

# COMM375: CHAPTER 8 READING NOTES

## □ Chapter 8 - Persuasive Effects of the Media

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- What is Persuasion?
  - When you are persuaded there is a change in your attitude.
    - You feel different about something as a result of being exposed to a message.
    - BUT a change in attitude is only part of what is involved in persuasion.
  - Significant persuasion also results in changes of behavior
    - You have to alter your behavior before you can be persuaded because otherwise you'll never know what it is you are trying to understand.
  - Truly Significant Persuasion - results in behavior that persists over time
  - Together these three features (Attitude Change, Behavior Change, Persistent Change) help to define what we mean by PERSUASION.

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- HOW MEDIA MESSAGES PERSUADE WITHOUT EVEN TRYING
  - A high proportion of media messages are designed to entertain
    - Over the years scholars have learned that these entertainment messages can exert a powerful influence on attitude and behavior...
      - EXAMPLE -> When "The Fonz" off of the popular sitcom "Happy Days" applied for a library card in an episode.... Weeks later following this episode, libraries around the country reported a 500% increase in library card applications.

- o As psychologists have studied the persuasion process, they have discovered that ordinarily people approach a persuasive situation with their defenses up..
  - Richard Petty and John Cacioppo describe this situation in their ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM) of Persuasion
    - According to them there are two main routes by which people might be persuaded.
      - 1) Central Route to Persuasion - which is a highly rational or cognitive route to persuasion - it's when people scrutinize the message carefully and tend to think up many counter arguments that the persuader must defeat to be successful.
      - 2) Peripheral Route to Persuasion - certain cues in the message lead people to accept the persuasive-proposition with little cognitive thought or scrutiny.

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- PRODUCT PLACEMENTS IN ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING
  - o Product Placements - Appear within movies or TV shows as more or less incidental to the plot...
    - EX - the movie ET, recalling the extra-terrestrial character enjoying the candy Reeses Pieces..
- THE THEORY OF MEDIA CULTIVATION: CULTIVATING ATTITUDES IS ATTITUDE CHANGE
  - o George Gerber's THEORY OF MEDIA CULTIVATION - doesn't use the term persuade to describe the impact of media, and his theory is often treated in the context of discussions of media violence or media stereotypes

- The theory is all about the cultivation of attitudes, which is, after all, another way of talking about attitude change..
  - According to Gerber the cultivation process is gradual and cumulative..
  - Also, according to Gerber, the world of media entertainment presents a particular view of social reality..
    - For example - content analyses of prime-time television programs reveal that about 12% of the male characters hold jobs work in law enforcement - this proportion is a gross exaggeration, in reality, only about 1% of employed males work in the area of law enforcement..
  - o What happens to people who make watching prime-time television a steady habit - According to Gerber the person becomes “cultivated” into the television view of social reality.
    - The viewer will begin to believe that the real world resembles the world presented in the media.
    - The TV viewer begins to believe that the world is a more violent place than it actually is.
  - o Mainstreaming - refers to what happens when people of different groups are exposed to the same media
  - o Resonance - refers to what happens when a persons real-life environment strongly resembles the environment depicted in the media....
- IF CULTIVATION WORKS - HOW DOES IT WORK?