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Lynzee Flores
Pittsburg State University

Alicia Mason
Pittsburg State University

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PUBLIC OPINION & U.S. FOREIGN POLICY:
INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL TELEVISION DRAMAS ON AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ENGAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS

Lynzee Flores, Graduate Student
Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas
MY RESEARCH: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

- **Definition:**
  - Role of communication in the political process (Christian. 2016)

- **Personal Interests:**
  - U.S. Foreign Policy and Diplomacy
  - Political Television Dramas

- **Research Importance:**
  - Media affects on government policy and the individual
WHAT ARE MEDIA EFFECTS?

• Studies show media could be an effective persuasion and learning tool

  • Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer (1976): “Audiences depend on media information to meet needs and reach goals.”

AGENDA SETTING: A COMMUNICATION THEORY

1972: Donald Shaw & Maxwell McCombs, “Mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agendas to the public agenda.”
THE AGENDAS

Gatekeepers and influential media

- Personal experience and interpersonal communication
  - Media agenda
  - Public agenda
  - Policy agenda

Real-world indicators of the importance of an agenda issue or event
SOFT NEWS  VS.  HARD NEWS

• AKA: Non-traditional and Traditional News sources

**Soft News:**
- Infotainment
- Primary focus is entertainment but has factual components
- Human interest themes
- Examples:
  - Late Night with Seth Meyers
  - Entertainment Tonight

**Hard News**
- News Reports
- Primary focus is educational and informational
- Political and public affairs themes
- Examples:
  - NYT
  - Cable News

The New York Times
POLITICAL TELEVISION DRAMAS

- One of America’s most popular genre of television series
- Top 5 most watched political dramas of 2016 - (24/50)
U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT

• Prominent throughout media news cycle in past 5 years

• Specifically featured in the Season 3, Episode 3 of Madam Secretary
INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Purpose of Research:
Political Television Dramas and/or Cable News Reports + U.S. Foreign Policy = Change of Public Opinion

HYPOTHESIS
Participants who view the political television drama video will report higher intentions to seek and share information about the South China Sea Conflict than participants who view cable news reports.
METHODS

• 4 part Survey
  1. Demographic information
  2. Perceived Issue Importance/issues familiarity & likelihood of sharing & seeking information
  3. Viewing of experimental video
  4. Post measurements of section 2

• 12 day data collection period
  • February 26, 2018 - March 9, 2018
METHODS CONTINUED

• Question Format

• Information Seeking:
  • 5 item, 10 point Likelihood Likert Scale
  • Listening to News programs/ podcast and Subject Matter Expert

• Information Sharing:
  • 3 item, 10 point Likelihood Likert Scale
  • Social Media, Word of Mouth, Written Materials
REPORT OF FINDINGS: THE RESULTS

Sample Size=110
N=88
School Levels of Participants

- Not Applicable: 47%
- Graduate Student: 12%
- Senior: 11%
- Junior: 14%
- Sophomore: 14%
- Freshman: 4%
Gender of Participants

- Females: 73%
- Males: 27%
- Unreported: 8%
## RESULTS: SEEKING INFORMATION

### Paired Samples t-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE VIDEO</th>
<th>POST VIDEO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Materials:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>F(2,87)=9.94, p=&lt;.001, partial eta² =.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Program/Podcast:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>F(2,84)=4.30, p=&lt;.05, partial eta² =.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter Experts:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>No Difference</td>
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### Univariate of Variance Analysis (ANOVA)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth:</td>
<td>$t(87)=2.15, p&lt;.05$</td>
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### Significance Levels:

- $p=0.05$
- $p=0.01$
- $p=0.00$
**RESULTS: SHARING INFORMATION**

**Paired Samples t-Test Results**

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<tr>
<td>t (88)=-2.45, p=.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>F (2, 87) = 5.63, p &lt; .005</td>
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<tr>
<td>t (86)=-2.07, p=.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Materials:</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
<td>F (2,87)=3.69, p &lt; .02</td>
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<tr>
<td>t (88)=-2.45, p=.02</td>
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SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

• Hypothesis was not fully supported

• The inverse of H1 was proven to be true:
  • Cable news reports = higher intentions of seeking information about foreign policy
  • Written Materials and News Programs or Podcasts

• Potential Causes:
  • Better General Understanding
  • Lack Issue Salience and Resolution

• Likelihood of information sharing post media exposure was supported
  • Word of Mouth
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION FIELD?

• Provides academic research
• Establishes new findings for future research
• Progressive to the changes of societal norms

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

• Small sample size
• Control elicitation video was short
• Differences between, gender, age, education level and other populations
WORKS CITED


THANK YOU!