



# Cultivation Analysis



George Gerbner

# FOCUS

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- Mass communication, especially television, cultivates certain beliefs about reality that are held in common by mass communication consumers.
- television is the culture's primary storyteller and has the ability to gather different groups together.

# Cultural Index Project

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- Cultural Index Project, conducting regular, periodic examinations of television programming and the “conceptions of social reality that viewing cultivates in child and adult audiences.”

# TV as culture

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- Cultivation analysis is rooted in James Carey's cultural definition of communication as “I a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.”

# Violence on TV

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- In 1967, President Johnson ordered the creation of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.
- In 1972, the surgeon general's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior was formed.
- Gerbner produced the Violence Index, a yearly content analysis of a sample week of prime-time network television content that would show, season to season, how much violence was actually present on television.

# Media Violence

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- in 1982 Gerbner and associates showed that "crime in prime time is at least 10 times as rampant as in the real world [and] an average of five to six acts of overt physical violence per hour involves over half of all major characters."

# TV is unique

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- Cultivation analysis underscores the uniqueness of television compared to print media, movies, and radio. For instance, television is found in more than 98 percent of all U.S. homes, requires no literacy, is free, combines pictures and sound, requires no mobility, and is ageless (people can use it at the earliest and latest years of life).

# Not causal but cumulative

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- Gerbner et al. argued that watching a specific program will not necessarily cause a specific behavior, but rather than television in general has a cumulative and persuasive impact on our view of the world.

# Content analysis

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- Detailed content analyses of television programming in order to demonstrate its most recurring and consistent images, themes, values, and portrayals.
- Questions about viewers' social realities by developing questions about people's understandings of their everyday lives.
- Compare the social realities of light and heavy viewers.

# Mainstreaming

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Heavy viewers tend to believe the mainstreamed reality that the world is a more dangerous place than it really is (e.g., all politicians are corrupt, teen crime is at record high levels).

# Resonance

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- Resonance occurs when things on television are congruent with viewers' actual everyday realities. In other words, people's objective external reality resonates with that of television.

# Mean world study (1980)

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- Heavy viewers seeing the world as a meaner place than do light viewers.
- Cultivation analysis suggests that amount of television viewing is a better predictor of people's answers than variables such as income and education.
- Light viewers - 1 in 100 will be a victim of violence while heavy viewers predicted that about 1 in 10 will be a victim of violence.
- Heavy viewers- 5 percent of culture is involved in law enforcement whereas light viewers felt that 1 percent is involved.

# Other findings

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- Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf (2001) found heavy viewing to cultivate more diversity of opinion about public issues than mainstreaming.