



THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON SOCIETY IN ROBIN SOANS' *LIFE AFTER SCANDAL*

Mehmet ÜNAL

**MASTER THESIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT**

Assist. Prof. Dr. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ

2019

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T.C.
ATATURK UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

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ÖZET**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ****ROBIN SOANS'IN *LIFE AFTER SCANDAL* ADLI OYUNUNDA MEDYANIN TOPLUM ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ****Mehmet ÜNAL****Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ****2019, Sayfa:70****Jüri: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ
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Kitlesel medyanın insanlar üzerinde algı değiştirici bir gücünün olup olmadığı konusu iletişim çalışmalarında 1920'lerden bu yana en önemli konulardan biri olmuştur. O zaman beri, kitlesel medyanın kontrol edici etkileri, etki dereceleri hakkında devam eden görüş farklılıkları olsa da hem birçok bilim insanı hem de toplum tarafından yaygın biçimde kabul görmüştür. Bu tezin amacı kitlesel medyanın insanlar üzerindeki etkilerini Robin Soans'ın *Life after Scandal* adlı oyununda medya etki teorileri ışığında incelemektir. Bu bağlamda, birinci bölüm medya etki teorilerinin ortaya çıkışının ve gelişiminin irdelenmesine ayrılmıştır. Aynı zamanda, medya etki teorileri kendi aralarında ve medya çalışmalarına temel oluşturmuş olan farklı disiplinlerdeki diğer çalışmalarla kıyaslanıp karşılaştırılmıştır. Böylece medya etki teorilerine temel oluşturmuş olan motivasyonların, ilham kaynaklarının ve önemli çalışmaların daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi amaçlanmıştır. İkinci bölümde ise verbatim tiyatrosu ve Robin Soans hakkında bilgi verilecek ardından medyanın toplum üzerindeki kontrol edici ve algı şekillendirici etkileri Soans'ın *Life after Scandal* adlı oyununda medya etki teorileri ışığında incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kitlesel Medya, Kitle İletişimi, Medya Etkileri, Medya Teorisi, İletişim Teorisi.

ABSTRACT**MASTER THESIS****THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON SOCIETY IN ROBIN SOANS'
*LIFE AFTER SCANDAL*****Mehmet ÜNAL****Advisor: Assist. Prof. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ****2019, Pages: 70****Jury: Assist. Prof. Yeliz BİBER VANGÖLÜ
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The question of whether the mass media has a perception-changing power over people or not has been a crucially important subject in communication studies from the 1920s onwards. Since then, the controlling effects of the mass media have been widely accepted both by myriads of scholars and common people despite the ongoing controversies over the degree of their effects. The aim of this thesis is to examine the effects of the mass media on people in the light of the media effects theories. In this context, Chapter One covers a discussion of the emergence and development of media effects theories. The media effects theories are also compared and contrasted within themselves and with the other studies from different disciplines that formed a basis for the media studies. In doing so, the study aims to provide a better understanding for the motivations, inspirations, and prominent studies that formed foundations of the media studies. In Chapter Two, some information about verbatim theatre and Robin Soans is presented and afterwards, the perception-changing and controlling effects of the mass media on society are examined in the light of the media effects theories.

Key Words: Mass Media, Media Effects, Media Theory, Communication Theory, Mass Communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Mass media has an indispensable place in the life of society since it is widely utilised as the primary source of information and entertainment. It covers the most widespread and accessible means of communication including newspaper, radio, television, and the internet; therefore, it is almost impossible not to be exposed to and be somehow affected by the messages delivered through mass media. The fact that mass media has some effects on the public perception and attitudes has been widely accepted both by myriad scholars and common people despite the ongoing controversies over the degree of these effects.

The effects that mass media has on its audience were first discovered in the 1750s. Friedrich the Great (Friedrich II of Prussia), who reigned between the years 1756 and 1767, was the first person in history to realise the effect of media on people and the fact that it was possible to take advantage of the media. Believing that newspapers could be utilised for the benefit of both the country and the state, he produced fake news by using newspapers to mislead his enemies during The Seven Years' War (1756-1763). After the war, in 1767, rumours of a new war in Berlin, which was the capital of the country, were spreading among the public. Therefore, Friedrich decided that people would need a distraction to ease the effect of these rumours and he made some newspapers publish another fake news of a frightening hurricane approaching from the northeast causing many injuries and material damages. Just like he planned, the fake news diverted people's attention from the rumour as they started to worry over the approaching hurricane. This historical incident shows us that as early as the eighteenth century, media has already begun to be used out of its real or stated purpose, that is, as a means of communication, hence taking on a manipulative function.

The best-known example of the kind of effect that mass media has on its audience is the story of 'The War of the Worlds Panic'. ABC NEWS relates this incident as follows:

The primary medium of entertainment is the radio, and it caused panic in the eastern United States after listeners mistook a fictional broadcast called "The War of the Worlds" as an actual news report. On October 11, 1938, future actor and filmmaker Orson Welles narrated the show's prologue for an audience believed to be in the millions. "War of the Worlds" was the Halloween episode for the radio

drama series “The Mercury Theatre on the Air” and it was a theatrical rendition of H.G. Wells’ 1898 novel of the same name. “I have a grave announcement to make,” the broadcaster stated. “Incredible as it may seem, those strange beings who landed in the Jersey farmlands tonight are the vanguard of an invading army from the planet Mars.” (ABC NEWS, 2018)

According to popular myth, thousands of New Yorkers fled their homes in panic believing that the country was under the invasion of aliens. The streets were crowded with citizens who were trying desperately to escape from the country. That incident alone is enough to prove the powerful and frightening effect of media on society as thousands of people acted on a piece of fictional news report without seeing a visual proof or even demanding any further confirmation.

Beginning with the 1920s and especially after the incident of ‘The War of the Worlds Panic’, scholars have become more and more interested in the field of mass communication and its possible effects on public attitudes and perceptions. While some media scholars such as Walter Lippmann and Harold D. Lasswell claim that media has strong and powerful effects capable of creating change in the public, others such as Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Bernard Berelson believe that media has only limited and minimal effects on people, which means it is thus not capable of effecting great changes in the public perception.

As a matter of fact, media has recently been getting more and more influential with the invention of the Internet. The fact that the Internet is not only the accumulation of all kinds of former media (the plural form of medium, not the press) such as books, newspapers, radio, and television but relatively better forms of them as well. It is cheaper and easier to utilise with some additional functions to the former communication media, a digital book uploaded on the internet, for instance, is still a book yet it does not require buying (if it is released and free which is mostly the case) and carrying that book around. The Internet, however, is not the first means of communication that uses instant speed of information dissemination since radio waves can also be transmitted instantly and so can the television broadcasts after the radio. However, while people can watch or listen to whatever is broadcast on the radio or television, the Internet enables its audience to choose what to watch and listen to as all the data uploaded on the Internet is always available to its users. Consequently, the

Internet offers better versions of all former means of communication and it is a highly popular means of communication.

Nowadays, almost every adult (and even teenagers) has a mobile phone and likewise, almost every mobile phone has access to the Internet. People thus have access to the Internet all the time and are informed through various social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. All over the world, people are connected to each other via these social media applications and this situation enhances the effects of media on society thereby being very influential on people along with television and newspapers.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the apparent and subtle effects of mass communication media on people in Robin Soans' *Life after Scandal* (2007) in the light of the media effects theories. In the first chapter, the media effects theories will be scrutinised along with their development processes and resemblances and connections with the former and later theories in the interest of clarity. The media has far more influence on people than it is thought to have had and the most frequent techniques utilised by the media have been examined under such theories as 'agenda-setting', 'priming', 'framing', 'dependency', 'spiral of silence', and 'cultivation'. Some prominent figures in communication studies such as Marshall McLuhan, Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard and such concepts that belong to those figures as 'the medium is the message', 'global village', 'simulacra', and 'simulation' will be briefly explained in this chapter as they are frequently cited in the communication theories especially with regard to the media effects theories. The core ideas behind each theory will be discussed and the findings of each theory will be compared with the others.

In the second chapter, verbatim theatre and the British playwright, Robin Soans, who is best-known for his verbatim plays, will be introduced and Robin Soans' *Life after Scandal* will be examined in the light of media effects theories by giving specific examples from the play. Since the play is about some infamous people involved in the most notorious scandals that happened in Britain in the last fifty years, it is closely related to media and its effects on people. It, therefore, provides us with pertinent examples for studying media effects theories.

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

1.1. MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

Media studies have grown into a substantial discipline within the last couple of decades. In accompaniment to this rapid development, numerous theories intersecting between media on the one hand and fields ranging from sociology, health and linguistics to psychology and neurology on the other emerged out. From their distinct perspectives, these theories have strived to form an understanding of the practices related to media and to answer such questions as how media operates, what kind of relations it establishes with its audiences and why it adopts the strategies that it does. An ardent observer of media theory, Jeremy Tunstall (1983) underlines a crucial aspect of media theories as follows:

Either the ‘mass media’ or ‘communication’ would cover a dozen disciplines... [and] even if the field is narrowed to ‘mass media’, it gets split into many separate media, many separate disciplines, many separate stages in the flow, and quickly you have several hundred subfields. (pp. 92-93)

His comment makes it evident that it is a challenge to categorise mass media through a single perspective as it covers myriad theories. Nevertheless, such categories are necessary as they help focusing on specific topics and ideas while examining particular subjects related to the media studies.

This study focuses on one of the most significant aspects of media studies: media effects. Within the field of media studies, media effects have been examined through a number of theories that discuss how media affects its audiences by shaping their perceptions and attitudes. As a starting point, this thesis study utilises the approach of the media scholar Burak Özçetin (2018) who suggests that it is possible to group these theories under two paradigms: the powerful effects paradigm and the limited effects paradigm. These two paradigms serve as umbrella terms covering the theories which have similar attitudes. In other words, these paradigms prove a simple categorisation for the media effects theories so that they become easier to explain and understand. Primarily based on the claim that mass media has strong influences on its audience, the

powerful effects paradigm includes such theories as ‘hypodermic needle’ or ‘magic silver bullet’, ‘propaganda’, ‘agenda-setting’, ‘priming’, ‘framing’, ‘dependency’, ‘spiral of silence’, and ‘cultivation’. The limited effects paradigm, which comprises theories such as ‘two-step flow’ and ‘uses and gratifications’ (also known as ‘Uses&Grats’ or ‘U&G’), opposes the powerful effects paradigm asserting that mass media has only a minimal or limited influence on the audience.

In fact, it may be useful to note that there has been a three-stage progression in the emergence and development of the theories categorised under these two paradigms. The first stage is the emergence of the theories which imply that media has strong effects on people with the early works of communication in the 1920s and 1930s; the next stage is the emergence of the new theories of the minimal effects between the 1940s and 1960s, which claim that mass media does not have powerful effects like the previous theories suggest, and the last stage is the rediscovery of the strong effects of mass media around the 1970s in the light of new theories like ‘agenda-setting’. Therefore, there has been a developmental loop when the media effects theories are considered through the paradigm of strength and weakness.

One of the earliest theories of mass communication, the hypodermic needle theory, which is also known as the magic silver bullet theory, is based on Walter Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* (1922) and Harold D. Lasswell’s *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927). The hypodermic needle theory suggests that mass media has a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audience. The metaphorical names of the theory (bullet and needle) also figuratively suggest that the message provided by media is a bullet fired from the media’s gun into the audience’s head or the message is likewise an injection given by the media’s needle straight into the passive audience. In his *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, the description that Lasswell gives for the propaganda performance of the US president Woodrow Wilson is akin to the figurative meaning of the hypodermic needle theory: “... Wilson brewed the subtle poison, which industrious men injected into the veins of a staggering people, until the smashing powers of the Allied armies knocked them into submission” (1927, p. 217). He describes the messages of propaganda through media as a ‘poison injected into the veins of people’ and that description fits the name of the hypodermic needle theory perfectly. In the 1920s and 1930s, mass media was perceived as highly dangerous since it was

widely believed that the powerful influence of media caused a sudden and inevitable change in people's behaviours and thoughts. According to the popular belief, there was no escape from the effects of media messages as media was the only source of information and the audience was powerless to resist the impact of its messages. Wilbur Schramm (1949) has pointed out this belief as follows:

Communication was seen as a magic bullet that transferred ideas or feelings or knowledge or motivations almost automatically from one mind to another relatively passive and defenceless, and communication could shoot something into them just as an electric circuit could deliver electrons to a light bulb. (p. 8)

Schramm points out that the effects of media appear almost automatically on the audience just like electricity generates light in a light bulb. In this metaphor, electricity is media, electrons are media messages, the light bulb is the audience, and light is the effect of media messages. In this respect, when a message is sent from media, receivers are affected immediately and they react accordingly without any resistance since the audience is accepted as passive and easily manipulative receivers. The aforementioned story of Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds' broadcast in 1938 has been classified as the archetypal example of the 'magic silver bullet' theory because the broadcast immediately affected its audience just like Schramm suggests.

Likewise, Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1955) characterise the interwar media by pointing to the strength of its influence. In their *Personal Influence*, they underline this strength by paraphrasing a passage from a paper written in 1949 by Bernard Berelson:

First the newspaper, and later the radio, were feared as powerful weapons able to rubber stamp ideas upon the minds of defenceless readers and listeners. In the 1920s, it was widely held that the newspapers and their propaganda "got us into the war," while in the 1930s, many saw in the Roosevelt campaign "proof" that a "golden voice" on the radio could sway men in any direction. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955, p. 16)

In these lines, Katz and Lazarsfeld state the fact that people are quite vulnerable to media emphasising its power to change their minds. As a matter of fact, its effect is so enormous that it is even able to convince people to get into war. Accordingly, mass media was decried at the time as "instruments of evil design" (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955, p. 15) and was properly feared as it was considered to be a powerful weapon.

Propaganda theory emerged during World War I in accordance with the magic silver bullet theory since both theories were credited with the media's immense power in shaping its audience's opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. Both propaganda and magic silver bullet theories claim that mass media has the capability of changing people's mind. The definition of propaganda provided by Jacques Ellul (1973) gives a clearer explanation for its purpose and how it functions:

Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization. (p. 61)

Ellul thus gives a rather thorough definition of propaganda by mentioning that it is an organised psychological manipulation in order to make masses either actively or passively participate in the actions of a group. Since it is defined and considered as thought manipulation, it gives the feeling that once people are exposed to propaganda, they may, without realising, end up changing their minds about certain issues. Because of the general belief that propaganda works on an involuntary and unconscious state of mind, it is not surprising for it to be feared as a powerful weapon by people.

Harold D. Lasswell is often cited as the main figure behind the propaganda theory because of his studies on the techniques of propaganda used in World War I. He expresses the effects of propaganda on people as follows:

When all allowances have been made and all extravagant estimates pared to the bone, the fact remains that propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world... In the Great Society [modern industrial society] it is no longer possible to fuse the waywardness of individuals in the furnace of the war dance; a newer and subtler instrument must weld thousands and even millions of human beings into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope. A new flame must burn out the canker of dissent and temper the steel of bellicose enthusiasm. The name of this new hammer and anvil of social solidarity is propaganda. (Lasswell, 1927, pp. 220-221)

As Lasswell states, propaganda is a powerful tool used to mobilise the masses especially while setting them against other nations. Propaganda was intensely used in both world wars and the Cold War and also by a broad range of social movements and political groups like Nazism, Fascism, Socialism, and Communism. Even though both magic silver bullet and propaganda theories postulate that media has a powerful

influence on people, propaganda typically influences people in slow and subtle ways while magic silver bullet theory is believed to have relatively more direct and immediate effects. For instance, while Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds' broadcast affected people directly and immediately, the Uncle Sam 'I want YOU for U.S. Army' poster¹, designed to encourage people to enlist in the war effort, is a sample of propaganda which affected people gradually, not instantly like the broadcast. This symbolic man, Uncle Sam is believed to be a meat packer named Samuel Wilson who lived during the war of 1812. Wilson's barrels of meat were stamped with the initials 'U.S.' to show that they belonged to the army. The image of this reliable and honest man became a great symbol of the United States of America for personal sacrifice, sense of patriotism, and confidence during World War I. This poster was so popular and efficient that it was also used in World War II. In this sample of propaganda, people were not influenced directly and immediately just after seeing the posters yet they were affected subconsciously by the image of Uncle Sam through which they were gradually instilled with patriotism.

Newer assessments on mass communication like the two-step flow and opinion leaders, which suggest that the magic silver bullet theory is not accurate, came out of books such as *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet (1948), *Personal Influence* by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), and *The Effects of Mass Communication* by Joseph Klapper (1960). Berelson was probably the first scholar who suggested an umbrella formulation for the limited effect theories of mass communication as follows: "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" (1948, p. 172). With this formulation, he implies that the mass media does not have direct and strong effects on its audience; instead, it has some effects on some of the audience under some conditions. He posits that the public is not "susceptible to messages from the 'omnipotent' media... [the effect of which] is direct and linear" (Li,

¹The attributes, which belong to Uncle Sam in 'I Want YOU for U.S. Army' poster, are described in *The Washington Post* like this: "A white goatee on a chiselled face. Bushy eyebrows over burning eyes. Silver hair flowing out from under a tall top hat decorated with stars. And one bony finger pointed toward the observer" (Andrews, 2017). This recruitment poster for the American forces during World War I depicts "a commanding Uncle Sam points an accusing finger of moral responsibility" at the viewer and says "I Want YOU for U.S. Army" (Knauer, 2017).

2013). He mentions many variances for only some kinds of communication media such as newspapers or television—not all media—to have some effects on people, which places his approach opposite to the strong effect theories.

On the other hand, two-step flow theory claiming that the messages of mass media do not have direct and immediate effects but only minimal and gradual effects on the audiences, was suggested by the media theorists. The two-step flow was first introduced by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet in *The People's Choice*, which is a research focusing on the voters' decision-making process during a presidential election campaign in Erie County, Ohio, USA. In their *Personal Influence*, in which the communication dynamics of the 1940 presidential elections in Erie County, Ohio, USA are examined, Katz and Lazarsfeld observe that “certain people in every stratum of a community serve ‘relay roles’ in the mass communication of election information and influence” (1955, p. 31). These people who are capable of influencing the people around them are named ‘opinion leaders’. Before the coinage of this concept, they first introduce the notion of opinion leadership by giving a description of opinion leaders:

What we shall call opinion leadership, if we may call it leadership at all, is leadership at its simplest: it is casually exercised, sometimes unwitting and unbeknown, within the smallest grouping of friends, family members, and neighbours...it is the almost invisible, certainly inconspicuous, form of leadership at the person-to-person level of ordinary, intimate, informal, everyday contact. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955, p. 138)

What Katz and Lazarsfeld describe here is a leadership position through which a person leads the opinions of those around her/him at a person-to-person level in every small segment of the society. Based on their observation, they deduce that the communication media (only radio and newspapers in the 1940s) are not influential enough in voters' decision-making process. Then, the authors ascertain from the interviews with the voters who changed their preference during the presidential campaign that it was other people that made them change their minds. Accordingly, Katz and Lazarsfeld acknowledge the personal influence of those opinion leaders and state that “the one source of influence that seemed to be far ahead of all others in determining the way people made up their minds was personal influence” (1955, p. 32). After examining opinion leaders, they find that “opinion leaders reported much more than the non-opinion leaders that for them, the mass media were influential” (Katz & Lazarsfeld,

1955, p. 32). It was thus observed that the media had more influence on opinion leaders than the rest of the population.

Based on those hypotheses in *Personal Influence* which is, at the same time, an analysis of the findings in *The People's Choice*, the flow of messages carried by mass media occurs in two steps: first, opinion leaders, who are individuals paying close attention to mass media, receive the messages delivered by the media; and second, opinion leaders interpret the actual media content and convey the interpreted message to opinion followers². Opinion leaders influence people who often share the same social status with them rather than those above or below them in the social order. The process intervening between the media's direct message and the audience's ultimate reaction to the message was coined as 'personal influence' after the publication of *Personal Influence*. It was conceived by the theorists that the mass media alone is not influential enough in affecting all of the audience and those, who are not affected in the first place, need to undergo a process in which opinion leaders will use their personal influence on their followers to shape their thoughts in accordance with the media messages that opinion leaders receive and interpret.

Another theory falling under the limited effects paradigm like two-step flow theory is uses and gratifications theory. It was developed by communication scholar Katz in 1959 as a reaction to the theories focusing on how media affects individuals. In formulating his theory, Katz rather focuses on how individuals actively use media for their particular purposes such as gaining information or being entertained. The theory suggests that media does not actually use people in order to persuade them to do something by affecting or manipulating them somehow. To him, it is people who use media for their own purposes, not the other way round. The theory aims to examine and understand not only how people use media but also why and with what purposes they use media in their everyday lives. In this respect, social media sites and services are a great study field for this theory as it aims to investigate what aspects of these sites and services motivate users to spend large amounts of time and effort on them. As 64 per cent of adults (Rainie et al., 2016, p. 2) and 80 per cent of the young use a social network service (Lenhart et al., 2014, p. 1), it is crucial to understand the role of these media in society and what kinds of impact they have on people. Unlike the early

² The people around opinion leaders.

theories, uses and gratifications theory does not categorise the audience as homogenous while analysing their habits and responses. It focuses on evaluating the media preferences of specific groups in society such as children, teenagers, and adults and claims that different groups have different interests, habits, practices, and tastes. There are also some other factors shaping people's use of media such as social roles and life circumstances. For instance, a single person with no children will have more time to watch TV, listen to the radio or s/he will update her/his Facebook status more often than someone who is married and has young children. The level of concern for privacy on social media also affects the use of media as one's concern about both known and unknown others' gaining access to her/his personal or private information is likely to affect the types and amount of information to be shared on social sites and services. If an individual, for instance, is concerned about an employer gaining access to her/his social network profile, s/he may limit the types of photos s/he shares on her/his profile. Accordingly, this situation will also influence the user's engagement with and relation to her/his friends and peers on the site or service. These examples show that life circumstances are crucial factors in determining how people integrate media into their lives. The detection and examination of those diversities are at the centre of this theory.

Uses and gratification theory does not only address media usage but also media gratifications which are examined with regard to two elements: the first one is 'gratifications sought' often referring to needs or motives, and the second one is 'gratifications obtained' (Katz et al., 1955, pp. 15-42). The theorists "conceive of the audience as actively choosing and using media in response to specific needs or goals... [and examine] the identifiable gratifications that the media provide" (Brown & Quan-Haase, 2012, pp. 488-508). They make a distinction between 'gratifications sought' and the 'gratifications obtained' as the former are about what users expect from a medium of communication before they use it for the first time, while the latter is the gratifications that users experience through and after the use of a medium. Gratifications obtained are important in the process of adopting a new medium as people decide whether to continue using it or not in this process. Therefore, gratifications sought and gratifications obtained should match in the adoption process of a new medium of communication. In this context, the study of gratifications also attempts to discern how the two are related.

In their study on the uses and gratifications of Facebook and IM (instant messaging), Anabel Quan-Haase and Alyson L. Young (2010) identify friend recommendations as a key motivator for adopting those social media applications since many participants mention that one of their friends suggested it. Other motivators are one's offline social network (the real social environment which is not on the internet) as many people claim that everyone they know is on Facebook and one's social relationship maintenance as users believe that social media helps others (social media users' friends, relatives, etc.) keep in touch with the users. Likewise, a study on the uses and gratifications of the micro-blogging site Twitter that has been carried out by Philip Johnson and Sang-Un Yang (2009) identifies the key factors determining the adoption of it as entertainment, relaxation, and communication for social motivations on the one hand and meeting new people, giving and receiving advice, and sharing information for information motivations on the other.

In 1981, communication scholar Alan Rubin proposed one of the most comprehensive typologies of media uses and gratifications. His typology of eight motivations covers the majority of explanations that people will give to explain why they watch television. He specifies these motivations as passing time, companionship, escape (pressure or reality), enjoyment, social interaction, relaxation, information, and excitement. The motivations listed here are related to TV only; however, Rubin's typology actually captures most of the explanations people give for their media consumption.

As mentioned before, the limited effects theories were very popular between the 1940s and 1960s among the media theorists who proposed those limited theories by rejecting the strong effects theories which had been accepted for two decades. After three decades of rejection, the history of media theories witnesses a rediscovery of the strong effects theories around the 1970s. In his *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann identifies the role of the news media in the formation of public opinion with the title of his opening chapter: "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads." His argument is that news media is the bridge between the world outside and the public and as a result of this, news media creates a pseudo-world in the minds of people and that world becomes the basis of the public's opinions and behaviours.

Although Lippmann formed a basis for the theory, he is not the theorist who proposed the agenda-setting theory which is the first strong effects theory suggested in 1972 when the strong effects of mass media were being rediscovered. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1972) examined the relevance between the news coverage for the issues in the 1968 presidential campaign and the importance that voters attached to these issues. In the study, also known as the Chapel Hill study, 25 days' content covering the nine major news sources (including local and national newspapers, network television news, and news magazines) used by voters during the fall campaign was examined and five major issues were listed in the media's agenda. Public's agenda was determined by a survey asking voters which issues were the most important in the election according to them. The results of the examination showed that there were remarkable correlations between the five most important issues determined by the media's agenda and the issues that were important in the public's agenda. More importantly, there were correlations even between the rankings of the media's agenda and the public's agenda as well as the voters' perceptions of the most important issues and how media presented them. Subsequently, the news media's agenda-setting influence on the public was documented and proved.

After examining the findings of the Chapel Hill study, McCombs and Shaw developed the agenda-setting theory as an exploration of how mass media shapes public opinion. The theory basically suggests that the salience of some issues on the agenda of media has a great impact on the salience of the same issues on the public's agenda; in other words, the media's agenda sets the public's agenda. The media influences what Lippmann calls 'the pictures in our heads', what they are about and what details of these pictures are salient in the minds of people. According to the theory, the media achieves that purpose by focusing on particular issues while ignoring the others.

Bernard C. Cohen (1963) claims that mass media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about" (p. 13). He implies that the media is not that powerful to affect the way people think about an issue, yet he accepts that the media has an influence on the choice of the issues that people think about. Unlike Cohen, McCombs believes that the media is also successful in telling people what to think. Suggesting that the news media has the potential of influencing the public's network-like mental structure, he states this

claim by paraphrasing Lippmann's 'picture' metaphor as: "the news media, our windows to the vast world beyond direct experience, determine our cognitive maps of that world" (McCombs, 2004, p. 3). According to this hypothesis, news media has the capacity to construct a pseudo-world and shape the public's perception in order to make them feel closely connected with that constructed world. People thus lose their ability to think independent from the images (constructed world) presented by the media. What follows is that 'the pictures in our heads' become so integrated with people's perception of the world that they cannot help thinking outside of these pictures in their heads.

The agenda-setting researches from Chapel Hill study to the present have identified three levels of influence of the news media on public. At the first level, the news media draws the public's attention to the major issues of the day and shape their perception to determine the most important ones and by doing so, the news media diverts their attention from the so-called less important issues. At the second level, the news media constructs the public's knowledge about these issues, especially, their most important attributes or aspects. At the third level, the news media is capable of constructing an integrated picture of these attributes or aspects in the minds of the public (McCombs & Guo, 2014, p. 265). This last level is the phase in which gradual effects of the media's agenda-setting have been finally fulfilled and after this phase, the public is ready to perceive any issue presented by the media.

According to the theory, that gradual effects of the news media's agenda-setting are almost inevitable as few people seek first-hand information and it is not possible to get every bit of information directly from the source; therefore, "most of what... [people] know comes to them 'second' or 'third' hand from the mass media" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 176). Consequently, as the media seems to be the widest source of information, it has the power of determining agenda, highlighting favourable characteristics of the salient issues, and constructing the desired images. It likewise has the capability of concealing deliberately the less favourable issues by framing the news.

In the 1980s, priming theory, which stemmed from the earlier agenda-setting theory, was suggested by Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder (1982). In fact, the theory suggests more or less the same idea with the third level of McCombs and Lei Guo's aforementioned three levels of influence hypothesis: the news

media is capable of constructing an integrated picture of some attributes or aspects in the minds of the public. Putting the similarities and differences of both theories aside, David H. Weaver (2007) states that “the alliance of priming and agenda-setting has strengthened the theoretical base of agenda-setting effects by providing ‘a better understanding of how mass media not only tell us ‘what to think about’ but also ‘what to think’” [Cohen, 1963, p. 13]” (p. 145). Priming is, nevertheless, a broader theory suggesting that mass media has a strong influence on behaviour, attitude, and how people process the received messages. The degree of the effects of priming also depends on predispositions of the audience so that if a person has a tendency for violence, violence-related messages will have a more forceful effect on her/him; if not, the degree of the effect will be low according to the theory (Scheufele and Tewksbury 9-20). Lars Willnat (1997) has also argued and confirmed Dietram Scheufele and David Tewksbury’s hypothesis that the theoretical explanations for the correlations, especially between agenda-setting and behaviour, have not been fully developed. Therefore, priming theory is broader than agenda-setting since priming explains the media’s influence on people’s behavioural changes.

Priming procedures were first used in the associative network model which examines human memory in cognitive psychology in the late 1970s. Network models of memory suggest that every idea or information is stored in memory as tags which form a network connected to related tags by associative pathways (Anderson, 1983, p. 199). For instance, ‘doctor’ is related to ‘hospital’ and ‘nurse’ but not to ‘butter’ or ‘desert’. Activating a tag in a memory network will activate all related tags associated with the one activated in the first place. Typical behavioural outcomes of that activation (reading the word ‘hospital’, for instance) is a faster judgement about and a faster pronunciation of a related word (‘doctor’) than an unrelated one (‘desert’). Social psychologists also studied personal perception, stereotyping, and attitude activation in the concept of priming. In social psychological experiments, participants are generally exposed to some specific priming events and then psychologists evaluate whether or not the priming events influence the participants’ interpretations or attitudes of later events or information. In Thomas K. Srull and Robert S. Wyer’s (1979) study, for example, participants are given four words: ‘he, Sally, hit, kicked’ and their task is to use three of the given words to make a sentence. There are, in fact, only two sentences that can be

built with these given words: ‘He hit Sally’ and ‘He kicked Sally’. That piece of information, however, is not shared with the participants. In either way, negative attitudes are activated as the concept is related to violence and that activation triggers the negative attitudes of other concepts according to the network models of memory. When the participants are asked to make judgements about an ambiguously described person or event, they subsequently judge the negative aspects of the person or event more than the positive aspects. This phase of earlier priming researches and findings in psychology is more salient for and related to the development of the priming theory in communication studies as both examine the influence of external factors from different perspectives on human perception, behaviour, and attitude.

Priming theory of communication is properly based on those associated network models of memory in social psychology which basically suggest that the formation of judgments is directly correlated with how associations can be brought to mind with a stimulus or trigger (Scheufele, 2000, pp. 297-316). The effects of priming can be evaluated through attitude accessibility; the longer it takes a respondent to respond to a question on a certain topic, the less accessible the topic in her/his memory. In a study by Francesca R. D. Carpentier (2014), participants are exposed to one of some specific target issues (health, environment or civil rights) via news stories, blogs or crossword puzzles and then given a task of filling word completion. The outcomes of the word completion show that the target issues that the participants are exposed to influence the word choice of them while completing the words. The word ‘_urse’, for instance, is most likely filled in as ‘nurse’ instead of ‘purse’ or ‘curse’ by the participants exposed to the health issue. This study shows that activating or triggering one concept in mind affects later judgements and perceptions.

In another experiment, Wendy L. Josephson (1987) investigates the priming effects of violence in media on children’s behaviours by presenting participants with either a violent or non-violent television program. The violent television program contains recurring images of walkie-talkies, while the non-violent program does not contain walkie-talkies. The purpose of the walkie-talkies here is to serve as a cue for violence. After the television program, half of the participants watch a thirty-second non-violent cartoon in which images of bad weather eventually worsening to snow are seen. The aim is to frustrate the young viewers with the images’ apparent technical

malfunction and static actionless scenes. According to Josephson, frustration brings about the result of acting aggressively. Then they are interviewed using either a walkie-talkie or a microphone and sent to the school gymnasium to play floor hockey. Half of the participants are exposed to the violence-related cue and half are not. When they begin to play hockey, some aggressive behaviours such as calling others abusive names, pushing others down, hitting them with hockey sticks are observed. After three games, each lasting for three minutes, the participants are returned to the teachers. As a result of this study, Josephson realises that violent television viewing primes children to act violently in the activities that follow. She also mentions that this effect is higher when the violent program show is coupled in the repeated studies with different participants. However, the effect of this priming appears to lessen in time and completely diminish in the later periods. It also shows that priming does not have long-lasting effects and that it is most effective just after the exposure. Such studies have proven the existence and validity of priming effects as a result of which the priming theory is still quite popular in communication studies.

Framing is also a theory which stemmed from the agenda-setting theory just like the priming theory. The framing theory focuses on both how the media presents news stories and how the public makes sense of the stories presented in the media. What the media highlights and how it does that as well as what it conceals—the way it frames stories—lead people to perceive them in a certain way. Todd Gitlin (1980) defines frames as “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (p. 6). He implies that framing is the process of selecting certain issues, presenting them, and emphasising certain aspects of the selected issues. Robert M. Entman (1993) also offers another, yet more detailed definition of framing:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

He defines the purpose of framing as telling people how to define problems, how to evaluate moral issues and even how to treat them. According to this definition, ‘framing’ is literally framing or drawing a circle around people’s perception and even

their actions by determining what is in the frame to ensure that they stay in the predetermined frame, perceive within the borders of the frame, and interpret according to the acquired frame. In other words, people's behaviours, manners, perceptions, and actions are likely to be guided and shaped by the perceived messages of media content.

Table 1

The List of Words Used by Journalists during the 1991 War against Iraq

They have A war machine Censorship Propaganda	We have Army, navy, and air force Reporting restrictions Press briefings
They Destroy Kill Kill	We Suppress Eliminate Neutralize
They launch Sneak attacks Without provocation	We launch First strikes Pre-emptively
Their men are Troops Hordes	Our men are Boys Lads

Source: Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing Newspapers*. Macmillan.

Framing is a powerful tool to increase the degree of acceptability of social issues as journalists imbue news stories with specific meanings without the notice of the audience. News framing is generally used as a strategy for agenda-setting because how the issues are reported and discussed from the perspective of agenda-setting has subsequent effects on audience's cognition and public opinion. John Richardson (2007) discusses this strategy of framing by using a list of words used by journalists during the 1991 war against Iraq, which is published by the *Guardian Weekly* (see table 1). The words listed on the left column refer to the Iraqis and those in the right column refer to the English. That list clearly shows that the choice of the word in news reporting can have a great influence on the audience's perception of the event as in the example. One event or situation may be reported by using different words to evoke either negative or positive perception in the minds of the audience. If the Iraqis are, for example, the ones killing the English soldiers, it is reported as 'they killed our boys' or 'they killed our lads' but if the English are the ones killing the Iraqi soldiers, it is reported as 'we

suppressed their troops' or 'we eliminated their hordes'. The use of the word 'horde' here shows how news media operates in a sinister way as horde is associated with nomadic tribes suggesting primitivism and sometimes with animals.

In addition to framing via word choice or the way news is reported, the mystification of the narrator or observer is also a frequently used strategy in news reporting. According to Noam Chomsky (2002) when the origin of the information is disguised, it is frequently a government source doing it (p. 10). This mystification of the narrator or observer strengthens the 'truth effect' of the reported news by creating an impression of absolute objectivity. By using this method, an authoritarian distance is effectively created between the sender/producer and the receiver of the news. In TV news reporting, the formality of clothing, gestures and eye movements, and the position of the desk all serve to visually create an authoritarian distance of an expert. In this way, the reported news is believed to have more influence on the audience.

This kind of mystifications is not only limited to news stories but are also utilised in the media coverage of scientific researches. Both the quality and tabloid press, for instance, have once deliberately reported the scientific researches, the findings of which appear to highlight the differences between men and women in order to reinforce sexual prejudices. An article in *The Guardian* of July 14, 1997, was published with the headline *Genes Say Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Sensitive*. According to the article, recent researches show that women are genetically more empathetic and caring than men who "could not help being boorish and aggressive" (Radford, 1997). The subtle message here is that women have to be empathetic and caring than men because these are women's innate characteristics. Men, on the other hand, cannot help being rude and aggressive as these are likewise men's innate characteristics. The conclusion to be drawn is that it is normal for men to be boorish and aggressive while women's role in creation is to be understanding and caring. In addition to the utilisation and misrepresentation of scientific researches, such a media coverage is framed through quotations by professors or experts. This adds an extra level of professionalism and strengthens the authoritarian aspect of the news. This aspect is also heightened by the use of such logical and causal connectors as 'therefore', 'so that', 'as a result' or 'according to'. In doing so, the media not only aims to preserve the authoritarian stance but also gives the impression of a highly rational discourse that cannot be rejected.

The framing and priming theories are examined in this study following the agenda-setting theory as the three are closely related to each other. In the chronological order of their development, however, other theories such as the spiral of silence and the dependency theory emerged out following the agenda-setting. The spiral of silence theory, which was developed by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, suggests that

People who have believed that they hold a minority viewpoint on a public issue will remain in the background where their communication will be restrained; those who believe that they hold a majority viewpoint will be more encouraged to speak. (West & Turner, 2010, p. 411)

According to the theory, people feel discouraged or frightened to express what they think or object to what they disaffirm in public when they think they are in the minority. The motive behind this theory is the attempt to examine the reasons for the silence of people.

In a research about the spiral of silence, Anthony T. Spencer and Stephen M. Croucher (2008) examine the public perception of ETA³ in Spain and France. Basque⁴ individuals from Spain and France are questioned about their support of ETA and asked questions like ‘How likely would you enter into a conversation with a stranger on a train about ETA?’ (pp. 137-153). Individuals claim that they are more likely to express their opinions to non-Basques, as they have a fear of isolation. The Spanish individuals, on the other hand, are more likely to be silent due to their greater proximity to the violent acts in their region. The results support the spiral of silence theory when cultural differences of two different regions in which ETA existed are taken into consideration.

The theory suggests a few assumptions about this silence, one of which is that the mass media gives more coverage to the majority groups in society and gives less to the minorities. Therefore, majorities feel the support of media whereas, in minorities’ regard, media is set against them. Another assumption is that being a part of minority results in a loss of confidence thereby leading to muteness, which is closely related to another assumption about minorities’ fear of isolation or separation from their social environments. The last assumption is that minorities keep silent as they want to avoid

³ Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, a militant separatist group.

⁴ Basques are an indigenous ethnic group characterised by Basque language, a common culture and shared genetic ancestry to the ancient Vascones and Aquitanians whose region is located around the border of Spain and France (Günther et al., 2015, pp. 11917-22).

debates and to secure themselves from the majority. According to Noelle-Neumann, this situation continues until the minority no longer expresses their opinion against the majority opinion and the perceived opinion of the majority becomes a social norm – the status quo – as a result of which the minority becomes less likely to speak out.

There are, however, some people in the minority who are able to express their opinion: the ‘hardcore nonconformists’ and the ‘avant-garde’. Hardcore nonconformists are the people who have already been “rejected for their beliefs and have nothing to lose by speaking out” while the avant-garde are “the intellectuals, artists, and reformers in the isolated minority who speak out because they are convinced they are ahead of the times” (Griffen, 2009, p. 379). In this context, if an individual is not a part of an avant-garde group, s/he needs to be silent in order not to be treated as a hardcore nonconformist.

Dependency theory, which is also known as the ‘media system dependency theory’ (MSD) or ‘media dependency theory’, was first introduced by Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Melvin L. DeFleur in 1976. It suggests that people use the media to achieve certain goals and to satisfy certain needs. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) describe dependency as the correlating relationship between media, audience, and social system. According to the theory, the integral relationship between media content, nature of society, and behaviours of the audience are very influential in the effects of the media on people. It is, in a sense, an extension or addition to the uses and gratifications theory developed in the 1950s as both theories are in agreement that people use media for gratifying their particular needs and purposes. However, dependency theory focuses on the audience’s goals as the origin of media dependency, whereas the uses and gratifications theory approaches the issue as more related to the audience’s needs. Even though there are some uses and gratification studies discussing audience’s goal as a motive for media use, the dependency theory is more extensive because it examines both macro and micro factors influencing the motives behind media dependency.

Stephen Littlejohn (2002) explains the way media dependency evolves when he writes, “First you will become more dependent on media that meet a number of your needs than on media that provide just a few” (p. 325). At the very beginning, the need for the media was to communicate for the purpose of receiving information. However,

as Littlejohn states, people have become more and more dependent on the media so much so that the media has become the need itself. Nowadays people have become so dependent on the media that almost nobody is happy or comfortable when her/his cell phone battery is dead or when there is no internet connection either in their devices or in the area. Unfortunately, the situation is getting worse by the day with the worst cases found in the young generations. A recently published caricature describes an old lady with a walking stick standing next to the traffic lights along with a young boy whose eyes are fixed on his cell phone as if he were hypnotised. As opposed to the expectation that the young should offer a helping hand to the elderly, the old lady takes the arm of the young boy saying: 'Let me help you cross the road'. This tragicomic caricature summarises today's media dependency by emphasising the severe state it has reached.

Apart from the purpose of entertainment, there are times when people become more dependent on media to receive information and feel updated about recent events. As Littlejohn writes, "The second source of dependency is social stability" (2002, p. 325). In times of conflict such as war periods or presidential elections, people become more dependent on the media to be informed about the happenings in society and to feel a sense of stability. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur also mention the same situation as follows:

The potential for mass media messages to achieve a broad range of cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects will be increased when media systems serve many unique and central information functions. That potential will be further increased when there is a high degree of structural instability in the society due to conflict and change. (1976, p. 7)

Those times are the ones that the media has become more influential as people pay more attention to news coverage than they normally do and consequently, media messages reach more audiences. In other words, the more important the media is in one's life, the more effects the media will have on the person.

Cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner (1969) is another mass media theory which examines the long-term effects of television. Based on the fact that the industrialised mass-mediated storytelling, especially via television programming, has become the dominant entertainment medium, the theory suggests that the audience has thus been heavily exposed to the views of violence and a distorted world. In the content

of such television programmes women, the elderly, and racial minorities are portrayed as victims of violence while white men are usually depicted as enforcers of violence. Audience's heavy exposure to such content may result in a fearful attitude to the world, distorted beliefs and a tendency to violence. It is suggested that these negative consequences of heavy exposure to such kind of content have been gradual but serious in the long-term.

Gerbner founded the Cultural Indicators Project (CIP) at the Annenberg School of Communication (ASC) of the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1960s to analyse the effects of television violence on audience's perceptions and attitudes. The project's aim was to analyse the content messages in order to evaluate what the audiences watch and to utilise cultivation analyses in evaluating the consequences of growing up, living with, and learning from a television dominated environment (Signorielli & Gerbner, 1995, pp. 278-283). From 1969 to 1995, CIP analysed over 3,000 programs and 35,000 characters of prime-time and weekend daytime TV programmes. The analyses show that TV presents a distorted reality, its storytelling is repetitive, and violence is common in all its content. Unlike the actual crime trends, for instance, most of the crimes portrayed on TV involve violence between strangers. Gerbner and his colleagues documented inequalities in TV content as well: male characters outnumber female characters by 3 to 1 and coloured people and older characters are underrepresented or misrepresented. In the study, Gerbner and his colleagues argue that repeated portrayal and viewing of such content, in which less powerful groups are unequally posed, are serious obstacles to the empowerment of women, the elderly, and the members of other less powerful groups, all of whom are more likely portrayed as victims of violence. They also found that crime is ten times more frequent in prime-time TV content than in reality and the consequences of violence are hardly portrayed in the content (Gerbner et al., 1980, pp. 10-29). Consequently, TV content is full of repeated misrepresentation of minority groups, blatant acts of violence, and distorted views of the world. According to the theory, heavy exposure of such content gradually 'cultivates' social construction in which the audience begin to perceive the real world as it is portrayed in the TV content. As a result of this exposure, the audience may either develop a fear of these violent acts or act in compliance with them.

The mean world syndrome is a term also coined by Gerbner to describe how the heavy viewers of television may end up perceiving the world. They are more likely to describe the world as a dangerous, frightening and intimidating place where people are untrustworthy and only caring for themselves. Moreover, he determines that this syndrome affects people differently: “[T]he most vulnerable to the ‘mean world’ syndrome are women, older people, those with lower education and income, those who do not read newspapers regularly, and those who live in large cities” (Gerbner, 1981, p. 6). According to him, the least powerful groups in society are likely to be affected by the cultivation effects of television because their lack of knowledge about the real world as a result of not regularly reading newspapers and their restricted environment in large cities make them vulnerable to such desperate thoughts. The first makes it easier to believe the pseudo-world they witness in TV content and since city life generally does not allow them to be in close relationship with their environment, the latter begets the feeling of insecurity thereby not feeling safe. Although Gerbner criticises and makes deductions only germane to heavy TV exposure, Morgan and Shanahan (1997) claim that if light viewers are consistently exposed to TV content, they are eventually likely to be affected by cultivation effects:

The forces that shape our beliefs are many and varied; television is just one. As Gerbner et al. have repeatedly argued over the years, television is by no means the most powerful influence on people, but it is the most common, the most pervasive, the most widely shared. Gerbner et al. have also argued that the size of an effect is less important than its direction and the nature of its steady contribution (see Gerbner et al., 1994 [= Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994]). They have pointed out that “small effects” make the difference in a tight struggle. (pp. 33-34)

They mention that the size of an effect matters and is consistent with the cultivation effects of TV viewing. Small-sized but consistent exposure to television, which has perception shaping effects about the world on its audience, still has cumulative cultivation effects. Therefore, consistency of the same kind of images may also cause cultivation effects in the audience.

As mentioned before, mass communication studies cover many disciplines and theories as communication is a broad field. However, only the most prominent ones have been examined in this study. Although some theories (like ‘simulacra and simulation’ (1981) and ‘medium theory’ (1964)), writers, and philosophers (like

Marshall McLuhan, Guy Debord, and Jean Baudrillard) are not mentioned in the media effects theories, they are frequently referred to in media studies. The following section will thus provide some information about these figures and theories.

The media guru, Marshall McLuhan coined the aphorism “the medium is the message” (1964, p. 7) and the term ‘global village’⁵, and predicted the internet technology almost 30 years before its invention. With his expression ‘the medium is the message’, also known as medium theory or ‘technological determinism’, McLuhan suggests that all media are the extensions of body organs, bodily functions, senses or processes and they have “psychic and social consequences” through “design or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes” (1964, p. 23). According to him, content cannot exist without a medium and it is actually the medium affecting the content and people, not the other way around. He accepts any kind of technology as a medium regardless of its communicative function and considers each medium as extensions of the human body or senses. Wheels, bicycles, and cars are, in this sense, the extension of legs or motion; tools and weapons are the extensions of fists, teeth, and nails; lenses, telescopes, and microscopes are the extensions of eyes or sight; computers are the extension of brain; books and libraries are the extensions of memory; electricity is the extension of the nervous system; clothes are the extension of the skin, and so forth (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 4-6). McLuhan argues that the existence of any of these media has intrinsic consequences regardless of its content and he amplifies this hypothesis through the example of the light bulb:

Whether the light is being used for brain surgery or night baseball is a matter of indifference. It could be argued that these activities are in some way the ‘content’ of the electric light, since they could not exist without the electric light. This fact merely underlines the point that “the medium is the message” because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and forms of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association. Indeed, it is only too typical that the ‘content’ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium. (1964, p. 152)

It is the existence of a light bulb as a medium that makes brain surgery or night baseball possible. In this example, brain surgery and night baseball are the outcomes or content of the medium which is the light bulb. Without the medium, the content cannot exist.

⁵ The term describes the world as a global village becoming more interconnected as a result of technological developments.

Using the same example, it can be further suggested that the existence of a light bulb is influential in human associations as people stay awake longer and interact more. That is why McLuhan believes that the medium itself is more important and influential than the content.

In his *Understanding Media* (1964), McLuhan states that different media require different degrees of their users' participation by which he means participation of the senses. If a medium enhances only a single sense, it is called a 'hot' medium. Photographs, radio, and telephone are, for instance, hot media as they require only one sense: hearing or sight. On the other hand, if a medium requires more effort or participation of more senses to comprehend the meaning, it is called a 'cool' medium. Television and the internet are examples of cool media as they require more than one sense: sight and hearing together.

McLuhan's another coinage, global village is a concept that suggests that the world is in a new age—the electronic age as he calls it—where humanity has exceeded beyond the early eras based only on spoken and written words. To him, people will soon be finding and receiving exactly the same information through technological tools. His prediction of the invention of the internet way before its invention is related to the concept of global village as it is mostly through internet that people around the world access the same information.

Guy Debord is another prominent figure in the study of communication theory with his implications of the mass media and its effects in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Although he does not mention any of the media theories in his work, it is possible to draw conclusions that are related to media theories. For instance, he states that the spectacle is “not a collection of images, [but] rather... a social relationship between people, mediated by images” (Debord, 1994, p. 12). It is obvious that he implies mass media with ‘the spectacle’ since he says ‘mediated by images’ and argues that the mass media does not only consist of images. It is, in fact, the social relationship that emanates through the image that has significance. The idea underlined here is that spectacle is always more than what it seems and accordingly, the messages delivered by the mass media may constitute and shape society's relationships. It means the media has

the power of influencing people and this hypothesis relates to almost all strong effects theories such as propaganda, cultivation, framing or agenda-setting.

Debord draws attention to the situation of people under the influence of representations and illusions provided by the media in the modern age with a quote from Ludwig Feuerbach in the very first lines of *The Society of the Spectacle*:

But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, the appearance to the essence... illusion only is sacred, truth profane. Nay, sacredness is held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness. (1994, p. 1)

The dependency to the sign rather than what is signified, the copy rather than the original, and the appearance rather than the essence is also the argument of the dependency theory. According to the theory, people know only what is presented to them and the presented images or facts are generally not real. The only information people receive is what media provides them with. In this case, they have to prefer the copy to the original and representation to reality as they have no other choice. In the long run, this dependency results in becoming a real need. Debord expresses this when he writes, “the spectacle is a permanent opium war waged to make it impossible to distinguish goods from commodities, or true satisfaction from a survival that increases according to its own logic” (1994, p. 30). Media becomes a real need and dependency since it influences people’s judgement to distinguish the truth from falsity/fabrication or entertainment from necessity. The metaphor ‘opium’ is aptly used to highlight the similarity between the effects of media and opium, the implication being that both opium and media are addictive and harmful for the consumers. Debord continues by explaining the same situation as: “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (1994, p. 1). He takes his claims a step further and states that all that was once directly experienced has been replaced by their representations. He mentions the effect of spectacles on the life of society again stating that life has turned into a mere accumulation of spectacles wherein representation has preceded the real.

Besides Debord, Jean Baudrillard is another important thinker whose ideas relate to media effects theories. He developed the concepts of 'simulacra' and 'simulation' examining the relationship between reality, symbols, and society in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). One basic claim he makes in the book is that representations are gradually replacing reality:

Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum.

These would be the successive phases of the image:

It is the reflection of a basic reality.

It masks and perverts a basic reality.

It masks the absence of a basic reality.

It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

(Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6)

In four phases, he describes the transformation of representations into simulations, simulacra, and hyperreal. In the first phase, he describes the pure representation or imitation of anything real without any twisted purpose. In the second phase, it is no longer pure or innocent and representation or imitation serves a purpose which is evil as it aims to mask and corrupt a basic reality. This phase is where the simulation starts. In the third phase, the image conceals not only the reality but also the absence of it and that is given as another function of simulation: it does not only mask or corrupt a reality; it may also conceal the absence of reality. In the fourth phase, the image is no longer a representation or imitation. It is a simulation. It loses all its relations to any reality and transforms into something new: a representation without an original. As the simulation does not imitate the original or the reality anymore, it becomes simulacrum: a representation without an original. Baudrillard differentiates representation and simulation as "Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false', between 'real' and 'imaginary'" (1994, p. 3). He emphasises that simulation is not a simple imitation, representation or copy but it is something that makes the borders indistinct. He further explains that "Simulation is no longer that of... a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). 'Hyperreal' is the world of simulation and simulacra, in which representation becomes more real than reality. According to

Baudrillard, we live in a simulation or even in a hyperreal world as media constitutes our knowledge of reality which is far from being real. As a result, we believe the media messages more than the reality itself because we do not know what is real. To put it simply, ‘simulation’ is the reproduction of the things constituting reality and ‘simulacrum’ is a copy or representation without an original. Disneyland, for example, is not a real functioning city but an amusement park without an original and Baudrillard claims that the Watergate scandal was also a simulacrum to convince people that law and justice still exist. The Gulf War, on the other hand, is claimed to be fake therefore a simulation by Baudrillard as it never happened in the way it was presented to people.

Baudrillard also refers to media’s agenda-setting function and mentions the use of simulations by media for its own purposes as follows:

Thus all hold ups, hijacks and the like are now as it were simulation hold ups, in the sense that they are inscribed in advance in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences. In brief, where they function as a set of signs dedicated exclusively to their recurrence as signs, and no longer to their “real” goal at all. (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 21)

He suggests the same hypothesis with those of agenda-setting, framing, and priming theories. Baudrillard and these theories claim that the media uses the news content or the images presented by any type of media to shape the audience’s perception of reality. Here, he states that simulations ‘function as a set of signs dedicated exclusively to their recurrence as signs, and no longer to their real goal at all’. In other words, the media uses media images—simulations—to manipulate the audience. He also remarks on how reality may differ from the appearance:

All that capital asks of us is to receive it as rational or to combat it in the name of rationality, to receive it as moral or to combat it in the name of morality. For they are identical, meaning they can be read another way: before, the task was to dissimulate scandal; today, the task is to conceal the fact that there is none. (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 15)

According to Baudrillard, if media or a government presents something in a particular way, the reality behind it is generally the opposite. If it is presented as rational, the purpose is to conceal irrationality. If it is presented as moral, it is to mask the immorality. He states that the duty of the government or media should have been to

cover the scandals, yet they try to reveal it in order to conceal the absence of the scandals. He is referring to his third phase of image transformation here which suggests that one of the functions of simulations is to mask the absence of basic realities. The media makes up scandals which are simulations and it also reveals those simulations in order to mask the absence of them. According to Baudrillard, then, media uses simulations to change the public agenda or to shape the perception of the audience.

Most of the prominent theories in media effects theories have been examined in this chapter. In the light of all examined theories here, it is clear that mass media has some effects on society. The only difference of opinion lies in determining either those effects are powerful effects or limited effects. Either way, each theory has contributed to mass media studies to provide a better understanding of media effects on people. In the next chapter, the British playwright Robin Soans' *Life after Scandal* will be scrutinised in the light of these media effects theories in order to explain the underlying motives and subtle purposes of the media effects encountered in the play.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AFTER SCANDAL IN THE LIGHT OF MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

2.1. VERBATIM THEATRE AND ROBIN SOANS

Verbatim theatre is a form of documentary theatre which is a theatre of reportage based on “Records, documents, letters, statistics, market-reports, statements by banks and companies, government statements, speeches, interviews, statements by well-known personalities, newspaper and broadcast reports, photos, documentary films and other contemporary documents” (Weiss, 1971, p. 41). Documentary theatre is generally referred to as “verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre-of-fact, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, restored village performances, war and battle re-enactments, and autobiographical theatre” (Martin, 2015, p. 5), testimonial theatre, and ethnodrama or ethnotheatre as they all utilise more or less the same sources as the basis of a performance. Although there is an emerging consensus that they can be used interchangeably, this will not be a necessarily accurate usage since each type of theatre focuses on different sources adopting different techniques. In testimonial theatre, for instance, individuals work with a writer and tell their own stories (hence, the name testimony) whereas the scripts of tribunal theatre are edited from court transcripts.

Looking back into the beginnings of documentary theatre, Erwin Piscator’s *Trotz alledem! (In Spite of Everything!)*, which premiered in Berlin in 1925, is widely accepted as the first stage documentary. The play was a revue about Communist Party, in which Piscator used new technologies including projected newsreel footage, news-extracts, recorded speeches, photographs and film sequences from World War I. Piscator’s *In Spite of Everything!* and such respected German documentary plays as Rolf Hochhuth’s *Der Stellvertreter (The Representative)*, also known as *The Deputy*, (Berlin, 1963), Heinar Kipphardt’s *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (1964), and Peter Weiss’s *The Investigation* (1965) had a great influence on British documentary theatre. Joan Littlewood chronicled World War I through songs and documents of the period such as newspaper footages in her play *Oh What a Lovely War!* (1969). In his review in *The Observer*, Ronald Bryden hails *Oh What a Lovely War!* as “The most

important theatrical event of the decade” since it criticises atrocities of the Great War by providing evidence.

Although there is an overlap between documentary theatre and verbatim theatre, the latter is slightly different because:

As the name suggests, verbatim plays are written using only the precise words spoken by people interviewed about a particular event or topic. The plays are constructed by the playwright from the testimony of witnesses or those close to an event in order to lend the play an authority that shifts the theatre from mere entertainment to a form of reportage, politicising the audience. (RKC-Drama, 2011)

In the process of constructing a play, a verbatim (word-for-word or in exactly the same words) style of theatre utilises the exact same words spoken by interviewees who are connected to the topic on which the play focuses. Verbatim plays focus on politics, scandals, disasters, sporting, and other social events. Since a verbatim piece requires the testimony of interviewees, the development of such theatre is closely related to the invention of the portable cassette recorder. The voices of interviewees can be recorded in their own environment thanks to these recorders. As interviewees are generally victims of an event or related to some unpleasant events, they are generally nervous about being interviewed and taking notes during the interview has a high possibility of making them feel as if they were being interrogated. In this respect, the invention of portable cassette recorder⁶ has a great influence on the development of verbatim theatre.

Fight for Shelton Bar (1974) is regarded as the first verbatim play. It is about a campaign fighting against the closure of a major steelworks in the heart of Stoke and it was performed in the city and most of the audience were the ex-workers of the steelworks. The other most prominent samples of verbatim theatre are David Hare’s *The Permanent Way* (2003), *Stuff Happens* (2004), and *The Power of Yes* (2009); the collaborated works of director Max Stafford-Clark and writer Robin Soans: *A State Affair* (2000), *Talking to Terrorists* (2005), *Life after Scandal* (2007), and *Mixed Up North* (2009); Nicholas Kent and Richard Norton-Taylor’s *Nuremberg* (1996), *Bloody Sunday* (2005), and *The Colour of Justice: The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry* (1999); Kent

⁶ Today, modern recording devices, cameras, and mobile phones are preferred instead.

and Gillian Slovo's collaborated works: *Guantanamo: 'Honour Bound to Defend Freedom'* (2004) and *The Riots* (2011).

Verbatim theatre has started to be utilised as a medium to depict and draw attention to major social issues such as:

army deaths in Philip Ralph's *Deep Cut* (2008) and Fiona Evans's *Geoff Dead: Disco for Sale* (2008); prostitution in Esther Wilson's *Unprotected* (2006), Alecky Blythe's *The Girlfriend Experience* (2008); murder in Tanika Gupta's *Gladiator Games* (2005) and *London Road* (2012) and perhaps most predominantly, a surge of work on the continuing issue of the war in Iraq: Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* (2003), *Called to Account* (2007) and *Tactical Questioning* (2011), Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2007) and Steve Gilroy's *The Motherland* (2008). (Cantrell, 2012)

Verbatim theatre tries to focus on almost all social problems and what makes it different from journalism is that it utilises the 'real words' of the 'real people'. This characteristic of these plays makes it rather sincere for the audience compared to journalism. Colette F. Keen puts this situation into words as follows:

The convergence of news in the digital age means that journalism can rarely connect to an audience, but when DT [Documentary Theatre], VT [Verbatim Theatre] or DVT [Documentary Verbatim Theatre] concentrates on a disaster, tragedy or scandal, we are able to look further into the heart of these events. (2017, p. 16)

Since the verbatim theatre is in a close connection with the people related to a specific issue, it is depicted as 'enabling us to look further in the heart of the events'. Anna Deavere Smith defines this situation as the verbatim theatre is able to "blur the lines between theatre and journalism, using text from real-life encounters to create gripping portraits". In this respect, another function of verbatim theatre is the fact that it becomes a memory keeper for those who have been all alone in their personal trauma by bearing witness to the story-owner as "[t]here is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you" (Hurstons, 2006, p. 175). It allows people to share their experiences with the public thereby presenting different perspectives for a specific issue which is "not the crudely distilled version of TV news, not the legalese of the official inquiry, but something more closely resembling what people near the heart of the matter might want recorded... as history" (Brown, 1995, p. 459). In other words, it offers people an

opportunity to share their version of their story or only the parts which they desire to be heard by others.

All in all, it cannot be claimed that the popularity or influence of verbatim theatre comes from its objectivity or reality. Its importance seems to lie in the validity of the words spoken:

Verbatim theatre is not about truth in the sense of the most accurate imitation of real utterances according to this way of thinking, but rather, it is about the truth revealed in the words themselves, which have validity because somebody really said them. (McManus, 2010, p. 7)

As verbatim theatre is based on interviews which are basically subjective utterances, they are far from being objective. This, however, does not mean that they are not true or real in any way. Although the information provided in verbatim plays cannot be accepted as an objective piece of information when the singularity of the source is taken into consideration, verbatim theatre differs from other genres as “verbatim plays are usually about something important [and] the implication [here] is that when the content of a play is actually important to us then we shouldn’t rely on fiction” (McManus, 2010, p. 8). Since verbatim plays are constructed from the real words actually said by somebody who does not have any literary concern unlike many playwrights while expressing their condition, they are accepted as more reliable than many other literary genres.

A playwright specialised in verbatim and documentary plays and an actor, Robin Soans was born in 1947 in Northamptonshire, England. As an actor, Soans has appeared in over eighty plays and in twelve films including *The Last Place on Earth* (1985), *Comrades* (1986), and *The Queen* (2006). Nevertheless, he is best known in Britain for his verbatim plays.

As well as non-verbatim plays such as *Bet Noir* (1986) and *Sinners and Saints* (1989) he mostly wrote verbatim plays. He wrote his first verbatim play *Across the Divide* in 1997, which is based on the interviews in Ken Livingstone’s Brent East constituency in the 1997 General Election. His second verbatim play, *A State Affair* (2000), which is a frank portrayal of child sexuality, went on two national tours and appeared twice at Soho Theatre. *The Arab Israeli Cookbook* (2004) which is a play about the everyday realities of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Talking to Terrorists* (2005)

which discusses the importance of negotiations and peaceful solutions in resolving terrorism, *Life After Scandal* (2007), and *Crouch, Touch, Pause, Engage* (2015) which tackles alienation by comparing and contrasting the situation of the Welsh rugby legend Gareth Thomas and two teenage girls from his town are his other verbatim plays.

As one of the most significant representatives of verbatim theatre in Britain, Soans elucidates in one of his interviews how he got involved in this kind of theatre as follows:

I never made a conscious decision to become involved in verbatim theatre... I blame much on my own personality... My parents took to describing me to their friends as 'a bit of a red under the bed' because, from an early age, I refused to swallow their political learnings and social values without question. Later... in my career I have mostly worked in the more political, less commercial sector of both theatre and film. (2008, p. 20)

Here Soans implies that he is involved in verbatim theatre since it allows him to ask questions. During his interviews that then lead towards creating a verbatim play, he needs to ask a lot of questions to clarify details. He believes that details are very important in the creation of a verbatim play because according to him "If you look at any of the great playwrights—Shakespeare, Chekhov, Miller—it is the human detail which hooks an audience... This is my aim: to use people's real words to move us to a new understanding of ourselves" (Soans, 2008, p. 41). He sees the details in life as the key factor for the creation of a great play since he believes that it is the human detail which impresses an audience in a theatre play. He also shows this as the reason for his interruptions during his interviews: "My need for specificity is the reason why I interrupt my interviewees in full flow only to ask for more detail" (Soans, 2008, p. 39). The interrupted flow of narrations is one of the stylistic characteristics of verbatim plays as well. His natural interruptions during the interviews, therefore, fit the nature of verbatim plays.

There is one more motive behind Soans's preference of composing verbatim plays, in particular *Life after Scandal*. Even though he has never discussed this reason directly, it is quite evident from his words below that he believes that every bit of information delivered to the public is far from the truth in this modern age. Accordingly, it may be suggested that he might possibly be on the pursuit of truth through the interviews he holds with people in the process of composing his plays. He

most probably created *Life after Scandal* in order to draw attention to this issue which is reinforced through this assertion:

The phrase ‘it does what it says on the tin’ is much in fashion at the moment, yet it seems to me that we are living in an age when virtually nothing ‘does what it says on the tin’: photographs are fake; television competitions are won by people who haven’t entered; articles in newspapers turn out to have been entirely fabricated; weapons of mass destruction cannot be found in Iraq. (Soans, 2008, p. 17)

In his play *Life after Scandal*, Soans tackles similar issues he mentions above. The play is more about the media’s fabrication of truth in the modern world than about scandals and what people who got involved in them, had to deal with. In this respect, it is possible to claim that the motive behind the creation of the play is the problems he has been aware of in this age of technology and media.

2.2. LIFE AFTER SCANDAL IN THE LIGHT OF MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

Life after Scandal was first performed at Hampstead Theatre on 20 September 2007 about a month after having been broadcast in a shortened version on Radio 4. Since the play is a cumulative work that consists of some of the most notorious scandals of the last fifty years, rendering problematic how media has treated these scandals, it lends itself to an examination of media effects theories. The variety of the questions tackled in the play with regard to the scandals contributes to a better and clearer understanding of the issues related to media scrutinised in the scope of this thesis through the myriad of examples it provides.

Life after Scandal is based on interviews with infamous people who were involved in scandals such as Neil and Christine Hamilton, Charles and Diana Ingram, Jonathan Aitken, Lord Charles Brocket, Lord Edward Montagu, Edwina Currie, Craig Murray, James Herring, Margaret Cook, David Leigh, Duncan Roy, and some common people whose full names are not mentioned such as Menaji (a paparazzo), and Sonal and Louise (who are just ordinary citizens). In this respect, the play covers people from every walk of life, presenting the events and their effects on a highly broad range and through several points of view. Such diversity facilitates a deeper examination of the media effects by enabling comparisons between the events and perspectives.

The play is thus comprised of parts of the real conversations between Soans and the people involved in scandals. This means that there is a very fine line between the actors, the characters and those people from real life because the actors' bodies serve as mere instruments to deliver the actual words spoken by these real-life figures who are turned into characters in *Life after Scandal*. Therefore, the play raises questions about what a theatre character is compared to a real-life person or how an actor relates to these two. The play's approach of being closely connected with real-life people and their experiences also provides a basis for a re-evaluation of the relation between theatre and real life. One of the crucial points the play makes is about mass media and the extent to which it affects the lives of people. With its focus on mass media, the play adds further to any discussion about reality and representation/fabrication.

Neither the temporal nor the spatial setting is clarified in the play. The stage directions do not describe the setting; yet, the existence of waiters and the chats about ordering food or drinks create the impression that the characters are in a restaurant. When it was first performed at Hampstead Theatre the set was an "anonymous West End hotel with leather sofas and sometimes... [it was] played in a restaurant" (Loveridge, 2007). This setting might be referring to the places where the actual interviews with the people were held. The style of the play allows the characters "to tell their story in their own words but to intercut these gobbets with the experiences of others. So rarely is there a conversation, but like a televised documentary, their narratives are spliced and juxtaposed" (Loveridge, 2007). Despite the fact that the individual stories of the characters are not presented in single episodes but as juxtaposed to the others, the plot is not hard to follow. In fact, layering the stories on top of each other creates a kind of an atmosphere of shared experience thereby highlighting and enriching the message the play endeavours to deliver. The style of the play might also be related to Soans' working style utilised during the creation of his verbatim plays. He talks about the process of writing his plays as follows:

I use different coloured marker pens to underline passages with common themes, and to indicate what would be effective next to what. I always look for thematic links, allowing me to create a kind of relay race, with actors passing the baton on to each other. (Soans, 2008, p. 35)

Soans explains here that he classifies the lines from the interviews in accordance with common themes and any other thematic links between the passages. Therefore, the style he uses in his plays might have developed as a result of the working system he used during the process of creating his plays.

In addition to the stories laid over each other, there is hardly any interaction between the characters of the play; if any, it takes place between the couples⁷ but not between the characters who do not know each other. However, the speeches of different characters are given one after another as if they form a part of a conversation when they are actually individually uttered lines somehow related to the issue or situation presented in that part of the play:

MONTAGU. ... My father died when I was two and a half, which is when I inherited the title of Lord Montagu.

BROCKET. My father died of a brain tumour when he was thirty-two, and I inherited the title Lord Brocket... Charles Brocket... Charlie B.

DUNCAN. Until recently, I didn't know who my father was. I found out in the end he was this Iranian guy who had then children with different women. He died ten years ago. My name is Duncan Roy, and I am a film director, and I pretended to be a Lord... (Soans, 2007, p. 30).

Here, the characters Montagu, Brocket and Duncan are not really involved in a conversation with each other even though their speeches run one after another. In fact, they do not know one another but the fact that they occupy the same stage inevitably underlines a shared experience. The binding quality of the individual stories throughout the play changes but in the above example, it is their fathers who seem to have had an influence on their lives somehow. Such parallel lines between the individual stories bring the issues discussed to the fore through the resemblance between the lives, incidents or characters.

There is also not much action in the play which instead depends on the narration of the characters' stories. This style seems to be far from delivering the essence of drama, which is action and creates repetitive conversations throughout the play by causing lack of dramatic elements. For these reasons, the play is often criticised:

⁷ Since the basis of the play is the interviews, only the Hamiltons and the Ingrams have conversations with each other probably because they were interviewed together and they had conversations during the interviews. Apart from that, the other characters do not have any conversations with each other in the play, even if they may know each other in real life.

There is nothing to look at because the characters do not interact...Victim and villain are lumped together and we are invited to sympathise with their common plight while we hiss at the cruel media... But oh, the blather we have to endure. We get verbatim phone calls setting up the arrangements, verbatim ordering of tea and coffee and verbatim offspring interrupting to ask what's for supper. (Edge, 2007)

It is understandable that the stage does not offer much to look at because it is the words that actually matter in this kind of theatre. Soans utilises ordinary daily conversations about tea, coffee or meal ordering for the purpose of creating a mutual setting for all the narrators in the play, but beyond that, there is no onstage action. He states that he attempts to obviate the monotonous atmosphere of verbatim talking by utilising additional materials as follows:

The quintessence of verbatim theatre is a group of actors sitting on chairs, or cardboard boxes or a sofa, talking to the audience, simply telling stories. In my own verbatim plays I have tried to weave my material into scenes, to give the actors a geographic pattern and to get away from a landscape of monolithic chunks of talking. (Soans, 2008, p. 21)

Since there is no interaction between the characters unless they are couples, Soans uses these conversations to create a smooth connection between the characters in order to give the impression that they are in the same restaurant or hotel. He mentions that he is trying to get away from the boring atmosphere of verbatim monologues in his plays by benefitting from other materials. In this case, orders and phone calls and the attempts to create an impression of a restaurant or hotel are the other materials he tries to utilise as a geographical pattern so that the actors and the audience get a chance to get away from the monolithic chunks of verbatim talking since this allows the actors to interact and get in a role related to the geographic pattern. They are, of course, not enough to compensate for the non-theatrical parts of the play, which has provoked much criticism. Lizzie Loveridge seems to agree with Simon Edge when she writes, "the whole is a slickly amusing evening but I was left with a small voice questioning its value as theatre" (2007). Such failure of dramatic elements must be credited to verbatim theatre because it lacks action and plot and only utilises the speeches of the interviewees without changing them.

Despite the fact that *Life after Scandal* is criticised for its form and style, it provides ample examples to analyse in the light of mass communication studies. It is not only the theme of the play but also its genre, verbatim, that is closely related to mass

media studies since it has always been the most salient question whether the media presents the reality or not. This play is structured upon real people's 'word-for-word' statements; yet, it is still a theatre play which means it is basically a work of fiction. Even though it represents real people by using their own words, they are acted by other people—actors and actresses—and surprisingly the effect is more powerful than the real event. It means the representation is more creditable than the original and this situation leads us to Baudrillard's concept of simulation and simulacra. As the concept suggests that representations are replacing reality or as Debord likewise mentions in his *The Society of the Spectacles* that copy is preferred to the original, representations are preferred to reality, the appearance to the essence or illusion to the truth. It can be claimed that staged version of the events or people, in other words, the representation, the appearance, the copy or the illusion, is preferred to the real versions of them which are, in a way, the original, the reality, the essence or the truth. In this respect, *Life after Scandal* may be considered as the simulation of the real even more so than other types of theatre because through its claim to representing the real words of the people concerned, verbatim theatre makes the statement that it is more real(istic) than other types of theatre.

Nail Gaiman has a quite different perspective on the same issue. According to him, "Fiction is a lie that tells us true things, over and over" (2008, p. xvi). One cannot claim that *Life after Scandal* depicts the bare truth because first of all, it is a play based on personal testimonials which means it gives the subjective opinions of the people interviewed. However, they are still real words that belong to real people. Furthermore, the scandals mentioned in the play are real scandals, not fictional in spite of the fact that their authenticity is debatable. All in all, it can be said that the play is essentially a mixture of fiction and reality yet the trueness of the events is still controversial.

It is possible to discuss the play itself as also related to McLuhan's 'the medium is the message' aphorism because without the medium—the play in this case—the message will never exist in the first place. The theory also suggests that media (as the plural form of medium, not the press) function as the extension of their body parts, bodily functions or abilities. In this regard, since the media serves as the only information source for people, the media can be considered as the extension of their eyes and ears or sense of sight and hearing which have been the basic extensions of their

body or basic abilities to receive information before the invention of the means of communication. Likewise, the play can be considered as the extension of their comprehension ability since people could not gain insight into the events with the information supplied by the media. They needed to see (or else the original version of the events should have been more effective than the play, not the other way round) the accumulation of all the scattered information provided by media, which is presented not from a one-sided perspective like that of the media but from different perspectives. This situation helps the audience of the play to comprehend the events and the results of them better and accordingly, the play can be considered as the extension of their comprehension ability according to the concept of the medium is the message.

In this regard, people are dependent on media for the production and dissemination of information as well as receiving it because people are not capable of being everywhere around the world to be able to witness and receive any piece of information from the first hand. While they are informed of scandals via media, they also need fictional productions or simulations and simulacra in order to get a better insight of the events or just to consider the event from different points of views since the media presents the information from a one-sided point of view in a way that, according to the popular belief, is arranged to serve for the media's specific purposes. The fictional production, simulation, and simulacrum, in this case, are a theatre play—*Life after Scandal*. This leads us to two other media effects theories: the uses and gratifications and the dependency. People utilise media since they need it and this refers to the uses and gratifications theory which suggests that people use media for their personal needs, goals and purposes. In the course of time, they begin to utilise the media because they become dependent on it as the dependency theory suggests in addition to the effects of the uses and gratification. As a result, while people utilise media of their own free will for their own needs (the uses and gratification theory), they then become dependent on it in time and they begin to be controlled by the media under its ultimate influence (the dependency theory). The media and the play, in this respect, can be examined in scope of both theories since people both need and are dependent on the media as the main source of information which is the basis of the arguments of both theories; the play is also needed either to gain an insight into the events or just because it pleases the audience as an act of entertainment.

Before moving forward with the discussion of the play's content in detail, this brief examination of the play's genre and theme along with the play's bare existence will be useful to provide us with a clue about why this play will not be scrutinised in the light of only one or two theories of mass communication but of the two paradigms (the powerful effects and minimal effects) and additional theories (simulation and simulacra, the medium is the message, etc.). Since the examination of media effects within the scope of one or two theories will be facile, all closely related theories of media effects will be utilised to provide a wider understanding of the issue by benefiting from various perspectives serving for the same purpose: to try to detect, comprehend, and explain the effects of media on society. The content of the play will accordingly be scrutinised by giving specific examples from the play in the light of media effects theories. In doing so, the examples will be examined either in the light of one single theory or more than one simultaneously since many of the examples in the play cover more than one theory at once. The relations both between the theories within themselves and with the examples from the play for different theories will be easier to state and analyse in the interest of clarity.

The play provides us with many examples of how the media functions in the life of its audience and the effects of it. The speech of Jonathan Aitken, a former Cabinet minister who is imprisoned in 1999 for perjury, for instance, is one of the finest ones that show how media may affect lives:

AITKEN. I wanted to keep my head down; I fled to New York. Yes, I suppose... yes... somewhere I could be anonymous. When I phoned home, my daughter said, 'Daddy, you're not just the news, you're the only news.' Of course, I thought she was exaggerating, but then I was faxed a copy of the *Evening Standard*. The banner headline was, 'THE RUIN OF AITKEN', in that magnified type-size used for great crises or the death of royalty; further down in pretty large letters it said, 'DOWNFALL OF A FORMER CABINET MINISTER', and underneath it said, 'AITKEN, THE MARRIAGE, PAGE 3; AITKEN, THE TRIAL, PAGE 4; AITKEN, THE LIES, PAGE 5; AITKEN, THE MAN, PAGE 12 & 13; LEADER COMMENT PAGE 9'. (Soans, 2007, p. 44)

Aitken⁸ states that he is the only news as the news about him covers the whole newspaper, which is an example of the practice of agenda-setting. According to agenda-

⁸ Jonathan Aitken first blamed the press for slandering him but later it was proved that he was the one lying and he was therefore exposed to more pressure from the press.

setting theory, media focuses on some issues while ignoring others thereby setting the public agenda. In addition to that, framing theory also suggests that the way in which the media highlights or frames the stories leads people to perceive them in a certain way. In this respect, the magnified type-size of the headlines and the headlines themselves such as 'THE RUIN OF AITKEN' or 'AITKEN, THE LIES' leads the perception of the news. The choice of the words like 'ruin' and 'lies' and their use with the name Aitken are meant to shape the perception of the audience in order to create a specific agenda in a specific frame. It basically gives the subtle messages that Aitken is a liar, he is ruined, and that becomes the most salient news in the world.

The play continuously highlights the fact that media is frequently utilised with the purpose of setting the public agenda. The main purpose of media for doing that is either to conceal a more important issue or to shape the perception of its audience about a specific issue. The experiences and observations of one of the characters in the play, for example, draw attention to this situation as follows:

CRAIG. When I published my book and the press were reviewing it, even the high-minded reviewers in the *Sunday Times*... I mean my love life occupies five per cent of the book, but that's all they concentrated on... the sex bits... and hardly at all on the issues of human rights and torture... the political content. But that's the point... they don't want anyone to take you or the issues you raise seriously. It was exactly the same with the ridiculing of Robin Cook... at the time he split from his wife and married his secretary; it was all about the sex scandal and nothing about the foreign policy. With such a high proportion of divorce you wouldn't have thought it would have caused that much of a stir. But it was still used against him and it's because Blair and Campbell had an agenda. Blair wanted to undermine Cook, and draw attention away from what he was standing for. (Soans, 2007, pp. 71-72)

Craig Murray was the British ambassador to Uzbekistan between 2002 and 2004 and he exposed the human rights violation of the Karimov administration, which caused conflicts with his superiors in the Foreign Office. The incidents he states above are more or less the same with what the agenda-setting theory suggests. He claims that the press focused only on the trivial part about sex which is a very limited part when it is compared to the rest of the issues about the political content of his book. In other words, the press highlighted a specific issue in order to conceal others, which is the main argument of the agenda-setting theory.

The other incident Craig mentions in the above quote is related to Robin Cook who was a British Labour Party politician who served as the Member of Parliament for Livingston and in the Cabinet as the Foreign Secretary. Craig indicates that Cook has been the victim of agenda-setting administrated by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a British journalist, broadcaster, and author Alastair Campbell who is best known for his working as Tony Blair's spokesman and campaign director. Craig suggests that Cook's divorce and remarriage were used against him in accordance with Blair and Campbell's agenda. Cook's sex scandal likewise became the most significant issue on the news agenda while there was nothing about the foreign policy. After a while, he was referred to as "Robin Cock"⁹ by David Dimbleby, the British journalist and former presenter of current affairs and political programmes, who is best known for the BBC's long-running topical debate programme *Question Time*. Even though Dimbleby apologised and stated that it happened inadvertently, it was perceived as an indication for the sex scandal he was involved in and that incident again kept him on the agenda by humorously relating his name to the scandal.

In the play, the sometime investigations executive editor of *The Guardian*, David Leigh explains how the scandals function in the hands of the media. The media's process of utilising scandals for setting the public agenda is explained stage by stage in David's speech as follows:

DAVID. These cases where people in the public eye are elevated and then dragged down and torn to pieces by the crowd are all theatre... a rather unpleasant form of theatre. That's what the Max Cliffords of this world understand. They aren't driven by anything except a desire to make money, and exude nothing but a slimy hypocrisy. That's what they do... they stage these performances. Act One. Here is a celebrity to admire, fawn over, gawn at. Act Two. Get the celebrity into trouble, and start dragging them down. Act Three. Trample the celebrity into the mud to make you feel better about the feelings of envy stirred up by your initial adoration. (Soans, 2007, p. 95)

David utilises the theatre metaphor for the creation process of celebrities and scandals. Indeed, scandals function like performances staged in theatres as both scandals and theatre performances serve as an escape from reality for the audience. Scandals are therefore used by the media to distract people from actual problems. In this process, the media creates celebrities, let them be adored by the public and drag them into scandals

⁹ Cook humorously answered back as "Yes, David Bumblebee" (Dimbleby, 2004).

with the purpose of using them as a distraction when necessary. David explains this process by using a metaphor of theatre performance with three acts, which is what the media theorists like Lippmann call agenda-setting.

The agenda-setting function of the media is frequently emphasised and criticised throughout the play through experiences shared by different characters probably to reinforce the effect of the message the play endeavours to deliver as follows:

MELISSA. Scandal... is a really effective way of reining in the unruly elements... the elements that threaten the power base.

DUNCAN. It's such a powerful controller. That's what nobody fucking realises.

MELISSA. You emasculate people's intelligence and their ability to discriminate by drowning them in a tidal wave of nipples and groins.

CRAIG. When you've got a media which has abandoned any ideas of education or intellectual values to determine its agenda, it opens the door to news management.

MELISSA. You do think you're going mad these days, don't you? The most ginormous scandals happen... David Kelly... and they don't get a look in.

CRAIG. When the Andijan massacre happened two years ago in Uzbekistan... the biggest massacre of demonstrators since Tiananmen Square, it was marginalised by something trivial. If I remember right, it was Kylie Minogue's breast cancer.

MELISSA. That's what's interesting. Where's everybody's conscience gone? I was horrified, haunted as a little girl by Biafra... things like Vietnam and Biafra... now nobody gives a toss... we're all looking at some tits.

CRAIG. When I was trying to interest the voters of Blackburn in torture, or the use of intelligence gained by torture, they were much more interested in who'd won 'Big Brother'...

MELISSA. It's interesting that it's scandal that's being used to manipulate people... the systematic feeding, feeding, feeding of salacious detail... (Soans, 2007, pp. 70-71)

Since the play develops in the form of the characters' narrations of experiences that are presented in parallel with each other, similar experiences about the agenda-setting function of the media are given one after another in this part of the play. Melissa¹⁰ is the daughter of a politician. She tries to draw attention to the powerful effect of the media on public through celebrities and scandals. She states that media uses scandals and celebrities to manipulate the public by systematically feeding them with salacious details. She uses some specific examples of this agenda-setting function of the media

¹⁰ She does not want her name and surname to be stated in the play as she wants to remain anonymous.

when she names David Kelly, Vietnam, and Biafra. David Christopher Kelly was a Welsh scientist and authority on biological warfare. He was employed by the British Ministry of Defence and found dead two days after an “unauthorised discussion he had with BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan about the UK Government’s dossier on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq” (“David Kelly (Weapons Expert)”, 2019). Melissa refers to this incident implying that Kelly’s death should have been on the public agenda instead of other trivial issues about celebrities and their scandals. She then refers to the Biafran War (1967-1970) which is also known as the Nigerian Civil War and the Nigerian-Biafran War. During this war, “there were about 100.000 overall military casualties, while between 500.000 and 2 million Biafran civilians died of starvation” (“ICE Case Studies: The Biafran War”, 1997). Finally, she refers to the Vietnam War (1955-1975) during which around 1.500.000 people were estimated to die. According to Melissa’s implication in her narration, these events should have been on the public agenda since they are the real scandals; nevertheless, the agenda was set by news media and nobody cared about these real problems. Roy Duncan puts the media’s tactic of trifling the truly important news into words when he says “While we’re all watching these celebrities yo-yoing up and down you can bury any amount of bad news” (Soans, 2007, p. 71). His observation likewise underlines the agenda-setting function of the media.

Murray also narrates his experience along with Melissa and Duncan and tells the audience how the media changed the agenda which should have been about Andijan massacre in Uzbekistan in 2005 in which more than 1,500 people were killed (Donovan, 2012). However, instead of the relatively more serious issues like the Andijan massacre, Australian singer Kylie Minogue’s breast cancer was on the news and public agenda at the time. Likewise, Murray mentions his anecdote about how everybody was more interested in who had won ‘Big Brother’¹¹, while he was trying to attract attention to torture or the use of intelligence gained by torture. Accordingly, he makes an observation about the media and its effects on people: “Everyone is living their lives through these iconic figures promoted by the media... and the trivia of what’s happening to them” (Soans, 2007, p. 71). In this respect, since people are under the influence of the

¹¹ Celebrity *Big Brother* (UK TV series) is the British version of the international television reality game show based on the original Dutch version of the show: *Big Brother*. In the show a number of celebrity contestants live together in an isolated custom-built house. One of the contestants is disqualified and sent from the house by a public vote at the end of each week. The last contestant left in the house wins the game and gets a reward.

media messages and the media decides what is salient or not, public agenda is automatically set by the media.

Some parts in the play are explicitly arranged to highlight the fact that media determines how people think about some certain issues by influencing their perception with the choice of words or the way the media presents these issues:

DUNCAN. Suddenly all this vitriol is pouring on you. You look me up on the Internet... con man, queer, violent, vindictive, psychopathic... This woman in one of the newspapers said people shouldn't sit down in the same restaurant as me. (Soans, 2007, p. 52)

MARGARET. ... It led to Campbell blackening my name, as being a vengeful woman... you should have seen the cartoons appearing at the time... hands splayed out, the fingers tattooed with 'VENGEANCE', and all these other words... 'ANGER', 'FURY', 'RAGE', 'SPITE'... I had this witch's face... I was a virago, and every time Robin tried to stand up for a moral issue they threatened him with ridicule in the press to keep him 'on message'... (Soans, 2007, p. 76)

These media messages are used to shape the perception of the audience. As the framing theory suggests, the choice of words like con man, queer, violent, vindictive, psychopathic, vengeance, anger, fury, rage, and spite are used on purpose by the media in order to shape the public perception about the personality and behaviours of the people concerned. The implication here is that those people who are defined with reference to these words cannot be trusted: they are thus outcasted and the reason to justify their isolation is their bad personalities. The audience who is exposed to this framed media content begins to think about these people or issues within the context of the words presented by the media.

If the people or issues are framed negatively, then the audience believes, under the influence of media, that they need to think, talk, and express their feelings and thoughts about these people and issues because they are the current agenda. In the play, this practice is frequently stated by the characters in various ways:

DUNCAN. I was being made an example of. By sending me to prison, nothing I ever said again could be taken seriously.

CRAIG. There's no doubt they set out to destroy your reputation, permanently. I've had to face the relentless hostility of a government, because of their absolute determination to remove someone objecting internally to what they were doing in

the name of the War on Terror, and the most effective way to drive them out of society is scandal; is to blacken their name.

NEIL. Suddenly you become a sort of public property for people to be moralistic and judgemental about. (Soans, 2007, p. 53)

CRAIG. That's what scandal does to you... you're pitched into the public arena in such a way that everyone is allowed an opinion about you, but you yourself are not allowed an opinion.

CHRISTINE. Millions of people who didn't even know you existed feel they can pass judgement on you.

CHRISTINE. ... Suddenly you're persona non grata. (Soans, 2007, p. 54)

CHRISTINE. ... It just goes to show how you can become public property.

NEIL. Once you've been scandalised, you're open season.

DIANA. ... Once you've been convicted in court for something scandalous, you're fair game... wherever you go, whatever you do. (Soans, 2007, p. 79)

Once someone or something is presented in a certain way by the media, everybody begins to think according to that image as if they shared a collective consciousness. They somehow think that they know these people or they are familiar with the issues presented so much so that they have the right to talk about or to 'be judgemental about' them. As the characters express, scandals cause people who got involved in them to become public property. This is an effect of media also explained in the framing and agenda-setting theories: the media sets the agenda and presents the issues in any way it prefers to present it with any specific purpose thereby framing them to shape the perception of its audience.

The public tendency to believe that they know the people presented by the media or that they are familiar with the issues presented is also what McLuhan refers to in his concept of the global village. According to McLuhan, the world is becoming a global village and all the nations are turning into tribes in a village through technological developments. The media seems to be providing people with all the information they need as if they were in a small village. The residents in a village are more intimately connected than those of a city or larger settlements and they are naturally more critical of the people living in the vicinity because they think everything happening in the village concerns them as they are its residents. In the modern world, media serves a similar function and there are many experiences told by the characters in the play which can be explained through the concept of the global village:

CHARLES. ... We don't have a right to go into Starbucks anymore without being called a cheat.

DIANA. Vigilante justice.

CHARLES. ... I'll have some snotty-nosed thirteen-year-old kid coughing right in my face.

DIANA. ... They all stand in the shop coughing or line up behind the baked bean tins and shout 'cheat'. They write 'cheat' on the car with dirt, with mud.

CHARLES. We've got a Volkswagen Sharan, a seven-seater, it's been car-key scratched, we get nails under the tyres regularly; the cat's been shot at with an air pistol.

DIANA. We wouldn't, we can't send our kids to local school... they would be bullied to death.

CHARLES. (*Eating a biscuit.*) It's persecution... sheer, unabashed persecution. We're fulfilling the role of the witch in the fifteenth-century village...

DIANA. I've had eggs thrown at me... (Soans, 2007, p. 61)

A former British Army major from Derbyshire, Charles Ingram and his wife Diana were accused of cheating on the television game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* in 2001. It was claimed that someone from the audience in the show was coughing to give him a sign when Charles was reading out the correct answer in most of the questions. This was the scandal Charles Ingram was involved in and this is why the family was publicly maltreated. Even though the public did not really know the Ingram family and even though the Ingrams did nothing against them, they thought they had the right to insult, humiliate, mock, and assault the family. This is the result of the global village and the framing effects of the media in the modern age: it is capable of shaping the perception of people and turning them against each other.

The play not only includes the narrations and thoughts of celebrities about the scandals but also those of ordinary people. It thus provides us with the opportunity to hear the voice of the target audience of the media:

LOUISE. Scandal... everyone likes a scandal... definitely.

SONAL. It puts a human face onto celebrity.

LOUISE. If you're watching someone famous... like Keira Knightley's got it all like... so to watch her split up with her boyfriend...

SONAL. Like the humanness of it...

LOUISE. Makes her just like us... means I can talk about her like I know her.

SONAL. Talk about their problems. You might meet a stranger, and to talk about Keira Knightley gives you a common ground.

LOUISE. Scandal's even better cos it's like a soap, and you're all waiting for the next chapter...

SONAL. With something like Kate Moss's coke addiction... someone comes into the shop... it gives you something in common to talk about... breaks the ice... so you can sell them something... sell them a top... cos you've got common ground. (Soans, 2007, pp. 68-69)

Louise and Sonal are not celebrities but ordinary people expressing their thoughts about the scandals in the play. They apparently believe that scandals are useful for them as scandals give them a common ground to talk about strangers and they have fun while following the scandals as if they were watching a soap opera. They also mention that scandals reduce celebrities to the degree of being one of them, which then allows them to talk about celebrities like they knew them. This situation is also related to the global village concept. Everybody is coming closer via scandals as if they were in a small village. The implication to be drawn is that different groups are affected by the media in different ways. Some groups benefit from the media while some suffer the consequences of its effect.

Taking for granted the idea that the world has become a global village, a question arises about how it may be used for the benefit of its people. When there is a fire in a village, its residents do everything to extinguish the fire because it will eventually burn them. If there is someone poor in the neighbourhood, people generally help them to ensure that they do not die of starvation. Yet, even though people react to the scandals as if they happened in a village, they do not act accordingly when the issues are not scandalous. In the 21st century, people still die of starvation and people do not react to it in the way they do to scandals. If they had done so, this could have made the world a better place. However, perhaps Katz and Lazarsfeld are right in describing the media as 'instruments of evil design' and perhaps McLuhan is also right about his claim that 'the medium is the message' because nothing good can come out of an evil instrument as the message has to be related with the medium itself. All in all, the media is a tool used by others, yet it has unfortunately been used for bad intentions so far. It has been utilised to set the public agenda and to shape, to frame the perception of people but none of them has really been beneficial to society. The intention has, nevertheless, always been to be

beneficial but not to society. The fact that the media has been controlled and utilised by a group of people or organisations is also mentioned in the play:

CRAIG. Ever since I stood up for human rights in Uzbekistan, the British Government has been actively telling people that I'm an alcoholic, that I'm mentally unstable, and that I'm corrupt (Soans, 2007, p. 52).

CRAIG. The Establishment, and whatever media they can control, close ranks, and their idea, their main aim, is that no one will ever take you seriously again...

DUNCAN. Without a single moment's doubt there exists in this country a series of string-pullers... if they can spot you as someone whose behaviour is perceived as being bad form and not towing the official line... you must be ridiculed and humiliated. (Soans, 2007, p. 55)

Craig implies that the media which is under the control of the British government blackened his name just because he tried to defend the human rights in Uzbekistan. He defines the people controlling the media as 'the Establishment' and Duncan likewise defines them as 'string-pullers'. The implication here is that these people or organisations controlling the media are doing that for their own benefit. They mention that their purpose is to eliminate any possible threats to their campaigns.

All the characters in the play seem to agree that the end justifies the means for the media. Exaggerating the issues to set the agenda is not the only strategy used by the media; it is also capable of making them up:

AITKEN. I was standing on the wind, and this man said 'I'm really pissed off... my nan died last week... she brought me up as an orphan et cetera, I want to go to the funeral, and the Governor's refused permission, it's bloody unfair.' I said, 'I'm sorry, is there some way you can appeal, get him to change his mind?' And he hit me, and tearfully pulled out this newspaper, and there was this huge half page, 'AITKEN ALLOWED OUT OF GAOL TO GO TO WILLIE WHITELOW'S FUNERAL', and the report went on to say I'd had tea and cucumber sandwiches with the Governor who'd given me special permission, and I'd gone to the funeral with two prison officers, talked to Margaret Thatcher and Lord Carrington... not one single word of it was true.

MENAJI. ... They fucking do whatever they want to do whenever they want to do it. They buy the photographs off me, and then they just make up the headlines and the captions underneath... the story underneath is nonsense. (Soans, 2007, p. 46-47)

Menaji is a paparazzo and he claims that the press is making the news content up by using the photographs he sells. He confesses that the photographs used in the news are

by no means related to the content of the news. Aitken likewise mentions that he was libelled by the media and hurt as a result of this fabricated news.

The main purpose of the media is not always to influence the public about specific people and issues regarding them. More general topics like gender differences may be targeted in order to shape the public perception. Media sometimes appears to highlight the differences between men and women in order to reinforce or change sexual prejudices:

CHRISTINE. (*Switching off phone*) That was *Closer* magazine... they do a column every week called 'Talking Point'... This week's topic is, 'Men are better liars than women' (Soans, 2007, p. 89).

The topic of the column is remarkable here as it is probably chosen to influence the perception of the public about this issue. Taking into consideration Soans's statement that "I can't include everything that I'm told by my subjects, so I must choose what I think is the most representative sample" (Soans, 2008, p. 42), it may be assumed that he tries to give only the pertinent parts from the interviews which are directly related to the media and its effects in *Life after Scandal*. Furthermore, since he states that "Simply by choosing to put a subject under the theatrical microscope, the playwright is saying 'Theatre's more to this than meets the eye'" (Soans, 2008, p. 19), the topic of the column cannot be pointless. It should be evaluated within the scope of the theme of the play—which is the media and its effects on people, in case there is something 'more to this than meets the eye'. In this respect, his implication here is most probably that this specific topic is chosen by the media with the purpose of paving the way for the upcoming scandals. With the ultimate framing effect of this topic on the audience, they are expected to develop a tendency to believe that men are relatively better liars and they cannot be trusted. In spite of the fact that lying is not a gender-specific issue, it is presented as if it were a scientific finding approved by an authority. The way it is stated in the column's topic is very crucial here. It is not phrased with the words 'it is believed' or 'it is claimed' but the statement is 'men are better liars than women' as if this were a fact or a universal truth that cannot be rejected. Hence, it gradually causes the ultimate manipulation of the audience's perception.

The effects of media messages, nonetheless, do not last for long, the messages hence need to be delivered in a continuous flow to preserve their effects. Accordingly, the perception of the audience tends to change radically in the course of time either by the effect of the media or intrinsically. Some characters in the play express this change with these lines:

CHRISTINE. When I came out of the jungle, people said ‘Shock, horror, she’s normal, just like the rest of us.’ That’s all we’ve done really... gone on being ourselves.

NEIL. We haven’t changed... it’s other people’s perception of us that has changed.

BROCKET. ... I went up to the Duke of Buccleuch’s place in the Scottish Borders... and I’d just come out of the jungle six months before... and there were a fair number of Dukes dotted around the lunch table, and this seriously aristocratic chap came towards me, and I thought, ‘Wait for it, here it comes... a metaphorical slap in the face’ you know... and he said, ‘what we saw in the jungle, the way you conducted yourself, and the way you represented our class, has done our class proud. You have done more help the image of the aristocracy than anyone else has done in decades.’ And the people around applauded and said, ‘Here here’ (Soans, 2007, p. 90).

These people used to be insulted and humiliated after they got involved in scandals but when they participated in a reality TV series, *I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!*¹² which is also known as the jungle, people’s perceptions and thoughts about them have dramatically changed. This situation can be explained by the priming theory which suggests that the media messages are highly influential on the audience especially in the short period of time after their exposure to the media messages but later the effects weaken gradually in the course of time. The media effects theories do not offer an explanation for this characteristic of the media messages; perhaps, this is the side effect of the media on people. As people are getting used to the fact that the media is dramatically changing its presentation about the issues, this behavioural model—the change in the perception of people— is compatible with the change in media’s presentation. Another possibility for this behavioural change is that people develop empathy in time for those who are outcasted by the media and forgive them. This would

¹² A reality TV show originally created in the United Kingdom in 2002, in which a number of celebrities live together in a jungle for a couple of weeks and compete each other to be crowned ‘King’ or ‘Queen’ of the Jungle.

also be a reasonable explanation for the perpetual need for the flow of consecutive scandals and the continuous feeding of the media content.

The fact that the effects of the scandals on people weaken and get lost in time creates the need for feeding the media content consistently in order to remain on the agenda. The media is, of course, aware of this characteristic of the scandals and therefore, keeps creating new celebrities to be utilised for the next scandals to set the public agenda. However, it is not always the media that uses people for its own purposes but sometimes it is the other way around. People may utilise the media for their own purposes:

JAMES. David Beckham understands the rules of modern celebrity... give the media a story to entertain the readers; get a new tattoo every six months, get photographed covered in blood, go out in a sarong. Constantly reinvent yourself... Rebecca Loos... she put her hand up, said she's had an affair with David Beckham, gave all the details to a Sunday paper, and carved out herself a career as a celebrity in her own right... Rebecca Loos made an enormous difference to brand Beckham... it secured them fame and riches for at least another five years...

CRAIG. All the people who become involved in the celebrity need scandal to keep their storylines going.

DUNCAN. Like the characters of 'EastEnders' their storylines have to be beefed up or they'll disappear from the public spotlight. (Soans, 2007, p. 68)

These observations of the characters emphasise the fact that people also utilise the scandals and hence the media for their own benefits, which is what the uses and gratification theory also suggests. In this example above, it is mentioned that two celebrities David Beckham and Rebecca Loos intendedly used the scandals and media to remain on the agenda. It is also implied that they make money by their fame or else they will disappear from the public spotlight.

Even though it is stated that people's perception is bound to change in the course of time and that they use the scandals for their own benefits, it is not the same for all kinds of scandals. There are some issues people tend to forget and forgive in a relatively long period of time. Homosexuality, for instance, is one such issue implied in the play. Most probably because of the standards of judgement they have been exposed to, while people react at first but easily forgive a sex scandal after some time passes, it takes a longer time period and their reaction is far harsher if it is a homosexual sex scandal. There are subtle implications about this issue in the play:

DUNCAN. After I got out of prison, I bumped into this posh woman at the Evening Standard Christmas party... She said, 'What are you doing here? Who invited you?' 'My friend.' 'Oh', she said, 'I thought we'd dealt with you.'... She was outraged that I was even there.

MONTAGU. I wasn't meant to recover.

DUNCAN. Soon after that, I met this old aristocrat... he told me, 'You should just disappear.'

MONTAGU. I think I was meant to disappear. (Soans, 2007, p. 50)

Even though almost all characters tell their stories about how they are welcomed by the public after a while, there are two characters who do not mention it. The only striking thing in common with these two characters is that they are infamous for their homosexual affairs. Nowadays this situation is gradually changing, people are getting used to the existence of homosexual relationships but it was not like this before the 2000s. These two characters, for instance, are not welcomed by the public according to their narrations. Their common observation about the public is that people wish them to disappear. This situation is explained by the spiral of silence theory: when people think that they are in the minority in the public, they are afraid of speaking or expressing their feelings and thoughts. According to the theory, likewise, people who think that they are in the majority have a tendency to express their feelings and thoughts more often and freely in the public. This example is not about the behaviours of the minority but it is about those of the majority. They want the minority group—homosexuals—to disappear, in other words, they want them to keep their silence so that nobody will realise that they have ever existed and hence, the standards of judgements of the majority will become norms in time.

According to the framing theory, these standards of judgements are also governed by the media. The media shapes the ethical and moral standards of the public by framing messages as if they are supplied by supreme authorities. As mentioned before, 'Genes Say Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Sensitive' and 'Men are better liars than women' are some examples of this kind of framing messages. Social norms, ethical and moral standards, and all kinds of standards of judgements are also shaped by the media through just kind of subtle framing messages. The underlying reason for people's attitudes against homosexuality is probably again the effect of these messages. This situation is gradually changing nowadays and the media is permanently endeavouring to

normalise homosexuality by placing at least one or two homosexual main characters in the movies and TV series. In recent years, there is a tremendous increase in the number of homosexual scenes in the TV series and people's standard of judgement about the issue is accordingly changing day by day.

On the other hand, heavy exposure to media content may result in a sense of desperation. The statements of the characters in the play also draw attention to this effect of the media content:

CHRISTINE. What hope had we got with tabloid filth poured on our heads every day? (Soans, 2007, p. 52)

MENAJI. What's wrong with everybody? They're all focused on bollocks. No one's telling the truth. You need discrimination, values, dignity. It's about staying free and not getting caught up in the system. Knowledge is not imprisoning ourselves with limited thinking... and that's what scandal is... limited thinking. You must see how easy it is to manipulate people with it, cos their lives are so thin, because they want to concentrate on what's juicy, dodgy, and dark... cos we're fucking lost... dodgy, dark, and negative. (Soans, 2007, p. 96)

Since the media appears to be the only source of information, people are, in a way, compulsorily exposed to the content of the media. One result of permanent exposure to negative content of the media is that it causes people to lose their faith in humanity and the world itself. Its influence is, in this case, inevitable because the content of media constitutes the knowledge of people about other people and the outside world. Christine and the paparazzo Menaji share their thoughts about humanity and the world above and they are quite pessimistic. Christine claims that humanity has no hope with the filthy content people are exposed to every day through newspapers. Menaji likewise believes that scandals are limiting people's ability of thinking and discrimination. Scandals are capable of manipulating people since people are not qualified enough to resist the bad effects of the scandals. People are equally bad that is why they want to concentrate on what is bad like themselves. This kind of pessimistic thinking is also examined in the scope of the mean world syndrome of the cultivation theory. The theory suggests that such syndromes appear as a result of heavy exposure to the media contents and they may have serious consequences in the long run like committing suicide. Some characters also mention that they had thought about suicide but their reason was rather the media pressure than mean world syndrome they experienced.

Soans composed *Life after Scandal* initially as a play about the process of getting involved in a scandal and its aftermath. However, he was actually more intrigued by how media and people who are under the influence of the media treat the people who get involved in scandals. Even this situation alone appears to be a criticism for the manipulative function of the media since it is repeatedly indicated in the play that these people involved in scandals have not been properly represented by the media, Soans, hence, does a kind of journalism—as all playwrights do in verbatim theatre—by making interviews and representing them as they are. In doing so, he exposes the effects of media over people by explicitly emphasising the similarities of the incidents throughout the play.



CONCLUSION

Life after Scandal by Soans, who is a British playwright renowned for his verbatim plays, has supplied us with a broad range of materials to discuss the effects of media on people in the light of media effects theories because the play is about the lives of the people involved in some of the most notorious scandals in Britain which took place between the 1950s and 2007. As they tackle the recent problems of society based on the testimonials of the people related to whatever subject is chosen as the focus, verbatim plays are different from many of the other theatrical genres due to their close connection with real people and events. In this respect, *Life after Scandal* seems to be a theatrical work suitably composed to scrutinise the effects of media on society since it is based on real people and events. The play also covers the incidents of a relatively long time period as well as giving voice to people from all walks of life such as lords, politicians, celebrities, and common people, which means it proves to be rather comprehensive and diverse in its discussion of the media effects.

The play provides us with plenty of examples from the most notorious scandals in Britain most of which can be examined in the light of media effects theories. In doing so, it helps to develop an understanding of the sinister operations of the media effects in society. While the play presents the scandals and the anecdotes of the people involved in these scandals, proving the fact that media has some effects on people, this study focuses on the media theories which seem to be highlighted in the play in order to examine and explain the underlying motives and purposes of these media effects. Taking into consideration Soans's keen interest in talking about the truth, his motive behind composing a play about media and its effects on people becomes even more clear.

In addition to the content of the play, its genre is likewise closely related to the media since verbatim is, in a sense, some kind of journalism as playwrights have interviews with the people who are somehow related to the subject of the play they are working on. In this particular case, *Life after Scandal* as a verbatim play stands as a critique of the manipulative function of the media since it is based on interviews and was composed by using the actual words in these interviews without making any changes in them. Considering that the media is believed to omit some facts in the news

while bringing to the fore some others or altering some news stories to make them more appealing to the public, it becomes more evident why Soans composed the play as a verbatim piece. By merely using the actual words spoken by the interviewees, he seems to criticise media's general practice of making such alterations, thereby manipulating the news. Throughout the play, it is frequently emphasised that media is functioning as a manipulative instrument in the hands of the people or organisations who are believed to use it for their own benefit.

Examples of these manipulative functions of the media from the play are effectively used in a repetitive way in order to highlight the fact that media has gained great influence over people by exercising various techniques and strategies. These techniques and strategies are in the study field of communication studies, especially those of the media effects theories. Throughout the play, the most frequently encountered techniques or strategies used on the purpose of media manipulation fall under the categories of agenda-setting, framing, priming as well as uses and gratification theories. There are also some incidents in the play fitting other less frequently encountered theories and ideas such as the global village, the medium is the message, simulation and simulacra, dependency, and the spiral of silence. These theories are utilised in this study to serve the purpose of scrutinising the incidents in order to explain the goals aimed at the use of the manipulative functions of the media.

When the play is examined in the light of the media effects theories, the examples of agenda-setting show that media frequently uses some kind of issues to set the public agenda and to keep it under control. A careful examination of all the incidents presented in the play indicates that scandals and reality shows like *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here* appear to be the most frequent issues that the media uses to draw the attention of people. The underlying aim in this agenda-setting is, most of the time, to distract people from some specific issues generally about political concerns. In order to achieve this goal, the media is claimed to have created celebrities and reality shows to utilise them in the creation of new scandals to conceal some political issues from the public agenda. In one of the incidents in the play, for instance, the implication to be drawn is that people were most interested in who had won *Big Brother* rather than the issues related to human rights like torture or the use of intelligence gained by torture. This example shows that the reality show, *Big Brother* is a more salient and

appealing issue for the public compared to more pressing issues like the violation of human rights as a result of the agenda-setting effect of the media.

In some other parts of the play, the framing effects of the media are explicitly presented through multiple examples. The examples show that there are both long-term and short-term effects of media framing used with the purpose of shaping the perception of people about some certain issues. These issues are likewise generally political. The media achieves its goal of framing by utilising various methods like the public representation of the issue, the definition of the issue, or just the choice of the word when the targeted issue is on the agenda. It, therefore, gives subtle messages with the framed presentations, definitions, and words to be able to shape people's perception about the issue. This change in the perception of people, however, does not last long in most cases. For this reason, the media is in need of a permanent flow of the framing messages in order to maintain the effects of framing over people and the non-stopping creation of celebrities are implied to serve for this purpose in various incidents presented in the play. The sex scandals are, for instance, repeatedly highlighted through its short-term effect on people. They are said to be created in order to set the public agenda for a short period of time. However, there are some cases related to homosexuality which, it is subtly implied, take a relatively longer period of time to be forgotten and forgiven by people whereas the effects of other sex scandals last shorter. There is no explanation offered as the reason for this attitude of people either in the media effects theories or in the play; yet, the most possible and reasonable explanation seems to be related to people's standards of judgment. Nowadays, however, this situation is likely to change as a result of the heavy exposure to homosexual scenes in the movies and TV series. Any implication to this change cannot be encountered in the play most probably since the play tackles the incidents before 2007. For instance, almost all of the characters in the play mention the incidents indicating that they are forgiven by people and their infamous perception in the minds of people has dramatically changed whereas Duncan and Montagu whose homosexuality marks their common point, do not mention anything about their redemption in the eyes of people. On the contrary, they mention that people expect them just to disappear and there is no implication about the change of this situation throughout the play.

Examples of the priming effects in the play indicate that people react to the media messages they are exposed to in the short period of the following time and these effects are likely to fade in time. Although the effects of priming seem to be similar to those of framing, they are related primarily to the actions while those of the framing are related to the perceptions. Most of the characters, for instance, mention their redemption in the public eye; the parts concerning the actions of the people are related to priming effects and the parts referring to the change in perception are related to framing effects.

Likewise, the agenda-setting, framing, and priming functions of the media, uses and gratifications effects of the media are repeatedly implied throughout the play. In most of the speeches of the characters, they accuse some people involved in the scandals of utilising the media and scandals to stay on the agenda to preserve their popularity in the public, to make money out of it or to become a celebrity. There are also some incidents referring to the fact that people like scandals since they find them enjoyable to follow. In other words, the implication in the play related to these parts is that some people use the media with the purpose of satisfying their own needs.

Dependency effects show that the media has become a matter of dependency for people and its influence, therefore, getting stronger and stronger. Global village effects show that the media is capable of creating an atmosphere in which people react to the incidents as if they were in a small village. In this respect, people are becoming more and more interested in the events happening all over the world and react to them accordingly as a result of the widespread use of the media. In today's world, the existence of youtubers and bloggers also testify to the fact that our lives depend quite a lot on the use of media and that the world has turned into a global village.

All in all, the incidents presented in the play seem to prove that the effects of media exist and are highly active in shaping the perceptions, behaviours as well as the attitudes of people and in controlling them in any desired way. All of the incidents in the play are arranged in a way to draw the audience's attention to this issue. Similar kinds of incidents and even very similar sentences which belong to different characters in the play are given one after another just to place emphasis on the existence of these effects. In doing so, it serves as a consciousness-raising session for its audience by providing a relatively more realistic portrayal of the incidents with the real words of the

real people as opposed to the media's fabricated or manipulated versions of the same incidents. Furthermore, it also highlights the fact that media as the primary source of information cannot be fully trusted. *Life after Scandal* thus achieves its purpose of laying bare the fact that the media influences the public in several ways.



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