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Department of Mass Communication University of Lagos Seminar Paper Comparative evaluation of Lasswell’s theory and structure of Mass communication, Schramm’s theory of the Process and Elements of Mass Communication, and the Knowledge Gap hypothesis, by Tichenor, Olien and Donahue Name of Presenter: Isah Momoh Matriculation Number: 78/0019450 Title of Course: Comparative Mass Communication theories: MAS 906. Lecturer: Professor Idowu Sobowale Date: 9 April 2009 ABSTRACTCommunication generally and mass communication especially are concerned generally with who says what, to whom, in what channel and with what effect (Lasswell, 1948), the sender/source, message, encoder, channel, decoder, receiver and feedback loop (Schramm, 1948). These two foundational mass communication theorists posit that communication is always intended to have an effect on the recipient and the society. Often it’s goal is to provoke change in the mind, environment and circumstances of the receiver, be they an individual, person, group or society at large. The source, according to Schramm is the provoker of the change/effect with the receiver being the major determinant of the success of the message or the source. Of course, the message, its encoding and decoding are also significant factors in the success of the communication. According to Lasswell, in the communication exchange/process, the information provider is usually more powerful than the information receiver; and that this applies to persons, groups, nations and societies.

The provider also dominates and more manipulates the receiver/consumer. Olien, Donahue and Tichenor in their Knowledge Gap hypothesis hold that in the information exchange, there is always a differential in the knowledge level of receivers (amongst themselves) and between sources and receivers. In their view, the more knowledgeable parties turn out more educated, enlightened and powerful than the less knowledgeable. The former become information dispensers and opinion leaders with the latter following and being disadvantaged. These theories therefore can be used to design a society’s communication system and move a nation from a position of weakness to strength by moving it from a largely consuming to a largely providing status. They underlie the need for every society to strengthen their communication media and optimize their communication process so that they can optimize surveillance of their environment (for opportunities and threats), correlation of (appropriate and mainstream) responses, and transmission of (acceptable and main stream) responses across all segment, strata and generation of society; thereby engendering cultural development. INTRODUCTION