

# Media

## Who controls the media?

The various forms of the media, (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, books, films, internet, including social media)

The Mass Media refers to “any form of communication that is invented to allow transmission to many people.” This essentially means that the mass media refers to any method of communication that can reach lots of people at the same time.

There are three main types of mass media:

1. **Broadcast media:** this refers to anything that is played to an audience through the radio, TV or in the cinema. This can refer to the news but can also include nonfiction.
2. **Print media:** this refers to anything that is printed to be read, which would include books (fiction and non-fiction), newspapers and magazines
3. **Online media:** this refers to any media accessed through the internet. In the modern world, this may include broadcast and print media as they access different platforms. For example, you can now read newspapers or watch TV online. Online media also includes social networking like Facebook and Twitter.

More terms to know

**Media:** A medium of communication, designed to enable a person or group to communicate information and ideas to an audience.

**Mass media:** Media that can reach large number of people, e.g., global audience. Use modern technologies

**Old media:** traditional forms of media such as newspapers and radio that reach a more limited audience, e.g., local, or national and are communicated in a one-way process.

**New media:** media formats that use modern technologies, spreading content using screen based, digital (computer technology) such as the internet or mobile phones, electronic eBooks, iPods

### Role of advertising

- Advertising is the main source of income when it comes to privately owned media (publicly owned media receive funding from the government) and so must stimulate demand for products and so they try to reach people with more disposable income or a larger audience.
- Advertising is powerful, in a consumer-driven world, it surrounds us and due to its very nature, it has an agenda.
- It attempts to psychologically trigger us into buying the product advertised by using what we positively identify with.

[Thus, advertising is typically propaganda - information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.]

[Think of cleanliness, beauty, wealth, etc.]

### Role of advertising

What is also important to note is how advertising is beginning to overlap into content, even employees shift in between curating content and advertising, making both fields intersect in similar skills. Personalization of advertising due to new media's use of 'cookies' is also important to note, especially with ethical consideration.

[Think of Beats or Samsung sponsorships within Lady Gaga or Ariana Grande music videos or your favorite Youtuber's introductions nowadays]

[Content wants to make you feel something to interact with it]

### Criticisms of advertising

1. Advertising thrives and brings out dissatisfaction and encourages materialism, consumerism, and lack of care for environmental concerns (waste).
2. It's geared towards the West and ignores other cultures.
3. Products advertised are
  - a. Overpriced
  - b. Unnecessary
  - c. Intentionally obsolescent (short lasting)
4. Increases costs on consumer due to competitors advertising and the cost of advertising
5. Objectifies and defines set beauty standards when including people in ads that may lead to eating disorders
6. When aimed at children, forces parents to buy unnecessary items.

[False needs to acquire products]

Ownership and control of the media.

A conglomerate is a huge cooperation made from the merging of different firms and there exist 6 current media conglomerates that are:

- Disney
- Viacom
- AOL Time Warner
- Bertelsmann
- Vivendi Universal
- News Corporation

Because such a few numbers of companies rule such a wide variety of media, our everyday content we consume will undoubtedly be run to the liking or understanding of these companies. For example, these companies are all originally from the USA, so content may be more likely to misrepresent foreign cultures (no cultural relativism).

[This may change in the near future due to merging]

Ownership and control of the media.

There are two main types of modern media owners:

1. Media baron: these are private businesses that own several types of media. An example of this is Rupert Murdoch, who owns News International.
2. Public corporations: these are organizations, usually funded by the taxpayer, that run types of the media. An example of this the BBC.

As technology has changed and globalization has taken place, so has ownership.

There are three main changes to the Mass Media:

1. Concentration: a small number of companies own the majority of the mass media. Ownership has become more concentrated.
2. Globalization: media organization are often international or transnational, operating in many different countries.
3. Diversification: media organizations now often own lots of types of media. For example, they might own a radio station, a newspaper and a TV channel.

Where once a company might have owned one local newspaper or a national TV station, it is more likely that one company owns a range of different types of media in a range of different countries.

[Diversifying audiences]

### Ownership and control of the media.

It is also important to note that Owners are not necessarily Controllers, Controllers may be the editor of the news or senior staff as well.

The importance of Owners varies, Owners sometimes directly control or appoint controllers that have similar values and beliefs.

The importance of Controllers also varies, take the example of Rupert Murdoch, he's a Mogul and thus owns way too many companies to directly control day-to-day decisions, so he appoints controllers who make these decisions, but they can only take these decisions if they're profitable.

### Freedom and censorship in the media.

Censorship refers to when a government or official body restricts freedom of speech (the right to share any information or make any comment you wish without punishment). In the UK, the government carry out some forms of censorship, usually in the name of protecting the vulnerable.

This could include:

- Preventing young people from accessing inappropriate content
- Preventing state secrets from becoming general knowledge. This is done through the Official Secrets Act.
- Preventing the mass media from commenting on certain stories that have been protected by legal injunctions (as in the case of Ryan Giggs' super injunction to keep his affair a secret.)

People have mixed feelings about censorship and whether it should be allowed. Some argue that having any form of censorship goes against our right to freedom of information and freedom of speech. This is particularly a Marxist worry.

Others argue that it makes sense for the government to keep some secrets, as long as it does not become corrupt. This is a more functionalist attitude.

## Freedom and censorship in the media.

What else affects the content of the mass media?

The content of the news and other mass media is also shaped by several factors. This is interesting to sociologists as we might be concerned about how valid (trustworthy) the mass media is as a source of information as a result of this.

Different factors include:

**Legal constraints:** journalists must obey the law and not be libelous.

**Practical and financial factors:** how much can you write and how much time and money do you have to spend on the content?

**Agenda-setting:** the organization is likely to value certain ideas and concepts over others and share information that it feels needs to be shared (propaganda). This can be influenced by an organization's political bias.

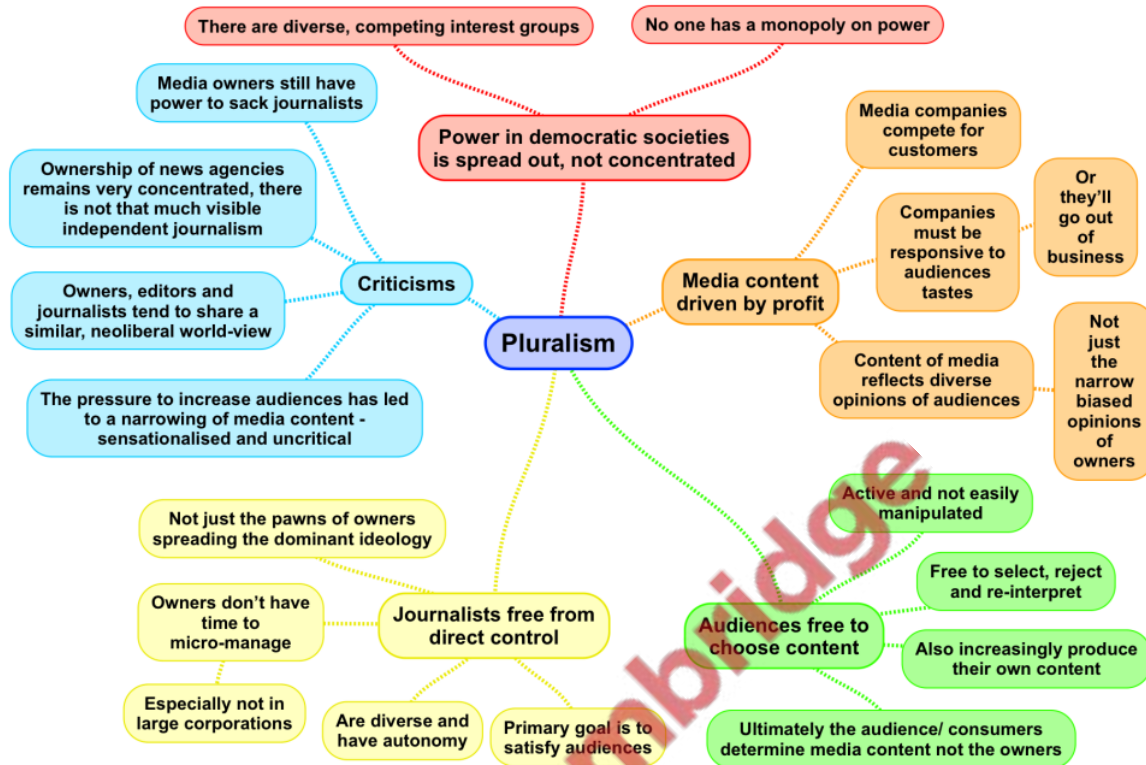
**News value:** as the media wish to attract an audience, they will likely print or broadcast stories that are of more interest to the audience. The value of a story may depend on the type of media. For example, a tabloid paper might be more likely to value celebrity gossip than a broadsheet.

Can we trust the media?

Due to selection bias and agenda setting, it can sometimes be hard to trust the media. A good example of this can be seen in national newspapers.

These tend to be associated with specific political views (partisan). For example, the Guardian is Left Wing while the Telegraph is Right Wing.

Pluralist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.



Pluralist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.

Pluralists argue that power in democratic, free market societies is spread out among diverse competing interest groups, and not concentrated in the hands of a minority economic elite, as Marxists suggests.

According to pluralists, no one group has a monopoly on power. Their view of the media reflects their view of power in society more generally.

**Media content driven by profit**

Pluralists argue that in democratic, free market economies different media companies must compete for customers, and so they must provide the kind of content those



customers want in order to make a profit and survive. If a company fails to provide the kind of news and entertainment that people need and want, customers will simply stop buying their media products and go elsewhere, forcing that company out of business.

It follows that control over media content ultimately lies with consumers, not the owners of media, because the owners need to adapt their content to fit the demands of the consumers.

Media owners primarily want to make money and so they would rather adapt their media content to be more diverse and keep money coming in, rather than use their media channels to publish their own narrower subjective views and opinions.

Media content thus doesn't reflect the biased, one-sided views of media owners, it reflects the diverse opinions of the general public who ultimately pay for that media content. The public (being diverse!) generally don't want one-sided, biased media!

### Pluralist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.

#### **Consumers determine content**

From the pluralist perspective audiences are active rather than passive and not easily manipulated. They are free to select, reject and re-interpret a wide range of media content, and they increasingly take advantage of new technologies and new media to produce their own content.

It is thus ultimately the consumers of media/ the wider audience who determine media content rather than the media owners.

#### **Journalists not controlled by owners**

Finally, pluralists point out that on a purely practical level media owners of large global corporations cannot personally determine the content of all their media products, there are

too many products and too many global-level management issues to keep them occupied. Thus producers, editors and journalists have considerable freedom to shape media content, free from the control of the big bosses.

### **Criticisms of Pluralism**

Ultimately it is still owners who have the power to hire and fire journalists and they do have the power to select high level editors who have similar views to themselves, which may subtly influence the media agenda.

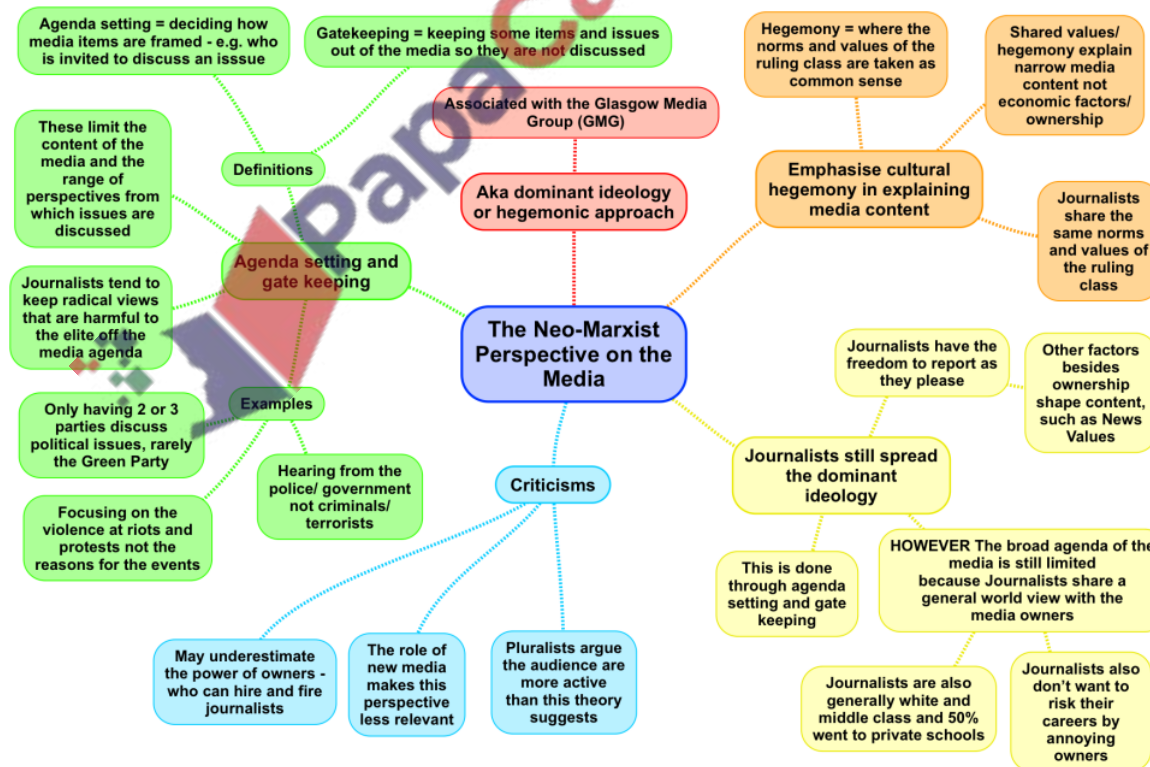
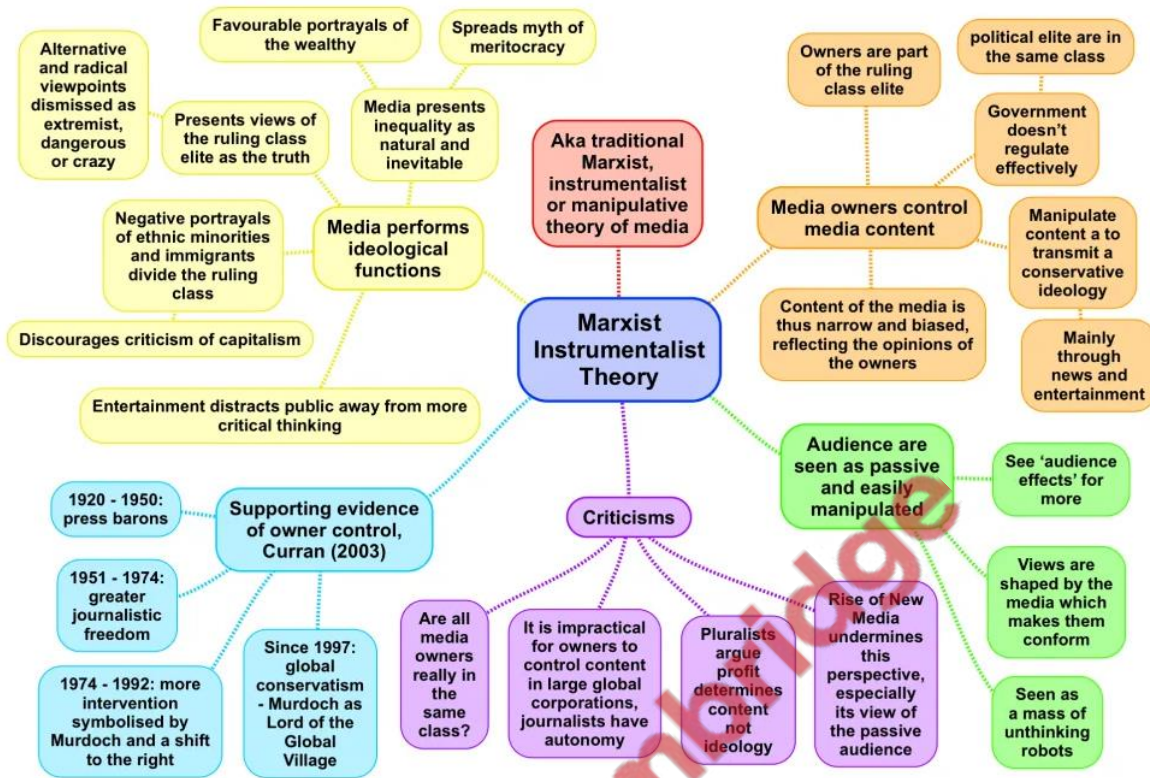
It still requires a lot of money to establish a large media company, and ownership remains very concentrated. There is relatively little journalism which is both independent and widely consumed.

Owners, editors, and most journalists share an upper middle-class background and a conservative worldview.

The pressure to maintain profits has led to narrowing of media content – more towards uncritical, sensationalist entertainment and less likely to be critical and independent.



Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.



### Traditional Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.

Marxist Instrumentalist theory holds that media owners control media content, and that the media performs ideological functions. The primary role of the media is to keep a largely passive audience from criticizing capitalism and thus maintain the status quo.

Marxist Instrumentalist Theory is also known as the Traditional Marxist or Manipulative Approach to the media.

#### **Media owners control media content**

Media owners are part of the ruling class elite, and they consciously manipulate media content to transmit a conservative ideology to control the wider population and maintain their wealth and privilege.

The content of the media is thus narrow and biased and reflects the opinions of the ruling class generally and the media owners in particular.

The government does not effectively regulate media content because the political elite are also part of the ruling class like the media owners.

The media performs ideological functions

According to Instrumentalist Marxists, the primary role of the media is to spread ruling class ideology and maintain the status quo, keeping the current unequal capitalist system in place.

#### **The media performs ideological functions in many ways:**

1. We see many favorable representations of (rather than critical commentary on) the wealthy – for example Royalty, millionaires on Cribs, and middle class lifestyles more generally in all of those hideous programmes about spending £500K on a house in the country.

2. It spreads the 'myth of meritocracy' – Dragons Den and The Apprentice are two wonderful contemporary examples of this.
3. The News often dismisses radical viewpoints as extremist, dangerous or silly, and a conservative (ruling class) view of the world as normal.
4. Negative portrayals of ethnic minorities and immigrants serve to divide the ruling class and discourages criticisms of the ruling class.
5. Entertainment distracts the public from thinking critically about important political issues.

Traditional Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.

**The audience are passive**

Marxist instrumentalists see the audience as a mass of unthinking robots who are passive and easily manipulate. They essentially take what they see in the media at face value and believe what they see without questioning it.

**Supporting evidence**

Curran (2003) suggests that there is a lot of historical evidence of media owners manipulating media content. He carried out a historical analysis of UK media, broken down into four historical periods.

Control by owners was most obvious in the era of the Press Barons in the early part of the 20th century, when some even said that they used their newspapers to consciously spread their political views.

Rupert Murdoch's control of his News Corporation since the 1970s is another good example of an owner controlling media content. All of his newspapers have a strong right-wing point of view, which reflects his values.

A specific example of Murdoch's control is that all of his news outlets supported the Iraq War in 2003, a war which he personally supported. It's unlikely that all the editors of all his newspapers globally shared this view.

### **Criticisms**

1. Pluralists are the biggest critics of Manipulative Marxists.
2. It is impractical for media owners of large corporations to control all output on a day-to-day basis. At some point they have to trust editors.
3. Pluralists argue that media owners are primarily motivated by making a profit and thus would rather provide audiences with the diverse content they want rather than use their media companies to spread their own narrow view of the world.
4. The previous criticism follows on from the Pluralist view that audiences are not just passive and unthinking, they are active and critical, and thus not easily manipulated: they can easily choose to switch off if they don't like what they see.
5. The rise of the New Media especially undermines the Manipulative approach – New Media encourage audiences to be more active and allow for a greater range of people to produce and share media content. It's simply not possible for owners to control such content.

### *Neo-Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.*

Neo Marxists argue that cultural hegemony explains why we have a limited media agenda.



Journalists have more freedom than traditional Marxists suggest, and the media agenda is not directly controlled by owners.

However, journalists share the world view of the owners and use gatekeeping and agenda setting to keep items which are harmful to elites out of the media agenda and thus voluntarily spread the dominant ideology.

This perspective is also known as the Dominant Ideology, or Hegemonic perspective on the media.

### **Neo-Marxists emphasize cultural hegemony**

Hegemony is where the norms and values of the ruling class are taken as common sense.

According to Neo-Marxists, the reason why we have a limited media agenda is because of cultural hegemony, not because of direct control by wealthy media owners. In other words, cultural factors are more important than economic factors in explaining narrow media content.

Simply put, Journalists have accepted the conservative worldview of the ruling class as common sense, and they share this world view with the ruling class – they thus unconsciously spread the dominant ideology themselves without the need for direct control by the media owners

### **Journalists voluntarily spread the dominant ideology**

Journalists have the freedom to report as they please, so other factors besides economic control/ ownership determine media content, factors such as the interests of journalists and industry news values.

HOWEVER, the broad agenda of the media is still limited because the journalists share the same world view as the ruling class and the owners (this is known as 'cultural hegemony').

This is at least partly because Journalists are themselves mostly white and middle class, with more than 50% of them having gone to private schools. They thus present a conservative/ neo-liberal view of the world on autopilot.

Also, journalists do not want to risk their careers by annoying owners and so are reluctant to publish content which might annoy owners.

*Neo-Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.*

### **Agenda setting and gate keeping**

Agenda setting and gatekeeping are the two processes through which journalists limit media content. They are normally used in relation to the selection and presentation of The News.

Gatekeeping = the process of choosing which items are selected for coverage, and others are kept out.

Agenda setting = deciding how media items are going to be framed, for example, who is going to be invited to discuss topics and what kind of questions are going to be asked.

According to neo-Marxists gatekeeping and agenda setting tend to result in issues which are harmful to the elite being kept out of the media, thus reinforcing the dominant ideology.

Examples of agenda setting and gate keeping include:

1. Only having two political parties discuss a news item – we rarely hear from the Green Party, for example.
2. Focusing on the violence at riots and protests, rather than the issues which are being protested about, or the cause of the riots.



3. The news taking the side of the police and the government, rather than hearing from criminals or terrorists.

### **Criticisms of Neo-Marxism**

- Traditional Marxists argue that it underestimates the important of economic factors, for example the power of owners to hire and fire journalists
- As with traditional Marxism, the role of new media may make this perspective less relevant. It is now much harder to maintain the dominant ideology, for example.
- Pluralists point out that this perspective still tends to assume the audience are passive and easily swayed by the dominant ideology. In reality, the audience may be more active and critical.

### *Post-modernist perspectives on the nature and role of the media.*

- Users create most of the content rather than the other way around
- Content moves between points like a network rather than the top-down
- Media cannot be controlled like traditional media

Patterns of media use, (e.g., by gender, age, social class, and ethnicity).

**Gender**

- Men play more video games than women (this is now changing), fighting and violence is associated with male characters
- Women tend to prefer soap operas; men prefer sports + action adventure and documentaries.
- David Morley's study into Family television
  - Men typically have control over program choice
  - Men wish to watch without interruption, women see media as a social activity and talk or do household tasks with media
  - Men carefully plan viewing, women do not.
  - Video recording is given to men and children

**Age**

- People watch more TV when 50 and over. Television is better for the visually or hearing impaired, some say compensates for being less involved in society.
- Some old people find internet a problem
- Children go to the cinema more than older people
- Children watch shorter, moving images (on YouTube)

Patterns of media use, (e.g., by gender, age, social class, and ethnicity).

### **Social Class**

- Tabloids (like The Sun) are seen as 'working-class newspapers', quality ex-broadsheet newspapers (like The Times) are for the middle or upper class
- Pop culture media is for the mass audiences, not the elite. Cable TV which focuses on sports is meant to divert from political issues for the working class
- Digital divide still exists in some countries because not everyone can afford the internet

### **Ethnicity**

- Minorities can consume content from their own cultures in today's world in order to preserve their culture
- Ethnic minorities can have their own media, but it depends on whether they have a large audience or not
- They still watch mainstream media but generally see programs they can relate with

Media representation of ethnicity, gender, age, class and disability.

**Media representation** – this refers to the way a social group is portrayed in the mass media (i.e., the image they are given)

- For example, you could write. "The media representation of old people is often that they are frail and unable to cope with the modern world"

**Stereotype** – this refers to an exaggerated story or representation of a social group.

- For example, you could write “The stereotypical image of teenagers from working class backgrounds is that they are chavs who hang around estates causing trouble”

**Media representations** of particular social groups can be positive or negative.

- For example, disabled people being shown as brave, courageous and tough (e.g., during the TV coverage of the Paralympics) could be seen as positive.
- Whereas the stereotype of the young, black male who is tough and violent and involved in gangs and street crime that is often seen in TV and film dramas creates a negative image.

**How does the Mass Media reinforce stereotypes of different groups?**

1. **Distortion:** information about individuals or groups or information about them are changed to give us a specific view (this can be linked to Trowler’s filter).
2. **Repetition:** the same image of a group is constantly repeated, so that the audience come to accept it as a reality
3. **Socialization:** norms and values are constantly shown in the media, showing us how a group does or does not fit in
4. **Invisibility:** those who do not fit the stereotype are hidden in the Mass Media
5. **Role models:** we are given role models who fit in with the stereotype.
6. **The Male Gaze:** Media is produced through the lens of men and sexualizes and objectifies women sometimes unintentionally

7. **Binary Oppositions:** Only two sides are shown, fighting against each other (good vs evil/men vs women/etc.) which doesn't indicate the real nuanced view of the world.

### Media representation of ethnicity

In the USA and UK, the majority of people are White, while minorities such as African Americans or Asian people also live with the majority. Binary oppositions are used here as well such as White people vs. everyone else because media is being produced from the 'White Gaze'.

Stereotypes mentioned below:

- The Dangerous Savage: Uncivilized people who want to attack protagonists or important characters for no logical reason (see: Indiana Jones)
- The Noble Savage: Positive stereotypes, when other cultures accept white values and therefore are shown western sympathy (see Dance with the Wolves)
- The Childlike Primitive: Assumed to be stupid, starving defenseless and need help of the white savior
- The Entertainer: Black people in media are often taken as comic relief and sing, dance or tell jokes rather than being a complete character
- The Exotic Woman: Non-white women that are daring yet alluring (see: Cleopatra)
- The Rich, Evil Tyrant: Corrupt ruling class who violate rights (used to justify colonies and western imperialism)

- The Clever: One who acquired western education but is using it for only his/her purpose

### Media representation of ethnicity

- Immigrants are shown as troublemakers
- Ethnic minorities never get main roles (this is changing since it has become profitable) or get made fun of
- Examples:
  - See: Mind Your Language
  - Black people (typically African Caribbean people) are shown as thieves
  - Asian people have accents that are used for comic relief
  - White Savior Complex
    - Black policemen are killed off and the White policeman always avenges him
    - In developing countries, if shown, need desperate help and so a white doctor helps multiple people

### Media representation of gender

#### **Females**

- Are shown as soft, warm, fragile and emotional (Male gaze)

- Underrepresented in most roles especially as the main character, narrow range of roles are given to them such as:
  - At home domestic worker,
  - Mother
  - Love interest
- Shown in ways that emphasize physical appearance which leaves women watching with an inferiority complex
- Usually, the male hero saves the damsel in some way
- Either shown as good or evil (binary) good women are the ones who work at home and bad women are liberal and free
- Women are shown in very limited occupations (nurses/receptionists)

The media landscape has improved but we do see relatively new tropes emerging that still condescends to women (like the Manic Pixie Dream Girl)

### Media representation of gender

#### **Males**

- Are shown as tough, hard, sweaty, strong, and physical (also love sports sometimes)
- Strength and power, independence is emphasized

- The three ideas create the concept of Hegemonic masculinity
  - Example: Die Hard (John McClane), Rambo (Rambo)
- Men are in traditional, breadwinner roles

### Media representation of age

#### **Media loves the young**

##### **Children**

- Innocent, vulnerable, need protection, made cute with round eyes and chubby cheeks
- In some movies children solve the problems and save the day
- Binary, never full characters, either innocent or evil

##### **Teenagers**

- Stereotypes are often negative, they do petty crime or are gang members, their interests are deviant
- Media has created folk devils and moral panics regarding teenagers, form devious sub-cultures
- Some teenagers are good for the sake of role models (Harry Potter)



## Middle aged:

- Responsible and law-abiding

## Media representation of age

### Older People

- Underrepresented: image is mostly negative, weak and they're in need of help (a burden to society)
- In The Simpsons: Grandpa is boring and tells long stories which make no sense
- As baby boomer generations turn into elders, the generation with the most spending power, older people have gotten a much more positive image
- Recently shown as wiser (Dumbledore, The Wizard from Lord of the Rings)
- Older men are shown more positively than older women, old women lose their conventional beauty and thus can't star in movies like Harrison Ford
- Older men could be newscasters but never an older woman

## Media representation of social class

- Can show two ideals people hold of social class
  - Society is fair and meritocratic (being poor is a fault of the individual)

- More common, leads to most information ending up misleading on the media
- How USA society is portrayed (American Dream)
- In The Simpsons, Homer Simpson is a working-class man shown as irresponsible
- Working class are shown as ripping off the benefits of the state whereas bankers or business owners who may be doing the same are represented positively.
- Society is unfair and closed (being poor is because some people have the odds against them)
  - Coronation Street is a show where the working class has a main role
  - Though the working class is usually never the main character (Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen)
- In US Soap Operas the assumption is that everyone is middle class

### Media representation of Disability

- Underrepresented, stereotypical and in the ableist gaze
- Representations
  - Monstrous freak (James Bond films, villain is disabled)
  - Object of pity: Disability with suffering

- Object of violence
- Object of ridicule
- A burden on society
- Superhuman abilities: disabled people need superhuman abilities otherwise they don't have an image if they don't have superpowers
- Unable to participate in society/community life

Organizations concerned have brought some improvements

- Charities used to show disabled people in a way to attract sympathy--using boycotting this has begun to change
- Words with negative impact on disabled communities are not used in the media
- Media organizations have comprehensive guides for their staff
- Small number of disabled people have been successful (Stephen Hawking) and used for media coverage
- The Paralympics and other events have been created

#### Media representation and reasons for changes

- Campaigns have been launched

- Social positions have changed for women, they're no longer considered housewives but decision makers and so the media does represent this sometimes.
- More women, ethnic minorities are employed in the media
- Baby boomers are an important class, so media now targets them as old people
- Older people and ethnic minorities are seen as important groups to be targeted
- The media itself is diverse, more media types and more people have access therefore they can create their own news if they don't like mainstream news.
- There are strict laws against discrimination
- Groups with less power and money are still not represented.

### **What is the influence of the media?**

The role of the traditional/new media in shaping values, attitudes, and behavior, with particular reference to

- television and violence;
- political beliefs and voting;
- patterns of consumption;
- gender stereotyping;
- the influence of the internet in areas such as social networking.

## Media Effects Models

Sociologists argue over how passive the audience is. The audience are those who receive the media. The question is to what extent the media affects the audience's view of the world.

## *Media Effects Models*

There are four different models (explanations) for how the mass media and the audience relate to one another

- 1. The Hypodermic Syringe Model:** this is the belief that the media 'injects' us with norms and values. This has an immediate effect on the audience, who accept everything the media broadcasts. For example, if I watch something violent, I am more open to violence.
- 2. Cultural Effects Model:** this is sometimes called the 'drip drip' or 'leaky tap' model. The audience are passive, but it takes time for them to absorb the norms and values. Ideas have to be repeated again and again but eventually they become 'normalized.'
- 3. Two-Step Flow Model:** The audience does not always trust the mass media, but many figures in the media are seen to be opinion leaders. When they state something to be true, we tend to believe them.
- 4. Uses and Gratifications Model:** this argues that the audience are not passive – they control the media by choosing what media to access. We only use the media that gratifies us (that we like) so the media has to produce what we want it to. This can be linked to pluralism

## Violence and the influence of the media

### **Imitation or Copycat Violence**

- One of the most researched areas of media effects is that surrounding the relationship between media violence and real-life violence. There is some evidence that media violence can 'cause' people to be more violence in real-life...
  - The Bandura 'Bobo Doll' experiment is evidence that media-violence can 'cause' children to act more aggressively when given the opportunity to do so.
  - Bandura showed three groups of children real, film and cartoon examples of a bobo-doll being beaten with a mallet.
  - A further group of children were shown no violence. the children were then taken to a room with lots of toys, but then 'frustrated' by being told the toys were not for them.
  - They were then taken to a room with a mallet and a bobo-doll, and the children who had seen the violent examples (whether real, film, or cartoon) imitated the violence by beating the doll themselves, while the children who had seen no violence did not beat the doll.

### **Desensitization**

- Newson (1994) theorized that the effects of media violence on children were more subtle and gradual. She argued that continued exposure to violence in films over several years 'desensitized' children and teenagers to violence and that they came to see violence as a norm, and as a possible way of solving problems. She also argued that television and film violence tended to encourage people to identify with the violent perpetrators, rather than the victims.

- Newson's research led to increased censorship in the film industry – for example, the British Board of Film was given the power to apply age certificates and T.V. companies agreed on a 9.00 watershed, before which shows would not feature significant sexual or violent scenes.

### Violence and the influence of the media

#### **The media can cause violence**

- The hypodermic syringe approach, believes that there is a DIRECT link between the violent behavior shown on TV, computer games etc and anti-social and criminal behavior in real life. It sees the media as having the power to influence audiences to commit copycat crimes.
- An example of copycat violence in the media- after watching the film Childs Play 3, A gang in Manchester tortured a 16-year-old girl, set her afire and left her dying, while one of the attackers repeated a line from the movie: "I'm Chucky– want to play?"
- Psychologist (Bandura) carried out an experiment on the relationship between media images and behavior. Bandura concluded that violent media content could lead to imitation or copycat violence (Note: research supports the HSM)

#### **The media doesn't cause violence**

- Uses and gratifications approach
  - People have choice and are not just molded by media (NOT PASSIVE)

- People have different uses/needs from media – personal identity/escapism / information
- Media violence – people can tell difference between violence in news and that in fiction, i.e.) games/films
- Sociologists like Gauntlett, argue studies which interview young people involved in violence, fail to show a strong connection between screen violence and real-life violence.
- Gauntlett argues that children are more sophisticated than we think in their understanding of what is real and what isn't. Some sociologists have also argued that the fear of new media forms is just another example of moral panic.
- Sociologists criticize Bandura and the use of experiments for researching the effects of media violence on audiences as they involve putting participants in artificial situations. This questions the validity of such research as how we know that the children's behavior was not affected by knowing they were observed.
- Peak and Fisher (1996) argue that television is not to blame for violence and crime. Television has been used as a scapegoat for deep-rooted social problems. They suggest that the causes of violence and crime are more likely to be found in poverty, unemployment, poor socialization, and personality traits



Political Beliefs and Voting

- Private media takes on strong political positions
  - e.g., UK Newspapers take on conservative positions



- though in the US media is organized more differently, the channel Fox News is openly right-wing
- Public service broadcasting means that TV channels may be more neutral but are often accused of bias
- Political parties often use the media for their own publicity
- The Sun is very influential-- we know media is influential, but it is hard to discern what really affects people's voting when factors are broken down
- Note we also take Opinion Polls to see who would win, this also impacts how people vote.

### Patterns of Consumption

- Media ultimately supports consumerism, a western way of life and globalization
- Advertising:
  - Shows a good lifestyle and manipulates people into buying products to achieve that lifestyle
  - When people can't achieve that given image then they experience status frustration which may lead to crime
  - Marxists believe advertising and other media creates 'false needs'

### Gender and traditional stereotyping

- Younger children may be encouraged to believe (due to media representations) that:
  - Boys can do more than girls and are more adventurous
  - Girls should be associated with home and boys with work
  - Boys are superior
  - Girls should spend time making themselves attractive
- Feminists have been advocating for more positive images of girls and women like more female main characters or more realistic traits

### The influence of the internet on areas such as social networking

- New Media: social media
- The internet is fairly cheap and easy to contribute to but there still exists a digital divide
- Used in what ways?
  - Social networking sites
  - Video-sharing sites
  - Instant messaging, texting, and twitter messages

- E-mail
- Older groups and those impacted by the digital divide still do not use the internet
- Internet is more difficult to censor but governments still try to prevent people from accessing certain websites (child pornography and illegal file-sharing sites)

### The selection and presentation of the news

- Gatekeeping: the ability of individuals to control access; a news editor with his newspaper stories
- The social construction has two stages:
  - Selection: choosing stories means some stories are important and some don't get prominence, what makes a news story worthy is based on News Values
  - Presentation: Angle is put around the news, where news appears is also important ( which page/section of the newspaper)
- Gatekeepers complete agenda setting, like news editors, they pick what stories or information get approved and what doesn't
- Practical constraints: Time and Space
- Legal Constraints: Libel laws
- Cultural Constraints: such as Conservative Culture

## The selection and presentation of the news

- Many practical constraints are not present on new media such as the internet, this has led to an increase in **Citizen Journalism** (ways in which the public can gather and distribute information)
  
- **Newsworthiness**: the extent to which a news story conforms to news values
  
- **News Values**:
  - Frequency: long term trends don't get importance
  - Negativity: bad news over good news
  - Unexpectedness: events out of the ordinary
  - Personalization: human interest to the story
  - Reference to elite nations: higher news value when talking about western, elite nations
    - and individuals: like stories about royalty, leading politicians, and celebrities
  - Conflict: dramatic clash of ideas
  - Logistics: the place where an event has happened
  - Meaningfulness: identifiable to the audience; more meaning
  - Lack of ambiguity: clearer events

- Continuity

The selection and presentation of the news

- Marxist Critiques of the News
  - Selecting and presenting news stories in ways that suit powerful groups in society
  - Neglecting the interests and concerns of particular groups in society
  - Neglecting the wrongdoings of large and powerful corporations
- Independent news media lacks readership
  - Pluralists say this is because people aren't interested
  - Marxists say more people would know if it was more accessible (like in shops)

Explanations of the influence of the media: hypodermic-syringe model, audience selection, cultural effects approach, uses and gratifications model.

- Hypodermic Syringe
  - Direct and immediate effects assumes that the audience is passive
  - Companies believed that advertisements would be successful based on hypodermic syringe

- Nazi Germany:
  - People did not have access to any other source of information and therefore the Nazi media had a direct effect
- Two step flow model: opinion leaders get influence over others

Explanations of the influence of the media: hypodermic-syringe model, audience selection, cultural effects approach, uses and gratifications model.

- Audience selection:
  - All audiences are not passive.
    - Media individuals encode a message and audiences decode it differently
    - Selective attention and selective retention are proof that all media messages don't affect audiences
    - David Morley in his research that different audiences interpreted the same message differently
  - Dominant hegemonic reading:
    - People accept and understand the meaning, values of the program if they share the program code
  - Share the program code:

- Partially known as negotiated reading where some of the message is accepted
- Oppositional/counter-hegemonic reading
  - “Readers don’t share the program code and reject the preferred reading. Readers use an alternative frame of interpretation because the program did not show life as it really was”

Explanations of the influence of the media: hypodermic-syringe model, audience selection, cultural effects approach, uses and gratifications model.

- Monogenic programs:
  - Programs and images to be read in a particular way
- Polysomic programs
  - Can be open to interpretation
- Morley specified that differences in meaning could be class-based, age-based, and ethnicity-based
- Media tries to push preferred readings, but audiences produce alternative readings.
- Cultural effects:
  - Cumulative effects that are long term
  - Women identity shaped over a long period of time:

- They are shown in a particular way again and again
- Sexist stereotypes given to young boys and girls receive
  - Particularly when boys are in hostels and media is their only source of information

Explanations of the influence of the media: hypodermic-syringe model, audience selection, cultural effects approach, uses and gratifications model.

- Factors that influence audience in believing and rejecting the option
  - Do people have a direct experience?
    - If not, they get affected
      - Example:
        - People who had gone through mental distress do not buy the idea that mentally distressed people are dangerous
        - Were miners violent, or no? People use logic
  - Affiliations and sympathies :
    - People are influenced by their own political and other beliefs
  - Source of information

People can differentiate between fact and fiction



Explanations of the influence of the media: hypodermic-syringe model, audience selection, cultural effects approach, uses and gratifications model.

Uses gratification model

- Audiences are in control
- Approach related to the pluralists; new media strengthens the argument behind this approach
- How audiences use the media is important
- Grouped under four headings
  - For entertainment media
  - Personal relationships (friend groups watch a program together)
  - Personal identity: Relate to character and makes decisions about themselves with relation to a character
  - Information: Find out about things beyond our personal experience
- Three problems with this approach:
  - Does not look at media messages (Assume that messages are unambiguous)
  - The media creates the needs in the first place then they satisfy them (The Marxist Approach)

Different groups of audiences may have different agency

Bias and distortion in the media, including propaganda and moral panics.

- Perspective:
  - Pluralists argue that there are a range of bias
  - Marxists argue that there are little to no differences
- Glasgow media group: Trade union protests shown in a guided manner:
  - Where managers were given more time and were interviewed in a calm manner and the workers actions were shown more than their opinion and they (the workers) were shown on the streets making noise
  - The above example shows us that the media can guide opinion

Bias and distortion in the media, including propaganda and moral panics.

- Moral panics
  - When an event is exaggerated, and public concern is created
    - Spiraling situation
  - Response to initial situation leads to more trouble
    - Self-fulfilling prophecy
  - Young people are scapegoated

- Situation created in which Rockers and other similar groups are blamed for deviance and this leads to society blaming them and then the Police becomes involved, and the issues become bigger
- Exaggeration (Mods and Rockers are shown as creating more problem than they actually have)
  - And Sensationalism (designed to catch audiences' emotions)

Developments in the media including changes in ownership, globalization, interactivity, the digital divide, diversification, and convergence within the media.

- Changes in ownership and control
  - Horizontal integration:
    - Content in one medium such as News Corporation showing its films on 'Twentieth Century Fox' and 'Sky'/'Star TV' Channels (which they own)
  - Vertical integrations
    - Different stages of production in one industry
      - ❖ Hollywood studios have their own cinemas
      - ❖ TV channels have their own satellite services
  - Synergy exists easily move media between different companies in the same conglomerate. They are able to subsidize loss-making activities

- Pluralists:
  - Many conglomerates are not always successful. New media such as Google challenges old media.
  
- Marxists see an illusion of choice
  - Newspapers always have differences, but Marxist say that they are actually not different. Very powerful conglomerates that can do vertical and horizontal integration put a blind eye toward the problems of capitalism

*Developments in the media including changes in ownership, globalization, interactivity, the digital divide, diversification, and convergence within the media.*

- Globalization
  - Instant around the globe. Print media catered to a nation and new media extended that to the globe and thus globalization
  - Some aspects of globalization and the media are:
    - The global media dominated by a small number of huge conglomerates
    - Western society and mainly western culture are spread
    - Media products are more global
    - Local cultures swamped: people will use their language less often

- Non-western media may also reach the world such as Bollywood

Developments in the media including changes in ownership, globalization, interactivity, the digital divide, diversification, and convergence within the media.

- Interactivity
  - Old media
    - Interactivity is less than new media but there are methods like writing letters to a newspaper, telephone call
  - New Media
    - Personalized news: emailed specific news
    - Create own media
    - Contribute to online discussions
    - Playing online games
    - Anonymous identities

Developments in the media including changes in ownership, globalization, interactivity, the digital divide, diversification, and convergence within the media.

- The digital divide
  - Computers/Internet may be expensive for the working class

- The poor in less developed countries don't have access to good internet
- Those who do have access can have better social capital
- Modern industrial societies are improving their situation by providing free laptops, cheap access to laptops and internet
  - ❖ Libraries that provide access to both
- Old people are still in the digital divide
- All developments point towards the media culture and augment it

Developments in the media including changes in ownership, globalization, interactivity, the digital divide, diversification, and convergence within the media.

- Diversification and convergence
  - Diversification:
    - Many media companies are becoming more diversified
    - Rupert Murdoch who owned newspapers has now expanded to more media avenues
    - The Virgin Group was a major media company but now has other non-media interests
  - Convergence:

- Television programs can be watched on computers
- Newspapers can be read on websites to access old media

Media representations and their influence on the audience.

- Stereotypes
- Can enforce prejudiced beliefs

For instance:

- Women are not capable of certain types of work
  - Is a belief given by the media?
- Media is a source of information and people's personal experiences may contradict with information provided by the media
- TV may have more influence due to their visual effects

