

Cultural Hegemony *Leadership with Consent*

Legitimizing Transnational Relations

Transnational media corporation (TNMC) structures and practices conform to, express, and reproduce social relations of production that establish hierarchies of decision-making. A new transnational division of labor alters the global access to the means of production, changes the relations of production, and determines what will be produced. Social relations are not analytical abstractions. Social relations in media production include: (1) the labor process necessary for production; (2) the social hierarchy in decision-making and implementation of production; (3) the means by which labor is recruited to participate in the production process; (4) the contribution of creative workers to media production; (5) the organization of consent by labor for an unequal social system; (6) the complementary process of involving labor in the production process as consumers and audience commodities; and (7) the symbolic production of meaning through media content. Several of these components will be at least minimally addressed in this chapter, especially the role of consent in reproducing transnational capitalism.

The structure of media production under capitalism frames the possible range and social terms of media consumption, so media production must be investigated for its ideological and cultural contribution to the functioning of the broader society. Media content programming – its images, narratives, and representations – roughly conforms to the structure and material relations of production: commercial media broadcast entertainment

to attract audiences; religious media broadcast entertainment for uplifting souls; public media broadcast entertainment for edification and education. Transnational media build consent for transnational capitalist relations.

Structures of ownership, financing, and regulation organize production norms and practices that create content that social groups interpret and use to reinforce or challenge the existing social relations of production. In shorthand: ownership → programming content → social use.

Ownership does not simply dictate norms, but social relations among groups inform and organize practices. Capitalist owners, corporate managers, production supervisors, writers and creative workers, technical professionals, and more all have differential effects on the production process relative to their social position and the relations of power that have been lost or won in previous negotiations for control (Thebourn, 2008).

Content parallels media ownership structures and production practices. Content underwrites TNMC marketing goals, anticipates profits from media products and audiences sold as commodities, and provides a fertile culture for advertising other consumer goods. In the process, media content popularizes and legitimizes explanations for dominant social relations and cultural norms. Television and movie genres are not selected for their cultural creativity, but for their expected capacity for attracting audiences and advertisers relative to their production costs, restrictions that express and parallel their ideological function of promoting consumerism and spectatorship.

The industrial organization of media directly impacts the dominant style of performance and artistic creation. The concentrated capitalist relations of production reserve power for executives who create performers from scratch, coordinate all artistic production by all employees, plan long-term marketing, and control all media content (Marx, 2012, p. 36). Likewise, media buyers exhibit a shared occupational screen, an insular business culture, and a bias in favor of established transnational media producers (Havens, 2006, p. 160). Richard Butsch's 50 year study of working class images on US television finds that network structures, economic imperatives, and the closed culture of network media creators produce negative images of male working class characters couched in an affluent consumerist ideology.

The political economy of transnational capitalism depends on the cooperation of working classes around the world. Capital is nothing without labor. The transnational capitalist class (TNCC) in all of its national and local manifestations must have at least tacit consent from the workforce to produce and distribute goods. Mass consumer participation is also required

to realize corporate profit. The social contradictions of capitalist inequality and overproduction cannot be avoided, but they may be mitigated or dispersed if TNCC leadership has mass popular consent for the social order and if the working class majority sees no alternative possibilities. These social and political conditions describe cultural hegemony – mass consent for a leadership that reproduces social relations for its own dominance and at least minimal benefits for others.

Capitalist cultural hegemony occurs to the extent that social groups consent to the political and cultural leadership of the transnational capitalist class and its representatives. Media entertainment and the commercial culture it nurtures contribute to mass consent for the larger social order led by transnational capitalism, while social structures and social relations that organize daily life at work and home provide ample experiences echoed in media depictions.

Cultural Hegemony and Mass Consent

Cultural hegemony embraces a political economy paradigm that stresses not just structures of production, but social relations that organize human actions and socialize participants to norms and practices necessary for the smooth functioning of transnational capitalism. Social structures of production and politics organize society; culture includes all those practices and meanings that help us make sense of our lives. Culture, understood as “a whole way of life,” includes language, signs and symbols, rituals, norms, beliefs, and everyday practices that help us understand the world and express our understanding of our way of life. Yet, the construction of cultural meaning is arguably a matter of political and economic power (Vujnovic, 2008, p. 435).

Capitalism depends on contributions of distinct social classes that have unequal access to the means of production and unequal benefits from the wealth created by labor’s use of technology and machinery. Because we are socialized from birth to accept the norms of inherited hierarchy, individual responsibility, and economic requirements for life, we internalize these norms as natural, internalizing explanations, beliefs, and ideologies that support the free market, corporate power, and social hierarchy as we experience them. Hegemony describes a social order that has broad consent for its way of life. Hegemony, as reconsidered by Antonio Gramsci (2000), explains that social contradictions between classes, including disparities in

Cultural Hegemony

Cultural hegemony understood as the social process of “moral, philosophical, and political leadership that a social group attains only with the active consent of other important social groups” (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 1) expresses the current status of transnational capitalism and the social relations that sustain it. Cultural hegemony posits that “commonsense” beliefs about the world arise from daily activities organized according to existing social relations, including wage labor and corporate profit. The hegemonic leadership of the capitalist class depends on widespread consent for social relations by other social classes and groups. Consent depends on how a leadership provides material, political, and cultural benefits to allies, supporters, and subordinate classes and social groups.

wealth and lifestyle, can be muted and accepted as the unfortunate weakness of an otherwise acceptable social order. Hegemony, as a political relationship, can only exist with the widespread consent of allies and subordinate classes willing to follow the political and cultural leadership of the hegemonic group (Artz & Murphy, 2000; Sassoon, 1987). Without consent, hegemony dissipates, challenges by new leaders emerge, and attempts to renegotiate consent may be supplemented with coercion to defend the dominant group.

In the twenty-first century, building hegemonic relations requires concerted, focused strategies for winning consent across classes, nations, and cultures. The political economy of transnational capitalism encompasses all of humanity engaged in accumulating wealth for corporate shareholders and owners – the notorious 1% and their upper class subordinates. Transnational capitalism has been able to temporarily forge widespread tolerance for its competitive, neoliberal order organized through its global chains of production and distribution. The cultural success of transnational capitalism depends on cross-class alliances with a global perspective that is attuned to the needs and demands of all social forces (Gramsci, 2000; Therborn, 2008, p. 158). Ironically, wagedworkers unknowingly deliver surplus value to their capitalist employers, who thus acquire resources to maintain and

continue exploitation (Therborn, 2008, p. 164) and sporadically win support for the social order.

The political economy of transnational capitalism includes all the structures, practices, and norms of commodity production from design and mass manufacturing through sweatshops, casual labor, and new media and the so-called new economy. The transnational capitalist political economy includes multiple levels of participation that build consent from different classes of people that sufficiently benefit economically, politically, and culturally (Artz & Murphy, 2000, pp. 24–29). *Economically*, working men and women benefit from employment and adequate wages which can be used to obtain food, housing, and leisure activities. Other social classes are involved in material production in diverse ways – from ownership, to management, to design, and quality control. *Politically*, labor has accepted modest political reforms and competitive electoral systems as evidence of representation, which has partially brought them into the political process. Other social classes are involved in political organization in diverse ways – from policy planning, to administration, enforcement, political party campaigning, and publicity. *Culturally*, TNMC media obscure the existence of social class, providing diverse and entertaining positive images of most social groups and providing a pleasing and confirming outlet for challenges and criticisms (Alper & Lestyna, 2005; Butsch, 2003; Dines & Humez, 2010). Ready access to affordable consumer goods reinforces self-interest and individual choice for all, while middle class professionals create and promote culture in diverse ways – from creation of content, to promotion, participation, and reporting on culture. All social classes contribute to the reproduction of capitalism materially and symbolically in contradictory and complex ways (Bourdieu, 1987; Garnham, 1990; Therborn, 1983). In all, for now, capitalist cultural hegemony has broad (albeit partial) consent across social classes, genders, and ethnic and religious groups in most nations – punctuated by some dramatic class conflicts rejecting capitalist assumptions, as seen recently in Greece, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

Local labor, creative workers, and subcontractors build sets, write dialogue, and translate consumer values to local cultures. They not only contribute to the hegemony of transnational capital, they contribute to their own consent by directly participating in the capitalist production process, receiving economic and political benefits while they confirm capitalist cultural hegemony in their own cultural work. The transnational capitalist class does not personally run this social system. It relies on the commitment and expertise of experts to manage social relations that ensure TNCC

profits. Supplementing political practices, advertisers, publicists, and media programmers are charged with building consent for the social order. In return, these “intellectuals for transnational consumerism” (Gramsci, 2011, Vol. 2, p. 242) are well-compensated and thereby exemplify living proof of the validity of assumptions about market economics.

Deregulation and privatization open access to personal consumption for the elite, while films, television serials, and advertising glamorize global standards of consumption (Denné, 2008, p. 99). Consequently, the capitalist bureaucracy, from technocrats and managers to government politicians, willingly consent to free market rules and values as expressed in the transnational order. “Thus both direct economic pressures and the cultural investment required for successful competition for cultural dominance ensure a tendency for the class structure of the dominant class to reproduce itself and its control over symbolic production” (Garnham, 1990, p. 85) with the increased likelihood of popular consent for its cultural hegemony.

By far the largest class in the world consists of millions of workers who actually produce the wealth of the world through their creative labor power. Their sheer immense majority would suggest that democratic decisions would quickly rearrange the socio-economic order, but for now this working class majority is not sufficiently organized politically to challenge capitalist social relations. Part of the responsibility of the managerial social class is to keep labor oriented away from collaborative action, to lead and organize the great mass of humanity according to the tenets of transnational capitalism, especially individual consumption. The TNCC and its agents prefer to have cooperation from all, because the relations of force tilt to the working class and are not susceptible to permanent coercion by a handful against the many. Even selective coercion is expensive and risky, as it might unleash a backlash that cannot be easily contained – as de Lozado learned in Bolivia in 2003 and Mubarak discovered in Egypt in 2012. Far more effective is leadership by consent. Of course, if consent for capitalist leaderships cannot be won or negotiated with subordinate groups, violence from capitalist quarters will again rise up – as in Egypt in 2013.

For consent to be secured, powerful class allies and substantial numbers of subordinate groups must cooperate in the functioning of the hegemonic system. Hegemony appears as a consensual culture only so long as the leading group can meet the minimal needs of the majority (Sassoon, 1987, p. 94), or at least obstruct efforts for an alternative social arrangement. Thus, government, educational institutions, churches, political parties, and media work hard to advance practices and beliefs in individualism, market

values, and deference to authority, while insisting that collective, social cooperation is misguided irrationality. Therborn (2008) observes that working men and women may consent to the social order because they may be disinterested in the form of rule to which they are subjected; they may be unaware of possible alternative social relations; they may feel individually isolated and powerless to affect change (p. 171). Lack of interest, information, and confidence are not personality traits or a permanent condition. Work rules, school curricula, media entertainment, and the entire panoply of behaviors and activities of daily life contribute to reproducing the existing social order, of building consent for the cultural hegemony of consumer capitalism. "The structure of the global capitalist system is maintained through the support of millions of citizens guided by charismatic personalities who routinely take control of the media and politics to manipulate emotions and logic" (Robinson, 2004, p. 159). To be successful, media localize and hybridize entertainment content with familiar, attractive, and culturally inclusive images.

Consumerist media entertainment has become culturally internalized and domesticated in nations around the world. In short, commercialized media producers everywhere emulate and consent to the tenets of transnational capitalist leadership, commodifying and marketing diverse and hybrid cultural products for global trade (e. g., world music, ethnic chic, fusion cuisine).

Zee TV broadcasts adaptations of global media content and style in Hindi-language serials, Hindi films, and Hindi music that massage transnational media themes into local variations (Derné, 2008, pp. 113–114), facilitating consumerism and self-gratification. As work life and social life become more commercialized and atomized and urban neighborhoods become more isolating, media narratives and images may displace the primary traditional sources of group identity, such as school, ethnicity, religion, even sport and political parties. Transnational media and their local partners promote consent for ruling social practices and cultural norms, particularly consumerism and individualism within whatever larger cultural package is on offer, such as European identities, pan-Asian identities, Islamic identities, and so on.

Shifting social positions wrought by the changes in production, work experience, daily life, immigration, and so on are accompanied by shifting media images that pleasantly confirm the legitimacy of the new social order. In the context of transnational media, individuals integrated into (and benefiting from) the new production relations, with more corporate and

work socialization into norms, values, and styles, and with more education, will be more likely to adopt transnational political perspectives provided by TNMC narratives and images.

Media images emanating from a transnational capitalist cultural hegemony are not explicitly manipulative; nor do these images "make" viewers accept consumerism or individualism. Rather, "images weave together the symbolic fabric of a hegemonic political culture" (Fernandes, 2000, p. 612) in stories that confirm the familiar patterns of daily life under capitalism, mostly paralleling individual social class positions. In India, "advertising, television programming, and Hindi films all play a role in constructing [and confirming] the experiences of the elite consuming classes as the norm" (Derné, 2008, p. 93). The average citizen really is alienated and atomized, with little power over what will be produced, and with scant positive representation on television or in film (Alper & Lestyna, 2005). Women and non-dominant cultural groups actually do experience ethnic and gender inequality at work and on the street, enduring negative stereotypes on screen (Dines & Humez, 2010). Working class citizens who are isolated from their neighbors and co-workers scramble for individual survival, while depicted as little more than lovable buffoons on television (Butsch, 2003). The majority of citizens really are excluded from political policy, locally, nationally, and internationally and excluded from both media production and accurate representations.

The primary control we have is what we eat (within our budget), what we wear (within our budget), and what we do in our leisure time away from work (because we have no rights in the workplace). In mass, urban, anonymous society, we witness on a daily basis the disinterest of others, the faux friendliness of store clerks, and the impersonal bureaucratic behavior of those in charge – the common malaise of all of us in a social order that leaves consumption as the primary expression of self and creativity. In this environment, we relish entertaining images of selfless heroines, direct action superheroes, bumbling authorities, rewarding romantic personal relations, and the positive rewards of self-confidence and self-interest. Content provided by TNMCs satisfies our desires, reiterates social inequality as the norm, and builds its consumerist cultural hegemony in the process. TNMC media express content historically and psychologically appropriate for transnational capitalist relations.

Hybrid media models and localized stories confirm the compatibility between local cultures and the global order. Transnational media thus obtain validity, while their stories establish and explain the ground on

which people move, providing appropriate meanings for behaviors and relations already active in daily life outside of media (Denné, 2008; Gramsci, 2011, Vol. 3, p. 170). In this transnational political and social configuration, governments do not police the neoliberal order alone. Transnational corporations (TNCs), advertising firms, and TNMCs employ marketing agents, publicists, scriptwriters, and programmers to create what is effectively a discipline for consumerism. As much as possible, mass desire is channeled into ritualized forms of consumption that provide profits to corporations and commonsense explanations to the rest of us (Galbraith & Karlin, 2012b, p. 19).

The cultural hegemony of transnational capitalism, often cast as globalization, appears as common sense to broad sections of all social classes across most nations. European businessmen, Dubai construction workers, French college students, teachers, journalists, and politicians from every land, and workers from Chinese factories and Bengali sweatshops to manufacturing plants in Mexico and the United States mostly accept the rule of the market and its insistence on individual competition, including an economically justified reduction in social welfare and public service. Working classes, ethnic diasporas, gendered labor forces, and disenfranchised youth may have individual goals and collective concerns, but for now individual consumption, the cultural norms of “work hard, play hard, keep your head down,” and (absent any other reasonable possibility) convince most citizens that “there is no alternative” to the free market and global competition.

Cultural hegemony develops according to class relations and practices. Global media experiences are framed by social class, gender, and ethnicity. There are those who make decisions and those who do the work, while pleasing multicultural offerings assure viewers of the naturalness of it all. Media entertainment symbolically naturalizes the TNCC regime of market relations, codified as individualism, self-gratification, consumption, deference to authority, and the privileging of apolitical entertainment and spectatorship over citizenship and participatory democracy.

Consent begins on the factory floor and in the digitally computerized office, while media messages and cultural pastimes confirm with gratifying consistency that individual success derives from personal initiative cushioned with acquiescence to authority. Caught between a little coercion and a little benefit, labor abides by management’s rules, consenting to wage relations that provide some modest security, reassured by pleasing cultural images and dominant political messages that legitimize the hegemonic leadership of the transnational capitalist class. One should be thankful for a

job, an income, and recognize one’s personal skill or luck in securing gainful employment – with tacit acceptance of supervision and corporate goals assuring continual reward. Co-workers and families by their actions seem to agree. The culture of daily work reinforces the social relations of wage labor and capitalist profit. Away from work, recreation and entertainment sustain the drudgery – “TGIF! “Thank God, it’s Friday!”

Given their immediate and ongoing economic and material benefit from the structure of transnational capital, an elite global middle class “shares a common aim of promoting a consuming ideology around the world” (Denné, 2008, p. 121). Such a complicit culture is the preferred mode of rule of transnational capitalism: contemporary cultural hegemony expresses the condition of widespread consent (or tacit acceptance) among diverse classes and ethnic groups for the capitalist structure and practices of wage labor production and consumerist dissemination of social and cultural life.

Relations of Production and Transnational Capitalist Cultural Hegemony

What is media power? The power to decide programming, the power to decide format and genre, the power to decide who has access to media production, to decide media content, its purpose, values, and ideology. Transnational media power derives from capitalist social relations based on private ownership and profit. The irrepressible necessity for commercial growth drives all media to adapt, merge, or disappear. This global trend adversely affects remaining public service media, which can be seen drifting towards advertising and entertainment (Hendy, 2013). According to the TNCC, media are private industries, and as such must abide by market rules. Decision-making power falls to those who own and finance media operations. Exceptions appear either as community media, in political and ethnic subcultures (like “outlaw” music genres in Indonesia; Boddien, 2005), or as part of revolutionary projects for social transformation, as in Nicaragua in the 1980s and contemporary Venezuela. In each case, media are both economic and cultural, and decisions over both are the result of power relations.

The structure and ideology of capitalist globalization have an indissoluble link with the structure and content of global media entertainment. Media “conform to the economic imperatives that affect other industries. Workers produce values that owners appropriate. One enterprise expands at the expense of another” (Schiller, 1976, p. 79). In the process, TNMCs

attract local partners who want in on the profits, increasing the predominance of commercial media everywhere – organizationally and ideologically disseminating the cultural values of individualism and consumerism (Fritth & Feng, 2009).

Rewards and sanctions organized by capitalist institutions, such as corporations and the legal system, enable as well as constrain (Bourdieu, 1992) – securing mass consent for existing social relations. Capitalism “forces people into highly exploitative relations; and it does so regardless of their culture, their background, [their nation]. All it is interested in is profits” (Chibber, 2013). So, just as other transnational industries control dispersed sites and processes of production, from design to manufacture, so too TNNMCs organize new relations of media production across borders. TNNMC television companies intersecting with Hollywood, Bollywood, Chollywood, and even Nollywood’s entrepreneurship reproduce and regulate a “new international division of cultural labor” through their “control over cultural markets, international co-production, intellectual property, marketing, distribution, and exhibition” (Miller et al., 2005, p. 52).

In each case, transnational capitalism rearranges the social relations of production that transform class relations globally and locally. Again, this has not been simply coerced: in Eastern Europe, foreign investment *followed* economic and social restructuring to “reinforce the tendency to organize the market and the economic organizations in ways similar to, or transplanted from, more economically advanced countries” (Jakubowicz, 2007, p. 116). Transnational investment was “actively solicited by Eastern European businesses, governments, and entrepreneurs” (Hollifield, 1993, p. 2). The “commercial logic of the market” also influenced media reform in post-Soviet Russia, which became one of the most rapidly growing advertising markets in the world (Vartanova, 2008, p. 20). In every locale, popular consent seems to follow transnational production trends.

Global restructuring includes shifting production sites such that the transnational media “labor economy is dispersed throughout the world” (Govil, 2007, p. 92), increasingly in global media cities that attract eager creative and production workers. Production of any particular film includes multiple locales with multiple jobs (from filming and editing to costume design and marketing) willingly performed by many nationally distinct work forces, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and contractors.

Labor can take manifold forms in local media production, from “special effects, sound recording, editing, film processing, music and dialogue coaching, to acting, directing, filming, scouting locations, building sets,

catering, government relations, set publicity, watching and interpreting” (Miller et al., 2005, p. 113). With localized TNNMC production, jobs are constantly ending and starting, further establishing capitalist control while winning consent from those workers who have jobs and diluting alternative possibilities by constantly dispersing temporary workers. In the TNNMC system, workers are caught in “perennial uncertainty and lack anything beyond temporary wages” (Miller et al., 2005, p. 115). Enamored TNNMC executives and postmodern theorists celebrate the autonomy of creative workers in this environment of decentralized production and the accumulation of wealth from the labor of those creative workers, arguing for consent to the new world order.

The New International Division of Cultural Labor

While it has always been true that that power differentials in social relations have dictated who can speak and when, the transition to transnational capitalism has radically altered how communication is produced and distributed. “The ability to transcend spatial limitations on commerce [with communication technology] has increased the variety, importance, and organization of various up-front and after-market windows worldwide when calculating potential sales revenue” (Havens, 2006, p. 38) – permitting transnationals to take advantage of differences in labor costs, tax policies, interest rates, and local services. Economists have noted that global flexible production schemes based on relocating production, increasingly in the developing countries, has accelerated measures to increase labor productivity everywhere. Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye (2004) designate this global condition the “new international division of labour,” arguing that it has led to a manufacturing crisis in industrial countries and production in developing countries controlled by transnational capital merged with national (p. 15). To overcome the social power of organized labor in industrialized nations, capital exports production elsewhere.

The development of the world economy has increasingly created conditions (forcing the development of the new international division of labour) in which the survival of more and more companies can only be assured through the relocation of production ... where labour-power is cheap to buy, abundant and well-disciplined; in short, through the transnational reorganization of production. (Fröbel, Heinrichs, & Kreye, 2004, p. 15)

Labor insecurity is the norm. Companies move production where lower wages, higher tax incentives, or other factors of production beckon.

Parallel developments in transnational media have created a “new international division of cultural labor” (NICL) (Miller et al., 2005, pp. 120–123). As TNMCs produce media commodities, ideologies, and profits, they also produce and reproduce the capital relation itself (Therborn, 2008, p. 137) – the underlying motivation for capitalist cultural hegemony.

There is no “de-centering” of power in this new global order. Global production does not disturb the TNMC “organizational hierarchy or the forms of specialization which stratify the working class and create a social layer of administrators and overseers who rule – in the name of capital – over the day to day operations in the workplace” (Harvey, 1999, p. 31), no matter what nationality, ethnicity, or gender supplies the workforce or management. Global media production creates local regional enterprises “with complex links between film, video, television, telecommunications, animation, publishing, advertising, and game design” (Davis & Yeh, 2008, p. 65) – all based on acquiring multinational talent and the cheapest creative labor possible. TNMC production recruits national governments, small media firms, and local workers to compete among themselves over wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Where jobs are few and wages are low, workers may willingly consent to their own exploitation as evidence of their own individual fortune or professional skill. In China, for instance, Mattel requires workers to be on the job 10–16 hours a day, seven days a week (Frost & Wong, 2007), yet most workers tolerate such conditions in exchange for regular wages. Media production is not “a simple reflection of the controlling interests of those who own or even control the broad range of capital plant and equipment which make up the means by which cultural goods are made and distributed. Within the media are men and women working within a range of codes and professional ideologies, and with an array of aspirations, both personal and social. The ambitions can be idealized; much cultural production is routine, mundane, and highly predictable” (Golding & Murdoch, 1991, pp. 25–26). The autonomy and creative contribution of media workers are curtailed within transnational production structures that prescribe who does what and who makes decisions. Over time, these practices encourage the internalization of capitalist norms as commonsense behavior.

Although individual access to media technology in the Internet age is unprecedented (nominally demonstrating the “openness” of the ruling social system), the capacity to reach others is severely limited and always

subject to the “off” switch controlled by privately run servers, as Egyptian democracy activists discovered when their social media challenged the Mubarak regime in 2011. Incredibly, some researchers continue to popularize the democratic myth of media access, imagining that “new media technologies enable anyone to start their own culture industry” (Poster, 2008, p. 699). Unfortunately, the information age of transnational capitalism remains one of unbridled *reception* of TNMC messages. The power to tell stories drifts to global media networks that have excessive control over communication via satellites and other media technology (Artz, 2007; Schiller, 1999, pp. 66–68; Thussu, 2000).

The new international division of cultural labor (NICL) “facilitates the free movement of capital into cheap production locations, contains labor mobility and undermines labor solidarity” as a mobile elite exploits whichever country charges the least (Miller et al., 2005, p. 152). Ultimately, the cultural hegemony of transnational media brings economic and political rewards for elites and their middle class technocrats; rewards obtained from rapacious free market policies that encourage individual entrepreneurialism and undermine social solidarity among workers by repeatedly subcontracting abroad with smaller independent studios.

Training for Consent

An essential feature of transnational media’s capacity for organizing and profiting from the division of cultural labor is the existence of shared business cultures sustained through extensive co-productions and joint ventures. In Russia, “business publications are among the first media enterprises when introducing international models and styles of practices” (Koikkalainen, 2007, p. 1326). Their production practices promote a market economy, while their journalistic practices communicate acceptable reporting, writing, and professional behavior. Indeed, the rapid growth of Russian business media provides a striking example of capitalist hegemonic leadership and its effective use of communication for training class allies (Vartanova, 2008).

Daily business practices demonstrate the legitimacy of TNMC leadership and build consent for its hegemony. In China, local publishers have formed joint ventures with several TNMCs, including Hachette (*Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Woman’s Day*), Hearst (*Cosmo*), Condé Nast (*Vogue*), and Shifunotomo (*Rayli*, *Mina*). The local editions receive text and photos. Staff

from the head offices in Paris, New York, and Tokyo are sent to train Chinese staff and editors, directing and modeling the required business norms of communication, editorial decision-making, content tone and style, marketing, audience research, and managerial practices – cultivating local publishers in the ways of TNMC operations, including preferences more amenable to advertising, such as changing “magazines for reading to magazines for seeing” (Frith & Feng, 2009, p. 169).

Throughout the training, facilitators coach participants and model appropriate business behavior in social interaction, humor, and even affections. In short, transnational capitalist class solidarity is cultivated and reproduced around shared commercial interests and these agreed-upon “best practices” for production, distribution, subcontracting, and labor relations. Aspiring local and national media look to successful transnational capitalists for economic, political, and cultural leadership.

Television producers and network executives see “light entertainment formats as insurance against uncertainty: they offer broadcasters more commercially efficient strategies of maximizing audiences” (Keane et al., 2007, p. 198). Genres such as game shows and reality TV attract viewers, limit costs for scriptwriting and acting, and take advantage of low-cost labor in all local adaptations. Around the world, governments agree on deregulation and commercialization, while TNMCs can expect standardized, equivalent media worker skills and pro-industry attitudes at lowered costs. The combination of work norms across national media labor markets and standardized formats with predominant images echoing individualism assures substantial media profit with minimal labor solidarity across gender, ethnicity, and national borders. Most importantly, production norms secure consent for the social relations of production and their ideological explanations. For now.

Without this global culture of production organized according to capitalist social relations, TNMCs could not successfully negotiate cultural hegemony in practice or in image. Whatever hybridity theorists might imagine, common dominant values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors are being cultivated in and by transnational media production. Hierarchies of professional skill and decision-making become “common sense” through enforcement and repetition on the job, backed by copyright laws and non-compete penalties that prevent workers from developing their creativity (Betting, 1997). Because TNMCs are vertically and horizontally integrated and interlocked with other communication technology companies, transnational media business and programming standards are duplicated across

media platforms and delivery systems, from television, film, satellite, broadband, and mobile technologies, facilitating a leadership position for TNMCs in new media uses, as well. Widespread consent has come with work norms and mass entertainment, but democracy and public access to production by the millions of workers and citizens are not part of the hegemonic equation.

Transnational consolidation and concentration assert the conditions for producing media, including aesthetics, style, form, and content. Reliance on formats, for instance, maximizes the adaptation of content and the distribution of standardized codes and conventions. Although national governments and cultural organizations, including religious groups, frequently attempt to block “foreign” imports of culturally “inappropriate” values, TNMCs have hegemonically adapted. TNMCs have “stripped away” those questionable elements and “substituted local flavour and values,” so that the hybrid program “provides the DNA, the recipe, and the technology for invigorating local television” with commercially structured and commercially viable formats (Keane et al., 2007, p. 200). Commercial success for TNMCs includes localizing production for local languages and cultures, as well as producing content for segmented national audiences: the cosmopolitan elite who own and manage industries, speak English, and participate fully in world economics and politics; the affluent middle classes, including managers, technicians, academics, politicians, and small business people; the working classes, both skilled creative workers, contractors, builders, and less skilled service workers; the lower working class of manual and casual laborers. TNMC leadership provides something for everyone in a truly hegemonic flourish.

A New International Culture of Consumption

A new transnational culture of consumption has grown in tandem with the new international division of cultural labor. As transnational production temporarily undermines labor organization and identity through temporary labor regimes, consciousness of social class and shared circumstances is muted. The combination of a hegemonic pull to consent for some economic reward and institutional coercion against collective resistance seeps into everyday life. Lifestyle identities (in fashion, leisure activity, fandom) attract otherwise alienated men and women (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 55). In terms of cultural hegemony, absent other more democratically authentic identities, commercialized lifestyle

norms are an appealing benefit provided by capitalist class leaders and their media.

The accumulation of wealth by the TNCC and its managerial and political elite has created an international market for the affluent and their interest and ability to purchase high-end consumer goods, consume large amounts of media and cultural commodities, including media technology, media content, live concerts, and travel. Taiwanese consumer culture, for instance, “hungers for diverse Japanese and Korean imports, including mobile phones, electronics, automobiles, cosmetics, clothing, and so on” (Huang, 2011, p. 8). Globally, cosmopolitan elites attract targeted media and advertising. Transnational marketing to this social class both reflects its consuming power and reinforces its prestige and ethos as cultural trendsetters. Media are produced, priced, and targeted for other social classes based on the lifestyle aesthetic established by elites, contributing to capitalist cultural hegemony both materially and symbolically which is actively consented to in consumer behavior. Media produce and distribute material products, which also always contain symbolic and social meanings. Media thus profit directly and facilitate profits for other TNCCs.

TNMCs develop TV stations with languages and formats appropriate for advertisers targeting different audience segments. TNMCs have likewise produced audience-specific films, magazines, newspapers, and music genres. Chua (2006) discerns “consumer communities” from dedicated fans to occasional consumers that parallel the uneven flows among the targeted transnational East Asian media markets, including fan clubs that are established by the celebrities or production companies themselves as a “means of sustaining consumer interest” (p. 10). Importantly, across all the national accents and social class cultural preferences, themes of consumerism and individualism predominate: independence, freedom, career, romance, and self-gratification jump out from all the TNMC produced stories and narratives, serving the interests of transnational capitalism and its yearning for increased profits.

Of course, individual consumer choice is woefully inadequate for the democratization of work or culture. Fans electing their favorite member of the Japanese idol band AKB48 “vote” by purchasing a CD in a commercial distortion of democracy (Galbraith & Karlin, 2012b). Following the “Hello Kitty” craze in Taiwan that expressed youth resistance to regimented education and dress, candidates in the presidential election campaign in Taiwan generated support and profit by marketing stuffed animals as campaign icons to non-political youth. Political expression metaphorically available

in a commodity is a weak substitute for a politically active citizenry. Passing off consumer choice as democracy (or pleasure as power in some variants) is a worn-out cliché and will not hold, although it seems accurate to note the demigration of the electoral process to a sales contest. More importantly, demonstrated regularly around the world, the contradictions between the production and content of global capitalist culture and the experiences and conditions of life for labor and its allies will continually fracture mass consent, erupting in organized political and social resistance – washing away pretensions of consumption as political power. For the moment, the shiny bubble of transnational entertainment predominates, attempting to cover the fragile, brittle social order with diversionary fun, games, and shopping.

Advertising in the Transnational Era

Production of media content for magazines, newspapers, film, television, radio, and the Internet has no consequence until the article, movie, or program reaches readers and viewers, which explains why TNMCs have horizontally integrated production with distribution across companies and borders. To streamline the distribution of media content, TNMCs have ramped up their use of marketing and advertising for their own products. Self-advertising and self-promotion increase the sales of magazines, DVDs, video games, mobile applications, and media-branded consumer products from cereal to clothing.

As noted in Chapter 3, media advertising is crucial to the overall capitalist economic cycle. Advertising expenditures topped \$557 billion in 2012 (Nielsen, 2013), indicating a vibrant, profitable industry and illustrating its importance for all other industries. Globally, the advertising industry has consolidated like the rest of transnational capital.

A handful of transnational, interlocked corporations produce and distribute advertising in alliance and consultation with other TNMCs and other transnational corporations. The largest advertising firm in the world, Dentsu Japan, controls about 30% of the market in Japan and East Asia, owns McGarryBowen (US), and recently acquired the Aegis Group, parent to the Carat and Vizeum global media networks, expanding its presence in Europe. Dentsu’s 2012 revenue topped \$22 billion. Omnicom and Publicis Groupe talked of a \$45 billion merger in 2013 that included DDB, BBDO, Leo Burnett, Saatchi, and other firms. Globally active, London-based WPP has annual revenues of \$10 billion. Advertising is directly interlocked

structurally and financially with transnational media, finance, and consumer goods producers.

The top four advertising firms also have members active in the Trilateral Commission, the World Economic Forum, Council of Foreign Relations, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Directors and shareholders of transnational advertising corporations are part of the transnational capitalist class and fulfill an important economic and political role in securing consent for consumerism, the free market, and the production of corporate profit.

Deregulation of the media, which is all but complete on a global scale, unleashed the friendly dogs of advertising. Tracking and hunting the terrain of neoliberalism and transnational production, advertising and entertainment media jockey for the speedy development of consumerism. From their review of dozens of studies, Hye-jin Paek and Zhongdang Pan (2004) learned that “as the market economy develops Chinese consumers are acquiring a more positive attitude toward the quintessential capitalist message form – advertisements” (p. 492). They found sufficient evidence of the effects of capitalism and advertising to draw “causal inferences on media impact of consumerist values,” with advertising being “a vanguard of the emerging consumer society” (Paek & Pan, 2004, pp. 492–493). Media advertising directly contributes to individualistic and consumerist values, such that exposure to advertisements relates to the acceptance of conspicuous consumption, self-fulfillment, individual indulgence, and the worshipping of affluent lifestyles (Paek & Pan, 2004, p. 495).

TNMC women’s magazines in China are largely funded by fashion advertisers, including L’Oréal, Procter & Gamble, Estée Lauder, Shiseido, Kosé, Unilever, and Benetton (Frith & Feng, 2009, p. 166). Individual consumerism now drives Chinese popular culture. Across Eastern Europe and Russia, a similar commercial media process unfolds under the direction of TNMCs and their advertising allies. Following deregulation of the media, Russia became one of the most rapidly growing advertising markets in the world, leading to a search for niche audiences and diversity in entertainment for delivering advertisements (Vartanova, 2008), while public media disappeared and social and cultural needs went unfulfilled.

Like media content in general, transnational advertising does not always rely on globally standardized specific messages. In most locales, advertising strategies “use well-known nationalist songs, popular commercial film actors and the sponsorship of cultural and sporting events that evoke strong national support” (Fernandes, 2000, p. 615). In Japan, celebrity idols

actually depend on advertising campaigns to market their own careers (Galbraith & Karlin, 2012a). In South Korea, K-pop music stars and their marketing managers use social media to speak to their fans about their personal lives and the products they use (Beattie, 2012). Advertising firms consciously attempt to align marketing strategies with specific national and local cultural conditions, making explicit linkages between products and targeted social classes (Fernandes, 2000) – increasing consumer activity and consent for market values.

Including the crucial role of media in capitalist cultural hegemony, the circulation of commodities in the “production → distribution → consumption” cycle that expresses the process of accumulation of wealth from labor should be amended as “production → advertising and media content → distribution → consumption.” This cycle defines transnational capitalism and its media system: advertising is essential to winning mass consent for consumer capitalism and the worldwide distribution of commodities. Advertising comprises part of the economic logic of media production – audiences are produced for sale to advertisers who in turn feed audiences persuasive messages intended to increase sales of other products.

Advertising does more than move products; it provides a “magic system” that transforms commodities into potent social signifiers (Jhally, 1990; Williams, 1980, p. 170). High heels become a sign of femininity, a sports car becomes a sign of masculinity. Raymond Williams explained the history of advertising as a communication practice that moved from description of quality and pricing, to a communication industry that influences the market – a system for financing media and persuading consumers to change their behavior and follow the leadership of capitalist politicians and marketers. “Advertising developed to sell goods ... but the material object being sold is never enough: this indeed is the crucial cultural quality of its modern forms” (Williams, 1980, pp. 182, 184). In this sense, advertising contributes mightily to capitalist cultural hegemony. Advertising whispers, asserts, and blares from far and wide that consumption brings happiness, that consumer choice demonstrates democracy, that living in a world of commodities is the best of all possible worlds. Advertising even offers financial aid to struggling economies: “Cash-strapped Spain towns [are now] a prime target for advertisers” who strike deals for landmarks, public buildings, and even iconic statues like Christopher Columbus draped in a Barcelona soccer shirt advertising Qatar Airlines (Kane, 2013). Participating in an advertised and advertising culture tacitly and actively exhibits and reproduces consent for the social order of production for consumption.

For transnational capitalism, the best working class consciousness is brand consciousness, which can organize individual social practices and define identity. Advertisers spend millions because they have determined that television images are the prompt, proximity to the star is the desire (Kartlin, 2012, p. 79), and consumer behavior is the cultural outcome. Pleasurable moments and desires are facilitated and exploited by advertisers using entertainment, a vital part of the cultural hegemony of consumer capitalism. Celebrating men and women as consumers who think, feel, and act in "self-motivated, self-interested, and self-reflexive ways" (Dunn, 2008, p. 79) only shuffles individualism to the top of the deck; it does nothing to build democracy or universal cooperation necessary for a less commercial, more humane social order.

Advertising does not seek satisfaction; advertising promotes continuous dissatisfaction that can only momentarily be suspended by some immediate purchase of a commodity. If one purchase provided satisfaction, further purchases would not be necessary. But advertising, and the capitalist commodity system that relies on its persuasive appeals, must have continuous, never-ending, ever-expanding consumption. Desire as expressed in advertising can only be achieved in the imagination. The permanent lack of actual fulfillment contributes to alienation, which quickly returns after each purchase. In Japan, celebrity idols are "replaced regularly and endlessly, even destroyed only to be recreated, thereby fueling the continuous movement of capital (Galbraith, 2012, p. 194). Consumer behavior, predicated on a constant search for pleasurable rewards, propels the capitalist system.

The Hegemony of Advertising and Entertainment

The dehumanizing essence of capitalism could not be revealed more starkly: human needs and human desires are manipulated as a means to harvest consumer fodder for the never-ending demand for capitalist profits. Obviously, satisfying human needs and desires is anathema to such a system that offers only the continuous allure of satisfaction just out of our reach. Consumer behavior assures ongoing consensual dedication to the social system. Organizing production more rationally for human needs would provide goods that work well, last long, and have minimal environmental impact. Advertising that meets media-instigated consumer wants may win mass consent and participation, but it diverts us from more meaningful and

rational public conversations about what kind of world we could devise for full human realization.

Advertising and media entertainment – the twin-headed monster of consumerism has roamed the world for decades searching for audiences and consumers, suffocating attempts at human-centered communication. In the twenty-first century, consumer capitalism dominates global culture. The appeal is the temporary gratification that needs repeated feeding. We enjoy the stories and images. We identify with the heroes and heroines. We desire the accoutrements of celebrity and star. We engage narratives that assure us that individual consumption brings satisfaction. We consent to the purveyors of entertainment and advertising, accepting their claims as guides to everyday life. Cultural hegemony by transnational capitalism requires as much.

Yet, we all sense the inadequacy of a system based on continuous consumption and environmental destruction. Whenever we break from diversionary entertainment, we recognize that humanity is missing from these fictions of consumption. Transnational capitalist cultural hegemony cannot continue to meet the needs of humanity. Inequality, overproduction, the depletion of natural resources portend unresolved antagonisms. Political and social crises recur as economic conditions deteriorate and collapse or cultural conditions unearth insurmountable inequalities. At those moments of rupture, alternative ways of being arise to confront the violence of nation-states defending capitalism. At those times, no sit-com, no action movie, and no commercial advertisement will win consent for a social system that offers nothing for humanity.

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