



# **Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application**

Fourth Edition

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# Cultivation Analysis

## *Chapter Overview*

- CA at a Glance
- Introduction
- Developing Cultivation Analysis
- Assumptions of CA
- Processes & Products of CA
- CA as a Critical Theory
- Integration and Critique

# CA at a Glance

- The media impacts how people view their world
- Most people get information from mediated sources
- Mediated sources shape a person's sense of reality
- Heavy television viewing and the perception of violence

# Introduction

- Consumption of media messages shapes perceptions of the world
- Media messages alter traditional notions of time, space, and social groupings
- Challenged the limited effects paradigm

# Developing Cultivation Analysis

- National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1967)
- Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior (1972)
- Violence Index
  - Violence appeared on prime-time television at higher levels than in the “real world”

# Assumptions of Cultivation Analysis

- Television is essentially and fundamentally different from other forms of mass media
  - 98% of U.S. homes have a television
  - Requires no literacy
  - Free and ageless
  - U.S. culture's primary storyteller

# Assumptions of Cultivation Analysis

- Television shapes our society's ways of thinking and relating
  - Stabilizes social patterns and cultivates resistance to change
  - Depicts what the world is like
  - Reaches people for more than 7 hours a day (Gerbner, 1998)

# Assumptions of Cultivation Analysis

- The influence of television is limited
  - Observable, measurable, independent contributions of television are small
  - “Ice age” analogy

# Processes and Products of CA

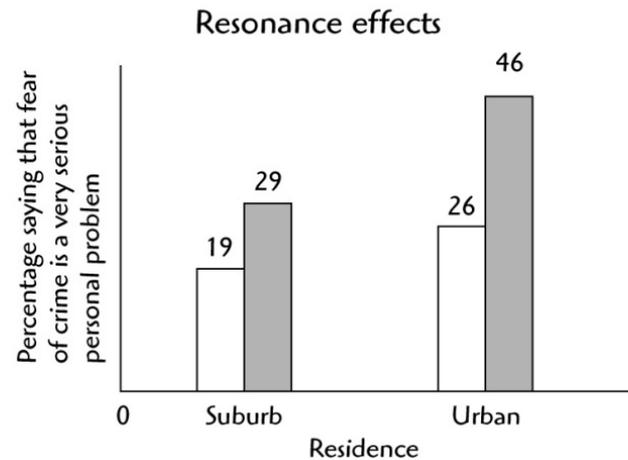
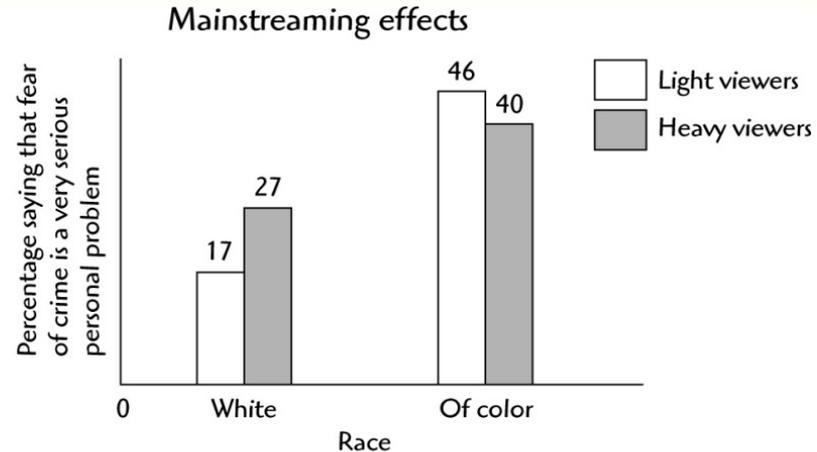
## *The Four-Step Process*

1. Message system analysis
2. Formulation of questions about viewers' social realities
3. Surveying the audience
4. Comparing the social realities of light and heavy viewers

# Processes and Products of CA

- Mainstreaming
  - When television's symbols dominate other sources of information about the world
  - Heavy viewing moves people's social realities closer to mainstream reality
- Resonance
  - When things on television are congruent with viewers' lived experiences
  - Amplifies mainstreaming

# Processes and Products of CA



**Figure 22.1**  
Effects of  
Mainstreaming  
and Resonance  
*Source:* Adapted from  
Gerbner et al., 1980.  
Reprinted by per-  
mission of Oxford  
University Press.

# Processes and Products of CA

- Effects of mainstreaming and resonance
  - First order effects: Learning facts
  - Second order effects: Learning assumptions

# Processes and Products of CA

## *The Mean World Index*

- Consists of a series of statements
  - Most people are just looking out for themselves
  - You can't be too careful in dealing with people
  - Most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance

# Processes and Products of CA

## *The Mean World Index*

- Findings
  - Different responses to these statements from heavy and light viewers
  - Heavy viewers see the world as meaner
  - Amount of television viewing is the best predictor of people's answers

# CA as a Critical Theory

- Learning from television produces perceptions of a mean world and warps perceptions
- Warped perceptions breeds an atmosphere of distrust

# CA as a Critical Theory

- Television is powerful because of the Three B's of television
  - Blurring traditional distinctions
  - Blending realities
  - Bending the mainstream reality to benefit the elite

# CA as a Critical Theory

- PROD (Proportional Representation of Diversity) index
  - Examines the representation of co-cultures in the media
  - Minorities are underrepresented

# Integration

- Communication traditions
  - Socio-cultural
  - Critical
- Communication context
  - Mass/media
- Approach to knowing
  - Positivistic/empirical

# Evaluating Cultivation Analysis

- Logical Consistency
  - Research methods do not match conceptual reach
- Utility
  - Does not explain the phenomenon of interest
  - Ignores perceived realism

# Evaluating Cultivation Analysis

- **Heurism**
  - Concepts applied to various studies
  - Third most frequently used theory in mass communication
- **Test of Time**
  - 30 years of subsequent studies fail to find results consistent with Cultivation Analysis
  - Times and media use are changing