MASS MEDIA, CULTURE & SOCIETY WITH THE PERSPECTIVE OF GLOBALIZATION, MODERNIZATION AND GLOBAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

During the course of this research paper the researchers intend to assess what are societies, culture and mass media; the circumstances and conditions that make the three of them to be interlinked. What are the effects of mass media on culture and society? and whether these effects are positive or negative. What is the role of mass media in creating globalization, modernization and how does it promote cultural invasion of dominant powers that control the forms and contents of the mass media. This cultural invasion through mass media is literally helping in creating global culture all across the world especially in under-developed countries and thus these countries are losing their own cultural heritages gradually. Because of the cultural promotion of the dominant powers by mass media in under-developed countries the new generations of these countries are ignorant of their own local cultures, norms and values, which is a great dilemma of today. This is an issue of international concern and needs an effective solution of the problem, because different nations are recognized and remain distinguished from each other on the basis of their cultural differences.

Keywords: Society, media ownership, cultural heritages, cultural differences, cultural invasion, modernization and globalization, global culture and cultural loss

INTRODUCTION

The term society signifies a group of people who share a common dwelling and who are dependent on each other for their survival and well-being. [1] The world-system is comprised of heterogeneous nations and societies. "A society is an organization of people who share a common territory, governed themselves and cooperate to secure the survival the group. Not all societies are nations; there may be several societies within a nation."[2] Just as all persons are linked to the world-system through their societal membership, so are they linked to their own society through their participation in its institutions.[3] In one way or another, every single person has some kind of relationship to the central institutions of family, religion, the economy, education and the state. The functioning of these institutions influences individuals' lives directly, often affecting them differently depending on their race or ethnicity, class or gender etc. These factors are considered to be the organizing principles around which social institutions operate.

Most of the anthropologists conceived the modern concept of culture toward the end of the 19th century; the first really clear and comprehensive definition came from the British anthropologist Sir. Edward Taylor, writing in 1871, he defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society."[4]

It is of great importance to notify that all culture is learned rather than biologically inherited; "a prompting anthropologist Ralph Linton refers to it as humanity's 'social heredity'."[5] One learns one's culture by growing up with it, and the process whereby culture is transmitted from one generation to the next one is known as "enculturation". [6] Language is the most important and basic factor in the transmission and learning of a culture. [7]

The means of public communication that reach large numbers of people/audience in a short time, such as television, newspapers, and magazines and radio etc. are called mass media. To define mass media further we can say that mass media are those media that are created to be consumed by immense number of population worldwide and also a direct contemporary instrument of mass communication. Nonetheless mass media is considered as the fourth estate of the society as well as it is the fourth pillar of any democratic government. It is the voice and weapon of the people & the society as whole. [8]

Mass media is intended for a large audience. It may take the form of broadcast media, as in the case of television and radio, or print media, like newspapers and magazines. Internet media can also attain mass media status, and many mass media outlets maintain a web presence to take advantage of the ready availability of Internet in many regions of the world. Some people also refer to the mass media as the "mainstream media," referencing the fact that it tends to stick to prominent stories which will be of interest to a general audience, sometimes ignoring controversial breaking news. Many people around the world rely on the mass media for news and entertainment, and globally, mass media is a huge industry. [9]

Mass media is a critical part of human societies. Understanding mass media is usually a key to understanding a population and culture, which is why the field of media studies is so huge.[10] Watching, reading, and interacting with a nation's mass media can provide clues into how people think, especially if a diverse combination of mass media sources are perused.

In the last 50 years the media influence has grown supportively with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet. [11] We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our daily activities like work, entertainment, health care, education, personal relationships, traveling and anything else that we have to do. In our work we usually know what we have to do is based on our experience and studies, however on our daily lives we rely on the media to get the current news and facts about what is important and what we should be aware of. We have put our trust on the media as an authority to give us news, entertainment and education.

Needless to say, whatever we have in mind about mass media, on the whole, it's all about innovation, novelty and modernity that is continually evolving and producing ways to speed up the way humanity is subsisting.

Mass Media, Culture and Society Together-An uncanny Combination

As a shared set of ideas, values, perceptions, and standards of behavior, culture is the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to other members of their society. It enables them to predict how others are most likely to behave in a given circumstance, and it tells them how to react accordingly. [12]

Society may be defined as an organized group or groups of interdependent people who generally share a common territory, language, and culture and who act together for collective survival and well-being. [13]The way in which these people depend upon one another can be seen in such features as their family relationships and their economic, communication, and defense systems. They are also bound together by a general sense of common identity.

Because culture and society are such closely related concepts, anthropologists study both. Obviously, there can be no culture without a society. Conversely, there are no known human societies that do not exhibit culture. [14]

Ultimately, a society is no more than a union of individuals, all of whom have their own special needs and interests. If a society is to survive, it must succeed in balancing the self-interests of its members against the demands of society as a whole. To accomplish this, a society offers rewards for adherence to its cultural standards. In most cases, these rewards assume the form of social acceptance. [15]

In a well working culture, people "can be proud, jealous, and pugnacious, and live a very satisfactory life without feeling 'alienation', 'depression', or any of the other pervasive ills of our own inhuman and civilized way of living." When traditional ways of coping no longer seem to work and people feel helpless to shape their own lives in their own societies, symptoms of cultural breakdown become prominent. A culture is essentially a maintenance system to ensure the well being of a group of people. Therefore, it may be deemed successful as long as it secures the survival of a society in a way that its members find to be reasonably fulfilling. What complicates matters is that any society is made up of groups of different interests, raising the possibility that some people's interests may be served better than those of others. Therefore, a culture that is quite fulfilling for one group within a society may be less so for another. [16]

The mass media are major transmitters of culture. Television broadcasts entertainment that reflects stereotypes of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and values across a wide range of dimensions, including race or ethnicity, class, gender, age, physical and mental ability, and sexual orientation. The format of the programs often invites viewers to laugh at, despise, or belittle cultures other than the dominant one in the United States. For example, The Simpsons has a running joke that depicts Pakistani immigrants as ignorant convenience-store owners and confused taxicab drivers. [17]

News programmers reflect the interests of the society's major power groups---corporations and the wealthy. The media are themselves controlled by major corporate entities and the primary sponsors of programming are corporate advertisers. Television commercials encourage a materialistic consumer mentality, regardless of necessity, safety, or effectiveness of products. Advertising creates a consumer culture in that it defines individuals' needs and then entices people to fulfill them by purchasing goods and services, an activity that is the lifeblood of capitalism. [18]

On the other hand, when television producers are less dependent on corporate advertisers, they are freer to promote and reinforce values and norms that challenge corporate culture. For example, much of the funding for public television comes from membership dues and federal support. Therefore, it is easier for children's programs like Mr. Rogers, Sesame Street, Zoom, and Barney and Friends to promote values of sharing, acceptance of others, and racial and gender equality.[19]

How Modernization, Globalization and Global Culture act in tandem to affect us:
One of the most frequently used terms to describe social and cultural changes as they are occurring today is modernization. This is most clearly defined as an all-encompassing and global process of political and socio-economic change, whereby developing societies acquire some of the cultural characteristics common to Western industrial societies. Derived from the Latin word modo ("just now"), modernization literally refers to something "in the present time." The dominant idea behind this concept is that "becoming modern" is becoming like North American and other industrial societies, with the very clear implication that not to do

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so is to be stuck in the past---backward, inferior, and needing to be improved. It is unfortunate that the term modernization continues to be so widely used. Since we seem to be stuck with it, the best we can do at the moment is to recognize its problematic one-sidedness, even as we continue to use it. [20]

The process of modernization may be best understood as consisting of four sub-processes, of which one is technological development. In the course of modernization, traditional knowledge and techniques give way to the application of scientific knowledge and techniques borrowed mainly from the industrialized West. Another sub-process is agricultural development, represented by a shift in emphasis from subsistence farming to commercial farming, instead of raising crops and livestock for their own use, people turn with growing frequency to the production of cash crops, with increased reliance on a cash economy and on global markets for selling farm products and purchasing goods. A third sub-process is industrialization, with a greater emphasis placed on material forms of energy---especially fossil fuels---to drive machines. Human and animal power becomes less important, as do handicrafts in general. The fourth sub-process is urbanization, marked particularly by population movements from rural settlements into cities. Although all sub-processes are interrelated, there is no fixed order of appearance. [21]

As modernization proceeds, other changes are likely to follow. In the political realm, political parties and some sort of electoral apparatus frequently appear, along with the development of an administrative bureaucracy. In formal education, institutional learning opportunities expand, literacy increases, and indigenous educated elite develops. Religion becomes less important in many areas of thought and behavior as traditional beliefs and practices are undetermined. Many traditional rights and duties connected with kinship are altered, if not eliminated, especially where distant relatives are concerned. Finally, where social satisfaction is a factor, social mobility increases as ascribed status becomes less important and personal achievement counts for more. [22]

The modernization has affected indigenous people surviving within contemporary state societies. Throughout the so-called underdeveloped world, in Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and elsewhere, whole countries are in the throes of radical political and economic change and overall cultural transformation. In fact, new inventions and major advances in industrial production, mass transportation, and communication and information technologies are transforming societies in Europe and North America as well. This worldwide process of accelerated modernization in which all parts of the earth are becoming interconnected in one vast interrelated and all-encompassing system is known as globalization. [23]

Globalization is the buzzword of the moment: a concept that has captured the interest of academics, business leaders, and politicians alike. Even as the world has become increasingly fragmented by specialized interests, it has simultaneously become more global as well. Globalization is a complex set of social, political, and economic processes in which the physical boundaries and structural policies that previously reinforced the autonomy of the nation state are collapsing in favor of instantaneous and flexible worldwide social-relations. While globalization is multidimensional, the most important dimension is economic globalization. In the past few decades, the spread of capitalism has fueled the rise of multinational corporations who wish to profit from untapped "global markets." Hence, these corporations aggressively support free-trade policies that eliminate barriers such as trade tariffs between national and international markets. For the mass media, which are owned and controlled almost exclusively today by multinational corporations, globalization creates opportunities to bring their cultural products to distant local markets. This fact has raised fears about cultural imperialism, the imposition of one set of cultural values on other cultures.

The process is dialectical or bi-directional, however. Local markets are influencing the products and thinking of the very companies targeting them, leading to concern that cultural difference is being eradicated in favor of one large hybridized culture. [24]

Human populations have always been on the move. But today, more people travel faster and farther than ever before due to modern means of transportation. Moreover, revolutions in communication technology-from print media to telegraph and telephone to radio, television, satellites, and the internet-make it possible to exchange more information with more people more swiftly and over greater distances. Obviously, the global flow of humans—their products and their ideas-plays a major role in cultural change. A popular belief since the mid-1900s has been that the future world will see the development of a single homogeneous world culture. This idea is based largely on the observation that, due to technological developments in communication, transportation, and trade, people of the world are increasingly watching the same television programs, reading the same newspapers, eating the same foods, wearing the same types of clothes, and communicating via satellites and the internet. Also of note, at least 175 million people (2.5 percent of the world's population) now live outside their countries of birth—not as refugees, but as migrants who earn their living in one country while being citizens in another. [25]

CONCLUSION

In the transition to post-modernity, mass media have gone from being one institution among many within our cultural environment to being the very basis of our cultural environment. It is evident by studies that the further back in history one travels, the less central mass media are to social life and the more central are other social institutions such as the family, the worship places, the school, and the state. But today, these social institutions have been subsumed by, and are largely filtered through, the mass media. More than ever before, the mass media have replaced families as caretakers, worship places as arbiters of cultural values, schools as sites of education, and the state as public agenda-setters.

The idea of a shared global culture may have a degree of popular appeal, in that it might diminish chances for the kinds of misunderstandings and conflicting viewpoints that so often in the past few hundred years have led to violent clashes and even full-scale wars. Anthropologists greet this prognosis with skepticism, though, suspecting that distinctive worldviews will persist as they have for hundreds of years, even in the face of massive changes. Indeed, one might argue that the chance for conflicting viewpoints actually increases, as evidenced in the sharply divided opinions within European states long allied to the United States concerning its decision to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003. Some have argued that perhaps a generalized world culture would be desirable in the future, because some traditional cultures may be too specialized to adjust to a changed environment.

Since a single homogeneous global culture is not necessarily the wave of the future. Some predict a world in which ethnic groups will become more nationalistic in response to globalization, each group stressing its unique cultural heritage and emphasizing differences with neighboring groups. One way of controlling divisive pressures in pluralistic or multi-ethnic societies is the adoption of a collective policy based on mutual respect and tolerance for cultural differences. Known as multiculturalism, such an official policy or doctrine asserts the value of different cultures co-existing within a country, and stresses the reciprocal responsibility of all citizens to accept the rights of others to freely express their views and values.

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