



Harold Lasswell (1902-1978)

Mentored By

Harry Stack Sullivan

- Introduced Lasswell Freudian theory

Edward Sapir

- Anthropologist and enthusiast for psychoanalytic theory

Elton Mayo

- Taught Lasswell how to utilize psychoanalytic interviewing and recording methods

Charles Merriam

- Helped him get grants for travels

Propaganda Research

- From neutral word “*to disseminate or propagate an idea*” to become negative connotation “dishonest, manipulative and brain washing”
- World War 1: Committee on Public Information (Creel Committee)
- Headed by **George Creel** to conduct massive domestic and international propaganda effort
- Organized corps of speakers to give speeches (4min men)
- US public believed propaganda was an insidious force if left unchecked
- Scholarly attention was attracted to effects of persuasive messages
- Research dwindled after 1940s because
- Private foundations and the federal government were more interested to fund research that was **useful to policy making** but did not raise troubling questions about the interests and motives of the persuaders or expose questionable propaganda techniques
- Lack coherent theory because of diversity of social science fields that studied it

Propaganda Research in relation to Lasswell

- First study was qualitative and critical in tone
 - Focused on symbols used (influenced by George Herbert Mead)
 - Entire civilian population takes active role in modern warfare. Public opinion mattered the same as generals and military troops involvement

Definition by Lasswell: A management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of the significant symbols. An attempt to change other people's views in order to further one's own cause or damage an opposing one.

No inherent moral scale, depends on **point of view** and **truthfulness** of message.

Considered as Mass persuasion though it is one way (intentional communication)

- Study on WW2 was quantitative and statistical
 - Conducted massive content analysis of Allied and Axis propaganda
 - Funded by Rockefeller foundation
 - Trained Dept of Justice to carry out content analysis of foreign newspapers beyond those studied by War-Time Communications Project
 - used to detect foreign propaganda in US to use as courtroom evidence
 - Lasswell served as expert witness for these cases
- **also** helped create propaganda
 - Criticized by some for deceitful manipulation of public attitudes
- Developed improved methodologies for propaganda analysis
- Role of propaganda studies changes to reformist to neutral observer.
- Propaganda analysis renamed to communication research

Content Analysis

- Investigation of communication messages by categorizing message content into classifications in order to measure certain variables
- Effects of messages are inferred as actual data about effects are seldom available
- Analysis of empirical data about individuals' political behaviour
- Study political behaviour (not ideas), power is key concept in understanding politics

Rockefeller Communication Seminar

- Met monthly from Sept 1939 - June 1940
- Original purpose was to provide theoretical guidance about communication research so Rockefeller Foundation would know who to fund
- Focus changed to how communication could help federal government with war
- John Marshall and Rockefeller Foundation critical in launching field of communication
- At RCS, he came out with **Functions of Communication**
 1. Surveillance of environment - understand environment to reduce uncertainty
 2. Correlation of society's response to events in environment - make sense of what is going on in the world
 3. Transmission of cultural heritage - history, values etc
 4. Entertainment (added later by other scholars)

Lasswell develops five-questions model

- Lasswell was influential in shaping seminar discussion towards communication effects
- **Who says what to whom in what channel with what effects?**
- Became basic framework in seminar
- Also became dominant paradigm defining the scope and problems of american communications research
- Behavioural science of communication became restricted to a process of persuasion
- Did not include “why”
- Gave coherence to media effects; however steered scholars away from important topics
 - ★ BUT it viewed communication as an act not a process, one-way and intentional, oriented towards achieving a desired effect

Policy Sciences (The Hoover Studies)

1. First large scale, quantitative based empirical research enterprise in contemporary political science
2. By-product was Lasswell’s argument for development of “Policy Sciences” - integration of political science, law, sociology and psychology and focusing on public choice and decision making
3. John Dewey was his inspiration
4. Policy science as a way to resolve political and social problems
5. Ameliorative actions for society
6. 1946 - Lasswell went to Yale Law School where he aimed to broaden nature of legal training by internationalizing it and introducing social science thinking

Contributions of Lasswell to Communication Research

1. 5 question model led to emphasis on determining effects > led to Lazarfeld crystallizing focus on communication effects
2. Pioneered content analysis methods > invented methodology of qualitative and quantitative measurements of communication messages
3. Study of political / wartime propoganda is an important early type of communication research
4. **Introduced Freudian psychoanalytic theory to social sciences in America** - using id, ego, superego via content analysis to political science problems (wow)
5. Helped create policy sciences, an interdisciplinary movement to integrate social science with public action The social sciences resisted.



Walter Lippmann (1889-1974)

History

1. Influential newspaper columnist
 1. most influential nonacademic intellectual influence on communication study
2. Worked with Lasswell on propaganda analysis and public opinion
3. 1922: Defined propaganda as situation in which communication flows are restricted and a set of individuals wish to distort news. Barrier between public and event must be present for propaganda to occur. (eg war, overseas events)

1922: Public Opinion

- “The Pictures in our heads and the world outside”
 - The media serves as principal connection between an event in real world and images in our minds of the event
- **Stereotypes as key factor** in public opinion process.
 - Stereotype as code that simplifies reality to facilitate transmission to others
 - Need to it to give meaning to confusion of world
 - Pseudo environment conveyed by media as result of high degree of gatekeeping in news process
- Highlighted power of propaganda from WW1 to WW2
- Pioneered what is now called **agenda setting** process - news topic is given priority concern by the mass media, public and policy elites

Agenda Setting

- (a) Media helps people determine what is important
 - Transfer of salience: *ability of the news media to transfer issues of importance from their news media agendas to public agendas*
 - influenced by placement and frequency
 - Contrasted with agenda building (creation of agenda)
- (b) Indirect effect of media (in contrast with **limited effects** model)
 - Promising alternative to scholarly search for direct media effects on overt behaviour change, which was found to have limited effects (role of media to inform rather than persuade)

- Studies shifted from powerful effects (**magic bullet**) to not as powerful when contrasted with interpersonal communication (**limited effects**) to powerful under some circumstances (**indirect effects**)
- (c)** Media affects knowledge which affects attitudes
 - What to think about (knowledge) vs what to think (attitude)
 - Less capable of changing directly attitudes and opinions, but can tell us what to think about
 - Difficult to change behaviour linked to attitude
- (d)** Rich Research tradition
 - Conceptualization furthered by political scientist Bernard Cohen in 1963 (40 years!)
 - McCombs and Shaw's study in 1972 of 1968 presidential election campaign in Chapel Hill
 - (a)** Almost perfect correspondence between frequency of issue mention in mass media with measured public agenda of 100 undecided voters
 - led to hypothesis that public agenda is caused by media agenda
 - (b)** Seminal article led to proliferation of investigations on agenda setting process
 - (c)** Kuhn's phase of "normal science": each empirical study builds incrementally on previous work (**see (g)**)
- (e)** Agenda setting process:
 - (a)** Media agenda setting: relative amount of coverage determined by media gatekeepers, impact of news and audience interests. Usually measured with Lasswell's content analysis
 - (b)** Public agenda setting: public decides which issues are of relatively greatest importance based on what they read and hear from media
 - (c)** Policy agenda setting: process by which agenda of government is determined
 - (d)** Assumed that media influenced public which in turn influenced policy
- (f)** Agenda setting effect result of aggregate impact of a very large number of messages
 - Not just one or few messages.
 - Different content but deal with same general issue
- (g)** Importance of Paradigm of Agenda setting
 - Came along when mass communication scholars were dismayed with previous model of direct effects
 - Kuhnian's notion of scientific revolution

How can media have few direct effects but strong indirect effects in setting public agenda