Ideological Analysis and Television

In class, we dissected Mimi White’s piece, “Ideological Analysis and Television” after having read it prior to class. Within this article, Mimi White really brings the function of television to light and tries to explain how media affects our mentality. Some key concepts she brings forth are dominant, residual, and progressive ways of thinking. Finally, White talks about commercials and how they play a part in the media.

Mimi white covers the three ways of thinking in great detail. One of the first is called the dominant. This is basically the common thought process by consumers of media. Depending on the time period, society has a collective idea on how things should be and what can be done from that.

I think Mimi White’s concept of dominant thinking makes a lot of sense because people tend to think alike. At one point in time, the dominant thought process was that a woman’s place is in the home, for example. Today, women have the freedom to do whatever they want, and although I may not agree with that statement in today’s society, it was still a collective thought from the people in that time period. I can disagree with the actual thought process, but that doesn’t change the fact that the majority of people did believe this thought at some point in time. So in some sense, I do agree that dominant thinking does happen and will continue to happen.

The other view Mimi White talks about is the residual mentality. She classifies this as an older way of thinking. Compared to the dominant mentality, residual thinking could very well become the dominant thought process, but whether it is or not doesn’t change the meaning of residual thinking. It will still always be considered the older thought process.

So if I take the same example from before, women having their place be in the home is not only considered a dominant mentality, but also residual thinking because it is the collective thought process from back in the day. In my opinion, the only way you can tell if something shows residual thinking is if you compare your thought process about a topic from today’s society to the thought process of society in earlier years. If it were still the same concepts, then it wouldn’t necessarily be considered residual thinking.

Mimi White’s last mentality is called progressive thinking. This can be defined as a new way of thinking. Taking the same example from before about a woman’s place being in the home, we can find out if the thought process is progressive by comparing it to the thought process from prior years. In today’s society, people believe a woman’s place is anywhere she wants. That is the new dominant way of thinking. It is also the progressive mentality because in a different time period, women weren’t given that kind of freedom.

Her last point refers to commercials. White believed that commercials were a way to sell products to people watching the media. Although today this seems self explanatory, in the time period where media was rising, producers and networks saw potential for making more money. If they played commercials and ads, the company and product is being represented and is more likely to be bought by consumers because people are seeing the ad. It is a winning situation for the networks because they make
money selling time for ads; and product companies make money from having more people know about their products.