Issues Raised by Media Ownership

The mass media is a very complex and layered industry. Many elements go into it such as production, distribution, and marketing. However, arguably one of the most pressing and controversial elements would have to be media ownership. With juggernaut conglomerates like *Times Warner* controlling whole sections of the media…they are bound to be issues.

First and foremost, with only a small number of conglomerates controlling the majority of media we see, who’s to hold them accountable for their actions if need be? There are only 6 of them, yet they basically own every major sector of the media. For example, *Disney* owns networks like *ESPN* and studios like *Marvel* having significant influence in sports, the news, film, the whole 9 yards. With such a dominant influence, they have so much control that it’s practically impossible to hold them liable for their behavior. Essentially, they have free reign, from production to distribution & marketing simply because they have the means to possess such power.

Further, with such control, the media is vulnerable to bias coming from the roots of production. As described by representation theory, the producers, i.e., the conglomerates, create the meaning in media; therefore, they can transcribe their biases, agendas, and so forth through media as an outlet. One of the most blatant manifestations of this issue is stereotypes. Racial stereotypes like the criminal black man, are perpetuated by the media. Thus, creating cognitive biases in many minds about the reality of our world. This can be a huge problem if the conglomerates exploit this, their influence is so great it can distort the reality of what’s being portrayed into something they want us to see/believe as a society even though it isn’t true.

Lastly, this system of mass ownership on behalf of the conglomerates has many benefits like an overall better quality of media; however, a system based on families of companies leading to one, like a family tree, is vulnerable to a fully systemic breakdown if one of those branches messes up. It’s comparable to a stack of cards, if one falls, the whole stack collapses. Much like that, if a smaller network were to ever have a major scandal the reputation of said network and their parent conglomerate could both be jeopardized. Such a thing could disrupt the media and cause a divide between people and media/other people, which above all isn’t healthy for society.

To summarize, media ownership is a very nuanced topic; it plays a big role in how media is produced, marketed, and distributed. Only 6 conglomerates run the backbone of current mass media, there are many problems and risks like media bias that come with such a system. Likewise, they are benefits, but do the benefits outweigh the risks?