

The claim that the media works in ways that support the ideology of the ruling cl...



The manipulative Marxist theory of the role of the media is that the media reflects the interests of the powerful, and supports their interests, this a conformist view, although Marxists do believe that the media act to legitimate or maintain the power of those who own the media. The ownership of the media has been largely concentrated and the views expressed are essentially conservative. A known theorist is Ralph Miliband who in his book "The state in Capitalist society" argues that the owners of the media exert a direct influence over their staff, this is shown in the content of their newspapers.

Marxists also think that those who control the media support their social position in dominant times by exerting their beliefs and values through the media. It's also argued that the media's effect on commodity consumption because of the commercial advertising that newspapers carry, through this it is believed that the capitalist class manages to maintain its economic power through the advertising revenue collected. The German ideology is: 'The class, which has the means of material production, has control at the same time of the means of mental production... they regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are those of the ruling class' Some evidence, which would support this, would be from Lord Beaverbrook who said 'I run the paper purely for the purpose of propaganda, and with no other motive' As with all theories there are strengths and weaknesses for manipulative Marxists there are a few, but some of these strengths are it examines the power wielded by proprietors over the content of their media products.

A second strength would be it recognises the centrality of the media as important players in capitalist society. Some of the weaknesses of the manipulative Marxist theory are that this approach assumes that the audiences are essentially passive and accepting of media messages. A second weakness would be that the owners do not exist as an individual capitalist class who have recognisable interests in common, if this were so then journalists etc would be transmitting the views and ideas of the owners. Nergine argued that there is potential for direct and indirect control; this is because the owners do appoint the chief executives and editors who work within set limitations. Whereas the hegemonic view was developed by Antonio Gramsci as a critique of classical Marxism.

He aimed to unify social theory and practice and to challenge what he saw as orthodox Marxism, hegemony for him was a way in which workers would accept leadership through processes of socialisation from which they accept the ideas of dominant groups as natural. Hegemonic Marxists argue with manipulative as they believe that it would be impossible for owners to have a direct influence in the day to day running of the organisation. People who believe in the hegemonic view believe that the owners of the media are white middle class, middle-aged men with a consensual view. Although this view is very different from the manipulative view it is still Marxist because of the prevailing ideas seen as pro capitalist, anti communist and against minority interest. However structuralist theorists do not see audiences as being easily manipulated, but as actively engaged in making sense of media communication.

A statement by Lull in 1997 was; The ongoing manipulation of public information and imagery constructs a potent dominant ideology, which helps sustain the material and cultural interests of its creator. Fabricators of dominant ideologies become and 'information elite'. Their power or dominance, stems directly from their ability to publicly articulate their preferred system of ideas Some evidence to back this up would be from S. Hood the former editor of BBC TV news in 1980 said " The images on our television screens are the means..

. of conveying an ideology; that view of society which has been evolved to provide a seemingly rational and therefore unquestionable explanation of how it works and of the power relationships within it. There is a totally objective theory called pluralist, they accept that the media is concentrated ownership and this brings inevitable bias and distortion in media products; although they see this as irrelevant as they think that the viewer has a exceptional way of making there views known, if they don't like the product they won't buy, watch or listen to it and the media will not show a article which will not sell as then they don't make any profit. Pluralists tend to say that this is the consumer in the ' driving seat'. The main pluralism argument is that it doesn't matter who owns the media ' we' as the audience make the most important decisions.

A statement which backs this up is John Whale a journalist and former ITN correspondent; The press is predominately conservatives in tone because it's readers are. If any substantial number of people seriously wanted the structure of society rebuilt from the bottom, the morning star would sell

more copies than it doesAn evaluation of the pluralist approach would show
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that the theory had strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of the pluralist approach would be that it recognises that audiences are not passive recipients of media messages; and that they are able to make choices about what they watch, read and listen to. A second strength would be that the pluralist approach recognises bias in the media, but maintains that audiences are also able to recognise bias so the media loses the power to manipulate the public. The weaknesses of the pluralist approach would be that media diversity does not in reality mean wide ranging choice this is due to the concentration of the ownership of the media e.

g. Rupert Murdoch taking control of Digital Television. A second weakness would be that journalists are closely vetted before they are recruited so very few dissident voices are heard. A final weakness would be that one question still remains; do we get the media we want, or do we learn to want what we actually get?