

How to Design Culturally Resonant Messages?

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Abstract

Starting in June 2009, DRDC Toronto's Effects & Influence Group (EIG) was asked by LFCA G9 (Influence Activities Unit) to provide course material that can be delivered to LFCA's Influence Activities (IA) operators to train them on how to design more effective message in an expeditionary environment. The lecture notes and the Powerpoint slides designed and delivered by the EIG are presented here.

Executive summary

How to Design Culturally Resonant Messages?

M. Afzal Upal; DRDC TN 2012-XXX; Defence R&D Canada Toronto.

Introduction or background: Starting in June 2009, DRDC Toronto's Effects & Influence Group (EIG) was asked by the Central Area's (LFCA) G9 Unit to provide course material that can be delivered to LFCA's IA operators to train them on how to design more effective message in an expeditionary environment. The material consisting of Power point slides and lecture notes we delivered was well liked by the LFCA G9 and the LFCA IA operators and we have been invited to present it in every iteration of the LFCA's course since then. We were also invited to present the course at the Quebec Area (LFQA) training in Montreal and provide a copy of the course to the Atlantic Area (LFAA). Following each presentation we received valuable feedback from course participants and organizers alike which has helped us tremendously improve the content and the delivery techniques. What follows are the lecture slides and notes from the most recent presentation during the LFCA's Operation Broadcast Walk held in at CFB Ottawa and CFB London during April and May 2012.

Significance: IA operators need scientifically rigorous training that they can apply to design effective messages in the field. Given that most IA operators do not have prior training in the science of social influence and marketing, designing effective training material is challenging. The course material contained in this report is based on state of the art science and has been rated positively by the IA operators.

Future plans: The Effects and Influence Group is committed to supporting the CF's needs in the area of training IA operators. We will continue to monitor both scientific developments as well as evolution of the CF's requirements to design courses that are scientifically rigorous as well as relevant to the needs of the CF.

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Figure 5: PSYOP leaflet used by Israeli Defense Force during Israel-Labanon War of 2006. 5

Acknowledgements

LFCA IA operators and MWO Jimenez for their valuable feedback on the contents of various versions of the “effective message design” lecture.

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1 Influence Activities Operator Training

1.1 Background

The G9 (Influence Activities) units of each Canadian military's area (LFCA) are responsible for the coordination of continuation training for all Influence Activities (IA) Operators within their area. The IA continuation training provides enhanced training for core subjects that must be covered over a two year period for any IA Operator to be declared current. IA operators need scientifically rigorous training that they can apply to design effective messages in the field that will have the desired impact on their target audiences. Given that most IA operators do not have prior training in the science of social influence and marketing, designing effective training material is challenging. Starting in June 2009, DRDC Toronto's Effects & Influence Group (EIG) was asked by LFCA's G9 Unit to provide course material that can be delivered to LFCA's IA operators to train them on how to design more effective message in an expeditionary environment. The material consisting of Power point slides and lecture notes we delivered was well liked by the LFCA G9 and the LFCA IA operators and we have been invited to present it in every iteration of the LFCA's course since then. We were also invited to present the course at the Quebec Area (LFQA) training in Montreal and provide a copy of the course to the Atlantic Area (LFAA). Following each presentation we received valuable feedback from course participants and organizers alike which has helped us tremendously improve the content and the delivery techniques. What follows are the lecture slides and notes from the most recent presentation during the LFCA's Exercise Operation Broadcast Walk held in at CFB Ottawa and CFB London during April and May 2012.

2. Lecture Notes

2.1 Three Lessons

The lecture is based on the following three practical steps towards the design of a culturally resonant message.

1. Message Should be Understandable for the Target Audience (TA).
2. Use surprise to attract a target audience's attention
3. Allow the Target Audience to Self-Discover Your Message as their Own Insight

2.2 Message Should be Understandable for the Target Audience

Traditionally, cross-cultural marketing experts have stressed that a message must be understood by the target audience, in the way it is intended, to ensure effective communication of a message. If the target audience members understand the message differently from the one intended by the message designers, then the message can have unpredictable consequences as was the case with the peace-dove, ghost-at-dinner, ace-of-spades, and the thought bubble campaigns. Thus the CF's Joint Doctrine Manual on Psychological Operations rightly points out that, "The target audience analysis is necessary in the planning and conduct of PSYOPS operations," that "access to a thorough understanding of the customs, ethics, values, and goals of the target audience" is needed, and that "The test is whether the message will get the desired response" (J7-DLLS-2, 2004). In a similar vein, the US Army PSYOP TTP document (FM-3-05.301) provides the following guidance for development of an effective PSYOP product.

The product should also be approached from a culture's perspective to ensure the product will have a cultural resonance with the TA. Culturally dictated modifications may be made automatically by a translator; questions should be asked that reveal such changes and then determined whether they convey the intended message.
(US Army 2003; Page 6-27)

The concept of cultural resonance is also commonly invoked by cross-cultural marketing experts both as an ideal for effective message design and as a post-hoc explanation of the success or failure of a marketing campaign. At the time of writing, a Google search for the phrase "cultural resonance" returns 26,200 web pages! Despite the widespread appeal of the intuitive notion of resonance, however, there does not appear to be a commonly agreed scientific definition of the term. Drawing upon the analogy with physical systems, social scientists (e.g., Snow and Benford, 1988), define an idea as culturally resonant if it "strikes a responsive chord" with the target audience and "fits" with the audience's previous beliefs, worldviews, and life experiences. Snow and Benford (1988) argue that, "the greater the correspondence between values promoted by a movement and those held by potential constituents, the greater the success of the mobilization" (Snow & Benford, 1988)(Page 213). Marketing researcher Wan defines resonance as, "the achievement of a harmonious state of mind in an individual due to accordance between an external stimulus and relevant nodes stored in the long term memory" (Page 475). He argues that

this can be measured by seeing how well a message matches the expectations and values of a target audience member (Wan, 2008). The notion of ‘a fit’ and ‘a match’ between a target audience member’s beliefs and the message not only seems to capture part of the intuitive notion of resonance but it also appears to have some theoretical merits. According to widely accepted psychological models of information comprehension (Kintsch, 1998), in order for an individual to understand a message, she must be able to retrieve a similar schema from her memory. A schema is a mental representation of a packet of information about a concept or a commonly used procedure such as visiting a restaurant or doing laundry.

Scientists have found some support for the notion that ideas that activate culturally familiar schemas are better remembered than ideas that are culturally unfamiliar. The eminent Psychologist Sir Fredrick Barrett conducted a series of experiments in the 1930s in which he found that culturally unfamiliar concepts such as ‘a canoe’ were more easily forgotten and distorted by people when compared with culturally familiar concepts (Bartlett, 1932). Bransford and Johnson (1972) found that participants who had seen the title “washing clothes” better understood and recalled the following text as compared to participants who had not seen the title.

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient, depending on how much there is to do.

If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, that is the next step. Otherwise you are pretty well set.

It is important not to overdo things – that is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run, this might not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well.

After the procedure is completed, one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places.

Eventually they’ll be used once more and the whole cycle will have to be repeated. However, that is a part of life. So how do you do yours?

Branford and Johnson hypothesized that the differences in comprehension and recall were due to the inability of the participants who had not been given the title to retrieve the appropriate schema from their memory (Bransford & Johnson, 1972). Thus, for a new message to be understood, it must activate similar concepts in the learner’s mind. To look at an extreme case, consider watching an ad in a language that you do not understand. The ad may not even be understood by you much less appeal to you enough to be considered as resonating with you. Thus the reason that the family-dinner leaflet and the ace-of-spades card campaign failed is that the target audience members did not possess the appropriate schemas that the message designers had in their minds when they designed the ads. In the peace-dove episode, the target audience members not only failed to recall the appropriate schema but actually recalled a different one, namely that of a “free chicken coupon.” Grocery stores coupons are not a widespread phenomenon in most of Afghanistan so it’s unlikely that they could have been the source of the “free chicken coupon.” Moreover, it is doubtful that a Coalition leaflet would have been confused with a grocery store coupon. Such a schema is more likely to have been acquired from the prior Coalition leaflets

depicting promotional items such as radios, soccer balls, and T-shirts which were indeed given away by the Coalition soldiers even though their distribution would not have required the submission of leaflets showing depicting their picture. This suggests that after the initial research to learn about the target audience member’s shared beliefs, one cannot rest on one’s laurels and must keep up-to-date with changes in the TA’s mental knowledge some of which may be caused by our own IO campaigns!

2.3 Use surprise to attract a target audience’s attention

Have you seen the TV ad where the fries talk to the ketchup and call him their best friend? How about the Geico ad featuring the curiously British-accented gecko? Have you ever wondered as to why so many ads feature talking objects, animals, and other counterintuitive entities? In 2007, I collected a random sample of 100 TV ads from the ad database adcritic.com and had two research assistants analyze them for the presence of counterintuitive objects and events. They found that one out of every four TV ads featured a counterintuitive object or event (Upal 2007). The French American anthropologist Pascal Boyer studied the religious beliefs of people around the world and found that a vast majority contained a large number of ideas that would seem counterintuitive to an outside observer (Boyer 2001). Boyer further argued that most of these counterintuitive ideas were only minimally so. He called them minimally counterintuitive (or MCI for short) i.e., ideas such as “a rock that listens” because they violate a small number of intuitive expectations of the category as opposed to maximally counterintuitive concepts such as a “rock that listens and talks and is everywhere” that violate a larger number of category expectations. Boyer hypothesized that MCI concepts have transmission advantages over other types of ideas because MCI ideas are remembered better than other types of ideas. A number of subsequent studies (Barrett and Nyhof 2001; Boyer and Ramble 2001; Upal 2005; Upal, Gonce et al. 2007) have largely confirmed Boyer’s findings.

While PSYOP operations do not seem to exploit MCI objects and events to the same extent as consumer ads do, but they have been used to gain a TA’s attention in a number of campaigns. For instance, during the Israel-Lebanon war of July 2006, the Israeli Defense Forces developed a number of leaflets depicting Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah with his characteristic beard and turban on an animal body (Friedman 2012).



Figure 1: PSYOP leaflet used by Israeli Defense Force during Israel-Labanon War of 2006. Expanding on Boyer's work, I have developed the notion of culturally counterintuitive concepts as concepts that violate shared expectations of a target audience (Upal 2009; Upal 2011; Upal 2011). I believe that the notion of cultural counterintuitiveness not only allows us to understand why socio-cultural ideas are always evolving but it is also more helpful for developing messages that will be catchy for specific groups.

2.4 Allow the Target Audience to Self-Discover Your Message as their Own Insight

Simply catching the attention of the target audience is not enough. To illustrate the point consider two versions of Camlin's "permanent markers" ad that were both posted to Youtube in March 2008 approximately a year after the ad's initial appearance on Indian television. One version was 16 seconds longer than the other one. The ad had won awards and had been wildly successful in India but as cross cultural marketing experts know, success in one market is no guarantee of success in another (in this case the Indian and non-Indian Youtube audience members from around the world). A check in February 2012 revealed that while the longer version received over 700,000 hits, the shorter version only attracted a meager 12,000 hits. The shorter version starts with a bird's eye view of an Indian village and quickly zooms on a thatch hut where a barely breathing man lies on a bed with a candle on his bedside which goes out as the man's breathing appears to stop. The camera focuses on his sad wife who is immediately surrounded by the professional mourning women who quickly take off her bangles and try to erase the red mark on her forehead. As the women are unable to erase the bindi mark despite their best efforts, the man restarts breathing with a cough and the smile returns to his wife's face. The scene changes to the outdoors as the sun shines and the man apparently fully recovered uses a Camlin marker to make a bindi mark on the forehead of his smiling wife. The ad ends with the announcement "Camlin permanent markers. Really permanent."

The ad is clearly culturally counterintuitive for a non-Indian audience that may not know about the significance of the red-mark on the forehead, the role of professional mourners, or traditional expectations regarding the role of a widow in India. Thus it is surprising that the shorter version of the ad did not attract even more attention from the international audience for whom it is even more culturally counterintuitive than it is for the Indian audience. Why did an ad that so clearly resonated with an Indian audience not resonate with an international audience? The answer lies in examining the extra 16-second preamble that is appended at the start of the longer version of the ad which seems to have been much more popular with the international Youtube audience members. The preamble consists of the following text-message.

- In India, Bangles, locket and a vermilion mark on the forehead are symbols of a married woman.
- Daily the husband applies the vermilion on the wife's forehead as it is believed to be connected to his lifeline.
- When the husband dies, Rudali's (Professional Mourners) come and strip the woman of these symbols.

What do these 51 words provide to a non-Indian audience member that makes the longer version of the ad to resonate with them? The answer lies in better understanding why people pay more attention to messages that violate their expectation. Cognitive psychologists argue that this is so because expectation violations indicate a learning opportunity (Schank 1999). They indicate the need to improve one's world model. But in order for us to actually learn something from a

learning opportunity, we must be able to make sense out of the surprising situation. Without the preamble, non-Indian audience members are not able to make sense of the Camlin ad, whereas with it, they are. Having been equipped with the knowledge of the significance of the vermilion-mark on the forehead, the role of professional Rudali mourners, and traditional expectations regarding the role of an Indian widow, the audience members are able to make sense of the ad and derive the key insight needed to connect the events in the ad, namely, that the inability of the Rudalis to erase the “really permanent” Camlin marker’s red-mark from the woman’s forehead brought her husband back to life. The initial expectation violation of the husband becoming alive after his apparent death makes the audience members puzzled and forces them to search their long term memory for a solution to this conundrum. The viewers of the longer ad (as well as Indian viewers of the shorter ad) possess the knowledge that allows them to resolve the apparent inconsistency. The ability to derive new insight fills them with delight and this is what makes the ad resonate with them. Contrary to the view of cultural resonance as an expectation-fit or match, I have argued that a message only resonates with members of a cultural group if it violates their expectations but then allows them to justify these violations by creating new insight and experiencing the delight of having discovered something they didn’t know before (Upal 2012). In order to avoid rousing people’s reactance and counterarguing, it is critical that the ad designers allow the TA members to self-derive the key message. People are more likely to be affected by a message if they feel that they have derived it themselves rather than being provided by the message designer.

3. Powerpoint Slides

DEFENCE **RD** DÉFENSE

Three Practical Steps For Designing Culturally Resonant Messages

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DEFENCE **RD** DÉFENSE

Three Practical Steps For Designing Culturally Resonant Messages

1. Rise above your own cultural ideas and learn your Target Audience's (TA) cultural ideas to design a message that is understandable for them
2. Get the TA's Attention
3. Get the TA to self-discover your message as insight as they attempt to explain the expectation-violation

2

An American Airlines Ad



- ▲ American Airlines wanted to advertise its new leather first class seats in the Mexican market, it translated its "Fly In Leather" campaign as "vuela encuero" which to some Mexican Spanish speakers means "Fly Naked"

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Locum Christmas Cards

- ▲ In 1991, The Swedish company **Locum** decided to give their logo a little holiday spirit by replacing the "o" in Locum with a heart in the Christmas cards sent to customers worldwide.



7

Buy a FARTFULL from IKEA!



The screenshot shows the IKEA Canada website interface. At the top, the address bar displays the URL: <http://www.ikea.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?topcategoryId=15567&catalogId=101>. The main header features the IKEA CANADA logo and a search bar with the text "OUR". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Our products", "IKEA near you", "Ask Anna", "Services", and "Home shopping". A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page: "Home > Children's IKEA > Children's furniture > Small furniture > FARTFULL work bench". The product image shows a red and wood-colored rolling work bench with a seat and a storage compartment. The product name "Work bench FARTFULL" is displayed in bold, followed by the price "\$149.00". A note states "(price reflects selected options) Website prices may vary from store prices." Below the price is a list of features: "Storage space for games and accessories under the seat.", "Mouse pad both for right-handed and for left-handed people.", "Seat part with handle, castered to be easy to move about.", and "The metal front doubles as a magnetic board." The designer's name, "Designer: Lisa Norinder", is listed at the bottom.

Address <http://www.ikea.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?topcategoryId=15567&catalogId=101>

IKEA CANADA

OUR

Fits:

Our products | **IKEA near you** | Ask Anna | Services | Home shopping

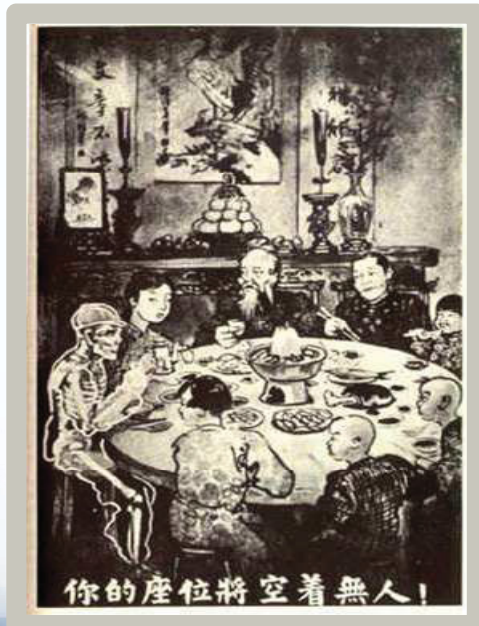
Home > Children's IKEA > Children's furniture > Small furniture > **FARTFULL work bench** | My profile

Work bench
FARTFULL
\$149.00
(price reflects selected options)
Website prices may vary from store prices.

- Storage space for games and accessories under the seat.
- Mouse pad both for right-handed and for left-handed people.
- Seat part with handle, castered to be easy to move about.
- The metal front doubles as a magnetic board.

Designer: Lisa Norinder

A Korean War Leaflet

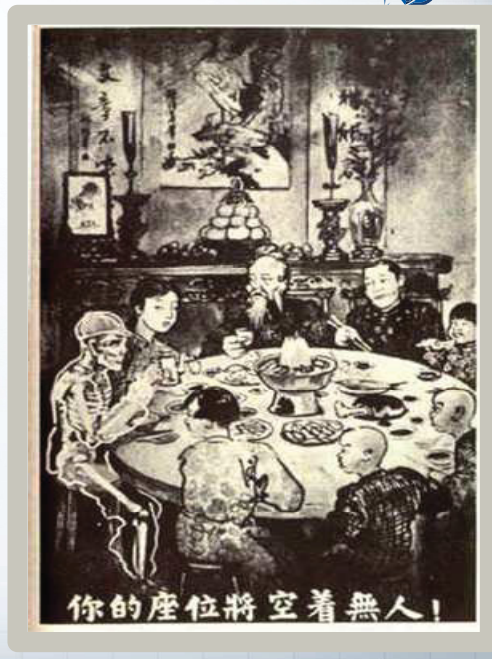


Back of the Leaflet

- Because Communist officials continue to stall at the Armistice talks – YOURS WILL BE THE EMPTY PLACE AT YOUR FAMILY'S NEW YEAR REUNION. Because Communist leaders compel you to continue this hopeless war – IN THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAMILY THERE IS GREAT EMPTINESS.

A Korean War Leaflet

- This leaflet confused the Chinese. This is not a traditional way to show a ghost in China. The Chinese did not understand the wealth depicted on the leaflet and truly believed that the family of a soldier would be poor. The leaflet served no military purpose and failed in its attempt to demoralize the Chinese Army. The Americans were thinking Thanksgiving dinner, and the Chinese had no clue. ("PSYOP Mistakes" by US Army Sergeant Major Herbert Friedman)



Vietnam War Ace of Spades

- ⤴ Left on the bodies of dead North Vietnamese by US soldiers
- ⤴ Unfortunately (for the US soldiers) the North Vietnamese did not share the idea of “ace of spades as a symbol of death”



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Saddam's Everywhere Watching Everyone!



Iraqis who unfamiliar with the idea of “bubble above the head as a thought” were left confused by the hovering Saddam head!

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Come Get a Free Bird!



- ⤴ “There is a funny story in regard to the Peace Dove depicted on some of our leaflets. Many of the Afghans believed the symbol to be some type of chicken and they assumed that the leaflet could be used as a coupon that entitled them to a free bird or meal provided by the Partnership of Nations.” (“PSYOP Mistakes” by US Army Sergeant Major Herbert Friedman)

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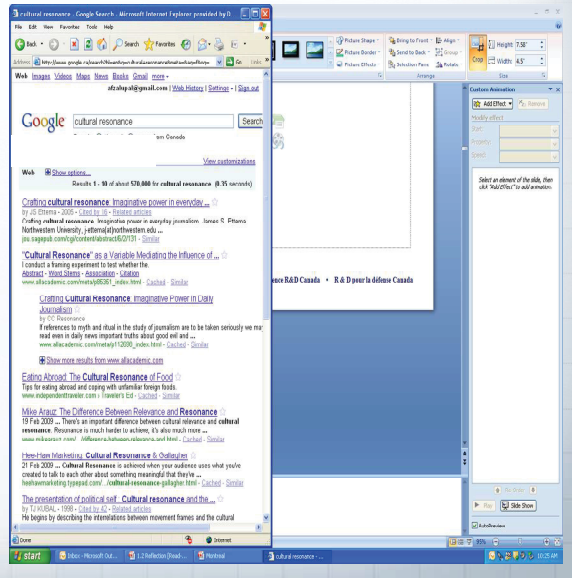
Design A Message That is Culturally Resonant With Your Target Audience

- ⤴ The target audience analysis is necessary in the planning and conduct of PSYOPS operations,”
- ⤴ Access to a thorough understanding of the customs, ethics, values, and goals of the target audience is needed.
- ⤴ The test is whether the message will get the desired response (CF’s Joint Doctrine Manual on Psychological Operations)
- ⤴ The product should also be approached from a culture’s perspective to ensure the product will have a **cultural resonance** with the TA. Culturally dictated modifications may be made automatically by a translator; questions should be asked that reveal such changes and then determined whether they convey the intended message. (FM-3-05.301, 2007)

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Cultural Resonance is Routinely Invoked to Explain Success/Failure of Cross-cultural Marketing

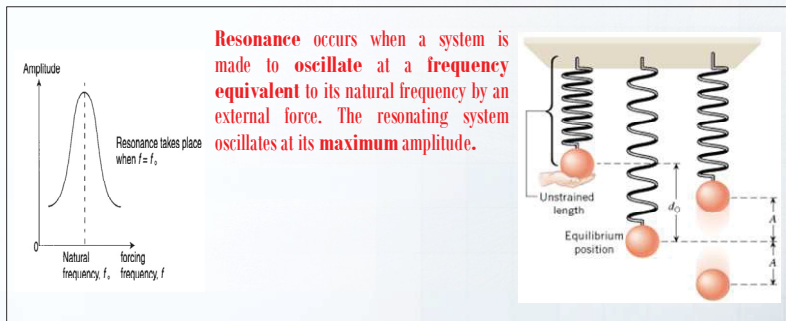
- Cross cultural marketing researchers as well as practitioners often invoke “cultural resonance” to explain why a marketing effort worked in on country but not another
- A Google search for cultural resonance retrieves hundreds of thousands of hits



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What is Cultural Resonance?

- ▲ Analogy with resonance in oscillating physical systems
- ▲ Refers to a match or equality of a parameter such as a frequency or energy between two parts of a system



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What is Cultural Resonance, Exactly?



- ⤴ Even though everyone likes the term, no one has bothered to define what “cultural resonance” really means!
- ⤴ Social science research community has come closest to this but still falls short of a precise scientific definition
 - “the fit between a message and audience’s previous beliefs” (Snow & Benford 1997)
 - “the achievement of a harmonious state of mind in an individual due to an accordance/match between an external stimulus and the individual’s mental state” (H. Wan, J of Communication, 58, 2008)
 - A resonant message is in accordance with
 - ⤴ a target audience’s values
 - ⤴ a target audience’s expectations

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What is Cultural Resonance, Exactly?



- ⤴ At DRDC’s Effects & Influence Research Group, we’ve been working for the last five years to develop with a scientific definition that would be useful to the Canadian Forces. We looked at
 - What is scientific definition of expectations
 - What does it mean for an idea to comply with expectations
 - What does it mean for an idea to violate expectations
 - We designed a number of scientific experiments to see which ideas are more effective (more memorable, more persuasive)
 - ⤴ expectation-compliant, or
 - ⤴ expectation-violating
 - We studied hundreds of successful and unsuccessful marketing campaigns to see whether they were expectation-compliant or violating
- ⤴ We’ve summarised this work into 3 practical lessons useful to CF

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What are expectations & Where do they come from?

- ^ From the knowledge that people have acquired through their life experiences
- ^ People's mental knowledge is stored in the form of organized packets called schematas (or schemas for short)
- ^ A large number of psycholinguistic studies support the notion that people's mental knowledge is organized around schemas in their long term semantic memory

Brewer & Treyens (1981)

- ^ Experimenters asked subjects to enter into a graduate student office and wait till they were called into another room (happened exactly 35 seconds later). Once in the other room, they were asked to write down everything they saw in the office earlier

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Test

- ⤴ Did you see any walls?
- ⤴ Did you see a chair?
- ⤴ Did you see a desk?
- ⤴ Did you see a skull?
- ⤴ Did you see any books?

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People see what they think they should be seeing!

- ⤴ Almost all subjects (29 of the 30) recalled the office had a chair, a desk, and walls
- ⤴ Only 8 out of 29 recalled that the office had a skull
- ⤴ 9 also recalled seeing books even though there weren't any!

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Washing Clothes



The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups. Of course one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at one time than too many. In the short run this may not seem important but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well.

At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one can never tell.

After the procedure is completed one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is a part of life.

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Topic Knowledge Helps People Understand and Remember what they read



- △ Bransford and Johnson (1973) found that
 - Those who read the text without the topic recalled 2.8 out of 18 possible ideas
 - Those who were given the title after the text recalled 2.7 concepts
 - Those who were given the title before the text recalled 5.8 concepts
- △ People who are told about the title before can retrieve their schematic knowledge about “washing clothes” which helps them better understand and remember the text
- △ These and other psycholinguistics experiments lend support to the notion that information in people’s minds is organized in the form of generalized packets such that one piece of information reminds them of another piece of information
 - Event schemas
 - Concept schemas

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Concept Schemas



^ Schemas are “form-like” packets of knowledge consisting of features & values

- feature 1: value 1
- feature 2: value 2

Cow
 legs: 4
 tail: 1
 face: 1
 udders: 4
 walks: yes
 flies: no



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Culturally Shared Schemas



- ^ Culturally shared schemas are schemas that are shared by members of a cultural group
- ^ A 2004 study by Yoon *et al.* found that individuals from different cultures have distinct representations of categorical information
 - Chinese and Americans were asked to list examples of mythical beings
 - ^ Chinese and American subjects listed culturally specific terms that could not be translated into the other language
 - Chinese and Americans were asked to list names for family relatives (e.g., mother, brother, cousin, etc.)
 - ^ Chinese subjects listed 124 distinct terms.
 - ^ Americans listed only 31 distinct terms

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Three Practical Steps For Designing Culturally Resonant Messages



1. **Rise above your own cultural schemas and learn your TA's culturally shared schemas to design a message that is understandable for them**
 - **Learn your TA's cultural schemas**
 - **Hard work requires immersing oneself into a foreign culture for years**
 - **Rise Above your own cultural schemas (removing the curse of knowledge)**
 - **Not an easy thing to do (talk to any teacher)**
 - **Use as much help as available**
 - **Human Terrain Team Experts**
 - **Target testing with locals**

A Soldier Helping a Girl with Her Doll

A handsome, smiling soldier, wearing a distinctive UN uniform. He was on one knee and had picked up a little girl's doll. He was putting the arm back on the doll while a little girl standing next to him is crying.

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Removing the Curse Of Knowledge

- ^ When the "Soldier Helping a Girl with her Doll" ad was shown to a group of North Korean prisoners they behaved strangely
- ^ The first one snorted, letting us know it was awful. Another pretended to spit on the floor, which was his way of showing disapproval. The other two nodded in agreement. The officers had the same response. Through an interpreter, we asked, "Why is this so terrible?" Their answer was, "To hell with little girls. We only care for boys. And our girls don't have baby dolls anyway." The next day we presented revised artwork. The child was now a crying boy. The doll had become a cart, and the soldier was fixing a wheel that had come off. All the test prisoners smiled their approval. It was a good leaflet.

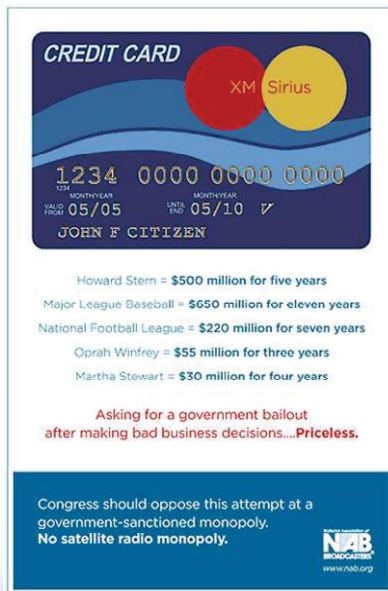
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Three Practical Steps For Designing Culturally Resonant Messages

1. Rise above your own cultural schemas and learn your TA's culturally shared schemas to design a message that is understandable for them
2. A 2005 UK study showed people see 3500 messages per day!
3. Get the TA's Attention
 - Some things inherently get people's attention (sex, violence etc.)
 - Surprise/expectation-violations/counterintuitiveness
4. Get the TA to self-discover your message as insight as they attempt to explain the expectation-violation

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Repeat-to establish expectations, Shift to violate them The Mastercard Priceless Campaign



Howard Stern = \$500 million for five years
 Major League Baseball = \$650 million for eleven years
 National Football League = \$220 million for seven years
 Oprah Winfrey = \$55 million for three years
 Martha Stewart = \$30 million for four years

Asking for a government bailout
 after making bad business decisions...**Priceless.**

Congress should oppose this attempt at a
 government-sanctioned monopoly.
 No satellite radio monopoly.


www.nab.org

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Trip to Manila. \$500.
 Watching your girlfriend eat balot. **Priceless.**

There are some things money can't buy.
 For everything else, there's Mastercard.



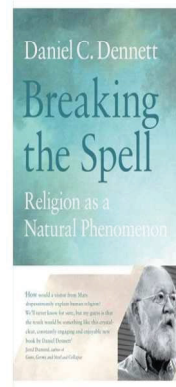
Cognitive Science of Religion

Pascal Boyer



Dan Sperber

- ⤴ There is no religion gene, spread of religious ideas has to be explained by appealing to ordinary processes of cognition
- ⤴ Most of the widespread religious concepts around the world are counterintuitive
- Counterintuitive concepts are culturally widespread because they are more memorable compared with intuitive concepts



Flying Cow: A Counterintuitive (Schema-incongruent) Concept

Counterintuitive objects violate some of the schema expectations

Cow
legs: <u>4</u>
tail: <u>1</u>
face: <u>1</u>
udders: <u>4</u>
walks: <u>yes</u>
flies: <u>no</u>



Experiment



- ⤴ Give people stories containing an equal number of intuitive and counterintuitive concepts and see which type of concepts are better remembered
- ⤴ If resonance = schema-congruence then people should remember the intuitive concepts better than counterintuitive concepts

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Results



- ⤴ On average people remember significantly more counterintuitive ideas than intuitive ones

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Counterintuitive Concepts Are Catchy



- ⤴ Intuitive messages are too ordinary, too everyday, too bland
 - Tell me something I don't know
- ⤴ Man bites dog is more newsworthy than dog bites man!
- ⤴ Counterintuitive concepts grab more attention than intuitive concepts because they violate people's expectations and tell them that their world model is inadequate
 - They tell people what they don't already know!



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Schema-incongruent PSYOP Leaflets



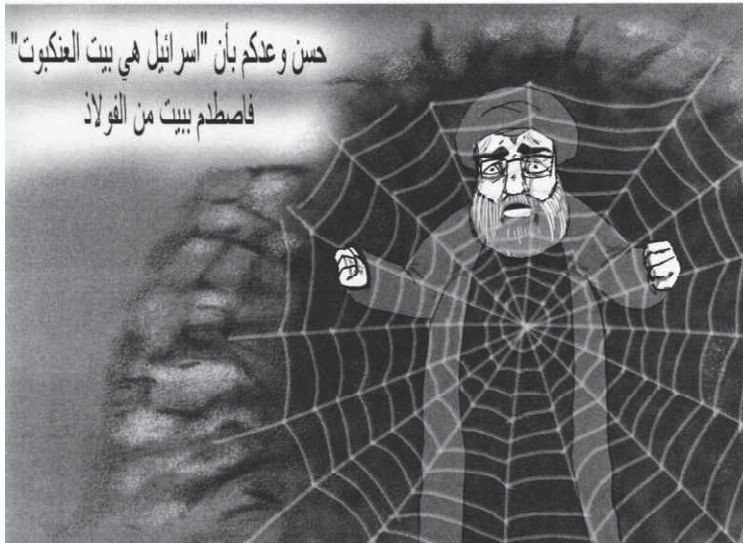
46

Schema-incongruent PSYOP Leaflets



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Schema-incongruent PSYOP Leaflets



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Three Practical Steps For Designing Culturally Resonant Messages

1. **Rise above your own cultural schemas and learn your TA's cultural schemas to design a message that is understandable for them**
2. **Use Surprising Schema-incongruent concepts to Get the TA's Attention**
3. Get the TA to self-discover your message as their own insight

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Television Advertisers Custom Design Ads for Different Cultural Groups

- ^ Two versions of the Award winning Indian “permanent marker ad” were posted on YouTube back in Spring 2008 ([youtube.com/watch?v=-ERV9xRcFUw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ERV9xRcFUw))
- ^ The shorter version (1.03 seconds) has only received 12000 hits
- ^ The longer version (1.19 seconds) has received close to a million hits.
- ^ The only difference in the longer version is the preamble that allows people unfamiliar with Indian culture to make sense of the ad and to self-elaborate the message the ad designers want to convey



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Gap Theory of Culturally Resonant Message Design



1. Use schema-incongruent concepts to make target audience members aware of a **gap in their knowledge**
2. Use the context surrounding the schema incongruent concepts and TA's shared mental knowledge to constrain the number of possible explanations of the expectation-violations such that the explanations (justifying the expectation-violation i.e., **filling the gap**) that most naturally occur to the audience reinforce the goal of your message
3. The target audience members will feel **mental delight** for thinking that they have discovered your message and this **positive affect** will assure greater memorability and greater degree of persuasion for your message

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Good Ads Break Viewer's Expectations and then allow them to fill the gap with product relevant knowledge



- ⤴ Bad ads either don't open the gap at all, or
- ⤴ Open the gap but don't force the audience to fill it with product supporting knowledge

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List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

[Enter list here, if applicable. If not, delete the page.]

DND	Department of National Defence
DRDC	Defence Research & Development Canada
DRDKIM	Director Research and Development Knowledge and Information Management
IA	Influence Activities
IATF	Influence Activities Task Force
LFCA	Land Forces Central Area
R&D	Research & Development
TA	Target Audience

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Starting in June 2009, DRDC Toronto's Effects & Influence Group (EIG) was asked by LFCA G9 (Influence Activities Unit) to provide course material that can be delivered to LFCA's Influence Activities (IA) operators to train them on how to design more effective message in an expeditionary environment. The lecture notes and the Powerpoint slides designed and delivered by the EIG are presented here.

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Influence Activities, IA Message Design, Target Audience Analysis