Meaning of Democracy Around the World:

A Thematic and Structural Analysis of Videos Defining Democracy

Hyunjin Seo, Ph.D.*
Assistant Professor
William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications
The University of Kansas
1435 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence, KS 66045-7515
E-mail: hseo@ku.edu
Phone: 785-864-3817
Fax: 785-864-5318

Dennis F. Kinsey, Ph.D.
Director of Public Diplomacy Program/Associate Professor
S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications
Syracuse University
215 University Place
Syracuse, NY 13244-2100
E-mail: dfkinsey@syr.edu
Phone: 315-443-3801

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Abstract

This study examines thematic and structural features of short films submitted to a worldwide video competition to define democracy. A total of 120 videos submitted from around the world are analyzed to identify prominent themes of democracy such as equal participation and diversity as well as audio and visual structural elements. Authors investigate whether and how thematic and structural aspects of videos differ depending upon geographical region and the degree of democratization. Implications of the findings are discussed in the context of procedural and substantive democracy.

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Introduction

The adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words," describes how visualization can help convey complex ideas effectively. That phrase is aptly applicable to situations where messages need to be communicated across different cultures and countries (Fahmy, 2005; Kinsey & Zatepilina, 2010). Indeed, studies have shown that visual images have a significant influence on people's perceptions of cultures and countries other than their own (Cloud, 2008; Kennedy, 2008; Michalski & Gow, 2007).

It is for this reason that the U.S. Department of State chose YouTube as a platform for a worldwide campaign aimed at enhancing the global dialogue on democracy. Launched in 2009, the Democracy Video Challenge has invited citizens around the world to create short videos that complete the phrase, "Democracy is…" Michael Apted, former president of the Directors Guild of America who collaborated on the project, said: "Film is a window into our common humanity – the challenges and joys that make up the universal human experience – no matter what language we speak or where we were born" (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

The Democracy Video Challenge attracted a total of over 1,600 entries from more than 110 countries for the 2009 and 2010 competitions (G. Clack, personal communication, March 2011). To facilitate global conversations around this campaign, the U.S. Department of State used social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to invite people around the world to vote online to determine winners and share thoughts about the campaign. In this way, the campaign engaged more than 1.5 million people online worldwide.

This study examines how citizens around the world communicated their ideas and understandings of democracy through videos submitted to the 2010 Democracy Challenge Project. The authors analyzed thematic and structural features of 120 videos sampled from the 466 videos judged in the 2010 competition. The first main analysis looks at themes of videos to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between countries in different geographical regions and with different scores on democracy in terms of thematic aspects of democracy they emphasized. The second part of the analysis examines structural features of videos such as storytelling techniques and audio/visual elements prominent in videos from those countries. Country characteristics analyzed include political system and indices of democracy and freedom of speech.

While the Democracy Video Challenge gathered potentially important information about global publics' visual communication about democracy, we could find no systematic analysis of these videos prior to this study. Thus this research contributes to enhancing our understandings of how citizens in different countries and cultures think of democracy and what kinds of visual features they use to communicate their ideas on democracy.

Consequently, this study offers both scholarly and policy implications. Theoretical and operational definitions of the thematic and structural variables introduced in this study should be useful for research in the areas of visual communication and international communication. In addition, this research will help professionals in public diplomacy and strategic communication to identify aspects of democracy that citizens around the world are interested in and thus come up with better approaches to engaging them. Overall, this study contributes to advancing research on visual communication in an international context.

Literature Review

Meaning of Democracy

Democracy has many meanings. Definitions of democracy are contested and debated (Berlin, 1969; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010; Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 2008). Whether one is talking about democracy in the United States (Dryzek & Berjikian, 1993), around the globe (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010), or in certain corners of the world, such as the Middle East (Dayton & Kinsey, 2010) and Sweden (Larson, 2001), there is no shortage of expressed opinion about the meaning of democracy.

Dryzek and Berejikian (1993) culled 300 statements of opinion on democracy from ethnographic studies, magazines, discussion groups, newspapers, voter pamphlets, and quotation dictionaries. They subsequently identified four "discourses" on democracy among their study participants in the United States, who were asked to sort a sample of 64 of those statements to represent their view. Consensus across all four discourses included concern for human rights, the importance of participation and voting by an informed citizenry, equality, and a belief in the wisdom of the electorate.

Dayton and Kinsey (2010), in their study of the meaning of democracy among civil society leaders in the Middle East, grouped opinions about democracy into five categories. The statements came from source material that included academic books and articles, speeches by policy makers, texts of major works in democratic theory, and press releases from government agencies. Categories included (1) *essential elements of democracy*; (2) *means to achieve democracy*; (3) *impediments and barriers to democracy*; (4) *advantages and disadvantages of democratic systems*; and (5) *democracy and the Middle East/democracy and Islam*. However, their study results, using these categories, indicate a

much simpler conception of democracy. Eighty-one civil society leaders from the Middle East overwhelmingly agreed that in a democracy, government authority flows from the people and is based upon their consent. Additionally, freedom of speech, including a free press and media, was viewed as essential elements to any democracy.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) states that:

Free and fair elections and civil liberties are necessary conditions for democracy, but they are unlikely to be sufficient for a full and consolidated democracy if unaccompanied by transparent and at least minimally efficient government, sufficient political participation and a supportive democratic political culture (p. 1).

The Economist Intelligence Unit's democracy index is comprised of 60 indicators capturing measures of electoral processes and pluralism, civil liberties, how government functions, political participation, and political culture. It is used to rank 167 countries on how democratic they are. Norway ranks number 1, with an overall score of 9.80 (on the 10-point democracy index scale) while North Korea ranks 167th with an overall score of 1.08.

One of the questions that we will answer in our research is how participants in the Democracy Video Challenge conceptualize and present (via video and visual imagery) their meaning of democracy.

Visual Imagery

Visual images tend to reflect the society in which they are created (Edwards & Winkler, 2008). While research focus is often on content, as in the case of studies of television news (Barnett & Grabe, 2000), structural differences like the interplay between picture and sound, or text and picture also vary across countries (Silcock, 2007). Visual

imagery is often viewed as an ideological tool used by those in power or those in opposition (Davis 2005; James 2006; Cloud 2008; Edwards & Winkler 2008; Erickson 2008; Hariman & Lucaites 2008).

In 1922, Lippmann (1965) observed that the pictures most of us have in our heads concerning other countries are not there from direct experience. Our understanding about other countries comes from the mediated images we see "representing" those countries.

Because of limited firsthand experiences most people have with other countries, media portrayals have been found to impact their perceptions of those countries (Anholt 2005; Graber, 2006; Harris & Karafa 1999; Kamalipour 1999; Kunczik 1997; Lim & Seo, 2009; Usluata 1999; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Visual coverage of events, places, and cultures is particularly influential in shaping people's perceptions about the world outside of their own countries (Cloud, 2008; Kennedy, 2008; Michalski & Gow, 2007).

Several communication scholars have looked at the visual aspects in areas such as public diplomacy (Kinsey & Zatepilina, 2010; Lord, 2006; Nye, 2004), national imagery (Edwards & Winkler, 2008; James, 2006; Kamalipour, 1999; Kennedy, 2008), ideology (Cloud, 2008; Davis, 2005; Hariman & Lucaites, 2007, 2008; Michalski & Gow, 2007), political rhetoric (Edwards & Winkler, 2008; Erickson, 2008), and representation of political candidates (Banning & Coleman, 2009).

U.S. Networked Public Diplomacy and Democracy Video Challenge

The Democracy Video Challenge is in line with the U.S. government's public diplomacy initiatives to engage global publics in the network information age. Public diplomacy refers to governmental and nongovernmental initiatives to engage, understand, inform, and influence global publics in an effort to promote national interest (Lord, 2008;

Nye, 2005, 2008; Tuch, 1990). While public diplomacy in the past most often focused on

one-way dissemination of information through traditional intermediaries such as mass

media, its focus has shifted to multi-way interactions with global publics in recent years

(Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2008; Fulton, 2002; Seo & Thorson, 2010). Social

media has played a significant role in this important change. For example, the Facebook

page of the Department of State enables the more than 70,200 fans from around the world to

exchange ideas about U.S. foreign policy and other international events. The Department of

State has an official blog, DipNote, with updates being posted to Twitter. Some U.S.

embassies use social networking sites popular in host countries to better interact with

citizens in those countries.

Former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James K.

Glassman explained the significance of the Democracy Video Challenge:

The Challenge breaks fresh ground for the use of new media in public

diplomacy. We in the State Department and our partners are not trying to

define democracy for young people around the world. Rather, the Challenge

asks participants to share their visions of what democracy means. If the

Challenge can generate thought and debate about democracy, on the

medium of choice for young people, we'll have achieved success (U.S.

Department of State, 2008).

In this worldwide video competition, contenders submit to a YouTube site original videos

that complete the phrase, "democracy is..." The length of the video is limited to a maximum

of three minutes. The 2009 competition received over 900 submissions, and more than 700

videos were submitted to the 2010 competition (G. Clack, personal communication, March

2011). Of these, only those that met the rules of the competition became official contest entries. For example, while there were more than 700 submissions for the 2010 competition, only 466 that met the standards were considered official entries and thus reviewed by a panel of experts as well as general publics around the world. The Democracy Video Challenge invited people around world to vote online to select winners, who participate in screenings of their videos in Hollywood, New York, and Washington D.C., hosted by the Directors of Guild of America and the Motion Picture Association of America. The worldwide video competition is supported by a partnership comprising democracy and youth organizations, the film and entertainment industry, academia, and the U.S. government.

Research Questions

In this study, the authors examine how people from different countries view democracy and communicate that view through a short film submitted to a contest sponsored by U.S. government and nongovernmental organizations. In particular, the authors are interested in learning whether and how thematic and structural aspects of videos are different based on geographical region and measure of democracy of the country. Since not many studies examined this particular topic so far, the authors pose the following research questions:

Thematic Features

RQ1: What are the prominent thematic aspects of the videos submitted to the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge?

RQ2: Are there statistically significant differences between the videos from different regions with regard to prominent themes featured in the videos?

RQ3: Are there statistically significant differences between the videos of countries with

different scores on democracy with regard to prominent themes featured in the

videos?

Structural Features

RQ4: What are the popular structural aspects of the videos submitted to the 2010

Democracy Video Challenge?

RQ5: Are there statistically significant differences between the videos from different regions

with regard to popular structural aspects of the videos?

RQ6: Are there statistically significant differences between the videos of countries with

different scores on democracy with regard to popular structural aspects of the videos?

Methods

Sampling

A total of 466 videos were judged in the 2010 competition of the Democracy

Challenge Project, and they constituted the population of this study. A stratified sampling

was used to select 120 videos for coding. The videos were first divided into six different

regions of origin (corresponding to U.S. Department of State regions) – Africa, East Asia

Pacific, Europe Eurasia, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere. In the

population there were 77 videos from Africa, 134 from East Asia Pacific, 56 from Europe

Eurasia, 53 from Near East, 54 from South and Central Asia, and 92 from Western

Hemisphere. Appendix A shows the number of videos submitted from countries within each

region. Then 20 videos from each region were randomly selected.

Coding Scheme

The authors individually coded thematic and structural features of the videos. For thematic features of the videos, aspects of democracy prominently communicated through each video were examined. The 10 aspects of democracy measured were (1) *popular participation*, (2) *freedom of speech/press*, (3) *freedom of religion*, (4) *justice*, (5) *political human rights*, (6) *economic and social human rights*, (7) *war and peace*, (8) *education*, (9) *diversity*, and (10) *deliberation*. These categories are based on our review of literature on democracy (e.g., Berlin, 1969; Dayton & Kinsey, 2010; Dryzek & Berjikian, 1993; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010; Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 2008; Larson, 2001) and also our preliminary analysis of 30 videos within the population (but not within the sample).

Popular participation emphasizes the idea that in a democracy citizens have the same weight in making decisions about the future of a society. Thus videos with participation as its topic covers issues like elections, voting, and other processes of having the public's voice heard. *Freedom of speech/press* conveys citizens' rights to freely express their ideas, opinions, and opposition to the government. *Freedom of religion* refers to citizens' liberty to choose their religion. *Justice* relates to fairness based upon rule of law rather than personal position. *Political human rights* covers matters concerning individuals' rights to participate in political life without significant discrimination or repression. *Economic and social human rights* refers to such things as equal access to housing and health. *War and peace* captures videos that emphasize democracy as promoting human security. *Education* emphasizes the role of informed personal development as an important component of democracy. *Diversity* refers to valuing of multiple ethnicities, life-styles, and religions. *Deliberation* emphasizes the importance of dialogue and discourse in sustaining

and improving democracy. The most prominent aspect of democracy featured in each video was coded as nominal variable (1 = popular participation; 2 = freedom of speech/press; 3 = freedom of religion; 4= justice; 5 = political human rights; 6 = economic and social human rights; 7 = war and peace; 8 = education; 9 = diversity; and, 10 = deliberation). In addition, to capture how often different aspects of democracy are mentioned across the videos, the authors also coded presence or absence of each democracy aspect in the video as dichotomous variable (1 = presence and 0 = absence).

To analyze structural aspects of the videos, the authors coded whether videos feature a storyline (storytelling), moving or still images, color or black/white, music, animation, and/or human actors. Gender and age of human actors appearing in the short films are also examined. In addition, the authors coded language (spoken and any subtitles), if English and/or other language.

As mentioned above, the countries are classified as belonging to one of the six regional categories used by the U.S. Department of State – Africa, East Asia Pacific, Europe Eurasia, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere. In addition, the authors coded a country's standing in democracy as reported in the Democracy Index 2010 by the Economist Intelligence Unit (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010). The Democracy Index offers a snapshot of the status of democracy in 167 countries considering five measures of democracy: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Based on country status on the five measures, the *Economist* grouped countries into four categories: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, and authoritarian regime. Thus a country's democracy standing was coded based on the four categories.

Intercoder Reliability

Two trained coders coded the same 18 videos randomly selected from the population outside of our sample. This constitutes 15% of the sample size as recommended by content analysis handbooks (Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). Intercoder reliability was determined using *Scott's pi*. The intercoder reliability score for the most prominent aspect of democracy was .89. The mean intercoder reliability score for presence or absence of the10 aspects of democracy in the video was .92. The mean intercoder reliability score for the structural features of the videos was .94. These intercoder reliability scores were acceptable and thus the two coders proceeded to code the 120 videos for a final analysis.

Results

The results are based on an analysis of a total of 120 videos, 20 videos each from the six regions: Africa, East Asia Pacific, Europe Eurasia, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere. In terms of a country's standing in democracy, 12.5% of the videos were from countries of full democracy; 40% from countries of flawed democracy; 18.3% from countries of hybrid regime; and 29.2% from countries of authoritarian regime. The average length of the videos was 1 minute and 55 seconds. As of March 25, 2011, the mean of the number of views for the videos posted to YouTube was 4,418 ($SD = 1.84$) with the most popular video viewed 143,152 times and the least popular one 73 times.

Thematic Features: RQ1, RQ2, & RQ3

Research Question 1 asked what are the prominent thematic aspects of the videos submitted to the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge. As shown in Table 1, popular participation was the most popular main theme of the videos accounting for 21.7% of the

120 videos. It was followed political human rights (17.5%), justice (15%), diversity (13.3%), freedom of speech/press (11.7%), economic human rights (8.3%), and deliberation (1.7%). Freedom of religion and education were not the main theme for any of the videos analyzed, and there were eight videos (6.7%) whose main theme was not captured by any of these categories.

This study also analyzed how frequently each of the 10 thematic aspects of democracy appears in the videos. While each video can have only one main theme, it can include multiple thematic aspects. Justice was the most frequently featured in the videos, appearing in almost a half of them (47.5%). The next more frequently featured aspects were political human rights (45%), popular participation (36.7%), freedom of speech/press (34.2%), diversity (30.8%), economic human rights (20%), war and peace (18.3%), and education (12.5%). Freedom of religion and deliberation was the least frequently featured aspects with each accounting for 5.8% of the videos (Table 2).

Research Question 2 asked whether there would be statistically significant differences between the videos from different regions with regard to prominent themes featured in the videos. A Chi-square test showed statistically significant differences between these videos (χ^2 (1, $df = 40$) = 68.12, $p < .01$). Popular participation including democratic election was the most important main theme in Africa and Europe Eurasia, whereas diversity was the most important main theme in Near East. For countries in Western Hemisphere, freedom of speech/press was the most important main theme. An additional analysis supported these regional differences. The authors conducted a series of Chi-square tests to see if there were statistically significant differences between the videos of countries from different regions in terms of how frequently each of the 10 democracy aspects was featured.

A statistically significant difference was found for popular participation (χ^2 (1, $df = 5$) =

13.64, $p < .05$) with videos from Africa and Europe Eurasia putting a greater emphasis on

this aspect compared with videos from the other regions.

Research Question 3 asked whether there would be statistically significant

differences between the videos of countries with different scores on democracy with regard

to prominent themes featured in the videos. This hypothesis was not supported when main

democracy aspects were compared (χ^2 (1, $df = 24$) = 21.37, $p = .62$), indicating the main

aspects of democracy featured in the videos are not significantly different between full

democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, and authoritarian regime. However, an

analysis on the frequency of each democracy aspect showed that there was a statistically

significant difference between the countries of different democracy standing in terms of

their emphasis on freedom of speech/press in the videos (χ^2 (1, $df = 3$) = 8.09, $p < .05$).

Countries classified as flawed democracy and hybrid regime put a greater emphasis on

freedom of speech/press aspects than countries of authoritarian regime and full democracy.

Structural Features: RQ4, RQ5, & RQ6

Research Question 4 asked what are the dominant structural aspects of the videos

submitted to the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge. In terms of use of color, 85.8% of the

videos were based completely on color images, 7.5% black/white, and 6.7% both color and

black/white (Table 3). About 82% of the videos used moving images, as opposed to still

images, in communicating their ideas of democracy. In addition, about 73% used

background music, and 23.3% incorporated animation in their videos. Only 35% of the

videos had an explicit storyline, and many of the videos (65%) used the technique of listing

aspects of democracy and then explaining rather than presenting their perspectives with a

storyline. And about a half of the videos (47.5%) did not include any narrative or voiceover relying simply on visual images or music to convey their understandings of democracy. Finally, a majority of the videos (77.5%) used human actors in communicating their messages with 38.7% featuring only male characters, 9.7% only female characters, and 49.5% both. More than half of the videos (60.2%) featured only adults, 6.5% only children, and 33.3% both.

Research Question 5 asked whether there are statistically significant differences between the videos from different regions with regard to popular structural aspects of the videos. Research Question 6 was about the comparison between countries with different scores on democracy. In both cases, there was no statistically significant difference based on Chi-square tests. That is, while there were some interesting thematic differences between the videos from countries in different regions and with different scores on democracy, no significant difference was found with regard to structural features of the videos.

Discussion

This study examined thematic and structural features of videos submitted to the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge. In particular, this research analyzed whether and how videos from countries in different regions and with different scores on democracy differ in terms of prominent thematic aspects of democracy and audio/visual elements featured in the videos.

One of the major findings of this study is that videos from different regions tend to focus on different aspects of democracy. Videos from Africa and Europe Eurasia emphasized the importance of popular participation. Compared with videos from the other regions, those from Near East and Western Hemisphere put a greater emphasis on diversity

and freedom of speech/press, respectively. These differences may be explained by theories of *procedural* and *substantive* democracy (Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 2008) and *positive* and *negative* freedom (Berlin, 1969).

Procedural democracy puts the utmost emphasis on having structures and institutions in place to enable voters to elect representatives in free elections (Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 2008). It seems natural that this type of democracy is prominently featured in the videos from Africa, since many countries in the region have observed election fraud, violence, and other procedural problems surrounding elections. These countries include Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Sudan, just to name a few. For example, the 2010 presidential election in Sudan drew sharp international criticism, as the election was marred by intimidation and fraud (Gettlemam, 2010). Then the world observed the historic January vote of southern Sudanese to determine whether to form an independent nation. As of March 2011, Nigeria's rising pre-election violence is making international headlines (AFP, 2011).

Thus anticipation of procedural democracy may be reflected in the videos from the region. For instance, a video from Zimbabwe declares, "Democracy is an even platform," describing the importance of people of different ages, professions, and physical conditions being able to cast a vote. "Fahrenheit 212," an animated short film from Ethiopia, emphasizes the need for every one of the eligible voters to participate in elections. The Ethiopian film adopts an analogy of how a one-degree increase from 211 to 212 Fahrenheit makes pure water boil, suggesting that "Democracy is a process that your participation matters." Perhaps for similar reasons, popular participation was the most prominent theme for videos from some Europe Eurasia countries such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia

has undergone political unrest since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 including major post-election rallies in 2008.

Why is diversity such a prominent theme in the videos from Near East? This may reflect their hope for realizing *substantive democracy*. In substantive democracy, ordinary citizens play a real role in making important decisions for the society, and substantive policies and real outcome of democracy are emphasized (Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 2008). In doing so, substantive democracy stresses the importance of protecting both majority and minority opinions. Indeed, it appears that there is a growing sense in the region rejecting some groups' interpretation of "any kind of diversity as an affront to Islam" (Madani, 2011). *The New York Times* recently featured a story about four Western-dressed female mannequins displayed on a street of Baghdad, Iraq, against the backdrop of "a banner featuring lust-crazed male ghouls" as well as "images of eternal suffering" (Leland & Adnan, 2011). This unmistakably conveyed the message that men who look at women in those kinds of dress become "voracious monster," and women who wear it "burn through eternity."

Some of the videos from Near East were trying to counter this type of message. For example, a video from the United Arab Emirates depicts two Islam women who are getting ready to go out. Scenes switch from one woman to the other both of whom are wearing make-up. The viewers then quickly realize that one woman follows a traditional Islamic dress code while the other is getting dressed with a colorful Western-style outfit. The two women encounter in front of an elevator and pleasantly exchange greetings despite their starkly different ways of dressing. It ends with a message on the screen that "Democracy is an appreciation of diversity." Other videos emphasizing diversity stressed the importance of

understanding and embracing those who may be different from us to move toward true democracy. Anti-government and pro-democracy rallies in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries in early 2011 are widely considered as some of the latest examples of growing recognition of the importance of diversity in the region.

It seems intuitive that freedom of speech/press is the most prominent theme in the videos from Western Hemisphere, given a long history of emphasis on this aspect in this part of the world. "Democracy – strings," a video from Brazil, describes a woman whose mouth was sealed closed by string. Moments later, her mouth was released by someone else enabling her to express her ideas. Similarly, a video from the United States stresses that democracy is possible only by ensuring freedom of speech while offering this formula: "Democracy + Freedom = Freedom of speech (Words + Opportunity) = Peace." A video submission from Peru started with the text on the screen, "One voice raise [sic] can make a difference." Then image changes to popcorn popping in a pot on a stove – on kernel, then another, then more, and soon all the kernels are popping feverishly. This is followed by the text, "Once voice can inspire other voices…it's an inalienable right to speak their mind."

There are some interesting findings with regard to structural features of the videos submitted to the Democracy Video Challenge. Male was the dominant gender in the videos. Of the 93 videos (77.5% of the total 120) that featured human actors in conveying their messages, 38.7% included only male characters, 9.7% only female characters, and 49.5% both. The dominance of male characters in the videos may result from the fact that more men than women are visible in political, social, and economic arenas in most parts of the world. However, the proportion of female characters in the videos from Near East was higher than most of the other regions, as the videos emphasized diversity and equal rights

for women. In addition, almost half of the videos relied solely on images or music, absent

narration or voiceover, in communicating their ideas. This may result from the fact that in

this worldwide video competition contenders wanted people around the world to understand

their messages regardless of their native language.

Little regional variation was observed when it comes to structural features of videos.

There was no statistically significant difference between the videos from different regions in

their use of storytelling techniques; moving and still images; color and black/white imagery;

animation features; and human actors. An overwhelming majority of videos used

background music and color imagery. In comparison, only 35% of the videos included a

storyline, and only 25% incorporated animation features. In terms of age grouping, more

than half of the videos (60.2%) featured only adults, 6.5% only children, and 33.3% both.

Why is there no statistically significant difference between videos from different

regions in terms of structural aspects featured in the videos? The small variance of structural

features between videos from different regions may result from the nature of the Democracy

Video Challenge. The worldwide video competition is organized by the U.S. Department of

State and nongovernmental organizations, and thus it is possible that the contestants were

familiar with U.S. filmmaking styles or tried to meet what they expected to be U.S.

standards. It is also possible that the authors may find some meaningful differences if a

greater number of videos are analyzed.

Like all empirical studies, this research has limitations. Most of all, the videos

analyzed for this study are those submitted to a U.S.-sponsored video competition and thus

may be more reflective of Western ideas and filmmaking styles. Also, this research analyzed

videos submitted to the 2010 competition only. It is possible that the first contest in 2009 may offer more innovative and diverse perspectives.

For more generalizable findings, future research could compare videos submitted to the Democracy Video Challenge with those entered into other international contests. In addition, it would also be useful to compare and contrast thematic and structural aspects of 2009 and 2010 entries to the Democracy Video Challenge. If the next competition is conducted soon, it will be interesting to analyze videos from the Middle East since the region has undergone very public political activity since the 2010 competition.

In this age of digital media, visual imagery is more prevalent and important in our private and public communication within and across countries. Thus communication scholars and professionals can benefit from more research investigating how people in different countries and cultures use visual images to communicate their ideas on matters concerning governance. In this context, this research contributes to advancing research on international visual communication.

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Table 1. Frequency of most prominent democracy theme in video

Main theme	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Popular participation	26	21.7
Freedom of speech/press	14	11.7
Freedom of religion	0	0.0
Justice	18	15.0
Political human rights	21	17.5
Economic human rights	10	8.3
War/Peace	5	4.2
Education	0	0.0
Diversity	16	13.3
Deliberation	2	1.7
Other	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Table 2. Presence/absence of thematic aspects in video

Theme	Presence (n)	Percentage (%)	Absence (n)	Percentage (%)	Total
Popular participation	44	36.7	76	63.3	120 (100%)
Freedom of speech/press	41	34.2	79	65.8	120 (100%)
Freedom of religion	7	5.8%	113	94.2	120 (100%)
Justice	57	47.5	63	52.5	120 (100%)
Political human rights	54	45.0	66	55.0	120 (100%)
Economic human rights	24	20.0	96	80.0	120 (100%)
War/Peace	22	18.3	98	81.7	120 (100%)
Education	15	12.5	105	87.5	120 (100%)
Diversity	37	30.8	83	69.2	120 (100%)
Deliberation	7	5.8	113	94.2	120 (100%)

Table 3. Frequency of structural features in video

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Color scheme	Color	103	85.8
	B/W	9	7.5
	Color + B/W	8	6.7
	Total	120	100
Moving/still imagery	Moving	98	81.7
	Still	11	9.2
	Moving + Still	11	9.2
	Total	120	100
Animation	Animation	25	20.8
	Non-animation	92	76.7
	Combination	3	2.5
Music	Yes	87	72.5
	No	33	27.5
	Total	120	100
Storytelling	Yes	42	35.0
	No	78	65.0
	Total	120	100
Narration	Narrative	28	23.3
	Voiceover	22	18.3
	Both	13	10.8
	Neither	57	47.5
	Total	120	100
Spoken language	English	27	22.5
	Other language	25	20.8
	Both	11	9.2
	Neither	57	47.5
	Total	120	100

Appendix A. Number of videos submitted by countries by region

Africa	77	Near East	53
Botswana	1	Algeria	3
Burundi	1	Bahrain	2
Cameroon	1	Egypt	4
Dem. Rep. of	1	Iran	21
Congo	3	Iraq	3
Rep. of Congo	30	Israel	9
Ethiopia	2	Jordan	1
Ghana	1	Lebanon	4
Malawi	9	Morocco	1
Mali	12	United Arab	3
Mauritania	4	Emirates	2
Nigeria	1	Yemen	
Senegal	2		
South Africa	5		
Togo	2		
Uganda	2		
Zimbabwe			

East Asia Pacific	134	South & Central Asia	54
Cambodia	6	Afghanistan	4
China	2	Bangladesh	1
Indonedia	64	India	21
Japan	4	Kazakhstan	2
Malaysia	20	Kyrgyzstan	1
Philippines	15	Nepal	4
Singapore	3	Pakistan	17
South Korea	2	Sri Lanka	1
Taiwan	17	Tajikistan	1
Thailand	1	Uzbekistan	2

Europe Eurasia	56	Western Hemisphere	92
Armenia	2	Brazil	8
Azerbaijan	1	Canada	2
Bosnia and	2	Colombia	27
Herzegovina	2	Costa Rica	3
Bulgaria	1	Dominica Republic	4
Czeck Republic	2	Ecuador	4
Denmark	1	Guatemala	5
England	2	Haiti	1
France	2	Mexico	3

Germany	1	Nicaragua	1
Greece	1	Paraguay	5
Italy	2	Peru	9
Latvia	2	United States	18
Lithuania	1	Venezuela	2
Moldova	1		
Netherlands	9		
Poland	7		
Romania	8		
Russia	2		
Serbia	4		
Spain	1		
Sweden	2		
Ukraine			