Klapper Reinforcement or Limited Effects Theory

1. 1. J.T. Klapper Phenomenistic Theory (1960)
2. [2.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-2-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)In 1960 Joseph Klapper at Colombia University was concerned that average people exaggerated the power of media. He introduced what he called PHENOMENISTIC THEORY With this theory he argued that media rarely have any DIRECT effects and are relatively powerless when compared with other social and psychological factors such as social status, group membership, strongly held attitudes, education and so forth.
3. [3.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-3-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)His theory is often referred to now as “reinforcement” theory because a key assertion is that the primary influence of media is to reinforce (not change) existing attitudes and behaviours. Instead of disrupting society and creating unexpected social change, media generally serve as agents of the status quo, giving people more reasons to go on believing and acting as they already do. He argued that there simply are too many barriers to media influence for drastic changes to occur except under very unusual circumstances.
4. [4.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-4-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)The main generalisation of Klapper’s theory is that… 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.
5. [5.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-5-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)The second generalisation is that… These mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not as the sole cause in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions. Regardless of the condition in question and regardless of whether the effect in question, be social or individual, the media are more likely to reinforce than to change.
6. [6.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-6-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Another generalisation made by Klapper’s theory is that… When (in certain exceptional cases) mass communication does function in the service of change , one of the two following conditions is likely to exist: o The mediating factors will be found to be inoperative and the effect of the media will be found to be direct; or o The mediating factors, which normally favour reinforcement, will be found to be impelling toward change.
7. [7.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-7-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Klapper did not exclude that media could have direct effects on audience “There are certain residual situations in which mass communication seems to produce direct effects, or directly and of itself to serve certain psychophysical functions”.
8. [8.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-8-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Criticism The main criticism towards the theory argue that its postulates are outdated due to: • the more pervasive nature of media today as compared to the 1960s (with people’s exposure to media considerably increased) • the decreased importance of the “mediating factors/influences” as the church, the family and the school began to lose their powerful position in people's socialization and therefore in limiting media effects
9. [9.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-9-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)What are the implications of Kappler’s phenomenistic approach for media research? • Empirical social research methods can be used to generate theory through an inductive research process. • Exploratory, descriptive research is expected to produce empirical generalizations that can later be combined to form middle-range theories. • Eventually, middle-range notions can be combined to create broad, powerful social theories that are firmly grounded in empirical facts.
10. [10.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-10-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Empirical Research so far seems to confirm Klapper’s generalisations • The role of mass media in society is limited; media primarily reinforce existing social trends and only rarely initiate social change. • The media will cause change only if the many barriers to their influence are broken down by highly unusual circumstances. • The empirical mass communication research supported this assumption. In study after study, little evidence of strong media influence was found.
11. [11.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-11-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Influence on media research The “limited effects” paradigm prioritized empirical observation and downgraded highly speculative forms of theory construction. It demonstrated the practicality and utility of empirical research and inspired development of a broad range of innovative methods of data collection as well as new techniques for data analysis. These empirical techniques have proved to be powerful and useful for specific purposes. Had the paradigm not becoming dominant, scientists might not have devoted the time and resources necessary to develop these techniques
12. [12.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-12-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)Contributions of the Limited Effects Paradigm The limited effects paradigm effectively replaced mass society theory as the dominant perspective on media, lessening unjustified fears about massive, uncontrollable media effects. This benefited media practitioners and most importantly, it helped ease pressures for direct government censorship of media and permitted media practitioners to implement useful forms of self-censorship.
13. [13.](https://image.slidesharecdn.com/klappertheory-130823130158-phpapp01/95/klapper-reinforcement-or-limited-effects-theory-13-638.jpg?cb=1378005130)References and further links Klapper J.T. (1960) The effect of Mass Communication, Free Press http://www.zeepedia.com/read.php?klappers\_phenomensitic\_theory\_klappers\_ generalizations\_criticism\_theories\_of\_communication&b=81&c=13 http://prezi.com/tebqbbaojbrr/joseph-kappler-phenomenistic-approach/