



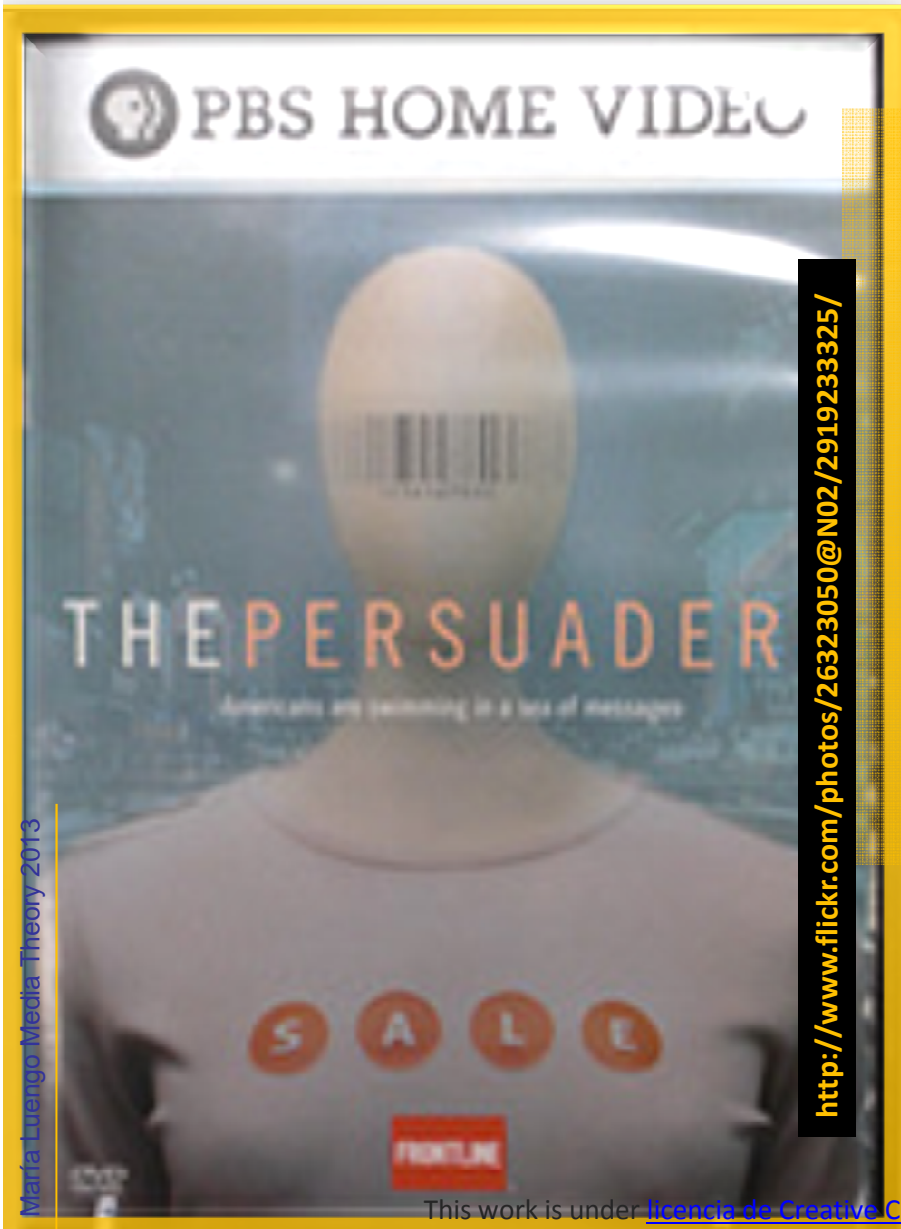
Universidad
Carlos III de Madrid



Week 4

Persuasion and Influence

By María Luengo



María Luengo Media Theory 2013

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/26323050@N02/2919233325/>

This work is under [licencia de Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial-CompartirIgual 3.0 España](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/es/).





Persuasion and Influence

Summary

☐ Historical Context

☐ Authors

☐ Assumptions

☐ Key Concepts

☐ Arguments

☐ Critique

Historical Context

- From the 40s, **psychological experiments** into media field were initiated
- Media researchers focused on **campaigns** and their limited influence
- Incorporation of **audience selectivity** and **interpersonal relations** into the design of media effects research
 - From a short-term change of opinion and attitude (media persuasion) to a far-ranging overview of influence in society (media influence)
- Consolidation of classical tradition of **MCR**
 - The so-called “**administrative**” research vs critical theory

Authors



Carl Hovland

One of the founding fathers of communication studies, with Lasswell and Lazarsfeld

The Yale approach - Interest in persuasive messages and wartime propaganda



Paul F. Lazarsfeld

Co-Author of *Personal Influence* – canonic work on media effects

The Columbia University tradition initiated by PL and his Bureau of Applied Social Research

Photos courtesy of google images

Assumptions

Cause (stimulus) → psychological process → Effect (response)

- Stimulus intensity and the extent of response vary under different condition of presenting **media content** to particular **audiences**
- Most of these studies extend far beyond the “strong” media effects (Hypodermic Needle Theory)

Key Concepts

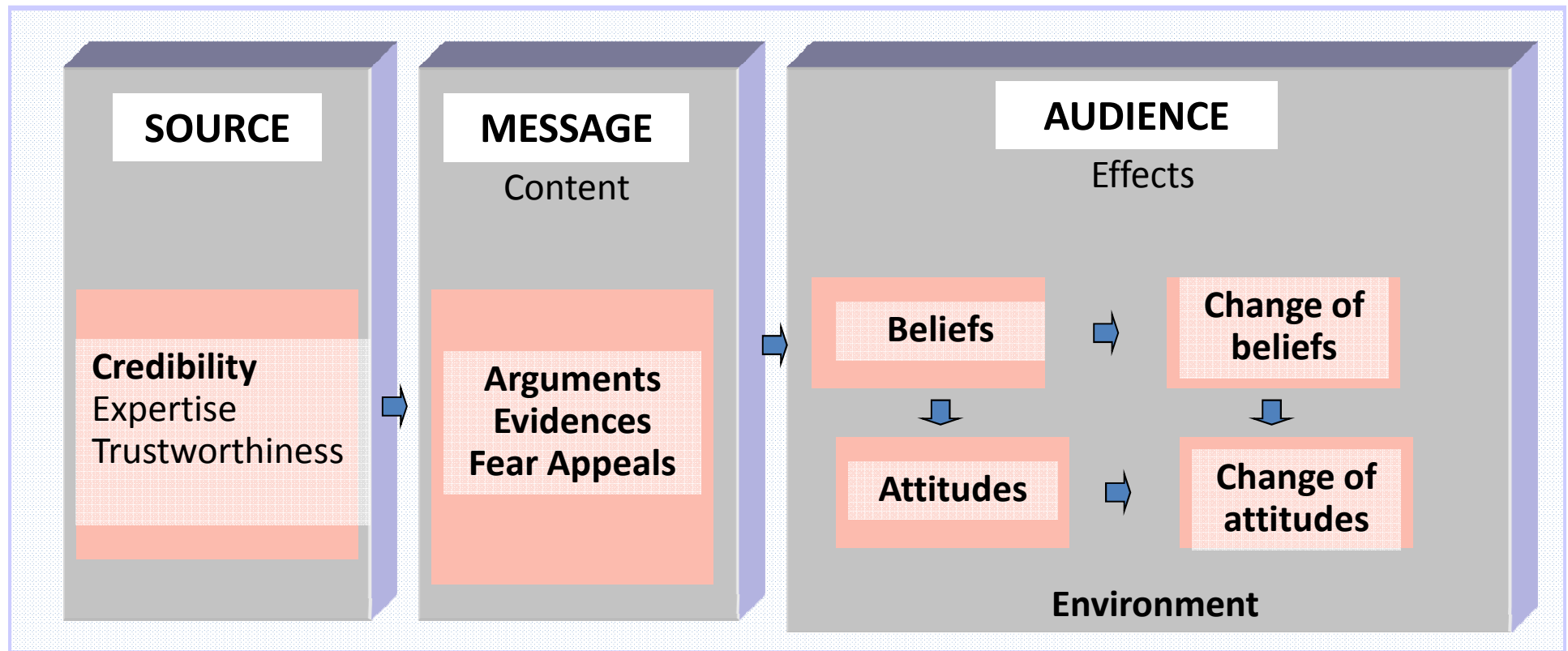
- **Audience** and **message** conditions which guide media research in line with persuasion theories:
 - Audience characteristics:
 - Self-esteem
 - Interest in acquiring information
 - Selective exposure
 - Theory of "cognitive dissonance"
 - Selective perception
 - Selective memorization

Key Concepts

- Message characteristics:
 - Speaker
 - Credibility – Degree of expertise and trustworthiness
 - Audience's perception of the speaker
 - Message
 - Message arguments (quality and quantity of arguments)
 - Evidence
 - Fear appeals

Hovland Model

Mass Communication and Change of Attitudes



Key Concepts

In Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence*. The part played by people in the flow of mass communication (1955)

– The **two-steps flow of communication**

persons at the apex of the community structure. But the 1940th election study seemed to indicate the parallel existence of what was then called horizontal opinion leadership. Each social stratum generated its own opinion leaders—the individuals who were likely to influence other persons in their immediate environment. In addition, the investigation seemed to indicate what was called a two-step flow in the effect of the mass media. In each social stratum, these “molecular” opinion leaders were more likely to expose themselves to magazines and broadcasts especially tuned to their level of education and interest. This seemed to suggest that influences stemming from the media make contact with opinion leaders who, in turn, pass them on to other people. An obvious ques-

Key Concepts

In Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence*. The part played by people in the flow of mass communication (1955)

- The rediscovering of the **primary group**
 - Primary interpersonal and group relations are an important variable of the mass communication process

Lazarsfeld Model

The Two-Step Flow of Communication

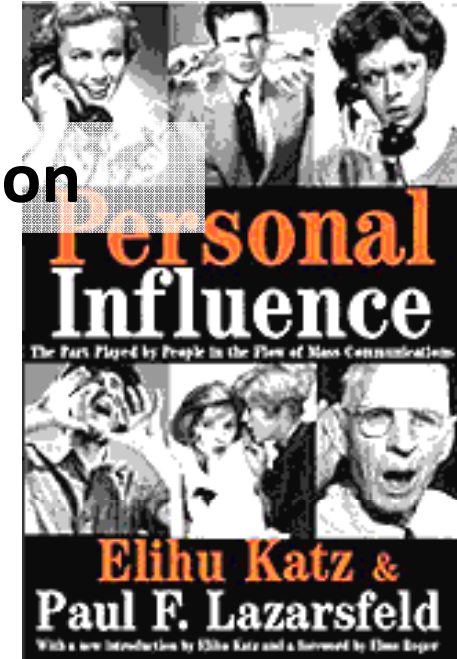
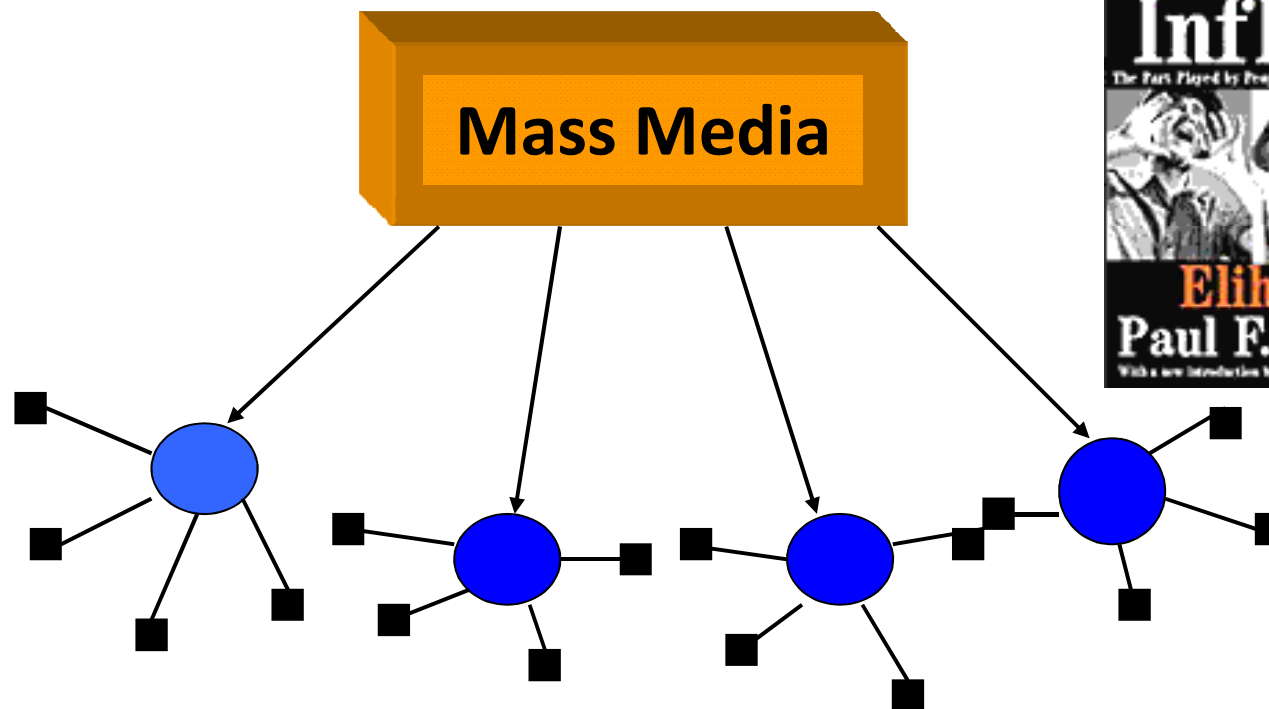


Image courtesy of
google images



Opinion leaders



People imbedded into circles of friends, relatives, or co-workers

Arguments

- **Role of the media**
 - Although persuasion works through complicated routes, mass-mediated messages still impact people in a strong way
 - There are a number of factors, relating to both the characteristics of messages and audience, which must be taken into account to study media impact

Arguments

Media effects

- Studies in line with Hovland showed that media effects are much more limited than the strong effect defended by the Hypodermic Needle Theory
 - But these studies did not deny media impact
- Findings based on Lazarsfeld's model indicate that media effects are small as compared to the role of personal influences

Arguments

Role of people

- Conditioned by their own characteristics which are related, as we have seen, with
 - self-esteem, interest in acquiring information, selective perception, and selective memory
- Individual differences, a key factor in the evaluation of media effects
- Importance of the group over the mass

Critique

- A “happy” extrapolation of results obtained through “laboratory experiments” to reality regardless of the specific contexts where these studies were made
- Empirical nature of this research
- Close connection with American Government and American enterprises