Ibadan Distance Learning Programme Series

CLA 215
Sociology of Communication

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LECTURE ONE

Meaning and Components of Human Communication

Introduction
Man is a gregarious being that always derives pleasure from the network of social interactions with fellow human beings. The cardinal essence of this network of interactions in the social groups is communication through language. It is, therefore, considered imperative that we first look at the meaning of human communication if we want to have a better understanding of how man interacts in society. In this lecture, we will discuss the meaning and elements of human communication as a process.

Objectives
At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:
1. Define communication as a social act;
2. Explain the basic concepts in the meaning of human communication;
3. Handle noise effectively in any form of communication encounter
4. Identify and explain the elements of human communication; and
5. Develop a better attitude to communication as a mutual act of message sharing rather than a unidirectional act of information dissemination.

Pre-Test
1. Define communication.
2. What are the elements of communication process?
3. Show how communication is different from information dissemination.
Meaning of Communication

Communication is a complex process of meaningful interaction among people. It is such a common practice that it has attracted innumerable definitions. Dance and Larsen were said to have compiled about one hundred and fifty definitions of communication (James, Ode and Soola, 2006). It appears every writer or researcher defines communication in the way that is appropriate in the particular context of his/her study.

Here, we define communication simply as the process of sharing and exchanging meanings, ideas, feelings, information and thoughts among human beings through a mutually understood set of codes which can be verbal or non-verbal (Bitner, 2005; Sambe 2005; Udall and Udall, 1979). This definition is not a prescribed one. You may want to define communication in a different way. Whatever definition you give to communication, it is important to be sure your definition reflects the true nature of communication as a process which we discuss below.

Elements of Communication

Every process is made up of interacting elements or components. Communication is a process and is made up of about eight elements—people, message, channel, medium, noise, context, feedback and effect.

Human communication involves people. Those involved in a particular communication encounter are called sender-receivers or transceivers. They simultaneously send and receive messages. There are no (and there should not be) permanent senders and permanent receivers; both alternate roles as senders and receivers.

The information that is exchanged between transceivers is the message. It is the content of the communicative encounter. A message has two aspects—the content aspect
which is the core distinct information and the relational aspect which is the affective stimuli we send along with the core information. The short statement, ‘come in’ has as its content the invitation to come in. However, the way it is said (relational) can suggest that we really have been looking forward to seeing the person being addressed, that he/she is not welcome or that he/she had, in fact, better not come in. The relational aspect of a message shows our attitude, feelings and emotions towards the person with whom we are communicating.

Messages are sent and received through channels. These include our five senses as well as the physical carriers of message such as paper, light and airwaves. Human beings are multi-channel communicators and the more the channels engaged in a communicative act, the greater the chances that the act would be a successful one.

The medium of communication often refers to the technical aspects of communication. In communication studies, we talk of mass media such as newspapers, radio and television. Mass media or media of mass communication can be divided into two: print media referring to newspapers, magazines, books and, in fact, whatever is printed; and electronic media which refer to radio, television and the computer. Electronic media can be sub-divided into two: broadcast media which are radio and television and narrowcast media which refer to cable, the Local Area Network (LAN) and Wider Area Network (WAN) of computers and the Internet.

Medium and channel are used interchangeably by some communication scholars whereas some try to separate them. The latter group claims that radio is a (mass) medium, but not a channel. Rather, radio makes use of airwaves as its channel. Television uses both light and airwaves to reach people. Writing is a medium that uses paper and light as channels.

In communication, there is almost always noise, which refers to whatever stands between the transceivers and makes communication difficult. It is anything that interferes with the easy flow of messages from one transceiver to the other. Noise comes in various
forms. There is the physical noise which refers to that which disturbs the ears. There is also physiological noise which refers to disturbances arising as a result of discomfort, fatigue, pain or sickness in the body of one of the transceivers. When any of these is present, it affects the quality and impact of communication. There is also linguistic noise—wobbly writing, incorrect or inarticulate pronunciation and the use of expressions that are too advanced for or strange to one of the transceivers. Those bent on impressing (or dazzling) their listeners with bombastic expressions run the risk of creating linguistic noise.

Communication takes place in a context, setting or environment. The place in which something is said dictates, to some extent, the meaning the transceivers attach to it. If Femi, a pupil knocks at the principal’s door and hears ‘Yes’ from within, he goes in because ‘Yes’ means ‘Come in’. But it does only in that setting. If the same Femi knocks at the door of the loo, and hears the same principal say ‘Yes’ from within for whatever reason, he will certainly not go in because ‘Yes’ from inside the loo means ‘Don’t come in’. A good communicator must always take into account the power place has on meaning. Another dimension to the context of communication is the size-related dimension. This gives us contexts of communication such as intrapersonal (communication from a person to him/herself); interpersonal communication which involves two or more people; group communication; organisational communication and mass communication.

The verbal and non-verbal responses we get during communication are called feedback. Without it, communication is an incomplete, one-way information dispersal effort, which is really not communication at all. Feedback helps us to know how clearly our message is reaching our co-communicator. Feedback comes in verbal forms such as when questions are correctly answered or when people say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. A greater chunk of feedback, however, comes in non-verbal forms such as head nods, smiles, frowns and facial expressions that show confusion.
Finally, communication has effects. Effects of communication are very difficult to measure. That is why many communication researchers prefer the terms impact and influence. This however does not negate the presence of effects. Whatever people do as a result of our communication with them is the effect of our communication. There are three kinds of effect—physical, emotional and cognitive effects (Gamble and Gamble, 1989). When what you told someone caused him/her to clap, fight, hug, speak, scream or do any such physical act, then the effect of your communication is physical; if it caused him/her to be sad, happy or frightened, then the effect was emotional, and if by communicating with someone you added to person’s knowledge or gave him/her new insights, the effect is cognitive. The result of a communicative act can be a combination of the three. For instance, if the people in a farm settlement were told that in response to their demands, the government has approved a subsidy on fertilizer, they are likely to show sincere happiness (emotional effect), laugh and shake hands (physical) and get better insight into the power of properly articulated demands (cognitive). There cannot be communication without effect, and a good communicator is always conscious of the effects his acts may have on other transceivers.

The effect of communication is determined by so many factors. These include the listener’s personality, his/her background generally (especially his/her background knowledge of the issues being discussed), culture, gender and so many others. That is why many times different people receive similar messages but react differently. A communicator should not think he/she can easily manipulate people to achieve whatever effect he/she wants: people are not robots.

Summary

In this first lecture, we have looked at some definitions of communication. We are told that human communication is more than passing or disseminating information. Rather, communication is a bi-
directional process that involves sharing and exchange of thoughts, ideas, feelings or information. As a process, we also learned from this lecture, communication has some elements such as the message, people (sender and receiver), context, channel, medium, effect/impact and noise. All these elements are always present in any communication encounter. For this reason, whichever definition we give to communication must reflect these elements.

Post-Test

1. Attempt any THREE definitions of communication.

2. Why do you think communication is a process?

3. Identify and discuss any FOUR elements of human communication. Show the relationship among these elements.

4. There is no communication without effect/impact. Discuss.

References


LECTURE TWO

The Nature of Human Communication

Introduction

Like human beings, lower animals also communicate. However, human communication is different from animal communication and unique in a number of ways. Some of the characteristics that distinguish human communication from animal communication are what we shall be discussing in this lecture.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Identify and discuss the characteristics of human communication;
2. Distinguish between human and animal communication; and
3. Appreciate the relevance of context in communication encounters.

Pre-Test

1. List and discuss any three characteristics of human communication you know.
2. Do you agree that human communication is different from animal communication?

CONTENT

Peculiar Characteristics of Human Communication

Communication is a unique feature of humans. It (or at least the extent to which we can use it) is essentially what differentiates us from other creatures. Though communication is a pervasive, womb-to-tomb practice, it is a complex one. This section gives us some insight into the nature of communication.

*Communication is a dynamic and continuous process.* By this we mean that it is always changing and it is on-going (Hybels and Weaver, 2001). All the elements constantly interact
and affect each other. It is impossible to drive a pin to a point and say ‘here is where communication begins’ or ‘there it ends’. It is a continuous process. Imagine that you had a quarrel with your landlord’s son last night. In the night the thought of the unfortunate event occupied your mind. You knew your landlord would be the first to wake you in the morning. You knew he would come battle-ready. ‘He’s a trouble-seeking, blood-sucking Shylock’, you told yourself. You started to plan, right on your bed, how to react. Which is a better option: to smile as usual while he rages, or respond ‘fire for fire’. You chose the latter. This morning as you come out of the house, you see the landlord coming from a distance, and you spot a white sheet of paper in his hands. ‘Ah! Quit notice!’ Yet, you make up your mind: fight m-a-n and damn the consequences. You remind yourself of the various excesses of this man and you just are not going to take any further rubbish. You select your words in advance. The man draws near and…beams a smile. ‘Teacher’, he says, ‘I learnt my boy was rude to you yesterday. Please, forgive the little rascal. I got this letter from my daughter. Please, as usual, bail me out by reading it for me’. Your own expression changes from the combative to the friendly. After this, you remember the event and the man in a new light and tell yourself, ‘I really did not understand my landlord. He’s a peace-lover after all’.

Communication is ubiquitous. Watzlawick, Beaven and Jackson (1967) made the very famous statement *man cannot not communicate*, thereby aptly capturing the ubiquity of communication. As you walk into the lecture room, greet some students and look away from others, pick a seat and run your finger across it to see if it is dusty, you are sending to and receiving from others around you, thousands of stimuli, sometimes consciously, oftentimes unconsciously; sometimes formally, other times informally. That is communication (Soola, 1998). You may choose not to talk but you cannot choose not to communicate. The reason for this is that communicating is more than exchanging words (it is much wider than language);
it is both verbal and non-verbal. **Verbal communication**, which may be written or oral, involves the use of words. Non-verbal communication is the transmission of messages through the use of body language (such as gestures, facial expressions and posture); tactile expressions (touching); the voice (loud, low, angry, soothing); clothing and dressing; space and distance (proxemic); colours and others. For example, the type, shape and fitness of the clothes a teacher is putting on and his/her composure or lack of it communicate loudly to the pupils and other teachers about his/her competence and general personality.

**Non-verbal communication** is a particularly complex form of communication for many reasons. First, it is culture-bound. What is accepted as a modest show of respect in a culture may be rather offensive in another. A simple example is the way respect is expressed among the different tribes in Nigeria. During greetings, simple curtsying before an elder is a lavish expression of respect among the Igbos whereas among most Yorubas, especially in the rural areas, that is great discourtesy; full prostration is the norm. Second, non-verbal cues are difficult to record. However it is a very powerful form of communication. Maurus (1999) says about 80% of our communication is non-verbal. Not only this, whenever what we say or write (verbal message) conflicts with the non-verbal, the tendency is for people to believe the non-verbal message. This is because non-verbal cues show the true feelings.

People confuse the terms *oral* and *verbal*. For instance, when they left an unwritten message for someone, they say ‘I did not meet her; I just left a verbal message’ instead of ‘I did not meet her; I just left an oral message’. *Verbal* means *using words* whether the words are written or unwritten, whereas *oral* means *spoken, unwritten*. So, oral communication, that is spoken communication, is a part of verbal communication. *Written* communication is the second part. Both make up verbal communication—pardon the repetition!

*Communication is a transaction.* Rather than being a one-way street, communication is a thorough two-way transaction and negotiation. It is give-and-take, simultaneous process with
a past, a present and a future. We respond to a communicative situation based on our past experiences. And we think of the future as we communicate with someone: if we want to develop a relationship with someone, we talk in a way that suggests that, and vice-versa. Oftentimes, we use phatic comments and expressions to say this. We often do not directly say: I do not wish to talk to you in future. Rather we ‘say’ so indirectly by our facial and emotional expressions, or by verbal but subtle means.

*Communication is unrepeatable and irreversible.* When we ask someone who has just said something to ‘come again’, we often do not get the exact representation of what was earlier said. Very often, the speaker modifies his earlier statement and the accompanying non-verbal cues, especially if we sounded offended or surprised by what we had heard. Not only this, a true communicative encounter changes the participants in some definite way that makes a true repetition impossible. No one goes away the same person as he came after a genuine communicative encounter. Communication is irreversible in that what is said cannot be unsaid. The Yorubas say, ‘words are (like raw) eggs; once dropped, they cannot be picked back’, and the Chinese say ‘Not even the emperor can buy back one single day’ (Gamble and Gamble, 1996).

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**Summary**
The lecture we have just concluded focused on those characteristics that distinguish human communication from animal communication. In the lecture, we were able to understand that unlike animal communication, human communication uses language in dynamic way to express different ideas. We also learned that human communication is context and culture-based, ubiquitous and continuous, among others characteristics. “*Man cannot not communicate*”, but he may choose not to speak.
Post-Test

1. Show, with example, how human communication is different from animal communication.
2. What does the statement “man cannot not communicate” tell you about human communication?
3. Demonstrate how human communication is dynamic.

References

LECTURE THREE

Meaning of Society

Introduction

Having discussed the meaning, elements and nature of human communication in the preceding lectures, we now move a step further in this lecture by discussing the meaning of communication. We will also look at the basis of society. To do this, we shall use the perspectives of two schools of thought. These are (a) The Structural Functionalism and (b) The Symbolic Interactionism. Our knowledge of the concepts will prepare us well for our subsequent discussions concerning the relevance of communication in the social group called society.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of society;
2. Identify different layer of the Nigerian society from the geographical perspectives; and
3. Discuss the peculiarities of the different layers of the Nigerian society.

Pre-Test

1. What is society?
2. What two major criteria (boundaries) can we use to demarcate a society?
3. List the different layers of geographic society. Relate your answer to the Nigerian society.
4. Enumerate the major characteristics of any two of the layers of society.
CONTENT

Definition of Society

Society is a collection of people living together in an organised way within a defined boundary. Society, as Daramola (2005: 1-2) describes it, is “the web of social relationships...the whole complex scheme or whole tissue of social relationships.” Citing George Simmel, one of the founders of modern sociology, and Anthropologist Raph Linton, Daramola further describes society as “a number of individuals connected by interaction...or any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to think of themselves as a social unit with well-defined limits.”

From the foregoing definitions, we could observe that society is a union of people who live together and interact within a common boundary. The boundary may be social (such as Women’s Society) or geographical (such as the Nigerian society). If we use the social boundary, society can be further categorised into religious societies, ethnic society, professional societies (Society of Engineers) and so on. A society is different from a community because the community is more closely knit than the society. That is, within a society, we can have a number of communities—units of people who share more proximate cultural or social identities.

Strata of Geographical Society

In this section, we focus on the big geographical society known as the Nigerian society. The Nigerian society, if viewed from the geographical perspective, has three layers. There are the rural, urban and semi-urban or peripheral layers. Let us discuss these strata and see how each of the strata is unique.

(1) The rural society:

The rural layer is inhabited by most Nigerians: about 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas (Moemeka, 2009). Rural Nigerians are friendly and hospitable. They are able to spend time
with other people and cultivate true relationships because their time is not governed by strict schedules and they are not affected by the trappings of the city. They are very important to the survival of the country because they produce nearly all of the food consumed in the country. Yet they are the poorest and the most neglected in the country. They are mostly illiterate. They lack basic amenities such as pipe-borne water, hospitals, electricity and good roads. Poverty in rural Nigeria is severe. The saddest part of the story is that the children of these poor rural people of today also have the tendency to become the poor rural people of tomorrow. There is no strategy mapped out by government to break the poverty chain. Health problems in rural Nigeria are worse than they are in the urban areas.

The media of mass communication do not pay attention to the rural people (Moemeka, 2009; Duyile, 1989). This is a result of many reasons: (1) Most media houses are located in the cities and so they cater to the interest of the urban people. (2) Advertisers focus on consumers—most consumers of modern products are found in the urban areas. Therefore, advertisers want to sponsor media programmes that appeal to these urban consumers. Take chocolate drink (which we wrongly call tea) as an example. Most rural people don’t take chocolate (or tea or coffee). Why then will a chocolate company sponsor a programme targeted at rural people. (3) Most media personnel are urban-based and urban-trained. They aren’t qualified to tell the stories of the rural people. Therefore rural people are neglected. (4) For reasons unstated by government, it has refused to approve the establishment of community radio stations in Nigeria. A community radio is a non-profit station owned, staffed and run by the community people (Ojebode, 2009; Myers, 2011). Because there are no community radio stations in Nigeria, the rural people do not have access to the broadcast media as active message makers. They are mere passive message consumers. The conventional radio system in Nigeria is highly elitist and urban-centred. In terms of programme contents and mode of delivery, the grassroots are alienated; their languages;
identity, needs, and hope are neither recognised nor protected by radio in Nigeria (Ojebode and Akingbulu, 2009).

The coming of mobile telephony (specifically the GSM) in Nigeria in 2000 has remarkably bridged the gap between rural dwellers and others in terms of the difference in their tele-density. Many rural communities now have access to GSM. But the difference between the rural and other areas in terms of tele-density has not been completely removed. Many rural communities in Nigeria still do not have telephone signals. For communication, rural Nigerians depend on traditional methods of communication such as town crier and symbols. They also depend on newspapers from the cities. Where rural newspapers exist, many are written in English which is alien to most rural people.

(2) The periphery:

The periphery or the sub-urban people are those who reside in areas that are not clearly urban or clearly rural. This category of people also includes squatters in urban areas and slum-dwellers. Most of these people have been lured by the promising glitter of city life. When they reach the city, they become completely disillusioned because what imagined before coming to the city are not actually there; the dreamed glitters are a mere mirage. Having settled in the city or in areas close to the city, they eke out a living there doing menial jobs. They have a high tendency to get involved in illegalities. These people are poor; they live in squalors and are largely illiterate. Their poverty may also be inter-generational.

(3) The urban:

The urban Nigerian is made up of the upper class—rich people, highly (formally) educated. They have social amenities (even if these are not adequate) such as electricity, water (pipe-borne or dug-out well). A large portion of the nation’s resources is spent on maintaining these
people. Though they have these amenities, their lives are not without problems: incidence of crime is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Most houses are walled to the sky, and many communities within the urban areas are gated. Not only this, they do not have the neighbourliness and “brothers-keeper” mentality of the rural people. Life in urban Nigeria can be busy, choked and even lonely.

Air and noise pollution are common urban problems. As a result of air pollution, certain lung diseases are more rampant in urban areas than rural. As a result of noise pollution, urban dwellers have more decibel losses than the rural dwellers. They tend to have more hearing problems. They may also suffer from “intentional progressive deafness”, that is, growing unresponsiveness or insensitivity to noise and sound.

Urban dwellers have access to all forms of modern communication: internet, satellite, newspapers, television and radio. They can afford recharge cards to call friends and family. And they may be very current. But this access has not tended to contribute to civic engagement: many urban dwellers are apathetic to community projects and even politics. Not only this, the access may have also contributed to withdrawal from interpersonal interaction and interpersonal communication.

Still on communication in urban areas, urban dwellers are likely to suffer from information overload. Because there is information coming from too many channels, they are likely to get overwhelmed and submerged in the pool of information.

The Root of Society
In our attempt to explain what constitutes society, what makes society possible, or how human society operates, we shall consider two schools of thought. These schools of thought are (1) the Structural-Functionalism Perspective, and (2) the Symbolic Interactionism Perspective (Daramola, 2005). Let us discuss these two perspectives:
(a) The Structural Functionalism

The Structural-functionalists believe that the core ingredients of human society are the structural elements such as roles, status, rules, institutions, languages and general systems of social control (e.g. constitution, regulation). In the opinion of this school of thought, human society is possible because individuals acquire and internalise the norms values and mores that guide acceptable conduct within the social setting. Through the process of socialisation, members of a human society acquire these social norms and values and become acceptable members of the society. When members acquire these values, the individuals become self-regulating or self-righting persons and voluntarily perform the roles expected of them in acceptable manners. As long as members of a social group imbibe these values through socialisation, society will continue to exist, function and transit from one generation to another. On the other hand, a human society will cease to exist as an orderly social structure as soon as members fail to acquire the structural elements we have already identified. Talcott Parsons is one of the notable proponents of structural-functionalism as a school of thought to explain the basis of society (Daramola, 2005).

(b) The Symbolic Interactionism

This school of thought believes that human society is possible because members interact, transact and form relationships among themselves. What defines or constitute society is what members of the society bring to it in terms of their interaction and relationship. Through these social interactions, society becomes a co-operative entity, a sustained moral and social order. According to the leading proponent of this school of thought—George Herbert Mead (Daramola, 2005)—society will continue to exist as long as its members continue to interact, transact and perform their civic responsibilities. This means that society is anchored on the framework of meaningful
social interactions among individuals, groups, organisations or institutions that constitute the society.

It is through these social interactions that people exchange ideas, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, emotions, experiences and information—this is communication, a social act that is performed through language, signs, gestures or other symbol-related processes. Therefore, communication, in the view of the Symbolic Interactionism school of thought, is the core element of society. Unless people communicate (interact socially), society is impossible. This is because it is through communication that new knowledge, ideas, values, norms and mores are transferred from one generation to another. In essence, without communication (interaction) socialisation is not possible, and without socialisation, society cannot sustain herself.

Summary

In this lecture, we have discussed the concept of society as a unit of social relationships or interactions among people of a common boundary. The common boundary or limit may be social or geographical. We have also identified and explained the geographic strata of the Nigerian society. These strata are the rural, the peripheral and the urban layers. We further identified and discussed two schools of thought from whose perspectives we can explain how society is possible. These two schools of thought are the Structural-Functionalism Perspective and the Symbolic Interactionism Perspective.

Post-Test

1. Give any two definitions of society.

2. Why do you think that a society is different from a community?
3. Enumerate and discuss the three strata (layers) of the Nigerian society.

4. What are the basic peculiarities of the rural layer of the Nigerian society?

5. Distinguish between *Structural Functionalism* and *Symbolic Interactionism* as two basic concepts for explaining the basis for society.

**References**


LECTURE FOUR

Sociology of Communication

Introduction
In the previous lecture, we looked at the meaning of society and we described it as a web of human relationship that is shaped by the structural elements such as the norms, values and mores on the one hand and the totality of symbolic interactions by individuals on the other hand. Our major focus in this lecture is to see how society and communication are related. In other words, we shall examine the concept of communication from the sociological perspectives.

Objectives
At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define the term Sociology;
2. Identify and explain the two major levels of sociology;
3. Explain or define communication from the sociological perspectives; and
4. Use communication more effectively for relationship building and social interactions.

Pre-Test

1. What do you understand by the term sociology?
2. Distinguish distinguished between micro-sociology and macro-sociology.
3. Why do you think communication and sociology are related?

CONTENT

What is Sociology?
In spite of the growing sense of independence among human beings, there are still many proofs that we are as gregarious and interdependent as those who lived several generations ago were. The invention and design of the motorcar, the boom in the use of information and
communication technology (ICT), the use of answering machines and so on are all meant to keep others away from our lives and to make us independent of them. But that hardly happens for life is practically impossible without the presence of and interaction with others. What we think, how we feel, and what we say and do are all shaped by our interactions with other people. The scientific study of these social interactions and of social organisations is called SOCIOLOGY (Hughes, Kroehler and Vander Zanden, 2010). Uche (2011:427) defines sociology as “the science which studies the development and organization of human society...the scientific study of the nature and development of society, human social behaviours and of the aspects of human life that derive from “living in society”. Uche further explains that the central concern of Sociology is the social relationship of people who are found in a society, and that under core focus of sociology are the social institutions, organizations, the interaction of social groups, and inter-relationship.

Levels of Social Interaction

Sociologists have distinguished between the two levels social interactions occur in human society. These two levels are the *micro-sociology* and the *macro-sociology*. The study of human interactions at small, face-to-face levels is called micro-sociology. It deals with a detailed examination of what we say, do and think every moment as we go about our daily lives and interact with individuals around us (Hughes et al., 2010). The interaction at the micro-level is more of interpersonal engagements. It is small-scale and short-term in most cases, and it gives the small picture of sociology. Macro-sociology on the other hand is the big-picture of sociology. It focuses on large-scale and long-term social processes of organisations, institutions, and broad social patterns, including the state, social class, the family, the economy, culture, and society at large. It is important to state that both micro-sociology and macro-sociology are interdependent. Changes at one level are influenced by
and influence the other, and the aggregate of what takes place at the micro-level largely shapes the patterns of the interactions at the micro-level.

**Sociology of Communication**

Sociology of communication is the study of the process, nature, structure and impact of communication from a sociological perspective. Put differently, it is the examination of how humans communicate as they interact with one another whether face-to-face or as groups and societies. It seeks to answer questions like how do people communicate? In what ways does communication take place at the individual and the family level? What happens to communication among a particular sub-culture? How do the mass media affect society and vice-versa? Sociology of communication involves understanding communication as humans encounter one another in society.

Communication and sociology are two sides of the same coin. They are inseparable. As earlier stated, sociology focuses on interactions and relationships. And human interaction is totally impossible without communication. Wherever people interact, they must communicate. As Watzlawick, Beaven and Jackson (1967) put it, man cannot not communicate, that is man cannot do without communicating with others around him. Sociology focuses on the dynamic forces that keep the society going and central among these forces is communication especially with reference to forms and media.

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<td>We have discussed the connection between Sociology and communication. First, we looked at some definitions of sociology and we conclude that sociology is the study of the patterns of human interactions. We then looked at the two levels of socio interactions—micro-sociology and macro-sociology—before we finally explained the concept of communication from the sociological standpoint. This we described as sociology of communication—the study of the process, nature, structure and impact of communication from a sociological perspective</td>
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Post-Test

1. Sociology is “the scientific study of the nature and development of society, human social behaviours and of the aspects of human life that derive from “living in society” (Uche, 2011:424). Use the foregoing definition to explain your understanding of the broad concept of sociology.

2. Justify the inclusion of the study of sociology in communication. Do you think sociologists too should study communication?

3. At what levels do human interactions take place? Use examples to illustrate your answer.

References

New York: Norton
LECTURE FIVE

Communication and the Family

Introduction

Family is a core unit of the social system. If we want to examine how communication is used to fabricate and lubricate social relationships, we must start from the level of family where interpersonal communication and interactions often take place before getting to the large, institutional level. Therefore, in this lecture, we shall focus on how communication is used at the family level.

Objectives:

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and understand family as a unit of the social unit;
2. Distinguish between the two perspectives of family; and
3. Appreciate the various functions of the family in the social system.

Pre-Test

1. How would you describe a family?
2. Why do you think the family is important in the social system?
3. With examples, distinguish the functionalist and the conflict perspectives of the family.

CONTENT

The family

The family can be defined as two or more persons related by blood, marriage, law, custom or adoption. Members of a family may or may not often live together in the same household. The family is a primary group typically with personal loyalty, affection and close relations
with and among all members. It is in the context of the family that a child develops humanness and moves from primitive biogenetic instincts to learned social responses (Diaz, Duoff, Hodgson, White, & Jone, 2013).

The basic communication skills, the rudiments of social interactions, and role behaviour, which are the components of human culture, are learned in the family. The ability to speak is inborn; but the language a child speaks and his communication behaviour are acquired in the society via the family as the first teacher. In fact, the family is a significant agent of social and political socialisation (Daramola, 2005). The family is the first window through which the child peeps into the larger world. When a child is born, he spends all of his childhood time in the family; at school age, he spends roughly half of his time in the family; at adolescence, roughly a quarter of his time is spent in the family, and at adulthood he still relates much with the family. The point is that from cradle to grave, the influence of the family is pervasive.

The child’s primary socialization begins with the family. The important identification with the ethnic group, culture and religions, social classes and even how the child views himself/herself as male/female have their origins in the family. When he answers the questions of identity (such as who am I?), the child is doing so largely as a member of his particular family. However, families differ greatly in terms of access to wealth and prestige. As a result, some families are able to expose their children to greater variety of communication media and activities than some others. This in turn have some impact on the child.

**Two Perspectives of the Family as a Social Unit**

There are two schools of thought that can be used to explain the concept of the family as a social unit. While one of the schools sees the family as a unit that performs some cardinal
social functions, the other school views the family from the perspective of social conflict. Let us examine these two perspectives.

(a) The Functionalist View of the Family

Functionalists analyse society in terms of the contributions of each of its parts to the operation of the whole. One part of the society is the family and has been analysed in terms of its contributions or basic functions to the society (Diaz, Duoff, Hodgson, White, & Jone, 2013). Functionalists observe that the family perform the following roles:

Sexual Regulations: Biologically, nearly every mature human can engage in sex. In practice however, every human society regulates the pattern of sex although the regulations vary from one society to another. In the African society, there are legal and religious frameworks that prohibit (or at least inhibit) sex outside marriage.

Reproduction: Families provide new members of the society. No society can survive longer than a generation except the family does its work of providing the generation that will take over from the current one. Not only does it provide new members, the family also nurtures them. Sex does take place outside marriage and children could be born as a result of such acts, but no child can survive unless he is taken care of in a family setting or a setting that looks like it.

Socialisation: The family provides the context in which the infant first meets older human beings. In this context, he learns the rules of behaviour, duties, language, communication and all the other aspects of culture. It is here the child acquires the skills needed to play adult roles later in life. The family with its intimate relationship is the chief agent of socialisation
in most societies. And as such, it plays the important role of meeting a crucial societal need—passing culture from one generation to another.

**Emotional Support:** This is another function of the family. There are loners, no doubt, but most human beings need social contacts. As social animals, we not only need companionship, but we actually need caring and affection. From infancy to old age, people turn to their families for warmth and intimacy.

**Economic Cooperation:** There is no known society in which the family does not play a major economic role. In traditional peasant and craft societies, the family is a cooperative work unit. Tasks and jobs are assigned according to the age and sex of family members. Even in the so-called modern societies in which nearly all the work is done outside the home, the family continues to have economic significance. It is in the family that decisions on how to spend money are made and these have enormous impact on the national economy.

**b) The Conflict Perspective of the Family**

Conflict theory concentrates on how people within a unit (the family in this regard) struggle for power, how they disagree and what actions they take to compete for or share wealth. The theory of conflict within families is premised on the assumption that family members experience conflicts and disharmony. The conflict theory examines family dynamics and the roles played by the family members, the source of the power and the causes of the conflict in the family. Included in the conflict theory as it applies to the family is the uncovering of how the family deals with changes and adversity (Ray, 2010). Conflict theorists, especially Marxists, see the family from an angle diametrically different from the functionalist perspective. They see the family as a unit in which tensions are constantly being played out (Diaz, Duoff, Hodgson, White, & Jone, 2013). Marriage is an arena in which each partner
seeks to control the other. The birth of children can generate struggle for power within the family or dispute over inheritance.

Socialisation, the conflict theory claim, is merely a process of enforcing existing pattern of power struggle between the haves (bourgeois) and the have-nots (proletariat); between parents and children, etc. On the economic level, male-female relations may be a struggle for the control of resources or properties right. The lead thinkers of conflict theory (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels) continue to see the family as a context for conflicts.

**Summary**

Family, as we have discussed in this lecture is a social unit of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, who may or may not often live together in the same household. It is the first stage of socialisation process where the child is first exposed the societal norms and communication behaviours. We have also examined the schools of thought that explain the concept of the family. These are the functionalist and the conflict schools of thought. While the first school sees the family as a unit that performs some cardinal social functions, the other school views the family from the Marxist perspective of social conflict or class struggle.

**Post-Test**

1. What is the family?

2. “The family is the first window through which the child peeps into the larger world.” Explain this notion from your own experience as a member of your family.

3. Identify and explain, with examples, the two perspectives of the family as a social unit.
References


LECTURE SIX

Communication Styles in the Family and the Changing Functions of the Modern Family

Introduction

Communication is not separable from all human activities. The fundamental lubricant of social interaction is communication, and this web of interaction starts from the family. This is why we must not neglect the place of communication in the overall social mechanism of the family. Therefore, in this lecture, our discussion shall be based on the communication styles in the family, and how such communication styles determine the nature of interaction and functions of the members of the family.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Identify and explain the different communication styles that may manifest in different family settings;

2. Appreciate the roles of communication in the overall socialisation of the child;

3. Understand how modernity is changing the functions of the family; and

4. Communicate better with members of your family and other people around you.

Pre-Test

1. How do you communicate with members of your family?
2. Which of your family members is always in charge of message control and dissemination?

3. What roles do you, your siblings and your parents play in your family?

CONTENT

Communication Styles in the Family

The family is the child’s first and most basic social group. It creates well-integrated members of society by inculcating the social culture and norms into children (Diaz, Duoff, Hodgson, White, & Jone, 2013). This basic function of socialisation is performed mostly through communication. Communication in the family has attracted the attention of scholars and continues to do so. As a result, many explanations and structures have been propounded about communication styles in the family. One of them is discussed here.

I. **Caplow’s Two-Against-One Theory** Caplow (1968) contends that the family is a basic triad—a group of three communicating people, in this case, father, mother and the child. According to him, in this triad there is always a teaming-up of two people against three. As soon as the child is born, family communication moves from dyadic (husband-wife) to triadic where the husband and wife may team up against the child or the child and one parent against the other parent. The teaming-up is often transient and may develop along certain issues. For instance, when issues of sports are discussed, the father and child may be on a side while the mother is alone on the other. When the attention is shifted to doing school homework, it may be the father on one side and the child and mother on the other. Family communication serves to introduce the child to the traditions, values and chief characteristics of the larger societies, cultures and communities to which the family belongs.
II. Trenholm and Jensen’s Four Network Types

According to Trenholm and Jensen (1996) there are four main styles of communication among families. These are the Chain, the ‘Y’, the Wheel and the all-channel networks. These networks are illustrated and explained below:

**Chain Network**

The Chain Network presents a pattern of communication where family members relay messages to one another via series of other family members. It is typically used when members see each other occasionally but are rarely all together at once. Messages are, however, more vulnerable to distortion and manipulations as they pass along the chain of communication.

**The ‘Y’ Network**

The “Y” Network is a centralised communication network where one member serves as a “gatekeeper”, allowing some but not all messages to be exchanged among members. One parent may monitor the children’s requests of the other parent, or an older child may summarise her siblings’ desires to the parents. This pattern also makes the messages to be prone to manipulations and distortion.
The Wheel Network is highly centralised. It is found in families that communicate through one key figure. Most members do not talk directly to one another. They find out about each other, and take instructions from the central figure. It is characteristic of an authoritarian family setting.

The All-Channel Network is the most decentralised network of all. It is characteristic of families that spend a lot of time together as a unit and in separate dyads. All or most of the communication channels here are open and utilised. The style of communication in this network is open and democratic.

The various communication patterns we have discussed have implications for the total being of the child. The type of the communication network that a family adopts determines to a large extent the world view, communication behaviour and personality of the child. For instance, Elwood and Schrader cited by Kelly, Keaten, Finch, Duarte, Hoffman, and Michels (2002) assert that family communication patterns, specially a pattern that reflects a high level
of conversation and open exchange of ideas among family members, may generate lower communication apprehension and less unwillingness to communicate by the child. The implication is that a child from a more democratic family where there is free exchange of message among siblings and parents would develop the courage to communicate with the peers and other groups outside the family.

The Changing Functions of the Modern Family

The modern family is undergoing rapid changes, which considerably alter what the family expects from the society. When the family was economically self-sufficient, parents were the sources of knowledge and skills which were transmitted to children. In the modern dependent family, the parent shares this authority with numerous specialists such as the schoolteacher and the mass media.

Family relations have moved from authority to companionship and some are moving towards colleague relationship. In the authority-centred family, one or both parents dominated the decision-making. In the companionship family, the group is held together by the need for love, security, warmth and continuing personal relationships. In the colleague-type family, members perform specialist roles. For example, in the family where the wife works, the husband may do the shopping although this is traditionally not his role. The colleague-type family defines its roles according to the functions that need to be performed and who best can perform them. In all of these, communication plays significant roles. Through communication, roles are shared and decisions are taken among and by members of the family. The type of communication pattern that a family adopts determines the overall social atmosphere in the family, while the social atmosphere also determine what and how decisions are taken and how responsibilities are shared.
Summary
Our focus in this chapter has been on different communication patterns that exist in the family. As the child’s first and most fundamental social group, the type of communication pattern that exists in the child’s family determines a lot of things in his life—his attitude to others, his manner of relating with other people, and his total world-view among others. In our attempt to discuss the communication styles in the family, we used two basic models—Caplow’s Two-Against-One Theory, and Trenholm and Jensen’s Four Network types. We also discussed how the functions of the modern family are changing rapidly as a result of emerging economic and social indices.

Post-Test

1. Why do you think it necessary to study communication styles in the family?

2. What roles does family communication style play in the socialization of the child?

3. Establish the relationship between Caplow’s two-against-one theory of communication style and the conflict perspective of the family.

4. List and discuss the major family communication networks as identified by Trenholm and Jensen. Which of the networks is characteristic of your nuclear family?

References


LECTURE SEVEN

Television, Modern ICT and Family Interaction

Introduction

The mass communication media and the modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are considered to be powerful agents of socialisation. They are present virtually everywhere. The conventional mass media—newspaper, magazine, books, radio and television—are present in virtually every modern home. However, their levels of presence and engagement are not the same. Perhaps because it combines motion picture, sound and colour effects to transmit its message, the television is considered to have occupied a massive proportion of the social space in the family. Apart from the television, the modern ICT are penetrating the modern families, and their effects are massive. Given this unique nature of the television, and the penetrating power of the new media, it is imperative that we examine the roles these media play in shaping the nature of interactions among the family members. This is our focus in this lecture.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Describe the roles of the television in the family;

2. Explain how the modern ICT affect communication and interaction in the family; and

3. Develop better attitudes toward the use of the modern ICT as tools for social interaction.
Pre-Test

1. List all the mass communication media you know.

2. Which of the mass media do you consider to be most engaging? Why?

3. Describe how the television is used in your family.

4. Apart from interpersonal interaction, through what means do you relate with other members of your family?

CONTENT

The Family and Television

The television is a powerful agent of socialisation. As Baran (2002:46) puts it, television is no less influential. It has recorded a phenomenal diffusion throughout U.S. homes. It became a true mass medium in 1960s, reaching into 90% of all homes in the United States of America. Through the television, family members are educated, informed and entertained. Its ability to combine motion pictures, sound and colour effect gives it an edge on radio and newspapers. Children prefer watching the television to listening to radio, while parents turn to the television more often to get most entertainments. The television has become a strong presence in most homes all over the world. This is because most parents go out to work leaving the child baby-sitters and/or with the TV. However this trend greatly reduces the amount of communicative interaction between the child and parents. Even when the parents return home, instead of gathering at the table to talk, they all gather before the TV to watch (gaze at) it; no one talks. The TV is not just taking the place of family communicative interactions, but it is also silencing them. When the TV is switched on, the family switches
off; conversations die down and family life becomes shallow. Interaction recedes and family members inevitably drift apart (Ejiaga, 1991).

By the time an American child graduates from high school, it is discovered, he has spent 17,000 hours in front of the TV compared with only 11,000 hours in school. A study conducted in the U.S required children to indicate which one, between their father and the television set, was their closer friend. Over 54% said the TV was a better friend than their father. In a study by Ejiaga conducted among students of the International School, University of Ibadan, he found that only 11% of his children respondents preferred chatting with parents to watching TV; while 24% preferred TV to parents. In addition, about 74% spent time watching TV whether or not their parents were at home. In other words, even when parents were at home, the TV still had the child’s full attention. A body of data provided by Baran (2002) on the American television households is revealing: There are 102.7 million television households in the U.S. with 99% using colour television sets, and 75% having more than one set. Further, a television is on for an average of 7.5 hours every day in each U.S. home, while a family of three or more people typically watches television up to 60 hours a week.

At mealtimes, family interactions equally suffer because most people prefer to have their meals with the TV, and on occasions mealtimes have to be shifted. As a result of TV, parents are gradually moving out the worlds of their children and a vacuum is created. This vacuum, it is opined, is being filled by the peer group and other socially less desirable engagements.

From the foregoing phenomena, it can be seen that the TV has gradually taken over a huge chunk of the socializing role of the family. The more this happens, the more problems the society will likely face. The world will be populated by people who did not have the benefit of the warm relationship with parents, people brought up by TV and who remember their parents as those always absent from the home.
Family Interaction and the Modern ICT

One of the great claims of the modern information and communication technology (ICT) is that it has brought the world together as one big “global village”. This has had tremendous impact on the family. The Internet and Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) have helped to keep members of the family in instant touch even when they are separated by thousands of kilometres. E-mails and phone calls can be made almost everywhere to get an update among family members, while other social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube) can be used effectively to facilitate interaction within and outside the family. Ibekwe (2003) in a study among students of the University of Ibadan found that to most students, the GSM has increased their frequency of contacts with their parents. According to her findings, the case is the same for those who had GSM and those who did not.

However, there have been criticisms against the ICT for causing real separations among people. Instead of visiting people and sharing their problems and feeling with them, people simply make a hurried phone call and conclude that they are in touch with them. Phone calls, especially in Nigeria, are often hasty because tariffs are very high. People (especially the youth) with smart phones that have sophisticated applications now rely heavily on chats and “pinging” to relate with most family members and friends. Therefore, real interpersonal communication does not take place and pseudo-relationship has replaced real relationships. The Internet is a worse culprit. In homes where there are internet facilities, a family member normally neglects other members and “hooks online” to his virtual friends in cyberspace. And where there are no facilities, the situation may be worse because members of the family may spend hours on end (and nights) browsing in cyber cafés. Nie and Erbing (2000) conducted a study among 4,113 Net users in 2,689 households and discovered among other things that people who spend five hours or more per week online spend less time with
family and friends. Individuals so glued to the Net cut off the real environment that surrounds them. This Minerd (1999) calls the decline of conversation with everybody wired.

**Summary**

In this lecture, we have able to examine how the television is used in the family and how the modern ICT are shaping interactions among members in the family. The television has a strong presence in almost every modern home, and it is used for education, information and entertainments. However, because of its multiple-effects, most parents in the modern families are carried away and are abdicating their roles as the first teachers; they allow the television to take almost all the social space in the family. Similarly, the abuse of modern ICT and other social media by family members are eroding the conventional interpersonal interactions in the family.

**Post-Test**

1. Enumerate the roles that the television plays in the family.

2. Describe how the television can become a negative presence in the family.

3. In what ways do the modern ICT affect the social interactions in the family? Cite examples from your family.

**References**


LECTURE EIGHT

The Peer Group

Introduction

In this lecture, we shall discuss the peer group as an agent of socialisation. We shall also examine the characteristics of the peer group and how members of the peer group use communication.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Understand the meaning of the peer group;
2. Understand the characteristics of the peer group;
3. Describe how the peer group use communication; and
4. Identify and relate well with your peers.

Pre-Test

1. What is the peer group?
2. List and discuss any three characteristics of the peer group.
3. What roles does communication play among your peers?

CONTENT

The Peer Group: Meaning and Characteristics

If the family exercises the strongest influence upon the child, his age mates or peers exert the second strongest influence. In fact, there are strong suggestions that in the modern world where the family members are together only rarely—both parents work, and the child moves from school classroom to school lesson and to another lesson after school—that the peers exert more influence than the parents.
The child’s peers become increasingly important to him as he moves away from his parents towards independence. From his peers, he learns many things he needs to know in order to become an adult. His movement away from parents to peers is not always easy and indeed it is frequently marked by strain and tension for both the child and the parent. The peer group is unique in some ways. Let us discuss these unique characteristics of the peer group:

Unlike the family, the peer group runs on a fairly egalitarian and equalitarian basis. A peer group is a group of equals. Of course, there is usually an informal leader or a set of decision makers—but the hierarchical structure which obtains in the family is always not there.

Another characteristic of the peer group is that it encourages and supports breakaway from parental constraints. The group usually encourages the child to establish his own independent identity. In most cases, the peer group often stands against the position of the family.

Third, the peer group is not an established institution—unlike the family. Roles of members of a peer group are less well defined, and may change frequently—again unlike in the family where roles are more or less consistent.

Children change membership of the peer group as they go through life—but they hardly change their membership of the family—and may also belong to more group than one at a time. A child at one time may be a member of the youth organisation in the neighbourhood, a football team fans club and a church or mosque youth group. In each of these groups, the child has a certain status and is expected to behave in a certain way.

The peer group offers the child the chance not only to break away but also to take responsibilities for his actions and inactions. Groups assign and saddle members with duties and responsibility they would otherwise not have been saddled with in a different context.
Most discussions of peer groups always cast them in antagonistic, anti-establishmentarian, rebellious and negative lights. Almost all the time, they are seen as polluting and destroying the child with evil values. This is not true in all cases. Peer groups have been valuable sources of inspiration, community service, education and innovation in many societies. Among the Igbo people, the age grade system is meant to help the child develop along with his peers into a useful and valuable member of the society. Peer groups embark on community service of various forms. Peer groups have also been an avenue in the fight against HIV/AIDS in developing world through the means of peer education.

The Peer Group and Communication

The Peer group influences and is influenced by communication and communication media, more than we think. For example, as Hartley (1999:86) rightly observed, “teenage gangs often develop strong norms for behaving and communicating” among themselves. We begin acquiring a language or languages in the family but soon as we move to school, we begin to get influenced by the language of the peer group. Ryan (2001:1135) has described the peer group as a social organ that has “an important influence on adolescent achievement beliefs and behaviours”. Peer groups influence a person’s communication in a number of ways.

First, the peer group offers the child an opportunity to discuss issues and topic forbidden by the parents. Top on such list of forbidden topics is sex. Naturally, people, especially young individuals, are always attracted to, and affiliated with, others that share similar attributes or do similar things. This tendency of group attraction is a social dynamic otherwise referred to as homophily (Ryan, 2001). Depending on how strict parents are, topics such as smoking, drug use, drinking and gambling, conversion to a different religion or marrying someone from a different religion or culture, are regarded as sensitive issues that
children should not be allowed to discuss. Therefore, the peers come together based on issues of common interest, and exercise the freedom of expression that the home may not allow.

Second, the peer group influences a person’s language use. Slang expressions are common among peer groups and are not usually used or encouraged by most families. Words and expressions considered as obscene and unclean by families are also used freely in many peer groups. We want to note that many peer groups prohibit such words as well—all groups operate by their own rules. Besides, peer group as an agent of socialisation serves as the platform for inculcation of social norms, cultural values and gender awareness among the youth. Tetreault, (2006:7), based on the findings of her study among Algerian youth in France, shares a similar view as she submits that “peer groups not only contribute to transgressive communicative practices in early adolescence, but also serve as a vehicle for adopting more conservative gender and cultural values at the onset [?] of adulthoods.”

Peer groups influence the choice of media products a person makes. Magazines that the young person reads, the television programmes he watches, the videos he borrows and watches are all influenced by the peer group. Very often, a member of the group watches something and recommends it to others. It may however be less direct than that: in some cases, a group has developed a taste and members consume every available media product that are consistent with or promote this taste. For instance, members of a specific football fans club would not wait until they are told to buy a wrist band that carries the name of their football team.

The peer group also influences a person’s non-verbal cues. The shape and size of the clothing a person wears (mini skirts, sagged trousers, make-ups etc.), the non-verbal gestures he exhibits while talking, how he walks etc are influenced often by the peer group. Everyone wants to be accepted by his group, and will do what others in the group do in order to get acceptance.
Summary

As we have discussed in this lecture, the peer group is a group of people who are of about the same age bracket, and move together as a social unit. The peer group exerts great influence on the child because apart from the family, the child’s nearest constituency is his peer group. The peer group has a structure that is anchored on egalitarian principle; it encourages breakaway from parental constraints; its role distribution is fluid (flexible/undefined) because it is not an established institution; membership of the peer group is neither sacrosanct nor permanent; and it encourages members to take responsibility for their actions. Besides, the peer group uses communication in some peculiar ways. For instance, the mode of communication among the peers allows members to discuss some issues or topics forbidden by parents; and, among others, they use slang expressions as part of their communication mode.

Post-Test

1. How would you define the peer group?
2. In what ways is the peer group different from other social groups?
3. Discuss how your peer group uses communication to cultivate social interaction.

References


LECTURE NINE

Communication among Hidden and Membership Groups

Introduction

Society is made up of different social units and institutions. Apart from the family and other social institutions such as the school and the religious institutions, there are other social groups. The aggregate of the nature of symbolic interactions among members of these social units gives shape to the larger society. While identities and activities of some of these groups are known to the public and endorsed by the constituted authorities, the case is different in some other groups whose activities and characters are concealed from the public. In this lecture, therefore, we want to discuss these two groups—membership and hidden groups—and how they use communication to facilitate social cohesion among their members.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between hidden and membership groups;
2. Understand how communication is used among hidden and membership groups; and
3. Communicate more effectively with your peers.

Pre-Test

1. How would you define hidden groups and membership groups?
2. Outline and discuss the functions that communication performs among hidden and membership groups.
Hidden Groups vs. Membership Groups

As the name implies, hidden groups are groups whose members’ identities and conduct are concealed from the public. Watters and Biernacki (1989:417) describes hidden populations as “a group whose activities are clandestine and therefore concealed from the view of mainstream society and agencies of social control”. Baumes, Goldberg, Magdon-Ismail, and Wallace (2013:1) describe hidden groups as “groups (communities) functioning in communication networks which use, intentionally or not, the surrounding background communications to disguise their existence”.

These groups of people are more difficult to study and reach with communication messages than non-hidden groups. Examples of hidden groups are users of outlawed or unauthorised substance/drugs such as marijuana (what is the pronunciation?), cocaine and heroin. In Nigeria today, gay and lesbian people are a hidden population.

Membership groups, also known as patron groups, are not involved, as a group, in unlawful activities but they have clear-cut ways of interaction which set them out as a group within the society. They congregate in specific places and share specific activities. Membership of these groups is by application and in some cases by official admission. Examples of patron or membership groups are clubs, societies and unions. In Nigerian higher institutions of learning, associations such as the Kegites Club, the Sigma Club, the Union of Campus Journalists, and various students’ organisations duly recognised and approved by the school authorities present unique examples of patron/membership groups.

How Communication is Used among Hidden and Membership Groups

The core ingredient of symbolic interactions among members of any social group is communication. Communication among hidden and membership groups performs primarily the basic functions it performs in other social contexts. These functions include:
• **Information:** Members use verbal and non-verbal communication to share messages, to notify one another about events and activities such as group meetings and projects.

• **Mobilisation:** Members employ communication to garner support from among members for group goals and targets. Mobilisation has to do with getting everyone to share in the belief that a certain cause should be pursued and vigorously pursuing it.

• **Entertainment:** Nearly all groups use communication to ease off tension; create a light atmosphere and mood during discussions. Some groups even create time meant only for entertainment.

• **Education:** Groups employ communication to enlighten their members about issues pertaining to them. Until recently, people living with HIV were referred to as hidden groups. These people employ communication to educate their members on healthy/positive living habits, adherence to treatment and related matters.

• **Socialisation:** New members of each group must learn the ways of the group. New initiates in the Kegites Club must learn the modes of greeting members as well as the Club language. Communication is used for this purpose.

• **Storage:** Communication performs archival functions for groups. Members store information pertaining to the group in written or oral forms. Most clubs keep well document minutes of meetings and file copies of memoranda for record purposes.

• **Warmth:** Communication, especially oral communication, promotes warm interpersonal relationships among members of a group.

• **Conflict Management:** Groups go through conflicts. Wherever there are people, there will be conflicts. Communication helps groups to resolve their misunderstandings and manage their conflicts.
Peculiar Use of Communication among Hidden Groups

In addition to the foregoing functions that communication performs among the hidden and membership groups, communication, among hidden groups performs two major functions of bonding and screening. Let us discuss these in details:

(a) Bonding

Bonding is a stage in interpersonal relationships at which two or more separate individuals become so united as to be called one. In romantic relationships, bonding occurs when two people (before now it used to be a man and a woman) are pronounced husband and wife. (Now the permutation range keeps growing!). Bonding is not only a stage: it is also a process by which the separate individuals that make up the group become closely connected and interdependent.

Communication serves to move groups towards the bonding stage. By communicating consistently and especially through expressions and symbols peculiar to them, members of a group grows in their one-ness. When hidden group members meet and speak their peculiar expressions, their sense of oneness is enhanced and a sense of bonding grows from there.

(b) Screening

Through communication, a hidden group screens in their members and screen out non-members. Communication becomes a password by which one is admitted or not into the group. Phatic communion is especially employed in this regard. Many groups have elaborate words and sentences that must be uttered by a person to show he or she is a member of that group. Inability to say those words disqualifies a person.
Summary

Our lecture has revealed that as it is in the family and any other social group, communication is vital to the social cohesion of both hidden and membership groups. The two groups use communication for different purposes. Besides, hidden group groups use communication in some peculiar ways. For instance, hidden groups employ communication to screen members and non-members, and to enhance bonding—a sense of “brotherhood” among their members.

Post-Test

1. Identify and explain the major characteristics of the hidden and the membership groups.

2. What are the basic functions that communication performs among hidden and membership groups?

3. Write short notes on (a) screening, and (b) bonding.

References


LECTURE TEN

The Concept of Culture

Introduction

In this lecture, we shall discuss the meaning of culture and the basic concepts in culture. Without culture, we cannot identify a human society. Therefore, our discussion of culture in this lecture is relevant to the overall content of this course.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define culture;
2. Identify and explain the basic concepts in culture; and
3. And appreciate the role of culture in human society.

Pre-Test

1. Give any three definitions of culture you know.
2. How is material culture different from non-material culture?

CONTENT

What Is Culture?

Culture is the total way of life that have been learned or acquired by members of a human society. Daramola (2005:54) defines culture as “that universal and uniquely human phenomenon consisting of pattern of thinking and behaving, doing and behaving, making and using, that all human beings learn in growing up as members of a human society”. It is the unique life style that characterizes a particular society and serves as framework for the social organizational patterns that distinguish one society from another.

   Culture is everything in the environment which is not in the form of nature. The implication of this definition is that all the natural elements in man’s environment are not part
of his culture, but what constitute culture are man’s social and physical contributions to his environment. Culture includes the religion, the language, marriage, ideas, values, ideals, the philosophy, ideologies, politics, arts and recreation, emotional and behavioural patterns, technologies, sciences etc. which are peculiar to a human society and acquired by man as a member of that human society. As Martin and Nakayama (2005) explain, culture is often regarded as the fundamental concept in intercultural communication. They go further that culture is the learned patterns of perception, values, and behaviours, shared by a group of people that is also dynamic and heterogeneous” Hall as cited by Baran (2002:9) describes culture as something that “lends significance to human experience by selecting from and organising it. It refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of lives...” In summary, culture is a concept that describes the both latent and manifest ways of lives of a group of people.

Culture can be material or non-material. The material culture includes artefacts or physical objects produced or fabricated by man. These include objects such as tools, broom, pot, mat, and technologies. The way man makes use (exploits) of his physical environment or other biological components is also part of his material culture. Reconstruction of the environment for tourism and sports is a good example. On the other hand, the non-material culture is not physical, it is latent. It includes rules and standards for socially acceptable behaviour (norms), values, beliefs and attitudes. Normative Culture (i.e. culture that constitutes norms—rules for behaving; standard way of doing things) and Cognitive Culture (i.e. mental aspects of a culture such as ideas, skills, knowledge, crafts, attitudes, values, and beliefs) are components of non-material culture.

**Some Basic Concepts in Culture**

There are a number of basic concepts in culture that are relevant to our discussion here. Let us examine some of them:
(a) **Cultural Relativism**

This is the belief that all human cultures are equally legitimate, acceptable, standard, and with fundamental value and integrity. Every culture within the context of natural environment of that society is unique and relevant to the people that created the culture. The culture of a human society is the product of the social and natural environments of that society. Cultural relativism, asserts that human conducts in a given society should be judged only by the normative cultural standards of that society, not by any external standard. Each culture is unique, acceptable and relevant to the people that developed it. So, no culture is strange, superior, inferior or substandard. As long as a culture is acceptable and not harmful to the people that created it, such a culture has its relative value.

(b) **Ethnocentrism (Cultural Superiority Complex)**

This is a mentality of judging other people’s culture by our own cultural standards, and concluding that our culture is superior to other cultures, perhaps because other cultures lack some components of our culture.

(c) **Xenocentrism (Cultural Inferiority Complex)**

It is the converse (opposite) of ethnocentrism. It is the mentality that our culture is inferior to other cultures that originate elsewhere. We believe that the products, styles, language, ideas, beliefs, technologies and other cultural components of our society are inferior to those of external cultures or other societies. For example, Nigerians have ridiculous preference for “foreign” products and values at the expense of our local products. The mass media can be a major tool for changing this negative orientation.
(d) **Sub-Cultures**

These are smaller cultures within a predominant culture. They arise when there are categories of population or sub-group whose members share the same cultural values, norms and beliefs that have some degree of variation on the major culture of the larger society. Variation in historical origins, settlements, economies etc. bring about sub-cultures (e.g. the Egbas, the Ekitis, the Oyos, the Ondos, the Ilajes, and the Ijebus in the South-western Yorubas of Nigeria). Cultures among okada riders in Ibadan, orientation among the members of the academia in UI, to mention a few, are instances of sub-cultures.

(e) **Counter Culture**

A counter culture is a culture that changes the established ways of doing things when it comes in contact with the existing beliefs, values, norms and ideologies of a group of people. A counter culture is always dominant and imposing.

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<th>Summary</th>
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<td>We have examined the meaning of culture. We defined culture as the total way of life that have been learned or acquired by members of a human society. In essence, culture is the total way of life of a group of people. Culture can be material or non-material. Besides, every culture has its relative value as long as it serves the people that created it.</td>
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**Post-Test**

1. What is culture?

2. Distinguish between material and non-material cultures.

3. Write short notes on the following:
   a. Xenocentrism
   b. Ethnocentrism
c. Sub-cultures

References


LECTURE ELEVEN

Attributes of Culture

Introduction
In lecture ten, we examined some definitions of culture. We also discussed some basic concepts in culture. In our lecture here, we shall move a bit further in our discussion on culture to examine the attributes of culture.

Objectives
At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Be familiar with the characteristics of culture;
2. Discuss the attributes of culture; and
3. Appreciate the relationship between culture and communication.

Pre-Test
1. What are the attributes of culture?
2. When we say “culture is symbolic” what do we mean?

CONTENT

The Fundamental Attributes of Culture
Culture has been defined in various ways by various people. In each of such descriptions of culture, we can see some of its attributes. For instance, Martin and Nakayama (2005:27) have defined culture as” the learned patterns of perception, values, and behaviours, shared by a group of people that is also dynamic and heterogeneous.” Baran (2002:9) defines culture as “the learned behaviour of members of a given social group”. Harris also cited by Baran (2002:9) describes culture as “the learned, socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of a society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting” In addition, Adler and Elmhorst (2008:41) define culture as “a learned set of shared
interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms which affect the behaviours of a relatively large group of people” All of these definitions share common descriptions of culture and capture most of the characteristics of culture as we shall discuss them here.

(1) **Culture is Shared:** Culture is not the property of an individual; it is the heritage of the people of a human society. Culture is created by and shared among members and generations of a social group.

(2) **Culture is a System:** This means that culture is a whole made up of inter-related parts that work together. Both material and non-material cultures are inter-related, and they form a systemic cultural complexity.

(3) **Culture is Diverse and Unique:** Cultures are different from cultures. As there are many societies/ groups, there are many cultures. From Africa to Asia, and from America to Europe, there are variations of human cultures as the human societies vary. However, human culture is unique universally as this culture separates man from animal. Human cultures share similar features.

(4) **Culture is Acquired or Learned:** To be acceptable members of society, individuals must learn or acquire the cultural values of that society. This is possible through socialization.

(5) **Culture is Adaptive:** This means that human culture can survive in a new environment by means of adjustment or adaptation. Either hot or cold, friendly or hostile, rainy or dry, humid or tropical, man’s culture allows him to adjust with, and adapt to his new social or natural environment.

(6) **Culture is Symbolic:** This means that culture is based on symbols through which human beings share meanings, and acquire the culture. Communication through
language is a fundamental factor in sharing meanings through symbols. Culture and communication are not separable. The two have mutual relationship. Culture determines the set of codes, context and meaning of communication symbols which members of a society collective use to share meanings while communication provides the social blood for culture to survive. Baran (2002:10) has a similar view of the symbiotic relationship between culture and communication when he says that “creation and maintenance of a more or less common culture occurs through communication, including mass communication”. As members of a society communicate different messages, they are share meaning and in the process culture is being constructed and nurtured.

**Summary**

We have able to discuss the basic attributes of culture. Culture is shared; culture is diverse and unique; culture is learned or acquired; culture is adaptive; and culture is symbolic. Both communication and culture share a mutual relationship: Culture gives meaning to symbolic elements (codes) of communication, while communication is used to create and sustain culture.

**Post-Test**

1. Give any two definitions of culture that reflect the basic attributes of the concept.
2. Enumerate and discuss any four attributes of your culture.
3. With examples from your cultural context, establish the relationship between culture and communication.
References


LECTURE TWELVE

Mass Communication: Audience, Message, Source and Feedback Mechanism

Introduction

Mass communication plays significant roles in social relationships among members of a society. Being a product of modern technology (mass media), mass communication is a major platform for intercultural communication—communication about cultural diversity and changes in the world’s framework of social interactions and how we must tolerate and adapt to them (Samovar and Porter, 1995). Therefore, in our lecture here, we shall discuss the meaning of mass communication. We shall also examine the fundamental characteristics of mass communication. We shall do this by considering the criteria of the nature of the audience, the message, the communicator, and the feedback mechanism in mass communication.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define mass communication;
2. Identify and explain the basic characteristics of mass communication;
3. Differentiate between mass communication and mass media; and
4. Appreciate the core distinctions between mass communication and interpersonal communication.

Pre-Test

1. What is mass communication?
2. In what ways does mass communication differ from interpersonal communication?
3. Describe the feedback process in mass communication.

**CONTENT**

**What is Mass Communication?**

Mass Communication is a complex process whereby a group of people operating together as a team, transmits information or communication messages to large, heterogeneous and anonymous audiences through a mass medium. Baran (2002:6-7) defines mass communication as “the process of creating shared meaning between the mass media and their audiences.” In another definition by Dominick (2011:9), mass communication is described as “the process by which a complex organization with the aid of one or more machines produces and transmits public messages that are directed at large, heterogeneous, and scattered audiences.” In mass communication, the sources at one end package and filter (screen) the message and send such a message through some technical devices to a large heterogeneous audience. Mass communication and mass media are related but they are not the same. On the one hand, mass communication is the process of information transmission to a large audience. On the other hand, mass media are those technical instruments or devices through which mass mediated messages are sent to the large audience. These technical devices are products of modern technology. So, media such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and the Internet are the media of mass communication and they are referred to as the mass media.

**Characteristics of Mass Communication**

There are some basic criteria that should always be considered to describe mass communication. These criteria are (1) the nature of audience; (2) the message; (3) the communicator (source), and (4) the feedback process (Baran, 2002; Daramola 2005; Dominck, 2011). Let us discuss these characteristics based on the foregoing criteria.
(A) **Nature of Audience**

The audience refers to the people towards whom the message is directed. The audience of mass communication have peculiar attributes: They are large, they are heterogeneous, and they are anonymous.

- In term of size, the audience of mass communication are considered to be large because the communicator(s) cannot interact with them on a face-to-face basis. Audience in a lecture room or a cinema hall, for instance, are not mass audience because the communicator(s) can see and interact with them face-to-face, but a radio audience/ TV audience of thousands or millions is a large audience.

- The audience of mass communication are considered heterogeneous because they are of diverse socio-cultural status and backgrounds. They are of both sexes, different ages, different educational qualifications, different geographical locations, diverse religions, etc.

- Anonymity means that members of the audience are generally unknown to the message source (mass communicator). The source does not know, and cannot determine or regulate the type or number of individuals that do consume his message. In fact, the communicator does not have any direct control on his audience and he cannot isolate anyone. Whoever has the means (channel), and is willing to be exposed to the message will do.

(B) **Nature of Message**

Characteristically, mass communication is rapid, public, transient and simultaneous. Let us describe briefly each of the attributes of mass communication message:

- **Rapidity**: Mass communication messages are rapid because they are packaged to reach a large audience within a relatively short period. Messages of mass
communication do not take months or years before they reach the audience. However, messages through the radio and television are relatively more rapid than those of newspapers, magazines or books.

- **Transiency:** Mass communication message is transient in the sense that it is meant to be consumed almost instantaneously. Frequently or daily, new messages are being transmitted, and in the process, the previous ones become stale or remote. However, information transmitted through the newspapers, magazines or books have more permanent features which make it possible for them to be stored for future use. Television and radio programmes can also be recorded for future use, but generally, mass communication message (especially broadcast media messages) are to be consumed almost immediately because they are naturally expendable.

- **Public:** Mass communication message is public because it is meant for large, heterogeneous members of the public. It is not meant for a group or a restricted class of people. It is a public property, and for this reason, it is liable to public criticism and censorship.

- **Simultaneity:** Simultaneity means that mass communication message has the inherent ability to reach the large audience almost at the same time. The audience who are scattered across diverse geographical settings get the message almost simultaneously. However, the quality of simultaneity is more peculiar to radio and TV messages. Audience may consume newspaper messages for instance, on the same day, but individual audience is free to consume the messages at his or her convenient time. Yet, the messages are simultaneously available to all.
(C) **Nature of the Communicator**

Mass communication is a complex process that is operated on a systemic structure. It is not a one-man business of people like teacher, preacher, group leaders or a lone fine artist. Rather, mass communication message are produced through a complex organizational structure (Dominick, 2011) of division of labour and specialization. Each unit of the production that is managed by different professionals is crucial to the overall success of the production and transmission of messages. If one unit fails, the whole process fails. Radio, TV transmission and newspapers/magazines/books production cannot be handled by a single individual. The complex process of producing mass communication messages makes the production very expensive. Consequently, access to the mass media is highly restricted. Only a few people, who are rich or influential enough, have the means to access the mass media, and they are the minority that controls the destiny of the majority.

(C) **The Feedback Process**

Feedback in mass communication is not instant, because of some technical barriers. Feedback is inferential, not direct (Baran, 2001). Even though, modern technologies such as telephone have made it possible for people to give their feedback, the feedback is not face-to-face, and is not complemented by non-verbal acts as what obtains in group or interpersonal communication (i.e. it lacks immediacy and directness). Again, not all the audience have access to such technological means of reaching back to the communicator in mass communication. The feedback is naturally inferential because the communication (source) cannot see, or know his audience, he cannot see the non-verbal cues that normally accompany communication messages as we normally have in
interpersonal communication. So, the communicator is not sure of the meaning actually intended by the interlocutor, he just guesses or infers the likely meaning. The feedback in mass communication may also be accompanied with comments or criticism from the audience, but such comments may come rather too late to affect the current episode of communication encounter that generates the criticism.

**Summary**

We have examined some definitions of mass communication. For instance, we define it as the process by which a complex group with the aid of technological devices produces and transmits public messages that are meant for large, heterogeneous, and scattered audiences. We also discussed the major attributes of mass communication that distinguish it from interpersonal or group communication. To do this, we used the criteria of the nature of the audience, the message, the source, and the feedback process.

**Post-Test**

1. Give any two definitions of mass communication.
2. List and discuss the criteria for identifying the characteristics of mass communication.
3. In reference to feedback process, how is mass communication different from interpersonal communication?

**References**


LECTURE THIRTEEN

The Mass Media and their Functions

Introduction

Our focus in this lecture is to explain the meaning of the term “mass media”. We shall also discuss the various functions that the mass media perform in society. We shall complement our discussion with relevant examples from the Nigerian context.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain the term “mass media”;
2. Identify and discuss the roles that the mass media play in Nigeria as social entity; and
3. Appreciate the fact that as the mass media play positive roles, they also have some negative effects on their audience.

Pre-Test

1. What do you understand by the term “mass media”?
2. What are media of mass communication?
3. Do you think the mass media have any negative impact on their audience? Give relevant examples to support your position.

CONTENT

Definition of Mass Media

The mass media refers to those communication media through which the large, heterogeneous scattered audience can be reached with communication messages. Radio, Television, the Internet, Magazines, Newspapers, Books and the Internet are the media of mass communication (Sambe, 2005). Therefore, they are referred to as the mass media.
Functions of Mass Media

The mass media perform a number of functions. Several communication scholars and authors (e.g. Baran, 2002; Daramola, 2005; Sambe, 2005; Dominick, 2011;) have suggested and discussed the roles of the mass media. Apart from the cardinal roles of education, information and entertainment, the mass media still perform other crucial functions. These functions include the following:

(1) The Surveillance Functions

The surveillance function of the mass media has to do with watching the environment and informing the people of events or issues that have impact/effect on society. The mass media serve as the societal watchdogs. They scout around to detect and alert the society to what is referred to as SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) as they affect the audience. There are two types of surveillance functions. They are:

(a) Warning Surveillance: This happens when the mass media gather information and inform the public about threats or dangers in the society. These threats may include impending disasters, economic depression, environmental pollution or hazards, growing unemployment, current trends of crime perpetration (e.g. ATM Scam, internet-based fraud), impending industrial action/disharmony (e.g. ASUU/SSANU/NASUU strike; doctor’s strike, general Labour Unions strike). The media warns the people of these threats so that proper precautions or proactive measures are taken. The reports about outbreak of swine flu in some parts of the world and outbreak of laser fever in Nigeria some times ago are good examples.
(b) **The Instrumental Surveillance**: This has to do with transmission of information about event, or issues that are helpful to the people. News about new cures for malaria/cancer/HIV/AIDS; employment opportunities, admission; selling of shares on the stock market, current market prices, and new products/services are instance of instrumental surveillance. The media serve as the eyes and the ears of the public. They help us watch our environment and alert us to dangers and opportunities.

(2) **The Correlation Function**

The audience of mass communication are large, scattered, anonymous and heterogeneous. The information sources do not know their audience, while the audience too may not know one another. But mass media, through their linkage capability, bring the people together. They serve as watchdog or checks, and bring to the people news about issues that collectively affect them. This function shares some resemblance with surveillance function, but the major thrust here is linkage. Through their correlation function, the mass media explain, interpret and comment on public issues. They provide support for established authorities, they co-ordinate separate segments and activities, they set orders for priority and help citizens reach consensus on public matters. They help the people to be aware of government activities and help the government to be conscious of citizens’ needs. In essence, they help to co-ordinate and unite various segments of society and ensure mutually beneficial relationship among the citizens. This function is developmental.

(3) **The Entertainment Function**

During leisure time, the mass media provide good source of gratification and enjoyment for the audience. The mass media, as they inform, also entertain the
audience. Cartoons and drama sketches on newspapers, music, video, drama series, stories, and sports commentaries on radio and TV provide relaxation and reduce social tension among audience. Through their entertainment function, the mass media may appear euphemistic by commenting on serious or controversial public issues in a funny or relaxed manner. This is possible through cartoons and comic satires.

(4) Cultural Transmission Function

This is socialization function of the mass media. The media mirror the society; they standardize and help to enforce its behavioural norms. The individuals learn how to behave and conform to the social standards by watching or consuming the ideas in media contents. Through the mass media, society increases its social cohesion. The mass media present a more or less standardized, common view of the diverse cultural values (Samovar and Porter, 1995), and provide a collective experience for members of a society. This is intercultural communication. The coverage of national festivals, cultural displays, traditional sports, parades, state funerals, national day celebration etc. are ways mass media perform cultural transmission role.

(5) Enforcement of Social Norms Function

Every social group has standards of conduct. This is norm. Schaefer and Lamb (1983) define norms as established standards of behaviour maintained, widely understood and shared by members of a social group—society. Norms define the dos and don’ts in a society. The mass media help to enforce this standard by consistently reporting punishments for violation of norms, or reward for upholding such norms. Some media organizations usually transmit some development messages as part of their public service and social responsibilities. It may be spot announcement or catch phrases in-between or at the end of a newscast or as public opinion or article in the print media. Such messages may discourage certain vices while some encourage positive
behavioural standards. Sometimes, some advertisements of certain products carry special warnings such as “Drink Responsibly”, and “Smokers Are Liable to Die Young”. All these are instances of how the mass media help to enforce social norms and values.

(6) Status Conferral Function

The mass media confer status or recognition on people, organizations and public issues. Through their gatekeeping function, the mass media determine who is to be heard, seen or read and what issues the audience would regard as the most significant. From millions of people and events, the media choose the few ones which become significant (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim and Wrigley, 2001; Paul and Elder, 2006). Those people whose actions or utterances are reported by the media instantly get status of prominence. According to Lazarsfeld and Merton (1971), mass media audience obviously subscribe to a mundane belief that if you really matter, you will be a focus of mass attention (mass media), and if you are a focus of mass attention (mass media), then you must surely matter. However, depending on the nature of the events, deeds or utterance of individuals, the mass media can confer either a negative or positive status on the events or the individuals.

(7) The Narcotizing Dysfunctional Role of Mass Media

As much as the mass media perform positive functions, they also have some negative roles and effects. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1971) created the term Narcotising Dysfunctional. They used the term to describe the situation whereby the mass media provide such massive amounts of information that the audience become numb (highly insensitive and passive) and generally fail to act on information, regardless of how compelling the issue (Sambe, 2005). This implies that the mass media have made
audience lose their critical ability and natural capability to assess and make personal opinion or take rational action. The media now act and think for the audience because the audience become extremely addicted to and overwhelmed by the media.

The dysfunctional role of the media usually reflects in so many negative effects they have on audience. They influence audience in their thoughts and actions. Some of these negative effects include the dominance and proliferation of violence, (especially by TV Stations and video film industry), multiplication of pornographic films (blue movies); public discussion of sex or sex acts that encourage and, sometimes, arouse negative sexual behaviour among adults and youth, adoption of foreign values and mannerisms that have negative impact on our culture, incitement of political violence or social disorder, promotion of bad individuals as models for the young ones etc.

Summary
In this lecture, we have been able to discuss the meaning of mass media. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and the Internet are media of mass communication. Therefore, we describe them as “the mass media”. The mass media, apart from their traditional functions of education, information and entertainment, also perform other crucial functions such as surveillance, status conferral, cultural transformation and correlation functions. In spite of these positive functions, the mass media also have some negative impact on their audience by providing such massive amounts of information that the audience become numb (highly insensitive and passive) and generally fail to act on information, regardless of how compelling the issue. This term is what Lazarsfeld and Merton (1971) describe as Narcotising Dysfunctional.

Post-Test
1. How would you define the term “mass media”? List the media of mass communication you know.
2. Enumerate and discuss any FOUR functions of the mass media.

3. In spite of the significant roles of the mass media in society, we can still describe them as two sides of a coin. Discuss.

References


LECTURE FOURTEEN

The Normative Theories of the Press (I)

Introduction

Culture and communication share symbiotic relationships: communication recreates and sustains culture while culture gives meanings to communication symbols as used in a given cultural setting. The pattern of communication and overall conduct of the mass media in a social setting are shaped by the social-cultural structure of that society. This contextual influence of society on communication systems is the thrust of the normative theories of the press. Therefore, in this lecture and the next one, we shall discuss the various normative theories of the press and situate them in our social context.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain what theories are;
2. Identify the normative theories; and
3. Explain how each of the normative theories operates.

Pre-Test

1. How would you define a theory?
2. What are the normative theories?
3. Enumerate the strengths and weaknesses of the libertarian theory of the press.

CONTENT

Meaning of Theory

Theories are a product of rigorous research; statements that have been tested and re-tested, and have been accepted as having explanatory and predictive qualities. Severin and Tankard (Jr) (2001) define theory as a general statement that explains our understanding or perception
of how the world works. Kurt Revom cited by Folarin (1998:3) describes theory as a way of explaining the ordering and occurrence of various events. Theory can be defined as a body of propositions or any systematic body of ideas that have been validated (proven) by empirical evidences which can help make meaning of a phenomenon, predict a consequence or guide action. Theory can also be defined as a body of systematic, scientific and formal propositions that help to give explanation to certain phenomenon or make predictions.

There are various theories in the field of mass communication and these theories, according to their nature/attributes, are categorized into four broad categories (Folarin, 1998):

(a) The Normative Theories

- Authoritarian Theory
- Libertarian Theory (Free Press)
- Social Responsibility Theory
- The Soviet Totalitarianism/Communist Theory
- Democratic-participant Theory
- Development media theory
- Revolutionary Theory

(b) The Social-Scientific Theories (i.e. media effect)

- Instinctive S-R theory (magic bullet, hypodermic needle theory)
- Two-step theory
- Agenda-setting theory, etc.
(c) The working theories

- Gate-keeping Theory
- Socialization Theory
- Generalization Theory, etc.

(d) The Common sense Theories

- Play Theory
- Environmental or sense extension theory
- Reflective-projective theory, etc.

The Normative Theories of the Press

The normative theories are the press theories that are concerned with prescribing how mass media are expected to operate given certain prevalent social values in the social environment. They are the products of broader social ideology and philosophy of a given society.

The basic assumption of the normative theories is that the press in a given society takes the colouration of the social norms of the environment within which it operates. That is, the type of political system, social ideology and philosophy that are in operation in a given society will determine largely, the nature and operational system of its media structure (Folarin, 1998; Severin and Tankard (Jnr), 2001; Watson, 2003; Sambe, 2005; McQuail, 2007; Baran and Davis, 2009). Therefore, according to the normative theorists, the operations and structures of the mass media are bound to vary from one society (country) to another because each society has its peculiar political system, social ideology and cultural values or norms. The press in the USA would have different operational system and structure compared to what obtains in Cuba, Nigeria, Russia or Saudi-Arabia. The operation of the press under
the military in Nigeria was different from what obtains in the current democratic dispensation. Let us discuss some of the normative theories in this lecture:

**The Authoritarian Theory**

This theory emerged from the state philosophy of absolutism which states that just a few individuals in the human society have the monopoly of knowledge. These few people are regarded as “sages” or “philosopher kings” who have natural capability and responsibility to run the affairs of the state and by exertion, the press. The press is seen as the state property which is crucial to the state’s survival to be entrusted in the hand of the masses. It is only the government or at least, those few individuals who are loyal to the government, that have the right to own and operate the press in the interest of the state. The press’ absolute function is to serve the interest of the state. This theory dated back to the sixteenth (16th) century when monarchy was the prevalent system of government in Europe and other parts of the world. The theory still operates till today in countries where monarchy is the system of government (e.g. Saudi-Arabia, Spain, Morocco, and Britain), however, with some modifications, because of the global trends of democracy. Under the military regime in Nigeria, the authoritarian system was in operation. In a country that practices authoritarian system, the mass media has only as much freedom as the natural leadership is willing to permit. The press is gagged and constantly censored. Repressive legislations, heavy taxation, draconian decrees etc are the tools used by the state to regulate the activities of the press. The mass media under authoritarian system are educators and propagandists through which the few influential elite exercise social control under the guise of state interest.

**The Libertarian Theory**

This theory emerged in the 17th century as a protest against the shortcomings of authoritarianism when monarchy was the predominant style of governance in Europe. Under
Authoritarianism, the media were owned by the state, and few individuals that were presumed loyal to the state. Access to the press and press freedom were the extreme luxury of the ruling elite. The quest for press freedom brought about the libertarian movement championed by John Stuart Mill, Thomas Jefferson, John Milton and John Locke. After 1688, the theory was adopted by England and the US.

The fundamental tenets of this theory are that the press are expected to inform, entertain, sell and chiefly, to help check the government by discovering the truth and make it a public property. The theory holds that man is a rational being, who possess the natural thinking and decision-making capability. That is, man is naturally capable of making decisions that will advance his interests and by nature; man deserves some degree of freedom. It is therefore suggested that man should be given significant degree of freedom to protect and advance his interest. By implication, the media, under the Libertarian theory, must be felt alone to constitute a free market place of diverse opinions/ ideas. Instead of the government serving as the chief media umpire, it is the fundamental responsibility of the media to check the activities the government and report any lapses to the public. The media now become the watchdog. The media ownership is open to everybody or those individual who can afford to own the media irrespective of their level of loyalty to the government. The media is controlled by the principle of “self-righting process of truth” in free market place of ideas’ and the court serves as the neutral arbiter. However, the right to own or have free access to the media does not permit defamation (libel & slander), obscenity, sedition or indecency as there are laws to take care of this aberration.

The mass media under the libertarian theory perform six cardinal functions. They:

(i) Provide public enlightenment
(ii) Serve the political system—“the right to talk politics”
(iii) Serve the economic system
(iv) Safeguard civil liberty (by serving as people’s parliament)

(v) Provide entertainment

(vi) Makes profits to stay afloat in the market

**The Soviet Totalitarian Theory**

The theory is also called the soviet-communist media theory. The theory emerged in the former (defunct) USSR when the Russian media was totally re-organized after the 1917 revolution. The fundamental principle of this theory is that the state (the government) should have absolute control of the media and every other means of production. All resources including the press/media belonged to the state. The ruling communist party of the then USSR completely owned and controlled the press. There should be no private ownership or proprietorship, no private shareholders etc apart from the state. No matter how loyal or rich an individual may appear, he cannot be trusted with the responsibility of media ownership and control unlike what obtains in the authoritarian theory where some rich individuals that are considered loyal to the ruling class are allowed to own media organizations.

The theory gives the citizens the access to the media because the media is the state property. However, anti-communist interests or opinions are prevented from getting to the media. The totalitarian theory sees the media as an organ of the government and is owned completely by the government to propagate the communist philosophies of collective ownership. Therefore, the press in the communist concept is the agitator, propagandist and organizer who only projects the interest and policies of the ruling elite. The press is not to search for truth but to help control the society. Information of interest and importance to the masses is not necessarily news to the media under totalitarianism.
especially if in any way such information is considered potentially harmful or embarrassing to the leadership or the communist interest.

The communist theory was influenced by Karl Marx who was himself influenced by George Hengel. The exponents believed that if the media was left open to allow individual ownership, man’s devilish intent to maximize profits at the expense of the absolute majority would overshadow the fundamental responsibility of the press which, according to the communists, was to serve the state by promoting the communist principle and policies.

**Summary**

In this lecture, we have looked at some definitions of theory. We identified the categories of media theories. Then we discussed the meaning of normative theories. Specifically in this lecture, we have identified and discussed three of the normative theories. These are the Authoritarian Theory, the Libertarian Theory, and the Soviet Totalitarian Theory.

**Post-Test**

1. Give any two definitions of theory.
2. What are the categories of mass media theories that we have?
3. Discuss the Authoritarian theory of the press.

**References**


LECTURE FIFTEEN

The Normative Theories of the Press (II)

Introduction

In lecture fourteen, we started our discussion on the normative theories of the press. We have already identified and explained three of the normative theories. These are the Authoritarian Theory, the Libertarian Theory, and the Soviet Totalitarian Theory. This lecture shall be devoted to the Social Responsibility Theory and the Democratic-Participant Media Theory.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain what theories are;
2. Identify the normative theories;
3. Establish the relationship among the normative theories;
4. Appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each of the Social Responsibility Theory; and
5. Explain how the Social Responsibility Theory operates.

Pre-Test

1. What is social responsibility theory?
2. Which of the normative theories would you recommend for Nigeria? Why?

CONTENT

The Social Responsibility Theory

The theory emerged as a response to the high technological development which made the cost of establishing and managing the press very higher and virtually prohibitive. The press become more commercially inclined, and the power to own the media was concentrated in
the hands of a few rich. Consequently, access to the press by the public became increasingly limited and open criticism or alternative view/opinions became relegated.

The social responsibility theory was first articulated in 1947 (USA) in the content of the Hutchins Commission’s Report on a free and responsible press. The theory holds the view that it is the primary responsibility of the press to service, promote and preserve democracy by providing information to the citizens and by promptly responding to the need of the society. The theory contends that for the press to effectively promote democracy, absolute ownership and control of the press by the state should be removed. The press should be as free as possible, however with some limit. The theory of social responsibility involved a view of media ownership as a form of public trust or stewardship, rather than an unlimited private franchise.

**Tenets of Social Responsibility Theory**

(a) The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust

(b) News media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant.

(c) The media should be free, but self-regulated

(d) The media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct

(e) Under some circumstances, government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest (McQuail, 2007:172)

The theory argues that the press should be socially responsible for taking up the obligation of social responsibility; by exposing the citizens to all kinds of information and diverse opinions, and by letting the people decide for themselves. But if the press fail to perform these social responsibilities, someone must ensure that they comply. Therefore, the social responsibility theory subscribes to government involvement in media ownership and
operation. Both the government and the private individuals can establish media outfits, but it is the responsibility of the government to issue licence and regulations in order to ensure that public interest is properly and adequately catered for by the private media organizations. In Nigeria for example, the federal government established the NBC (National Broadcasting Commission) and the NPC (National Press Council) to issue licences and to regulate the operations of the broadcast programming and print-media publications respectively. The NBC was established by the Decree 38 of 1992 under the Federal military government of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida

The theory shares some elements of libertarianism and possibly, that of totalitarian theories. Although, the media was free under the libertarian theory, Hutchins’s Commission questioned whether the media, under libertarianism theory, was really working; whether the press performed its statutory roles by giving everybody access to express their opinions and to get enough information in a free fair manner. In order to correct the weaknesses of the libertarianism theory, government should not completely withdraw from the management and operation of the press.

Democratic-Participant Media Theory

The Democratic-Participant Media Theory is not among the traditional four normative theories (the Authoritarian, the Libertarian, The Soviet-Communist, and the Social Responsibility Media Theories) as identified by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in the 1950s (Folarin, 1998; Severin and Tankard (Jnr), 2001; Watson, 2003; Sambe, 2005; McQuail, 2007; Baran and Davis, 2009). It is one of the emerging normative theories. The other two are Development Media Theory and Revolutionary Media Theory. As the name implies, the Democratic-Participant Media theory prescribes the re-structuring of the media terrain in such a way that citizens would have better control of and more access to the media. In essence, the social system should allow true democratisation of the media structure so that the
characteristic bureaucracy, commercialisation and professional hegemony in media structure are removed or reduced. The theory is a reaction to the public disappointment with the failure of both Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories to deliver the social benefit expected of them. The Libertarian theory on the one hand encourages heavy commercialisation and monopolisation of privately-owned media house. On the other hand, the Social Responsibility theory entrenches a phenomenon of centralism and bureaucratisation of the broadcast institutions (Mcquail, 2007). The Democratic-Participant theory considers the public broadcasting as extremely elitist, too urban, too rigid in structure, highly vulnerable to the manipulation of those in power, and too subservient to professional principles at the expense of social responsibility. Therefore, the theory prescribes a new media regime that would give more attention to needs, and aspirations of the audience, especially people at the grassroots, who have been obviously marginalised by the media structure under the elitist media system created by libertarian and social responsibility principles. It calls for decentralisation and pluralism in the media sector where communication would be horizontal instead of being top-down, and participatory instead of being monopolistic. It calls for a grassroots media system (perhaps community radio system) that allows the masses to take part fully in the democratic project.

Folarin (1998) citing McQuuail says that the theory is associated mainly with the more developed liberal democracies. However, the theory lacks legitimacy as it is yet to be practically integrated into the structure of any media system in the world. Another problem with theory is its seemingly unrealistic prescription that “the mass media have become too socially important to be left in the hands of professionals” (Folarin, 1998:30). Obviously, journalism is a profession. For this reason, it becomes practically impossible to alienate the professionals from the mainstream of media operation.
Summary
In this lecture, we have discussed the Social Responsibility Theory and the Democratic-Participant Media Theory. The major tenets of the Social Responsibility Theory are that it gives freedom to the press to operate and at the same time, it requires the press to be socially responsible. To ensure media organisations are responsible, the theory provides for establishment of regulating agencies to supervise issuance of license and to monitor contents of the media. The Democratic-Participant Theory on the other hand prescribes the re-structuring of the media terrain in such a way that citizens would have better control of and more access to the media, and fully participate in the democratic project of the country.

Post-Test
1. Identify and explain the tenets of the Social Responsibility Theory.
2. Highlight the basic weaknesses of the Libertarian and Social Responsibility Theories that Democratic-Participant Theory aims to address.

References
LECTURE SIXTEEN

The Normative Theories of the Press (III)

Introduction

This is our final lecture. We shall use this lecture to discuss the other two emerging normative theories of the press. The theories are Development Media Theory and Revolutionary Media Theory.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Understand the basic tenets of Development Media Theory and Revolutionary Media Theory;
2. Highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each of the two theories; and
3. Have a better understanding of the normative framework of the Nigerian press.

Pre-Test

1. What are the tenets of Development Media Theory?
2. Explain the roles of the new media in political struggles in Africa.

CONTENT

Development Theory

This theory is recent and it came with the attainment of independence by the poor developing nations of the 3rd world, where the primary pre-occupation of the government is to achieve meaningful development that will make them look like the developed nations; a situation where poverty is reduced or eliminated, and the people experience overall improvements in every sphere of their lives. The central thrust of this theory is that the government should mobilize the press to achieve the state’s development goals such as eradication of poverty,
fighting illiteracy, building political consciousness, assisting economic advancement, and good healthcare. The press should be used to inculcate indigenous values and culture in the citizens.

The sole function of the press is to serve the government to achieve development. Thus, what the government considers as development messages or tasks are what the press are expected to promote. Anything outside these is considered subversive by the government. The press are basically agents of developments, and must help government to promote its development drive. Government always censors the press to ensure that they comply with the development policies of the government. Reporting of foreign news or values that seem to contradict the national interest is unethical, no matter how newsworthy such reports may appear. The media under this theory must always support, but not challenge the constituted authorities i.e. there is no room for criticism. The government sends down development message to the press, the press swallows it and re-produces to feed the public. The press has no voice of its own. Truth and information become the state’s property. The state’s interest and drive to fight diseases, poverty and illiteracy are considered more important than citizen’s rights of expression and civil liberties. The press, therefore, is more concerned with the development issues as dictated by the government, than with articulation of citizens’ opinions and interests. The theory support the concept of NWICO- New World Information and Communication Order—where the local press should re-position themselves to counter balance the dominance of the foreign giant media.

The theory is peculiar to the so-called under-developed or developing nations of Africa and Asia. It has some elements of authoritarianism because the government usually puts the press under constant monitoring both public and private media, to ensure they promote the development objectives of the state. The theory has two variants that operate with different degrees of state control (Folarin, 1998):
(a) **Liberal Development Journalism:** It is called Investigative Development Journalism. The press works in the interest of the state to promote development goals, but the journalists are relatively free to criticize government, investigate and report corruption to the people. They are constructive partners and stakeholders, but not passive servants, in the process of national development.

(b) **Conservative Development Journalism:** It is also called Benevolent Authoritarian Development Journalism. Here, the press also works in the interest of the state, but does not engage in investigative journalism to expose vices and make them public property. They serve the state more slavishly and less critically. The journalist do not see any reason to criticize the government, as the government consider the press as having no moral obligation to criticize government. They consider open criticism of government activities as anti-development.

**The Revolutionary Theory**

This is a new concept that is underlined by the modern era of advanced technologies where access to the media has become more open and the impact of the mass media is more pronounced. The revolutionary theory explains the concept of illegal and subversive communication using the press to overtake government or take control from the rejected or foreign rulers. When the people feel that their government is no more responsible or does not have the popular legitimacy and mandate to rule, they use the press to subvert such government. Illegal and underground (guerrilla journalism) operations such as secret publication of illegal magazines/newspapers, or transmission of broadcast programmes from illegal stations are attributes of the press under the revolutionary concept. Examples are midnight publications in France to fight the German oppression and Hitler during the World War II; activities of TELL Magazine, TEMPO Magazine, THE NEWS, Radio-Kudirat etc. to
fight military junta and anti-June12 elements in Nigeria; the use of Radio Biafra to activate the birth of Biafra Republic, the use of social media during the Arab spring and the 2012 anti-fuel subsidy removal protest in Nigeria.

**Summary**

In our final lecture, we have discussed the Development Theory and Revolutionary Theory. The central thrust of the Development theory is that the government should deploy the press to achieve the state’s development goals such as eradication of poverty, fighting illiteracy, building political consciousness, assisting economic advancement, and good healthcare. The revolutionary theory, on the other hand, explains the concept of illegal and subversive communication using the press to overtake government or take control from the rejected or foreign imperialists.

**Post-Test**

1. What is Development Theory? Why would you recommend it for Nigeria?

2. What is the relationship between modern communication technology and the Revolutionary Theory?

**References**


