Media role in migrant perceptions

The media's role inthe bias perception of migrants

The media plays a key role in how groups of people are perceived by the rest of the world. This can be achieved through the use of traditional broadcasting or social media, by media institutions and prosumers. As prosumers are content producers who are to both create, and consume the media, (Albarran, 2013, P106), it allows their opinion to be voiced to a wide variety of people, signifying the importance it could have in relation to creating and shaping the public's opinion of a certain group (Global Ethics Network, 2015). This theory can be applied to the issues such as migration, which are posed to be negative some most western European countries like the UK, especially as our society is amongst a post 9/11 era. This was proposed during a conference speech, when UK prime minister, Theresa May suggested " she wanted to eliminate the free movement of EU citizens into the UK once thecountry splits from the EU", (Cressey, 2017).

In modern society, there is astrong relationship between the news and politics, as politician's views andideologies are typically expressed to the public through institutions such asthe BBC and Fox news. This is carried out by the news " concentrating on a few issuesand subjects that lead to the public to perceive issues as more important thanother issues", (University of Twente, 2017). Therefore, this agenda settingtheory can be applied to the hegemonic view the UK government has againstimmigration, especially those from Islamic countries or religions. This issignified through a live broadcasting on Fox news following the Manchesterbombing, where the institution put a banner up stating, " Isis Terror group saysit's behind the attack", (Fox news, 2017). Even though this was a tragic event, it favoured

the prime ministers views against immigration, as more control overwho is let in the country, results in a lower risk of terrorism acts. Although, news stories like this may target and affect a large population, " what'snewsworthy to one group, is not necessarily newsworthy to the other," (Bednareket al, 2012, P46). Therefore this news value signifies that the government isgeneralising the publics interests based on their beliefs.

Based on the consumption of news, it's clear that political actors can lead to biased news coverage. Which can be detrimental to the religion of Islam, as the tragic 9/11 event will always have an effect on how Muslims are perceived by the public, and in western society. Therefore the meaning behind a political actor is, " an individual who has obtained some measure of political power, who engage on decisions, policies media coverage and outcomes associated with conflict." (INFOCORE, 2015). This leads to the hypothesis that there is a hierarchy of how biased news is presented, as ' insiders' such as politicians from a particular party, voice their policies and thoughts to the press. This then leads to semi- insiders (Journalists), presenting these policies to the public, which is effectively carried out if these policies are presented by a trusted public service institution such as the BBC. Statistics show that most institutions are controlled by the state, meaning that this sense of a fair and balanced news coverage no longer exists. This is supported when the Guardian stated that " the profoundly dysfunctional British press, over 75% is controlled by three right wing men, setting the agenda for the nation's political discourse". (McCombs, 2004). This is perhaps influenced by the events that occurred on September 2001, " as there are now control programmes of xenophobia movements imposed by

the government's islamophobia of the far right", (Fekete, 2009, P77). This is a signifier of Britain's recent issues of Brexit, as the hegemonic conservative views, have been passed down from each political actors (insider and semi-insider), in order for the majority of the public to agree with its policies against immigration.

Although the hegemonic view of immigrationis deemed as negative for the westernised population, due to economical andhousing issues they may bring, it is apparent that Germany is one of a very fewcountries, who are more willing to welcome migrants. this is evident, as therewere more than one million refugees who moved to Germany in 2015 alone. However, this caused a lot of confusion for the German population, as they felt thattheir own problems weren't being taken seriously, therefore " thousands ofGermans started to protest against their governments pro-refugee policy,"(Washington post, 2016). In this case, it's clear that the media's negative influenceof migrants post- 9/11 hasn't had a big effect on the Germany as they arechoosing to reject and " see through the dominant ideology," (Fourie, 2001, P254), of what immigration brings. This is an example of audienceinterpretation and readings, where the theorist Stuart Hall believed thatpeople decide to either negotiate, agree or oppose the hegemonic view societyhas, meaning that the media's influence is less effective to the public andcountries like Germany who decide to challenge it.

The media is also a constructive toolas presenting biased facts and information to consumers, however prosumers whoactively look, produce and share information, find there are two sides to anissue. Evidently, this occurred on the lead up to the Brexit vote, where newscoverage kept linking

immigration with the war crisis in Syria, which was usedto emphasise the uncertainty of welcoming these particular migrants. However, the news did not signify that " immigration is one of the most important andinfluential social processes taking place in many countries, mainly in Europeand North America," (Ruggiero et al, 2011, P36). Statistics also show that the" English National Health service shows that in 2015, 235, 000 out of 1. 22million staff were non-British," (Independent, 2015). This therefore brings upan issue that news isn't necessarily what is important in the world but isabout protecting a hierarchy's (government) beliefs.

The role of technology plays a keyrole in how the media operates as digital devices such as; mobile phones andtablets, allow the public to interact with social media sites such as; Instagram, Facebook and twitter more freely. Meaning that this new age ofmodern media, allows anyone to become citizen journalists, due to the power ofthese devices. In recent times this has been a way for news institutions togain and share information about issues and events happening around the world. This is signified through author Ian Cram stating, " mobile phone camera footageshot by an individual at the location of a developing news story frequentlyfinds its way on news television screen and online Journalism forums," (Cram, 2015, P3). An example of this being used, was when there was the Tunisian beachattack occurred, when a Muslim male followed the terrorist round during thekillings he carried out (Sky News, 2015). Furthermore, the male following, record the event that made it onto Sky news, the video also denoted the mantrying to stop the killer (terrorist). Even though the context of the videoitself, signified a Muslim terrorist killing people, it also suggested that notall Muslims are the

same, countering this concept of Islamophobia, as the (Muslim)man behind the camera, was a protagonist, supporting this theory of binaryoppositions being applied, (Fourie, 2007, P249). Therefore, this video couldquestion the hegemonic view of Islamic migrants seeking asylum in the UK, asinstitutions like sky who broadcasted the video, benefited from this particularpiece of citizen journalism, similarly to how the country benefits frommigrants working in the NHS.

Even though social media is a democratic platform that allows users to follow, share and connect who they wish to interact with, when a powerful figure such as the president presents their opinions on Twitter, it can successfully change or question people's perspective on specific issues. This was used by Trump in the run up to his election poll in 2015, as he stated, " A nation without borders is not a nation at all. We must have a wall," (Twitter, 2015). As the most powerful man in the world, it suggests that his views must be valid, hence why he'd potentially become president. However this approach to a prevent free movement, may have led to Theresa May's approach of leaving the EU, knowing that this would make immigration harder for migrants coming from third world countries like Syria. Thisstereotype was further supportedin the same year when Trump stated, " What I don't do is take in two hundred thousand Syrians who could be ISIS… I have been watching this migration. And I see the people, they're mostly strong men," (Millstein, 2015, P3). This undemocratic type of leadership suggests that the hierarchy in modern society could be institutionally racist and stereotypical, against groups that were not born on home soil. Furthermore, this emphasises the importance as well as the strong

relationships the media have with politicians, as Tweets, pictures and conferences can all be posted online, allowing users to gain the gratification of information, wherever they go, meaning the politicians views can easily be presented to a mass audience. Furthermore, political insiders using social media, are able to present migrants as a moral panic illusion, which suggests issues have been exaggerated whilst a reaction is gained based on hysteria by the powerful, (Cohen, 1972, P7). This therefore questions if media platforms are a democratic space for consumers seeking fair and accurate value from the news.

In conclusion, recent political elections have played a big part in how the media and public portrays issues such as immigration across the world. This has been more noticeable in countries such as; England and the USA during the lead up to; Brexit and the presidential election. The combination of these events and terrorism, has given politicians the power to discriminate against what migrants stand for, through the use of social media. However, the reason behind terrorism from the middle-east, is sometimes overlooked, as it's usually a response in relation to policies put in place by the western world, which essentially has caused wars in the past. Suggesting, " terrorism is therefore a word to describe illegal political violence that is beyond the realms of what is seen as legitimate", (Richards, 2015, P7). Signifying that terrorists can be just as or even less detrimental to society then politicians, as Donald Trump's views are essentially effecting two hundred thousand people in need, on the basis of their nationality. Although, the media predominantly plays a biased role, it's clear, that prosumers are a signifier of Stuart Hall's audience interpretation theory of; disregarding (opposing)

information that is fed to them through the media conglomerates. Therefore, the contradiction between insiders and outsiders, allows neutral readers to gain a balanced perspective of the issue, allowing them to make a judgement off their own opinion, instead of relying on what the media wants to produce.

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