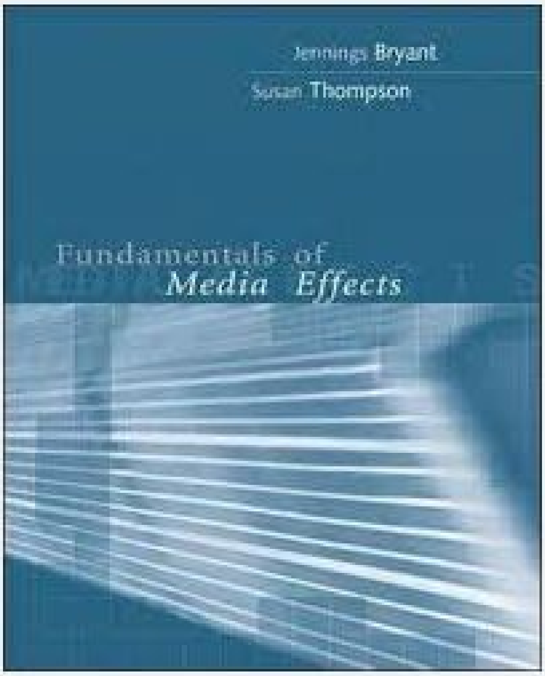

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Fundamentals of *Media Effects*

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CHAPTER 3

History of the Scientific Study of Media Effects

> *Tantalized fascination surrounds all efforts to study the effects of mass media.*
>
> —Paul F. Lazarsfeld, 1949

If one were to judge from the preceding chapter, effects from media communications would appear to be rather powerful. The reason for this is obvious: History is biased toward recording instances when mediated communications seem to provoke action. Major reactions that can be traced to mediated communication are much easier to locate. Except for the existence of a very detailed personal diary or some other trustworthy personal account, instances of limited media effects are difficult for the historian to identify.[1]

① Several late 19th-century studies in psychology and sociology involved research on mass media and presaged the theoretical bases for more sophisticated and numerous studies in the decades to follow, but media effects research emerged categorically in the 20th century. In the past half century, graduate programs in mass communication have sprung to life at major research universities throughout the country, and the study of media effects has quickly matured and diversified. ② Researchers now search for evidence of media effects in a number of distinct research branches such as persuasion, media violence, sexually explicit material, fright reactions, agenda setting, new media technologies, uses and gratifications, cultivation research, and other areas.

Several communication scholars have acknowledged chinks in the armor of the established history and have offered excellent revisionary works, but their accounts either have focused more upon the history of communication studies than on media effects research and thought per se (Dennis & Wartella, 1996; Rogers, 1994) or they have concentrated on the history of communication theories (Heath & Bryant, 2000). E. Katz (1980, 1983) examined the media effects research tradition from a conceptual standpoint, offered an interesting analysis of media effects research issues, and suggested significant points of connection among the various theories of media effects. In our reexamination of the standard history of media effects research for this chapter, we employed historical research methods rather than conceptual analysis alone to note several key points of contention and identify important issues that should be addressed in the future.

The chapter first relates the "established" history of media effects research, then provides our view of the actual history, which differs somewhat from the standard version. We identify some neglected pioneers and more recent scholars of media effects who contributed significantly to our knowledge of media effects. We then point out several issues that have been obscured by the established rendition of history and offer suggestions for advancing the knowledge of media effects in the future.

THE "ESTABLISHED" HISTORY

Because of the historical bias toward chronicling powerful media effects and the concern about media's impact, it should not be surprising that in the early days of scientific effects studies, powerful effects were assumed by many. The study of media effects began during World War I in response to concerns about propaganda spread by the military and after the war by corporations (in the form of advertising and public relations efforts). At first, social scientists and the public believed that mass media produced powerful effects upon their unsuspecting audiences.

Thus begins the "established" history of media effects study in the United States. This standard history has been told and retold in countless lectures, articles, and chapters. J. W. Carey (1996) provided an eloquent summary of the established history, which we quote from time to time to enrich this discussion.

> As the "jazz age" turned into the Great Depression, the fears of propaganda and the media were confirmed by the mass movements in politics and culture typical of that period and by a series of specific and startling events of which Orson Welles' radio broadcast "The War of the Worlds" stood as an archetype. In the standard history, this random assortment of fears, alarms, jeremiads, political pronouncements, and a few pieces of empirical research were collapsed into the "hypodermic-needle model" or "bullet theory" or "model of unlimited effects" of the mass media, for they converged on a common conclusion: The media collectively, but in particularly the newer, illiterate media of radio and film, possessed extraordinary power to shape the beliefs and conduct of ordinary men and women. (p. 22)

3 3 According to the standard history, most people in the United States (including most social scientists) believed that mass media, especially electronic media such as film and radio, had incredible powers to influence their audiences. The immense power of media messages on unsuspecting audiences was described in colorful ways: Mass media supposedly fired messages like dangerous bullets, or shot messages like strong drugs pushed through hypodermic needles. These descriptions gave rise to the "bullet" or "hypodermic-needle" theory of powerful media effects. 4

The standard history typically attributed the rise of the bullet theory as a response to the development of a mass society of fragmented individuals receiving similar messages from the mass media of communication. Early theorists focused on the phenomenal changes in society from the late 19th to early 20th century and the resulting influences on the masses. H. Blumer (1951), noting the importance of mass behavior, wrote that due to urbanization and industrialization of the early 20th century,

> mass behaviour has emerged in increasing magnitude and importance. This is due primarily to the operation of factors which have detached people from their local cultures and local group settings. Migrations, changes of residence, newspapers, motion pictures, the radio, education—all have operated to detach individuals from customary moorings and thrust them into a wider world. In the face of this world, individuals have had to make adjustments on the basis of largely unaided selections. The convergence of their selection has made the mass a potent influence. At times its behaviour comes to approximate that of a crowd, especially under conditions of excitement. At such times it is likely to be influenced by excited appeals as these appear in the press or over the radio—appeals that play upon primitive impulses, antipathies and traditional hatreds.[2] (pp. 187–188)

A number of early books were written with an underlying acceptance of the bullet or hypodermic-needle theories;[3] that is, the immense power of mass communication messages on their audiences. These included, to name a few, Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922), Harold Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), and G. G. Bruntz's *Allied Propaganda and the Collapse of the German Empire in 1918* (1938). Also, the standard history relates that the bullet theory served as the basis for a series of studies sponsored by the Payne Fund in the 1920s. These studies sought to determine the influence of the motion picture on children and found that

> as an instrument of education it has unusual power to impart information, to influence specific attitudes toward objects of social value, to affect emotions either in gross or in microscopic proportions, to affect health in a minor degree through sleep disturbance, and to affect profoundly the patterns of conduct of children. (Charters, 1950, p. 406)

One media historian called journalist Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* "the originating book in the modern history of communication research"[4] (Carey, 1996, p. 28). Another prominent media scholar viewed it as a founding work for agenda-setting research (Rogers, 1994). In this classic work, Lippmann called upon his experiences with propaganda during World War I. The book became "a key intellectual influence in creating public apprehension about the role of propaganda in a democratic society" (Rogers, 1994, p. 236). Lippmann emphasized the role of the news media in influencing the perceptions of audiences about issues of importance.

The standard history states that the hypodermic-needle theory remained dominant until after the Depression, when empirical studies began to indicate that effects from mass media were not as powerful as originally thought. Rather than a society of fragmented individuals receiving all-powerful messages from mass media, the view shifted to one of a society of individuals who interacted within groups and thus limited the effects of media messages. Studies by Paul

Early studies such as those sponsored by the Payne Fund examined the effects of movies on children.
Source: © Sean Sexton Collection/Corbis

Lazarsfeld at Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research and by other social scientists such as Carl Hovland working for the U.S. War Department, indicated that mass media had only limited effects on individuals in their audiences.

> What was also discovered, in the standard rendition, was that individuals, the members of the audience, were protected from the deleterious possibilities inherent in the mass media by a group of predispositional or mediating factors . . . Some individuals (a few) under some circumstances (rare) were directly affected by the mass media. Otherwise, media propaganda and mass culture were held at bay by an invisible shield erected by a universally resistant psyche and a universally present network of social groups. (Carey, 1996, p. 23)

The limited effects model became thoroughly established in 1960 with the publication of Joseph Klapper's *The Effects of Mass Communication*. This classic work, based on his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, reviewed hundreds of media effects studies from the 1920s through the 1950s and attempted to make blanket generalizations on the subject of mass media effects. Klapper called for a new approach to research in the field, a "phenomenistic approach," which emphasized particular factors that limited the effects of mass media messages on individuals.

> Klapper concluded that the fears of propaganda, of manipulative elites, of media-induced extremist behavior, were misplaced and hysterical . . . Given the conservative bias of the media and of social life generally, Klapper concluded that the preponderant effect was the reinforcement of the status quo . . . With the conclusion firmly established that the media had but limited effects, the research agenda was largely a mopping-up operation: the closer and more detailed specification of the specific operation of mediating and intervening factors . . . In a well-known line, interest shifted from what it was that the media did to people toward what it was people did with the media. This was then a shift in interest and attention from the source to the receiver and a relocation of the point of power in the process: The audience controlled the producers. Except for some special problems (violence and pornography are the best-known examples) and some special groups (principally children), interest in direct effects and propaganda withered away. (Carey, 1996, pp. 23–24)

⑮

In the decades following the 1960s, mass media research thrived as the field of mass communication became firmly established at research universities throughout the nation. Certain new theories and research findings did not fit neatly into the limited effects paradigm; therefore, the history was amended to include new studies that indicated moderate to powerful media effects were indeed possible (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984a, 1984b; Blumler & McLeod, 1974; Maccoby & Farquhar, 1975; Mendelsohn, 1973; Noelle-Neumann, 1973). 6 ⑥

A marvelous graphic representation of the established history of media effects is included in W. J. Severin and J. W. Tankard, Jr. (1992) and reproduced here as Figure 3.1. This linear model indicates some of the major studies and research programs in mass communication—some that supposedly caused drastic shifts in scholarly thought regarding the power of media effects through the years. Table 3.1 presents a timeline that corresponds to Figure 3.1 and offers brief descriptions of the various studies that contributed to each major model.

This standard scenario of "all-powerful" effects to "limited" effects to "moderate" to "powerful" effects provided a simple and convenient history of the field of communication research. Unfortunately, as many scholars have pointed out (Carey, 1996; Wartella, 1996), the established history is not altogether satisfying. Although it contains accuracies, it also misleads due to its strict adherence to the supposed major shifts in thought about the power of media effects triggered by particular research findings. Moreover, certain research findings from these major studies (and others) that run contrary to the established picture are simply ignored. Additionally, the standard history emphasizes the importance of some scholars but neglects to mention other individuals and their studies.

In the following section, we offer a new approach for describing the history of research on mass media effects. Although the old history remains attractive because of its ease of description and topical divisions, the revised history we now relate includes additional evidence and a fresh perspective. We hope that what is lost in convenience will be gained in greater accuracy.

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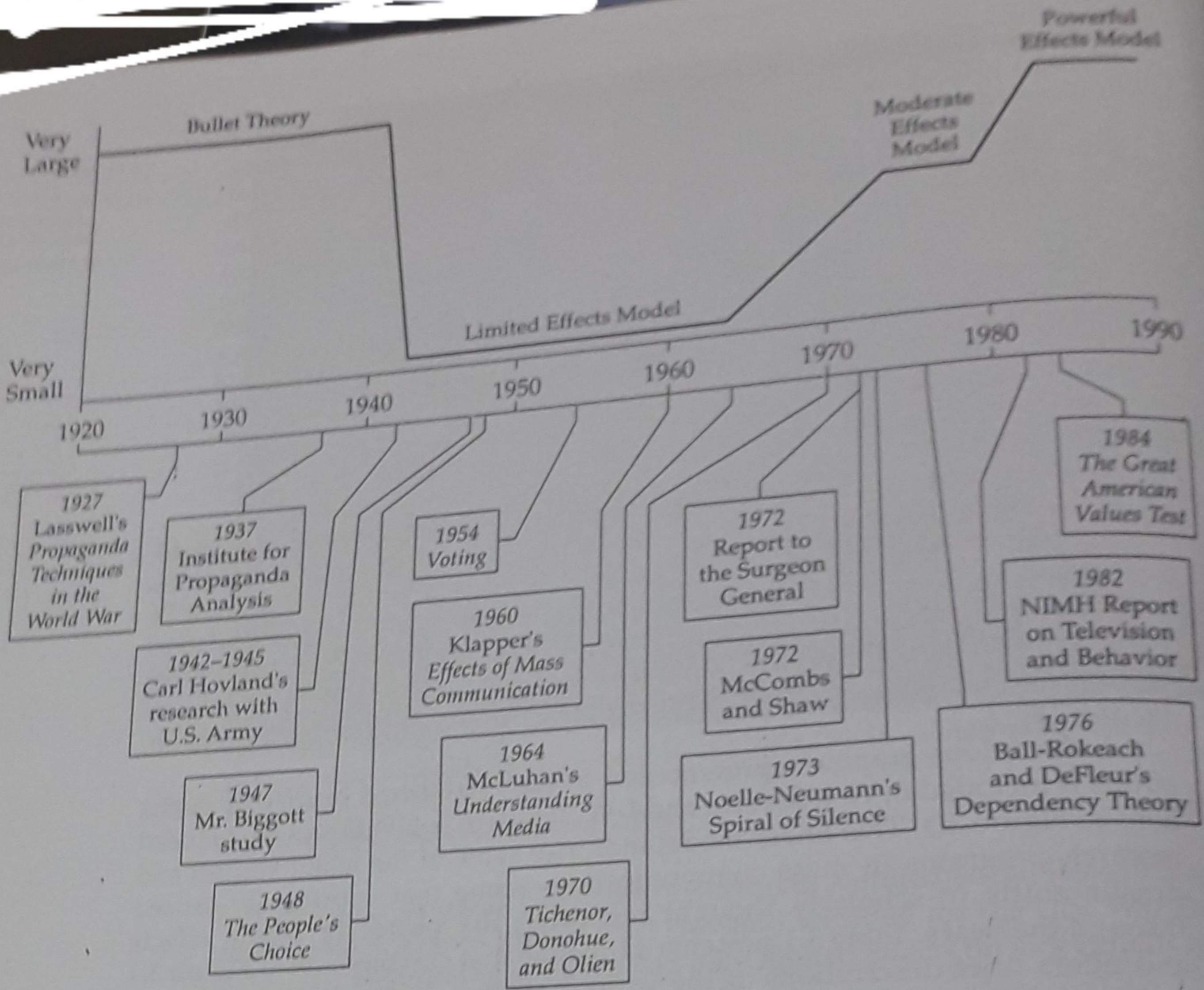

FIGURE 3.1. Size of Effect Due to Mass Communication, for Various Theories.
Source: From W. J. Severin and J. W. Tankard, Jr., *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media*, 3e. Copyright © 1992 by Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted/adapted with permission.

A REVISED HISTORY

A more accurate history of mass media effects research shares some similarities with established history but differs in important ways as well. The two versions have in common the many research studies that indicated different levels of media effects. (Moreover, the "established" history is always recounted in the improved history because that version has been accepted as gospel for so many
7 years.) The new history differs from the standard version in these ways: the acknowledgment of early, precursory media effects studies by psychologists, sociologists, and other investigators; the reevaluation of summary findings from some of the major studies; the inclusion of particular studies through the years that did not fit neatly into the "standard" scenario; the importance attributed to particular scholars; the emphasis on the advances in effects research through the

Table 3.1 Timeline

Blast)

BULLET THEORY MODEL

1927	Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (Lasswell, 1928). Based upon his doctoral dissertation, this qualitative work analyzed the content of propaganda messages of World War I, identifying various propaganda techniques.
1937	Institute for Propaganda Analysis. This research institute was formed in response to public fear regarding the persuasive power of propaganda via mass media. Many worried that an evil tyrant like Hitler could gain power in the United States by flooding mass communication media with propaganda messages. Studies were conducted in an effort to understand the effects of propaganda.

Literature Re

LIMITED EFFECTS MODEL

1942–1945	Carl Hovland's research with the U.S. Army. Hovland and his associates conducted persuasion research for the Research Branch of the U.S. Army's Information and Education division. Hovland's controlled experiments measured attitude changes among soldiers who viewed training or motivational films. They found that the films did not increase soldiers' motivations.
1947	Mr. Biggott study. This study by Cooper and Jahoda (1947) examined the effects of cartoons that poked fun at prejudice. Rather than changing any attitudes, the cartoons only strengthened or confirmed preexisting attitudes, whether prejudiced or unprejudiced.
1948	*The People's Choice*. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) studied voting decisions among voters in Erie County, Ohio, during the 1940 election campaign of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie. They found that interpersonal contacts were more powerful than mass media in influencing voting decisions. Mass media messages reached influential citizens called "opinion leaders," who in turn passed along information to others. This process was labeled the "two-step flow" of communication.
1954	*Voting*. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) conducted panel surveys among voters in Elmira, New York, during the 1948 campaign that pitted Harry Truman against Thomas E. Dewey. The studies found that mass media influence played a small part in affecting voting decisions. Personal influence (interpersonal communication) was found to be the most important factor determining a person's voting decision.
1960	Klapper's *Effects of Mass Communication*. This classic work surveyed several hundred media effects studies and concluded that the effects of mass communication were limited.

MODERATE EFFECTS MODEL

1964	McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. Canadian Marshall McLuhan (1964) offered a new view toward mass media communications. He believed that media effects did not result from media content, but from the form of the medium itself. In other words, the effects occurred at a very base level, altering patterns of perception and thought.
1970	Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien. These researchers posited the "knowledge gap hypothesis," which states that "as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease" (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970, pp. 159–160).

(continued)

Table 3.1 Timeline (concluded)

	MODERATE EFFECTS MODEL (CONCLUDED)
1971	Report to the Surgeon General. This report found that a causal relationship existed between viewing televised violence and subsequent aggressive behavior, but "any such causal relation operates only on some children (who are predisposed to be aggressive)" and "operates only in some environmental contexts" (Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972, p. 11).
1972	McCombs and Shaw (1972). These researchers conducted the first study of the agenda-setting hypothesis, which posits that news media coverage of particular issues influences their audiences' views about what issues are important.
1973	Spiral of Silence. Noelle-Neumann's (1973) theory of rather powerful media effects suggests that people become reluctant to speak an opinion that is counter to the majority opinion in society. Mass media are instrumental in shaping impressions about public opinions that are dominant or becoming dominant.
1976	Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's Dependency Theory (1976). This theory stresses a relationship between societal systems, media systems, and audiences. It states that the degree to which audiences depend upon mass media information varies based on individual differences, the amount of disorder or conflict present in society, and the number and centrality of information functions that they serve.
	POWERFUL EFFECTS MODEL
1983	NIMH Report on Television and Behavior. This report, sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, surveyed the research on effects of TV violence and found positive correlations between TV violence viewing and subsequent aggression among children and teens. "Not all children become aggressive, of course, but the correlations between violence and aggression are positive. In magnitude, television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behavior as any other behavioral variable that has been measured" (1983, p. 28).
1984	*The Great American Values Test.* Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube's (1984b) elaborate study showed that when people are confronted with inconsistencies in their basic beliefs or values, they modify their values, attitudes, and behaviors accordingly. The effects of viewing a 30-minute television program on values were rather powerful.

years; and the identification of some sorely needed but missing classification rules that are fundamentally necessary for particular systematic inquiries that will advance overall knowledge and allow generalizations regarding media effects.

The history of mass media effects research does not move in pendulum swings from "all-powerful" to "limited" to "moderate" to "powerful" effects (again, except for the recounting of the established version). Instead, our history emphasizes the body of research that has, from the beginning, found overwhelming evidence for *significant* effects from mass media communications on audiences, based for the most part upon scientific methods and traditional statistical models. Additionally, the recounting of the history makes apparent an immediate need for clarifications, standardizations, and much additional research in the field of mass media effects (Thompson & Bryant, 2000).

19

End.

Political Agendas in Research on Effects of Violence: Historical Perspectives

In his classic work *The Politics of TV Violence*, W. D. Rowland (1983) also offers a revised version of the history of media effects research, focusing on television violence, from the standpoint of the underlying political motives of various groups with a stake in the results (e.g., the networks, politicians, the concerned public). In the 1950s, public pressure to know more about the effects of television grew particularly intense after it became apparent that the new medium was becoming an essential part of U.S. society and culture. Through the years, elected officials have responded with major inquiries whenever public concern about the ill effects of television violence was on the rise. A number of groups have particular stakes in the results of research on media violence: politicians, the general public, industry executives, reformers, and media effects researchers.

> For their part the politicians may be depicted as having found in the effects research efforts the vehicle necessary for them to project an image of concerned inquiry, while ensuring that that inquiry would force them into little, if any, legislative action. (p. 30)
>
> Building on the prior relationships with university-based research centers and joint governmental funding, the industry continued to support and promote selected research efforts while overlooking or avoiding others. Throughout this process of development, the broadcasting industry alternately supported and opposed the research enterprise, carefully cultivating—and thereby shaping—certain aspects and allowing others to wither. (pp. 29–30)
>
> The mass communication research community found the vehicle necessary for it to begin to obtain identity and ultimately to achieve legitimacy in the academy The struggles therein for supremacy among competing social sciences carried over into the effort to interpret th new medium. A liberal, optimistic, and newly retooled American social psychology proved to be a highly attractive competitor for research funds and public recognition. (p. 27)

Source: W. D. Rowland (1983). *The politics of TV violenc* Beverly Hills: Sage, pp. 27, 29–30.

Without standard lines of demarcation, media effects researchers have often made qualitative judgment calls about the power of effects. Based upon these qualitative verdicts, what emerges is a history of research that states conclusively that, yes, various kinds of mass media effects do occur, but the levels of influence have been assumed to vary from limited to rather powerful; furthermore, researchers have recognized this—mostly they have argued this—from the beginning.

The intense debate about the power or limits of media effects still rages to this day, but knowledge in the field continues to advance. For example, as is delineated in subsequent chapters, we have discovered that media effects may be cognitive (affecting thoughts or learning), behavioral (affecting behavior), or affective (affecting attitudes and emotions). Effects may be either direct or indirect, and they may be short term, long term, or delayed. They may be self-contained or cumulative. We have learned much about individual differences, psychological factors, environmental factors, and social group characteristics that cause audience members to perceive and react to media messages in specific ways. Still, much remains to be discovered, and in the final part of this section we will take a look at some of the interesting landscapes waiting to be painted by media effects researchers in the 21st century.

Precursors

Several 19th- and early 20th-century studies in psychology, sociology, and social psychology involved the examination of particular mass media effects. Some studies were philosophical in nature and offered comments on the suspected influence of mediated communications on audiences and public opinion, rather than isolating particular social effects on mass media audiences in a controlled design or a laboratory setting. The handful of experimental studies conducted usually focused on the measure of very specific physical or psychological effects from media exposure.

We cite these studies for two reasons. Because of their emphasis on mass media and their introduction of ideas that would later become the theoretical bases of particular media effects studies, they should be considered precursors to the mass media effects studies that would arise in the 20th century. Additionally, two of these precursory studies reveal that the models for suspected powerful and limited effects from mass media communications developed almost simultaneously, contrary to the established version and its representative studies.

Two articles in the *American Journal of Sociology* in the late 19th century illustrate early differing views on the power mediated communications exerted on audiences. They introduced ideas that other social scientists would explore more fully in theoretical formations and controlled experiments during the next century. It is interesting that of these two articles, the "limited effects" view preceded the "powerful effects" view. J. W. Jenks (1895) doubted the influence of newspapers of the period on the formation of public opinion, and he proposed that the individual differences of audience members modified the influential power of communications:

> One chief reason, perhaps, of the comparatively small influence of our press is that the people know the fact that the papers are run from motives of personal profits, and that the policy of the paper is largely determined by the amount to which its opinions will affect its sales and advertising . . . [W]e all of us doubtless have our opinions formed from former prejudices, we ourselves unconsciously selecting the facts and statements that fit into these former prejudices, and thus tend to conform to our own beliefs . . . It is probably not too much to say that not 25 percent of our adult voting population have deliberately made up an opinion on a public question after anything like a reasonably full and fair study of the facts in the case. Public opinion, then, seems to be a mixture of sense and nonsense, of sentiment, of prejudice, of more or less clearly defined feelings coming from influences of various kinds that have been brought to bear upon the citizens, these influences perhaps being mostly those of sentiment rather than those acting upon the judgment. (p. 160)

V. S. Yarros took the opposite view by emphasizing the power of the newspaper as an organ of public opinion; however, he bemoaned the "mendacity, sensationalism, and recklessness" (1899, p. 374) that characterized most of the newspapers of his day. He also regretted that so many editors of the day were so incompetent yet wielded so much power over an unsuspecting public:

> The editor is glad to have the support of authority, but he is not daunted or disturbed at finding recognized authority against his position. The mature opinions

> of scholars and experts he treats with a flippancy and contempt which the slightest degree of responsibility would render impossible. But the editor is irresponsible. The judicious and competent few may laugh at his ignorance and presumption, but the cheap applause of the many who mistake smartness for wit and loud assertion for knowledge affords abundant compensation. Controversy with an editor is a blunder. He always has the last word, and his space is unlimited. He is a adept at dust-throwing, question-begging, and confusing the issue. In private life he may be intellectually and morally insignificant, but his readers are imposed upon by the air of infallibility with which he treats all things, and the assurance with which he assails those who have the audacity to disagree with him. The average newspaper reader easily yields to iteration and bombast. He believes that which is said daily in print by the august and mysterious power behind the editoral "we." His sentiments and notions are formed for him by that power, and he is not even conscious of the fact. (p. 375)

The debate about the power of newspapers to either direct or reflect public opinion, which is the forerunner of the mirror/lamp metaphor of the popular culture debate of the 1950s, as well as an antecedent of the modern-day argument for and against the agenda-setting hypothesis, continues to this day. In the 20th century, articles in the *American Journal of Sociology* and elsewhere kept the debate alive before and after the publication of Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (Angell, 1941; Orton, 1927; Park, 1941; Shepard, 1909).

Several early experimental studies deserve mention as precursors to modern-day media effects, especially in the area of entertainment. These include a study of the effects of music on attention (Titchener, 1898), the effects of music on thoracic breathing (Foster & Gamble, 1906), and a study of musical enjoyment as measured by plethysmographic and pneumographic records of changes in circulation and respiration (Weld, 1912). Another early study, more theoretical than experimental, examined the nature and origin of humor as a mental process and the functions of humor (Kline, 1907).

Frances Fenton

One of the earliest (perhaps the first) studies of the effects of consumption of media violence on behavior was a doctoral dissertation by Frances Fenton. The partial and summary findings of her study appeared in two issues of the *American Journal of Sociology* in November 1910 and January 1911. Fenton pointed out that the popular notion that newspaper accounts of antisocial activities had suggestive powers on readers was well established prior to her thesis (see Fenton, 1910, pp. 345 and 350 for lists of articles). She defined *suggestion* as

> the process by which ideas, images, impulsive tendencies, or any sort of stimulus, enter from without into the composition of the neural make-up or disposition and, at times more or less in the focus of consciousness, at other times not in the focus at all, are transformed into activity by the agency of a stimulus which bears an effective though unrecognized relation or similarity to the image or neural set, and in which there is in large part, or wholly, failure to anticipate the results of the suggested act. (pp. 364–365)

Fenton argued "on the basis of the psychology of suggestion" that a direct causal relationship could be assumed between reading newspaper articles on crime and on antisocial activities and subsequent criminal or antisocial acts. In her dissertation, she identified numerous cases in which individuals were known to have committed copycat-type crimes or other antisocial acts after getting ideas from a newspaper article. Due to lack of available space, the journal articles included only summary headings to describe the nature of the cases, but these headings were said to represent

> a mass of both direct and indirect evidence of the suggestive influence of the newspaper on anti-social activity gathered from a wide range of territory and from many different sources. (pp. 557–558)

She also measured the amount of such material appearing in several large-circulation newspapers of the "yellow" variety, although she emphasized that

> this was undertaken not because the actual amount of anti-social matter in a newspaper is known to bear a direct relation to the growth of crime, or because we have any evidence to show that changes in the two bear a constant relation to one another. (p. 539)

Gabriel Tarde

At about the same time that Fenton produced her study, Gabriel Tarde was undertaking his own study of crime. In *Penal Philsophy* (1912), Tarde offered a quote from A. Corre's *Crime et suicide* regarding the effects of reading about hideous crimes such as the Jack-the-Ripper murders. Corre observed that "pernicious influence" from publicity of such crimes led to "suggesto-imitative assaults," or copycat crimes. "Infectious epidemics spread with the air or the wind; epidemics of crime follow the line of the telegraph," Corre wrote (Tarde, 1912, pp. 340–341).

SOME PIONEERS IN MEDIA EFFECTS RESEARCH

In the years following World War I, innovative scholars from various disciplines at several particular institutions of learning conducted pioneering studies to examine the fledgling domain of scientific research on the effects of mass communication. These scholars, who came from disciplines outside journalism or mass communication, hailed principally from the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and Yale University. They included (among a number of others) the following: Carl Hovland, an experimental psychologist from Yale University; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a sociologist at Columbia University; Harold Lasswell, a political scientist at the University of Chicago and, later, Yale University; Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist at the University of Iowa and, later, MIT; Samuel A. Stouffer, a sociologist from the University of Chicago; and Douglas Waples, a "professor of researches in reading" (Waples, 1942, p. xi) at the University of Chicago.[5] The importance of the first four of these scholars to the history of mass communication research has been firmly established by Wilbur Schramm prior to his death in 1987 (Rogers & Chaffee, 1997) and reiterated by Rogers (1994), and for this reason alone we greatly condense our discussion of them. We concentrate more on the final two scholars who have not received much recognition in either the standard or other revised versions of communications history, even though they made significant contributions to the media effects tradition.

✓Carl Hovland 1

1 Carl Hovland studied the effects of training films on the attitudes of American soldiers during World War II (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1965), and later directed experimental research that explored media effects on attitude change.[6] The tight design of the experiments conducted by Hovland became the model for much future research in media effects. Wilbur Schramm, a principle "mover and shaker" of mass communication research in the United States, said that Carl Hovland's body of research from 1945 to 1961 constituted "the largest single contribution . . . to this field any man has made" (Schramm, 1997, p. 104).[8] 2

3✓ Paul Lazarsfeld

Paul F. Lazarsfeld earned a PhD in mathematics, but his diverse research interests included social psychology, sociology, and mass communication. Lazarsfeld and his research institute at Columbia University pioneered research in the effects of radio and introduced the notion that interpersonal communication was an important mediating factor in certain mass media effects. In the 1940s Lazarsfeld and his colleagues examined the influences of mass media on public opinion during a presidential campaign. They found that most people were influenced primarily through interpersonal contacts rather than by what they read in newspapers and magazines or heard on the radio, although those media were found to have some influence in and of themselves.[7] Particular individuals whom the researchers called "opinion leaders," who were often rather heavy users of mass media, were found to pass along information to others in the community who looked to them for guidance. This finding led to establishment of a two-step flow model of mass communication, in which media effects were perceived as being modified by interpersonal communication about those media messages. Subsequent research expanded the two-step flow model into one of multistep flow: 4

> Later studies concluded that the influence of opinion leaders was not always "downward," as in the interpretation of news events for a less informed audience. Opinion leaders were found to communicate "upward" to the media gatekeepers (i.e., newspaper editors and radio programmers) as well as share information "sideways" with other opinion leaders. Further studies of interpersonal communication showed that an individual's personal identification with an organization, religion, or other social group has a strong influence on the type of media content selected . . . Group norms apparently provide a type of "social reality" check built on similar and shared beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and concerns that tend to form barriers against mediated messages contrary to the group's point of view. Likewise, mediated messages in agreement with the group or provided by the group are usually attended to and utilized to reinforce the status quo. (Heath & Bryant, 2000, pp. 349–350)

Harold Lasswell

7 Harold D. Lasswell made many contributions to the study of media effects, the most notable being his five-question model—"Who says what in which channel to whom with what effects?" (Lasswell, 1948)—his studies of propaganda, and his identification of three important functions that mass communications serve in society: surveillance of the environment, correlation of society's response to events in the environment, and transmission of the cultural heritage.[8] E. M. Rogers (1994) listed five major contributions that he believed Lasswell made to communication study:

> 1. His five-questions model of communication led to the emphasis in communication study on determining effects. Lasswell's contemporary, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, did even more to crystallize this focus on communication effects.
> 2. He pioneered in content analysis methods, virtually inventing the methodology of qualitative and quantitative measurement of communication messages (propaganda messages and newspaper editorials, for example).
> 3. His study of political and wartime propaganda represented an important early type of communication study. The word *propaganda* later gained a negative connotation and is not used much today, although there is even more political propaganda. Propaganda analysis has been absorbed into the general body of communication research.
> 4. He introduced Freudian psychoanalytic theory to the social sciences in America. Lasswell integrated Freudian theory with political analysis, as in his psychoanalytic study of political leaders. He applied Freud's id-ego-superego via content analysis to political science problems. In essence, he utilized intraindividual Freudian theory at the societal level.
> 5. He helped create the policy sciences, an interdisciplinary movement to integrate social science knowledge with public action. The social sciences, however, generally resisted this attempt at integration and application to public policy problems. (pp. 232–233) ⑧

Kurt Lewin

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin did pioneering studies in the dynamics of group communication. While at the University of Iowa, he conducted a famous group of communication experiments to explore the differences in persuasive power on audiences in different group conditions. In the best known of these experiments, "the sweetbreads study," groups of housewives reluctant to serve glandular meats to their families learned about the benefits of beef hearts, thymus (sweetbreads), liver, and kidneys by either attending a lecture or a discussion group. The discussion group situation proved far more effective in changing the behavior of the housewives (making them more likely to serve glandular meats to their families).

According to Rogers, Lewin's "greatest academic influence was through the brilliant students whom he trained" (1994, p. 354). One of his students, Leon Festinger, directed a study to identify communication network links among married students living in a set of apartments (Festinger, Schachter, & Bach, 1950).

Later, Festinger advanced his famous theory of cognitive dissonance, which proposes that whenever an individual's attitudes and actions are in conflict, the person will adjust cognitions in an attempt to resolve the conflict.[9]

✓ Samuel Stouffer

5

Paul Lazarsfeld dedicated to Stouffer his report of the Columbia University voting studies, "which profited from his skillful procedures of survey analysis" (1962, p. xxxi). He also cited Stouffer's influence on Carl Hovland's studies on attitudes and communications conducted at Yale University after World War II. Stouffer pioneered the use of empirial research, especially survey research, for social enquiries, and the use of precise statistical methods. He directed research for the Division of Information and Education of the United States Army during World War II.

After the war, Stouffer conducted several studies of communications media, but these studies deal more with the effectiveness of media and often are not labeled as effects studies.[10] His importance to the history of media effects research lies in his empirical expertise, his influence on early communication researchers such as Hovland and Lazarsfeld, and his insistence that communication research adhere to strict empirical standards. In a 1942 chapter called "A Sociologist Takes a Look at Communications Research," Stouffer applauded the careful methods of the investigation by R. C. Peterson and L. L. Thurstone (1933), one of the famous Payne Fund Studies that examined the effects of movies on children. 6

> A classic example of a complete experimental study in communications research was Thurstone and Peterson's study of the effects of specific motion pictures on social attitudes . . . Subsequently there have been several other studies more or less similar to Thurstone's and Peterson's, but it is surprising that there have not been more . . . This experiment demonstrated that a single movie has measurable and relatively lasting effects on children—but did anybody doubt that? Why spend a lot of money and time to demonstrate the obvious? There are two answers to this. In the first place, Thurstone showed that the direction of the effect (whether toward or against a given set of values) was not always predictable on a common-sense basis. A film glorifying a gambler had the unpredicted effect of making children feel more than ever that gambling was an evil. In the second place, Thurstone and Peterson were able to prove that effects of single films lasted over a long period of time and also that certain combinations of films had mutually reinforcing effects. It is true that they left hundreds of interesting questions unanswered. What types of children were affected most? What types of scenes within a given picture had the most effect? Were there differences in the kind of effect which would require a multidimensional rather than unidimensional attitude continuum for description? Such questions call for further research, and the Thurstone-Peterson method shows a way of answering them. (pp. 138–141)

Stouffer emphasized the importance of controlling for variables such as educational status, age, or other differences among audiences that could account for differences between the groups tested—variables that might mediate media effects. When the researcher does not control for confounding variables, he warned, "we can only hope and pray that we are controlling all the factors which would tend to differentiate" (p. 139) the control and experimental groups.

Finally, Stouffer's empirical expertise and prescience allowed him to identify problems in 1942 that continue to plague communication researchers in the 21st century—namely, the accurate measure of cumulative effects of mass media communications:

> It is a difficult matter to design an experiment which will measure the cumulative effect of, say, a year's exposure to a given medium of communication . . . The difficulty of evaluating cumulative effects of many small stimuli in the field of communications is all the more serious because there is good basis for the belief that it is in just this way that communications have their principal effect. One soft-drink ad may not invite the pause that refreshes, but hundreds, and even thousands of them, confronting the consumer in as many different social situations evidently help sell the product. (pp. 141–142)

Douglas Waples

Douglas Waples was a professor in the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago. His significance to modern media effects research has been ignored by the standard history, but in fact it may be rather substantial. In 1940, at the same time that Lazarsfeld was conducting radio studies at Columbia University, Waples, Bernard Berelson, and F. R. Bradshaw published their work on the effects of print media, *What Reading Does to People*. The work revealed much about print media effects on attitude change.

> The studies have repeatedly shown that reading can change attitudes. They have also shown that certain reader traits and certain content elements will modify the effect of the reading. For example, the effects are modified by differences in what the readers already know about the subject. The less the reader knows about the complexities of and objections to issues discussed in the text, the greater the change in attitude will be. (pp. 108–109)

More significantly, Waples offered the earliest published version of the most famous statement about the process of communication in the history of effects research, and he added an important phrase that the later versions neglected. "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" (Lasswell, 1948, p. 37) has always been credited to Lasswell in the standard—and other revised—histories of communication research. Joseph Klapper (1960) indicated the statement originated with Lasswell in 1946 (Smith, Lasswell, & Casey, 1946), but an article by Waples in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1942 begins with the following quotation: "*Who* communicates *what* to *whom* by *what medium*, under *what conditions*, and with *what effects?*" (p. 907). Rogers (1994) credited the "who says what" statement to Lasswell, spoken during a Rockefeller Communication Seminar in 1940, a conference also attended by Waples, but the quote is not recorded in the rather detailed conference papers.[11] D. Lerner and L. M. Nelson (1977) said that Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* "set forth the dominant paradigm" (p. 1) of the five-question line, but nothing resembling the "who says what" statement appears in that text. As for the Waples quote, whether he was quoting Lasswell, himself, or someone else is unclear; neither scholar provided a citation for the words, either in 1942 or 1948.

The identity of the speaker is less important than the substance of the Waples' quote; namely, the inclusion of the "under what conditions" phrase. This phrase, absent from any of the published Lasswell versions, adds a sophistication to the process that is essential to the sorting out of media effects at their various levels. Waples wrote the following after the quote:

> Reliable answers to this complex question at regular time intervals would greatly clarify the process of social change via communications and would simplify predictions of impending changes. (1942, p. 907)

INTEREST IN MEDIA EFFECTS CONTINUES

The number of scholars drawn to communication inquiry continued to increase throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The innovative studies and the innovators had much influence on the "founder" of the disciplinary approach to mass communication study, Wilbur Schramm (Rogers, 1994).

Wilbur Schramm

Though Schramm did not specialize exclusively in media effects (one of his principal areas of interest was in international communication and the role of mass communication in developing third-world nations), his importance must not be overlooked due to his role as consolidator and legitimizer of mass communication study—including media effects.

> Schramm was the first professor of communication so-designated; his was the first communication research institute and the first doctoral program awarding degrees in communication; and Schramm presided over the first academic unit (a "division") of communication in the world. (Rogers & Chaffee, 1997, p. 7)

Schramm initiated the first PhD program in mass communication in 1943, when he served as director of the journalism school at the University of Iowa. Three years later, he had founded the Bureau of Audience Research at Iowa, one of several communication research institutes that sprang to life during the 1940s and 1950s. These institutes were patterned somewhat after Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia.

Mediating Factors

During these decades, researchers began to focus experiments on the different reactions of individuals to the same media presentations. Rather than viewing audiences as passive victims who could be manipulated by mass media messages, scholars soon realized that individual differences and environmental factors were important mediators in the process of mass media effects.

> Experiments in behaviorism, motivation, persuasion, and conditioning led researchers to examine the processes of habit formation and learning. Differences among individual personality traits and psychological organization were found to be affected by the social environment in which people were raised. Moreover, studies in human perception showed that an individual's values, needs, beliefs, and attitudes were instrumental in determining how stimuli are selected from the environment and the way meaning is attributed to those stimuli within an individual's frame of reference. (Heath & Bryant, 2000, p. 347)

Studies with theoretical bases in psychology and sociology found that audience members selectively attended to media messages, depending upon their predispositions, interests, attitudes, social category, and a number of other factors. Similar variables were found to influence an individual's perception of a media message and what the person remembered about the message. These concepts were later defined as selective exposure, selective perception, selective retention, and the social categories perspective, which posits that people with similar demographic characteristics react similarly to media messages.

ATTEMPTS TO GENERALIZE ABOUT EFFECTS

Bernard Berelson

Bernard Berelson, another pioneer in media effects research, was a colleague of Waples at the University of Chicago, where Berelson served as dean of the Library School, and later a colleague of Lazarsfeld's at Columbia University and the Bureau for Applied Social Research. He coauthored with Lazarsfeld the classic voting study, *The People's Choice*.

Berelson was perhaps the first researcher to attempt to make umbrella generalizations about mass communication effects when he suggested the following formulation for research. His concern was for the influence of communication effects on public opinion, rather than media effects overall, yet his formulation could be applied to other research in media effects:

> Some kinds of *communication* on some kinds of *issues*, brought to the attention of some kinds of *people* under some kinds of *conditions*, have some kinds of *effects*. This formulation identifies five central factors (or rather groups of factors) which are involved in the process, and it is the interrelationship of these variables which represents the subject matter of theory in this field. At present, students can fill out only part of the total picture—a small part—but the development of major variables and the formulation of hypotheses and generalizations concerning them are steps in the right direction. (1948, p. 172)

Several years later Berelson noted the many complex findings that had emerged from research studies that would have to be considered in the development of any overarching theory of mass communication effects:

> The effects of communication are many and diverse. They may be short-range or long-run. They may be manifest or latent. They may be strong or weak. They may derive from any number of aspects of the communication content. They

> may be considered as psychological or political or economic or sociological. They may operate upon opinions, values, information levels, skills, taste, behavior . . . Because of the variety and the complexity of the effects of communications, this topic probably represents the most neglected area in communication research. (Berelson & Janowitz, 1950, p. 395)

Joseph Klapper

Ten years later, one of Lazarsfeld's students, Joseph Klapper, produced his still valuable and classic work, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (1960). In this book, Klapper offered several overarching generalizations "in their bare bones" (p. 7) about the effects of mass media messages. Unfortunately, through the course of history, the ideas in Klapper's book have been greatly reduced to a "limited effects" notion that encouraged a "phenomenistic approach" that would identify mediating factors involved in effects, even though Klapper warned repeatedly about the grave danger in "the tendency to go overboard in blindly minimizing the effects and potentialities of mass communications" (p. 252).

Klapper's generalizations have usually been overlooked or quoted only in partial form. In most cases, only the first two generalizations have been reproduced—the two that, not surprisingly, emphasize the many studies that show limited or indirect effects of media communications. Generalizations 3, 4, and 5—those that emphasize that direct effects from media communications are indeed possible—have been ignored by the standard history. For this reason, we include all five generalizations in Figure 3.2.

FIGURE 3.2. Klapper's Generalizations

1. Mass communication *ordinarily* does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.
2. These mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions. Regardless of the condition in question—be it the vote intentions of audience members, their tendency toward or away from delinquent behavior, or their general orientation toward life and its problems—and regardless of whether the effect in question be social or individual, the media are more likely to reinforce than to change.
3. On such occasions as mass communication does function in the service of change, one of two conditions is likely to exist. Either:
   a. The mediating factors will be found to be inoperative and the effect of the media will be found to be direct; or
   b. The mediating factors, which normally favor reinforcement, will be found to be impelling toward change.
4. There are certain residual situations in which mass communication seems to produce direct effects, or directly and of itself to serve certain psychophysical functions.
5. The efficacy of mass communication, either as a contributory agent or as an agent of direct effect, is affected by various aspects of the media and communications themselves or of the communication situation, including, for example, aspects of textual organization, the nature of the source and medium, the existing climate of public opinion, and the like.

THE 1970S AND BE

In the 1970s, the decade following the appearance of Klapper's (1960) book, psychological theories arose that had strong implications for the understanding of mass media effects. The theories of Albert Bandura (1973; 1991)—social learning theory and, later, social cognitive theory—opened up alternative lines of inquiry for communication researchers.[12] Rather than focus primarily on mass communication's effects upon attitude change, scholars in the 1970s and beyond began for the most part to examine more complex behavioral responses, changes in cognitive patterns, and media effects on learning and knowledge (Becker, McCombs, & McLeod, 1975; Chaffee, 1977; Clarke & Kline, 1974). Many of the most important of these findings are discussed throughout the remainder of this text.

Social learning theory explains how viewers learn and model behaviors they see in the mass media, based upon their environmental and cognitive predispositions. It began to serve as the basis for a bevy of research that examined the effects, especially among children, of viewing violence on film and television, the latter medium fast coming into dominance.

In the years since the 1960s, as the field of mass communication research continued to blossom and attract more scholars interested specifically in media effects, other areas of media effects research were either born or developed into maturity. These included cultivation analysis and other sociological procedures that attempt to measure the cumulative effects of mass communication, research to examine the agenda-setting hypothesis that mass media are responsible for bringing public awareness to particular issues, research to explore the reasons why audience members used particular mass media, and the many other areas of media effects.

FINAL POINTS OF CONTENTION WITH THE STANDARD HISTORY

As mentioned previously, we take issue with several aspects of the established history and, in reviewing the history, we notice the necessity for clarifications, standardizations, and additional research. In this section we identify those points of contention, and in the next section we suggest what we hope will be a productive path for media effects research in the 21st century.

Studies that indicate "limited" and "powerful" effects can be identified in every period of the history of media effects research. Although a number of studies and works during the bullet theory years did indicate that "powerful" media effects were possible (Annis & Meier, 1934; Britt & Menefee, 1939; Bruntz, 1938; Cantril, Gaudet, & Herzog, 1940; Lasswell, 1927), others found that mass media had only limited effects on their audiences. In 1926, for example, G. A. Lundberg found only a slight relationship between the opinions of Seattle residents on four public issues and on stands taken by the newspaper. He concluded that

> A modern commercial newspaper has little direct influence on the opinions of its readers on public questions. It probably seeks to discover and reflect that opinion rather than to make it. (p. 712).

The following year, an essay in the *American Journal of Sociology*, titled "The Limited Social Effect of Radio Broadcasting," questioned the powerful effects of radio on society. M. D. Beuick (1927) believed the effects of the medium would be rather limited, and that its greatest benefits would be to isolated individuals. We previously referred to the study by Waples and his associates on the effects of print media on public opinion and the "limited effects" conclusions they reached. These studies reveal that the limited effects idea was well established long before the standard history recognized its existence.

The same inconsistencies can be found during the "limited effects" years of communication research and beyond (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1942/1944; Lerner, 1949; Merton, 1946); furthermore, some of the major studies in the standard history contain mixed findings on the power of media communications, but these findings have been lost beneath the all-encompassing rubrics of powerful or limited effects models. For example, even though Hovland's experiments showed that the army films did not raise the motivational level of the troops, they *did* reveal significant effects in the cognitive dimension—soldiers learned a good deal of factual information by viewing the film (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1965). Also, in an even more important example previously reviewed, the findings of Klapper's *The Effects of Mass Communication* (1960) have generally been reduced to supporting only a limited- or indirect-effects scenario, yet Klapper clearly indicated that instances of direct effects were apparent from some of the research findings he reviewed, and he warned of the dangers of underestimating the power of media communications on audiences.

FUTURE OF EFFECTS RESEARCH

The challenges for media effects of the 21st century are great, but they will eventually be met if researchers continue to approach the problems with "tantalized fascination" (Lazarsfeld, 1949, p. 1). First and foremost, if we are to continue to describe media effects as either powerful, moderate, or limited, we must come up with standard, empirical lines of demarcation to separate the levels. In his influential article on "The Myth of Massive Media Impact," W. J. McGuire (1986) based his definition of small effects sizes on the percentage of variance accounted for by several dependent variables of effects; certainly statistical effect sizes would be one basis for delineating the standards. McGuire argued that powerful media effects were exaggerated, based on review of a handful of important studies in a variety of areas.

> A formidable proportion of the published studies (and presumably an even higher proportion of the unpublished studies) have failed to show overall effects sizable enough even to reach the conventionally accepted .05 level of statistical significance. Some respectable studies in several of the dozen impact areas reviewed . . . do have impacts significant at the .05 level, but even these tend to have very small effect sizes, accounting for no more than 2 or 3% of the variance in dependent variables . . . (p. 177)

Although we respect the forcefulness of McGuire's argument, we must point out that a number of studies have shown media effects significant at not only the .05 level, but at the .01 and the .001 level and beyond, and with effects sizes that account for substantial amounts of the variance (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994). Moreover, meta-analyses (statistical studies that make generalizations about effects by examining and comparing findings from many different completed research studies) of media effects reveal relatively robust effects sizes within entire genres of media effects investigations and more modest effect sizes associated with other genres (Carveth & Bryant, in press). Other studies, although recording effects in the small-to-moderate range, gain significance when one considers the vast sizes of media audiences (Andison, 1977; Wood, Wong, & Cachere, 1991). Neither these studies nor their robust effects are "mythical," but in order to classify them as "powerful" effects, a precise classification schema must first be established.

In another example, Hovland (1959) described the divergence in results from correlational studies and experimental studies on attitude change from exposure to mass communication in simple terms of *percentages of people found to be affected*. This represents another method that could be used to classify the appropriate types of studies into the various levels.

> Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet . . . estimate that the political positions of only about 5 percent of their respondents were changed by the election campaign, and they are inclined to attribute even this small amount of change more to personal influence than to the mass media . . . Research using experimental procedures, on the other hand, indicates the possibility of considerable modifiability of attitudes through exposure to communication. In both Klapper's survey (1949) and in my chapter in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Hovland, 1954) a number of experimental studies are discussed in which the opinions of a third to a half or more of the audience are changed. (p. 440)

Another challenge for media effects researchers will be to identify the circumstances, conditions, or variables that account for media effects at all their various levels and forms and offer generalizations—perhaps very complex ones, even typologies of effects—that will explain the complex phenomenon of mass media effects. These are the theoretical generalizations that will advance understanding in the field of media effects. To advance such theories, communication scholars will need to use either quantitative meta-analysis techniques (when feasible) or more qualitative, intensive examination of studies in the different areas of effects research (such as that employed by Klapper), grouping the studies on the basis of their effects levels (based upon the to-be-established schema or on other theoretical criteria).

In 1960 Klapper insisted that the time for media effects generalizations had arrived. Forty years after Klapper's insistence, we can say that we know much more about the effects of media communications, but precise, blanket generalizations remain elusive, owing to the complex nature of the subject. One obvious omission in the effects literature to date is the conspicuous absence of a "no-effects model." Academic journals are severely biased toward publishing studies that show the occurrence of statistically significant media effects. Studies that find no significant effects do not normally appear—a 1944 study by Mott was a notable exception. Most studies examine a number of factors or variables, and statistically significant relationships are usually found for some but not others. No scholar has yet sifted through the thousands of effects studies to identify those particular variables or instances—reported in many studies—

when no noticable effects occurred. The statistically significant results are the ones that attract the most attention, yet the instances when media effects do not occur should be of as much interest to communication scholars as the instances when effects do occur—the no-effects scenario is, thus far, a missing piece of the effects puzzle.[13]

In recent years, a research technique known as meta-analysis has been useful in making generalizations about the different genres of media effects. For example, Paik and Comstock (1994) conducted a major review of studies on the effects of television violence and produced a useful meta-analysis by partitioning variables (e.g., viewer attributes and types of antisocial behavior) in their research design. Meta-analysis involves finding common statistical ground among a large number of same-genre studies and then offering summary findings based on all the available evidence. Throughout this book, we include discoveries from recent meta-analyses in the various types of effects research.

Meta-analyses may be the best hope of producing blanket generalizations similar to those proposed by Klapper. If such generalizations are indeed possible, they would need to sufficiently explain the circumstances and conditions necessary for powerful or limited, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term, cumulative, cognitive, affective, or behavioral effects from mass media communications and, if possible, the factors present in a no-effects scenario. The enormity of the task stands apparent when one realizes that Klapper (1960) seems to be the only scholar in the history of media effects research who has even attempted to make such blanket generalizations on media effects across the board. Klapper offered a good starting point for those scholars of the 21st century brave enough to tackle the job of sorting through and studying the thousands of media effects studies that have been conducted through the years.

Klapper emphasized that he was "in no way committed to these particular generalizations, let alone to the exact form in which they here appear" (p. 9). He hoped that additional thought and research on the subject would "modify and perhaps annihilate the schema," and pointed out that he was "far less concerned with insuring the viability of these generalizations" than with "indicating that the time for generalization is at hand" (p. 9). "For certainly these particular generalizations do not usher in the millennium. They are imperfect and underdeveloped, they are inadequate in scope, and in some senses they are dangerous" (p. 251). It seems that, contrary to Klapper's view, his generalizations *do* usher us into the millennium. Forty years after Klapper insisted that generalizations needed to be made, the challenge remains unmet. It is our hope that this text will pique the interest of future media effects scholars who will meet the challenge of developing the long-awaited, overarching theory of media effects.

SUMMARY

The "established" history of media effects research offers a linear model of thought about the relative power of mass media messages on their audiences. In the years following World War I, scholars and the public believed that media possessed great power to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals in their audiences. This was called the "hypodermic-needle" theory or "bullet" theory of media influence. This model remained dominant until after the Depression when empirical studies indicated that the effects from mass media were not as powerful as originally thought. Studies by Lazarsfeld and Hovland indicated that mass media had only limited effects on individuals in their audiences. The limited effects model became firmly established in 1960 with the publication of Joseph Klapper's *The Effects of Mass Communication*. In the decades that followed, certain research findings and new theories did not fit into the limited effects model; therefore, the standard history was amended to include new studies that indicated that moderate to powerful media effects were indeed possible.

The standard scenario of "all-powerful effects to limited effects to moderate effects to powerful effects" provided a simple and convenient history of the field of media effects research. Unfortunately, the established history is neither satisfying nor accurate.

Our revised history of mass media effects research differs from the established version in the following: the acknowledgment of early, precursory media effects studies by psychologists, sociologists, and other investigators; the reevaluation of summary findings from some of the major studies; the inclusion of particular studies through the years that did not fit neatly into the "standard" scenario; the importance attributed to particular scholars; the emphasis on the advances in effects research through the years; and the identification of some sorely needed but still missing operational definitions for studies that will advance overall knowledge and allow generalizations regarding media effects.

This revised history emphasizes a body of research that has, from the beginning, found overwhelming evidence for significant effects from mass media communications on audiences, based for the most part upon scientific methods applying conventional statistical techniques. The history does not move in pendulum swings, due to the nonexistence of operational definitions to indicate the precise empirical ranges of "limited," or "moderate," or "powerful" effects. This history makes apparent the dire need for such operational definitions.

Our revised history acknowledges years of qualitative judgment calls on the part of researchers that label media effects in ranges from limited to powerful. It emphasizes that the debate about the relative power of mass media effects has been active since research on the subject began and remains an issue to this date. It also recognizes considerable advances in knowledge about media effects that have occurred through the years due to empirical investigations. Findings have indicated that media effects may be either cognitive (affecting thoughts or learning), behavioral (affecting behavior), or affective (affecting attitudes and emotions), and that the effects may be either direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, intermittent (e.g., sleeper effects), or cumulative. Findings have also revealed that individual differences, psychological factors, environmental factors, and social group characteristics cause audience members to perceive and react to media messages in specific ways.

In the future, media effects researchers will be challenged to come up with standard, empirical lines of demarcation that will classify effects as either powerful, moderate, or limited. Another challenge will be to identify the circumstances, conditions, or variables that account for media effects at their various levels and forms and make generalizations to explain the complex phenomenon of mass media effects. These generalizations should explain circumstances and conditions necessary for powerful or limited, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term, cumulative, cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects from mass media communications and, if possible, the factors present in a "no-effects" scenario. Despite these needs, we have learned a great deal about media effects through the years. Still, 40 years after Klapper's insistence that the time for media effects generalizations had arrived, we remain dependent upon his five generalizations for any overarching theory of media effects.

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