

# The Media Industry

COMM2112 Theories of  
Communication and Persuasion  
Semester One 2008  
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[http://www.wacc.org.uk/wacc/thinking/communication\\_rights/the\\_people\\_s\\_communication\\_charter](http://www.wacc.org.uk/wacc/thinking/communication_rights/the_people_s_communication_charter)

# **THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION CHARTER**

# The importance of communication

- Communication is a fundamental human right
- Essential for
  - Human development
  - Social development
  - Social participation
  - Economic development

# The industrialization of communication

- Media form themselves into industries for practical reasons
  - To manage social power and wealth
  - Production requirements
  - Distribution requirements
  - Consumption requirements
  - Policy requirements

# Industry and the common good

- Media are a means of increasing social power and wealth, therefore,
  - They become captive and subject to exploitation by particular groups,
  - And used to further the interests and benefits of those groups,
  - In competition with or to the detriment of the common good.

# The outcomes...

- The media shape events according to their own production, distribution and consumptions needs, e.g.
  - Journalism language and practice
  - The visuality of television
- The media appropriate common social activities into their own terms, e.g.
  - Sports events
  - Commodification
- The media engage in social engineering to their own benefit, e.g.
  - The construction of stereotypes
- The media give preference to those people and practices which can profit them.

# Key questions

- Who owns the media in a society?
- How are they regulated to balance commercial interest and community service?
- How are they regulated to ensure community needs for information and debate?
- In what ways do the needs and functions of the media shape the social agenda?

# Authoritarian

- Key value: The media operate under the control of the state to serve the interests of the state as interpreted by the rulers
- The goal: a political and social equilibrium brought about by a submission to authority.
- Appeal
  - neat and disciplined.
  - very appealing to orderly minds that desire structure, logical order, and institutional stability.
  - It is very difficult and painful for people to live without external authority.

# Authoritarian

- Ownership may be either public or private, but owners controlled
- People are generally seen as
  - not intellectually capable
  - psychologically rigged for subservience
  - educationally incompetent to make decisions
  - people's desire generally is seen as desiring leadership and order, with simple straightforward, easy solutions and actions
  - people want decisions made for them.
- The ruling elite reflect
  - a fear of the masses
  - intellectual arrogance based on felt superiority
  - a hatred for anarchy or disorder
  - a love for social stability
  - a respect for power

# Libertarian

- Proponents:
  - John Milton, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson
- Attitudes toward people
  - a basic trust of the "common person"
  - people as inherently rational animals with inherent natural rights
  - a basic trust in people to make intelligent decisions (generally)
  - all kinds of information and ideas should be made public and as freely available as possible
  - free criticism, and developing the capacity to be individually critical, is essential to personal and national well-being and growth.

# Libertarian

- Attitudes to media
  - a pluralism of voices and opinions is necessary for decision-making in a democratic society
  - should be total freedom and openness in communication
  - main purpose of media is to inform, to entertain and to sell, with a strong emphasis on discovering the truth and keeping a check on the government.

# Libertarian

"And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.... (Truth) needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power."

*Areopagitica: a speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, to the Parliament of England.* John Milton (1644)

# Liberal-Pluralism and the “News”

Media fundamental to democracy:

- as defenders of ‘freedom of speech’
- monitor government, police, corporate sector for honesty, lawfulness

Belief in that “plurality of viewpoints” preserved by divergent and clashing interests of owners, managers, editors and journalists

# Cross Media and Foreign Ownership Laws in Australia

- Lifting of bans on cross media ownership and removal of foreign media ownership restrictions
- New 2 out of 3 rule (radio, print, TV) previously could not own TV and newspapers in same market
- Diversity: new rules must be a minimum of 5 outlets in cities, 4 in regions
- (Sydney and Melbourne currently have 10 or 11)
- Foreign ownership was capped at 20% this has gone

(Ricketson, ACMA “Media Reform” Fact Sheet)

# Social Democracy

- Regulation of media moves between
  - authoritarian pressures for order, control and protection
  - libertarian pressures for greater freedom, fewer restrictions

# Social Democracy

- **Assumptions**

- social order and social good require some ordering and control of social agencies
- there is no reason why agencies of mass communication should be treated any differently from other social bodies
- social bodies, including media, should be given as much freedom as possible to pursue their own interests, determine their own activities, and regulate themselves
- regulation of the market is acceptable to ensure that the common good is served and to protect the public interest
- the media are mainly privately owned, but can be supplemented by the government
- the functions of media are to inform, entertain, sell, and raise issues of public importance for the purpose of social discussion and action.

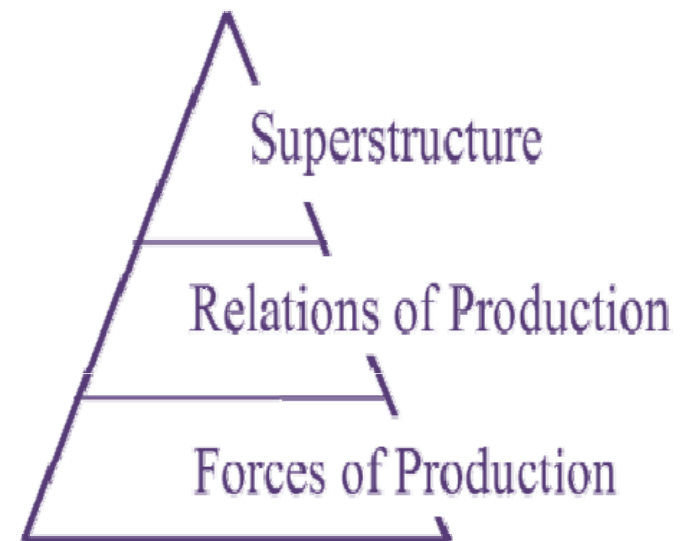
# Social Democracy

- **Regulation of the media happens through**
  - **Governments**, who establish the framework of media, business and criminal law
  - **The courts**, who apply and interpret the laws
  - **Industry self-regulation**, through industry bodies, professional codes, traditions of practice
  - **The marketplace**
    - Consumers, through what they buy and watch and through feedback
    - Media as businesses
    - The influence and demands of advertisers and producers
    - Social action and pressure groups

# Karl Marx

## Base and Superstructure

- **Modes of production** are made up of relations of production (social class) + means of production (factories, machinery)
- The mode of production or **base** *determines* the superstructure (Art, Culture, Politics)



# Ideological domination

- Marx's describes the determination of the superstructure by these economic relations (mode of production + relations of production) as **ideological domination**
- “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time the ruling *intellectual* force.”

# Marxist view of media

- The media are a major tool in this constant power contest
- Media are more than just channels for communication, media are ideological agencies
  - they play a central role in maintaining class domination
  - they reinforce the dominant social norms and values that legitimize the system

# Antonio Gramsci

- Gramsci emphasises that there are competing ideologies operating in every culture that are not reducible to economic relations
- Institutions (universities, schools, workplace, media outlets) often advocate contradictory or competing ideologies
- Ideology is not forced upon people. It “hails” or persuades people
- We all have multiple identities – worker, student, sister, fan of *Desperate Housewives*, swimmer, going to dance parties etc...

# Antonio Gramsci and “Hegemony”

- Certain ideologies do achieve dominance or hegemony. But this is always partial. Ideologies are always in a process of struggle and negotiation with other ideologies.
- Ideologies achieve hegemony through persuasion rather than force

# Galtung and Ruge (1981) Ten Factors of Newsworthiness

1. Conflict: each story has two sides – good for dramatisation
2. Relevance: news events should impinge on audience's lives (even indirectly)
3. Timeliness: recent events are favoured
4. Simplification: significance of event should be unambiguous
5. Personalisation: emphasis on humans coping with life 'on the ground'

# 10 Factors of Newsworthiness (continued)

6. Unexpectedness: out of the ordinary events
7. Continuity: Should be able to fit in with other similar kinds of events or stories
8. References to elite nations
9. Cultural specificity: events which conform to the maps of meaning of newsworker and audience
10. Negativity: 'bad news' is favoured over 'good'

# Life before Kevin

- Sally Young argues that PM John Howard is highly skilled in making himself 'the authoritative source' on events
- shifted away from press conferences to media appearances at favoured outlets, doing "door stop" press conference
- Also "stays on message" – repeating same point over and over with slightly different words
- Increased use of press releases

# Persuasion -> Propaganda

- No-holds-barred use of communication to propagate specific beliefs and expectations
- **Ultimate goals** (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1992)
  - Change the way people act
  - Believe the change is voluntary
  - Their own behaviours and opinions

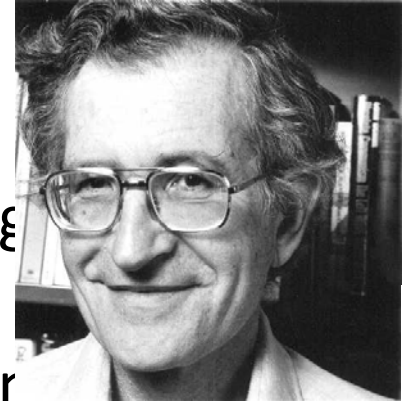
# Quote

- It would not be impossible to prove with sufficient repetition and psychological understanding of the people concerned that a square is in fact a circle. What after all are a square and a circle? They are mere words and words can be moulded until they clothe ideas in disguise (Goebbels 1928)

# What characterizes propaganda? - Larson

- Ideological
- Uses mass media
- Conceals
- Aims at uniformity
- Circumvents the reasoning process ...\*\*\*

# Noam Chomsky & Edward Herman's Propaganda Model



- *Manufacturing Consent* (1992)
- “Propaganda” – broadly equivalent to ideological domination
- Chomsky believes in ‘truth’ but it is hidden under ‘necessary illusions’
- The media cultivate common patterns of acceptance in people’s minds
  - Through compliant media processes and devices of thought compliance as effective as totalitarian states
  - Alternative options are excluded through processes of suppression, falsification and manipulation.

# Chomsky and Herman's 5 Filters

1. Commercial basis of dominant news organizations are very expensive to run. Big corporations set the news agenda eg: Reuters, Fox, New York Times
2. Advertising is primary source of income for commercial news organisations – market news to affluent viewers
3. News media rely excessively on 'expert sources': politicians, police beat, media releases – these preferred sources exclude independent non-official sources
4. Flak: threats by politicians or media monitors to punish media outlet for publishing or broadcasting negative stories
5. 'Ideology of anti-communism' helps mobilise populace against a common enemy

# Neil Postman



- *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business.* 1985
- Concerned with the trivialisation of social life through television.
  - “Television transforms everything it touches, trivializing serious forms of public discourse (like news, politics, science, education, commerce and religion) by turning them into entertainment. We, the public, are unwittingly drawn to this trivialized entertainment and are transformed by it.” ...\*\*\*

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