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Book Review:

Liesbeth de Block & David Buckingham, *Global Children, Global Media: Migration, Media and Childhood*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, $84.95 hardcover

Liesbeth de Block and David Buckingham's book, *Global Children, Global Media*, examines the interrelationship of media, childhood, migration and globalization by focusing on migrant children's consumption and production of media in Europe. Block and Buckingham concentrate on child migrants, a group that is often left out or mistreated within the contemporary debate on migration, citizenship and nationhood. They argue that migrant children are often viewed as passive victims or criminal threats while their experiences and perspectives go unheard. Nonetheless, they are major players in their families' decisions to migrate, and they are the focus of their parents' expectations for the future. At the same time, they are also on the "frontline" in their new societies, and experience and feel the tension between adapting to the culture in their new environments and holding onto their culture from their places of origin. Ultimately, the authors achieve their goal of producing new insight on the prevailing academic debates about globalization, migration and media by applying these weighty subjects to issues and experiences faced by child migrants. By carrying out empirical research on children's media intake and media-making, the authors gain incite on the children's perspectives.

The book proceeds from the broad to the specific. The first two chapters examine the debates surrounding globalization, migration, media, and childhood. Following these broader debates, the authors discuss identity and migration, two topics that are deeply embedded in issues of globalization. They are specifically interested in children migrants and how their lives embody the cultural and political-economic changes in their globalized environments. While the children invoke multiple identities, their hybrid identities are shaped by the nation-states from which they come and where they currently live. The children can be both celebrated as agents of the globalizing process but also critically perceived of as consumer won over by market forces. The authors acknowledge that the debates about globalization—such as, whether or not it promotes Western imperialism...
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or is a celebration of cultural mixing—can be transferred to discussion of media flows, due to media’s ability to connect people and provide agency while also being a product of economic profitability and political power for large United States-based media corporations.

In the next four chapters, the authors investigate the children’s consumption of media, emphasizing the fact that the children consume a mix of global and local media. In their study, the authors find television to be the dominant medium. They are particularly interested in how migrant children have access to transnational television, which allows the children to watch programs from their countries of origin, while they are also able to watch media produced in their new locations, which can include television produced by ethnic minorities like themselves. The authors acknowledge that certain language barriers and culture differences make it more difficult for some than others to gain access to television programs from their countries of origin, and they also admit that their study does prove to be somewhat inconsistent depending on the migrant groups and countries being examined. Nonetheless, they conclude that migrant children do have access to a wide array of media, including but not limited to global media, which they define as media created for the mass audience of children around the globe. The authors focus on Disney, Pokemon and Harry Potter as examples of global media that comes from the dominant culture and not necessarily from the place that the migrant comes to or from. By surveying the complexity and hybridity of migrant children’s media consumption, the authors demonstrate the media influences that happen on a local, transnational and global scale, which impact the children’s identity, sense of home and social interactions with one another in their new locales.

The book discusses not only migrant children’s consumption but also their production of media. The authors took part in the European Commission-funded research project, which they termed ‘Children in Communication about Migration’ (CHICAM), based at the Institute of Education at the University of London between 2001-2004. They established media-making clubs in which migrant children, ages 10-14, met regularly to produce short videotapes that represented their thoughts and experiences. The children’s videos were then shared with other migrant children in the other clubs through the Internet. The clubs were set up in Europe (Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Greece, and the United Kingdom) and were open to migrants from all over the world. CHICAM used media for a dual purpose. Firstly, media-making was used as a method to gain greater understanding of migrant children’s perspectives and experiences through their videos. Secondly, the authors were interested in the process of media production and how it could enhance the learning experience for the migrant children who consumed media on a daily basis. The last four chapters (before the conclusion) go into detail about their empirical research and findings to demonstrate how the broad theoretical discussion in the first few chapters can be applied to particular migrant children’s lives.

The results of the CHICAM studies proved the complexity of using media education as both a method of research and a tool for learning. The authors admitted the difficulties of participatory research: they could not separate the educators’ influences in how media was taught; nor could they view the children’s videos apart from the influence of the media that the children coveted outside the clubs. They found the potential for media education promising, although were careful not to assume such education was clearly empowering. The authors were able to dispute the notion of children and migrants as passive victims while also demonstrating how media helped children understand their place in the world, which could be both beneficial and limiting. The authors admit that while such a study welcomed migrants from all over the world, it is decidedly Western in its empirical practices, notions of education, models for learning and choices for the media-making clubs. The findings also show that while the migrant children have access to a wide array of media, they are primarily attracted to the “here and now” and
therefore more interested in media that meets their European local needs and purposes¹. I agree with the authors' position that children's media needs to be studied globally, beyond the boundaries of the nation, but I also think the authors should have conceded that their focus was within the European region (where their empirical research comes from) because the title, *Global Children, Global Media* proposes a much broader study. Nonetheless, the authors do a convincing job emphasizing the impact media plays in migrant children's identity formation and sense of themselves and others in the world. Block and Buckingham's combination of theoretical and empirical work illustrates the complexities of studying global flows of media and... people and the interaction between the two within the context of globalization.

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Endnotes

¹ Liesbeth de Block and David Buckingham, *Global Children, Global Media: Migration, Media and Childhood* Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2007 198