NEWS VALUES
Broadcast Journalism
Think-Pair-Share!

- Why is it that mass media outlets feature particular news stories prominently while others receive little, if any, coverage?
INTRODUCTION

- Although every media outlet is different, mass media gatekeepers have traditionally relied on some predictable values to evaluate the newsworthiness of a story.

- Their decision might impact how the story is covered, including how many resources are spent following the story, and how prominently the story is featured.
INTRODUCTION

In the present era of audience fragmentation, individual audience members increasingly choose what kind of news content they receive, yet traditional news values often still govern how deeply a news story permeates a community.
In 1973, Galtung and Ruge developed one of the first models of news values. Shoemaker et. al. followed up in 1987 with a similar model. Both offer a useful framework for understanding how gatekeepers evaluate potential news stories.
GALTUNG AND RUGE, 1973

- **Relevance** - How relevant is a news story to the audience in question? For example, an earthquake in Mexico is almost always more relevant to a Western audience than to an audience in Asia.

- **Timeliness** - How recently did the event unfold? Timing is of the utmost importance in today’s 24 hour news cycle. Recent events, or events in the making, are most likely to lead the news.
Simplification - Stories that can be easily simplified or summarized are likely to be featured more prominently than stories that are convoluted or difficult to understand.

Predictability - Certain events, such as elections, major sporting events, astrological events, and legal decisions, happen on a predictable schedule. As the event draws closer, it typically gains news value.
**GALTUNG AND RUGE, 1973**

- **Unexpectedness** - On the other hand, events like natural disasters, accidents, or crimes are completely unpredictable. These events are also likely to have significant news value.

- **Continuity** - Some events, such as war, elections, protests, and strikes, require continuing coverage. These events are likely to remain in the news for a long time, although not always as the lead story.
GALTUNG AND RUGE, 1973

- **Elite Countries** - Famine, drought, and national disasters are more likely to draw attention if they are happening in “First World” countries than if they are happening in developing countries.

- **Elite People** - Certain individuals, like politicians, entertainers, and athletes, are considered, by virtue of their status, more newsworthy. If someone throws a shoe at an everyday person, it’s probably not news. If someone throws a shoe at the President of the United States, it will likely be in the news for weeks.
GALTUNG AND RUGE, 1973

- **Composition** - Editors have to keep in mind the big picture—the sum of all content in their media outlet. For this reason, an editor might select soft human interest stories to balance out other hard hitting, investigative journalism.

- **Negativity** - Generally speaking, editors deem bad news more newsworthy than good news.
GALTUNG AND RUGE, 1973

- Relevance
- Timeliness
- Simplification
- Predictability
- Unexpectedness
- Continuity
- Composition
- Elite People
- Elite Countries
- Negativity
Shoemaker et al., 1987

- **Timeliness** - Shoemaker et al. also recognize timeliness as a critical news value.

- **Proximity** - Similar to Gatlung and Ruge’s “Relevance.” The closer an event takes place to the intended audience, the more important it is. This is why huge local or regional stories might not make the national news.
SHEEMAKER ET AL., 1987

Importance, impact, or consequence - How many people will the event impact? Issues like global warming issues have become big news in recent years precisely because environmental changes affect the entire planet.

Interest - Does the story have any special human interest? For example, the inspirational story of a person overcoming large odds to reach her goal appeals to a fundamental human interest.
Conflict or Controversy - Similar to Gatlung and Ruge’s “Negativity.” Editors generally deem conflict more newsworthy than peace.

Sensationalism - Sensational stories tend to make the front pages more than the everyday.
SHOEMAKER ET AL., 1987

- **Prominence** - Similar to Gatlung and Ruge’s “Elite People.” The actions of prominent people are much more likely to make the news than non-public figures.

- **Novelty, oddity, or the unusual** - Strange stories are likely to find their way into the news. Dog bites man—no story. Man bites dog—story.
SHOEMAKER ET AL., 1987

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Importance, impact, or consequence
- Interest
- Conflict or Controversy
- Sensationalism
- Prominence
- Novelty, oddity, or the unusual
### PMI Chart

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<th>INTERESTING</th>
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What are the positive ideas about this?
What are the negative ideas about this?
What is interesting about this?
CONCLUSION

- Every news outlet has a different protocol for selecting which stories to run, but some traditional values often determine the “newsworthiness” of a story. The more of these news values a story satisfies, the more likely you are to see it prominently featured in mass media outlets.
Sources
