The globalization of media

The globalization of media is a pervasive phenomenon associated with several different theories and views about its characteristics and consequences. Due to the considerable amount of transnational media which originates in the U. S, many fear that globalization will lead to an " Americanization" of the world, while others fear the power imbalance in media flows will weaken national sovereignty (Straubhaar et. al 2009, 531). The article " Indigenity, media and cultural globalization: The Case of Mataku, or the Maori X-Files" by Kevin Glynn and A. F. Tyson supports the opposing view – that globalization provides the opportunity for national cultures to counter the Eurocentrism in the global media market, though the Western domination of the market does act as an obstacle against the expansion of productions by lesser known cultures (Glynn et. al 2007, 210). Despite minor setbacks in the organization and flow of the article, Glynn provides developed and well-researched arguments in support of his view, and strengthens his thesis further through the analysis of an internationally known indigenous television drama, Mataku.

From the first part of the article, the author's thesis is clear: contemporary media is comprised of a multidirectional flow of information and culture, rather than a homogenic and unilateral one. The global mediasphere is complex and differentiated, with evident cultural hybridity between " local" and " global" production (Glynn et. al 2007, 211).

Firstly, analyzing the alternative view – that globalization is an extension of colonization – shows that it is an established view with strong points in support of it. Cultural imperialists believe globalization poses similar threats to indigenous population as colonization did during the early colonial period

(Rodricks 2003, 81). Similarities between globalization and colonization, as outlined by Rodricks (2003, 49) include the idea that both phenomena involve a focus on financial gain, a competition for consumers, markets, and resources, and a suppression of indigenous cultures (Rodricks 2003, 50-57). Furthermore, knowledge, as presented by global media, is described as " specialized, compartmentalized, and standardized" (Kawagley et. al 1999, 121) which reflects the Eurocentric view that knowledge should provide universal definitions and categorized information (Henderson 2000, 35-37). This view of knowledge directly opposes the First Nations' view that knowledge should involve collectivity, and decision-making as a community (Rodricks 2003, 79), further exemplifying the biases and Eurocentrism, evident in the global market.

Glynn, although he does not deny the struggles faced by First Nations mediamakers against racism and stereotypical portrayals of minority cultures in mainstream television, has a more positive outlook of globalization as a trend that creates opportunities for establishing public recognition of indigenous identities (Glynn et. al 2007, 220). At one point he even suggests, through a quote from a Maori producer, Tainui Stephens, that the inevitable struggles against more dominant cultures in the global media market, can be an aid, as opposed to a hindrance, to the Maori quest for self-determinism, since it " makes [the Maori] that much more determined to succeed" (Stephens 2004, 114).

Glynn raises several points to support his claim that the indigenous public sphere is continuously expanding through global media systems (Glynn et. al 2007, 211), and each of the points are specific to his thesis and backed up with historical events, such as the establishment of Aboriginal television channels, or opinions of other scholars. For instance, he refers to Kraidy's conclusion that through aspects such as immigration and colonial expansion, " the ' local' and the ' global' have long been hybridized" (Kraidy 1999, 459). He also refers to Stuart Hall's view that the use of global media is key for cultural and political survival of indigenous cultures (Grossberg 1996, 143), and Lisa Parks' view that global media does not need to act as a tool for Western cultural imperialism, but can instead be used to establish aspects of local culture and priorities (Parks 2005, 59). By providing an array of quotations and references to a number of people, some of whom are closely associated with the subject under discussion – the Maori, Glynn presents a well-supported and thus, convincing position.

The number of quotations and references which he presents depicts his analysis as one that is evidently well-researched. However, the implementation of this research at some points in the article, acts as an impediment to the organization and flow of his argument. Because of the various different views he references to from various people, there is a section in his article where he ' stacks', in a sense, one point after another, where each point counters the one preceding it. He begins with the dismissing of Marshall McLuhan's concept of the ' global village' as " overly idealistic" (Glynn et. al 2007, 209), counters this with the point that, despite this, the concept has a romanticism about it which disregards the issue that the ' global village' is discriminatively governed by the West. Nevertheless, Glynn mentions as a counterpoint to this concept of power imbalance, neoliberalism promotes the idea of a free flow of information, and this point is then, in turn, countered with the argument that the concept of a ' free market' is overly simplistic, and can have a suppressive effect on cultural self-expression. The fears associated with Western domination of the global media market is briefly discussed before finally arriving at the point which supports Glynn's original thesis – that such a view makes the fallacious presumption that indigenous cultures do not have the ability to withstand Western imperialist power (Glynn et. al, 210). The way these points, each of which are supported by a different author's opinion, are presented sacrifices clarity since the reader may be susceptible to losing track of Glynn's primary thesis due to the bombardment of other points that are raised, each in succession to the other.

Despite this shortcoming, overall, Glynn presents a strong argument, with a substantial amount of support given through other opinions and relative research. The second part of the article deals specifically with Mataku, an indigenous production which has received both domestic and international success; the popularity of this drama serves as an example which encompasses each of the points raised in Glynn's thesis. A strength in Glynn's discussion of the issue of globalization in relation to indigenous media production is, throughout the article, and primarily in the concluding section, Glynn does not present an overly idealistic view of the positive effects which globalization can have on the growth of national cultures. Rather, he reminds us that, despite the possibilities which globalization presents in regard to this issue, the undertakings involved in the production and popularization of indigenous media must be dealt with cautiously, and the struggles of First Nations mediamakers involving the establishment of institutions, the availability of funding, and the dominant Westernized views of mainstream media, are constant challenges. Glynn thus provides a convincing, optimistic yet practical view of the ways in which the globalization of media can contribute to the growth of the indigenous public sphere and the establishing of national cultures on a global scale.

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