

Comparative evaluation of three theories of mass communication by lasswell, schra...

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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

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ABSTRACT Communication 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

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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