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Media Globalization

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Reception studies also examine how audiences create "interpretive communities," or how people create shared meaning from viewing the same media texts. For example, in her book *Reading the Romance*, Janice Radway conducted an ethnography of a bookstore, investigating the many reasons women read romance novels. She found that romance novels helped women to escape the everyday realities of their lives. Applications of the concept of interpretive communities have been applied to study a variety of groups, such as fan communities and video-game players.

Although media ethnography can be a useful way to study media audiences and the production of media texts, there are several critiques of this field of study. First, ethnographers should consider power relations between researchers and subjects. Many media ethnographers have addressed this critique by reflecting on their personal experiences and explaining their subject position.

Others critique media ethnography for narrowly relying on interview data and not employing long-term, in-depth ethnographic methods. From this perspective, the way that qualitative researchers use the term *ethnography* is problematic, because many of the methodologies used are interviews, focus groups, and case studies that do not offer descriptions as "thick" as when the researcher is embedded in a particular context for a long period of time. These critics suggest that media ethnography, while influenced by the field of cultural anthropology, differs significantly in terms of scope.

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See also Audiences: Reception and Injection Models; Encoding and Decoding; Gay and Lesbian Portrayals on Television; Gender and Masculinity: Black Masculinity; Hall, Stuart; Mass Media; Media Consolidation; Newsrooms; Radway, Janice; Reception Theory

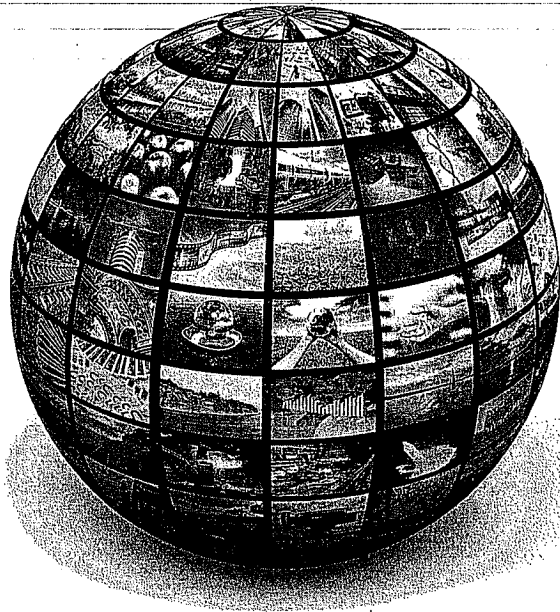
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MEDIA GLOBALIZATION

Transnational media can be defined as media that are produced, distributed, and consumed across national boundaries through the new communication and information technologies that became available at the end of the 20th century. These technologies include satellite television and the Internet. Transnational media appeared in the era of globalization, an era characterized by an increased connectivity, interconnectedness, or interdependence. Transnational media are most often studied from an economic or cultural perspective. An economic perspective focuses on the concentration of power in the hands of only a few global media giants that aim to enrich themselves and their owners, potentially at the cost of consumers and citizens. For women, this increasing media concentration means a smaller number of media outlets worldwide and less diversity of ideas in the marketplace. A cultural perspective focuses on the impact of imported cultural products on local cultures as well as the reception of these products by various audiences. The flow of cultural products across nations is of specific interest to women, as ideas about appropriate gender roles are often quite nation-specific. Global news agencies, for example, often exclude voices of women in their news reports and typically represent women as victims. Third World, postcolonial, and transnational feminists are working to point out problems of access and representation of women in the media, especially of those in developing countries. Media activism groups around the world engage in activities such as the Global Media



Globalization and advances in technology have led to an era of more connectedness and interdependence, including the ready availability of transnational news. (Photos.com)

Monitoring Project, which is taking place every five years, to gather information about the participation of female journalists in the news media as well as the inclusion of female sources and the representation of women in the news. This research is used to lobby media houses for the inclusion of women in all aspects of the newsmaking process and to demand more gender-sensitive representations of both men and women.

Globalization

Media globalization can be seen as part of the more general phenomenon of globalization, which refers to an increased global connectivity, interconnectedness, or interdependence that results in the shrinking of the world and the compression of time and space. Globalization is often defined in terms of global capitalist markets, but Arjun Appadurai suggested that globalization and global cultural flows could be described in terms of five “scapes,” or dimensions: ethnoscaping, mediascaping, technoscapes, finanscaping, and ideascapes. These *scapes* refer to the flow across borders of, respectively, people, media, technologies, money, and ideas. Of most interest to media scholars is the flow of media and ideas across

national boundaries. A result of globalization is deterritorialization, where the relationship between culture and space becomes destabilized. Feminist scholars have pointed out that “grand theories,” those focusing on the macro level, typically ignore gendered dimensions of globalization. The globalization of media has been studied primarily from an economic and a cultural perspective.

The Economic Perspective

The economic perspective on media globalization uses the approach of a critical political economy to study structures of media ownership. According to this approach, media reflect the interests of powerful elites, including media owners and advertisers. In patriarchal societies, men are those in powerful positions, and media owners are typically men. These elites are often seen as politically conservative. As a result, media serve the conservative interests of (male) media owners.

Over the last 30 years, media ownership has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few powerful companies. This means fewer and fewer companies own more and more media outlets. Today, the most powerful media companies are considered to be Time Warner, Disney, Sony, Bertelsmann, Viacom, News Corporation, and Vivendi. Each of these companies is a conglomerate that exists of several subsidiaries. For example, the media giants often own television channels, film companies, newspapers, magazines, radio stations, book publishers, music groups, and Internet businesses. To maximize profit, media conglomerates use one company subsidiary to complement and promote another, a strategy that is known as synergy. These conglomerates are also maximizing economies of scale, whereby the cost of a company’s output declines as its size grows.

The increasing concentration and conglomeration of media ownership result in a handful of media giants that control global information flows. These media giants are considered to be more interested in increasing their profits than in serving the public interest, and they may sacrifice the quality of content to keep expenses low or advertisers satisfied. For women, the concern is that media globalization results in fewer ideas in the marketplace. As the number of sources of information that are available for citizens and consumers declines, the number of available points of view also diminishes.

The Walt Disney Company provides a good example for feminist concerns related to media concentration and conglomeration. Critiques have pointed out that Disney is one of a few powerful media companies that exports entertainment for children across the globe. However, Disney's representations of women, people of color, and other nations in film are often stereotypical and degrading. Because of the dominance of Disney, these images reach children and reinforce stereotypes in young audiences. Disney's power is enhanced by its theme parks, toys, and television shows.

The Cultural Perspective

Media globalization is also studied from a cultural perspective, where the focus is on the impact of imported cultural products on cultures as well as the reception of these products by various audiences. The imbalance in power between the developed countries of the North and the undeveloped countries of the South has led to accusations of cultural imperialism, or the invasion of one culture by another through the media. For example, the United States dominates media exportation in several industries. These problems of unequal cultural flows were discussed at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1970s, when representatives from Third World countries argued for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The developing world argued that an open marketplace simply did not allow for an equal flow of information and that governments should take special steps to protect and promote their nations' own cultural works. This idea was strongly opposed by representatives from especially the United States and United Kingdom. Today, new media technologies and a growing sense of nationalism have resulted in a limited contraflow, or the flow of media and information from the South to the North. This contraflow, however, is unequal, and the relationship between countries exchanging media in this way is therefore referred to as asymmetric interdependence. Examples of contraflow include the export of films from India's film industry (Bollywood) and broadcasts from news outlet Al Jazeera, which is based in Qatar.

The work of sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse is often drawn upon to consider issues of globalization and culture. He argues that cultural globalization will result in one of three scenarios: a clash of civilizations, McDonaldization, or hybridization.

In the first scenario, a clash of civilizations, cultures will remain separate from one another but ideological conflicts will increase. In the second scenario, McDonaldization (a term coined by sociologist George Ritzer to refer to the assumption by a culture of the characteristics of a fast-food chain), a global, homogeneous world culture may develop, as proponents of cultural imperialism have argued. In the final scenario, new hybrid cultures may develop because of cultural mixing and borrowing.

When media globalization is studied from a cultural perspective, one of the most important questions is how cultural products from one part of the world would be received in other parts of the world. The theory of cultural proximity states that nations that share cultural attributes—language, for example—more easily relate to each other's cultural products. Those studying media exports are interested in how programs can be adjusted through the processes of regionalization, localization, and glocalization. Media content can be tailored to fit particular regions, especially if these regions, called geolinguistic regions, share a language. Media content can also be adapted for a local market through a blend of the local and the global, called glocalization. An example of glocalization is the successful adaptation of the British program *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* to markets in more than 100 countries around the world. A variety of aspects were changed, including the host, participants, questions, and prize money. The result of glocalization is often hybridized media content. In this field of study, media audiences are typically seen as active in their decisions about media content.

Of interest to gender scholars is how media representations of women are received in various cultures. For example, the British show *Pop Idol* was adapted for the American market as *American Idol*, and then to the Afghan market as *Afghan Star*. In a country where music and dancing were forbidden under Taliban rule, *Afghan Star* created quite a controversy when a female finalist's head scarf fell to her shoulders while she was dancing. The woman received death threats and had to go into hiding after her performance.

Global News Agencies

Global news agencies are organizations that act as global news wholesalers to retail news outlets. These agencies collect and distribute news around the world, and they are often studied as part of media

globalization. Where national news agencies focus on national concerns such as nation building and development, the focus of global news agencies is more on global concerns. Because of their global reach, they have much power over images and news that people around the world receive. Some of these news agencies—for example, Agence France-Presse (AFP), Reuters, and the Associated Press (AP)—have existed since the first half of the 19th century. In an era of globalizing media, news agencies are often blamed for cultural homogenization because of their focus on Western news and adherence to Western news values. In fact, some media scholars argue that globalization is the same as Westernization to global news agencies, because of their Western news ideologies and unequal attention to world regions.

Research has shown that women are seldom included in news content from mainstream global news agencies. However, research in this area is scarce. When women are included in international news more generally, they are most often represented as victims of disasters. In news about women from “other” countries, stereotypes abound. For example, Arab women are often portrayed as culturally inferior and repressed. These news representations seldom take specific historical contexts and circumstances into account. Because of the lack of representation of women in global news content, women have developed their own news networks, notably the Women’s Feature Service (WFS) and WIN News. Between 1994 and 1999, the Inter Press Service (IPS), an alternative news agency that focuses on news from the developing world, implemented a gender-mainstreaming policy to hire more women and to include more women in the news. To mainstream gender in the news, IPS aimed to integrate issues of gender, equality, and women’s rights into all its editorial coverage. While the project was not completely successful, IPS continues to work on gender equality through its *Gender Wire*, a free weekly newsletter.

Third World, Postcolonial, and Transnational Feminisms

The theoretical perspectives developed through Third World, postcolonial, and transnational feminisms have been used to inform scholarship on media globalization and transnational media. Third World feminism gives voice to women from the developing world and argues for the recognition of the histories and struggles of Third World women through inter-

secting forms of oppression. Postcolonial feminism focuses on the effects of racism and colonialism on women, and it is also critical of cultural imperialism by Western feminism. Transnational feminism refers to the movement of feminism across national borders through networking, conferences, and new media technologies. Feminist scholars have used these theories to study various aspects related to gender, culture, and the media in a global perspective.

Global Media Activism

Feminist media groups around the world are engaging in media activism to demand better access for female journalists to the media and more gender-sensitive representations of both men and women. Media activists worked to include the media as one of 12 areas of concern in the “Platform for Action,” which emerged from the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. Strategic objectives related to women and the media were included in Section J of the document and specifically addressed the continuing problems that women face with regard to access and representation in the news media. Governments and other groups were urged to mainstream gender into all policies and programs. Media scholar Margaret Gallagher published *Gender Setting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy* in 2001, and it became an essential guide for those interested in gender and media activism on a global scale. Perhaps the best example of global media activism is the Global Media Monitoring Project, which was launched in 1995 to coincide with the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The project has been repeated every five years since then: in 2000, 2005, and 2010. A total of 108 countries participated in the most recent study, which showed that only 24 percent of people who are heard or read about in print, radio, and television are female. This is considered to represent a significant improvement over that of 1995, when only 17 percent of people in the news were women. The study also found that female reporters wrote 37 percent of stories reported on television, on radio, and in newspapers.

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See also Class Privilege; Cultivation Theory; Cultural Politics; Feminist Theory: Postcolonial; Feminist Theory: Women-of-Color and Multiracial Perspectives; Gender Media Monitoring; Mass Media; Media

Consolidation; Media Convergence; New Media;
Newsrooms; Postmodernism

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MEDIA LITERACY

At the 1992 National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, a rough consensus emerged from U.S. scholars—from such diverse fields as media studies, media production, literature and language arts, library information science, and educational theory and practice—regarding the importance of media literacy, its definition, and significant concepts for teaching it. Media literacy was defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms.” A media-literate person “can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media.” Scholars could not agree on a list of goals or instructional practices for teaching media literacy; however, by using models developed by educators in Australia, Canada, and Great Britain, they did agree on the following conceptualizations:

Media are constructed and construct reality; media have commercial implications; media have ideological and political implications; form and content are related, each of which has a unique aesthetic, codes, and conventions; and receivers negotiate meaning in media.

Thus a comprehensive definition of media literacy involves the ability to locate multimedia resources (research skills); to analyze them critically (possibly using various models of analysis); to evaluate them in the social, economic, political and historical contexts in which they are created and interpreted; and to interpret them in light of the grammatical logics (textual and visual) that shape them. For some scholars, media literacy also involves the ability to create media messages in print, audio, video, and multimedia formats, such as are found on the Web. For others, it involves not only acquiring cognitive skills but also aesthetic, emotional, and moral development.

Although media literacy is primarily taught in K–12 curriculums, it is also taught in institutions of higher education around the globe. In North America, the term often used is *media literacy*, whereas in the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries it is often called *media education*. Teachers of media literacy use diverse pedagogical techniques, including close textual analysis, contextual analysis of specific media texts such as films or television shows, genre analysis, cross-media comparisons, and macro-analysis of media industries, such as advertising. They often employ techniques as diverse as role playing and media production.

The interdisciplinary field of media literacy studies has been informed by various conceptual models, such as media effects/inoculation theory, uses and gratifications, cultivation theory, cultural/critical studies, and semiotics. The conceptual foundations drawn upon result in very different kinds of media literacy education programs. American media studies tend to reflect the effects/inoculation and uses and gratifications paradigms, whereas Latin American and European countries draw primarily from cultural/critical studies and semiotics.

Types of Media Literacy

Media ecology theorist Joshua Meyrowitz argues for the importance of developing multiple media literacies in students. Specifically, he enumerates three media literacies; content literacy, media grammar literacy, and (drawing on the American media ecology tradition) medium literacy. He explains that