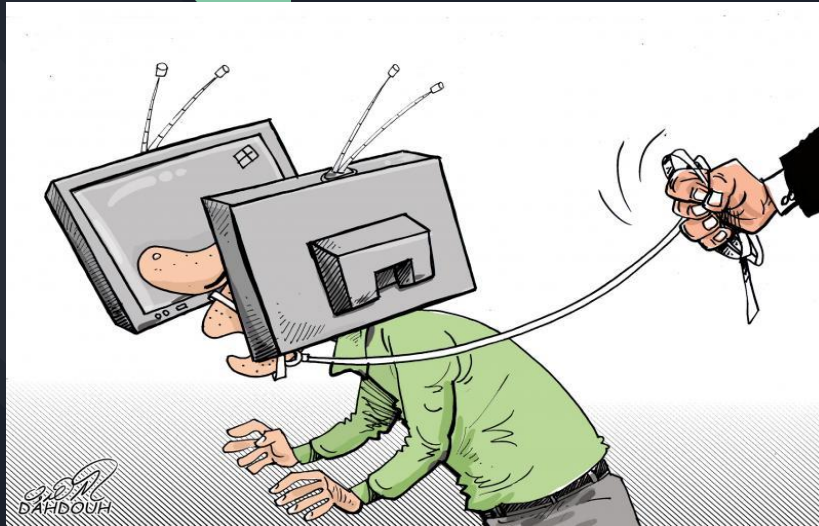


Theories of the media and influences on media content





Pluralist theories of the media

One characteristic of these approaches is the significance they place on information diversity.


Diversity and choice - media consumers are central to the relationship between the media and ideology.

Pluralist perspectives reverse the traditional Marxist argument that audiences consume whatever owners decide to give them.

The role of media is to provide consumers with the information and services they demand.

Criticism of pluralist arguments

- It overstates the separation of ownership and control in modern media conglomerates.
- Major shareholders, such as Rupert Murdoch's family with News Corp, still exert control in business.
- Although internet makes it difficult for owners to control what their audience sees, reads and hear, old media may actually have far larger audience than most new media.

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- Pluralists argue that media diversity guarantees consumer choice, but competition does not automatically mean media diversity.


Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories of the media

Traditional Marxism - media are the most important and influential ideological institutions.

Determinist approach: media is seen as powerful agencies that can shape and fully decide people's general thoughts and behaviours.

Media are a part of the political and ideological superstructure in capitalist society and their role is to spread values that support the capitalist system through ideas:

- Support for capitalism;
- Rationalising and justifying social inequalities;
- Defending the concept of private property;
- Private ownership of profits;
- Negatively labelling alternatives to capitalism.



Althusser saw media as an ideological state apparatus (ISA) - media owners use media to manipulate how classes see the world to create the belief that societies work in interests of all rather than the interests of a few.

Criticism of Marxist approach

There are occasions where sections of the media do not simply reproduce ruling class **propaganda**.

Idea that ruling class is whole body with members who all share the same interests has been questioned.

Usefulness of concepts like dominant ideology and false consciousness have been questioned.

Neo-Marxists argue that media influence is hegemonic not manipulative.

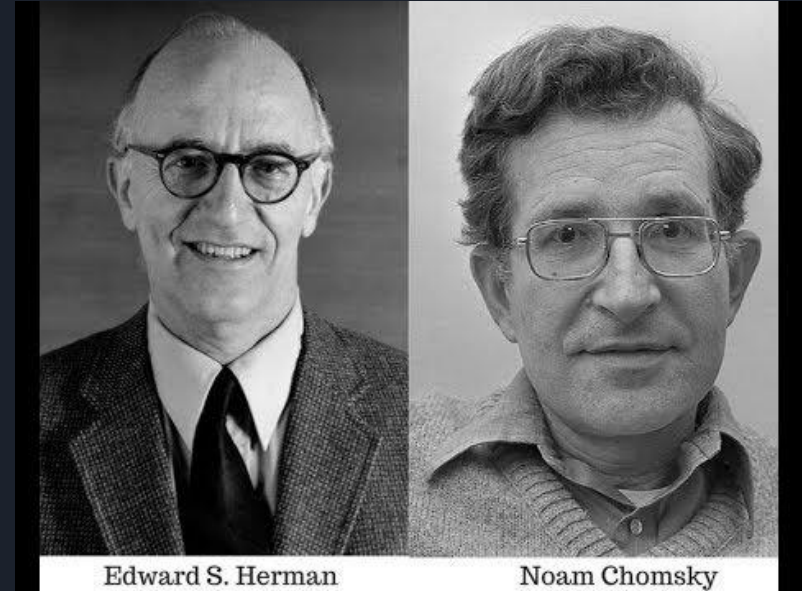
Hegemonic view - owners and controllers have a common economic interest, expressed in terms of core values.

Propaganda model developed by Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman - main role of the media in democracies as ensuring that people support the state and capitalist system.

News is determined by 5 filters:


1. Ownership
2. Advertising
3. Sourcing
4. Flak
5. Ideology of fear

- Criticism of this model include questioning whether media all act in the ways implied and pointing out that the media do exposes cases of wrongdoing by corporations.



Edward S. Herman

Noam Chomsky



Senior news media workers such as editors who make decisions about what will and will not be reported - gate-keepers.

Because they represent audience needs and how different media reflect what their audiences want, new values are proof of consumer choice and diversity.

Marxists believe that new values are proof of how the public is shaped and influenced, teaching them to desire whatever the media considers to be relevant.


The editor of a media organization is responsible of making sure that the owners' news agenda is followed. Making ensuring that journalists understand and keep to the organizational news value is another duty of the editor.

Setting the agenda involves choosing what to report and what not to.

The idea that editors and owners decide what to publish and what not to report sets the agenda for how the general public receives and interprets news is also neo-Marxist in nature.

- Hall (1980) argued that journalists provide a preferred reading in which they instruct the audience on how to understand the facts they are provided. News stories are framed.

Framed - how a news or topic is presented to an audience by the news media, allowing them to come to a specific conclusion about what is happening



Speech, a phrase also employed by postmodernist, describes a technique of presenting the world from a specific point of view.

The ideas, beliefs and values of general, powerful groups are reflected in speech, which also provides a framework for listener interpretation. This can provide credibility to some values.

- Cohen's (1972) concept of folk devils, people who are believed to threaten the established moral order.

Common examples include:

- The poor constructed in ways that blame poverty on the individual
- Receiving payments they do not deserve
- Immigrants who are seen as failing to integrate into a dominant culture

Folk devils - people and groups that receive more criticism and attention because it is believed that they pose a challenge or a danger to the status quo.

Discourse - a technique for reflecting the ideas, attitudes, and values of particular powerful groups while creating a framework for audience interpretation.

Moral panic - increased fear of a group of behaviors that are seen as a threat or challenge to society's moral order, as reported by the media.

The concepts of mass manipulation and hegemony as different ways of understanding the production of media content


Marxist sees the media as a significant ideological institution in capitalist society.

Media's role is to shape how people think by manipulating the nature, extent and type of information on which they make judgements.

Owners and controllers use the media as a tool to influence public opinion - mass manipulation.



They promote a particular ideological worldview that clearly favors the interests of the ruling class. They use techniques such as propaganda.



Neo-Marxist uses a concept of hegemony to describe their way of viewing production of media content.

According to them, the media's job is to maintain the status quo by promoting and supporting fundamental societal norms.

The media works in the same kind of influence as advertisers in designed to convince consumers to purchase one product over another.

The postmodernist contribution to understanding the media

- The pluralist viewpoint and the postmodernist view of the media are more similar than Marxist viewpoints.
- In the postmodern era of new media and social media, it's more challenging for a ruling class to restrict access to knowledge in a ways that Marxists advise they do.
- Media today is that they have become more common, they are present in our lives much more than in the past.

Baudrillard use the term hyper-reality to express how different narrative accounts interwave and conflict in a constantly changing pattern of representations built on representations.

- Form a 'reality' in themselves – something that is 'more real' than the reality they claims to describe.

Each reality is constructed from the way in which individuals pick and choose different ideas to suit their own beliefs.

Baudrillard calls these realities simulacra - 'representations that refers other representations'

- Mcluhan and Powers (1992) - 'they are the messages'





Censorship as a factor in influencing media content

20th century - mass media were used for propaganda by states

- examples: anti-Jewish propaganda in Nazi Germany and communist propaganda in the Soviet Union
- In modern capitalist societies the state exercises less direct control of the media, because freedom of expression is valued and media can be trusted to 'do the right things'.

The state creates legal guidelines and standards that set the parameters for media behavior.

The lot of states restrict sexual images and other content that can be considered immoral in their individual nation.

- Advantage: The internet and new media cross borders, people of a nation where something is restricted might be able to locate it on website located outside of the nation.
 - Social media platforms have the ability to edit or remove certain types of content, such as photos that show nudity.
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- The number of social media users have increased as a result of social media
 - In order to detect fake news items, Facebook now employs independent real reporters.