**Hypodermic Needle Theory**

**1920’s – 1940’s – Various Theorists**

A linear communication theory which suggests that the media has a direct and powerful influence on audiences, like being injected with a hypodermic needle. This theory considers only one option. That the audience are passive and what they see they will act out or believe. The majority of Copy Cat murders that take place relate heavily to this theory. You could argue that when a Copy Cat murder takes places, the predator watches, hears or plays something and then goes and acts out the crime. Although many people still talk about the media in this way, this theory is disregarded as an out-dated way of thinking about media influence. Audiences are more active than this theory suggests.

The Hypodermic Needle Theory suggests that the media has a direct and powerful influence on audiences. It was developed in the 1920s and 1930s after researchers observed the effect of propaganda during World War I. It became the dominant way of thinking about media influence during the subsequent decades. The Hypodermic Needle theory is a linear communication theory which suggests that a media message is injected directly into the brain of a passive, homogenous audience. This theory suggests that media texts are closed and audiences are influenced in the same way. The Hypodermic Needle Theory is no longer accepted by media theorists as a valid explanation of communication and media influence. Indeed, some dispute whether early media theorists gave the idea serious attention. In their book An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research, Michael Salwen and Don Stacks write: “The hypodermic-needle model dominated until the 1940s. As discussed earlier, although there is some question whether such a model influenced scholarly research, anyone reading pre-World War II popular literature will see that it underlay much popular thinking about the mass media and their consequences.” Although the Hypodermic Needle Theory has been abandoned by most media theorists, it continues to influence mainstream discourse about the influence of the mass media. People believe that the mass media can have a powerful effect on people and parents continue to worry about the effect of television and violent video games