



The New Poor

The Importance of Knowledge

- Financial poverty usually coincides with information poverty
- Information wealth is required for effective functioning in contemporary society
- The mass media can reach large groups in ways never thought possible
- Theoretically knowledge should be available to all via the new technologies



The Hope of the Church

- “The first of these (controversial) issues is information, or the search for news and its publication. There exists in human society a right to information...” (Inter Mirifica, #5)
- “Public opinion exercises enormous influence over the lives of all citizens ... It is necessary ... justice and charity ...in the formation and diffusion of public opinion (Inter Mirifica, #8)



Communio et Progressio

- “The (media) can contribute a great deal to human unity. If ... good will is not there ... there is less understanding and more discord ... evils are multiplied” (#9)
- “All ... are to work together ... to ensure the the media of communication ... contribute to the pursuit of truth and the speeding up of progress” (#13)



Aspiration of the State

- DeValera on the opening night of RTÉ “”



The Knowledge Gap

- *"as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status (SES) tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease"*
(Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1965)



Past and Present

- *1940s research on **chronic know-nothings** (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947).*
- *Persistent inequities in the acquisition of mass media information (Gaziano, 1983; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1980)*
- *Information is not distributed equally, fairly and uniformly throughout, and to all segments of, society.*



The Role of the Media

- Information gap is predicted by media reliance -- newspapers vs. TV as source
- The lower the SES the more likely the use of TV as a primary source of news
- TV news is less informational than newspapers
- TV coverage of certain events of importance can be non-existent due to limitations of space and time



The Gap in Current Affairs

- The divorce referendum indicated significant differences in the coverage between TV and newspaper
- The knowledge is gap is wider where there is a plurality of news sources
- Strong local impact can lessen the gap especially when different audiences are targeted in specific ways



More than just knowledge?

- Brantgarde (1983) indicates the gap refers to more than just knowledge
 - knowledge gap does exist
 - dissemination gap also exists
 - influence comes from dissemination
 - influence gap exists



Why does this gap exist?

- Different communication skills between rich and poor
- Different social exposure
- Different media exposure
- Different levels of education
- Different priorities
- The nature of media orientation to the consumer market



Consumption Patterns Change

- Less time for TV viewing and more channels
- Decreasing newspaper readership relative to population growth in developed world
- Rising Internet usage and time online
- Does this change in information source herald a new knowledge gap of greater significance?



The New Technologies

- The great white hope of our time: the Internet (The World Wide Web)
- Different levels of access across the world
- Different levels of access within Ireland
- What is being sold?
- What is really on offer?



First world and non-runners



The Nouveau Riche and the New Poor



Ethical Implications



The Challenge



Social Justice in Technology

