

The Nature of Communication between Humans
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IN 1952 I WROTE A PAPER entitled "How Communication Works" which was published as the first chapter of the first edition of this book. Now, after eighteen years during which a great deal has happened in communication study, it seems fitting to take another look at that topic.

More than half of all the research ever conducted on human communication has become available only in the last eighteen years. Most of the organizations now engaged primarily in communication research are less than eighteen years old. Most of the great laboratories for studying human communication—election campaigns, the effects of television, diffusion of information and adoption of new practices, information storage and retrieval, and the use of mass media in economic and social development, to name a few of them—have been worked intensively only in the last eighteen years. Since 1952 there has been added to our libraries much of the work of Carl Hovland and his associates in the Yale study of communication and attitude change; Charles Osgood and his associates at Illinois, on the empirical study of meaning; Paul Lazarsfeld and his associates at Columbia, on the study of interpersonal as related to mass communication; Festinger, Katz, McGuire, and others on dissonance theory, consistency theory, and other psychological processes related to communication; Pool, Deutsch, Davison, and

So many people have contributed criticism and helpful suggestions to this paper that it would be infeasible to thank them all by name. I should like to mention especially, however, the detailed and insightful criticism given by my colleague and former student, Thomas Cook, of Northwestern University. He is responsible for many of the good things in the paper, and for none of the bad ones.

1 Wilbur Schramm, "How Communication Works," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954) pp. 326.

others: 0) international communication; Newcomb, Asch, Sherif, Leavitt, Bavelas, and others on groups and group processes as related to communications; Miller, Cherry, and others, applying Claude Shannon's mathematical theory of communication to human communication problems; Berelson, Holsti, and others on content analysis; Miller and others on System theory; Carter on Orientation; Chomsky and others on language; May, Lumsdaine, and others on learning from the mass media.² During this time communication study has moved so fast that it has seldom stood still for its portrait, but with so much activity and so many able scholars in the field it would be strange if the picture in 1970 were precisely the same as in

1952.

The difficulty in summing up a field like human communication. Examples of the literature referred to are: C. I. Hovland, I. Janis, and H.

Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); C. I. Hovland, "The Effects of the Mass Media of Communication," in G. Lindzey, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954); C. I. Hovland and M. J. Rosenberg, *Attitude Organization and Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); C. E. Osgood, G. Suci, and P. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957); E. Katz and P. F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955); L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (New York: Harper, 1957); D. Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24 (1961): 113-204; W. McGuire, "Attitudes and Opinions," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (in press); T. Newcomb, "Attitude Development as a Function of Reference Groups: The Bennington Study," in Maccoby, Newman, and Hartley, eds., *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), pp. 265-75; S. E. Asch, "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," *ibid.*, pp. 174-83; M. Sherif, "Group Influences upon the Formation of Norms and Attitudes," *ibid.*, pp. 219-25; H. Leavitt, "Some Effects of Certain Communication Patterns of Group Performance," *ibid.*, pp. 546-50; G. A. Miller, *Language and Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951); C. Cherry, *On Human Communication* (Cambridge, Mass.: Technological Press and Wiley, 1957); C. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949); B. Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952); O. Holsti, "Content Analysis," in Lindzey and Aronson, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 596-692; M. May and A. A. Lumsdaine, *Learning from Films* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958); B. Berelson, P. F. Lazarsfeld, and W. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); H. Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim, and P. Yince, *Television and the Child* (London: Oxford, 1958); D. Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958).

Q. cation is that it has no land that is exclusively its own. Communication is the fundamental social process. This was recognized many years ago by Edward Sapir, when he wrote an article, for the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, that is still fresh and insightful.

It is obvious that for the building up of society, its units and subdivisions, the understandings which prevail between its members, some processes of communication are needed. While we often speak of society as though it were a static structure defined by tradition, it is, in the more ultimate sense, nothing of the kind, but a highly intricate network of partial or complete understandings between the members of organizational units of every degree of size and complexity, ranging from a pair of lovers or a family to a league

of nations or that ever increasing portion of humanity which can be reached by the press, through all its transnational ramifications. It is only apparently a static sum of social institutions; actually, it is being reanimated or creatively affirmed from day to day by particular acts of a communicative nature which obtain among individuals participating in it. Thus the Republican party cannot be said to exist as such, but only to the extent that its tradition is being constantly added to and upheld by such simple acts of communication as [hat John Doe votes the Republican ticket, thereby communicating a certain kind of message, or [hat a half dozen individuals meet at a certain time or place, formally or informally, in order to communicate ideas to one another and eventually to decide what points of national interest, real or supposed, are to be allowed to come up many months later for discussion in a gathering of members of [he party. The Republican party as a historical entity is merely abstracted from thousands upon thousands of such single acts of communication, which have in common certain persistent features of reference. If we extend this example into every conceivable field in which communication has a place we soon realize that every cultural pattern and every single act of social behavior involve communication in either an explicit or implicit sense³.

³ E. Sapir, "Communication," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 15 vols., 1st ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1930-35).

Thus every discipline concerned with human society and human behavior must necessarily be concerned with communication. It is no accident that the research mentioned at the beginning of this paper has involved psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, linguists, educators, mathematicians, and engineers, as well as the comparatively small group of individuals who think of themselves primarily as communication scholars. This is salutary because the methods and insights of all these disciplines can be brought to bear on the study of communication, but on the other hand it requires any student of communication to look in many places for his basic material. A student of pre-Cambrian geology, to take a contrasting example, can be reasonably sure that the chief papers in his field will be written by geologists, that they will be listed together and will build one on another; but a student who wants to comprehend the sum total of existing knowledge of human communication must search at least half a dozen scholarly fields, and he can be fairly sure that the articles will go off in many directions and will not all build one on another. This is one of the reasons why a unified and systematic theory of human communication has been slow to emerge.

It would be pleasant to be able to report that eighteen years of such broadening interest and effort have coalesced into a simpler, clearer model of communication. This is not the case. "How Communication Works," written in 1970, has to be more complex, and require more qualifications, than in 1952. This is no reason to be discouraged with the progress of the field:

sciences often grow in an accordion pattern. Consider, for example, the alternating simplifications and complications in the history of natural science as it has been forced to discard in turn the idea that earth, air, fire, and water are the basic elements, the idea of ether, the idea that atoms and molecules are the basic building blocks of matter, and finally-so it seems-the idea that the same physical laws that govern superatomic relations also govern the subatomic universe. But the fact remains that human communication seemed a simpler thing in 1952 than it does in 1970. At that time we felt we had a fairly inadequate comprehension of the process and its social uses. We counted on S-R psychology, when the intervening variables were properly defined, to explain most of the effects. The study of audiences in terms of social categories promised to explain most of the variance in response to communication. The tools of content analysis, interviews, and sample surveys promised to give us a good idea of what was getting through. The study of attitudes promised to give us a predictor of action. We felt that Shannon's information theory was a brilliant analogue which might illuminate many dark areas of our own field. Already, at that time, the complicating questions were being asked: Why did the mass media apparently change so few votes in election campaigns? Why did people of the same social categories (education, class, and so forth) still react so differently to the same communication? Why was field survey data on communication effects so different from laboratory data? Why was a change in verbally expressed attitudes so seldom followed by observed action in those directions? How did a man's group relationships enter into the way he used communication and the effect of communication on him? Questions like these were being asked in 1952, and tentative answers were being given, but I fear we did not realize at that time how difficult and tortuous were the

paths down which those questions would lead us.

In the middle of change it is hard to sum up change. Yet I should like to suggest some directions of change that I perceive.

For one thing, neither the psychological nor the social model of the communication process is any longer sufficient by itself. rather, they must be combined and somehow comprehended together. The social aegis under which the message comes, the receiver's social relationship to the sender, the perceived social consequences of accepting it or acting upon it, must be put together with an understanding of the symbolic and structural nature of the message, the conditions under which it is received, the abilities of the receiver, and his innate and learned responses, before we can predict with any real confidence the consequences of an act of communication. This somewhat com

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plicates the models we were accustomed to drawing fifteen years ago, and yet there is ample evidence that such complication is necessary.

In the second place, communication has come to be thought of as a relationship, an act of sharing, rather than something someone does to someone else. So far as I know, 'How Communication Works' was the first general essay on communication to use the concept of "sharing" information; this was in part a reaction against the mechanistic psychology much in use at the time to explain communication effects, and against the irrational fears of propaganda being expressed in the early 1950'S. indeed, the most dramatic change in general communication theory during the last forty years has been the gradual abandonment of the idea of a passive audience, and its replacement by the concept of a highly active, highly selective audience, manipulating rather than being manipulated by a message-a full partner in the communication process.

To appreciate the magnitude of this change, one must recall how frightening World War I propaganda, and later Communist and Nazi propaganda, were to many people. At that time, the audience was typically thought of as a sitting target; if a communicator could hit it, he would affect it. This became especially frightening because of the reach of the new mass media. The unsophisticated viewpoint was that if a person could be reached by the insidious forces of propaganda Carried by the mighty power of the mass media, he could be changed and converted and controlled. So propaganda became a hate word, the media came to be regarded fearfully, and laws were passed and actions taken to protect "defenseless" people against "irresistible" communication. This was the Origin of many propaganda studies, and one of the reasons why content analysis of propaganda was developed to such a high point by Harold Lasswell and his associates.

I have elsewhere called this the Bullet Theory of communication. Communication was seen as a magic bullet that transferred ideas or feelings or knowledge or motivations almost automatically from one mind to another. Thus, for example, the Columbia *Encyclopedia* has defined communication as "the

transfer of thoughts," even though that idea has been out of date for many years: it is *messages*, not ideas or thoughts, that pass from communicator to receiver. To sum up, then, in the early days of communication study, the audience was considered relatively passive and defenseless, and communication could shoot *something into them*, just as an electric circuit could deliver electrons to a light bulb.

But scholars began very soon to modify the Bullet Theory. It did not square with the facts. The audience, when it was hit by the Bullet, refused to fall over. Sometimes the Bullet had an effect that was completely unintended. For example, in the Mr. Biggott experiment when prejudiced people were fed anti-prejudice propaganda, they actually used it to reinforce their existing prejudices.⁴

The first major Step in explaining why different people reacted so differently to the same communication was taken when sociologists developed what might be called the Category Theory. Advertisers can be chiefly thanked for this, because the need to measure audiences and tailor commercial messages for them led to impressive financial support for audience studies, and it became necessary to find a simple and usable way of classifying audiences in terms of the media content they selected and the goods they were interested in buying. It became quickly apparent that most college-educated people had different tastes from those of elementary-school graduates, young people from old, males from females, city people from rural people, rich from poor, and so forth. As the theory became more subtle, it was found that people who held different clusters of attitudes or beliefs would choose differently and react differently from those who held different clusters. As the theory was examined still more carefully, it became apparent that the groups people belonged to had something to do with their communication habits, and these memberships led them to choose and react to messages in such a way as to defend the common norms of the groups they value. A great deal of interpersonal communication was seen to be involved in any change

4E. Cooper and M. Jahoda, "The Evasion of Propaganda," *Journal of Psychology* 23 (1947): 15-25.

°%o_ _of taste, values, or opinions. For example, people would consult other members of their groups as to how they should interpret, or respond to, messages they received. Finally, this line of thinking led to some devaluation of the power of the mass media, and to a resurgence of the belief that personal communication was responsible for most social control. This position was developed powerfully by Paul Lazarsfeld and his pupil and associates at Columbia.

Trying to explain the differences in what people learned(from communication, psychologists who were studying communication and attitude change-notably Carl Hovland and his associates at Yale-began to isolate the active variables in the process. They found that experience and personality differences in members of an audience were extremely important. For example, the I.Q. of a receiver, his authoritativeness or permissiveness, and the responses he had learned to make, were even more powerful than the categories he belonged to, in predicting his reactions to a message. Hovland and his associate also isolated many of the content variables in a message-for example, two-sided vs. one-sided presentation, or primacy vs. recency-and when these were set against individual difference variables it became possible to make some sharp predictions of effect.

Thus by the middle 1950'S the Bullet Theory, if you will pardon the expression, had been shot full of holes. If anything greatly passed from sender to receiver, it certainly appeared in very different form to different receivers. And the audience was far from a sitting target.

Raymond Bauer gave a name to the frustration of psychologists and sociologists in trying to apply the old mechanistic theory of communication when he wrote about "The Obstinate Audience." 5 The Zinmerman-Bauer experiment contributed further to the idea of an obstinate

and active audience by showing that what people select from communication, and what they remember, often depends on the use they expect to

5 R.Bauer, "The Obstinate Audience," *American Psychologist* **19 (1964): 319-28.**

have to make of the content. The audience simply would not act like a target!

In recent decades, therefore, we have come to believe that the intervening steps between communication stimulus and response are less simple than they had generally been considered. We had been concerned with "getting the message through," getting it accepted, getting it decoded in approximately the same form as the sender intended-and we had undervalued the activity of the receiver in this process. We had tended to undervalue the importance of the psychological processes that might be triggered by present and stored perceptions of social relationships and role patterns, in such a way as to enter into the response to any communication. Without such complicating concepts we could never explain why the anti-cigarette campaign was not initially more effective, why adoption of new practices proceeds as it does, why violence on television sometimes may and sometimes may not stimulate violence in the behavior of its viewers, and why a failure in prophecy might have the effect it does on members of a cult.

Thus we have come 180 degrees from a theory of the passive audience to a theory of an active audience. I shall suggest, later in this paper, that it is now necessary to think of the communication process as two separate acts, one performed by a communicator, one by a receiver, rather than as a magic bullet shot by one into the other.

Since 1952, we have a renewed interest in dealing with the communication process as a whole. We have gained new insights into audience behavior. We have new linguistic and conceptual tools for dealing with the message, as well as computers for simplifying the drudgery of content analysis. We have a greater interest in learning why communicators do what they do, as well as a beginning of system models to describe how a society, Organization, or other group affects the performance of its communicators at the same time as it is affected by them. This concept of mutual causation has helped us to understand many communication patterns. For example, the mass media contribute to changes in taste, and audience feedback contributed

to and public opinion changes policies; persuasion changes attitudes, which can change behavior, which reinforces attitude change; economic development brings about increases in communication and communication facilities, which bring about increases in economic development; and so forth. These ideas of communication as a relationship (rather than a target-shoot and all interaction (rather than an action) now require us to fill in some neglected areas in the process.

So much for changes. Now, where do we stand?

What Is Communication?

Here are some representative definitions:

Communication-the imparting, conveying, or exchange of ideas, knowledge, etc. (whether by speech, writing, or signs).

Oxford English Dictionary.

Communication-the transfer of thoughts and messages, as contrasted with transportation, the transfer of goods and persons. The basic forms of communication are by signs (sight) and by sounds(hearing).-*Columbia Encyclopedia.*

In the most general sense, we have *communication* whenever one system, a source, influences another, the destination, by manipulation of alternative signs which can be transmitted over the channel connecting them. -Charles E. Osgood, 1 *Vocabulary for Talking about Communication.*

The word communication will be used here in a very broad sense to include all the procedures by which one mind may affect another. This, of course, involves not only written and oral speech, but also music, the pictorial arts, the theater, the ballet, and in fact all human behavior. In some connections it may be desirable to use a still broader definition of communication, namely one which would include the procedures by means of which one mechanism (say automatic equipment to track an airplane and to compute its probable future positions) affects either mechanism (say a guided missile chasing this airplane).

-Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication.*

The mechanism through which human relations exist and develop--all the symbols of the mind, together with the means of conveying them through space and preserving them ill time.

-Charles Cooley.

Each of these definitions has its own strength and its own usefulness. The first two are

based on the idea of transfer of information; they distinguish between the transfer of ideas, knowledge, thoughts, and messages, and the transfer of more material things. The third and fourth definitions rest on the idea of influence or effect, rather than a transfer of anything. Notice that they do not limit the nature of the message to anything but "signals." The fifth definition is noteworthy for its emphasis on human relationship.

Today we might define communication simply by saying that it is the sharing of an orientation toward a set of informational signs.

Information, in this sense, we must define very broadly. Obviously it is not limited to news or "facts" or what is taught in the classroom or contained in reference books. It is any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation. It may include emotions. It may include facts or opinion or guidance or persuasion. It does not have to be in words, or even explicitly stated: the latent meanings, "the silent language," are important information. It does not have to be precisely identical in both sender and receiver—we doubt that it ever is, and we are unlikely to be able to measure that correspondence very completely anyway. The ancient idea of transferring a box of facts from one mind to another is no longer a very satisfactory way of thinking about human communication. It is more helpful to think of one or more people or other entities coming to a given piece of information, each with his own needs and intentions, each comprehending and using the information in his own way.

Communication is therefore based on a relationship. This relationship may exist between two persons, or between one person and many. In the sense that Sapir talked of groups and organizations in the passage we quoted, communication may take place between a group and an individual, a collective society and an individual or a society and a group or organization. Animals communicate (although, as we shall point out later, in a somewhat more limited way than do humans), and communication takes place between humans and animals. Humans communicate quite successfully with machines (e.g., computers); and machines, as Shannon points out in his definition, can communicate effectively with each other within the limits of capability designed into them. The essence of this relationship is being "in tune" with each other, focusing on the same information. This central element of the communication relationship is usually embedded in certain social relationships that contribute to the use and interpretation of the information. A lover and his lass, sitting under a full moon, are in a social relationship which is likely to contribute certain emotional content and meaning to anything that is said. An audience in a theater is likely to engage in a willing suspension of disbelief in a way that it would never do if it were face to face with the same actor over a business deal. A man reading his newspaper is likely to come to this relationship each day with certain expectations and a certain degree of confidence different from those he would bring, let us say, to a letter from a stranger. A teacher and a student, a father and a son, an employer and employee, members of a football team, two men from the same order—all these are obviously in a social relationship that will in some way color any communication between them.

This relationship does not have to be face to face. Cooley's definition speaks of the means of conveying symbols through space and preserving them in time. Thus the mass media make communication possible over great distances: they are simply put into the communication process to duplicate man's writing (the printing press) or to extend his senses of sight and hearing (television, films, radio). Similarly, signs and symbols from the past may result in communication as all of us know who have experienced Chartres cathedral, or the *Iliad*, or the third symphony of Beethoven. But it is obvious that there is a difference in quality between the communication relationships that are close and direct, and those that are removed in

time or space. There can hardly be two-way communication with Homer, and the feedback even to a local newspaper or television station is very faint. Given the right situation, these distant communications may have very powerful results; indeed, one of the reasons great books survive and mass media continue to exist is that they have the power to "tune in" with audiences at a distance. Communications of far lower power, and far lower cost, can be effective when two people are together interacting. Other things being equal, if we want to persuade, or teach, or understand, or reach an agreement with someone, we are more likely to be able to do it face to face.

But whether face-to-face or mediated, whether immediate or removed in time or space, the communication relationship includes three elements and two kinds of action. The elements are the communicator, the message, and the receiver.

It is no longer necessary to defend the idea that the message has a life of its own, separate from both the sender and receiver. If anyone questions this, let him remember how he feels when he has put a letter into the mailbox and wishes he could recall it to make a change. But it is out of his control, just as though he were a general who had sent his army into battle without him and had to wait for reports from the front to find out whether they had followed his commands, how the opposing army had reacted, and what had been the result of the battle. The message exists as a sign or a collection of signs with no meaning of their own except that which cultural learning enables a receiver to read into them. Thus the Rosetta Stone, Cretan Linear B, and certain Mayan records were all meaningless until scholars could recreate the culture sufficiently to be able to read them. Furthermore, the meaning is probably never quite the same as interpreted by any two receivers, or even by sender and receiver. The message is merely a collection of signs intended to evoke certain culturally learned responses—it being understood that the responses will be powerfully affected by the cultural experience, the psychological makeup, and the situation of any receiver.

The communicator constructs, as best as he can, the signs which he hopes will call forth the desired responses—whether verbal or nonverbal, auditory, visual, or tactile. That is the first act of the communication process. A receiver selects among the stimuli available to him, selects from the content of the message he chooses, interprets it and disposes of it as he is moved to do. That is the second act

of the process. The acts are separate, separately motivated, but brought together by the collection of signs we call the message.

If we want an analogy to this process, we can find something much closer than a communicator shooting a magic bullet into a receiver, or a mass medium spraying magic bullets into an audience. It is possible to think in the more homely terms of a wife cooking dinner and placing it on the table for her husband. He takes what he wants. He may not like something she cooks. He may be feeling ill or tired, and consequently eat little or nothing. The situation being what it is, he will probably eat a good dinner. But the point is, *he* is in control of the situation after the food is set out for him. It takes *both* the act of a cook and the act of a diner to make a dinner party.

Let us call up a similarly homely analogy for what happens in mass communication.

I know a baker in southern Asia who gets up at dawn every morning to bake goods for sale. He can't force them on anyone

-there is no parallel to the Magic Bullet here! All he can do is display his wares. He chooses a place where he knows crowds will pass. He bakes things of a kind he has found many people like. He tries to display them attractively. Then it is up to the patrons. The crowds move past. Some passersby will see the cakes and breads; some will not. Some will be hungry and looking for food; others, not. Some will be looking specifically for cakes or bread; others, not. Some, because they have bought good wares from this specific baker in the past, will be looking for his stand especially; others, not. Some will see the cakes, find their appetites stimulated, and reach in their pockets for coins; and they may or may not find any. And if they buy, they may or may not eat any or all of what they buy; they may or may not eat it with jam; they may or may not taste it and throw it away.

This is a closer analogy to the way we see the process of communication now.

Let us understand clearly one thing about it: communication (human communication, at least) is *something people do*. It has no life of its own. There is no magic about it except what people in the communication relationship put into it. There is no meaning in a message except what the people put into it. When one studies communication, therefore, one studies people~relating to each other and to their groups, organizations, and societies, influencing each other, being influenced, informing and being informed, teaching and being taught, entertaining and being entertained~by means of certain signs which exist separately from either of them. To understand the human communication process one must understand how people relate to each other.

What Does It Do?

What people do with communication is not easy to catalog or classify. Let us take a few examples from everyday communication.

(1) A professor thinks over what to say in tomorrow's lecture. He reviews the topic. What points should he be sure to make? What items should he select to mention? What position should he take on one of the disputed questions included in the topic? He weighs the arguments on each side. Is this communication, even though two parties are not involved? It is very hard to say that it is not. An individual is talking to himself-and listening to himself. Much of the life of the mind is lived this way.

(2) An individual says "Good morning!" to another. He is communicating nothing about the quality of the morning, but rather a message of friendliness. Beyond that, he is following an accepted ritual which reaffirms that he and the person to whom he speaks both belong to the same culture and that the mores are being observed. He is saying, in effect, "9 A.M. and all's well!"

(3) An individual reads the morning paper. He is informing himself about the changes in his environment, absorbing such persuasion from editors and columnists as he is willing to accept, being entertained by the cartoons and some of the feature stories. But that is not all. As Berelson has shown, he may be performing a ritual that helps prepare him to face the day, going through the morning task of relating himself again to the world of business and politics, perhaps hiding behind the paper to keep from having to talk.

(4) A young man says to a pretty girl at a cocktail party, "Cigarette?" On the surface he is inviting her to smoke one of his cigarettes. Beyond that he is communicating interest, and inviting her to respond in the same way. If she responds favorably, the next step is likely to be some such question as, "Haven't I seen you somewhere?" which also indicates little concern over whether he has seen her but more interest in whether this casual grouping might become a longer lasting one.

(5) "Go get 'em, team!" a coach shouts as his football players run out for the kickoff. This might be classified as persuasion or instruction, but really it is intended to recall to them the norms of their functioning group: to run hard, tackle hard, win the game if possible for old So and So.

(6) "Dangerous curve-30 miles an hour," the sign reads. The motorist slows down to 35. An agency of the government has communicated to him some advice and a concern for his safety; he has responded in a way that shows the degree of confidence learned from previous experience with such advice. If there is a radar camera around, it communicates that expression of confidence back to the state highway department.

(7) The reading lesson in the third grade is the story of Washington crossing the Delaware. What is being communicated to the pupils? The countless little feedbacks, corrections, and instructions that help them to learn the skill of reading. Beyond that, some facts in history, and the enjoyment of a good

6 B. Berelson. "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means," in P. F. Lazarsfeld and F. Stanton, *Communications Research, 1948-49* (New York: Harper, 1949),

pp.111-29.

story. Beyond that, the norms of patriotism and self-sacrifice. Even this handful of examples will suggest that messages very seldom have a single purpose, and that very often the manifest content is not the important content at all. It is not entirely flippant to say that communication does what an individual or group or society needs at any given time to relate itself to parts of its environment. Communication is the great relating tool. It relates individuals to each other, making it possible for groups to function and for societies to live together harmoniously. It relates an artist or entertainer to his audience, a teacher to his students, a leader to his people. Wherever opportunity offers or danger threatens, there we find a great increase in communication. Recall the enormous flow of communication generated by the Gold Rush, the great war of this century, the assassination of President Kennedy.

Bearing in mind that the basic function of most communications is relating people to each other or to groups, and that their latent content may be more significant than what they manifest, still we can classify a very large part of social communication under a few headings like these:

from the SENDER'S viewpoint from the Receiver's viewpoint the objective of communication may be to:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Inform | 1. Understand |
| 2. $\frac{1}{2}$ act | 2. Learn |
| 3. Please | 3. Enjoy |
| 4. Propose or persuade | 4. Dispose or decide |

These are not far from Harold Lasswell's catalog 7 of the functions of social communication-surveillance, consensus, socialization-as we can see by looking at them from the view-point of society as contrasted with that of individuals:

7 H. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." in L. Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp.

37-5'.
M'__ viewed **SOCIALLY** viewed **INDIVIDUALLY**

the objective of communication may be:

- I. Share common knowledge of environment
 2. Socialize new members of society and necessary to live comfortably abide by norms and customs in society
 3. Entertain members, distract them From troubles and dissatisfactions, create artistic form
 4. Gain working consensus on available, take action on in resources in desired direction
- I. Test or expand picture of reality, learn of opportunities and dangers
 2. Acquire skills and knowledge to play their roles and
 3. Enjoy, relax, sometimes escape from real problems, sometimes gain oblique insight into them
 4. Reach decisions where choice policy, win allies or followers, formed basis, behave in socially desirable way

I do not mean to suggest that the sender's and the receiver's objectives, or the social and the individual goals, are always so neatly parallel as they may seem to be in the preceding charts. Actually the uses to which the same message is put may vary greatly from person to person, and any message may have multiple functions for the same receiver. Thus, for example, not all the audience will use an entertainment message simply for enjoyment. The women who listened to radio soap operas, it was discovered, made widely different uses of the content.⁸ Some used it to identify with the heroine and draw vicarious pleasure from her strength and fine character; others, to reinforce their view of woman's hard life and man's weakness and perfidy; still others, for advice as to how to solve some of their own problems. Thus any message may be functional in different ways, a concept that helps us especially to understand the varied effects of mass media.

8 H. Herzog, "What We Really Know about Daytime Serial Listeners," in P. F. Lazarfeld and F. Stanton, eds., *Radio Research, 1942-43*. (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, '944), pp.3-33.

Mass media came into the patterns of communication when science and industry created machines like the printing press, the camera and the motion picture, radio and television, to

extend man's senses and expand his ability to duplicate signs. Society built around these new machines and around centers of information like the school and the government a number of very large social institutions to carry out many of the tasks which used to be handled by individuals. These new institutions have not replaced interpersonal communication; they

COMMUNICATION TASK	TRADITIONAL SOCIETY	MODERN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY	MODERN SOCIETY
		Interpersonal	Mass Pattern
1. Share knowledge of environment	Watchman	Informed person	News media
2. Socialize new members	Parent or tribal elder	Parent, older children, professional teacher	School system, publishing, educational media
3. Entertain	Dancer, ballad singer, storyteller	Storyteller, artists of all kinds	Entertainment industry, including entertainment media and publishing
4. Gain consensus, persuade, control	Tribal chief or council	Influential leader, salesman, agitator	Government, and all the organizational and media structure for forming public opinion and exerting social control, including advertising and propaganda

They have merely supplemented and extended it. Thus, when society consisted of primitive tribes struggling against the cold and the dangers of the environment, a watchman would be stationed on the hill to send back word when food animals or hostile warriors were in sight. In modern society much of this task has been delegated to the news media, with their staffs of reporters, correspondents, editors, wire services, and facilities for printing and broadcasting-but much information still travels interpersonally. This development is outlined on p. 21

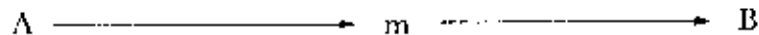
From the watchman on the hill to the color television newscast relayed by a satellite, however, the tasks of human communication have remained essentially the same. Basically communication remains the instrument of human relations, the remarkable device which makes it possible for Organisms to live and work and play together; and also, unfortunately, sometimes for groups to malfunction and societies to destroy themselves.

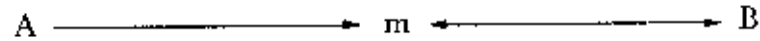
How Does It Work?

Essentially the communication process consists of information processing organized around a shared orientation to certain signs. Ordinarily this requires two or more participants, but as we have pointed out it can take place within the thought processes of an individual. However, most writers about communication have chosen to concentrate on the situation **iii** which one individual processes information in the forms of signs which he hopes will come to the attention of another individual. This has typically been diagrammed in this and we can accept it as a time analogue of the process, if we keep in mind that nothing really passes from A to B, but rather that A encodes a message as best he can in signs, and that B reads a message into those signs. In other words it is just as meaningful to say that B acts on the signs, as that they act on B, and it might be better to diagram it thus: This has a sound basis in electronics, and is a useful analogy to what must happen when information passes between humans, which Wendell Johnson describes in this way:

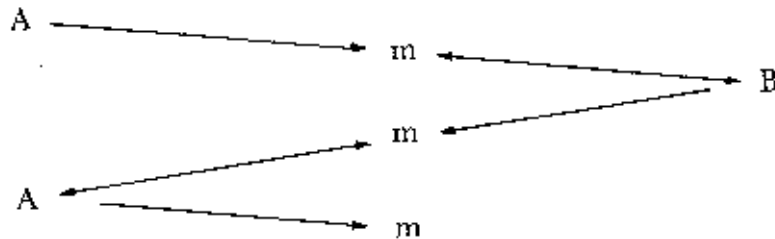
1. An event occurs -
2. which stimulates Mr. A through eyes, ears, or other sensory organs, and the resulting
3. nervous impulses travel to Mr. A's brain, and from there to his muscles and glands, producing tensions, preverbal "feelings," etc.,
4. which Mr. A then begins to translate into words according to his accustomed verbal patterns, and out of all the words he "thinks of"
5. he "selects," or abstracts, certain ones which he arranges in some fashion, and then
6. by means of sound waves and light waves, Mr. A speaks to Mr. B,

9 C Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).
way:

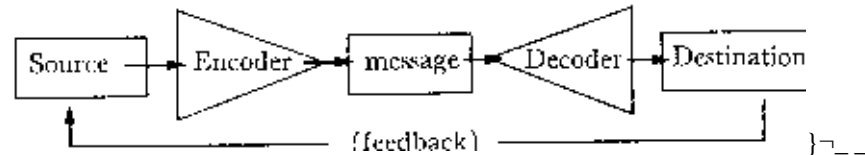




Similarly, we might represent the successive acts that constitute the interaction in this way:



Shannon,⁹ in his engineering model, represents the interaction, with the aid of a feedback link, in this manner:



7. whose ears and eyes are stimulated by the sound waves and light waves respectively, and the resulting
8. nervous impulses travel to Mr. B's brain, and from there to his muscles and glands, producing tensions, preverbal "feelings," etc.,
9. which Mr. B then begins to translate into words, according to *this* accustomed verbal patterns, and out of all the words *she* "thinks of"
10. he "selects," or abstracts, certain ones, which he arranges in some fashion and then Mr. B speaks, or acts, accordingly, thereby stimulating Mr. A-or somebody else-and so the process of communication goes on, and on....¹⁰

Osgood has preferred to schematize the process like this, emphasizing that each participant both receives and sends messages, encodes/decodes and interprets.¹¹

Another useful model of this general kind is that of Westley and MacLean.¹² But rather than proliferate models, let us talk about the process for which they are shorthand.

However we may choose to draw a diagram of human communication, we must remember

that the process itself is more complicated than any picture or description of it which we are likely to put down. Most of the communication process is in the "black box" of the central nervous system, the contents of

10 W. Johnson, "The Communication Process and General Semantic Principles," in W. Schramm, ed~*Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960) pp.307-15.

11 See C. E. Osgood, *A Vocabulary for Talking about Communication* (Urbana, Ill.,n.(1.).

12 B. Westley and M. MacLean, "A Conceptual Model for Communications Research."JournalismQuarterly 34 (1957): 31-38.

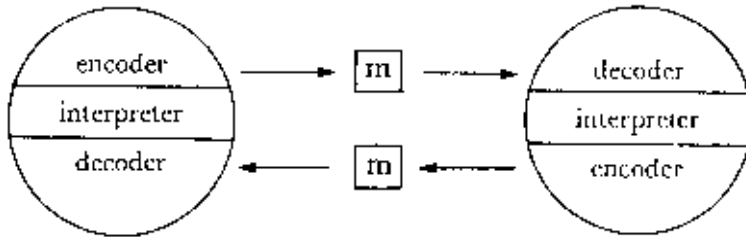
SCHRAMM*Nature of Communication between Humans*

25

which we understand only vaguely. When we describe communication, we are therefore dealing with analogies and gross functions, and the test of any model of this kind is whether it enables us to make predictions-not whether it is a true copy of what happens in the black box, a matter of which we cannot now speak with any great confidence.

Two other notions get into most of these analogic descriptions of the communication process: feedback, and noise. To talk about these we must say something about the nature of the message.

As we have noted, a remarkable characteristic of all communication (except that accomplished by physical contact such as a handshake or a pat on the head) is that the message is at some point in the process quite separate from either sender or receiver. Of course, the verbal signs in our writing or in our speech are more easily separable from us than the natural signs we make by gesturing or with a facial expression, although these too can be separated by recording them on film or videotape. As a matter of fact, the ability of man to create signs that will be portable throughout space and time is one of the characteristics that sets human communication apart from most animal communication. With relatively few exceptions, even the more intelligent animals are limited to communications signs that are inseparable from the situation in which they are used. A dog growls over a particular bone at a particular place, and thus communicates the information that he will defend that particular bone at that particular time; he has no way of communicating that he will defend all bones of a certain kind in certain conditions, or of writing a history of his defense of bones, or any of the acts of abstraction which human language permits us to do. We, too, use natural signs: we pound the table to emphasize a point, or smile at a particular young lady, but we can also encode a message that may be read and interpreted hundreds of miles or hundreds of years away, and we can deal with highly abstract notions that apparently are beyond the capability of the nonhuman animals. To develop this idea, however, requires us to talk about language, which is too



subject for this paper. Here we need only illustrate the fact that the message is, at some point in the process, separate from both the sender and the receiver.

At that time the sender can look at it with new eyes, so to speak. He can wish, as all of us have, that he had used another word, or emphasized another word, or said something more nicely or more nastily or more persuasively. The kind of information that comes back to the sender from seeing or hearing his own message is one kind of *feedback*, by means of which he can guide his further communication and try to repair the damage, if any. A still more important kind of feedback comes to him from the receiver. Perhaps the receiver will say, "I don't understand," or "I get it," or "This bores me," or "I don't like what you have just said." More likely he will wince, or look blank, or yawn, or nod his head in agreement. Such feedback tells the communicator how his message is being received. We might diagram feedback links in this manner.

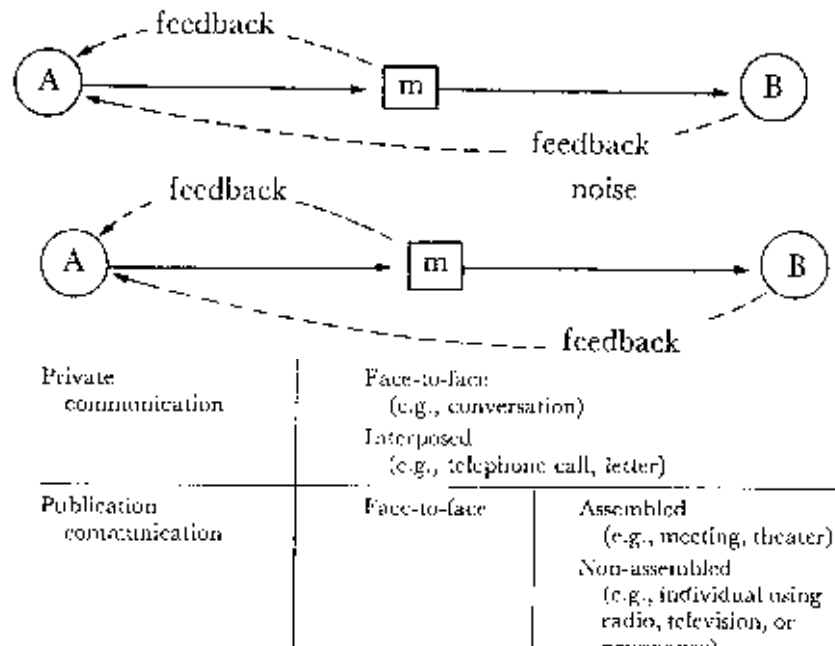
A message may become contaminated. This is the concept usually called noise, which was introduced from electronics and has all exact meaning as electronic noise but has been used to cover a multitude of phenomena in human communication. It is usually defined as anything in the communication channel which the sender did not intentionally put there. This may be actual physical noise (a jet plane that comes over just as a young man tries to whisper to his girl), distracting elements (a bad accent or an unsuitable costume), competing elements (someone else calling to the intended receiver, a big headline or a picture elsewhere on the page to attract a man away from the newspaper story he is reading), or any one of many other things. It is a useful idea, though not a very tight one, because it calls attention to the fact that a message (which is usually less than perfect when it is encoded) is likely to suffer further deterioration before it is decoded and interpreted by a receiver and that in human communication as well as electronic, a big signal-to-noise ratio is to be desired.

We have not yet introduced the framework of social relations in which we said all communication necessarily functions. These enter into the communication process on at least four levels. First, there is the physical communication situation itself. Deutschmann **13** has usefully classified communication situations in this way:

He points out that different kinds of signs are likely to be used in different situations; for example, orthographic signs in a letter, spoken words and gestures in face-to-face and audio-visual media situations, and so forth.

He might also have said that the particularities of the situation themselves constrain to some extent the kind of communication that goes on there, and the response that is likely to be made to it. For example, a boy who wants to propose marriage is more likely to do so in a private face-to-face situation than a public meeting or on television. When he hears a political

13 p j Deutschmann, "The Sign-Situation Classification of Human Communication," *Journal of Communication* 7' no.2 (1957) 63-73.



radio in his apartment, he is unlikely to jump to his feet, clap his hands, and shout, but this is exactly how he might respond to the same speech at a political rally. Being with an audience at such a rally would have an effect on his own response. But consider the situation on a less global level. We have already said something about the social setting of communication. One is unlikely to communicate, looking at a burglar over a gun barrel, in the way one might communicate looking at a pretty girl over a martini. One is unlikely to communicate with one's father in the same way as with a stranger, or with a trusted friend in the same way as with a distrusted competitor. In any of these cases, the very act of communication sets up a

functional group. The purpose of the group (e.g., to borrow a cigarette or discuss marriage), the situation (a convertible in the moonlight or a crowded subway car), and the relationship which the participants bring into the situation (friends, enemies, lovers, strangers) Necessarily set up certain role patterns of behavior.

In the third place, there are certain relevant groups whose norms and role patterns are likely to have something to do with what goes on in the communication process. We live in groups (such as families and work groups), and many of our most satisfying experiences occur in groups. We cherish and defend the norms and beliefs of the groups we value, and we try to follow the role patterns they give us to play. That is, if we value church membership, we try to live according to the code of the church; if we value our family life, we try to play the part of a good father, or husband, or son, as we understand those roles. It is only natural that when communication enters an area where it touches one of our group memberships, we should recall the norms and roles of the group and check the communication against them. For example, a good church member is unlikely to respond favorably to an attack on religion. A good family man is unlikely to respond favorably to criticism of his children. In some cases a participant is likely to check a communication directly with members of his valued groups before he acts on it. Studies of adoption, for example, have found that physicians are very likely to ask one of their

good friends in the profession what his experience has been with a new drug, and farmers are likely to ask other farmers they admire for advice on adopting a new agricultural practice. **14**

In the fourth place, the norms and constraints of the society as a whole inevitably impinge on the communication process. In any society there are things one does and things one simply does not do, things one believes without challenge and ideas one doesn't entertain, because of the society one has grown up in. Some figures and traditions can be challenged with impunity; others, not. And not only the content, but the ways of communicating differ among societies. Many Latin Americans like to talk to you from a distance of about eight inches, and they feel very uncomfortable if they are forced to speak, say, from the other side of a desk. A North American, on the other hand, feels it is unnatural (except at a cocktail party) to talk much closer than thirty inches, and there have been comical scenes when a man from one continent has retreated all the way across a room to keep what he regards as a respectable distance, all the time followed closely by a man from the other continent trying to keep *his* idea of a respectable distance. If you are introduced to a girl in Germany, you can shake her hand; in Spain, you can kiss her hand. In some countries there are restrictions on the freedom of children to play with other children. In some countries you can start a conversation with any stranger on the street; in other countries, an attempt to do so will be scornfully rebuffed.

It may be well now to turn from the situation in which a communicator displays signs which he hopes to share with a receiver, and talk about the signs themselves.

We have already spoken of the separateness of the message at one point in the process. This

is the case whether it exists as the variations in air pressure which we hear as sounds, variations in light frequencies and intensities and patterns which we see as print and pictures and movement and color, actions

14 See, for example, H. Menzel and E. Katz, Social Relations and Innovation in the Teaching Profession, "*Public Opinion Quarterly* **19** (1955): 337-52; E. M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963

which we perceive as touch, or chemicals in the air which we smell. These physical manifestations have a separate existence from which a receiver, according to his cultural background and resources, will read some meaning or other. Meaning is thus a cognitive and emotional thing; it exists within the participants. It is the response a receiver makes to the signs that embody the message.

Let us emphasize that meaning is more than a dictionary definition; it is both cognitive and emotional, connotative as well as denotative—the response of a whole personality to a set of signs. A person learns these responses by associating signs with references (the things they refer to). He sees a dog, hears it, touches it, smells it, observes how it behaves. Someone calls it a dog after a time the word *dog* evokes from him some—not all—of the responses he made to the experience of meeting an actual dog. As he meets more dogs, he generalizes the word *dog* to cover all these experiences. Thus his response to the sign will not be precisely like his response to any particular dog—especially if the dog is growling at him, or brushing affectionately against his leg—but it serves as a code for his stored memories of all these experiences. This is the way he learns most signs, but he learns also from other signs. For example, many a child who has never seen a wolf still learns to respond to the word *wolf* by being told that it is like a big, fierce, wild dog—or by seeing a picture of a wolf.

Thus the meaning anyone is able to read into signs depends on his experience with them and their referents. The word *airplane* will mean nothing to a native of central New Guinea who has never heard of or seen an airplane. A man who knows only Russian and a man who knows only English would have the greatest difficulty communicating in words, although they might get messages through by gesture, pictures, or numbers. All Eskimo who has never seen any dogs other than huskies will probably make a different response to the sign *dog* than a city matron whose experience with dogs has been mostly with poodles.

The similarity of meaning which Mr. A and Mr. B will perceive in a message depends on finding an area where the experience of the two people is sufficiently similar that they can share the same signs efficiently. If we think of the circle around A and the circle around B in the following diagram as their *frames of reference*, by which we mean their fund of usable experience, then the areas where they can communicate efficiently with each other are represented by the overlap of the

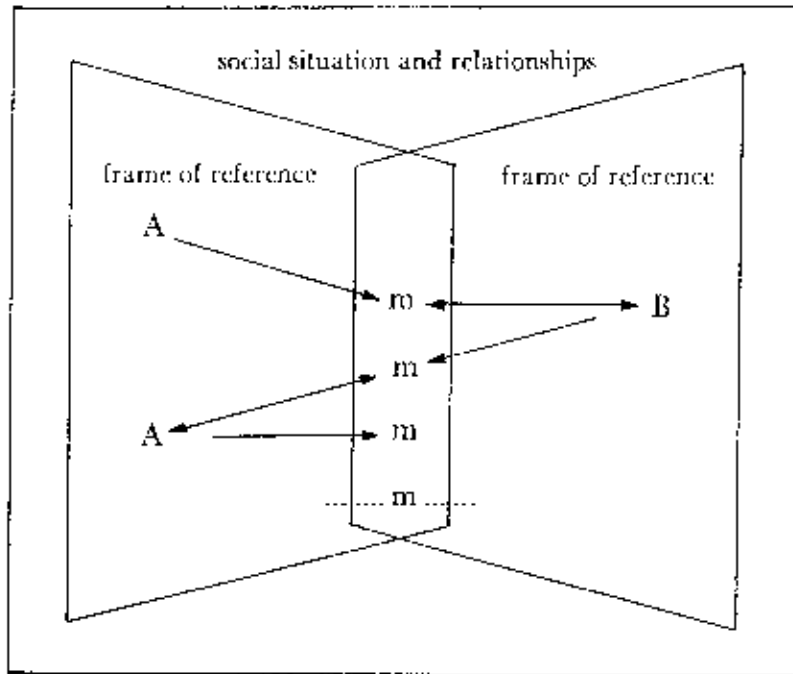
interprets them according to his frame of reference, and disposes of them according to his needs, his values, and the social imperatives and constraints he feels.

A number of years ago I suggested that a "fraction of selection" was probably operative at the time when a receiver made a selection of messages. This, somewhat modified at the suggestion of some of my colleagues, is perhaps worth repeating here:

The fraction, of course, can be made larger either by increasing the upper term, or decreasing the lower. It helps to explain

why home television made so much dent in movie attendance (less effort heeded to enjoy programs at home), why jamming is not entirely sufficient to stop the listening to foreign shortwave broadcasts (some people want very badly to hear them), why public library use falls off so sharply after the teen years, and so forth. The reservation I have about this idea, however, is that it implies a rationality that does not really bulk large in the process of selection. Much selection must be accidental: a person "just happens" to be where he can attend to a given message. Much is impulsive. On the other hand, over the years a person tends to seek the kinds of communication that have rewarded him in the past—his favorite television programs, his favorite columnists, the advisers he trusts. He has, therefore, a built-in expectation of reward from looking in certain places. Beyond that he tends, other things being equal, to select the cues that are close at hand and easy to find in the glut of communication.

$$\text{likelihood of selection} = \frac{(\text{perceived reward strength}) - (\text{perceived punishment strength})}{(\text{perceived expenditure of effort})}$$



In this section began with several models of the communication process. We might conclude it with another model which though overly simplified, I have sometimes found useful in explaining how communication works. It is shown on the preceding page.

Patterns of Function and Process

It would be inappropriate to deal at length with the effect of communication at this point, because that topic will receive major attention later in this volume. However, it may be worth suggesting here that the goals of communication are related to what goes on within the process. The four main types of communication--informational, instructional, persuasive, and entertaining--each require slightly different patterns of information processing, and we may find it useful to set out some of those differences in tabular form.

Let us be clear that these communication functions are not often separated so clearly as the

outline on pp. 36-37 might suggest. Advertising is a combination of persuasion and information, and in many cases it tries to attract attention and good will by means of a strong entertainment component. A good teacher tries to combine a little entertainment with his instruction, and he may try to persuade students to adopt a certain set of values-at least to value learning. Any of us may try to give information in an entertaining way, and an increasing number of novels, dramas, and poems have persuasion as a secondary goal.

It is noteworthy also that any of the communicators referred to in the outline can function either on the professional or the amateur level. For example, anyone can transmit information, but a foreign correspondent is a highly trained and specialized collector and transmitter of information. All of us engage in persuasion, but certain people-advocates, advertisers, and political, among others-do it professionally. A teacher may be a highly trained and long-experienced graduate of a professional college or school, or a mother helping her child learn to tie a shoe. Any of us may tell a joke, but Bob Hope is a professional at it. And consequently, each of the functions has been institutionalized in the mass media as well as in interpersonal discourse.

Nevertheless, the outline makes it clear that the intended function of communication has something to do with what happens in the process.

Perhaps the part of the outline most in need of comment is the concept of *contract*. Our role patterns and cultural value Systems make certain expectations of persons who enter into communication relationships, and these requirements vary according to the goals of the relationship. If it is to transmit information, then the communicator is expected to be knowledgeable, accurate, and fair in his interpretations. The receiver is expected to pay attention. If either one fails to live up to these expectations, then the relationship results in disappointment or indignation. Similarly, both the teacher and the pupil are expected to behave in certain ways. In return for attention and obedience, the teacher is expected to know his subject and present it well. An actor is expected to give a skilled performance; in return, the audience is expected for the time to suspend disbelief-not to apply reality tests to the drama, but to live for a while in its world of imagination, and use its ambiguities to stimulate their own imaginations. All these are contracts-seldom expressed but nevertheless operative, and familiar to all of us. We act as though we had actually signed a contract to behave in the expected way. In contrast, there is really no contract involved in a persuasive situation. The receiver enters with his guard up; the communicator is restricted only by anticipation of what might happen if his arguments or promises were later proved false. Obviously, therefore, the persuader enters a communication relationship with certain handicaps that other communicators do not have, and it is not surprising that a good advertiser, lawyer, or politician tries to introduce other elements into the situation-entertainment, for example, or a reputation for solid information along with his persuasion.

Let us now add a few notes on what happens in each of these four types of communication situations.

ENTERTAINING

COMMUNICATOR Any knowledgeable
Teacher
Any "support-seeker"
Professional or person

or change agent
amateur performer

GOAL or RELATIONSHIP

I. Communicator Transmit information
Transmit information; Bring about "yielding"
Bring about enjoy-

stimulate further
ment and some-

or other control of

learning activity
times deeper

attitude or behavior

understanding

2. Receiver
Learn what he is re-
Pleasant or moving

Test reality-usually
Hear the argument

quired to or wants
emotional

in short-term con-
or "sales pitch"

text to

learn-usually
arousal-some

for long-term use
times a quest for

new insights

CULTURAL CONTRACT

I. Communicator Expected to be good
Expected to be skilled None
Expected to be artist

and well-informed
skilled per

reporter or

teacher
former

2. Receiver
Expected to be atten-
Expected to

Expected to be
None

attentive

tive and studious,
"willingly suspend

and follow
disbelief," accept

directions
ambiguity

SETTING

I. Interpersonal Anywhere
Schools, or other Anywhere

2. Media News media
Textbooks, ETV, etc. Opinion or advertise-
Entertainment media

ments in media

EFFECTS

I. Reaction	Variously interestor
Sometimes interest and "Arousal"	Concern or rejection
related learning	disinterest, grati-
activity	tude, doubt
2. Changes	Storage of new and
Storage of the informa-	Cognitive or behav-
Few; sometimes new	relevant information,
tion perceived as	ioral processes to
repertoire for	to be absorbed in
relevant-emphasis	alleviate concern
social interaction,	cognitive bases of
storage for long-	on
new under	or
term use in	behavior
standings ofen	
problem-solving	
vironment	

* This table owes something to LeonardDoob's brilliant analysis of *Communicatian in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961),and still more to a table made for me by Professor Thomas Cook, of Northwestern University, who has already been mentioned.

The process of informing

Mrs. A. looked suspiciously at her husband, who had buried **his nose in** a detective **story** while she was telling him the neighborhood news. She concluded her story abruptly: "And [he horse ate up all our children."

"That's fine, dear," he said, after a moment.

"Henry, did you hear a word I said?" she demanded **indignantly**.

"No, dear," he said, turning the page.

In this sad little Story, the process of informing failed to clear the first hurdle. It did not get attention.

We all go through life surrounded by a glut of messages. These are far more than our senses can attend to, far more than our nervous systems could handle. For example, when I drive to work in the morning I pass through a city but perceive little of it. I am busy selecting the cues that let me drive safely and directly to my office. Only when I stop at a traffic light and have a chance to look around for a minute do I appreciate how much I am missing because of my selective attention and perception.

The process of informational communication requires four steps-four hurdles to be cleared: (1) to attract attention to it, (2) to have it accepted, (3) to have it interpreted and-so the communicator hopes-(4) stored away for later use.

How does one select the cues he attends to? We have discussed this in terms of the "fraction of selection" and have pointed out that much selective exposure is accidental or impulsive, rather than rational, but that nevertheless habits develop **Out** of long experience to make it more likely that a given individual will select a given kind of communication than another kind. It should be noted that the research on selective exposure is by no means clear, and that in many cases the experience of practitioners is as useful as the findings of scholars¹⁵

News editors, advertisers, and other professional communicators

¹⁵ Shramm, "How Communication Works," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*.

tors try to make the message appear more rewarding by appealing to the needs and interests of their intended audience-some of them, like the beauties who advertise soft drinks, quite remote from the rewards their users are likely to get from accepting the product. They try to make it easier to get by making their messages stand **Out** with large headlines or color or pictures, and by saturating the channels.

They try also to encode it and present it so as to eliminate noise and interference as far as

possible. One way to do this is to build in redundancy where necessary. In school composition, we are generally taught to avoid redundancy; in practical communication, redundancy is cultivated to combat noise and interference. Repetitions and examples are introduced where it may be hard to get a point. In sending international news cables, important words are often repeated so that there will be as little chance as possible of garbling them in transmission:

WILL NOT-REPEAT NOT-ACCEPT TERMS," the cable reads, and no editor ever upbraids a correspondent for that kind of redundancy.¹⁶

Once the message has been encoded as well as possible and offered where it is likely to attract attention, then the sender can do little more except be alert to the feedback from the receiver. A skilled speaker, for example, can "read" his audience and adjust his communication to them. It is no longer possible to do anything with the message that has gone, but he can still add to it or correct it. And there is always next time.

Then it is up to the receiver. If he decides to give attention to the message, then he must decide whether to accept it, and

16 As a matter of fact, redundancy is built into all languages. It has been calculated that if a reader of English is given the first, the first two, the first three, or the first four letters of a large number of assorted words in an English passage, he is likely on the average to be able to predict the next letter in about **50** percent of the cases. Therefore, if he misses a letter or even a word, or if the printer makes a typographical error, the reader has a good chance of getting the meaning anyway. Incidentally, to illustrate the importance of a redundancy figure such as we have just given, it is estimated that if English were as much as **50 percent redundant it would no longer be fun to work crossword puzzles, because the answers would come too easily.** On the other hand, if the language were only **30** percent redundant, then it would be easy to make three-dimensional crossword puzzles.

he must make his own interpretation. Acceptance will depend largely on the face validity of the message itself, and on his judgment of the sender's credibility or prestige. A well-known experiment in attitude change once used a series of messages about the president of the United States, varying from very favorable to very unfavorable. One of them said that the president was in favor of communism. The audience laughed and refused to accept that message because of its lack of face validity.¹⁷ On the other hand, many persons would tend to accept a rather shocking news item in a distinguished paper like the *New York Times*, because of the newspaper's reputation for accuracy.

If he accepts the message, then he will give it such interpretation as his stored-up experience and his built-in values lead him to give it. As we have said, he can only interpret in terms of the responses he has learned. But one tends to interpret new experiences, if possible, in ways that fit with old experiences and accepted values. This sometimes leads to distortion, and often to selecting the parts of a message that fit comfortably, discarding the rest.

The use a receiver makes of any message depends on what he needs from it. I remember a sad example of how well-intended

communication went awry when a certain educational administrator was subjected to very serious charges by a local newspaper. A distinguished academic committee was appointed to investigate the charges. They reported that the charge was without foundation; there had merely been, they said, a "failure of communication" in the administrator's department. They saw their report as a vindication of the administrator (after all, what department has not sometimes had "communication failures"?). But the newspaper paid very little attention to the acquittal on the serious charge, and it trumpeted for weeks the fact that the committee had found a "failure of communication" involving the administrator. Ultimately, the administrator resigned. The chagrined committee realized that what had happened was that they (senders) and the newspaper (receiver) had come to that communication with entirely different purposes. They had thought to explain the trouble that had occurred, and indicate that it was not too serious. The newspaper, however, was out to get the administrator and simply seized upon the part of the message that would further its purpose.

ent purposes. They had thought to explain the trouble that had occurred, and indicate that it was not too serious. The newspaper, however, was out to get the administrator and simply seized upon the part of the message that would further its purpose.

The process of informing people, then, is not as simple as it might seem. In fact, it is beset by so many problems and pitfalls that the constant flow of relatively accurate information in human society may seem almost miraculous. That information is shared in a usable fashion is a tribute both to the communication skills we learn and to the flexibility and adaptiveness of the human organism.

The process of instruction

In Colombia, where the use of television for in-service training of teachers has been studied by a Stanford research team, it was found that teachers learned a great deal from a televised course on the new mathematics. But if they viewed the course in groups, and discussed each lesson, they learned considerably more than if they viewed alone; and they learned still more if their groups had supervisors who directed the discussion.¹⁸

The chief difference between the process of communication used for teaching and for information is that it is necessary to build some learning activities around the receiving end of the chain. This is what the Colombia educators were doing when they arranged for group discussion of each television lesson, and the result they obtained has been proved out in many other places.

Learning is an active thing. It comes from practicing responses. Lectures or textbooks alone are not enough. All teachers become aware that progress in their classrooms comes about not so much from what they teach as from what their students go about learning: the skills they practice, the problems they solve, the answers they seek.

For years teachers have built practice and discussion around textbooks. The coming of

instructional television provided a

16 This research was done by N. Maccoby and G. Comstock. A report is now in press. A stricter test of this proposition, because television could provide everything the classroom teacher could except personal interaction with the pupils. In fact, it could do some things better than most teachers (furnish excellent demonstrations and teaching aids, for example), and it could share the best teaching. And indeed it was found that pupils learned a great deal from television courses. But they learned a great deal *more* when a program of practice, discussion, and individual activity was built around the television in the local classroom.

Therefore, a characteristic of instructional communication is that it must provide for individual learning activities. The same hurdles must be leaped as in any other kind of communication: attention, acceptance, interpretation, storing. But the messages must be encoded in such a way, also, as to encourage the pupil to rehearse the responses he is expected to learn, and

if possible active study and practice must be organized. Almost nowhere in the world is one of the mass media being asked to carry the whole burden of instruction alone. In the "outback" country of Australia, where families often live several hundred miles from the nearest town or school, both elementary and secondary education are offered by radio, but the radio lectures are combined with correspondence study which requires the \ pupils to submit lessons regularly and maintain contact with a

teacher by mail, and wherever possible the pupils are brought together in groups of five or six every day to study together under a supervisor. In Italy, where thousands have been taught by television to read and do simple arithmetic, the process does not work very well unless the pupils are brought together to practice their new skills under supervision. In India, rural adult education has been found to result in more learning and more action if rural programs are piped into a discussion forum.¹⁹

Instructional communication presupposes a kind of contract between teacher and pupil, just as does informational communication. On his part the teacher contracts to give the pupil a

¹⁹ See W. Schramm, P. H. Coombs, F. Kahnert, and J. Lyle, *The New Media: Memo to Educational Planners* (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1967).

systematic view of useful knowledge, and to give him opportunities to practice what he must learn. The pupil contracts for a certain amount of trust in his teacher's guidance, and a willingness to engage in a certain amount of learning activity. Supposedly, he comes *wanting* to learn. One of the teacher's jobs is to keep up this motivation, and if necessary increase it. If the pupil is not motivated to learn, then, in effect, he does not sign the contract, and the instructional communication is likely to be wasted.

Like the informing process, instructional communication, then, must achieve attention, interest, acceptance, an adequate interpretation, and learning, and it is built upon a special con-

tract between sender and receiver. But it has a long-range rather than a short-range learning goal, and it is expected to incorporate or stimulate certain additional activities on the part of the receiver, in which respect it bears certain resemblances to persuasive communication, as we shall now see.

The process of persuasion

About twenty years ago a series of delightful cartoons **was** prepared to make fun of racial prejudice. It was thought that this would provide a way to penetrate the defenses of prejudiced people, and perhaps get them to laugh themselves out of some of their rigidity on the subject of race relations. But the most prejudiced people completely misinterpreted the cartoons, and considered them to be really justifications of their own positions. For example, after looking at one cartoon that showed a woman in a hospital refusing to accept a transfusion unless it **was** "blue blood," a prejudiced person said, "That's a very good idea. I must warn my doctor to be careful about that if I ever need a transfusion!"

The essential difference between instructional or informational, and persuasive, communication is that the former two stress learning; persuasion stresses yielding. Each type of communication must get the message over the several hurdles mentioned earlier. But for persuasion that is not enough. It is necessary. This is the "Mr. Biggott" study. See Cooper and Jahoda. "The Evasion of Propaganda." essay also to set in motion social psychological dynamics by which the receiver may bring himself to yield to the point of view advocated by the persuader.

Of course, it is not so hard to implant new attitudes or encourage new behavior in a new area. For example, if our first contingent of astronauts had come back from the moon with an account of hostile and dangerous little green men, earthlings would have been easily persuaded that they should view with alarm this new threat. After all, we now have very little in our files about the subject of moon men. But if we already had long-time knowledge and strongly held attitudes toward moon men, then it would not be such a simple matter to change those. When a strong area is attacked directly, the message is likely to be rejected or distorted as in the case just described.

Think of the situation in which persuasion takes place. We have noted that there is a contract (as in entertainment or instruction) between **sender and** receiver (although skilled persuaders try to make use of other contractual norms—for example, the door-to-door salesman uses social norms of politeness to hold his attention at least for a little while). The sender is on his own. He can choose the information and package it to fit his goals. He can attract attention by entertainment (the programs accompanying the commercials), by saturating the perceptual field (big type, loud commercials, parades, rallies), by big names and big events. He can

advance arguments, make threats, offer rewards. He can even reward us on occasion for role-playing the position he wants us to adopt *Caveat emptor!*

As for the receiver, he comes with his defenses up (to the extent, at least, that he perceives the persuader as manipulative). He is prepared to be skeptical. He has faced persuasion before. He asks, "What is there for *me* in this message?" He comes with a set of needs he waits to satisfy, and with a set of beliefs and attitudes, some relatively flexible but many of which he is prepared to defend stubbornly. He comes with a set of personal relationships and loyalties, and he feels deeply dependent on any of them. He comes with a set of perceptions of opportunity and threat in the environment, which he is not prepared to change without seeing good evidence. On balance, the persuasion situation is a buyer's, not a seller's, market.

Probably the closest we have come to the kind of change that might be brought about by discovery of dangerous little moon men is the notorious panic caused by Orson Welles's broadcast, in 1938, of a dramatization of "The War of the Worlds."²¹ The more susceptible people believed the broadcast was real, and that the invaders were actually sweeping everything before them. Suddenly all their environmental support seemed to be crumbling, and with it all their confidence in law and order, and national power. Their need for self-preservation took control, and without bothering to check up on the broadcast they took to the hills. Fortunately, this kind of persuasion has not often been used, but the Welles incident illustrated dramatically (1) the importance of not being perceived as manipulative; (2) the effect of vague threat for which many receivers could think of no defense; and (3) the use of a contractual culture norm-trust in radio as a disseminator of news.

The process of persuasion, so far as it is primarily a *communication process* (as distinguished, let us say, from the use of force, or a training process like operant conditioning) consists of introducing some information which leads the receiver to reappraise his perception of his environment, and through that to reappraise his needs and ways to meet them, or his social relationships, or his beliefs and attitudes.

Suppose that the goal is a reappraisal of needs. One tactic is to encourage a new social need (who felt a need for a hula hoop before the fad was promoted?). Another is to make an old need salient; for example, skillful enough advertising can make us aware that we are hungry, and then it is relatively easy to implant the idea that the client's product might be just what we are hungry for. Still another is to present a new way to satisfy an old need (Brand X tastes better).

If the picture of reward and threat in the environment can be changed sufficiently, then we can expect that this change

²¹ See H. Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), and article in this volume.

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21 See H. Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), and article in this volume.

will be reflected in a receiver's estimate of his urgent needs at the time and consequently in his attitudes and behavior. This **kind** of change process on which communication might have some effect.

A similar process can be triggered by changing a receiver's percept of his social relationships. Every salesman, of course, tries to establish himself as a friend and well-wisher of the prospective buyer, so that his persuasion will be trusted. Many of the most successful evangelists put a new convert at once into a group of believers so that his decision will be socially reinforced. Many advertisements hold out the implied hope of being able to join an admired group—for example, "men of distinction," or the sponsors of a particular cause, or "the Pepsi-Cola generation."

One of the patterns which some nations have been reported to use in attempts at "brainwashing" involves simultaneously removing old social support and providing new support. A military captive is removed from his officers (the authority structure) and ultimately from his fellow P.O.W.'s (friendship group). He is allowed to receive no mail from home, and is told that other captives have informed on him. These are all steps to take away the social support for the values and behavior patterns it is desired to change. Then he is put into a small group where people are studying communist doctrine and writing "confessions" of their former "errors." He is rewarded and socially supported for every step he takes in the desired direction, and encouraged to build up new friendships among converts. Obviously, such a radical change as persuading a soldier to give up his loyalty to his country is riot accomplished very Often, but the process is nevertheless clear: (i) undermine confidence in existing social relationships, (2)

offer new ones that (3) reward a person for desired opinions and behavior.

Another tactic is to build up cross-pressures on a target. If a person can be convinced that two groups he values, or two advisers he trusts, disagree completely on the point at issue, then he will be vulnerable to a suggestion that seems to offer a way out of the inconsistency.

One of the most powerful processes that seems to be accessi

strain toward consistency. A great deal of research has been done in the last ten years on consistency theory, which is based on the premise that people are motivated to establish consistency and will try to make their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors consistent with each other. Heider was one of the first social psychologists to make prominent use of this concept, and an early example of a consistency theory was Newcomb's A-B-X model. Since that time, Festinger, Osgood and Tannenbaum, Rosenberg, McGuire, and others have made important contributions to consistency theory, which will be discussed and, in some cases illustrated, later in this volume.²²

When communication is used for persuasive purposes, then, there are strong defenses against change in any attitudes and beliefs that really matter to the holder—defenses that would ordinarily reject a suggestion for change or distort it as the cartoons we described at the beginning of this section were distorted. It is necessary to breach those defenses in some way—to implant information that will start a process of reappraisal and reorganization.

The process of entertaining

"What do you think T. S. Eliot really meant by 'The Hollow Men'?" asked Miss A, who is a high school senior.

"I don't know," her brother said. "Why doesn't he write so there's no question what he means?"

"It wouldn't be any fun if he did," said Miss A.

The essential difference between the communication process used for entertaining and other versions of the process is that they operate under different ground rules, which are illustrated by the little exchange just quoted.

Entertaining requires the same steps as the others. The message must be coded so as to be interpretable within the experi

²² F. Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (New York: Wiley, 1958); T. Newcomb, "An Approach to the Study of Communicative Acts," in

Hare, Borgatta, and Bales, *Small-Groups* (New York: Knopf, 1955). See also Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*; McGuire, "Attitudes and Opinions"; Hovland and Rosenberg, *Attitude Organization and Change*.

ence of the audience, it must appeal to audience needs and interests, and it must so far as possible be designed to avoid the hazards of noise and interference. It must gain attention, it must be accepted, and it must be interpreted. Feedback is at least as important in an entertainment situation as an information one; in the case of live entertainment it is a crucial element--if the artist cannot fit his act to his audience, he is a failure--and in the case of media entertainment it is so important that broadcasters spend millions of dollars each year on learning about their audiences.

The chief difference lies in the unwritten contract between sender and receiver. Entertainment requires of the receivers a certainly "willing suspension of disbelief." Instead of requiring full and accurate reporting and remaining skeptical of anything that checks poorly with their picture of reality, the entertain-merit audience must be willing to let down their defenses, go along with a story or a spoof or a good joke, often agonize and rejoice with a character who never lived or could live. Instead of expecting simple, clear, unambiguous writing, they expect a certain kind of artistic ambiguity and a host of latent meanings.²³ Poetry, for example, often uses figures of speech and incidents that can be interpreted variously according to what a reader finds in them, as Miss A recognized in the incident with which we began this section.

The entertainer is expected to have more concern with form than is the informational communicator. The way he writes or speaks or moves is itself expected to give pleasure. He is expected to be imaginative rather than utilitarian, to write richly rather than clearly, to tell a good story, to do an expert job of turning a phrase or building a scene. In other words, whereas informational communication asks for the skill of the reporter, entertainment asks for the skill of the artist. Even on the level of entertainment represented by the luncheon club joke, still a good storyteller must be skillful at imitating dialects and knowing where to put the punch line. And he must be alert to audience feedback so that he knows how long to build up the story.

The receiver, on his part, is expected to be willing to

23 See C. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: Meridian, 1955).

tify with one or more of the characters, to put himself in their places, to feel with them. In poetry and modern painting, he is expected to enjoy ambiguity, rather than to let himself be frustrated by it. The question, "What did - the author mean?" is shunned by most modern writers and many modern teachers, who prefer the question, "What does it mean to *you*?" In fact, it is in works of art that we can appreciate the true separable-ness of messages. For nearly

three thousand years people have enjoyed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* without ever really knowing much about who Homer was. For four hundred years viewers of *La Gioconda* (the Mona Lisa) have enjoyed the portrait and read their own interpretation into it, without knowing or much caring what da Vinci thought it meant.

The intended effect of entertainment **communication** is also different from that of the other types. Each of these, and notably instruction and persuasion, is basically concerned with a long-term effect—storing information, continuing learning activity and problem solving, attitude or behavioral change. Entertainment communication, on the other hand, is usually aimed at an effect on the audience while it is exposed to the entertainment. This does not mean that there are no long-term effects of entertainment communication. We know, for example, that children often imitate for a long time afterward what they have seen on television. A fine drama may contribute insights or change attitudes that will remain for a long time with members of the audience. Aristotle developed a theory that the effect of fine poetry or drama was to purge audiences of unworthy sentiments, and all of us have seen that entertainment often serves to reduce tensions. But the basic effect occurs during the communication, and it is an emotional and aesthetic arousal, quite different from the effects of any of the other kinds of communication we have discussed.

A Role on Mass Communication

A question remains. Is the process of *mass* communication any different from the process of *interpersonal* communication?

Mass communication is more complicated. A large organization

is inserted into the communication chain, with its own internal communication, and its own need to inform itself, to arrive at and carry out policy decisions, and to socialize its new employees to roles and norms. Westley and MacLean have spelled out some of these complications.²⁴

This organization operates around a machine, and therefore can duplicate messages and send them in great numbers through space and time, and to a very large audience. Instead of having to deal with a single receiver, or a small face-to-face group, in mass communication has an audience many of whom it never sees or hears from. Feedback is weak, and the audience is usually heterogeneous in abilities and interests.

Choosing the content is therefore more difficult than in interpersonal communication, where the relationship is direct and feedback is usually immediate. The mass medium has to decide whether to program for the largest possible audience or for segments of it, and how to divide time and energies if it decides to program for different segments.

Furthermore, social demands and social controls on the mass media are louder and stronger than on the individual. Any society usually has rather definite ideas of what it wants its mass media to be and do. It may exercise control on them through law, executive action, economic support, or otherwise. This further complicates the job of the media.

But on the whole the similarities between the processes of mass and interpersonal communication are far greater than the differences. Mass communication faces the same defenses. It must jump the same hurdles: attention, acceptance, interpretation, and disposition. It requires the same kinds of contract between sender and receiver for entertainment and instruction. It must depend on activating the same kinds of psychological dynamics if it is to persuade.

As we have said, the fashion was for a number of years to worry about the great and awful power of mass communication, because of the enormous number of hours people gave to

24 B. Westley and M. MacLean, "A Conceptual Model for Communications Research-."

media entertainment and the size of media audiences for political information. But the more scholars looked into the effect of the media, the more they found that the same resistances to change applied there as in person-to-person communication—in fact, more strongly. People come to the media, as to other messages, seeking what they want, not what the media intend them to have. Because there are so many media and media units, they have a considerable choice. They still have their defenses up; they still defend their strongly held positions. Because of their distance from the media, and the relatively isolated way of reading, viewing, or listening, they tried to put even greater reliance on their social groups and their advisers.

Katz, Lazarsfeld, and others discovered a phenomenon they called the "two-Step flow," by which they meant that much of the influence and information from the mass media reaches the public through Opinion leaders or influentials, who are great users of the media and filter them for retransmission by inter-personal channels.²⁵ Later and longer looks at the "two-step flow" lead us to think that it might be better called an "2-stepflow," for the influentials have their own influentials to whom they go for advice and information. However that may be, the point is that interpersonal channels of information are functioning side by side with the mass media channels, and these interpersonal channels are exerting much of the influence in society.

This is not to say that close and influential relationships may not be built up between someone in the mass media and people in the audience. Father Coughlin had the ability to build such a relationship, and many dictators of Our time have felt that control of the media was essential to their power and continuing influence. The birthday and "get well" cards that some people in the audience send to entertainers they do not know, and even to cartoon or fictional characters who have never lived, are other evidences of personal attachment. But there is

25 E. Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 21 (1957):61-78.

good reason to think that the media in a democratic society, as Lazarsfeld and Merton argue, are more likely to contribute to the status quo than to great change; 26 and the less control on the media, the less uniformity that is enforced upon them, the more likely that they will not be able to impose any single pattern of belief or conduct on their audiences.

It is the long-term effects-which are hardest to study-that most concern us. Is the picture of environment that is being presented by the mass media accurate and sufficiently complete? In a sense, what the media do not carry might concern is more than what they do carry. And what effect on tastes and behavior can be predicted from the long hours now devoted to television? There is evidence that television and films serve as a model for much behavior.²⁷ McLuhan has argued that the act of carrying on so much of human communication through lines of printed type signs reading horizontally may have a deleterious effect on personality and culture, but this is not proven, and in any case the whole trend in the last fifteen years has been to devote more and more communication time to television and films which McLuhan, contrary to many other critics, regards as a salutary change.²⁸

Among the long-term effects, the most potent may well turn out to be the less dramatic ones-not the gross anti-social effects, but the gradual building up of pictures of the world from what the mass media choose to report of it; the gradual homogenization of images and behaviors over large populations, as a result of the universality of the mass media; the granting of status to persons who have access to the media. I once described this effect as resembling the gradual building up of a stalagmite in a cave, from the constant drip-drip of calcareous water upon it, each drop leaving a residue so small as to be invisible until the dripping had continued for years. And not until

26 p i; Lazarsfeld and R.K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action in Schramm, ed., *Mass Communication Quarterly*, pp. 492-512, and in the same volume.

27 For example see A. Bandura. "Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66 (1963): 3-11.

28. M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

hundreds of years later could visitors see that the stalagmite had grown and altered its shape. This kind of effect, rather than quick and dramatic change, may be the chief impact of the mass media on human society.