

Topic: Play Theory  
Stream: BA JMC  
Semester: 2nd  
Content: What is play theory

### Introduction

William Stephenson, a British social scientist first introduced the concept play theory in his book "the play theory of mass communication". Started his career in physics his interest in psychology led him to study in the University of London and received his second PhD in psychology. He served in India as a brigadier General during the world war by joining the British army. He served as the assistant director of psychology in the oxford university, and then in the University of Chicago and also as the director of advertising research for Nowland and company. Then he spends the rest of his professional life in the University of Missouri School of journalism as a professor till his retirement in 1974. He was the visiting professor in the University of Iowa till his second retirement in 1977. He is well known for his expansion of unconventional form of factorial analysis involved with the process of subjectivity. Stephenson's theory became influential as he approached the mass communication literature in a subjective and psychological manner rather than the conventional methods.

The conventional methods on approaching the mass communication works were factual and sociological. William Stephenson came introduced a method which is more subjective and psychological. This method analysis how any communication procedure is enthralled by individuals. In this theory Stephenson is explaining how the people comprehend these theories and which area is being grasped and which is rejected and why is that occurring. It helps to understand to which extend the mass distinguish the facts with the fiction which is being displayed in the media subjectively, how the mass use the media for a step-up or for fulfilling their own desires.

### What is Play Theory

William Stephenson's play theory is mainly emphasised on how we use media for our satisfaction and also how media bring changes in our lives according to its contents. This theory is based on a field where pain is in one end and pleasures the other. Work favours pain and play favours pleasure. Play is self-contained and people do it to get satisfaction. But work has to be done to increase productivity. People often are influenced by the media in a positive and negative way. The persuasion that is been offered by the advertisements, the characters of your favourite movie star all influence people. According to Stephenson we develop our fantasies and see our favourite characters in the media showing our emotions. As we relate our characters with what we see in the media, we are greatly influenced by them and the character they showcase.

This theory is closely related to uses and gratifications theory where we can observe how people use the media and why. The media greatly influences the needs of the audiences and also the gratification the media provide them. In play theory the media is mainly used to get pleasure out of its usage than as the medium of information and

education. When we use media we might use it as an intensification of ourselves by relating the events which is presented in the media with our real lives.

Scope:

Through this theory we can understand to what extent we use the communication media as an intensification of ourselves and how it satisfy our need for pleasure. To exhibit the extent of self-sufficiency attainable from a distinct respect to social control executed by his socio cultural system.

Example

People tend to follow the trend of the popular culture in the society. Likewise a famous movie actress will be the promoter of this trend. We will try to relate our life with the content that they are showing in the movies and will try imitate them. We tend to follow the merchandise that they use, we tend to live up to them and find pleasure by doing so. The batman series has become quiet famous nowadays and the kids and even the young adults have been influenced by the characters in that movie. This has influenced the people in positive way. Most of the time people become helpless confronting an injustice, and in the movie batman is been showed as a protector. The event can be related to the happenings of a real life and people tend to see it as a continuation of their experiences.

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