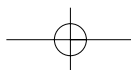
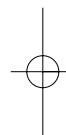
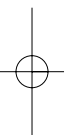


# **UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA**



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**Second Edition**

**Eoin Devereux**

 **SAGE Publications**  
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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In this era of rapid globalization, this volume brings together a wealth of material to bear on questions concerning the role and influence of the media in cultures and contemporary societies. Eoin Devereux deftly argues that while the concept of globalization is problematic, complex and contested, it can be characterized in its complexity in terms of the key role that transnational media organizations are playing in the process, as media ownership has become increasingly concentrated despite overwhelming deregulation.

The author brings examples from societies around the world to illustrate developments in each chapter. From music to soaps, sports to serious news and current affairs programming, and reality shows to teen drama, this introductory text gives students an opportunity to think critically about the daily representations of the world in film, on television and radio, in print and online. Media representations of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality are discussed along with media representations of poverty in the “Third World” and the “developed world.”

Devereux provides an abundance of detailed examples in case studies from around the world. The assignments force students to reflect upon their media consumption and how it may influence their ways of thinking and their behavior. The volume offers students a way to develop a reflexive and critical approach to create and empower agency in light of the “dominance of the global media.” New media technologies—such as blogging and podcasting—appear to be pushing this process to enhance the power of individual audience members, but the author warns that “it would be naïve to ignore the power of the global media giants.”

The volume provides a thorough and accessible discussion of “ideological” approaches to understanding and theorizing about the role of the media in society. Devereux offers a re-conceptualization of the media introducing such concepts as “audience resistance.” He makes it possible for students to easily digest material that is usually found in much more complex elaborations of Althusserian concepts as “ideological state apparatus” “relative autonomy”, and “hegemony.”

Incidentally, as a brief morbid aside to these serious Althusserian concepts, readers may be interested to know that Louis Althusser (1918-1990), an influential Marxist philosopher and advocate of the French Communist Party, claimed mental instability after killing his wife, Hélène Legotien nee Rytman, by strangulation in 1980. After a few years in a French psychiatric ward, he returned to normal daily life before his own death of natural causes in 1990. When the French deconstruct

the name Althusser they say “tu-serres” which means to grip or hold fast. His name is therefore not only a synonym for his personal actions but also for his theory, one that leaves little room for individuals to breathe while in grip of the apparatus of the all-powerful ideological state.

Serious questions about how to analyze media content and media reception are raised in this volume. A variety of qualitative approaches to analyzing audiences and their reception of media content are discussed, with the author’s preference clearly stated for understanding media influence through more emphasis on rich forms of reception analysis and ethnographic research. Methodological approaches to audience research are dichotomized into ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ paradigms. It is important to note that the increasingly popular and widespread use of the ‘qualitative’ methodologies of unstructured interviews, participant observation, focus groups and diary keeping are by no means limited to a particular ideological or critical corner of the field. Indeed, these methodologies constitute the very means by which market researchers identify opportunities to influence buying behavior through persuasive advertising. These methodologies are also central to how those working in the field of development and poverty eradication in low-income countries assess progress, and identify successful approaches to bringing about real change.

The wide array qualitative methods discussed in this valuable introductory text engage interest and encourage students to become involved with them and at the same time critically reflect upon the research process.

Holli A. Semetko  
March 2007