

International News Coverage in U.S.

Refresher – Basic Concepts:

Stereotypes

- Applying exaggerated negative traits to everyone within a group, based on lack of experience

Homogeneity

- People or social groups that are similar in upbringing, culture or ethnic background

Navel Gazing

- Assuming your location, culture or experiences are the center of the universe

Otherness

- Different in appearance or character from what is familiar, expected, or generally accepted

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Early immigration to America

Earliest:

- England
- Scotland
- Ireland
- Germany
- France
- Netherlands
- Spain
- Italy

Later:

- Scandinavia
- Mexico
- Israel
- Russia
- Eastern Europe
- Asia
- Middle East

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Early immigration to America: Africa

Forced immigration: Slavery

- More than 380,000 Africans captured, brought to U.S.
- Came from regions with waterways for transportation
- Senegambia (Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali)
- West Central Africa (Angola, Congo, Gabon)
- Also Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Cameroon
- Seen as subhuman – property

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Africa (54 countries)



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U.S. media stereotypes of Africa – otherness

- Skin color (not all Africans are Black)
- Nations, regions not differentiated
- Cultural traditions portrayed as alien, backward
- Assumed to be all jungles, wild animals
- Poor, uneducated – everyone lives in huts
- Inherently inferior (well after slavery ended)

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Distinction – Slaves vs. Later Immigration

- After slavery, little immigration from Africa for a century
- Decolonization – new freedoms
- 1990s and forward – big influx of Africans come to U.S.
- Many sought higher education, labor opportunities
- Some sent remittances back to families in Africa
- Many aimed for permanent residence in U.S.
- Often covered positively in U.S. media
- Contrast with coverage of refugees

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U.S. media stereotypes of African Americans

- The ultimate other – skin color
- Subhuman – servants at best
- Uneducatable, dirty, immoral
- Animalistic, threatening – thieves, rapists
- Permanently in poverty
- Impure in numerous ways
- Deserving of segregation, lesser status
- These stereotypes persist to this day

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Refresher: Political & trade ties to America

G7 nations:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Canada
- Japan

Generally positive coverage

Other economic powers:

- China
- India
- Russia
- South Korea
- Brazil
- Mexico

More mixed coverage

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Cold War Influence, 1940s-'90s

- Cold War: The period of hostility and tension between the Soviet Union and allies ('Eastern Bloc') and the U.S. and its allies ('Western Bloc') after World War II.
- Allies of U.S. generally covered positively in media; Eastern Bloc shown as oppressed by Soviet rule
- Non-aligned nations less economically powerful – seen as non-factors – 'Third World Countries'
- Little U.S. media coverage – when shown, often portrayed as backward, inaccessible, alien
- Often little attempt to educate audiences about them

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Tone of Much News Coverage of Other Countries

Positive

- Powerful, influential, economically strong, friendly, welcoming, sophisticated, cutting-edge, 'on our side,' 'with us'
- Most commonly applied to political allies

Negative

- Threatening, oppressive, evil, scheming, misguided, alien, scary, confusing, 'on their side,' 'against us'
- Most commonly applied to political opponents

Dismissive

- Backward, uneducated, unsophisticated, economically poor, still developing, 'those poor people,' 'never heard of them'
- Condescending, marginalizing, often glib tone
- Often applied to countries and regions not well understood

All of the above – often more assumptions, stereotypes than facts

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What should news consumers consider?

- Look for signs of otherness in coverage
- What is the overall tone of a story?
- Are stereotypes assumed true in stories?
- Is familiar always good, unfamiliar always bad?
- Beware of stories that drive anger, fear
- Don't take stereotypes in stories at face value
- Look at international news sources to get a fuller picture and different angles of stories
- Learn more about unfamiliar countries, cultures