

Приказ дела

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YOUTH AND MEDIA *

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Young people are the social group most likely to cause controversy whenever a debate on the impact of media is commenced. Does the media have a direct impact on young people, how do they "decode" media messages, how do the messaging systems affect their habits, are they the initiators or do they inhibit social changes, are just some of the questions that pervade almost all theories related to media influence. With the aim to answer some of the most common dilemmas regarding the relation between young people and the media, Andy Ruddock, a professor at Monash University, Australia, in his book *Youth and Media* offers a different approach to the study of media influence on young people, putting it in the framework of social history and politics, as well as relating it to the everyday life as inevitable.

Throughout his ten chapters, Ruddock frames his discussion in a recurring cyclical figure that flows in the following cycle: *Research Question, Underlying issue about media influence, Relevant literature, Exemplifying case study, Outcomes, and Lesson for understanding media influence.*

The first chapter, *Why Youth Media?* (pp. 9-37) could be a preface in which the author points out the importance of the research of young people. Further the author presents the case study, a snapshot by Ryan Florence, a British teenager who simulates the assassination of David Cameron and who, after the broadcast on television, becomes viral. In this case, the author points out not only how young people gain political points, but also the omnipresence of the media that enables young people to participate in the making of history, even unintentionally.

The second chapter, *Understanding media content* (pp.37-69), has for its object to determine whether listening to rap music makes people violent. Author claims that the impact of the media is opportunistic: *the media offers young people responses to the needs that have been created elsewhere, and that should be sought out of the media* (p.42). The case study, which the author uses to illustrate the above claims, is the study of Jonathan Pieslak (Pieslak, 2007, 2009) on why young soldiers listened to rap music during the campaign in Iraq. The conclusion derived from the study is that young people often wittingly expose themselves to the negative impact in order to get the assumed/desired effect.

* Andy Ruddock (2015). *Youth and Media*, Belgrade: Clio; p. 298, translation Jelena Petrović

In the third chapter, *Understanding media technologies* (pp.69-96), Ruddock examines the role of social media in youth protests. Ruddock, using the example of Bratich's analysis of the Arab Spring, proves the thesis about the ambivalence and points to the other side of the activism of Egyptians, which was actually "inhibited" under the influence of social networks (Bratich, 2011). The author presents another possibility through the case study as well. It is about Rachel Hoffman from Florida who was murdered while acting as a police informant in a botched drug sting in 2009. The epilogue were numerous protests through social networks and changes in the law. Ruddock uses this example to indicate that it is worth considering *whether the combination of new media platforms* (p.89), no matter to what extent they were exploited, can lead to positive examples of youth activism and to concrete changes.

In the fourth chapter, *Understanding global media industries* (pp. 96-122), the author, through the example of the series *Super Girl*, a musical reality show broadcast in China, shows that it *has become more important how the audience uses the media than how they interpret the media content* (p. 96). The aim of this chapter is to show how the global media industries manage to attract young audience and, at the same time, to appeal to members of different cultures, which is particularly evident in the case of reality show programs.

In the fifth chapter, *Understanding media users* (pp. 122-144), the author discusses the impact of social media on identity construction. In this area, subcultures and feminist studies are the most important, so they are used as a relevant reference by the author. Ethnographic research, which Ruddock introduces as a case study, discusses how Palestinian girls secretly use mobile phones given to them by their boyfriends and see them as "postmodern engagement ring" (Hijazi-Omari and Ribak, 2008). This shows us that the private use of media, when people, in this case girls, think no one is looking, represents a kind of "*defensible space*" (p. 122) and regulates gender identity.

The the sixth chapter, *Understanding media violence* (pp. 144-168), explores how the profit-driven media leads to the commodification of violence. Ruddock argues that the media frames social reality, so the school shootings have become a genre. Through case studies the author concludes that the violence in the media should be thought of as a political message, which is based on fear and the ability to define reality, but one should not lose sight of the fact that new media technologies allow (young) *users to participate in the commercialization of violence* (p. 145).

In the seventh chapter, *Understanding advertising and marketing* (pp. 168-193), Ruddock explores the influence of the media on students' alcohol consumption. The most important observation is that the promotion of alcohol is focused on the meaning of social space. It can be concluded that beverage companies *use the media skillfully to achieve a close relationship with various groups of consumers* (p. 168), which is not a novelty in marketing research.

In the eighth chapter, *Understanding political communication* (pp. 193-219), the author, through the case study of the election campaign of Barack Obama, suggests a link between the social media and encouraging young people to vote. The author concludes that the convergence of the media, blurring the boundaries between news and entertainment, accelerates the political communication trend and draws attention more to what a politician is like than to what he or she stands for as a potential candidate.

In the ninth chapter, *Understanding celebrity* (pp. 219-243), the author offers an explanation of why young people are so mesmerized by celebrities. Ruddock uses the study case about the street-skater-turned-*Jackass* star Bam Margera and points out that Margera is famous because he is an athlete who looks like "an ordinary young man" on television, which is attractive to most media platforms (p. 219). When it comes to celebrity industry, it could be concluded that it uses common people daily as raw material for the sake of gaining profit.

In the last chapter, *Understanding critical media studies* (pp. 243-263), the author summarizes the thesis about the influence of the media on young people explained in the preceding chapters, while maintaining a critical tone in relation to the allegations of direct influence. Since the previous chapters have taken into account the saturation of the media, the last chapter presents some kind of a shift towards those young people who do not have or have limited access to the media. Ruddock emphasizes that the media education is essential in situations when there are not many opportunities for access the media.

Youth and Media presents a comprehensive overview of various theories that interpret the media effects. Besides the overview of the most important studies within the field, the author offers up-to-date and interesting case studies, through which he explains, confirms or disproves the previous studies on the specific problem. The relationship between young people and the media influence is certainly inevitable in this context, given that the majority of the studies that have addressed this issue relate to young audiences, their participation, habits and lifestyle. The book is intended for those who deal with the media in different ways, because, as the author himself points out in *Epilogue* (pp. 263-268), "if you're not that interested in youth, don't worry- you're really doing media research" (265).