

Marxism and Ideology

Marxist approaches

1. Marxist approaches argue that the prevailing socio economic order is exploitative
2. And that the **media** form an integral part of this system
3. Which reflects and reinforces powerful interests

Marxism and Ideology: The basics

1. For Marx, capitalism is about the **ownership of wealth** and property by a small but all powerful elite class group – the bourgeoisie
2. And the exploitation of non-wealth owning majority or proletariat
3. As their labour is sold to the profit of others

Class relationship

1. For Marx capitalism is defined by class relationship.
2. The power of the bourgeoisie depends on their exploitation by the proletariat
3. And the more the proletariat sell their labour to the bourgeoisie the greater their alienation and subordination.

Thinking

1. For Marx, the dominant ways of thinking in a society reflects the prevailing mode of production and interests of the ruling class.
2. The dominant cultural values, ideas and beliefs – ideology
3. Ideology promotes false-consciousness, Blinding workers to the true nature of their exploited position
4. Making the arrangements of the capitalist system appear natural and inevitable
5. Neo-Marxism highlights the growth of mass media and popular culture

The culture industry as mass deception

1. Neo-Marxist analyses of media are a group of theorists known as the Frankfurt school
2. Whose work was completed mostly in the US after escaping Nazi Germany in the 1930s - Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse
3. They explored the ideological role of consumerism and mass media
4. Marx regarded ideology as a discernible set of ideas which emerged from capitalist relations

Frankfurt school ideas

1. Under capitalism art is a mass commodity – little different from other industrial products

2. Adorno – suggests that culture ceases to be a creative social relationship between artist and audience But becomes a set of anonymous consumer objects exchanged for money
3. Marcuse argues that the superficial lure of such objects generates false needs in the minds of the workers

Frankfurt school continued

1. They criticise the culture industry products which result in standardisation
2. Rather than challenging and encouraging creativity or independent thought, the products are simple, repetitive and effortless

Pseudo-individualism

1. The Hollywood film – is standardised in the same way
2. Another phenomena is pseudo-individualism where we are presented with the illusion of difference and diversity
3. Media and culture have been incorporated into an all-encompassing socio-economic system
4. Resulting in an industrialised version of cultural expression

Unsupported Elitism

1. The theme of cultural consumerism as superficial enjoyment is applicable to our contemporary society.
2. There are however problems with some of the Frankfurt school thoughts.
3. Their ideas do have links with individual self-determination, imagination and creativity
4. Who decides what is creative and what is not
5. Who decides that some needs are legitimate and some are not?

Too broad

1. In labelling every cultural industry product as standardised and dismissing everything as pseudo-individualism - It is too broad
2. However, in a digital culture characterised by on-demand access their work does highlight that more does not mean different
3. But there are some distinctions between cultural industry products

Ideological meanings

1. The Frankfurt school presents a social cement version of ideology
2. Rather than persuading people to support the status quo by propagating a particular set of dominant ideas, The culture industry binds or cements people to the system, crushing their capacity to think critically or independently

3. Others though, focus on identifying the propagation through media texts, meanings and modes of representation which serve ideological purposes.

Beyond Marx's materialism

1. For Marx, to change the dominant ideas, you had to change the economic system rather than the other way round.
2. Althusser – softened this by suggesting that ideas have relative autonomy
3. Althusser – to survive and reproduce itself, the economic system relies on control of dominant thinking Through ideological state apparatus Which includes religion, schools, family and other institutions
4. There is struggle regarding ideology and so dominant ideology can be challenged.

Gramsci

1. Gramsci goes further to highlight the importance of independent struggle and change within the realm of culture and ideas
2. Gramsci coined the term hegemony to refer to the taken for granted (natural) ways of understanding the world Which strengthens the interests of the dominant political group in society.
3. IN order to maintain their position of economic and political power, Gramsci argues that the dominant group needs to achieve hegemony By dominating the realm of ideas and culture

Maintaining hegemony

1. Gramsci argues that intellectuals play a role in such ideological struggles.
2. Stuart Hall notes that media constitute the primary site for these struggles over meaning.
3. Hall recognises that some audience groups may not fully accept the messages encoded into media texts.
4. However, he still thinks of media as effective means of establishing hegemony, Making ideological representations look objective and natural.
5. Hall - discourse rarely steps outside of the underlying, unquestioned frameworks and assumptions that serve the dominant interests.

Barthes

1. Barthes focused on mythology which can be used to identify the repeated activation and reinforcement of prevailing ways of understanding the world. Barthes suggests that ideology transforms history into nature
2. The circulation of myths, makes assumptions that appear natural and inevitable, Particularly the ideological media content regarding myths

Consumerist myths

1. Contemporary culture is saturated with messages that promote consumerism and the desirability of commodities
2. Consumption is seen as the main goal in contemporary life.
3. Kellner suggests that the media increasingly subjects us to a basic ideological premise that buying or consuming is to be aspired to
4. Our identity is as a consumer

Advertising and ideology

1. How advertising establish products as symbols for culturally desirable concepts related to identity, fulfilment, happiness or freedom.
2. Concepts such as freedom, independence and understandings of what it is to be male and female Become traits acquired through consumption

Ideologies of consumerism

1. Ideologies of consumerism go beyond message in advertising
2. Media, social media, film etc. also valorise consumption
3. Makeover programmes present the transformation of the individual appearance, home, garden etc. through goods
4. Narratives connect these transformations with improvements in happiness.
5. We should all, look to transform our lives and identities through consumption (the ideology)

Magazines

1. Consumer magazine formats, often centre on reviewing and enthusing about particular categories of consumer goods
2. Which leaves the notion of consumerism as the basis for one's life as unquestioned.

Celebrity industry

1. The celebrity industry also is a source of consumerist ideology
2. Celebrities, present us with idealistic consumerist fantasies in the form of attractive, wealthy and popular individuals
3. Whose clothes, accessories, cars, make-up, houses and broader lifestyles are the subject of mass fascination
4. But these still highlight the importance of consuming as effectively as possible.

Neo-Marxist critics

1. The media distract us from radical change
2. And mask how the production of consumer goods is premised on capitalist exploitation

3. The promotion of commodity fetishism – the symbolic separation of commodities from the social conditions in which they were produced

Political Economy and ideology

1. Some look at the commercial structure of media ownership and control
2. Critical political economy looks at the workings of the culture industry.
3. Looking at the economic and material relations of cultural production.
4. Critical political economists look at the economic dominance of the wealthy and powerful and how this translates into ownership, influence and control over the dissemination of ideas.

Manufacturing consent

1. Herman and Chomsky – argue that the extent of corporate control over communication leaves little possibility to challenge the prevailing capitalist order
2. Five institutional filters in the media system which serve to make counter-ideological forms less likely

Filter one

1. Filter one is the ownership and profit orientation of media and cultural institutions.
2. Media are controlled by a small number of highly powerful corporate institutions
3. Which often compete with each other but also have mutual political interests
4. They stand to benefit from global capitalism and government policies that are about open markets and profit maximisation
5. They are likely to oppose regulations that constrain their commercial operations

Filter two

1. This is the imperative to attract and retain advertisers
2. Most of these also constitute large money making corporations who share the interest of media companies in promoting deregulated global capitalism
3. Such advertisers are unlikely to be enthusiastic about content that is critical of the capitalist status quo

Filter three

1. This is about the extensive influence on media of a range of other wealthy and powerful groups
2. Governments, mainstream political parties, high profile pressure groups, large-scale corporate interests
3. These are able to use their wealth and power to manipulate flows of information to media, through carefully orchestrated and expensive public relation strategies.
4. The organisation of press conferences, the stage managed release of information, comment, images, footage and cultivation of beneficial relationships with journalists

Filter four

1. Flak – refers to the negative consequences liable to result from any substantial coverage by a media organisation of counter-ideological messages.
2. If any messages make it through the previous filters, the media organisations responsible can expect much criticism and labelling
3. As well as legal challenges or the withdrawal of advertisers.

Filter five

1. An atmosphere that associates critical content with enemies – is also a barrier.
2. Originally regarding the cold war – the notion of anti-Americanism has been of significance
3. With the charge levelled against the opponents of the Bush administration in the years following the attack on the World Trade Centre 2001.

The cumulative effect of the five filters operating together, Herman and Chomsky suggest, ensures that media are thoroughly dominated by ideological forms of culture that serve the interests of the status quo.

Cultural Imperialism as globalisation of ideology

1. Operating globally enables large integrated corporations to maximise the supply of materials and labour to minimise costs
2. Companies maximise demand for their products and services by turning the whole world into their market
3. Media products – television, music etc. – are produced with global appeal in mind.
4. This is deemed to have encouraged focus on simplicity, standardisation and the erosion of local distinctiveness.

Core and periphery

1. Cultural imperialism theorists liken exploitative and hierarchical relationship between the core and peripheral countries
2. To exploitation and cultural indoctrination of colonised populations by the west in the 19th and 20th centuries.
3. For Peet, the global diversities are disappearing as entertainment-oriented mass culture originating in the west dominates life around the world.

Political economic versus cultural approaches

1. Ideology critique via textual analysis is often associated with a cultural studies approach to Marxism, influenced by autonomy of the cultural sphere (Althusser, Gramsci, Hall)