

Mass communications

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



In Todd Gitlin's book called Media Sociology he looks at the Dominant Paradigm and the effects of " Mass media". In a chapter we learn " the recalcitrance of audiences, their resistance to media-generated messages". Gitlin suggests that the dominant paradigm has shown through studies and surveys that audiences retain the power and control of what messages that are sent to them through mass communication devices like television, radio and print.

Alone with the findings of Paul F. Lazarsfeld and his associates he has come to the conclusion that " media are not very important in the formation of public opinion". Survey studies of the broadcast of political agendas for social attention showed only slight effects on the public. This proves that audiences are still able to argue and deliberate what is being feed to them and they are still able to make up their own minds. Another factor that influenced their opinions was the theory of the " two step flow of communication".

The study revealed evidence that the flow of mass communication is less direct than previously suggested. Lazarsfeld and his associates Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet suggest that " ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population". This suggests that in regarding advertisements and political messages the public often receive the facts, opinions and sales pitch from the company bosses through devices and we as a society are expected to except these codes and respond accordingly.

But this often doesn't happen because not everyone has the devices to receive the messages. So this suggests that the best way of communicating a message is by word of mouth, rather than the media. Gitlin also looks at the research that is based on the "Hypodermic Theory". The hypodermic model of media influence suggests that a message would be transmitted from the mass media to the mass audience; who would take in the message. But the investigations of Lazafeld et al suggest that there media effects were negligible and that the idea of a "mass audience" was not enough and misguided.

It also suggests that social influences had more of a major result on the way that public opinions are created hence limiting the media's effects. The second author that I must mention is Liesbet Van Zoonen. Her studies have explored how feminist theory and research contributes to a fuller understanding of the media's many roles in the construction of gender in contemporary societies. She believes that research into feminism "assumes a rather straightforward sender- message - receiver sequence".

This suggests that she believes that the media has control of how women are perceived in the mass society. Television producers are the worst culprits in stereotyping gender roles. Often women are seen as housewives who stay at home look after the children and cooks dinner for the husband. Van Zoonen mentions "distortion" as a "key concept in many feminist approaches to the media" meaning that the reality of women's role in the modern day has been twisted. "It is argued that in reality many more women work than we get to see or read about in media content".

Although research into the behavioural effects has not revealed much about the influence of the mass media in the long term, some studies have shown that in the area of a cultivation theory, effects have produced relevant results. " People who watch television for hours on end will tend to replace their own social experience with that of television reality, resulting in a 'television view' of the world". This theory is capitalised by the producers of media content such as TV producers or in the case of print, editors. This theory has also been taken advantage of by advertisers.

For example other research and teachings of the likes Edward Bernays show that it is possible to appeal to societies vulnerabilities to target their inner desires making them believe that their 'wants become their 'needs'. This was successful in the promotion of women smoking cigarettes in the 1920's. He appealed to women's desire to be seen as powerful as a man and by smoking cigarettes they are symbolising that they can be equals. Although the media has a lot of power and input into gender stereotyping, Van Zoonen also explains how there are problems in within the feminist transmission model of communication.

This is because " not everyone perceives reality in the same way". This suggests that the mass society is in no way uniformed and through their own " self of sense" and interactions with other people they " produce, reproduce and adjust definitions of reality". But this has no limitations to the feminist views of how women are perceived in the media and " feminists calls for more realistic images of women and definitions of femininity" within the mass communications.

I believe that the two authors contradict each other giving opposite theories to the effects of mass communications. Both are very passionate in their field of research and after studying their teachings I have come to the conclusion that in regards of the media and the mass communications, I believe that we as society whether aware or not are the receivers of messages and codes that are sent to us through every medium. I think that it is 100% our responsibility to decode the messages and send appropriate feedback.