



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: JLS 815

COURSE TITLE: Advanced Theories in Mass Communication



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Course Title: **Advanced Theories In Mass Communication**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to JLS III: Advanced Theories in Mass Communication! It is available for students in the postgraduate Journalism programme. The course provides a foundation for the mastery of the various courses in the Mass Communication programme. Scholars from various communication-related disciplines have provided definitions of a theory, generally from the perspectives of their own disciplines. None of the definitions can be regarded as sacrosanct. A thorough understanding of the concept of theory can only come from a processing and integration of the various definitions and perspectives that one encounters. Such exercises in processing and integration will help you to progressively master the principles underlying even the most practical of your courses. As one of the scholars whose definition of theory will be later considered puts it, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

This course guide provides you with the necessary information about the contents of the course and the materials you will need to be familiar with for a proper understanding of the subject-matter of the course. It is designed to help you to get the best of the course by enabling you to think productively about the principles undergirding the things you study and the projects you execute in the course of your study and thereafter. It also provides some guidance on the way to approach your tutormarked assignments (TMA). You will of course receive on-the-spot guidance from your tutorial classes, which you are advised to approach with all seriousness.

COURSE AIMS

The aims of this course are to:

- (i) Explicate the concept of theory.
- (ii) Present an overview of mass communication theories.
- (iii) Discuss key samples of the various categories of mass communication theories.
- (iv) Illustrate application of mass communication theories in real-life communication situation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- (i) Define a theory, with particular reference to mass communication theories.
- (ii) Identify extant categories of mass communication theories.
- (iii) Exemplify each category identified.
- (iv) Analyse and apply the examples given in real-life situations.

WORKIKNG THROUGH THE COURSE

I would advise you to carefully study each unit, beginning with this Study Guide, especially since this course provides a crucial foundation for your understanding of all the other courses you will encounter in the programme. Also make a habit of noting down any question you have for tutorials. And please try your hand at formulating or identifying theories relevant to your various communication experiences.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. Course guide
2. Study units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule.

STUDY UNITS

JLS 815 is a 3-Credit Unit 700 Level course for Postgraduate Journalism students. There are a total of six modules in this course, each module being made up of five units. Thus you will find a total of thirty units in the whole text. Some units may be longer and/or more in depth than others, depending on the aspect of the course that is in focus. The six modules in the course are as follows:

- Module 1: Introductory Notes on Mass Communication Theories.
- Module 2: Normative Theories
- Module 3: Social-Scientific/Media Effects Theories.
- Module 4: Working/Operational Theories.
- Module 5: Critical-Cultural/Cultural Criticism Theories.
- Module 6: Information Society Theories.

Each module is preceded with a listing of the units contained in it, and each unit is in turn preceded by a table of contents, an introduction, a list of objectives and the main content, including Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs). At the end of each unit, you will find one Tutor-marked Assignment (TMA) which you are expected to work on and submit for marking.

TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

At the end of each unit, you will find a list of relevant reference materials which you may yourself wish to consult as the need arises, even though I have made efforts to provide you with the most important information you need to pass this course. However, I would encourage you, as a university student (and a postgraduate student at that), to cultivate the habit of consulting as many relevant materials as you are able to within the time available to you. In particular, be sure to consult whatever material you are advised to consult before attempting any exercise.

ASSESSMENT

Two types of assessment are involved in the course: the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs), and the Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA) questions. Your answers to the SAEs are not meant to be submitted, but they are also important since they give you

an opportunity to assess your own understanding of course content. Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA) on the other hand are to be carefully answered and kept in your assignment file for submission and marking. This will count for 30% of your total score in the course.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

At the end of every unit, you will find a Tutor-Marked Assignment which you should answer as instructed and put in your assignment for submission. However, this Course Guide does not contain any Tutor-Marked Assignment question. The Tutor-Marked Assignment questions are provided from Unit 1 of Module 1 to Unit 5 of Module 6.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for JLS 111 will take three hours and carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination questions will reflect the SAEs and TMAs that you have already worked on. I advise you to spend the time between your completion of the last unit and the examination revising the entire course. You will certainly find it helpful to also review both your SAEs and TMAs before the examination.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The following table sets out how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Four assignments (the best four of all the assignments submitted for marking).	Four assignments, each marked out of 10%, but highest scoring three selected, thus totalling 30%
Final Examination	70% of overall course score.
Total	100% of course score.

COURSE OVERVIEW PRESENTATION SCHEME

Units	Title of Work	Week Activity	Assignment (End-of-Unit)
<i>Course Guide</i> Module 1 Unit 1	Introduction to Mass Comm. Theories (i) What is Theory? (ii) Characteristics of Theory	Week 1	Assignment 1

Units	Title of Work	Week Activity	Assignment (End-of-Unit)
Unit 2	(i) Why we study theory (ii) How we arrive at Theory	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 3	(i) General and Specific Kinds of Theory (ii) Theory Distinguished from some Analogous Concepts	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory.	Week 2	Assignment 1
Unit 5	The Communication Process — Communication Models.	Week 2	Assignment 1
Module 2	Normative Theories		
Unit 1	(i) Authoritarian Media Theory (ii) Soviet-Communist Media Theory	Week 3	Assignment 1
Unit 2	(i) Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory (ii) Social Responsibility Media Theory	Week 3	Assignment 1
Unit 3	(i) Democratic Participant Media Theory (ii) Development Media Theory	Week 4	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Advent of Development Journalism and Communication.	Week 4	Assignment 1
Unit 5	Evolution of Development Communication Paradigms.	Week 5	Assignment 1
Module 3	Social-Scientific / Media Effects Theories		
Unit 1	Mass Society Perspective — Magic Bullet/ Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt Theory.	Week 5	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Limited Effects Perspectives — (i) Individual Differences/Social Categories/ Social Relations Perspectives. (ii) Perception Theory	Week 6	Assignment 1
Unit 3	(i) Uses and Gratification Theory. (ii) Agenda-Setting Theory.	Week 6	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Modified Limited Effects Perspectives — Cultural Norms Theory, Mainstreaming / Synchronisation Theory etc.	Week 7	Assignment 1
Unit 5	(i) Persuasion Theories (ii) Media Violence Theories	Week 7	Assignment 1
Module 4	Working Operational Theories		
Unit 1	Gatekeeping and Gatekeeping Factors	Week 8	Assignment 1
Unit 2	News Values and their Evolution	Week 8	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Socialisation Theories Relating to the	Week 9	Assignment 1

Units	Title of Work	Week Activity	Assignment (End-of-Unit)
	Journalism Profession.		
Unit 4	Internal Gatekeeping Reviewed.	Week 9	Assignment 1
Unit 5	External Gatekeeping	Week 10	Assignment 1
Module 5	Critical-Cultural / Cultural Criticism Theories		
Unit 1	Commodification of Culture Theory	Week 10	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Media Intrusion Theory	Week 11	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Social Marketing Theory	Week 11	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Social Semiotics Theory	Week 12	Assignment 1
Unit 5	Information Processing Theory	Week 12	Assignment 1
Module 6	Information Society Theories		
Unit 1	The Post-Industrial Society Perspective	Week 13	Assignment 1
Unit 2	(i) The Surveillance Society Perspective (ii) The Informational Capitalist Perspective	Week 13	Assignment 1
Unit 3	The Declining Public Sphere Perspective	Week 14	Assignment 1
Unit 4	The Post-Fordist Society Perspective	Week 15	Assignment 1
Unit 5	The Post-Modern Society Perspective	Week 15	Assignment 1
	Revision	Week 16	
	Examination	Week 17	
	Total	17 Weeks	

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THE COURSE

Advanced Theories in Mass Communication provides you with the opportunity to review the mass communication theories you studied at the undergraduate level; to study those theories at a deeper level; and to become familiar with some emerging perspectives in the field. As I informed you earlier, a careful study and proper understanding of mass communication theories would enable you to grasp the principles underlying the facts and/or skills you acquire in the other journalism courses and, later, the activities you engage in as a full-fledged professional. If you have come into the programme as an experienced professional, you may be surprised that you begin to understand at a deeper level some of these functions you have been performing as a matter of routine. The theory course thus becomes — in a way — a process of self-discovery. Remember, “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Kurt Lewin).

This Course Guide is designed to facilitate your accomplishment of the objectives of the course by providing you with a foreknowledge of what you are going to encounter in the course. Please read it carefully to enable you to get the best out of the course.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THE COURSE

First, I think it will help if you try to review the theories you studied at the undergraduate level, to firm your background preparation for the course. Second, you may need to purchase one or two texts recommended as important for your mastery of the course content. You need quality time in a study-friendly environment every week. If you are computer-literate (which ideally you should be), you should be prepared to visit recommended websites. You should also cultivate the habit of visiting reputable physical libraries accessible to you.

TUTORS AND TUTORIALS

There are fifteen (15) hours of tutorials provided in support of the course. You will be notified of the dates and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, and keep a close watch on your progress. Be sure to send in your tutor-marked assignments promptly, and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty with your self-assessment exercise, tutor-marked assignment or the grading of an assignment. In any case, I advise you to attend the tutorials regularly and punctually. Always take a list of such prepared questions to the tutorials and participate actively in the discussions.

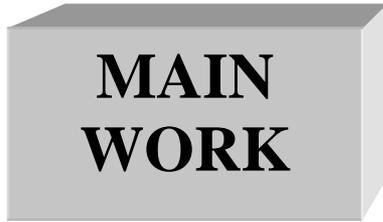
CONCLUSION

This is a theory course but you will get the best out of it if you cultivate the habit of relating it to your practical courses and to your everyday communication experiences.

SUMMARY

This Course Guide has been designed to furnish the information you need for a fruitful experience in the course. In the final analysis, how much you get from the course depends on how much you put into it in terms of time, effort and planning.

I wish you a brilliant success in JLS 815 and in the whole programme!



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	• The Informational Capitalist Society Perspective
Unit 3:	The Declining Public Sphere Perspective
Unit 4:	The Post-Fordist Society Perspective
Unit 5:	The Post-Modem Society Perspective
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MODULE 1

INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES

- Unit 1:
 - What is Theory?
 - Characteristics of Theory
- Unit 2:
 - Why Do We Study Theories?
 - How Do We Arrive at Theories?
- Unit 3:
 - General and Specific Kinds of Theories.
 - Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts.
- Unit 4: Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory
- Unit 5: The Communication Process/Communication Models

UNIT 1 • WHAT IS THEORY? • CHARACTERISTICS OF THEORY

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 What is Theory?
 - 3.2 General Characteristics / Attributes of a Theory
 - 3.3 Conventional Criteria for Identifying a Good Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this introductory unit, we shall focus on three things pertaining to theory:

Various Definitions of Theory.

General Characteristics / Attributes of a Theory

Conventional Criteria for identifying a good theory

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define a theory, either in your own words or by integrating extant definitions which have been made from various disciplinary perspectives.
- (ii) State generally observable characters/attributes of a theory.
- (iii) List conventional criteria for identifying a good theory.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 What is Theory?

There have been very many definitions of theory, none of them sacrosanct. As with many other concepts that cut across nearly all disciplines, there is a tendency for interested scholars to define theory and illustrate it with particular reference to their own disciplines. However, some of the extant definitions are more generally applicable than others. We shall take a brief look here at some of those more general definitions.

According to social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (1958), a theory is a way of explaining the ordering and recurrence of various events in the ecosphere. Philosopher Abraham Kaplan (1964) sees theory as a way of making sense out of a disturbing situation. The well-known contemporary communication scholar, Wilbur Schramm (1963) describes theory as a “crap-detector” which enables us to separate scientific statements from unscientific ones. Severin and Tankard (Jnr.) (1982) define theory as a set of systematic generalisations, based on scientific observation (and) leading to further empirical observation. Finally, for now, Earl Babbie (1989) says a theory is a generalised and more or less comprehensive set of statements relating different aspects of some phenomenon, while Denis McQuail (1983), in similar vein, states that a theory consists of a set of ideas of varying status and origin, which seek to explain or interpret a given phenomenon.

The foregoing is a representative listing of definitions of theory by a cross-section of scholars in the communication and cognate fields.

Exercise 1.1

Find from your reading or website search two generally applicable definitions of theory which are not contained in the above list.

3.2 Characteristics/Attributes of Theory

From the list of definitions in 3.1 above and others like them, we can extract the following attributes or characteristics of a theory:

- (i) A theory is a systematic and logical statement of a general nature.
- (ii) Such a systematic and logical statement implies substantial intellectual rigour.
- (iii) A theory is at once dynamic and “dated”: dynamic in the sense that it is subject to modification (or rarely, change) in the light of new facts; “dated” in the sense that it is usually a step behind reality in the light of other events taking place while the theory is being formulated.
- (iv) A theory has an ascertainable origin — where and by whom formulated/proposed.
- (v) A theory is based on scientific observation coupled with logical reasoning.
- (vi) A theory usually leads to further empirical observation or research. You will see later that the relationship between theory and research is a circular one.
- (vii) A theory is a means to an end (“... a way of explaining the ordering and occurrence of various events” — Kurt Lewin; and “... a way of making sense out of a disturbing situation” — Abraham Kaplan), not an end in itself.

Exercise 1.2

State, with appropriate illustration, one other characteristic/attribute of theory that has struck you from your study of the subject.

3.3 Conventional Criteria for Identifying a Good Theory

Following are the conventional criteria for identifying a good theory. These criteria help to ensure validity and reliability in the theory-formulating process. There are “scientific” criteria and there are “aesthetic” / “humanistic” criteria, as detailed below:

3.3.1 Scientific Criteria for a Good Theory

- (i) **Explanatory Power:** Do the propositions of the theory enable us to explain as much of the communication phenomenon as possible?
- (ii) **Predictive Power:** Do the propositions of the theory enable us to forecast accurate events and outcome?
- (iii) **Parsimony:** Does the theory contain as few propositions as possible to explain the communication phenomenon — that is, is it as simple as it can be?
- (iv) **Testability:** Can the propositions of the theory be tested and therefore falsified or proven wrong if need be?
- (v) **Internal Consistency:** The propositions that comprise the theory should not contradict one another.
- (vi) **Heuristic Potential:** The propositions that comprise the theory should suggest further hypotheses to be tested through research.

3.3.2 Aesthetic/Humanistic Criteria for a Good Theory

- (i) **New Understanding:** Does the theory provide us with new and fresh insights about the nature of the human condition?
- (ii) **Societal Values:** Does the theory help us to improve the human condition in some substantive way? Does it stimulate or generate change?
- (iii) **Aesthetic Appeal:** Does the theory capture our interest and imagination — Does it prique our curiosity about the phenomenon being explained?
- (iv) **Community Agreement:** Is the theory accepted and supported by like-minded scholars?

(Available at http://www.k.arizona.edu/comm.300_mary/alpha.html).

Exercise 1.3

Choose one scientific criterion and one aesthetic/humanistic criterion above and explain more fully the way(s) in which each of them helps us to identify a good theory.

4.0 CONCLUSION

With particular reference to mass communication theory, there are various extant definitions of a theory. None of these extant definitions can be regarded as **the definition**, since each of the “definers” tends to define theory from the perspective of his / her own discipline. Only an appropriate integration of various definitions can provide a comprehensive view of the concept of theory. In the foregoing discussion, we have selected a few of the more generally applicable definitions. The characteristics/attributes of theory and the identifying criteria projected are, however, generally applicable to (communication) theories.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a brief look at a representative sample of the more generally applicable definitions and explanations of a theory. We also attempted an overview of the discernible characteristics or attributes of a theory. Finally, we presented an inventory of the conventional criteria for identifying a good theory. Such criteria are meant to preserve the scholarly integrity of theory formulation. We noted, finally, that theory is a means to the end of arriving at solutions to our intellectual problems, not a dogma designed to impose our ideas on others. As such, it is subject to change.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you explain why you consider theory a desirable aspect of the study of journalism.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D.K. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

Folarin, B. (1998, 2002, 2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., etc.

Website cited: http://www.k.arizona.edu/comm.300_mary/alpha.html.

MODULE 1 (Contd.)

INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Unit 1: • What is Theory?

- Characteristics of Theory

Unit 2: • Why Do We Study Theories?

- How Do We Arrive at Theories?

Unit 3: • General and Specific Kinds of Theories.

- Theory Distinguished from some Analogous Concepts.

Unit 4: Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory.

Unit 5: The Communication Process / Communication Models.

UNIT 2: • WHY DO WE STUDY THEORIES?

- **HOW DO WE ARRIVE AT THEORIES?**

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Why Do We Study Theories?

3.2 How Do We Arrive at Theories? — The Scientific Method.

3.3 Relationship Between Theory and Research — Deduction and Induction.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus on three things:

- Why Do We Study Theories?

- How Do We Arrive at Theories? — The Scientific Method?
- Relationship Between Theory and Research — Deduction and Induction.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain why we study theories;
- Show how we arrive at theories — generally through **The Scientific Method**;
- Project the relationship between Theory and Research.
- Explain the difference between **Deduction** and **Induction**.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Why Do We Study Theories?

We study theories because they help us in managing reality. As Kurt Lewin puts it, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” According to him, good theories enable us to put facts in perspective, and to predict what will happen, sometimes before the events we are theorising about get completed. By Schramm’s own definition, a theory can be employed as a “crap-detection”, which can help us to separate scientific statements from unscientific ones. In other words, a theory may provide the yardstick against which to measure the success or failure of any scientific endeavour — an experiment, a project or technical report. And, according to Kaplan, a theory helps us to make sense out of disturbing situation. Well, not only a disturbing situation (such as the police trying to resolve a murder case) but also other situations that prique our interest, e.g. what is the later educational effect of heavy television programme consumption by a pre-school child?

The use of theory in all scientific endeavours has tended to assume the nature of a ritual (in both the “hard” and “soft” sciences) in order to maintain the traditional intellectual rigour and preserve the integrity of these scientific endeavours. According to T.S. Kuhn (1970), “in science generally, all facts must be embedded in a theoretical framework.” Finally, one may study a theory simply for the intellectual interest it stimulates and satisfies.

Exercise 2.1

Which of the reasons provided above for studying theories do you find most convincing, and why?

3.2 How Do We Arrive at Theories?

The theories fall into several categories. Some, such as the so-called “Social–Scientific” theories, consist of generalisations derived from systematic observation and objective analysis of mass media variables employing methods associated with empirical research in the social sciences, e.g. experimentation, field surveys, content analysis, etc. These were mainly introduced into mass

communication scholarship by Paul Lazarsfeld and his associates in the United States in the 1970s. Other theories rely more on logic while yet others are rooted in logic and empiricism. However, the process generally associated with theory formulation as well as research is known as the Scientific Method. In its traditional vintage, the process involves the following steps, which you may find set out with slight variations in the literature:

- (1) **Conceptualisation:** The theorist starts with a “human”, a conceptual definition of the subject of inquiry. Call it a “topic” if you like. This initial definition is usually not amenable to scientific analysis.
- (2) **Operationalisation:** This involves the translation of general concepts into specific indicators or variables and the specification of the proceeding(s) to be adopted. In survey research terms, it involves a progression from a statement of the study problem, through formulation of research hypotheses/questions, to the generation of questionnaire items or interview questions. In Content Analysis, it would involve (in addition) the specification of content categories and subcategories to be observed. As Earl Babbie (1989: 152) puts it, operationalisation is a step that may be seen as going on throughout the inquiry until we reach our conclusion(s) or generalisation(s).
- (3) **Observation:** Having carefully specified the variable to be studied, it is time to embark on the observation of these variables from the data assembled, choosing any of the available modes of observation — questionnaire method, interviewing, experimentation, personal observation or looking into records.
- (4) **Analysis:** This is the process of extracting meaning from the facts observed, being careful to keep an open mind and record what the data actually says to us and not what we expected them to say to us (see Leedy: 1974).
- (5) **Testing:** That is, examining the match between the hypotheses/research questions with which we started the study and the results or findings from our analysis.
- (6) **Generalisations:** That is, the wide-ranging conclusions reached regarding the subject of inquiry.
- (7) **Theory:** Our theory consists of or derive from the generalisations made as a result of our observation, analysis and testing.
- (8) **Law:** From one theoretical perspective, a theory that has stood prolonged/repeated tests without being disproved or modified. Laws of this type are relatively rare in the social sciences, which study mainly human organisation and behaviour. These are so inconstant that it is relatively difficult to arrive at scientific laws or the basis of them.

Exercise 2.2

Based on a social problem that is of relevance to your locality, formulate a study topic and derive one hypothesis and one research question from the topic.

3.3 Deduction and Induction

You must have observed from the above exposition that theory and research are closely related through the Scientific Method. Both theory and research may be seen as two sides of the same coin. According to Earl Babbie (1989: 7), the three elements of social science are theory, research and statistics. A scientific assertion needs to have both logical and empirical support; it must make sense and it must align with observations in the real world. Theory largely provides the logical support while research (with statistics) provides the empirical support. In practice, both theory and research further interact through two approaches to scientific inquiry known as **Deduction** and **Induction**.

3.3.1 Deduction or the Deductive Approach

The deductive approach seeks to test the validity of a given generalisation by applying it to a set of individual cases. (For illustrations, see Folarin 2006:). For a further illustration, suppose you encounter a generalisation that “most Nigerians rely on traditional medicine for treatment of their ailments”, you would — to ascertain the truth of this statement — “assemble” a representative sample of Nigerians and find out what each of them relies on for treatment of their ailments. That would represent a deductive approach to your inquiry.

3.3.2 Induction or the Inductive Approach

The inductive approach proceeds from real-life empirical observations to theoretical generalisations. It, too, starts with a “hunch”, but the topic would be framed differently. The hunch could take the form of a question; for example, “which is the most popular treatment for ailments among Nigerians?” Progressing through the Scientific Method, we would also question a representative sample of Nigerians. Our generalised finding might be “treatment with traditional medicine”.

Thus, as Babbie (1989: 3) sums up the difference, “In deduction we reason toward observations, while in induction we reason from observations”. In other words, in the deductive model, we use research to test theories (generalisations), whereas in the inductive model we develop theories from analyses of research data.

Exercise 2.3

Think of a research project you undertook at the undergraduate level (e.g. for your final year dissertation) and say whether you adopted the deductive or the inductive approach to the inquiry. Give reasons to justify your statement.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Theory helps to illuminate the principles undergirding given statements, courses or projects in the social sciences. But theory does not drop from a

mysterious height for ordinary humans to ponder. It is developed by humans in the course of searching for solutions to their own problems. Of course, to ensure valid solutions, standard procedures have emerged for theory formulation and criteria evolved for “certifying” a good theory. You can yourself begin to work on appropriate theories to illuminate the principles undergirding the everyday communication problems you encounter or communication projects you undertake.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have attempted to provide answers to two questions: Why do we study theories? And how do we arrive at theories? It was explained that we study theories to help us manage reality in its various ramifications. Some emphasis was laid on the crucial importance of theory in tackling reality in the Social Sciences. We also saw that we arrive at theories principally through the Scientific Method, why binds theory and research together as two sides of the same coin. We also spotlighted two models of scientific inquiry with which we work through the Scientific Method: the Deductive Model and the Inductive Model.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Again, based on a social problem that is of relevance to your community:

- (a) Formulate a theory/research topic that illustrates the deductive model of scientific inquiry.
- (b) Now, reformulate the topic in accordance with the inductive model of inquiry.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Babbie, E. (1989) *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 5th edition, pp.1-56.

Folarin, B. (1998, 2002, 2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*. Ibadan: Stirling–Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., etc.

MODULE 1 (Contd.)**INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES**

Unit 1: • What is Theory?

- Characteristics of Theory

Unit 2: • Why Do We Study Theories?

- How Do We Arrive at Theories?

Unit 3: • General and Specific Kinds of Theory.

- Theory Distinguished from some Analogous Concepts.

Unit 4: Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory.

Unit 5: The Communication Process / Communication Models.

UNIT 3: • GENERAL AND SPECIFIC KINDS OF THEORY
• THEORY DISTINGUISHED FROM SOME ANALOGOUS
CONCEPTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Body

3.1 General and Specific Kinds of Theory

3.2 Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall handle two major subtopics:

- General and Specific Kinds of Theory.
- Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) List and discuss general categories of theory from which Mass Communication theories derive.
- (ii) List and discuss specific categories of Mass Communication theories.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Denis McQuail (1983: 6) following the strain of Robert Merton's analysis in *Social Theory and Social Structure (1957)*, distinguishes four types of general social theory, namely Normative Theory, Social Scientific Theory, Working (or Operational) Theory, and Commonsense (or Everyday) Theory. Baran and Davis (2003: 22off) have recently drawn attention to an emerging category of Critical–Cultural (or Cultural Criticism) Theory. A little earlier, Frank Webster (1995) and his associates had spent much time and effort explicating what they called Information Society Theory.

3.1.1 Normative Theory

Normative Theory seeks to locate media structure and performance within the milieu in which it operates. According to Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956, 1960), the press tends to assume the form and coloration of the environment within which it operates. Thus, normative theory tries to explain the ways in which social structure and culture impinge on mass media structure and performance, and highlights the consequences of non-convergence between societal communication principles and mass communication practice. An individual normative theory may be a logical package of generalisations regarding mass communication and the environment, or it may be a product of deliberate “communication engineering”, aimed at enhancing media performance for the benefit of the sustaining environment. Sometimes, it is a product of a combination of both processes — as in the case of the Social Responsibility Media Theory. The six normative theories currently recognised in their literature are Authoritarian Media Theory, Soviet-Communist Media Theory, Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory, Social Responsibility Media Theory, Democratic–Participant Media Theory, and Development Media Theory.

3.1.2 Social–Scientific Theory

This consists of generalisations derived from systematic observation and effective analysis of media variables, employing methods associated with empirical research in the social sciences — experimentation, field surveys, content analysis, etc. This trend was introduced into mass

communication scholarship by Paul Lazarsfeld and his associates in the 1970s and became the essential constituent of what came to be known as “Communication Science”. Social–Scientific theory, which deals largely with media effects, has developed in several stages, from the “mass society” (or “very powerful media”) perspective, through the “Limited effects” perspective, to the “modified limited effects” perspective, and subsumes practically all current media effects theories, in the literature–persuasion theories, violence theories, consistency theories, etc.

3.1.3 **Working (or Operational) Theory**

Basically, this category consists of guidelines, techniques, traditions and conventions that guide the work of media production and “give it consistency over time”. As these endure through time, and especially as they are subjected to observation and analysis by scholars, they take on the nature of theory — working (or operational) theory. Operational theories deal with issues like gate-keeping, news values, and socialisation among journalists.

3.1.4 **Commonsense (or Everyday) Theory**

This encompasses the knowledge of the media that people possess by virtue of their experiences as media consumers. All of us have our own ideas about what the media are doing or ought to be doing. But not all of us can translate our ideas into social–scientific or working theories. However, statements in commonsense theory can provide a hunch that triggers off research which in turn births a theory that can be more directly categorised as social–scientific or operational. (See Folarin: 1998, 2002, 2006 for an extensive discussion of commonsense theories).

Exercise 3.1

What do you envisage as the main difference(s) between Normative theory and Working (or Operational) theory?

3.1.5 **Critical–Cultural (or Cultural Criticism) Theory**

A fifth, emerging type of general social theory relevant to our concern in this course is that which has come to be christened Critical–Cultural or Cultural Criticism theory (see Baran and Davis: 2003, 25). Critical–cultural theory subsumes a set of smaller theories primarily concerned with conflicts of interests in society and the ways in which mass–mediated communication tends to perpetuate these conflicts and the domination of some groups over others (see Littlejohn: 1996, 17). Proponents of these theories do not stop at presenting the social world as they see it. They also try to work as active agents to reform it, sometimes in radical ways.

As would be expected, exponents of “Communication Science” (the empirical researchers, that are more comfortable with social–scientific theories) are not overly impressed by cultural criticism theories, the justifications and the conclusions of which depend on argument and

debate rather than on empirical data. The sample Critical–Cultural / Cultural Criticism theories to be focused in this course are:

- (i) Commodification of Culture theory
- (ii) Media Intrusion theory,
- (iii) Social Marketing theory,
- (iv) Social Semiotics theory, and
- (v) Information Processing theory

3.1.6 Information Society Theory

Information Society theory is that category of general social theory which is now taking its place as the **dominant paradigm** (Aiyedun–Aluma: 2004, p.12). According to Granham (2001: 130) as cited by Aiyedun-Aluma (op. cit):

Confrontation with the theory of Information Society, both as a science and (as an) ideology, is now un-avoidable. Here is a theory of communication massively presenting itself as both a way of understanding the present historical moment and the dominant development trends in society and at the same time as the favoured legitimating ideology for the dominant economic and political power holders.

Garnham goes on to assert that information society theory has been used to justify some policies of the European Union. In practice, the predominance of information society theory is demonstrated by the remarkable growth in the power; prevalence and promotion of the computer and cyberspace technologies (in particular the Internet) since the 1970s.

There are quite a number of types of definition of information society theory, but the most relevant to our concern here are the **technological** and the **economic** types of definition.

- (i) The **technological** definition sees the information society as born of breakthroughs in information processing, storage and transmission that have led to the application of information technologies (IT) in virtually all corners of society, and to the production of cheap information storage and processing technologies such as the computer, which is now so extensively distributed (Webster: 1995, p.7).
- (ii) The **economic** definition views the information society as one in which information goods and services provide the major arenas of economic activity (Porat: 1978, p.11).

The six major perspectives on information society theory (as identified by Aiyedun–Aluma, and adopted in this course) are (i) the post-industrial society perspective, (ii) the surveillance society perspective, (iii) the advanced technocentric or informational capitalist society

perspective, (iv) the declining public sphere perspective, (v) the post-fordist society perspective, and (vi) the postmodern society perspective.

Exercise 3.2

Here, we are focusing on the technological and economic definitions of Information Society theory. Can you think of one other possible type of definition, as one who is deeply involved in the events leading to the evolution of the theory?

3.2 Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts

3.2.1 Theory and Myth

The two appear to have several features in common but are not the same thing. Bohannan and Curtin (1971: 178) throw some light on the similarities and differences:

- (i) Both theory and myth have to organise and condense plenty of facts (including beliefs in the case of myth) into recognisable form. However, while myth employs narrative for this purpose, theory must be founded on testable facts.
- (ii) Second, theory and myth are subject to different canons of proof. While myth can always be illustrated by the vicissitudes of human life, theory must stand up to experimentation and logic.
- (iii) Facts can be gathered from informants for the exposition of concepts in a theory but this is not possible with a myth.
- (iv) The origin of a theory is ascertainable but that of a myth is usually shrouded in mystery.

3.2.2 Theory and Dogma

- (i) Dogma is a matter of social agreement or belief, based on tradition and authority, whereas theory is based on experience and logic.
 - (ii) Dogma is built, to a large extent, on mystification: ‘a feeling- expressed or implicit.’ that certain matters are beyond human investigation. Theory as a basic element of science, has led to the breakdown of various forms of mystification in mundane human affairs.
- (iii) Dogma is relatively static, theory is relatively dynamic (i.e. subject to change or modification on the basis of new facts).

3.2.3 Theory and Philosophy

- (i) Philosophy is more interested than theory is in questions of value. In other words, while philosophy deals with what obtains and what ought to be, (scientific) theory deals simply with what obtains and why. In short, scientific theory basically is ‘amoral, which philosophy can ill afford to be.
- (ii) Philosophy tends to assume greater latitude in arriving at its conclusions than theory can afford to assume.
- (iii) Empiricism appears to be more crucial for theory as scientific inquiry than it is for philosophical inquiry.

(See Folarin: 1998, 2002, 2006 for a more detailed discussion of these differences).

Exercise 3.3

Discuss a dogma in your social, cultural or religious environment, and make clear your own attitude to the dogma.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This has been a rather “dense” unit, but you need not experience much difficulty with it, if you have carefully digested the contents of Units 1 and 2. In this unit, we have seen that theory is not an amorphous concept but an organised one, serving as a lighthouse in the realm of social science. As such, it is resolvable into various categories, both general and specific, according to the area of social science being investigated.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at various general categories of social theory, but we have simply listed the specific categories which will constitute the subject of subsequent modules in this course. Highlights of the unit are the newly emerging categories of Critical–Cultural/ Cultural Criticism theory and Information Society theory. Both will become clearer as we resolve them into specific theories in later modules. Finally, we tried to clarify the differences between theory and analogous concepts such as myth, dogma and philosophy to serve as further guide to students.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Construct a table of general social theories discussed in this unit, with the examples of specific theories into which they can be resolved.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Aiyedun–Aluma, V. (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm”, Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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MODULE 1 (Contd.)

INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Unit 1: • What is Theory?

- Characteristics of Theory

Unit 2: • Why Do We Study Theories?

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- Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts.

Unit 4: • Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory.

Unit 5: • The Communication Process / Communication Models.

UNIT 4: • HUMAN COMMUNICATION THEORY AND MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY

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3.1 The Nature of Human Communication.

3.2.0 The Nature of Mass Communication.

3.2.1 Mass Communication as Science.

3.2.2 Mass Communication as Art.

3.2.3 Mass Communication as Skill.

4.0 Conclusion.

5.0 Summary.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA).

7.0 References / Further Readings.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus on two major points, with three subsidiary points:

- The Nature of Human Communication.
- Mass Communication as a Subset of Human Communication.
 - Mass Communication as Science.
 - Mass Communication as Art.
 - Mass Communication as Skill.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explicate the Nature of Human Communication.
- (ii) Discuss Mass Communication as a subset of Human Communication.
- (iii) Dissect Mass Communication as an object of study; specifically:
 - (a) Mass Communication as Science,
 - (b) Mass Communication as Art,
 - (c) Mass Communication as Skill.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Nature of Human Communication

There are several delineations of human communication, out of which we shall pick two to serve as guide in this course. All these delineations recognise mass communication as a facet of human communication.

In a UNESCO-sponsored study titled “The Social Communication Triad”, one of the organisation’s communication consultants, Francis Balle, recognises three major facets of social communication, namely **Interpersonal Communication**, **Organisational Communication** and, of course, **Mass Communication** (Balle: 1985).

In **interpersonal communication**, there is usually no technological interface or mediation as in mass communication, since interaction generally takes place in a face-to-face setting, which ensures immediate feedback reinforced by non-verbal cues. Even in midline cases like telephone conversation, the feedback, though incomplete, is not as delayed as it is in mass communication. The audiences of interpersonal communication are relatively small and in close proximity. The message, except perhaps in the case of formal public lectures, etc, is episodic in nature and rather loose in style.

By contrast, **Organisational (or Institutional) Communication** is marked by a relative rigidity of style rarely found in the other kinds of communication, even though these also have their own rules. Furthermore, while mass communication is directed in general to large, heterogeneous and scattered audiences, and interpersonal communication to relatively small and close-knit

audiences, organisational (or institutional) communication has to aim at more focused publics, each of which has to be addressed a little differently, based largely on differences in demographic factors.

3.2.0 The Nature of Mass Communication

Mass Communication is that form of communication whose delivery system permits the flow of information to large, diverse — and often scattered-audiences, which may also be far removed from the message source.

The message may be small (as in the case of a spot advertisement) but is often voluminous and mass-produced (as in the case of a newspaper issue, or electronic news bulletin). It is largely one-directional and impersonal in style. At the mass media establishment (newspaper/magazine publishing house or radio/television station), the message is mediated (modified, tailored or doctored) by trained intermediaries referred to as “gatekeepers” (sub-editors, writers, editors, and even reporters), so there is usually no guarantee that what the audiences eventually receive is exactly, or even close to, the original message sent by the source. The particular viewpoint from which the gatekeeping (modifying/tailoring/doctored) is done is known as the “slant”, deriving largely from management policy, which is itself a product of many factors (ownership, profit motif, competition and market situation, and, in a few cases, ideological standpoint). The source of the message may be an individual, a group, an organisation/institution, or even a veiled source such as “a reliable/well-placed source”, or “a source close to the Government House”, as is often cited by the mass media. Furthermore, the feedback is often limited, delayed and indirect (such as through letters to the editor). In spite of all these, **Mass Communication** looms large in the social communication spectrum because, in spite of the differences spotlighted, it still serves as a **carrier** for other facets and subsets of communication (as in the case of a print or broadcast report of a two-person interview, a press release, or advertisements for job placement).

Our discussion so far has flowed from Francis Balle’s depiction of mass communication, which situates it as an important facet or subset of human (or social) communication while spotlighting its distinguishing features. There are yet other expert delineations of both human communication and mass communication — such as that by Michael Prosser (1978: 46-61), which presents a more elaborate typology of human communication, based on the direction of the communication and the numbers of participants involved. In a hierarchical order, Prosser projects five communication “sets”, namely **Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Cultural, Collective and Global Communication** sets. The relationship between one set and the next to it in either direction is one of “inclusion”; that is, each set is “included” in the next higher set,

while itself “includes” the next lower set. Thus intrapersonal communication is included within interpersonal communication, which is included within cultural communication, which is included within collective communication, which is included within global communication. Put the other way round, global communication includes collective communication, which includes cultural communication, which includes interpersonal communication, which includes intrapersonal communication (see the diagram on page of Folarin: 2006 (a)) for a clearer graphic picture of Prosser’s delineation). Again, Prosser stresses that **mass communication**, though apparently a minute “subset” of the social communication spectrum — at least graphically — yet it is a predominant subset since it serves as a **carrier** for the other sets and subsets, including even **Global Communication**.

Exercise 4.1

Which of the two delineations of the social communication spectrum as discussed above do you find more illuminating — Francis Balle’s or Michael Prosser’s? Why? Give as many reasons as you can.

3.2.1 Mass Communication as Science

Some scholars (notably Severin and Tankard Jr: 1978, 1987) draw attention to three attributes of Mass Communication as an object of study, namely:

- (i) Mass Communication as Science
- (ii) Mass Communication as Art
- (iii) Mass Communication as Skill.

In this subsection, we shall take a brief look at **Mass Communication as Science**. This is a reference to the principles, theories, research approaches etc. undergirding the study of mass communication and serving to preserve its integrity as a science. These, as you have already seen, are grouped together under the rubric of the “**Scientific Method**”.

Reference to Mass Communication as Science may also be meant to recall the interdisciplinary nature of mass communication, with emphasis on the science aspect of the interdisciplinary grid. In the first place, it may refer to the fact that the relatively young discipline of mass communication has taken much of its bearing, content and methods from the older social science disciplines of psychology and sociology. It touches on anthropology at several of its edges, while political science and economics are not alien to the mass communication fare. In the second place, the natural sciences (pure and applied), especially various branches of physics and engineering, have had and continue to have substantial impact on the development of the content and media, especially the electronic media, of mass communication. However, it does look as if when we talk — in ordinary contexts — of mass communication as Science, we are more concerned with reference to the

principles undergirding the subject and the methods of inquiry associated with it — methods such as come under the rubric of the “**Scientific Method**”, which you are already acquainted with. In the theory class, we are largely concerned with mass communication as **Science**.

3.2.2 Mass Communication as Art

From this perspective, we consider those aspects of mass communication that task the (professional) communicator’s creative abilities, such as planning a newspaper/magazine page, preparing a storyboard for an advertisement or a floor-plan for a television production. Furthermore, your “artistic” endowments and competence should place you in good stead when it comes to writing catchy headlines for news stories, taking memorable television shots at an OB venue, selecting appropriate music or sound effects for a radio programme, or providing appropriate lighting to create a desired mood or atmosphere in a television broadcast programme. How far we can go in considering the “artistic” aspects of mass communication is only limited by the student’s or scholar’s imagination.

3.2.3 Mass Communication as Skill

There are some problems in trying to draw a line between the “artistic” and “skill” aspects of mass communication, since both suggest engagement with the “practical” aspects of the vocation, and may both be involved in a single activity. For example, while casting a catchy headline may be regarded as an art, what about headline counting (an aspect of headline writing)? I suppose many would regard the latter as a skill. Announcing and performance may legitimately be associated with “Art”, but the accomplished announcer/performer must have mastered some skills, including articulation, elocution and proxemics. So the question arises: What is an art and what is a skill? Or, why try to distinguish between them in relation to mass communication? My personal view is that there may still be unanticipated situations or settings in which the distinction comes in useful. The clue I would suggest is to regard as a “Skill” any activity involving:

- (i) Direct interaction with equipment or machine, such as operating a television switcher, handling a camera, taking charge of the recording of a broadcast or music programme, etc.
- (ii) Technical mastery of a working tool, the word “tool”, being understood in a general sense, which would include, for instance, articulation, dance, headline counting, etc. Such “**technical mastery**” may or may not involve direct interaction with equipment.

What all this means is that a given activity in the mass communication process — page planning, headline writing, announcing, performing, etc. — may involve and often involves the simultaneous demonstration of art and skill.

Exercise 4.2

Describe one activity that identifies Mass Communication as an art and one other activity that identifies it as a skill, making clear why you have treated each activity as such.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Mass Communication is variously recognised in the literature as a component of social/human communication, which is, however, clearly distinguished from other components by several interesting characteristics. What is more, it has frequency and visibility advantages over other forms of human communication. Finally, it serves as “**carrier**” for the other components. **No wonder Mass Communication looms so large in the study of communication as a social science.**

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have sought to locate Mass Communication within the social/human communication spectrum. At the same time, we have seen how clearly distinguished Mass Communication is from the other components of the spectrum, and why it looms so large in communication studies. The reasons, we have seen, include its greater frequency of occurrence, its greater reach — thanks to ever-advancing technologies — and the fact that it serves as an indispensable **carrier** for the other components. We have also taken a rather cursory look at the distinctions recognised by some scholars among the “**science**”, “**art**” and “**skill**” aspects of Mass Communication, our finding being that while it is fairly easy to separate those activities that tend to mark Mass Communication out as “Science” (mainly theory, research and statistics), it is a little more problematic to separate the activities that mark it out as “Art” or as “Skill”, especially since both concepts touch on the more practical aspects of Mass Communication, and are often involved in one and the same activity. Nevertheless, we have ventured to suggest a clue, in the very unlikely event of such a distinction turning out to be crucial.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

What is in a name? Try to answer that question as follows:

Either through the Internet or through personal contacts (not necessarily through personal visits, although that would be ideal), find out what name is

given to the department in which communication is studied in each of the Federal Universities offering a relevant programme. Find out to what extent the differences in name translate into differences in the contents of the programme. Use your finding(s) to offer advice to the National Universities Commission (NUC) on your ideal communication curriculum and ideal name(s) for professional communication departments in Nigerian universities.

(Note: You are advised to seek guidance from your tutor before embarking on the assignment).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Balle, F. (1985) *The Social Communication Trial: Reports on Mass Communication, No. 74*. Paris: UNESCO. (You may wish to consult UNESCO Office in Nigeria).

Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.

Prosser, M. (1978) *The Cultural Dialogue: An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (Would be useful if you could lay your hands on it).

MODULE 1 (Contd.)**INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES**

Unit 1: • What is Theory?

- Characteristics of Theory

Unit 2: • Why Do We Study Theories?

- How Do We Arrive at Theories?

Unit 3: • General and Specific Kinds of Theory.

- Theory Distinguished from Some Analogous Concepts.

Unit 4: • Human Communication Theory and Mass Communication Theory.

Unit 5: • The Communication Process / Communication Models.

**UNIT 5: • THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS /
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3.1 The Communication Process.

3.2 Communication Models and their Evolution.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study the following:

- The Communication Process or System.
- Communication Models and their Evolution.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the Communication Process or System.
- (ii) Discuss Communication Models and their Evolution.
- (iii) Explain the relevance of Communication Models to Everyday Reality in Mass Communication

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Communication Process or System

Professors De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975, 1987) spotlight three broad but fundamental questions that provided a focus for mass communication theory and research after World War II (WW II). The three questions will be listed here in the following order:

- (1) How does mass communication take place? Is it different from other types of communication? (It is the answer to this question that will be attempted in this unit).
- (2) What has been the impact of societies on their mass media? (The answer to this question will be provided in Module 2 where we discuss **Normative Theories**).
- (3) What has been the impact of the mass media on society? (We shall attempt to answer that question in Module 3, under **Social Scientific/Media Effects Theories**).

The nature of Mass Communication is revealed to a large extent by an understanding of the Communication Process or System. The term *process* is used to indicate that the communication act is dynamic, not static; and that it is continuous, not piecemeal. The term *system* on the other hand, captures the fact that the communication event consists of various interconnected, interdependent and interacting components, such that the whole system cannot function (at least not effectively) if any of the normal components is missing or defective. As the saying goes, a chain is as strong as the weakest link in it. There are many communication systems but, compared to other systems, such as animal communication, the human communication system is highly developed and very complex. Its study has, however, been fairly simplified through the concept of the communication process, which began to be crystallised in rudimentary form (from about the end of WW II) in what came to be known as **Communication Models**. Various communication scholars as well as scholars in cognate fields began to project (mainly graphic)

representations of the way they thought the communication process/system operates.

Exercise 5.1

Explore the concepts of **Process** and **System** (through dictionaries, encyclopaedias and even the Internet) and then comment on the appropriateness of these terms for describing a communication act or event.

3.2 Communication Models and Their Evolution

A model is a miniature, a highly selective representation of reality — a symbolic representation, designed to help us visualise the relationships among various elements of a structure, system or process; an object, event or act. For an example of a structural model, consider the architect's model of a proposed building, campus or estate. An architect's model for a proposed 4-flat, 2-storey building was as "big" as a loaf of bread; while a five-square-mile university campus has been modelled on a 6' by 4' panel board! The model's builder or formulator focuses on the aspects of the pertinent object or reality which he finds most important for his purpose. Thus no single model can be expected to present a holistic picture of reality. And hence the existence of many communication models in some cases, several communication models by a single scholar (e.g. Charles Osgood, Wilbur Schramm etc).

In spite of this limitation, however, communication models help us to visualise, analyse and discuss various complex processes and issues that would be otherwise difficult to explain. Even you as a budding communication scholar can construct your own models to help you understand some communication issues better or facilitate your explanation of them to others. The test of the appropriateness and efficiency of each model will consist in the extent to which it succeeds in advancing the reader's understanding of the issue(s) in focus; that is the extent to which it succeeds in clarifying issues that they found confusing or puzzling before coming in contact with your proposed model.

From about the middle of the immediate past century, i.e. shortly after the end of WW II, scholars began to propose models which sought to explicate the communication process. Two of the seminal works in this area were:

- (i) The Shannon and Weaver Model, otherwise referred to as the Mathematical Theory of Communication (precursor of Information Theory in Electronic Engineering?)
- (ii) The Lasswell Model, which was part of an extensive treatise on the functions of communication in society.

3.2.1 The Shannon and Weaver Model (1948-49)

Claude Shannon was a telephone transmission engineer, and his interest was not in mass communication as such but in the understanding and improvement of telephone communication. He was concerned to show what happened to "information bits" as they "travel" from the source to the receiver. In the process, he isolated the key elements of the

communication process, i.e. the source, message, transmitter, channel, receiver and destination. His colleague, Warren Weaver, later added the element of feedback, the absence of which was identified as a weakness of the initial Shannon model. Another weakness, from the point of view of human communication, was that the theory decidedly excluded “meaning”, which is a cardinal consideration in human communication but which could befuddle Shannon’s engineering treatise. However, the key elements of the communication process as identified by Shannon provided a bearing for all later graphic communication models. These elements may be explained as follows:-

- (i) **The Communication Chain:** All communications are composed of chains or systems; and a system or chain is no stronger than its weakest element or link.
- (ii) **The Information/Communication Source:** The entity (individual, group or organisation) that originates the message. Otherwise called encoder, originator, etc.
- (iii) **The Message:** The information itself, which may be verbal or nonverbal, visual, auditory, tactual or olfactory.
- (iv) **The Transmitter:** The person, establishment (or equipment) that encodes and transmits the message on behalf of the source (the transmitter may itself be the source).
- (v) **The Channel:** The avenue through which the message is transmitted to the receiver. It may be electrical, mechanical or human. It is often used interchangeably with “medium”.
- (vi) **The Receiver:** The entity (individual, group, organisation) at which the message is targeted; otherwise called decoder, audience, etc.
- (vii) **The Destination:** The central “nervous system” (e.g. the human brain) where the message is processed for final use.
- (viii) **Noise:** Anything added to the information signal but not intended by the information source, and therefore causing distortion in the message.

Shannon recognised only “channel noise” but later studies interpolated “semantic noise” which arises from verbal mismanagement; and “psychological noise”, resulting from the current state of the mind of the participants.

- (ix) **Feedback:** The signal relayed from the receiver back to the source about the accuracy of reception of the message.

Shannon also added the concepts of:

- (x) **Channel Capacity:**

- (a) A channel's absolute ability to transmit the output of an information source (i.e. whether it is able to do so at all).
- (b) The amount of information a channel can transmit per unit time. For example, *it is* known that the eye can resolve and transmit far more information than the brain can process and store within a given time.
- (xi) **Redundancy:** The part of the message, which is not determined by free choice of the sender (i.e. which is not “entropy”, “randomness”, or “uncertainty” in the information theory sense). Redundancy is superfluous because, without it, the message would be essentially complete (In masscomm terms, consider the redundancy involved in prime-time news — the “headlines”, the “main news”, then the “major points”).
- (xii) **The Idea of Correspondence:** Systems, including communication systems, can be corresponding or non-corresponding. For example, a written code and a telegraphic code (*like* the spoken verbal code and electronic code) are non-corresponding. For example, a written code and a telegraphic code (*like* the spoken verbal code and electronic code) are non-corresponding, so one has to be re-coded or “transcoded” *into* the other for purposes of *transmission* and reception. In information theory terms, communication takes place when two corresponding systems, coupled together through one or more non-corresponding systems, assume identical states as a result of signal transfer along a chain (Schramm: 1954). The coupling is known as the “gatekeeper point”.

We have gone to this length *in discussing* the Shannon and Weaver model to let the student see what information theory bequeathed to Mass Communication theory. However, because information Theory represents essentially a structural system, it cannot be used to fully explicate a functional system such as human communication.

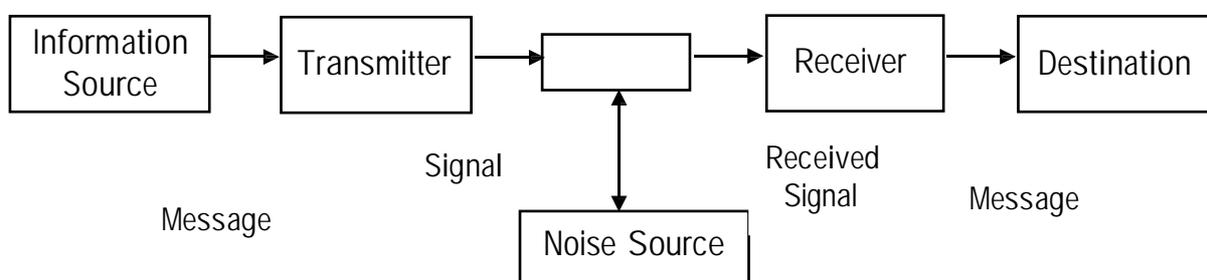


Fig. 1: The Shannon and Weaver Model

3.2.2 The Lasswell Model (1948)

At about the same time that Engineer Shannon was proposing his model, social scientist, Harold Lasswell, was also busy analysing the functions of (Mass) Communication in Society. In 1948, he published his findings, in which he assigned three functions to the media, namely:

- (i) Surveillance of the Environment (the news function);
- (ii) Correlation of the different parts of the Environment (the editorial function); and
- (iii) Transmission of the cultural heritage from one generation to the other (the cultural transmission function).

Of immediate relevance to our subject matter here is Lasswell's proposed verbal model to describe the process through which these communication functions are carried out. To understand this, the Model requires that we answer the questions:

Who ?

Says what ?

In which Channel ?

To Whom ?

With what Effect?

Correspondences can be identified between Lasswell's verbal model and Shannon's graphic model as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) | Who | Information Source |
| (2) | Say(s) what..... | Message |
| (3) | (In) which (Channel)..... | Channel |
| (4) | (To) whom..... | Receiver |
| (5) | (With) what (Effect)..... | Destination |

(Table 1: Correspondences between the Shannon and the Lasswell Models)

With the addition of "How" (and the acronym "5ws and H"), Lasswell's verbal model has come to provide a working guide for modern journalists.

3.2.3 The Westley–McLean Model

Here Westley and McLean gave specific attention to mass communication as distinct from a general communication model. Figures 2a and 2b below indicate the differences depicted by Westley and McLean between interpersonal communication (Figure 2a) and mass communication (Figure 2b). The diagrams show graphically how feedback is direct and uncomplicated in interpersonal communication but indirect and complex in mass communication.

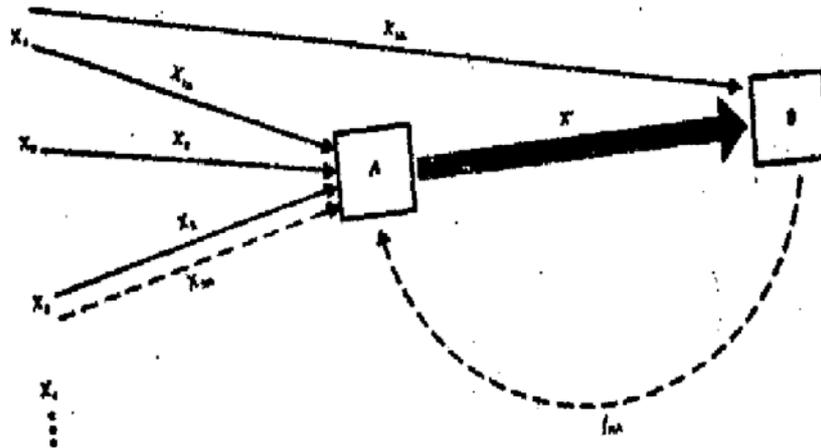


Fig. 2a:

The Westley–McLean Model (for Face-to-Face Interpersonal Communication)

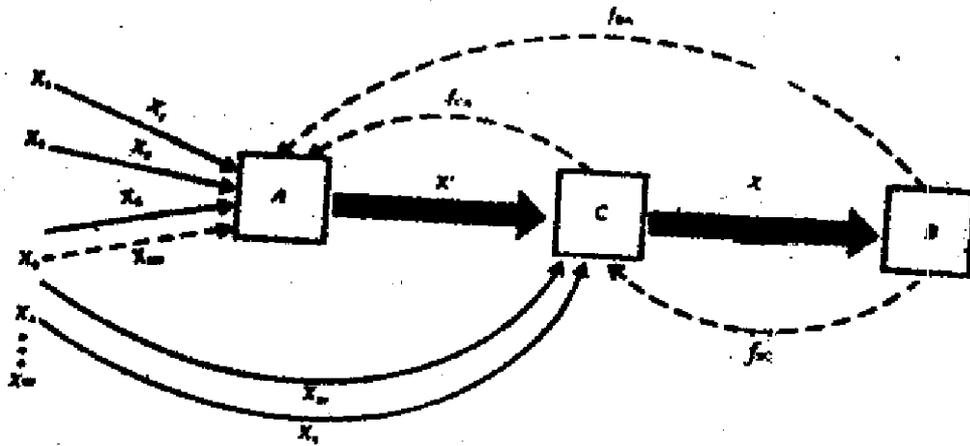


Fig. 2b:

The Westley–McLean Model (For Mass Communication)

Besides the key elements of the communication process, the authors added:

- (i) Objects of orientation (or communication stimuli) — for both interpersonal and Mass Communication, and
- (ii) The “gatekeeper point” for mass communication.

On the whole, the Westley–McLean Model constitutes one of the milestones in our cumulative understanding of the communication process in general, and the mass communication process in particular. In face-to-face communication (figure 2a), the source (A) focuses on objects of orientation or on a specific stimulus (X) in his environment, and designs a message (X1, X2...), which he sends to the receiver (B). The receiver immediately returns to the source (A) a feedback (fBA).

But in mass mediated communication (Figure 2b), there is an intervening element, the gatekeeper (C) who, after receiving the messages (X1, X2....) from the source (A), or personally focusing on some stimuli (X) in the environment, forms his own message (X¹), and finally transmits it to the receiver (B). In effect, the gate keeping act constitutes a filtering process, such that the message that gets to the receiver may not be exactly as originated by the source. Furthermore, the feedback in mass communication may flow in three directions:

- (i) from receiver (B) to gatekeeper (C); (Feedback fBC)
- (ii) from receiver (B) to source (A); (Feedback fBA)
- (iii) from receiver (C) to source (A) (Feedback fCA)

The source (A) or receiver (B) may be an individual, a group or a system. The message may be oral or visual, spoken or written, graphic or gestural.

3.2.4 The De Fleur Model (1958)

This is a generalised model, which seeks to explain various forms of communication in one graphic construct. The author acknowledges his debt to previous models. In addition, the model has taken over some ideas from the work of the “father” of Cybernetics, Nobert Wiener (1948), on self-generating and self-maintaining systems. What raises De Fleur’s model to a superior level of conceptualisation is its depiction of the cyclical (or helical) nature of the communication process. This underscores the interchangeability of the source/encoder and receiver/decoder roles. De Fleur also recognises that “noise” can emanate from any of the key elements and not just from the channel or the source. *Figure 3* below captures De Fleur’s ideas about the general communication (including the mass communication) process.

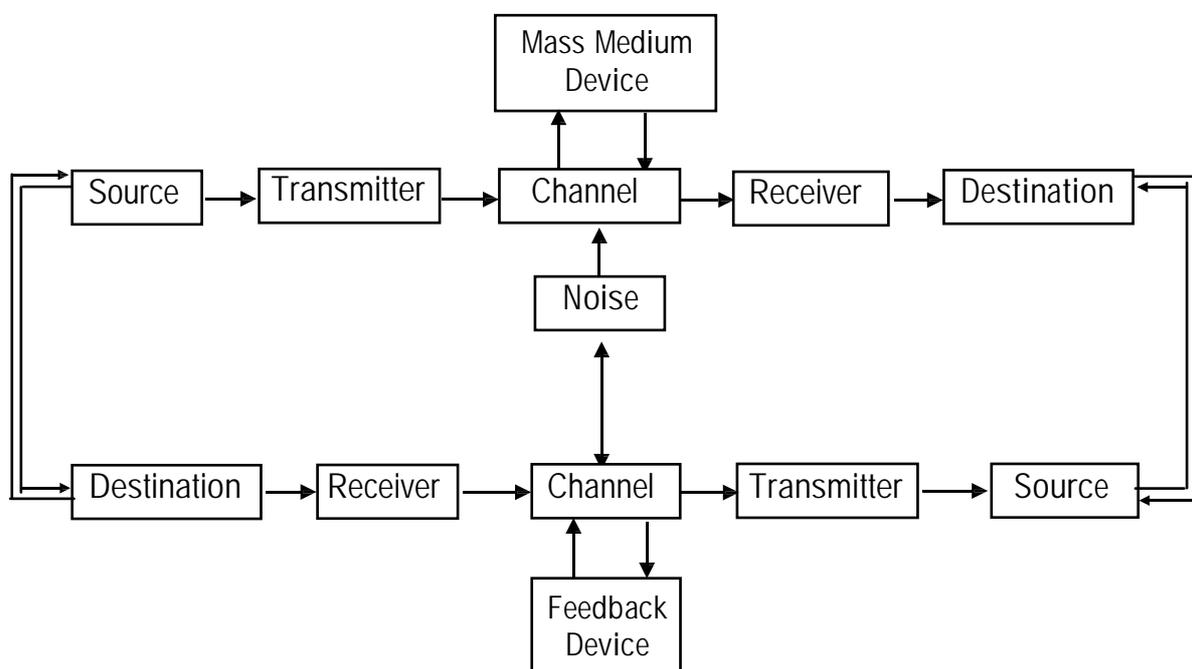


Figure 3: The De Fleur Communication Model (The “Isomorph”)

3.2.5 The HUB Model (1974)

HUB stands for Hiebert, Ungurait and Bohn, the surnames of the three authors of the book in which this model is proposed.

As is indicated in the diagram below, the model visualises the Mass Communication process as a set of concentric circles representing a series of actions and reactions. It visualises the communication message as a “pebble” dropped into the “pool” (of human affairs). The message (here our “pebble”) impacts upon and is impacted upon by many factors as it “ripples” out to the “shore” (the audiences) and bounces back to the “centre” (the communicator). These affected and affecting factors are the components of the total communication process, and they include:

Communicator(s): Subsuming a complex institution made up of the editorial and production staff as well as the talent and, more important, the proprietor.

Content(s): Subsuming all the uses and functions which the media are made to serve — information, interpretation, education, persuasion, sales and advertising, and entertainment.

Codes: Variations in the symbols/systems used, including language symbols.

Gatekeeper(s): Referring primarily to the individuals within the media who make decisions about what is communicated, how it is communicated and when it is communicated.

Medium/Media: Referring here to the total system or institution of newspaper, radio, television, etc.

Regulators: For example, the courts, governments, consumers, professional organisations, pressure-groups etc. who formulate laws, restrictions and informal pressures which control the content and structure of the media.

Filters: Referring to the culture systems through which people view the world as portrayed by the mass media.

Audiences: Receivers of communication messages, consisting of heterogeneous entities and in most cases unclassifiable.

Noise: Both channel noise and semantic noise and possibly psychological noise — which are well-known phenomena and occur in various forms such as static in radio and television, out-of-focus motion picture, blurred portions of newspaper, vocabulary beyond the linguistic level of hearer, lack of proper contextualisation of meanings, biased ideas or messages, etc.

Feedback: The communicated response from the audience to a message.

Amplification: Physical and psychological reinforcement of mass-mediated message caused by the channels they travel through.

Thus the HUB model pictures the communication process as consisting of the above elements through which the message ripples out and bounces back, with consequences either way.

THE HUB MODEL OF MASS COMMUNICATION

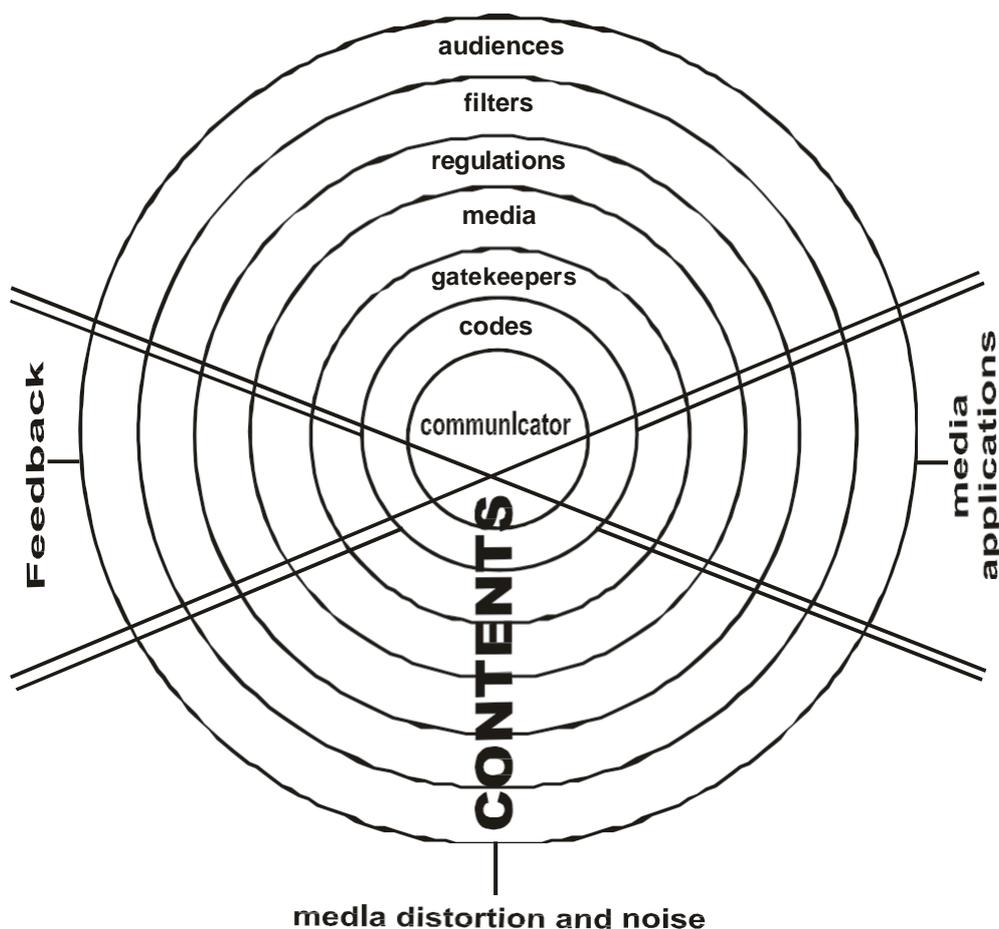


Fig. 4: The HUB Model

Other Models: Other communication models proposed between 1948 and 1960 include:

- (i) The *George Miller Model* (1951): Proposed in the context of language structure and performance.
- (ii) *The Charles Osgood Models* (1954): Which stressed the essence of communication as a social process.
- (iii) *The Wilbur Schramm Models* (1954): In one of which he introduced the idea of “Field of Experience”, which must be shared by decoder and encoder, for communication to be effective.
- (iv) *The George Gerbner Model* (1956): interested mainly in the question of perception and representation.
- (v) *The David Berlo Model* (1960): Stressing the importance of the skills, attitudes and knowledge, which the participants bring into the communication transaction as well as the culture and social system within which they are communicating.
- (vi) *The McCombs Triangular or ABC Model* (1960s): Drawing attention to the importance of the “Orientations” of decoder and encoder toward each other and to the object of communication.

Although these other models were not specifically directed at mass communication, they have varying degrees of relevance for mass communication, which is, after all, an aspect of general human communication.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In spite of their limitations(s), Communication Models come in useful for the explication of complex communication issues.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have — in answer to the question: how does mass communication take place? — taken a cursory look at communication models, with emphasis on those models that deal directly with, or provide a bearing for our understanding of, the mass communication process.

We are concerned with communication models (mass communication models in particular) because of the important place they occupied in the seminal studies of mass communication and in the formulation of mass communication theories beginning from the decade of the end of World War II. Mass Communication models provide an invaluable aid in the unravelling of the *different* aspects of the complex subject and of the theories involved. Indeed, communication models may be said to have constituted the initial phase of the evolution of “social scientific” theories in the field of mass communication.

Defining a model as a simplified graphic or verbal symbolisation designed to help us visualise the various elements of a complex structure, process or system, we went on to examine a few communication models, paying particular attention to:

- (i) The Shannon and Weaver model (1948-49) which made the graphic extraction of the elements involved in the communication process while proposing the now celebrated mathematical theory of communication. It provided an indispensable bearing for later graphic models of communication.
- (ii) Lasswell's verbal model of communication (1948), centred around the "5WS" which has provided a working formula for modern journalists.
- (iii) The Westley–McLean model (1957) which first included the "gatekeeper point" as an element of the mass communication process, to distinguish the latter from the interpersonal communication process which is relatively free of the technological media interface.
- (iv) The De Fleur model (1958) which first clearly represented the communication process (mass and interpersonal) as a cyclical process, thus underscoring the two-way structure of the true human communication.
- (v) The HUB model (1974), which visualises the impact of a communication message as a ripple caused by a pebble or small stone thrown into a pool of water, with all the ramifications of such a ripple.

We finally mentioned in passing other communication models, which are of general relevance to human communication.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Indicate which of the models explained in this unit you have found most illuminating and pinpoint the features which make it so.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.

Hiebert, Unguray, and Bohn (1995) *Mass Media V*.

MODULE 2

NORMATIVE THEORIES

- Unit 1: • Authoritarian Media Theory.
 • Soviet–Communist Media Theory.
- Unit 2: • Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory.
 • Social Responsibility Media Theory.
- Unit 3: • Democratic–Participant Media Theory.
 • Development Media Theory.
- Unit 4: • The Advent of Development Journalism.
- Unit 5: • The Evolution of Development Communication Paradigms.

- UNIT 1: • AUTHORITARIAN MEDIA THEORY**
 • **SOVIET COMMUNIST MEDIA THEORY**

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
- Authoritarian Media Theory
 - Libertarian (Free Press) Theory

- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss two specific normative theories:

- Authoritarian Media Theory
- Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define Authoritarian and Libertarian Media Theories
- (ii) Discuss the times and circumstances in which they emerged.
- (iii) Cite examples of their impact on contemporary media structure and performance.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Authoritarian Media Theory

As we were already told, the basic assumption of normative theory is that the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social, cultural and political milieu within which it operates (Siebert et. al. 1956: 1, Kunczick, 1988: 46). We have also learnt that there are six specific normative theories recognised in the current literature, namely Authoritarian, Libertarian, Soviet–Communist, Social Responsibility, Democratic–Participant and Development Media Theories. The first of them, Authoritarian Media Theory, will be handled in this subsection.

Authoritarian Media Theory is generally recognised as the oldest of the press theories, and it dates from the 16th century. It derived from the philosophy of absolutism, in which “recognition of the truth” was entrusted to only a small number of elites or ‘sages’, able to exercise leadership in a kind of top-down approach (Kunczick, op. cit.). Whether the ownership was private or public, authoritarian media existed to service the government of the day, and were forbidden to criticise it or its functionaries. The term “authoritarian”, according to McQuail (1987: 111), aptly defines press arrangements in societies where the media first began — monarchies in which the press was subordinated to state power and the interests of a ruling elite. This was notably true of 16th century England. But it can equally appropriately be employed to describe much of what happens today in countries where the press is owned and/or directly controlled by government, and those segments of the press (if any) that

are not under government's direct control are apparently expected by the ruling elite to at least maintain neutrality, even in the face of bad governance. This view, according to Siebert et al (op. cit.), set the original pattern for most of the national press systems of the world, and still persists in some.

The instruments of authoritarian control of the media in contemporary times are many and varied, and they are employed in various combinations by different authoritarian governments. They include repressive legislation, heavy taxation, direct or subtle state control of staffing of media establishments and of essential production inputs such as newsprint, and even such objectionable measures such as prior censorship, and punitive suspension of publication. Total proscription has indeed been employed in a few cases of media perceived as unfriendly to the government of the day. The degree of authoritarianism with reference to press control tends to vary inversely with the level of a country's liberal democracy but directly with the level of primitive genius of the leadership to acquire and hold on to power, as well as the degree of sycophancy and disagreement within the press itself.

Exercise 1.1

Objectively examine press–government relationship in your country; see whether you can find any traces of authoritarianism; and explore the ways in which those traces arose.

3.2 Soviet–Communist Media Theory

This specific normative theory was a derivative of Authoritarian Media Theory transplanted to the Soviet–Communist sphere. There is the difference, however, that while Authoritarian Media theory served to maintain the *status quo*, Soviet–Communist Media theory was aimed at promoting development, as understood and prosecuted by the Communist–Socialist party (or “Workers’ Party”). According to the theory, the main task of the press was to promote the socialist system and maintain the sovereignty of the proletariat via the Communist party. In any case, the media were under direct state control and managed as an arm of government. Outside government, they could only be used by loyal and orthodox party members. It will be observed that while the Soviet–Communist Media theory sought to use the media to support development and change towards the attainment of the communist state, it was like the Authoritarian Media theory in subjecting the press to direct state control.

Soviet–Communist Media theory also differs from two other leading Western media theories (to be discussed later), Libertarian (Free Press) Media theory and Social Responsibility Media Theory in that:

- (i) Whereas the two Western theories place a premium on “topicality” i.e. currency and social relevance) in news presentation, Soviet–Communist Media theory's premium was on “partiality”, which technically means that every issue must be seen and interpreted from an ideological perspective — from the standpoint of the communist party. **Partiality**

(the “Synonym” in a Western theory would probably be **advocacy**) was one of the four working principles of the communist press, the other three being — quite interestingly — **truthfulness, commitment to the people, and mass character.**

- (ii) Whereas the two Western press theories assign an economic function to the press, the Eastern theory removed the profit motif from press operations, since — as a service arm of government — it should be financed by government.
- (iii) Whereas the two Western media theories expect the media to raise social conflict to the level of discussion (with suggestions for solution), Soviet–Communist Media theory forbade organisation of press structure along the lines of political conflict, since socialist societies aspire to become “classless” societies.

Soviet–Communist Media Theory emerged from the complete reorganisation of the Russian press following the 1917 revolution, jointly deriving from Authoritarian Media Theory on the one hand, and on the other hand from the principles enunciated by Marx and Engels and the application rules worked out by Stalin. The theory (while it lasted) provided a model for most of the media in countries under the sphere of influence of the then Soviet Union (e.g. Tanzania in Africa).

Contemporary concern about Soviet-Communist Media Theory had to do with the fact that the theory, rather than facilitate the emergence of a classless society, merely substituted the tyranny of the aristocracy and other power elites with the tyranny of the proletariat. As Michael Kunczick (1988: 77) summed up the situation:

... the main task of the media in existing socialist systems is to discipline people and shield them from information about the possibilities of a better, freer life.

However, as Kunczick also admitted by implication, it was probably too early to predict likely developments in the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and in Russia in particular, after the contemporary political eruptions subsumed under **glasnost** and **perestroika** had subsided. Perhaps it is still too early even now, although there have been some rather impressionistic indications that press structure and performance in Russia are already succumbing to Western Capitalist influence in several respects, possibly including the ideological.

Exercise 1.2

From the Internet and any accessible hard source(s), find out as much information as you can on the current state of media structure and performance in Russia.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You will probably have observed that the two specific theories we have so far studied have confirmed the general normative theory's assumption that the press takes on the form and coloration of the social and political milieu within which it operates. Authoritarian Media Theory conformed to monarchical England's social and political milieu in the 16th century and possibly to monarchical/aristocratic Russia's social political milieu prior to the October Revolution (1917) while Soviet–Communist Media Theory obviously fitted in with the new dispensation that emerged after the 1917 revolution.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have made a brief study of two specific normative theories namely Authoritarian Media Theory and Soviet–Communist Media Theory. We learnt that Authoritarian Media Theory prevailed in monarchical/aristocratic socio-political settings such as 16th century England and pre-Revolution Russia. Authoritarian Media Theory subordinates the press to the ruling power, which it is also forbidden to criticise. We also saw the typical arsenal of control which the ruling power employs to make the press toe the line. We were also told that Authoritarian Media Theory is not just a historical phenomenon: there still exist press systems that operate at the mercy of the ruling powers, or otherwise engage in a never-ending struggle for press freedom. As for Soviet–Communist Media Theory, we learnt that it emerged with the ascendancy of the Communist party and the Soviet political conglomerate following the 1917 Russian revolution. Although the media theory (as a concomitant of the Marxist political theory) was basically aimed at promoting the ideals of a projected “classless” society, anxiety soon grew (especially in the West) that it only succeeded in substituting the tyranny of the proletariat for the tyranny of the elite. The future will tell what finally happens to the theory after the dividends of **glasnost** and **perestroika** have fully materialised.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

The near-equivalent in Western Media practice to the socialist principle of “**partiality**” would be “**advocacy**”. Write a two-page essay, discussing what you understand by the term “Advocacy Journalism”.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

- Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfol Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.
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MODULE 2 (Contd.)

NORMATIVE THEORIES

UNIT 2: • LIBERTARIAN (FREE PRESS) MEDIA THEORY
 • SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MEDIA THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory
 - 3.2 Social Responsibility Media Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study two other specific normative theories:

- Libertarian (Free Pres) Media Theory
- Social Responsibility Media Theory

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory and describe its antecedent and subsequent circumstances.
- (ii) Define Social Responsibility Theory and describe its origin and tenets.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory

Libertarian media are well known for their philosophy of rationalism and natural rights. They exist to check on government, and that demands that they be free of government control. Central to this theory was John Milton's idea of the "self-rightening process of the free marketplace of ideas", with the press here conceived as this marketplace. The underlying reasoning was that good ideas would drive out bad ideas if both were guaranteed free expression in the "marketplace". Also influential was the social, political and economic ferment of the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and North America.

In its most basic form, libertarian or free press theory prescribes that an individual should be free to publish what he or she likes and to hold and express opinions freely. Soon the demand for freedom was extended to include freedom of association or assembly with others. However, the theory does not overtly prescribe freedom to defame, to indulge in unbridled obscenity, to assault individual privacy or to commit sedition — most or all of which have been perpetrated at one time or the other, in one place or the other, in the name of libertarianism or press freedom. In short, libertarian media theory does not anywhere advocate press immunity to the rule of law and the canons of civilised social conduct. It does assert, however, that people (including media people) should be seen as rational beings, able to distinguish between truth and falsehood — which renders prior censorship of media fare superfluous. It also advocates that the press be seen as partner with government in the search for truth, rather than as a tool in the hands of government. The actual advent of the theory coincided more or less with the emergence of the press from official control in the West in the 17th century and it flourished most in the earlier part of the 19th century, during which reference to the press as **The Fourth Estate of the Realm** emerged and became common. The theory has since become a widespread justification of demands for press freedom, especially in countries that claim to be democratic (or democratising). The clearest expression of the libertarian or free press media theory today can be found in the First Amendment to the American Constitution, which expressly stipulates that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ... or of the press."

Exercise 2.1

Libertarianism and Authoritarianism may be assumed to be two extremes of the world's socio-political philosophies and press theories, and each country of the

world may be located with an inclination towards the right or the left of centre on the continuum. Study the expositions on Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory and Authoritarian Media Theory (Unit 1), and:

- (i) Find at least two justifications for such an assumption.
- (ii) Try to locate your country on the assumed continuum, giving cogent reasons for your placement.

3.2 **Social Responsibility Media Theory**

Social Responsibility Media Theory owes its origin to the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, set up in the United States of America in 1947 to re-examine the concept of press freedom as enunciated in the Libertarian (Free Press) Media Theory. This was because the so-called “free marketplace of ideas” had failed to guarantee press freedom and to yield the expected benefits to society. Rather, the commercial development of the press and unforeseen developments in media technology had tended to limit access to the media for individuals and groups, and to concentrate media power in the hands of a few businessmen and media professionals who had the means to set up media empires. These developments with the attendant lowering of standards in public taste encouraged by the prevailing libertarian psyches made Americans think that the media had to be kept to certain social standards while at the same time ensuring that press freedom as guaranteed by the constitution was preserved. In general, socially acceptable press behaviour was to be anchored on self-regulation, but if the press would not voluntarily behave properly, then there must be definite social structures to ensure that it does behave in compliance with recognised social standards.

The chief duty of the media operating with this theory is to raise conflict to the plane of discussion (with proposals for resolution). In principle, the media can be used by anyone who has an idea to express, but they are forbidden to invade private rights or disrupt vital social structures or interests. The only serious constraints on them are exercised by community opinion, consumer protest and professional ethics.

The Hutchins Commission actually postulated six functions for the press (see Siebert et al, 1956: 74; Kunczick, 1988: 48 and McQuail, 1987: 16 ff):

1. To serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible.
2. To keep the public well informed to enable it to take self-determined actions.
3. To protect the rights of the individual by acting as watchdog over the leadership (especially government).
4. To serve the economic system, for instance by bringing together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising.

5. To provide good entertainment (whatever “good” may mean in the culture at any point in time).
6. To preserve financial autonomy and independence, so as not to become dependent on any special interests and influences.

As Kunczick (1988: 48) observes, the main departure from the tenets of the libertarian (or free press) media theory lies in the demand for social responsibility which, if need be, can be forced on the press by other institutions, should the press act contrary to the demands of social responsibility. This must not, however, be misused as legitimation of any attempt at a comprehensive censorship. About the best known institution set up (in America) to enforce the principles of social responsibility on the (broadcast) media is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), on which Nigeria’s own National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has apparently been modelled. The National News Council (NNC), which is more involved with the print press is not as visible or powerful as the FCC, and looks more like a voluntary creation of the press itself. There are professional associations such as the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). And there are pressure groups like the once powerful Action for Children Television (ACT) which has now disbanded, having “accomplished the purpose of its creation”. Indeed, it did succeed in getting virtually all advertisements banned from children’s television!

All these government agencies, professional associations and pressure groups serve to keep the American press on its toes and keep the ideals of social responsibility alive, while also helping to maintain “a respectable distance” between the government and the press. Happily, such agencies, associations and groups are also springing up in Nigeria to perform similar roles and help advance our democracy.

Exercise 2.2

Identify at least three agencies, associations and/or pressure groups which help to enforce social responsibility on the press in Nigeria, describing the contributions of each of them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have seen in this unit that the two normative theories of our concern, namely Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory and Social Responsibility Media Theory, were also veritable products of their environments. Libertarian Media Theory grew in the context of the social and political ferment in Europe and America of the 18th and 19th centuries. Social Responsibility Media Theory was largely a product of deliberate social engineering triggered by public discontent with the outcome of the operations of the Libertarian Media Theory. The press, indeed, takes on the form and coloration of its sustaining environment!

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have considered two more normative theories. We saw that Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory grew as a concomitant of the search for freedom in the social, political and intellectual spheres which characterised the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America. We saw how the quest for press freedom soon extended to include other freedoms — those of speech generally, of thought and of association. We saw how the press grew in importance as a result of the newfound freedom. However, we also saw how people soon became disenchanted with the impact of the freedom on press structure and performance, and how the public discontent gave birth to a new normative theory: Social Responsibility Media Theory. The distinguishing feature of the new theory, we saw, is that it prescribed regulatory institutions which could enforce social responsibility on the press, should it fail to perform responsibly through self-regulation.

6.9 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Soviet-Communist Media Theory was essentially a derivative of Authoritarian Media Theory, just as Social Responsibility Media Theory was a derivative of Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory. Hence the four normative theories so far studied are sometimes referred to as “The Four-in-Two Press Theories”. Write a two-page essay with the title “The Four-in-Two Press Theories”, in which you try to justify the nomenclature in a summary of the situation so far.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

- Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.
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MODULE 2 (Contd.)

NORMATIVE THEORIES

UNIT 3: • DEMOCRATIC–PARTICIPANT MEDIA THEORY • DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Democratic–Participant Media Theory
 - 3.2 Development Media Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study the last two specific normative theories in the extant literature, namely:

Democratic–Participant Media Theory
Development Media Theory

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define Democratic–Participant Media Theory and describe its current status.
- (ii) Define Development Media Theory and describe its genesis and *raison d’etre*.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Democratic–Participant Media Theory

The main thrust of Democratic–Participant Media Theory lies in its insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers. The theory is, according to McQuail, associated in the main with the more developed liberal democracies but it lacks full legitimation as yet and is yet to be precisely incorporated into the operating norms of any specific media institutions. Needless to add that an appeal to its tenets is discernible in some of the developing societies, too.

Democratic–Participant theory reflects public disillusionment with both of its predecessors: Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories, because of their failure to deliver social benefits expected of them. It reflects public “reaction against the commercialisation and monopolisation of privately owned media and against the centralism and bureaucratisation of public broadcasting institutions, established according to the norms of social responsibility” (McQuail, 1983: 98; Kunczick, 1988:49). The theory sees public broadcasting organisations in particular as too elitist, too susceptible to the whims and caprices of those in government, too rigid in structure and too slavish to professional ideals, even those ideals that tend to hinder social responsibility. Of course democratic–participant theory also reflects disappointment with democratic political structures which, and politicians who, have become increasingly alienated from their origins. To those, it tends to say: “go back to your roots!”

With reference to the media, the theory calls for greater attention to “the needs, interests and aspirations of the receiver in a political society” (Kunczick, op. cit. 49). In the place of monopolisation, it calls for pluralism; in place of centralism it advocates decentralisation and localism. It insists that media conglomerates be replaced or at least juxtaposed with small-scale media enterprises. It calls for “horizontal” in place of “top-down” communication, a concern for feedback in social-political communication and an acknowledgement of the feedback so as to realise the “completed communication circuit”. In essence, the theory accords priority to the “associational” mode over the “command” mode, and, even the “service” mode, of socio-political communication. (The “Associational” mode, *a la* McQuail (1983) assumes equality between sender and receiver; the “service” mode assumes reciprocity of interests between the two, while the “command”

mode assumes superiority of the sender to the receiver in a one-way; command communication track).

It holds that the mass media have become too socially important to be left in the hands of professionals! In sum, democratic–participant theory may be regarded as the press world equivalent of “grassroot democracy”.

Exercise 3.1

Democratic–Participant Media Theory has been referred to somewhere, as a press theory of the future. Spend some time reflecting on why you agree or disagree with this view.

3.2 Development Media Theory

This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviour of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as “developing countries” or “third world countries”. It, too, is not easy to locate in any particular institution or country, because it encompasses a great variety of fluctuating economic and political conditions. (Consider that India, Brazil and Korea on the one hand; and Nigeria, Togo and Bangladesh on the other, are all lumped together under the category of “developing” or “third world” countries.) However, a legitimating principle — at the time the theory began to emerge — was that there were (and still are) certain common circumstances or characteristics of developing countries that make it difficult to apply the other normative theories to the press therein. These include:

- (1) Absence or inadequate supply of requisite communication infrastructure;
- (2) Relatively limited supply of requisite professional skills;
- (3) Relative lack of cultural production resources;
- (4) Relatively limited availability of media-literate audiences;
- (5) Dependence on the developed world for technology, skill and cultural products.

The reader will probably agree that even these “legitimating circumstances” or “common characteristics” vary greatly between the two sets of developing countries illustrated above. But they tend to be more homogeneous in one respect: their primary aim in media use is — at least professedly — development. They also tend to give priority to theories that emphasise grassroots participation.

The major tenets of development media theory as summed up by McQuail (1987: 121) are as follows:

- (i) Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.

- (ii) Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
- (iii) Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language(s).
- (iv) Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- (v) Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- (vi) In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operation; and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.

McQuail and other scholars like him certainly deserve credit for their penetrating insight, especially into what appears to be the common line of thinking among leaders of developing countries. But, certainly, the expression of these principles or tenets can do with some fine-tuning, so as to make them more useful (by expressing them in clearer developmental terms) and at the same time in terms acceptable to all conscientious journalists, as working guidelines. As things are now, practically all the principles or tenets have been couched in more or less “confrontational” terms, this time with the journalists (including broadcasters) rather than government at the receiving end. They are therefore likely to be met with resentment by journalists with respectable self-perceptions. It has to be remembered that in spite of the normative truism that “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates,” there are certain journalistic values and conventions which are cherished by media professionals in most parts of the world, and which therefore impinge on their manner of operation and on their self-perceptions.

Moreover, a substantial number of leading journalists in developing countries have been trained in one western industrialised country or the other, and have tended to imbibe the journalistic cultures of those countries. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that these journalists (and those who train or work with them) see themselves as operating with “libertarian” and “social responsibility” principles, which were, in any case, the main principles inculcated in them prior to the advent of “development journalism”. Finally, as we noted earlier, the principles of development journalism should not be seen as robbing development press of its traditional freedom or shielding it from the traditional ideals of social responsibility as they are known in the West.

Thus, principle number one above could be modified or reframed so as to also take cognizance of the media’s traditional policies or goals. The same thing goes for the second principle which is more or less a clear reference to the “development functions” of national integration, socio-economic modernisation, promotion of literacy, and cultural creativity. (See Katz and

Weddell: 1974, Awe: 1978, Weddell: 1979). The principle could also become more acceptable if stated in such clear terms rather than the blanket terms in which it has been stated. As for the third principle, Kunczick (1988: 49) has rightly observed: “McQuail failed to see the problem of internal colonialism, i.e. the smashing of local and/or regional cultures and languages”. There can be no objection to the intention of principle number four except to mention that while geographically close countries can be easily identified, identifying culturally or politically “close” countries may not be as easy as it sounds. As Kunczick (ibid) also rightly notes, the fifth principle is much too vague to be useful as a working guideline, while the justification pleaded in support of censorship and direct control in principle number six is inappropriate to a planned development process.

In sum, one would suggest a fine-tuning of the principles or tenets of Development Media Theory along the following lines:

- (i) Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy (or in line with national ideology), without prejudice to their traditional functions of information, education, and entertainment of the public.
- (ii) Media should also accept and help in carrying out the special development tasks of national integration, socio-economic modernisation, promotion of literacy, and cultural creativity.
- (iii)
 - (a) “National” media should give priority in their content to the national macroculture in so far as this can be abstracted from the national milieu, then to regional cultures and then to local cultures, all in a descending order of priority.
 - (b) “Regional” media are of course normally expected to accord priority to regional cultures (and languages), while
 - (c) “Local” media give priority to local culture(s) and language(s).
- (iv) Media should carefully identify and give due attention in their foreign news to links with other countries with similar socio-cultural orientations and/or political and economic aspirations.
- (v) In order to safeguard the ideals of press freedom, journalists and other media workers should at all times faithfully fulfil their obligations and stoutly defend their rights in the course of their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- (vi) The state with its systems has a duty to see to it that media or journalists presumed to have contravened any national law(s) in the course of their information gathering and dissemination tasks can conveniently face prosecution expecting a fair and speedy trial.

Take it or leave it, Development Media Theory has already provided a bearing for the concepts of development communication and development journalism, which you may find with slightly different names and explanations in different contexts. And the concepts appear to be making varying degrees of headway in operationalisation and implementation in the different zones of the developing world. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the theory become “user-friendly” (with all the implications of that computer jargon), so that the large number of journalists and media establishments who currently appear to be “innocent” of any knowledge of the theory with its derivatives (development communication and development journalism) may be brought into the mainstream.

Exercise 2.2

Study the modifications proposed in this section to the basic tenets of Development Media Theory and make clear why you agree or disagree with each of the proposed modifications.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The last two specific normative theories that we studied are relatively young and still seeking legitimation because of their respective extensive relevance. It may be said that the habitat of Democratic–Participant Media Theory is global, while the “developing world” to which Development Media Theory primarily applies is so large and relatively indeterminate. Yet the relevance of both of them to contemporary press structure and performance is indisputable. No doubt as their postulations — which are after all based on experience — continue to be examined with reference to specific locations, the required legitimation, will become a *fait accompli*, subject only to vicissitudes in technology and globalisation.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the last two normative theories: Democratic–Participant Media Theory and Development Media Theory. The former, we saw, amounts more or less to a protest on the perceived failures of its two predecessors (or elder siblings), Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory and Social Responsibility Media Theory. We saw finally that, probably because of the relative radicalism of its postulations, as well as its extensive relevance, it is yet to find a specific habitat. Hence the reference to it as a press theory of the future. On the other hand, we saw that Development Media Theory was born of a later-day recognition of the errors in the earlier attempts to transfer the older normative theories to the developing world, which proved unwise because of gaps in relative technological advancement and differences in culture. But again because of its extensive relevance, Development Media Theory has tended to remain at the “programmatic level” till date. A suggestion was finally made as to how to make it “user-friendly”, especially because of the urgent need for advancement in the media of the developing world.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Submit a two-foolscap page essay in which you explain why you agree or disagree with the view that the so-called Libertarian (or Free Press) Media Theory, Social Responsibility Media Theory and Democratic–Participant Media Theory represent **merely** different stages of the same theory.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.

Kunczick, M. (1988) *Concepts of Journalism: North and South*. Bonn: Friedrich–Ebert–Styung.

McQuail, D. (1983) *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. London: SAGE Publications.

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MODULE 2 (Contd.)

NORMATIVE THEORIES

UNIT 4: • THE ADVENT OF DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Advent of Development Journalism
 - 3.2 Two Types of Development Journalism
 - 3.3 Toward a Normative Theory of the Nigerian Press.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at the following subtopics:

The Advent of Development Journalism.

Two Types of Development Journalism.
Toward a Normative Theory of the Nigerian Press.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Describe the Advent of Development Journalism, linking it to Development Media Theory.
- (ii) Describe the two types of Development Journalism that emerged.
- (iii) Explain the projected theory of the Nigerian Press at the end of the unit.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Advent of Development Journalism

The concept development journalism emanated largely from efforts by scholars from developing countries to “cut the umbilical chord” that had tied them to western communication scholarship, since it had been discovered that western models of journalism and of journalism-related scholarship were not in fact transferable to developing countries. The term “development journalism” emerged around the mid-1960s as a descriptive term for a type of “journalism” which demands that news reporting be constructive, and geared toward development ends (Refer to basic principles of Development Media Theory in Unit 2). Its focus should be on long-term development processes rather than on day-to-day news (Traber: 1985). In other words, the slogan that says, “yesterday’s news is history” does not apply to development news. Development journalism, being a kind of “alternative” journalism also has to explore alternative media of expression (Traber *ibid*). However, it is probably fair to summarise as Kunczick (1988: 3ff) has done, that the concept still remains at the “programmatically” level to date.

Even within that programmatic framework, however, there have been various attempts to evolve sub-types of development journalism; for example “Islamic” journalism (Hussain: 1986). “Asian” journalism (Chu: 1986), “Alternative” journalism (Rowlands and Lewin, eds: 1985); and now we are discussing a normative theory of the Nigerian Press. The problem of translating the “programme” of development journalism into actual practice in Nigeria can be gauged from conflicts usually generated whenever government functionaries such as Information Ministers attempt to give legal teeth to existing “national communication policies”.

Development journalism, like development media theory, owes its genesis severally to Modernisation theory (shorn of most of its slavishness to consumerism), Dependency Theory, and Systems Theory, and of course to concepts borrowed from the older normative theories, especially Authoritarian and Social Responsibility theories. It was given a boost by former journalists,

who became leaders of newly independent states especially in Africa-Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah with his *Evening News*, Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe with his *West African Pilot*, and Obafemi Awolowo with his *Nigerian Tribune*, Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta with his influential *Kikuyu* newspaper, and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere with his *Uhuru*.

All these placed emphasis on shaping national identities and forging national cohesion (Kunczick, 1988: 84-85; Lent, 1979; Lerner, 1968; Galtung, 1971; and Organ, 1982).

Exercise 3.1

In a two-foolscap-page essay, reflect aloud on the ways in which Development Journalism was given a boost by former African journalists, who later became leaders of newly independent African states.

3.2 Two Types of Development Journalism

Those who would object to some, or most or all of the tenets of Development Media Theory as initially identified. (McQuail, 1987: 121) or even as “fine-tuned” in this module (see Unit 3) may find consolation in the information that Development Journalism has not developed in one straight-jacketed direction. There have developed two basic strands of Development Journalism, which may be characterised as:

- (i) Investigative Development Journalism (Kunczick: 1988), otherwise Liberal Development Journalism;
- (ii) Benevolent-Authoritarian Development Journalism, otherwise Conservative Development Journalism

3.2.1 Investigative or Liberal Development Journalism

This type of journalism focuses on critical questioning and evaluation of the usefulness of development projects and the efficiency of control by the authorities concerned. It “X-rays” public complaints of misgovernment and probes allegations of corruption both of which may stand in the way of development. Thus, while:

- (i) respecting some of the tenets of Development Media Theory — especially the one that obliges the media to accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy, it
- (ii) emphasises the tenet that vaguely admits that journalists and other media workers have freedoms as well as responsibilities, and
- (iii) defies (or at least disregards) the more authoritarian tenets which seek to justify censorship, subsidy and direct control as means of ensuring press compliance.

The greatest problem which investigative or liberal Development Journalism faced hitherto was that press freedom, which is its cardinal requirement was a rare commodity in most developing countries (see Kunczick: 1988, Adegbola: 1987, and Farounbi: 1987).

3.2.2 **Benevolent-Authoritarian or Conservative Development Journalism**

This type of development journalism is espoused by scholars, media practitioners, leaders and others who believe that selective handling of information is justified in developing countries, which are often ridden with crises. The important thing, they hold, is to ensure that public welfare is kept in mind at all times. Exponents of benevolent authoritarian or conservative development journalism tend to view democracy as an unproductive luxury in developing countries. Holding on to the most authoritarian tenets of Development Media Theory, they are prepared to assign to the national news agencies the function of censorship in addition to their normal function of news distribution. The pervading, freedom-inhibiting tradition of exaggerated respect for national leaders is best exemplified in benevolent-authoritarian or conservative media which, like erstwhile socialist media, are subject to the principle of “democratic centralism” and self-censorship. Running through such media and the attendant scholarship is a common belief that economic development cannot take place in developing countries without the short-term sacrifice of political liberty and press freedom (see Nasser: 1983, Akahenda: 1983 as cited in Kunczick, 1988: 86).

Exercise 3.2

Which of the two strands of Development Journalism do you personally find more realistic: Liberal Development Journalism or Conservative Development Journalism? (i) Why and (ii) Why (and (iii) Why?

3.3 **Toward a Normative Theory of the Nigerian Press**

Our task in this subsection is to present a framework for a normative theory which captures and adequately summarises the ideas outlined in the foregoing paragraphs with reference to the Nigerian press and with special reference to the state of development journalism in the country.

At the centre of the framework is, of course, Development Media Theory with its basic tenets as earlier outlined in this module (see page for the diagrammatic framework). A little to the left of centre lies the concept and practice of Investigative or Liberal Development Journalism, in so far as it is evident in Nigerian media practice. It is anchored mainly on those tenets, which Development Media Theory has taken over from Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories. It is expounded in appropriate editorials, features, cartoons, and of course in hard news (especially scoops) with detailed background and dealing with development matters. So-called “junk journalism” (as distinct from “gutter journalism”), with its propensity to pry a little closer than is usual or conventional into the lives of public figures, may

also be seen as an aspect of investigative or liberal development journalism in Nigeria.

But on the opposite side, close to the right of centre, also lingers the concept and practice of benevolent authoritarian or conservative development journalism, to account for the fact that the Nigerian press, like most “developing” press, still laboured until lately under the burden of the arsenals of authoritarian control, including legislation, litigation, taxation, “registration”, decrees and edicts, press management, bribery (euphemistically called “brown envelopes”) and self-censorship. The list also includes limitation and/or discriminatory allocation of production inputs (such as newsprint), rough treatment of journalists (including imprisonment), and inordinately frequent suspensions of publication.

Normally, media pluralism — as evidenced by large numbers, various types and varied ownership of media — should be expected to promote healthy investigative or liberal development journalism. How far has this been the case in Nigeria? In any case, it cannot be said to be serving the cause of benevolent — authoritarian or conservative journalism, since the power of sheer numbers of the mass media has been a source of irritation to successive conservative leaders, and partly explains the frequent acts of intimidation directed against the media. At the base of the central Development Media Theory lies a vista of traditionalism, with the indigenous media crying for attention and for incorporation into the development communication process (see Ugboajah: 1986, 1989; Wilson: 1988). Such media are many and varied, but certainly not all would qualify for consideration. The ones frequently mentioned — especially those that can be and are being easily integrated into the modern mass media — include drums, music, theatre, poetry, songs, stories, sculpture, dance etc. Enveloping the whole framework is the nation’s “ecosphere” (environment), which provides ecological inputs into various aspects of the theory from time to time. Still lurking, unfortunately, around the corners of the ecosphere are four dysfunctional forces of apathy, ignorance, illiteracy and poverty, which may be characterised in greater detail as follows:

1. Apathy:

- (i) Apathy on the part of many a journalist toward public issues that ought to engage his attention, with undue concentration on political controversies, and
- (ii) Apathy on the part of many an otherwise enlightened member of the public toward the performance of the mass media on which they largely depend for information with which to manage their lives.

2. Ignorance:

- (i) General ignorance of what the media are doing or are expected to be doing, and

- (ii) Elitist ignorance of the type that makes us believe we know more than we actually do about the sociology of the environment (see ACCE Reports: Cotonou 1983 and Dakar 1983).

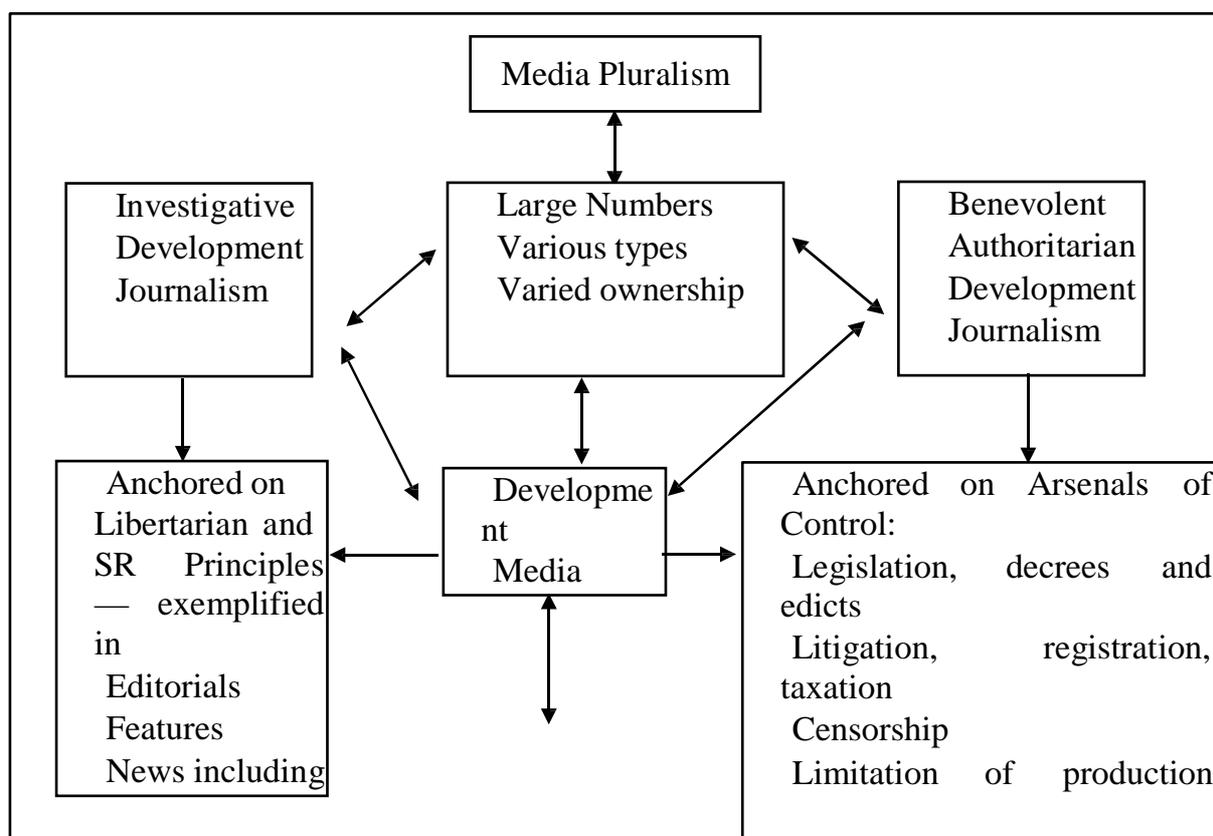
3. Illiteracy:

- (i) Illiteracy in the absolute sense of being unable to read and write, and
- (ii) The higher illiteracy, involving a lack of comprehension of the deeper connotative socio-psychological implications of the things we read and write, or hear and say, largely because we are communicating through the medium of a second language — carrier of an alien culture.

4. Poverty:

- (i) Material poverty on the part of many a citizen, which hinders access to information purveyed by the mass media, and
- (ii) Poverty of ideas on the part of many a media establishment, which makes them seek easy refuge in sensationalism, “trivialism”, and “junk”, in their least respectable manifestations, especially in times of “anomie” in the country.

As our knowledge of the environment increases, and as the environment continues to undergo social, political and economic changes, so our theoretical framework will undergo corresponding modifications to accommodate observed environmental developments. The framework can thus be said to be in a state of flux, with the central theory, Development Theory, pulling at, and being pulled in various directions by the different variables that provide *inputs into* the framework, while the unstable “ecosystem” tends to turn the framework round and round.



inputs

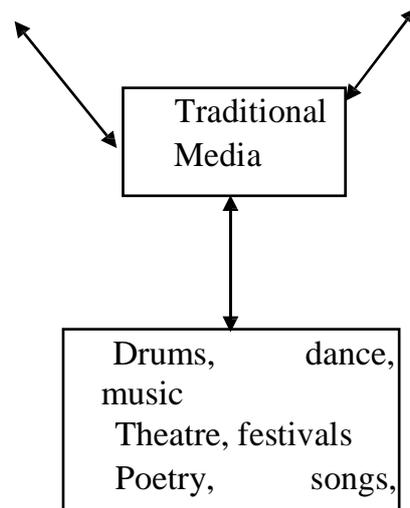


Figure 5 Framework for a Normative Theory of the Nigerian Press.

However, as the ecosphere approaches a state of equilibrium (social, political and economic) of the type that has been achieved to varying degrees in the industrialised western nations, our normative press theory will begin to attain corresponding stability.

Exercise 3.3

Would you like to venture to classify Nigerian mass media into (i) Liberal media and (ii) Conservative media, on the basis of our exposition in this unit, providing cogent justifications for your classification?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Even with the limitations imposed on it by various forms of dependency on the part of developing countries, Development Media Theory is certainly providing some usable guidelines for Development Communication / Development Journalism, a *sine qua non* for any developing country in a hurry to advance. A mastery of the theory therefore ought to be encouraged in mass communication institutions and establishments.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have traced the advent of Development Journalism on the basis of guidelines that can be extracted from Development Media Theory. We saw the two strands of Development Journalism that have emerged: Liberal Development Journalism and Conservative Development Journalism with their distinguishing characteristics. We finally proposed a framework for a normative (development) theory of the Nigerian press, on the basis of the exposition in this unit.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

In a maximum of two foolscap pages, state two factors promoting and two factors inhibiting the practice of investigative (or liberal) development journalism in Nigeria, stating also how you think the positive factors can be enhanced and the inhibiting factors mitigated.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

- Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.
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MODULE 2 (Contd.)

NORMATIVE THEORIES

UNIT 5: • THE EVOLUTION OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PARADIGMS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Evolution of Development Communication Paradigms
 - 3.2 The Importance of Development Communication Paradigms
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at:

- The Evolution of Development Communication
- The Importance of Development Communication Paradigms

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Trace the genesis of Development Communication Paradigms.
- (ii) Discuss the Challenges of Development Communication Paradigms to scholars.
- (iii) Describe the evolution of Development Communication Paradigms.
- (iv) State the importance of Development Communication Paradigms.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Genesis of Development Communication Paradigms

Through appropriate metacommunication research, scholars have generally identified two major paradigms of development communication. These are the **diffusion paradigm** and the **participation paradigm**. The former has also been labelled the **dominant paradigm**, while the latter has been labelled the **alternative paradigm**. (Windahl, Signitzer and Olson, 1992 as cited in Ayedun–Aluma 2004: 4 — emphasis mine).

In a nutshell, the **diffusion paradigm** holds that the process through which innovative ideas, practices, or objects come to be widely disseminated and accepted in any society is one of transference of such **innovations** from the **innovators** to the **adopters** in society, while the **participation or participatory paradigm** holds the view that communication effectiveness is better achieved when the **target receivers** have been actively involved in the processes of **message production and distribution**.

Exercise 5.1

Find out from your readings (and possibly from the Internet) the relationship between **theory** and **paradigm**.

3.2 The Challenges of Development Communication

Economic development became a challenge to the world leading countries from the end of World War II. The first aspect of the challenge was the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-ravaged countries of Europe. The other was the so-called “modernisation” of the European colonies, especially in Africa and Asia. While the first challenge was comparatively easy to handle — subject only to the availability of the requisite resources — the second challenge (the “modernisation” of Africa and Asia) proved rather intractable. It took some false starts and consequent frustrations for the leaders and their consultants to learn the necessary lessons.

One of the lessons eventually learnt is that “communication constitutes an important factor in the development process” (Ayedun–Aluma, 2004: 3). The question of how to optimally apply the factor of communication in the development process has since posed one of the major challenges to development experts and practitioners. “A fundamental aspect of the study of development communication has been the analysis of **development communication paradigms**”, which are regarded as “the forces that define and propel work in the discipline” (loc. cit.).

Exercise 5.2

Is communication also relevant to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged countries? How?

3.3 The Evolution of Development Communication Paradigms

3.3.1 The Dominant Paradigm (The Diffusion Theory Phase)

The major problem of development communication from the beginning has been a theoretical understanding of the relationship between the development process and communication effects. The early phase of this understanding — which lasted from the 1950s till the 1970s — has been labelled the **modernisation theory** phase. In this phase, the development process was seen as the “physical, social and psychological transformation of ‘traditional’ societies into ‘modern’ ones.” Unfortunately, modernisation was wrongly conceived as becoming like Western Europe or North America. Moreover, the perspective of communication effects that then prevailed was the “stimulus — response”, “mass society”, “linear or direct influence” perspective. The development communication planners took little note of the emerging research findings about individual differences and social relations with their limiting effects on the source’s influence over the receiver. The “theory” that obtained about communication effects was (therefore) the **magic bullet / hypodermic needle / transmission belt theory**.

It was the coming together of all these views and perspectives on the development process and of communication effects that gave rise to the **dominant paradigm** of development communication. The major features of this paradigm were as follows:

- (i) A focus on the diffusion of new ideas, practices and technologies from leaders (and innovators) to followers (and laggards).
- (ii) A focus on the efficiency of the processes of message transfer from source to receiver.
- (iii) An attempt to exploit the psychological and sociological properties of the receivers for the purpose of facilitating the achievement of the source’s goals.

- (iv) The employment of expert/bureaucrat-controlled, nationally/internationally planned programmes of development (or modernisation) action.
- (v) A reliance on the development model (or experience) of the industrialised countries of Western Europe and North America.
- (vi) The use of modern mass communication messages and channels (radio, mobile cinema vans, news reels, agricultural extension documentaries, posters, leaflets etc). (See Ayedun–Aluma, 2004: 8).

UNESCO was recruited into the stakeholders' group and renowned communication theorists such as Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm and Everett Rogers were employed as consultants. Yet this high profile participation could not substitute for a clear grasp of the relationships between the development process and communication effects. The inadequacies, which soon became apparent, included the following:

- (a) Most of the “sophisticated” programmes of development (based on modernisation theory) were not in line with the priorities of the target or beneficiary populations.
- (b) The new practices and technologies were resisted in cases of conflict with indigenous beliefs.
- (c) The programmes were abandoned where they failed to meet the receiver's needs.
- (d) The need for maintenance and the lack of requisite local expertise sometimes caused serious problems.
- (e) The beneficiary populations were sometimes sidelined by the management styles of the development experts and bureaucrats with their aides.

These inadequacies ultimately led to the call for and establishment of an **alternative paradigm**.

3.3.2 The Alternative Paradigm (The Participation Theory Phase)

This phase lasted from the 1970s to the 1990s. Based on the frustrating experiences of the diffusion theory/dominant paradigm phase, the development process was now viewed as a function of the participation of all the stakeholders in the pertinent community. The participation view of development required that the widest possible cross-section of citizens be involved in **deciding, implementing, evaluating and benefiting from** the activities of deliberate social change. Thus:

- (i) The capacity to define and direct the development experience was restored to the beneficiaries of development.
- (ii) There was now a focus on the processes of local popular participation at the community level.

- (iii) Rather than remain neutral movers of information, communicators became active triggers of popular participation.
- (iv) Traditional and folk media assumed greater importance in development communication programming.
- (v) Small-scale, community-based communication activities (including broadcasting) mostly replaced large-scale, rather impersonal communication activities.
- (vi) There was improvement in learning both by the local population and by the facilitators themselves.
- (vii) There was also an acceptance and utilisation of the truism that every development experience is unique and should be treated as such.

However, the following weaknesses of the participation theory/paradigm (among others) soon became apparent (see Ayedun–Aluma, 2004: 9):

- (a) The process of deciding the goals and methods of development action tends to aggravate conflict.
- (b) The activity of participation in development projects has an opportunity cost for beneficiaries since they would otherwise have spent their time in more customary productive enterprises.
- (c) There was no universally relevant and feasible model for implementing, monitoring and evaluating participation.
- (d) There was a tendency for participation to be superficial or tokenish, with unsatisfactory consequences for the pertinent development projects.
- (e) In some cases, a “participating elite” would soon be created, leading to the aggravation of social inequality in the target population.

The participatory paradigm still remains popular in development activities, in spite of the weaknesses identified in it. Witness the acknowledged successes of participation-based development programmes such as the World Bank-sponsored LEEMPS programme in Imo State of Nigeria. Indeed, it has assumed its own status as a dominant paradigm, thus occasioning a feeling of the need for an alternative paradigm. The Information Society Theory easily fits into that position. The little complication here is that Information Society Theory has itself become so predominant that it is looked upon in some quarters as the current Dominant Paradigm. Further discussion in this regard will be reserved till Module 6, which is devoted to Information Society Theory.

3.3.3 The Importance of Development Communication Paradigms

- (i) Paradigms determine the scientists' choice of theoretical framework.
- (ii) A paradigm functions as a platform or vehicle of scientific change, the locus of scientific progress.
- (iii) Each paradigm provides the basis for identifying schools of thought or communities of scholars. Thus, in the history of development communication scholarship, each of the two major paradigms has been associated with a distinct package of theories of communication processes and effects; the dominant paradigm with linear message transfer models of communication, and to alternative paradigm with two-way consultative models of communication.
- (iv) Furthermore, the dominant paradigm has in practice, been associated with the **functionary** model of public relations, in which communication is seen as a one-way dissemination of information to induce understanding and compliance in the audience, while alternative paradigm is associated with the **functional** model of public relations in which communication is seen as a two-way interaction between a communicator and his audience aimed at bringing about reciprocal understanding between two parties.

Exercise 5.3

Find out any further information you can about the **functionary** and **functional** models of public relations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Development Communication Paradigms have evolved in the course of international efforts to employ the communication factor in solving development problems. A dominant paradigm is the one that holds sway at a given time while the alternative paradigm is the (presumably better) paradigm that replaces the dominant paradigm. Today's alternative paradigm is virtually certain to become tomorrow's dominant paradigm.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at the evolution of Development Communication Paradigms. We saw that the dominant paradigm is associated with linear, one-way communication models such as the diffusion model, while the alternative paradigm is associated with two-way consultative models of communication, such as the participatory approach. We also got a hint that Information Society Theory is

currently threatening to complicate the dominant-alternative binary concept, as it appears to be assuming both roles simultaneously!

6.0 TUTOR-MRKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

On the basis of the knowledge you have gained in this unit, write a two-foolscap-page essay on the relationship between the development process and the communication process.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun–Aluma, V. (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm,” unpublished research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan.

Soola, E.O. ed. (2002) *Communicating for Development Purposes*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.

MODULE 3

SOCIAL–SCIENTIFIC / MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

Unit 1: Mass Society Perspective / Stimulus Response Perspective
(Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt Theory)..

Unit 2: Limited Effects Perspective

- Individual Differences / Social Categories / Social Relations Perspectives.
- Perception Theory (Aspects of).

Unit 3: Minimal Effects Interface.

- Uses and Gratification Theory.

Unit 4: Modified Limited Effects Perspectives

- Agenda Setting Theory.
- Cultural Norms Theory.
- Mainstreaming / Synchronisation Theory.

Unit 5: • Persuasion Theories.

- Media Violence Theories.

UNIT 1: MASS SOCIETY / STIMULUS-RESPONSE PERSPECTIVE / MAGIC BULLET / HYPODERMIC NEEDLE / TRANSMISSION BELT THEORY

CONTENTS

8.0 Introduction

9.0 Objectives

10.0 Main Body

- Mass Society Perspective / Stimulus–Response Perspective.
- Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt Theory.

11.0 Conclusion

12.0 Summary

13.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)

14.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we explore the first concrete perspectives on **Media Effects**, the **Stimulus–Response** perspective (or **Mass Society** perspective) which gave birth to the **Magic Bullet** or **Hypodermic Needle** or **Transmission Belt** theory.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (iv) State the factors that provided bearings for the study of **Mass Media Effects**;
- (v) Explore the early perspectives (Stimulus–Response / Mass Society Perspectives) on Media Effects;
- (vi) Discuss the ensuing Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt theory, and its impact on Mass Communication scholarship.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Factors that Provided Bearings for the Study of Media Effects.

These included:

On the Technological Plane

- (i) The earlier advent of printing and paper technology, which accelerated the dissemination of information, and
- (ii) The development of electromagnetic theory and its early translation into electronic technology.

On the Intellectual Plane

- (i) The predominance of the **Stimulus–Response (S-R)** theory in Mass Communication’s parent disciplines of Sociology and Psychology, a theory which holds that, to every given stimulus, there is an instinctive response.
- (ii) The contemporary assumption that a person’s behaviour was governed by hereditary forces which intervened between stimulus and response, and that these forces were uniform in all human beings.
- (iii) The emerging sociological concepts of society as a mass of isolated, anonymous and helpless human beings.

On the Pragmatic / Empirical Plane

- (i) The successes recorded by wartime propaganda with the available mass media as its conveyor belts.
- (ii) The equally remarkable success of mass advertising, which was analogous to wartime propaganda in its own impact on the commercial scene.

This complex combination of factors gave rise to the first concrete perspective on media effects, the Stimulus–Response (S-R) perspective or Mass Society Perspective.

Exercise 3.1

Spend some time reflecting on the precise ways in which the successes recorded in wartime propaganda and mass advertising impacted on the emergence of mass communication theories.

3.2 **The Stimulus–Response (S-R) Perspective / Mass Society Perspective on Mass Communication**

From this perspective, the mass media were held to be supremely effective, mind-controlling agents, and it was assumed that all target audiences responded inescapably and uniformly to mass media messages. Moreover, since people were assumed to be isolated, anonymous and helpless members of the mass society, this perspective did not recognise any social controls or ties that could counter the “powerful” influence of the mass media. Thus it was assumed that the media people could easily sway people’s minds, especially with the use of emotional appeals. This position was of course consonant with the prevailing Stimulus–Response (S-R) perspective in practically all contemporary intellectual fields, and endeavours, especially psychology, sociology and other disciplines.

Exercise 3.2

Think of and briefly describe any area of mass media performance in your country in which you can identify a lingering influence of the stimulus–response (S-R) or mass society perspective.

3.3 **The Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt Theory and Its Contemporary Impact**

All these are, of course, posthumous names for the theory. They furnish picturesque descriptions of the then perceived effects of mass-mediated messages, especially of the magnitude and inescapable nature of these effects; which perception was, of course, later realised as mistaken. The realisation did not come, however, until after costly false starts and frustrations in development communication efforts. All linear, one-way development communication theories that constituted the dominant paradigm, such as Diffusion Theory and Modernisation Theory, took their bearings from the Magic Bullet Theory, which in turn emanated from the Stimulus–Response (S-R) perspective. From the Transmission Belt viewpoint, communication agents were conceived of as neutral movers of information, over which they had little or no influence. Development communication experts and bureaucrats were simply obsessed with message transfer processes to the exclusion of other communication variables! This same theoretical perspective underlined the position of conservative development journalism exponents as well authoritarian government bureaucrats that you could not allow press freedom in young developing countries without beckoning to perennial crises, since these functionaries conceived of the “mass audiences” as passive, helpless and lonely receivers of mass-mediated messages.

Exercise 3.3

Conservative Development Journalism exponents — are they completely wrong, after all? Discuss.

4.0 **CONCLUSION**

Well-meaning efforts were made after World War II (WW II) to understand “the impact of the mass media on society” (Refer to Module 1, Unit 5) and to use the understanding to plan and design effective development communication messages. However, as the foregoing exposition shows, the early “understanding” was mistaken and led to false starts and eventual frustration.

5.0 **SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have made a brief survey of the early attempts to understand the impact of the mass media on society. We saw the factors that provided bearings for these efforts, on the technological, intellectual and pragmatic planes. We also saw, however, that the perspectives emerging from these factors (the stimulus-response and mass society perspectives) were mistaken; hence they encouraged some false starts which had to await later approaches for their rectification.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Have you ever observed or been involved in a development communication programme that failed to achieve its purpose because it was grounded on an inadequate understanding of the communication process, or of media effects? Describe the programme and the steps taken or that could be taken to rectify it.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun-Aluma, V. (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm”, a research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan.

Baran, S. and Davis, D. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

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MODULE 3 (Contd.)

SOCIAL–SCIENTIFIC / MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

UNIT 2: LIMITED EFFECTS PERSPECTIVES

CONTENTS

8.0 Introduction

9.0 Objectives

10.0 Main Body

3.1 Limited Effects Perspectives — Introductory Remarks.

3.2 The Individual Differences / Social Categories / Social Relations Perspectives.

3.3 Aspects of Perception Theory.

11.0 Conclusion

12.0 Summary

13.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)

14.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at some “Limited Effects” perspectives which dislodged the Stimulus–Response and Mass Society Perspectives with the emanating Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt Theory. These included the Individual Differences Perspective, the Social Categories Perspective, the Social Relations Perspective and some aspects of Perception Theory.

6.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Discuss the “Limited Effects” Perspectives in general terms.
- (ii) Discuss specifically:
 - The Individual Differences Perspective,
 - The Social Categories Perspective,
 - The Social Relations Perspective,
 - Some Aspects of Perception Theory.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 “Limited Effects” Perspectives on Mass Communication

The years immediately following the rise and fall of the instinctive S-R, mass society perspective saw the emergence of the three major perspectives; the **Individual Differences Perspective, the Social Categories Perspective and the Social Relations Perspective** which emanated from different disciplinary sources but which Folarin (1988: 2002 and 2006) has put together under what he calls the “**Post-Instinctive S-R Perspective**”. Elsewhere (e.g. Baran and Davis: 2003), they are — perhaps more appropriately — brought together under the **Limited Effects Perspective**. This period also saw the emergence of the concept of **Communication Science**, which was more or less launched in the United States by war-immigrant Paul Lazarsfeld and his associates through their introduction of the empirical approach into Mass Communication research and theory formulation. In their report of the Erie County research titled **The People’s Choice: How the Voter Makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign** (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce: 1944), Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet demonstrated — convincingly, no doubt — that the voters sampled were neither passive nor lonely receivers of media messages, since results showed that they voted, not as media campaigns more or less “directed”, but in accordance with several variables such as age, sex, location and more importantly, as a result of interactions with “significant others”: friends, neighbours and relations in particular. It was mainly this report that yielded the

Social Categories and Social Relations Perspectives to be discussed later. We next discuss briefly these specific perspectives that constituted the overall **Limited Effects Perspective**.

Exercise 3.1

Try here to recall and practically describe the steps involved in the **Scientific Method**, which is the hub of the **Empirical Approach**.

3.2 The Individual Differences Perspective

From expositions and laboratory experiments on behaviourism, classical conditioning, learning differences, and attitude formation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it became increasingly clear that individuals differ in their personal psychological organisation, just as studies in the natural sciences had also revealed differential biological endowments in people. It was discovered that attitudes, values and beliefs were learnt in the context of experience and this resulted in differences in cognition and perception. The principle of selective attention and perception, which holds that people pay attention to messages and interpret them in line with their own interests, beliefs, values and experiences dealt the final blow to the Instinctive S-R perspective, although the mass society aspect has tended to die hard. As for the “irresistible hereditary factor” which was believed to intervene between the stimulus and response, making compliant response inevitable, “an accidental” discovery from a recent library search by the renowned management expert and motivation speaker, Stephen Covey, is quite instructive:

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In those choices lie our growth and our happiness (Covey: 2004, p.42).

3.2.2 The Social Categories Perspective

The basic assumption here (predicated on empirical evidence) is that members of a given social category (determined by age, sex, location, socio-economic status, etc.) will seek out similar communication messages, which they will also respond to more or less similarly, other things being equal. Thus the kinds of movies, music and broadcast programmes sought after by teenagers and adolescents are certain to be different from those preferred by their parents while different election candidates and campaigns may appeal to different social categories. It has also been shown that men and women may differ widely in their TV programme preferences. While the Individual Differences perspective derived from general psychology, social categories perspective derived, as we have seen, from research in general sociology.

3.2.3 The Social Relations Perspective

The Social Relations Perspective developed from findings that people’s reaction to a given mass media message or campaign and their action

upon it was modified by their informal social relationships — with friends, relations, social groups, etc. In particular, it was discovered that people’s voting decisions were determined more by discussion with others than by media campaigns. Besides election campaigns, the field of agricultural innovation also contributed insights in support of this perspective.

These three perspectives marked the initial phase of the overall **Limited Effects Perspective**. The Two-Step Flow Hypotheses also emerged at this time from the same fields of social research and rural sociology.

Exercise 3.2

Describe a situation (real or hypothetical) in which the differences implied in the Social Categories Perspective engendered a conflict within a family over which TV programme to watch at a particular given time.

3.3 Aspects of Perception Theory

3.3.1 Perception Studies

We learnt earlier that studies in perception helped to nail the coffin on the “magic bullet” theory. Perception is a large subject. But we shall confine ourselves to the area most relevant to our concern: the ways in which people perceive media messages targeted at them. In particular, we shall be looking at selective perception along with other related selectivities. But first, what is perception?

- (i) The process of making sense out of experience (Burgoon and Ruffner: 1978, p.104).
- (ii) How the individual makes sense of his or her world (Corner and Hawthorn: 1980, p.104).

Perception depends on a complex of variables such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships. All these in conjunction with language constraints and the “limited experience factor” result in the selective perception process, which takes place in a ‘stop-gate’ fashion with selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention. In other words, you have to be exposed to a message before you can attend to it, you have to pay attention before you can perceive the message, you have to perceive it before you can retain it for later recall.

3.3.2 Selective Exposure

It is only natural that people seek out information that caters for their own interests, confirms their beliefs, and boosts their own ego, while avoiding those that are contrary to their own predispositions and attack their self-image. This determines which papers they subscribe to or read

at all, which television stations they turn to, and which programmes they watch on those channels.

3.3.3 Selective Attention

Because the eye processes information much faster than the brain can interpret, the human brain has to select which information to pay attention to at any given time, in order to avoid confusion. Physiological impairments or needs (bad eye sight, hunger), physical hardship (heat in a crowded lecture room, boredom from fatigue, hostile orientation toward information or source, assumed familiarity with message content, etc. can also severally or in combination affect the span of attention — during lecture, media programme, etc. (hence advertisers use all kinds of gimmicks to catch and retain audience attention).

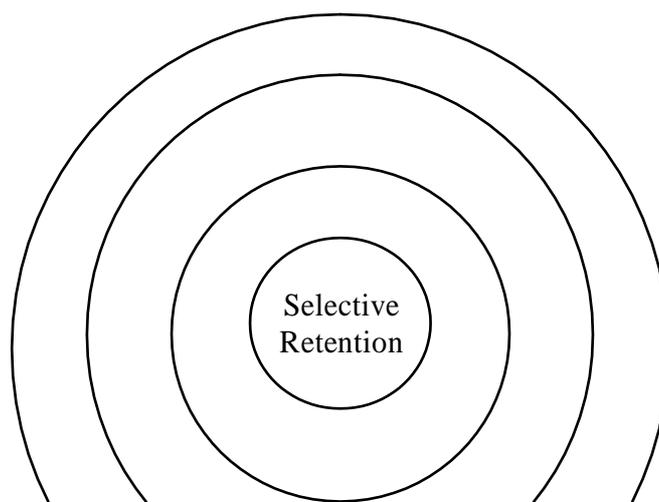
3.3.4 Selective Perception

The study of perception actually led to the discovery of the selectivity processes. Each of us tends to perceive and then decode communication messages in the light of our previous experiences and current dispositions, our needs, moods and memories. The language we speak and words we use also tend to circumscribe our perception. De Fleur and Bull-Rokeach recall how scientists for a long time considered the atom indivisible because the Greek word “atom” means “indivisible”. They also recall how malaria remained uncontrollable for a long time because doctors believed it was caused by the “bad air” (from Italian “malaria”) of the tropics.

3.3.5 Selective Retention

None of us can retain for later recall all the messages we receive. Moreover, some messages are forgotten more quickly than others. We more accurately remember messages that are favourable to our self-image than messages that are unfavourable. The saliency of the message (relevance to our needs), the method of transmission and the interests and beliefs of the receiver are also known to affect retention rate.

Selective exposure, attention, perception and retention work together in rather complex ways, not in isolation, and they contribute to the cultivation of the attitudes of acceptance, avoidance, rejection and denial. And they render it unlikely for any person to be a passive, helpless receiver of media messages.



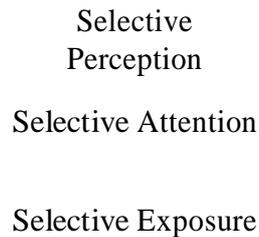


Figure 6: Four Concentric Rings, representing the four selectivities
Exercise 3.3

Reflect honestly on an occasion on which **selective attention** cost you or a friend the understanding of an important aspect of one of your courses. What were your or his/her eventual reaction and action?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The emergence of the “Limited Effects Perspective” was inevitable. People were bound to realise sooner or later that the mass media could not exercise in peacetime the same degree of influence which they were supposed to have exercised during the war! The subtle advent of empirical research, and other advances on the intellectual horizon, simply accelerated that realisation. Perhaps the effects of war on media effects deserve more serious studies than may have been undertaken so far.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have seen how continued progress on the intellectual horizon dislodged the traditional stimulus–response / mass society perspective with the ensuing Magic Bullet / Hypodermic Needle / Transmission Belt theory. The intellectual advances occurred in various fields but they all worked together to shed invaluable light on the nature of the interactions between society and her mass media. Prominent among the intellectual advances were results of laboratory experiments in general psychology, findings from studies in rural sociology, and introduction of empirical research in the field of mass communication itself.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Attempt a two-page succinct comment on the difference between the **Stimulus–Response (S-R)** pattern as understood in the immediate post-WW II period and the pattern as “discovered” by Stephen Covey from a recent library search (Covey: 2004). What does the difference show about intellectual progress? Mention one or two other fields in which the kind of change involved here has taken place, with brief comments on the social impact of the change(s).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

- Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.
- Lazersfeld, P.I., B. Berelson, and H. Gaudet (1994) *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce.

MODULE 3 (Contd.)

SOCIAL–SCIENTIFIC / MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

UNIT 3: MINIMAL EFFECTS INTERFACE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Minimal Effects Interface
 - 3.1.1 Uses and Gratification Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we take a look at the immediate consequence of the emergence of the Limited Effects Perspective discussed in the preceding unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Discuss the impact of the emergence of the Limited Effects Perspectives;
- (ii) Explore one theory that emerged during the period: **Uses and Gratification Theory.**

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Minimal Effects Interface

The immediate consequence of the new perspectives and discoveries was that some media analysts (e.g. Klapper: 1960, McGuire: 1969) now swung to the opposite extreme, maintaining that the mass media had very little (if any) effect on their audiences. Hence about the only notable theory proposed at the time seemingly ran away from talking about media effects and concentrated rather on the role of the receiver/consumer/user of media fare, to whom the new perspectives have restored due autonomy. This was the **Uses and Gratification Theory.**

3.1.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

The theory perceives the consumer of media fare as actively influencing the consumption or reception, since he/she selectively chooses, pays attention to, interprets, and retains the media messages on the basis of his/her needs, beliefs or even his/her whims and caprices. The focus was thus shifted from media production and transmission functions to media reception and consumption functions. Instead of asking “**What kinds of effects occur under what conditions?**”, the question became, “**Who uses which contents from which media, for which reasons and under which conditions?**” To the scholars concerned, the question of effects became tangential. The new scenario ran thus:

- (i) An individual has some communication or information need,
- (ii) He/she selectively picks the medium or media that appear(s) likely to meet his/her need,
- (iii) He/she selectively consumes the content.

What about effect?

- (iv) Well, an effect may or may not occur!

Two weaknesses of the theory, which critics are usually quick to point out, are:

- (a) Needs are usually simply listed (entertainment, information, knowledge, relaxation, etc.) without being classified or operationalised.
- (b) Needs are often defined in a circular way: the needs are identified from behaviour, which is in turn explained in terms of needs.

Exercise 3.1

What does the emergence of **Uses and Gratification Theory** remind you of about intellectual and other movements?

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above scenario that some media scholars got carried away by the new perspectives on media effects — the findings that the media were not “all-powerful”. They (the scholars) now more or less asserted that the media had very little (if any) effect on their audiences. Hence about the only significant theory that emerged during the period, **Uses and Gratification Theory**, shied away from discussing effects but rather concentrated on reception functions.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this short unit, we have taken a quick look at the immediate consequence of the emergence of Limited Effects Perspectives discussed in Unit 2. We saw how the only significant theory developed at the time shifted from production functions to reception/consumption functions. In the **Uses and Gratification Theory**, the question of effects became tangential. In the next unit, we will see how far this **minimal effect perspective** subsisted.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Write a two-page comment on the weaknesses (and strengths, if any) of **Uses and Gratification Theory**.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

- Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.
- Kunczick, M. (1988) *Concepts of Journalism: North and South*. Bonn: Friedrich–Ebert–Stiftung.

MODULE 3 (Contd.)

SOCIAL–SCIENTIFIC / MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

UNIT 4: MODIFIED LIMITED EFFECTS PERSPECTIVES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction.
- 2.0 Objectives.
- 3.0 Main Body.
- 3.1 Explanation of the Modified Limited Effects Perspective.
- 3.2 Agenda Setting Theory.
- 3.3 Cultural Norms Theory
- 3.4 Mainstreaming / Synchronisation Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall consider the **Modified Limited Effects Theories** that were, happily, surfacing more or less simultaneously with the **Minimal Effects Interface**. The modified position is expounded in this unit by the **Agenda Setting Theory**, the **Cultural Norms Theory**, and the **Streamlining / Synchronisation Theory**.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, it is hoped that you will be able to:

- (i) recognise the continued, though modified strain of the Limited Effects Perspectives.
- (ii) briefly discuss the:
 - Agenda Setting Theory,
 - Cultural Norms Theory, and
 - Mainstreaming / Synchronisation Theory.

3.1 The Modified Limited Effects Perspective Explained

Although no one again ascribed “almighty” power to the mass media after the emergence of the Limited Effects Perspectives, it was not everyone that switched over to the opposite extreme claiming that the mass media exercised no influence at all over their audiences. Rather, continuous studies showed that while the media were not “all powerful”, it would be wrong to hasten to the conclusion that they were totally without influence on their audiences. What research revealed was that the media’s influence was varied, often subtle, and in general cumulative. What is more, the media network does not exercise this influence single-handed but in association with other social networks. Prominent among the pertinent theories were the three discussed below.

3.2 Agenda Setting Theory

The main thrust of the Agenda Setting Theory is that while the mass media may not be powerful enough to determine for us what and how we actually think, they are obviously influential in determining what we as a nation, society or group think about at a particular time: they pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. For instance, they set the agenda for political campaigns; they “help” to keep political and other crises alive; they help to bring some people to public prominence and fame (or notoriety). The elements through which the media (consciously or unconsciously) prosecute agenda setting include:

- (1) The quantity or frequency of reporting on an issue;
- (2) Prominence given to the reports — through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics; or timing on radio and television;
- (3) The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and

(4) Cumulative media-specific effects over time.

In addition to politics and elections, research on agenda-setting, theory and research later focused on racial unrest, student riots, crime statistics, inflation, drug abuse, etc. Additional examples that could furnish relevant research materials in Nigeria include “June 12”, military/political interventions, ethnic rivalries, “419”, and paid assassination. Kunczick (1988: 192) points out that the opportunity for agenda-setting by the mass media becomes enhanced when the value structure of a society is in a state of flux. (Relate this to Nigeria). Furthermore, Lang and Lang (1960) draw attention to two important factors in agenda-setting.

- (1) The “reciprocal effect”, concerned with the very presence of the media at the scene of an event; and
- (2) The “landslide effect”, which refers to the (usually exaggerated) impressions created by the kind of media handling or reporting — waving crowd, ovations, booing, etc.

As Kunczick further points out, appropriate procedures for examining agenda setting involve comparisons between media content over a certain period and the subjects that most people in the society are discussing. The greater the consonance, the more the agenda-setting hypothesis is confirmed. There have been criticisms of the agenda-setting hypothesis, but it is generally agreed that it has a strong enough basis in logic and experience. As Marshall McLuhan (1968: 204) concludes, the press can colour events by using them in a particular way, or refusing to use them at all.

Exercise 4.1

Is Agenda Setting Theory a “Minimal Effects” theory or a “Limited Effects” theory? Reflect on it.

3.3 Cultural Norms Theory

The theory charged that, through selective presentation and tendentious emphasis on certain themes, the mass media created the impression among their audiences that such themes were part of the structure or clearly defined cultural norms of society (can you spot the relationship with agenda-setting theory?) As a result, impressionable members of the public tend to pattern their own behaviour along the lines of such media presentations. In citing the theory, the critics of the mass media tended to stress the potentially negative consequences of such media treatment of issues, while the exponents of the media stressed the potentially beneficial influences. The negative perspective may be illustrated with the following anecdote provided by McLuhan (1964: 205):

In 1962, when Minneapolis had been for months without a newspaper, the Chief of Police said: “Sure, I miss the news, but so far as my job goes, I hope the papers never

come back. There is less crime around without a newspaper to pass around the ideas”.

On the positive side, exponents of the mass media can cite pro-social instances of the media’s role in using their “pseudo-environments” to bring about positive changes, e.g. during social mobilisation programmes.

Exercise 4.2

Spotlight the similarities between Agenda Setting and Cultural Norms Theories. Where does the difference lie?

3.4 Mainstreaming / Synchronisation Theory

This can be seen as a complement to Cultural Norms Theory. “Mainstreaming” theory is a specific product of the “Cultural indicators” project being run by the Annenberg School of Communications in the USA since the 1970s. It has two aspects, namely:

- (i) Message Analysis: Involving detailed examination of selected media contents.
- (ii) Cultivation Analysis: Observation of the effects of the messages.

Based on research findings, Cultivation Analysis assumes that, the more time people spend watching television, the more their world views will be like those spread by television. Most Americans live by television from childhood, so television messages and images form the “mainstream” of a common symbolic environment, a cultural core of society, doing for the American what religion did for the West before the revolutions; i.e. providing a strong cultural link among the cross-sections of society. Television also links Americans to an external world of its own making. It is this mainstreaming or synchronising influence that American television carries to the different parts of the world invaded by it.

The major areas of mainstreaming research have been advertising and politics. Concerning politics, the trend in research findings has been that television tends to impoverish a variety of views, thus turning people into “one-dimensional human beings”. There is also the question of stereotyping with regard to sex roles with men being presented by television as dynamic and aggressive while women are presented as passive and domestic. Men dominate the social sphere in the television world, while women are portrayed as victims. And girls who are heavy television watchers tend to develop role expectations which conform to stereotypes shown on television. In advertising, mainstreaming tends to eliminate competing viewpoints. And in news reporting, headline positions are neutralised by so-called “objective reporting” which provides “pros” and “cons” and keeps opponents silent. In conflicts between the state and the individual, the state is portrayed as the winner and the individual the loser, so non-conformists had better beware!

It would be interesting to investigate how much mainstreaming takes place in television programming in Nigeria.

Exercise 4.3

Do you agree or disagree with the assumption that “the more time people spend watching television, the more their world views will be like those spread by television”? Why, or why not?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our exploration of Agenda Setting, Cultural Norms and Mainstreaming/Synchronisation theories certainly has led to the conclusion that it would be wrong to perceive the mass media as exercising no influence on their audiences, even though it is clear that they are not the irresistible mind-controlling agents that they were previously assumed to be. They may not be able to determine our final decisions, but they are influential in our pre-decision reflections. For example, in any promotional, mobilisation, or innovation campaign, the mass media cannot decide for us at the adoption stage, but they are supremely influential at the Awareness, Interest and Evaluation stages. In fact, it may be said that any promotional, innovation or mobilisation campaign that discounts mass media influence will end up as a non-starter. On the rather negative side, we have seen how they can affect people’s world-view (for better or for worse), encourage stereotyping, determine the issues that engage people’s minds most of the time, and more or less cajole people into adopting false societal norms. How logical or scientific was it (or would it be) to pass off such social agents as totally non-influential?

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been introduced to some of the **Modified Limited Effects Perspectives** which developed more or less simultaneously with the **Minimal Effects Interface**. We explored the Agenda Setting, Cultural Norms and Mainstreaming / Synchronisation theories all of which ascribe substantial influence to the mass media at least in pre-decision reflections, if not in actual decision-taking.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

By objectively analysing some specific radio and television programmes, assess how much mainstreaming/synchronisation there is in Nigerian broadcasting. (Ask your tutor the minimum number of programmes to analyse)

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Burgoon, M. and M.Ruffner (1978) *Human Communication: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Holt, Reinhert & Winston.

Kunczick, M. (1988) *Concepts of Journalism: North and South*. Bonn: Friedrich–Ebert–Stiftung.

MODULE 3 (Contd.)

SOCIAL–SCIENTIFIC / MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

UNIT 5: e PERSUASION THEORIES e MEDIA VIOLENCE THEORIES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Persuasion Theories
 - 3.2 Media Violence Theories
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine small samples of **Persuasion theories** and **Media Violence theories**, in continuation of our consideration of **Modified Limited Effects Perspectives**. First, we shall take a look at the **Psychodynamic** and the **Sociocultural** models or paradigms to which all persuasion theories can be traced. We shall then discuss **Social Judgement Theory** and **Value Change Theory** as illustrations. For Media Violence Theories, we shall examine **Aggressive Cues Theory** and **Reinforcements Theory** as illustrations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Briefly explain and discuss Persuasion.
- (ii) Examine the two basic models/paradigms of Persuasion theories.
- (iii) Discuss two persuasion theories as illustrations.
- (iv) Discuss two typical Media Violence theories.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Persuasion Theories

3.1.1 Persuasion Defined

Persuasion may be defined as the process whereby an attempt is made to induce changes in attitudes and behaviour through involvement of a person's cognitive and affective processes (Bradley: 1984, p.351). According to Burgoon and Ruffner (1978: p.400), most definitions of persuasion emphasise:

- (i) Conscious intent,
- (ii) Message transmission, and
- (iii) Behavioural influence.

British psychologist Roger Brown (1961) makes a distinction between persuasion and propaganda. According to him, it is persuasion when the message stresses the interests of the receiver or the mutual interests of the source and receiver. But it is propaganda when the message betrays a single-minded pursuit of the source's own interests.

Two of the theories dealing with persuasion are briefly discussed below. But first, there are two theoretical models that underscore virtually all the persuasion theories, namely:

- (i) The Psychodynamic Model, and
- (ii) The Socio-cultural Model.

(De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975: 237-254).

Exercise 5.1

Can you augment the definition of Persuasion given above? Do so as much as you can.

3.1.2 The Psychodynamic Model

Based on the Individual Differences Perspective, it holds that, for a persuasive message to be considered effective, it must succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient(s) in such a way that he or she or they will respond overtly with models of behaviour desired or suggested by the communicator. For example, to encourage enlightened voting behaviour, the communicator would have to get people to develop favourable attitudes to the electoral process as a whole. The psychological motivations used as intervening variables between the message stimulus and audience response include hunger, sexual urges, status drives, vanities, opinions, etc.

3.1.3 The Socio-cultural Model

This derives at once from the Social Categories perspective and Social Relations perspective. It seeks to explain the ways in which variables such as organisational membership, work roles, reference groups, cultural norms and primary group norms exercise social control and help to shape and channel people's overt actions in ways that depart from their own internal psychological dispositions. Messages are presented in such a way as to make recipients believe that these are the socially acceptable models of behaviour with reference to given situations. The model thus presents a picture of "Consensual Validation". Those who fail to conform are represented as deviants, while conformists are praised as integrated human beings. The model is particularly adaptable to diffusions of innovation, charity drives, revenue collection campaigns, breastfeeding campaigns, etc., but its usefulness is not limited to these areas. Advertising message developers use it extensively.

The theories of persuasion discussed hereafter as well as actual instances of application are referable in varying degrees to both the Psychodynamic and the Socio-cultural models.

3.1.4 Value Change Theory

Value Change theory employs the technique of "Comparative feedback" to induce attitudinal and behavioural change. Rather than simply inform people about the harmful or beneficial effects of certain kinds of behaviour, methods based on value change theory challenge the people to test their own values against those of others, which are presumed to be socially more acceptable. The discovery that one is probably less liberal, less patriotic, or less socially responsible than one had assumed

leads to self-dissatisfaction and will — it is hoped — trigger a value change in the individual. Since values underlie attitudes, which underlie behaviour, it is assumed that a change in value will lead to corresponding changes in attitudes and behaviour. But first, people have to have clear information on the ranking of their present values. The kinds of appeal employed in this as in other variants of the model are those based on fear and vanity.

Exercise 5.2

Discuss one other Persuasion theory that you are familiar with.

3.1.5 Social Judgement Theory

This theory holds that an attitude is a much more complex matter than is suggested by binary descriptions such as “favourable-unfavourable” or “positive-negative”. It views attitude change as a two-stage process: the receiver first judges the attitude and then makes the necessary adjustment.

According to Social Judgement theory, an attitude is better viewed as a continuum with gradations ranging from “most acceptable” to “most unacceptable”. The areas encompassing these gradations are known as “latitudes”: a latitude of acceptance (positions a person finds acceptable); a latitude of non-commitment (positions about which the person is neutral or undecided); and a latitude of rejection (positions the person finds decidedly unacceptable). That person’s persuasibility on a given topic depends on where the topic falls on his/her attitude continuum. If it falls within his/her latitude of non-commitment (in which case he/she is not “ego-involved”), the person will have little difficulty in going along with the persuasive message. If it falls within his/her latitude of rejection (in which case he/she is “ego-involved”), the person is likely to resist the persuasive message, viewing it as more discrepant to his own attitude than it actually is. Where, on the other hand, the message falls within his/her latitude of acceptance, the person easily accepts the persuasive message viewing it as more congruent with his own attitude than it actually is.

It follows therefore that it would be much more difficult to persuade a person on a topic in which he/she is ego-involved than on one in which his/her ego is not involved. The degree of difficulty would vary directly with the level of ego-involvement. Therefore, a would-be persuader would be well advised to first ascertain where the pertinent topic falls on the prospective persuadee, attitude continuum. This would enable the would-be persuader to select or design media messages that are most likely to enhance persuasive effect.

3.2 Media Violence Theories

Besides persuasion, the other area that has attracted considerable scholarly attention is media violence. The two major culprits of public complaints are television and film, especially television. Public criticism and scholarly interest

have bludgeoned with the expansion of television and the explosion of advertising. Unfortunately, most of public criticism is more impressionistic than systematic. And most of the pertinent research findings have been inconclusive. What is more, as theories and hypotheses mushroom, so do counter-theories and alternative hypotheses. Television in particular has been at the centre of much conflicting criticism and evaluation. The “crimes” attributed to television include the following:

- (i) Lowering public taste by pandering to “the lowest common denominator”.
- (ii) Encouraging real-life violence by the frequency and gusto with which it presents violence in its programmes.
- (iii) Encouraging delinquency (both juvenile and adult) through unabashed reports and demonstrations of sex and anti-social behaviour.
- (iv) Inducing extravagant consumption through unconscionable advertising.
- (v) Suppressing creative thinking through its homogenising and synchronising influences.
- (vi) Aggravating class differences.

The most worrying of these charges was and still is the encouragement of violence. Against these serious charges, the exponents of television make an equally impressive array of claims. It is claimed that the media (especially television):

- (i) Expose sin and corruption (consider the activities of “junk” media — for better or for worse — in Nigeria);
- (ii) Guard the public freedoms of speech and thought in particular;
- (iii) Expose some of their consumers to refinement and culture which they might otherwise have no access to;
- (iv) Familiarise their audience with world events;
- (v) Improve consumerism and standards of living through advertising;
- (vi) Provide harmless entertainment after the hassles of daily work;
- (vii) Enhance instructional and general educational efficiency; and
- (viii) Aid social mobilisation and promote grassroots democracy.

As things are now, the defenders of television in particular have scarcely made any claim to counter the charge of inducing violence except to counter that “they are giving the public what it wants”. In a television-saturated society like the United States, research into the probable effects had to be intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, from “a national sense of urgency concerning the causes of real world violence”, taking due cognisance of the fact that “Youthful members of the first TV generation were the most visible participants in the violence of this era ...” (De Fleur and Ball-Rockeach: 1974, p.219). It was very tempting to see a logical connection between the incessant portrayals of violence on television (and film) and the increasing rates of real-world violence. There were government-sponsored investigations and there were individual and group

efforts by scholars. Here we shall focus attention on two of the theories that emerged.

3.2.1 **Aggressive Cues Theory**

This one assumes that exposure to mass-mediated aggression increases people's level of emotional and psychological stimulation which can in turn lead to aggressive behaviour, e.g. watching war films or boxing and wrestling contests. However, it is further believed that whether a person responds to the aggressive cues may depend on whether he is experiencing frustration or irritation at the time of exposure to mass-mediated violence. It also depends on whether the media present the violence as justified (as a means of self-defence or of vengeance).

But exposure to media violence can, according to this theory, also work in the opposite direction. It can inhibit the actual expression of aggression through a sense of guilt. Prior experience with or exposure to violence is also believed to lower the level of aggressive arousal. Aggressive cues theory is related to the Individual Differences Perspective on media effects.

3.2.2 **Reinforcement Theory**

Exponents of Reinforcement theory assume that mass-mediated violence simply reinforces the existing aggressive inclinations that people bring to media exposure. Cultural norms/values, social roles, personality features and family or peer influences are held up as factors determining violent behaviour. However, for people (especially children and youth) lacking social stability and fruitful social relationships, mass-mediated violence may provide a primary model for violent behaviour.

Reinforcement theory has its roots in the Individual Differences perspective, since it explains how people with differing characteristics can be reinforced by the same violent programme offering. It is related to the Social Categories perspective, since it views individuals as representatives of social groups. It is equally a product of the Social Relations Perspectives, since it sees social stability and firm social relationships as effective antidotes to the influence of media violence.

Exercise 5.3

Articulate your reactions to the media violence theories (Aggressive Cues Theory and Reinforcement Theory discussed above).

3.0 CONCLUSION

The persuasion theories and media violence theories discussed in this unit would appear to reinforce the **Modified Limited Effects Perspectives**. They show that the mass media cannot be seen as unqualifiedly effective for inducing attitude change. By

the same token, they cannot be held solely responsible for inducing violence in society, yet they cannot be said to be totally without influence in these areas.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we examined sample persuasion theories and media violence theories in continuation of our consideration of **Modified Limited Effects Perspectives**. Specifically, we looked at the Value Change Theory and Social Judgement Theory as illustrations of Persuasion theories, and Aggressive Cues Theory and Reinforcement Theory as illustrations of Media Violence theories. None of these theories presents the media as either “all-powerful” or totally powerless.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Summarise in a two-page comment your attitude toward Social-Scientific / Media Effects Theories of Mass Communication after going through this unit.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Burgoon, M. and M. Ruffner (1978) *Human Communication: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Holt, Reinhert & Winston.

De Fleur, M.L. and S. Ball-Rokeach (1975) *Theories of Mass Communication*. New York: Longman (3rd edition).

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MODULE 4

WORKING / OPERATIONAL THEORIES

- Unit 1: Gatekeeping and Gatekeeping Factors.
- Unit 2: News Values and their Evolution.
- Unit 3: Socialisation Theories Relating to the Journalism Profession.
- Unit 4: Internal Gatekeeping Reviewed.
- Unit 5: External Gatekeeping.

UNIT 1: GATEKEEPING AND GATEKEEPING FACTORS

CONTENTS

- 15.0 Introduction
- 16.0 Objectives
- 17.0 Main Body
 - 17.1 The Concept of Gatekeeping

- 17.2 The Gatekeeping Process
- 17.3 Factors Influencing Gatekeeping Decisions
- 18.0 Conclusion
- 19.0 Summary
- 20.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 21.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, our focus will be on **Gatekeeping**. We shall explain the concept of Gatekeeping, explore the gatekeeping process and consider the factors that influence gatekeeping decisions.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (vii) Define gatekeeping;
- (viii) Explain the gatekeeping process;
- (ix) Discuss the factors that influence gatekeeping decisions.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Concept of Gatekeeping

We earlier defined Working Theories as consisting of guidelines, conventions, values, rules etc. which guide the process of media production and give it consistency over time. One basic concept in this area is that of **Gatekeeping**, to which we now turn our attention.

The term “gatekeeping” was coined by Kurt Lewin (1951, 1958) to describe those individuals who control food channels and use within groups during World War I and later, to describe those who control the transmission of media fare generally. The point is that no media establishment can transmit all messages it receives in the course of a day’s routine. Some individuals have to decide which information to transmit, which to defer, which to modify, which to delete entirely. Such individuals, as it were, open and close the “gate” that stands between the information source and the recipient. Gatekeeping is not restricted to accepting and rejecting of information. It involves shaping, display, timing, repeating the message for emphasis, and so on.

As Mr. E. Ekeli, former General Manager of the Delta State Printing and Newspapers Publishing Corporation put it in a lecture to a group of senior undergraduate students of mass communication:

Be he a reporter, editor, or sub editor, a journalist is first and foremost a gatekeeper...

Gatekeeping is known to be influenced by a number of factors some of which are discussed below. Of these, Ekeli appears to place the most crucial emphasis on the ethical dimension. For he says:

Gatekeeping is nothing but voluntary self-censorship performed by the media themselves. Gatekeeping emanates from the understanding by journalists that apart from legal restrictions on what is to be published, including photographs, journalists have a moral duty to be socially responsible to their readers in whatever materials they package for them.

He added that gatekeeping (or self-censorship) is a daily routine in all media establishments and that its strategies vary from organisations to organisations. One is aware that some journalists and scholars, especially those with a leftist orientation, are likely to object to Ekeli's emphasis on self-censorship, especially if they interpret the term as "being cautious not to offend the powers that be." However, Ekeli's definition appears to capture the essence of gatekeeping, at least in publicly owned and government-controlled media establishments. But there is substantial evidence to show that gatekeeping in all its ramifications (including self-censorship) is not confined to publicly owned and government-controlled media outfits, as we shall see later in this unit.

Exercise 1.1

Write down a one-page reflection on "Gatekeeping as Self-censorship"

3.2 The Gatekeeping Process

We noted earlier that gatekeeping amounts to screening of the information to be disseminated. That means communicating some themes and suppressing others. The "screening" can take place at any of the several levels in the media house hierarchy: the reporter, editor or publisher. IN print as in electronic newsrooms, the processing starts with the reporter rewriting his/her own report for submission at the sub-desk, where the news copy may be completely reworked to make it conform to house policy, which in essence translates to the publisher's or proprietor's world-view. For example, it is reported (Kunczick: 1988, p.145) that at *TIME* magazine, all reports filed in by correspondents were totally reworked to ensure that the news reflected company interests. The publisher, Henry Luce, is said to have striven for absolute control with the help of personally selected top editors, which is said to have led *TIME*'s one-time China correspondent, Teddy White, to put in his office a sign, which reads:

*Any resemblance between what is written here and what is printed in **TIME** magazine is purely coincidental (ibid).*

Concerning objectivity, the following statement is credited to the publisher, Henry Luce:

I don't pretend that this is an objective magazine. It's an editorial magazine from the first page to the last and whatever comes out has to reflect my views and that's the way it is (ibid).

Luce's statement is significant, since his magazine, *TIME*, is reported to be an international leader in the print media business. The most important thing here for now, however, is for the student to realise that gatekeeping is not just a matter of accepting or rejecting information, but also of processing — modifying, shaping, displaying, etc. of the accepted messages. Through this “filtering” process, gatekeepers not only decide which occurrences come to public awareness but also influence the ways in which those occurrences are perceived — through the kind of editorial treatment given them. Hence the journalist's responsibility is often described as a grave one, involving:

- (i) Ethical Responsibility, that is the journalist's concern to maintain his/her self and social esteem by establishing a steady credibility with his audience; and
- (ii) Social Responsibility: Performing his/her journalistic role (reporter, editor, publisher) in such a way as to demonstrate an awareness that he/she has a stake in what happens to society — stability or confusion, order or anarchy, equity or corruption, etc. (See Macdonald: 1975, 1978).

Exercise 1.2

Now write down another one-page reflection on “Gatekeeping as a Filtering Process”.

3.3 Factors Influencing Gatekeeping Decisions

- (i) **Timing:** This is very crucial in the gatekeeping process. News is determined more by when it is received in the publishing cycle than by any other single factor. Information received early in the day when a large proportion of newspaper space or newscast time remains to be filled has a better chance of passing through the gate than a news item arriving later in the day. When two or more items arrive sufficiently early within the publishing cycle, editorial decision is influenced by several other factors, including the following:
- (ii) **Ownership Pattern:** Publicly owned and government-controlled media tend to be more authoritarian and more prone to self-censorship than privately owned media: they carry more news favourable to the government of the day and avoid news unfavourable to it; they avoid direct criticism of government actions, and suppress news that would amount to revealing government secrets. Party organs fall in the same category, since they tend to report news from the perspective of their patron parties. This is not to suggest that privately owned media are free to report what they like and the way they like to. There is the common saying that the ghost of the proprietor is ever hanging over the editorial

conference whether that proprietor happens to be a government, a corporation or an individual. However, non-governmental media tend to be freer to do investigative reporting, for example, concerning government, which is the biggest source of news in any society.

- (iii) **Management Policy:** This is usually contained in the mission statements and reflected in the practice codes of each media establishment. It flows from the publisher through the management and editorial boards to the editors, writers and reporters. Indeed, every worker who aspires to grow with the establishment would normally be expected to get familiar with management policy. Given the pyramidal-cum-hierarchical structure of media organisations, management policy tends to engender the kind of bureaucracy, which Democratic Participant theory frowns upon. Long-serving members of the top hierarchy can sometimes deviate within acceptable limits but:
- (a) they must earn that privilege by conforming for long periods; and
 - (b) the acceptable limits are unique to each organisation.
 - (c) **Size of the media:** Large newspapers, for example, tend to be less dependent on news items supplied by the news agencies and to rely more on their own news gathering resources than smaller newspapers. The same thing applies to large broadcasting networks, especially in more developed countries such as the United States of America. So, their editorial staff tend to be more loyal to house policy and house style.
- (iv) **Perceived Needs and Preferences of the Audience:** Editors believe at least that they are providing their audiences what they like or need to read, view and listen to. They claim to do this mainly through readership surveys and other forms of audience research. However, the extent to which these are carried out varies with the different organisations. Besides regular audience surveys, avenues through which audience preferences can be ascertained include feedback channels such as letters to the editor / opinion columns, phone-in electronic programmes, audience open days, etc.
- (v) **Editor's Perception of Reality:** Perceived audience needs and preferences notwithstanding, editors sometimes have, or are expected to have a better grasp of a given social situation and to decide how best to report on it; say, a war situation, for instance.
- (vi) **Views held by Editor's Colleagues:** It is, to elicit such views that editorial conferences are held. The Editor-in-Chief's own perception of reality is not infrequently swayed by the views expressed by his colleagues at such daily conferences. This procedure ensures a kind of internal consensus over what is put out as news.

- (vii) ***Influence of Advertisers:*** Since the commercial press in particular is so dependent on advertising revenues, the tendency of the press to defer to the feelings of the advertisers, especially big advertisers, is understandable. Advertisers are known to exercise considerable influence over the news purveyed by the media they patronise, especially over news that have to do with such advertiser's business, or clients including even governments.
- (viii) ***Appraisal of Offerings by the Competition:*** Each establishment jealously watches what its competitors are providing as news, especially in times of crises or any newly breaking events. Indeed, it is claimed (but not indisputably proved) that some establishments maintain within rival organisations paid contacts who furnish them with prior information on their rivals' news propositions.
- (ix) ***Availability of Photographs or Film Footage:*** Visuals (photographs and films) are very important to journalists because of their ability to enhance the effects of given news items. Television gatekeepers in particular often seem to base their news judgements more on the visual aspects (availability of good film footage) than on the significance of the news content.
- (x) ***Legal Considerations:*** The law of defamation as well as of seditious libel hangs over the journalists like the Sword of Damocles. All journalists are expected to be aware of them and to strive to avoid running foul of them. Newspapers have legal departments and broadcasting houses have internal censors who screen news items in particular to ensure that they are free of libellous content. Besides defamation and sedition, there are other offences that journalists try to avoid, such as contempt of court, which may arise from a few sources including commenting unconscionably on a matter that is *subjudice*; that is, undergoing trial in a law court.
- (xi) ***Professional Ethics:*** Objectivity, balance fairness, social responsibility etc. are ethical terms that are bandied about among journalists and media scholars. But they are not easy to practicalise because of their indeterminacy, (they are not governed by any precise rules or guidelines). Still, all journalists are expected to be sensitive to them in gathering, processing, and reporting news.
- (xii) ***Ideological Perspectives and Political Orientation:*** These exercise a subtle yet significant influence on gatekeeping. As George Gerbner (1961) points out,

The basic editorial function is not performed through editorials but through the selection and treatment of all that is published.

Gerbner refers to the process involved as "total selection and relative emphasis". In a study of the coverage of an unwitting murder case by three

French newspapers — one a leftist newspaper, the second a commercial newspaper and the third a right-wing newspaper — he found that each paper reported both the incidents and the trial from its own ideological perspective and political orientation, with the commercial paper swinging a little to the right and a little to the left but always nearer to the right of centre. In conclusion, Gerbner espouses the proposition.

... that all news are views; that all editorial choice patterns in what and what not to make public (and in what proportion, with what emphasis, etc.) have an ideological basis and a political dimension rooted in the structural characteristics of the medium; that such ideological perspectives and political tendencies will be expressed and cultivated through presumably non-political news as much as, or perhaps even more than, through overtly political reporting and in the commercial-press as well as in the “party press”.

Gerbner’s study confirmed this proposition, of course, with the proviso that the basic ideological and political choices are recognised as inherent not just in party partisanship but in the total operation of “news values” and of standards of reporting.

Exercise 1.3

What are your views on the degree of importance usually attached to the availability of visuals in television news reporting?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Gatekeeping is a **filtering process** through which journalists manage information flow from source to receiver, with themselves as the gatekeepers. It is made necessary by the reality that no media establishment can transmit to the public the whole of the prodigious amount of information that it receives in the course of a day’s routine.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the concept of **Gatekeeping** and we saw that it is the process by which media establishments delimit the amount of information to transmit to the public out of the huge amount they receive daily. We saw, furthermore, that gatekeeping involves more than mere selection of passable information for transmission. It also involves shaping, sequencing and staging of the information. Finally, we saw several of the factors that influence gatekeeping decisions. Of these, timing appears to be the most critical.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

which **five** of the factors listed above as influencing gatekeeping decisions do you envisage as most important to Nigerian journalists? Attempt to discuss the factors in a descending order of importance. (Maximum of two pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

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MODULE 4 (Contd.)

WORKING / OPERATIONAL THEORIES

UNIT 2: NEWS VALUES AND THEIR EVOLUTION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 News Values: Historical Dimensions.
 - 3.2 News Values: Contemporary Dimensions.
 - 3.3 Why Bad News is Good News.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall be concerned with **News Values and their evolution** and conclude with a brief explanation on **Why Bad News is Good News in the Journalistic Tradition**.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (1) Define News Values and trace their evolution.
- (2) Explain why Bad News is Good News in the journalistic tradition.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 News Values: Historical Dimensions

“News Values” refers to the criteria by which news is selected. The term ‘news value’ was first used by Walter Lippmann in 1922. According to Michael Kunczick (1988: 148), the modern discussions about news values began in communication scholarship in the 20th century but has a long tradition, going as far back as the seventeenth century. Even at that time, qualities such as truth, importance/prominence, consequence, geographical proximity, negativity, strangeness, etc. were already recognised as important requirements. Also recognised was the problem of “reality construction” by the mass media, created by the need for the media to appear regularly, regardless of whether there was any important or unusual event occurring or not. For these early media, the regular, the usual, the private, the indifferent and the unexciting had no news value.

Exercise 2.1

Write down a one-page comment on “the Problem of ‘Reality Construction’ by the Mass Media”.

3.2 Contemporary Dimensions

When Lippmann first used the term “news value” in “Public Opinion” in 1922, he cited clarity of the occurrence, surprise, geographical proximity, personal impact and conflict. He also distinguished between:

- (i) Environment (that is, the real world as it exists), and
- (ii) Pseudo-environment (referring to the subjective world in men’s brains, especially the world created by the mass media).

On his own part, Wilbur Schramm (1949) distinguished between:

- (i) Immediate Reward News, e.g. crime and corruption, accidents and disasters, sports and recreation, and social events; and
- (ii) Delayed Reward News, e.g. information about public affairs, economic matters, social problems, science, education, etc.

Summing up those analyses, Kunczick (1988: 149) says that news values are, in the final analysis, “nothing but the more or less intuitive assumptions of journalists about what interests their given public, i.e. what gets their attention. And, since deviation from the norm has particular attention-value, a short-lived natural disaster (e.g. a destructive tornado, an earthquake, a murder, etc.) attracts the media, especially “day-topical” media like the newspaper, more than prolonged social “disasters” (e.g. corruption, inequalities, social injustices, etc.).

In a research on “The Structure of Foreign News”, Galtung and Rouge (1965) identified about a dozen criteria of newsworthiness, including frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, unexpectedness of the pertinent messages, and whether they refer to elite people and nations. But of more importance for our purpose here are the three assumptions made by the authors, namely that:

- (i) the more events answer to the above criteria, the more likely it is that they will be selected as news;
- (ii) once an event has been selected as news, the factor(s) that have made it newsworthy will be accentuated, thereby leading to distortion.
- (iii) Both the processes of selection and distortion will be replicated at all stages in the communication chain from stimulus to receiver.

The facts of selection and distortion, and of the replication of these features at every step in the communication chain, as well as the problems of slant, reality construction and the creation of pseudo-environments by the media — not to talk of the phenomenon of selective perception by the consumers themselves — explain why there can sometimes be such a wide gap between real events and the people’s perception of those events as mediated by the press. These facts and problems explain why an ardent exponent of the press like Thomas Jefferson could still say in his later life:

I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time (See Kunczick: 1988, p.152).

But more important still, they provide the conscientious journalist with food for humbling reflections, and a stimulus for aspirations to greater conscientiousness in striving to ensure that the images his/her reports create in the heads of the audience are not too far away from the threshold of reality.

The little account provided above should suffice in showing the journalism and mass communication student that the criteria of news selection and news judgement espoused by today's journalists and media scholars (e.g. Akinfeleye: 1982, 1987) were not dreamt up yesterday but have a long tradition worldwide.

Exercise 2.2

What is your reaction to Kunczick's view that new values are "nothing but the more or less intuitive assumptions of journalists about what interests their given publics, i.e. what gets their attention"?

3.4 Why Bad News is Good News

Wilke (1984) as cited by Kunczick (1988: 151) posits four possible reasons why bad news usually gets preferences in media reporting:

- (i) Because bad news satisfies the frequency criterion better. In other words, the negative, being easier and requiring less time (compare building a house with demolishing it) has a higher frequency score in human life.
- (ii) More people are likely to agree on what is "bad" and the interpretation of a "bad" occurrence than on the interpretation of a "good" event. So, editorial conferences are likely to adjourn, having imprimated more negative news than positive ones.
- (iii) In spite of the consensual value of negative news as posited in (ii) above, negative news is more unexpected than positive news. (The human psyche is naturally more at home with the positive, so that negative is likely to jolt him into a news awareness and therefore to make news).
- (iv) Negative news is said to be more consonant with at least some dominant images of our time.

Communication's "psycho-analyst", Marshall McLuhan confirms these propositions at pages 294-295 of his book, *Understanding Media* (1964) where he says: "Real news is bad news — bad news about somebody or bad news for somebody". For McLuhan, the press is "a group confessional form that provides communal participation", just as a book is "a private confessional form", that provides "a point of view". Both book and newspaper, he says, are confessional in character, creating the effect of "inside story" by their mere form, regardless of content. As book page yields the inside story of the author's mental adventures, so the press page yields the inside story of the community in action and interaction. According to McLuhan, it is for this reason that the press seems to be performing its function most when revealing the seamy side.

Summary of 20th Century News Values

Let us conclude this unit with the following adapted summary of 20th century news values enumerated by John Lule and his associates in their *Handbook for Third World Journalists* (University of Georgia Press: 1989, p.23).

Table 3: Summary of 20th Century News Values

First World News Values	Second World News Values	Third World News Values
Timeliness	Ideological Significance	Development
Proximity	Party Government Concerns	Social Significance
Personality	Education	National Interest
Responsibility	Human Interest	Education
Prominence	Timeliness	Proximity
Human Interest	Proximity	Personal Interest
Integration	Openness (Glasnost)	
Conflict		
Interpretation		
Self-criticism		

Exercise 2.3

Have you got some independent views on “Why bad news is good news in the journalistic tradition”? You may wish to summarise those views in a one-page comment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

News values have a long tradition and they have remained fairly constant throughout that tradition. Even the slight distinctions noticeable — during the Cold War period — among the so-called First World, Second World and Third World countries may be assumed to be fast disappearing following the cessation of the cold war. So we may eventually be able to speak of “universal news values” among the world’s mass media.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have focused on news values, tracing their evolution from about the 16th century. We sensed a connection between this evolution and the tendency for “bad news” to assume prominence as “good news” in the mass media.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

“Human Interest” as a news value appears to cut across the three “worlds”. What do you understand by “Human Interest” news?

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Kunczick, M. (1988) *Concepts of Journalism: North and South*. Bonn: Friedrich–Ebert–Stiftung.

Lule, J.L. et al. (1989) *Handbook for Third World Journalists*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

MODULE 4 (Contd.)

WORKING / OPERATIONAL THEORIES

UNIT 3: SOCIALISATION THEORIES RELATING TO THE JOURNALISM PROFESSION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Socialisation Process.
 - 3.2 Some Specific Socialisation Theories.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall explore the socialisation process among journalists and then take a look at some specific socialisation theories, namely: Role Theory, Identification Theory, Exchange Theory etc.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Explain the socialisation process among journalists.
- (ii) Discuss specific socialisation theories such as those discussed in this unit.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Socialisation Process

Applied to journalism, socialisation refers to “learning the skills, motives, orientation patterns and emotions required for everyday journalistic behaviour, i.e. adopting the values, norms, habits and attitudes prevailing within a certain media organisation to become a full fledged member (journalist) of that organisation” (Kunczick: 1988: 97). In short, the process of “knowing the ropes”. Occupational socialisation, Kunczick points out, has to be seen as an almost life-long process. In the process, there develops a reciprocal relationship between the journalist’s personality and the journalistic job itself; the individual chooses journalism because he/she believes it can meet his/her requirements and that he/she can meet the requirements of journalism. The job and the man/woman mutually affect each other but, according to Kunczick, there is empirical evidence to suggest that the job affects the man more than the man affects the job. The process by which a person adapts himself/herself to an occupation in which he/she wishes to make a career for himself or herself is known as “professional deformation”.

Exercise 3.1

Spend some time reflecting on professional socialisation in some other professions you know of.

3.2 Socialisation Theories

3.2.1 *Role Theory*: The theory is predicated on the assumption that people’s behaviour can be predicted from the social (and occupational) roles they occupy. In this connection, role is the point of intersection between the individual and society. It refers to the expectations made on the holder of a given position (say, an editor) by other holders of positions —

which may include other editors. Socialisation helps to stabilise organisational structures and values in the face of fluctuations in organisational membership. Through interaction with colleagues and reference groups, one acquires not only the skills required by, but also the values, attitudes and norms associated with membership. This interaction plays a significant role in journalism.

The occupational role is impinged upon by other social roles such as mother, Christian, breadwinner, etc. This may result in role conflicts. The conflicts may be “intra-role” (i.e. within a given role), such as the conflict between the need to be objective and the pressure to acknowledge solidarity with one’s “in-group”, or between truthfulness and the journalistic convention against the disclosure of the identity of an informant. “Inter-role” conflicts may be illustrated by those between being a mother/home keeper and working as an editor without specific closing time; or being a pastor and a lawyer. “Role strain” arises when these conflicts in role expectations or demands become a “burden” to a particular journalist. Role-strain may lead to low job satisfaction, loss of confidence in the organisation or even in oneself, or high tension in the job situation. One interesting finding reported by Kunczick (1988: 100) is that, contrary to normal expectation, work stress, known to be so high in newspaper and television journalism, for instance, does not correlate with “role-strain”. Rather, it is factors such as the lack of a challenge, low job autonomy and underemployment that have been found to correlate actively with “role-strain”, because they kill initiative and hinder self-actualisation.

Exercise 3.2

How can being a lawyer and at the same time a pastor create inter-role conflict? And how can the potential role-strain be forestalled?

3.2.2 **Identification Theory:** Identification refers to the adaptations that take place as a role occupant emulates a particular model. Such changes are predictable and contribute to organisational stability. Identification theory presupposes:

- (i) A strong relationship with a mentor or model who imparts values and standards of performance, instils a sense of confidence, and guides the developing journalist by example.
- (ii) A daily routine in which the evaluation and processing of news, as well as the media house’s policy line are learned and accepted.
- (iii) A “self-selection mechanism” by which, the prospective employees know the basic ideological lines of media establishments and try to get employment in ones corresponding to their own orientations.

Identification is also influenced by such factors as institutional sanctions (e.g. rejection of non-conforming articles), esteem for and obligation to superiors, mobility aspirations (i.e. the desire to advance) and so on.

On the whole, as the agents of socialisation/identification (official supervisors, earlier cohorts, etc.) continue to guide the new recruits, so do their own values become reinforced.

3.2.3 **Generalisation Theory:** This theory espouses the possibility of the transfer of values, attitudes and thought patterns from a given role, to one's other social roles, thus generalising these values, attitudes and thought patterns. For example, teachers are known to generalise their classroom attitudes into the family set-up and some judges have been "accused" (even if in jest) of generalising their courtroom attitudes to some other social situations. In the same way, journalists have often been associated with alleged generalisation of their journalistic values, attitudes and thought structures to other aspects of their social life. In the past, the attributes allegedly thus generalised by lower-cadre journalists in particular in Nigeria were not too flattering. These days, a general kind of positive "professional deformation" appears to have taken place, and many Nigerian reporters in particular are associated in the public eye with more respectable attributes. Moreover, with the relatively more generous opportunities now available for training, the image of the journalism profession as a beehive of school drop-outs has crumbled fast.

3.2.4 **Symbolic Interactionism:** Symbolic interaction is a process in the course of which people interpret the symbols used by the interaction partners and their own actions are based on the respective interpretations and or situation definition's (Kunczick, 1988: 103, Baran & Davis, 2003: 238). From this theoretical viewpoint, the learning of avocation means "learning the ropes", i.e. satisfactorily defining the role demands and the work situation, while one's personality becomes increasingly submerged in the role. Every action initiated by a role incumbent is dependent on his/her definition of the situation. In short, actions occur on the basis of situation diagnoses. The developing journalist has to learn to respond appropriately to those situations (i.e. to adapt to the demands of the organisation), or quit. From this perspective, the socialisee is seen as fairly passive, with little influence on the socialisation process. There is of course the theoretical counter-perspective, which focuses on the socialisee's own initiative: it assumes that the socialisee actively selects situations that promote his personal goals, thus making the socialisation process dynamic and unpredictable. Such a personal goal may involve sporting the image of a tough journalist, an objective journalist, a dogged seeker after truth, etc.

Seen from either viewpoint, symbolic interactionist theory is predicated on the presence of a socialiser and a socialisee, both affecting and being

affected by the work situation, which interaction develops the socialisee and reinforces the values of the socialiser. The caveat is that the active socialisee in a dynamic interactive work situation may, consciously or unwittingly, undermine the aims and intentions of the socialiser.

- 3.2.5 **Exchange Theory:** In explaining this theory, one of the exponents assumes that every interaction involves an exchange of goods or services. People attempt to get from others as much as they have given to them. In turn, they are obliged to give in return as much as they have taken from others. Thus subordinates give loyalty in return for advice and guidance from superiors, while superiors may provide protection in return for compliant or referent behaviour from subordinates, as in the field of journalism. According to Exchange Theory, the rewards are devalued when the exchange becomes too frequent or too obvious. However, in the case of occupational socialisation, the outcome depends greatly on the socialisee who stands to gain more from the exchange.

Exercise 3.3

Briefly discuss the similarities and differences between Identification Theory and Exchange Theory.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Journalism, like other professions, involves a socialisation process among its members. The socialisation process can be looked at from several angles or theoretical viewpoints. The ultimate benefit of the socialisation process is organisational stability.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a brief look at socialisation in the journalism profession. First, we looked at the Socialisation Process and then at some specific socialisation theories: **role theory** which views a professional role as the point of intersection between the professional and society, **identification theory** which is concerned with the adaptations that take place as a role occupant emulates a role model; **generalisation theory** which discusses the possible transfer of values, attitudes and thoughts from a given role to one's other social roles; **symbolic interactionism** which deals with reciprocal interpretations of symbols used by the interaction partners; and **exchange theory** which deals with envisaged exchanges (e.g. loyalty for protection) between **socialisee** and (superior) **socialiser**. It is not clear to what extent these processes are consciously observed in the pertinent organisations.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

In **Symbolic Interactionism**, "Every action initiated by a role incumbent is dependent on his/her definition of the situation; in short, actions occur on the basis of situation diagnoses." Describe a hypothetical case (or a real case if you know of any) in which a role incumbent made a wrong diagnosis of the pertinent situation, making clear what were the consequences, and the reaction of the role incumbent to these consequences.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Kunczick, M. (1988) *Concepts of Journalism: North and South*. Bonn: Friedrich–Ebert–Stiftung.

MODULE 4 (Contd.)

WORKING / OPERATIONAL THEORIES

UNIT 4: INTERNAL MEDIA GATEKEEPERS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Internal Media Gatekeepers.
 - 3.1.1 The Print Media Gatekeepers
 - 3.1.2 The Broadcast Media Gatekeepers
 - 3.1.3 Gatekeepers in the Film Industry
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a brief look at Internal Gatekeeping in the mass media establishments: both the print and electronic media establishments.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Make a comprehensive discussion of gatekeeping in the print media.
- (ii) Make a comprehensive discussion of gatekeeping in the electronic media.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Internal Media Gatekeepers

We have said much about gatekeeping within the media establishments. Still, we shall present some supplementary material in this unit on the media's exercise of self-regulation which, as we have stressed, is the bedrock of the media's **social responsibility**. As Hiebert, Unguray and Bohn (1995) again remind us, most media regulation starts internally and this can be the most crucial regulation. They go on to say:

In fact, the media often submit to self-regulation simply because they do not want to offend their audience or do not want a public outcry to encourage government to be more restrictive (HUB, 1995: 453).

The media affected include both print and electronic media as well as the recording industry and distribution outfits. The personnel involved are mainly editors but may also include directors, producers, and publishers who exercise final responsibility for mass mediated products.

Exercise 4.1

In the spirit of "self-regulation", write a two-page essay on "Self-Regulation" the Bedrock of Social Responsibility", using internal gatekeeping by the mass media for illustration — and score yourself.

3.1.1 ***The Print Media:*** Both in the more advanced countries and in developing countries like Nigeria, print media establishments have on their staff lawyers to guard against publication of materials that may amount to civil libel, seditious libel or invasion of privacy. Media associations such as the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) or the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the U.S. Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, or the

Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and a few other groups like them exist to protect the interests of their members, and they have elaborate codes of practice to keep them from falling foul of the law, and to enable them to demonstrate the highest ethical standards of practice. Because of North America's unique provision for press freedom, media gatekeepers are not obliged to accept codes of conduct issued by the respective associations but instances are very rare in which they openly flout the codes. Rather, they may fight to get the codes modified. Ironically in Nigeria where the print media gatekeepers are still governed by the codes issued by their associations and quasi-regulatory bodies such as the National Press Council (NPC), there have been reports of gatekeepers flouting the codes and worse still, refusing to honour the Council's invitation to defend themselves against one complaint or the other. There is, happily, abundant evidence that, as our refurbished democracy is making an obvious headway, our professional outfits and associations are also gearing up to put their groups on a high pedestal of ethical professional practice.

Exercise 4.2

Do you think we in Nigeria have reached a stage at which individual or corporate media gatekeepers can afford to disregard codes of practice issued by their professional associations? Why, or why not?

3.1.2 ***The Broadcast Media Gatekeepers:*** The broadcast media are normally more wary of falling foul of professional codes of practice. Especially at the networks, internal censors guillotine many programmes which the producers have "finalised" for airing. The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), which would be more or less the equivalent of our own Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), appears to be much more visible and more powerful than its print press counterparts such as the National News Council (NNC). But it sometimes looks as if the networks can do without NAB, in view of the authority wielded by their own internal censors, all in an effort to forestall undue external pressure — through self-discipline. The point is that the broadcast media are, everywhere at the centre of public interest, pressure and criticism, not only because of their greater visibility and the immediacy of their content but, more important, because the airwaves which constitute their primary capital, are public property and are very scarce. This is a fundamental fact that all broadcasting personnel must be trained (and I hope are being trained) to realise; but, just in case there are some who do not realise or simply forget this fact, there are internal censors to keep all internal gatekeepers on their toes.

Exercise 4.3

Write down for later discussion with a friend or tutorial colleague, a two-page reflection on why Nigerian governments tend to show greater interest in the performance of the broadcast media than in that of their print counterpart.

3.1.3 ***Gatekeeping in the Film Industry:*** Film has always been television's "accomplice" in the court of public opinion. As we noted in an earlier unit, their "crimes" are myriad, and they include lowering of public taste through unabashed display of open sex, and assaulting the mental health of young people in particular through their frequent display and seeming justification of violence. In Nigeria, the list of culprits would no doubt include home-videos and, even though they may not be accused of displaying open sex, the apparent obsession with "fetish" and "voodooism" by some of the producing groups probably call for the same level of public concern. At the initial stages, the thought of having "our own" indigenous entertainment fare and cultural repertory probably drowned whatever public criticisms there were. However, I understand that, especially now that we have some fairly sophisticated home videos in the market, some of the bigger production outfits are voluntarily including personnel that may be seen as "internal censors" on their staff.

In the U.S., films have ratings, which amount to a pre-empting of public criticism, especially regarding violence and explicit sex. This way, the internal film censors tend to throw the ball into the parents' court concerning the protection of their wards' mental health. It is interesting to see individual producers or groups of these struggling to have the ratings of their programmes improved, and they succeed in many cases without any fundamental changes in the programmes. And that leads to our final observation about internal gatekeeping. As time passes and society changes, so do the moral standards that underlie the gatekeeping practices, especially in film and television. Thus in advanced as in developing countries, films and television programmes that would have raised a lot of eyebrows in past generations are now being shown without much ado.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our brief examination of internal gatekeeping in the mass media establishments has shown that they fulfil their self-regulation requirements through strict internal gatekeeping. The approaches vary with media types and structures, but the end-purpose of all their internal gatekeeping is to pre-empt public criticism and restrictive government regulatory measure.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have looked at internal gatekeeping in the print and electronic media establishments. We saw that the print media have lawyers on their staff to guard against potentially libellous publications in particular. (In some, there is also the **ombudsman** whose work appears to be similar to but more general than that of the lawyer — gatekeepers). We also saw that the broadcasting outfits have censors who assess programmes that are ready to go on air. Films, we saw, have ratings by means of which they guide the public about which category of consumers a given film is

suitable for. We concluded by observing that gatekeeping standards are subject to changes in accordance with changing times.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

You have just been appointed Chairman of Nigeria's Film and Video Censor's Board. Write down your inaugural speech before an assemblage of stakeholders.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Hiebert, Unguray and Bohn (1995) *Mass Media V.*

MODULE 4 (Contd.)

WORKING / OPERATIONAL THEORIES

UNIT 5: EXTERNAL MEDIA GATEKEEPERS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Government as Gatekeeper
 - 3.2 The Content Source as Gatekeeper
 - 3.3 Advertiser as Gatekeeper
 - 3.4 Consumer as Gatekeeper
 - 3.5 Pressure Groups as Gatekeepers
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at selected **External Gatekeepers** the way we looked at internal gatekeepers in the preceding unit. The external gatekeepers to be looked at include Governments, advertisers, individual consumers, as well as consumers joined together as pressure groups.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, I expect you to be able to:

- (i) Discuss governments, advertisers and consumers as external gatekeepers to the mass media.
- (ii) Discuss the consequences of external gatekeeping for the mass media and the public.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Government as Gatekeeper

It is interesting that most of the U.S. media laws seek more to uphold than to restrict press freedom. And, in the few cases, which amount to curtailment of press freedom, judicial interpretations of the constitution either uphold or, most commonly, nullify governmental action. The strategies employed by governments to control the mass communication process and thus act as external gatekeeper to the media include the following (Hiebert et al: 1988: 46).

Censorship

Only motion pictures, and no other media, are legally subject to censorship (i.e. prior restraint) in the U.S. and in most countries that operate under her influence. Yet governments, including American governments, have from time to time attempted to commit censorship, sometimes out of genuine anxiety to protect the public. But the American courts in particular have always declared such attempts unconstitutional.

Regulation of Broadcasting

Radio and television stations have to be licensed by the government but a broadcast licence's programme cannot be censored. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) charged with regulating radio, telephone, telegraph and television, can only interpret the law, it cannot make laws. It of course grants and renews licences and regulates some programme content in the arena of political affairs programming; for example the Fairness Doctrine, which obliges broadcasters to seek out and broadcast contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues of public importance, and the Equal Time clause of the

constitution which requires that, during election campaigns, broadcasters should furnish equal time and equal opportunity to all political candidates for a given office. In addition, the Commission allocates frequencies to new broadcasting stations.

Nigeria's National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) performs a similar role to the FCC's. But while FCC deals basically with commercial broadcasting, NBC handles issues relating to federal, state and private (commercial) broadcasting. Moreover, the NBC is yet too young to have accumulated experience and material for analysis as the FCC has. However, we are here primarily concerned with its gatekeeping role.

Regulation of Advertising

The U.S. Government regulates advertising through the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which was set up to check unfair competition in business, including dishonest advertising, especially dishonest television advertising directed at children. FTC does not censor the content of commercials, nor does it make rules on what may or may not be produced. It only detects and prosecutes instances of attempts to cheat consumers through dishonest advertisements. In principle, the relevant Nigerian government agencies will probably also find prior censorship or elaborate regulations unnecessary, since the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) has in fact embarked on an experimental internal censorship comparable in its ramifications to the internal censorship of motion pictures.

Criminal Liberal and Sedition

This is an area in which the state assumes the role of "prosecutor" in cases of false and malicious attacks on society, attempts to endanger public order by destructive (false and malicious) publications/information, and libellous statements against discrete social groups or against dead persons who cannot defend themselves. Even the United States has had on its books statutes pertinent to this area. Examples include the "Alien Acts" and "Sedition Act" of 1798, which were designed to protect the young government of the new republic being destabilised by frivolous and malicious publications. There were also the Espionage Acts of the first and Second World War periods, which were designed to prevent the otherwise irrepressible American press from publishing information that could be used by the enemy against the United States. However, it is a remarkable reflection of America's commitment to press freedom and respect for constitutional rights that the Alien Acts and the Sedition Act of 1798 lapsed as soon as the young republic became more confident — actually when Thomas Jefferson, an untiring exponent of press freedom, became President. Similarly, the Espionage Acts expired at the end of each war. But, even while these statutes remained on the books, relevant prosecution was extremely rare, no doubt because of the security implications but equally certainly because of the sensitive First Amendment issues raised by these statutes.

The latter observation is particularly relevant to the Disclosure Law of 1950 passed by the American Congress in the wake of the East-West Cold War. No news organisation was known to have been prosecuted under that law up to the mid-1980s (see Hiebert et al, 1988: 467), the only successfully prosecuted culprit till then being a government employee who was found guilty of selling classified photos to a British Defence magazine. American newspapers have of course been warned by the CIA that they could get into trouble by publishing information leaked to them in the course of such trials. In Nigeria, such laws appear to be in active operation still.

Restriction on Dissemination and Pornography

The final illustration we are going to discuss of external regulation, or attempts to regulate media content by governments concerns restrictions on the importation, distribution, and sale of pornographic materials — films, tapes/cassettes, comic strips, and what have you. Governments everywhere appear to acknowledge their responsibility for the protection of public morals by restricting the importation, distribution and sale of pornography generally. Obscene publications are the primary targets of such restrictions, but in some countries, they also relate to gambling and lottery information. Quite understandably, they also relate to “treasonous propaganda” in America of the cold war period. The Customs Departments of several governments are empowered to impound obscene materials as well as lottery gambling information that are being imported into their countries. The Postal Services have also been known to block the mailing of such information in the past but their activities in that regard have tended in recent times to be limited to getting senders of such information to label them as such.

What I personally find intriguing now is that national laws pertaining to pornography tend to focus attention on the importation of obscene materials across borders, while apparently de-emphasising the dangers of pornography originated within each society. Judging by the amount of mass-mediated home-grown obscenity within some of these societies, it would appear that the fear of cultural contamination more than concern for public morals must have been at the centre of the attempts by various governments to restrict importation, distribution and sale of pornographic materials within their borders.

Other Government Measures

Other areas in which governments have sought to act as “external gatekeepers” to the mass media include protection of the political and judicial systems (e.g. against contempt of court) restrictions on court coverage (to preserve security) and protection of property.

Exercise 5.1

Find out as much information as you can on the way pornography is controlled in your country.

3.2 Content Source as Gatekeeper

Right from the beginning of the communication process, the source can act as “gatekeeper” or “regulator” through strategic handling of the information. Three such strategies identified by Hiebert and his associates are strategic releasing, strategic withholding and strategic staging.

Strategic Releasing: The very decision to disseminate a given message through a letter, newsletter, press release, radio/TV news release, documentary, newspaper/magazine supplement, or what have you involves some strategic planning. Each choice made also has its implications, or involves prior considerations, regarding costs, timing, reach and potential effects of the pertinent messages. An instalmental release of a given information package may also be a strategic means of control on the way in which the information will be transmitted by the media and the effect(s) it will have on the audience.

Strategic Withholding: The source especially a government, can decide on which information or which parts of some given information the media will have access to. Laws governing security of some government information have furnished material for endless debates in some of the more advanced liberal democracies. In most conflicts touching on the propriety of the media publishing government’s classified information, the government has always had its way. However, the final outcome of the Watergate trials in the U.S. has demonstrated that there can be limits to “executive privilege” in communication matters, especially in countries that profess to be democratic.

Strategic withholding is also achieved by banning the press from particular meetings. Such denials of access to meetings for the press have been more common in authoritarian setups than in accredited liberal democracies. One area in which there appears to have been unqualified — co-operation between the press and government (especially their Defence Division) is in the agreement to keep the identities of intelligence agents secret.

Strategic Staging: The content source can also “dictate” how information will be disseminated and perceived by his own strategic staging of the pertinent events; for example, by hiring a group of protesters to shout pro or anti-XYZ sentiments and getting the media to focus their cameras and tapes on the protesters, thus drowning other elements of the event. In the case of the print media, the language and style employed by the content source are aspects of strategic staging. There was a president of a particular country who was said to be fond of organising citizen demonstrations to give prior “endorsement” to any bill he intended to send to congress. The media would be made to cover the demonstrations, and it would in the end look as if it was the demonstrators’ demand(s) that the President was meeting in sending the bill to parliament. It sounds awkward in essence but it is a good illustration of strategic staging of information dissemination by the content source.

3.3 The Advertiser as Gatekeeper

We have had cause to refer, earlier, to the potential influence of advertisers on the gatekeeping process. We only need to elaborate a little further here. The

influence of advertisers is reflected more in self-censorship by the internal gatekeepers themselves, who would not wish to see advertising dollars or Naira dry up. There are said to be occasional disagreements between “office” and “shop” (news office and the business sections) over the need to respect advertisers’ sensitivities. This may sometimes involve respecting the advertiser’s wish to have a given criticism of or satire on government toned down or deleted altogether, in the case of a sponsor with important business connections with government. The theoretical position is summed up in the following statement by Hiebert and his associates (ibid):

Theoretically, the more independent the medium can be from advertising, the less power of regulation the advertiser will have. Radio and television, which receive 100 per cent of their revenue from advertising, run the risk of great pressures from sponsors. Newspapers and magazines, which for the most part, receive 33 to 50 per cent of their revenue directly from subscribers, have less direct obligation to paid advertisers. Books, the recording industry, and motion pictures, which receive 100 per cent of their revenue directly from their audiences, can afford to ignore Madison Avenue altogether.

In developing countries like Nigeria, where a lot of the media derive their revenues from government subventions and government patronage, their obligation appears, understandably, to be more to government as both sponsor and advertiser.

3.4 Consumer as Gatekeeper

There are three areas in which the consumer, either as an individual or within a group, can assert his/her control over media content, i.e. act as an external gatekeeper. These are through selective consumption, Civil Libel suits, and suit to assert the Right of Privacy.

Selective Consumption: This is the area where the consumer can most greatly influence media content. He simply withdraws his patronage from media whose content offends him, or, in fact, refuses to patronise them at all. Especially in countries like the United States where mass communication is pure business, an unmitigated exercise of “selective exposure” by consumers can mean bankruptcy for some media establishments. So, the media go all the way to please their consumers. From a sense of social responsibility, however, they often have to balance the pure demands of the market place with considerations of the mental health and social well-being of the citizens at large, especially where customer preference (e.g. violence, open sex) appears to run counter to the social good.

Civil Libel Suits: The consumer can sue a medium for defamation of character, either libel (published or broadcast defamation) or slander (defamation by word of mouth). Not all defamation suits succeed, but some

complainants have been awarded large sums in damages arising from libellous publication or broadcast. The damages could be punitive as in the case of *Carol Burnett vs. the National Enquirer* in which Burnett was awarded \$1.6 million (later reduced on appeal to \$750,000). (Burnett, a television star, had sued the periodical for publishing a story indicating that she had been drunk and disorderly in a Washington restaurant). But the damages could be token as in the case of *Ariel Sharon vs. Time* magazine, in which the magazine was fined a token sum of \$1 after pleading guilty to the charge and convincing the court that the libel was without malice. (Ariel Sharon, then Israeli Defence Minister, had sued *Time* for falsely accusing him of having encouraged atrocities against Palestinians in refugee camps. *Time* admitted that it had relied on its correspondent's report without double-checking it because of the pressures of deadline; but it pleaded good faith in publishing the story) (see Hiebert et al, 1988: 480 – 481 for both stories among others). In the early days of the press in Nigeria, some newspapers went bankrupt and packed up business as a result of having to pay punitive damages for libel, about which the nationalist press was not known to be too careful. A good example was *Lagos Reporter* published by Victor Mason, a former editor of the fire-brand *Lagos Echo*, which finally collapsed in the early 1900s, because of its inability to pay damages awarded against it in a libel suit instituted by a Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court, Samuel Percy Jackson. Also between the mid-1930s and the 1940s, the *West African Pilot*, published by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, paid considerable sums in damages for libel, apart from being denied government advertisements, because of its “confrontational” posture vis-à-vis the colonial administration.

Suits in Defence of the Right of Privacy: Another legal means by which consumers can try to control media content is through suits instituted in defence of their right to privacy, which includes the right to solitude, and to insulation from needless publication of private matters, especially when such publication involves indecency. People can also sue any medium that uses their names falsely in a public event (e.g. advertising Fela Anikulapo's band as billed to play at a function in order to attract the youth, when in actual fact, no arrangement has been concluded with the band or when the band has actually declined to play there). Finally, a medium can be sued for using a person's likeness (especially a photograph) without the person's permission. The people that have little or no chance of winning most of the suits relating to invasion of privacy are acknowledged public figures. Such people are generally assumed to have lost their right to privacy by taking up public office, or otherwise becoming “public” e.g. being involved in a newsworthy act or incident (such as Jennifer Mdiye, Bose the nail-in-the-head girl, and Percy Herst, the kidnapped and “co-operating” daughter of the American Press baron were involved in). The courts' readiness to protect people's right to privacy can lead, and has sometimes led, to secret police actions and other practices that violate other democratic principles. Still, the Right of Privacy regulation, if properly operated, can serve as a legitimate check on inappropriate media content.

Exercise 5.2

Spend some time reflecting on the opportunities available for the individual consumer to influence media content in your country.

3.5 Pressure Groups as Gatekeepers

Except perhaps in the area of politics, pressure groups did not become a force to reckon with in Nigeria until recently. But they are much more visible and more influential in the more advanced liberal democracies like the U.S. A good example was Action for Children's Television (ACT), a voluntary but well-established group committed to holding commercial television in particular to high ethical standards in programmes directed at children. The group cut across the various strata of society and retained highly qualified consultants. This group exercised considerable influence on television programme content in the U.S. For example, it almost successfully sought to get advertising banned from children's television. ACT voluntarily disbanded not too long ago, declaring its *raison de'tre* accomplished.

There are also religious, ethnic, political and professional groups, which seek to protect their own interest, especially over the ways in which they are represented, and the time and space allotted to them, in the media. Pressure groups take advantage of the Fairness Doctrine in issuing rejoinders to objectionable ideas propagated through the broadcast media. Songs, recordings and even books are not exempted: women groups have fought against sexism in the print media, just as they did against "Page 3 Girl" in *The Punch* newspaper in Nigeria in the 1980s.

Exercise 5.3

Find out all you can about the **Freedom of Information Bill** currently before the National Assembly in Nigeria and discuss the efforts of **pressure groups** to get the bill passed.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Gatekeeping in the mass media is not the exclusive prerogative of media staff. Various stakeholders (governments, advertisers, content sources and pressure groups) exercise varying degrees and types of influence on media content in any society.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a cursory look at the groups or entities that act as external gatekeepers to the mass media. We saw that these include governments, seeking to hold the media to some constitutional provisions and thereby protect the citizens and the governments themselves from media abuse; the advertisers who exercise subtle control through selective patronage; individual consumers whose greatest power of control lies in selective consumption but can also sue the media for invasion of privacy; and pressure groups who often use the force of numbers to influence media content.

It is our considered view that all these and other issues considered in Module 4 should become part of a body of working/operational theories at the metacommunication research-cum-theoretical level.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Which of the external gatekeepers discussed in this unit do you consider most influential, and why?

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Folarin, B. (2006) *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* (3rd edition). Ibadan: Bakinfo Publications, in association with E-Watch Print Media.

Hiebert, Unguray and Bohn (1995) *Mass Media V*.

MODULE 5

CRITICAL–CULTURAL / CULTURAL CRITICISM THEORIES

- Unit 1: Commodification of Culture Theory
- Unit 2: Media Intrusion Theory
- Unit 3: Social Marketing Theory
- Unit 4: Social Semiotics Theory
- Unit 5: Information Processing Theory

UNIT 1: COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE THEORY

CONTENTS

- 22.0 Introduction
- 23.0 Objectives

- 24.0 Main Body
 - 24.1 Introduction to Critical–Cultural Theories
 - 24.2 Introducing Commodification of Culture Theory
 - 24.3 Consequences of Commodification of Culture
 - 24.4 Globalisation and Commodification of Culture
- 25.0 Conclusion
- 26.0 Summary
- 27.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 28.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, our focus is on **Commodification of Culture Theory**, after a general introduction to **Critical–Cultural Theories**. We shall discuss the essence and consequences of Commodification of Culture Theory and finally place it in the **Context of Globalisation**.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (x) Explain the essence of Commodification of Culture Theory;
- (xi) Envisage the consequences of Commodification of Culture Theory.
- (xii) View Commodification of Culture Theory through the spectrum of **Globalisation**.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introduction to Critical–Cultural Theories

The theories we have discussed so far, project views of powerful mass media or they espouse limited effects of the mass media on individuals, groups and societies. The “powerful media” theories are christened *Mass Society* theories as opposed to the *Limited Effects* theories born of the empirical movement more or less inaugurated by Paul Lazarsfeld and his associates in the late 1970s. The *limited effects* perspective held sway for most of the later part of the 20th century, but also within the same century, a composite group of theories emerged which abandoned the microscopic perspectives of the empirically based theories and, instead, offered a broad range of ideas about the ways in which the mass media affect and indeed bring about subtle changes in a society’s culture (See Baran and Davis, 2003: 227). As would be expected, proponents of empirical research-based theories question the evidence provided by cultural criticism theorists to support their views. They (the empiricists) find these theories too speculative, their evaluation being based on debate or argument rather than on hard research findings, or at best on “qualitative researches”. However, it must be noted as Baran and Davis (loc cit) note, that much of the disagreements among researchers (and among scholars in general)

tend to centre around methodological disputes rather than on validity of content.

3.2 **Introducing Commodification of Culture Theory**

The Commodification of Culture Theory is concerned with what happens when culture is mass-produced and distributed in direct competition with locally based or community-based culture. (Baran and Davis, 2003: 331ff). According to this perspective, the mass media have become industries specialising in the production and distribution of cultural commodities. By reason of their greater economic power, they are able to displace the local producers of cultural fare, to the detriment of the people's everyday lives. The elite entrepreneurs engage ill-paid skilled workers who weave together bits and pieces of folk culture which they then market for profit and as a substitute for the authentic folk culture. Thus the people are made to subsidise subversion of their own everyday culture. The subversion is perpetrated through westernised and other hybridised folk music, television programmes and movies. In countries like the United States, Hollywood products tend to be accepted as genuine folk culture probably because of the huge supporting industries, the lack of government competition and the *panache* with which the products are packaged. But these same products become subjects of controversy when exported abroad; to Europe and the third world countries for example. They are scarcely tolerated in the media of some Asian and most Arab countries, especially at the initial stages of 'trial and error' which culminate in what authorities and critics regard as destroyers of local culture and of daily life. But the marketers still manage to penetrate most of their markets through low distribution costs.

Exercise 1.1

Commodification of Culture has been discussed here more or less as a global phenomenon. Now try to discuss it with specific reference to your own cultural location. Provide illustrations.

3.3 **Consequences of Commodification of Culture**

According to the critical and cultural theorists, the following are the deleterious consequences of the elite's practice of lifting bits and pieces of everyday culture out of their contexts and repackaging them for marketing (see Baran and Davis, 2002: 232ff; Hay: 1989; Meyrowitz: 1985):

1. Omission of important elements of culture which are needful for the understanding and structuring of experience of segments of the communities whose cultures are purportedly being represented; for example, minority cultures in the United States. Even in developing countries like Nigeria, critics point to undue emphasis on primitive aspects of culture, as if the cultures concerned have been frozen in time.
2. Overdramatization of the selected aspects of culture, so as to make them attractive to the audience. This can give a wrong picture of the pertinent cultures to foreigners and to the youthful members of the audience.

3. Employment of (sometimes unethical) marketing devices which show little concern for the ways the products are used, or for the mental health of the audience, particularly its young members.
4. The entrepreneurs who operate the cultural industries are generally ignorant of the consequences of their bastardisation of culture because of their social and psychological distance from their consumers.
5. Where the entrepreneurs are aware of unwholesome effects, they resort to what Baran and Davis call “strategic avoidance” or “denial of evidence” about these effects. They either pretend to be ignorant of them, strive to distort the evidence, or claim they are giving the audience what they want.
6. Critical and cultural theorists are already taking a serious look at the ways in which elite Western media content, especially television programmes and movies, intrude into and disrupt or corrupt indigenous cultures around the world.
7. Advertising is especially implicated in the commodification of culture syndrome through its encouragement of people to consume products whose values are suspect, to engage in spurious fun, or to seek fake identity. In Nigeria in particular, saturation advertising techniques employed in marketing these cultural products are known to have short-term and long-term consequences which the producers and marketers appear or pretend to be unaware of.

Exercise 1.2

Which of the consequences listed above strikes you as the most harmful, and why?

3.4 Globalisation and Commodification of Culture

There is probably little that is new among the charges levelled against modern elite cultural products and their producers by the cultural and critical theorists. But these theorists have taken the criticism to a new level of pessimism. It is probably apt to point out that in the context of ongoing globalisation in practically every aspect of human life, and with cultural entrepreneurship booming everywhere, even in developing countries (witness Hollywood), there is probably no way of completely checkmating creative cultural interaction, both regionally and globally. In the final analysis, each cultural entity or each nation probably has to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring wholesome adoption and adaptation of creative cultural products within and across its own borders, without unnecessarily breaching pertinent human rights. This is already being done with some degree of success in the area of film censorship in various countries. Intensified and international efforts may also become necessary in the interest of global human mental health.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Commodification of culture amounts in the final analysis, to a debasement of culture. But it appears difficult to stop, in the context of ongoing globalisation. Moreover,

genuine cultural creativity is to be courted, not hindered! It would appear that each cultural community has to accept the responsibility for ensuring for its culture the degree of resilience that could enable it to resist degradation by contemporary commodification of culture.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have focused on Commodification of Culture Theory which deals with what happens when culture is mass-produced and distributed. We looked at the consequences of the commodification and found that the falsification of authentic local culture is undesirable but difficult to stop, because of the ongoing globalisation processes in virtually every aspect of human life. The unit was concluded with a suggestion that each cultural location accepts responsibility for preserving the integrity of its own culture.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Submit a two-page comment on “Commodification of Culture and Globalisation”.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

MODULE 5 (Contd.)

CRITICAL–CULTURAL / CULTURAL CRITICISM THEORIES

UNIT 2: MEDIA INTRUSION THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 8.0 Objectives
- 9.0 Main Body
 - 9.1 Introducing Media Intrusion Theory
 - 9.2 Antidotes to Media Intrusion
- 10.0 Conclusion
- 11.0 Summary
- 12.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 13.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus on **Media Intrusion Theory** as one of the specific Critical–Cultural or Cultural Criticism theories. We shall explain the theory and then take a critical look at the “antidotes” suggested to the “undesirable” effects of Media Intrusion into the political process.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (3) Explain Media Intrusion Theory
- (4) Take a critical look at the suggested antidotes.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introducing Media Intrusion Theory

Media Intrusion Theory deals with political communication, especially in the more advanced liberal democracies. According to the theory, the political process has been subverted by the mass media (Davis 1992). Essentially, the theory takes its bearing from the work of a political scientist, V.O. Key on “elite pluralism” (Key: 1961). By Key’s theory, politics operates best through a hierarchical relationship between the public and its elected leaders, starting from the grassroots base, with the aspiring leaders working up their way into power positions through their involvement in local, regional and national organisations such as P.T.A., Red Cross (or those like Rotary, Lions etc.) then to political parties. Many of such elite leaders don’t necessarily hold overt political powers but may work behind the scenes serving the interests of the social groups they lead. Media intrusion theorists charge that this socially beneficial political process has now been subverted by the mass media, especially television, by substantially eroding the influence of the elite organisations in national politics. For one thing, many people now stay home and watch television rather than participate in local groups. For another, politically ambitious elites don’t feel the need anymore to process their aspirations through such groups. (Except that in places like Nigeria, selection/election processes such as OPTION A4 may force political aspirants to look inwards). Thirdly, political elites having lost the support of the local elites now turn to political consultants who counsel them — at very high costs — on how to rally support using the mass media, and without relying on local middlemen. While television organisations are accused of reaping windfalls from such “spurious” campaigns, they in turn accuse the political consultants of manipulating their (the TV organisations’) news coverage through various forms of strategic handling of their (the political consultants’) clients political releases (see Module 4 Unit 5 on “Strategic Releasing”, “Strategic Withholding”, and “Strategic Staging”, under **Content Source as Gatekeeper**).

3.2 Antidotes to Media Intrusion

According to Entman (1989), even political parties have progressively declined in influence as a result of intrusion by the mass media and the political consultants, as some politicians no longer see a compelling need to rely on their political parties for success at elections. It is even alleged that some consultants go as far as advising their clients to avoid any mention of political parties! And this has little to do with independent candidature!

Given the above scenario, it is hardly surprising that many politicians are accused of being alienated from their home bases. Media intrusion theory, though hard to test empirically, helps to place such accusations in clearer perspective. Solutions suggested by media intrusion theorists are, in my view, neither here nor there, since they relate to practices that die-hard:

- (i) Politicians are advised to rely less on political consultants with their manipulative strategies.
- (ii) Journalists are advised to change or at least vary their well-known approaches to news coverage which make them vulnerable to manipulation by political consultant.
- (iii) The citizenry are advised to take great interest in issues and less in trivial campaign spectacles.
- (iv) At the overall management level, it is suggested that there should be shortening of electoral campaign periods, especially presidential campaigns, to reduce, the time available for media intrusion (Baran and Davis, 2003: 338-343). But how practicable are all these suggestions — except perhaps the last one?

Exercise 2.1

- (a) From your review of the Media Intrusion Theory, who is actually subverting the political process, the media professionals or the political consultants? Why?
- (b) Discuss the “Option A4” political selection system in the context of V.O. Key’s “elite pluralism”. Would you or would you not encourage the media to help popularise the system? Why?
- (c) Take a critical look at the advice given by Media Intrusion Theorists to: (a) media professionals, (b) politicians (c) the public, and (d) political process managers, on ways of restoring the subverted political process. How realistic do you find each of these pieces of advice?
- (d) Mention at least two elite leadership groups that could encourage in Nigeria the kind of elite–public relationship described by V.O. Key. How would they do it?

4.0 CONCLUSION

While it is true that the modern mass media (especially television) have become a potent influence on the political process, the modern phenomenon of political consultancy has also contributed a great deal to the so-called “subversion” of the

process. It is not clear to what extent the solutions suggested by critical-cultural theorists can put an end to the envisioned subversion.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at **Media Intrusion Theory** in the context of **Elite Pluralism**, and found that both the mass media and the political consultants do contribute to the “subversion” envisaged by critical-cultural theorists. We also looked at the “antidotes” suggested by theorists and found that these may not be too effective in the face of deeply entrenched practices.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Write for submission, a two-page comment on the “Prospects of a Political Process Without Media Intrusion in the Modern World.”

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

MODULE 5 (Contd.)

CRITICAL-CULTURAL / CULTURAL CRITICISM THEORIES

UNIT 3: SOCIAL MARKETING THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introducing Social Marketing Theory
 - 3.2 The Hierarchy of Effects Model
 - 3.3 Social Marketing Theory and Conflict Resolution
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus on **Social Marketing Theory** as one of the specific Critical–Cultural or Cultural Criticism theories. The theory will be explained and one of its projected models discussed. We shall then take note of the criticism of Social Marketing Theory as unsuitable for handling conflict situations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define Social Marketing Theory.
- (ii) Critically discuss the **Hierarchy of Effects** Model of the theory.
- (iii) Critically examine the criticism of Social Marketing Theory as unsuitable for handling conflict situations.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introducing Social Marketing Theory

Social Marketing Theory, developed in the early 1970s, is a legacy from product marketing to mass communication scholarship. It has close affinity to and may indeed be regarded as an extension of the persuasion theories on the one hand, and the diffusion theories on the other. Social Marketing theory is actually a collection of “middle range” theories concerned with promotion of socially valuable information. In that regard, it may be seen as a “working theory” in the area of information campaign design and evaluation. Going beyond the search for the best methods of designing messages that work, it seeks to anticipate social and psychological barriers to the effectiveness of mass-mediated information and formulates strategies to overcome them. These strategies may involve scientifically derived techniques of persuasion or they may simply amount to unabashed saturation advertising in the final analysis.

The main features of the theory as identified by Baran & Davis (2003: 303ff) include the following:

1. It has clearly designed methods for inducing audience awareness of the subject of the information campaign, e.g. a health campaign such as malaria roll-back, HIV / AIDS prevention; pressure group mobilisation; or a presidential candidate.
2. It pays close attention to audience segmentation and targeting.
3. It works out reinforcement techniques as an essential component of the information design.
4. It attaches importance to the cultivation of images and impressions, e.g. a presidential candidate talking to workers in his rolled-up sleeves, or dancing away with kids at a Sallah celebration; or a social club presenting gifts at an orphanage — with all the implications of these images.

5. Beyond inducing awareness, it proceeds to stimulate interest, which will hopefully lead to information-seeking about the subject of the campaign. This may involve various techniques for playing up the subject's potential for bringing satisfaction to the individual, or to society.
6. The theory projects techniques for leading the targeted audience from interest and information-seeking to decision-making.
7. As a final stage of the targeting, there are techniques for prodding the audience to action.
8. As in all audience-centred propositions, there are methods of monitoring and evaluating the campaign both formatively and at the end of the campaign, in order to discover aspects needing refinement.

3.2 The Hierarchy of Effects Model

One interesting model of the social marketing theory is the **hierarchy of effects model**, which differentiates a large number of persuasion effects, thus facilitating the design of a step-by-step strategy. There is a clear progression from the “most easily induced” effects to the more difficult ones, e.g. from **awareness** to **interest** to **reinforcement** to **decision** and then to **action**. That design is then used to decide the time for transmission of each stage of the information campaign. The limitations of the hierarchy of effects model, as indeed of the social marketing theory as a whole, are similar to those of the persuasion and diffusion theories: to overcome audience resistance or lack of interest, you simply change the message. There is little or no attempt to discover the reasons for audience resistance or lack of interest. In the event of a total failure of the campaign, the blame tends to be pushed to the door of the audience, who are dismissed as ignorant or too unresponsive to socially beneficial innovation (Baran & Davis, 2003: 202-205).

It will be recalled that these were the same views held about the developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s decades, following the failure of the linear, diffusionist, modernisation/westernisation development paradigms to deliver the expected development benefits.

3.3 Social Marketing Theory and Conflict Resolution

Critics have also noted the unsuitability of a straight social marketing theoretical approach to the handling of conflict situations. Still, it is generally viewed as viable for issues such as public health campaigns and other forms of social mobilisation, provided it is shorn of such techniques as scare tactics and saturation advertising. Another feature seen as limiting the effectiveness of the theory is the elite nature of the relevant media technologies. Hence it is felt that there ought to be continuous efforts to develop more egalitarian media technologies which can deliver the expected benefits of the Social Marketing Theory. One of such “egalitarian” media is the net.

- (a) Identify one similarity and one difference between Social Marketing Theory and Diffusion Theory.
- (b) To what extent can product marketing strategies be applied to the marketing of a political candidate? What precautions have to be taken in effecting such a transfer?
- (c) Write short notes on (a) Saturation Advertising, (b) Reinforcement Techniques, (c) Hierarchy of Effects Model, and (d) Westernisation/ Modernisation Development Model.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Mass Communication scholarship inherited **Social Marketing Theory** from product marketing. It is more or less an extension of the diffusion theories and persuasion theories which are also used extensively in product marketing. The **Hierarchy of Effects Model** of the theory, introduced by Rice and Atkins in 1989 (see Baran and Davis, 2003: 302), sounds ingenious in identifying a clear progression of effects from “most easily induced” to the more difficult ones and then linking them to phases of the campaign. Its limitation lies in proposing no strategy for resisting audience resistance. Notice should be taken of the criticism that it is unsuitable for handling conflict situations.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we were concerned with **Social Marketing Theory** as one of the specific critical-cultural / cultural criticism theories. We saw its connection with the diffusion and persuasion theories, apart from its genesis in product marketing. We noted its main features as identified by scholars like Baran and Davis, as well as its limitations. We also took note of the emerging preference for more egalitarian media technologies, for campaigns anchored on Social Marketing Theory — to achieve maximum effect.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Write down your views on the prospects and problems of using the net as a major media technology for social marketing campaigns in contemporary Nigeria (substitute the name of your country if it is not Nigeria) (maximum two pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. K. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

MODULE 5 (Contd.)

CRITICAL–CULTURAL / CULTURAL CRITICISM THEORIES

UNIT 4: SOCIAL SEMIOTICS THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introducing Social Semiotics Theory
 - 3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Social Semiotics Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we take a brief look at **Social Semiotics Theory**. First, we shall look briefly at the genesis and features of Social Semiotics Theory and then consider its strengths and weakness as noted by critics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should at least be able to:

- (i) Define **Semiosis**, and place Social Semiotics Theory in perspective.
- (ii) Discuss the identified strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introducing Social Semiotics Theory

This is at once a microscopic and macroscopic theory spearheaded in the main by Karl Jensen (see Jensen: 1995) to provide support for critical cultural scholarship, in much the same way that “Communication Science” helps to create a consensus among empirical media researchers. We have already noted, in the introduction to this module, the scepticism engendered among “communication science” scholars by the prevailing methods of the emerging critical cultural studies. By the mid-1980s, critical cultural scholarship had become so successful — in quantitative more than qualitative terms — as to attract sharp criticisms, even within the same school, especially within the political economy and ethnographic segments of the school (Baran and Davis: 2003, Chapter 11) and there were internal calls for a reconciliation of the differences at issue. Jensen’s approach would appear to be a response to such calls. Jensen even goes so far as to seek to integrate aspects of critical cultural studies and communication science, arguing that both traditions share a common focus on audience activity as well as a common desire to understand how audience members make sense of media messages. According to Jensen, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have valuable contributions to make to that understanding. He also seeks a middle ground between mass society theories and limited effects theories.

Taking his bearing mainly from James Carey’s ritual definition of communication (Carey 1995, 1988), Jensen views the role of mass media in daily life from several angles. In the first place, he sees the media increasingly as serving to structure the daily routines of both individuals and societies, in the political, economic and cultural spheres. As institutions, the mass media become points of reference in these spheres. For example, the early morning news we wake up with becomes a way (a symbol) of linking up with the temporal structure of and events bulletin in the community, the nation and the world; while the newspaper over breakfast serves as a kind of symbolic guide to the organisation of our later leisure activities for the rest of the day. The car radio creates a customised media environment that fills the gap between home and work-place. Moreover, the media (e.g. radio music) serve as mood setters

in different work settings, more or less neutralising the reality of labour. Entertainment houses (cinemas, electronic household, and arcades) provide opportunities for reflection on the other daily routines. Thus, during much of our everyday life, we are engaged in **semiosis**: the process of interpreting and using signs which these experiences represent in the different social environments or situations. Furthermore, Jensen believes — like communication science exponents — that while the mass media reproduce the signs (situations) for our interpretation and use, they are not the creators of the signs/situations, a position at least analogous to that of the Agenda Setting Theory. The difference remains that while communication science retains the transmissional perspective (one-to-many), the social semiotics perspective is a transactional and pragmatic one concerned with the role of communication in transforming society and promoting our understanding of it.

3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Social Semiotics Theory

The strengths claimed for Social Semiotics Theory include its differentiation between merely descriptive popular culture research and theory-based work, its accommodation of empirically based communication science perspective, its efforts to integrate various dimensions of critical cultural scholarship, and its realistic accounts of audiences' vulnerabilities and powers. On the other hand, the greater part of its offerings is non-empirical; it produces untestable generalisations; it appears over-optimistic in its overall aims (See Baran and Davis, 2003: 357).

Exercise 4.1

- (a) Explore analogies between Social Semiotics Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory.
- (b) Which approach strikes you as capable of better enhancing understanding of the ways audience members make sense of media messages — the qualitative approach or the quantitative approach? Justify your position.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Social Semiotics Theory is concerned with the process of interpreting and using signs and symbols which are represented by our daily experiences in different social environments/or situations. The theory with its ensuing approach is recommended by its transactional and pragmatic perspective but it seems over-ambitious in seeking to at once subsume both “critical–cultural scholarship” and “communication science”.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a cursory look at **Social Semiotics Theory** as one of the specific **Critical–Cultural theories**. We learnt that the theory was spear-headed by

Karl Jensen (1995) to provide a crutch for critical cultural scholarship in the same way that **communication science** helped to create a consensus among empirical media researchers. We also saw, however, how he went on to seek to encompass aspects of “Communication Science” — a trend that is common in so-called “qualitative” research in mass communication scholarship today. We finally note the strengths and weaknesses of the theory as summarised by Baran and Davis.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

How would you explain the difference(s) between the transmissional and the transactional perspectives in media studies? (maximum of 2 pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. K. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

MODULE 5 (Contd.)

CRITICAL–CULTURAL / CULTURAL CRITICISM THEORIES

UNIT 5: INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Genesis of Information Processing Theory
 - 3.2 Application to Mass-mediated Information
 - 3.3 Advice to Television Organisations
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we have come to the last specific critical-cultural / cultural criticism theory to be focused in this module (and in this course). We shall first examine the genesis of **Information Processing Theory**, and then discuss its application to mass-mediated information. We shall conclude with a simple advice to television handlers on the basis of knowledge gained from our study of the theory.

At the end of the unit, I very much hope you will be able to:

- (i) Trace the genesis of **Information Processing Theory** as it applies to Mass Communication;
- (ii) Discuss its application to mass-mediated information.

6.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Genesis of Information Processing Theory

Information Processing Theory (of mass communication and media) is a rather composite theory concerned with the way in which individuals routinely cope with sensory information from the media. Primarily, a product of research in cognitive psychology, it has been increasingly adapted to the study of media audience activity: how do people absorb, process and store in memory for later recall the prodigious amount of information provided by the mass media?

The theory views the individual as a complex “computer system” with built-in information handling capacities and strategies which enable him/her to filter the vast amount of information that reaches them so that only a small amount of it ever reaches the conscious mind; then only a small amount of this is singled out for attention and processing; and then only the tiniest fraction of this is finally stored in long-term memory for later recall. Baran and Davis (2003: 279) say that this is why some cognitive psychologists see human beings as better information avoiders than information handlers. (Refer also to the selectivity processes discussed in Module 3). We have elaborate, sophisticated, largely subconscious mechanisms for screening out irrelevant information. A growing insight from cognitive psychology regarding the learning process is that the ability to absorb and recall large amounts of information may not necessarily, at least not always, be much of an intellectual virtue. (This is of course not an encouragement for lazy people who try to excuse their laziness by retorting: “You know I’m not good at recalling facts/dates etc!”) It is to emphasise that efficient and effective information handlers (including learners) are those who have developed routinised strategies for identifying critical information and screening out irrelevant information). Each of us would probably benefit from routinised assessments of our information handling capacities and strategies relative to our information handling needs.

3.2 Application to Mass Communication

Applied to the handling of mass-mediated information, Information Processing Theory supports the view that routine consumption of information from the media (especially electronic media) is a much more complex process than it is usually assumed to be, and that the complexity varies in nature and amount with the medium in question. For example, television viewing requires information processing skills that are quite different from the skills required for the consumption of radio or cinema fare. And the electronic media generally demand variegated specialist skills different from those required for the consumption of print media fare — even among equally literate consumers. Researchers have also identified several features of media information packaging which consumers consider to be facilitators or hinderers of efficient and effective information processing (e.g. Davis and Robinson: 1989). They find for instance, that stories with complex structure and terminology or powerful but irrelevant visual images are candidates for misunderstanding or poor understanding by the audience. And they find that human-interest stories with simple but dramatic storyline are better understood.

According to these researchers, and with specific regard to television viewing, information handling weaknesses are shared in varying proportions by both the audiences and the broadcasters. Most of us television viewers have developed schemes or cognitive patterns that pay us well in watching **television entertainment** because television is generally assumed to be an entertainment medium. When we transfer these schemes to the consumption of **television news**, they result in a kind of passive viewing, with relatively little gains in understanding, storage and recall. It would probably pay to routinely draw the attention of television viewers to the mistakes they routinely make in these regards and the implications of these seemingly innocuous mistakes for harmonious social and political interactions. For developing countries in particular, it is important to educate consumers and journalists to see beyond the journalistic hobby-horse of “information, education and entertainment”, and to appreciate the imperative of using the costly medium of television to advance the cause of national integration, the acceleration of socio-economic development and cultural creativity (see Folarin, 1998: 2000).

It has also been noted that the packaging of most television news stories tends to be “biased against understanding” (Baran & Davis, 2003: 283). To start with, too many stories are crowded into each news bulletin to take maximum advantage of the little time usually available. “Time”, they say, “is golden to the electronic media,” just as “space is golden to the print media.” That is true, of course, but we must be conscious of the consequences and costs to the consumer. In the case of television, each story is a complex combination of visual and verbal content, the visual component being usually predominant. Most of the time, viewers are left with striking visual images but little contextual information (See Unit 1 of Module 4 on Factors Influencing Gatekeeping Decisions).

3.3 Advice to Television Organisations

Information Processing Theory is rapidly revealing how we tailor our innate cognitive skills to make use of media content. It may be of help for television organisations to employ the services of information processing researchers / experts in the efforts to enhance the “**viewability**” of their news programme in particular and current affairs programmes generally, in much the same way that print media organisations once employed the services of reading experts in the efforts to enhance the “**readability**” of their newspaper and magazine news stories.

Exercise 5.1

- (a) State one feature that is found to enhance and one feature that is found to hinder the understanding of television news.
- (b) Identify one situation in which excessive screening of sensory information may be harmless and another situation in which it could be dangerous.
- (c) Explain why you think the emphasis tends to be placed on news information handling than on entertainment in Information Processing Theory.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Although Information Processing Theory is primarily a product of research in Cognitive Psychology, it is substantially amenable to application to the processing of mass-mediated information.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have focused on Information Processing Theory as applied to Mass Communication, with particular regard to the way we employ our built-in information handling capacities and strategies to filter out irrelevant information. It is these capacities and strategies that enable us to manage the vast amounts of information that reach us from the mass media on a daily basis. We also saw how the complexity of television news programming in particular poses a challenge to our information handling capacities. We concluded with advice to television organisations to employ the services of information processing experts to help them enhance the **viewability** of their news programmes in particular.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Do you share the view that the public need to be consciously educated on how to process television news information with profit? Suggest one or two forms that such public education could take. (Maximum of two pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Baran, S. and Davis, D. K. (2003) *Mass Communication Theories*.

MODULE 6

INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

- Unit 1: The Post-Industrial Information Society Perspective.
- Unit 2:
 - The Surveillance Information Society Perspective.
 - The Informational Capitalist Society Perspective.
- Unit 3: The Declining Public Sphere Information Society Perspective.
- Unit 4: The Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective.
- Unit 5: The Post-Modern Information Society Perspective.

UNIT 1: THE POST-INDUSTRIAL INFORMATION SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

CONTENTS

29.0 Introduction

- 30.0 Objectives
- 31.0 Main Body
 - 31.1 Information Society Theory Revisited
 - 31.2 Introducing Post-Industrial Information Society Perspective
 - 31.3 Key Features and Values of the Post-Industrial Information Society.
- 32.0 Conclusion
- 33.0 Summary
- 34.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 35.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall revisit the definition of the Information Society Theory, introduce one of the Information Society perspectives, namely the Post-Industrial (Information) Society Perspective, and state the key features of the society.

7.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should at least be able to:

- (xiii) Define Information Society again;
- (xiv) Explain the Post-Industrial Information Society Perspective.
- (xv) State the key features of the Post-Industrial Information Society.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Information Society Theory Revisited

Perhaps we should begin by stating that we are interested in **Information Society Theory as a development communication paradigm**. I'm afraid we must quote from Garnham (2001: 130) again to put our explanation in perspective:

Confrontation with the theory of Information Society, both as a science and as an ideology, is now unavoidable. Here is a theory of communication massively presenting itself as both a way of understanding the present historical moment and the dominant development trends in society and at the same time as the favoured legitimating ideology for the dominant economic and political power holders.

According to Garnham, the theory has been used to justify some policies of the European Union. In practice, the predominance of the Information Society is demonstrated by the remarkable growth in the power, prevalence and promotion of the computer and cyberspace technologies (the Internet in particular) since the 1970s. In Unit 3 of Module 1, we presented two of the types of definition of Information Society that are immediately relevant to our

discussion, namely the technological and the economic types of definition. (Please refer to these definitions again). Other types of definition are the occupational, the spatial and the cultural, which are more or less self-explanatory. As we mentioned earlier, we shall consider six extant perspectives on Information Society Theory, as identified by Ayedun–Aluma (2004). (See Introduction to the present module, Module 6). In the rest of this unit, we shall focus on the Post-Industrial (Information) Society Perspective.

Exercise 1.1

Attempt brief statements of the **occupational**, the **spatial**, and the **cultural** definitions of Information Society, on analogy with the technological and the economic definitions given in Module 1, Unit 3.

3.2 The Post-Industrial (Information) Society Perspective

The post-industrial (information) society, according to the exponents, was born when increased demand for services — as distinct from labour — led to increases in the number of service sector workers. Increased demand for services was fuelled by increased productivity and wealth accruing to industries that relied on innovative technologies rather than on labour. Most of the people thus freed from industrial labour spent their increased leisure acquiring service skills thus swelling up the supply of service workers in response to increased demands. One does not have to go far to find support for this perspective. Even Nigeria with its not-too-cheering contemporary industrial profile sports a number of features of a post-industrial information society, in keeping with global trends.

3.3 Key Features of the Post-Industrial Information Society

- (i) Knowledge / Information is highly codified and systematised, thus facilitating the management of complex jobs, social innovation and creation of technology.
- (ii) The core of the service sector workers are the professionals, providing technical services in science, engineering, health, education, and government.
- (iii) Information and knowledge are given premium value because of their importance for the work of the professionals.
- (iv) Other things being equal, the professionals' predilection for planning and organising tends to permeate society.
- (v) A significant proportion of its workers are in white-collar jobs in the service/sector.

Exercise 1.2

From about what time or period can we say that Nigeria began to sport the values and features of a post-industrial information society? Show clearly how you arrived at your choice.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The post-industrial information society is all around us, driven largely by ICT. Different regions of the world demonstrate varying levels of the values and features of the post-industrial information society according to their ICT levels.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a closer look at Information Society Theory (first introduced to us in Module 1, Unit 3: **General and Specific Kinds of Theory**), with a focus on the **Post-Industrial Information Society Perspective**. We noted some key features and values of the Information Society as seen from the post-industrial perspective, with their impact on development.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

On the basis of the exposition in this unit, submit a two-page essay on the ways in which highly codified knowledge and information facilitate complex jobs and social innovation.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun–Aluma, Victor (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm,” a research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Caincross, Frances (1998) *The Death of Distance: How the Communication Revolution Will Change Our Lives*. London: Orion.

Webster, Frank (1995) *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.

MODULE 6 (Contd.)

INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

- UNIT 2:**
- **THE SURVEILLANCE (INFORMATION) SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE**
 - **THE INFORMATIONAL CAPITALIST SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE**

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 14.0 Objectives
- 15.0 Main Body
 - 15.1 Introducing the Surveillance (Information) Society Perspective
 - 15.2 Key Features and Values of the Surveillance (Information) Society
 - 15.3 Introducing the Informational Capitalist Society Perspective.
 - 15.4 Key Features and Values of the Informational Capitalist Society.

- 16.0 Conclusion
- 17.0 Summary
- 18.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 19.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall focus on two perspectives on Information Society Theory, simply to enable us to accommodate our six perspectives within the planned five units. The two perspectives to be focused here are the Surveillance Information Society Perspective and the Informational Capitalist Society (otherwise known as the Advanced Technocentric Information Society) Perspective. As usual, we shall, after introducing each perspective, take a brief look at the key features and values of the Information Society as seen from that perspective.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (5) Explain the Surveillance and the Informational Capitalist Society perspectives on Information Society Theory.
- (6) State the key features and values of the Information Society as seen from these two perspectives.
- (7) Reflect on the impact of these features and values on development.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Surveillance (Information) Society Perspective

The Surveillance (Information) Society, according to the proponents, arose from an imperative condition for the survival and success of the modern nation state. That condition was the nation state's need for accurate, codified and systematised information on its citizens, both nationals and aliens, for planning, administration and control. That need/condition propels the Surveillance Information Society to strive for a high level of ICT.

3.2 Some Key Features and Values of the Surveillance Information Society

- (i) The Surveillance Information Society is closely linked to the modern nation state, which is central to people's sense of personal identity.
- (ii) It constantly monitors its members in order to ensure that they have their citizenship rights and that they live an orderly, peaceful and prosperous life.
- (iii) It also constantly monitors its members in order to ensure that they fulfil their citizenship responsibilities to the nation state.

- (iv) It furthermore engages in constant monitoring of aliens, especially those that are considered to be “security risks”, in order to preserve a reliable security system.
- (v) It engages in exhaustive surveillance of corporate business interests, in order to preserve the material well-being of the nation state.
- (vi) All these conditions, features and activities oblige the surveillance information society to go after relevant technologies, especially ICT. In the past, surveillance by the nation state involved considerable labour and obvious powers. In the modern Surveillance Information Society, surveillance is more virtual and involves minimal labour, even while still exercising equal power.

Exercise 2.1

“The modern nation state is central to the citizens’ sense of personal identity”. Discuss.

3.3 Introducing the Informational Capitalist Society (otherwise the “Advanced Technocentric Information Society”) Perspective

Several other names have also been concocted for this perspective on the Information Society: **Techno-capitalist Information Society**, **Informatising Society**, etc. Its major exponents have been well known left-wing communication scholars like Herbert Schiller, Castells, and so on. According to them, this facet of Information Society arose from the need of corporate capitalists to operate with maximum profit — a need that has varied in strength as capitalism has gone through different phases. Later day capitalists have adopted, mainly and intensively, information (and) communication technological innovativeness as their new *modus operandi*, after the failure of earlier phases of capitalism. As Schiller sums up this perspective:

What is called the ‘information society’ is, in fact, the production, processing and transmission of a very large amount of data about all sorts of matters ... to meet the very specific needs of super-corporations, national government bureaucracies, and the military establishments of the advanced industrial state. (Schiller 1981: 25).

3.4 Key Features and Values of the Informational Capitalist Society

- (i) In it, information is regarded as a commodity. As Webster (1995) puts it, “As a rule, information is produced and made available only where there is the prospect of its being sold at a profit.”
- (ii) In it, access to, and ability to generate information is greatly influenced by socio-economic class; and

- (iii) The gap widens inexorably between those who have the ability to pay for information and those who don't. (See Folarin: 1998, 2002 and 2006 on Knowledge Gaps Theory).
- (iv) In this society, public funding for information institutions such as museums, libraries, etc. is steadily replaced by private, profit-making finance.

Exercise 2.2

Take a close look at the ongoing privatisation syndrome in Nigeria, and reflect in particular on the ways in which it affects the information institutions in the country.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- (i) The **Surveillance Society** has always been around with us. What marks out the **Surveillance Information Society** is its intensive predilection for and heavy dependence on high level information (and) communication technology. In the traditional surveillance society, the surveillance is/was largely overt and labour-intensive. In the surveillance information society, the surveillance is largely subtle and largely dependent on **virtual** information and communication.
- (ii) The Informational Capitalist Society is with us **here and now**. While many of the elite in particular see it as certain to ultimately lift the nation state to the rank of advanced, industrialised nations, its largely anti-welfarist posture makes it at once threatening and annoying to the majority of ordinary citizens.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at two perspectives on Information Society Theory, namely the Surveillance and the Informational Capitalist perspectives. We saw that in the former, society has taken advantage of bludgeoning information (and) communication technology which it uses as its indispensable prop; while in the latter society actually adopts information (and) communication technology as its occupation and as a commodity.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

What, in your view, has been the impact of Globalisation on the advent and progress of the Informational Capitalist Society? (Maximum 2 pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun–Aluma, Victor (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm,” a research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Webster, Frank (1995) *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.

MODULE 6 (Contd.)

INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

UNIT 3: THE DECLINING PUBLIC SPHERE INFORMATION SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Introducing the Declining Public Sphere Information Society Perspective
 - 3.2 Key Features and Values of the Declining Public Sphere Information Society.

- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at the Declining Public Sphere Information Society perspective. After the usual introduction of this theoretical perspective, we shall examine the key features and values of the Information Society as viewed from the perspective.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define the Declining Public Sphere Perspective on Information Society Theory.
- (ii) State the key features and values of the Declining Public Sphere Information Society.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Introducing the Declining Public Sphere Information Society Perspective

According to the proponents of this perspective, the genuine public sphere is the open and freely accessible arena where public opinion is formed through the informed and rational debate of citizens who are free of manipulation by government or market forces. But in the Declining Public Sphere Information Society, the genuine public sphere is undermined by:

- (i) the predominance of the capitalist state as portrayed in Unit 2, and
- (ii) the domination of public communication systems by capitalist organisations.

In this state of affairs, public discussion becomes an opportunity for display of power rather than an opportunity for genuine exchange of views on public issues.

Exercise 3.1

Can you find any relationships and/or analogies between this perspective and Media Intrusion Theory? (See Module 5 Unit 2). Discuss them.

3.2 Key Features and Values of the Declining Public Sphere

Information Society

- (i) Information services are increasingly commercialised and privatised (Recall what we said in Unit 2 about the anti-welfarist posture of the Informational Capitalist Society or Advanced Technocentric Information Society).
- (ii) Public information (including even statistical data) are subject to manipulation or distortion, to further the partisan interests of governments and politicians.
- (iii) Information management (public relations, social mobilisation, social marketing) are widely practised, to control people's information environments and hence their actions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Declining Public Sphere Information Society subverts the genuine public sphere by various means, including its hibernation under the capitalism-infested nation state, the capitalist domination of public communication systems, the possible manipulation/distortion of public information and other similar means.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at what the exponents of Information Society Theory call **The Declining Public Sphere Information Society**. The society was defined as that in which the genuine public sphere is subverted by the factors mentioned in 4.0 above as well as by the employment of various forms of information management to control the people's minds and actions.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Write down your views on why you think the Declining Public Sphere Information Society Perspective needs or needs not be treated as distinct from the Informational Capitalist Society (or Advanced Technocratic Information Society perspective (Maximum 2 pages).

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun–Aluma, Victor (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm,” a research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Cinsman, Babasola (1998) *A Matter of People*. Lagos: UNDP.

Webster, Frank (1995) *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.

MODULE 6 (Contd.)

INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

UNIT 4: THE POST-FORDIST INFORMATION SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective Defined.
 - 3.2 Key Features and Values of the Post-Fordist Information Society.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall first define the Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective and then go on to examine the key features and values of the Post-Fordist Information Society.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Define the Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective.
- (ii) State the key features and values of the Post-Fordist Information Society.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective Defined

Fordism, according to Webster (1995: 145), was the predominant mode of capitalism between 1945 and the mid-1970s. It upheld the sovereignty of nation states, and assumed government's capacity to devise and implement policies within its area of jurisdiction, with relative immunity of indigenous companies from foreign competition and the existence of distinctively national corporations. Put in other words, Fordism was a closed form of capitalism. Fordism's smugness was further encouraged by high levels of employment, mass consumption of goods and economic dominance of strong national corporations.

However, the smugness was later shattered by the stresses of socio-economic factors such as economic recession, unemployment, bankruptcies, labour dislocation and, most important of all, **globalisation**. All these factors combined to reduce the profitability of Fordist capitalism, which, to regain its vitality, had to develop new features: a new phase in its operations. It is this new regime that constitutes the Post-Fordist Information Society.

Exercised 4.1

To what extent could Fordism be seen as a universal phenomenon before the advent of Globalisation? And to what extent can the impact of Globalisation on Fordism be said to be universal?

3.2 Key Features and Values of the Post-Fordist Information Society

- (i) It has had to yield to the globalisation (internalisation) of the processes of production, distribution and sustaining information and communication.
- (ii) There is now a heavy reliance on digital information and communication technologies for organising, channelling and accessing the vast amounts

of information involved in contemporary business (and personal) interactions.

- (iii) There is now an inclination toward increasing productivity and profit while either keeping the size of labour constant or reducing it and increasing the new use of technology.
- (iv) A high premium is now placed on the principle of operational flexibility (flexible job descriptions, flexible job tenures, flexible wages, flexible work times and customised consumption).

Thus the Post-Fordist Information Society perspective deals with the inevitable changes that were brought into government and business mainly by globalisation and information (and) communication technologies after the smugness encouraged by the postwar prosperity in the capitalist countries was shattered by the stresses of socio-economic factors which include economic recession, bankruptcies, etc.

Exercise 4.2

To what extent can the present reforms in Nigeria's public services be traced to Post-Fordism (i.e. the Post-Fordist Information Society perspective)?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Post-Fordism was inevitable in the face of the onslaughts of ICT and globalisation. Today, no nation state has the opportunity of the near-complacency of Fordism, with contemporary economic uncertainties, unemployment etc. everywhere. No country has the kind of environment to encourage closed government or business. No nation state can feel like an island unto itself. Not any more!

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have taken a look at the Post-Fordist Information Society Perspective. We saw that it deals with the placement of closed and self-sufficient capitalism with outward-looking and globalised capitalism, following the disruptive socio-economic forces of the later post-war years. We saw some of the key features and values of the Post-Fordist Information Society, which included a heavy reliance on digital information and communication technologies, a reduction in the size of labour with the increased use of technologies, and an acceptance of the principle of flexibility in wage structure, work times, etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Write for submission, a two-page comment on "Information (and) Communication Technologies as a catalyst in the rise of Post-Fordism".

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Ayedun–Aluma, Victor (2004) “A Critique of Information Society Theory as a Development Communication Paradigm,” a research report in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Webster, Frank (1995) *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.

MODULE 6 (Contd.)

INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

UNIT 5: THE POST-MODERN INFORMATION SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Post-Modern Information Society Perspective Defined.
 - 3.2 Key Features and Values of the Post-Modern Society.
- 4.0 Conclusion

- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall take a look at the last of the six perspectives on the Information Society Theory adopted for this course, namely the Post-Modern Information Society Perspective. After discussing the essence of the theory, we shall examine some of its key features and values.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) Discuss the essence of the Post-Modern Information Society Perspective.
- (ii) State the key features and values of the Post-Modern Information Society.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Essence of the Post-Modern Information Society Perspective

The Post-Modern Information Society Perspective equally perceives contemporary society as informational; but it interprets ‘information’ as “multi-perspectived” (not simply digital, for instance). According to Webster (1995: 177),

... today life is conducted in a ceaseless circulation of signs about what is happening in the world (signs about news), about what sort of identity one wishes to project (signs about self), about one’s standing (signs of status and esteem) about what purposes buildings serve (architectural signs) about aesthetic preferences (signs on walls, tables, sideboards), and so on.

Consequently, the Post-Modern Information Society Perspective charges that modernism was fundamentally incapable of grasping the multicultural nature of contemporary social reality. Evidence can be found, for instance, in the belief of modernism in the validity of science and reason as the only worthwhile avenue for obtaining true knowledge of social reality, whereas contemporary social experience shows that there are in fact many worthwhile avenues for getting true knowledge of reality. Thus it concludes that the so-called scientific theories of the social process and the planned programmes of social intervention that they engender are simply the cultural preferences of their promoters, rather than absolute ‘truths’.

Sounds iconoclastic, doesn’t it? May be, but it seems to point the way to a successor to globalisation as a ruling force in most human issues these days. Call it **multiculturalism**, **multiperspectivism**, or what you like. It presages that globalisation is unlikely to last for eternity. What about **digitalisation**? Well, your guess is as good as mine!

Exercise 5.1

Write a two-page reflection on “The Future of Globalisation and Digitalisation as seen from the Post-Modernist Perspective”.

3.2 Key Features and Values of the Post-Modern Information Society

- (i) Postmodernism resists the claim of universal correctness (or ‘truth’) of social theories and their expert/bureaucrat planned and administered policies and programmes.
- (ii) Post-modernism is marked by a celebration of differences (in meanings, values and styles of thinking and living).
- (iii) In postmodernism, signs are perceived as simulations rather than true representations of reality.
- (iv) Postmodernism advocates the use of utility value and commodity value as justification for generating, gathering and analysing information.

Postmodernism indeed perceives progress in radical, not simple ways.

Exercise 5.2

Write a two-page summary of the differences between the Post-Modern Information Society Perspective and the other five perspectives considered in this module.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Post-Modern Information Society Perspective (or Postmodernism) projects a world order which represents a return from globalisation to multiculturalism. It does not speak this clearly on digitalisation but tends to say that this is not likely to remain the only way of generating, gathering and analysing information.

5.0 SUMMARY

We started this unit by looking at the point of departure between Modernism (which the other perspectives represent more or less) and Post-Modernism which the perspective herein discussed represents. It perceives modernism’s view of progress as narrow, and projects a wider view which recognises differences in meanings, values and styles of thinking and living.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Are you a globalisationist or a multiculturalist? Show which by writing a two-page comment on the views of Postmodernism as contained in the foregoing exposition.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

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