

Thumbnail Image:



Jan 24, 2019 by [Michael Edward Walsh](#)

Starting Conversations About Structural Violence ^[1]

The field of public diplomacy should make greater use of the quantitative measures that have been developed by media critics to explore the representation of disadvantaged groups in societies. These qualitative measures not only provide public diplomacy practitioners with analytical tools for describing the representation of disadvantaged groups in a society, or between societies. They also provide public diplomacy practitioners with interactive engagement tools for raising foreign publics' consciousness about structural violence in their own societies.

Consider the Bechdel-Wallace Test. This test serves as a "cultural barometer" of the extent to which women are represented in fictional works. It simply asks whether there are at least two women who talk to one another about something besides a man. This quantitative measure not only provides an analytical tool for describing the extent to which women are present in the fictional works of a society, or between societies, but it also provides an interactive

engagement tool for raising a foreign public's consciousness about gender-based structural violence in their own society.

"...these quantitative measures provide useful tools for starting conversations with foreign audiences about the representation of non-privileged groups within societies."

Or, consider the DuVernay Test. This test serves as a “cultural barometer” for the extent to which minorities are represented in fictional works. It simply asks whether there are at least two persons of color who talk to one another about something other than race. This quantitative measure not only provides an analytical tool for describing the extent to which minorities are present in the fictional works of a society, or between societies, but it also provides an interactive engagement tool for raising a foreign public's consciousness about racial-based and ethnic-based structural violence in their own society.

These kinds of quantitative measures provide simple ways of starting conversations with foreign audiences about the marginalization of non-privileged groups within their own societies. They also provide public diplomacy practitioners with ready-made templates for constructing new quantitative measures that can be used to explore the representation of a wide range of other disadvantaged groups in societies—for example, migrants 📄 and asylum seekers.

To illustrate this point, imagine a *Black Girl* Test, named after and inspired by the 1966 French-Senegalese film. This test would serve as a “cultural barometer” for the extent to which migrants are represented in fictional works. It would simply ask whether there is at least one migrant who gets their own narrative arc. This quantitative measure would not only provide an analytical tool for describing the extent to which migrants are present in the fictional works of a given society, or between societies, but would also provide an interactive engagement tool for raising a foreign public's consciousness about migrant-based structural violence in their own society.

In the year ahead, it is my hope that more public diplomacy practitioners will become proficient in making use of quantitative measures to explore the marginalization of disadvantaged groups in societies. Although they are not without their limitations, these quantitative measures provide useful tools for starting conversations with foreign audiences about the representation of non-privileged groups within societies. And, that is a clear and present need in a world of hyper-globalization.

Submitted December 9, 2018
