

Media and Society: 3

Defining 'mass media'

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Outline

- Medium/Media?
- What is 'the media' made of?
- Areas of media study
- Why MASS media?
- 4 Big Themes

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'Medium' / 'media'

- an agency or means of doing something: eg. *their primitive valuables acted as a medium of exchange.*
- a means by which something is communicated or expressed
- the intervening substance through which sensory impressions are conveyed or physical forces are transmitted: *radio communication needs no physical medium between the two stations.*
- the material or form used by an artist, composer, or writer

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The 'media'

Latin *medius* –
'something in-between other things'

What 'things' are the mass media 'in-between'?

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Elements of the mass media

- People
- Companies
- Audiences
- Professional groups
- *Technologies*
- *'Texts' (all types of content)*

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Elements of the mass media

Perhaps more simply (abstractly?)

- **Technologies**
 - Broadcasting, 'internet', printing, 'infrastructure' etc
- **Organisations/Institutions**
 - TV companies, trade unions, governments, regulators etc
- **Symbols**
 - Words, images and sounds as media content

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Models of Communication

'Communication' takes many forms

- Personal, 'mechanical', sub-conscious(?), mass
- 'General' models vs 'specific' models

There are LOTS of models of communication of varying levels of abstraction

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Models of Communication: Lasswell

- "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?"
 - WHO says
 - WHAT
 - in which CHANNEL
 - to WHOM
 - with what EFFECT?

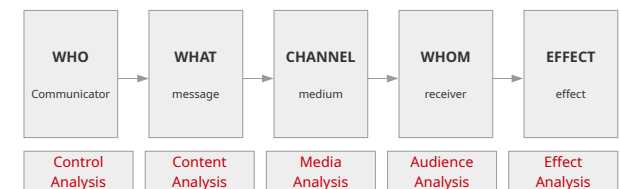


Harold Lasswell, 1902-78

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Lasswell's Model

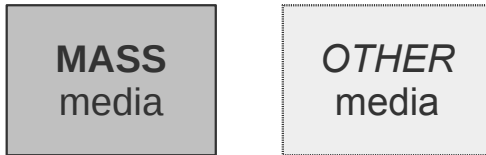
- Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?



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Why 'mass' media?

- Of all the different types of communication media we distinguish between 'mass' media and others.



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What is a/the 'mass'?

- **Group:** members know each other, share identity, stable relations over time
- **Crowd:** shared locality, temporary, event-based
- **Public:** larger, dispersed, enduring, issue-based
- **Mass:** very large, widely dispersed, anonymous, passive, receptive, unstructured

H.Blumer, *The Mass Audience*, 1939

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Attitudes to the 'mass'

- **Positive implications**
 - Genuinely 'popular'
 - Solidarity
 - Strength
 - Cooperation



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Attitudes to the 'mass'

- **Pejorative implications**
 - Uneducated
 - Ignorant
 - Potentially irrational
 - Unruly
 - Perhaps violent!



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Mass Media / Communication

- A type of communication designed specifically to reach a/the "mass"
- Professional / organisational "sender"
- Impersonal / distant relationship
- Senders have 'authority'
- Communication flows mainly in one direction

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Big Themes in Mass Media Research

- Media Power
- Social Integration
- Mass Information
- Media as 'problem'

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Media Power

- Propaganda
- Entertainment
- Public opinion



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Albert Speer on Hitler

"Hitler's dictatorship differed in one fundamental point from all its predecessors in history. His was the first dictatorship [...] which made the complete use of all technical means for domination of its own country. **Through technical devices like the radio and loudspeaker, 80 million people were deprived of independent thought.** It was thereby possible to subject them to the will of one man."

A. Speer, Minister for Armaments and War Production, Nuremberg Trials, 1946

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V.I.Lenin



Iskra (Spark) 1900-1905



Pravda (Truth)

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V.I. Lenin on newspapers

- The necessity to concentrate all forces on establishing a regularly appearing and regularly delivered organ [newspaper] ...
- Learn, propagandise, organise – and the pivot of this activity can and must be only **the organ of the party**

V.I. Lenin, 'Our Immediate Task' (*Rabochaya Gazeta*) 1899

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Social Cohesion

- Industrialisation
- Urbanisation
 - 1900: 13%
 - 1950: 29%
 - [2030: >60%]



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Urbanisation



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Urbanisation: new lives, new problems

- Crime and immorality
- Loneliness, alienation
- Mass media it was thought could contribute to...
 - A new type of **social cohesion** ('mass culture')
 - Supporting democratic **mass politics**

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Mass information

- Growth of popular education
- Spread of literacy / libraries
- Increasing enfranchisement (right to vote)
 - Gradual spread of adult male suffrage 1850s -1920s
 - Women's suffrage: NZ 1893, Norway 1913, UK 1928, Japan 1945

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"Inform, educate, entertain"

- The BBC's mission:
 - "To enrich people's lives with programmes and services that **inform, educate and entertain.**"
- **Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)**



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Media as a 'problem'

- If in doubt, blame it on the mass media!
- The mass media can be held responsible for anything that seems to be wrong with society.



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Blaming the media...

- Attacks on Traffic Wardens in the UK...

"Tabloid spleen blamed for rise in attacks on traffic wardens"

"One motorist, on receiving a ticket, struck the warden in the face with a baseball bat. Other drivers are recorded as using their cars as battering rams. **NCP believes there is a direct link between inflammatory media reports about the parking control regime in London and incidents of abuse and assault.**"

Hugh Muir, The Guardian, Monday 7 June 2004 02.10 BST



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Summary: 1

- Different types of communication require different models
- Mass communication (by the mass media) has its own models
- Models direct our attention, allow us to set limits

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Summary: 2

- The growth of the mass media was part of larger changes in many societies
- The forms of the mass media change with 'history'
- "The mass media has a special role" (public service)
- Concerns over 'media power' are common
- Intimate link with modern society

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ENDS

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