

Impact of mass media

[Media](#), [Advertising](#)



The Impact of Mass Media I. M. Student Introduction to Sociology SOC 101 D. A. Teacher March 20, 2010 The Impact of Mass Media President Abraham Lincoln delivered his infamous Gettysburg address dedicating the Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19th, 1863. It was estimated 10, 000 people attended the ceremony to observe the speech live and it was days before the message was read about in print. President Barack Obama delivered his live State of the Union Address last January to an estimated 30 million television viewers at home while another 1. 3 million watched it online and it was only minutes after the speech was done that people were able to read about it in print. Mass media is printed and electronic means of communication that carry messages to widespread audiences. In the 21st Century United States, mass media products range from traditional newspapers and magazines, to radio, television, and internet. The internet has brought a whole new era of instant information to the media utilizing online social networks and live news outlets. In 150 years this Nation has gone from actually being on site to view something live to the ability to watch events live from the comfort of our own home. Where will we be in another 150 years? Although instant media is most times unfiltered, mass media has grown because of advanced technological means offering instant global reach while greatly influencing social changes. The Functionalism of Mass Media The functionalist perspective emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain stability (Schaefer, 2009). So what is the purpose of the media? Mass media plays important roles in our everyday life. In addition to providing entertainment, news, and education, media products are also used to socialize and market. As a daily routine,

many people today make use of mass media tools for various reasons such as socializing, gathering data, sharing information, and even escape. Television is a source of media that has a strong effect on society today. It is important to look at the influence of television because an average American who subscribe to cable TV watches over eight hours of television a day (Guillen, 2005). The medium of film is particularly suited to representing multiple perspectives through its ability to convey subjective experience. Film is also a medium with rich resources for conveying the sights, sounds, rhythms, and auras of a particular space and time, or what is called "chronoscopes"-that is, "time-space articulations, characteristic of particular, historically determined conceptions of the relations between the human, the social and the natural world". Further, the film medium is also well equipped to represent the multiscale complexity of globalization with its flows and disjuncture's (Manning, et al., 2010) The media increases social cohesion by presenting a common, more or less standardized, view of culture through mass communication (Schaefer, 2009). I believe we could all agree mass media provides valuable information which each individual uses for work or personal reasons. For example, many folks will watch the news on television or seek information via the internet daily to stay abreast of current events. As this paper is being written, a devastating earthquake and Tsunami recently struck Japan and now the country is trying to avert nuclear disaster. There is risk of nuclear power plants exploding and on the verge of meltdown. This in no way compares to the 9/11 attacks, but as fellow humans we are genuinely concerned for the well being of our neighbors to the Far East. Significant sporting events or sports entertainment such as the

Olympics or the Superbowl are media tools used as a reason for people to gather and socialize with family and friends. The advertising moguls know this and also use these mass media events to market their products to millions of consumers. With the explosion of the internet and its global instant reach, new virtual societies have formed using websites such Skype, Twitter, and Facebook. These online tools are communities of people from all over the world meeting, make new friends, or catching up with old friends and family too in a web based portal. More and more people are beginning to live in a virtual reality world. While the privacy of these communities is often times criticized, the benefits of such media greatly increases social interaction. This theory also relays the message that the media is an enforcer of social norms (Schaefer, 2009). The mass media broadcasts information and television shows which reinforce social norms by pointing out the events that violate mores and folkways such as crimes and substance abuse. By doing this and not glorifying criminal behavior, the mass media can publicly emphasize the proper behaviors or formal norms to countless people. The Conflict with Mass Media Conflict theorists view the mass media as a means to reinforce divisions within a society which differs from the functionalist theory that mass media is used as a tool for social cohesion. Functionalist and conflict theorists would agree the mass media provides information, entertainment, and social outlets but where it differs is how much is provided and who decides what is transmitted (Schaefer, 2009). Gatekeeping is the process where material passes through a series of checkpoints before it reaches the audience. The media industry is funded by major businesses whose interests are the desire to maximize profits

(Schaefer, 2009) and are shaped by these businesses' agendas as well as the desires of the small group of individuals who control what eventually reaches the viewers. The community and the filmmakers have different expectations regarding content and control (Coffman, 2009) too. Quite often, the media is structured in such a way that certain minority interests or groups are simply neglected or used as stereotypes in television. The news inaccurately covers its communities by having most of its stories about violence. A University of Miami study of local television news found that the time devoted to crime varied between 23 to 50 percent even though violent crime in the city remained constant, involving less than one tenth of one percent of the population (Guillen, 2005). Often times one can watch the local evening news and hear more stories of violence in other parts of the Nation as well as other countries over good human interest stories in their local community. Technological advances of mass media products and communications offers many the opportunities for instant information, but not everyone gets to enjoy this though. There is a digital divide within the U. S. and especially global when compared to the U. S. How big is the " global digital divide"? Less than 10 percent of the world's population uses the Internet. Statistics compiled by the International Telecommunication Union as of the end of 2002 indicate that Internet use as a proportion of the population ranges from less than one percent in many underdeveloped African, Central American, and South Asian countries to between 50 and 60 percent in Iceland, the United States, Scandinavia, Singapore or South Korea (Guillen, 2005). Because of these statistics, Americans are at risk of ethnocentrism if we don't take this into account when associating with

developing nations. Another area where Americas are at risk of being ethnocentric is when we overstress U. S. dominance (Schaefer, 2009) in the mass media. The Interactionism of Mass Media Interactionists generalize about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole. Our social behavior is conditioned by the roles and statuses we accept, the groups to which we belong, and the institution we belong to (Schaefer, 2009). This theory is similar to the other theories in that the media is a major source of daily activity. It is very similar to the functionalist perspective in that it supports face to face interactions within society. This theory differs with the conflict theory where the interactionist looks for shared understandings; conflict theorists emphasize the differences of opinion or the struggle and the divisions within a society. Advances in technology probably play the biggest role within the Interactionism theory. The rise of the internet has facilitated new forms of communication and social interaction (Schaefer, 2009). One the internet alone, there are sites like Facebook that have gone global that fully supports social interaction. Another site like YouTube is another area where anyone can post a video of just about anything. The danger of the above mentioned sites is there is little control to what is put onto these sites. Children who are exploring the net or have little to no parental supervision could end up seeing much more than what a social norm would expect. The internet is the exception to centralization and concentration on media. Interactionists see a change in the way people share media and how they get their news versus their interest in it. Why wait for the evening news or even for breaking news on CNN, when Yahoo and Google are at your fingertips? (Schaefer, 2009). The

internet is readily available for the user and is also the only media outlet that allows the average person to get an audience of millions if a post, or most likely a video, goes viral. According to hyperdictionary. com, a viral video is a video clip that achieves widespread distribution through online sharing. Interactionists play close attention to the use of symbols (Schaefer, 2009). Political leaders and entertainment figures use the media to control their images as symbols through public appearances called photo opportunities or " photo ops. " The underlying approach to a photo op is to pose the candidate (or the actor) with symbols of appealing values, in the hope that viewers will equate the two. In beer commercials these values can include the friendship symbolized by a welcoming group of guys in a bar. For a political candidate, the values could include patriotism or people where there's a candidate speaking with a U. S. flag as the backdrop or with his family or citizens of the community. Some movies engage their audience with alternative products to market the premiere or to promote continual interest in the movie. For example, the Shrek series construct global audiences as " communities" of consumers who are able to participate in a film by purchasing the many products placed throughout or by playing the computer games and visiting the Web sites developed as part of the " multimarket commercial intertext" of a given film (Manning, et al., 2010). The Mass Media Providers Viewpoint Media moguls and Webmasters perspective on the functionalist view of mass media is that it is a business, a big business. Large sums of money are generated by advertising on television, websites, magazines, etc. While maximizing profits (Schaefer, 2009) may be the foregoing reason for the mass media from the individuals

who are a part of the institution, I believe there are other roles the media providers take on too. Because of the global instant reach of today's media, activists or humanitarians use the tools to get messages out to the public quickly. Using the earlier example of the Tsunami that hit Japan, how fast did we see Red Cross commercials, texting 90999 to make an instant \$10 donation to the relief effort? The conflict viewpoint from the media providers is that it is a tight competition for scarce resources and the old way of doing business is gone. Many local newspaper circulations have closed shop do to in your face current events television programs. Additionally, with so many providers on the market and the advent of pay television and radio, the marketing dollar is dwindling. For example, like many other consumers, I subscribe to XMSirius satellite radio because I loathe the promotion of consumption all the time. So, the satellite radio company is making the "advertising" dollar vice the media mogul. The interactionist view from the media providers is this perspective is the one that helps us understand one most important aspect of the mass media system — the audience (Schaefer, 2009). The media giants know they would be washed up without the consumer. The interactionists have ways to keep the audience involved in the programming. Some example of how the audience participate in the programming are the reality completion shows like American Idol, Survivor, Dances with the Stars, to name a few. Viewers have the opportunity to vote for their favorite player. The Mass Media and Social Change Social lives have changed tremendously with the introduction of mass media into lives. An example of how media coverage can be functional, contrasting, and interactive can be seen in the reporting of the protests surrounding the US-

led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Catherine Luther and Mark Miller analyzed pro-war and anti-war coverage in eight US newspapers and showed how reporters were more likely to use illegitimate cues when referring to anti-war protestors, while using legitimate cues to refer to pro-war campaigners (Barker, 2008). Americans are either for or against the war and turn to the media for information. Differences of opinion are a valid way to gain insight into a society or cause. Lastly, the power of the media will generate interest to get people to come out and support.

The View from the Audience

The mass media are distinguished from other social institutions by the necessary presence of an audience (Schaefer 2009). Without an audience, media products would cease to exist. The functionalism perspective from the audience is most anything you want or need can be accessed, purchased, researched, and you can even merge types of media into one source. The conflict with today's mass media is the unfiltered aspect meaning the freedom of press versus protecting our children from some of the bad things seen on the media outlets. Another conflict the audience has with mass media is members of an audience do not all interpret media in the same way. Often their response is influenced by their social characteristics such as occupation, race, education, and income (Schaefer, 2009). Interactionist view on social interaction in today's media product offer more freedom of broadcasting and less freedom to censor.

Conclusion

The media has had a huge impact on society over the last two to three decades with the significant advances in technology. Although instant media is most times unfiltered, mass media has grown because of advanced technological means offering instant global reach while greatly influencing social changes.

Viewers have instant news, entertainment, and socializing opportunities via many different types of media tools. From the functionalist view, and the interactionist, the mass media's biggest change has come with the introduction of the internet. The contrast to the movement of socialization and instant information is the increased freedom of information that is shared throughout the media tools and the risk of unfiltered information to certain viewers.

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