

# Issues in researching and developing media projects

Media



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## Introduction

One of the main problems associated with masscommunicationis the social, cultural and psychological effects of mediacontent and use (Perse, 2001, p. 1). It is therefore important to fully understand the effects in which the media has upon popularculturein order to advance positive effects and mitigate negative ones. Accordingly, it was evidenced by Young (1999, p. 82) that modern society engulfs its members by consuming and culturally assimilating masses of people via the media, educationand through participation within the marketplace. Mass media products thus articulate ways in which they believe the world should be by adopting various ideological approaches. However, as pointed out by (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003, p. 192); “ there is no singular ideology that is promoted by the media.” Instead different perceptions continue to be expressed, although critical accounts of mainstream ideologies do not appear to dominate society as well as those that tend to represent the social world. Nevertheless, “ when people watch international news, they pay as much attention to street scenes, housing and clothing as to the commentary which accompanies the pictures from foreign lands” (Thompson, 1995; p. 176). In effect, society is subjected to social inclusion as a result of the portrayals of the media, which will be exemplified by analysing three different texts from media/popular culture and considering how these relate to broader issues of ideology.

## Main Body

The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (Horkheimer, M and Adorno, T. W. 1944, p. 41).

Horkeimer and Adorno's text provided an excellent illustration of how society is influenced by the ideological perceptions portrayed by the media.

Accordingly, it was made clear that popular culture today is widely the result of the production of standardised cultural goods such as; television programmes, radio programmes, magazines and films. These goods were thus considered to have been used in a way that manipulates societal values and beliefs. Consequently, it was believed by Horkeimer and Adorno that all mass culture is identical and that cultural goods are simply used in order to create ideologies "to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce"

(Horkeimer and Adorno, 1944, p. 42). These so-called industries are therefore only created in order to generate income and do not have regard to the needs of society. Not all agree with this view, however, and instead it has been argued by Fiske (p. 19) that popular culture does represent the needs of society: "Popular culture is not consumption; it is culture – the active process of gathering and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system." Accordingly, it was believed by Fiske that culture could never be described in terms of buying and selling commodities regardless of how industrialised culture became since culture is active process that is established from within. Essentially, whilst Horkeimer and Adorno believe that culture can be created from commodities, Fiske clearly disagrees and instead argues that popular culture is developed and advanced by the people within a society and that it is not created by the culture industry.

The writings of Horkeimer and Adorno do relate to broader ideological issues nonetheless, which is evident from the fact that the media and cultural productions are capable of changing individual perceptions of race. Thus,

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whilst race was a major problem for many years, the ways in which the media portrayed race began to change which ultimately altered individual attitudes. This is widely due to the fact that “ ideology is a key factor in the maintenance of oppression, but even more important is its successful dissemination” (Spears, 1999, p. 34). Because ideology consists of a set of ideas that are considered the ‘ norm’ individuals tend to follow these and if mass communication portrays an ideology in a certain way, it is likely that the majority of society will alter their beliefs in accordance with this. An example of this can be seen in relation to rap music which has been exploited by the media for a number of years. Thus, whilst this particular type of music may not have been welcomed in previous years, it has become apparent that this is now a normal part of society and mainstream music videos thereby rely upon video imagery that “ reinforces the increasing use of an urban sensibility in music, television and films that exploits a mediated understanding of black, urban aesthetics” (Fitts, 2008, p. 211). Arguably, whilst racial stereotypes are still prevalent through mass communications, it is palpable that the media can influence and change societies way of thinking.

Media Ownership: Concentration and Conglomeration (Deveraux, E. 2007, p. 87).

Deveraux discusses the ownership and control of the mainstream media in her text in order to determine the social, cultural and political implications the increased awareness of this has. Consequently, it is evidenced by Deveraux that those who control and own the media do play a large part in

popular culture today since they create various ideologies that subsequently influence the ways in which we think. Despite this, it has been pointed out by Deveraux that “ significant information inequalities persist in the age of mediaglobalization” and that “ all human societies continue to be divided into ‘ media haves’ and ‘ media have nots’” (Deveraux, 2007, p. 87). In effect, this seems to suggest that increased media does not necessarily mean that individuals have greater choices since the media ultimately control the perceptions that are to be portrayed. Consequently, there is a lack of diverse information that is provided by the media which fails to reflect the needs of society as a whole. This is supported by the views of Croteau and Hoynes (2003, p. 195) when it was made clear that; “ the creators of media content have often reproduced the inequalities that exist in society based on race, class, gender and sexual orientation.” In addition, rather than merely reporting the existing inequalities of society, the media tends to alter media content to reflect the views of themselves which tends to be white, middle and upper class men.

This leads to a great deal of media prejudice and it seems as though a broader perspective of society ought to be portrayed in order to give a true reflection of ideology. Arguably, Deveraux attempts to highlight the problems associated with media content and illustrates that there are broader ideological issues that tend to exist. This is because, the views of those from a certain race, class and sexuality are not being conveyed, which leads to a great deal of societal inequality. Unless the perspectives of the media are broadened, it is likely that social inequalities will continue to exist. In addition, even though the internet is more widespread in this new digital

age, those of the minority are still not having their voices heard despite the different ways in which opinions can be conveyed online. This was recognised by Whibey (2012, p. 1) when it was pointed out that: “ Studies have shown that online participation varies with income.” Hence, it was stressed that individuals of a higher income were more likely to blog. Whilst this may be due to a lack of internet connectivity it is evident that the ideologies of the minority are not being represented. In addition, even where the minority do blog, it is unlikely that their views will reach the mainstream, which again signifies how the media is being controlled by a certain type of person.

Antonio Gramsci and Hegemony (Long, P. and Wall, T. 2009, p. 285).

Long and Wall believe that ideology is no longer considered relevant in today's society. Accordingly, they believe that despite media perceptions as to how individuals ought to live their life, the constant changes no longer make this possible. Therefore, the ideological theory no longer represents society as it once did: ideology is not static and is subject to change – how we live and what we believe is different from the society of Marx's day” (Long and Wall, 2009, p. 287). In accordance with this, it is therefore believed by Long and Wall that the media can no longer influence societal values and beliefs in the way that they could. This is very important in order to eradicate gender, class and racial biases which the media appear to have created, yet whether this means that the media no longer have an influence on society is doubtful. This is because, mass communication products will continue to influence the ways in which we think about things whether

consciously or subconsciously and as asserted by Kenix (2010, p. 1); “ Media both perpetuate identities to the public and are receptors of an ideology created and sustained within society.” It was also added that; “ Media do not only send ideological messages out to the public but media systems are also interwoven into the ideological framework of society. Media also have their greatest influence on individuals over time.” Consequently, provided that the media continue to expose certain ideologies, it will eventually become embedded into all societies regardless as to whether it was disapproved of or not.

This is because, regardless as to whether the media are a desirable influencer, it is clear that they shape individuals values and beliefs within modern society. Whilst attitudes may have changed over the years, the media is still the most powerful product which ultimately controls ideology through the perceptions in which it creates. This leads to much inequality, though “ there is a widespread recasting of the ideal role of the state” (Garland and Sparks, 2000; p. 186). In order to prevent the media from influencing society in a way that leads to inequality, it is vital that public bodies “ have a crucial role in helping people fulfill their potential and removing the barriers that hold people back” (White Paper, 2009) in effect, social inequalities must therefore be eradicated in order to tackle such media inequality. Thus, whilst Long and Wall make it clear that the media does significantly influence popular culture, they are still of the belief that ideologies are no longer relevant in today’s society. If these contentions are accurate, it would seem as though the underlying issues surrounding race, gender and sexuality are simply the result of individual perceptions.

Consequently, it is evident that the relationship between the mass media and popular culture is still pertinent in today's society, though the media do not have the same influence over individual values as they may have had in the past. Although this is considered important in preventing inequality, it seems as though the mass media should have a broader perspective on life as prejudice is still being conveyed.

## Conclusion

Overall, it is manifest that there are significant social, cultural and psychological effects of media content and use. This is widely due to the fact that modern society is largely influenced by the ideologies that are created by mass communication. In addition, whilst different ideologies continue to be promoted, only certain values reach mainstream society. This leads to a great deal of inequality and illustrates how the media are capable of dominating the social world by conveying their own views and opinions. In Horkeimer and Adorno's text, it became apparent that popular culture is swayed by the production of standardised cultural goods and that societal values and beliefs are thereby manipulated as a result of this. It was also made clear that cultural industries are only created in order to generate income for those that are most likely to profit and that the true needs of society are not being provided for. Whilst many will disagree with these points, it is palpable that the media can influence and change the ways in which society thinks. This is also due to the fact that the owners and controllers of the media are usually white middle and upper class men who communicate their own beliefs and values into everyday settings. Hence,



media content does not hold a broad perspective, which ultimately leads to inequality as only certain issues are being dealt with. Because of the constant changes in society, however, it is believed by Long and Wall that ideologies are no longer relevant, yet given that the relationship between the mass media and popular culture is still very much existent it is likely that ideologies will still influence society.

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