

The Transformation of Contemporary Media Studies: From Agenda Setting to Tool of Social Consensus

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Abstrak

Posisi kajian media hingga kini terus menghadapi perdebatan akademis: dimulai dari perspektif positif (paradigma media positivis), perspektif semi-kritis (paradigma media postpositivis dan konstruktivis), perspektif kritis (paradigma media kritis), hingga ke perspektif postmodernis/poststrukturalis. Studi kualitatif ini tidak membahas dari sisi paradigma postmodernis/poststrukturalis, melainkan hanya melihat posisi dan fungsi media dari sudut pandang positivis, konstruktivis, dan kritis. Studi ini bersifat kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis deskriptif-interpretif. Hasil studi menunjukkan konstruktivisme dan paradigma kritis memiliki cara pandang, ketajaman argumen, dan derajat analisis yang berbeda dalam melihat kedudukan dan fungsi media dari sudut pandang sosial, budaya, dan ideologi dibandingkan dengan paradigma positivis.

Kata kunci: *Posisi dan fungsi media, perspektif positivis, konstruktivis perspektif, perspektif kritis*

Abstract

The position of media studies continues to face academic debate: starting from a positive view (positivist media paradigm), a semi-critical perspective (postpositivist and constructivist media paradigms), a critical perspective (critical media paradigm), to a postmodernist/poststructuralist perspective. This qualitative study does not discuss the postmodernist/poststructuralist paradigm, but only looks at the position and function of media from a positivist, constructivist, and critical perspective. This study is qualitative with a descriptive-interpretive analysis approach. The results of the study show that constructivism and critical paradigms have different perspectives, sharpness, and levels of analysis in viewing the position and function of media from a social, cultural, and ideological perspective compared to the positivist paradigm.

Keywords: *Media position and function, positivist perspective, constructivist perspective, critical perspective*

INTRODUCTION

The development of diverse ideas about the position and function of media among social scientists, particularly communication scientists (who were initially dominated by a positivistic perspective on media), has had a significant influence on the academic journey of (mass) media studies. If we trace it back further, media studies must begin with four key defining points in the history of human communication: (1) the discovery of language as the most sophisticated tool for human social interaction; (2) the development of the art of writing and human speech through the use of language; (3) the development of the ability to reproduce written words through the printing press, thus enabling the realization of massive mass communication; (4) the birth of electronic communication, from the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and even space satellites (Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974).

In the following phase, media studies cannot be separated from the emergence of conventional mass media, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, which boomed in the 1920s and 1930s (Hanif, 2011: 235). At that time, media studies focused solely on examining the dynamics of the growth, role, and function of mass media in the political interests of the state. In this early era, media studies were also directed at supporting the ideas of liberalism, individualism, and freedom of information, as well as strengthening the position of mass media as the 'fourth pillar of democracy' (fourth estate). The focus of media studies in this early era was solely directed at securing and disseminating the political policies of Western countries (read: Europe and America). Examples of these early media studies can be seen in propaganda studies

(Harold Lasswell), media effects studies (Melvin Defleur and Paul Lazarsfeld), audience uses and satisfaction studies (Jay Blumer and Elihu Katz), or persuasion and attitude change studies (Carl Hovland). However, in the developments in the early 1970s, the scope of media studies was expanded, from initially only focusing on communicators (sources), messages, and media to then including 'audience culture' as an important study variable, including social, cultural, cognitive, psycho-social, ideological, political, economic, media organization/ownership, and media information technology variables.

Another study states that media studies can be seen in at least three periods: the pre-mass media studies period, the mass communication era, and the mass media studies era. Each era has different characteristics, focuses, interests, even paradigms, approaches, and methodologies. Furthermore, in terms of media ownership and its relationship to the realities of society and the state, media studies have experienced a significant shift in focus. While in the pre-mass communication period (as the era of the press), the position and function of mass media was primarily as a tool of political propaganda for those in power. Subsequently, in the era of mass communication and media studies (especially the current era of new media), mass media is positioned more as a means of information, entertainment, education, information distribution, a tool for public literacy, and even an agent of 'guardian of democracy' (Bambang, 2014, p. 199).

Continuing into the 90s to the current era of social media, in the context of function, media studies not only see its position and function conventionally (solely as a means of entertainment, information, and education, as understood by positivists), but media studies are now identified as positioning their studies more broadly, such as the function of surveillance, interpretation, linkage, disseminator of dominant values (transmission of dominant values), source of information and controller of communication flow, source of social power, political control tool of the dominant class, supplier of pop culture, business/industry actor (through job creation, circulation of goods and services, designing transactions with other industries/suppliers, and building various norms that relate media interests to extra-media socio-political institutions), (Ardianto & Q-Anees, 2007, p. 14-17; Habibie, 2018, p. 81-82; Launa & Lusianawati, 2020, p. 1).

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to understand the position and function of media within the dynamics of understanding positivist, constructivist, and critical perspectives. Qualitative analysis is used to present research data in a descriptive-narrative manner. Meanwhile, interpretive analysis is used because it considers the character of the object of study (namely the relationship between the position and function of media and the interests that underlie it) as a dynamic and unique phenomenon that requires strong reasoning and interpretation skills from the researcher (Rahardjo, 2010, p. 3).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is research used to examine natural objects where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection techniques are triangulated, data analysis is inductive, and research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Qualitative research procedures produce descriptive data in the form of speech, writing, or behavior of individuals, groups, or organizations being observed. Data processing does not use statistical procedures or numerical quantification techniques. The primary focus of qualitative research is everything inherent in human attributes, such as speech, writing, individual behavior, social actions, social values, social institutions, and interactions between elements of human attributes in an effort to understand and interpret human actions, including cultural events/specific social behaviors, in a more comprehensive, factual, accurate, systematic, and cohesive manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative research prioritizes the use of inductive logic, influenced by the researcher's experience in data collection and analysis. Qualitative research generally produces in-depth descriptions, accounts, and analyses of the objects and subjects of analysis studied within a specific social context or setting (Creswell, 2014, p. 27). The goal of qualitative research is to uncover the meanings underlying distinctive, unique, and specific social realities. In qualitative research, the understanding, meaning, and interpretation of social reality are not predetermined

by the researcher, but rather are obtained through analysis of the various attributes of social reality underlying the object or subject of research (Moleong, 2013, p. 6).

Qualitative research focuses more on and emphasizes: (1) observing certain social phenomena; (2) exploring/revealing the meanings underlying these social phenomena; (3) conducting descriptive/taxonomic analysis, providing meaning and assessment, and drawing coherent conclusions from the phenomena observed, explored, revealed, analyzed, and interpreted critically and objectively. The strength of qualitative analysis is largely determined by the researcher's accuracy, appreciation, and clarity of words, including the researcher's choice of diction, style, and terminology (Basri, 2014). The data collection technique used in this literature-based qualitative research is documentation. Documentation is a procedure for collecting primary data (such as observation results, informant statements, coding, and research notes) and secondary data (such as books, journals, documents, and personal opinions of experts) that are considered relevant to the needs and objectives of the research.

The next stage is data presentation. After going through the stages of collection, processing, analysis, and interpretation, the data is then presented in a systematically structured narrative. This systematic presentation of data/narrative aims to facilitate the depiction of the themes and thought processes that are the main focus of the research. To facilitate understanding, the data will also be presented in the form of images, charts, or matrices. The formulation of descriptions in the form of images, charts, or matrices is deliberately presented to strengthen the narrative (descriptive-interpretive) arguments and analysis.

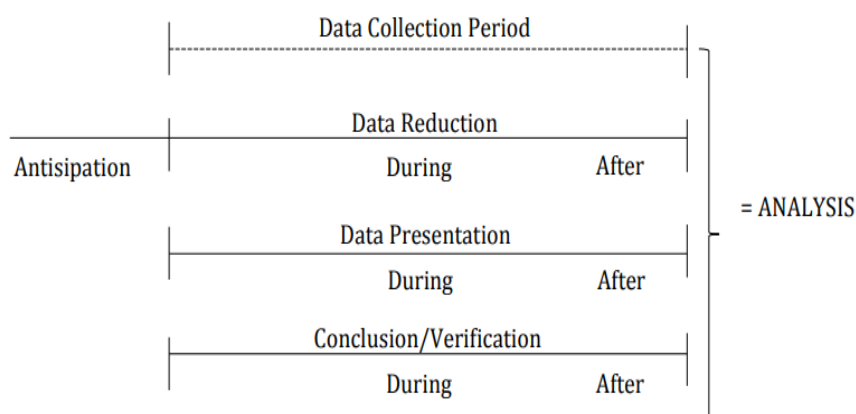


Figure 1. Stages of Qualitative Data Analysis

Source: Miles & Huberman (2009, p. 18)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social scientists and communication scientists understand the term 'media'—which later evolved into media studies or media studies—to explain several things. First, it is used to refer to tools or technologies used for communication, such as paper, radio waves, or spoken words. Early communication thinkers, such as Harold Innis (*The Bias of Communication*, 1951) and Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964) also used the word media to refer to technological tools/devices. Second, the term media is also used to refer to media institutions, organizations, or corporations (such as television or radio news stations). In the 1920s, media institutions and advertising agencies began referring to newspapers, magazines, and radio stations as 'media.' Social scientists in the 1930s also used the term media as a synonym for mass media (Nerone, 2003).

Third, referring to historical aspects, the presence of various social media platforms, which are now growing rapidly, are increasingly varied, and widespread, further strengthening the 'expansion of the scope' of communication media studies. The variety of social media platforms we encounter today can generally be identified and classified into two main categories: contemporary media (a combination of more modern forms of media and visual communication, such as social media, digital journalism, and video games); and traditional media (this category

refers to conventional media forms, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television) (Jacob Imm, 2021).

Fourth, referring to the discipline, media studies is a field of study that focuses on examining the history of the influence of mass media (media effects), which has strengthened since the early 20th century. Examined from a genealogical perspective, media studies stems from the tradition of the social sciences and humanities, which focus on the study of mass communication. In the late 1970s, media studies (such as cultural studies) emerged as an independent discipline (Webster, 1995).

Fifth, media studies is a scientific investigation of the anatomy of mass media that encompasses various social science perspectives, including political science, sociology, psychology, history, semiotics, and language/discourse analysis (critical and constructivist). Media studies encompasses the areas of terminology, concepts, theories, paradigms, and methodologies related to media objects—from people, organizations, media products (film, television, radio, advertising, etc.), media technology, and media culture. (electronic, visual, digital), and others (Chandler & Munday, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussion topics related to the position and function of media will be analyzed using positivist, constructivist, and critical perspectives. Media studies cover media as agents of determinism, agenda-setting tools, social construction tools, discourse shapers, representation, framing, propaganda, discourse struggles, and social consensus tools.

Media as Inevitability

Media ecology theory (or technological determinism theory) is a genre within the family of media effects theories (based on the positivist paradigm) that believes that the influence of media technology on society is inevitable (linear media perspective). This theory was put forward by Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962). Determinism (a theoretical understanding that believes in deterministic laws) believes that all past events influence future events; and this influence often occurs without humans being aware of it (the definition of determinism). For McLuhan, media permeates our entire existence (and consciousness). Media is the core of the ecology of life. One of the assumptions of determinism is the idea of a 'global village' to describe how media binds humanity into one large ecological system of life (political, economic, social, cultural, and ideological). The implications of the assumptions of the global village theory include the ability of humans to receive information and interact directly with various global events (Herawati, 2011, p. 103; Meisyaroh, 2013, p. 40).

For McLuhan, the globe is nothing more than a village. The development of electronic media has resulted in the elimination of constraints and boundaries of space and time in human communication. This condition has encouraged society to interact intensely in a vast and complex global space. At the theoretical level, the term 'global village' is often intertwined with the concept of globalization, which has the same object of study: the integration of society (socio-economic and socio-cultural) into a global order with media as its primary guide and manager. McLuhan's theoretical ideas show that the nature of the technology (media) that we create, directly or indirectly, is the cause of changes in cultural values and the formation of our perceptions and the way we communicate today (Pamungkas, 2015, p. 246).

Agenda-Setting Tools

The agenda-setting theory (also part of the positivist paradigm-based media effects theory) proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (in *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media*, 1972) states that mass media has the ability to influence the public regarding deliberately selected and highlighted news topics. This theory states that the media is central to determining truth because of its ability to transfer awareness and information to the public agenda by directing public concern toward issues deemed important for the media agenda. The two most prominent basic assumptions of this theory are: (1) the press and mass media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape issues; and (2) the mass media concentrate on only a few societal issues to present them as more important than others (Tamburaka, 2012, p. 22-23).

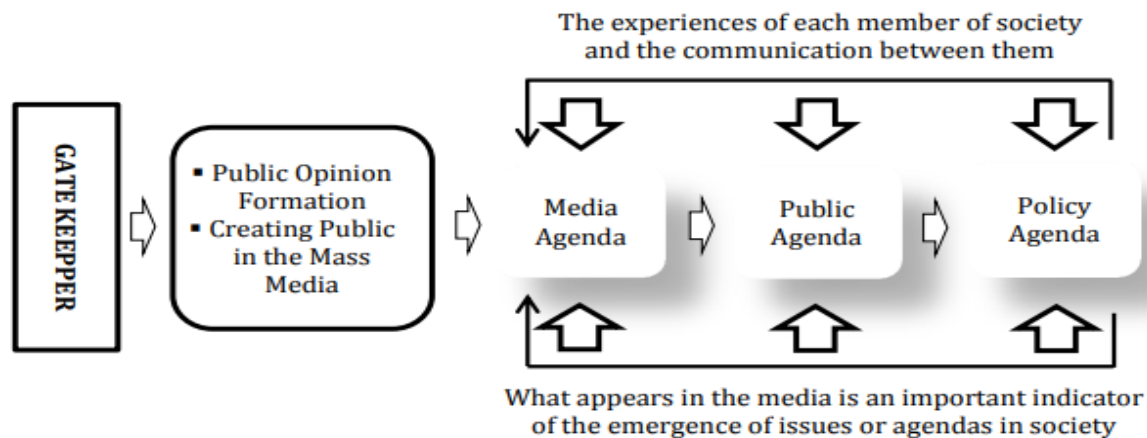


Figure 2. Agenda-Setting Process

Source: Firdinanta "Agenda-Setting, Framing, dan Konstruksi Berita" (2023)

Agenda-setting theory believes that it is journalists and newsrooms who will determine which news is selected, filtered, highlighted or removed from the news, based on three main bases of agenda-setting theory, namely: (1) mass media does not reflect reality in presenting issues/news; (2) media concentration on an issue forces the public to believe that the issue is important compared to other important issues; and (3) there is a strong and significant correlation between issues on the media's agenda and issues that become the public's agenda (attention) (Tamburaka, 2012, p. 22-23).

Agents of Social Construction

The study of media as agents of social construction is based on constructivist studies, particularly the work of Eriyanto (*Analisis Framing: Konstruksi, Ideologi, dan Politik Media*, 2011). According to this constructivist media paradigm, the media (as producers of information/ news) do not actually report/narrate events as they are (factual). This is because events or realities are not the kind of 'things' that can simply be transformed by the media into news. Reality is the product of the interaction between journalists and the social facts operating in the environment outside the media. In the process of internalization, reality is observed and absorbed into the journalist's consciousness. At this stage of internalization, the reality perceived by the reader's consciousness appears to be objective, even though it is actually subjective (a result of social construction). In the process of externalization, journalists immerse themselves in understanding reality according to their own consciousness and conceptual map. The concept of facts expressed by journalists to view reality does not necessarily 'liberate' journalists from their subjective state of consciousness (Eriyanto, 2011, p. 20).

In terms of journalistic work, news—from the constructivist perspective—is technically interpreted through several derived questions: how is the news obtained? How is it produced? And what is the position of journalists and the media in question within the overall news production process? The constructivist perspective (including the critical perspective) questions the position of journalists and the media in the news production process and the overall social structure and political power within society, which are related to (Eriyanto, 2009, p. 31-38):

1. *Facts*: Facts (events/incidents) are the result of constructing reality. The truth of a fact is relative and applies within a specific context.
2. *Media*: The media is an agent of message construction.
3. *News*: News is neither a reflection nor a mirror of reality. News is merely a construction of reality. Every news item produced is the result of constructing reality.
4. *Reality*: Reality is subjective, as the opinion/viewpoint of the newsmaker cannot be eliminated (a journalist views the reality of the news with their subjective perspective and considerations).

5. *Journalists*: Journalists are not reporters/observers, but rather agents of social construction (of news, events, or incidents). Journalists cannot hide their moral choices and biases, as they are an intrinsic part of news formation. News is not the product of individual journalists but rather part of the organizational process and interactions between journalists, leaders (editorial elites) and media owners.
6. *Ethics and moral choices*: Journalists' values, ethics, moral choices, and biases cannot be separated from the process of covering or reporting an event. Journalists' values, ethics, moral choices, and biases must be understood as an integral part of the news production process.
7. *Audience*: The audience has its own interpretation of the news, which may differ from the interpretation (intended to be constructed by) the newsmaker.

Mass media, through their messages (which they intend to construct), not only inform or communicate a message, but also provide meaning through a series of information presented to the audience. It is often not realized that the reality presented by the media is actually a second reality, often different from the true reality (first reality). This means that the news presented by the media is essentially the accumulated result of various social realities originating from the media's external environment (Muslich, 2008, p. 150-151).

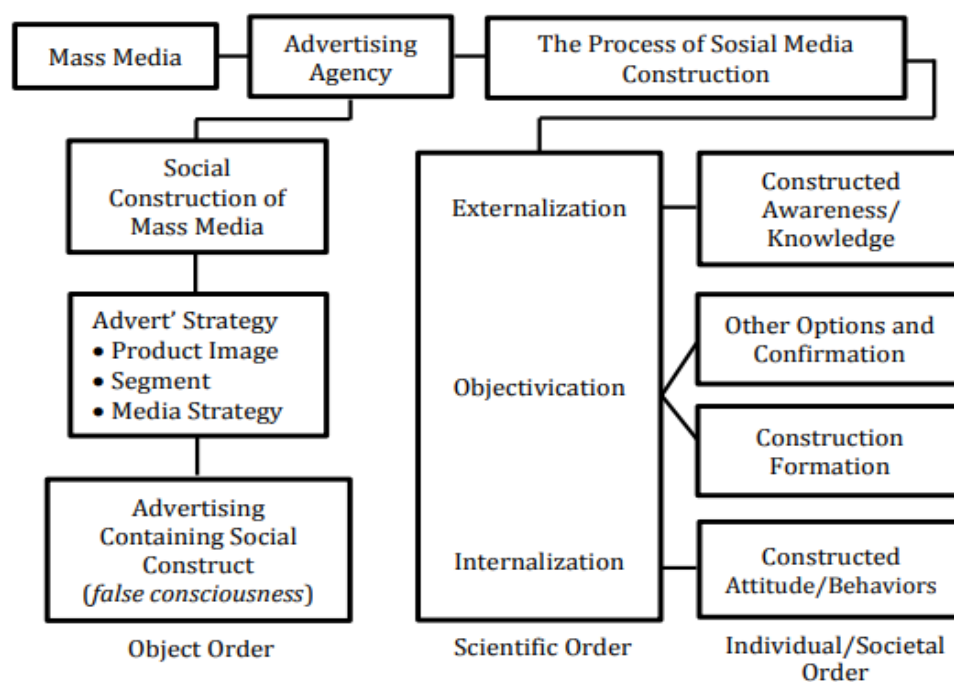


Figure 3. Social Media Construction Process

Source: Bungin (2015, p. 39).

In other words, news must be understood as the result of journalists' or media industry actors' construction of events/realities; because the same event/reality has the potential to be constructed differently by other mass media outlets. Journalists/media outlets may have different concepts or perspectives when viewing an event/reality (which is manifested in news texts). News content is an expression of the subjective order of reality constructed by the communicator (or news source) (Eriyanto, 2011, p. 32-33).

Discourse-Forming Agent

According to Fairclough (in *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1995), discourse refers to the use of language as a social practice, namely the interconnected relationship between events and texts. However, in social practice, discourse is detached from the social reality in which it is formed (Haryatmoko, 2015, p. 155). Foucault (in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, 1972) defines discourse as a complete series of utterances in an orderly

communication act, containing a number of ideas, concepts, or effects formed in a specific context/situation (Fillingham, 2001, p. 12). Meanwhile, Ricoeur (in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 1981) defines discourse as an event that is always related to four accompanying characteristics: (1) a specific place and time; (2) a subject, namely, 'who speaks?'; (3) someone presents language in a specific time and place, also referring to the object being discussed, to the world depicted using certain techniques; and (4) a medium for the communication process, the exchange of messages, and the interpretation of events (Fithri, 2014, p. 198).

Ricoeur and Foucault's views above are in line with Guy Cook's understanding (in *Discourse and Literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind*, 1994), who states that text (news) cannot be separated from context and discourse, because the three are a complete unity (Kridalaksana, 2011, p. 134-137). For Tuchman (in *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, 1980), because the media has the ability to shape public opinion, the position and function of the media are very important in the political system, especially the democratic political system. Meanwhile, according to Dan Nimmo (in *Political Communication and Public Opinion in America*, 1978), the primary means of political discourse as discourse itself are words (which function as political symbols) (Hamad, 2010, p. 4).

Complementing Tuchman and Nimmo's ideas above, Althusser (in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, 1971) also views the position and function of mass media as highly strategic in relation to the formation of discourse and its function as a tool for legitimizing power (the formation of political discourse of power) (Sobur, 2015, p. 29-30).

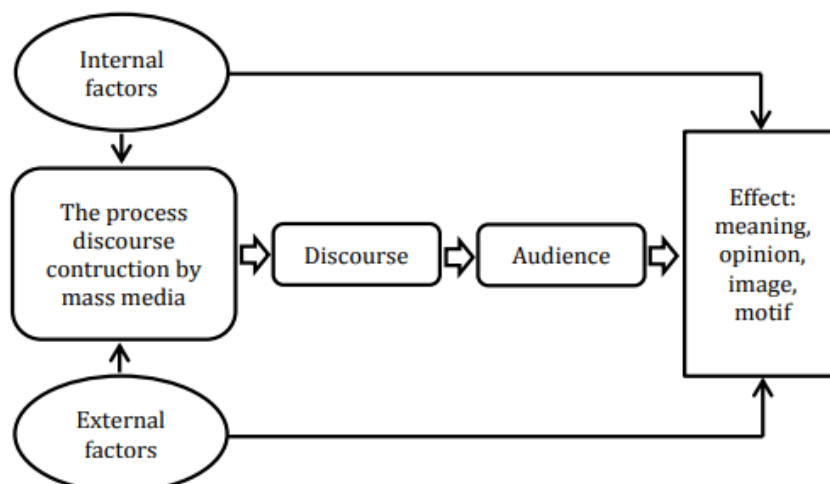


Figure 4. The Process of Mass Media Discourse Construction

Source: Hamad (2006, p. 265)

If we look at global communication trends over the past 40 years, it seems that this communication-as-discourse perspective is often used by Western countries, which tend to construct negative discourse on Islam (fundamentalist, radical, terrorist, or anti-democratic religion). Western opinion makers also frequently construct developing countries (NSB) as sources of religious conflict and producers of ethnic and communal violence. Conversely, the West presents itself as a civilized, humanist, and democratic nation (The West's construction/ framing of the discourse on Islam and NSB can be illustrated in the communication model shown in figure 4 above).

Agents of Representation

The rationale for media as agents of representation in this sub-topic draws on academic constructs from Stuart Hall (in *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 2003) and John Fiske (in *Cultural and Communication Studies*, 2004). According to Hall, there are at least three approaches to understanding: the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist (Stuart Hall, 2003, p. 7). In the reflective approach, the meaning conveyed by language is like a mirror that reflects something (an object, an idea) as it is, according to its true meaning. In the intentional approach, the meaning of something (an object, an idea) is based on the author's/speaker's

explanation. Meanwhile, in the constructionist approach, something (a political event) has no meaning whatsoever until we construct its meaning through a system of representation (politics as an arena for elite power representation). Meanwhile, according to Fiske: “*representation is something that refers to the process by which reality is conveyed in communication, through words, sounds, images or a combination thereof or a number of actions related to camera techniques, lighting, editing processes, music and certain sounds that process conventional symbols and codes into representations of the reality and ideas that are to be expressed.*” (Fiske, 2004, p. 282)

For Hall, representation must be understood from the perspective of the individual's active and creative role in interpreting the world. Representation is the way in which meaning is assigned to things depicted through images or other forms: on screen, in words, or in sentences. Representation is a linguistic phenomenon: how an issue is presented or constructed can be explained through language. It is through language that various forms of representation are presented by the media and presented in news reports (Eriyanto, 2009, p. 113). Meanwhile, according to Fiske, representation in the context of television media can be expressed in a number of actions related to camera techniques, lighting, editing processes, music, or specific audio/sound that process conventional symbols and codes into representations of the idea of the order of reality they wish to express. In the practice of representation, the prevailing assumption is that media content is not pure reality. Therefore, representation is seen as a way in which the media constructs a version of reality using specific strategies or techniques.

In *Media Discourse* (1995), Fairclough defines the representation of media content as: what constitutes the foreground or background; What is the theme/trend of an issue? And how to determine the representation category of a particular event, situation, or condition. For Fairclough, the representation of media content is implicitly related to the discourse practices the media intends to *re-present*. Representation is the production of meaning from various concepts of thought conveyed through language as a discursive practice (the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language).

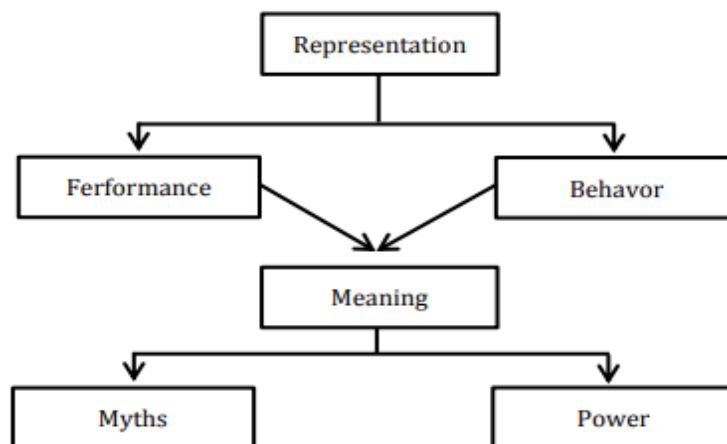


Figure 5. Representation and Its Relation to Meaning

Source: Modification from Egia Ariko (2016)

Meanwhile, according to Branston and Stafford (in *The Media Student's Book*, 1996), representation is all the signs by which media re-presents an event or reality. However, the reality seen in media images does not represent reality as it is. Within it, a construction is always present. In representation, there is never a completely transparent 'window' of reality. Although in the practice of representation, construction always occurs, the concept of "representation" according to Branston and Stafford is not distinct from the concept of 'social construction.' The concept of representation can go further, revealing how a group is represented by media news presentations.

Referring to the concept of representation by Hall, Branston, and Stafford, representation is not merely a process of re-presenting an object in the media (such as text, photos, images, caricatures, cartoons, graphics, maps, QR codes, advertisements, and others). But more than that, the media also carries out the process of forming a specific identity for the events (news or

information) that are narrated or presented. In this context, Stuart Hall (2003) concluded that the representation presented by the mass media is actually ideological, because the mass media has the ability to 're-represent' the interests of one group (dominant) to another group (subordinate).

Framing Tools

Framing is a technique by which social reality is framed, constructed, labeled, and given specific meaning. Framing is a technique for highlighting certain aspects of news stories so that the highlighted parts become more meaningful, more memorable, and more easily embedded in the minds of the audience. According to Tuchman in *Making News* (1980), framing is "how we view the news through a window on the world." Viewing and understanding the world through a window of course depends heavily on the size of the window we use. A large window allows for a broader view of the issue, while a small window limits our view of the issue. In news reporting, this window through which we view the issue is called a 'frame' (Eriyanto, 2011, p. 4). The framing of a news story by journalists and media workers involved in the news production process will impact the news presented in the media (print and electronic). Naturally, each media outlet has its own framing standards, which differ from those of other media outlets. The daily *Harian Kompas*, for example, certainly has a different standard for framing news than the daily *Harian Republika* or the *Koran Tempo*.

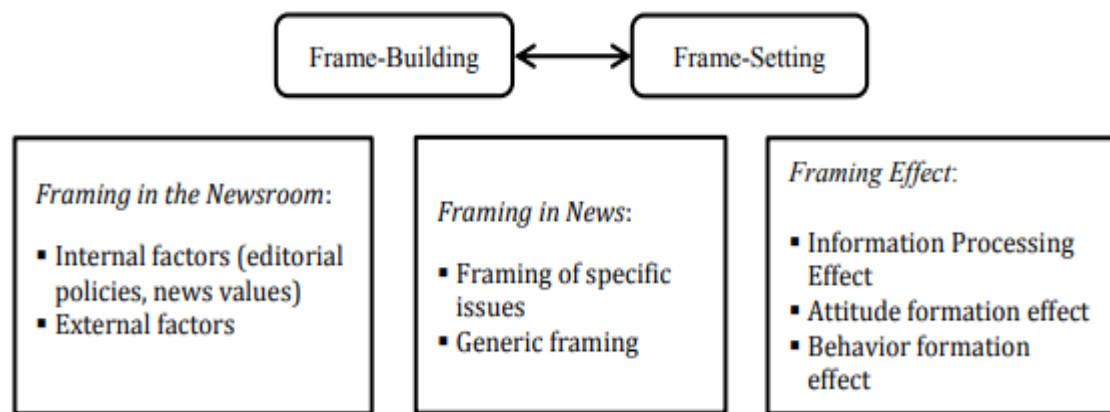


Figure 6. Media Framing Process

Source: Firdinanta "Agenda-Setting, Framing, dan Konstruksi Berita" (2023)

Stuart Hall (in Storey, 2010, p. 12) describes the differences in framing that occur among mass media as: "a moment of media production is framed entirely by meanings, ideas, and knowledge practices related to production routines, professional ideologies, and media institutional knowledge. In television, the production structure begins with discourse that raises topics, reports, agendas, events, people, and the presentation of images to the audience." Like Stuart Hall, William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani in *Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach* (1989) also see the media engaging in framing—through language practices and the use of specific symbols—in creating news, namely 'packaging' reality into a particular structure so that an issue has a specific meaning or understanding. This occurs because the packaging process involves selecting news facts: some news facts are highlighted, obscured, hidden, or omitted from the news being produced.

Propaganda Agents

The theoretical construction of media as propaganda agents has been laid down by several scholars, including Harold Lasswell (in *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, 1927), Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (in *Manufacturing Consent, A Propaganda Model: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, 1988), and Roger Brown (in *Words and Things: An Introduction to Language*, 1957). These three scholars emphasize different levels of analysis regarding propaganda in relation to mass media.

Lasswell, for example, defines propaganda as: “solely referring to the control of opinion by means of significant symbols, or the technique of influencing human action by manipulating the presentation (of news/information).” Meanwhile, representation, according to Lasswell, can take the form of speech, writing, images, or music (Saverin-Tankard, 2015, p. 128). During World War II, according to Lasswell, propaganda aimed to: (1) foster hatred of the enemy; (2) preserve the friendship of the allied (Western) powers; (3) to maintain friendship, and if possible, to establish cooperation with neutral parties (non-Western countries); and (4) to stop the enemy's enthusiasm (Saverin-Tankard, 2015, p. 129).

Brown further defines propaganda as: “a form of symbolic manipulation designed to produce an action for others whose benefit (or advantage) is achieved for the benefit of the persuader, not the persuaded.” According to Brown, to the extent that the techniques used only benefit the communicator/persuader, and not the other way around (for the benefit of the communicant/persuade), then the communication act from the persuader to the persuaded can be categorized as propaganda (Saverin-Tankard, 2015, p. 128-129).

On the other hand, Chomsky and Herman (2005, p. 1-2), in the context of global media behavior, define propaganda as: “The propaganda model focuses on wealth inequality, and this power has a cascading impact on mass media interests and choices. Money and power can filter news suitable for print, marginalize dissent, and allow governments and dominant individuals to convey their messages to the public.”

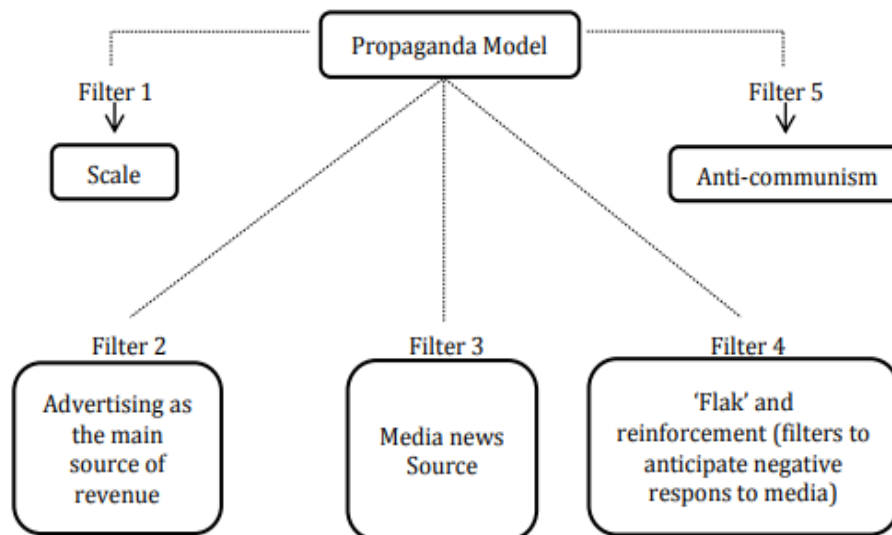


Figure 7. Chomsky's and Herman Propaganda Filter Model

Source: “Manufacturing Consent” (2016)

Within the framework of the role of media in the era of globalization, according to John B. Thompson in *The Globalization of Communication* (2000), as quoted by Rianto (2008, p. 70), he states: “The restructuring of space and time brought about by the development of media technology is part of a broader set of processes that have transformed (and will continue to transform) the modern world. This process is generally described today as globalization.” Consistent with Thompson's ideas, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (2005) see the dominance of media elites and the process of public marginalization as resulting from what Chomsky and Herman call ‘the operation of mass media filters.’

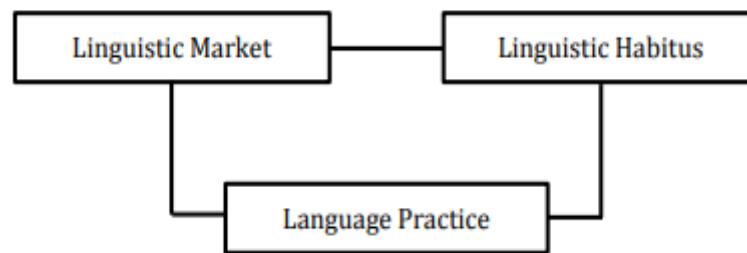
The propaganda model is a conceptual model in the study of media political economy (instrumentalist) developed by Chomsky and Herman to explain how propaganda and ‘systemic bias’ operate in the mass media reporting process, as shown in figure 7 above. The Chomsky-Herman model also explains how media manipulation filters operate and how approval of economic, social, and political policies is ‘manufactured’ in the minds (and minds) of the public through these propaganda filters. The five propaganda filters according to Chomsky-Herman can be briefly explained as follows (in *Manufacturing Consent*, 2016):

1. *First Filter (size)*. Size relates to the profit orientation and profitability of the mass media. In this filter, political elites also control media conglomerates.
2. *Second Filter (the advertising license to do business)*. This aspect relates to: (a) an advertising-based system will tend to stifle the existence of media companies that depend on revenue from circulation/sales; (b) news is organized by the media around the business interests of advertisers (both corporate and individual advertisers); (c) wealthy elites and media conglomerates are the primary controllers of new entrants (players) in the media business, who face significant operational costs; (d) elites print news and ideas to sell to the public, controlling the information presented. The elites decide which topics will be featured, how they frame issues, how they filter information, and how they place emphasis on their media coverage; (e) infotainment is a logical outgrowth of this process. Celebrity news has become the primary focus of news coverage; (f) only a small number of news outlets highlight and emphasize human interest issues/news programs. This situation distances the audience from important humanitarian issues.
3. *Third Filter (sourcing mass media news)*. This aspect relates to: (a) the filtering of mass media, where various information provided by the government, business actors/practitioners, and experts/specialists who serve as primary sources of news receive approval and funding from agents of power; (b) in the neoliberal era, information originating from the government, police, business institutions, and the public is filtered through news agencies; (c) Media workers treat bureaucratic news sources as factual sources because journalists also act as officials actively participating in upholding normative order to control public opinion developing in society; (c) every media worker will recognize official claims originating from the government as the primary source of information and credible and competent knowledge; (d) within this filter, there is a moral division of labor between government officials and journalists: government officials as the owners of news and sources of knowledge; while journalists are their agents.
4. *Five Filters (flak)*. Flak is related to the mass media's ability to control demands coming from the external media environment. Flak refers to negative responses to media statements (which can take the form of letters, telegrams, telephone calls, petitions, lawsuits, demands for fulfillment of political promises from elites, and other means such as complaints, threats, and punitive measures). Flak can be carried out in an organized and centralized manner or through localized mechanisms, such as autonomous individual or group action.
5. *Fourth Filter (anti-communism)*. This aspect is related to the ideology of anti-communism as the final filter (which has long been the primary framework for Western media).

The Medium of Discourse Contests

The conceptualization of media as an arena for contests of meaning draws on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the language market. The language market is a 'social arena' where various discourses are realized or manifested. Within the language market, sanctions and censorship are implemented to define what can be 'said' and what cannot be said. The language market creates rules/price formation. Specific capital (language) holds the capacity to maximize material and symbolic gains to be gained by groups competing in the language market. This means that language has an economic dimension that can be 'traded' (selling language) by various groups in society, much like the buying and selling of goods or services in an economic market (economic exchange) (Fasri, 2011, p. 132-133; Ningtyas, 2015, p. 155).

Figure 8 shows that language practices do not occur in isolation, but are interconnected with the interplay of linguistic markets and linguistic habitus. These three components make language a kind of arena for 'economic exchange,' characterized by the presence of producers language, consumers language, and the traded commodity language (Fasri, 2011, p. 133-134).

**Figure 8.** Language as Social Practice

Sumber: Fasri (2011, p. 134)

As Bourdieu (Rusdianti, 2003: 35) stated:

"In the linguistic market arena, the primary commodity in the circulation of 'trade' is no longer language, but discourse. As a social practice, language practice cannot stand alone. Every word chosen by a social actor is determined by their linguistic capacity, which stems from their linguistic habitus. Moreover, linguistic habitus also determines the logic of their thinking. Social actors who grow up in an environment familiar with books, magazines, and other quality reading sources from childhood will have a rich vocabulary, a more organized way of thinking, and the ability to seek out and locate the sources of knowledge they need."

For Bourdieu, language practice does not stop at mere language games. This is because the social arena in which language practice (discursive competition) takes place is dynamic. In that arena, commodities are at stake, fought over by various groups with vested interests seeking to win. Each language practice (discursive competition) has its own strategy, mode, value, and goal, depending on the value or worth of a discourse. The high or low value/price of a discourse depends on the relationships and tensions that occur in society and the extent to which the benefits from the distribution of capital flow into the language market (Fasri, 2011, p. 135-136).

According to Bourdieu, the uneven distribution of capital in the language market is generally driven by 'social class differences,' which ultimately give rise to the practice of discourse domination. The greater the value/worth of a discourse, the greater the legitimacy (support) it receives. Therefore, a group with a dominant discourse (doxa) will have greater freedom to impose its norms, social values, and interests on the dominated social group (Fasri, 2011, p. 139). According to Bourdieu (in Snook, 2005, p. 217):

"When a language dominates a market, it becomes the norm underlying the pricing of styles of expression and the value of the competence that accompanies them. Language is an artifact, but because it is universally enforced by linguistic agency, it has social efficacy to the extent that it functions as a norm. Linguistic domination is exercised by groups that have the means to enforce those norms as legitimate, or that monopolize meaning through existing grammatical devices".

The concept of the struggle for meaning is also related to other Bourdieu concepts, namely 'symbolic power' and 'symbolic violence.' In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), Bourdieu defines symbolic power as: "a type of power to change and create reality, namely as a symbol that is recognized, recognized, and legitimate, to make people see and believe, to strengthen or change their perspective on the world itself" (Krisdinanto, 2014, p. 201-202).

Symbolic power operates through symbols as instruments of coercion: (1) through the ownership of symbolic capital (the more symbolic capital a social agent, whether individual or group, possesses, the greater their chances of winning); and (2) through investment strategies (read: intervention or domination) to support the effectiveness of symbolic construction work (Fasri, 2011, p. 142). Meanwhile, symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, always works in two ways, namely: (1) through 'euphemism', namely obscuring the meaning of language to make it seem soft so as not to receive rejection/resistance from the people; (2) through a censorship mechanism, which operates not only in the production of everyday verbal discourse (low context), but also in the production of scientific discourse built in written texts (high context). The aim is to

determine what may be said and what is prohibited in order to preserve the 'values of the dominant group' (Fasri, 2011, p. 145).

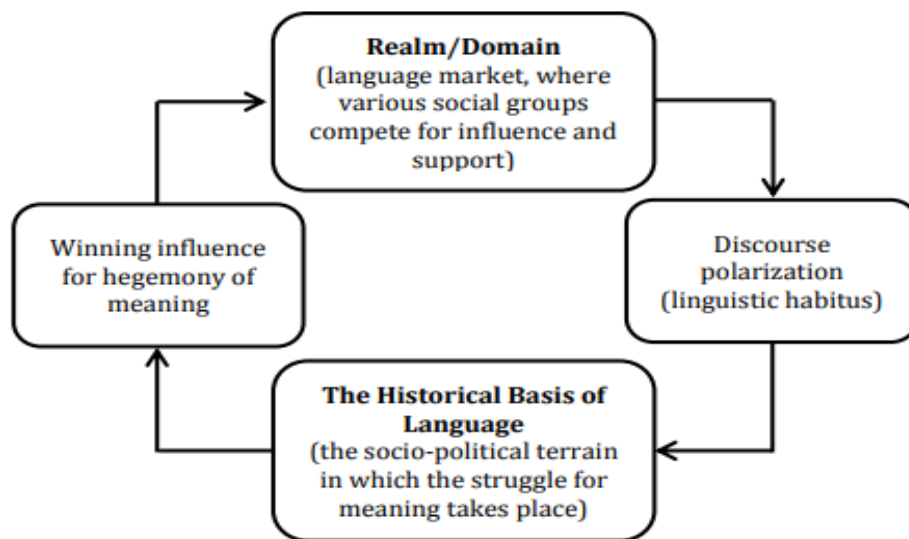


Figure 9. The Process of Struggling for Meaning (Dominant Discourse)

Source: Adaptation of Pierre Bourdieu's scheme of struggles for meaning

Tool of Social Consensus

The concept of media as an arena for social consensus stems from the neo-Marxist tradition of thought, particularly ideas derived from the thinking of Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, and Daniel Hallin. The view of media as an arena for social consensus is particularly prominent in Antonio Gramsci's view, which is linked to Gramsci's conception of 'moral and intellectual leadership' as a conceptual variant of the theory of 'hegemony'—which consists of three levels: integral hegemony, decadent hegemony, and minimal hegemony. According to Gramsci, a social group, economic class, or political community will achieve supremacy through the dominance of 'moral and intellectual leadership,' whose ideas originate from social consensus (consent). Gramsci linked social consensus to the phenomenon of psychological spontaneity that encompasses the acceptance of sociopolitical rules in society. The consensus accepted by a particular social class, workers for example, is the result of minimal hegemony (not because the working class considers the existing social structure to be good for the existence of their group, but more because they do not have a conceptual basis that allows them to understand the exploitative social structure and reality objectively) (Siswati, 2017, p. 21-22).

As Gramsci explained: "... the ruling class not only maintains and justifies its domination, but will constantly seek to organize and win the active consensus of the groups it seeks to regulate" (Patria & Arif, 2015, p. 13). The problem is that workers' agreement (consensus) with dominant ideas is not born of fear or conformity, but rather of full awareness and agreement stemming from the hegemony of the dominant class. This seemingly conscious agreement (consensus) of the working class, according to Gramsci, is a sham intended to create a moral basis that legitimizes the creation of a 'hegemonic situation' (Patria & Arif, 2015, p. 125-126). Moral leadership, as the essence of the concept of hegemony, is defined by Gramsci as (Patria & Arif, 2015, p. 126):

"Dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by maintaining the 'spontaneous consciousness' of their subordinate groups, including the working class, through the construction of negotiated meanings resulting from political and ideological consensus involving (both) the dominant group and (especially) the dominated group."

The logical assumption: the ruling class has succeeded in convincing subordinate groups (society) to accept the moral, political, and cultural leadership of the dominant class selflessly; through the preparation of various narratives, constructions, and representations (claims of

moral and intellectual leadership). This hegemonic condition is a series of ideas built on the basis of negotiations by the ruling class. Ironically, the ruling class does not only control economic resources, but also hegemony, namely controlling the minds and consciousness of others whose legitimacy is achieved through moral and intellectual leadership; not just political-economic leadership. The consensus that occurs between these two classes is created through covert influence through various values and knowledge disseminated through means of power (such as educational institutions, bureaucracy, economic institutions, mass media, and other power apparatuses) (Santoso et al., 2007, p. 88).

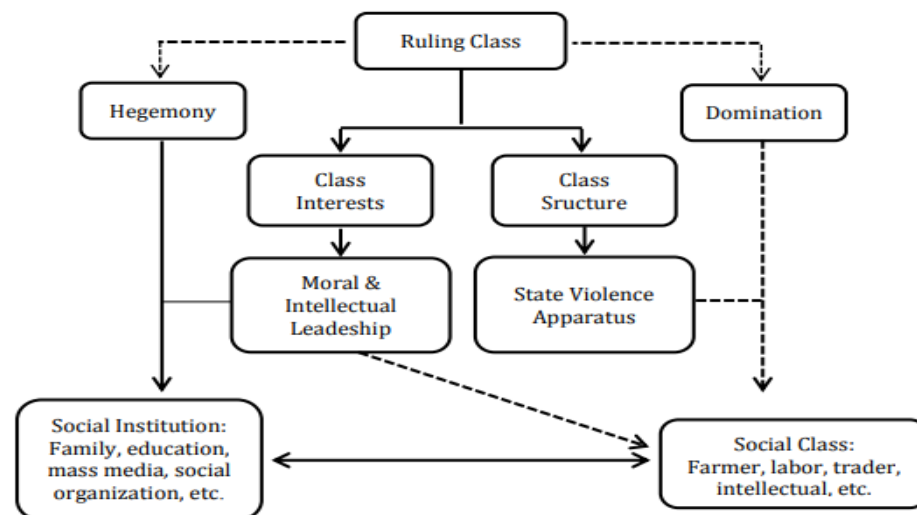


Figure 10. The Working Process of Hegemony and Domination

Source: The result of an adaptation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and domination

According to Gramsci, hegemonic leadership operates in two ways: (1) exerting control through coercion or domination, manifested through physical force or threats (this method is used when the legitimacy of hegemonic leadership is low or vulnerable); and (2) exercising control through agreement, which occurs when individuals/groups voluntarily align with the views of the dominant group (Yunus, 2016).

From the perspective of hegemony as a manifestation of social consensus, we position the mass media as a means, arena, or instrument of the hegemony of the ruling class (dominant group). The mass media is a social institution within a democratic system, serving as an 'extension' of the dominant class (such as business people, officials, and high-ranking bureaucrats) to determine the ideology that dominates discourse in the public sphere. Language, therefore, becomes a crucial tool for serving the hegemonic function of this discourse.

In a capitalist societal structure, the public space where values are formed is systematically monopolized by capitalists; and hegemony has become a kind of consensus that colonizes public awareness and critical thinking. Through the mechanism of monopolistic media hegemony, the publishing or broadcasting rights of mass media—which are predominantly owned and controlled by capitalists—freely distort information, twist facts, and deceive the masses. For Gramsci, the media has now become an 'extension' of the dominant group to win its ideological struggle over the hegemony of other groups. Given that today, the media, in its operational work, shapes opinions and perceptions (hegemonic texts) through the arena of consensus, not through coercion, oppression, or physical violence (Mahdi, 2015, p. 207-208). In this context, it can be said that the media's work process in enforcing social consensus through claims of moral and intellectual leadership (as hegemonic texts) is carried out through the subconscious processes of the audience.

The concept of media as an arena of social consensus within the context of the public sphere also captured the attention of Jürgen Habermas in his book on the 'structural transformation of the public sphere' (in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 1962). This German philosopher, sociologist, and leading figure in

critical theory defines the public sphere as (Lestari, 2009): “A domain of our social life where something like public opinion can be formed... [where] citizens deal with matters of public interest without being forced.... [to] express and publish their views.”

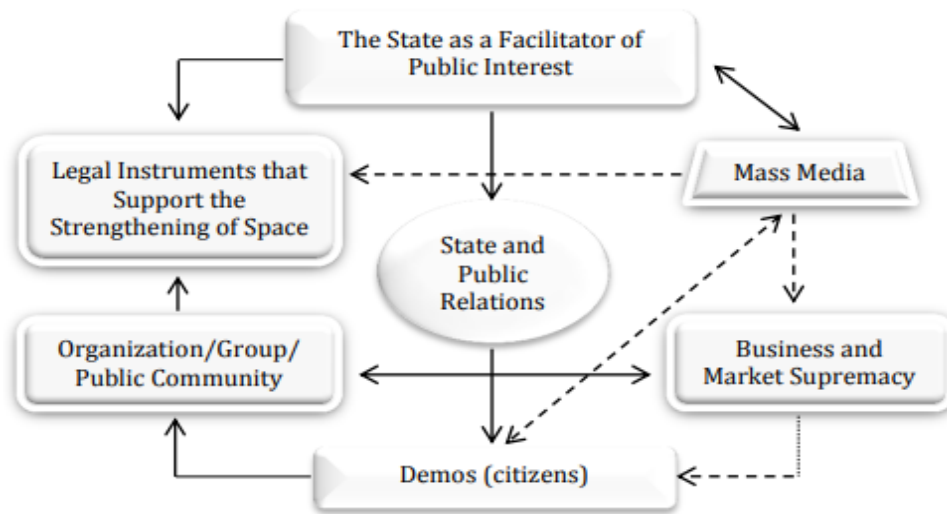


Figure 11. The Position of the Media in the Democratic Public Sphere

Source: The result of an adaptation of Jurgen Habermas' concept of public sphere

The public sphere itself consists of information organs (such as newspapers, television, or radio) and other institutions of public discussion (such as parliament, political parties or clubs, public assemblies, coffee shops, meeting halls, citizen forums, and similar public spaces), where socio-political discussions take place intensely in public life (Arismunandar, 2008, p. 5). For Habermas, power must not only be legitimized but also rationalized through communicative action so that the mass media, as a public institution, is freed from various forms of shackles, dogma, and domination by the capitalist class as owners of the means of production. Habermas's communicative action paradigm is based on the assumption that power must be enlightened by rational discussion that effectively engages the public so that every citizen (*demos*) can actively participate in political discourse in the public sphere (Hardiman, 2000, p. 22).

According to Habermas, the mass media can fill the role of filling the public space between state power and civil society as a mechanism for socio-political consensus. Citizens as audiences should not be merely made into spectators of media discourse performances that shape public opinion, reducing the status of citizens (audiences) to mere objects of news, entertainment, and information; without involving them in matters of public discourse in a participatory manner. Mass media—as a symbol of the autonomy of the public sphere—is understood by Habermas as an emancipatory space, a place where critical reason becomes a means to carry out emancipatory communication actions in order to realize the formation of a critical, participatory, and rational society (Arismunandar, 2008, p. 8).

In order to build this social consensus, according to Habermas, the practice of discourse (the use of language, text, or symbols) must be freed from various systematic distortions and ideological shackles that hinder the process of social emancipation. Because, if discourse (language, text, or symbols) remains shackled and dominated by a particular class, the process of hegemony of meaning within the context of social consensus in the public sphere (mass media) will be difficult to rationalize, emancipate, and empower.

Another idea regarding media news ideology as an arena of social consensus also comes from Daniel C. Hallin (in *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, 2004). According to Hallin, in the context of ideology, news as consensus (or texts containing interests or ideologies) can be classified into three categorical domains, namely: news as a realm of deviation; news as a realm of legitimate controversy; and news as a realm of social consensus (scope of

consensus). The three ideological maps of news according to Hallin (see figure 19 below) can be explained as follows (Eriyanto, 2011, pp. 150-151):

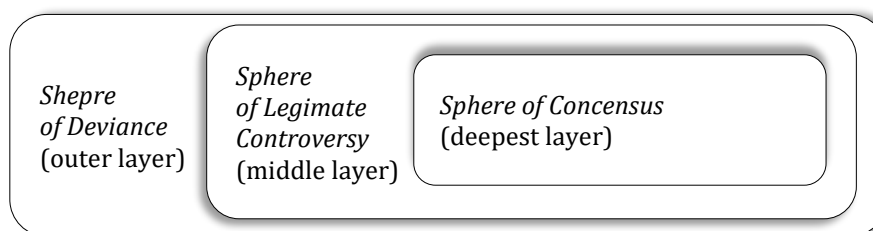


Figure 12. Daniel C. Hallin's Ideological Map of News

Source: Eriyanto (2011, p. 150)

1. **Sphere of Deviance:** In this outermost area of deviance, a particular event, idea, or behavior in a news report is ostracized and deemed deviant by the mass media. For example, the Peaceful Labor Action (and other mass labor actions) fall into this area because the labor action is seen as bad, deviant, and inconsistent with the values of diversity and unity (contrary to the economic growth agenda and national consensus).
2. **Sphere of Legitimate Controversy:** In this middle area of deviance, there is a general agreement that public criticism is seen as bad and deviant behavior. For example, public criticism of various government policies (such as the Omnibus Law), which is currently again controversial. This means that some in our society still consider public criticism to be impolite and even contrary to Indonesian political culture.
3. **Sphere of Consensus:** This is the deepest area, where reality, events, behavior, or ideas have become a consensus (mutual agreement). In this area of consensus, reality is understood and agreed upon collectively as an idea that aligns with the group's ideology. For example, the idioms Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI), *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), or the slogan *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) are ideas that constitute an area of national consensus or collective agreement among the Indonesian people.

As an area of social consensus, Hallin's consensus map above can be used to illustrate how the same social reality can be described differently. Media with different ideologies will explain and place the same event on different maps, depending on their respective interests.

CONCLUSION

This study uncovers four interesting implications for media studies. *First*, the expansion of the academic repertoire of media studies through the development of increasingly broad, unique, specific, and profound mass media issues has undoubtedly led to the emergence of diverse approaches, theoretical constructs, and methodological schemes in mass media research. The presence of positivist, constructivist, and critical perspectives has provided new insights into our understanding of the position and function of media in the context of mass communication, a dynamic development that continues to this day.

Second, the emergence of media studies with new perspectives (postpositivist, constructivist, critical, and postmodernist/poststructuralist) increasingly emphasizes that the media does not merely function as a medium for conveying/disseminating messages, but only utilizes language or symbols to narrate news, with the sole normative goal of creating press freedom, equal access to public information, meaningful message structures, and an atmosphere of togetherness (as understood by the positivist paradigm). On the contrary, the media actually has specific motives, goals, and interests through 'semantic operations' and 'symbolic constructions' to legitimize and access the dominance of information from ideology or class interests produced by dominant groups.

Third, the presence of these diverse communication approaches also has implications for communication research methods. The reality construction approach has encouraged the emergence of discourse analysis methods to uncover the reality behind discourse.

Methodologically, this certainly enriches survey research methods (to measure the effectiveness of media effects on achieving communication goals and programs) and ethnographic or phenomenological research methods—two of the many qualitative research methods—which are increasingly being used by communication researchers as new methodological tools in mass media research.

Fourth, the critical (and postmodernist/poststructuralist) perspective has factually had long-term political and social implications. Through this perspective, we can utilize discourse analysis for the benefit of social integration, both at the individual, group/community, organizational, and larger social levels. Discourse analysis has successfully detected, reduced, and prevented conflicts between individuals/groups, socio-cultural clashes, ethnic/communal violence, or the strengthening of the single hegemony of dominant group ideology over marginalized public interests. Through the variety of solutions it produces, discourse analysis has the potential to reduce our unequal and injustice-ridden social life.

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