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Media Literacy And Its Cultural Hegemony

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Abstract: This paper emphasizes on the symbiotic relationship between media literacy and cultural hegemony. It attempts to focus on the contextual meaning of both media literacy and culture by giving a brief historical overview of societal norms from media perspective and bring to the fore the interrelatedness of culture and media. Media Literacy and cultural hegemony are interconnected notions that emphasizes on how media influences societal values and customs. Media literacy empowers individuals to critically analyze media messages, while cultural hegemony refers to the dominance of certain perspectives and values within a society often reinforced by media. Media literacy helps individuals resist hegemonic influences by fostering critical thinking and media analytical skills. Media plays a vital role in shaping and maintaining cultural hegemony. By controlling the narratives and perspectives presented in media, powerful groups can influence public opinion and reinforce their dominance.

Index Terms - Media Literacy, Cultural Hegemony, Subalterns, Marxists economics.

The concept of cultural hegemony is much broader than that of ideology, because it refers to the construction process of the collective experience, the creation of the world conceptions and of the moral, cultural and intellectual direction of society through media literacy. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication, from the printed word to the Internet. It helps you to understand your surroundings. It empowers you to make more informed decisions. It makes us enlightened with the right information which enables us to see through the strategies and critically evaluate manifestos. Antonio Gramsci considered hegemony as a process where subalterns had to impose another scenario not to irretrievably find themselves in the same previous social structure. For Gramsci, hegemony is exercised by the ruling class not only through coercion, but also through consensus, managing to impose their worldview, a philosophy of customs and 'common sense' that favor the recognition of its domination by the dominated classes.

Hegemony is not equal to (...) ideology, consciousness formations of the ruling class are not reduced, but include the relations of domination and subordination, according to (...) practical consciousness configurations, as an effective saturation of the process of life in full (...) hegemony is a body of practices and expectations regarding the whole of life. Our senses and energy (...) define perceptions we have of ourselves and our world. It is a vivid system of meanings and values. To the extent they are experienced as practices (they) appear to confirm each other. It is a sense of reality for most people in society (...) (Williams 1977: 109).

According to him, it refers to the moral philosophical and political leadership of a social group which is not gained by force by an active consent of other social groups taking control of culture and ideology. During this process, the leading social group exerts its impact and gain its legitimacy mainly through social mechanisms such as education, religion, family and the mass media.

I. MEDIA HEGEMONY:

Based on the definition of hegemony, media hegemony means dominance of a certain aspects of life and thoughts by penetrating dominant culture and values in social life. In other words, media hegemony served as a crucial shaper of culture, values and ideology of society. (Althiede,1981)

The assumption of media hegemony is that the ideas of the ruling class become ruling ideas in society. According to this approach, the mass media are controlled by the dominant class in society which uses it as a vehicle for exerting control over the rest of the society. Media Hegemony is rooted in the Marxists economics. Altheide says that it seems to involve at least three assumptions that could be treated with evidence.

- 1) The socialization of journalists involves guidelines, work routines and orientations replete with the dominant ideology.
- 2) Journalists tend to cover topic and present news, reports that are conservative and supportive of the status quo.
- 3) Journalists tend to cover negative coverage of foreign countries, especially Third World Nations.

II. MEDIA HEGEMONY IN THE PAST

- 1) Corporate Media Power
- 2) Media Ownership in hands of few
- 3) Capitalist-Status quo
- 4) Western values
- 5) Negative coverage of 'Third World'

Robert Ferguson uses the metaphor of an iceberg to explain the need for critical media analysis. Many educators working under an apolitical media literacy framework guides their students to only analyze the obvious and overt tip of the iceberg they see stretching out of the water. Ferguson asserts that this is a problem because "The vast bulk which is not immediately visible is the intellectual, historical and analytical base without which media analysis runs the risk of becoming superficial, mechanical or glib. The critical component of media literacy must transform into an exploration of the role of language and communication media in order to define relationships of power and domination because below the surface of that iceberg lie deeply embedded ideological notions of white supremacy, capitalist patriarchy, classism, homophobia and other oppressive forces.

What comes to our mind when we think of the word media? Perhaps, Facebook post, Instagram, memes, infographics, your favorite TV show, news? Media refers to all forms of communication that inform, entertain or communicate with us. Media plays a very pivotal role in our daily life. We cannot think or imagine our life without media. Getting up in the morning, reading newspaper while sipping a cup of tea or browsing net or reporting videos on TikTok. It shapes our perception, attitude and behavior-for better or for worse. With the advancement of technology media is more accessible now than ever. Survey shows that 90% of teens age 13-17 have used social media, 75% report having at least one active social media profile and 51% report visiting a social media site daily. On average, teens are online almost 9 hours a day, not including time for homework. While having the world at our fingertips, can be both enlightening and thrilling but it also imposes new trials and risks. Today, customers are blitzed with info, often with blurred lines between fact, fiction and opinion. This phenomenon is referred to as "information disorder or information overload" a term that comprehends the various categories of misinformation, disinformation and malinformation that pollute our media. Examples of MDM include conspiracy theories, propaganda and hyper-partisan content.

In this confusion and dilemma comes the role of media literacy which protects the next generation from the potential negative effects of media, enabling students to become active participants in today's digital society, rather than passive consumers. The purpose of media literacy is to facilitate an understanding of media and its role as well as develop necessary skillset to be critical thinkers, thoughtful and effective communicators of society. Considering media literacy from intercultural perspectives, the authors describe its role in the world where the notion of the uniqueness of each civilization as an isolated, self-sufficient entity is no longer valid: Without realizing it, we are probably subjugating humans to the often-uncontrolled designs of technical progress. We need to ask ourselves these significant questions.

Is this, in essence, a kind of fatalism with regard to the future?

Are we not regarding it as a factor independent of our will?

Perhaps due to impotence or lack of diligence we are allowing ourselves to surrender by the designs of an apparent ne leviathan technology named technocracy. We tend to accept ant technological progress without questioning it. Perhaps we are anaesthetized our critical conscience. Humanity should govern the development of technology instead of technology governing the development of humanity. It is now imperative to abandon

blind trust in technology and to deepen our critical spirit. Humanity as a whole must force the media system to act as an interpreter and translator of various cultural hegemony.

In recent years, regulatory authorities from the world of communication in Europe – which tend to separate themselves from government influence to become independent authorities – have launched, although unsystematically, initiatives related to increasing the autonomy and critical abilities of citizens. At the same time, they have on occasions used different mechanisms to promote civic participation in some of the decisions and standards that affect the communication sector. Nevertheless, only a few of these authorities, such as OFCOM, have systematically supported the promotion of media literacy. It is not however, an isolated case. On the contrary, its example has spread and many authorities now promote media literacy or are beginning to recommend its promotion as a result of the research and investigations that they have carried out.

III. THE NEW STRATEGY OF SOME INDEPENDENT REGULATORY AUTHORITIES EMBRACES

1. **Monitoring:** Just as these institutions are in charge of monitoring the status of the communications market, they should monitor the status of the public's understanding and interaction with the media.

2. **Research:** Finding the best ways to introduce people to information society, to find opportunities and to be aware of risks.

3. **Active promotion and partnership:** Active promotion does not only mean promoting campaigns, but also to act as mediator among all the stakeholders, that is to say, to encourage dialogue and co-operation among all public and private actors.

Media and information communication technology are tools for empowerment when people who are most often marginalized or misrepresented in the mainstream media receive the opportunity to use these tools to tell their stories and express their concerns. For members of the dominant group, critical media literacy offers an opportunity to engage with the social realities that the majority of the world are experiencing. As Marshall McLuhan (1964/1997) coined the global village, it is not merely enough to understand media, we need to be empowered to critically negotiate meanings, engage with problems of misinterpretations and underrepresentation, and produce their own alternative media. Addressing issues of inequality and injustice in media representations can be powerful starting place for problem-posing transformative education. Media Literacy offers tools and framework to help us in the process of deconstructing injustices, expressing own voices and struggling to create better society.

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