**PRIMING EFFECT**

Priming occurs when exposure to mediated communication activates related thoughts that have been stored in the mind of an audience member. Media message content triggers concepts, thoughts, learning, or knowledge acquired in the past that are related to the message content. In this way, message content is connected, associated, or reinforced by related thoughts and concepts that it brings to mind. For a certain period after viewing such content, a person is more likely to have thoughts or memories become permanently associated with the message content, or stimulus.

E.g. if one views a rail accident or air accident the viewer might recall an accident he is part of. his interest in the news story and his reaction to it may well be affected by his existing knowledge and previous experiences.

In other words his memories *primed* him to react in a particular way to the story. The priming activation may also influence a person’s behavior, causing him or her to act or react in some way , sometimes with undesirable consequences . The most sensational example of undesirable priming, in this case operating with social learning theory may be that of COPYCAT crimes- especially murder or other violent crimes that occurred after the person was PRIMED by movie or program

Instance of copycat crimes are grave extremes of priming. Such cases represent a very small percentage of the population experience priming affects so completely that they actually MODEL OR IMITATE the viewed behavior. Priming effects from the viewing of media violence are normally much more subtle but even that level they represent cause for concern.

**Conceptual Roots**

Priming is based upon the concept of cognitive neo association. This social psychological perspective attempts to explain a portion of the phenomenon memory.

To understand cognitive neo association, one must picture the brain as a complex network or pathway that connects associated ideas, thoughts feelings and concepts.

Memory can be described as the overall network, when a person watches a television program or reads a newspaper the information being processed triggers or activates certain pathway throughout the net work. Individual thoughts or feelings from past experiences are remembered and associated with the new information. These ideas and thoughts may stimulate other, related ideas and they may influence a person’s actions. Ideas connected to emotions trigger associated feelings and responses.

E.g. research has shown that thinking depressing thoughts can actually cause feeling of depression and exposure to ideas of aggression can produce feelings of anger or even aggressive acts under some circumstances. Similarly a sad scene in a movie, causes audience to remember similar moment in their own lives and recall emotions associated with the events.- a painful separation, death of a loved one , a tragic accident.

Individual differences in perceptions, of course cause priming activation strengths to vary considerably from person to person. However, number of media effects studies have shown strong evidence for priming, especially for the priming of ideas related to aggression. One study found that children who read comic books with violent content were more likely to gave aggressive thoughts than children who read comic books with more neutral contents.

**Variables that enhance priming effects**

Modeling from mass media, then is an efficient way to learn wide range of behavior and solution to problems that we otherwise learn slowly or not at all , or pay too high a price to learn in the

Actual environment. Research has shown that there are some intervening variables that strengthen the cause- effect phenomenon when they are present , which are following:

1. The perceived meaning of the communication
2. The perceive justifiability of the witnessed aggression
3. The extent to which audiences identify with the characters
4. The perceived reality of the mediated communication
5. The stimulus of prior experiences

**1. Perceived meaning**

In a research first participants were angered then shown professional prize fights and professional football. They were given the information that either they were fighting to hurt others or simply performing their professional jobs. Afterwards there were asked to give electric shocks to those who angered them. The ones who were told that athletes were trying to hurt each other showed evidence of being ‘primed’ with more aggressive thoughts as they administered more punishing electrical

**2. Perceived justifiability**

Research has also shown that viewers of mediated violence are also influenced in their actions by the outcomes of the situations they see.

A number of studies reveal that viewers believe what happens on television or in movies could also happen to them if they behave in ways similar to the characters depicted .When viewers see aggressors suffering as a result of their behavior; they are les likely to imitate the aggressive behavior. Also when viewers are reminded of the serious and unfortunate consequences of violence, aggression is usually restrained

**3. Character identification**

Research has shown that identification with a media character enhances priming effects. In an experiment first participants were angered and then shown a prizefight.

One group was told to think of themselves as the winner. The 2nd group was asked to think of themselves as the referee. The 3rd group did not receive any instructions.

Half the group was asked to think of the word ‘hit’ each time winner punched his opponent. After the movie each participants had the opportunity to shock the person who had angered him, the most severe punishment was administered by the group of men who had pictured themselves as the winner and had thought hit with each punch

**4. Perceived reality**

The perceived reality of media depictions can also intensify the strength of priming effects. Research has shown that priming effects are strongest when audiences believe they are witnessing actual rather than fictional events. E.g. in one study angered participants saw the same war film, but only half were told it was a fictional movies. The other half were led to believe that the film depicted actual combat groups. Similarly in another study similar results among three groups of 5th and 6th grade children. First group saw a fight being reported realistically on the news.2nd in the context of fantasy entertainment.

3rd in control viewed as an ordinary commercial. When tested first group scored significantly higher on an aggression index than the other two.

**5. Memories of prior experiences**

Another factor identified with enhancing priming effects is that of prior learning or remembered experiences. As an audience member views a violent act, he or she remembers other occasions when semantically similar thoughts or feelings cropped up. The memory reactivates a neural network and strengthens the effects of priming.

**Recent research and the future trends**

In recent years effects scholars have continued to study priming effects, especially those that result from exposure to media violence. In the Annual Review of Sociology it was stated that much of the evidence that links mediated violence to the aggressiveness or the priming of aggressive thoughts.

In recent years, priming effects have been found in areas of communication research other than media violence studies such as political communications, Minority portrayals and Advertisements.

The number of media effects studies base upon priming theory continues to increase as more research seek to identify the links between media priming and the subsequent attitudes and behaviors of audience members.

**Summary**

Priming is a popular area of media effects research that explores the cognitive components of information processing.

Priming occurs when exposure to mediated communication activates related thoughts in the mind of an audience member.

Media content triggers concepts, thoughts, learning or knowledge acquired in the past and related to the message content.

For a certain period of time after viewing, a person is more likely to have thoughts about the content, related thoughts, or memories, sometimes these related thoughts become permanently associated with the message content or stimulus.

**Priming may influence a person’s behavior**

The person may act or react in a certain way, sometimes with undesirable consequences. . Instances of *copycat* crimes are grave extremes of priming.

Priming is based upon the concept of cognitive neo association which attempts to explain the phenomenon of memory. Individual thoughts or feelings from past experiences are remembered and associated with the new information.

Ideas connected to emotion trigger associated feelings and responses, audience members are likely to have thoughts with similar meanings to what they are viewing or semantically similar thoughts.

Most studies on priming use tight controls in laboratory situations.

The connection between the priming of aggressive thoughts and the actual display of aggression is not particularly strong unless certain variables are present. These include:

* The perceived meaning of the communication
* The perceived justifiability of the witnessed aggression
* The perceived reality of the mediated communication and e
* The stimulus of prior experiences

In recent years, a number of media violence studies have shown evidence for priming effects. Future research on priming by media effects scholars will continue to search for answers.

**CULTIVATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL REALITY**

Since the dawn of mass mediated entertainment, people have feared powerful and harmful media effects, especially on the children. Through the years the research findings have varied, but a number of studies have shown that the connection between viewing violence and committing violent acts is not merely a public perception. Today research continues and many answers have been determined, but many questions remain.

The cultivation hypothesis developed as one attempt to explain the influence of television on its viewers. The cultivation tradition grew out of a media violence research project called the Cultural Indicators Project, headed in the 1960s by George Gerbner, a University of Pennsylvania communication scholar. Investigators explored the relationship of long-tem television viewing, to the inculcation of various perceptions, values, and beliefs on the part of audiences.

Simply stated, the cultivation hypothesis proposes that over time, heavy viewers of television develop views of the world similar to what they see on television. The basic assumption underlying the cultivation or enculturation, approach is that repeated exposures to consistent media portrayal and themes influence our perceptions of these items in the direction of the media portrayals.

In effect, learning from the media environment is generalized, sometimes incorrectly to the social environment.

**History**

Some early research studies indicated that media portrayals of certain topic could have an impact on audience perceptions, particularly if the media were the main information sources. DeFleur in 1967 found that television had a homogenizing effect on children's perceptions of occupations commonly shown on television.

Then to study the viewer perceptions of social reality stems from the Cultural Indicators project of George Gerbner and his associates. Since 1968 they have collected data on the content of television and have analyzed the impact of heavy exposure on the audience. Some of the many variables that have been content analyzed are the demographic portraits of perpetrators and victims of television violence, the prevalence of violent acts, the types of violence portrayed, and the contexts of violence.

They found that long-term exposure to television, in which frequent violence is virtually inescapable, tends to cultivate the image of relatively mean and dangerous world. The basic hypothesis of cultivation analysis is that the more time one spends living in the world of television, the more likely one is to report conceptions of social reality that can be traced to television portrayals. In their finding indicated that the perceptions of reality were cultivated by television.

**Conceptual roots**

Cultivation adherents argue that television as a ‘whole sale distributor of images is different from other mass media. It serves as the *great storyteller* of our age.

Programs are produced to appeal to the entire population. Even very young viewers find it easy to become enthralled by an entertaining television show. According to these researchers the diverse publics all tend to think more alike when watching television because they all receive similar messages.

All television program, from entertaining action program to news programs, possess

Similar, repetitive patterns sometimes called myths, facts, or ideologies. These patterns are thought to influence viewers’ perception of the world.

Long-term exposure to these overall patterns of television programming is most likely to result in the ‘steady entrenchment of mainstream orientations for most viewers.’

**Mainstreaming and Resonance**

Mainstreaming is one of the principal concepts that underlie cultivation analysis; another is resonance. **Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming assumes that dominant sets of attitudes, beliefs, values and practices exist within cultures. Patterns also emerge across the spectrum of television programming-patterns regarding outcomes to various situation, gender roles,, minority representation and so forth.

These patterns result in a “mainstream set of attitudes beliefs and values that are repetitively presented on television. Heavy television viewers tend to cultivate similar mainstream views , cultivation researcher Nancy Signorielli and Michael Morgan defined the concept in this way”

Mainstreaming means that heavy viewing may absorb or override differences in perspectives and behavior which ordinarily stem from other factors and influences, in other words, differences found in the responses of different groups of viewers, differences that usually are associated with the varied cultural, social, and political characteristics of these groups, are *diminished* or even absent from the responses of heavy viewers in these same groups. So mainstreaming is a leveling effect. Heavy viewing resulting in a common viewpoint washes out differences in perceptions of reality usually caused by demographic and social factors.

**Resonance**

Resonance occurs when real world support the distorted image of reality shown on television. Whenever direct experience is in agreement with the messages from television, the messages are reinforced- they resonate- the cultivation effect is amplified.

So resonance is when the media reinforce what is seen in real life, thus giving an audience member a ‘double dose’ the resulting increase in the cultivation effect is attributed to resonance. For example, research has shown that the heavy television viewers who are most likely to fear crime are those who live in inner-city areas where crime rates are high. Cultivation researcher stresses that the concept of cultivation assumes that television and its publics interact in a dynamic process.

The extent to which person cultivates the messages seen on television depends upon a number of factors. Some people are more susceptible to cultivation influence due to personality traits, social background, cultural mores (education) and even their past television viewing experiences.

Gerbner and his associates explained the interactive process in this way:

*Although a viewer’s gender or age of class makes a difference in perspective, television viewing can make a similar and interacting difference. Viewing may help define what it means, for example, to be an adolescent female member of a given social class. The interaction is a continuous process as is (cultivation) beginning with infancy and going on from cradle to grave.*

**Theoretical developments**

After an extensive literature review scholars concluded that there was evidence for a link between viewing and beliefs regardless of the kind of social reality in question.

However additional research has also shown that cultivation hypothesis may be more complicated than first thought.

There is evidence that cultivation may be less dependent on the total amount of TV viewing than on the specific types of programs viewed.

Research also indicates that cultivation effect is more pronounced among active viewers than among low-involvement viewers and that personal experience with crime was an important mediating variable that affected the impact of TV programs on cultivating an attitude of vulnerability toward crime. Additionally it was found out that the perceived reality of the TV content had an impact on cultivation.

Similarly other variables such as identification with TV characters, IQ, and informational needs of the viewer had differential effects .In other words, different people react indifferent ways to TV content, and these different reactions determine the strength of the cultivation effect. Apart from these there are other multivariate model of cultivation which are taken into account by researchers like:-

* Is viewing done to meet informational needs or as diversion
* The number of information alternatives available.

Research has shown that maximum occurs among heavy viewers who watch for information, believe the content to be real and have few alternative sources of information. Tapper in 1995 presents a possible conceptual model of the cultivation process that is divided into two phases.

* Phase one deals with content acquisition and takes into account such variables as motives for viewing, selective viewing, the type of genre viewed, and perceptions of the reality of the content.
* Phase two is the storage phase and elaborates those constructs that might affect long-term memory.

Researchers have presented a psychological model of the cultivation process based on the notion of accessibility of information in a person’s memory. They posit that human memory works much like a storage bin. When new information is acquired, a copy of that new information is placed on top of the appropriate bin. Later when information is being retrieved for decision making, the contents of the bin are searched form the top down, thus information deposited most recently and most frequently stand a better chance of being recalled.

Similarly researchers have also reported the results of their empirical test that the faster a person's able to make a response, the more accessible is the information retrieved. Consequently, when confronted with a social reality judgment, heavy TV viewers should be able to make judgments faster than light viewers and their judgments should also demonstrate cultivation. (e.g. soap operas)

There are two discrete steps in performing a cultivation analysis.

* First, descriptions of the media world are obtained from periodic content analyses of large blocks of media content. The result of this content analysis is the identification of the messages of the television world. These messages represent consistent patterns in the portrayal of specific issues, policies, and topics that are often at odds with their occurrence in real life. The identification of the consistent portrayals is followed by the construction of a set of questions designed to detect a cultivation effect. Each question poses two or more alternatives.

One alternative is more consistent with the world as seen ton television, while another is more in line with the real world. (e.g. 60% homicide done by strangers in real life 16%. The question base on this discrepancy was. Does fatal violence occur between strangers or between relatives and acquaintances? The response ‘strangers’ was considered to be the television answer)

The second step involves surveying audiences about their television exposure, dividing sample into heavy and light viewers(4 hours a day is usually the dividing line) and comparing their answers to the questions that differentiate the television world from the real world. in addition, data are often collected on possible control variables such as gender, age and socioeconomic status. A statistical procedure consists of correlation analysis between the amount of television viewing and scores on an index reflecting the number of television answers to the comparison questions.

In sum, cultivation has proven to be an evocative and heuristic notion. It is likely that future research will concentrate on identifying key variables important to the process and on specifying the psychological processes that underlie the process.

**SYSTEMS THEORIES OF COMMUNICATION PROCESSES**

Although psychologists led communication researchers to the possibility of individual media effects, engineers alerted these researcher to the possibility of developing holistic explanations for societal or system wide effects.

**System**

System consists of a set of parts that interlinked so that changes in one part induce changes in other parts. System parts can be directly linked through mechanical connections or can be indirectly linked by communication technology. Because all parts are linked, the entire system can change as a result of alterations in only one element.

Systems can be goal directed if there is a long-term objective that they are designed to accomplish. Some systems are capable of monitoring the environment and altering their operations in response to environmental changes.

Interest in systems began with electronics engineers who developed systems that could be programmed to pursue goals, monitor the environment and adjust actions so that the goals were achieved.

These engineers were concerned with designing systems in which communication links functioned efficiently and transmitted information accurately. Communication was a means to an end, if a communication link didn't work properly then the solution was obvious. Communication technology had to be improved so that desired levels of effectiveness and accuracy were achieved.

**How it is applied to society?**

Thus, in designing and engineering systems of the type, communication problems were solved by technological change. As a result, during the 1950,s and 1960s there was optimism that important, societal –level communication problems might also be solved by improving the accuracy of message transmissions.

**The rise of systems theory**

After World War II social scientists became intrigued by system notions. These models fundamentally altered how relationships between variables were understood. But most 1960s social systems theorists acknowledged that the greatest and most recent impetus toward the development of systems theories came from an engineering subfield known as CYBERNETICS, the study of regulation and control in complex machines.

Cybernetics investigates how *communication links between the various parts of a machine enable it to* *perform very complex tasks and adjust to changes taking place in its external environment.*

Cybernetics proved especially useful for communications engineering – the design of powerful new communication system for military applications, such as radar. Communication engineers had abandoned simple, linear model of the communication process by the 1940s. A circular but evolving communication process was conceptualized in which messages come back from receivers to influence sources that in turn alter their messages. These circular process were referred to a as feedback loops. In these systems, an ongoing mutual adjustment is possible that ultimately leads to achieving a long-term objective or function. Complex machines rely on feedback loops as means of making ongoing adjustments to changes caused by the environment. Feedback loops enable sources to monitor the influence of their messages on receivers. But just as important, receivers can in turn influence sources.

If the effects are not what is expected or desired, a source can alter a message until the desired feedback is obtained. So the machines built in the World War II provided sophisticated means of detecting subtle changes so that a weapons system could achieve it objective. We refer to these as ‘communication systems’ if their function is primarily to facilitate communication. By this definition, a guided missile is not a communication system. It is a weapons system that contains a communication.

**Mathematical theory of communication**

Communications engineers also made important breakthrough that is central to the current revolution in communications technology. Accuracy in message transmission is essential if systems are to operate effectively and achieve long-term goals. Even minor errors can compound over time and lead to serious problems. To address this situation, communication engineers developed a very sophisticated system. The flow was known as a signal and each element in it was labeled an information bit. The ultimate information bit is a digital bit-one that is either present or absent.

Methods of monitoring the accuracy of transmission of bits were developed. Any difference between the signal sent and the signal received were viewed as errors or noise. High levels of noise tolerated if a message is redundant, that is, if it contains many bits that carry the same information. Every communication link can be seen as a channel, and every channel can be seen as having a certain capacity to transmit an accurate signal.

Obviously it is better to have channels that can accurately transmit complex signals. When accuracy is a problem, redundancy can be increased, but this reduces efficiency because the same information is being sent more than once. E.g. AM radio is static. Static is thousand of erroneous bits of information that have somehow entered the signal as it moves from the radio transmitter to our receiver. Whereas FM signals aren’t as subject to the introduction of errors as the signals moves from transmitter to receiver, so you receive a more accurate transmission of the original signal.

Similarly the trend in communication engineering has been to find ways to reduce or even eliminate noise, improve efficiency and increase channel capacity.

This is the basis for contemporary work on digital high definition television (HDTV). Rather than transmitting 30 frames a second as does traditional television, HDTV transmits only digital information about the changes that occur between those frames. E.G newscasters reading the news. The background does not change only their mouths and facial expressions change. After the initial transmission all that is sent and received in a digital HDTV system is information about changes in that original scene. Noise is reduced, efficiency is improved and channel capacity is increased as only necessary information enters the system.

Notions about signals, noise, bits, efficiency, redundancy and channel capacity have found their way into mass communication theory through a variety of sources.

**Mathematical theory**

One of the first and most important books was the Mathematical theory written by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1949 .They believed that these new concepts would transform how all forms of communication were understood, they were optimistic that it might even be possible to remedy macroscopic, societal-level communication problems using these very microscopic notions. Their ideas came to be referred to as **information theory**.

In communications technology and the design of communication systems, the theory has been enormously successful. Technology based on this theory is providing the building blocks constructing the Information Superhighways. Information Superhighways means a *worldwide system of computer* *networks accessible to any user connected to it.*

Designers of this super-communications system promised that it would provide us with vast quantities of information at low cost in convenient, user-friendly format, and that promise seems to have been fulfilled. But efficient, accurate transmission isn’t enough, entry into the information age has been accompanied by a troubling escalation in social problems.

Only recently have system theorists begun to recognize and try to develop more complex models that allow ongoing transformation of systems.

**Adoption of system models by Mass communication theorists**

Systems models replaced the Transmissional model that was implicit in most of the early effects research. Lasswell provided a cogent, succinct version of this model when he described the communication process as *who says what to whom through what medium with what effect.*

The Transmission model assumes that a message source dominates the communication process and the primary outcome of the process is some sort of effect on receivers-usually one intended by the source .Influence moves or flows in a straight line from source to receivers. The possibility that the message receivers mighty also influence the source is ignored. Attention is focused on whether a source brings about intended effects or whether unintended negative effects occur.

Mutual or reciprocal influence is not considered. Communication theorists proposed new models of communication processes with feedback loops in which receivers could influence sources and mutual influence was possible. Westley and Maclean in 1957 provided a good example of this type of model.

Most conversations involve mutual influence, participants send out message, obtain feedback, and then adjust their actions. In overall social environment can be understood as something that is created by ongoing negotiation between actors.

**EMERGENCE OF CRITICAL & CULTURAL THEORIES OF MASSCOMMUNICATION**

**Closed versus open systems**

Two fundamentally different types of systems can be differentiated and used to model different forms communication. Systems can be closed and homeostatic or they can be open and dynamically balanced. Closed systems are like simple machines that perform a task endlessly. There is limited monitoring of the external environment. The machine works well as long as all the parts interrelate in the same, unchanging manner. If a part becomes so worn that it stops working or a wire that is part of communication link frays, the system will fail. It has no capacity to adjust to problems. The role played by communication in these closed systems tends to be highly structured and predictable.

They often communicate in very simple digital messages turn on and turn off.

**Open system**

An open system consists of parts that interrelate in such a way that overall system can monitor its environment and adjust to both internal and external changes. The parts of open system can alter their functions so that if one part fails, others can adjust and take over its function. These systems can be capable of growth and change over time, often, their relationship to environment can change as well. These systems are said to dynamically balanced- that is they are able to maintain their integrity and a high level of organization while undergoing significant changes .They are able to combine stability with change. A classic example of an open system is a *biological organism*.

In our body the various organs communicate in a variety of ways- using electrical and chemical messages transmitted by the nervous and circulatory systems. The body can adapt in very complex ways to the failure of some of its parts and changes in the external environment. Complex adjustments occur-yet the body as a whole maintains its physical integrity- it can grow and change and yet remain highly organized.

Systems theory had its greatest practical impact on mass communication theory several decades after the burst of initial interests in the 1960s.

**Criticism of systems models**

Systems models have a limitation that some critics find troublesome. A status quo bias in systems models can tend to concentrate our attention on observable structures and lead us to assume that the primary function or role of these structures is to maintain and serve the overall system. We are led to ask research questions like

Is a particular part doing what it should?

Is it communicating properly?

Is it maintaining a proper relationship to other parts?

Is it enabling the system to operate properly?

The value of each part is assessed by its contribution to the whole. When we view a system in this way we might be concerned about communication but only in a limited way. We tend to view communication as something that merely interconnects parts in much the same way that occur nervous and circulatory systems interconnect h organs in our bodies. If the system is doing what we think it should, then we conclude that communication must be appropriate. If we think the system is failing then we look for communication problems. But sometimes systems should fail. Sometimes systems go through necessary transformations in which existing structures break down and give way to new structures. In such case communication will necessarily play a very different role.

**Summary**

In the last couple of sessions we have studied two bodies of thought –social cognitive theory and system theory, both of which came to mass communication theory from outside the discipline itself – signaled an important shift in thinking about mass communication.

**Emergence of critical and cultural theories of mass communication**

Before we proceed lets briefly overview how the challenge to limited effects paradigm came from ideas other than social cognitive learning and systems theories. As we know limited effects theory focuses on whether media content can have an immediate and direct effect on specific thoughts and actions of individuals. Researchers typically sought evidence for these effects in experiments or through survey. However, there is another way of approaching the study of mass media effects. Instead of focusing on specific effects on individuals we can focus instead on changes in culture, on how shared understandings and social norms change. Instead of trying to locate hundreds of small effects and add them all up. We can ask whether the development of mass media has profound implications for the way we create, share, learn and apply culture.

Now we will trace the emergence of theories that directly address questions about the way media might produce profound changes in social life. These new perspectives argued that media might have the power to interfere into and modify how we make sense of our social world and ourselves. These theories are quite diverse and offer very different answers to questions about the role of media in social life. Nevertheless, in all these theories, the concept of culture is central. Media affect society because they (media) affect how culture is created, shared, learned and applied. Cultural theories offer a broad range on interesting ideas about how media can affect culture and also provide many different views concerning the long-term consequences of the cultural changes affected by media.

**Two ways used by cultural theorists**

Now we will discuss the two widely used ways used by cultural theorists to differentiate the various theories of media.

1. There are **microscopic,** interpretive theories that focus on how individuals and social groups use media to create and foster forms of culture that structure everyday life
2. And there are **macroscopic**, structural theories that focus on how social elites use their economic power to gain control over and exploit to propagate hegemonic culture as a means of maintaining their dominant position in social order,

They are called political economy theories because they place priority on understanding how economic power provides a basis for ideological and political power.

**Differences between Microscopic and Macroscopic Theories**

Cultural studies theories are less concerned with the long- term consequences of media for the social order and more concerned with looking at how media affect our individual lives. These theories are said to be micro –level or **microscopic** because they de-emphasize larger issues about the social order in favor of questions involving the everyday life of average people.

Critical theories and political economy theories by contrast are **macroscopic** cultural theories, which are less concerned with developing detailed explanations of how individuals are influenced by media and more concerned with how the social order as a whole is affected.

These theorists until recently microscopic and macroscopic theories developed in relative isolation. Theorists were separated by differences in geography, politics and research objective. But that may be changing, as we will discuss in the coming sessions.Microscopic cultural studies researchers prefer to understand what is going on in the world immediately around them. They are intrigued by the mundane, the seemingly trivial, and the routine. They view our experience of everyday life and of reality itself as an artificial construction that we somehow maintain with only occasional minor breakdowns. They want to know how mass media have been incorporated into the routines of daily life without creating serious disruptions. Perhaps the media do cause problems that are somehow being compensated for or concealed? If so, how is this being done? Will there be a breakdown eventually- or are we being systematically desensitized and trained to be aggressive? Or is everyday life being transformed in useful ways – are we becoming kinder and gentler.Whereas macroscopic researcher are troubled by the narrow focus of microscopic theory. These researchers demand answers to larger questions.

How do media affect the way politics is conducted, the way that a national economy operates or the delivery of vital social services? Macroscopic researchers want to know if media are intruding into or disrupting large-scale social process. E.g. have media disrupted the conduct of national politics and therefore increased the likelihood that inferior politicians will be elected? Macroscopic researchers believe that such large-scale questions can’t be answered if you begin by looking at individuals.

**REVISION**

Understanding the nature of communication

Definitions of communication

Conceptualizations of communication- points of convergence

* Communication as a process
* Communication is transactional
* Communication is symbolic

Communication is a process a process –oriented conceptualization of communication suggests that it is continuous and complex and cannot be arbitrarily isolated.

Communication is transactional that is, not only do participant constantly influence each other, they are also by the influenced context in which they interact

A third area of convergence in conceptualizations of communication is the belief that communication is symbolic.

* Semiotics a study of signs
* Sign is a relationship between Signifier and the signified
* Signifier is the word book
* Signified is the concept of the book
* Understanding the nature of theory

Theory

Paradigm

Paradigms are different ways of looking at world- the ways to observe, measure and understand social reality.

There are three major paradigms

* Positivistic perspective
* Interpretive perspective
* Critical perspective

**Positivistic perspective**

* Is objective,
* Rests on order,
* Is governed by strict , natural and unchangeable laws
* And can be realized through experience
* All members of society define reality in the same way, because they all share the same meanings.

**Interpretive Perspective**

Interpretative social science relates to the works of Vico, Dilthey and Weber.

Interpretive theorist s believe that reality is not ‘out there’ but in the minds of the people

Reality is internally experienced is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors and is based on the definition people attach to it

Reality is not objective but subjective

**Critical Perspective**

This was developed out of the work of Karl Marx and the critical, theorists and feminists. Critical theorists see reality in a different manner.

Reality is created not by nature but by the powerful people who manipulate condition and brainwash others to perceive things the way they want them to, to serve the needs of the powerful.Sir Karl Popper, a philosopher instrumental in shaping 20th century views of knowledge are, *“Theories* *are nets cast to catch what we call the world.”*

Theories help us understand or explain phenomena we observe in the social world.

There are **two approaches** to theory building.

* Deductive approach
* Inductive approach

**Deductive approach**

* From the general to particular; the process by which theory is tested
* Deductive approach to theory building tend to give primacy to theory

**Inductive approach**

* Inductive approach to theory building gives primacy to observation.
* From the particular to the general; the process by which theory is generated.
* In this approach, theoretical abstractions are based on- or grounded in empirical observation

**Model**

*A model is a consciously simplified description in graphic form of a piece of reality. A model seeks to show the main elements of any structure or process and the relationships between these elements. (McQuail)*

A theoretical and simplified representation of the real world. A model is not an explanatory device by itself, but it helps to formulate theory

**Study some of the early communication models**

So a successful pictorial model offers three major advantages.

* They organize concepts
* They explain processes and
* They predict outcomes
* Two kinds of models

Structural model

Functional models

Three different ways of viewing communication processes

* Linear model
* Interactive model
* Transactional model

**From communication to mass communication models**

The term mass communication emerged in late 1930s;

Nature of the communicator

Nature of audience

Nature of communication experience

What is mass communication?

Why study mass communication?

How the media industry originated?

**Development in the history of Mass Communication**

DeFleur and Ball Rokeach in 1989point out to a number of important developments in the history of mass communication

* Age of signs and signals
* Age of speech and language
* Age of writing- papyrus
* Age of printing after 15th century-Gutenberg’s invention of moveable type and printing pres in 1456
* But the age of MC was ushered by widespread distribution of newspapers (1920 radio 1940 TV)

**Mass media includes**

* Print media
* Electronic media
* New media- Telemetric media

As new media combine telecommunication and information it includes:

* Video games
* Virtual reality
* CD- Rom

**Normative Theories of Media**

* Authoritarian Theory
* Libertarian Theory
* Chicago School

**Authoritarian Theory**

* Libertarian theory arose in opposition Authoritarian theory-
* An idea that placed all forms of communication under the control of a governing elite or authorities.
* Authorities justified their control as a means to protect and preserve a divinely ordained social order.

**Libertarian Theory**

* In rebelling against authoritarian theory early libertarians argued that there should be no laws governing media operations.
* Free press means that all forms of media must be totally unregulated.

**Hutchins Commission on Freedom**

It emphasized the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, accurate, news reports.

**Chicago School**

Chicago School envisioned modern cities as **“**Great Communities” comprising hundreds of small social groups- everything from neighborhood social organizations to citywide associations.

For these Great Communities to develop, all the constituent groups had to work together and contribute. These were referred to as pluralistic groups in recognition of their cultural and racial diversity.

**Totalitarian media Theory**

Totalitarian media Theory is a normative theory calling for suppression of pluralistic groups and the use of media under the control of the dominant political party to propagate a strong centralized political culture.

* Civic or public journalism
* Development media theory
* Democratic-participant theory

Keeping the spirit of the SR theory in view many newspapers began practicing *civic journalism*, actively engaging the members of their areas in reporting important civic issues.

**Development media theory**

Development media theory was intended to recognize the fact that societies undergoing a transition from underdevelopment and colonialism to independence and better material conditions often lack the infrastructure, the money, the traditions, the professional skills.

**Democratic-participant theory**

Democratic-participant theory was proposed in recognition of new media developments and of increasing criticism of the dominance of the main mass media by private or public monopolies.

* the rise of mass society
* the assumptions about mass society
* main theories of mass society—one propounded by Ferdinand Tonnies – concept of Gemeinschaft (folk society) and Gesellschaft (modern, industrial society)-
* the other propounded by Emile Durkheim- concept of mechanical solidarity (folk societies) and organic solidarity (modern social societies)
* what were the assumptions about the relationship of mass society and mass media

Theories that propounded that media have a powerful effect on people. Theories which were the reason for the theories that media can be used as powerful propaganda tool.

* Behaviorism
* Freudianism
* Magic bullet theory
* Lasswell propaganda theory
* Walter Lippmann

**Behaviorism**

John B. Watson- an animal experimentalist who argued that All human action is merely a conditioned response to external environmental stimuli. Media provides external stimuli that triggered immediate responses (Nazi propaganda)

**Freudianism**

Sigmund Freud

1. Ego is rational mind is in control
2. Id is the dark side of the self- the egocentric, (selfish and self-centered) pleasure seeking part of ourselves- that Ego must struggle to keep in control
3. Ego relies on the internalized set of cultural rules the Superego- for guidance

**Magic Bullet Theories**

In the 1920s Media was assumed to operate like magic bullets that penetrated people’s minds and instantly created associations between strong emotions and specific concepts.

By carefully controlling these magic bullets, propagandists felt that they could condition people associate good emotions, such as loyalty and reverences with their own country and associate bad emotions, such as fear and loathing with their enemies.

**Paradigm Shift in Mass Communication Theory**

Middle –range theory and the consolidation of the limited effects paradigm. How a radical transformation in media theory took place. The focus from powerful effect of media shifted to Limited Effects of Media. And how this became the dominant paradigm in U.S media research from 1940 till 1960s.

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* Innovators
* Early adopters
* Early majority
* Late majority
* Laggards

**Challenging the dominant paradigm**

How the growing violence and the possible contribution of the television became a concern for the American society. Several different perspectives are discussed, including:

* Surgeon General’s Scientific
* Catharsis
* Social learning

**Surgeon General’s Scientific**

Advisory Committee on Television and social behavior in 1969.

*While the … report is carefully phrased and qualified in language acceptable to social scientists , it is clear to me that the causal relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficient to warrant appropriate and immediate remedial action. The data on social phenomena such as television and violence and or aggressive behavior will never be clear enough for all social scientists to agree on the formulation of a succinct statement of causality, But there comes a time when the data are sufficient to justify action, that time has come.*

**Catharsis** – sometimes called sublimation- the idea that viewing violence is sufficient to purge or atleast satisfy a person’s aggressive drive and, therefore, reduce the likelihood of aggressive behavior. Catharsis suggested that television violence had social utility, providing young people with a harmless outlet for their pent-up aggression and hostility.

**Social Learning**

Social learning – encompasses both imitation and identification to explain how people learn through observation of other in their environments

Social cognitive theory

Modeling from mass media

Priming effects

Variables that enhance priming effects

*According to Albert Bandura, “ social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation , in this model of reciprocal determinism, behavior; cognitive, biological and other personal factors; and environmental events all operate as interaction determinants that influence each other bidirectionally.”*

Baundra’s social cognitive theory of mass communication the broader social learning theory serve as the foundations for volumes of research in all areas of media effects study-

Effects of media violence

And sexually explicit material

Pro-social or positive media effects

Cultivation effects

Persuasion

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the importance of these uniquely human characteristics, known as the

• symbolizing capacity

* self-regulatory capacity
* self-reflective capacity
* vicarious capacities

**Modeling**

The phenomenon of behavior reenactment is called as MODELLING. Modeling is the acquisition of behaviors through observation.

Modeling includes four component processes

* Attention
* Retention
* Motor reproduction
* Motivation

Whenever a person sees a character on the screen expressing some strong emotion or performing some powerful action,

The viewer is affected or aroused*.*

The viewer remembers similar experiences and emotions, and these thoughts and images serve as cues that trigger self-arousal. E.g. ET, Jaws, horror movies—fear reaction.

**Cultivation**

The cultivation hypothesis developed as one attempt to explain the influence of television on its viewers, the cultivation tradition grew out of a media violence research project called the Cultural Indicators Project, headed in the 1960s by George Gerbner, a University of Pennsylvania communication scholar.

Simply stated, the cultivation hypothesis proposes that over time , heavy viewers of television develop views of the world similar to what they see on television.

**Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming is a leveling effect. Heavy viewing resulting in a common viewpoint washes out differences in perceptions of reality usually caused by demographic and social factors.

**Resonance**

Resonance occurs when real world support the distorted image of reality shown on television. Whenever direct experience is in agreement with the messages from television, the messages are reinforced- they resonate- the cultivation effect is amplified.

The extent to which person cultivates the messages seen on television depends upon a number of factors. Some people are more susceptible to cultivation influence due to personality traits, social background, cultural mores (education) and even their past television viewing experiences. Is viewing done to meet informational needs or as diversion? The number of information alternatives available.

**Systems**

Ideally, systems notions could provide a powerful way of conceptualizing complex, social system and analyzing the role played by communication in them. Important social problems might be solved

* Closed versus open systems
* The criticism of systems models

Emergence of critical and cultural theories of mass communication