

Durham, M. G., & Kellner, D. M. (2006). Adventures in media and cultural studies: Introducing the keyworks. In M. G. Durham, & D. M. Kellner (Eds.) Media and cultural studies: KeyWorks (ix-xxxviii). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Synopsis:

Durham and Kellner explored the various approaches to the study of media, culture, and society. The first theory the authors explained is Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony which describes the ruling class domination over the masses by imposing their beliefs and values on the people. Next, the authors discussed the Frankfurt school theorists who further developed the ideas of hegemony and analyzed the growing powers of corporations in society and the media. The Frankfurt school studies showed how the media was controlled by big corporations who used it to further their own interests. Afterwards, the authors described the British cultural studies, who "overcame the limitations of the Frankfurt-school notion of a passive audience in their conceptions of an active audience that creates meanings and the popular"(p. xxiv). Lastly, Durham and Kellner addressed the postmodern theories, globalization, and political economy. They argued each transdisciplinary perspective from the Frankfurt school to the British cultural studies to the French postmodern theories have their strengths and weaknesses, but the authors suggested using all the approaches to overcome the limitations that each perspective may hold.

Key Concepts:

- **Culture industry:** "The process of the industrialization of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives which drove the system"(p. xvii)... "producing a consumer society based on uniform needs and desires for mass produced products and a mass society based on social organization and conformity"(p. xix).
- **Society of the Spectacle:** "Refers to a media and consumer society, organized around consumption of images, commodities, and spectacles"(p. xxiii).
- **Political Economy Approach:** "Centers more on the production and distribution of culture than on interpreting texts or studying audiences... encompasses economics and politics, and the relations between them and the other central structures of society and culture"(p. xxvi).

Key Quotes:

- "The media were interpreted as potent creators of role models, gender identity, norms, values, and appropriate and inappropriate behavior, positioning audiences to behave in diverging ways" (p. xxxii).
- "Each new approach, each emergent theory, equips the budding critic with a different way of seeing and interpreting, thus creating a more diverse perspective for understanding media and culture"(p. xii).
- "The notion of the postmodern implies a fundamental rupture in culture and history. It suggests that there are important changes in the economy, society, culture, the arts, and our everyday life which require new theories, ways of perceiving the world and forms of discourse and practice"(p. xxxiv).

Essential Question:

- Although we may be equipped with different lenses to view the world, will we ever be able to fully understand our ever changing world?