Mass Communication Living in a Media World 6th edition Hanson Solutions Manual

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Chapter 2—Mass Communication Effects: How Society and Media Interact

Summary and Learning Objectives

With the rise of mass society and the rapid growth of the mass media starting in the 19th century, the public, media critics, and scholars have raised questions about the effects various media might have on society and individuals. These effects were viewed initially as being strong, direct, and relatively uniform on the population as a whole. After World War I, critics were concerned that media-oriented political campaigns could have powerful direct effects on voters. This view, though still widespread, was largely discredited by voter studies conducted in the 1940s and 1950s. These studies found that the voters with the strongest political opinions were those most likely to pay attention to a campaign and hence were least likely to be affected by it. More recently, research has expanded to move beyond looking just at the effects that media and media content have on individuals and society to examinations of how living in a world with all-pervasive media changes the nature of our interactions and culture.

Understanding the effects of media on individuals and society requires that we examine the messages being sent, the medium transmitting these messages, the owners of the media, and the audience members themselves. The effects can be cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral, or psychological.

Media effects can also be examined in terms of a number of theoretical approaches, including functional analysis, agenda setting, uses and gratifications, social learning, symbolic interactionism, spiral of silence, media logic, and cultivation analysis.

Many people claim that the media are biased toward one political view or another. Conservative critics argue that there is a liberal bias arising from the tendency of reporters to be more liberal than the public at large. The liberals' counterargument is that the press has a conservative bias because most media outlets are owned by giant corporations that hold pro-business views. Finally, some critics argue that the media hold a combination of values that straddle the boundary between slightly left and slightly right of center. The press in the United States began as partisan during the colonial period, but adopted a detached, factual, objective style in the 1830s to appeal to a broader audience.

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

1. discuss the history and development of our understanding of media effects;
2. explain how the critical theory model differs from the effects models;
3. name four types of effects the mass media can have;
4. explain eight major communication theories and their uses; and
5. explain how the mean world syndrome addresses the effects of consuming large amounts of violent media.

Review Questions

1. How did the existence of electronic documents allow Edward Snowden to steal and release so many secret government records? Could he have done the same thing with paper documents?

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2. What are the major problems with the direct effects model—the original theory of media effects?
3. What are the four major types of media effects? Give an example of each.
4. Compare and contrast how the direct effects model would explain the effects of media violence compared with the cultivation theory.
5. What kind of questions can you best answer using critical theory? What kind of questions is it weakest at answering?

Media Literacy Exercises

Media Literacy Exercise—C-SPAN versus commercial networks

Watch C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* morning interview program for half an hour. It can be viewed on your local cable service or on the Internet at www.c-span.org/. Then watch half an hour of a morning news show on a commercial broadcast or cable news channel.

In a brief essay, describe three ways in which *Washington Journal* differs from the morning news show you watched on the commercial network. Which type of program do you prefer? Why?

NOTES: There are a number of key differences between C-SPAN and the commercial networks. They include

- C-SPAN does not stop for commercial interruption at regular intervals.
- While some C-SPAN hosts are better known than others, they all adopt a similar detached style of interviewing. There is a stylebook for C-SPAN interviewing that describes exactly how interviews should be done.
- The guests and callers are the focus of C-SPAN programs, not the hosts.
- Commercial network interviews tend to be livelier and more confrontational.

C-SPAN has a video archive that has every program the C-SPAN networks have ever aired that you can call up as free streaming video. This is an incredible resource for mass communication teachers. Check it out at

- http://www.c-spanvideo.org/

You can also view all three of the C-SPAN networks online at https://www.c-span.org/networks/

Suggested Readings

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- Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964): The original work on how the media shape how we perceive the world.

- Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): An examination of how television through its very existence changes the world we live in.

- Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Analysis Techniques*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2005): An excellent and readable summary of different approaches to studying the mass media.

- Dennis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 5th ed. (London: Sage, 2005): This is a huge, comprehensive look at mass communication theory and was one of my primary references for this chapter. This title is one for you, not for your students, most likely.

- All of the Chapter 2 links posted to my RalphEHanson.com blog http://www.ralphehanson.com/category/chapter-2/page/5/

Lecture Builders

Philip de Vellis's Vote Different ad

The opening of the YouTube video is instantly familiar—Apple's iconic "1984" Super Bowl commercial featuring dark Orwellian imagery created by famed director Ridley Scott streams out. But what's going on here? Instead of television screens filled with Big Brother spouting ideology at the colorless marching drones, it's Hillary Clinton's face and voice from her presidential campaign announcement video. At the close of the video comes the text, "On January 14th, the Democratic primary will begin. And you'll see why 2008 won't be like '1984.'" The one-minute clip then ends with a letter *O* stylized to resemble the rainbow Apple logo, above the Web address of rival Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

The mash-up video appeared to come from Obama's campaign, though of course it didn't. But it's a fascinating look at how user-created video sites such as YouTube changed the nature of the 2008 presidential campaign. You had a zero-cost distribution network through which individual people enthralled by the video distributed it virally through blogs and e-mails. Messages were going out that no candidate financed or approved.

Once posted, the video became one of the hottest user-created videos on the Web. Over an 18-day period, the clip was viewed more than 2.5 million times, and over the course of the 2008 campaign it was viewed more than 4 million times.

There was endless speculation about who created it and, just as important, why. The user name of the video poster was "ParkRidge47," a subtle poke at Senator Clinton, who was born in 1947 and was raised in the Park Ridge, Illinois, area.[19]

The response to the video was fascinating. Obama, appearing on the *Larry King Live* show, denied having anything to do with the video, but he spoke admiringly about it:

[19] Michah L. Sifry, "Parkridge47: Not an R, and Not Bill Hillsman," Personal Democracy Forum, March 21, 2007, www.techpresident.com/node/173.

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> [W]e knew nothing about it. I just saw it for the first time. And, you know, one of the things about the Internet is that people generate all kinds of stuff. In some ways, it's—it's the democratization of the campaign process. . . . But it's not something that we had anything to do with or were aware of and, given what it looks like, frankly we don't have the technical capacity to create something like that. It's pretty extraordinary.[20]

The accusations and rumors about the identity of the creator were all over the place. Of course, some fingered the Obama campaign, while others accused Republican activist groups similar to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (who helped sink John Kerry's presidential campaign in 2004). Eventually the liberal-leaning website the Huffington Post tracked the video back to Phil de Vellis, who had been an Internet consultant for an Ohio Democratic Senate candidate and also worked for a Democratic Internet consulting firm.[21] In his own post on Huffington's blog, de Vellis acknowledged creating the video:

> I made the "Vote Different" ad because I wanted to express my feelings about the Democratic primary, and because I wanted to show that an individual citizen can affect the process. There are thousands of other people who could have made this ad, and I guarantee that more ads like it—by people of all political persuasions—will follow. This shows that the future of American politics rests in the hands of ordinary citizens…This ad was not the first citizen ad, and it will not be the last. The game has changed.[22]

The amazing thing was how easy it was for de Vellis to produce the ad. He told *Vanity Fair*'s James Wolcott, "I made the ad on a Sunday afternoon in my apartment using my personal equipment (a Mac and some software), uploaded it to YouTube, and sent links around to blogs."[23] Prior to becoming a full-time political consultant, de Vellis was a freelance video editor and graphics designer in Los Angeles. He has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Los Angeles. After de Vellis was outed as the creator of "Vote Different," he was terminated by his employer, Blue State Digital, but he was soon hired to be the vice president of new media for Murphy Putnam Media.

De Vellis was correct when he said that the political advertising game had changed. During the general election campaign, the best video supporting Obama came not from the campaign but rather from Will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas. The video "Yes We Can" features speeches by Obama overlaid by a wide range of popular performers singing and speaking. Like "Vote Different," it was created as a personal project by a skilled media professional with no connection to the campaign. Numerous advertising journalists, including *Ad Age*'s Bob Garfield and *Business Week*'s David Kiley, called "Yes We Can" the best marketing message of 2008.[24]

Clay Johnson, the head of Blue State Digital, in an interview conducted before de Vellis was revealed as the video's creator, spoke to the challenges of user-created video. "The real trouble . . . is that as people get more sophisticated in producing these videos, you're going to see a very large blur in

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[20] Larry King, interview with Barack Obama, *CNN Larry King Live*, March 19, 2007, transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0703/19/lkl.01.html.

[21] Arianna Huffington, "Who Created 'Hillary 1984'? Mystery Solved," Huffington Post, March 21, 2007, www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/who-created-hillary-1984_b_43978.html.

[22] Phil de Vellis, "I Made the 'Vote Different' Ad," Huffington Post, March 21, 2007, www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-de-vellis-aka-parkridge/i-made-the-vote-differen_b_43989.html.

[23] James Wolcott, "The YouTube Election," *Vanity Fair*, June 2007.

[24] Bob Garfield, "Ads Garfield Loved," *Advertising Age*, December 15, 2008, adage.com/article?article_id=133200; David Kiley; "Best Message Creation of 2008: The Winner Is Will I.Am," *Business Week*, December 31, 2008, www.businessweek.com/the_thread/brandnewday/archives/2008/12/best_message_cr.html.

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what's official and what's not."[25]

In this simple statement, Johnson is putting forward Truth Two—There are no mainstream media; Truth Three—Everything from the margin moves to the center, and, by implication, Truth Five—New media are always scary. The "Vote Different" and "Yes We Can" videos show how new tools, such as YouTube videos, are becoming a growing part of the political process. What makes user-produced videos so scary to those in the business of politics is that the videos can't be controlled. They aren't yet regulated—at least as of this writing—by the Federal Election Commission; they can be produced by anyone with talent and a halfway-decent computer; and they can reach a worldwide audience almost instantly at little cost to the producer.

Here are links to the two videos mentioned here:

- http://ralphehanson.com/blog/archive_07_03.html#032207_1984
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcx-mYY

Material on political influence

Our understanding of the media and the campaign process has evolved over the past hundred years. In the early decades of the twentieth century, scholars and critics worried that voters might be manipulated and controlled by campaign messages sent through the media, especially those that might be sent subliminally. This understanding changed in the 1940s and 1950s as scholars came to suspect that media effects might in fact be selective and indirect. Currently, it is believed that an interactional relationship exists among politicians, the press, and the public in which each influences the others.

How Do Political Campaigns Affect Voters?

If, as *The People's Choice* study indicates, campaigns do not have strong direct effects on voters, what are candidates trying to accomplish with their campaigns? They may be trying to directly persuade voters with the content of the messages, but more likely they are trying to shape the campaign in subtler ways. These are interactional models that say that the interaction among voters, the media, and the campaigns that are triggered by the ads are more important than any direct persuasion of voters. Here are two examples:

The **resonance model** says that the candidate's success depends in part on how well his or her basic message resonates with voters' preexisting political feelings. Thus, the candidate who does the best job of sending out messages that connect with target voters is the one most likely to win. The communication goal for the campaign is not so much to get people to change their minds as it is to get voters to believe that they share viewpoints with the candidate.[26] The resonance model was clearly used in the 2008 campaign in ads by both Democratic candidate Barack Obama and Republican candidate John McCain. Obama got strong resonance out of a commercial that claimed McCain was out

[25] Sarah Lai Stirland, "Fears of a YouTube Swiftboat," Wired News, March 23, 2007, www.wired.com/news/politics/0,73069-0.html?tw=rss.politics.
[26] Dan Balz and Anne E. Kornblut, "Obama Joins Race with Goals Set High," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2007.

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of touch with ordinary people because he didn't know how many houses he owned. McCain got a similar resonance by charging Obama with being more of a celebrity than a serious politician.

The **competitive model** looks at the campaign not in isolation, but as a competition between two or more candidates for the hearts and minds of voters. Hence the success of a campaign message, such as a speech that criticizes the candidate's opponent, depends as much on the opponent's reaction as it does on the message itself. Voter response can also depend on how the media react to the message. If the message attracts media attention, it may be played repeatedly on news broadcasts, as well as on political talk shows.[27] During the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, candidate Hillary Clinton leveled charges against Obama that he had lifted political rhetoric from Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick. Similar charges that Sen. Joe Biden had lifted a speech from the British Labor Party leader helped sink his campaign for the presidency back in 1988.[28]

But Obama did not suffer the same sort of damage that Biden did. Why not? First, Obama and Governor Patrick are friends, they share the same political adviser, and they have long shared a similar message. Second, Patrick did not object to the use of his words. Finally, Obama did not react particularly defensively to the charges of plagiarism. So, according to the competitive model, the public's direct reaction to the charges didn't matter as much as how the public reacted to Obama's reaction to the charges.

MEDIA THEORY NOTES: McLUHAN: Marshall McLuhan was famous for his quote "The medium is the message." Now it is absurd to argue that there is no importance in the actual message. Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke says to imagine you are given a warning that you have an enemy coming to kill you. You will want to know who the enemy is and why he hates you. You want to know more than just what channel was used to transmit the message. But McLuhan was not really trying to say that the message itself was unimportant. Instead he meant that media have effects beyond the messages they transmit.

McLuhan argues that the changing nature of our communication technology changes how we use our senses to perceive the world. When we lived in an era where all of our media were printed, we used rational, linear arguments because we were accustomed to the linear nature of print. Now that we live in a video age, we pay more attention to our feelings and to what McLuhan considered to be more expressive communication.

McLuhan died in 1980, not long before MTV first went on the air, but he would have loved the implications of the music video channel. For music videos are media with very little content. There is a stream of music and images that individually might make sense, but more often have little to do with one another. MTV, McLuhan might have argued, is almost pure medium—a series of beautiful,

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[27] Stephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, and Adam Simon, "Shifting Perspectives on the Effects of Campaign Communication," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997).

[28] Howard Kurtz, "Media Notes: Big Day or Non-Event?" *Washington Post,* February 19, 2008, www.washington post.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/19 /AR2008021900844.html?referrer= emailarticle.

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interesting, or shocking images and sounds that push to the limits the technological capabilities of cable television. The message of MTV might be that life is a series of brief images that capture our imagination because they are flashy, interesting, sexy, or violent.

MEDIA THEORY NOTES: MACARTHUR DAY PARADE: One of the most visionary of the early TV studies was conducted by Kurt and Gladys Lang in the late 1950s. They wanted to know how people perceived an event differently when they viewed it on television rather than when they experienced it in person. To find out, they positioned 31 observers around Chicago to study how people responded to the parade honoring General Douglas MacArthur and then compared their feelings to those who viewed the parade on television.

People who saw the parade in person had expected to see mobs and wild crowds; they also expected to be entertained. But at the parade itself there was relatively little discussion of the political controversies surrounding General MacArthur, people behaved relatively well, and folks complained that the parade would have been better on television.

Those who watched the parade on television and listened to the commentary saw an image of the public wildly supporting MacArthur. Television delivered the excitement that people expected through the entire day. People along the parade route waited and waited with nothing going on; they then saw MacArthur for a few moments as he went past. People watching the parade on television saw MacArthur continuously. What is more, they had commentators telling them the event was exciting.

The Langs concluded that television gave a very different picture of the parade than being there in person. They found that

- television technology shapes the views people receive of the world.
- the commentary from an announcer helps shape the views of television audience members.
- the event itself was staged primarily for television coverage rather than the in-person audience.
- the goal of the broadcast was to give the audience something interesting to look at rather than an accurate portrayal of reality.

Social learning Batman example

Think about a small boy who watches Batman defeat evil bad guys (EBGs) by physically fighting with them. Fighting with the EBGs proves to be a successful strategy and generally earns the superhero praise and the keys to Gotham City. Thus, while watching the animated show may not lead directly to the child engaging in violence, it could teach him that fighting is an effective way of solving problems and leads to social approval. He may then try out the practice by fighting with his sister, at which point he discovers it does not lead to social approval from his parents, and he stops the behavior. Or he might try it out by fighting with his friends and discover that it leads to his receiving respect. From this simplistic example, we can see how social learning theory can be applied to analyzing media. The content of the media can provide a large-scale source of content from which social learning can take

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place.[29] If the behavior being modeled is successful in achieving the person's goals, it may continue to be used. Think of the *Batman*-watching child who gains respect among his friends by fighting. If the behavior is unsuccessful in achieving results, the person may try other strategies. Think of the *Batman*-watching child who earns parental disapproval by fighting with his sister. He may instead sharpen his verbal or negotiating skills to gain the upper hand in conflicts with his sister.

NOTES: WHO IS THE AUDIENCE: A good bit of the media content exists for relatively small audiences. For example, the Sunday morning shows on the various cable and broadcast networks, such as *Fox News Sunday*, *Meet the Press*, and *Face the Nation*, are heavily watched by print journalists, who may write stories for Monday's paper based on what was said on the Sunday pundit shows. The influence of these programs comes not from *how many* people watch them, but rather *who* watches them.

NOTES: HOW DOES TELEVISION CHANGE POLITICAL NEWS: Joshua Meyrowitz, in his book *No Sense of Place,* says that when we see too much of our leaders, we tend to lower them to our level. For leaders to appear heroic they need to keep people at a certain distance, which is hard when the media are constantly viewing them. The coming of the television camera to presidential press conferences made the meetings between the press and reporters public. No longer can the president banter with the press or give them directions without the world watching in. President Teddy Roosevelt, for example, used to be interviewed while being shaved. And although this would be a fairly intimate situation, it was not being staged for the press. The readers of the newspaper articles would not hear about him sitting in the barber's chair. They would simply read about the information he gave out. But television gives all sorts of details that are left out of other media. Meyrowitz says, "Print, for example, conveys words but no intonations or facial gestures; radio sends intonations along with the words, but provides no visual information; television transmits the full audio/visual spectrum of verbal, vocal, and gestural." Also, because our messages can go out instantly, we expect instant response. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the country the day after Pearl Harbor, but President George W. Bush appeared on television the evening of September 11, 2001, following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., and he received some criticism for delaying his appearance for that long.

VIDEO HINTS: When I used to teach this course in a large lecture setting, I would generally have C-SPAN playing on the video system as students came to class. Today, in addition to the basic C-SPAN networks, you also have access to anything that has ever aired on C-SPAN through the C-SPAN video archives mentioned previously.

To highlight the difference between C-SPAN and the commercial networks, show a clip of *Washington Journal* followed by a clip from *The O'Reilly Factor* from Fox News or *Countdown* from MSNBC. It can also be interesting for students to see an excerpt of BBC news. This can be taped from BBC America if you have access to that channel, or streamed from the BBC website.

[29] DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*.

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Media Activities

When Words Matter

The words we use matter intensely. Sometimes they tell others a lot about who we are. Sometimes when we use the wrong words we hurt people we hadn't intended to. And sometimes we don't have any idea what the actual words are as illustrated in this link:

- http://www.ralphehanson.com/2014/11/21/when-words-matter/

Questions: Consider, for example, the language people use to refer to immigrants who enter the United States without the permission to do so. How does using different words change how we feel about or perceive people?

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Chapter 2

Media Literacy Exercises

Media Literacy Exercise—C-SPAN versus commercial networks

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In a brief essay, describe three ways in which *Washington Journal* differs from the morning news show you watched on the commercial network. Which type of program do you prefer? Why?

NOTES: There are a number of key differences between C-SPAN and the commercial networks. They include

- C-SPAN does not stop for commercial interruption at regular intervals.
- While some C-SPAN hosts are better known than others, they all adopt a similar detached style of interviewing. There is a stylebook for C-SPAN interviewing that describes exactly how interviews should be done.
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Chapter 2

Lecture Builders

Philip de Vellis's Vote Different ad

The opening of the YouTube video is instantly familiar—Apple's iconic "1984" Super Bowl commercial featuring dark Orwellian imagery created by famed director Ridley Scott streams out. But what's going on here? Instead of television screens filled with Big Brother spouting ideology at the colorless marching drones, it's Hillary Clinton's face and voice from her presidential campaign announcement video. At the close of the video comes the text, "On January 14th, the Democratic primary will begin. And you'll see why 2008 won't be like '1984.'" The one-minute clip then ends with a letter *O* stylized to resemble the rainbow Apple logo, above the Web address of rival Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

The mash-up video appeared to come from Obama's campaign, though of course it didn't. But it's a fascinating look at how user-created video sites such as YouTube changed the nature of the 2008 presidential campaign. You had a zero-cost distribution network through which individual people enthralled by the video distributed it virally through blogs and e-mails. Messages were going out that no candidate financed or approved.

Once posted, the video became one of the hottest user-created videos on the Web. Over an 18-day period, the clip was viewed more than 2.5 million times, and over the course of the 2008 campaign it was viewed more than 4 million times.

There was endless speculation about who created it and, just as important, why. The user name of the video poster was "ParkRidge47," a subtle poke at Senator Clinton, who was born in 1947 and was raised in the Park Ridge, Illinois, area.[1]

The response to the video was fascinating. Obama, appearing on the *Larry King Live* show, denied having anything to do with the video, but he spoke admiringly about it:

> [W]e knew nothing about it. I just saw it for the first time. And, you know, one of the things about the Internet is that people generate all kinds of stuff. In some ways, it's—it's the democratization of the campaign process. . . . But it's not something that we had anything to do with or were aware of and, given what it looks like, frankly we don't have the technical capacity to create something like that. It's pretty extraordinary.[2]

The accusations and rumors about the identity of the creator were all over the place. Of course, some fingered the Obama campaign, while others accused Republican activist groups similar to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (who helped sink John Kerry's presidential campaign in 2004). Eventually the liberal-leaning website the Huffington Post tracked the video back to Phil de Vellis, who had been an Internet consultant for an Ohio Democratic Senate candidate and also worked for a Democratic Internet

[1] Michah L. Sifry, "Parkridge47: Not an R, and Not Bill Hillsman," Personal Democracy Forum, March 21, 2007, www.techpresident.com/node/173.

[2] Larry King, interview with Barack Obama, *CNN Larry King Live*, March 19, 2007, transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0703/19/lkl.01.html.

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consulting firm.[3] In his own post on Huffington's blog, de Vellis acknowledged creating the video:

> I made the "Vote Different" ad because I wanted to express my feelings about the Democratic primary, and because I wanted to show that an individual citizen can affect the process. There are thousands of other people who could have made this ad, and I guarantee that more ads like it—by people of all political persuasions—will follow. This shows that the future of American politics rests in the hands of ordinary citizens…This ad was not the first citizen ad, and it will not be the last. The game has changed.[4]

The amazing thing was how easy it was for de Vellis to produce the ad. He told *Vanity Fair*'s James Wolcott, "I made the ad on a Sunday afternoon in my apartment using my personal equipment (a Mac and some software), uploaded it to YouTube, and sent links around to blogs."[5] Prior to becoming a full-time political consultant, de Vellis was a freelance video editor and graphics designer in Los Angeles. He has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Los Angeles. After de Vellis was outed as the creator of "Vote Different," he was terminated by his employer, Blue State Digital, but he was soon hired to be the vice president of new media for Murphy Putnam Media.

De Vellis was correct when he said that the political advertising game had changed. During the general election campaign, the best video supporting Obama came not from the campaign but rather from Will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas. The video "Yes We Can" features speeches by Obama overlaid by a wide range of popular performers singing and speaking. Like "Vote Different," it was created as a personal project by a skilled media professional with no connection to the campaign. Numerous advertising journalists, including *Ad Age*'s Bob Garfield and *Business Week*'s David Kiley, called "Yes We Can" the best marketing message of 2008.[6]

Clay Johnson, the head of Blue State Digital, in an interview conducted before de Vellis was revealed as the video's creator, spoke to the challenges of user-created video. "The real trouble . . . is that as people get more sophisticated in producing these videos, you're going to see a very large blur in what's official and what's not."[7]

In this simple statement, Johnson is putting forward Truth Two—There are no mainstream media; Truth Three—Everything from the margin moves to the center, and, by implication, Truth Five—New media are always scary. The "Vote Different" and "Yes We Can" videos show how new tools, such as YouTube videos, are becoming a growing part of the political process. What makes user-produced videos so scary to those in the business of politics is that the videos can't be controlled. They aren't yet regulated—at least as of this writing—by the Federal Election Commission; they can be produced by anyone with talent and a halfway-decent computer; and they can reach a worldwide audience almost instantly at little cost to the producer.

Here are links to the two videos mentioned here:

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[3] Arianna Huffington, "Who Created 'Hillary 1984'? Mystery Solved," Huffington Post, March 21, 2007, www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/who-created-hillary-1984_b_43978.html.

[4] Phil de Vellis, "I Made the 'Vote Different' Ad," Huffington Post, March 21, 2007, www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-de-vellis-aka-parkridge/i-made-the-vote-differen_b_43989.html.

[5] James Wolcott, "The YouTube Election," *Vanity Fair*, June 2007.

[6] Bob Garfield, "Ads Garfield Loved," *Advertising Age*, December 15, 2008, adage.com/article?article_id=133200; David Kiley; "Best Message Creation of 2008: The Winner Is Will I.Am," *Business Week*, December 31, 2008, www.businessweek.com/the_thread/brandnewday/archives/2008/12/best_message_cr.html.

[7] Sarah Lai Stirland, "Fears of a YouTube Swiftboat," Wired News, March 23, 2007, www.wired.com/news/politics/0,73069-0.html?tw=rss.politics.

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- http://ralphehanson.com/blog/archive_07_03.html#032207_1984
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Material on political influence

Our understanding of the media and the campaign process has evolved over the past hundred years. In the early decades of the twentieth century, scholars and critics worried that voters might be manipulated and controlled by campaign messages sent through the media, especially those that might be sent subliminally. This understanding changed in the 1940s and 1950s as scholars came to suspect that media effects might in fact be selective and indirect. Currently, it is believed that an interactional relationship exists among politicians, the press, and the public in which each influences the others.

How Do Political Campaigns Affect Voters?

If, as *The People's Choice* study indicates, campaigns do not have strong direct effects on voters, what are candidates trying to accomplish with their campaigns? They may be trying to directly persuade voters with the content of the messages, but more likely they are trying to shape the campaign in subtler ways. These are interactional models that say that the interaction among voters, the media, and the campaigns that are triggered by the ads are more important than any direct persuasion of voters. Here are two examples:

The **resonance model** says that the candidate's success depends in part on how well his or her basic message resonates with voters' preexisting political feelings. Thus, the candidate who does the best job of sending out messages that connect with target voters is the one most likely to win. The communication goal for the campaign is not so much to get people to change their minds as it is to get voters to believe that they share viewpoints with the candidate.[8] The resonance model was clearly used in the 2008 campaign in ads by both Democratic candidate Barack Obama and Republican candidate John McCain. Obama got strong resonance out of a commercial that claimed McCain was out of touch with ordinary people because he didn't know how many houses he owned. McCain got a similar resonance by charging Obama with being more of a celebrity than a serious politician.

The **competitive model** looks at the campaign not in isolation, but as a competition between two or more candidates for the hearts and minds of voters. Hence the success of a campaign message, such as a speech that criticizes the candidate's opponent, depends as much on the opponent's reaction as it does on the message itself. Voter response can also depend on how the media react to the message. If the message attracts media attention, it may be played repeatedly on news broadcasts, as well as on political talk shows.[9] During the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, candidate Hillary

[8] Dan Balz and Anne E. Kornblut, "Obama Joins Race with Goals Set High," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2007.

[9] Stephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, and Adam Simon, "Shifting Perspectives on the Effects of Campaign Communication," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997).

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Clinton leveled charges against Obama that he had lifted political rhetoric from Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick. Similar charges that Sen. Joe Biden had lifted a speech from the British Labor Party leader helped sink his campaign for the presidency back in 1988.[10]

But Obama did not suffer the same sort of damage that Biden did. Why not? First, Obama and Governor Patrick are friends, they share the same political adviser, and they have long shared a similar message. Second, Patrick did not object to the use of his words. Finally, Obama did not react particularly defensively to the charges of plagiarism. So, according to the competitive model, the public's direct reaction to the charges didn't matter as much as how the public reacted to Obama's reaction to the charges.

MEDIA THEORY NOTES: McLUHAN: Marshall McLuhan was famous for his quote "The medium is the message." Now it is absurd to argue that there is no importance in the actual message. Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke says to imagine you are given a warning that you have an enemy coming to kill you. You will want to know who the enemy is and why he hates you. You want to know more than just what channel was used to transmit the message. But McLuhan was not really trying to say that the message itself was unimportant. Instead he meant that media have effects beyond the messages they transmit.

McLuhan argues that the changing nature of our communication technology changes how we use our senses to perceive the world. When we lived in an era where all of our media were printed, we used rational, linear arguments because we were accustomed to the linear nature of print. Now that we live in a video age, we pay more attention to our feelings and to what McLuhan considered to be more expressive communication.

McLuhan died in 1980, not long before MTV first went on the air, but he would have loved the implications of the music video channel. For music videos are media with very little content. There is a stream of music and images that individually might make sense, but more often have little to do with one another. MTV, McLuhan might have argued, is almost pure medium—a series of beautiful, interesting, or shocking images and sounds that push to the limits the technological capabilities of cable television. The message of MTV might be that life is a series of brief images that capture our imagination because they are flashy, interesting, sexy, or violent.

MEDIA THEORY NOTES: MACARTHUR DAY PARADE: One of the most visionary of the early TV studies was conducted by Kurt and Gladys Lang in the late 1950s. They wanted to know how people perceived an event differently when they viewed it on television rather than when they experienced it in person. To find out, they positioned 31 observers around Chicago to study how people responded to the parade honoring General Douglas MacArthur and then compared their feelings to those who viewed the parade on television.

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[10] Howard Kurtz, "Media Notes: Big Day or Non-Event?" *Washington Post,* February 19, 2008, www.washington post.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/19 /AR2008021900844.html?referrer= emailarticle.

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People who saw the parade in person had expected to see mobs and wild crowds; they also expected to be entertained. But at the parade itself there was relatively little discussion of the political controversies surrounding General MacArthur, people behaved relatively well, and folks complained that the parade would have been better on television.

Those who watched the parade on television and listened to the commentary saw an image of the public wildly supporting MacArthur. Television delivered the excitement that people expected through the entire day. People along the parade route waited and waited with nothing going on; they then saw MacArthur for a few moments as he went past. People watching the parade on television saw MacArthur continuously. What is more, they had commentators telling them the event was exciting.

The Langs concluded that television gave a very different picture of the parade than being there in person. They found that

- television technology shapes the views people receive of the world.
- the commentary from an announcer helps shape the views of television audience members.
- the event itself was staged primarily for television coverage rather than the in-person audience.
- the goal of the broadcast was to give the audience something interesting to look at rather than an accurate portrayal of reality.

Social learning Batman example

Think about a small boy who watches Batman defeat evil bad guys (EBGs) by physically fighting with them. Fighting with the EBGs proves to be a successful strategy and generally earns the superhero praise and the keys to Gotham City. Thus, while watching the animated show may not lead directly to the child engaging in violence, it could teach him that fighting is an effective way of solving problems and leads to social approval. He may then try out the practice by fighting with his sister, at which point he discovers it does not lead to social approval from his parents, and he stops the behavior. Or he might try it out by fighting with his friends and discover that it leads to his receiving respect. From this simplistic example, we can see how social learning theory can be applied to analyzing media. The content of the media can provide a large-scale source of content from which social learning can take place.[11] If the behavior being modeled is successful in achieving the person's goals, it may continue to be used. Think of the *Batman*-watching child who gains respect among his friends by fighting. If the behavior is unsuccessful in achieving results, the person may try other strategies. Think of the *Batman*-watching child who earns parental disapproval by fighting with his sister. He may instead sharpen his verbal or negotiating skills to gain the upper hand in conflicts with his sister.

NOTES: WHO IS THE AUDIENCE: A good bit of the media content exists for relatively small audiences. For example, the Sunday morning shows on the various cable and broadcast networks, such as *Fox News Sunday*, *Meet the Press*, and *Face the Nation*, are heavily watched by print journalists, who may write stories for Monday's paper based on what was said on the Sunday pundit shows. The

[11] DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*.

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influence of these programs comes not from *how many* people watch them, but rather *who* watches them.

NOTES: HOW DOES TELEVISION CHANGE POLITICAL NEWS: Joshua Meyrowitz, in his book *No Sense of Place,* says that when we see too much of our leaders, we tend to lower them to our level. For leaders to appear heroic they need to keep people at a certain distance, which is hard when the media are constantly viewing them. The coming of the television camera to presidential press conferences made the meetings between the press and reporters public. No longer can the president banter with the press or give them directions without the world watching in. President Teddy Roosevelt, for example, used to be interviewed while being shaved. And although this would be a fairly intimate situation, it was not being staged for the press. The readers of the newspaper articles would not hear about him sitting in the barber's chair. They would simply read about the information he gave out. But television gives all sorts of details that are left out of other media. Meyrowitz says, "Print, for example, conveys words but no intonations or facial gestures; radio sends intonations along with the words, but provides no visual information; television transmits the full audio/visual spectrum of verbal, vocal, and gestural." Also, because our messages can go out instantly, we expect instant response. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the country the day after Pearl Harbor, but President George W. Bush appeared on television the evening of September 11, 2001, following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., and he received some criticism for delaying his appearance for that long.

VIDEO HINTS: When I used to teach this course in a large lecture setting, I would generally have C-SPAN playing on the video system as students came to class. Today, in addition to the basic C-SPAN networks, you also have access to anything that has ever aired on C-SPAN through the C-SPAN video archives mentioned previously.

To highlight the difference between C-SPAN and the commercial networks, show a clip of *Washington Journal* followed by a clip from *The O'Reilly Factor* from Fox News or *Countdown* from MSNBC. It can also be interesting for students to see an excerpt of BBC news. This can be taped from BBC America if you have access to that channel, or streamed from the BBC website.

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