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Intro to Media Studies
MDA10001
Miss Gigi Bui

Assignment 2 – Weekly Reflection	Weight 5%
Week 4: Form versus Content	Due date: 29 Sep 2024

Part 1: Two interesting points from this week's reading.

We're in a time of globalization—Is it a better time for equality and democracy? Not really, some argue that it actually is a new face of imperialism on a new scale (Devereux, 2014). Whereby, there exists the powerful few who exploit us—our people and our resources.

To serve their interests and benefits, the powerful put a positive spin on our concept of 'globalization'.

We need to stay sharp, so keep in mind that: essentially, there are 11 key features of globalization (Devereux, 2014):

1. Growing level of connectedness on a global level
2. ICTs reduce the distance in terms of time and space between individuals, societies, and nation-states.
3. Rapid transfer of information, knowledge, and capital.
4. Migration
5. A series of flows: capital, knowledge, mass-mediated symbols, and people.
6. Global phenomena in people's (local) lives
7. Deterritorialization
8. Greater reflexivity—to become more critical of our immediate surroundings.
9. More exploitation of the Third World: raw materials and labor.

10. Don't believe the hype, we're far from a utopia. Many women and children are being exploited in global sex industries and workplaces.
11. 'Anti-globalization' movement

References

Devereux, E. (2014) Understanding the media, 3rd edn, Sage, LA.

Part 2

Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams famously disagreed about the power of **media technology** to shape society.

- What were their positions?
- Who do you agree with more and why (use an example)?

Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) – Technological Determinism

He argued that the medium is the message. Meaning, media technology itself, rather than the content, has set in determinants of societal change. As in, we cannot change the one-way consequence.

Raymond Williams (1921-1988) – Cultural Materialism

He contended that culture shapes technology and its social implications. The cultural, economic, and social factors must be taken into account.

He countered technological determinism by placing the emphasis on human agency.

I like the view of Raymond Williams more.

Because I believe in our human agency. I believe that our understanding and interpretation of content greatly matter. Ultimately, we drive societal change.

There's an article in The New Yorker in 2017 called **China's Selfie Obsession**. The author Jiayang Fan walks us through China, where Meitu's apps with beautifying filters are changing the way faces look and shaping the beauty standard.

The media technology to consider here is the coded beautifying filters by Meitu company. These filters always make skin tones brighter and whiter, nose bridges higher, and eyes bigger with double-eyelids—to the extent that people would look unnaturally “Eurasian” (Fan, 2017).

Alarming, people are obsessed with this beauty standard and spend hours to beautify their selfies. This obsession on a large scale makes Fan discombobulated when she reckons people's faces are becoming more and more similar. To achieve the ideal look, people try ways: through app filters and even plastic surgery.

It's important to note that this new phenomenon is happening in a culture of saving face—where one's appearance is expected to be “a matter of ordinary courtesy” for the public interest—and in a country where people have no “liberated sense of self” (Fan, 2017). In this cultural change, our human agency seems insignificant.

I'm still trying to wrap my head around this phenomenon. Is it the technology that dictates our taste—or it is us to be blamed for our choices and preferences?

I think the powerful in society have set out this unrealistic beauty standard. And somehow, we follow like sheep. Is it because having these features and these faces would open doors to opportunities and societal acceptance?

For what I know, this beauty obsession is now worldwide. What to do? Do we simply blame Hollywood and the West for these white people facial features?

References

Fan, J. (2017, December 11). China's selfie obsession. The New Yorker.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/18/chinas-selfie-obsession>