

# The Tradition of Cultivation Theory And The Spiral of Silence Media

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of understanding cultivation theory, we can analyze how the mass media work in forming opinions and be able to turn those opinions into public opinion so that the mass media are able to create homogeneous thoughts on situations or world realities. The research method or data collection is based on book dissection and several previous studies. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the mass media make a major contribution to the perspective of each individual who basically has different perceptions to become homogeneous or the same view is all the effects of the cultivation process. Factors that influence the expression of one's opinion: ages, gender, economy levels, and educational stage including spiral of silence. Another effect of the cultivation process is the phenomenon of choosing to be silent from some individuals who have different views from public opinion, in other words, this phenomenon is called the spiral of silence.

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays the mass media play an important role in shaping the views and mentality of the community towards the surrounding environment. From the point of view of the author, mass media can be said to be agents of change in both positive and negative terms. The reason the author puts forward ideas or perceptions like this is that there is a communication theory that discusses the process of forming interpretations, understanding the environment for each individual from the results of delivering information. From the mass media, individuals themselves as the mass or communicants who receive messages have different interpretations of what they understand from the information, because each individual has their own frame of mind, their own point of view. Therefore that the results of the message can be different.

The theory that discusses the process of forming the interpretation of the communicant who receives messages from the media is Cultivation Theory. Before going into a discussion, it would be better if we understand the meaning of this Cultivation theory. Cultivation theory is an analysis that explains the process of forming perceptions, interpretations, understandings and beliefs about the environment, the effects of consuming mass media (George Gerbner, 1999) states, *"Most of what we know, or what we think we know, we don't. experience yourself. We know it because of the various news that we see and we through the media"*.

This theory was put forward by George Gerbner a Communications Dean from Pennsylvania University. The results of his research while helping the United States government, provide opinions and statements that people who watch television more often will have excessive beliefs about "the mean and scary world" and "the outside world is a jungle". Television that broadcasts about violence will cause social paranoia and this effect will change the view or

perception of each individual that humans are evil creatures. George Gerbner once revealed the results of his research as follows;

*“Television is a centralized system of story-telling. It is part and parcel of our daily lives. It is drama, commercial, news and other programs bring a relatively coherent world of common images and messages into every home. Television is cultivated from the infancy the very predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other primary sources... The repetitive pattern of television is mass-produced messages and images from the mainstream of a..”*

George Gerbner (1999) explains that television seeks to instill the same perspective on the world's reality so that television is able to make people have a homogeneous perspective. This phenomenon may change slightly in today's world, where television is no longer the center of people entertainment and activities. People nowadays, have too many electronic items around even when outside the house. If the television is not connected to WiFi, now it's just a pile of dusty electronics in the corner of the house. These changes of course also change the theories that make television as the center, including the theory of cultivation and the spiral of silence.

## 2. Method

This article analyzes several books that cover cultivation theory, public opinion and the spiral of silence. These findings are associated with phenomena that occur in society in relation to community activities related to media, especially social media. Additional reading sources are carried out to strengthen the arguments presented in the article. Data collection is based on book review and some previous research.

## 3. Results and Discussion

At the beginning of the cultivation theory, the theory concentrates on one specific medium: television (Miller, 2002). At that time, television became something that could not be left behind. The viewer's ability to move quickly, change channels and move forward in an instant, which adopted the attitude and competence to read 'correctly' naturally became an aspect of the culture of the time (Barker, 2004). This phenomenon is now being replaced by the existence of the internet, which is even closer in distance and forces us to develop faster than television used to be. Now Youtube and friends are a new television that is even more intoxicating without us even realizing it. However, cultivation theory is not predict about direct impacts on our thinking about specific issues or the attributes of those issues but impacts on the very way we view the world (Miller, 2002). Therefore the cultivation theory also presents a picture of the media that more broad in concentrating on social construction effects.

How is the media process able to have a major influence on the masses or the recipients of their information? There are two reasons expressed by Gerbner, namely mainstreaming and resonance:

- Mainstream as the basic word of mainstreaming, while mainstreaming means “following the mainstream”, when the mass media are able to dominate with the ideas and information they present so as to beat ideas and information from other sources. Another definition from West and Turner (2007) states *"the tendency for heavy group audiences to accept a dominant cultural reality that is similar to the reality depicted by the media that is not the same as the actual one"*. Most of the masses think that what is presented by the media is more correct because the media has a strong credibility.

- The second reason is resonance that the information broadcast by the media has similarities with the reality in society or the people who consume information from the media, Gerbner (1982) states: “*and leads to cultivation patterns that are increasingly strengthened*”. For example, when the media broadcasts news of the robbery in A city, the masses living in B city will also feel fear because the news of the robbery in A city reflects the same situation as B city, or even one of the masses. Residents who live in B city also could feel the same experience of violence as news from B city. The news that was broadcast by the media caused residents who experienced the same thing to remember the incident again.

Thus the cultivation process that occurs in the community, the consequences or effects of consuming information from the media, but not all groups of people are affected by the messages displayed in the media, the average people who are affected by media information impacts are people who come from the middle class economy. This is because people in this group become the main target of the media in line with their economic situation and their relatively large number or population, Gerbner (1999) states, “*The differences that are usually associated with the cultural, social, and political characteristics of community groups in society are disappearing because the big groups audiences who come from different cultures are now in one group*”.

Talking about new media that is closely attached to our lives. Youtube is a platform with various forms of cultural, social, and economic values produced by massive users through consumption, evaluation, and entrepreneurial activity (Anshari, 2021). But not all youtube users will generate fame or public recognition from the number of subscribers and likes. Another way that can be done is to actively share opinions on social media that are more two-way interaction, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others.

The media make a great contribution to public opinion. It is important to remember that public opinion comes from the opinions of individuals in society. Factors that influence the expression of one's opinion: young people are more expressive than older people, educated people are more critical than those who are not, and men are generally more willing to express opinions than women (Littlejohn, 2014). The spiral of silence is also a factor, even a strong factor.

How can mass media shape public opinion and dominate it? There are three characteristics of mass media so that they are able to form public opinion, namely:

- Media is widespread, media is everywhere, media has wider information that can be accessed at any time. Therefore the media becomes a very important tool and becomes a basic information need for the community. This trait is called ubiquity.
- The media always repeat the information they convey. Noelle-Neumann says this is a “reciprocal influence in building up a frame of reference”. This trait is called the cumulative.
- According to Noelle-Neumann, the media produces consonants because the media are able to affirm their own thoughts and ideas, and make those thoughts appear as if they came from the general public. This property is called the consonant.

However, if we look more, the public actually has an awareness of the difference between public opinion and private opinion that does not need to be conveyed to the public. Petronio (in Griffin, 2012) states that people believe they own and have a right to control their private information and cultures differ on the value of openness and disclosure.

Social media users such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook have heard very often the advice that not everything has to be written on social media. However, people think in a gray line about which boundaries are –not-all-things-should-be-publish- and which are allowed to be published. In the end they just follow social media 'public opinion', that some activities that threaten our private information, are okay to be violated. Being active and updating using social media is a 'requirement' for an existence. Also included in the formal teaching and learning process during the pandemic, such as Whats App groups, google meet or google class rooms. However, collecting a child's video assignments via Instagram posts or even collecting a picture of a child's ID card on a school shared drive is the only option. Individuals who object to this must remain silent, not because they are lazy to speak out but more because they are tired of being different in almost everything. It will develop into a spiral of silence.

The spiral of silence theory is a symptom or phenomenon that occurs as a result or effect of the media that disseminates opinions or ideas that dominate. Hence the public opinion is formed and people or individuals who have different views with public opinion will stay silence, Noelle Neumann (1984) defines that, "*The attitude or behavior that must be expressed by a person in public if he does not want to be isolated; in the area of controversy or change in public opinion is an attitude that a person can exhibit without danger of isolation towards himself*".

The prerequisite for continuing to exist in society, both formal and informal, is to always dwell on the media or rather not forget the presence of social media. For those who do not have a Facebook, Instagram, or even WhatsApp account on their smartphone, they are almost certainly an elderly or nerd in their environment. Even nerds really need reading intake from the media. This is normal. However, some people who realize the importance and necessity for them to secure private information, will always remain immersed in silence amidst the hustle and bustle of hyperreality of media images. As Baudrillard (1994) said, "It's the society as the mirror of television". In this case, television has been replaced by Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and others.

#### 4. Conclusion

From this article, the author concludes how the media is now closely attached and cannot be separated from daily life. Cultivation theory is used to see the media is no longer just television or other media but more to see a broader perspective. New media construct public opinion in a somewhat different way than traditional public opinion. The new media will raise opinions that are more profitable, not only in terms of commodities but also from existence, especially for the media itself. Although the opinion is not the most voiced, it will become public opinion as well. To remember, that the media is no longer just a corporate institution, the media is society itself. There will always be members of society who are contra to the growing public opinion. However, due to the incessant existence of public opinion which is more viral, counter opinion is more often drowned and creates a spiral of silence.

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