



Universidad  
Carlos III de Madrid



## Week 3

# Transmission

Introduction

Historical Context

Authors

Assumptions

Key Concepts

Arguments

Critique





# Introduction

- **Different communicative contexts:**
  - Determined by
    - Number of people
    - Distance between people
    - Extent of feedback
    - Technical resources

6 possible types

1. Interpersonal communication
2. Group communication
3. Organizational communication
4. Public communication
5. **Mass communication**
6. Intercultural communication



# Introduction

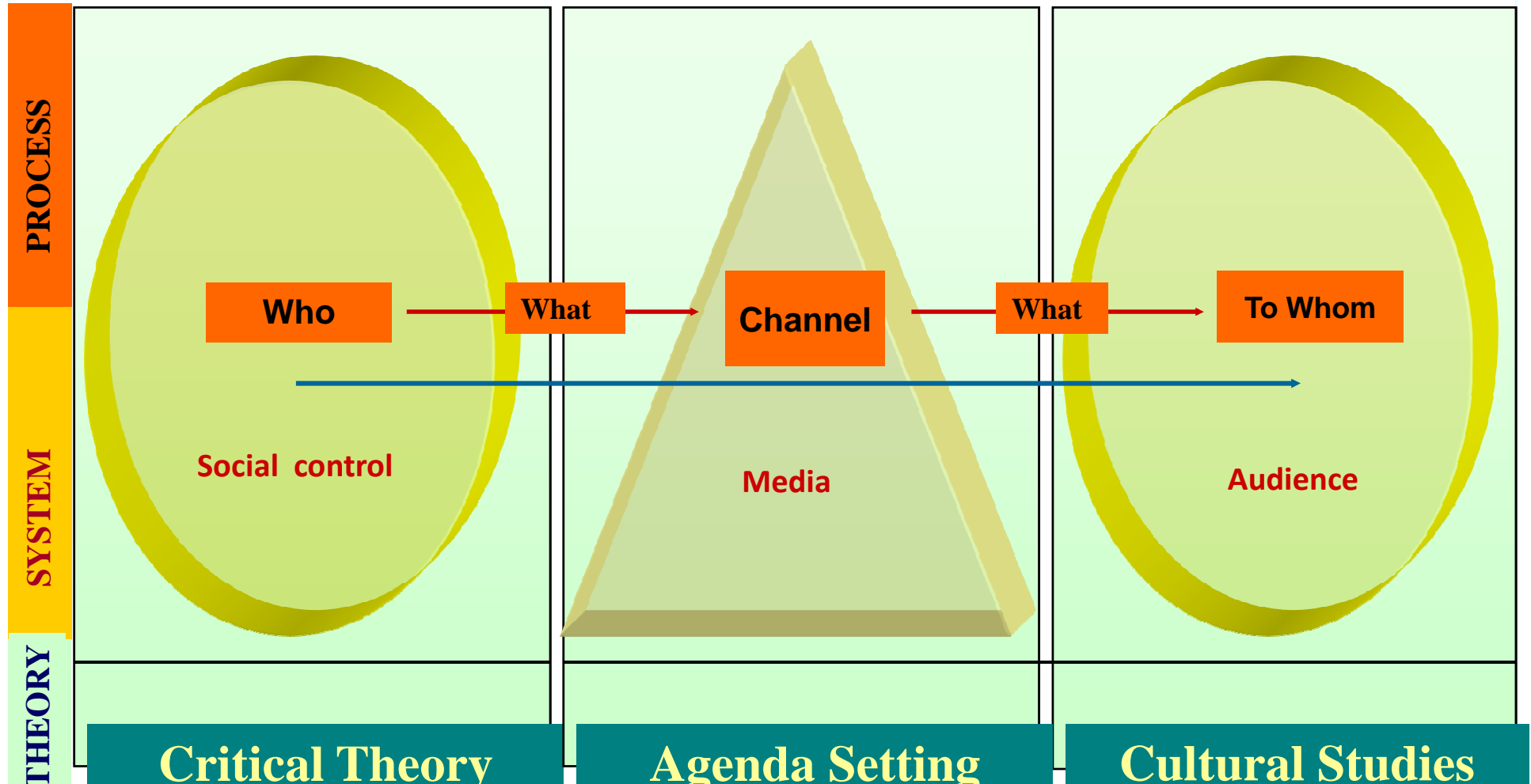
“A convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following question:

- **Who**
- **Says What**
- **In Which Channel**
- **To Whom**
- **With What Effect?”**

(Lasswell, 1948)



# Research Areas in Mass Communication





## Lasswell Model (1948)

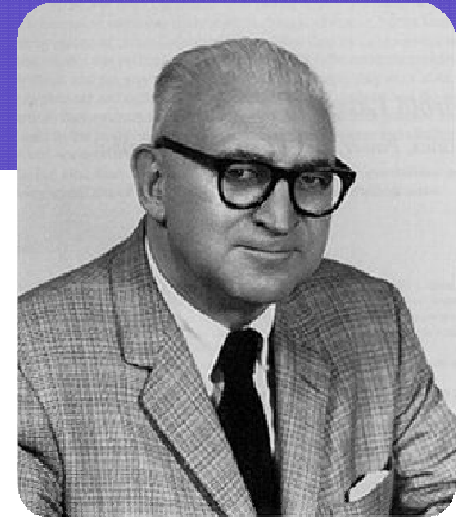


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# Transmission

## The Hypodermic Needle Theory

Pioneer theory of American Mass Communication Research



## □ Historical Context

- Threat of the two world wars
- Widespread dissemination of mass communication
- Connection between mass media and the tragic experience of totalitarian regimes
- Importance of propaganda
  - Mass distribution of messages with the intention of influencing values and behavior
  - Nazi propaganda



- Harold D. **LASSWELL**
  - *Technique in the World War* (1927)
- Sidney ROGERSON
  - *Propaganda in the Next War* (1938)
- Sergei CHAKHOTIN
  - *The Rape of the Masses* (1939)
- Hadley CANTRIL
  - *Psychology of Social Movements* (1941)



## □ Assumption

# Social behaviorism

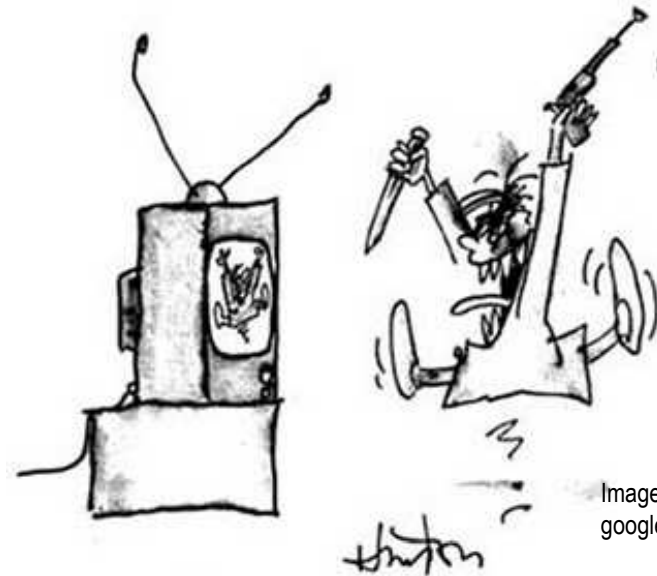


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- Psychological foundations in **the stimulus / response scheme**
- Study of human behavior through **methods of experiment and observation** (natural sciences)





## □ Key Concepts: **Mass Society**

- ✓ Weakening of traditional bonds – condition for the isolation and alienation of masses
- ✓ Definition of *mass* as a **new type of social organization**
  - Homogeneous aggregation of individuals who are substantially undifferentiated
  - People are separated from each other with little or no chance to interact
  - Lack of traditions, rules of behavior, leadership and organizational structure
- ✓ The definition emphasizes and confirms the central element of the hypodermic theory, i.e that individuals remain **isolated, anonymous, separate, atomized**



- **The role of the media**

Mass media is seen as a new kind of unifying force in a society characterized by the lack of interpersonal relationships

- **Effects of media on the public**

In this first period the effects of mass media are direct, immediate and powerful

- Payne Foundation Studies on the effects of movies on youth



## □ Arguments

- Mass communication process is asymmetric
  - Active broadcaster / passive recipient
- Communication tends to reach an observable and measurable effect
  - Content analysis
- The roles of communicator and recipient seem isolated, independent of social and cultural relations
  - Effects on the audience: aggregation of age classes, etc.



## □ Critique

- Hypodermic theory assumes a rationalist understanding of the action and the notion of social "mass"
  - emphasis on the independent, isolated and atomized individual
- Empiricism – content and effects must be measurable and observable
- Studies in line with Mass Communication Research have overcome this theory:
  - Variables
  - Evolution of the studies of the effects