



Brown, A.R. (2003) 'Book review - Black marks: minority ethnic audiences and media', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29 (3).

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book review published by Taylor & Francis Group in '*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*' on 1/5/03 available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830305616>

ResearchSPAcE

<http://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/>

This pre-published version is made available in accordance with publisher policies.
Please cite only the published version using the reference above.

Your access and use of this document is based on your acceptance of the
ResearchSPAcE Metadata and Data Policies, as well as applicable law:-

<https://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/policies.html>

Unless you accept the terms of these Policies in full, you do not have permission to
download this document.

This cover sheet may not be removed from the document.

Please scroll down to view the document.

BOOK DETAILS - Karen Ross and Peter Playdon, **Black Marks: Minority Ethnic Audiences and Media**, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2001, 238pp. £42.50 h.b. (ISBN 0-7546-1425-5)
JOURNAL - Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
REVIEWER – Andy Brown

Despite its title, this volume presents twelve studies concerned with responses to, interpretation and uses of, macro, micro and niche media, by a wide range of minority ethnic groups in contrasting national, economic and cultural contexts. The ‘minority ethnic audiences’ are thus ethnic minorities within ethnic majority societies, either through migration and (forced) settlement, for example, studies of South Asian and Greek Cypriots in Britain, ‘Turkish, Pakistani, Jasmineli, Lebanese, Palestinian, Kurdish and ex-Yugoslavian’ (p. 36) groups in Denmark; or where the minority audience is an indigenous minority within a majority settler society, for example, Aboriginals in Australia, Native Americans in the U.S.A or the little known Sami community, in northern Scandinavia. Throughout the studies there is concern to establish, empirically, minority populations within specific national contexts and the range and types of media available to them within national and global media ‘scapes’ and ‘flows’ as well as the politics and economics of media policy and minority provision within particular national histories. Thus an emergent theme within the collection is the uses and choice of media forms in relation to diasporic processes or long standing racialised divisions, involving issues of minority ‘representation’ and identity politics but also the relation of these concerns to ‘public service’ broadcasting and deregulated global media ‘mixes’.

The book is divided into two broadly thematic sections. The first, slightly larger section, examines minority ethnic audiences troubled relationship to majority (national) media. Here the focus is on the ways in which minority audiences receive, negotiate and contest national broadcast media which offers negative, limiting or non-existent accounts of minority roles, identities and communities. The second part examines minority community uses of niche media, either produced within a national context or available via satellite from country of origin or of ‘identification’. The suggestion here is that, presumably, global media proliferation offers diasporic and indigenous minority audiences a greater range of means of representation of community and individual identities. However this distinction is not as clear cut as it might appear, since niche media production and consumption takes place within markets which serve dominant ethnic groups, whereas practices of resistance and contestation in reception and the uses to which media consumption are put, occur both in relation to majority media as they do in a multi-media context. Thus, Tsagarousianou’s chapter on the uses made of both ‘diasporic’ and ‘mainstream’ media involves both distinctions.

One of the strengths of the book is the sheer range of minority communities examined. Thus there are studies of African-Caribbean, South Asian and Greek Cypriots in Britain, African-American and Native Americans in the U.S, Turkish groups in the Netherlands and in Germany, Magherebis in France, Vietnamese, Fiji Indian, Chinese and Aboriginals in Australia, English, Afrikann and Zulus in South Africa and Sami in Norway. Each study offers up to date empirical data about the size and composition of minority communities and location as well as, often detailed, empirical data on satellite and terrestrial media use. This, along with diasporic and national histories of media provision, is important since a good range of the studies offer empirical engagement with cultural globalisation theories, such as those of Appaduri and Bhabba. Other studies engage with ideas such as Islamaphobia, Orientalism, 'othering', 'imagined communities' and the 'public sphere'. Through context specific studies the case studies offer confirmation, contestation and modification of such ideas. In this respect, each case study is based on a specific discussion and use of audience research methods, ranging from focus groups (the majority), participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews and social surveys. Given the scope and diversity of the studies no single issue or conclusion is dominant yet the majority of studies attest to the importance of subjecting 'big' theories to local and empirical examination.

This volume should appeal not only to media scholars but also scholars of ethnicity and migration, particularly through the engagement with Appaduri's ideas, which form the basis of many of the studies. However such readers are not best served by Ross' introduction which not only provides an inadequate but also misleading account of 'new audience research' (p.xiii). In particular, Ross fails to engage with the concept of 'interpretative communities' which is surely indispensable to the debate about minority reception and media? One of the problems Ross is struggling with in her introduction and her own contribution is the extent to which audience studies abandon any strong claim for media 'effects'. But her argument is strangely unconvincing, 'many people believe that the portrayal of minority ethnic individuals and groups has an impact on the way in which white people deal with minority ethnic communities in real life. In other words, that there is a direct cause and effect between media messages and social behaviour' (p. xiii). But, of course, this is not proof of such a claim but of the strength of the perception derived from minority experiences of majority media. In any case, Ross' preferred framework, of white media and black audiences, fails to address the complexities of identity or media practices, let alone the unpredictable complications these empirical studies so clearly throw up. In this respect, I prefer Tsagarousianou's argument, to the effect that 'Ethnic communities in general and ethnic audiences in particular, are highly heterogenous and diversified, and their patterns of media and cultural consumption extremely complex' (p.21).