

LECTURAS PARA CLASE

Communication Theory: Propaganda and the Public*

Around the time of World War One and Two, Communication research largely focused on the influence of propaganda. One question that researchers sought to answer was: how can communication be utilized to create behavioral changes? Governments felt that if they were to function efficiently, they could only do so with the coordinated cooperation of their citizens. Through the use of propaganda, governments could ensure that a nation functioned to meet its goals, but could also lead to crushing individuals' ability to shape their own lives and their own consciousness. Research into this area greatly expanded mass communication research in the twentieth century.

This chapter approaches the question of propaganda, from the perspective of someone that many have called one of the “fathers of communication”, Walter Lippmann.

Early Experiences of Walter Lippmann (1889-1974)

Walter Lippmann was born in 1889 and spent much of his youth exploring arts such as painting and music, travelling to Europe, and acquiring a particular interest in reading, all due to his family's secure economic status (Weingast, 1949). By the time he entered Harvard in the fall of 1906, Lippmann had been exposed to a wide array of ideas and had been well prepared for the challenging work that lay ahead of him at school. It was at Harvard that the first influences on Lippmann's work and theoretical approach first appeared.

Lippmann was influenced by the social thinkers of the time such as George Santayana, William James, and Graham Wallas. It is impossible to understand

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Lippmann's own thought without some grounding in the perspectives popular at Harvard and elsewhere. He was influenced by the move toward an American pragmatic approach, as well as socialist thinkers of the time.

Predecessors of Walter Lippmann

William James (1842-1910)

Many consider William James to be one of the most prominent influences on Lippmann while at Harvard (Weingast, 1949; Steel, 1999). The two scholars first met when Lippmann published an article in the *Illustrated*, a Harvard campus magazine. Lippmann's article, written as a response to a book of Barrett Wendell's, was a commentary on social justice and the plight of the common man. James was intrigued by Lippmann's article and surprised Lippmann by approaching him. The two became friends, and Lippmann's regular conversations with James profoundly influenced his future work.

William James is perhaps best known for his theories of pragmatism. James (1907) defines the pragmatic method as, "The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking toward last things, fruits, consequences, fact" (p. 29). He showed how pragmatism is related to truth, and truth is that which can be verified. "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify" (James, 1907, p. 88). In this way, James (1907) suggested that the understanding of the world is based on enduring, significant perceptions of the effects of the objects that surround individuals. Although Lippmann strayed from the practice of pragmatism in his own work, there were ideas that he took from James' theories and applied to his own life. Steel (1999) claims that one of these ideas was that of meliorism, or the idea that "things could be improved, but never perfected" (p. 18). Another is practicality, or the idea that "men had to make decisions without worrying about whether they were perfect" (Steel, 1999, p. 18).

The themes of meliorism and practicality are indeed evident in Lippmann's thought and writing. Throughout many years of writing, Lippmann's opinions on the

issues of the public and their relationship to government tended to waver. For example, according to Weingast (1949), Lippmann initially supported the idea that government intervention in the economy was necessary, specifically through the provision of public projects to support employment during times of economic hardship. However, when Franklin D. Roosevelt presented his New Deal, which included more government intervention in the public arena, Lippmann did not support the program (Weingast, 1949). Lippmann (1936) wavered in his views on socialism as well.

It is doubtful that his constant changes of opinion were purposeful; rather they served as evidence of James' influence on Lippmann's work. By accepting the ideas of meliorism and practicality, it could potentially mean that one is always striving to find the next best solution; that when one theory fails, another can be developed to take its place. By questioning himself and his beliefs, Lippmann was advancing his own theories and finding new ways of understanding his surroundings.

George Santayana (1863-1952)

Santayana was a philosopher at Harvard who also influenced the work of Lippmann. Santayana's theories revolved around the idea of the essence of objects, which Munson (1962) defined as the "datum of intuition" (p. 8). Santayana was interested in uncovering the various essences that made up human life: those values which could be uncovered and then tied to human experience (Steel, 1999). This outlook is a sharp contrast to the theories of James, which Lippmann had already been exposed to. Steel (1999) explained that while James focused on the idea of moral relativism, or the ability to create truth from observation, Santayana was focusing on the "search for absolute moral values that could be reconciled with human experience" (p. 21).

Santayana's influence on Lippmann is evident in his later work. Tied to Santayana's ideas of the "essence" of humanity and life, were his ideas that democracy could result in a tyranny of the majority (Steel, 1999, p. 21). This idea is easily related to Lippmann's later writings in *Phantom Public* (1925). *Phantom Public* examines the American public within a democratic system. Lippmann (1925)

expresses his ideas that the majority of the American public is uneducated in public issues, easily manipulated into siding with the majority, and therefore, plays a very limited role in the democratic process. In relation to democracy, Lippmann states, "Thus the voter identified himself with the officials. He tried to think that their thoughts were his thoughts, that their deeds were his deeds, and even in some mysterious way they were a part of him....It prevented democracy from arriving at a clear idea of its own limits and attainable ends" (p. 148). Lippmann (1925) shows that within a democratic system the majority is actually suppressed by the minority opinion. It is this overwhelming suppression of the public opinion within a democratic system that seems to represent Santayana's influence on Lippmann. If Santayana argued that democracy would result in a tyranny of the majority, Lippmann (1925) supported this idea by showing that public opinion caused little influence on a democratic system that was actually controlled by the educated elite.

Graham Wallas (1858-1952)

Graham Wallas, a founder of the Fabian Society, was another predecessor to Lippmann's work (Steel, 1999). Wallas is perhaps best known for his work *Human Nature in Politics* (1981). The political views expressed in this book helped to shape Lippmann's later thoughts about the relationship between the public and its environment.

Wallas (1981) expresses his thoughts on the public's understanding of their surroundings. He states that the universe presents the public with, "an unending stream of sensations and memories, every one of which is different from every other, and before which, unless we can select and recognize and simplify, we must stand helpless and unable to either act or think. Man has therefore to create entities that shall be the material of his reasoning" (p. 134). In this way, Wallas was showing that the public is incapable of understanding their environment; the stimuli that they are presented with are too numerous to gain a well-versed understanding. Steel (1999) claims that this idea was one of Wallas' greatest influences on the future work of Lippmann, particularly in *Public Opinion* (1922). In this work, Lippmann (1922) expanded upon Wallas' original ideas about the relationship between the public and

their environment, and was able to show that the public was not able to take in all of the knowledge from their environment that would truly be needed to affect their governance.

Aside from inspiring Lippmann to examine the relationship between the public and the environment, Wallas can also be credited with influencing Lippmann to break his ties with the Socialist school of thought (Steel, 1999). Until his interactions with Wallas, Lippmann had held strong socialist beliefs, based not only upon his experiences at school, but also upon the writings of Karl Marx.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx was particularly concerned with explaining the class struggles that existed in society (Rogers, 1994). His most well-known works were *Das Kapital* (Capital) and *The Communist Manifesto*. Through these works, Marx explained his theories about the struggle of the working class, their alienation from their work, and their need to rebel against the elite in order to take ownership for their actions and gain power (Rogers, 1994). Marxism explained the way that economic forces create changes in society, and the need for the creation of a communist system to restore equality to that system (Rogers, 1994).

While at Harvard, Lippmann read Marx's ideas on communism, and chose to support the ideology of socialism (Steel, 1999). Lippmann also joined the Fabians while at school. They were a group which urged for the empowering of the middle-classes, rather than the over-throwing of the elite, in order to create social equality (Steel, 1999). Unlike Marxists, however, the Fabians still believed in the presence of an intellectual elite (Steel, 1970). This theme is present in Lippmann's *Phantom Public* (1925). In this piece of literature, Lippmann (1925) explains that society is truly dominated by an intellectual elite, even when they might think that they are following a system of majority rule. "...it is hard to say whether a man is acting executively on his opinions or merely acting to influence the opinion of someone else, who is acting executively" (Lippmann, 1925, p. 110).

Marx also claimed that mass media is used as a tool by the elite social classes to control society (Rogers, 1994). This theme is evident in Lippmann's *Public Opinion*

(1922), which explained that it was the mass media who determined what information the public could access, and how the limitation of such access could in turn, shape public opinion.

The remnants of Marxism are present in Lippmann's later works, such as *Public Opinion* and *Phantom Public*. By 1914, Lippmann was no longer a supporter of the implementation of socialism on a large scale (Steel, 1999). With his publication of *Drift and Mastery* (1914), Lippmann denounced the use of socialism (Steel, 1999). Furthermore, his publication of *Good Society* (1936) was essentially a criticism of the very theories of socialism that he had once supported. By this point, Lippmann (1936) recognized the error in the socialist theories; the fact that even by putting an end to private ownership and developing collective property, people still may not know how to properly distribute resources without exploitation. Lippman (1936) claims "This is the crucial point in the socialist argument: the whole hope that exploitation, acquisitiveness, social antagonism, will disappear rests upon confidence in the miraculous effect of the transfer of titles" (p. 72). Lippmann's wavering views on socialism are important. They clearly affect how Lippmann sees the relation between man, his environment, and his government. These themes will be prevalent in Lippmann's theories, as he explains how and why the public is subject to manipulation.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Aside from his reading of Karl Marx, Lippmann was also influenced by the readings of other academics. Of particular importance to the work of the propaganda/mass communication theorists in general was the work of Sigmund Freud. Freud's influence can be seen not only in the work of Lippmann, but also in the work of Lippmann's contemporaries.

Sigmund Freud was initially trained as a medical doctor and later founded psychoanalytic theory (Rogers, 1994). Of particular importance to psychoanalytic theory was the understanding of an individual's mind. According to Rogers (1994), Freud was able to divide the human consciousness into three states; the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. The conscious consists of those things which we

know about ourselves, the preconscious consists of those things which we could pay conscious attention to if we so desired, and the unconscious consists of those things which we do not understand or know about ourselves (Rogers, 1994). From these three levels of individual analysis, Freud attempted to understand human behavior. Both Freud's general theories of psychoanalysis, as well as one of Freud's writings in particular, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, came to be of particular importance to the propaganda theorists.

The Interpretation of Dreams dealt with the idea that dreams are a form of wish fulfillment; they represent a desire of the unconscious that can be achieved during sleep through the creation of a dream to fulfill a need (Levin, 1929). Lippmann applied this idea to his work in *Public Opinion* (1922). In *Public Opinion*, Lippmann (1922) stressed the idea of "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads" (p. 3). This concept involves the idea that a person's perceptions of an event or situation may not match what is actually happening in their environment (Lippman, 1922). This idea was influenced by *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in that Lippmann used this book to develop his idea of a "pseudo-environment" that existed in the minds of individuals (Rogers, 1994, p. 234).

Bernays' (1928) understanding of human motives was also based on the study of Freud's work. Bernays was Freud's nephew, and at various times in his life the American travelled to Vienna to visit with his uncle. Bernays had a special interest in adopting psychoanalytic theory into his public relations work, and this influenced his thinking in relation to public opinion. In *Propaganda*, Bernays (1928) claims it is the Freudian school of thought that recognized "man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for desires which he has been obliged to suppress" (p. 52). Bernays (1928) goes on to show that propagandists cannot merely accept the reasons that men give for their behavior. If they are truly hiding their real motives, as Freud suggests, then "the successful propagandist must understand the true motives and not be content to accept the reasons which men give for what they do" (Bernays, 1928, p. 52). By getting to the root of a man's wants and needs, Bernays suggests that propaganda can become more effective and influential.

Overall, Freud's theories were a strong guiding framework for understanding individuals. By helping theorists such as Lasswell, Lippmann, Bernays, and Ellul to understand individuals, Freud was also helping them to understand the public that they aimed to manipulate.

The Theories of Walter Lippmann

While at Harvard, Lippmann had first-hand exposure to the theories of William James, George Santayana, and Graham Wallas. He had also read the works of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. While some applications of Lippmann's predecessors' ideas to his research have already been discussed, it is important to examine the overall theories of Walter Lippmann.

Following his time at Harvard, Lippmann decided to pursue a career in journalism. He had focused on the study of Philosophy at Harvard. By 1910 he had dropped out of their graduate program and was ready to pursue a career (Steel, 1999). Lippmann started his career by working for Lincoln Steffens, writing primarily about socialism and issues on Wall Street (Rogers, 1994). Following his time with Steffens, Lippmann began work on an elite intellectual magazine known as the *New Republic* (Rogers, 1994). Lippmann worked on *New Republic* for nine years, and as his time there came to an end, he began to publish his most prominent pieces of literature (Rogers, 1994).

Public Opinion

Public Opinion (1922) is perhaps Lippmann's most well-known work. It was in this piece that Lippmann first began to develop and explain his theories on the formation of public opinion. Lippmann (1922) begins this book by describing a situation in 1914, where a number of Germans, Frenchmen, and Englishmen were trapped on an island. They have no access to media of any kind, except for once every sixty days when the mail comes, alerting them to situations in the real world. Lippmann explains that these people lived in peace on the island, treating each other as friends, when in actuality the war had broken out and they were enemies (Lippmann, 1922).

The purpose of the above anecdote is to develop the idea of "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3). Throughout *Public Opinion*, Lippmann (1922) explains the way that our individual opinions can differ from those that are expressed in the outside world. He develops the idea of propaganda, claiming that "In order to conduct propaganda, there must be some barrier between the public and the event" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 28). With this separation, there is the ability of the media to manipulate events or present limited information to the public. This information may not match the public's perception of the event. In this way, Lippmann was essentially presenting some of the first views on the mass communication concepts of gatekeeping and agenda-setting, by showing the media's power to limit public access to information.

Lippmann (1922) showed how individuals use tools such as stereotypes to form their opinions. "In putting together our public opinions, not only do we have to picture more space than we can see with our eyes, and more time than we can feel, but we have to describe and judge more people, more actions, more things than we can ever count, or vividly imagine... We have to pick our samples, and treat them as typical" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 95). Lippmann shows that the public is left with these stereotypical judgments until the media presents limited information to change their perception of an event. Rogers (1994) claims that in this way, Lippmann was showing us that "...the pseudo-environment that is conveyed to us by the media is the result of a high degree of gatekeeping in the news process" (p. 237). Lippmann recognized that the media was altering the flow of information, by limiting the media content that was presented to the public. Furthermore, Lippmann presents the idea of agenda-setting, as he recognizes that the mass media is the link between individual perceptions of a world, and the world that actually exists (Rogers, 1994).

Phantom Public

Phantom Public (1925) focused on describing the characteristics of the public itself. Lippmann (1925) used this book to show the public's inability to have vast knowledge about their environment, and therefore, to show their failure to truly support a position. Lippmann (1925) gives a harsh view of the general public, stating,

"The individual man does not have opinions on public affairs... I cannot imagine how he could know, and there is not the least reason for thinking, as mystical democrats have thought, that the compounding of individual ignorances in masses of people can produce a continuous directing force in public affairs" (p. 39). This book seemed to show that democracy was not truly run by the public, but rather, was being controlled by an educated elite. The public could not be truly well informed, so they were easily convinced to side with an educated minority, while convincing themselves that they were actually in a system of majority rule. Lippmann (1925) claims that the book aimed to "...bring the theory of democracy into somewhat truer alignment with the nature of public opinion... It has seemed to me that the public had a function and must have methods of its own in controversies, qualitatively different from those of the executive men" (p. 197).

Other Writings

Lippmann also published a number of other books that dealt primarily with his political thoughts regarding the public. These included *A Preface to Politics* (1913) and *Good Society* (1936). While these works are important toward understanding Lippmann's thoughts on the relation of the public to their government, *Public Opinion* and *Phantom Public* held most of Lippmann's theories that were relevant to mass communication research.

Future Career Path

Aside from his major works of literature, Lippmann was perhaps best known for his "Today and Tomorrow" column, which he began publishing in 1931 in the *New York Herald Tribune* (Weingast, 1949). This column gave Lippmann complete freedom of expression, and the ability to write about such topics as history, government, economics, and philosophy (Weingast, 1949). Although the column tended to appeal to a limited American audience, it dealt with a wide variety of important issues. Weingast (1949) estimates that only 40% of American adults could understand Lippmann's column, and only 24% could be considered regular readers

of the column (p. 30). However, it is this column that still must be recognized for helping Lippmann's ideas to gain popularity.

Lippmann's various works led him to a great many opportunities to work with important figures in history. In 1918, he was given the ability to assist President Woodrow Wilson in writing the Fourteen Points, which helped to restore peace after World War One (Rogers, 1994). Of more importance to communication studies, Lippmann was also given the opportunity to publish and present propaganda in Europe to support the acceptance of the Fourteen Points on an international scale (Steel, 1999). It is through this work that some of Lippmann's ties to Harold Lasswell can be observed.

Other Propaganda Theorists

Harold Lasswell (1902-1978)

As Lippmann was writing propaganda, Harold Lasswell was undertaking empirical analyses of propaganda. In fact, much of the propaganda that Lasswell was examining was actually being written by Lippmann himself (Rogers, 1994).

Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) was a prominent scholar in the area of propaganda research. He focused on conducting both quantitative and qualitative analyses of propaganda, understanding the content of propaganda, and discovering the effect of propaganda on the mass audience (Rogers, 1994). Lasswell is credited with creating the mass communication procedure of content analysis (Rogers, 1994). Generally, content analysis can be defined as, "...the investigation of communication messages by categorizing message content into classifications in order to measure certain variables" (Rogers, 1994). In an essay entitled "Contents of Communication," Lasswell (1946) explains that a content analysis should take into account the frequency with which certain symbols appear in a message, the direction in which the symbols try to persuade the audience's opinion, and the intensity of the symbols used. By understanding the content of the message, Lasswell (1946) aims to achieve the goal of understanding the "stream of influence that runs from control to content and from content to audience" (p. 74).

This method of content analysis is tied strongly to Lasswell's (1953) early definition of communication which stated, "Who says what in which channel to whom and with what effects" (p. 84). Content analysis was essentially the 'says what' part of this definition, and Lasswell went on to do a lot of work within this area during the remainder of his career.

Lasswell's most well-known content analyses were an examination of the propaganda content during World War One and Two. In *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Lasswell (1938) examined propaganda techniques through a content analysis, and came to some striking conclusions. Lasswell (1938) was similar to Ellul, in that he showed that the content of war propaganda had to be pervasive in all aspects of the citizen's life in order to be effective. Furthermore, Lasswell (1938) showed that as more people were reached by this propaganda, the war effort would become more effective. "...[T]he active propagandist is certain to have willing help from everybody, with an axe to grind in transforming the War into a march toward whatever sort of promised land happens to appeal to the group concerned. The more of these sub-groups he can fire for the War, the more powerful will be the united devotion of the people to the cause of the country, and to the humiliation of the enemy" (Lasswell, 1938, p. 76).

Aside from understanding the content of propaganda, Lasswell was also interested in how propaganda could shape public opinion. This dealt primarily with understanding the effects of the media. Lasswell was particularly interested in examining the effects of the media in creating public opinion within a democratic system. In *Democracy Through Public Opinion*, Lasswell (1941) examines the effects of propaganda on public opinion, and the effects of public opinion on democracy. Lasswell (1941) claims, "Democratic government acts upon public opinion and public opinion acts openly upon government" (p. 15). Affecting this relationship is the existence of propaganda. Due to this propaganda, "General suspiciousness is directed against all sources of information. Citizens may convince themselves that it is hopeless to get the truth about public affairs" (Lasswell, 1941, p. 40). In this way, Lasswell has created a cycle, whereby the public is limited in the

information that is presented to them, and also apprehensive to accept it. However, it is still that information that is affecting their decisions within the democratic system, and is being presented to them by the government. This is an interesting way of viewing the power of the media that is somewhat similar to Lippmann's theories.

Edward Bernays (1891-1995)

At approximately the same time that Lippmann and Lasswell were examining public opinion and propaganda, Edward Bernays (1891-1995) was examining public relations, propaganda, and public opinion. Bernays (1928) defines propaganda as, "a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of a public to an enterprise, idea, or group" (p. 25). Contrary to other propaganda theorists, Bernays recognizes that propaganda can be either beneficial or harmful to the public. It can help individuals decide what to think about or alter the opinions of individuals, but this may actually be beneficial to society's functioning as a whole. Bernays states, "We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of... Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society" (p. 9).

Based on these ideas that the public opinion can be modified, and that such shaping is a necessary part of society, Bernays pursued his work in the field of public relations. "Public relations is the attempt, by information, persuasion, and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement, or institution" (Bernays, 1955, p. 3). In *The Engineering of Consent*, Bernays (1955) lays out the framework for understanding the public and developing a public relations campaign. Bernays (1955) claims that the key to a successful public relations campaign is adjustment of the campaign to the attitudes of various groups in society, gathering information to effectively express an idea, and finally, utilizing persuasion to influence the public opinion in the intended direction.

Bernays' theories represent a step forward for mass communication theory. They move away from more typical presentations of "hit-or-miss propaganda," and move toward a deeper understanding of the public, and the necessity of attention-

generating propaganda in influencing public opinion (Bernays, 1955, p.22). Bernays (1955) himself made a statement regarding his phrase, “the engineering of consent.” He said, “Engineering implies planning. And it is careful planning more than anything else that distinguishes modern public relations from old-time hit or miss publicity and propaganda” (Bernays, 1955, p.22). Furthermore, Bernays’ theories also represent a different view of the formation of public opinion. In opposition to Lippmann, who views the public as being easily manipulated, Bernays cautions against this. He claims, “The public is not an amorphous mass which can be molded at will or dictated to” (Bernays, 1928, p. 66). Instead, Bernays (1928) offers the idea that in attempting to influence the public, a business must “...study what terms the partnership can be made amicable and mutually beneficial. It must explain itself, its aims, its objectives, to the public in terms which the public can understand and is willing to accept” (p. 66).

Bernays elaborates on these ideas in *Public Relations* (1952). Rather than merely attempting to manipulate the public through propaganda, Bernays presents public relations as a tool that can be used to combine the ideas of the public and the persuader. “The objective-minded public relations man helps his client adjust to the contemporary situation, or helps the public adjust to it” (Bernays, 1952, p. 9). Bernays view of the public is softer than that of Lippmann, as he recognizes the power of society, but still also claims that manipulation of the public is possible. Bernays (1952) writes of the benefits of public relations, “To citizens in general, public relations is important because it helps them to understand the society of which we are all a part, to know and evaluate the viewpoint of others, to exert leadership in modifying conditions that affects us, to evaluate efforts being made by others, and to persuade or suggest courses of action” (p. 10). Under this framework, while manipulation of the public is still possible, it is not in such blatant ignorance of the public opinion. Theorists such as Lippmann and Ellul tended to disagree with this point.

Jacques Ellul (1912 – 1994)

Jacques Ellul's (1912-1994) theories on propaganda took a different view of the formation of public opinion. Ellul (1965) shows that propaganda is actually a specific technique, which is both needed by the public, and by those who create the propaganda in the first place. In *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Ellul (1965) defines propaganda as, "a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated into a system" (p. 61). In contrast to the other theorists examined in this chapter, Ellul tends to view propaganda as a necessary, but all-encompassing, activity. It is not something to be presented to the public in a single instance, but rather, must become a consistent part of every aspect of the public's life.

In *The Technological Society*, Ellul (1964) categorizes propaganda as a form of human technique. In general, he considers the term "technique," to be referring to the methods that people use to obtain their desired results (Ellul, 1964). Specifically, he claims that human technique examines those techniques in which "man himself becomes the object of the technique" (Ellul, 1964, p. 22). In this scenario, man is the "object," as he is constantly being exposed to, and pressured by, various presentations of propaganda. Ellul (1964) goes on to say, "Techniques have taught the organizers how to force him into the game... The intensive use of propaganda destroys the citizen's faculty of discernment" (p. 276).

While *The Technological Society* focuses on the methods used to create a technique, such as propaganda, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (1965) focuses on the specific relationship between propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion. As with Lippmann, Ellul understands the lack of knowledge that the general public holds for use in forming public opinion. Ellul (1965) comments on the use of stereotypes and symbols in propaganda, as did Lippmann in *Public Opinion* (1922). Ellul (1965) states, "The more stereotypes in a culture, the easier it is to form public opinion, and the more an individual participates in that

culture, the more susceptible he becomes to the manipulation of these symbols" (p. 111).

Both Ellul and Lippmann recognize the inability of the public to form educated opinions as a whole. However, while Lippmann chose to focus on the idea that we should accept the fact that it is truly an educated elite that is controlling our opinions, Ellul chose to focus on the fact that the public actually has a need for propaganda. Ellul contests the idea that the public is merely a victim of propaganda. Rather, he states that, "The propagandee is by no means just an innocent victim. He provokes the psychological action of propaganda, and not merely lends himself to it, but even derives satisfaction from it. Without this previous, implicit consent, without this need for propaganda experienced by practically every citizen of the technological age, propaganda could not spread" (Ellul, 1965, p. 121).

Through his theories in *The Technological Society* and *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Ellul tends to give the media and society's elite (the creators of propaganda) a lot of power in shaping public opinion. While Bernays recognized the importance of making propaganda appeal to the needs of the public, Ellul claims that the public's need is simply for propaganda in the first place.

Recent Mass Communication Theorists

Based on the traditional theories of Lippmann, Lasswell, Bernays, and Ellul, more recent studies have been able to be conducted on the use of propaganda in creating public opinion. Lippmann (1922) was essentially the first theorist to develop the idea of the agenda-setting function of the media. By 1972, McCombs and Shaw had set out to study this phenomenon in their work "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." This study examined the 1968 presidential campaign, by asking undecided voters to identify the key issues of the presidential campaign, and then comparing those ideas to the issues that were being presented by the mass media at the time (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that there was a +0.967 correlation between voter judgment of important issues, and media presentation of those issues. McCombs and Shaw used this information to further

Lippmann's ideas that the mass media did indeed set the agenda for what the public should think about.

Iyengar and Kinder (1982) expanded on Lippmann's theories as well, by putting the idea of agenda-setting and priming to the test. They created experimental situations, in which subjects were exposed to news broadcasts that emphasized particular events. The results of this study both supported and expanded upon Lippmann's initial theories. "Our experiments decisively sustain Lippmann's suspicion that media provide compelling descriptions of a public world that people cannot directly experience" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1982, p. 855). Iyengar and Kinder (1982) found that those news items that received the most attention, were the news items that people found to be the most significant. Furthermore, Iyengar and Kinder (1982) also found evidence of a priming effect, in that those events that received the most attention by a news broadcast, also weighed the most heavily on evaluations of the president at a later time.

Lippmann's (1922) theories in *Public Opinion* also touched on the idea of a gatekeeper in the media process. By 1951, Kurt Lewin had expanded on this idea, by showing that people can manipulate and control the flow of information that reaches others (Rogers, 1994). Based on the ideas of both Lewin and Lippmann, White (1950) undertook an examination of the role of a gatekeeper in the realm of mass media. In *The "Gatekeeper": A Case Study In the Selection of News*, White (1950) examined the role of a wire editor in a newspaper. He found strong evidence that there was a gatekeeping role at work within the mass media, as this editor rejected nine-tenths of the articles that he received, based primarily on whether he considered the event to be "newsworthy," and whether he had another article on the same topic that he liked better. His results were important, as they showed the subjective judgments that an individual can exert in releasing limited information to the public.

Conclusion: The Importance of These Theories

The theories developed by Lippmann, Lasswell, Ellul, and Bernays are important for a number of reasons. Based on the ideas of his predecessors,

Lippmann was able to bring attention to the fact that the public is able to be influenced by the media. The work of Lippmann and his colleagues has led to more recent research that is meant to help understand the influence of the media on the public. Through the work of Iyengar and Kinder, White, Lewin, and McCombs and Shaw, a more comprehensive understanding of the media has been developed. The public has now been made aware of various media functions such as agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and priming, and the potential effects that these techniques can have on their audiences.

The theories presented in this paper have tied heavily to both the direct effects and limited effects media models. Theorists such as Ellul tended to side heavily with the direct effects model, whereby propaganda could directly influence the thought of the masses. Meanwhile, theorists such as Lippmann also noted that the media might not be influencing only thought, but may also be influencing what people thought about. It was this line of thinking that resulted in a starting point for future research in the area of the limited effects of the media. Such limited effects were shown through the work of Iyengar and Kinder, as well as McCombs and Shaw.

Overall, the research of the scholars discussed in this paper has been very important to the understanding of the media, the manipulation of the public, and the formation of public opinion. While the theories of Lippmann, Lasswell, Bernays, and Ellul were formed years ago, they continue to help us understand the society that surrounds us today.

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