

PUBLIC OPINION

2003

Outline:

A) Introduction:

Public opinion comprises of beliefs and modalities of behavior in value-laden spheres, which can be publicly conveyed or manifested with the expectation that they will converge with approval or that there is no peril of thereby isolating oneself.

B) General Discussion:

1. Articulation about the various theories of public opinion
2. Evolve an opinion and refer it accordingly

C) Conclusion

Foreword:

Social science is subject to the equivalent biases as the physical sciences. Public opinion is, perhaps, not as distinct as a superior or inferior drug treatment. Here it may not be a matter of curbing what is, but causing to come into being something that supports the interest of the creator. Understandably, people can be made to evince things based on the construction of questions. These reflections can then be used to corroborate policies that one wishes to promote (Jeffres 21).

Thesis Statement:

This research paper is aimed to describe the various theories of public opinion, explain it link to spiral of silence and draw an inference based on the deliberations put forth.

The discussions and recordings of this paper will be limited to the scope of the literature surveyed.

Mass communication is the process whereby media establishments acquire and broadcast messages to large publics and the procedure by which those messages are assayed, applied, interpreted, and disseminated by audiences. Media are cardinal to the cogitation of mass communication and public opinion is a consequence of media communication.

Media theories can be fractioned into two general topics. Macro theory reckons at the relationship between media and broader societal institutions. Micro theory considers the relationship between media and audiences. Media can be probed in terms of their content and structure

- McLuhan, whose approximations are based on those of Innis, invests great importance on the media. Media can be postulated as extensions of the human mind and how it affects how our perception and feel. The elementary interest of any historical period is a bias developing out of the predominant media of the time. Time-binding media, which last over generations, furnish a bias toward tradition. Space-binding media, which are well transmitted over space, render a bias toward empire building. Western culture has been powerfully shaped by the linear bias of writing. The primary media of a period divulge a certain sense ratio that impacts how we deal with the world. We are currently in an electronic age, which has ushered a global village. Semiotics has been influential in the examination of media. Marshall (54-60).
- In 1948 Harold Lasswell delivered a simple yet brilliant model of communication. Often quoted, the model look like this: Who/Says what/In which channel/To whom/With what effects. This model adopts the basics of communication and explains step by step what happens (Littlejohn 315). Harold Lasswell went on to develop a three-step explanation of the role of media.
 1. Surveillance or furnishing information about the environment.
 2. Correlation or presenting solutions to figure out problems.

3. Transmission, which is training and socializing.

- Agenda Setting can be classified as neither a model of communication nor a theory (Littlejohn 317). It seems to be more of an account for how the mass media and public opinion affect one another. Agenda setting is one hypothesis, which doesn't entirely explicate how, why, or by whom agendas are determined. All we acknowledge is that they are set and we can only theorize about the rest.

Semiotics focuses on the use of signs and meanings in media content (Littlejohn 318).

- Media messages can elicit numerous imports.
- Media texts get their substance through affiliations made by audience members.
- The meanings of media texts are impressed by events extraneous to the texts themselves.

Media are an important social institution (Littlejohn 319).

- In Classical Marxism the media are construed as instruments of the dominant class and as a means by which capitalists advance their profit-making interests.
- In political-economic media theory, media content is seen as goods to be traded in the marketplace.
- In the Frankfurt School media are a means of building culture, directing to the domination of the ideology of the elite.
- Hegemonic theory proposes that media take a role in upholding certain dominant pursuits over others in society.
- The sociocultural approach articulates that media makes cultural productions by the manipulation of symbols.

The spiral of silence is implemental in the evolution of public opinion and it occurs through the following modes (Littlejohn 321):

- When individuals comprehend their opinion is popular, they express it, and when they opine their opinion is not popular, they tend not to express it.
- This process conduces to certain opinions being stated more than others.
- The media report on those opinions most often stated, giving impetus to the spiral.

This theory is founded on two presumptions.

- The quasi-statistical feel is the power of people to predict which opinions are prevalent and which are not.
- People align their expressions of opinion to these perceptions.

There is also some individual variance in the tendency to express opinion.

- Young people are inclined to be more expressive than older people.
- Enlightened individuals will speak up more than uneducated people.
- Men are by and large more divulge their opinions than women.

The spiral of silence is stimulated by the fear of isolation. . There are certain exceptions to the spiral of silence, as pioneers, alter agents, and the daring tend to speak out regardless of the prevailing opinion. When journalists' opinions deviate from those of the general public, they will advertize their own opinions as well as those expressed by citizens, leading to a dual mood of opinion.

Works Cited

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Littlejohn, Stephen W. Theories Of Human Communication.Fifth Edition. Humboldt State University: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996.

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