

We have posited here that the widely utilized allegory of media effects scholarship that pivots back and forth between an interpretation of strong and minimal effects may function awkwardly as a significant impediment to the recognition of theoretical accumulation and the increasing sophistication of effects theories and the social contexts of the effects process. We put forward an alternative way to structure the field, suggesting that rather than rejecting previous theoretical structures or obsessing over a demonstration of a large effect size we simply focus on identifiable patterns of theoretical expansion and refinement. We find that effects theory evolves from a starting point of a simple model of persuasion and transmission (persuasion theories) and has accumulatively added in turn analytic constructs of audience motivation and disposition (active audience theories), the socially situated context of the mass communication process (social context theories), the character of the

technical channel of communication and the political and institutional context of communication (societal and media theories), and the impact of media messages on the salience and cognitive organization of opinions and beliefs (interpretive effects theories). Finally, a new and now fast-growing literature on the new media has emerged. This newest component of the literature has not yet made much of an effort to connect up with its forebears. Perhaps it should. We are delighted to see that the new work by Bennett and Iyengar (2008) proposes moving beyond the face-to-face versus mediated focus of CMC research in addressing the new media. They do not define the new media as a new field requiring theory *de novo*, but rather draw attention to how dramatically expanded choices facing media audiences force us to reconsider central premises of the extant media effects paradigm. Such an approach strikes us as important progress.

There is no figure in this article that cross-tabulates which elements of the three-stage model are equated to corresponding stages of the proposed six-stage model. The two approaches are complementary but incommensurate. The former draws attention to the characteristic size of effects, the latter to the conditions under which effects are evident. The three-stage model, as typically advocated, however, implies that the succeeding stages reject the premises of their predecessors. The evidence from our analysis, in contrast, illustrates that five of the six stages in the literature we identify not only continue to be cited, the pattern of citations continues to grow as models of media effects are built upon and refined rather than abandoned. And, for the record, in the sixth case concerning the early persuasion literature the number of citations continues to be strong and the relative decline in citations is rather modest.