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International Communications
Week 11

**Contraflow in Global Media:**

**News:**
While there are real forces and arguments related to media convergence and cultural homogenization, it also must be said that the spread of the US model of professional, commercial media has also brought some beneficial changes to some national and regional media industries, leading to a revival of cultural nationalism and the ability to speak back to power.

National media content on the whole remains important (and in many cases, the most successful and profitable in local markets)
- People prefer entertainment in their own language, especially when it caters to their own cultural priorities
- However viewers are more complex these days
  - access to many media forms through new technologies allows individuals to access local, regional, national and international channels and participate – in varying degrees – with multiple levels of global media discourses and participate in multiple levels of identification
  - it is hard to lock a media consumer into one frame of identity from which to ‘understand’ them
  - audiences can critically negotiate with imported media content in more complex ways than many studies suggest

**Global Media Events:**
- Serve to potentially link us together in positive ways
- Continue to be framed by culture, cultural industries, and cultural impressions/biases
– 2005 Tsunami
– BP Oil Spill
– Live 8/Live Earth

Visual Media have tremendous power to influence people’s political and social attitudes. Media can
- evoke emotional responses
- demand attention
- threaten us
- influence memories
- change ideas of what is natural
- change ideas of the world.

Corporations have used regionalization and localization to manifest ideas of ‘global culture’, but the spread of technology and expanding forms of media and forms of communication have also made the global cultural landscape much more complex.

The technological potential within the extended global media networks has also increased the power and potential of smaller entities/countries/industries to get their voices in the mix.

**Benefits of Global Media:**
1) Has contributed to creating local jobs in media and cultural industries
2) Has contributed to the improvement and movement of media products around the globe
3) Has produced a liberatory potential that can contribute to strengthening liberal democratic culture (gives the people a voice).
4) Has empowered marginalized peoples, allowing them to produce media content and programming that gives them the power to represent themselves, rather than simply be represented by others (works against the proliferation of distortions of representation in western media content)
Problems of Global Media:
1) Representations disseminated in global media products can exacerbate inter-cultural tensions/misunderstandings
2) Can incite backlash against western culture/nations who see it as a threat to local culture
   a. Often based on religious and political groups

Conclusions:
1) Cultural Imperialism/Homogenization is a difficult process to prove
2) Although Western domination of media content globally remains overwhelming (and undeniable), the cultural interactions between western media products and non-western societies are deeply complex
   a. How these products are used and interpreted by various cultures is difficult to nail down in one easy explanation about the construction of meaning
      i. Just because American pop culture is popular around the world *does not mean* that America is popular or that people want to be Americans
      ii. Backlash often occurs in response to
         1. ways in which western media represents local cultures and countries in distorted light
         2. the way western power and interests are deployed through media content and discourses
         3. ways in which westerners engage (or not) with the complexities of other cultures and countries (business people/tourists)

The “Third World” and the “Other” (Edward Said)
- popular discourses in the west lump together the ‘majority world’ into undifferentiated generalizations and superficialities which categorize it in distorted and simple ways.
Obvious unfamiliarity or limited and often distorted understanding of history, traditions, languages, and cultures of many developing countries leads to such undifferentiated views of the ‘majority world’

YES, this is also true of other countries, which reduce the US to simple stereotypes; the difference lies in the fact that we are more powerful and influential in global media politics meaning we can easily be more effective in GETTING OUR MESSAGE OUT; other countries struggle even to be heard, much less understood on their own terms (rather than those set by the US media and culture agenda)

The dominance of the US/Western media models and US culture provides the dominant frame/measuring stick for viewing other cultures and media products, in many cases, implicitly positioning them lower in the hierarchy of value
- Consequently, culture from small countries struggles to be appreciated on its own terms in light of the terms imposed upon it from US/western cultural parameters
  → Locals develop ambivalence about their own culture
  ▪ Czech music culture

International media traffic is more intricate than many economic analyses suggest; culture and cultural identifications travel and are reinforced in very complex ways
- The ‘Scapes’ of Globalization (Appadurai)
  ▪ -ethno-, media-, techno-, finance- and ideo---offer a framework for examining the "new global cultural economy a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (32).
- Cultures of Diaspora → the experience of cultural hybridity (‘living in-between’)
  ▪ the dispersion or spreading of something that was originally localized (as a people or language or culture; the dispersion or
spreading of something that was originally localized (as a people or language or culture)

- The term \textit{diaspora} is used to refer to any people or \textit{ethnic} population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic \textit{homelands}; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world, and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture.

\textbf{Global media organizations and products are critical in fostering such linkages and identifications}

MBC – Middle East Broadcasting Center  
Phoenix Chinese Channel  
TV Globo  
Bollywood  
Reggae

Such cultural channels and products have not necessarily contributed to greater awareness of cultural differences and greater tolerance or interest in multiculturalism; rather, they have instead primarily served niche markets and demographics, implicitly limiting their impact as agents for fostering cultural interaction and engagement.