



Moldova Media Credibility and Family Communication Patterns: The Radio Giurgiu Project

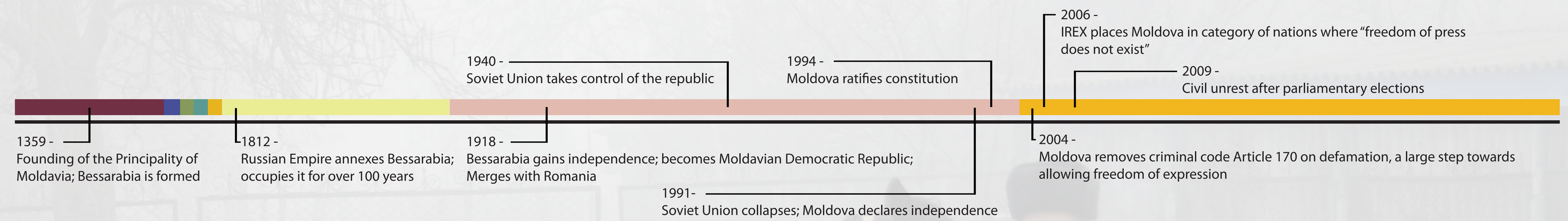
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Map of Eastern Europe taken from *Crossing Borders in Romania*; Map of Moldova taken from *about.com*



Project Description

This ongoing international research/service project in the former Soviet Republic of Moldova explores how exposure to democratic journalism influences public expectations and perceptions of journalism credibility. The research team conducted a journalism training camp and helped students at the village school establish an online radio station designed to cover the local community. Researchers interviewed local community members about their perceptions of Moldovan news media credibility. Community members also completed a questionnaire about their family communication patterns.

Literature Review

Family Communication Patterns:

- Conversation and conformity family orientations have been related to family television viewing, political discussion, and consumer decision-making (e.g., Fujioka & Austin, 2002; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972), as well as to young adults' apprehension, reticence, and college adjustment (Kelly et al., 2002; Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001).
- Family communication orientations have also been related to social interaction behaviors; conformity orientation families, for instance, have been found to avoid conflict and emphasize traditional values and respect for authority (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

Moldova Media Credibility:

- In the two decades since it declared independence from Soviet rule, Moldovan news media continues to lack press freedom. (Monitoring Report: Media Coverage of Topics of Public Interest Center for Independent Journalism, Moldova, 2011).
- Press Freedom is seen as a critical component in gaining public trust in the media (A Comprehensive Assessment of Media Needs in the Republic of Moldova Center for Community and Gender Studies and Center for Independent Journalism, Moldova, 2008).
- Moldovans view their news media as less independent and credible than their counterparts in neighboring countries because they are censored by the government and political parties. (A Comprehensive Assessment of Media Needs in the Republic of Moldova, Community and Gender Studies and Center for Independent Journalism, Moldova, 2008).

Media Landscape

The Moldovan media landscape is fraught with complexity and confusion. Despite denationalization of several news media, few truly independent voices have emerged. Both news media professionals and the public see the media as a tool of political interests lacking both financial and editorial independence.¹ Moldovan media are concentrated in the nation's capitol, Chisinau, and rural communities have little if any access to local news coverage.² In 2009, Moldova ranked 148th of 165 countries around the globe in press freedom.³

¹As recently as May of 2010, Reporters without Borders, an organization promoting press freedom around the globe, reported that Moldova government continues to seek to influence and control the news media.

²Moldova's Center for Independent Journalism February 2011 Monitoring Report.

³The 2009 Freedom House Global Free Press Rankings also listed the former Soviet Republic as "not free."

Research Questions

RQ1: In the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, how does the public perceive news media credibility in:

- a) State-run news organizations
- b) Independent news organizations

RQ2: In the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, are family communication patterns related to:

- a) Media use
- b) Perceptions of media credibility



method

Personal interviews (n=15) using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to code responses; the unit of analysis used was a complete thought unit (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)
Observational research (conversations and interactions with students and community members)
Questionnaire (n=28)
Revised Family Communication Patterns Scale (RFCP, Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, 1990)
Fifteen items measure conversation orientation (e.g., "I really enjoy talking with my children, even when we disagree"); eleven items measure conformity orientation (e.g., "When my children are at home, they are expected to obey my rules"), using a Likert scale measuring frequency

$\alpha = .86$, $M = 51.90$, $SD = 8.69$ Conversation
 $\alpha = .76$, $M = 29.08$, $SD = 6.40$ Conformity

Conversation: values the free and open expression of ideas, as well as the autonomy of all family members; Conformity: values children's deference to parental authority, emphasizing uniformity of attitudes, values, and beliefs among members



results

RQ1: In the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, how does the public perceive news media credibility in:

- a) State-run news organization
 - b) Independent news organizations
- Moldovans do not perceive state-run or independent news organizations as credible (n=12). A fear element exists due to perceived government threat (n=12), and Moldovans believe government has direct influence on content (n=9), and has complete political control of media (n=6).

RQ2: In the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, are family communication patterns related to:

- a) Media use
Conversation was positively associated with frequency of use of state-run newspapers ($r = .43$, $p < .05$).
- b) Perceptions of media credibility
Conformity was positively associated with believability of state-run radio ($r = .51$, $p < .05$).
Conformity was negatively associated with believability of independent print news ($r = -.49$, $p < .05$).



Implications

The transition from post-Soviet and communist rule may result in lingering mistrust and suspicion of news media.

The mistrust may be rooted in the current developmental stage of Moldovan news media or actual government influence.

To a limited extent media use is associated with families that encourage open communication.

Trust in state news and lack of trust in independent news is associated with families that encourage conformity.

These results highlight the importance of this area of study and reinforce plans to continue gathering additional data.