

MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH: AN OLD ROAD RESURVEYED

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Mass communication has many ramifications and so, too, do the research studies that seek a better understanding of its characteristics and its place in our society. Here it comes under the scrutiny of an old hand at critical surveys of mass communication research, himself a discerning researcher.

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APAPER on the current state and apparent future of mass communication research might take many forms. It might, for example, present imposing evidence that the discipline has defied the gloomy prognoses made some years ago, and remained both viable and virile.¹ It might attempt to review the concepts and techniques that have in recent years affected the discipline, including, for example, the development and refinement of homeostatic theories;² the demonstration that communications not only affect audiences but that audiences also affect communications;³ the discovery of previously invisible effects, now rendered observable by the development of such devices as the semantic differential;⁴ or any or all of various other developments.

This paper has far more modest aims. It proposes only to discuss a particular type of research orientation, noting that although it has been used to some degree in the service of mass communication

¹ See, for example, Bernard Berelson, "The State of Communication Research," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 23, 1959, pp. 1-6.

² An excellent review of homeostatic theory and its application to communication research will be found in Nathan and Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Homeostatic Theory in Attitude Change," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 25, 1961, pp. 538-545.

³ For a review of this entire concept, see Raymond A. Bauer, "The Obstinate Audience," a paper delivered to the Western Psychological Association on April 20, 1963. Or see a somewhat earlier paper by Bauer, "The Initiative of the Audience," *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 3, 1963, pp. 2-7.

⁴ The definitive volume on the semantic differential is Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1957.

research, it has not been rigorously or widely applied; that its potential, though great, has accordingly not been realized; and that our knowledge of the social effects of mass communication might well be greatly enhanced by its wider and more rigorous use.

The research orientation to which I refer is functional analysis. The statement that it has rarely been applied in the service of mass communication research may raise some quietly incredulous eyebrows. Lowering them again is part of the objective of this paper.

In the last few years various communications researchers, including Elihu Katz and David Foulkes,⁵ Raymond Bauer,⁶ Charles Wright,⁷ and others, have publicly applauded a mushrooming growth of so-called "functional" studies. Most of these scholars have noted that the procedure is not in itself new, having been used on various isolated occasions for more than twenty years, but that it is now gaining considerably more momentum than it previously possessed.

There is a tendency among some pro-functionalists to pin the functional label on any study that provides a list of uses to which various types of mass communication material are put by their audiences, and in particular to those studies which reveal uses that are odd, unanticipated, or surprising. Reference is typically made, for example, to Herzog's revelation that women used daytime radio serials as sources of advice on how to cope with real-life problems,⁸ to Bogart's description of how adult male workers used comic strips as a topic of safe noncommitting conversation,⁹ and, more recently, to Mendelsohn's description of how people use radio as a means of reassuring themselves that they are in contact with the world.¹⁰

Lists of the uses to which people put mass communication, and the gratifications they derive from it, of course do not in themselves constitute full *functional analyses* in the classic sense of the term. They are rather first steps in such analyses, and various works, including some of my own, have been labeled examples of functional analysis although, in my opinion, they did not really qualify for that label. I will come

⁵ Elihu Katz and David Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as 'Escape': Clarification of a Concept," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 26, 1962, pp. 377-388.

⁶ "The Obstinate Audience," as cited.

⁷ Charles R. Wright, "Functional Analysis and Mass Communication," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 24, 1960, pp. 605-620.

⁸ Herta Herzog, "What Do We Really Know about Daytime Serial Listeners?" in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, editors, *Radio Research, 1942-1943*, New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944, pp. 3-33.

⁹ Leo Bogart, "Adult Talk about Newspaper Comics," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 61, 1955, pp. 26-30.

¹⁰ Harold Mendelsohn, "Listening to Radio Station WMCA: A Study of Audience Characteristics, Habits, Motivation and Taste," New York, The Psychological Corporation, 1962, mimeographed.

back to this point a little later in this paper. At *this* point I want only to say, "Viva los uses and gratifications studies, and may their tribe increase." We need them badly.

I look hopefully for a proliferation of such studies, because they do not for the most part deal with what might be called dichotomous questions. Mass communication research has, I believe, been too frequently and too long focused on determining whether some particular effect does or does not occur.

This is probably in large part a reflection of the verbalized concerns and desires of the public at large, which has typically formulated its queries in such terms as "Do depictions of crime and violence produce juvenile delinquency? *Yes* or *No*?" or "Do mass media abase tastes? *Yes* or *No*, and, if *No*, do they raise tastes? *Yes* or *No*?" Mass communication research has found few clear-cut yes or no answers to such questions, although it has asserted, over and over, that mass communication is rarely, if ever, the prime mover, and instead tends to reinforce the existing predispositions of its audience members. This honest reply has led the public to accuse us of being at best inconclusive and at worst evasive.

I suspect also that these dichotomous questions and our willingness to investigate them as such have held up the systematic development of knowledge about mass communication in at least two ways. First, the questions, as they were formulated by others and accepted by us, forced us into a long persisting use of one-to-one cause and effect models, a habit we continued even after we knew it to be inadequate and oversimplified and thus largely fallacious. Second, because these questions were put to us and investigated by us as discrete and independent inquiries, we have produced numerous bodies of data which often defy integration, and which get integrated, insofar as they can be integrated, only on those rare occasions when someone attempts to write a review or history and searches through these discrete bodies of data for threads of interrelationship. Uses and gratifications studies, I believe, can help tremendously to overcome these difficulties and progressively determine the real role of mass communication in the lives and development of its audiences.

There is no dearth of fields that such studies could profitably till. For example, let us come back to the perennial question of the effects of depictions of crime and violence. In this springtime of 1963 I think I can safely say that it is generally agreed by both communication researchers and the more thoughtful segment of the public at large that such depictions do not in and of themselves turn normal children into delinquents—*no*, but that they may nevertheless exacerbate the maladjusted behavior of already maladjusted children, *yes*. A group

of extremely competent psychologists is now attempting to determine whether such media fare decreases or increases levels of aggression.¹¹ I will offer odds that the final answer will be susceptible of summary in Berelsonian terms, i.e. that some *types of depicted violence* will be found to have some *types of effects* on the *aggression levels of some types of children* under *some types of conditions*,¹² or—yes, and no, both with provisos. I am not here arguing against the need of investigating dichotomous questions, but I think that if we are to learn what role these depictions do play in the development of children and young adults, we must also ask many nondichotomous and more probing questions. After all, most children and most adults, whether well adjusted or maladjusted, see both crimes and violence depicted on both the home and movie screen, and yet they neither commit murders nor become gangsters. I think the time has come for us to ask what uses they *do* make of this material. What gratifications *does* it provide? Some partial answers have been provided by a few studies, including those by Riley and Riley,¹³ by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker,¹⁴ by Bailyn,¹⁵ by Elkin,¹⁶ and by a few others. But we can count the identified uses on one hand—or perhaps on one and a half hands—and I do not personally know of a single use and gratification study that focuses on the *adult* audience for such material.

To take another example, and one of which we are all aware, we may note the recent flurry of medical shows on television. Messrs. Casey and Kildare and The Nurses have risen high into the evening sky. I have, in fact, heard that the organization of on-the-air medical practice has reached the stage where a patient in a forthcoming show will be referred by the physician on that program to a physician on another program. Few people have asked, heaven be praised, whether these programs cause children to practice appendectomies on their friends

¹¹ I refer here to a series of studies, past and present, by such psychologists as Albert Bandura, Leonard Berkowitz, O. Ivar Lovaass, and their various colleagues. For a current and concise review of much of this literature, see Leonard Berkowitz, Ronald Corwin, and Mark Heironimus, "Film Violence and Subsequent Aggressive Tendencies," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 27, 1963, pp. 217-229.

¹² Cf. "Some kinds of *communication* on some kinds of *issues*, brought to the attention of some kinds of *people* under some kinds of *conditions*, have some kinds of *effects*." Bernard Berelson, "Communications and Public Opinion," in Wilbur Schramm, editor, *Communications in Modern Society*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1948, p. 172.

¹³ Matilda White Riley and John W. Riley, Jr., "A Sociological Approach to Communication Research," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 15, 1951, pp. 444-460.

¹⁴ Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin B. Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1961.

¹⁵ Lotte Bailyn, "Mass Media and Children: A Study of Exposure Habits and Cognitive Effects," *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. 73, 1959, pp. 1-48.

¹⁶ Frederick Elkin, "The Psychological Appeal of the Hollywood Western," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 24, 1950, pp. 72-86.

or lobotomies on their enemies, or even whether such programs channelize the occupational aspirations of children. There has, in fact, been relatively little concern about the effects of these programs, and there has been even less interest expressed in the psychological uses which people make of them. And yet, if these programs attract and hold any notable part of the audience that hitherto watched or still watches shows in which physical violence abounds, there may well be some gratifications that can be supplied by both types of content. The identification of these gratifications might lead to useful generalizations and, conceivably, to new programming concepts.

News and informational programs are also today much in the public eye and ear. The obvious objective of news programs is to inform the public. We know that many people do use these programs to acquire information, and we know that some people use them in order to *feel* informed, more or less regardless of whether the feeling is justified. We know also that quite a few people use newscasts as tranquilizers because the programs at least indicate that the world, despite its crises, is still with us. What other uses are made of these programs, and what other gratifications do they provide? Why, for example, do a good many people, as Mendelsohn recently pointed out, listen to the news every half-hour, while at the same time saying, in absolutely no spirit of complaint, that it is mostly repetitive?¹⁷

These are the kinds of questions that uses-and-gratifications studies are capable of answering, and, by their answers, capable of adding to our knowledge of the role of mass communication in the lives of its audience. But here an important and perennial question raises its now hoary head: "Knowledge for what?" Who or what benefits from endless lists of hitherto unsuspected uses, some almost idiosyncratic, that people make of mass communication? Of what value is it to know, for example, that some housewives feel that the radio is a link with the outside world, and so deliberately leave it on, even when they know they will be unable to hear it because they are going to be in the basement tending the washing machine?

Many people will, of course, reply that knowledge is valuable for its own sake, regardless of its utility, and that any fact, however apparently isolated, is pertinent to some area of cumulating information. The unlistened-to radio, they will say, tells us more about housewives than it tells us about radio, and might well be of greater interest to Betty Friedan or Marya Mannes than it would be to Dr. Stanton or General Sarnoff. The argument is true as far as it goes. But I am thinking at the moment in terms of the value of mass communication

¹⁷ Mendelsohn, *op. cit.*

research findings for practitioners and for researchers in the field of mass communication itself.

I suggest that if uses-and-gratifications studies of mass communication are to reach their own maximum usefulness, either to social science or to communicators, they must be pursued with greater rigor than many of them employ. For this purpose, the brilliant yet lucid paradigm of functional analysis developed by Robert K. Merton offers a highly practical model.¹⁸

Communication researchers following this paradigm must, to begin with, specify the precise element of the media situation which provides the particular gratification, or which is put to the stipulated use. Is it the *content* of the program, and if so precisely what *elements* of the content? Is it the mere *process of reading or listening or viewing*, regardless of content? Is it the *concept of the medium*—its audience's image, as it were—as would seem to be the case for our nonlistening housewife? Or is it some combination of these or other elements? Whatever it is, it must be specified by the researcher who lays claim to the title of functional analyst.

Second, if uses-and-gratifications studies are to achieve their potentialities they must, I believe, proceed further along the road on which many of them have stopped. They must consider not only the observed use, but the *consequences* of that use for the individual user, for social groups, and for society at large.

Indeed, in the linguistics of Mertonian functionalism, the word "function" is applicable only to consequences that enhance or maintain the health and integral organization of the referent—be that an individual, a group, or an entire society. Consequences that impair that organization are called "dysfunctions." Uses and gratifications whose consequences are not observed do not qualify for either of these titles, remaining, for the time being, simply observed uses and gratifications. By these criteria, which I think communication research would do well to espouse, the researcher who performs uses-and-gratifications studies cannot lay claim to the functional analysis label unless the consequences of the uses and gratifications are stipulated.

The stipulation, furthermore, cannot be a purely speculative manifestation of the researcher's personal values, for at that point he ceases to be a researcher and becomes a philosopher. If it is to merit the name of research, the stipulation of consequences must be made on the basis of scientific observation or, perhaps temporarily, in terms of hypotheses that may thereafter be put to scientific test.

To be explicit by way of example, the discovery that women use

¹⁸ Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1949, pp. 49-54 (or, in rev. ed., 1957, pp. 50-55).

soap operas as a source of advice on real-life problems does not enter the realm of true functional analysis until the consequences of this use are demonstrated—until it is shown, for example, that the women are therefore rendered more able or less able to deal with the problems of their own lives. The fact that people use newscasts to obtain the *feeling* of being informed involves functional analysis only when it is shown that the people actually *are* more informed or can converse more easily at social gatherings, or, possibly, that as a result of *feeling* informed they do not take steps they otherwise would take to become more deeply informed. Not until such consequences are demonstrated is the role of mass communication fully described. And I want to draw attention again to the word “demonstrated,” which is not synonymous with “assumed.”

I fully realize that some hypothesized consequences of observed uses and gratifications will be extremely difficult, and perhaps in some cases impossible, to demonstrate or observe by the type of tight research I am demanding. Nevertheless, I think communication research must face the challenge, and I am confident that, given the interest on the part of methodologists, some of the challenges will be met and others will be more and more closely approximated, as is often the case in social research. To ignore the challenge is to invite continuance of a kind of ambiguous or misleading casualness, frequently based on nothing other than the existing connotations of a word. The term “escapist,” for example, was long considered by many people a damnation of the media material to which it was applied. Katz and Foulkes have recently indicated how misleading this assumption is, and pointed out numerous examples of how “escape” can be functional.¹⁹

Functional analysis also requires a clear definition of the *referrent* of consequences—or, put more simply, an answer to the question of who or what enjoys or suffers the consequences. I will not labor this rather obvious point. Clearly, what may be functional for one sort of person may serve no function, or may be dysfunctional, for another sort of person, or for a special-interest group. Conversely, something that is functional for a special-interest group may be nonfunctional or dysfunctional for the society of which the group is part.

True functional analysis, as well as a fuller understanding of mass communication's role, both require a consideration of *functional alternatives*. If, for example, the broadcast media never presented classical music, or serious drama, or situation comedies, how would the gratifications which such fare now provides be achieved? Would

¹⁹ Katz and Foulkes, *op. cit.* The authors for the most part postulate functions rather than demonstrating them, but in any case indicate the inadequacy of previous assumptions of dysfunction.

alternate routes, or lack of routes, be functional or dysfunctional for individuals and for society as a whole?

Failure to consider functional alternatives has limited the usefulness and validity of many past and current communication studies. A case in point, or a series of cases, is provided by the various studies which some years ago indicated that heavy television viewers read less than light viewers (or than they themselves did before becoming heavy viewers), *but did not indicate what kinds of reading had been reduced*. This finding may have at least three different implications. If the viewer is therefore less exposed to the works of fine and provocative authors, the viewing has *not* served as a functional alternative and may be intellectually dysfunctional, for both the viewer and society. If, on the other hand, television exposes the viewer to the works of such authors as, say, Melville, or Marquand, or Barrie, or Chayefsky, whereas without television the viewer might have read quantitatively more but on a lower quality level, then the viewing, though again not serving as a functional *alternative*, might well be intellectually functional for both the individual and society. Finally, if the viewer reads fewer Western or detective stories, light romances, or other works that serve the same function as similar television material, then viewing does serve as a true functional alternative, and, at least as regards intellectual development, would appear to be of no social importance. That this is often the case, at least among children, has been demonstrated by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker, who found that Canadian children to whom television was available read fewer comic books and pulp magazines and went to fewer movies than did children in a comparable town where television was not available; the habits of the two groups did not differ to any great extent in regard to more serious reading.²⁰

What has been here suggested is not rigid adherence in every detail to Merton's paradigm of functional analysis, as any student of Merton will readily realize.²¹ What has rather been suggested is that communication researchers make more abundant use of a few criteria that seem minimally requisite to any real understanding of the social effects of mass communication.

Now let us suppose, for one idyllic moment, that all the requirements here stipulated were met by a whole flock of studies. Let us suppose that all these studies specified uses and gratifications of many kinds of media material; that they identified the exact content elements, or other elements, involved; that they demonstrated consequences to individuals, groups, and society; and that they considered what alterna-

²⁰ Schramm, Lyle, and Parker, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-73.

²¹ A much more rigorous application of the Mertonian paradigm will be found in Wright, *op. cit.*

tive consequences might occur (or did occur) in the absence of mass communication. How would all this help us?

To begin with the obvious, we would know a lot more about the real role of mass communication in our society than we currently do, and we could better dispel not only existing ignorance, but existing blocks to knowledge. We could, for example, probably break the bonds of such gross and very probably misleading dichotomies as "entertainment content" and "informational content." We would be able to move toward more meaningful typologies of media content and audiences than now exist, and we might finally be able to relate content category systems to audience category systems. We might find clearer relationships than are now known to exist between currently discrete bodies of research data, and so render our studies more cumulative. To be brief, if momentarily redundant, we might well be able to develop more valid and meaningful descriptions than now exist of the complex roles that mass communication plays in our society. We are fond of saying that mass communication research used to be directed to the question of "What does mass communication do to people?" but that uses-and-gratifications studies ask, more sensibly, "What do people do with mass communication?" If this latter type of study proliferates and becomes real functional analysis, we may find that the two questions are not discrete. What people do and can be brought to do with mass communication may largely determine what mass communication does and can be brought to do to people.

But this kind of idyllic closure, the development of knowledge of such scope, is not likely to occur overnight nor by the end of the next academic year, despite the overflowing coffers of various foundations and the smaller but still shimmering coffers of the mass communication industry itself. No matter how copious and how glittering the gold, the kind of full functional knowledge here proposed as a goal is not going to be attained for eons if functional analyses or related techniques are pursued as they have for the most part been pursued in the service of communication research.

I have made no actual counts, but it is my impression that these studies, and in particular uses-and-gratifications studies, have too wholly restricted themselves to the identification of uses, gratifications, and functions that are *already present to be observed*. Frequently enough, only the uses and gratifications are observable: the functions, or consequences, are therefore either not mentioned, or become a product of speculation, or are noted and reported only upon the occurrence of some adventitious event, such as a newspaper strike,²² which renders

²² See, for example, Bernard Berelson, "What Missing the Newspaper Means,"

the functions themselves conspicuous because they are not being served, and because people therefore either verbalize their frustrations or seek functional alternatives. The functional analyst has typically relied, in hypothesizing and identifying uses and gratifications, on his insight and the qualitative analysis of his collected data. For the stipulation of consequences he either switches to cerebral extrapolation or sits patiently but uncreatively awaiting an appropriate disturbance in the external environment.

Dissatisfaction with the need to speculate or to await the aid of unforecastable future events is probably one of the roots of the currently renewed interest in long-range studies of mass communication effects. There is again wistful and often serious talk about studying a cohort of persons over decades—of pursuing, as it were, a panel study embracing the infancy, childhood, and adolescence of the respondents. Impressive statements are being made—and they *are* impressive—about the need to observe the “whole person” in order to observe the role of mass communication within that *Gestalt*. Alluring as this idea may be, its implementation presents severe practical problems and equally severe methodological problems, such as the establishment of causation, for which our existing techniques can offer only compromise answers. In addition, as patient as the researcher may be, he is not likely to be too happy about the prospect of waiting twenty years for the answers to his present questions. Some of us who are today asking the questions may not even be around in twenty years to take note of the answers. If we want to see the answers ourselves, perhaps we had better *do* something about getting them.

The words “do something” are rather trite, but they are here meant to be taken in an absolutely literal sense. Our current approaches to functional analysis and the proposed stratagem of long-range studies all involve our sitting patiently, or impatiently, waiting for consequences to become visible. But such passive observation is no inherent requirement of functional analysis. There is no reason why the functional analyst need *sit* about when, instead, he can *set* about.

By way of one example of activity, we might consider attempting to *produce* a function, in the full “consequence” sense of the term. We might build, on the basis of what we know, a model of the preconditions that seem likely to produce that consequence, and then literally create those conditions and see if that consequence, or some other unanticipated consequence, occurs. Put another way, we might undertake experiments, within otherwise natural conditions, which collapse

the decades of the long-range study to some more easily observable period.

By way of a more specific example, all of us would, I suppose, like to see the mass media serve the function of developing tastes for relatively high-level cultural material. I do not mean to deprecate the functions of "entertainment," which Mendelsohn has been so ably tracking down,²³ nor do I mean to undersell the functions of "escape," which Katz and Foulkes have brilliantly rescued from the mire of apparent dysfunction.²⁴ But good drama and good music, however entertaining or escapist they may be, also have cultural value, and a taste for such media material, or for good informational programs, is generally regarded as positively functional both for the individual and for society as a whole. Why not garner what limited knowledge we possess about the preconditions of this function and attempt to produce it?

Children, whose media tastes are still in process of formation, would seem to be the most logical subjects of such an attempt. The concept of guiding that development, overtly or covertly, is no longer novel. It is daily attempted by some teachers, who are primarily interested in the goal rather than in observing the process, and modes of achieving the goal have been suggested as topics of research.²⁵ To the best of my knowledge, it has not as yet been suggested that such a study might serve as a prototype for the kind of induced functional development and accelerated functional analysis that is here being proposed.

The model for such a study would be built on what we know, or think we know, about the necessary preconditions of the development we would be attempting to induce. We know, for one thing, that mass

²³ Harold Mendelsohn, "Why the Attack on Entertainment?" a paper read at the meetings of the American Sociological Association, Los Angeles, Aug. 29, 1963.

²⁴ Katz and Foulkes, *op. cit.*

²⁵ The teaching of television appreciation is discussed in Neil Postman and the Committee on the Study of Television of the National Council of Teachers of English, *Television and the Teaching of English*, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961.

The results of a series of studies, mostly unrelated to mass communication but nevertheless provocative in any consideration of taste development, will be found in Herbert E. Krugman and Eugene L. Hartley, "The Learning of Tastes," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 24, 1960, pp. 621-631.

Research on the development of media tastes has recently been suggested by the Joint Committee for Research on Television and Children (circular letter, June 14, 1963).

A research proposal involving, as does the study here proposed, an attempt to develop media tastes by providing incentives to children in school situations, has been advanced by Hilde T. Himmelweit, "An Experimental Study of Taste Development in Children," in Leon Arons and Mark A. May, editors, *Television and Human Behavior: Tomorrow's Research in Mass Communication*, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963, pp. 46-62.

media, though largely devoted to entertainment, nevertheless do offer, in absolute terms, a considerable amount of informative and high-level material, much of which draws relatively small audiences. We are pretty sure that making more such material available would not produce a taste for it among many persons who do not already possess and exercise such tastes. We know also that, given the availability of the material, some persons who ordinarily flee from it will sometimes expose themselves to it, in a reluctant or resigned sort of way, for reasons wholly extraneous to the material itself—because, for example, their best boy friend or best girl friend or boss or reference group talks about classical music, and listening to it now and then accordingly seems a possible path toward various rewards.²⁶ But we also know that some persons who first exposed themselves to high-level material for highly nonaesthetic motives have grown to love it for its own sake. The indirect functions that they first sought gave way to unanticipated gratifications, and the material began to serve the direct aesthetic functions for which it was intended.

The kind of study of which I am speaking would seek simply to create the supposed preconditions of this kind of functional development, and observe the development as it occurred—or as it failed to occur. It has been suggested, for example, that it might be possible to create, within otherwise natural situations, a set of conditions under which children would, for perhaps half a year, be assured of obtaining a certain psychological gratification from viewing or listening to cultural media material, as a result of pre-planned activities on the part of their teachers, their peers, and their families. Observation of the children's media tastes and reactions before, during, and for some time after the experimental period should provide much needed information on the processes of taste development, and how, if at all, the development can best be guided.

Two other aspects of this type of study deserve to be highlighted, although time and space dictate that they can be only briefly mentioned here. The first is that in seeking to achieve certain communication effects, or functions, or consequences, such a study does not seek to modify the communication, but rather seeks to modify the audience. The second and related point in such a study plan is the concept of circular influence. Early exposures to a particular type of media material are expected to lead to certain gratifications for the audience member; these gratifications are expected to modify the attitudes he brings to later exposures; and these new attitudes are in turn expected

²⁶ For a now classic study in this area see Edward Suchman, "Invitation to Music," in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, editors, *Radio Research 1941*, New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941, pp. 140-188.

to modify the functions which the communication serves for him. In short, study plans of this type conceptually restore the audience member to his rightful place in the dynamic, rather than leaving him in the passive, almost inert, role to which many older studies relegated him.

Yet study plans of this type do not involve any really revolutionary departures. They have here been dwelt upon only because they exemplify what seems to me a fruitful type of communication research. There is perhaps no element in such studies that has not been employed, or at least conceived, either in communication research, or in educational planning, or under the odious cloak of so-called "brain-washing." The elements have merely been rearranged to afford a somewhat different angle of observation. And simple as such studies may be in concept, the creation of appropriately controlled conditions in an otherwise natural environment often requires arrangements so complex that some such studies may never get beyond the conceptual state. This is perhaps inevitable, but vigorous and widespread conceptions would seem likely to produce some viable births.

Should the whole concept of attempting to produce functions under controlled conditions prove to be more sterile than fertile, there must surely be other ways in which functional analysis can be brought more fully into the service of mass communication research. As I may perhaps have indicated already, I think that mass communication research would greatly benefit if this known but relatively seldom used road were longer and more often followed.