Battleground: The Media
Volumes 1 and 2

Edited by
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BATTLEGROUNDS
THE MEDIA
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Youth and Media Use
Few institutions are as powerful or as thoroughly suffused into every aspect of our daily lives as are the media. From computers to television, film to music, cell phones to newspapers, most of us spend much of our waking hours using, consuming, or creating media. From entertainment fare to nonfiction programming and from videogames to theme parks, media corporations are highly conglomerated, profit-seeking entities, and also the couriers, purveyors, creators, and editors of the messages, texts, and images that comprise the information age. It is, therefore, no surprise that the media have become a hub of controversy and a battleground for issues as disparate as election campaigns and the critical satire of Comedy Central, to depictions of race, gender, and sexuality. With its power to regulate such a powerful industry, government has become a battleground site as independent media producers and public interest groups struggle over the policies that shape the landscape of media—from current public access television to the future of the Internet. Many of these controversies extend well into cultural and social realms because they focus debate around the values expressed in media messages and the effects they have on children, teens, our knowledge of the world, members of other religions or groups, and even of our own bodies and social identities. As entries on the Digital Divide and Representations of Class illustrate, media issues also provide a lens into social and economic inequities. The ways in which we define ourselves and our communities are reflected and shaped by such formats as the so-called reality shows and by citizens themselves as they create media content and find their voices as bloggers on the Internet.

In this ever evolving geography of symbolic techniques, media and marketing strategies, new and traditional genres, and new media technology, the task of
Introduction

editing a collection of entries on controversies has proven challenging, illuminating and remarkably difficult, as each new day and news cycle brings yet more issues worthy of coverage. Nevertheless, in these two volumes, we have assembled some of media studies’ smartest critics, experts, and researchers to discuss the more pressing concerns and “battlegrounds” in contemporary media. Some entries focus on age-old topics that precede our modern era and others chart more recent trends. However, rather than become distracted by the superficial details and names of 2007, these entries focus on underlying issues and concepts. In addition to comprehensive definitions and dominant themes, we have tried to present key influences that set the parameters for the arguments brought to bear in media debates by scholars, public interest groups, industry professionals, and readers and audiences alike. True to the nature of media studies—an interdiscipline sitting at the crossroads of more traditional fields such as sociology, political economy, art, rhetoric, anthropology and political science (just to name a few)—we offer here a broad range of entries concentrating not only on humanistic themes but also from social scientific perspectives. Undoubtedly all readers will imagine entries that could have been written, more controversies that could have been explored, and favorite arguments downplayed, but we hope these volumes illuminate core principles and provide a set of guideposts able to direct the inquisitive reader in continued exploration of the themes, issues and perspectives of their choice. We offer ways of beginning discussion, thought, and deliberation, not, as is often the case with encyclopedias, to close off discussion. The production of these two volumes has proven to be a dynamic process, and we hope Battleground readers engage with these volumes with equal enthusiasm.

By way of defining “the media,” we have frequently concentrated on mass media, and this emphasis has in turn resulted in thorough coverage of television. New media theorists often argue that the day of a computer-centered media diet will soon be upon us, but in 2007 television remains the preeminent mass medium in the United States, with near-total coverage across the population, and frequently central to popular culture. Even those who do not watch television are often aware of its key figures and programs. Television is often the central cog in many media empires’ machinery, it is cause for more alarm and concern than are most media, and it networks many other media, telling us, for instance, of movies to come and of magazine heroes and villains. Much of the commercial content and traffic on the Internet is directed from more traditional forms of media, including television, and their formats, themes, economics, and regulatory histories help shape the landscape of new media. This increasingly wide range of new technologies, varying formats, and symbolic practices are interconnected through economies and technologies; with this in mind, we include in this collection a variety of entries on film, magazines, newspapers, music, new media, and mobile media.

The need for some entries will appear patently obvious to many readers, while other entries focus on “buried” issues—ones that achieve less popular presence often precisely because corporate-owned media either willfully neglect discussion of such issues, or at least, find it beneficial to their business practice to
allow issues to go unnoticed, thereby avoiding needed public debate. The Video News Release, for example, may not be a household phrase, but we argue that it should be; similarly, other entries examine noncorporate media. Since the media industry enjoys such a considerable monopoly on many citizens’ attention, everyday discussions are often informed and framed by the news and entertainment content brought to their attention by media companies. In this collection, we hope not only to examine the agendas set by mainstream media, but also to unearth hot-button issues that corporate media do not discuss with enough frequency. In addition, considering the aesthetic influences, motivations, and struggles of alternative media and independent cultural productions, allows us to see the dominant media in new and revealing ways. As Marshall McLuhan noted, just as fishes do not notice the existence of water till out of it, the media flows all around each one of us, our habitat and our lived environment, and thus this collection will at times focus on media issues that have become as invisible to us as water is to fish.

While it is common to talk of “the media” as if it were a monolithic entity, and while corporate collusion sometimes makes it appear uniform and singular, of course there is no such entity called “the media.” Instead, the media is a collection of programs, films, songs, stars, and games from varying sources, which are consumed by varying citizens and consumers, often in varying ways. Media are regulated differently and are produced differently. Thus, “the media” is a huge amalgam of variation and difference, rendering it hard if not impossible to generalize about “the media” as a whole. We intend the entries in these two volumes to tackle different zones of the media universe, thereby not only presenting disagreements and controversies within any given entry, but also producing disagreement between different entries. With audiences, programs, producers, regulators, citizens, artists, and institutions all active agents in the production of “the media,” one will find a different picture of the media universe depending upon which agent(s) one focuses on, as will be evident across the many entries in these two volumes.

Each entry includes an opening that explains a key controversy or battleground topic, the entry proper, and a list of further readings. The latter, in conjunction with the general bibliography at the end of Volume 2, should help readers find more discussion of the issue at hand. We also encourage readers to follow the cross-references throughout, as inevitably many issues build on the shoulders of others, and some entries are illuminated further by yet other entries. The cross-references should offer readers an Ariadne’s thread through the collection.

Finally, as editors, we must offer thanks to the many individuals who have helped us put this collection together, namely our fantastic contributors and Daniel Harmon at Greenwood Press. We would also like to thank Guy Robinson and Monica Grant for assistance and support: juggling so many entries taxes the brain, and we thank them for helping us to keep our gray matter in order.

Robin Andersen and Jonathan Gray, August 2007
À LA CARTE CABLE PRICING

In 2004, a coalition of public interest advocates concerned about rising cable television bills and cultural conservatives offended by sexuality explicit TV programs joined forces in support of so-called à la carte cable, which would allow subscribers to pay for only the channels they want to watch rather than pay set fees for packaged channels. Cable viewers may have long wondered why they should pay for a plethora of channels when they might only watch a few with any regularity, but community organizations representing historically underrepresented groups have opposed à la carte pricing with concern for how this might negatively impact program diversity.

THE COALITION FORMS

The à la carte coalition developed after the notorious 2004 Super Bowl halftime reveal where Justin Timberlake tore off a piece of Janet Jackson’s costume, exposing her right breast. Soon after, Nathan Deal, the Republican congressman from Georgia, authored an amendment to a bill that would allow cable and satellite providers to offer subscribers the choice to pay for individual channels. The consumer advocacy groups Consumers Union and Consumer Federation of America joined the cultural conservatives from Concerned Women for America and Parent Television Council (PTC) in a letter of support for the amendment. The influential PTC has made “cable choice” a central component of its campaign to rid cable television of indecency. Other strategies to enforce indecency standards for cable operators have faced legal hurdles because cable operators have maintained First Amendment protections against such content regulations.
(see http://www.parentstv.org/PTC/cable/main.asp). Consumers Union, meanwhile, has advocated for ownership restrictions to curtail the power of media conglomerates from using their leverage to charge cable operators large fees for programming. They have also called for reinstating cable-rate regulations given that cable rates had risen 2.5 times faster than inflation since Congress eliminated rate regulations in 1999. But regulators have resisted these efforts. Thus, Consumers Union focused on à la carte pricing as a strategy to lower costs, increase quality, and allow viewers to not pay for channels they do not want to watch.

Most cable providers strongly opposed these efforts to tamper with their profitable, vertically integrated business models and editorial powers to bundle programs and set subscription rates. Other media conglomerates that did not own cable systems, such as Disney, also opposed à la carte because they made huge profits by using broadcast retransmission consent rules (Disney owns ABC and major-market TV stations) to demand large fees and prime channel positions for their cable networks (such as ESPN, ESPN2, and the Disney Channel, in the case of Disney). But cable networks focused on African American- and Latino-themed programming also vocally opposed the amendment supporting à la carte, fearing that their channels with more targeted audiences would perish under such a scheme. In April 2004, Alfred Liggins, chairman of TV One, the cable network targeting African American adults, wrote an op-ed in the Washington Times arguing against à la carte. A month later, Debra Lee of BET, Jeff Valdez of Sí TV, Kent Rice of the International Channel, Mike Hong at Imaginasian TV, and Rudy Ibarra from Outstanding Latin Entertainment wrote letters to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce stating that under à la carte their networks would never have launched without the guaranteed access to viewers needed to attract start-up capital. The Congressional Black Caucus also joined these programmers in opposing à la carte (for a narrative of these early developments see http://www.publicintegrity.org/telecom/report.aspx?aid=395).

**Sí TV**

Sí TV, an English-language cable/satellite channel focused on the diverse Latino cultures in the United States, has been a vocal opponent of à la carte pricing. Founded as a production company in 1997, producing programs such as *The Brothers Garcia* for Nickelodeon, Sí TV launched as a network in February 2004 with financial backing from the satellite TV distributor EchoStar and cable operator Time Warner. Original series include *LatiNation*, a weekly magazine about Latino culture in the United States; *The Rub*, a nightly show about sex, love, and relationships; *The Drop*, a weekly music and variety show; *Circumcised Cinema*, a series that reedits Mexican B movies; and *Not-So-Foreign Filmmakers Showcase*, about the multicultural independent film scene. Other series directly engage with political issues, such as *Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*, a mealtime discussion show on topics such as prisoner rights, racial discrimination, and gay marriage; and *Urban Jungle*, a reality series that places privileged suburban kids in South Central Los Angeles to live like immigrants.

In 2007 Sí TV and TV One, the African American–targeted network, created the Alliance for Diversity in Programming to promote diverse television programming and oppose à la carte
In reaction to this opposition, the House Committee abandoned the amendment and asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to study the potential impact of à la carte. In the spring and summer of 2004, civil rights organizations representing communities of color implored the FCC to dismiss the idea that they argued, in the words of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, “could diminish what little diversity is currently on cable and put minority and women programmers at risk.” Other civil rights organizations opposing à la carte included the League of United Latin American Citizens, the NALEO Education Fund, Allianza Dominicana, the National Hispanic Policy Institute, the Hispanic Federation, the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Conference of Black Mayors, the National Coalition of Black Civil Participation, the National Congress of Black Women, the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, and the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium. Women’s organizations also united in opposition, including the Sexuality Information and Education Council, the Global Fund for Women, the Feminist Majority, American Women in Radio and Television Inc., and the National Council of Women’s Organizations. Geraldine Laybourne, co-founder of Oxygen, strongly opposed the measure, arguing that her channel targeting young women viewers would never have launched under à la carte pricing.

Also in opposition were fiscally conservative organizations such as Citizens for a Sound Economy, the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. Unlike their social conservative counterparts who supported à la carte as a means to insulate families from television sex and violence, these conservatives categorically opposed any government regulations. As the Cato Institute put it in its FCC filing, “This debate really comes down to the question of whether government should preempt an industry’s preferred (and quite successful) business model” (for a list of comments from à la carte opponents see http://www.media.espn.com/MediaZone/PressKits/NCTA/quotes.htm).

THE FCC’S RESPONSE

In July 2004, Booz Allen Hamilton released a report commissioned by the National Cable & Telecommunications Association supporting these groups’ assertions that mandated à la carte and themed groupings of channels, such as a family-friendly tier, would reduce program diversity and raise subscription rates for those who purchased nine or more channels (see http://www.ncta.com/pdf_files/Booz_Allen_a_la_Carte_Report.pdf). Under the direction of then FCC Chairman Michael Powell, who supported free-market principles, the FCC...
accepted the report’s findings to not mandate pricing. The report’s conclusions were also partially supported by the U.S. General Accounting Office’s October 2003 study (see http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d048.pdf).

However, the social conservatives in the House Committee, and the vocal à la carte supporter Senator John McCain, chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, strongly encouraged the FCC to continue studying the issue. Lending momentum for further study was Powell’s announcement in January 2005 that he would resign, and three months later President Bush’s appointment of Kevin Martin, an FCC commissioner who had made opposition to indecency a cornerstone of his television policy, to the chairmanship. So the FCC’s media bureau went to work on the issue, but instead of conducting additional research it merely revisited portions of the Booz Allen study and identified “problematic assumptions” and “biased analysis.” For example, the bureau argued that the Booz Allen report mistakenly assumed that under à la carte, viewers would watch less TV and that diversity would not necessarily decrease because advertisers would likely find niche channels with paying subscribers more valuable.

But the bureau’s report is most enthusiastic about saving money for “mainstream” audiences and increasing ratings for the most popular channels. In supply-side economic language that refers to “market efficiencies” and optimizing aggregate “consumer value,” the report embraced the likelihood that à la carte would create more choices for “mainstream consumers” but less “niche programming that appeals to a small set of subscribers.” What this says to the civil rights organizations and “niche” channels such as Sí TV and TV One, which are mostly produced and watched by historically underrepresented groups, is that a properly efficient marketplace, restored by à la carte pricing, would rightly weed out these “over-valued” niche networks (see http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-263740A1.pdf).

As Patricia Williams has demonstrated, in conceiving the general viewing public as segregated into “mainstream” and “niche” audiences, we suppress the interests of historically marginalized communities under the guise of a “neutral ‘mass’ entertainment.” Rather than define a mainstream culture that is oblivious to its dominant status across class, gender, and race, against a ghettoized cultural “other,” as Williams argues, we should develop “a view of a market in which there are not merely isolated interest groups, of which the ‘mass market’ may be one, but in which ‘mass’ accurately reflects the complicated variety of many peoples and connotes ‘interactive’ and ‘accommodative’ rather than ‘dominant’ or even just ‘majoritarian.’” Thus, allowing viewers to channel surf across a variety of channels, even ones they do not watch regularly, creates a more diverse representation of our mass culture that is available to all.

FROM CONSUMER CHOICE TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

Though cable operators have maintained opposition to à la carte, several large systems have offered “family-friendly” bundles, such as Time Warner’s “Family Choice Tier,” which was made available in March 2006. But waiting for cable
giants like Comcast (which owns TV One) and Time Warner (which owns Sí TV) to decide what constitutes diversity and how much we should pay for bundled programming does not solve the structural issues of vertical integration, media conglomeration, and the unequal distribution of advertising dollars for programs that include the perspectives of communities of color. When the progressive Consumers Union and the Free Press support à la carte in opposition to a broad spectrum of communities of color, and they do so by framing the issues using the classical economic language of individual consumer choice (the title of a Consumers Union report supporting à la carte is “Let the Market Decide”), we risk reproducing the abstracted, universalistic discourses of consumer choice and neutral markets that have reinforced current neoliberal free-market structural arrangements rather than invoking the cultural rights of historically disempowered groups and the necessity that we all interact broadly with cultural difference instead of walling off our television viewing through personalized channel subscriptions.

Rather than narrowing viewership of culturally diverse networks such as Sí TV through à la carte pricing, perhaps the industry needs prompting to make these diverse networks more widely available. Placed on limited digital tiers, Sí TV reached less than 14 million subscribers as of 2007, while close to 80 million households had access to “mainstream” cable/satellite networks. In this case, the cable marketplace, as a space for the general public to participate in the diversity of Latino culture in the United States, falls far short of creating a common space for engaging with cultural difference.

See also Cable Carriage Disputes; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; Obscenity and Indecency; Regulating the Airwaves; Representations of Race; Representations of Women.

Note
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John McMurria

ADVERTISING AND PERSUASION

Advertising is the driving force behind American business and the largest industrial economy the world has ever known. It is the mediator between the consumer and the vast array of products available from manufacturers across the
global. As a mode of communication, it employs powerful persuasive strategies designed to convince viewers, readers, and audiences of all media that purchasing products will make them popular, relieve their anxiety, and gratify almost any need. As an aesthetic form, it has been called the art of capitalism, and because of the emotional techniques it often employs, it has been condemned as manipulative and psychologically harmful. Advertising continues to penetrate public space and find new distribution sources with each new, popular media format, and the debate over advertising’s influence on society and culture is continually renewed.

With economies of scale, for over a century industrial capitalism has been able to manufacture and deliver commodities to world markets on an unprecedented scale, with Americans comprising the largest market for world goods. The availability of such a quantity of products demands rapid distribution in retail outlets, from high-end department stores to the expanding box stores that now pock the county’s landscape. Products must be sold to consumers whose spending consistently outstrips their income, and desire to purchase more products must be continually stimulated. Advertising brings together media and marketing research, extraordinary creative talent and vast audiovisual resources including new computer-based digital technologies, all with the purposes of selling the commodities capitalism has to offer.

STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION

Often the material differences that distinguish one product from its competitor are slight, and marketers understand that relying simply on product information is not an effective way to instill desire for products. In today’s advertisements, the psychological and emotional strategies of persuasion are referred to as the “soft” sell, and they vary greatly from one commercial campaign to another, but many are familiar as recognizable standards.

Celebrity Endorsements and Brand Identity

The celebrity pitch is ever popular because audiences admire the glamour and often trust those they have come to know through popular media. Products endorsed or used by the familiar faces on TV and in magazines are effective ways of compelling consumers to buy more things. If Michael Jordan likes Nike, and sports fans like Michael Jordan, then those fans will be more inclined to want the products he uses. Behind simple admiration is also the implied promise that sports gear of a particular brand will increase the consumer’s chances of better performance. “Liking sports” also becomes a consumer identity, and wearing certain sports gear distinguishes the consumer as a sports fan. Brands associated with particular players and teams further refine these cultural signifiers of identity. In this way, sports clothing of all sorts becomes equally important as a cultural communicator and not just an item of apparel. As a form of symbolic communication, sports gear is worn as much for style as for athletic activity. As products move further away from materiality, and exist as cultural symbols, “style over substance” becomes a quality of consumer culture.
Models of Perfection

For the female consumer of beauty, fashion, and glamour products, celebrity endorsement is also essential. Far more effective than extolling the ingredients or quality of any particular brand of make-up, perfume, or shampoo is the promise that those products are the very ones used by the beautiful models and celebrities that populate the landscape of popular culture. In what is called “latent content,” the message implies that the beautiful, perfect models have been transformed by the products into the stunning visions seen in the advertisements; as one cosmetics company teases, “Maybe she’s born with it. Maybe it’s Maybelline.” But consumers are rarely aware that pictures of models have almost always been “touched up” to present perfect images. Graphic digital technology is also used to create larger-than-life advertising images that seem perfect, and along the way cultural standards of beauty become impossible for average consumers to emulate. When women are constantly told they can and should look like the glamorous models in advertisements, it is no wonder that the majority of American women are dissatisfied with their own body image. Underlying many advertising appeals to join the world of beautiful people and fantasy wish fulfillment is the anxiety of not fitting in or living up to the cultural standard.

Anxiety

Some strategies of persuasion play on personal anxieties, especially those for hygiene products. The word halitosis entered the cultural lexicon in early Listerine advertisements, and since then, dandruff, bad breath, and hair loss have all been portrayed as impediments to social acceptance, mobility, and fulfilling

MINORITY REPORT: FUTURISTIC VISIONS OF CONSUMER CULTURE

In preparation for the film Minority Report, Tom Cruise and the film’s creators reportedly consulted with marketing and advertising professionals in order to more accurately portray what the world of consumer culture might look like in the year 2050. In Minority Report, the body becomes branded and the market penetrates every aspect of life and body. In the film Cruise is seen walking though a Gap store as sensors automatically “read” the individual human code identified in his irises. An automated voice reminds him of his last purchase in an attempt to interest him in another. Some of the most chilling scenes in the movie revolve around the idea that marketing information is inscribed within the human body, specifically within the eyeball. The eye-reading technology exists within a total information society, and that information has a dual purpose. It is also used for state control. In one of the most gruesome sequences, the film presents a distopian future in which the commercial information is shared with a repressive governing regime with severe consequences to individual liberty. As he struggles to maintain his freedom, Cruise’s character is forced to have his eyes brutally removed. The film is fiction and it depicts an extreme case, but it serves as a warning of the dangers of accumulating, cross-referencing, and centralizing huge amounts of personal data on individual citizens and making it available to those who would use it for political purposes.
interpersonal relationships. Products are offered as the solutions to these personal and social problems. Mothers who wash their children's clothes in certain brands of detergent are assured happy, healthy kids who will continue to love them while wearing their clean, white, stain-free garments. Such promises are often made through compelling scenarios depicted visually on television and in magazines. A variety of ads that play on guilt are directed toward parents. From the OnStar automotive assistance system to airbags and tires, these ads make the point that if you love your children you will use these products. Children sometimes featured sitting in the backseat talk about how happy they are that their Dad bought a particular car.

**Language of Association**

Images are key to the persuasive strategies of advertising. Visual messages can make associations and create implied meanings without advertisers ever having to make direct promises about the quality of their products. Taking a picture of gold nuggets placed next to coffee beans and adding the caption, “The Gold Standard in Coffee,” allows the consumer to associate the value of gold with that of coffee. The photograph and caption transfer the cultural value of gold onto the brand of coffee being advertised. But even a casual “decoding” or “textual analysis” of the ad can reveal the false nature of the communication. Under logical and visual analysis, it becomes clear that the quality of a mined metal has little to do with the flavorful taste of an agricultural product, and that gold and coffee have little real connection. Yet visual and verbal associations allow advertisers to make claims about products without having to verify them or state them directly. In this way, consumers often accept obvious exaggerations without critically evaluating them. Media literacy has become an important educational curriculum designed to help the public, especially children, understand the ways in which persuasion carries implied meanings that do not hold up under scrutiny.

**The Promise of Belonging through Consumption**

With the slogan “Pepsi, The Choice of a New Generation,” Madison Avenue launched the lifestyle ads of the 1970s. Such ads often promised satisfaction through group consumption. A picture of a group of friends all wearing the same Dockers khakis, or all drinking the same soda, is an image of belonging. Products confer a sense of group identity and a way to recognize other members of the same peer group, now defined as a consumption subgroup. The ad’s promise of fulfilling interpersonal relationships is made visually. Because of the documentary nature of the photograph, it is indisputable that the consumption subgroup is content being together. However, if these implied messages were stated directly, “Wear these jeans and you will have the friends you want,” or “The people who drink Coke have more friends,” the assertion would be much less credible and therefore much less effective as persuasion. In this way, marketing strategies and aesthetic design work together to create more powerful modes of persuasive communication, both visual and verbal.
Marketing Segmentation

Lifestyle ads were designed to appeal to consumption subgroups, and since then the consuming public has been increasingly differentiated into smaller groups of people that share similar demographics, such as age, gender, race, education, and income. Market researchers look for other consumption indicators as well, and “psychographics” add values, beliefs, opinions, and behavioral practices to the mix. Carving up what was once a huge, ill-defined mass public into smaller groups has allowed the advertising industry to target consumers with messages specifically designed to more clearly defined tastes. Selling products by associating them with the values and sensibilities of various subgroups is referred to as “marketing stratification” and remains dominant within the industry. Agencies and their clients are willing to pay higher ad rates for messages they can be confident will reach the people most likely to be persuaded by the targeted message. With each new marketing campaign, a once-broad public continues to be refined into specific market segments.

Such marketing practices work hand-in-hand with media and have influenced the economics and program design of not only broadcast and cable media, but radio, magazines, and Internet content as well. With its multiple channels, cable television originated as a “narrowcasting” medium, in which programming directed at specific audiences dovetailed with the advertising created to appeal to those same tastes and sensibilities. In this way viewers were defined as consumers and targeted as markets for specific products. As numbers of viewers are sold to advertisers through rating, and with higher rates for audiences “primed” with compatible programming, television, radio, and other media are increasingly defined as marketing mediums as well as entertainment or information sources. These marketing practices and the merger of media content with advertising campaigns paved the way for the insertion of advertising into programs themselves, and product placement became a dominant commercial practice during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Commercializing the Media

The deregulation of broadcasting, beginning in the early 1980s, lifted restrictions on the amount of advertising that could be aired on television. This resulted in the further commercialization of programming and the development of program-length commercials, which characterize many shows that feature products from beginning to end. Infomercials—long-form advertisements that mimic the formats of other shows, especially news and information programming—became popular on late-night television and cable services alike. Public interest groups are critical of these developments and have appealed to the Federal Communications Commission for regulations that would force these shows to be identified as commercially designed programs. Media watch groups have also criticized new hybrids of commercial media such as advertisements produced in public relations firms disguised as information segments that now frequently air on local news programs.
ADBUSTERS AND “CULTURE JAMMING”

Founded in 1989 by Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmalz in Vancouver, Canada, Adbusters is an anti-consumerist organization that has mixed education, research, activism, and art to complain about advertising’s many excesses. Adbusters is particularly well known for its parodic advertisements that mock the bravado, false promises, and absurd logic of ads. Thus, for instance, taking aim at Camel cigarettes’ animated character Joe Camel, a series of Adbusters ads follow “Joe Chemo,” showing him hospitalized by his addiction. Another parodic ad for Calvin Klein’s Obsession depicts, in classic black-and-white photography style, a young woman bent over a toilet bowl, offering the suggestion of a more sinister “obsession” with thinness fueled by Calvin Klein ads. Adbusters publishes a reader-supported magazine, and has also been instrumental in launching the annual Buy Nothing Day and TV Turnoff Week.

Adbusters and its fellow culture-jammers aim to rob advertising signs, symbols, and logos of their power, and to implore citizens to read ads critically. But in a sign of how invested media corporations are in pursuing advertising by making their messages ad-friendly, commercial broadcasters in both the United States and Canada have refused to play Adbusters’s anti-ads. Thus, other culture-jamming groups have taken to “repurposing” outdoor advertising and to reclaiming public space, using pranks, anti-ads, and media events to “jam” advertising. One long-standing group, the San Francisco Billboard Liberation Front, adds critical commentary, often amusing and witty, to billboards. For example, a McDonald’s ad depicting a breakfast sandwich with the tag line, “Suddenly you’re a morning person,” in the Downtown Berkeley BART stop was changed to read “Suddenly you’re a nothing person.”

STEALTH STRATEGIES

As the fast-moving, highly competitive world of advertising seeks new media formats and persuasive strategies to promote product brands, corporate image, and commercial icons, a variety of edgy advertising practices under an assortment of titles have emerged in recent years. From brand buzz, to seeding, stealth, undercover, guerilla and renegade, these practices are designed to enter into the consumer’s consciousness just under the critical radar that recognizes advertising as persuasive communication. These undercover formats have an important shared characteristic; their promotional aspect is not revealed and they lack recognizable “sponsorship.” To the hip new marketers, sponsorship has become a dirty word. Unlike product placement and other hybrids of commercial media, these persuasions are often interpersonal and take place in both public and private places. For example, a man on the street asks a passerby to take his picture. As the interaction proceeds, opportunity to promote the camera arises. The passerby would be surprised to find that the man has actually been hired to sell the camera. In another example, a person may sit down at a bar and order a drink within earshot of others, then strike up a conversation.
He or she is selling a particular brand of alcohol. And some companies pay college students to “buzz” the latest CD from a musical group to their friends at parties.

Other unconventional sales promotions take place in retail stores and at the point of purchase. In some boutique clothing stores, employees are now paid to be “peer trend setters.” These people casually offer comments about what products and styles are hip and fashionable to shoppers who are looking for clothes and sampling products. “Seeding” a new product can be done by leaving empty bottles or cans on tables at locales where targeted consumers will see them and assume they are popular with other members of their consumption group.

Humans have long engaged in market relationships, trading and bargaining for goods and services, but drawing out the differences between earlier forms of market interactions and present business strategies reveals that bargaining entails the application of individual skills, a type of personal theater of pretext, pretend, persuasion, and resistance. But with stealth marketing the interaction assumes a false premise. By concealing its purpose, the “mark” does not have the chance to display skill or offer resistance. The playing field is not level. At its worst, some forms violate trust and may create a cultural atmosphere that spoils the public sense of mutual respect and honesty. For these reasons, some marketers have made strong statements against these practices.

MARKETING DISCRIMINATION

As advertisers’ data regarding consumer purchasing behavior has increased in recent years, so too has marketing discrimination, whereby certain real or potential customers are given better treatment, while other real or potential customers are ignored. Hence, for instance, since statistics suggest that the elderly do not consume as highly as do younger shoppers, and that they are more likely to have developed brand loyalties that will not easily be swayed, many advertisers ignore this market completely, meaning that advertising-driven media forms such as television and magazines are often overwhelmingly youth-focused.

Moreover, as database marketing has become a hot trend, advertisers and retailers are now able to personalize their advertising, no longer just relying on broad demographic trends. Thus, many retailers and other businesses are mailing coupons and special notices only to “good” customers, or to those deemed likely to be good customers. When mixed with television viewing data recorded by cable boxes, DVRs, and TiVo, and with developments in digital television delivery being made, this trend could easily result in differentiated programming or personalization for different audience members. Some citizens welcome the prospect of personalized marketing, but personalized marketing means not simply that each person will receive different ads, programming, and services, but that some may receive no or poor programming or service, hence further threatening the democratic potential of broadcasting and other supposedly “mass” media.
ADVERTISING AND POLITICS

If we look at social-cause marketing from this point of view, we might say that every aspect of our lives, even political ideas, becomes fertile ground for marketing products. Some popular commercial campaigns now revolve around political ideas, many promising social change and a more peaceful world through the purchase of products. In fact, a prominent critic of consumer culture, Thomas Frank, argues that one of the only spheres where protest and criticism are currently acceptable in our culture is advertising. Online messages for Diesel clothing tell consumers that to achieve “successful living” they must “take action,” fight, shout, and wake up “the rebel inside you.” With visual references to baby-boom hippies, a young woman in a headband makes the peace sign and compels us to “reject the established mints” and eat Mentos. Another Mentos ad references “flower power,” a countercultural slogan from the 1960s, with a daisy and the words “peace, love and happy mints.” Playtex promises a new “women’s movement” by which the company means “freedom from seams and stitches” with the Only You bra. Like many “postmodern” commercial messages, these ads are presented with a sense of irony, making claims, yet making fun of themselves at the same time for making such silly claims. Nevertheless, they successfully tie political impulses for peace, social change, and women’s liberation to consumer identities and purchasing products.

Social-causal marketing, both serious and comedic, has been criticized for making arbitrary claims that mislead consumers and negatively effect political participation. Critics argue that advertising in general, and “socially conscious” commercials in particular, lead to a passive, uninformed public. Such advertisements appeal to the political desires for freedom and equality, yet offer no real strategies to achieve social change. Purchasing products does little to move the world in the direction depicted in the ads. Buying Mentos will not lead to world peace; wearing Diesel clothing will not change the world; and women cannot achieve equal status, respect, and independence by wearing a particular bra. When political sentiments are directed toward consumption, the public is compelled to consume, not actually participate in politics in ways that might achieve social and political goals.

This leads us to understand the commercialization of politics in a complicated light. Advertising’s effect on American politics has been felt more directly through election campaigns that have become a type of commercial politics, in which highly targeted political messages are designed through the use of focus groups and directed toward voting subgroups, each of which is watching or listening to its favorite program. In a process that mirrors the selling of products, an image of a political leader is also sold to the public, turned audience and then consumer. As politicians devise persuasive messages they must “stay on message,” and authentic discourse becomes harder to find in the political arena. It reaches greater levels of distortion with negative political advertising that often plays on fear, anxiety, and disgust. “Going negative” is also known to “turn off” the voting public, causing political analysts to charge that commercially driven election campaigns create a cynical, politically disengaged citizenry. For these
reasons, and because of the high cost of airtime, campaign reformers advocate that corporate media outlets should provide “free time” for political candidates to better serve the public interest and to disentangle the candidates from the special interests, which are often the ultimate funding sources for expensive ad campaigns.

SWEATSHOPS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

It is frequently asserted that we live in a postindustrial society with an economy driven by information systems and symbolic culture. Advertising is certainly part of that symbolic culture, but commercial messages are, most of the time, selling goods, the products of industrial production, even though such commodities are often produced in other, less developed countries. Americans for the most part are not exposed to the factory conditions and the exploitation of workers who toil under extreme conditions in underpaid jobs. Nike has long been criticized for refusing to pay a fair wage in countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Mexico, and China, even though its advertising campaigns feature powerfully humanistic visions of individual liberation. Writers such as Naomi Klein have documented the exploitation of cheap labor markets by American companies and popular brand labels. It can be said that advertising creates a symbolic world that surrounds everything from trainers to sports gear, from dolls to toys, in a fantasy of consumer culture, which removes products from the unpleasant realities of their production. Left uninformed about corporate global practices, the consumer is more susceptible to commercial persuasions. Public interest advocates, human rights organizations, and labor groups such as the Workers Rights Consortium have pressed for external monitoring of factory conditions in countries around the world, and these proposals, together with environmental concerns, have been brought to bear on international trade organizations and the major economic summits of the developed world.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, industrial capitalism seemed to hold the promise of well-being and economic security to a Western world eager to achieve a standard of living unparalleled in human history. Indeed, early advertisers were often visionary utopians who advocated for personal growth and spiritual attainment. By the twenty-first century, the promise of industrial production heaves under the weight of an environmental crisis, including air and water pollution, toxic by-products, and the destruction of human environments as well animal habitats. The unanticipated and unwanted side effects of industrial production are now widely understood, such as the extravagant depletion of global resources, and global warming, the consequence of greenhouse gases discharged into the atmosphere due to an unsustainable level of energy use. Thus far, with only a few exceptions, advertising has not been able to come to terms with the need for conservation and more ecologically sound, environmentally friendly corporate practices. Instead, ads have used the beauty of the natural world in images of nature as just one more “selling hook.” The extraordinary imagery of pristine landscapes used to sell SUVs illustrates this point. These vehicles have become, for critics, the symbol of conspicuous consumption
of unrenewable fossil fuels and one of the worst offenders for releasing harmful levels of emissions into the atmosphere.

Advertising influences society and culture on many levels. It compels us to define who we are and what will make us happy. In a very real way, advertising propels our consumption lifestyle and is intimately tied to a set of market relationships that drives the global economy. Only by understanding the broader role advertisements play in culture, the environment, and the globe will we be better able to make choices about what to buy and how we want to live.

See also Body Image; Branding the Globe; Hypercommercialism; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Literacy; Pharmaceutical Advertising; Political Entertainment; Product Placement; Ratings; Representations of Women; Television in Schools; Video News Releases; Youth and Media Use; Women’s Magazines.


Robin Andersen

AL-JAZEERA

The Qatari-based Al-Jazeera satellite channel, the first 24-hour all-news network in the Arab world, has been surrounded by much controversy since its inception. Its uninhibited critique of authoritarian governments has infuriated many Arab officials, who have not been used to seeing a broadcast network that is not appeasing their policies. Its exclusive broadcast of tapes by Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants and its unvarnished reporting on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the most recent war in Lebanon have catapulted it into the international media spotlight. It has been heralded by its admirers as a beacon for freedom of expression, and accused by its critics of sensationalism and biased reporting. Indeed, some U.S. officials charged the station with anti-American bias for its coverage of the “war on terror.”
Al-Jazeera is an anomaly that has defied all odds. It came out in a region that has not been known for its free and open media environment; it was launched by Qatar, a small peninsular country in the Persian Gulf that hardly had any impact on the Arab media scene before Al-Jazeera; it challenged the Western news networks’ monopoly over the global news flow; and it gave the Arab people a platform through which they can express their opinions without red lines, listen to different points of view, and engage in lively and bold political debates about issues that used to be buried under the carpet of government censorship before the advent of Al-Jazeera. When covering the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the station includes a wide spectrum of international opinion, but has been criticized in some official U.S. circles for including graphic images of the U.S. bombing in the Middle East. Its daring coverage has made it the news station of choice for more than 40 million Arab viewers worldwide.

**AL-JAZEERA TIMELINE**

November 1, 1996—Al-Jazeera launches with a start-up grant of $140 million from the Qatari emir.

January 1, 1999—Expands from 6 hours a day to 24 hours a day.

October 7, 2001—Broadcasts a statement by Osama bin Laden two hours after the U.S.-led coalition begins military strikes against Afghanistan.

October 30, 2001—When asked by a correspondent from Al-Jazeera’s Washington bureau about the authenticity of pictures showing Afghan children as war casualties, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld accuses the network of propounding Taliban propaganda.

November 13, 2001—The United States launches a missile attack on Al-Jazeera’s office in Kabul, Afghanistan. Although no Al-Jazeera staff are hurt in the attack, the building is destroyed and some employees’ homes are damaged. In a letter to Al-Jazeera dated December 6, 2001, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Victoria Clarke states, “The building we struck was a known al Qaeda facility in central Kabul.”

March 4, 2003—The New York Stock Exchange bans Al-Jazeera (as well as several other news organizations) from its trading floor indefinitely, citing “security concerns” as the official reason. A few months later the ban was rescinded, according to a New York Stock Exchange spokesperson.

April 8, 2003—U.S. bombs hit Al-Jazeera’s office in Baghdad, killing reporter Tareq Ayyoub. At a briefing in Doha, Qatar, the network’s managing director says the Pentagon was informed of the network’s location in Baghdad several months before the war started. Brigadier General Vincent K. Brooks says of the Al-Jazeera attack, “This coalition does not target journalists. We don’t know every place journalists are operating on the battlefield. It’s a dangerous place, indeed.”

September 23, 2003—Iraqi interim government suspends Al-Jazeera (and Al-Arabiya, an Arab news channel based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates) from reporting on official
government activities for two weeks for what it says was support of recent attacks on
government members and U.S. forces.
August 7, 2004—The Iraqi interim government shuts down the Baghdad office of Al-
Jazeera for one month, citing national security concerns. Later, the shutdown is ex-
tended indefinitely, and the offices sealed. Al-Jazeera continues to report from Iraq
through a network of stringers.
June 2005—Rumsfeld accuses Al-Jazeera of encouraging Islamic military groups by airing
beheadings of American troops in Iraq. In response, the network says in a statement
that “Al-Jazeera… has never at any time transmitted pictures of killings or beheadings
and… any talk about this is absolutely unfounded.”
November 15, 2006—Al-Jazeera International is launched with four bureaus in Washing-
ton, DC; London; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Doha, Qatar.

Adapted from the Project for Journalism Excellence: http://www.journalism.org/node/1530.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Al-Jazeera, which means “the island” in Arabic, was launched by Qatar’s pro-
gressive emir (the Arabic equivalent of a prince) Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-
Thani in November 1996 as part of his move to introduce democratization to
his tiny state in the Persian Gulf. The British-educated emir, who overthrew his
father after a nonviolent coup in 1995, planned for Al-Jazeera to be an indepen-
dent and nonpartisan satellite TV network free from government scrutiny and
manipulation.

The launching of Al-Jazeera followed the termination of a contract in April
1996 between Rome-based, Saudi-owned Orbit Radio and Television Ser-
vice and the Arabic TV division of the BBC News Service. After the failure of
that venture, the majority of the BBC’s Arabic TV service editorial staff mem-
bers were recruited by Al-Jazeera, which also inherited the BBC network’s
editorial spirit, freedom, and style. This core group of newly recruited staff
members received their training in a Western journalistic environment, and
they were familiar with the Arab political environment, with all its nuances and
intricacies—qualifications that made them the final ingredient in the recipe for
Al-Jazeera’s eventual success (see el-Nawawy and Iskandar 2003).

The Qatari emir offered an initial pledge of around $140 million to help launch
and subsidize Al-Jazeera over a five-year period through November 2001, after
which the network was to become a financially independent commercial enter-
prise in much the same form as CNN. Al-Jazeera, however, has failed to raise
enough money through other means and is still receiving financial support from
the Qatari government, which owns some of the network’s shares.

Al-Jazeera’s popularity had been limited to the Arab world until the 9/11 at-
tacks on New York and Washington, DC. Since then, Al-Jazeera, which had
exclusive videotapes of Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and footage
from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, has become a global news source. Today,
Al-Jazeera houses a staff of more than 400 journalists and 50 foreign correspondents working in 31 countries. More importantly, Al-Jazeera has created a niche for itself by identifying a market demand for serious and independent journalism, with content mostly dedicated to political matters that are of key concern to the Arab people.

**AL-JAZEERA INTERNATIONAL**

As part of its plans for international expansion and global reach, Al-Jazeera launched its English-language network, called Al-Jazeera International (AJI), on November 15, 2006. The new network, which was launched after prolonged delays and months of preparation because of technical and political problems, has offices in Washington, DC; London; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Doha, Qatar.

The new network, which is also funded by the Qatari emir, appeals to the Western audience as well as the non-Arabic-speaking Muslim populations in countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh. It has employed several high-profile Western journalists, including British talk host and interviewer David Frost, former “Nightline” correspondent Dave Marash, and Josh Rushing, the ex-Marine best known for his lead role in the critically acclaimed 2004 documentary about Al-Jazeera called Control Room.

A pressing question regarding Al-Jazeera International is: What kind of identity and market niche will the new network establish for itself? “From its onset, [AJI has tried to] act as a counterbalance to the Western-centric reporting of the established [Western] channels” by marketing itself as “the voice of the South.” AJI “opened with an in-depth review of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, followed by another on Darfur. Reports on Iran and Zimbabwe followed with African and Arab issues dominating the agenda” (Nkrumah 2006).

Al-Jazeera houses a staff of more than 400 journalists and 50 foreign correspondents working in 31 countries. More importantly, Al-Jazeera has created a niche for itself by identifying a market demand for serious and independent journalism, with content mostly dedicated to political matters that are of key concern to the Arab people.

**AL-JAZEERA PROGRAMS: A BREATH OF FRESH AIR IN A POLITICALLY RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Al-Jazeera has revolutionized the Arab media scene by airing what no other Arab news organization dared to: the hard, often harsh truth of Arab life, culture, and politics. It has posed the first serious challenge to the censorial culture of political and media restraint in the Arab world. The network’s shockingly open and passionate political talk shows tackle sensitive issues that have always been considered “taboo” by Arab standards, like sex, polygamy, apostasy in Islam, banned political groups, torture, and corruption of Arab officials. Many of these shows take a news approach that allows for presenting “clashing perspectives” of political opponents. Such an approach “was not only an innovation on Arab television but was also unfamiliar in a region where the voice of authority is rarely challenged openly, whether at school or university, within families or at work” (Sakr 2004, p. 157).

Al-Jazeera’s talk shows, such as More than One Opinion, Open Dialogue, and Without Borders, open the floor for free and open debates and heated discussions that are aired live, with no room for editing on the part of Al-Jazeera staff.
These programs feature academics, experts, politicians, and activists who represent different sides of the same issue. In this free marketplace of ideas, the audience members have a platform to call in and express their opinions on what the guests have to say. In fact, Al-Jazeera has a talk show titled Al-Jazeera Pulpit, which is devoted exclusively to taking live phone calls from ordinary people to know their opinions and their stances on various political issues.

Al-Jazeera viewers, who were initially shocked by the approach and editorial style of its talk shows, became used to controversial confrontations, contentious views, and loud debates “with Islamists and anti-Islamists pitted against each other, as well as people of all political persuasions and dissidents from Morocco to Egypt and Palestine to Bahrain” (Sakr 2001, p. 58). For those viewers who have been yearning for an Arab news network through which they can express their views without inhibitions, Al-Jazeera is a breath of fresh air in a heavily censored environment. In his comment on the impact of Al-Jazeera talk shows on Arab audiences, Faisal Al-Kasim, the host of The Opposite Direction, the flagship talk show on Al-Jazeera, argues that while Arab television networks have become used to reporting the trivia and the news that glorifies the rulers, Al-Jazeera talk shows “have damaged this decaying media and whetted the appetite of the Arab people for more talking” (Al-Kasim 2005, p. 104).

It was no surprise that Al-Jazeera’s talk shows would anger most Arab government officials, who were not used to seeing an Arab television station challenge their policies or take a line that is contradictory to their agendas. Countries’ outrage with Al-Jazeera took different forms: many countries sent official complaints to Qatar. In fact, more than 450 complaints were received by Qatari diplomats from various Arab states during the first few years following the start of Al-Jazeera. Some countries temporarily closed down Al-Jazeera bureaus; others withdrew their ambassadors from the Qatari capital, Doha; still others, faced with the impossibility of jamming the Al-Jazeera signal, went as far as shutting down power to several major cities to prevent their people from watching Al-Jazeera programs.

AL-JAZEERA AND “CONTEXTUAL OBJECTIVITY”

The term objectivity itself, when used within a journalistic context, signifies the adoption of a position of detachment, and it suggests the absence of subjectivity, personalized involvement, and judgment. This ideal or mirage is one that is particular to journalists and the institutions in which they operate.

It would be unrealistic to expect Al-Jazeera, or any other media outlet for that matter, to be absolutely objective. Even if absolute objectivity were possible, there is no absolute truth or reality to be absolutely objective about. A more accurate and more realistic term to apply to Al-Jazeera is “contextual objectivity,” which demonstrates the hybrid struggle between attaining objectivity in news coverage by covering all sides of the story while appealing to network audiences through contextualization. Contextualization demonstrates a situational perspective, allowing for sensitivity to the environment in which the network is broadcasting. Contextualizing a certain event is governed by the realization that objectivity is in the eye of the beholder—the audience seeking the “truth.”
Contextual objectivity can be witnessed in virtually every media outlet today. All media have inherent biases, and all news is manufactured to appeal to a certain audience. That is why people prefer one network over another. But the question is: how do networks strike the balance that provides audiences with a true representation of real events while still appealing to public sensibilities?

While most news networks engage in contextual objectivity, consciously or otherwise, in their day-to-day coverage, Al-Jazeera is perhaps the first network to articulate this approach as a network philosophy. The channel’s motto, “The Opinion and the Other Opinion,” repeated frequently during program intermissions, is an indication that the channel aspires to cover all sides to a particular story, and that it has instituted a pluralistic media discourse. Al-Jazeera believes that public discourse can only be equitable and effective if all possible opinions and views are expressed and demonstrated equally, whether they are Israeli, Palestinian, American, or Turk. Al-Jazeera’s philosophy suggests that “truth” is the culmination of multiple conglomerated subjectivities (see el-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002).

But in the process of trying to live up to its motto, Al-Jazeera has also tried to appeal to the values and beliefs of its Arab audiences. This seemingly paradoxical dilemma is for some a form of contextual objectivity. Al-Jazeera has been telling the American side of the story in Iraq, even as it sympathizes with the plight of the Iraqi people for independence. Its sympathy with the Palestinian cause does not deter it from interviewing Israeli journalists and politicians.

**CONTEXTUAL OBJECTIVITY IN AL-JAZEERA’S COVERAGE OF AMERICA’S “WAR ON TERROR”**

Contextual objectivity on Al-Jazeera is best explained in the framework of the network’s coverage of America’s “war on terror,” or as Al-Jazeera refers to it, the “so-called war on terror.” This war, which has been launched by the U.S. administration in the aftermath of the September 11 events of 2001, has sparked major debates over the definition of terror, its social and political implications, and the extent of the news media’s adherence to the journalistic principles of balance, truth, and objectivity, especially during times of political strife.

The world media systems have not agreed upon a universal definition of terror. In fact, the concept of terrorism is “contested, value-laden and open to multiple meanings located within broader cultural frames, so that, to some extent, terrorism is in the eye of the beholder” (Norris et al. 2003, p. 6). Each media system may perceive a terrorist event differently. For some, it may be a suicide; for others it may be a martyrdom. That is why one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. Al-Jazeera, in its portrayal of practitioners of violence as either “terrorists” or “freedom fighters,” reflects its political culture, its value system, and ideological and commercial interests that tend to drive media anywhere. “This raises the very question of whether and to what extent [Al-Jazeera] can be truly objective when reporting from the Arab world about issues that matter to Arabs the most.” Or yet another question: “Can an Arab channel reporting on Arab issues remove itself from its Arab perspective?” (Zayani 2005, p. 18).
Addressing these questions in the context of America’s “war on terror” is especially important given the way U.S. president George W. Bush described the parties involved in this war as “either with us or against us.” Bush’s pronouncement has placed media outlets like Al-Jazeera in a cultural split of “us” and “them.” The implied cultural assumption for the American broadcast networks, which are products of the American culture, was that they were the platform for the “us” in the war against “them.” However, Al-Jazeera, which is a product of the Arab culture, found it difficult to join the “us” side (i.e., the American side) when most of its viewers were obviously non-Americans who had some reservations about the way the war was conducted. That is why, whenever Al-Jazeera presented news from an Arab perspective in America’s “war against terror,” it was automatically perceived by U.S. officials as anti-American (see Zaharna 2005).

In fact, several senior U.S. officials repeatedly criticized Al-Jazeera, accusing it of fueling anti-American sentiment and giving terrorists a podium because of its airing of tapes from Osama bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda lieutenants. Al-Jazeera defended its position by saying that bin Laden is one side of the story that had to be presented, and that the airings of his tapes on the network were followed by panels including American and Arab analysts to dissect his messages.

CONCLUSION

Al-Jazeera’s editorial policy relies on balancing different perspectives against each other while trying to present a context that suits the Arab cultural and political environment. That has earned it legitimacy, credibility, and popularity on a regional and international level. It has also encouraged other networks in the Arab world to emulate its style and integrate its editorial policy in their programming.

Unfortunately, though, the United States perceives a strong element of bias in Al-Jazeera’s overall coverage. In the U.S. official circles, Al-Jazeera’s seeming exercise of contextual objectivity is equated to being at least “anti-American.” However, in the Arab world, where the majority considers Al-Jazeera to be a symbol of democracy and free speech, a few critics still accuse the channel of being “pro-American.” This is evidence that the channel must be doing something right, and an inadvertent reaffirmation of the network’s success at employing, implementing, and engaging in contextual objectivity.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Global Community Media; Islam and the Media; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Political Documentary; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.

Mohammed el-Nawawy

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES

Democracy demands broad and inclusive public discourse and freedom of expression. Over the years, mainstream media have been criticized for walling off public debate on important issues, and in the age of corporate conglomeration, critics continue to challenge the loss of diverse voices across the media spectrum. An authentic democracy needs dialogue, and alternative media have long provided the space for a multiplicity of viewpoints excluded from much of public debate. The alternative press has a long and important history in the United States, and in recent years new technologies have been designed and employed by independent and community producers that have provided access to channels, equipment, and communities not served by corporate media outlets. Alternative media are a site of controversy for a range of issues from professionalism to regulation, and debates within organizations continue as new production styles raise issues about innovation, formatting, and audience expectations.

OTHER VOICES

The British colonies in North America became a nation through the mobilizing efforts of small publishers. Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin were just the most prominent of the leaders whose fingers pulled proofs off rebel presses. Democracy has been synonymous with free speech since the early American rebellion against corrupt state power and the lack of political representation. The country’s founders fought for freedom of expression, and those rights and liberties have been codified, challenged, and renewed throughout the history of the republic. At the turn of the twentieth century, President Theodore Roosevelt...
coined the term “muckraker” for the audacious exposés that challenged entrenched wealth and corruption, both public and private. Those journalistic traditions remain an essential aspect of American media culture and continue to influence alternative and freelance journalists.

Alternative media, sometimes referred to as community media, are often tied to social movements for change and racial and economic justice. In the 1960s “underground” newspapers flourished with antiwar voices and iconoclastic comic artists such as R. Crumb. These papers grew out of the civil rights movement, in which newspapers by the Black Panthers and others were key tools, educating and mobilizing like-minded supporters for often militant actions that challenged racism. Earlier in the century, antiwar voices had been published in a magazine called The Masses, which included art by the “Ashcan School” of painting—including William Glackens and John Sloan—and writers John Reed and Max Eastman, among others. During WWI an entire press run of this magazine was seized by the U.S. Postal Service. The government accused the magazine of undermining the war effort.

The legacy of these traditions can be found in the long-form investigative reporting in much of the alternative press, in magazines and publications such as Mother Jones, CounterPunch, The Progressive, Harper’s, and The Nation, among others. These alternative sources of information stand outside a media world dominated by corporate giants who have been charged with restricting information unfavorable to the business sector. Corporate media counters that the alternative press is not popular, and the critiques it offers are outside of mainstream concerns and issues. Defenders argue that slick styles and sensational formats attract readers and audiences to material that distracts the public from important democratic debates.

**BROADCASTING AND CABLE CHANNELS**

Although electronic transmission in the United States had a lively start with thousands of amateur radio broadcasters, the trend for decades after the Radio Act of 1927 tended toward greater and greater consolidation of corporate use of the airwaves. VHF and UHF television channels took a similar pattern. In the 1970s cable distribution advanced and more channels came on line, offering a full channel of news (Cable News Network [CNN]), 24-hour sports channels such as ESPN, and full-time entertainment channels, such as HBO, Showtime, and A&E, the arts and entertainment network. However, these new channels soon became commercially driven as part of the larger holdings of corporate media empires.

**NONCOMMERCIAL MEDIA**

Not all broadcast stations are commercial. There is electromagnetic spectrum space allocated for noncommercial and educational uses. Originally, many of these channels were run by colleges and universities, although most of them are now nonprofit entities that make up the key stations of PBS (Public
Broadcasting Service) and NPR (National Public Radio), both funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which receives money from Congress. Although structured purposefully to be shielded from direct political influence, over the course of its history funding for public broadcasting has been subject to political pressures, with congressional members, predominantly from the Republican party, periodically calling for an end to financial support. Because of the lobbying power to promote the commercial media sector in the United States, overall funding for public networks is much less than that allocated in other industrialized countries. The fact that the funding does not cover production and ongoing expenses has meant that these networks must rely on donations from public and corporate donors. Critics of the programming content of public broadcasting argue that corporate donors have undue influence over programming decisions. They charge that they have all but eliminated the experimental and diverse programming originally envisioned for PBS. Others argue that the lack of relevant programming should be attributed to the faulty visions of those within the public broadcasting system. Because of such problems, independent producers and unions have had to march, petition, and sue to get their voices, shows, and programming agendas heard on public broadcasting.

ARTICULATING THE NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES

Advocates for developing an alternative media system that is more inclusive and able to accommodate a diverse set of opinions and voices also point to the regulatory rollbacks of laws that once required commercial media outlets to fulfill their public interest mandate. The authority by which all channels operate requires that they broadcast “in the public interest, convenience and necessity.” Many argue that that goal, codified into law in 1934, was made irrelevant when broadcasters claimed that such cartoon fare as The Flintstones and The Jetsons was “educational.” Community and activist groups who form a major constituency for alternative media point out that even commercial time, driven ostensibly by a “free market,” is often closed to alternative viewpoints, even for those willing to pay commercial rates. Peace activists and unions have had to take networks to court to be able to buy standard commercial time for 30-second spots. The “Fairness Doctrine,” which was ushered in after WWII in an effort to combat potential dominance of public airwaves by particular parties, has been eliminated. Public interest groups have argued that these changes led to the present media landscape, and they contend that commercial media do not represent the broader public. They point to the inordinate amount of public space for the strident pronouncements of ultraconservatives such as Rush Limbaugh and Bill O’Reilly, among others, and the lack of alternative space for counter agendas and independent voices. In earlier times the Fairness Doctrine would have required that “the other side” of an important issue be included, a demand the public can no longer make. Cable talk show hosts and producers point to the diversity of their guest lists, but detractors argue that conservative hosts set the agendas and enjoy a discursive advantage.
PACIFICA NETWORK

After WWII, media producers looking for distribution sources outside of the mainstream media were able to create radio venues for alternative voices. Pacifica Network, founded in the 1950s by Louis Hill, acquired five stations in major cities: Los Angeles; San Francisco; New York; Washington, DC; and Houston. Because this community radio network is able to sustain itself through listener contributions, the stations were not subject to the pressures of NPR and the need for corporate sponsors. However, while this network has served communities for years and developed innovative programs that draw on the strength of activist groups, individual talent, and academic producers, among others, the network has been beleaguered by budget shortfalls and internal disputes over competing visions for alternative media.

PEG ACCESS

In the early 1980s, when cable technology dramatically increased the number of channels and services available, public and alternative media entered an era of expansion and innovation. Channels for public, educational, and government (PEG) access were mandated through cable franchises in thousands of cities and towns across the country. PEG access channels provide live coverage of town meetings, high school basketball games, and space for community organizations and individuals to have ongoing programming. In many cities, these channels have become important locations for community dialogue. The local franchises often provide a percentage of the cable revenue for funding media centers to program these channels. This funding is based on the fact that the cable lines utilize a public resource: the local rights-of-way. In order to build the cable system, access to local streets and manholes is needed. In exchange for this, local franchise authorities have negotiated for channels, equipment, staff, and housing for local media centers. Tucson, Arizona; Burlington, Vermont; and Grand Rapids, Michigan are just a few of the places where PEG access resources have brought a good measure of democratic expression to local issues. However, the channel space has increasingly become a desirable asset, and the cable corporations and companies have been fighting hard to try to undercut access use and free up more channels for commercial programming.

PAPER TIGER TELEVISION

Paper Tiger Television started as a public access program in New York City. Artists and activists worked with cultural critics to produce educational and informational programs that aired over two access cable channels. From the beginning, many of the shows focused on media themes, offering critiques of programs, newspapers, and regulatory and ownership issues, controversies that continue to surround the corporate media. The Paper Tiger collective has lasted 27 years, producing over 400 programs. Paper Tiger expanded from cable and continues to distribute its programs to schools, colleges, community groups, and overseas venues.
Instead of trying to mimic the expensive, slick production style of mainstream mass media and what marketing consultants call the “packaging” of news programming, Paper Tiger created a “public access aesthetic” that included innovative and inexpensive set designs, handmade graphics, and alternative location settings. Dedicated to the inclusion of original and creative artistic expression, the collective developed a working analysis that argued that alternative formats were as important as content. The style and look of the Paper Tiger video aesthetic was contentious, with some critics charging that audiences would not take seriously shows that diverged from the high production qualities recognizable on network TV and even in some documentary formats. Yet Paper Tiger continued its unconventional and inexpensive style, and such innovations predated the now popular look of many independent videos, especially those shared on online venues such as YouTube and others.

**DEEP DISH TELEVISION**

Deep Dish Television can be understood as the logical outgrowth of the public access structure, providing a distribution network for public access video and independently produced programming. Initiated in 1986, its goal was to collect programming from community stations and video artists from across the country and provide a national distribution source for that programming. Programs are uplinked to a satellite feed that can be received at local community media centers, where they can be rebroadcast on community, public, and access stations. As a “grassroots” network, Deep Dish has produced its own programs with the help of individual donors and foundation support. Programs and even series that address specific topics from an in-depth perspective exemplify a very different type of reporting of historical and cultural events, political scandals and corruption, and war. After 20 years, assessing these often groundbreaking series allow media analysts and the public alike to fully appreciate the role of and need for alternative media (see sidebar, “Shocking and Awful: Deep Dish Television Responds to War”). The most successful of the Deep Dish uplinks has been the daily news program *Democracy Now!* with award-winning journalist Amy Goodman. This ongoing international news program began as a radio show on the Pacifica network and became a television series through the Deep Dish network of local stations.

**SHOCKING AND AWFUL: DEEP DISH TELEVISION RESPOND TO WAR**

In the days before the invasion of Iraq, as the U.S. military planned a massive aerial bombing campaign of Baghdad, the Pentagon phrase “Shock and Awe” was repeated with enthusiasm on mainstream television. At the same time, Deep Dish TV was setting in motion a plan to record, illuminate, document and bear witness to what would be left out of the commercial media war-coverage frame. They would title the 13-part series of 28-minute programs *Shocking and Awful*, and the group of independent artists and media producers would tell the story of the Iraq war in a way completely unlike that of commercial media.
As telecom corporations such as AT&T and Verizon move to provide video programming, pressure builds to minimize the public interest requirements for PEG access and to eliminate local franchise regulations. Media activists are working to ensure that PEG access will stay in cable and serve as a model for other platforms.

PUBLIC INTEREST SET-ASIDE

Direct Satellite Broadcasting (DBS) is one arena to have developed a “public interest” set-aside. DBS can provide the sort of channel choice that cable provides via satellite. It is the only programming available in many rural areas where cable lines are not cost-effective. In the late 1990s, when DBS systems were being marketed around the country, organizations such as the Consumer Federation and the Instructional Telecommunications Foundation lobbied to make sure that some sort of public “payback” would be required from these systems. After several years of lobbying and activism, 4 percent of DBS channels were required to be educational and nonprofit. This has enabled the University of California and University of Washington as well as several consortia of colleges to have national programming via satellite. It has also enabled two “alternative” channels: Link TV and Free Speech TV, which provide national space for, among others, antiwar activists and environmental advocates. Free Speech TV airs Democracy Now!, the television version of the popular Pacific Radio
news program first distributed by Deep Dish TV, and has garnered a huge audience and an active constituency of alternative media advocates.

LOW-POWER RADIO

Another venue for alternative voices is low-power radio. Much of the radio spectrum in the United States is unused and in the 1990s, with the availability of low-cost electronic equipment, creative young people began pirate stations to play music that wasn’t allowed on commercial media, and to provide space for environmental and community discussions. In the past the argument against this sort of anarchic broadcasting had used the fear of interference, but the antennae of low-power transmitters can be set so that they do not interfere with commercial channels. With the availability of low-cost transmission equipment, so many of these stations had developed by the late 1990s that a movement began to grow to legalize low-power broadcasting. Prometheus Radio is a Philadelphia organization that grew out of a pirate broadcast to become an organizing hub and station-building center. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) has allowed several hundred low-power stations, which now provide information and cultural programming to diverse groups including farm workers, crab fishermen, and immigrants.

INDYMEDIA

In 1999, while preparing for the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, alternative media makers from around the country formed the “Independent Media Center” and created a Web site: www.indymedia.org. Long before YouTube and other commercial Web video, this site became a global node for activism, providing easy posting of audio and video, still photographs, and graphics, greatly expanding activist news and information. PDF files were posted so that local groups could print out a daily newspaper. The excitement of this project spread to many countries, and Indymedia has been an important locus for alternative news especially during crises, such as the economic collapse of Argentina in 2001.

AIR AMERICA

Air America was initiated in 2003 to be an alternative to conservative talk networks. It enabled progressive voices, such as feminist Laura Flanders, to be available on the AM dial. Although it generated impressive audience ratings, the lack of commercial sponsorship forced it into bankruptcy in 2006. However, it still continues as a programming source in several cities.

CONCLUSION

The growth of the Internet has lead some to discount the importance of regulated broadcast spaces. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of people still
Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security

Free flow of news is the oxygen of a democracy, and without confidential sources, a truly free press could not exist. If the press is to perform its watchdog function, it is essential for a news organization to use information from those not in a position to identify themselves. But many critics feel that the press misuses confidential sources, particularly in stories where national security issues are at stake.

This country was founded on the principle that the press be free and fearless. The First Amendment to the constitution provides for a press that acts as a fourth branch of government, endowed with the ability to question those in any of the three other branches of government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial.

When the First Amendment was adopted at the end of the eighteenth century, journalism was very different from what it is today. There was no television, no radio, no photography, no Internet, and no large media companies. Instead, in
the broadsheets of that day, there were lots of opinions, and lots of mundane bulletin board material, like lists of when commercial ships were to set sail. But from the start, reporters played their assigned role: they were skeptical of what the government told them, and they questioned official pronouncements.

The framers were insistent that the press be independent, that it provide a check on official action. The press was not supposed to be a cheerleader for actions of government. Many years later, this view was neatly captured by Finley Peter Dunne, who wrote wildly popular, satirical “Mr. Dooley” columns in the early twentieth century that were nationally syndicated. The fictional Dooley was an opinionated, first-generation, Irish American bar owner who criticized the nation and its most powerful people. It was Dooley who thought the duty of a newspaper was to “afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.” This comment has been attributed by some writers to Henry Louis Mencken. Thomas Griffith asserts in *The Waist-High Culture* (1959), though, that the phrasing was Dooley’s first.

The practice of anonymously leaking information to the press is as old as the country. George Washington often was angered because word-for-word accounts of his Cabinet meetings were published in newspapers of the day. Washington thought his political rival, Thomas Jefferson, was intent on embarrassing him and therefore probably leaked this information. In the nineteenth century, journalists were known to bribe clerks to turn over government documents. The clerks remained anonymous.

Contemporary journalists have a finer sense of propriety; they ordinarily do not bribe anyone. But confidential sources remain the lifeblood of this country’s journalism, particularly in Washington, where reporters keenly feel they have an obligation to provide the public with necessary information. If use of confidential sources was prohibited, readers would be cut off from a great deal of information. On the other hand, attributing information to confidential sources is not fully satisfactory, arousing genuine issues about the credibility of the information. It is not possible to gauge the reliability of information if readers do not know its sources. When modern journalists must resort to anonymity, they need to tell readers and viewers as much as possible about their sources, but they often fall short of this goal.

**“RELIABLE SOURCES”**

For much of the last half of the twentieth century, journalists would almost routinely attribute nonpublic information to “reliable sources.” But this formulation was not very helpful. Of course, the source was “reliable.” Why else would it be used? This particular locution—“reliable sources”—appears much less frequently these days.

Dangers abound in using—or overusing—anonymous sources: reporters may subject themselves to being manipulated by someone who passes on information for personal gain. Readers may suspect that the anonymous sources just do not exist, and thus undercut the credibility of the press.

The country’s best reporters, including those who regularly write about national security issues, almost always rely on well-placed sources who reporters
Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security

promise not to identify under any circumstances. Sometimes, these sources are whistleblowers, who feel strongly that the public should know about a governmental abuse and would lose their jobs if their identity were disclosed. Reporters, in turn, are generally respectful of genuine national security issues. They do not knowingly publish stories that would endanger lives or affect the security of this country.

Sources rarely are totally altruistic. They usually have their own motives for talking to reporters and for wanting the public to know certain information. In the end, it is probably impossible for journalists to understand these motives and to make judgments based on what these motives are. “My own view is that the law can’t and shouldn’t distinguish, and I would say journalists can’t and shouldn’t distinguish between good sources and bad, virtuous sources and unvirtuous ones,” says Floyd Abrams, probably the leading First Amendment lawyer in the country. “If a journalist grants confidentiality, I think the journalist has to keep her word.”

Probably the most famous anonymous source, W. Mark Felt, was an FBI official who finally disclosed his identity in 2005. Until then, he was known as “Deep Throat,” the source who provided invaluable guidance to the Washington Post’s Bob Woodward in his reporting on the Watergate scandal with Carl Bernstein. Even though decades had passed, once Felt made his disclosure, some fellow agents thought Felt had committed an outrage in telling government secrets to reporters. Other people felt he was a hero. Felt’s motives were complicated. He viewed himself as a patriot. He was also angry that President Richard Nixon had not given him the top job at the FBI. Whatever his motives, his information was invaluable in helping to unseat President Nixon.

The use of anonymous sources—so successful in the Washington Post’s reporting on Watergate—had a decided downside. In 1981, Bob Woodward, then an editor, oversaw an article by Janet Cooke, a young reporter who wrote a powerful story about an eight-year-old boy named Jimmy, who was a heroin addict. Neither Woodward nor the other editors insisted on knowing Cooke’s source. She had told the editors that the drug supplier would kill the boy if she squealed to her editors. They did not press. Months later, Cooke won a Pulitzer Prize, journalism’s highest honor, but her story quickly unraveled. Questions

WASHINGTON RULES

In Washington, journalists and sources communicate in their own peculiar, often convoluted way, with their own special terms of art. “On the record” is straightforward and means you can be quoted by name and title. After that, things get murky. In “on background” conversations, officials describe facts and policy in an informal way and are not to be quoted. Materials can be attributed to “senior administration officials.” “Deep background” material can be printed only if it is not specifically attributed to anyone. (The story can be couched in terms of “it has been learned that”). Finally, in “off the record” conversations, the information cannot be published, but journalists can only use what they are told to guide their research. They can confirm the information elsewhere.
were raised about false entries on her résumé, and soon after she confessed that “Jimmy” was a fabrication.

That episode led to soul-searching in journalism and the reexamination of how anonymous sources were used. Some news outlets curtailed the use of anonymous sources, but the major news organizations continued to rely on anonymous sources, particularly in national security matters.

**CASE STUDY: THE PLAME CASE**

For years, the government in power—whether Democrat or Republican—investigated unauthorized leaks of information, usually focusing on the people who leaked the information, not the reporters. Leakers were almost never found. What has changed in recent years is that the government has begun in earnest to look at reporters as well, not necessarily to prosecute them but to have the reporters lead them to the source who gave up classified information.

From 2003 to 2007, two issues, leaks and national security, held center stage in Washington. The dispute began with President Bush’s 2003 State of the Union address, in which he claimed that Saddam Hussein had sought to obtain uranium in Africa as part of a campaign to build up weapons of mass destruction. In July 2003, Joseph C. Wilson IV, who had served as acting ambassador to Iraq at the time of the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s, wrote a pivotal op-ed article for the *New York Times* in which he contradicted what Bush had said in his State of the Union address. Wilson related how the CIA had sent him to Niger in 2002 to figure out whether Iraq had, in fact, sought to purchase uranium ore. Wilson’s investigation concluded that there was no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein had made any such effort, and he charged that senior Bush administration officials had distorted intelligence about Iraq’s effort to obtain uranium to buttress the case for going to war.

Later that month, Robert Novak, a veteran conservative syndicated columnnist, cited two unnamed senior administration sources who told him the selection of Mr. Wilson to conduct this investigation had been pushed by his wife, Valerie Plame, a CIA “operative on weapons of mass destruction.” (Years later, Plame appeared before a Congressional committee and sharply disputed that she had any meaningful role in the decision to send her husband to Niger.) Quite possibly, it was felt, a public official had anonymously disclosed the information about Ms. Plame’s job in an effort to smear her husband.

President Bush was very public in condemning the leak and he promised to fire anyone involved in the leak. An aggressive special counsel, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, was named to find out which Bush administration officials leaked the identity of Ms. Plame, which might have been a federal crime. In the end, no one was fired.
Karl Rove, Bush’s powerful deputy chief of staff, confirmed Ms. Plame’s identity to two reporters, but continued in his job.

Ultimately, nobody was criminally charged with knowingly leaking the name of an undercover CIA officer. But I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney’s former chief of staff, was convicted of perjury, obstruction of justice and lying to the FBI. He was found guilty of lying about his role in a White House campaign to discredit Wilson, a vocal critic of the Iraq war. Stripped of the complex legal language, Libby’s crime was that he had not given a grand jury an accurate version of his conversations with reporters. Libby could have reasonably anticipated that reporters would keep his confidences, as is their custom. But they were pressured by a vigorous prosecutor, and they buckled. At the trial, the chief witnesses against Libby turned out to be reporters who had once used him as a source.

In the course of the investigation of Libby, Judith Miller, then of the New York Times and one of the reporters who had used Libby as a source, was subpoenaed. She had indeed discussed the Wilson investigation with Libby, as he had with other reporters, but Miller never wrote a story. In her confidential conversation, she had promised Libby not to disclose who he was. And Libby provided information on the understanding that it could be used so long as he was not named directly. When the prosecutor demanded she discuss that conversation, Miller balked. Upholding the important principle that reporters must protect the identity of confidential sources, she went to jail to protect Libby’s identity. Then after 85 days, she was released from jail once Libby explicitly gave her permission to testify—first at the grand jury, then at trial. And eventually that testimony helped to convict Libby of federal charges.

To complicate matters, Miller was a very controversial reporter with a political cloud over her head. She had been singled out by certain critics on the left as someone who had written stories about weapons of mass destruction that were uncritically favorable to the administration in the run up to the invasion of Iraq. However, at the time she was writing, many people, including Saddam’s own generals, felt that the Iraqi leader had weapons of mass destruction.

Months after she was released, in a television interview, Miller said: “Going to jail for me was not a career move, not a career enhancement move. Going to jail was something I felt I had to do. I didn’t want to do it. I hadn’t sought a confrontation with the government. I’d never written anything. It was a question of principle and conscience. And whatever anyone else said, in a way, was irrelevant to me. It was painful. It was extremely painful for my friends and family. But I knew why I was in jail. And I knew that I was in jail for a cause that I thought was essential to our profession. So I was very comfortable with the decision. But was it painful? Yes. Was it disappointing? Yes. Was it infuriating? Yes. It’s journalism.”

As principled as Miller thought her cause, she was unable to explain to the broader public why her resistance to the government served a noble purpose. What Miller’s travails showed was that if journalism, particularly in Washington, must be an insider’s game, journalists then need to explain their role more convincingly.
See also Bias and Objectivity; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Journalists in Peril; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Watch Groups; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment.


Tom Goldstein

AUDIENCE POWER TO RESIST

Educators, policy makers, and parents worry about the negative effects of the media. Blaming the media for eating disorders, violence, sexuality, profanity, war, sexism, racism, homophobia, hedonistic consumerism, and seemingly all other imaginable ills is a common occurrence. But to what degree can we as audience members resist the messages that bombard us daily? Surely, not all who watch a sexist television program, for instance, walk away sexist. In this battleground issue, many believe the opposite, that audience members are not so easily influenced and have the power to resist violent, antisocial messages, and unhealthy persuasion. Is attacking the media a way of avoiding, as some say, engaging with lack of social and economic equality, and other problems equally as responsible for the social ills that are too easily blamed on the media?

MEDIA EFFECTS

Media messages hold remarkable power to normalize certain behavior, to render other behavior “deviant” or abnormal, and to lead us toward or away from certain beliefs and frames of mind with their emotive, narrative, and/or informational allure. Given its scope of coverage, the mass media have unrivaled abilities to project images and ideas to a vast number of citizens, a talent or curse that has been praised and feared since the advent of mass media.

At the same time, however, all too often the media become a scapegoat when deeper social problems afflict a society or individual: thus, for instance, blaming school shootings and other violent crimes on gory horror films, violent video games, and countercultural music is much easier than inquiring into the complex social realities that lead to a youth going on a killing rampage. As such, the allegation of media responsibility can sometimes erase the apparent need for personal and societal responsibility, with the abstract “media” serving as a catch-all for societal problems, and a red herring for causational analysis.

Similarly, allegations of media effects risk posing the notion of an unthinking, easily influenced mass of media consumers. Media effects discourse has
often been criticized for underestimating the mental capacities of youth and children in particular, but also for a patriarchal elitism that frequently posits women and the “uneducated” working classes as easily influenced, with images of screaming teenage pop music fans, obsessed soap opera fans, and high school dropouts who believe anything the television says, working to assure the rest of us that we are a sage, enlightened group. Many allegations of media effects therefore mask culturally based attacks on taste, whereby it is others’ media that worry us, not our own.

The fact is, though, that many media messages are far less persuasive. If media messages were more successful, and if media audiences were as gullible as some critics contend, complaints from the advertising industry of the difficulty of persuading consumers would be nonexistent. Instead, after any television ad break, all viewers would feel the need to buy everything advertised and we would similarly feel the need to wear everything we see stars wearing, and to behave exactly as our favorite film and television characters behave. The absence of “total effects,” and the complex nature of media effects is further illustrated when millions of high schoolers who watch gory horror films, play violent video games, and listen to countercultural music, for instance, exhibit no need or desire to engage in mass murder. Many audience members resist thousands of media messages weekly.

THE “ACTIVE AUDIENCE”

Belief in the freedom of audiences to read against the grain of media messages came to a head with the work of media theorist John Fiske. Fiske posed that audiences are “active,” by which he meant that we actively make sense of all that we consume, thinking through what the messages mean, choosing what to accept and what to reject, rather than watching passively, mindlessly accepting everything that comes our way, as if the media injected their messages into us with a virtual hypodermic needle. Whereas a belief in media effects looks at the construction of a message, and then its journey to the consumer via a process that oftentimes suggests that the consumer is a mere receptacle, a belief in active audiences looks at the consumer first, as an individual who approaches a media message with certain desires and needs, thus suggesting that individuals have control over media messages, not vice versa.

The process of media consumption can also be seen as communal and social, not just individual. Thus, instead of seeing both media message and consumer as isolated in a vacuum together, we should realize that many messages are discussed afterwards (or beforehand), thereby subjecting them to scrutiny. Many studies of media effects find that effects are strongest immediately following consumption, meaning that when audience members stop to talk or think about media messages, the effects often diminish. Media effects studies are also often conducted in artificial environments, hence overlooking the corrective effects of familial or friend discussion and debriefing. Media literacy helps us to see the strategies and patterns behind media messages, and with so much everyday talk being about the media, we often share our media literacy with others, ensuring
a greater level of media savvy overall. Precisely because so many individuals fear media effects, therefore, warnings of the media surround us, encouraging us to be wary in general, but also offering specific strategies for reading against the grain in particular. Some of these warnings are offered by the media themselves, as good parody and satire. Some in particular operate as media literacy primers on media genres, as does *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* with the news, or *The Simpsons* with the family sitcom.

Also, as consumers, we are capable of enjoying a media message without wholly agreeing with it. Some television programs, for instance, have intriguing characters, are filmed in attractive and artistic ways, and/or examine places of considerable interest. But we can like one part of a program and dislike another, loving the “look” of a show, say, but dismissing its politics, or loving one character yet despising another. All of us no doubt have had the experience of falling in love with a song whose lyrics elude us, an experience that illustrates how easily media messages can be parsed and divided. Even fans, then—those consumers who seem most obviously passive—are often active, thoughtful, and/or discriminating readers, viewers, and listeners.

**AN EXAMPLE: CULTURAL IMPERIALISM**

A particular example of the debate over media consumption and audience power can be found with regards to the suggestion that American media are a “cultural imperialist,” Americanizing the planet and socializing the youth of the world to yearn for all things American. American media have a foreign presence like no other national media, their music, films, and television dominating many foreign markets. But some argue that non-Americans are free to resist the messages of American ideology embedded in so many of these global media messages, and that to argue otherwise is to belittle the intelligence of foreign

**TELEVISION WITHOUT PITY (www.televisionwithoutpity.com)**

Considerable evidence of active audience behavior can be found at the Web site Television Without Pity. The site offers hundreds of discussion boards on new and old television series, and postings from site moderators and from the site’s thousands of posters frequently approach the programs from a satiric, critical angle. Thus, amidst the many professions of idolatry of other shows, one finds *Are You Hot?* described as having “telegraphed more like a slave auction than something sexy and fun to watch” and *Just Legal* is said to have been “a wreck from the first fifteen seconds of the pilot, and it only got worse from there.” Even posters who follow a program closely, clearly enjoying it, prove ready, willing, and able to share frustrations with gender or race depictions, overt and gaudy consumerism, and with its politics, or simply to mock unrealistic events and characterization, or transparent attempts by a show’s writers to create emotion and pathos. Television Without Pity serves as a running dialogue between viewers and television, one that illustrates the many complex interactions between consumer and media.
consumers. Researchers Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, for instance, found that Arab viewers of *Dallas* enjoyed the television program, yet rejected outright its glorification of American capitalism, seeing the program instead as an illustration of all that is wrong with American capitalism, and seeing its characters as immoral. Sometimes, then, messages can “boomerang,” swinging back on themselves. The ultrapatriotic film *Independence Day* remains one of the global box office’s all-time champions, but viewers from Vancouver to Hong Kong reported audiences cheering the scene in which aliens destroy the White House, suggesting the degree to which audiences can empathize with various figures in a media narrative, and can actively read against the narrative’s interests.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE ACTIVE AUDIENCE APPROACH**

However, the example of American media overseas also highlights the limitations of active audience theory. First of all, while international viewers may have rejected *Dallas* and *Independence Day*, they were still stuck with the shows. We might be able to read against a media message, but that gives us no power in and of itself to create a new or better message. Thus, we should never romanticize reading against the grain as an “answer” to problematic messages. Nationally chauvinist, racist, sexist, or other detrimental messages are best challenged by messages that are not detrimental, and as powerful an act as the deflection of detrimental messages can be, such an act does not create better messages. With the news, for instance, we might sense that coverage is biased, but in the absence of alternative coverage, we are left with only the biased account.

Second, reading against the grain can prove tiring. Many of us turn on the television or our CD player, go to a movie, or buy a book or magazine in order to relax. In such situations, it is often easier to read with the grain. While all of us are capable of “active” viewing, and while all of us are active viewers at some point, the experience of being a passive viewer is often sought out and relished. At certain times, we might “forget” to be active, or might go along with a media message merely because we are not in the mood to fight it.

Ultimately, it is helpful to view media effects as akin to the sowing of seeds. Seeds—or messages—are scattered liberally on the ground—or audience. Many seeds will fail to grow, but others will flourish. What makes the media powerful is not that they regularly convince all viewers to follow their messages, for this is rarely if ever the case. Rather, the media are powerful because occasional seeds do grow. To become confused and believe that all seeds grow is foolish, but we would be equally foolish to assume that simply because many seeds die on the ground, therefore all seeds perish. For example, many listeners may dismiss a racist song as vile, but its power lies with the few listeners who take it to heart.

**AUDIENCE REBELLION**

Beyond simply fighting a media message in the act of consumption, audiences can also mobilize themselves in ways that speak back to media creators. Peggy Charren’s successful initiative to start a parents advocacy group, Action for Children’s Television, ended in pushing Congress to introduce legislation
that limited advertising in children's television programming; Christian groups have boycotted films or television programs into financial death; and Bill Maher's *Politically Incorrect* was forced off the air in 2002 after his controversial comments concerning the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to a threatened boycott of his show's advertisers. On one hand, media producers have often proven remarkably indifferent to their everyday consumers’ requests, but on the other hand, many media corporations live in constant fear of offending highly mobilized consumer groups (as with the Christian Right through such groups as Focus on the Family), and thus self-censor in order to avoid audience rebellion.

To some, the most obvious and effective form of audience rebellion would entail turning off the television, radio, CD player, and so forth. However, avoiding the media proves increasingly hard in a mediated world, and with all the information and entertainment that we receive from the media, to mix metaphors, a “cold turkey” approach risks throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Moreover, going cold turkey still leaves the messages there for other consumers. As such, the continuing challenge for consumers will be to navigate through the media in ways that expose them to their better messages, yet with viewing strategies, awareness, and media literacy to avoid and/or see through the detrimental ones.

In the meantime, any discussion of media effects must remember that media consumption never happens in a blank setting: rather, we approach any act of consumption in a certain place, with a certain mindset, perhaps with a certain group, and all of these variables change the nature of our interaction with the media. Media effects are never just about messages and about the media: they are also about the complex history of the audience, and all study of media effects therefore requires close study of the audience.

**See also** Celebrity Worship and Fandom; Children and Effects; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Cultural Appropriation; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Media Literacy; Media Reform; User-Created Content and Audience Participation; Violence and Media; Women’s Magazines; Youth and Media Use.


*Jonathan Gray*
BIAS AND OBJECTIVITY

Citizens who live in a democracy depend on the news media to help them stay informed about the world and the important issues that affect their lives. Reliable information goes to the core of the democratic process. Citizens make decisions, vote, and take actions based on the information they receive from the press. Journalism articulates a set of standards and practices that establish a professional commitment to neutrality and balance in relation to the people and events reported in the media. The idea of objectivity is a central ethos of journalism, acknowledging reporters’ commitment to disseminating unbiased news and information. At the same time, by articulating professional canons and declaring the goals of objectivity, legitimacy and credibility are conferred upon the profession. The role of the press is central to Western enlightenment values, and the journalistic standard of objectivity is acquiring new global significance as reporters seek different roles and institutional supports within formerly Communist and authoritarian regimes. Whether objectivity can be realized in practice, however, or whether it is a useful concept for attaining the information goals of a democracy, remain debatable questions.

WHAT IS OBJECTIVITY IN REPORTING?

News reporting in the pursuit of truth without fear or favor is undoubtedly a positive value. Few reporters would want to be considered unable or unwilling to produce accurate, unbiased news accounts for citizens of democracies who need to make informed judgments about public affairs. But in an age when journalism, with increasing frequency, is criticized for biased and unfair
reporting, it appears that the matter of objectivity is not so clear cut. Under scrutiny, the concept of objectivity has been found to lack a clear definition. In fact, it seems to have many meanings and is often interpreted differently by journalists themselves. One research team, Wolfgang Donsbach and Bettina Klett, found at least four different ways that working journalists defined objectivity. In some cases, it is seen as the negation of subjectivity; the prescription that journalists keep their own ideas, interpretations and opinions out of a story. In another definition, an objective story is one that includes fair representations of each side in a controversy. Another way journalists identify the practice, is the need to adopt an attitude of balanced skepticism towards all sides in a dispute. Some journalists think of objectivity as the inclusion of facts to contextualize an issue.

While seeking an authoritative definition that illuminates the practice and concept, it becomes clear that objectivity is actually multifaceted and should be defined as an interrelated complex of ideas and practices. Objectivity seems to provide journalists and the public alike with a general model for conceiving of and evaluating news stories and reports. It also describes news institutions and their newsgathering and disseminating strategies. For an inclusive definition, it is important to understand that objectivity is no one thing, but a socially constructed concept that delineates complex professional practices. Robert Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao suggest that such an “objectivity regime” must be identified on several levels or dimensions. First, objectivity comprises the goals that journalists and their editors strive for. Referring to the work of Denis McQuail, these can be divided into values concerning journalism’s ability to impart information about the world. Such information must separate fact from opinion, and it must be accurate and complete. It also describes a set of values concerning the stance reporters should take towards the value-laden meanings of news. These values are identified as detachment, neutrality, impartiality and independence, avoiding partisanship, personal biases, ulterior motives, or outside interests.

In addition to values and responsibilities, journalism professor W. Lance Bennett has noted that the concept of objectivity also embodies a set of newsgathering and presentational techniques, such as “documentary reporting practices.” The separation of hard news from commentary allows news reporters to transmit only “facts” that they can observe or that “credible” sources have confirmed. These practices are graphically illustrated in the pages of newspapers when they separate factual reporting from the opinion pieces in the editorial section.

Objectivity is also part of the embedded institutional framework of complex news organizations with legal protections. The media, particularly the news media, function under legal guarantees of free speech designed to insure independence from the state. Such protections have come to assume a degree of professionalism with regard to conduct and appropriate skills. In addition, though most news organizations are part of larger profit-seeking corporate conglomerates, the concept of objective journalism within this institutional framework assumes the separation of editorial and marketing functions within news divisions.
Finally, objectivity is an active ingredient in public discourse. It provides the language for everyday assessments of journalistic performance. This language includes synonyms, such as “fairness” and “balance,” which some people see as more flexible and achievable substitutes for objectivity. Objectivity is often counterposed to “bias,” most frequently partisan or political bias; arguments have also been advanced that media representations embody technological, gender or cultural biases.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF OBJECTIVITY

Just as trying to define objectivity is complicated, tracing its historical trajectory is equally complex, and at times the subject of debate, especially with regard to its emergence in American journalism. As an ideal, objectivity is neither universal nor timeless, and has emerged in specific historical, political and cultural contexts.

Geopolitically, adherence to objectivity is more typical of journalism in the United States, Britain, and Canada than incontinental Europe, with its stronger tradition of partisanship in the press, or in theocratic or authoritarian regimes, where journalism is mandated to serve the state and/or an official ideology. In the Middle East, Al-Jazeera, broadcasting out of Qatar, challenge traditional reporting from authoritarian regimes, but evoked the ire of the United States with alternative representations of the war on terror. Even where it is most entrenched, the objectivity regime is more characteristic of some news media (such as the “quality” press, public service broadcasting, news reports) than others (such as tabloid newspapers, entertainment-oriented television, opinion columns).

Historically, objectivity as a paradigm in Anglo-American journalism displaced explicit partisanship during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Media scholar, Dan Schiller sees the roots of objectivity in the democratic discourse of universal natural rights in the nineteenth-century labor press. A more conventional view links objectivity's origins to the emergence of technology (photography, the telegraph) and associated organizational forms (news wire services, the “inverted pyramid” form of reporting) that appeared to capture reality. The emergence of advertising for mass markets contributed greatly to the decline of the partisan press; nonpartisan “objective” journalism enabled newspapers to pursue the broadest possible readership, and thus advertising revenue.

Cultural currents and historical events also contributed to the formulation of objectivity as a value. Mitchell Stephens traces the roots of objectivity to “reverence for facts,” and the development of the scientific method in the late nineteenth century. A significant turning point for journalism occurred after the First World War. Modern war propaganda influenced public support for war, and the carnage left in its wake compelled scholars, commentators, and social scientists alike to reevaluate the role and practices of the press. The rise of the new public relations industry, Freudian psychology, historically unprecedented totalitarian regimes in Europe, and the Great Depression, all contributed by the 1930s to a culture's loss of confidence in the reliability of the press, the rationality of
citizens, and the viability of liberal-democratic capitalism. Objectivity in North American journalism became more narrowly and technically defined as certain types of “factual” statements, rather than a universalizing discourse of truth in the public interest.

Over the next few decades other reporting approaches, such as interpretive reporting, adversarial/critical journalism, and enterprise reporting have been developed that sometimes questioned the values of objectivity. Those alternative models and competing styles that once seemed to directly challenge the objectivity regime, however, have generally been contained or marginalized by the regime.

DEBATES OVER OBJECTIVITY: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CRITIQUES

Underlying various critiques and defenses of journalism objectivity are contending epistemologies, or different models for understanding the relationship between the texts of news reports, and the reality they seek to describe. Positivism, once a dominant position in Western thought, was firmly based in the European Enlightenment’s confidence in scientific method, rationality and progress. It asserts the possibility of accurate descriptions of the world-as-it-is, through the careful observation of events, perceivable through the senses. Positivism underlies the commonsense criticism of news that it should be objective and accurate, but often is not, due to various factors that introduce “bias” in reporting. Often, conservative critics cite the presumed “left-liberal” political views of journalists, an interpretation of news bias common in the United States, but less so in other Western liberal democracies; it is a view that has in turn been criticized for intellectual inconsistency and for its assumption that journalists themselves are primarily responsible for news agendas. Others argue that a variety of organizational and institutional factors, such as the demand for ratings-boosting stories shape the news. Herman and Chomsky have countered the liberal bias model with a contrary view that sees news as failing to obtain objectivity due to the “conservatizing” pressure of powerful elites, such as media owners, advertisers, governments, and/or official sources. This view has also been criticized as paying insufficient attention to the institutional autonomy of journalism and the full range of external influences operating on the news. Many point to the increasing influence of the public relations industry that promotes stories for both private and commercial interests.

If these critiques rest on the epistemological assumptions of positivism, a contrary epistemological position is evident in recent social theory, in trends that emphasize the importance of language or “discourse” in shaping human understanding of reality. Conventionalism holds that human perception of the world is always mediated by our mental categories and our procedures of knowledge production. In this view, news reporting is as much a construction of the social world, as a reflection of it; objective journalism cannot live up to its ideal, because knowledge of the world independent from the standpoint of the observer is impossible. Claims to achieving objectivity in the news,
then, must be regarded as assertions of the power to define reality, rather than legitimate claims to have accurate knowledge of it. In the view of its critics, however, this epistemological position tends towards a self-contradictory relativism, which sees no independent way to assess the truth-value of competing news accounts or discourses. Some analysts argue that this position leaves journalists with no mandate or motivation to attempt to distinguish between truth and propaganda.

A third epistemology, critical realism, avoids both positivism’s faith in superficial facts, and conventionalism’s dead-end relativism. Knowledge of the real is possible, it asserts, but only through engaging in the work of theorizing, and exploring the structures and processes that underlie individual events. From this standpoint, news reporting may be criticized not because objectivity is impossible in principle, or because individual journalists or news reports have departed from the (otherwise desirable and achievable) standards of objectivity but because the structures and procedures of actually existing journalism constitute a deficient form of objectivity. This standpoint offers some sophisticated critiques of the objectivity regime as generating, paradoxically, ideological accounts of the world, accounts that are partial and one-sided, or that reinforce existing relations of power. One line of critique suggests that objectivity serves to disguise the value assumptions and commitments that unavoidably influence the selection and presentation, the framing, of news reports. Reports may quote “both sides” in a controversy, thus appearing to be balanced and impartial while at the same time confining the definition of what is at issue, and marginalizing other perspectives. Thus, U.S. television reports of the Iraq war policy often feature Democratic and Republican party leaders criticizing each other, while leaving unexamined their shared assumption that what is at stake is how to achieve victory or reduce American casualties, rather than, for example, reducing Iraqi suffering or strengthening international law.

**RECENT CHALLENGES AND CONTEXTS**

Arguably, objectivity has remained a dominant norm in North American journalism during much of the past century because it has served a variety of functions and interests. Because objectivity allows press reporting to appear as if it does not favor one opinion over another, it is able to amass broad audiences. The proclamation of professional standards provides political legitimacy for the monopoly press, and by simply presenting the voices of different politicians, the claim to objectivity helps define and manage the relationship between reporters and their political sources. Journalism scholar Gaye Tuchman’s seminal work detailed how objectivity enhances journalists’ claim to professionalism, and constitutes a “strategic ritual” that protect them from such hazards as lawsuits and editors’ reprimands.

Yet current developments in the political economy of news media are potentially undermining the objectivity regime. The internet facilitates the diffusion of opinion and personal experience, blurs the distinction between producers and audiences, and bypasses journalists as professional gatekeepers. The
deregulation of broadcasting and the relative decline of public service broadcasting have intensified commercial pressures since the 1980s. Channel proliferation has fragmented audiences, and more and more conventional media are owned by conglomerates seeking high and immediate profits. Consequences arguably include the erosion of the universalizing stance of objectivity, and the decline of public affairs information in the conventional news media, and conversely, the rise of opinionated pundits, politically partisan media, such as Fox News in the United States, and infotainment.

Contrary to the objectivity norm, recent reform movements within journalism have called for the explicit pursuit of specified goals. In the United States, civic journalism challenges reporters to abandon the stance of detachment in favor of reinvigorating public political life. Internationally, and particularly in strife-torn countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Rwanda, practitioners and educators critique conventional news reportage of conflicts as tantamount to “war journalism” that too often exacerbates violence. For scholars Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, who articulate an alternative notions of peace journalism, far from being neutral observers, journalists are caught in a feedback loop with political players; and the ethos of objectivity, with its emphasis on official sources, two-sided conflict, and events rather than processes, impedes a morally and professionally justifiable incentivization of peaceful outcomes. Critics such as Thomas Hanitzsch however, dismiss peace journalism as another form of advocacy, usurping what should be the role of public relations.

In the Anglo-American heartland, faith in objective reporting may be eroding, but no single norm or regime has emerged to supplant it. Meanwhile, in many non-Western “transition societies,” objectivity may be gaining a new lease on life under the impact of media globalization, and as an alternative to the state-oriented authoritarianism of the past.

See also Al-Jazeera; Alternative Media in the United States; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Blogosphere; Conglomerates and Media Monopolies; Disabilities and the Media; Embedding Journalists; Hypercommercialism; Journalists in Peril; Media and Citizenship; Narrative Power and Media Influence; National Public Radio; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Public Broadcasting Service; Public Sphere; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering and Tabloid Media; Representations of Women; Video News Releases.

BLOGOSPHERE: POLITICS AND INTERNET JOURNALISM

Today’s blogs reflect a style of politics and the press that was a major force in American society almost to the time of the Civil War. At the same time, they are showing how quickly and effectively new technologies can be used to affect contemporary affairs. Certainly, since the start of the 2004 presidential campaign, the blogs have become an increasingly important part of the American political landscape.

BACKGROUND

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, both news media and political organizations in America became more and more centralized, the former to the point where they were associated almost exclusively with New York City, the latter with Washington, DC. Technological innovations, particularly in the area of communications, made it more financially attractive to consolidate ownership of news media operations and allowed political leaders to remain in close touch with supporters a long distance away. Though more efficient, these changes also led to increased alienation from both news media and politics on the part of the average American.

At the same time, the debates of the nation began to be used by the news media for ratings. No longer were they as interested in the quest for solution. Both politicians and the news media participated in this, the politicians to stake out a definable public image and the news media defining the debates as entertainment, looking for continued conflict (and, therefore, continued viewership) instead of progress toward resolution. Much of this left the public decidedly cold.

When the blogs appeared, they provided a link back to another era of American politics and journalism, a time of direct popular participation in both, but one that began to disappear as the Civil War approached. In the early years of the American republic, newspaper editors were directly involved in the political process. In fact, their newspapers were the networks that allowed for the...
creation of political parties. At that time, journalism, as the distinct profession known today, did not exist; certainly, there were no guidelines for ethical behavior on the part of the press. So, the articles that appeared ranged from scurrilous attacks all the way to the most considered reflection—and sometimes by the same author.

The political press of that early era died out as newspapers became commercial products that needed to distance themselves from politics in order to assure the widest possible circulation, and as journalists began to see theirs as a special mission framed by the First Amendment’s “freedom of the press” guarantee, something that had earlier been considered only as a protection of open political expression, but that had evolved into a right for the new and distinct “fourth estate.”

The desire to be directly involved in the debates in the press, however, did not disappear even as it became increasingly difficult for individuals to find voice

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**“FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS” AT DAILY KOS**

Who posts here?

The quick answer is “anyone who wants to.” There are a wide variety of people writing diaries and comments on dkos. They include elected politicians, candidates hoping to become elected politicians, experts in a range of fields, and active bloggers from around the net. The vast majority of writers, however, are ordinary citizens interested in talking about and participating in the political process. The majority of people posting here fall on the liberal side of the US political spectrum, however people of conservative views are welcome to come and debate. If you are polite, you will be treated politely. Unfortunately, there are some people who post comments or diaries with the sole purpose of provoking others. These people are called trolls. Some tips and techniques for dealing with trolls are described below….

Diaries

Most of the action takes place inside of diaries. These are written by users, and then read and commented on by other users…. Most diaries appear in the Recent Diary list on the right-hand side of the screen. By default, this shows the last 20 diaries that have been posted; this can be reset as high as 50 diaries using the field at the bottom of the list. People reading diaries can recommend them (see below). If a diary receives enough recommendations, it will automatically be promoted to the Recommended Diary list, which sits above the Recent Diary list. Recommended diaries tend to attract a wider audience and more comments than most diaries. The length of time that a diary spends on the Recommended list depends on how many users recommend it; it can vary from a few minutes to more than one full day. Diaries moving to the Recommended list is a democratic process; the diaries on the list are the ones that received the most “votes” to be there.

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in newspapers. Just so, the craving to participate in political debates remained intact, though the debates were removed to distant locations. Not surprisingly, then, when the blogs appeared, they provided an outlet for pent-up energies and emotions—expanding, as a result, with a vigor that surprised almost everyone, but particularly those politicians and members of the press who had become increasingly distant from the American population.

**WHAT IS A BLOG?**

A blog (from “Web log”) is an interactive Web page that allows an individual to post entries that are immediately available for viewing (and, sometimes, for comment) on the World Wide Web. Blogs evolved from online bulletin boards where people could participate in “conversations” through posts and responses. One main difference from the “bulletin boards” is that anyone can create their own blog, and for free (unless they want a fancier one), controlling both look and access. Another is that the blogs tend to be more flexible and responsive to the individual than earlier forums for Internet discussion.

People blog on all sorts of topics, but the best-known blogs tend to be those concerned with political issues. The most popular of all are the group political blogs, where anyone can join, presenting their own diaries and commenting on the diaries of others. In general, these tend to attract the like-minded—one of the greatest criticisms of them is that they tend to stifle debate within them by hounding out those (often called “trolls”) whose viewpoints are different from the mainstream of the particular blog. Because of their real similarities, political blogs, whether right wing or left, were soon referred to in the commercial news media as “the blogs” rather than simply as blogs, giving them a sense of being a single, coherent force which, in fact, they never have been.
Doubters of the Blogs

In the more established quarters of political and news media power, many see the blogs as an intrusion by the unlearned and unskilled. In addition, in the eyes of many journalists, the very fact of writing for an audience demands adherence to certain ethical standards—one is not able to say whatever one wants in a public journalistic arena if one wants to be considered an ethical journalist. Instead, one must strive for “balance,” walking a line between any two sides of an issue and treating all opinions with respect. In addition, according to these journalists, one must leave one’s politics at the door, reporting with candor and “objectivity.”

The belief in these kind of journalistic ethics has been growing and evolving since the time of the “penny press” before the Civil War, when newspaper editors started to distance themselves from the politics they covered. It was expressed most forcefully several generations later by Adolph S. Ochs on taking control of the New York Times in 1894. On August 18, 1896, he wrote, “It will be my earnest aim that the New York Times give the news, all the news, in concise and attractive form, in language that is parliamentary in good society, and...to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved.” Belief in such an attitude was solidified in electronic media through the influence of Edward R. Murrow of CBS News in the 1940s and 1950s.

To someone attempting to follow in the footsteps of Ochs and Murrow, the blogs, with their overtly partisan and sometimes quite vituperative attacks and...
commentaries, seem an affront to good journalism, debasing an entire profession simply by their proximity. Buried in an avalanche of blogs, these people fear, audiences may no longer recognize “good” journalism when they see it. Therefore, they either attack the blogs as a whole or try to find a way of channeling them into a more traditional framework.

Another criticism of the blogs is that they are available to only one side of the digital divide. That is, because they require the use of technology both for participation and for reading, they are open only to those with access generally associated with a certain degree of wealth. Liberal bloggers came under criticism in September 2006 when a meeting was arranged between a group of them and former President Bill Clinton in his offices in Harlem, an historically African American neighborhood in New York City. The bloggers who attended were all white and middle class, pointing out the fact that the blogs have become a forum for few from minority communities and even fewer from amongst the poor.

**A BLOGGING SUCCESS**

One of the most significant aspects of the blogs is their ability to keep alive (or even bring alive) a story that the commercial news media have overlooked. The first of these to have a significant political result was sparked by the comments of Trent Lott at a celebration of the 100th birthday of former “Dixicrat” Strom Thurmond. Lott’s comments were seen by many bloggers as having distinct racist overtones—and they refused to let the matter die, though it remained unreported by most of the news media.

Because of other connections between Lott and questionable organizations and stances concerning race, many of them brought to light and mentioned repeatedly by bloggers, the commercial news media did eventually begin to cover the story. No matter how much Lott tried to quell it, the controversy continued to grow, to the point where President Bush felt he needed to comment on it, chastising Lott. Soon thereafter, Lott resigned his position in the Republican leadership as Senate majority leader and the outrage died down.

**A BLOG TIMELINE**

1978—CompuServe begins first real-time chat.
1985—The WELL, one of the first significant dial-up BBSs, goes online.
April 1999—Peter Merholz coins the word “blog.”
May 2002—Daily Kos, the largest political blog, is founded.
December 2002—Mississippi Senator Trent Lott’s possibly racist comments on retiring Senator Strom Thurmond are publicized by bloggers, forcing his eventual resignation as Senate Majority Leader.
Two strands of amateur journalism have begun to coalesce through the blogs, both known as “citizen journalism.” One of these is concerned with local reporting and community building; the other concentrates on investigative reporting. An example of the former is iBrattleboro, a site dedicated to the coverage of Brattleboro, Vermont. An example of the latter is ePluribus Media, which focuses on taking amateur research to the highest level possible.

iBrattleboro (http://www.ibrattleboro.com) is determinedly local. At the top of the site, one reads, “Welcome to Brattleboro’s original, locally-owned citizen journalism site. Read and write your own news, interviews, and more. Pick a local Brattleboro story and cover it yourself or with friends.” Sites like this one have sometimes been disparaged as “church bulletins,” but they are providing an active avenue for community involvement in the dissemination and discussion of local news. Community pressure, through feedback comments on particular stories, keeps iBrattleboro focused on its primary brief.

ePluribus Media, on the other hand, is geographically quite diverse, its community coming only through its Web site for its journal (http://www.epluribusmedia.org) and through its community Web site, its blog (http://scoop.epluribusmedia.org/). Like iBrattleboro, in addition to being determinedly amateur, ePluribus Media offers book reviews, opinion pieces, interviews, and a wide variety of other sorts of articles. Its focus, however, is on research into a variety of politically related issues and on fact checking all information before it is placed on the journal site (as a blog, the community site is not held to quite the same high standard). Among journal articles, one may find work on voting rights, posttraumatic stress disorder, the effects of Hurricane Katrina, and much more.
Like the other citizen journalism sites, the energy behind both of these comes from passionate amateurs, people who care about their communities and the issues facing them. They see themselves as distinct from professional journalists simply because they can indulge themselves, researching and writing on whatever they want, rather than on what is assigned through a news-media hierarchy. For the most part, they hold themselves to the same high standards as professional journalists.

CONCLUSION

Though they have been in existence barely a decade, the blogs reflect a desire for individual expression that is even older than the American republic. In the tradition of Benjamin Franklin, who had to use a pseudonym to first get his work in print, the bloggers push against media barriers, attempting to wrest control from the powers that they see as constricting personal rights to say what one will. Because of their libertarian bent, the blogs range from vitriol to vanity, enmity to elegance. This bothers many in the older commercial news media, who want to see more regularity in both presentation and response to the news. This also means that no one can predict what the blogs will be in a few years. Not even the bloggers know that.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Bias and Objectivity; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Google Book Search; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Net Neutrality; Online Publishing; Political Documentary; Public Sphere; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Aaron Barlow

BODY IMAGE

Ideas of beauty vary, but since the turn of the twentieth century, the “thin ideal” has dominated conceptions of female beauty in America. Beginning in
the 1970s, researchers began testing whether dissatisfaction with one’s body image encouraged women to develop eating disorders (especially anorexia and bulimia) in an effort to attain the “thin ideal.” More recently, researchers have been concerned with a seemingly opposite problem: a rise in overweight and obesity in the United States. Both problems appear to have strong roots in media images, whether of dangerously unhealthy “ideals” for women in particular, or of the pleasures offered by yet another sugary treat.

Body image is a person's perception of his or her own body size, shape, and attractiveness. It is our mental image of our physical self, and it is not necessarily accurate or consistent. Our body image is “elastic,” changing in response to different moods or to external stimuli. Many researchers have examined the ways in which body image may be influenced by exposure to images of others, such as models in fashion magazines or advertising, or television and movie stars. Because American media have presented the “thin ideal” almost exclusively as the most desirable body type for women, researchers have tried to discover how repeated exposure to such images affects women's self-perception and satisfaction with their own bodies.

Most high-fashion models are severely underweight, as measured by the Body Mass Index (BMI). The average model is 5’9” and weighs 110 pounds, which translates into a BMI of 17. (A BMI of 19–23 is considered normal weight.) Although ultrathin, waif-like models were banned from the catwalk in Madrid’s September 2006 fashion show, the industry still demands very thin models (with a desired figure of 34”-24”-34”) who can wear clothing in size 2 or 4. This is the body type found almost exclusively in fashion magazines in the United States. Many film and television stars, singers, and other celebrities also struggle to match the “thin ideal,” and popular magazines are filled with photos and news stories tracking their weight gains and losses. The images of women found in American film, television, and advertising reinforce the desirability of the “thin ideal” with very little exception.

Most of the research conducted on body image has employed empirical or quantitative methods. These have included asking women to complete self-report surveys or to use psychological assessment scales such as the Stunkard Body Figure Rating Scale or the Body Cathexis Scale to indicate their body image and body satisfaction. These assessment scales consist of a series of body outlines or silhouettes that range from very thin to obese. Subjects are usually asked to identify the silhouette they think looks most like them and to indicate the figure they find most attractive. Most research has found that women tend to overestimate the size of their own bodies. Additionally, a majority of women perceive themselves as larger than their “ideal” size and surveys have shown that between 55 and 75 percent of women in North America feel dissatisfied with their bodies. These tendencies seem to be even stronger shortly after women read fashion magazines featuring models who match the “thin ideal.”

These feelings of body dissatisfaction have been shown to encourage some girls and women to engage in unhealthy eating practices, including eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa (a severe reduction in calorie intake) or bulimia nervosa (binge eating followed by purging). Eating disorders, defined by
the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as “serious disturbances in eating behavior” that are often paired with “feelings of distress or extreme concern about body shape or weight,” typically begin when girls are between ages 11 and 13. One recent University of Minnesota study found that teenage girls who frequently read magazine articles about dieting were more likely in later years to practice extreme weight-loss measures, such as vomiting, than girls who never read such articles. Men can also develop these same eating disorders, and an estimated 5 to 15 percent of people with anorexia or bulimia are male. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, between 0.5 and 3.7 percent of females suffer from anorexia at some point during their lives, while between 1.1 to 4.2 percent of women suffer from bulimia. (About half of the individuals who have been anorexic later develop bulimia.) Deaths attributed to anorexia and bulimia, especially among fashion models and other celebrities, have raised a great deal of concern about the health effects of extreme dieting in pursuit of the “thin ideal.”

**COMPLICATIONS OF RACE, CLASS, AND AGE**

Research on body image has sometimes been criticized as focusing too much on the experiences of young white girls and women in the United States at the cost of ignoring differing expectations and experiences for women and girls of color or for older individuals. Some have argued that the “thin ideal” constitutes a standard of beauty among whites, but that African Americans and Latinas in particular grow up with different cultural ideals of beauty and attractiveness. In response, scholars contend that while there may be some cultural differences in what is considered desirable or attractive, all girls are exposed to the same narrow range of media images of beauty found in magazines, television, film, and advertising. Girls of all races or ethnicities are barraged by messages about their bodies, skin, hair, and faces, and although these messages may at times be contradictory, increasingly one of the few common experiences for girls in the United States has been the pressure to diet in order to fit into mainstream American culture. Some studies focusing on women of color have found that as an individual’s socioeconomic status increases, so does the pressure to attain

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**BODY SIZE AND SHAPE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Dress Size</th>
<th>Measurements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>145</td>
<td>11–14</td>
<td>36&quot;-30&quot;-41&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion model</td>
<td>5'9&quot;</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>34&quot;-24&quot;-34&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Store mannequin</td>
<td>6'0&quot;</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34&quot;-23&quot;-34&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbie</td>
<td>6'0&quot;</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39&quot;-19&quot;-33&quot;</td>
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Source: Adapted from ANRED (Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders), http://www.anred.com/stats.html.
the “thin ideal.” Becky Thompson, for example, has argued that a desire to be thin—or to want one’s daughters to be thin—may be a result of economic, racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination that parents experienced. Because other physical features (skin or eye color, hair texture, height, etc.) are not easily (if at all) alterable, more emphasis may be directed towards weight. Recent studies, then, have concluded that girls, whether African American, Latina, Asian, or white, grow up learning that being thin is valued. These arguments are strengthened by evidence that eating disorders are increasing among women of color.

Because eating disorders typically begin when girls enter puberty, most research on body image has focused on adolescent girls and women in their early 20s, although some studies have discovered very young girls (age 6) and women in their 70s with eating disorders. A few studies have examined body image among older women. Their findings suggest that women’s dissatisfaction with their body shape and size persists across their life span, and that even in later life women tend to be more dissatisfied with their bodies than men. Older women may not feel this dissatisfaction as strongly as younger women, however, and their “ideal” body size has been found to be larger than that of younger women.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL APPROACHES**

Rather than using empirical methods like surveys, assessment scales, or laboratory experiments to investigate body image, some scholars have explored this topic within a historical framework, arguing that such research can offer a better understanding of the role of culture in shaping an individual’s attitudes and practices in relationship to food, diet, and body image. Scholars such as Susan Bordo and Kim Chernin have noted that body norms and ideals have changed over time, often in conjunction with changes in a nation’s overall wealth. Initially in Western cultures, a rotund figure was the visible sign of economic success. During the Victorian era, as food became more readily available to members of the middle class and not just the rich, the aristocracy began to adopt the “thin ideal” as a different way to make class distinctions apparent. A thin body began to represent wealth and status, power and control. By the late nineteenth century, the middle class adopted a concern with body image and began dieting to attain an idealized weight or shape. A rounded body was no longer seen as a sign of success, but of moral failing or a lack of control, while a healthy and fit body was equated with self-control, self-denial, and willpower.

Primarily, though, women serve as the representatives of class distinctions; a slender and attractive wife can represent a husband’s success. Though the “thin ideal” emerged in the Victorian era, it was a thin waist in particular (along with an ample bosom and hips) that was prized. Corsets helped women achieve this look, though at the cost of fainting or suffering serious physical ailments from having their waists constantly cinched to extremely thin (and dangerous) dimensions. The changing shape of women’s bodies has in many ways served to reflect larger cultural values. In periods when women were striving to demonstrate their equality (especially in the 1920s and again in the 1960s and 1970s), a thin, straight figure was prized. In times when gender differences seemed more
important (as in the 1950s and again in the 1980s), women with somewhat fuller figures (especially in terms of large breasts) were perceived as more desirable and attractive. The “tyranny of slenderness” (in Kim Chernin’s phrase) that began at the turn of the twentieth century has been amplified in recent decades with chemical diets and surgery in an ever-escalating pursuit of the “perfect body.”

Men's bodies, too, are subject to cultural demands and expectations. Men are often expected to demonstrate their self-discipline and control by their size and shape also, but in the form of increased bulk and muscle rather than by adherence to a “thin ideal.” Rather than starving or purging themselves to attain a body ideal, men may be more likely to engage in demanding exercise regimes to develop muscle mass. The feeling that one's body is never big or strong enough can lead to a condition known as “muscle dysmorphia.” Getting bigger can also be achieved by overeating or binge eating. According to the NIMH, between 2 and 5 percent of Americans struggle with binge eating, an eating disorder that also affects more women than men.

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

According to recent studies, more than 65 percent of adult Americans (men and women age 20 and older) are overweight, with about 30 percent of this group being classified as obese (at least 20 percent above normal weight as measured by the BMI). Although some individuals consider the “obesity epidemic” to be exaggerated, arguing that BMI measures can be inaccurate and that excess weight alone is not necessarily a health problem, medical studies have linked overweight and obesity to increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. While more men (67 percent) than women (62 percent) are overweight, women are more likely to be obese. Overweight and obesity are found among every population group, but these conditions are more prevalent among people of color (Hispanics, African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders) and among low-income individuals. Additionally, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost 9 million children ages 6 to 19 (about 15 percent of children in the United States) are obese. Because obesity rates are increasing faster than genetics alone can account for, most researchers studying this phenomenon look to eating disorders (especially binge eating) as well as changes in the foods we eat as the chief culprits.

The food industry in the United States is a trillion-dollar business, with over 7 billion spent on advertising each year. Typically, the foods most heavily advertised in the United States are the cheapest as well as the most calorie-dense: processed foods filled with sweeteners and fats (soft drinks, candy, and snack foods) that are generally lacking in nutritive value. With thousands of new food products introduced into grocery stores each year, the food industry must work hard to persuade consumers to eat more. Appeals used in food advertising rarely concern the taste, nutritive value, or ingredients of foods. Instead, food is linked to much stronger emotional appeals. Bordo and Kilbourne both analyze the ways in which food advertising heightens women’s anxieties about weight
(often describing foods in quasireligious terms such as “temptation,” “sin,” and “guilt”), while simultaneously linking food (and even binge eating) to fantasies of pleasure and indulgence. Food in advertising is often eroticized and linked to sexuality and love. It is also linked to many other values, such as one's ability to be a good mother, to display status, to be cool or hip, or to be well liked and admired.

Ironically, both an anorexic girl and an obese woman may in fact be starving themselves to death, one by reducing nearly all calories, but the other by reducing those calories that supply the nutrients the body needs to be healthy. Media images and advertising often profit from and are complicit in both acts.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Dating Shows; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Media and the Crisis of Values; Representations of Class; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Women's Magazines.


Jean Retzinger

BOLLYWOOD AND THE INDIAN DIASPORA

With approximately 20 million South Asians, more than 30 million Chinese, 13 million Jews, and 300 million people of African descent living as migrant populations, it has become difficult to sustain the idea that cultural identities are tied to a particular place in the world. Multiple connections are developed as immigrants forge and sustain social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Their embeddedness in more than one society, enabled
by communications technologies, not only highlights how social relations have changed but also raises an important question: how do migrants reconstruct a sense of belonging in new places, far removed from their homeland? Often, the most available resources are media products, but does a notion of citizenship that is based on consumption serve only the interests of the cultural industries? What do migrants stand to gain or lose in defining citizenship through media consumption?

While globalization is observable at many levels, and indeed, pervades many aspects of daily life, defining what the term means has remained difficult partly because it involves many different dimensions. However, it is possible to highlight two interrelated features of globalization for they are central to understanding how relationships among culture, place, and identity have changed over the past two decades. These are migration, and technologies of communication.

Rapid mobility of people across local and national borders, and new technological developments that ensure the flow of information and images across these borders, have transformed social relations. There is nothing “local” about where we live now, for every realm of our lives—work, finance, entertainment, health, and so on—is now connected to other places and people around the world. Easier and cheaper access to telephones, cable and satellite television, and the Internet have opened up newer routes for us to visit faraway locations and “go places,” all from the comfort and familiarity of our homes and local settings.

Our experience of the world has also been changed by another kind of flow that lies at the heart of globalization—migration. How do migrants craft a sense of community and cultural identity? What cultural resources are available and how are these resources mobilized towards fashioning a sense of cultural identity that avoids the two extremes of cultural ghettoism and complete assimilation into the host society?

**MEDIA AND DIASPORIC IDENTITY**

If understood as a problem of reconstructing a sense of “home” away from “home,” we can recognize the important role that imagination plays in everyday life in migrant settings. Driven in part by memory and nostalgia, diasporic communities are involved in a constant dialogue between their past and a new present, with the homeland embodying tradition and authenticity. In this setting, music, films, and television shows from “home” have not just enabled large numbers of people to maintain relations across great distances, strengthening transnational kinship, religious, economic, and political ties. Transnational media function as repositories for content and images that help reimagine culture that was formerly tied to a specific locality. In other words, media are not mere artifacts evocative of a “home” left behind—in shaping how the “home” is remembered, they reconfigure memory and nostalgia in important ways. With few other cultural institutions in place for immigrants to tap into, media have assumed a central role in diasporic communities’ maintaining and reinventing sociocultural linkages and identities.
The value of media, among a mix of other influences such as family visits, pilgrimages, travel to the home country, local ethnic organizations, and places for religious worship, lies in their ability to permeate various social rituals. Studying the circulation and consumption of bhangra music and dance among Asians in Britain, Gayatri Gopinath points out that popular culture forms are more than just entertainment. In a diasporic setting, popular cultural forms become strategic tools for keeping alive certain traditions, and most crucially, serve as a bridge between generations. In the United States, performances of song-and-dance sequences from Bollywood films as part of “India Night” cultural shows on college campuses are another instance of media becoming a key resource for immigrant youth to define cultural identity in relation to other racial and ethnic groups and for their parents to participate in this process. As scholars like Henry Jenkins and Sunaina Maira have observed, mixing classical dance with contemporary club moves and remixing bhangra music with hip-hop rhythms, such performances reflect the creative and surprising juxtapositions that happen in a migrant setting as people construct the “home” as both a world away and right in one’s own backyard.

**KABHI KHUSI KABHIE GHAM... (HAPPINESS AND TEARS, 2001, DIR. KARAN JOHAR)**

*Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...* (*K3G*) is a story of an affluent Indian family: Yashvardhan, Nandini, and their two sons—Rahul and Rohan. The family is split apart when Rahul marries Anjali, a girl from a lower-class neighborhood in Delhi, instead of the girl his father has chosen. Yashvardhan disowns Rahul, and Rahul and Anjali move to the United Kingdom accompanied by Anjali’s younger sister Pooja and Rahul’s nanny. When Rohan learns about these incidents, he vows to reunite the family. Rohan moves to London and makes his way into Rahul’s family under an assumed name and reconciles the family.

*K3G* is one of the biggest hits of Bollywood. Major stars, catchy songs, and elaborately choreographed dances all contributed to the film’s success. But the importance of *K3G* lies in its departure from earlier Bollywood narratives in recognizing and representing nonresident Indians (NRIs). Over nearly three decades, Bollywood films have tended to position the diaspora as impure and India as the crucible of virtues. Furthermore, in these films, claims about the diaspora’s impurity are made by resorting to stereotypes of diasporic women as “Westernized” and “immoral.”

*K3G* is no different from such films in its portrayal of gender norms, but does mark a significant shift. *K3G* renders the diaspora less impure and more as an acceptable variant within a transnational “Indian” family. While one can point to several scenes in the film, the key moment is when Anjali and Rahul’s son (Krish), born and raised in England, sings the Indian national anthem at a school function in London. Instead of singing “Do Re Mi,” Krish surprises everyone by singing the Indian national anthem. Such sequences function both as reassurance for Indian immigrants that they can live abroad, yet claim cultural citizenship in India, and as an acknowledgment of India embracing the NRI as one of its own. The diaspora is no longer different and threatening.
Cultural citizenship, then, can be understood as imagining one's membership in relation to a national culture even if one is not a citizen of that nation in strictly legal or political terms. In other words, being Indian American is as much a matter of consuming Bollywood films, participating in a Bollywood fan community, or remixing bhangra music as it is about owning two passports and being a dual citizen.

While acknowledging that definitions of cultural identity in diasporic settings can challenge rigid ideas of what it means to be “Indian” or “American,” some scholars point out that these seemingly flexible modes of defining one's identity are only available at the cost of being commodified and sold as marketable demographics to advertisers. Critics also point out that governments also play a role in these processes and work to circumscribe what it means to belong in a particular nation. In other words, there are some very real limits to “cultural citizenship.” To understand this complex dynamic—of opportunity and risk—let us turn our attention to the case of Bollywood in diasporic communities.

**CASE STUDY: BOLLYWOOD AND THE INDIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA**

Films from India have always traveled to different parts of the world, and have been an important form of cultural exchange between India and the Middle East, several countries in Africa, and Eastern Europe. In the United States, Bollywood films were brought in by Indian families who moved there when the U.S. government changed its migration policy in 1965 to allow people from non-European nations to live and work in the United States. In several cities across the United States, Indian families met during the weekend to watch a Hindi-language film. Screenings were usually held in university halls rented for a few hours during the weekend, with films screened off 16-mm, and later, 35-mm reels. These weekend screenings, with an intermission that lasted 30 to 45 minutes, were an occasion, apart from religious festivals, for people to wear traditional clothes, speak in Hindi or other Indian languages, and participate in a ritual that was reminiscent of “home.” These screenings were marked as an exclusively Indian space, away from mainstream society, where families could meet and participate in a ritual of sharing personal and collective memories of life in India and introduce their children to different aspects of “India” and “Indianness.”

While this mode of viewing has changed with the availability of videocassettes and DVDs through Indian grocery stores and through online outlets such as Netflix, Bollywood films continue to play a key role in community events such as the “India Night” cultural shows on college campuses where second-generation Indian Americans perform song-and-dance sequences from popular Bollywood films. Further, while advances in communications have facilitated contact with India, over a period of time, work and other social engagements in the diaspora result in most migrants gradually losing touch with day-to-day developments in India. Thus, by defining various social rituals and shaping interactions that these rituals have created, Bollywood films have helped sustain expatriate Indians’ desire to perform their “Indianness” and define their belonging in “India.”
Further, in recent years, Bollywood’s convergence with the Internet has made overseas audiences an integral part of the film industry. In addition to watching films, they are able to access content and participate in a national culture in a more direct and immediate fashion than was previously possible. In other words, new media have further reduced the time-lag between India and the diaspora where Bollywood is concerned. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are now part of the same cultural space as Indians within India. The question is, are all NRIs part of this global cultural space that is being defined by Bollywood? What are the exclusions built into this notion of cultural citizenship?

THE LIMITS OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

First, it is important to recognize that Bollywood is only one of several film industries in India. While Bollywood is certainly the most well known outside...
India, and can claim the status of a “national” cinema because the films are made in Hindi (India’s national language), several regional-language film industries (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Bengali) are just as prolific and successful. Furthermore, given that the Indian diaspora in countries such as the United States is highly diverse in terms of language and region, it is important to qualify claims of Bollywood’s influence in the diaspora by pointing out that families from the states of Tamilnadu or Andhra Pradesh are more likely to watch Tamil and Telugu language films rather than Hindi-language Bollywood films.

Second, we need to note that not all Bollywood films are successful in the diaspora. Even a cursory glance at box office figures indicates that only a certain kind of big-budget, family-oriented film does well among NRIs. In these family-centric Bollywood films, class, regional, linguistic, and religious differences are consistently erased in favor of an “Indian” family that is highly educated, affluent, north Indian, Hindu, patriarchal, and upper caste. Indeed, it becomes clear from these films that it is only a certain kind of NRI who is of importance to Bollywood and to the nation. Other ways of being Indian and claiming Indian-ness are often marginalized.

The importance of Bollywood’s role in defining “Indianness” in an age of global flows, of who can claim “cultural citizenship” in India, becomes particularly clear when we consider the Indian government’s recent efforts to reach out to NRIs. In this new imagination of a “Global India,” only people of Indian origin from “dollar and pound” countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada are being offered dual citizenship. Others, either poorer migrants in these “dollar and pound” countries, or those from “third-world” countries like Fiji or Trinidad, are being excluded.

Thus, we need to approach the idea of “cultural citizenship” in the context of globalisation and diasporic communities by acknowledging that media create spaces for people to work out notions of belonging and entitlement on a daily basis while remaining attuned to the ways in which “citizenship” gets circumscribed both by the workings of media industries and larger social and political forces.

**See also** Communication Rights in a Global Context; Cultural Appropriation; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Global Community Media; Media and Citizenship; Nationalism and the Media; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; World Cinema.

Branding the Globe

Global advertising is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has been credited with creating new markets, improving economies and connecting people worldwide through trade in consumer goods. On the other hand, it has been criticized for spreading consumer culture to every corner of the globe through the growth of multinational corporations and their advertising agencies as they preach the gospel of capitalist development. What are some of the intended and unintended effects of global advertising?

Globalization has been led mainly by economic interests in the Western world. During the closing decades of the twentieth century, helped in no small way by emerging digital communication technologies, international markets across the globe began to be opened up by multinational corporations and their advertising agencies. Modern media allow advertisers to spread unified branding campaigns, or global advertising messages around the world at a phenomenal rate through the global media. Because of this rapid communication and advanced transport and delivery systems, companies like eBay and Starbucks, for example, have been able to build in a few short years what corporations like Coca-Cola and General Electric took over a century to establish. Thus, Western multinational corporations were able to establish great wealth in the twentieth century through unprecedented global growth.

In a 2005 Interbrand study of the world’s top 100 global brands, over 50 percent were U.S. corporations and 40 percent were European-based. Less than 10 percent of the top global brands were headquartered in Asia and none in Africa. However, the world is changing and as the markets in developing countries begin to grow, the effects of global advertising on consumer culture may have unintended effects.

The Origins of the Multinational Corporation

The roots of the modern multinational corporation can be traced back to the 1600s, when the English monarch granted a charter to the British East India Company to establish overseas commercial and trade interests. Holland chartered the Dutch East India Company for the same purposes. These two companies were probably the first truly multinational corporations. These companies and others like them colonized their chartered territories on behalf of sponsoring monarchs. Before the twentieth century, economic expansion had been the exclusive domain of national governments either directly or through charters. But starting in the early 1900s, corporations began to take over this role.
By the twentieth century, the corporation had become the dominant type of business organization throughout the world. In the United States today, for example, while corporations account for only about 20 percent of all businesses, they generate about 90 percent of all business income.

During the 1920s, Henry Ford led the development of the modern manufacturing corporation by introducing assembly-line production. This allowed corporations to cut production costs and increase output. Manufactured products became more affordable for an increasing number of people. By the 1920s, the major industries in the United States that had evolved from clusters of small companies were taken over by major corporations. AT&T dominated the telephone industry; General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler produced the majority of automobiles; and Westinghouse and GE controlled the electrical equipment sectors. These competitive products were soon to be found around the world, and export earnings were responsible for an increasing share of U.S. corporate profits. It was not until after World War I that the United States began to emerge as a major world economic power. At the same time as Europe was recovering economically from the war and reestablishing its global trade through companies like Lever Brothers (soap and chemicals) and Royal Dutch Shell, the United States was building up its economic strength through the expansion of its own multinational corporations.

**ADVERTISING AND GLOBALIZATION**

Ben Bagdikian (1997) is one of the many who have recognized that advertising has always been a vital gear in the machinery of corporate power, arguing that “it not only helped create and preserve dominance of the giants over consumer industries, it also helped create a picture of a satisfactory world with the corporations as benign stewards” (p. 131). In 1926, the president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, attributed the success of mass demand for products “entirely to advertising” and noted that advertising “is a great power…part of the greater world of regeneration and redemption of mankind” (p. 148).

While the Depression of the 1930s had a dampening effect on global industrial growth, the postwar boom from 1945 to 1960 saw the beginning of a huge influx of American corporations into the international arena. U.S. corporations like Coca-Cola, Colgate-Palmolive, Westinghouse, and General Motors built plants around the world. The Americans were soon joined in this expansion by European and later Japanese multinationals. Only 7,000 multinational corporations existed in 1970, but by 1994, their numbers had grown to 37,000 parent corporations—with over 200,000 affiliates worldwide. Multinational corporations currently employ over 73 million people around the world, and some are more economically powerful than many nation-states (Firth and Mueller 2003).

Multinational corporations have been able to achieve extraordinary growth during the twentieth century primarily because they had the assistance of multinational advertising agencies that assisted them in spreading the word about “the good life” (based on acquisition of material goods) around the globe.
THE SPREAD OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

As multinational corporations extended their reach outside their national borders, they insisted that their advertising agencies set up branch offices in all the countries into which they expanded. The J. Walter Thompson advertising agency opened its first overseas office in Great Britain in 1899, and by the 1950s had 15 overseas agencies (Sivulka 1998). The Standard Oil and Coca-Cola accounts took the McCann Erickson advertising agency into Europe in the 1920s. By the 1960s, the expansion of U.S. agencies reached a peak. During this phase of ad agency expansion overseas, the international billings of the major U.S. advertising agencies began to outstrip the growth of their domestic billings. In 1960, some 36 American ad agencies had branches outside the United States and operated a total of 281 overseas offices. By the 1970s, international billings reached an annual US$1.8 billion and accounted for more almost 20 percent of total agency U.S. billings (Firth and Mueller 2003).

Establishing overseas branches and partnerships, U.S. advertising agencies were able both to service their multinational clients and to compete for the accounts of other U.S. firms operating abroad. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, because U.S. domestic advertising business began to level off, overseas markets began to look even more appealing to the U.S. advertising agencies with multinational aspirations. As a consequence of this overseas expansion, the international billings of U.S. agencies with overseas operations more than doubled during the following decade.

A second major surge in international expansion by U.S. and European advertising agencies occurred during the 1980s—a decade of megamergers in the industry. These mergers involved a handful of large, highly profitable ad agencies operating at the global level. In 1986, for instance, three advertising giants—BBDO International, Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), and Needham Harper Worldwide—announced a three-way merger to create the world’s largest advertising firm—the Omnicom Group. Further mergers and acquisition of agencies resulted in the creation of the British giant WPP Group. Today, four enormous advertising conglomerates or holding companies, the Interpublic Group, Omnicom Group, WPP Group, and Publicis Groupe SA, together control more than half the world’s ad agencies. Table B.1 groups a small sample of the best known amongst the dozens of advertising agencies owned by these advertising behemoths.

Table B.1  Global Advertising Conglomerates and Selected Agency Holdings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpublic</th>
<th>Omnicom</th>
<th>WPP</th>
<th>Publicis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McCann Erickson</td>
<td>BBDO Worldwide</td>
<td>J. Walter Thompson</td>
<td>Publicis Worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowe &amp; Partners</td>
<td>DDB Worldwide</td>
<td>Ogilvy &amp; Mather</td>
<td>Leo Burnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foote, Cone &amp; Belding</td>
<td>TBWA Worldwide</td>
<td>The Batey Group</td>
<td>Saatchi &amp; Saatchi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GLOBAL BRANDS AND THE GROWTH OF CONSUMER MARKETS

As multinational corporations and advertising agencies have spread around the globe the concept of branding has also spread. Naomi Klein (2000a) wrote in *The New Statesman*:

The formula for these brand-driven companies is pretty much the same: get rid of your unionized factories in the west and buy your products from Asian or Central American contractors and sub-contractors. Then, take the money you save and spend it on branding—on advertising.

Corporations like Nike, Reebok, and Tommy Hilfiger have moved their production outside the United States to the developing world’s “free-trade zones”—free, that is, of taxes and wage or other labor regulations. In these developing countries, multinationals can produce goods at a fraction of the cost of manufacturing in a developed country. This successful formula has allowed the big image-makers like The Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, and Nike, which were once satisfied with a 100 percent markup from the cost of factory production, to get closer to a 400 percent markup (Klein 2000b).

According to Klein, these profits are then pumped back into global advertising, which has resulted in these brands becoming global icons. Today, the top 10 global brands as identified by Interbrand include 8 U.S.-based firms, one Finnish, and one Japanese (see Table B.2).

While the expansion of Western brands throughout the world proceeded quite successfully during the twentieth century, bringing massive wealth to the West, at the beginning of the twenty-first century there are signs that the spread of global capitalism may have some unintended side effects. During the next 50 years, 97 percent of the world’s population growth is expected to take place in the developing countries (e.g., India, China, Indonesia, and Brazil). The United

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**Table B.2 The World’s Top Global Brands in 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>GE</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intel</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nokia</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Disney</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>McDonald’s</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Marlboro</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Business Week Online, 2005.*
Nations Population Estimates and Projections also project that the populations of Europe and North America will shrink to only 11.5 percent of the total world population by 2050. Africa will grow to account for over 20 percent and Asia will make up 60 percent of the world’s total population (see Table B.3).

These substantial shifts in the centers of gravity of global markets represent an interesting new phenomenon: the rise of global consumer culture fueled by global advertising and branding.

**THE CASE OF CHINA**

The People's Republic of China, for example, has a population of 1.3 billion people. While the overall gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is still relatively low, during the past two decades, China has been the world’s largest and most rapidly developing country. China already has one-fifth of the world's consumers, and it has a rapidly growing middle class, hungry for consumer goods. Thus, developing countries like mainland China and India are destined to take center stage in the global bazaar.

This rapid economic growth in the developing world has resulted in a transformation of consumer behavior, and advertising is positioned at the epicenter of this transformation. In the past 10 years, over 100 million people in China moved up to the middle class and many others moved up to the wealthiest class. In fact, the figures on China's newly rich are staggering. China now boasts nearly 235,000 millionaires (US$ equivalency). At least 10,000 of these entrepreneurs are each worth US$17 million, according to researchers at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In 2006, the 50th richest Chinese boasted an income of US$190 million, while in 1999, number 50 on the “rich list” had only $10 million. Economists forecast that in 10 years, China's middle class will be 400 million strong. While this economic growth has created unprecedented opportunities for Western multinationals—nearly 30 percent of all new McDonald’s restaurants opened this year will be in China, and Starbucks, the huge U.S. coffee company, expects China to become their second largest market in the world—this rampant consumerism has also brought with it another phenomenon: piracy.

### Table B.3 World Population by Continent, 1998–2050

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1998 %</th>
<th>2050</th>
<th>2050 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia and Oceania</td>
<td>3,615</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,766</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5,902</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8,909</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the Shijingshan Amusement Park, which recently opened in the suburbs of Beijing, children are greeted by costumed figures like a large duck and a happily waving lady mouse. Are these Daffy Duck and Minnie Mouse? “No,” says the management of the park, “the characters in our park just look a bit similar” to those in Disneyland.

Huge markets have sprung up in all the large cities in China selling fake branded items like Gucci bags, Mont Blanc pens, and pirated CDs and DVDs. The rise of consumerism and the Chinese ability to copy branded icons has strained ties between the wealthy countries in the West and China. The U.S. trade deficit with China, for example, soared to U.S. $232.5 billion in 2006. Thus, global advertising's success in creating new markets for branded Western consumer goods has created eager new consumers in the developing world, as well as opportunities for local entrepreneurs to capitalize on the rising tide of capitalism by producing an endless array of “fake global brands” for local consumption.

THE RISE OF GLOBAL MEDIA

The past few decades have also seen unprecedented growth in the global media to serve the needs of the global advertising industry. Western magazines like Elle, Vogue, Maxim, and Seventeen, for example, are now available in “local country” editions worldwide.

The unintended side effect of the growth in global media has also been to further stimulate consumer culture. Herman and McChesney (1997) point out that “the globalizing media treat audiences as consumers, not as citizens, and they are most attentive to those with high incomes.” This, they show, has led to the erosion of the social and economic development role of the media in many developing nations. In country after country, commercial satellite and cable channels have captured the wealthier, urban viewers. These competitive market forces drive government media channels to cut back on “positive externalities of public service” and “at the same time give full play to audience-attracting programs featuring sex and violence.” According to Herman and McChesney, the media in India, for example, “are being integrated into a global system that caters to those with effective demand and encourages them to want and to spend more.” These authors go on to point out that India’s globalizing media and the advertising community are promoting “an elitist consumerist culture within the larger society of what is still a Third World country” (p. 188). Their observations can be applied to many other countries in the developing world.

Thus, the linkages between the multinational corporations, global advertising, and the growth of commercial media channels are all interrelated. Agencies continue to lobby for media channels in which to advertise their corporate clients’ products and services. The weight of evidence supports the contention that multinational corporations and global advertising interests throughout the world have clamored for the creation of commercial broadcasting to replace the existing public service systems.
CONCLUSION

Multinational corporations and their advertising agencies have a growing and essential role in the continued success of global capitalism. Globalization helped corporations spread the messages of consumption through global advertising and the global mass media have helped manufacturers and service providers to penetrate markets around the world. Global advertising spreads lifestyles and values along with the products being marketed. From their inception, the mass media have been commodities to be consumed in much the same way as hamburgers and cosmetic surgery.

Ironically, one major unintended side effect of the rise in consumer culture is the development of alternative markets in countries like China for locally produced “fake” branded items that are affordable to the rising masses of middle-class consumers. Meanwhile “real brands” like Haier and Lenovo from China are emerging on the international consumer market to challenge the Western giants like GE and IBM. Using the branding techniques they have learned from Western corporations, these new entrants to the marketplace can draw on over a billion local consumers to become a major presence in the global marketplace in the twenty-first century.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Communication and Knowledge Labor; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Cultural Appropriation; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Global Community Media; Hypercommercialism; Pharmaceutical Advertising; Piracy and Intellectual Property.


Katherine Frith
CABLE CARRIAGE DISPUTES

The transition from analog to digital television has rekindled an ongoing battle over the obligation of cable and satellite operators to carry local broadcast channels and cable companies to provide public access channels. Cable, satellite, and emergent video distributors, including telephone companies, have challenged these requirements, claiming government interference in their free speech rights. Does the proliferation of digital cable, satellite, and broadband Internet technologies mean that government intervention is no longer justified to support local television, despite ongoing support for local broadcast carriage rules by local communities? Does digital broadcasting change local commercial broadcasters’ public interest responsibilities as they begin to offer more than one broadcast signal?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established the “must-carry” rules in the early 1960s and Congress upheld them in 1992, applied them to direct broadcast satellite in 2002, and extended them to broadcasters’ main digital signal in 2006 to take effect in February 2009. Cable and satellite operators have protested these requirements as unconstitutional breeches of their free speech rights. The courts found these rules unconstitutional in the 1980s but the Supreme Court upheld them by narrow 5 to 4 decisions in the 1990s. While these carriage requirements expose regulatory battles among competing industries, they also represent symptomatic solutions to broader structural issues regarding the emergence of new communications technologies and the role of governments, industries, and citizens in regulating them. Also exposed are broader conflicting cultural priorities from commitments to locally produced television, diverging tastes over national
Cable carriage disputes have also erupted between national program networks and cable/satellite operators. One example of this occurred in January 2006 when the satellite company EchoStar dropped the women’s-oriented Lifetime network and Lifetime Movie Network from its service over a contract dispute, replacing them with a rival women’s-oriented channel, Oxygen. Because Lifetime was partially owned by Disney, which also owned ABC, The Disney Channel, and ESPN networks, they had bargaining leverage over carriage rates. However, as the top-rated network among women viewers and an advocate for women’s issues, Lifetime relied less on this corporate leverage than the public protests from their viewers.

Over 50 women’s organizations, including the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Organization of Women, the YWCA, and the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, organized nationwide letter-writing campaigns and rallies to protest EchoStar and encourage subscribers to switch to a competing satellite service that carried the networks. A month later, EchoStar and Lifetime agreed on a contract, but the competing satellite company DirecTV sued Lifetime for failing to comply with a promise to pay $200 for each viewer who switched from EchoStar to DirecTV during the dispute.

Commercial programs, and rosy forecasts for altogether different audiovisual cultures through broadband. The history of these disputes will continue to influence future debates over audiovisual policies.

Protecting Local Broadcasters

Cable and broadcaster disputes began in the early years of television’s expansion in the 1950s. Local cable systems consisting of hilltop microwave towers and cables strewn to homes emerged in the sparsely populated western states and hilly areas around the country where communities had poor or no broadcast reception. Broadcasters complained that this pirated their signals without paying for them and grew increasingly concerned as cable systems began importing signals from network-affiliated stations in distant cities, sometimes duplicating the programs on local stations. Evident at a series of FCC and congressional hearings on the matter were conflicting cultural values over the development of this new mass medium. The FCC’s frequency allocation plan prioritized the development of local stations in every community despite the difficulty that sparsely populated areas might have in funding stations through advertising revenues. In 1962, under the newly appointed FCC Chair Newton Minow, who labeled network programming a “vast wasteland,” the FCC required a Riverton, Wyoming cable operator to carry all local stations and prohibited it from importing distant signals that duplicated programs on local stations. The FCC extended these rules to all cable operators in 1965. But many residents in areas outside the signal reach of three-station markets (over 90 percent of households at this time) wanted access to more national network programming and the “local” television culture from distant cities—in some cases, communities created nonprofit
cable and booster antenna systems to do so. In 1966, ostensibly to protect the potential growth of local UHF (ultrahigh frequency) stations in metropolitan areas, the FCC banned cable importations of distant broadcast signals into the top 100 TV markets, effectively stalling cable development there.

While these early cable systems were primarily antenna systems for better broadcast reception, in the late 1960s broadband cable offered more channel capacity and two-way interactivity. Rather than seeing it as a threat to local broadcasters, policy makers, nonprofit foundations, and social scientists found “Blue Sky” potential in cable to offer a variety of communication services such as job information, health and child care, distance education, and opportunities for citizen participation in local community affairs. The Johnson administration released the President's Task Force on Communication Policy, Ralph Lee Smith published the widely read *The Wired Nation*, and the Sloan Foundation circulated *On the Cable*, all championing broadband cable's potential to offer a wider array of programming, including the uplifting cultural programming dear to the critics of the vast wasteland, and a potential communication tool to address urban poverty and racial inequality.

**LIFTING CARRIAGE RESTRICTIONS**

In 1972, the FCC lifted the importation restrictions into major cities and required larger cable systems to offer at least 12 channels, two-way capacity, and three access channels for public, educational, and government use. However, the FCC retained its restrictions on pay-TV from two years earlier, which prevented pay-TV channels from using recent motion pictures, certain sports programming, and series with interconnected plots in anticipation that they might be otherwise siphoned away from free-to-air broadcasting. By the mid-1970s, the cable industry grew as did its lobbying power, FCC staff changes under the Ford and Carter administrations produced advocates of cable deregulation, satellites offered cable program producers national distribution, and the federal courts increasingly demanded factual evidence for cable restrictions. Ongoing disputes over the copyright liability of cable operators were settled in 1976 with the creation of a Copyright Royalty Tribunal that established compulsory licensing fees for programs. By the end of the decade, the federal courts found pay-TV and antisiphoning rules unfounded and the FCC lifted all cable programming restrictions.

With program restrictions lifted, carriage disputes shifted to the franchising process where municipal governments asserted their authority over channel capacities, franchise fees, local ownership rules, subscription rates, and public access provisions. In 1984, Congress addressed this with the first federal laws for cable television that gave cities authority over the franchising process and public access requirements, but limited franchise fees, forbade federal and state subscription rate regulations, and limited the powers of city government to regulate rates. With the stability of federal rules, cable penetration and new channels grew rapidly, but so did cable mergers, subscription rates, and service complaints. To redress this, in 1992 Congress enacted new legislation that
established service standards and federal rate regulations as well as indecency rules for cable access channels (which were later found unconstitutional) and requirements to make cable programs available to competing providers including direct broadcast satellite. Because the federal appeals courts in 1986 and 1988 had struck down local broadcast carriage rules on free-speech grounds, the 1992 act reinstated must-carry requirements on up to one-third of cable systems’ channel capacity, which the Supreme Court narrowly upheld a few years later. The act also gave local broadcasters the right to negotiate for compensation for carriage but larger cable operators refused to do so. Instead, broadcasters and their affiliated networks used this right to negotiate carriage of new cable channels, as did ABC with ESPN2 (both owned by Disney), NBC with CNBC, and Fox with FX.

In the late 1970s, Congress began to contemplate a more systemic rewrite of the Communications Act of 1934 to account for the emergence of new communications technologies. Industry and federal regulators moved toward a consensus that prioritized market competition and reduced government regulation to produce comprehensive legislation in 1996. The Telecommunications Act allowed telephone companies to offer video services, cable companies to offer telephone service, and broadcasters to own more stations nationwide and commit to timelines for converting to digital transmission. However, eight years later, telephone companies had yet to offer substantial competition in video, cable subscription rates had increased by 45 percent, and public interest groups and angry citizens had persuaded Congress that loosened broadcast ownership rules had given too much power to media conglomerates. In the late 1990s, direct broadcast satellites developed smaller dishes and digital compression technologies to offer local broadcast channels in addition to national networks, thus offering some competition to cable operators.

**CABLE PROGRAM CARRIAGE TIMELINE**

1952—Cable households, 14,000.
1960—Cable households, 650,000.
1961—A federal district court rejects restrictions on cable carriage on the basis of “unfair competition.”
1964—A federal appeals court rejects right of broadcaster to restrict cable carriage.
1966—FCC asserts jurisdiction over cable and bans the importation of distant broadcast signals into largest 100 cities.
1968—U.S. Supreme Court finds that cable carriage of broadcast signal does not infringe on copyrights.
1970—Cable households, 4.8 million. FCC places content restrictions on pay cable.
1972—FCC lifts ban on distant broadcast signal importation into largest 100 cities and enacts nonduplication rules for these distant signals. Top markets must provide public, educational, government, and leased-access channels.
1974—A White House task force recommends separating cable operators from content providers.
The most recent carriage disputes involve the transition to digital broadcasting. In 1997, Congress mandated that all broadcasters convert to digital broadcasting by the end of 2006. But cable operators’ reluctance to carry broadcasters’ analog and digital signals during the transition period slowed the process. In 2005, Congress extended the transition deadline to February 17, 2009, and provided $1.5 billion in subsidies to assist low-income households to purchase converter boxes. Because digital transmission makes more efficient use of the spectrum, broadcasters can offer multiple channels instead of just one. As of 2007, Congress has not required cable operators to carry broadcasters’ additional channels. Absent these requirements, in 2005 public television stations entered an agreement with cable operators to carry four digital channels for each local PBS station. Local PBS affiliates have developed channels for kids programming, educational instruction, and local programming in addition to their main channels. Commercial broadcasters have lobbied for multicast carriage that some public interest groups have supported if additional public service requirements are enforced, such as channels for public affairs, educational children’s programming, and community access.
Other carriage disputes include video franchising requirements for telephone companies. In 2006, the House passed a bill that stripped local municipalities of their authority to oversee the franchising process. The proceedings from the February 2006 Senate hearings on video franchising reveal a conceptual split between the public interest advocates in the television reform community and those with roots in Internet activism. The organizations that have worked in the trenches of local cable franchising for years, including the National Association of Telecom Officers, the National League of Cities, the National Conference of Mayors, and the Alliance for Community Media, made the case that without local oversight, national franchising would allow new entrants to redline their way to profitability and undermine local community participation in developing community-access television. However, Public Knowledge, the advocacy group focused on intellectual property issues and the defense of a “vibrant information commons,” supported national video franchising to streamline the process and continue the deregulations set out in the 1996 Telecommunications Act (for the Senate hearings see http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/witnesslist.cfm?id=1700; for Public Knowledge’s hearing statement see http://commerce.senate.gov/pdf/sohn-021506.pdf). Similar debates have ensued at the state level (see http://www.freepress.net/news/21937).

The trajectory of these regulations over 60 years demonstrates the incremental approach that the FCC, Congress, and the courts have followed in addressing disputes between broadcasters and cable operators. Must-carry decisions were put in place, found unconstitutional, and then reintroduced to preserve free over-the-air local broadcasting as a primary public interest goal in television. But as broadband Internet technologies provide yet another distribution outlet for audiovisual programs, this history also reveals more structural issues regarding the property status of new technologies that can inform future debates. Government regulators have held broadcasters more accountable to community groups and citizens because broadcasters use the scarce public airwaves. Thus, the FCC, Congress, and the courts have favored citizen viewers’ First Amendment rights to access diverse programming over the rights of commercial broadcasters. Conversely, regulators have treated cable wires as largely private property, favoring cable operators’ First Amendment protections and limiting public interest requirements to must-carry rules and channel space for public access. Yet the private status of cable wires has been contested. Cable wires require public thoroughfares (such as city streets) and public airwaves to transmit national signals to local cable operators. Thus, in 1958 the Senate proposed a bill that applied the same public interest standards of broadcasters to cable operators, many state and municipal regulators in the 1960s and 1970s treated cable as a public utility, and telecommunications officials in the Nixon and Ford administrations recommended that cable be regulated as a common carrier with universal access requirements. More recently, the debate has turned to the Internet with a more market-oriented approach. In 2006, the FCC changed the property status of broadband Internet from a “telecommunications” service to an “information” service, which relieved Internet providers of universal access rules. A public-interest coalition fought back by calling on lawmakers to include “net-neutrality”
provisions so that broadband service providers could not discriminate against content producers (see http://www.savetheinternet.com/=coalition).

CONCLUSION

A market-oriented consensus has driven communications policy since the FCC began deregulating cable television in the late 1970s. According to this consensus, new digital technologies hold the promise of solving public interest issues from expanding opportunities for local expression to uplifting the wasteland of popular commercial television, as long as the government steps out of the way to allow the “free market” to develop these new technologies. But in the wake of the failed market-oriented policies of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that produced high prices, media conglomerates, and little competition, this consensus can be challenged through remembering that the property status of communications technologies is socially determined and open to contestation. From distant signal importation in the 1950s, local broadcast carriage in the 1960s, public access channels in the 1970s, rate regulations in the 1990s, and debates over video franchising jurisdictions and net neutrality in the 2000s, the lessons remain. Solutions require more than market-oriented approaches. Best practices have required regulatory frameworks where local, state, and federal governments; industry leaders; independent program producers; labor groups; public interest organizations; and concerned citizens have had a say in how communications technologies develop.

See also À La Carte Cable Pricing; Alternative Media in the United States; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; Media Reform; Net Neutrality; Online Digital Film and Television; Pirate Radio; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service; Regulating the Airwaves.

CELEBRITY WORSHIP AND FANDOM

The faces, fashionable figures, and extravagant lifestyles of media celebrities have become part of audiences’ everyday lives. Proliferating entertainment news shows, Web sites, and magazines have created levels of familiarity and intimacy previously only shared with those in our immediate social environment. However, when celebrities become objects of fans’ affection, the psychological bonds between fans and their favorite stars can rarely be described as worship or one-sided adoration, as fans and audiences negotiate and appropriate the media products through which they encounter the celebrity. They thus construct distinct meanings in their reading of mediated individuals.

A poignant and often echoed definition of celebrity was offered by Daniel Boorstin as early as half a century ago when he identified a celebrity as a “person who is known for his well-knownness” (1961, p. 58). Boorstin’s definition highlights two key aspects of the cultural phenomenon of celebrity. First is its self-perpetuating nature in which media exposure breeds celebrity and celebrity furthers exposure. This inherent spiral of celebrity is unmasked in the recent rise of jet set—and reality television—celebrities, exemplified by Paris Hilton, whose celebrity status appears unrelated to any recognizable professional achievements. However, the difference between such recent examples of celebrity and more traditional manifestations of stardom such as film and sports stars in the first half of the twentieth century, the rise of pop musicians in the postwar period, and fashion models since the 1980s is one of degree rather than kind. Celebrity is thus a distinctly modern occurrence tied to the transformations of consumption, communication, and everyday life in industrial modernity. Second, Boorstin’s definition points to the importance of audiences’ sustained interaction with celebrities in media consumption allowing for degrees of familiarity and intimacy.

CELEBRITY AND INTIMACY

This perceived intimacy and its psychological consequences have been a focus of academic research on media power as well as the relationship between mass media and self. The presence and importance of celebrities in audiences’ everyday lives has been viewed by early mass communication research as an indication of the power that media exercise over audiences: some have identified film stars as manifestations of “pseudo-individuality,” which is maintained through shallow variations of physical appearance seeking to mask the inherent standardization of life and conformity in industrial societies (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). The pretense and artificiality of the relationship between
celebrities and audiences is in turn emphasized in Horton and Wohl’s notion of “para-social interaction.” According to Horton and Wohl, the interaction between stars and audiences “characteristically, is one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development” (1956, p. 215), thus leaving audiences largely disempowered. To some, then, celebrity works as a powerful form of social and crowd control in the era of mass societies.

That such control has been attempted rather than successful (cf. Marshall 1997), however, reflects the complex power of relations between celebrities and their fans. John Thompson describes the relationship between fan and celebrity as “non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance” in which the celebrity does not “talk back.” In contrast to face-to-face communication, audiences’ encounters with celebrities are thus forms of “mediated quasi-interaction.” Thompson suggests that audiences gain rather than lose control over such relationships: it is precisely because celebrities are so familiar to us, yet are not part of our daily face-to-face interactions or our social environment, that audiences have the capacity to shape their relationship with distant others. Celebrities are available at the press of a button or by opening a magazine when and where we like and require, while the communicative distance between celebrities and audiences creates the space for idealized readings of celebrities—a circumstance that explains the often profound disappointment of fans who meet their favorite celebrity face-to-face. Thompson thus describes an interest in given celebrities and the act of becoming a fan as a “strategy of self,” a way to meaningfully build an identity in a mediated world.

FANDO AS RELIGION?

The intense emotional attachment many fans display towards their favorite television show, sports team, band, or film star has triggered frequent comparisons between fandom and religion. Equally, stars and popular icons span the extraordinary world of media celebrity with the mundane life of audience members in ways similar to how religious iconography offers a link between the divine and the believer. Indeed, journalistic and academic discourses employ a range of religious terminology: “worship,” “devotion,” and “pilgrimage” are all popular concepts to describe fan practices. Even the word “fan” finds its etymological root in fanaticus, the Latin word for a member of a temple.

Despite such linguistic parallels, the differences between fandom and religion are profound: however intense the emotional bond between fans and stars, it is rarely attributed with transcendental significance by fans. Equally, while certain fan cultures employ religious symbols in fan art, as, for example, Jesus-like depictions of Elvis, such symbolism is employed by such fans to express their simultaneous fandom and faith. The link between religion and fandom is thus largely one of shared spaces identity construction: in today’s mediated world, the consumption of popular media and icons has created an alternative space for identities to be formed and negotiated, thus filling a void created by the secularization of modern life.
CELEBRITY CULTURE VERSUS FAN CULTURE

Thompson's work reflects a shift of the pendulum from focusing on celebrities (media production) to focusing on fans and audiences (media consumption). Instead of concentrating on “celebrity culture,” we might instead highlight the audience's power in creating meaning in the consumption of popular culture. In John Fiske's (1989a, 1989b) analogy, we could compare popular media products to jeans—they are mass-produced commodities that for all the standardization in their production become meaningful only through the way they are worn, made our own, and eventually torn by consumers. Far from uncritical worshippers of a particular celebrity, fans make “tactical” use of popular icons in ways that are empowering to themselves. Henry Jenkins's seminal study *Textual Poachers* further documents the degree to which audiences appropriate media texts for their own ends. In Jenkins's words, “I am not claiming that there is anything particularly empowering about the texts fans embrace. I am, however, claiming that there is something empowering about what fans do with those texts in the process of assimilating them to the particulars of their lives” (1992, p. 284). Crucially, rather than a bond between isolated audience members and their objects of affection, fans are often part of communities that share readings and ways of using media products, and hence that foster the critical rereading and appropriation of these products, as well as the creation of fan-authored materials such as fan fiction.

DESPERATELY SEEKING CELEBRITY

As part of his portrayal of postwar American consumer culture as suffering from a cultural pathology of narcissism, the historian Christopher Lasch identified the incessant need of individuals in such conditions to exercise their individuality by striving for fame and celebrity and thus seeking to separate themselves from the anonymous masses. The celebrity universe according to Lasch is a constant encouragement for the “common man” to identify with extraordinary and the spectacular, making the banality of our everyday existence difficult to bear.

In this approach, the contemporary fascination with celebrity is fuelled by the inherent focus on the self and self-fulfillment in contemporary culture. Crucially, however, such self-centeredness does not lead to the worship or adoration of a particular celebrity, which is always an act of subordination, but to the desire to achieve celebrity oneself, lucidly illustrated in the sheer endless supply of those seeking fame through participating in reality television programs, casting shows such as *American Idol*, or television talk shows. Fans and those striving for celebrity thus engage in opposing practices: while fans intersect themselves into media products through the distinct meanings they create in their readings underscored by admiration and appreciation of mediated stars and texts, celebrity seekers’ interest does not lie with external objects (i.e., actual celebrities) but with their self and its ambition to achieve celebrity status.
FANS, ADMIRERS, OR WORSHIPPERS?

Just as with other media products such as television programs, celebrities too can become multifaceted objects that offer fans a range of readings and meanings, for pertaining to the rules and varieties of audience use, there is no fundamental distinction between the different forms of mediated popular culture. Admittedly, in their glamour, many celebrities reveal the inherent commercial logic of cultural production more pronouncedly than other popular texts. But at the same time, fan cultures focusing on particular celebrities are distinctly less common than phrases such as “celebrity worship” suggest. In Boorstin’s definition of celebrity based on how well known a celebrity is, the boundaries between fame and notoriety are distinctly blurred. The dictum that there is no such thing as bad publicity has been taken to new levels by twenty-first century arrivals on the celebrity circuit such as Britney Spears and Paris Hilton. Yet, while their immense exposure ensures how well they are known, this presence does not automatically translate into being liked or even cherished. As Sconce notes, we are erroneous if we assume that “most Americans like Paris Hilton, when in fact, the vast majority of her media exposure is framed as negative irritation” (2007, p. 330). Celebrities can then serve not as object of worship or adoration but also as the focus of anti-fandom and displeasure. Moreover, in those cases where celebrities are at the center of fan cultures, they—at least from the point of view of the fan—take on other qualities than simply being well known and are valued for their musical, acting, or sporting talents; their appearance; or their actions and convictions.

Recent psychological and psychoanalytical approaches to the bond between fans and their fan objects further confirm that celebrity and media exposure provide a premise but not a sufficient basis for affection and adoration. In 1985, Vermorel and Vermorel collected a series of fan fantasies drawing on popular icons such as pop stars; their book documents how audiences’ interests in stars are fed by sexual desires articulated in such fantasies. Desire and lust, however, do not equate to worship (and on occasion, the sexual fantasies they report point in the opposite direction) and can be assumed to be often fleeting and tied to particular physical attributes. Subsequent work examining fans of female Hollywood stars of the 1940s and 1950s (see Stacey 1994) and Anthony Elliott’s analysis of the motives of Mark Davis Chapman’s murder of John Lennon in December 1980 have suggested that fans engage in processes of “projection” and “interjection,” in which an idealized reading of the star allows for the externalization of positive and negative attributes of the fan him or herself, and thus provides the basis for the emotional bond between fan and star. Stars and other fan objects might then function as a “mirror” to fans’ self-image, offering a bond between fan and star that is grounded in the fan’s unrecognized self-reflection. In all such scenarios, the celebrity is thus not the object of abject adoration or worship, but subject to complex processes of identification, projection, and reflection and can be ascribed with positives (fandom) or negative connotations (anti-fandom). While how well the celebrity is known is the premise for such processes to take place in acts of “mediated quasi-interaction,”
they also require subjectively recognized qualities beyond simple celebrity status. Celebrity by itself therefore does not guarantee public affection and adoration, and celebrity status doesn’t automatically translate into popularity, much less worship.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Cultural Appropriation; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Cornel Sandvoss

CHILDREN AND EFFECTS: FROM SESAME STREET TO COLUMBINE

Children are generally considered to be a vulnerable audience, and fears about the possible negative effects that media might have on them have circulated since the spread of mass-produced culture in the nineteenth century. At the same time, there have always been progressives who have assumed that “proper” media could have positive effects on children. What roles should parents, educators, the government, and media producers themselves play in guaranteeing that children have access to appropriate media? And who decides what is appropriate?
THE TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

A voluntary ratings system for television was established in 1997, and all programs except for news and sports are now rated Y (suitable for children aged 2 to 6), Y7 (may not be suitable for children under 7), G (suitable for general audiences), PG (parental guidance suggested), 14 (may not be suitable for children under 14), or MA (suitable for mature audiences). There are also specific content indicators. Y7 shows, for example, are frequently labeled FV for “fantasy violence”; the label is considered less strong than the plain V given to programs for older viewers. Other content labels include: S (sexual situations), L (coarse language), or D (suggestive dialogue). Studies have shown, though, that many parents are unfamiliar with the ratings and that very few use their V-chips.

Anxieties about the possible effects of media on children spring in large part from the adult desire to uphold a sacred ideal of childhood innocence. Adults fear that media may have a wide range of effects on children, making them violent or sexually active, for example, or inculcating them with racist, sexist, or homophobic prejudices. Of course, what is “negative” depends on the point of view of the adult. Traditionalist parents, such as members of conservative religious groups, are likely to want their children to consume very different media than that which would be favored by more liberal parents.

Unlike many concerned parents, most producers of media see children not as endangered innocents but as savvy consumers capable of making their own decisions about media consumption. If, from the point of view of video game, TV, movie, and comic book producers, media are to be censored by anyone, it is clearly parents who should be in the driver’s seat, not the government.

Activists tend to disagree, feeling that government should take a more active role in regulating children’s media. However, activists vary widely in their definitions of what is dangerous. Liberals like Action for Children’s Television focused on eliminating excessive commercialism. Conservative groups like, in the 1980s, the born-again Christian group the Moral Majority, and, more recently, the evangelicals of Focus on the Family, have focused almost exclusively on advocating the censorship of sexuality.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Perhaps the most famous opponent of putatively dangerous children’s media was Anthony Comstock, a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century moral reformer who was particularly concerned about dime novels—cheap storybooks for working-class kids that emphasized criminal adventures. In the 1930s, the social-scientific Payne Fund Studies also addressed the issue of the teaching of crime to minors. One of the most widely publicized of the studies examined the film-going habits of juvenile delinquents. Not surprisingly, when asked if they had turned to crime because of gangster films, many boys were eager to oblige the researchers and say yes. The girls studied were runaways, many of whom had
had sexual relations; these subjects, too, were happy to blame their adventures on the scenes of seduction they had observed in Hollywood films.

By 1934, Hollywood's self-censoring organization, the Production Code Administration (PCA), had perfected a system for previewing all scripts and completed films with an eye for making them “safe” for general consumption. Children (and “immature” adults) were to be shielded from images of sex and violence. In the 1950s, as the PCA began to lose power, a new bogeyman emerged: crime and horror comics. Psychologist Frederick Wertham spearheaded a movement against violent comics, claiming they schooled children in sadism and sexual perversion. In 1954, the Comics Code Authority was set up by the comics industry to censor itself. Though the Code was theoretically voluntary, the industry feared that if it didn't censor itself the government would step in and do the job.

Of course, comics were not considered the only source of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s: TV was also singled out. Shows like The Untouchables were attacked for their violence, but it was not just television's images that were seen as the problem; TV itself became a new member of the family, a device that could bring families together around a “wholesome” program or divide families who fought over viewing decisions. TV might even do ill to children, adults worried, by harming their vision or diverting their time from wholesome outdoor play.

In the post–World War II years, anxieties about the sexual content and, more generally, rebellious attitude of rock 'n' roll were also on the rise. These kinds of anxieties would surface again in 1985 when the Parents Music Research Council would successfully advocate for warning labels to be put on sexually explicit (or explicitly violent) albums. Youth-targeted music had contained risqué lyrics for years, but anxieties came to a head in the 1980s due in large part to the dramatic commercial success of rap music and the rise of the Walkman, which enabled kids to listen to music in utter privacy. Anxious parents worried about

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**SESAME STREET**

Sesame Street was the first American educational children’s program to receive government funding and the first to be produced with input from psychologists and educators. It was also a breakthrough show for its aggressive targeting of minority viewers, and part of its enduring legacy is the idea that multiculturalism should play a role in children’s television. Each season, a curriculum is rigorously plotted out and segments are tested on the target audience (3- to 5-year-olds); segments that do not successfully hold viewers’ attention or convey lessons are revised or discarded before broadcast. In the early years, a relatively small amount of Sesame Street merchandise existed, but today the show’s characters are widely marketed; such commercialization is a symptom of PBS’s overall commercialization in the wake of dramatically reduced government support for public broadcasting. When Sesame Street first premiered, it was controversial; developmental psychologists worried about the show’s fast pacing and questioned the idea of using television to teach, and right-wingers attacked the show for its picture of racial integration. Today, however, there is probably no program more widely acknowledged as having positive effects on young viewers.
what their children might be secretly listening to and whether that private music might have negative consequences.

Though anxieties about the effects of music, television, and film on children still bubble up, video games and the Internet are today seen as the biggest threats to children. Video games are assumed to make children violent and sexually precocious; the Internet is often assumed to be swarming with sexual predators. To keep children “safe” from the Internet, conservative politicians and activists fought for the inclusion of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The CDA was intended to make the entire Internet devoid of content that might harm minors. This proved both unfeasible—given the Internet’s vast, decentralized, international sprawl—and unconstitutional. The courts struck down the CDA as a First Amendment violation almost immediately.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF TELEVISION

In the 1950s, Senator Estes Kefauver led hearings on juvenile delinquency, which included testimony on the possible effects of TV, radio, and comics on children, and Senator Thomas Dodd held hearings specifically on television violence in the early 1960s. Senator John Pastore held hearings on TV violence in 1972 in response to a series of studies on “Television and Social Behavior” that had been commissioned by the Surgeon General’s Office. The studies’ results were inconclusive: it was clear that viewing violent images might have short-term effects on children’s behavior, but whether the images could cause damage over time remained very much an open question. In any case, the government did not attempt to directly regulate television content as a result of the studies.

ACT fought a long battle for the regulation of children’s television, and in the 1970s the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) instituted a number of rules for children’s television, regulating the ratio of program to commercial content, adding separators (“bumpers”) between programs and ads, and eliminating “host-selling,” the practice of television hosts (lead actors on children’s shows) directly hawking goods to their young viewers during programs. These regulations were clearly designed with the assumption that excessive commercialism had negative effects on child viewers. The regulations were undone in the 1980s by President Ronald Reagan’s FCC.

In the 1990s, politicians debated the V-chip, a device to be implanted in all televisions that would enable parents to block out inappropriate content. The V-chip requirement was included in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. “V” stood for “violence,” as promoters of the chip assumed that violent material was the content that parents were most concerned about. Conservative religious activists opposed the chip, advocating instead (without success) that TV should simply be cleaned up across the board so that V-chips were unnecessary.

As a result of persistent activist pressure, the Children’s Television Act (generally supported by Democratic politicians and opposed by Republican politicians) was finally passed in 1990. The Act requires broadcasters—but not cable providers—to provide three hours of educational or informational programming
COLUMBINE

The teenagers who shot and killed their classmates at Columbine High School in 1999 were alienated youths in long, black trench coats. Though they did not sport the make-up, jewelry, and other dark markers of the Goth subculture, the boys were widely identified as Goths, and a national hysteria about the dangers of youth culture ensued. Goth influences range from horror films to Romanticism and Gothic literature, and Goths express their loneliness and feelings of alienation through their theatrical, vampire-like appearance and their taste for dark music. In the wake of Columbine, adults were quick to blame musicians like Satanist Marilyn Manson for his corrupting influence on Goths. Less attention was paid to the important sociological conditions that cause nonconformist youth (those with no interest in sports and unusual tastes in music, clothes, or books) to feel lonely and alienated in the first place. A handful of liberals observed that easy access to guns obviously enabled the Columbine killers, but most irate adults felt that media—which was assumed to turn kids into Goths—was the more pressing problem. One Republican cited in Time magazine went so far as to say that our country needed “Goth control” not “gun control.”

to children each week. The rationale for imposing such obligations on broadcasters is twofold: (1) Children are a vulnerable minority audience, and broadcasters have an obligation to provide something of value to this vulnerable audience rather than simply manipulating it. (2) The broadcast spectrum (the air through which broadcast signals are sent) is, in principle, owned by the public, and broadcasters are legally obliged “to serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity.” Free market proponents argue that the Nielsen ratings are a sufficient gauge of which programs serve the public, and that government has no place interfering with broadcasters’ business practices. Those favoring regulation, conversely, argue that children’s special needs cannot be assumed to be met by whatever program is able to garner the highest rates for candy and toy ads; excessive commercialism, from this perspective, has a very negative effect on children.

ASSUMPTIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS UNDERPINNING ADULT ATTACKS ON CHILDREN’S MEDIA

Adult-led attacks on media consumed by children have shifted their focus over time, but certain elements seem to recur, underpinning the activities of anxious adults. First, adults have tended to exaggerate the vulnerability of children while, conversely, imagining themselves mysteriously immune to being negatively affected by media. Second, adults have assumed that children are naturally innocent and pure, and are only corrupted when introduced to mass media. That children might be naturally greedy, violent, or sexually curious is rarely considered because such an idea would conflict with very strong cultural assumptions (which only emerged in the Victorian era) that children were inherently good and pure. Third, media have become scapegoats. If a child is excessively hostile, it is easier to blame television or video games than to look
elsewhere (the family or school) for causes. Fourth, would-be censors speaking in the name of children often really want to clean up everybody’s media. Such censors, in effect, end up treating all media consumers as if they are children. Fifth, attacks on children’s media, whether undertaken by activists, politicians, or social scientists, have tended to decontextualize media, especially media with violent content. “Violence” is rarely understood as one narrative component among others, or seen has having a potentially positive valence.

For example, journalistic attacks on Buffy the Vampire Slayer shortly after the shootings at Columbine in 1999 emphasized that one episode (whose broadcast was deferred after Columbine) pictured a miserable teenager with a gun, isolated in a tower within shooting range of his classmates. That the episode centered, with great sensitivity, on the real pain of adolescence, and that the boy with the gun was driven to consider not mass murder but rather suicide, was simply ignored. It did not matter to angry grown-ups that Buffy examined violence in a thoughtful way; they were sure that popular culture—especially video games and Goth music—were the root cause of the Columbine incident, and they were eager to attack any youth media that dealt with violence, regardless of its approach (see “Columbine” sidebar).

The important thing to remember is that every generation witnesses hysteria about whatever media is most popular among children. Such hysteria tends to subside when the next big thing comes along. Waves of hysteria are also shaped by shifting political climates. With President George W. Bush, a conservative born-again Christian, in the White House, and a Republican Congress, Janet Jackson’s breast-baring “costume malfunction” at the 2004 Super Bowl snowballed into a national conservative Christian campaign to sanitize the airwaves in order to keep children safe from profanity and sexually charged images. Suddenly, the FCC was deluged with complaints about “indecent” material, and it responded by fining radio and TV broadcasters at a previously unheard of rate. When Democrats have dominated Congress or the White House, concerns about media effects have focused less on sex and more on commercialism and the advocacy of educational programming.

EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

Alarmist declarations about the purported negative effects of media on children will always, unfortunately, receive more attention than attempts to use media to educate, edify, or simply entertain youth in a positive manner. Yet there have always been a minority of educators, activists, politicians, parents, and media producers themselves who have stood up for the potentially positive effects that media might have on children. The FCC’s first female commissioner, Frieda Hennock, was a strong advocate for educational programming (directed to both adults and children) in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the 1960s, FCC chairman Newton Minow and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy encouraged broadcasters to create more educational programming. At the time, “educational” children’s shows like Romper Room and Captain Kangaroo focused on socialization and basic skills like tying one’s shoelaces. That all changed with
the premiere of *Sesame Street* in 1969, which shifted the focus to teaching cognitive skills (see "Sesame Street"). Today, most educational programming is shown on PBS and on the children's cable channel Nickelodeon. *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer* are among Nickelodeon's most popular educational shows.

**See also** Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media Literacy; Media Reform; Media Watch Groups; Public Broadcasting Service; Regulating the Airwaves; Television in Schools; Video Games; Violence and Media; Youth and Media Use.


*Heather Hendershot*

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**COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE LABOR**

In the information age, contemporary advanced societies are no longer organized around agriculture or manufacturing. Instead, an increasing amount of work is directed toward production and distribution of information, communication, and knowledge. This shift has changed the occupational structures of developed societies and is beginning to be felt in some less developed ones as well. As job opportunities and working environments change with the development of new technologies, telecommunication companies have benefited from reducing the skill component of jobs or eliminating jobs entirely and replacing them with automated systems. This especially applies to jobs traditionally filled by women. Global telecommunication technology also allows outsourcing of knowledge workers to cheaper labor markets in the developing world. With these changes, the question facing scholars of communication and information technology is not how such changes will continue, but if knowledge workers will realize their strength and organize around their common interests.

The study of knowledge labor has raised important questions for academics and policy makers. Because they have such an important impact on research and intervention, the most fundamental questions have to do with how we define and make use of the terms. Since there is extensive debate on this topic, it is more useful to provide a range of definitions for each term than imagine and impose one ostensibly correct meaning.
DEFINING KNOWLEDGE LABOR

Knowledge work has been defined in the narrow sense as involving creative labor or the direct manipulation of symbols to create an original knowledge product or to add obvious value to an existing one. According to this view, knowledge work would include what writers, artists, Web page designers, and software creators do. A more expansive definition encompasses the work of those who handle and distribute information, including people like librarians and postal workers. The reason for considering these jobs to be knowledge occupations is because an increasing amount of the work performed involves making use of information to efficiently and effectively deliver an information product. By including this work, one acknowledges that the line between what is and is not creative labor in the knowledge field is very fuzzy and that a good case can be made that workers who appear to be more marginal to knowledge production nevertheless add tangible value to the information product. There is also a practical purpose to expanding the definition. The meaning of knowledge labor is not just measured by external criteria but by how it is subjectively experienced by workers themselves. Creative work is distinguished from information handling or distribution because it is felt to be different in the lives of workers. But that is less the case today as evidenced by the growing “convergence” of different kinds of workers organized under the same union umbrellas. Finally, the most expansive definition of knowledge work would include all workers involved in the chain of producing and distributing knowledge products. This view maintains that workers involved in the production of computer hardware, including low-wage immigrant women workers in Silicon Valley and abroad, are knowledge workers because they are an integral part of the value chain that results in the production of the central engine of knowledge production, the computer. Similarly, call-center workers who sell communication products and services would also fall within this broad definition of knowledge work because they are central to marketing information and make use of the products of communication technology to carry out their work. Moreover, the management and control of their work would not be possible without the advanced surveillance technologies made possible by developments in communication and information technology.

THE RISE OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Discussion and debate about the relationship between the technologies of communication and information, work, and social development is not new. An extended history of the subject in the West would include the work of Comte de Saint-Simon, who speculated on the transformation from manual to mental labor in the eighteenth century; of Karl Marx, who referred to the formation of a “general intellect” in the course of capitalist development; and of Charles Babbage, whose difference engine gave us one of the first serious designs for a computer in the nineteenth century. These and others have had a substantial impact on how we think about work and information technology. In the last 50 years, the academic emphasis has been on developing measures to track the growth of the information sector as an economic force. Jean Fourastié provided
the first sustained analysis of the division between agriculture, manufacturing, and the expanding services sector. Fritz Machlup was among the leaders in charting the expansion of the data and information components of the economy, and Marc Uri Porat built on this work to document the shift from an economy based on the primary (agriculture) and secondary (manufacturing) sectors to one rooted in services (tertiary) and information (quaternary) occupations. Neither Machlup nor Porat addressed the political, social, and cultural implications of this transformation in anything approaching the theoretical sophistication of Daniel Bell.

According to Bell, we were not merely experiencing a growth in data and information, nor merely a shift in the major occupational categories, but a transformation in the nature of capitalist society. Capitalism had been governed for two centuries by industrialists and their financiers, who comprised the capitalist class. Now, with the rise of a society dependent on technology and particularly on the production and distribution of information, Bell maintained that a new class of leaders, a genuine knowledge class of well-trained scientific-technical workers, was rising to prominence and ultimately to leadership of a postindustrial capitalism. Inherited wealth and power would shrink in significance and a genuine meritocracy would rule. Such a society would not necessarily be more democratic, but it did portend a shift in power from its traditional base in family inheritance to technical and scientific knowledge. The ranks of knowledge workers would literally power and manage this new postindustrial economy, leading to steady economic growth and the decline of historic ideologies. For Bell, political battles over public policy would diminish as technical algorithms and knowledge-based measures would govern. There would no doubt be tensions in such a society, but these would be technical and not ideological.

**KNOWLEDGE COMPANIES DOMINATE AND DE-SKILL WORKERS**

It did not take long for others to conclude that, cultural issues aside, postindustrialism itself was not inherently progressive. For Herbert Schiller, postindustrialism meant the rise of transnational media and communication businesses that would pump out support for American values, including its military and imperial ambitions, and eliminate alternatives through increasingly concentrated market power. According to Harry Braverman, for the vast majority of workers in the service, retail, and knowledge professions, labor would be as regimented and ultimately de-skilled, as it had been in assembly-line manufacturing. Indeed, given the immateriality of knowledge work, it would be easier than in the industrial era to separate conception from execution, and to concentrate the power of conception (e.g., design and management) in a dominant class.

There has been widespread debate ever since Bell, Braverman, and Schiller addressed these issues, but there is some agreement in key areas. There is consensus that a shift has occurred in developed societies, and that one is beginning in some less developed ones, from manufacturing to knowledge work. Yes, people agree, there was and still is considerable knowledge required in much of
manufacturing as well as in agricultural work. But the difference today is that an increasing amount of work is taken up with the production and distribution of information, communication, and knowledge. Furthermore, there is agreement that a dynamic process of de-skilling, up-skilling, and re-skilling is taking place in the occupational hierarchy. At different times and in different sectors one or another of these processes predominates, but the labor process, most concur, cannot be reduced to the singularity of one process. Nevertheless, there is also agreement that companies have benefited from reducing the skill component of jobs or eliminating jobs entirely and replacing them with automated systems, and this especially applies to jobs traditionally filled by women.

OUTSOURCING KNOWLEDGE LABOR

Where de-skilling or job elimination is not possible, companies have accomplished the same objective by moving jobs to low-wage areas within a country or by shipping them abroad. Since knowledge work typically does not require moving material things over long distances (e.g., call centers and software...
engineering contain little or no bulk), the production process requires the use of
global telecommunications systems whose costs have been declining over years
of technological development. This process of outsourcing enables, for example,
an American company to use data-entry workers in China, call-center employ-
ees in Canada, and software programmers in India and incur a fraction of the
labor costs that it would by employing workers in the United States. This pro-
cess is by and large an extension of the general predominance of a business-led
neoliberal agenda that has transformed the business-labor social contract of the
1950s and 1960s (guaranteed jobs at a living wage with a package of benefits) to
a business-first agenda that, in the name of productivity, has made jobs, wages,
and certainly benefits far from a guarantee in today’s developed societies. Be-
cause outsourcing is part of a wider business agenda that has also attacked the
social policy instruments that protected labor and trade unions, it has been all
the more difficult for working people to mount a successful defense.

**KNOWLEDGE WORKERS UNITE**

Out of necessity and often using the tools of their trade, knowledge work-
ers are increasingly organizing to defend creative work and its public purpose.
Across the converging communication and information technology sectors,
they are organizing trade unions that respond to technological convergence
and the convergence of companies that have created massive concentration in
the knowledge industry. For example, the Communication Workers of Amer-
ica (CWA) represents 700,000 workers in the media, telecommunication, and
information technology sectors. A similar convergent union, the Communi-
cation, Energy and Paperworkers of Canada, now represents about 80,000 workers
in these and other occupations. Demonstrating the value of labor convergence
across borders, the CWA used its power to successfully unite on-air and techni-
cal workers to defeat the 2005 lockout of workers at Canada’s national broad-
caster. At the international level, the Union Network International (UNI),
a global federation spanning the converging knowledge arena, calls itself “a
new international for a new millennium.” UNI was founded in 2000 and includes
15.5 million workers from 900 unions in 140 countries. Finally, even high-tech
workers, typically an enormous challenge to organize, have, with the help of the
CWA and other unions, revived social movement unionism in the United States
by organizing disgruntled workers who write code and produce content at Mi-
crosoft, IBM, and other big firms.

**WILL ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE WORKERS FOLLOW?**

University and college professors long ago recognized that technology, edu-
cation, and professional status did not lift them out of the realm of workers.
Many responded by organizing trade unions that follow the craft model. This
has provided a privileged status and academics are arguably the new aristocracy
of labor. But it has separated teachers in higher education from the process of
labor convergence. As a result, they cannot enjoy the benefits of joining workers
across the knowledge arena and the opportunity to extend to other knowledge workers the principles that university faculty have fought with some success to maintain: full-time, secure jobs, with tenure and good pensions. Instead of setting the standard for knowledge workers worldwide, university faculty have hoarded their privileged status. But commercialization with new technologies continues to nip at the heels of academic labor and threatens to shred that status. Indeed, the future of knowledge and communication labor is likely to depend less on the next new thing and more on whether knowledge workers of the world, including academic workers, will unite.

See also Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Branding the Globe; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; The DVD; Global Community Media; Google Book Search; Hypercommercialism; Online Publishing; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Pirate Radio; Public Access Television; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; World Cinema.


Vincent Mosco

COMMUNICATION RIGHTS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Over the past six decades “communication rights” has been a recurring theme in global discussions about democratic freedoms. Advocates argue that a more democratic communication system providing equal access and diverse information will help create a more peaceful and humanistic world, preserve indigenous culture, and sustain democratic institutions. Yet, establishing universal codes and implementing their protection in global policy regimes has proven to be an ongoing struggle.

The first official proposal for “communication rights” can be traced to the French civil servant Jean d’Arcy in 1969. This proposal built on earlier principles that began to take shape in the aftermath of World War II. The first global
articulation of what eventually became known as the “right to communicate” occurred in Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The boldest and most innovative component in this statement is the “freedom to impart information.” Also noteworthy is the positive rendering of this wording that is largely missing from the negative freedoms outlined in influential standards such as the U.S. First Amendment: “Congress shall pass no law...” Instead, communication rights are often articulated in ways that assume people are not simply passive consumers, but also have a right of access to diverse sources of information within a democratic media system. That is, communication rights are not merely about “freedom from” but also “freedom for,” and require at least a two-way communication flow based on principles of balance, equal access, and democratic participation. Like other official statements of human rights and democratic norms that we often take for granted, this codification is a significant achievement for its role in shaping debates and determining global norms and policies. However, such codes are often ignored or interpreted in different ways, which sets the stage for contestation. Struggles around the meaning and protection of communication rights have risen to the fore during a number of historic and contemporary forums.

**FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION VS. RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE**

Historically, the idea of communication rights has clashed with an emphasis on “information” extricated from its communicative context. In other words, while information is often treated like a commodity, communications is a crucial human process that cannot be bought and sold on the market. Likewise, systemic problems like the “digital divide” cannot be easily remedied by some technical fix, but instead require processes that are by nature social and political. Many advocates argue that communication rights should be considered an inalienable human right, protected by international law.

Differing from communication rights in terms of its emphases and objectives, the free flow of information doctrine first became prominent in U.S. foreign policy in the mid-1940s, reflected in statements made in 1946. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Benton said, “The State Department plans to do everything within its power along the political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures, and other media of communication.... Freedom of the press—and freedom of exchange of information generally—is an integral part of our foreign policy.” John Foster Dulles, who would become U.S. secretary of state in the 1950s, stated, “If I were to be granted one point of foreign policy and no other, I would make it the free flow of information.”

In the 1940s, liberals and conservatives alike, though perhaps for different reasons, pushed for the free flow of information. Given the ascendance of Western
In the decades following World War II, communication rights served as a global counternarrative to the prevailing “freedom of information” rhetoric. These two visions clashed within UNESCO during what became known as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates. The NWICO debates raged in and outside the United Nations from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s, allowing for the first time a wide range of media and telecommunications-related issues to be argued in a relatively open and global context. Unfolding within the polarity of the Cold War era, NWICO was spearheaded by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of U.N. countries, whose membership had increased with dozens of newly independent countries following decolonization. This sudden swell in so-called third-world countries led to a rebalance of power in the United Nations, forming a third force between the Soviet Union and the United States. The developing world's strengthened position fueled reform efforts concentrating on cultural identity, imperialism, and communication rights.

The NWICO debates led to “The Declaration on Mass Media,” which was introduced in 1972 and formally issued at the 1978 UNESCO General Assembly. It caused acrimonious debate around the dominance of Western news content and the increasing importance of Western-controlled technologies that kept non-Western countries in a state of “forced dependency.” The biggest conflict centered on proposed amendments to the free flow of information doctrine, which the Western press cast as a life or death struggle for press freedom. After fierce contestation and a watered-down final product, the free
flow doctrine was amended to read: “free-flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information.”

The MacBride Commission’s report to the 1980 UNESCO general assembly built upon these earlier provisions with a wide range of recommendations that would effectively redistribute global media power, such as television imagery, the distribution of radio receivers, and the journalistic right of reply, to name several. By suggesting structural changes, including regulations on information flow, UNESCO invited the wrath of a burgeoning pro-market neoliberal order championed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. By the early 1980s anti-UNESCO fervor in Western elite circles reached a feverish pitch, abetted by right-wing groups such as the Heritage Foundation. The United States and United Kingdom subsequently pulled out of UNESCO in 1984 and 1985, respectively. Following the pull out of UNESCO’s largest sponsors, NWICO gradually receded into relative obscurity. However, annual MacBride panels persisted for many years and helped bring together a new civil society coalition that would form the basis for a new theater of contestation. Indeed, two decades following the lost alternatives of NWICO, the crystallization of a new civil society alliance was evident when similar issues involving democracy and communication reemerged at the World Summit on Information Society.

COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AT THE WSIS

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence in reform efforts around communication rights. During the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)–sponsored discussions known as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 and again in 2005, communication rights emerged as a rallying theme for global media reform groups. The original goal of the WSIS was to “define a common vision of the information society.” Given the summit’s initial focus on important social problems like the global digital divide, the coalition behind the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS), the World Forum on Communication Rights (WFCR), and other reform groups saw opportunities for advancing communication rights. However, initial hopes for the WSIS to seriously address communication rights were dashed early on when discussions devolved into a technical dispute over Internet governance. Nonetheless, both phases of the WSIS saw a genuinely progressive presence. Groups like the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), among others, articulated alternative policy visions based on social justice and human rights, and worked hard to get less technocentric language into official WSIS documents, focusing on structural inequities such as lack of access to new communication technologies. Drawing heavily from Article 19 language, the continuity between NWICO-era and WSIS rhetoric was partly due to the involvement of similar groups and individuals. For example, people associated with WACC participated in both movements, as did many veteran activists and academics.

Arguably the most significant alternative vision to emerge at phase one of the WSIS was the “civil society declaration.” Overall, this wording is very similar
to NWICO-era manifestos with references to communication rights. A significant symbolic victory for communication rights advocates and progressive non-governmental organizations was the inclusion of similar language in the official WSIS Declaration of Principles document:

We reaffirm, as an essential foundation of the Information Society, and as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. It is central to the Information Society. Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers. (ITU, 2003, ¶4)

Anchoring information to crucial communication processes, this statement challenged the otherwise technocentric thrust of official WSIS documents. Nevertheless, many participants saw this inclusion as inadequate. Although it suggests everyone’s communication needs should benefit from the information society, it does not address preexisting global inequities or the means by which disadvantaged people will be given the opportunity to participate in the brave new world of the “Information Society.” An alternative approach advanced by communication rights advocates focuses less on easy technological remedies, and more on social needs that require a redistribution of crucial resources.

The emphasis on information is itself an ideological turn, and continues to draw from the free flow of information rhetoric that, in many cases, is as much about allowing commercial interests to operate unimpeded as it is for creating a truly democratic communication system with equal access for all. The increasingly corporate-dominated Internet arguably represents a major triumph of this antiregulation view.

COMMUNICATION RIGHTS TODAY

Various advocacy groups continue to fashion a post-WSIS strategy to mobilize civil society around communication rights. During and immediately following the WSIS, new attempts were made to help further define communication rights. For example, a statement delivered at the World Forum on Communication rights, which was held in conjunction with the first phase of the WSIS, characterized communication rights as a “universal human need” based on “the key principles of Freedom, Inclusiveness, Diversity and Participation.” A CRIS document titled “Assessing Communication Rights” defined communication rights in terms of human dignity that goes beyond protections of opinion and expression to include areas like “democratic media governance, participation in one’s own culture, linguistic rights, rights to enjoy the fruits of human creativity, to education, privacy, peaceful assembly, and self-determination.” This same document divided communication rights into four pillars: communication in
the public sphere; communication of knowledge; civil rights in communication; and cultural rights in communication.

Despite the renewed interest in communication rights and the promising signs of global mobilization, there are also many troubling developments. Autocratic governments around the globe continue to suppress the most basic communication rights. Countries like Burma and China are prime culprits, but even Western democracies like the United States recently have witnessed state infringements against civil liberties, such as covert government surveillance. These developments do not bode well for communication rights.

At the same time, however, media reform efforts with a focus on communication rights have taken on a new urgency. In the United States, public uprisings manifested around media ownership issues in 2002–03, and Internet policies such as net neutrality in 2006–07. A possible silver lining to various political and media crises is the increasingly mainstream notion that communication rights require structural safeguards. Despite the ascendance of the blogosphere, a well-funded, vibrant public media system is still necessary. Although many U.S. media reform groups tend to focus on domestic issues, there is also a growing awareness that communication rights are a global issue. Increasingly, advocates within North America and abroad are calling for a more internationalized media reform movement, encouraging greater coordination around global intellectual property regimes, media concentration, and other contentious communication issues.

Since their first articulations in the mid-twentieth century, communication rights have figured prominently in progressive global reform efforts to create a more democratic world. Then as now, on multiple fronts, the global struggle for communication rights continues.

See also Al-Jazeera; Blogosphere; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media Literacy; Media Reform Net Neutrality; Regulating the Airwaves.

Conglomeration and Media Monopolies

Conglomeration poses a range of issues for citizens and consumers. Does the presence of prominent news outlets in multinational conglomerates influence the coverage of contentious social and political issues? What effect does industry concentration have on media content—motion pictures, television programs, music, and so on? Does the loss of diversity in ownership result in the replication of money-making formulas that promote a corporate ethos at the expense of original ideas? Overall, does consolidation make it impossible or at least improbable for independent voices and viewpoints to reach citizens and consumers? These are just a few of the questions that surround the ownership controversy.

The focal point in the battle over media conglomeration is the concentration of prominent news and entertainment firms in a handful of corporations. Free market advocates argue that centralized ownership is necessary if companies are to remain profitable. They point to the explosion in the number of programming outlets, arguing that consolidation has not restricted the variety of media content. But opponents contend that conglomeration eliminates alternative viewpoints and empowers corporate media to promote dominant ideas and frame public discussion and debate.

DEFINING CONGLOMERATION

Conglomeration is the process through which distinct companies come under common ownership within a single corporation. There are two different models of conglomeration, and prominent media firms fall within each of them. The traditional definition of conglomeration involves the grouping of wide-ranging, unrelated businesses from various industrial sectors. This model involves unrelated diversification, which is the expansion into industries that are not related to the core business of a conglomerate. The General Electric acquisition of NBC in 1986 is a classic example of that type. A second model of conglomeration builds through related diversification, which involves the acquisition of firms that are connected to the core business in critical areas. The evolution of Viacom is an example of that form. Cable television was its core business in the 1980s, with ownership of MTV, Nickelodeon, and Showtime, before it expanded into motion pictures and broadcast television with the acquisitions of Paramount Pictures in 1994 and CBS in 2000.

MONOPOLIES

Conglomeration is one factor that leads to concentration, and ultimate consolidation results in monopolies. That structure exists when there is just a single
seller of a given product in a market. True monopolies are most common in the newspaper business. Countless cities have just one daily, like Atlanta’s *Journal-Constitution*. Far more common are media markets that are oligopolies, which feature a few giant sellers of a product with each having a significant share of the market. In 2005, for example, four global giants—Universal Music, Sony BMG, Warner Music, and EMI Group—combined for over 80 percent of music sales in the United States and worldwide. Some use the phrase media monopolies to describe the small collection of corporations that are dominant in various media markets.

**ISSUES OF OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL**

One of the battle lines in the debate over conglomeration is whether ownership and control matters or not. From a free market perspective, ownership of a firm is not a concern unless combinations create market structures that lead to anticompetitive conditions. The Sherman Antitrust Act was enacted in 1890 to address such behavior in the United States, and it has shaped media markets. In 1938, the federal government launched a decade-long legal battle with the Hollywood studios, accusing the majors of “combining and conspiring” to “monopolize the production, distribution and exhibition of motion pictures.” When the same corporation owns production studios as well as the theaters that show the movies it makes, the control of production, distribution, and exhibition could effectively close out competition. The so-called Paramount consent decrees, a series of agreements between the government and studios, prohibited anticompetitive behavior and forced the “divorce” of production and distribution from exhibition. Free market advocates argue that this is as far as the government should delve into the marketplace.

The question is whether the nature of media products raises more significant concerns and demands additional government action. The attention to such issues has shifted over time as new ideas and ideologies come to the fore.
In 1966, International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) attempted to acquire the ABC television network, and despite claims that the network would remain independent, the Department of Justice and others questioned the impact ITT’s international operations might have on ABC News and blocked the merger. Two decades later, the regulatory climate was altogether different, and there was little opposition to the combination of General Electric and NBC, although the issues were very similar.

The focus on ownership and control hinges, in part, on the potential impact of media content. Mark Fowler, chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the 1980s, once stated that a television is nothing more than a “toaster with pictures.” This, in turn, meant that the government could treat television the same as other industries. Scholar Douglas Kellner, however, argues that television assumes a critical role in the “structuring of contemporary identity and shaping thought and behavior.” In his view, television has undertaken functions once ascribed to “myth and ritual,” including “integrating individuals into the social order, celebrating dominant values,” and “offering models of thought, behavior, and gender for imitation.” From this perspective, media play a significant role in society and conglomeration becomes a far more serious issue.

**TYPES OF CONGLOMERATION**

There are multiple incentives for conglomeration. The expansion into diversified businesses creates opportunities for growth and allows a conglomerate to cushion the impact of downturns in core business sectors. General Electric is often cited as the model of a diversified conglomerate, and its collection of businesses makes it, among other things, a military contractor and designer of nuclear power plants. NBC Universal contributes less than 10 percent of the total revenue of General Electric, but with a number of news outlets, among other things, NBC might be far more important to the parent company by helping shape public debate over contentious issues, such as militarism and energy production, through NBC News, MSNBC, and CNBC. In 1987, for example, less than a year after the meltdown of the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl, NBC News aired an hour-long show entitled “Nuclear Power: In France It Works.”

**SYNERGY**

More common in media industries is related diversification. This allows a conglomerate to build upon a strong business though the diversification into areas that are close to the core. This can create synergies that enable it to increase revenues and decrease costs through the common management of multiple businesses. This is evident in the conglomeration of media assets in corporations such as The Walt Disney Company, Time Warner Inc., and News Corp. Motion picture production and distribution remain important contributors to the Disney bottom line, for example, but the most successful unit in Disney is the Media Networks division, which includes both ABC and ESPN. Disney’s corporate expansion into related fields proved to be quite lucrative.
Horizontal and vertical integration are defining characteristics in media consolidation since the 1980s. With horizontal integration, firms acquire additional business units at the same level of production, distribution, or exhibition. Such consolidation enables conglomerates to extend their control and maximize economies of scale through the use of shared resources. With vertical integration, firms acquire additional business units at different points in the process. This allows them to control the supply and cost of essential materials and enables them to rationalize production and increase their control over the market.

Using vertical and horizontal integration, media conglomerates gain far greater control over the marketplace, but such economic strategies limit market access for independent producers and distributors. This is most evident in the motion picture and television industries. Independent film distributors were prominent in the late 1980s, but a decade later the major conglomerates had swallowed most of these firms while large theater chains had overtaken small movie houses. By 1997, six corporations accounted for over 92 percent of box office revenue, and the blockbuster and the multiplex came to define the American moviegoing experience. The same pattern is evident with prime-time television. As networks exerted greater control over television production, fewer programs originated from outside of conglomerates focused on financial control and less risky programs became appealing. Numerous versions of profitable formulas multiply in seemingly endless spin-offs, as the dearth of original, innovative television productions become more evident.

These practices extend to foreign markets as well, and the impact of Hollywood on indigenous production is a long-standing concern. The U.S. government promotes the export of media products across borders, and one of the justifications for the relaxation of ownership restrictions at home is the argument that the media conglomerates need to be massive to succeed overseas. This contributes to a general mindset that firms that do not grow through mergers

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THE CONGLOMERATION OF MICKEY MOUSE

The transformation of The Walt Disney Company from a struggling studio operating in the shadow of its related theme parks into a sprawling corporation provides one of the clearest examples of conglomerate. The first step was the creation of production units to develop a diversified slate of films. In 1983, combined domestic and foreign box office receipts for its motion pictures totaled just $82.5 million. A decade later the filmed entertainment division of Disney generated $3.67 billion in revenue. The diversification into related businesses was the next and most significant step. The biggest headlines came in 1996 with the acquisition of Capital Cities/ABC Inc. This created vertical integration between ABC and the production units within Disney, links that were most evident a decade later when three shows from Touchstone Television, Lost, Desperate Housewives, and Grey’s Anatomy, fueled a resurgence of the network. That merger also included ESPN, which became the most lucrative unit in the Disney empire. In 2004, the diversified conglomerate generated over $30 billion in revenue, 20 times what it did in 1984.
and acquisitions will be swallowed. Ted Turner’s pursuit of both broadcast networks and motion picture studios before Turner Broadcasting became part of Time Warner in 1996 is testament to this way of thinking. Turner summarized the goal in simple terms: “The only way for media companies to survive is to own everything up and down the media chain…. Big media today wants to own the faucet, pipeline, water, and the reservoir. The rain clouds come next.”

CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF CONGLOMERATION

The change in the corporate control of the three major broadcast networks—ABC, CBS, and NBC—illustrates how conglomeration transformed media assets since the 1980s. In 1985, two of the networks were still linked to the individuals who created them, ABC and Leonard Goldenson and CBS and William Paley, while NBC remained in the hands of the corporation that launched its radio network in the 1920s, RCA. At that time, the networks remained the core businesses of their corporate parents, and the news divisions supported the public interest mandate that came with broadcast licenses. In 2005, all three shared ownership with a major motion picture studio—ABC and Walt Disney, CBS and Paramount Pictures, and NBC and Universal Pictures—and the news divisions were important revenue centers. These combinations raise various concerns, not the least of which is the coverage of the conglomerates themselves. Michael Eisner once put it in simple terms: he did not want ABC covering Disney.

Not all combinations prove to be successful and some argue that modern conglomerates are too unwieldy to react to changes in the marketplace. The most notable failure is the merger of America Online and Time Warner in 2001.

MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION CONGLOMERATION, 1985–2006

1985—News Corp. acquires Twentieth Century Fox.
1986—Capital Cities and ABC merge to create Capital Cities/ABC Inc.; General Electric acquires NBC.
1989—Time Inc. and Warner Communications merge to create Time Warner Inc.; Sony acquires Columbia Pictures.
1990—Matsushita Industries acquires Universal Pictures.
1993—Walt Disney Co. acquires Miramax Films.
1994—Viacom Inc. acquires Paramount Pictures.
1995—Seagram Co. Ltd. acquires Universal Pictures.
2001—Time Warner and America Online merge to create AOL Time Warner.
2004—General Electric and Vivendi Universal merge assets to create NBC Universal.
2006—Viacom and CBS split and form two corporations, with Sumner Redstone retaining majority ownership of each of them; Viacom Inc. acquires DreamWorks SKG.
The melding of old media and new media did not reap the promised rewards and AOL was dropped from the corporate letterhead in 2003, but it was not just the size of Time Warner that was its undoing as pundits point to various problems. And some changes are more cosmetic. In 2006, Viacom split its assets into two corporations, Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp., but Sumner Redstone remained in control of both of them, so ownership and control did not change hands. The rationale for the split was not the size of the conglomerate but the price of Viacom stock, with Redstone and others contending that the true value of the motion picture and cable television assets would be realized after the split from the slower-growing broadcast interests.

**CONGLOMERATION: MULTIPlicity OR DIVERSITY**

When Ben Bagdikian published the first edition of *The Media Monopoly* in 1983, he estimated that ownership of most of the major media was consolidated in 50 national and multinational conglomerates. When he published *The New Media Monopoly* two decades later, Bagdikian concluded that the number had dwindled to just five. The degree of conglomeration in media industries is evident across the board. In 1985, there were six major motion picture studios and three major broadcast television networks, and nine different conglomerates controlled one of each. In 2005, the number of broadcast networks had doubled with the addition of Fox, The WB and UPN, but the number of corporations that owned a studio or network had dwindled to just six. Those corporations—Disney, NBC Universal, News Corp., Sony, Time Warner, and Viacom—also held an ownership interest in over 75 percent of the cable and satellite channels with over 60 million subscribers, as well as the most prominent premium movie channels, HBO and Showtime.

Therein rests an important battleground in this debate. Since the 1980s, Congress and the FCC relaxed ownership rules based on the argument that increases in outlets rendered such regulations needless interference in the marketplace. When the FCC announced the relaxation of various rules in 2003, chair Michael Powell argued that the “explosion of new media outlets” demanded change so the commission did not “perpetuate the graying rules of a bygone black and white era.” There is little question that the number of outlets has increased. Less certain is whether this growth resulted in more independent voices and diverse viewpoints.

Central to this debate is the distinction between multiplicity and diversity, since it is possible to increase the number of available outlets without a parallel expansion in the range of ideas and values in the public commons. The rise of cable news services, for example, diluted the influence of the broadcast network news divisions and created the impression of abundance. This could be quite significant, since the dissemination of news and information from diverse and antagonistic sources is considered a pillar of self-government in democratic societies. When one traces the ownership and control of the cable news services, however, the promised excess is nowhere to be found. The five prominent cable news services—CNN, CNN Headline News, CNBC, MSNBC, and Fox News
Channel—are all part of major media conglomerates, as are the broadcast networks. These are far from diverse and antagonistic sources of news and information, so the debate on media conglomeration rages on.

See also Branding the Globe; Communication and Knowledge Labor; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Hypercommercialism; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; Net Neutrality; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Pirate Radio; Regulating the Airwaves; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood.


William M. Kunz

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

When the mass media and information technology became increasingly central parts of everyday life during the last century, they produced an extraordinary increase in the volume of cultural material available to us. The symbolic forms that media and the Internet generate—TV programs, blogs, movies, radio personalities, podcasts, and so on—have become some of the most recognizable and influential elements of culture, and human involvement with the full range of cultural forms that surround us has also become more diversified, flexible, and intense. Some worry that citizens consume such forms passively, and that culture as such is manufactured by the industries that create the media. But people have greater opportunities than ever before to actively shape the meanings of cultural institutions and experience. They do so as individuals and members of groups by creatively engaging their cultural environments in ways that promote their own interests.

Our cultural worlds have become increasingly complex. In particular, the symbolic aspects of culture have become much more common and widespread. In the face of what might seem to be considerable prospects for creative engagement with the media and popular culture, however, some critics contend that we are all being fed a homogenous, prefabricated culture. To such critics, corporations create, control, and regulate culture and thus our very means of expression.

But culture cannot be so easily contained. The remarkable growth of media, information technology (IT), and the culture industries demonstrates one
fundamental fact—culture is dynamic, always changing. Why is this so? Certainly economic motivations explain part of the changing nature of culture. The media, information, and culture industries constantly search for new ideas and personalities they can sell to potential audiences. Audiences play their part too, though, by demanding constant cultural stimulation. Novelty and change are important parts of human nature.

Culture is not limited to what is offered up by the media, IT, and culture industries, of course. Culture has more traditional features too—language, religion, typical food, and gender relations, for instance, all help define us culturally. But even these traditional anchors of culture are represented symbolically in the Information and Communication Age. For instance, language is a symbol system in and of itself. Religion depends on symbolic imagery—the Christian cross, Jewish star of David, and Muslim crescent moon, for example—as well as music, mythology, holidays, and rituals, to maintain its cultural influence. Food is inherently visual and often represented in advertising. The way the mass media present images of men and women contributes much to our understanding of gender roles.

Without question, much of what we come to believe about our culture is conditioned by repeated exposure to the communications and culture industries, and to more traditional sources of information—especially religious institutions, schools, government, political parties, and civic organizations. We know how pervasive and powerful these influences can be, but do they determine our sense of culture and cultural identity?

Not entirely. Humans are not just passive recipients of cultural information. Although the tendency to conform to cultural norms and expectations is always there, and the norms and expectations are backed up by all kinds of rules and regulations, most people—especially more independent-minded individuals—do not simply accept the cultural values, norms, and habits they inherit. People and groups often resist the cultural framing and conditioning to which they are exposed. That resistance sometimes leads to the creation of alternative cultural expressions.

A DEFINITION

The key battleground concept of cultural appropriation refers to how people take something that is given to them by culture and use it for their own purposes, sometimes in direct contradiction to the intention of the creator of the original idea. By culturally appropriating a cultural resource, people “re-signify” the object or idea in question. They give it a different meaning.

To understand the usage of the concept being described here, it is best to think of the word “appropriation” as a noun that is being modified by an adjective, “cultural.” A “cultural appropriation” is an act of cultural modification that is performed by individuals or groups. The term “appropriate” can also be used as a verb to communicate the idea being discussed here, as in “people appropriate cultural materials for their own reasons.” Don’t let the more familiar definition of the adjective “appropriate” throw you off. For our purposes, “appropriate”
Cultural Appropriation

CULTURE AND SUPERCULTURE

The cultural creativity we see everywhere is not limited to what is presented by the mass media and the cultural industries, or to public appropriations made within alternative social or cultural movements like punk rock or religion. Culture is becoming more and more personalized today—think YouTube, MySpace, iPod. The driving force behind this decentralization of culture is modern communications technology. Access to Internet and satellite TV, mobile (camera) phones, and computer software, for example, gives people in more developed countries and middle-class individuals in less wealthy parts of the world unprecedented sources of inspiration and tools for expanding their worlds as consumers and producers of culture. Through acts of individual “cultural programming,” enterprising individuals today create their own dynamic, personal “supercultures”—personalized matrices of material and cultural resources.

does not mean “proper” or “fitting to the occasion.” What cultural appropriation means and how it works becomes much easier to grasp with some examples.

THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE: PUNK ROCK

The quintessential case of cultural appropriation can be found in popular culture of the turbulent 1970s, a stressful period in world history. Fierce resistance to the Vietnam War was raging across the globe. Civil rights struggles, the emergence of modern feminism, and increased use of illegal drugs by middle-class youth were taking place. In England, other problems were developing. Much of England’s industrial economy—mining and manufacturing—was declining. Working-class jobs were evaporating. British youth—especially young men—found their job opportunities shrinking and their lives becoming increasingly bleak.

At the same time, changes were taking place in the popular music industry in England and the United States. Music fans had become bored with pretentious “progressive rock” or “art rock” bands like Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, and Rush. The poetic lyrics, lush arrangements, long solos, and concert hall venues of these “super groups” were being rejected by more and more popular-music fans. The virtuoso groups were being replaced by bands that played short, simple, angry songs to smaller audiences in clubs. Punk rock was born.

The cultural emblem of the punk movement was a striking act of cultural appropriation—safety pins that were stuck through facial skin as simple piercings. The original function and significance of the safety pin for everyday domestic purposes had been appropriated by disenfranchised youth for cultural and political reasons—rejection of a life of boredom and meaninglessness. Piercing the skin with a safety pin—meant to shock and disgust mainstream society—became a highly recognizable sign of resistance to the dominant culture. The symbolic effect has had lasting effects. The contemporary body piercing craze began as an iconic symbol of a social and musical revolution that raged from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s.
**COLLECTIVE APPROPRIATION: RELIGION**

Cultural appropriation often reflects resistance to or the projection of an alternative solution to the massive power that is wielded by government, industry, and religion, and other social institutions. Let us consider the supremely important case of big religion. Because faith has proven to be so important to so many people in nearly every world culture, religious ideology, institutions, and iconography—often in mediated form—have become familiar objects available as popular resources for cultural appropriation. Some examples can help illustrate how this works. Catholics everywhere make their own nontraditional Catholicism, often to the horror of Church authorities. In Latin America, for example, people have invented various hybrid local religions composed of traditional Vatican dogma and liturgy, but also reflecting local customs, beliefs, superstitions, and rituals, including African voodoo. In recent years, many Latin American Catholics have adapted and transformed Catholic ideology, authority, rules, and rituals to better fit their own personal, group, and cultural orientations in massive processes of “collective appropriation.” The “Black Saints” were created by African slaves and their progeny in Brazil in order to make the bible more ethnically relevant, as another example, and Venezuelan residents of a poor Andean village have replaced Jesus on the cross with a local hero, a medical doctor who saved many lives in the area a century ago. All these particular images gain power and popularity because they are picked up and circulated by the mass media, also known as the “cultural media,” and become part of the common consciousness.

A particularly striking example of collective cultural appropriation in the realm of religion in Latin America is the Santa Muerte (Saint of Death) movement in Mexico. This social movement was started by poor people who felt their spiritual and social needs weren’t being sufficiently met by the traditional Church. To develop an alternative faith, people appropriated virtually all of the main symbols of Catholicism. Most importantly, the Virgin Mary, a cultural symbol of great importance to Catholics everywhere but especially within the Mexican interpretation of the religion, was transformed into La Santa Muerte, the “saint of death.” She appears as a skeleton cloaked in a shroud. That particular symbol was created because one philosophical tenet of the movement is that only in death do all people truly become equal. Only then, at the imagined moment of meeting God, can poor people become properly recognized and valued. Other religious symbols have been culturally appropriated too, often for less serious reasons. Madonna popularized the cross as a decorative object for her shows and videos, and the Jewish Kabala became a symbol of her celebrity lifestyle. Goth rocker Marilyn Manson made religious iconography, including the cross, part of his purposefully “demonic” stage show.

**INTENTION**

Not all instances of cultural re-signification are intentional or even consciously recognized by those who do the work. Homeless people in the United States, for example, have turned supermarket shopping carts into personal storage vehicles.
Doing so, they take a material resource and cultural symbol of middle-class abundance—the metal shopping cart—and transform it ironically into something they feel they need for sheer survival. In the process, a new cultural meaning of the shopping cart is created. During the Vietnam and Iraq wars, some soldiers used military gas masks as inhaling devices to heighten the effect of marijuana smoke, certainly not the reason the troops were issued the masks in the first place. The gas mask, a symbol of war, was used for a purpose that stood in direct contradiction to the fighting, although communicating that alternative meaning was not intended. These are acts of cultural re-signification, but not of cultural appropriation. To appropriate a cultural resource requires some degree of conscious awareness of the action being taken on the part of the responsible individual or persons.

Even when cultural materials are consciously repackaged to create new meanings and send new messages, those actions don’t change the original meaning or meanings of the cultural object for everyone. Culture is not a finite concept; there is plenty of room for many possible meanings of all cultural goods and representations. Safety pins are still understood and used for their original purposes, for example. The traditional Catholic Church still maintains a strong presence in global culture. Shopping baskets and gas masks continue to function for the practical reasons they were invented.

THE CULTURAL HYBRID

As we’ve seen, acts of cultural appropriation often create cultural hybrids—the fusing of cultural forms. Rap music and hip-hop culture, for instance, have been appropriated by individuals and groups around the world in ways that suit their own purposes. Rap began as a cultural expression of stressful American inner-city culture. But consider what happens when rap is exported to a place like Hong Kong, Indonesia, or Spain. The cadence, sound, and style of rap are appropriated by local musicians in these places, where it is sung in local languages with lyrics that refer to local personalities, conditions, and situations. The resulting musical hybrid is an amalgam of American inner-city black culture and Hong Kong, Indonesian, and Spanish youth culture. Cultural resources—rap music and all the attendant features of hip-hop culture—have been appropriated and the result is a variety of cultural hybrids.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION IS CREATIVE WORK

Individuals and groups who attempt to alter or expand the meanings of the cultural institutions and resources around them participate in highly creative work. The ability to interact imaginatively with the endless array of material and symbolic cultural resources in our world represents a crucial part of what separates humans from other animals. We are active agents of our cultural lives. We don’t just passively inherit our cultural surroundings; we engage, modify, and transform them. The symbolic consequences of cultural appropriation can be enormous—at times even leading to revolutionary cultural developments like the punk rock phenomenon or the creation of alternative religions.
See also Audience Power to Resist; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Online Digital Film and Television; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; User-Created Content and Audience Participation; World Cinema; Youth and Media Use.


James Lull

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND HYBRIDITY

Hollywood movies, television shows, and music CDs are just some of the U.S. media exports that can be found in almost every corner of the globe, however remote. As soon as U.S. programs were sold overseas, the export of American media stirred controversy. In the twenty-first century, critics continue to charge that the massive exporting of U.S. media and consumer goods harms indigenous cultures by influencing attitudes and edging out local producers in a process that leads to the domination of U.S. products and values. Other scholars see evidence of cultural mixing and a process of sharing that results in hybrid genres and cultural fusion in an age of globalization.

The charge that the United States was practicing cultural imperialism was heard frequently from the 1960s through the end of the twentieth century. Scholars, political activists, and policy makers asserted that Western films, TV shows, and commodities were promoting a social model of consumer-based capitalism. They lodged the central claim of cultural imperialism: that through the media, U.S. business and political leaders were trying to influence audiences in receiving countries and create overseas environments favorable to Western political and economic interests. In the process, the argument goes, the autonomy of receiving countries, as well as their cultures, values, and identities would be weakened or destroyed.

HISTORY OF A CONCEPT

The idea that an imperial power exports its culture as part of a process of domination is not limited to the modern setting. It has been applied to past practices of European countries such as Britain, France, and Spain, and also to the Japanese and Ottoman Empires, as well as other imperial regimes throughout history. The cultural imperialism thesis states that with politico-military imperialism on the wane, powerful countries use cultural means rather than
armed force and occupation to achieve their political and economic goals. In this view, cultural products can smooth the way for domination by exposing people to products they may desire, the values that are seen to accompany those products, and ultimately even new sources of allegiance. In short, the cultural imperialism argument is that if people in other countries consume a lot of U.S. television shows, films, and other media products, they are likely to forget or reject their own cultural roots and instead try to emulate the characters and practices they are exposed to through imported media.

In *Mass Communication and American Empire*, well-known media scholar Herbert Schiller argued that the United States was extending its already sizeable power through economic dominance of other countries’ communications systems and through the cultural influence carried by exported media. With this book Schiller set forth a fundamental claim that cultural imperialism constituted a threat to traditional cultures. Schiller went on to argue that the mass media were the principal vehicles for promoting Western values, and that the U.S. government and business sectors were deliberately attempting to mold developing countries’ values and institutions to benefit U.S. objectives.

The term cultural imperialism carries with it certain assumptions about the relationship between the developed and developing worlds. It follows Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems model that places the developed countries in the center, dominating the peripheral nonindustrialized countries in ways that do not allow those countries to develop independently. Cultural imperialism also draws from dependency theory, which states that underdevelopment has not been simply a matter of some countries progressing more slowly than others, as some have suggested, but rather that the developed countries derive economic benefits from this unbalanced relationship.

**ONE-WAY FLOWS**

Analysis of the global trade in entertainment products confirms that the United States has been the world’s principal exporter of films and television programs, while importing very little. The recognition of this “one-way flow” of
film and TV internationally has contributed to the charge that in their search for worldwide markets and sympathetic populations, transnational corporations, most based in the United States, are practicing cultural imperialism.

Objections to cultural imperialism have been voiced in international debates about the regulation of media imports in the interest of national development. Such controversies pitted the U.S./U.K. conception of the “free flow of information,” which promoted unregulated markets in news and entertainment, against many other countries’ insistence on the need for balance in media exchanges, particularly of news. This position was expressed in the UNESCO-based call for a New World Information and Communication Order. Addressing concerns related to cultural imperialism, the 1980 report of the UNESCO International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, known as the MacBride Commission, reiterated the claim that Western countries’ domination of international media and culture were endangering national identities of less powerful countries.

COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

While the concept of cultural imperialism challenges existing global inequities, it has many critics. One major critique of the cultural imperialism thesis is that it disregards the role of audiences in interpreting media. The claim that audiences are affected in specific, predictable ways by media content has been widely challenged. In the context of cultural influence, some studies have shown that people interpret the messages of television programs and other media fare in ways that are consistent with their own cultural backgrounds. Therefore, any television program can have multiple interpretations. This dilutes the claim that imported audiovisual material consistently shapes audience members’ attitudes and behaviors in ways favorable to Western values. The cultural imperialism claim that exposure to imported images and ideas weakens cultural identities has also been challenged along the lines that audience interpretations vary. Some studies have shown that imported media can have a strengthening effect on people’s identities because audience members may react to the unfamiliar images and practices depicted in imported TV and films by becoming more aware of their own traditions and symbols, and more loyal to their cultures.

Another major critique of the claim that imported media products weaken receiving cultures is that this claim overlooks the complexity of cultural interactions. Cultural exchange is a multifaceted process. As a way of conceptualizing and analyzing the intricacies of cultural interactions, the concept of cultural hybridity has gained attention. This concept recognizes that cultures draw from one another and blend in unplanned ways to produce new cultural manifestations. This process is multidirectional—it does not occur solely as a one-way imposition of elements of dominant cultures on less powerful cultures. For example, the quintessentially U.S. musical style of rock ‘n’ roll—which is exported and emulated around the world and which has itself engendered accusations of cultural imperialism—would not exist without the abundant contribution...
of African influences. Similarly, the Latin American influence on U.S. popular music and TV—and on U.S. culture in general—is growing.

In an age of corporate globalization, some scholars and economists have come to criticize more overt forms of unequal global distribution of wealth and the policies, trade agreements, and legal structures that sustain this situation. As international military conflict continues to characterized the early twenty-first century, the importance of shared culture and its potential contribution for mutual understanding is gaining interest as one pathway to a more peaceful and stable world.

HYBRIDITY AND GLOBALIZATION

While it is still true that the U.S. dominates global media exporting, and imports very little media material from other countries, in the twenty-first century the term cultural imperialism is seldom used. It has been overtaken by the concepts of hybridity and globalization, the understanding that through communication and transportation technologies, the world has become increasingly interconnected. The concept of media globalization recognizes that media are central to the ongoing growth of international interaction and interdependence, and it lacks the implication of deliberateness that is built into the notion of cultural imperialism.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Branding the Globe; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Cultural Appropriation; Global Community Media; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; World Cinema.


*Nancy Morris*
DATING SHOWS

From *The Dating Game* and *Love Connection*, to *Temptation Island, The Bachelor*, and *I Love New York*, dating games have been a staple of television for many years, offering mild fun, occasional titillation, and scripts of romance to be or not to be. Many have been resoundingly criticized for their normalization of heterosexual romance, and for the roles that they seemingly propose that men and women play in real life’s dating games, but some have also been praised for opening up a space on television in which gender norms and expectations can be challenged, played with, and interrogated.

HISTORY

While today’s post-*Bachelor* explosion of dating games might suggest that the genre is relatively new to television, the genre “dates” back to the 1970s’ *The Dating Game* and its 1980s copycat, *Love Connection*, both of which asked singles to select from a group of three suitors based on a series of rather staged questions and even more staged answers. Audience members could laugh at the inappropriate answers or suitors, or root for the “right” connection, and thus the genre neatly married comedy and romance, offering idle fun in half-hour chunks.

A new sort of dating show then began with the rise of reality television programming in the late 1990s. *Blind Date*’s cameras followed dates, while producers added snarky comments and criticism in the form of animated pop-ups, supposed thought bubbles, or analysis by a range of commentators in a comment bar at the bottom of the screen. Also, since *Blind Date* was sold to fill late
evening timeslots, it also sexed the genre up considerably, featuring contestants in skimpy bikinis, bumping and grinding at night clubs, engaging in long and sloppy kisses, and so forth. Blind Date’s followers, such as Elimidate and Fifth Wheel, later added a competition element, whereby singles would date multiple suitors at one time, inspiring contestants to one-up each other in dancing, kissing, and stripping.

This competition met its nadir with FOX’s Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire? in 2000, a show that while roundly criticized, whet the network’s appetite for prime-time, hour-long versions of the Elimidate formula of young people, sexy locations, lots of alcohol, and open invitations to cavort. Thus, Temptation Island followed, a show that split four couples up, placing the women on a tropical island with 20 young men, and the men with 20 young women, to see if anyone would be “tempted” to cheat. Temptation Island opened the floodgates for prime-time dating shows, with the less tawdry and significantly more popular The Bachelor starting on ABC in 2002. The Bachelor took a bachelor to a secluded mansion filled with 25 women in evening gowns, and then proceeded to arrange “fantasy dates” for them, as the bachelor was required to whittle the 25 down to a final winner. The show also inspired multiple variations, from FOX’s Joe Millionaire and NBC’s Average Joe and For Love or Money—all of which “tricked” the bachelor/ette or suitors in some way—to

A SELECTIVE TIMELINE OF DATING SHOWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Network(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind Date</td>
<td>syndication, 1999–2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?</td>
<td>FOX, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimidate</td>
<td>syndication, 2001–06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Wheel</td>
<td>syndication, 2001–04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temptation Island</td>
<td>FOX, 2001, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bachelor/The Bachelorette</td>
<td>ABC, 2002–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Joe</td>
<td>NBC, 2003–05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Meets Boy</td>
<td>Bravo, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupid</td>
<td>CBS, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Love or Money</td>
<td>NBC, 2003–04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Millionaire</td>
<td>FOX, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date My Mom</td>
<td>MTV, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Player</td>
<td>UPN, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>MTV, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Control</td>
<td>MTV, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavor of Love</td>
<td>VH1, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Love New York</td>
<td>VH1, 2007</td>
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CBS’s *Cupid*, which allowed audience voting, and UPN’s *The Player*, which pimped out the formula. In spring 2007, *The Bachelor* was in its tenth cycle, still going strong.

Meanwhile, MTV and VH1’s move into the world of reality television produced yet another subgenre of the dating show, with over-the-top, outrageous comedies with quirky twists. *Date My Mom* required suitors to go on a date with the bachelorette’s mother, *Next* allowed the bachelor/ette to end the date and replace the suitor at any time, *Parental Control* gave parents the chance to choose two alternatives to their child’s current significant other, and *The Flavor of Love* and spinoff *I Love New York* tried to find love for the comical characters Flavor Flav and Tiffany Pollard.

### PLAYING FOR THE CAMERA: CRITICISM

A common criticism of many dating shows is that they perpetuate tired and regressive notions of how men and women should behave, especially while dating. First, with all but a few exceptions, most shows take heterosexuality as the assumed norm, immediately marginalizing gay or lesbian sexuality or romance. Such a move occurs at blinding speed, though, precisely because dating shows often espouse rigid ideals of ideal masculinity and femininity. Women on *The Bachelor*, for instance, are rewarded for being demure, quiet, and submissive, as many seasons of the show have featured a loud and assertive woman in the first episode who is cut from the pack, and is shunned by her fellow contestants, for daring to behave as she does. Women are assumed to want a rich, muscular, take-charge man, while men are assumed to want a slim, demure woman who will let him take the lead. Moreover, the women often appear to privilege finding romance above all other activities in their lives, suggesting that finding a spouse is a single woman’s first and most important task in life. Even when the bachelor is in theory the one seeking companionship, shows such as *The Bachelor* often depict him as the “missing piece” of the puzzle for the women, positing a clearer sense of lack with the women than with the man, and hence implying that women need validation and completion from men. Certainly, since many such shows depict the women willing to back-stab each other, or to gloat in victory, they paint a picture of fiercely competitive, even desperate women, that is often contrasted to the relaxed friendliness and composure of the man or men.

Of particular concern too is the degree to which many dating shows require women to perform for the bachelor significantly more than their gender-flipped variants require men to perform for women. Women are encouraged to conform to a slim body image, and to render their body as a spectacle for the men to enjoy. Whether this takes the form of dancing competitively on bar tables or poolside on *Elimidate*, or of the prolonged set piece of the “rose ceremony” in *The Bachelor*, in which the man, the male host, and the camera gaze continuously at the women while trying to decide who to pick, as if from a catalog. Feminist critics express concern with television (and film) images such as this where the
camera’s “eyes” are gendered as heterosexual male, with the woman performing for the camera; the concern is that such shows normalize the act of turning women into sexual objects perpetually on show, and that such normalization will also encourage women to look at themselves as might a (horny) man, and hence both to welcome and solicit the male sexual gaze at all moments. The shows invite audiences to criticize the harem of female suitors as unworthy, determining who will be unlikely to garner the man’s favor, and so forth, hence reducing a woman’s value to her “usefulness” to men.

Some feminist critics also detect a worrying misogynistic vein to some dating shows, given that they often encourage viewers to enjoy the site of women defeated. *Average Joe*, for instance, promised a bachelorette a house full of eligible suitors and then delivered a bus full of “geeks,” and overweight or otherwise conventionally unattractive men. The camera then relished in her horror as one by one the men stepped off the bus, and much of the show continually berated her for being so superficial—even as it never problematized its own choice of a conventionally attractive woman as the ideal date. *Joe Millionaire* deceptively told its female suitors that the bachelor was a millionaire, and yet audience members knew the truth all along, and hence were invited to enjoy the spectacle of “gold-diggers” being belittled and punished for their greed—even when women are positively encouraged to seek men for such reasons in many other dating shows and products of mass culture.

**THE RACIAL POLITICS OF DATING SHOWS**

Dating shows also offer messages about interracial dating, and about race and beauty. *The Bachelor*, for instance, is particularly fond of the stereotypical beauty pageant blonde, rarely adding more than one or two obligatory minority woman, and to date no minority bachelors. The number of nonwhite suitors on dating shows only tends to go up when the bachelor/ette is nonwhite. Thus, when the supposed paragons of beauty and attractiveness tend overwhelmingly to be white, or else a special exception to the bachelor/ette’s racial background (as though competition now occurs in a minor league), the racial politics of beauty are pronounced on dating shows.

Enter Tiffany Pollard, also known as “New York,” star of VH1’s *Flavor of Love* and *I Love New York*, who became a veritable “unruly woman,” much loved by fans for her decidedly “unfeminine” behavior: speaking her mind at volume, loving to eat, mocking or belittling men, and refusing to be any man’s trained puppy. While a glorious rejection of and play with expectations of gender on one level, as an African American woman, Pollard’s racial characterization was less clear, galvanizing audience reaction into those who found her yet another offensive replication of the stereotypical sassy African American woman, and those who found her performance so over-the-top and excessive as to gleefully poke fun at and disable the racial caricature, much as did the entire genre of blaxploitation films in the 1970s.
PLAYING WITH THE CAMERA: BREAKING THE MOLD

However, the dating show is a more complex genre than its surface of outright sexism suggests. In particular, as *Average Joe* or *Joe Millionaire* suggest, dating shows have long been loved for showing bad matches, and while the audience member’s criticism of those on screen may at times be misogynistic, it might at other times allow audiences a chance to distance themselves from prevalent scripts of romance. Here, then, it is the very cheesiness of suitors, of dates, and of cast members’ long confessions that amuse, and instead of engaging with dating shows as romances, we might instead engage with them as comedies. As comedies, some dating shows invite us to laugh at the silliness of dating expectations, to roll our eyes at those who endlessly seek to live up to the expectations, and hence to create different dating norms. Just as watching *Jerry Springer* might bring amusement to audiences, yet no role models for future behavior, so too might watching dating shows allow a space for play with and mockery of those on screen.

In particular, the MTV and VH1 shows so obviously mix scripted behavior, and outrageous premises, in a way that encourage little identification, and much mirth. *Parental Control*, for instance, shows very little of the actual dates, and instead focuses a lot of the screen time on verbal sparring between the parents and the unwanted significant other, the three of whom must watch video footage of the dates together. Here, the unwanted significant other often becomes a comic hero, with the parents’ traditional expectations flouted and abused by the often free-spirited significant other. Similarly, when the parents first interview prospective dates, the producers always litter the pool with yet more comic characters. While we might see their comic misbehavior as policing and disciplining a very firm notion of how one should behave, it is also such characters who become the life of the show, and who make it enjoyable to watch, and thus we will often support that behavior rather than chastise it.

Quite apart from the more riotous and comic dating shows, we might also observe that identification is never secure even with shows such as *The Bachelor*. While the bachelor is selecting from a group of 25 women, for instance, this may well salt wounds of past rejection and public humiliation for viewers, who might therefore identify with the rejected women, not the bachelor. In such a situation, the bachelor’s seemingly “dreamy” qualities might therefore be inverted, as he becomes yet another cardboard cut-out man who the viewer would be best to avoid. As with all reality television, much of the work of the dating shows takes place in the conversations and criticisms they inspire, not solely on the screen. Just as *American Idol* or *America’s Next Top Model* do not require that viewers validate the ultimate winner, neither does *The Bachelor* require that one either agree with the bachelor or even agree that he is a worthy catch in the first place.

Finally, dating shows can also challenge the norms of patriarchal, heterosexual romance. Most notably, many shows focus more on “hooking up” than on meeting one’s actual spouse, thereby refuting the supposed purpose of traditional dating. None of the MTV or VH1 shows seem to express hope in relationships
lasting beyond a few months, and UPN’s *The Player* was particularly insistent on celebrating “players” and those who reject notions of ideal love, marriage, and long-term relationships. MTV’s shows have even offered gay or lesbian episodes, and Bravo’s *Boy Meets Boy* staged an all-male dating show. Viewers, meanwhile, are becoming increasingly aware that contestants on most reality television shows are often there for the fame and exposure, willing to play whatever role necessary, yet rarely likely to stay with their television-arranged partnership longer than the date of broadcast. Hence, many dating shows are framed as games first and foremost, not as decisively real, and thereby in turn might suggest the degree to which real-life dating and gender role-play are themselves highly peculiar games.

**CONCLUSION**

Ultimately, in the dating show, we have an odd genre, one that is occasionally progressive, offering the tools and images to reject scripts of patriarchal, heteronormative romance, that sometimes equates to little more than a postmodern play with little embedded meaning, and yet that at other times perpetuates a model of romance and gendered behavior that hearkens back several centuries. Rather than alternate between these options at different times, though, dating shows are often all of the above at the same time, making it particularly difficult to evaluate or even to parse out their gender politics, instead requiring a purposive viewer to read around and through its various gender blockades.

**See also** Audience Power to Resist; Body Image; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Reality Television; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women.


*Jonathan Gray*

**DIGITAL DIVIDE**

Many have argued that inequalities of access to the Internet in an information-driven society pose a serious social problem and that public investment is needed to solve it. Others contend that the digital divide is a minor concern that will
resolve itself without government involvement and spending. The positions we take on this debate depend upon our understanding of how new technologies spread throughout society, whether we think Internet access is a frill or a necessity, and our vision of whether government can and ought to help broaden access.

Concerns over the digital divide, and the origins of the term itself, stemmed mainly from studies of who used computers and the Internet that were conducted in the mid-1990s by the U.S. government. This research found dramatic inequalities of access to digital technologies at a time when the Internet was being popularized and the U.S. economy was emerging from recession. The digital divide sparked concerns about whether broad participation in the economic and educational benefits of the information age would be possible. In response, President Bill Clinton’s administration, local governments, and private charities invested in efforts to make Internet access widely available in schools, libraries, community centers, and health care facilities. Within a few years, critics of this investment argued that the digital divide had never been a large problem and that it had shrunk so quickly that it no longer required public attention.

Although the terms of the debate over the digital divide have changed, the controversy itself remains relevant. As late as 2005, around 1 in 5 Americans had never accessed the Internet or used e-mail (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2006). Many people around the world lack access to basic information and communication technologies, so the divide is not simply an American phenomenon, nor is it merely about access to the Internet. In addition, as high-speed broadband Internet service was introduced in the United States and other developed countries, inequalities arose between Americans who could afford this enhanced service and those with slower dial-up Internet service. High-speed service became a necessity for making full use of what the Internet had to offer—video, audio, telephony, games, and so on. Because ongoing technological innovation is likely, the debate over unequal access to these technologies will probably always be with us.

The digital divide may be defined as the gap between those who have access to information and communication technologies and use them effectively for educational, economic, civic, and cultural needs, and those who do not. Effective use involves not only the ability to receive information, but also to adapt it to one’s needs, and to create and communicate one’s own knowledge and views to others. Advocates for equal access see the abilities to send and receive information via new media as necessary conditions for full participation in society. Thus, those who are concerned about inequality tend to call for digital inclusion for those who are least likely to have high-speed Internet connections, or any access. These underserved groups include people with less education, those with lower incomes, African Americans and Latinos, people with physical disabilities, the elderly, and rural residents.

Given the many factors that shape Internet access, advocates for digital inclusion argue that it requires more than simply providing computers and Internet service. Offered the bare physical resources that allow one to get on the Internet, many people will be unable or unwilling to use it, or to use it to its fullest potential. They also need training in how to use computers and navigate the Internet.
They need support from family, friends, and the larger culture in which they live to use a technology that can seem bewildering, threatening, or merely irrelevant to one’s way of life. People need relevant content in a language they speak and read. Whether societies should help provide these benefits to their citizens hinges on three issues: new technologies’ ability to spread to all members of society, the significance of ensuring that people have equal opportunities to communicate, and the role of government in the information age.

**DIFFUSION AND INNOVATION**

Those who minimize the significance of the digital divide contend that disparities work themselves out over time as technologies diffuse throughout the population. The early adopters of the Internet may have been more white, male, affluent, and educated than the norm, but this is less the case now that Internet usage is permeating societies, at least in the developed world. Prices for computers and basic Internet service have fallen dramatically. People can log on for free in public libraries, schools, and even coffee shops. As a generation of youth who have grown up online mature into adults, any meaningful differences in Internet use are likely to disappear.
However, others argue that true digital inclusion requires keeping up with a set of technologies that are in perpetual motion. Advances in hardware used to access the Internet, from mobile phones to personal digital assistants, confer greater benefits on those who can afford to buy the latest devices. Facility with rapidly developing applications, from instant messaging to blogs to wikis, empowers some denizens of cyberspace to express themselves more widely and powerfully than others. New forms of Internet service, including high-speed service and wireless access, allow some to connect faster, more conveniently, and more productively than others. Some of us will always fall behind without support because as some technologies that shape Internet usage are widely adopted others are introduced that transform access anew.

**COMMUNICATION RIGHTS**

Critics of efforts to close the digital divide maintain that a market economy requires us to accept some inequality of outcomes in life. As long as a society makes some effort to provide equal opportunity to meet basic human needs, it is not a problem that some will end up earning more than others and therefore be able to afford more luxuries. From this standpoint, people may have fundamental rights to public schooling, basic health care, or national security, but not to most communication technologies and services. Perhaps the poor should pay less for local telephone service so that they can call 911 for help in emergencies, but they do not deserve free or low-cost broadband Internet service subsidized by higher rates on other users. Furthermore, the critics argue, most people who still lack home Internet connections do not want them either because they find the Internet unnecessary or objectionable. For some, being an Internet have-not is a choice.

**DIGITAL INCLUSION PROJECTS**

There are many examples of efforts to extend the benefits of full Internet access to underserved communities. For example, when the city of Philadelphia commissioned a municipal broadband network, it required the private company that offered Internet service over the city’s network to set aside 5 percent of annual revenues earned in the city to pay for computers and training for low-income families and minority-owned businesses. The city also required that service be offered at a discount to poor families and that free access be available at numerous “hotspots” around Philadelphia. Some nonprofit organizations have gone further by developing Web sites that attract underserved groups to use the Internet by offering informational, educational, and job training resources targeted to these groups’ interests. For example, One Economy, an organization that provides computers, Internet service, and training in public housing developments, created its own World Wide Web site in English and Spanish called The Beehive, which includes information tailored to low-income people about money, health, jobs, school, news, voting, citizenship, and family issues. The Beehive also offers free e-mail accounts and many local sites focused on users’ home cities to connect people to their communities.
In contrast, others contend that in a society that relies on information for its lifeblood, communication technology has become a necessity for equal opportunity and social inclusion. In this view, communication should be considered less like income (where capitalist societies tolerate stark inequalities) and more like education or voting—a fundamental component of a basic standard of living and citizenship. For example, increasingly people are likely to receive their telephone, television, radio, and Internet service via a single broadband connection. Free or low-cost broadband service for the poor has been hailed as a crucial tool for education, a potential economic engine for reviving low-income communities, a means for receiving better medical care and emergency services, increasingly necessary for applying for government services and engaging in effective political participation, and the main medium for twenty-first-century news and entertainment. Therefore, some view broadband as a basic public need comparable to utilities such as roads, water, and electricity.

**ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**

Even if the digital divide is a problem, can government solve it efficiently and effectively? Skeptics accuse programs such as the U.S. e-rate program, which introduced new fees on telephone subscribers’ bills and used the money to help fund Internet service in public schools, libraries, and clinics, of being wasteful and unnecessary. Some private efforts to connect low-income villages and neighborhoods around the world have been well-intended failures because they neglected to do more than provide computers and modems to people who had no training or money to maintain the equipment. Some have argued that government should not burden the telecommunications industry by requiring it to offer service in unprofitable areas. Telecommunications companies have strongly objected to competition from municipal broadband projects, in which cities build their own high-speed networks in part to offer cheaper service to residents.

However, others see public regulation and investment as necessary for expanding access to information. They note that high-speed Internet service is most widely available in countries where governments have taken a greater role in requiring private providers to deploy service to all areas or helped subsidize the building of broadband networks. The U.S. government did little to support broadband deployment in its early years and broadband was therefore less widely available and slower than in many other wealthy countries. Supporters of public involvement in Internet provision argue that telecommunications companies have failed to offer affordable service and have refused to extend their networks to serve unprofitable communities. The federal government’s stance was different during the advent of the telephone industry in the late 1800s, when the same problems arose. Regulations compelled telephone companies, many of which held monopoly control over their markets, to serve all communities and to charge lower rates to rural, low-income, and household subscribers so that everyone could be connected via the new medium. Some cities built their own telephone networks to achieve these ends. The voices of those who supported
universal service requirements and public networks in the early days of telephony echo in contemporary debates over broadband and the digital divide.

**See also** Blogosphere; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; Net Neutrality; Public Sphere; Regulating the Airwaves; Representations of Race; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


**Chad Raphael**

**DISABILITIES AND THE MEDIA**

Representation of persons with disabilities in the media reveals societal attitudes as well as the limits and fears of society’s understanding toward persons with disabilities. Media depictions have real repercussions on the lives of persons with disabilities, and all the more so when they are physically unable to speak for themselves, or if they lack access to media tools of representation. It can be said that we will all one day be disabled at some time in our lives. In light of continuing scientific developments in medicine, reproductive technology, prenatal genetic testing, and much more, we need to seek ways to change ourselves to make the world a better place for persons with disabilities.

**MEANINGS AND MODELS OF DISABILITY**

Although disability is a distinctly modern concept, representations of disability—of the human body injured and diseased—have been with us as long as the human body has been represented in painting and in sculpture. Along with the numerous technological innovations of the modern age—photography, the rapid and widespread distribution of text and images first via newspapers and magazines, then via television and film, and now via the Internet—have arisen more images of disability. Images of persons from war zones and from foreign countries that do not have access to the same medical care as in the West
have brought more graphic visual representation of physical injury and disease right into one’s living room and onto one’s computer screen. The media can be said to have, on the one hand, contributed to familiarizing disability and making it seem less strange. On the other hand, the very showing of images of “others” can have the effect of turning persons with disabilities, whose visual appearance is somehow different, into a “freak” on display.

The medical model of disability and the social model are two frameworks in which disability can be understood. The term *disability* is itself a medical term that suggests injury and that denotes and is connected to notions of *cure*. Therefore, the term is often conceived of as a condition that can be fixed. In this model, to be disabled is to be sick or physically ill; to be broken and in need of recovery from the disability. Another model of disability is the social model, according to which disability is socially and culturally constructed. The social construct model takes into account societal and cultural meanings of impairment, health, and disease; of how material conditions and the environment contribute to the experience of being disabled; of what it means to have a physical, mental, or cognitive condition that makes participation in so-called normal acts of society, of human beings, difficult and even not possible.

Both models have limits. There are real physical and health aspects for persons with disabilities, but societal perceptions of what it means to be disabled also play into how persons with disability are viewed and treated, how decisions about research are made, how services are devised and delivered, and how political policy is created and implemented.

**REPRESENTATION, ADVOCACY, AND SELF-ADVOCACY**

Persons with disabilities have often been seen as not only physically weak but also cognitively and mentally impaired, as if cognitive and physical impairment occur together. Advocates for disabled persons were first “able-bodied” or nondisabled persons because it was thought that disabled persons lacked the capacity to advocate and speak up for themselves. Charity organizations and
advocacy organizations for disabilities can shape not only understanding about disabilities and about persons with disabilities, but can also significantly influence the course of research and therefore of new developments and treatments about a disability due to their fund-raising capacity.

In the wake of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, persons with disabilities began to advocate for themselves. In 1977, members of the disability community participated in a four-week sit-in in the offices of San Francisco’s Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, to call for the enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The protesters were successful and Section 504 is regarded as a precursor to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Advances in technology and in medical care have assisted persons with disabilities in self-advocacy. The development of new technologies from motorized wheelchairs to computers and the Internet to augmentative communication devices has enabled persons with disabilities to have greater mobility, to communicate more readily, and to more fully participate in their communities. As a result, persons with disabilities are more and more seen; are more and more visible, and seek more and more to represent themselves and to (rightfully) be the authority about how they are represented. More and more memoirs and other writings by persons with disabilities are now available, and by persons whose communicative and cognitive impairment (i.e., those with Down Syndrome) would in the past have been seen as making this impossible.

It is crucial that the persons who have the disability be in charge of their own representation. Stereotypes about disabled persons as a “burden” and less than normal are so deeply entrenched that people do not realize they are perpetuating discriminatory attitudes at the moment when they believe themselves to be advocating for positive change. This is in no small part because, too often when it comes to the media, those with disabilities are not in charge of the tools of the media. An example of this is the autism advocacy efforts of talk radio host Don Imus. Imus has been both praised for his speaking about autism on the air and criticized. In his broadcasts, Imus presented one theory of autism causation that, accordingly, offered a one-dimensional representation of autism: Imus spoke of autism as being caused by vaccines and of autistic children as damaged and injured. (Imus’s wife, Deirdre Imus, is herself an advocate for environmental causes and has created her own line of environmentally friendly cleaning products.) Due to the popularity of Imus’s talk show (until his ouster in April 2007 as a result of his racist comments with regard to the Rutgers University women’s basketball team), whatever he might say about autism, and about the causes of and potential treatments for autism—however one-sided and simply inaccurate—reached a much broader audience and perpetuated misunderstanding of autistic persons.

The Internet has leveled the playing field in giving persons with disabilities not only a voice but a constant presence. Via e-mail, chat rooms, and blogs, the Internet has made it possible for persons with disabilities who might have difficulties in physically transporting themselves to a meeting, a support group, or a rally, to find each and to find support, and to band together to be a growing political presence. By putting up their own Web sites and other media publications, disability advocates like Not Dead Yet have taken on more and more of a part
in the discussion about their disabilities. Disability advocates argue that there is a unique disability culture that is outside of normal and normative mainstream culture. For instance, deaf culture argues against teaching deaf children to use spoken language and to use sign language, and critiques the use of cochlear implants. Why not enable deaf persons to communicate with a means (sign language) that is more readily accessible for them, rather than requiring them to use verbal language, which might be easier for those of us who are not disabled to understand, but which emphasizes deaf persons’ disability?

**DISABILITY IN THE MASS MEDIA**

One example of how media accounts of disability have shaped societal understanding, and misunderstanding, of disabled persons can be seen in the example of Dr. Jack Kevorkian and the creation of Not Dead Yet. Not Dead Yet is a disability rights advocacy group which was founded on April 27, 1996, shortly after Kevorkian was acquitted in the assisted suicides of two women with nonterminal disabilities.

Kevorkian was convicted of second-degree murder in the death of Thomas Youk, 52, a Michigan man suffering from Lou Gehrig’s disease. Referring to his release after eight years in prison as “one of the high points of his life,” Kevorkian was met by Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* on his release. In 1998 Wallace’s reporting on the filming of Youk’s death “played a key role in Kevorkian’s conviction”; an interview with Kevorkian was broadcast on *60 Minutes* on the Sunday following his release in June 2007. “They’ll downplay his history of helping non-terminally ill disabled people commit suicide and portray him as some kind of martyr,” Not Dead Yet wrote in December 2006. “They won’t mention his advocacy of lethal experimentation on death row prisoners or disabled infants at all.” Many disability rights advocates have long opposed Kevorkian and his public crusade to legalize assisted suicide. They have argued that doing so would essentially make it “open season” for people with disabilities who are often considered a burden on society, particularly at a time when the cost of health care is high. They have also noted that many people Kevorkian “helped” end their lives were not in the final stages of terminal illnesses, but instead had
disabilities and were in “emotional, psychological or social crises, which made them more vulnerable.”

Another disability that has been grossly misrepresented in the mass media is autism, a neurological disorder characterized by impairments in social skills, communication, and behavior. Despite the fact that today we know more than we ever have about autism since Leo Kanner first identified the disorder in 1943 and since 1967, when Bruno Bettelheim’s *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self* was published, we still talk about autism the same way that we did in the days of both men. Much of what is said about autism in the mass media presents a view of autism that still draws on the metaphors and images of autism used in the 1960s. Autism is still said to be “mysterious” and treatment a “mystery.” Similarly, the causes of the disorder, and life with autism, is often considered “hopeless.” Despite significant advances in scientific research and in educational methods, the popular representation of autism has not changed from that of earlier decades, and shows little sign of changing. This disconnect between what we actually know about autism and popular representations of autism, persists and is ultimately not beneficial for our understanding of autism, of disabled children and adults, and of disability as a whole.

It is necessary to foster more positive representations of autism and life with autism in order to stop seeing autistic persons as broken and diseased beings who need to be fixed and made nonautistic. This task is easier said than done; attempts to change stereotypes about autism can sometimes result in more misunderstanding. In “Autism: The Art of Compassionate Living,” Jennifer Liss of *WireTap* writes about the efforts of parents to battle stereotypes about autism and to raise understanding. In her video, *Autism Every Day*, autism mother and ex-CNN news anchor Lauren Thierry describes how she tried to capture “autism every day” to combat myths of autistic persons as “idiot savants” and of autism as caused by bad parenting. Said Thierry: “The party line is supposed to be that anything that raises awareness you’re supposed to be happy about. That notion is 10 years old. At this point we need to be showing the world what the vast reality truly is.” That reality, according to Thierry, includes images of kids not sleeping through the night, banging their heads against the wall or running into traffic, not images of kids setting basketball records or passionately playing the violin. However, as Liss writes in her article, it seems that Thierry sought a particular image of life with an autistic child in her video, one which emphasized only the negative. Before filming, Thierry told her subjects not to vacuum the house or do their hair. The camera crew showed up unexpectedly, so her subjects had no therapists present; the cameras rolled as a mom struggled with her son to brush his teeth, as a 9-year-old was in severe distress, and as a 5-year-old was having his diaper changed. Though Thierry undoubtedly wanted to tell the truth, much of the footage of *Autism Every Day* is characteristic of nonfiction programming designed to attract ratings. And such dark and uncomfortable revelations are only one side of living with children with autism.

One of those dark and uncomfortable truths that the article “Autism: The Art of Compassionate Living” refers to is the killing of autistic children by their parents. Dr. Karen McCarron, who allegedly killed her 3-year-old daughter,
Katherine McCarron, is mentioned, as is Alison Tepper Singer, senior vice president of Autism Speaks, an organization that seeks to provide information about autism and raise funds for research. Autism Speaks featured the *Autism Every Day* video on its Web site, http://www.autismspeaks.org, and showed it at fund-raising events. Tepper Singer is herself an autism mother who, in the *Autism Every Day* video, talks about wanting to drive off the George Washington Bridge with her autistic daughter. Many autistic persons and families with autistic children have reacted with outrage and disgust to Singer’s statement and have even drawn a connection between her and Karen McCarron. Thierry called Singer “gutsy and courageous” and noted that “you don’t say stuff like that—camera rolling—unless you are truly ready to play ball with the entire world.”

My son, Charlie, is autistic and our family has been through every autism experience including the “terrible” ones—the screaming at the doctor’s visits, the feces where they shouldn’t be, the bruises, the dwindling bank account. But these experiences are only so terrible as we choose to represent them as such. While it is necessary to show compassion for parents who have difficult lives and have made sacrifices for their autistic children, the majority of our concern needs to start with the autistic child, with autistic persons, and to think about how we represent them. Otherwise, we are only reinforcing myths and stereotypes about autism. Desperation is one perception of raising a disabled child, and not necessarily as fact, and to represent life with a disabled child as “desperate” or a “tragedy” can have real repercussions.

**REPRESENTATION AND PRENATAL GENETIC TESTING**

The representation of disability matters because what people think about a disabled person can influence decisions about having, or not having, a child with a disability such as Down Syndrome. Due to new, less invasive screening techniques—an ultrasound exam that can detect whether a child might have Down Syndrome as early as 11 weeks into pregnancy—the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is recommending that all women who are expecting be screened. Previously, only women 35 years of age and older have been routinely tested for chromosomal abnormalities in their fetuses. The new ultrasound exam, a nuchal translucency test, measures the fluid that accumulates in the back of a fetus’s neck: There is a “strong association” between this thickening of the back of a fetus’s neck and Down Syndrome, and studies that use this measurement along with two blood tests have been shown to detect 82 to 87 percent of Down Syndrome cases.

Parents-to-be who discover that they may have a child with a disability are likely to consider the views of medical professionals and of medical and charity organizations in making their decision to have, or not to have, a child. With regard to prenatal testing for Down Syndrome, some professionals represent life with a disability in a negative light. For instance, Dr. James Goldberg, the former chair of the ACOG’s committee on genetics, notes that it is “not as problematic” to lose a normal pregnancy as to give birth to a Down syndrome child. Such a statement implies that a child born with Down Syndrome—that a
disabled child—can be “problematic” to a family, and that having the information in one’s first trimester of pregnancy that one is carrying a child with Down Syndrome—a disabled child—will do, in the words of Dr. Nancy Green, medical director of the March of Dimes, “the most good for the biggest number.” Given that the population of children with Down Syndrome—of children with a disability—does not comprise “the biggest number” in society, one might wonder what form “the most good” might take: Is it suggested that “the most good” would be for fewer disabled persons to be born, so that those who do not have a disability do not have to take care of them?

English and disability studies professor Michael Bérubé offers a different picture about “the good” of life with a disabled child. Bérubé’s son Jamie has Down Syndrome. In his book, Life As We Know It: A Father, a Family, and an Exceptional Child, Bérubé represents his son by narrating his early struggles to learn to eat and talk and learn; he has continued to write about Jamie growing up and becoming a teenager who loves Harry Potter books and traveling. Bérubé understands the significance of images and words, our “social constructions” of disabled persons, when he writes in the Epilogue to his book. “That’s why advocates of the disabled are so concerned about polite words, popular movies, and visual and textual representations of every kind. We need to deliberate the question of how we will represent the range of human variation to ourselves” (p. 260).

CONCLUSION

As more tests for screening for chromosomal and genetic abnormalities in a fetus are developed, we will be faced with more difficult questions about having a child with a disability. If life with a disabled child is represented as terrible and tragic, people may be more likely to choose not to have such a child. If life with a disabled child is represented as full of hope and new discoveries amid the difficulties, people can understand that life with disability, while different, can be very good indeed.

The metaphors and the language that are used to refer to people with disabilities have a direct impact on how they are understood and treated by society. It is crucial to pay attention to how persons with disabilities are represented in the media because, as disability studies scholars Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemary Garland-Thomas write, “Disability as both a bodily condition and a social category either now or later will touch us all. The fact that many of us will become disabled if we live long enough is perhaps the fundamental aspect of human embodiment.” Each one of us is likely to one day become disabled as we age and our bodies change and it is therefore all the more crucial to pay attention to how disability is represented in the media today.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Public Access Television; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks.

Further Reading: Bérubé, Michael. Life As We Know It: A Father, a Family, and an Exceptional Child. New York: Vintage, 1998; Burke, JoBeth McDaniel. A Special Kind of Hero: Chris
THE DVD: HOME VIEWING OF MOVIES COMES OF AGE

The DVD has revolutionized home viewing of movies and television programs and is an important part of the high-tech media development of the twenty-first century. Far cheaper to produce, easier to store, and capable of housing much more information than a VCR tape, the DVD also offers interactive possibilities for the viewer that have changed the way people relate to films and many television series. The DVD is part of a long series of technological developments, starting back in the 1920s, that have ironically been resisted, at least since the dawn of the television era, by the very people destined to make the greatest profits from them.

WHAT IS A DVD?

A DVD, or “Digital Video Disc” (sometimes “Digital Versatile Disc”), is an optically read storage device that can be used to house images (both still and moving) and sound for playback. Its size, the same as the older compact disc (CD), was chosen because it allowed manufacturers to use the same carriers they were making for CD players. Though primarily used for movies and games, it can be used for much more, providing a discrete and portable vehicle for the storage of data of all sorts.

By 1999, just two years after the DVD was first offered for sale in the United States as a vehicle for movies, thousands of titles had been transferred to the new technology. As the price of players (thanks to the decision to use the CD size) was low, people were quick to switch to the DVD format for home viewing. In addition, the DVDs proved easier to store than much bulkier videotapes, could provide movies in their original aspect ratio (the height/width ratio of the studio release), could be easily accessed at any point in the movie (while VCRs required rewinding and fast-forwarding), and could contain much more information, making it possible to add attractive extras that convinced many people to replace their old videotapes completely.
Not only were the DVDs attractive to the consumer, but the manufacturers liked them as well. Costing less than half as much to produce as a videotape, the DVDs could sell for as much if not more (especially when packaged as “special editions”). This made it financially attractive for the manufacturers to produce as many movies on DVD as possible, leading to a renewed popularity of old movies. Restored Hollywood musicals, films noir, romantic comedies, and even silent films have found their way to DVD, creating an entirely new fan base for films that had not been seen by the general public for years.

**BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

Home viewing of commercial movies began on the heels of World War I with the introduction of the Pathé Baby with its 9.5-millimeter center-sprocket film in 1922 and the transfer of professional films to that gauge. The Kodascope, Kodak’s first 16-millimeter home system, soon followed. Though these were more curiosities than anything else, they gave people a taste for home viewing that was only to grow over the next decades up to the point where, by the end of the century, home viewing had become the driving financial force behind the American film industry.

Just as cinema has gone through numerous revolutions since the 1920s, so has home viewing. In keeping with the technology of the time, the Baby and the Kodascope of the 1920s had no ability to produce sound. When sound finally came to the movies in 1927, it did not also come to home viewing. For home projectors, that came a few years later—in 1932, with the introduction of an RCA Victor sound system.

The popularity of television, starting in the late 1940s, led to a new way of watching movies at home. No longer did people need projectors and their own film libraries; now, they could simply turn on the set, sit down, and watch. Unfortunately for home viewers anticipating first-rate movies on the small screen, the movie studios of the day saw television as a threat, as competition. They would not release their major pictures to the television stations or networks, forcing television, when showing movies at all, to rely on B-westerns, science fiction, and horror movies, leading to a nostalgia for such films that remains to this day among the baby-boomers growing up at the time. It wasn’t until the early 1960s that recent feature films were regularly shown on television, starting with NBC’s Saturday Night at the Movies. Before that time, only a few major feature films were aired regularly on television, most notably *The Wizard of Oz* at Thanksgiving and *It’s a Wonderful Life* at Christmas. It was television that made both films the cultural icons they now are, something that studio executives, anxious and protective, were not able to appreciate until years later.

By the 1970s, having finally proved they could augment studio profits when shown on television, movies were a staple of both network and local-station fare. They had established themselves as an important part of home entertainment for the average American, not just those who could afford film projection equipment. Soon, movies would become one of the most important parts of home entertainment with the introduction of inexpensive systems that could record whole movies for playback later, such as the Video Home System (VHS) and
The DVD: Home Viewing of Movies Comes of Age

The ill-fated Betamax. The introduction of home taping systems scared the film studios. They believed that amateur home recordings would eat away at their profits. It took them some years to realize that the VHS was a boon to them, not something that would starve them. Rental of videotapes had become big business by the end of the 1970s. Soon after that, sales of prerecorded movies on videocassette began to take off as people began to understand and demand the higher quality of professionally dubbed tapes as compared with home recordings. Even on prerecorded tapes, however, the quality of videotape was never very high. There was at least one alternative that did gain a little momentum, the laserdisc, but it was unwieldy (as large as a long-playing record) and, like the Sony tapes, could not hold an entire movie. Even so, a number of films were transferred to laserdisc in the 1980s and early 1990s, bought mainly by serious film fans who objected to the alterations of films made for presentation on videotape. The warning inserted on the screen before the start of most videotapes, “This film has been modified from its original version. It has been formatted to fit your screen,” began to irritate more and more viewers. By the 1990s, the demand for films presented in their original and with even higher quality had grown sufficiently so that manufacturers finally started to seriously develop alternatives to the videotape.

ADVANTAGES OF THE DVD

At the time that television was introduced, it used an aspect ratio of 1.33:1, just slightly narrower than the movies of the era. Partly in response to television (wanting a more dynamic look that could not be reproduced on television) and partly because new technologies allowed it, movies soon moved to what would...
come to be called “widescreen.” Today, most films are produced either in a ratio of 1.85:1 or 2.35:1 (CinemaScope). In either case, reproducing that ratio on a television required letterboxing, strips of black above and below the image on the screen. In the early days of videotape, people objected to this, partly because videotapes were not very sharp to begin with, and reducing the size of the image made it even harder to see.

To get rid of the letterbox effect, videotape manufacturers utilized a process called “pan and scan,” effectively cutting off a part of each shot, capturing only what was deemed essential to the scene. This appalled film enthusiasts, but there was little they could do about it aside from buying the expensive and ungainly laserdiscs—until, that is, the advent of the DVD and, at the same time, developments in television sets that allowed for sharper image reproduction. Initially, most DVDs were offered in both letterbox and full-screen editions, but most viewers no longer feel the need for the larger image in the screen—and not simply because the image is now sharper. Televisions are larger and, because of the popularity of the DVD and the desire they have sparked for seeing films as they were originally intended, many are offered with an aspect ratio just slightly narrower than that (1.85:1) of most commercial films.

Other advantages of the DVD are increased sound possibilities, the ability to turn subtitles on and off, the ability to switch to dubbing in other languages, and the possibility of listening to a commentary on the film or television episode while it is playing. And, of course, there are the extras. Sometimes additional full-length films are added, biopics of directors and actors, documentaries on the making of the movie or television show, or even another film of the same name (as in the case of one DVD release of the Stanley Donen film *Charade*). Outtakes and deleted scenes also show up, as do music videos and a wide range of other items—all added to entice consumers away from their videotapes.

Even with the immediate popularity of the DVD, the film studios, once again, did not understand clearly that the DVD, like showings on television and the videotapes the DVD superseded, augmented their films instead of replacing them. This time, though, the evidence of the value of the DVD came quickly. By 2004, according to the *New York Times*, income from home viewing of movies (including television broadcast rights, cable rights, videotapes, and DVDs) was nearly triple that of theater showings. To the surprise of studio executives, home viewing had become the driving engine of the movie industry.

The producers of television shows, however, came to an understanding of the possibilities and advantages of the DVD much more quickly. The ability to offer “complete season” sets of shows was potentially as lucrative as syndication of reruns, providing an after-market with a power to extend the life of a show well beyond broadcast runs. DVDs have allowed viewers the chance to escape the ad breaks of broadcast television, and to watch multiple episodes at once, and hence along with such devices as TiVo, they are revolutionizing how viewers can watch and engage with television on their own terms.

The DVD has also provided new power for producers in their battles with networks. *The Family Guy*, for example, was cancelled twice—but was brought back each time in part because DVD sales of the shows were so strong that the
FOX network was forced to recognize the sustained drawing power of the show. Another FOX show, *Firefly*, though cancelled in its first season, produced DVD sales so powerful that Universal Pictures willingly backed a movie based on it. Though only one of the elements leading to the diminution of network power, the DVD has contributed to the broadening of viewing possibilities within an arena once dominated by just three networks.

**DISADVANTAGES OF THE DVD**

The DVD is *not* film. To a cinema purist, this will always be a disadvantage. Even when projected, it does not have quite the feel of film. The image from a DVD can also break up, its own version of the scratches that mar film, and the shelf-life of a DVD is not expected to be particularly long (though this may not matter, as new technologies may replace them before this ever becomes a problem).

The greatest danger posed by the DVD and by digital technology in general is that, as it replaces film, the originals may not be preserved. Already, the reserve of 16-millimeter prints is quickly disappearing. Soon, all movies may exist only digitally, something at which film scholars and restorers shudder. Though there are enough advantages to the digital that some filmmakers (such as David Lynch) now shoot exclusively in a digital format, the fact remains: most films were (and still are) shot on film with the intent that they be shown on film. As we move away from film, the possibility of seeing these movies in the format they were created for (and thus of seeing them exactly as they were meant to be) is disappearing.

Like the videotape before it, the DVD changes the way movies are made, something many filmmakers view with caution. As VHS systems became increasingly important to industry profits, filmmakers started shooting differently, constructing their scenes with an eye towards eventual pan-and-scan cropping—grouping the most important elements of a shot at the center of the image, for example. Since the advent of the DVD, with its easy accessibility and much clearer images,
The DVD: Home Viewing of Movies Comes of Age

set designers and directors have found themselves concentrating more on the details in their shots, sometimes to the detriment of the whole, as happened in Peter Weir’s 2003 film *Master and Commander*, where even the buttons on the costumes were faithful reproductions of early nineteenth-century buttons, but where more significant historical gaffes went undetected.

**CONCLUSION**

Though the DVD may not have a long life as a vehicle for movies or television (or even for games), it has helped change viewer relations to films—and has finally convinced studio executives that home viewing of movies is not something to be fought, but encouraged, and that non-advertiser-driven television can be lucrative. Collectors of videotapes were always a little shy about their hobby, knowing that the versions of the movies that they cherished were not of high quality, due to limitations in the technology and the editing (including pan-and-scan) that generally accompanied them. The DVD has changed that. With the DVD has come not just improvement in quality, but the extras have sparked a new interest in the history of movies as well as in genres that have been long considered almost dead. DVD collectors have become students of movies and
television, of their histories and their versions. At no time have so many people known so much about so many movies in particular—many of which had come close to being completely forgotten by the end of the twentieth century.

Today, studio executives still worry about the loss of control that home viewing represents. Because they are so cheap to produce, DVDs are pirated and sold, often for a quarter of the price of the legitimate release. Studios try to stop this, but do not want to do the one thing that would really counter piracy: bring down their own prices. They are also trying to stop copying and altering of DVDs by home viewers through technological blocks, but this is proving extremely difficult in the face of the ingenuity of home viewers.

Whatever form movies may be brought into the home by in the future, the impact will probably not be as great as that of the DVD. The new technology probably will not be packaged as discrete entities as DVDs are, allowing each movie to be surrounded by commentaries, alternate endings, and related material of all sorts (these will be available, certainly, but probably through links on the Internet and not as part of a package). But the impact of the DVD will remain; knowledge of movies will probably never fall back to its pre-DVD level.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Online Digital Film and Television; Political Documentary; Piracy and Intellectual Property; TiVo; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; World Cinema.


Aaron Barlow
EMBEDDING JOURNALISTS: HOW CLOSE IS TOO CLOSE?

The U.S. invasion of Iraq marked a new era in the evolving relationship between the media and their military sources. Prevented from access to the battlefield in previous conflicts, journalists were invited by the Pentagon to accompany troops into the theater of operation during Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the invasion of Iraq, over 700 embedded war correspondents from the United States rode with American and British soldiers across the Iraqi desert and reported from remote locations, sometimes using new cell-phone video technology, making the Iraq war the first to be broadcast live, in real time. Critics questioned the wisdom of what they called a loss of journalistic independence while Pentagon officials proclaimed they wanted the public to see what war was really like. Embedding was a profound historical development for communication and war reporting, and had significant influence on the way the war was reported. Coverage of the Iraq invasion will have enduring effects on the ways in which the media tell the story of war.

WAITING FOR WAR STORIES: ANTICIPATING AN INEVITABLE WAR

With the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon promised media access to the battlefield unseen since Vietnam. Journalists gauge their freedom to report war based on their ability to cover military units in actual combat. In what was being heralded a new era of military openness, reporters expressed hopeful skepticism about Pentagon promises to accompany troops into Iraq. In the weeks before the
war started, hundreds of journalists were embedding with military units anticipating their new access to close-up views of combat. At the same time, protests against the war took place in major cities across the globe, demonstrations that were largely ignored by the American mainstream media. Instead, the news agenda was filled with stories showing “embeds” training at media boot camps, learning about gas masks, and running with heavy backpacks while holding cameras taking footage on the run. Network anchors prepared audiences for what they said would be an uncensored war. Overall, the early coverage of the embedding process set the tone and created a media atmosphere that made war seem inevitable.

**POSITIVE IMAGES**

News reporting of the conflict seemed to be under way even before the fighting started. Prewar news coverage was dominated by positive stories about the military from reporters embedded with troops along bordering countries who were “waiting for war.” U.S. network anchors Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw were already wearing khakis in the desert, driving Humvees, profiling soldiers, hitching rides on helicopters, and previewing high-tech weaponry. “With all this firepower and all these forces primed and ready to go, how long can they stay in peak condition?” worried NBC’s Tom Brokaw (NBC, February 18, 2003). Other topics important for public discussion before the war started, such as the potential humanitarian crisis, the validity of the charge that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and diplomatic proposals that might have prevented the conflict, were downplayed, discounted, or left outside the news agenda.

**THE CRITICS**

In the United States, discussions in the alternative media took on a different, more critical attitude to embedding than those in the mainstream media. Veteran war correspondent Chris Hedges was one of the most outspoken critics of the idea. In cautionary statements to the press before the war, Hedges argued that the idea that reporters would have unfettered access was based on wishful thinking. He went on to say that the practice of embedding was insidious and predicted that it would produce a loss of distance as reporters gained a sense of loyalty to the troops they covered.

Hedges was referring to a commonly held attitude about reporters and officials. Many journalism texts spend time recounting cautionary tales about how journalists should avoid the loss of professional and emotional distance from their sources. Accurate reporting demands journalistic independence.

**THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Many analysts and journalists understood from the beginning that embedding would create a different dynamic between reporters and soldiers than existed in previous wars. Vietnam has been referred to as the “uncensored” war
largely because of the frontline access afforded war correspondents. Photojournalists and “renegades” covering the war moved freely through the country, found their own units, and buddied up with soldiers and officers alike. They covered them for a time, then moved on. “Embeds” in Iraq, on the other hand, had no independence, no vehicles, and were required to stay with the assigned unit for the duration of the war. There were lists of restrictions and rules to be followed. Assignments were centrally organized by the Pentagon, and there was no “cutting deals” in the field. Journalists covering Iraq were totally dependent on the military, not only for access, but also for equipment, medical supplies, and their own protection. Indeed, Iraq became a dangerous conflict for all reporters, and numerous journalists continue to be killed.

In addition, some officers made it clear from the beginning that journalistic independence would be undesirable in the field. At briefings in Kuwait City, embeds were told they would be made part of the unit, and a member of the team. The Washington Post (March 7, 2003) quoted Lt. Col. Rick Long who said, “Reporters shouldn’t be . . . independently probing for facts. . . . If something bad happens, it’s the military’s job to investigate.”

PRESS POOLS AND THE FIRST GULF WAR

War correspondents Chris Hedges and John MacArthur both covered the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, and were outspoken critics of the “pool system.” Their experiences made them highly skeptical about embedding. During the first Gulf War, the press had been promised access through a pool system, in which teams of reporters would accompany troops and share footage and information with each other. But from the beginning, war correspondents were highly restricted, and many journalists were blocked from the field of operation when the ground war started. In addition, official military escorts followed journalists as they interviewed troops, and public affairs personnel attempted to manage information between the media and the military. Alternative news outlets took the military to court and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit against the Pentagon for censorship during the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations (The Center for Constitutional Rights 1991, pp. 10–11). The lawsuit documented the ways public affairs “escorts engaged in arbitrary censorship of interviews, photography and altered the activities of the soldiers when reporters came into their presence, not for security reasons, but to ensure favorable coverage of the military presence.”

THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

The Pentagon had learned from the first Gulf War that U.S. journalists were unlikely to be critical of military operations if they felt it would jeopardize their future access to combat. In addition, press restrictions over the years had blocked what the military perceived as positive stories of battle along with the negative. General Wesley Clark, working as a CNN analyst, admitted that restricting journalists during the Persian Gulf War was a huge mistake. He noted that there
was no reporting, images, or even documentation of one of the biggest armored battles ever fought. In addition, the Pentagon had been criticized for restricting the press, first during the invasion of Grenada in 1983 by the Sidle commission, and again by a Defense Department report after the Panama invasion that concluded that the failure of the pool arrangement resulted in stories and pictures of dubious quality. Though the media coverage of the first Gulf War was highly positive, particularly after the fighting started, the Pentagon was roundly criticized for press restrictions. Embedding was viewed as the solution to the problem of battlefield access. It was seen as a process that would be able to take advantage of the considerable resources of the media, but under controlled conditions more favorable to the military.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Since World War II, the distinctions between military information operations (psyops), public diplomacy, and public affairs have been blurred with each new war, but the evidence is that the development of the embeds policy and its implementation in the United States was largely driven by a public relations agenda. Even as it promised a lack of “blanket censorship,” the Pentagon did not hide its desire to shape positive coverage of the invasion of Iraq. As former war correspondents and alternative media were reporting stories critical of the new relationship between the Pentagon and the media, embedding, it was discovered, was the brainchild of Assistant Defense Secretary Victoria Clarke. Clarke’s public relations experience included working for Hill and Knowlton, the PR firm responsible for promoting the false baby-incubator story from the first Gulf war.

THE EXCITEMENT OF INVASION

With embedding, the invasion of Iraq resembled other television productions in which journalists and media producers follow their subjects in unscripted shows designed to give a sense of authenticity and excitement. On U.S. television, war coverage mirrored reality shows (such as *Cops*) and camera and journalistic perspectives merged into a point of view united with the military effort. Empowered by riding shotgun with the soldiers, journalists on U.S. media barely contained their excitement. They wore goggles, flack jackets, and even reported through gas masks as they adopted military jargon; “There are boots on the ground.” They interviewed top-gun pilots and crawled along the ground with gunfire in the distance, pressing microphones into soldiers’ faces as they pointed their weapons.

So surreal was the experience that newscasters felt compelled to tell viewers that the images they were seeing were live, not a movie. Coverage of the Iraq invasion in the United Kingdom, where journalists covered British troops, had similar effects. There is an irony here, of course, in which the verisimilitude of frontline reporting appears to create a sense of unreality. It explains, nonetheless, the findings of an Independent Television Commission survey in
the United Kingdom in which a majority—52 percent—said that this kind of reporting can make war seem too much like fiction, and too easy to forget people are dying. This idea was echoed in focus groups, in which people repeatedly referred to the coverage as being like a “war film.” And indeed sometimes it was a war film, as in the case of the Jessica Lynch story, or the various mooted involvements of Hollywood in the Pentagon’s public affairs or psyops operations.

**WAR WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES**

Broadcasters found themselves irresistibly drawn into the action-packed drama of a war against an almost invisible enemy (if Iraqi civilians were enigmatic, the Iraqi soldiers were almost completely absent—rarely seen or discussed, but generally assumed to be supportive of Saddam Hussein). From the pro-war perspective, the norms of taste and decency made it difficult for broadcasters to show the more graphic images of death and destruction, giving the narrative an almost fictional quality.

Journalists and critics had predicted that embedding would result in stories biased toward the military’s perspective. Investigative reporter Greg Palast noted

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**FROM IRAN-CONTRA FALL GUY TO EMBEDDED REPORTER FOR FOX NEWS**

One former marine who became an embedded U.S. reporter during the invasion of Iraq is of particular interest. Oliver North achieved notoriety during the televised Iran-Contra hearings in the summer of 1987. A little-known Vietnam veteran who worked at the National Security Council under the Reagan administration, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North was implicated as a key player in the scandal. He worked with former General Richard Secord and others to supply arms to the “contras,” or counterrevolutionaries, fighting to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Because the contras attacked Nicaraguan civilians and were charged with human rights abuses, Congress had denied them military aid.

Oliver North, or “Ollie” as President Reagan called him, resigned his post along with National Security Advisor Admiral John Poindexter in November 1986, when Attorney General Edwin Meese announced that sophisticated weapons systems had been sold to Iran and money from the sales had been diverted to buy weapons for the contras.

When congressional hearings investigating the scandal were carried live on television, the media spotlight cast an unusually favorable glow over North who, just as easily, could have been cast in the role of villain. Though North admitted to supplying the contras against congressional mandate, activities that were illegal and unconstitutional, his felony conviction was overturned on a technicality because he had been granted immunity for his testimony before Congress. Sixteen years after being called before Congress for his role in the Iran-Contra Affair, Oliver North was accepted as a legitimate journalist and hired by FOX News, becoming one of the most visible embedded U.S. TV reporters covering the push into Baghdad during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

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before the invasion that media coverage almost never mentioned the possibility that people would die when bombs were dropped on Baghdad. “We've forgotten about the Iraqis. Who will document the effects of the bombing?” (personal communication with the author, February 2003). When another journalist, soon to embed with the U.S. military, was asked if they would be allowed to take pictures of Iraqi civilian casualties, the response was, “We're telling the U.S. military’s story, that will be up to other journalists” (personal communication with the author).

EMBEDDING AS A NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The news value of the battlefield footage that embeds provided was so compelling that while there were many more complex stories to tell—about the wider international context, the Iraqi people, the economic implications, the reaction of the Arab world, public opinion, debates about the rationale for the war and its aftermath—these were eclipsed by a narrow focus on the fighting itself.

In the aftermath of the invasion, it is widely understood that the U.S. media did not take an independent position with regard to the military operation, and that critical coverage came only after the war continued to devastate Iraq and kill American soldiers. But during the invasion, British broadcasters were aware of the divided attitudes about the war in the United Kingdom and made efforts to be impartial. So, for example, while the U.S. networks—following warnings from the Pentagon—pulled their teams from Baghdad, British reporters steadfastly remained. And there is little evidence that broadcast journalists in the United Kingdom were seduced by the embed program to become cheerleaders for the U.S. forces. Research on the U.K. coverage suggests that more pro-war accounts came from studios in London, not from the embeds in Iraq, whose reports were much more nuanced.

One of the most significant changes brought about by embedding is that in previous conflicts when war reporters had little access to the field, broadcasters were heavily dependent on military briefings. During the 1991 war with Iraq, media coverage was dominated by military briefings from Riyadh and Dhahran, Washington and London. Especially in the case of British media, coverage of the 2003 conflict represented a significant point of departure, with fewer reports coming from central command (“CentCom”) headquarters in Qatar. Reports from embeds, on the other hand, played a more significant role, providing a great deal of the footage from the region.

Not only did the embed program thereby allow British viewers to get closer to the front lines than in previous wars, it meant that, at least in the U.K. media, there was more space for independent verification of information and that information about the progress of the war was less clearly controlled by the military.

What the embed system did do, however, was bind journalists into a focus on the progress of the war at the expense of broader contextual issues. The fact that there were no embeds with Iraqi forces (for obvious reasons) combined with traditions of taste and decency to humanize the U.S.-led forces and dehumanize the Iraqis. This war narrative then created its own momentum, making “liberated” Iraqis more newsworthy than the many who had, at best, mixed feelings about
the war. In the case of U.S. coverage, a concerted effort was made to avoid viewer empathy for wounded Iraqis through various verbal and visual strategies. In the rare case the wounded Iraqis were shown on American TV, the images were identified as propaganda for Saddam Hussein. Dead and wounded American soldiers were also rarely seen.

CONCLUSION

Embedded reporting, precisely because it provides such newsworthy reports, forces the coverage towards a simplistic narrative in which wider questions about the war are excluded. Indeed, it could be argued that to the degree that embeds succeeded in providing objective, exciting, relatively uncensored British reports, such reporting made the story of war more compelling. This explains the Pentagon's enthusiasm for the program. In short, if the details did not always go their way, the thrust of the coverage was very much on their terms.

Both in Britain and the United States, the historical significance of the role of embedding was in constructing a narrative confined to the progress of the war. Telling an exciting, real-time, visually stimulating narrative of conflict forced the wider questions about the war to the background, and made the moment of victory, rather than, for example, the long-term welfare of the Iraqi people, the climax of the narrative. Even when British embedded reporters were demonstrably impartial, it was within the confines of a limited perspective—a focus on the progress of the fighting rather than why the war was being fought or what its consequences might be. Without that discussion, the media did not fulfill their role in a democratic system, to provide the public with the information it needed to understand the national security policies, and the long-term effects of military actions taken by its government.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Bias and Objectivity; Journalists in Peril; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Nationalism and the Media; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Reality Television; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering and Tabloid Media.


Robin Andersen and Justin Lewis
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDERED, AND QUEER REPRESENTATIONS ON TV

Representations of varied sexualities on television remain surprisingly controversial, especially on network TV. While representations of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (GLBTQ) identities are now quite common across both network and cable television, depictions of same-sex physical intimacy continue to cause concern among TV producers, advertising sponsors, and the viewing public. How have GLBTQ representations of both identities and intimacies changed over the past 50 years?

BACKGROUND

Media representations of sexuality are astonishingly diverse, ranging from homoerotically charged ads in magazines, to the troubling (to some) sexual politics of hip-hop music, to the seemingly sex-obsessed fictional communities on U.S. prime-time television, to the anything-goes world of online pornography. Public debates about how sex could and should be represented in mainstream media reached new heights (or depths) in the late 1990s as we watched newscasters struggle with the President Clinton/Monica Lewinsky affair—how to talk about oral sex and how explicitly? How to display semen-stained clothing? What was so unusual about President Clinton’s penis (the infamous “distinguishing marker”), and how to talk about penises at all on the nightly news? Since then, we’ve debated the pros and cons of anal intercourse thanks to Sex and the City, gaped at Janet Jackson’s nearly bare breast (sorry, wardrobe malfunction) during the 2004 Super Bowl, danced happily to the Black Eyed Peas’ “My Humps,” and set our
TiVos to catch *Queer as Folk, The L Word*, and the launch of MTV Networks’ Logo, a new cable channel targeting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered viewers.

Media representations of sexuality have changed dramatically over the past half-century due to two related changes in North American values—first, our growing acceptance of the idea that sex for pleasure (rather than sex for procreation) is a good, healthy activity; and second, our growing acceptance of varied sexual identities and (to a lesser extent) same-sex sexual activities. Obviously, different types of media have different leeway in how they might represent sexual issues. The focus here is on U.S. network television due to its centrality to our entertainment landscape (99 percent of U.S. households have at least one TV set), and the interest is focused on TV representations of sexual minorities—that is, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transsexual, intersexual, and transgendered persons and relationships.

**REPRESENTING VARIED SEXUAL IDENTITIES ON TV**

Perhaps not surprisingly, the U.S. television industry has a long history of ignoring, stereotyping, and marginalizing varied sexual identities and storylines (see Gross 2001). For example, gay and lesbian issues or characters were almost invisible on television in the 1950s and early 1960s, as networks assumed that the viewing audience was composed wholly of married, monogamous heterosexuals and their children. As the gay rights movement rose to national prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, prime-time portrayals of homosexuality increased, though scriptwriters quickly settled on two safe ways to tell gay-themed stories: the coming-out script and the “queer monster” script (Capsuto 2000). While the 1970s ushered in prime-time shows about gay characters, they were typically played by straight actors and marketed to a straight audience, a trend that continues today. In the 1980s, TV depictions of varied sexualities declined dramatically due to the conservatism of the Reagan presidency and growing concerns about HIV/AIDS (and its association with gay male sexuality).

The 1990s told a different story. Increased media activism, the growing number of cable channels (which placed new economic demands on the networks and led to more expansive programming), rising stigma attached to antigay prejudice, and growing recognition of a gay consumer market all contributed to a sharp rise in the number of GLBTQ characters and/or narratives. Indeed, a study by the Parents Television Council published in 2003 found that references to homosexuality grew more rapidly between 1989 and 1999 (a 265-fold increase) than references to any other sexually oriented topic on television, including masturbation, oral sex, and “kinky” sex (LeVay and Valente 2006). Approximately 50 network series had lesbian, gay, or bisexual recurring characters in the 1990s, more than twice the total of all previous decades (Capsuto 2000). Network prime time introduced the first lesbian lead actress/character in 1997 (Ellen Degeneres/Morgan on ABC’s *Ellen*) and the first network gay male lead character in 1998 (Eric McCormack on NBC’s *Will & Grace*).
In many ways, the 1990s seemed to overcome the long-standing “rules” for how to represent varied sexual identities (especially homosexuality) on television. For most of U.S. television history, producers and writers followed four general rules. First, gay or lesbian characters must be restricted to one-time appearances in TV series or one-shot TV movies. Second, gay and lesbian characters can never just “happen to be” gay—instead, their sexual identity must be presented as a “problem” to be “solved.” Third, their problem must be explored in terms of its effect on heterosexuals (that is, the focus is on straight people struggling to understand). And finally, gay and lesbian erotic desire must not be represented on screen (Dow 2001). While there are certainly more GLBTQ representations than ever before on television, they are not necessarily more progressive representations. For example, GLBTQ characters are still more likely to appear in comedies than dramas (where the line between “laughing with” and “laughing at” remains strategically ambiguous), they are still typically played by straight (or not out) actors and marketed to straight audiences (Ellen Degeneres on *Ellen* was a major exception), and depictions of same-sex intimacy remain troublesome for the networks. In the words of Larry Gross, “Same-sex kisses continue to be treated with all the delicacy and attention required for high-risk medical procedures.”

What are the barriers to a more expansive representation of varied sexualities on television? One is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which enforces the law that governs obscene, indecent, and profane network television and radio programming. FCC guidelines, along with a TV network’s Standards and Practices department, encourage the development of generally conservative characters and storylines in an effort to avoid penalties (such as warnings, monetary fines, or license revocation). Another potential barrier is a program’s advertising sponsorship. While some cable channels (such as MTV) have sponsors that support progressive or edgy programming, network television in particular has a history of conservative sponsorship that impacts storytelling possibilities (see “Selected Milestones in U.S. Television History” sidebar); this barrier is more applicable to daytime than prime-time network programming. A third potential barrier is the various lobbying groups that monitor TV programming. While there are some high-profile groups advocating for more progressive GLBTQ representations (such as GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), there are many powerful organizations that believe that positive depictions of GLBTQ persons or lifestyles violate standards of moral decency. While network producers struggle to accommodate the often-competing demands of different lobbying groups, the combination of this barrier with the others mentioned above tends to lead to more conservative programming. Finally, genre matters in the types of characters and stories we see on TV.

**SELECTED MILESTONES IN U.S. TELEVISION HISTORY**

1971—*All in the Family* becomes the first network sitcom to feature a gay character.

1972—*The Corner Bar* is the first prime-time show to feature a recurring or regular gay character.
1983—*All My Children*’s Lynn Carson becomes the first gay character on daytime soap operas.

1989—On *thirtysomething*, a recurring gay male couple is shown in bed “the morning after.” The episode generated a national debate and lost the network more than $1 million in advertising revenue. The episode was not included in the summer rerun schedule.

1992—*Melrose Place* launches the first of a wave of supporting gay characters throughout network prime-time in the 1990s.

1994—*The Real World* includes gay housemate Pedro Zamora, who is suffering from AIDS both on screen and off.

1997—Ellen DeGeneres comes out as a lesbian, both on *Ellen* and in real life.

1998—*Will & Grace* features the first gay male lead in network broadcast history.

2000—the U.S. version of *Queer as Folk* debuts on cable television, exploring the lives of a group of gay men and women in Pittsburgh and featuring more-graphic-than-network-allows depictions of same-sex sex.

2000—Bianca Montgomery comes out on *All My Children*.

2004—Lesbian and bisexual relationships and lifestyles are the star of *The L Word*.

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**GENRE MATTERS: SEXUALITY ON DAYTIME SOAP OPERAS**

Action-based narratives offer different possibilities (and limitations) than do sitcoms, reality shows, or serialized dramas. For example, it might seem surprising that U.S. daytime soap operas have rendered sexual minorities invisible to a far greater extent than network prime time, given soaps’ 70-year history on radio and television for telling educationally oriented narratives. Such stories are not without economic risk, given soaps’ more conservative viewing audience and advertising sponsorship as compared with that of prime time, but producers historically resolved this dilemma by choosing “easy” social issues to write about, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, or breast cancer. These issues are considered easy because while the depiction or resolution of the story might be controversial, the issue itself is not (no one, in other words, is “for” alcoholism or cancer [Anger 1999]). With certain topics, however, such as varied sexualities, the inherent risk is greater because the subject matter itself remains controversial.

The first fully fleshed-out gay character was written for NBC’s *Another World* in 1974 but the story never aired because network executives got nervous about how viewers would respond. Between 1980 and 2000, daytime soaps featured openly gay or lesbian characters in meaningful roles only five times. The first occurred in 1983, when *All My Children* (ABC) introduced child psychologist (and lesbian) Lynn Carson. Lynn was a marginal character, lasted only two months in Pine Valley (the show’s fictional location), and had no on-screen romantic life. In 1988, *As the World Turns* (CBS) introduced gay clothing designer Hank Elliott. Hank appeared regularly on the show but his presence, too, was short-lived and the character departed in 1989 to care for his partner suffering (off-screen) from AIDS.
A much more significant attempt occurred in 1992, when *One Life to Live* (ABC) launched a critically acclaimed storyline featuring Billy Douglas (played by movie-star-to-be Ryan Phillippe), a teen struggling with the coming-out process and the acceptance of his family and friends. While clearly written as a problem-centered narrative, Billy's story was an important TV milestone in that he was depicted as a well-adjusted and functional gay teen. Once the homophobia around which his story centered was resolved, however, Billy faded into the background of the show and eventually exited in 1993. Daytime's fourth gay character, high school teacher Michael Delaney, was introduced on *All My Children* (ABC) in 1995. Linked to one of the show's core kinship networks, Michael's story featured homophobia and the occupational barriers faced by GLBTQ persons in the United States. More significantly, the narrative also revealed at least three other gay residents of Pine Valley, suggesting that a whole gay community/subculture (rather than isolated characters) might actually exist in the world of daytime soaps.

Without question, the biggest GLBTQ milestone in U.S. soap opera history was the revelation in 2000 that *All My Children's* (ABC) Bianca Montgomery was gay. This story stands out from the others because Bianca was a long-term core character who viewers got to know “before” she was gay, she was the daughter of the single most famous character/actress in daytime history (Erica Kane/Susan Lucci), the revelation of her sexual orientation took place in a lesbian bar, a setting never before depicted on daytime (Jill Sobule’s “I Kissed a Girl” was playing in the background), her desire for a sexual partner was made explicit on screen, and over time she was successfully mainstreamed by the writers, transformed from “the lesbian on soaps” to just another character looking for love, sex, and happiness in Pine Valley. While polls in magazines like *Soap Opera Digest* or *Soap Opera Weekly* indicated that viewers were nervous about seeing same-sex intimacy depicted on screen, they accepted Bianca's lesbian identity and her search for a partner.

Part of the difficulty in telling GLBTQ stories on soap operas is that the genre has unique constraints. Soaps are designed to air for decades (ABC’s *General Hospital*, for example, debuted in 1963), and their whole reason for being is to celebrate romantic hook-ups, match-ups, break-ups, and make-ups. One or two gay characters cannot survive on a soap opera the way they can on a weekly primetime sitcom or drama. On soaps, gay characters must have a relationship in order to last on the show. In a personal interview, Michael Logan, the resident soap opera critic for *TV Guide*, explained:

A new hot chick comes on to *The Young and the Restless* and she could be with Victor, she could be with Jack, she could be with Joe and Schmo. There are any number of potential possibilities and that's the way that the writers weave their stories. But you don't have that kind of thing going on with a gay character because there just aren't any other gay characters on that canvas for that character to match up with. [A new gay character would obviously be] for the gay character that we [already] have on the canvas, so the mystery of who so-and-so's going to hook up with…kind of get[s] tossed out.
This means that how a same-sex romance unfolds—and what intimate or sexual details will be depicted on screen—becomes a crucial question. It is crucial for network prime time too (several seasons of Will & Grace unfolded before Will had his first romantic kiss), but is much more relevant for daytime since soaps air five days a week and intimate relationships unfold in much greater detail. Indeed, soaps’ focus on romance gives the genre the dubious distinction of having more sexual content than any other type of TV programming, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation report, including flirting, open-mouthed passionate kissing, fondling (though not of breasts or genitalia), vaginal intercourse (implied, not depicted), “playful” S & M or bondage scenes, and occasionally what appears to be oral sex (very vaguely implied). Totally absent is intimation of other types of sex acts, such as anal sex, group sex, or sex toys. Also absent on daytime soaps, in major contrast to network prime time and cable, are depictions of nudity. Shirtless men are commonly depicted on soaps, but shirtless women are filmed only from the back and both genitalia and backsides are nowhere to be seen. And while soaps have the most sexual content, they are also more likely than sitcoms, dramas, or TV movies to emphasize sexual responsibility and the potentially negative consequences of sexual risk.

Daytime’s first same-sex kiss actually occurred on As the World Turns (CBS) in June 2001. However, it was between a straight man in drag attempting to harm another man through poisoned lip gloss (it’s a long story). Daytime’s first romantic same-sex kiss was between Bianca and Lena on All My Children (ABC), which occurred in 2002 and was widely applauded in the daytime press. The kiss was more than a chaste peck (though no tongues were involved) and did not progress to further on-screen physical intimacy, though an off-screen relationship between Bianca and Lena was implied by the narrative. For the remainder of Bianca’s time in Pine Valley (the actress/character exited the show in 2005 though has since returned), however, the writers chose not to explore her love/sex life but instead showcased her rape, subsequent pregnancy, and involvement in a complicated baby-switch storyline. A fully explored same-sex relationship has yet to happen in daytime soap opera.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? THE 2006–2007 TELEVISION SEASON

In August 2006, GLAAD issued a press release analyzing diversity in the 2006–2007 U.S. television season (see http://www.glaad.org/eye/ontv/06-07/overview.php). Focusing on prime-time comedies and dramas on the broadcast networks, they counted only nine gay or lesbian lead or supporting characters out of 679 television series—1.3 percent of the overall total. While this percentage is about the same as in the 2005–2006 season (then it was 1.4 percent), GLAAD found that the profile of the character roles has been greatly reduced from one year to the next. Not surprisingly, characters and storylines with varied sexualities are more easily found on cable networks and in unscripted reality and competition programming. Interestingly, given our discussion above, for the first time in U.S. television history the three networks that
broadcast daytime soap operas (ABC, CBS, and NBC) each had a show with a lesbian or gay character in the 2006–2007 season. In addition, *All My Children* is currently launching only the second storyline in daytime history involving a transgendered/transsexual character (the character is beginning to transition from male to female). While it is true that what viewers will actually be able to “see” on daytime soaps remains constrained by the conservative boundaries of the genre, it is a remarkable transformation in a few short years.

**CONCLUSION**

Media representations of sexual acts, sexual intimacy, and varied sexual identities will continue to be a controversial issue in the United States for the foreseeable future. Every culture regulates sexual expression to some extent, and our own history reveals a growing acceptance of sex for pleasure along with growing acceptability of same-sex relationships. Given the various barriers to progressive GLTBQ programming that still exist, however, what viewers are able to see on their TV screens will continue to be debated in U.S. households and throughout the industry.

**See also** Obscenity and Indecency; Media and the Crisis of Values; Pornography; Ratings; Reality Television; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Shock Jocks; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; TiVo.


*C. Lee Harrington*

**GLOBAL COMMUNITY MEDIA**

Community media—small-scale, grassroots, underfunded—have been an important dimension of the global media landscape for a very long time. They have also been a very neglected feature. People have often seen them as temporary, trivial, poorly designed, and thus basically irrelevant to anyone except the handful of obsessive folk who produce them. Yet a brief look at their impact past and present suggests that such dismissiveness is born of a very oversimplified understanding of how these community media have in fact operated. Examples are drawn below from the last three centuries to illustrate the argument, and the importance is underscored of carefully defining our terms.
The headword’s three terms need to be made clear straightaway. “Global” and “community” might seem to be opposites, signifying respectively “international” and “cosmopolitan,” versus “local” and “real.” Here, however, “global” is used to mean worldwide and local simultaneously, and to direct our attention to how, ever faster, the two are coming to be interlinked. “Community” is used here to describe media that are organically part of a social movement, and so for the most part are underfunded, small-scale, and located at the grass roots. “Media” seems by contrast an unproblematic word, used simply to mean broadcasting, cinema, and the press. Here its definition is far wider, and encompasses, as well as those formats, communication activities such as graffiti, buttons, popular song, street theatre, performance art, dance, demonstrations, certain dress choices such as T-shirts, and not least, alternative Internet uses. Some writers also describe these media as “alternative,” others as “participatory,” “citizens’ media,” “tactical media,” or social movement media.

SOME EARLY EXAMPLES

A major early instance in the United States was the Revolutionary-era press, when many pamphleteers, Tom Paine being the most famous, campaigned to shake off British rule. To some degree it was a war of pamphlets, since loyalists were not slow to publish their own tracts defending the British monarchy. The often uncertain outcome of the Revolutionary War meant that the insurrectionary publications were especially important in helping build momentum against colonial rule.

Only a decade later in France, a similarly energetic flood of publications, ranging from satirical cartoons to angry denunciations of royal abuses to reasoned treatises on monarchical power, was a very significant element in fomenting a republican form of government there too.

THE ABOLITIONIST PRESS

The abolitionist press emerged about three decades later in the United States, though preceded by France and Britain. Some of the earliest U.S. examples were autobiographies by formerly enslaved Africans who had escaped from the Southern states or been freed. At least six of these were written, interestingly enough, by merchant sailors. Because their work, unlike for most of the enslaved, required them to travel by sea and major rivers, they got to see slavery systemically, and also to pick up news of African revolts in New World slaving nations. These early books were soon followed by a stream of publications from some white campaigning writers such as William Lloyd Garrison, and a little later still by the leading African American writer and activist Frederick Douglass, who had himself been born into slavery in eastern Maryland.

THE LABOR PRESS

The labor press, at present almost nonexistent as a social force, was also to be reckoned with throughout the later nineteenth century in Britain, France,
Germany, the United States and other rapidly industrializing nations. It was a central facet of the growth of the labor union movement. In the United States, with its multilingual immigrant workforce of the decades leading from the 1880s through the 1930s, newspapers also came to be printed in a variety of European languages, such as German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, and Yiddish. In Germany in the later nineteenth century the Socialist press flourished, providing a considerable spectrum from highbrow intellectual journals to newspapers, and from women's publications to pamphlets geared to workers’ recreational activity.

THE SUFFRAGIST PRESS

The women’s suffrage press, dating from 1848 in the United States, developed its work over the decades that followed, painfully and painstakingly helping build the movement that finally won the right to vote for women citizens after World War I. In New Zealand this right was already conceded in 1893, in France it was not granted until 1945, but in every country the suffragist press was a key element in the ongoing public campaign's eventual success.

It is important to realize that as in the other instances in this period, these publications, were they newspapers, magazines, fliers, posters, or books, mostly did not come out daily, or necessarily regularly. They carried little or no advertising, nor were they glossy. Often they might be just a few pages, and not necessarily designed well. But the demand for them within the suffragist movement, among its women and men members, was nonetheless high.

THREE VITAL CONTRASTS

Before we proceed further, these examples push us to recognize three further important points concerning community media.

First, the media described above had considerable impact in spite of their small size. People sometimes make the mistake of evaluating these media as though they operate in the same way as mainstream media. Yet their objectives are often sharply different, since they are focused on campaigning and mobilizing the public to take on social issues, while big commercial media primarily exist to make a profit by running ads, by entertaining, and sometimes by providing a news service. As a consequence, the mainstream media agenda usually fails to challenge existing social structures based on wealth and political power. By contrast, community media are integral parts of social movements. They enable those movements to have dialogue and fresh perspectives, and are energized in turn by the movements’ vitality.

Second, social movement audiences or readers are different from mainstream media users. They are active, aware of their surroundings, committed to social change. When they make use of these media, they are not looking for a break from a tough working day or from a day when the kids have been scratchy-side-out. They are not looking for escape, but for involvement.

Third, the timeframe of these two types of media is completely different. Social movements often take a long time to form; they have peaks and lulls. Slavery
THE DANGERS OF DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY STRUGGLES

In May 2006, 70,000 public school teachers of the state chapter of the National Educational Workers’ Union called a strike to protest the declining support for public schools in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, after the governor refused to meet with educators to discuss the issue. As the civil action grew, the teachers were joined by other unions, groups, and organizations, and the strike became a burgeoning people’s movement protesting the accelerating economic hardships brought on by seven years of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). On June 14, 2006, Governor Ulises Ruiz sent in state police to dislodge over 600 protestors who had set up an encampment in the town’s main square. Sixty civil associations together drafted a letter of support for the protests condemning the police violence and the growing attacks by extra-judicial military forces. The teachers broadcast their messages using a community radio station, and when their station was destroyed, university students helped organizers broadcast over theirs. The protest lasted for months.

By the fall of 2006, working with Indymedia in New York City, American journalist Brad Will went to Mexico to report on the protest for the Independent Media Center. On October 27, 2006, Brad Will was shot and killed while filming and reporting from Oaxaca. Human rights activists continue to call for a full investigation into the death of Brad Will and other Oaxacans who have been killed during the protests. Independent New York–based filmmakers Tami Gold and Gerardo Renique released a videotape titled *Land Rain and Fire: Report from Oaxaca*, distributed by Third World Newsreel (www.twn.org), which offers background, analysis, and documentation of the events leading up to the protest and police brutality against the demonstrators.

took many decades to be ended, just as many decades passed before women were allowed to vote, and the labor movement took a long while to win the right to the eight-hour working day, to a paid annual vacation, to health care (all of which are seriously under siege again at the beginning of the twenty-first century). Measuring the true impact of community media requires we grasp this essential contrast in a time frame.

Overall, then, we need to avoid lumping all media clumsily together as though they all operate the same way. Only then can we understand the roles of community media.

COMMUNITY MEDIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Examples from the twentieth century have been very numerous indeed. Most have yet to receive a proper description and analysis. Two interlinked developments, according to the German writer Walter Benjamin, have been decisive in this mushroom growth, though his argument is adapted slightly here to bring it up to date.

One is the emergence of cheap and accessible media technologies. In his day he pointed to the still camera and to film, and their production in vast quantities.
Surveying what has happened since then, we would point as well to transistor radios, tiny video cameras, cheap digital editing equipment, cell phones, and the expanding rate of Internet access—all of which give the public the potential to generate their own communications outside their immediate circles, at long distances, today often almost instantaneously.

Benjamin’s argument, however, was about much more than hardware (or even software). He interpreted the public’s eagerness to take up and use these media technologies when they became available as a signal of the expansion of people’s self-assertiveness in the modern era, of a historical decline of political passivity.

He himself linked this shift in attitudes to the Russian revolution and the rise of communism, though he wrote at an earlier epoch when there was much less information than there needed to be of the terrifying developments in Soviet Russia under Stalin, and when the international image of the Soviet Union was for many a beacon of hope in the struggle against Nazism and fascism in 1930s Europe. We need not and absolutely should not, with hindsight, support his endorsement of Soviet-style communism, but given Benjamin’s overall values, we should rather link popular media usage with the upsurges in labor demands, women’s rights, anticolonial insurgency, civil rights, and global social justice movements.

Of all these media developments, the expansion of easily accessible radio has been by far the most widespread across the planet. As of the time of writing, many parts of the world have no access to television or the Internet, or indeed telephony. Illiteracy rates are very high in many places. As Alfonso Geerts and other writers point out, very cheap radio sets and the ever-growing number of community radio stations are probably the most important community media sector globally. In affluent territories, radio is often forgotten, defined simply as one of a series of delivery mechanisms for music. This assumption is miserably blind to the realities of life in the Southern Hemisphere (though there is nothing wrong with popular music, which is globally important).

**TWO OTHER EXAMPLES**

Many examples can be found in Atton (2001), Rodríguez (2001), Downing (2001), Couldry and Curran (2003), Opel and Pompper (2004), Rennie (2006), and the further reading they reference. Two cases, however, which deserve a particular mention from the end of the century and the outset of the twenty-first century, are the global Indymedia network, and the emergence of blogging and file sharing.

**Indymedia**

The Independent Media Center (IMC) network (“Indymedia”) emerged in late 1999 in the context of the global social justice movement protests against the World Trade Organization. There are currently about 200 hyperlinked Indymedia centers around the planet, concentrated more in North America and
Western Europe than elsewhere, but in some measure touching much of the globe.

An IMC consists of a connected server and a collective of people who staff it, normally on a volunteer basis. This unit seeks admission to the IMC network, and on satisfying certain basic political and technical standards, is admitted as a member. (Thus, at the extreme, a neo-Nazi, or homophobic, or commercially driven, or religiously evangelistic group, without computer skills, would be excluded on both ideological and technical grounds.)

The content on active IMC sites is often updated daily or at least frequently, with some sites at certain times even placing some 30 postings a day. It is open to people with all views, outside the fundamentally hostile category, to place postings. Its links to all the other sites enable users to check instantly on events from France to Indonesia, from Mexico to South Africa. There is an archive of earlier discussions and postings. Most sites carry photos, audio files, and video files.

The focus is on news concerning global struggles for social justice. The predominant language across the sites is English, but not only are other languages dominant in national sites (Portuguese in Brazil, for instance), there are also translations offered on some sites for some items. Regional languages also play a role on some sites (e.g., Galician in northwest Spain, Quechua in Bolivia).

While there is some control over registration as an IMC in the interests of coherent organization at the most basic level, in many respects the IMC network is a body without a head, and thus a fascinating example not only of very low-cost global/local communication, but also of the potential enabled by a participatory, self-managed operation.

**The Blogosphere**

The other case can be addressed much more briefly, and it is the growth more or less simultaneously of blogging and file sharing. Extreme exaggeration of their significance was endemic in their early days. There were visions of the imminent collapse of organized news media and of the recording industry, and a complete Pandora's box of cost-free democratic sharing and diffusion.

All that hype aside, both movements, although composed of people with hugely different goals and contributions, signified the appetite and the potential for more significant and unhampered lateral communication, in contradistinction to the vertical media hierarchies that still bestride the globe. The sharp distinction between “mass” communication and “niche media” showed signs of becoming blurred, with the prospect of a richer cultural environment being actually short of utopian.

**Conclusions**

So far from being a trivial field for those obsessed by the irrelevant, the study of small-scale “community” media on a global scale shows itself to be a very serious pursuit. In the era of nanotechnologies and the genome project, that should not come as a surprise.
See also Alternative Media in the United States; Blogosphere; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Independent Cinema; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Journalists in Peril; Minority Media Ownership; Parachute Journalism; Pirate Radio; Public Access Television; World Cinema.


John D.H. Downing

GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

In October 2004, Google announced a partnership with five powerhouse research libraries to scan millions of books into a company database and make them accessible via an online search engine. While the press regarding Google Book Search has been dominated by the discussion over copyright, there are several other questions raised by this massive scan of information. Namely, why did Google and the libraries enter this partnership? How will this partnership affect the future of libraries? And what kind of data can a company gather about what we search for and read?

GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH STATISTICS

5—libraries initial participating in the Google Library Project (Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, the University of Michigan, and the New York Public Library).

32 million—estimated number of published books to be scanned.

7.8 million—volumes in the University of Michigan library. Google has agreed to scan them all.

$150 million to $1 billion—estimated cost of the library scanning project (according to different sources).

$100,000—cost of one book-scanning machine.


$80 billion—estimated annual revenues, worldwide book industry.

3%—percentage of total spending on higher education that is directed to academic and research libraries.

2%—percentage of municipal budgets dedicated to libraries in 1950.

0.5%—percentage of municipal budgets dedicated to libraries in 2005.
**THE COPYRIGHT DEBATE**

At the time of writing, Google Book Search has deals in place to acquire content from the libraries of Harvard University, Stanford University, Oxford University, the University of Michigan, and the New York Public Library, hence promising one-stop shopping for students, academics, or average folks seeking to gather information on virtually any topic. Though widely heralded in the media as a potential achievement of epic proportions, authors and publishers became concerned that freely available online books would hurt sales of their physical counterparts. In turn, they invoked copyright law to sue Google and stop its scanning program.

Google argues that its program is not designed so that site visitors will “be able to read copyright books through Google Book Search.” Instead, “the purpose of this program is to help you discover books. That’s a very different thing than saying that this is a substitute for actually buying the books and reading them. In fact, we are looking to direct you, once you’ve discovered that book, to the place you can find it” (“The Battle over Books: Authors and Publishers Take on the Google Print Library Project,” 2005).

The president of the Association of American Publishers (AAP), Patricia Schroeder, notes that, “the bottom line is that under its current plan Google is seeking to make millions of dollars by freeloading on the talent and property of authors and publishers” (Wray and Milmo 2006). Allan Adler of the AAP further argues that if Google is “going to directly promote it[self] through the use of valuable content [and] intellectual property created by others, those others at least should have the right to have permission asked, if not also to share in a bit of the revenue” (“The Battle over Books,” 2005).

Under the program’s current design, user searches that return works under copyright offer bibliographic data about the book as well as a few sentences of text—or “snippets” as Google deems them. Books no longer under copyright (meaning those over 75 years old) are available in their entirety. Google believes that if anything, they are providing a service that will bring light to millions of “orphaned” books that have been languishing in libraries unseen for years. As Google’s lawyer David Drummond states, “We’ve designed the service to be a fair use one, to be a service that promotes a significant public good that spurs creativity in the society and in the world, and one that does not harm publishers or authors” (“The Battle over Books,” 2005).

**WHY IS GOOGLE DOING THIS?**

Google cofounder Sergey Brin once proclaimed that, “The perfect search engine would be like the mind of God. The mind of God, one might imagine, probably features everything that human beings have ever written, recorded, photographed, videotaped, linked, or designed. Thus, it makes sense that the content of every library would be necessary fodder for ‘the perfect search engine’” (Vaidhyanathan 2005, p. B7).
Nevertheless, Google Book Search is by no means a completely charitable endeavor. Google is investing heavily so that it can bolster its reputation as the number-one source for information on the Internet. By partnering with these libraries, not only does Google gain access to troves of content, they also associate themselves with the valuable brand names of Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, the University of Michigan, and the New York Public Library. They can then pitch their program to advertisers as a resource for curious readers who demand access to some of the finest collections in the world. And advertisers are willing to pay heavily to target a person specifically interested in The Joy of Cooking or The Life of Jimi Hendrix.

However, this project will not come cheaply for Google. The cost of digitizing a library on the scale of the University of Michigan’s has been estimated at over a billion dollars. Though Google has hordes of money to pursue these kinds of projects, it is nevertheless taking an enormous financial risk to make the dream of an all-digital library a reality.

**WHY ARE LIBRARIES DOING THIS?**

Many wonder why a library wouldn’t want to do this. Google is willing to invest billions in digitizing materials and has agreed not to charge libraries a penny in the process. Each library in the partnership can choose what materials it wants to share and what it wants to keep private (up to this point, only Michigan has agreed to open its complete system to Google). Plus, Google has agreed to defend every library in the partnership for every copyright lawsuit.

One benefit of the digitization partnership stressed by libraries is the importance of preservation. Scanning books could safeguard library collections in times of natural disasters and war; for instance, Hurricane Katrina’s destruction of collections within Tulane University’s library would have been less devastating if these collections had digital backups.

John Wilkin, the librarian in charge of Michigan’s digitization efforts, believes that all materials everywhere should be scanned. In a personal interview in 2006 he stated, “Nothing is too insignificant—it will all have an audience. Every book its reader, every reader its book.” Promoting accessibility to a worldwide forum helps a library ensure that it is meeting its mission as a part of a public good and public trust.

Finally, libraries are extremely aware of the dominance of the Internet in today’s search for information—and they do not want to appear outdated or left behind. Students overwhelmingly turn to online resources such as Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia over antiquated card catalogs as their speedy first option for research. The expectation of neatly ranked results and clickable searches holds greater appeal than time spent burrowing through a library’s stacks. This demand for speed puts libraries on the defensive, and, as a result, embracing Google as a search mechanism could help a library move from appearing behind the times to appearing as if it is keeping pace with them. Many libraries have therefore decided that they must work with the Internet if they are to remain meaningful and useful for the next generation of researchers and readers.
THE ROYAL LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA

The goal of acquiring all knowledge and storing it in one location predates Google Book Search by over two thousand years. The Royal Library of Alexandria, Egypt was rumored to house 500,000 scrolls as well as lecture halls and study areas. Scientists from throughout the ancient world converged there to research mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, medicine, and literature. Modern scholars debate the details of its destruction, as accusations range from Julius Caesar to a series of subsequent invaders. Yet the call for the library’s resurrection has been touted by many thinkers ever since, most notably H.G. Wells and his vision of “The World Brain.”

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES

For large-scale research universities, Google Book Search means that libraries will have to adjust to Google’s method of search as the primary means of interface. Overall, libraries will confront more pressure to digitize their collections, and there is a chance that some overlapping materials will be condensed to save time, money, and space. (For example, does the University of California system really need nine copies of every single document the U.S. government publishes?) As many of these big libraries are armed with considerable budgets, there will be more of a shift in resources than outright elimination of services. The University of Texas at Austin, for example, moved almost all the books from its undergraduate library to other libraries on campus so that its main space could be transformed into an “information commons” featuring 1,000 reference books and hundreds of computer terminals.

However, smaller libraries at less wealthy institutions might face dramatic changes. Community colleges can eliminate stacks of books and convert storage space into teaching space, as they will now be able to rely on digital access and interlibrary loans to fill many of their content needs. Librarians at these institutions will shift their focus from developing collections to guiding students in how to navigate the Web, write term papers, and apply for jobs.

If one can imagine the contents of the community college library disappearing, then a potentially similar fate looms for local public libraries. Since libraries often compete for funding with entities such as fire and police departments, it is easy to imagine books being shared online or across county lines. After all, if the average library user can get virtually anything he or she wants on Google, then why would a local city council bother opening new library branches to serve a potentially dwindling public?

DATA, PRIVACY, AND GOVERNMENT SUBPOENAS

In today’s economy, technology is used to track almost every transaction. Credit card companies keep histories of every purchase made with the convenience of plastic—from shoes to airline tickets to packs of gum. Cell phone operators have records of every phone call; travel can be traced through the use
of Global Positioning Systems; and credit agencies can quickly deliver reports of your payment history to almost anyone.

Information scholar Howard Besser (2001) writes that “today a large number of websites monitor the browsing that goes on at their site, tracking who is looking at what, how often, and for how long. A whole industry has emerged that purchases this kind of personal marketing information from site managers and resells it. In difficult financial times, even licensors who are committed to privacy concerns may find the temptation of payment for this kind of information difficult to resist.”

With the development of Google Book Search, the online giant has equipped itself with a superior tool for determining who its customers are—as well as what they are reading. Google earns virtually all of its money from advertisements, and all queries conducted via Google Book Search are recorded in the company’s database. For example, when a person signs in to seek George Orwell’s 1984, Google logs the search in the user’s profile and tracks what part of the world they are logging in from via an Internet protocol (IP) address. This information is then preserved indefinitely in Google’s archives, and is ultimately used to develop targeted demographic profiles to be sold to marketing firms.

While Google’s behavior is not atypical for the search industry (virtually all online companies do the same thing), it does conflict with libraries’ strong tradition of privacy protection. Libraries dump records on a regular basis—once a checked-out book has been returned, the library destroys any information regarding that transaction. Historically, librarians have even risked going to jail rather than turn over patron information sought via government subpoena. This reflects the belief held by free-speech advocates that libraries represent one of the few public institutions where people can freely pursue open thought and engage in original, controversial research without fear of reprisal.

However, after the terrorist attacks of 2001 this practice was challenged by the Bush administration when it was revealed that hijackers used public library computers to conduct some of their communiqués. In response, the government designed the U.S. Patriot Act to gather information in public places where people do not expect complete privacy.

Google does not hold itself to the same privacy standards as libraries. Thus, the government can gain access to Google’s databases by presenting a court-backed warrant seeking information. Plus, under the Patriot Act, “Google may not be able to tell users when it hands over their searches or e-mail messages” (Cohen 2005). Adam Cohen argues in the New York Times that “if the federal government announced plans to directly collect the sort of data Google does, there would be an uproar—in fact there was in 2003, when the Pentagon announced its Total Information Awareness program, which was quickly shut down.”

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

If Google becomes the first (and perhaps only) point of reference for an 11-year-old seeking to write a book report, one can imagine the possibilities for
it to dominate the future of the search field. Though great potential comes from digitally preserving books and making them accessible online, Google’s partnership with prominent libraries raises considerable concern about copyright violations, the future of libraries, the role of publishers in a digital era, and the privacy of user searches. It remains to be seen whether this billion-dollar venture will revolutionize—or compromise—the way we search for information.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Internet and its Radical Potential; Net Neutrality; Online Publishing; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Public Sphere; Surveillance and Privacy.


Paul Vinelli

GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Freedom of speech is essential to the proper functioning of a democracy. The right to express ourselves free from government censorship is a fundamental individual liberty, one that Americans hold dear as a defining feature of our nation. However, in a large country with a diverse population, living together in freedom requires of us a great deal of tolerance. A national commitment to freedom of speech means freedom of speech for everyone, even those with whom we disagree, even those whose ideas we feel are dangerous. For this reason, the United States has long had a remarkably ambivalent relationship with freedom of speech, defending it at times, dispensing with it at others.
The founding fathers gave future generations of Americans a great gift in the form of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Inspired by the writings of seventeenth-century British political theorist John Milton (see “The Bill of Rights” sidebar), they had the foresight to recognize that a government based on the principles of popular sovereignty cannot function effectively without the free flow of information. People who chose their own leaders cannot make informed choices in the voting booth unless they have access to accurate information and a wide range of opinions, to help them formulate their own positions. Leaders chosen by a free people must remain accountable to those voters, with their words and actions open to scrutiny. Only media that are free from government control can effectively serve the “watchdog” function of the “fourth estate.” Acting as an unofficial fourth branch of government, a free press can serve as a check against abuses of power by reporting on the activities of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches.

The framers of our Constitution included a prohibition against federal censorship as a reaction to the strict censorship they experienced under the British monarchy. In a democracy, citizens choose their own leaders, who are then, in turn, expected to represent the will of the public. People in power rarely like being challenged, and the urge to silence critics is common among leaders, even those who have been elected. The founding fathers wanted to help our country avoid a situation in which elected officials suppressed dissent. They wanted to insure that people would have a right to complain about the government without fear of imprisonment, and that minority views would have a chance to be heard.

**THE CHALLENGE OF LIVING TOGETHER IN FREEDOM**

When the First Amendment was adopted in 1791, America was a fairly homogeneous nation. The people who were allowed to vote in the new country were all white males, most of them were of British or French heritage, and the majority were Protestant. When the founding fathers wrote the First Amendment, they could not possibly have imagined how diverse our population would eventually become. As time went on, immigrants from around the world began arriving on our shores, seeking the individual liberties on which our country was founded. Living together in freedom is not that challenging when people

**THE BILL OF RIGHTS**

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is the first of 10 amendments known as the Bill of Rights, all adopted simultaneously by our Congress in 1791. Each of these rights is designed to protect individual liberties. The First Amendment states that: “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”
have a great deal in common. As more people from different ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds live in greater proximity to one another, the likelihood of disagreement greatly increases. When confronted with words and images that are deeply offensive, or threatening to the people or ideals we cherish, few may be willing to take the position, often attributed to the French philosopher, Voltaire: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

A HISTORY OF AMBIVALENCE

Freedom of expression is often invoked as one of the defining liberties of American democracy. When we take a closer look at our nation’s history, though, another story is revealed. We like freedom of speech when it allows us to voice our own views. However, when it comes to those with whom we disagree, or those who are generating words and images that we feel pose a danger to our children, our community, or our nation, Americans have a long history of suspending freedom of expression in exchange for comfort, or security. While it may seem justifiable, at times, to curtail certain extreme forms of expression, many warn that once we begin making exceptions to individual liberty, we are in danger of sacrificing one of the most fundamental principles of our nation. Benjamin Franklin himself cautioned that “those who would give up an essential liberty to purchase a little temporary security deserve neither liberty nor security.” Balancing the rights of the individual with the needs of the group is a complex challenge, and the history of our nation reveals that we continue to grapple with finding this balance.

American ambivalence about freedom of speech dates back to our earliest years as a nation. Ironically, less than 10 years after adding the First Amendment to the Constitution, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. These laws were designed to curb sedition—criticism of the government—during a period when the United States was engaged in a policy dispute with France. Under this law, anyone who criticized President Adams, or any other aspect of the U.S. government, was subject to steep fines and jail time. Nearly two dozen journalists were arrested and their voices silenced under the Sedition Act. When Thomas Jefferson, a staunch free speech advocate, was elected president several years later, he repealed the law. But the precedent was set. From then on, nearly every time our country has faced domestic or international tensions, efforts have been made to suppress dissent.

PEOPLE IN HISTORY

One of the most important historical figures in the development of freedom of speech is John Milton, the famous seventeenth-century British writer and political philosopher. Writing in opposition to the harsh censorship that he and other writers of the period experienced at the hands of Parliament, he published a powerful essay on the importance of freedom of
speech entitled "Areopagitica." In it, he set forth the argument that remains, to this day, the basis for freedom of speech in a democracy, known as "the self-righting principle." According to Milton, though people sometimes make mistakes, if given enough freedom they will eventually find their way to the truth. The danger of censorship, he warned, is that it impedes the quest for truth. Milton believed that in any open encounter, truth would always triumph always falsehood. Thus, in his view, all ideas should be heard, to allow the right answer to emerge. He also argued that the open discussion of ideas is essential for civil liberty. The most famous lines from his essay are these: "And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to doubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple: who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

**DISSENT DURING WARTIME**

It is often said that "the first casualty of war is truth." Even in a democracy, the open discussion or debate about domestic and foreign affairs is often seen as a luxury of peacetime. When a country goes to war, support of the war effort becomes a primary national focus. In order to wage a successful military campaign, high group cohesion is required. Many people must work closely together, both at home and abroad, in difficult and dangerous conditions, to achieve victory. Thus, during wartime, it is argued, there is less room for dissent. During times of military conflict, public discourse—from news reports to popular opinion—is generally expected to support the national effort.

This is true in all nations, and despite our Constitutional commitment to freedom of speech, the United States is no exception. When faced with an enemy—actual or perceived—people rally together, and individual liberties are often suspended in the name of security. Those in favor of such limits argue that it is necessary, at times, to sacrifice some liberties to protect the safety of the nation as a whole. Often, dissent during wartime is seen as disloyalty. Others argue that in a democratic society, the free expression of dissent is essential, especially during times of internal discord. Conflict between these two perspectives continues to this day.

During the Civil War, the governments of both the North and the South jailed those who spoke out against those in power. Prior to the outbreak of the war, those advocating succession—or abolition—often found their writings confiscated, their printing presses destroyed, and faced arrest. Once the fighting began, neither side tolerated dissent, and many went to jail in both the North and the South, even ministers who prayed for an end to the conflict. During the First World War, Congress passed the Espionage Act of 1917, which prohibited any speech that challenged the government or the war. Over 2,000 people were prosecuted for dissent. When the constitutionality of that law was challenged, the Supreme Court made its first formal exception to the First Amendment, stating that speech that posed a "clear and present danger" to the nation could be suppressed (*Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47 (1919)). From then on, with nearly
every military conflict, we passed laws or set up policies designed to curtail free speech.

During the Cold War in the 1950s, the McCarthy era was a particularly dark time for free speech in America, when anyone who showed any signs of supporting dissent was branded a “communist.” In the 1960s, opponents to the Vietnam War were dismissed as radicals, and people who burned flags or draft cards in protest were sent to jail. In an attempt to suppress growing criticism of our involvement in Vietnam, the Nixon administration tried to stop both the New York Times and the Washington Post from publishing excerpts from the Pentagon Papers, a military history of the Vietnam conflict (New York Times v. United States and United States v. Washington Post, 403 U.S. 713 (1971)). In the wake of Vietnam, the government placed strict limits on media access to military activity in the Persian Gulf, in an attempt to limit negative press coverage. Following the events of September 11, 2001, Congress adopted the Patriot Act, which among other things created a broad definition of “terrorist,” allowing for the arrest of Americans exercising their First Amendment rights to peacefully protest government policy. While the government often claims that some sacrifice of free speech must be made during wartime in the interests of national security, critics and constitutional lawyers often argue, in response, that such wartime censorship protects the government from criticism, not external enemies. As our nation grapples with new foreign and domestic military challenges in the early twenty-first century, we continue to struggle with the ongoing question of how to balance individual liberty with national security.

**TIMELINE: SOME KEY MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN AMERICA**

1791—Bill of Rights added to the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment.

1798—Alien and Sedition Act: first official exception to the First Amendment.

1842—Congress passes first anti-obscenity statute.

1861–65—U.S. Civil War: freedom of speech suppressed on both sides of the conflict.

1873—Comstock Act adopted, barring the use of the U.S. postal system for the distribution of obscene material.

1915—Supreme Court rules that the medium of cinema is not protected under the First Amendment.

1918—Espionage Act amended to include strict sedition laws. Over 2,000 prosecuted for dissent against American involvement in World War One.


1934—Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is established, marking the start of federal regulation of broadcasting.

1940—The Smith Act passed by Congress prior to U.S. entry into World War II. Used as the basis for silencing those accused of communism during the McCarthy era.

1952—Burstyn v. Wilson: Supreme Court reverses earlier decision, granting First Amendment protection to film.
One of the most challenging issues facing any country committed to freedom of expression is that of hate speech. In a nation theoretically committed to equality, how do we handle messages that challenge that basic premise? Does freedom of expression extend to those who speak messages of hate? How should we handle extremists who call for the oppression, deportation—or extermination—of specific groups of people? Initially, it might seem like a simple issue: prejudice and hatred are wrong, killing is wrong, so, speech advocating such things is wrong too. However, banning hate speech doesn’t eliminate racism or hatred. In fact, the censorship of this form of communication may inadvertently fan the flames of intolerance, because once an idea gains the status of being “taboo” it often becomes more attractive, at least to some.

The issue of hate speech has generated endless debate in our nation. Many fascinating cases have gone before the courts: Does the Klu Klux Klan have the right to march in the streets? Can the Confederate flag be displayed in public buildings? Can universities enforce rules banning hate speech from their campuses? Ultimately, the Supreme Court has ruled that our rights to freely express our views do have limits, particularly if the speech in question can be seen as posing a direct threat to physical safety. The Court created a category of speech called “fighting words,” which they defined as “words spoken in a face-to-face confrontation that are likely to create an immediate breach of the peace.”

1969—Brandenburg v. Ohio: The Supreme Court draws a distinction between speech that advocates ideas (protected by the First Amendment) and speech that incites violence (not protected), establishing the “incitement standard.”
1972—Gooding v. Wilson: Establishes the definition of “fighting words,” which may be prohibited if likely to create an immediate breach of the peace.
1974—Miller v. California, establishing modern definition of obscenity, and excluding it from First Amendment protection.
1978—FCC v. Pacifica: Supreme Court upholds the constitutionality of the FCC’s decision to punish broadcasters who air language that is “obscene, indecent or profane.” Establishes the “safe harbor laws.”
2001—Patriot Act adopted by Congress, following the incidents of September 11, 2001, permitting the government to monitor electronic communication, and empowering law enforcement officials to demand records from bookstores and libraries, to identify who is reading “suspect” material. This act was later amended to allow the government to track an individual’s Web-surfing habits and search terms.
2004—Congress empowers the FCC to greatly increase fines imposed upon broadcasters for the violation of indecency standards.
Speech that meets this test may be prohibited by the states (\textit{Gooding v. Wilson, 405 U.S. 518 (1972)}). This is a complex standard to enforce, however, because it is not always clear exactly what kind of speech fits this definition. Not everyone reacts with violence to an insult, and some have learned to simply walk away in response to hate-filled epithets.

The development of the Internet has made the issue of hate speech all the more complex. Web sites preaching racial hatred fall outside the domain of face-to-face speech, and are thus protected by the First Amendment. Civil rights activists worry that this technology has greatly facilitated the spread of the message of intolerance, allowing racist groups to “recruit” new members under the protection of electronic anonymity. With each new communication technology our nation faces new free-speech challenges, and the issue of hate Web sites remains unresolved. While many feel that hate speech is simply too dangerous, and should be denied free-speech protection, others argue that the best answer to the voice of hate is more speech—specifically, messages of tolerance. Since it seems unlikely that banning hate speech will actually eliminate racism, they suggest that the best way for us to combat prejudice is through education, not censorship.

\section*{MANY OTHER ISSUES}

The topics discussed here are only some of the many examples of American ambivalence about freedom of speech. Other controversies that illustrate our mixed feelings about the First Amendment include debates about flag burning, book banning, freedom of speech in the classroom, cameras in the courtroom, and the right of journalists to withhold the names of anonymous sources. In addition, critics of media deregulation argue that concentration of ownership in the United States has created a dangerous situation in which a handful of media giants control the flow of ideas. Corporate censorship, they warn, has replaced government censorship as the new threat to the proper functioning of our democracy, hampering the press from serving its role as the fourth estate.

It is often said that “with freedom comes responsibility.” Exactly what it means to balance freedom of speech with the responsible exercise of that right in a democracy continues to be a matter of debate. Despite the many changes that come with each new communication technology, the deeper issues remain the same. Living together in freedom calls upon Americans of every political persuasion to be ever vigilant. Unless we all guard against our own tendencies towards intolerance and complacency, we risk losing this precious right to let our voices be heard.

\textbf{See also} Al-Jazeera; Alternative Media in the United States; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Blogosphere; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Literacy; Minority Media Ownership; Obscenity and Indecency; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Public Sphere; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks.
NOTES

1. While these words are generally attributed to the French philosopher François Voltaire (1694–1778), there is some debate as to the actual source of the quote. Some suggest that the phrase was invented by a later author to summarize Voltaire’s views, as expressed in his “Treatise on Toleration.”

2. Benjamin Franklin, in a letter from the Pennsylvania assembly, dated November 11, 1755, to the governor of Pennsylvania.

3. This quote is generally attributed to U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson (1866–1945), a staunchly isolationist Republican, who is said to have made this statement as part of a speech before Congress in 1917.


Gwenyth Jackaway
HYPERCOMMERCIALISM

The landscape of popular culture is cluttered with on air commercial messages and many media analysts and public interest groups charge that advertising, promotion, corporate slogans and icons have become inescapable intrusions on everyday life. The trend toward weaving advertising and promotion into the fabric of mainstream media has been termed hypercommercialism and describes the increasing prevalence of sales and marketing in all aspects of media production and structure. Product branding has been recognizable for decades, but now “branded entertainment” embeds advertising into the design of entertainment programs themselves. Along the way, television is transformed into a marketing tool and viewers become consumers of products, not audiences to be entertained. Media managers argue that combining entertainment and sales will satisfy the public, if done with skill and ingenuity. Critics counter that the consequences of hypercommercialism extend to the foundations of American democracy, because such practices affect news programming and press reporting, as well as entertainment genres. The parameters of hypercommercialism are in constant flux, changing with new ownership structures, media technologies, marketing philosophies, symbolic techniques, and production formats, all of which make contemporary commercial culture a dynamic realm, and a battleground issue, from critical and cultural perspectives.

THE COMMERCIAL MEDIA

The economics of TV has had a particular historical trajectory. When commercial interests won the battle over broadcasting in the 1920s, it was decided
that television and radio programming was to be paid for by corporate sponsors. But the controversy did result in broadcast regulation that required networks and station owners to broadcast in the “public interest, convenience and necessity.” Advertising would pay for TV programming and commercialism came to be the dominant force in American media, the ramifications of which we are only now beginning to fully understand.

In the 1950s, one sponsor paid to produce each program. This practice gave way by the end of the decade to spot advertising, which continues today. Commercials inserted during programming breaks are purchased by multiple advertisers at negotiated prices determined by a combination of ratings, program demographics, time, content, and availability. In recent times, commercial messages have lost some of their persuasive power as ads become shorter, more frequent, and easier to zap (for example, TiVo). In addition, viewers are media literate and wary of such overt persuasions. Celebrity endorsements help, but now celluloid and video stars pitch everything from aspirins to phone companies. Audiences have come to know that every endorsement has its price, making them a little less effective. But when stars use products in movies and TV programs, it still appears to be the discourse of entertainment, not sales. In a strategic game of leapfrog, advertisers step up persuasive technique and media strategy as the old ones lose some of their punch.

Now promotional messages are no longer restricted to spot advertising. In the age of deregulation, when restrictions on the number of commercials allowed in any hour of programming have been removed, contemporary television places products into just about every nook and cranny of airtime. Although spot advertising is not going away, it now coexists with product placement, a practice that embeds the promotion within the program. Both advertising practices continue to evolve, and as they do, critics charge that they exert inordinate influence over TV programs and feature films alike.

### INFLUENCING MEDIA CONTENT

Placing brands in films really took off after 1982 when Steven Spielberg’s cute alien, ET, ate Reese’s Pieces and sales shot up. Then, in 1983, Tom Cruise wore Ray Ban sunglasses in the movie *Risky Business.* Public interest researchers Michael Jacobson and Laurie Mazur noted that in one month Ray Ban reported sales of 18,000, more pairs of that style sold then during the previous 3 years. As plugging in film came to be understood as the industry’s golden goose, agencies directed more clients toward the movies, and as advertising interest rose so did its influence on films. Media scholar Mark Crispin Miller first noted that films with product placement contained scenes that slowed the pacing to feature products; had more mythic, less complicated heroes; and ended on a happier note. In essence, the films moved closer to the upbeat, singular attitudes of commercial design. These changes were predictable consequences of embedding products in story lines, and they follow the conventions of industry wisdom. Ads must not stand out from the landscape of media, rather, they must be integral parts of entertainment geography. From the early day of commercials on television, broadcast historian
Eric Barnouw detailed the ways in which advertising professionals learned that commercials that diverged in style and content from programs were ineffective at selling products. Since then, media buyers have long demanded what is called programming environments: particular stories and character types that surround the product and its ad campaign with compatible and complimentary messages. In this way viewers and readers are primed to be more susceptible to ads and the symbolic culture that sustains them.

The economic success of broadcasters is dependent on programs that please two different constituencies, ad buyers and TV audiences, whose interests sometimes diverge. Many network professionals attempt to create interesting, independent programming, but productions must be attractive to sponsors who pay the bills. Because ad agencies and their clients make “up front” media buys based on the programs they see, producers know well that shows dove-tailed to sponsors’ wishes garner the highest rates. In these ways, advertisers come to exert enormous influence on programming design. Nowhere is this more evident than with reality shows, in which entire programs are designed by and for advertisers.

**BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT**

Product placement on TV has evolved into what the industry now calls branded entertainment. Media contracts revolve around brand integration deals, a common feature of reality shows. In many of these shows the networks have contracted with task sponsors, or companies willing to pay to have entire episodes built around their products. In its third season, *The Apprentice* built programs around, for instance, Dominos Pizza and Staples. Products were designed and pitched to company executives, and through the entire episode, each show featured brand logos in an all-encompassing corporate environment. Another NBC reality show, *The Restaurant*, contracted with Coors, American Express, and Mitsubishi. The three companies paid the entire production costs of the episodes. In the first show, chef/owner Rocco DiSpirito orders beer, then corrects himself, “Make that Coors beer. Kimberly, do not come back without Coors beer for all these people,” he says. In addition, dialogue with branded content is being dubbed in after filming (Husted 2003). Such practices alter the programs as advertisers influence the scripts, settings and editing process. As one entertainment writer noted, *The Restaurant* has the feel of an infomercial. Such programs might better be called product placement shows because the advertising content is being scripted, with any pretence to reality being in name only. These shows hark back to television of the 1950s when sponsors controlled programming, and illustrate the current merger of entertainment and promotion.

**MAGAZINES**

These precepts hold true to magazines as well, where combining advertising and content has been standard practice. Articles written to augment paid advertising by emphasizing promotional themes or featuring products are called
complimentary copy. When articles are placed on facing pages or used to surround the ad text, they are referred to as adjacencies. Much of magazine content is filled with stories generated from advertising departments as complimentary copy, not from the creative inspirations of editors, or the investigative instincts of reporters. Magazines also carry advertorials and special advertising supplements formatted to look like feature journalism. They hope the format tricks readers into being less critical and more open to the messages. Indeed, many advertisers reject independent story ideas. In addition, magazine and newspaper editors increasingly rely on public relations professionals who represent corporate clients and celebrities who pitch stories and even write copy.

CREATIVE AND EDITORIAL JUDGMENT

Now magazine copy, much like many film scripts, is submitted to ad agencies offering them the chance to find appropriate insertion points for their products. This merging of media content and product promotion has resulted in increasing demands by manufacturers and their agents that content conform to the messages of the advertising. Chrysler publicly announced such economic prior restraint as corporate policy in January 1996. The company's advertising agency sent a letter to magazines carrying its advertising requiring them to submit articles to Chrysler for advanced screening. If the company deemed any editorial content provocative or offensive, it warned, it would pull its advertising.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors prepared a response and on June 30, 1997 sent out an appeal to editors to take a position not to bow to such advertising pressure and to reassert their right to have final authority over the editorial content of their magazines. Milton Glaser, a graphic designer and cofounder of New York magazine, hearing of Chrysler's policies wrote, “Censorship of this kind that acts to curtail the exchange of unpopular ideas is unacceptable for all those who care about human freedom and a healthy democratic society” (Glaser 1997). He added that such a practice “violates our sense of fairness and our notion of how a free press work.” Chrysler Corporation responded with surprise to the protest, saying it was only making public a policy that many other companies practice covertly.

In film as well, advertisers sometimes try and succeed, in shaping content to their demands. The fight over how to end the popular film Jerry Maguire is a case in point. In Jerry Maguire, Tom Cruise stars as a struggling sports agent and Cuba Gooding Jr. plays the lovable football player Rod Tidwell, trying to make it big time. Products such as Coke, Visa, and Reebok are plugged, but the film goes further in its support of advertising. Tidwell's very success is measured by his popularity with advertisers. His career goal is to appear in a Reebok commercial, not on the late-night, low-budget, water-bed pitches that are a sure sign of failure. Reebok's placement in the film led to contentions about creative control, ultimately won by the shoe company. The director cut 47 seconds of Tidwell appearing in a Reebok commercial at the end of the movie. Reebok sued, and when the film aired on Showtime, the pitch had been reinserted. At this point advertisers have enormous control over motion picture plot and dialogue, and
in this case, endings. By the end of 1998 the talented Gooding was pitching Pepsi on TV spots, still in his Tidwell character.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP: MERGERS, CONSOLIDATION, AND TIGHT DIVERSIFICATION

No discussion of how media culture came to be hypercommercial is complete without mentioning the role of corporate mergers and acquisitions, which took place in two significant waves of consolidation in the 1980s and 1990s. Film industry observer Thomas Schatz, documented the 1989 transformation of the structure of the industry, when a total of 414 media deals worth over $42 billion were struck, the most notable being the $14 billion merger of Time Warner. In 1995 another wave hit, setting a record of 644 mergers totaling $70.8 billion. Along with Disney purchasing Cap Cities/ABC, Viacom’s buyout of Blockbuster, and Westinghouse’s merger with CBS, the already massive Time Warner bought Turner broadcasting in a $7.3 billion deal. Among other things, CNN, TNT, and TBS gave the new company broadcast distribution for its vast media products of film and TV series, resulting in the largest media library in existence. Changing copyright ownership led to the mining of the past for commercial purposes, and bits and pieces from old movies, characters and cartoons turned up everywhere from ads to merchandise. Time Warner made spectacular profits with vintage Looney Toons, the revenues for syndication and merchandising of Daffy Duck and his friends reached $3.5 billion in 1996.

Media conglomeration has allowed the mega corporations to practice synergy, another key piece of the expanding commercial mosaic, in which corporations cross-promote their own stars, programs, and merchandise on their media outlets. When Time Warner wanted to own the production and distribution of its TV shows, it started its own TV network, WB. Because teens comprise the biggest consumer market in the music industry, Dawson’s Creek was used to sell the songs and artist signed to Warner Bros. record labels. Paula Cole’s, I Don’t Wanna Wait, became a top 10 single after being featured as the show’s theme song.

Synergy also provides the economic fuel that propels the trend toward huge media franchises, including summer blockbusters. The primary requirement for synergy is capital, which only huge companies have, first to produce the film that forms the epicenter, then to provide the millions needed to drive the marketing force behind it. These multipurpose entertainment/marketing machines then create film franchises that become lengthy promotions for a vast array of licensed tie-in and brand-name consumer products. One narrative can also lead to movie sequels, TV series, music videos, and sound track albums, video games and theme park rides, graphic novels and comic books. Indeed, the first giant step in this direction was the Batman blockbuster. As industry writers like to say, Warner is the Studio that Batman built. Batman was one of the first films to utilize the whole machine of the company, from the marketing to the tie-ins and the merchandising, all building up the momentum needed for international distribution. Films are no longer singular narratives, rather, they are iterations
of entertainment supertexts, multimedia forms that can be expanded and resold almost ad infinitum.

**RETAIL OUTLETS AND MEDIA BRANDS**

*Batman*—the movie, then the industry—inspired the chain of Warner Bros. retail stores, one of the most significant trends in all of this. These new entertainment/commodity facilities, or retail stores feature branded products. Before the deregulation of the 1980s, merchandise tied to TV shows was not allowed because the program would have been, in essence, an extended commercial. Since then (as in the 1950s), the shows that feature the products that children desire so fervently after seeing them on TV, advertise the product for the length of the program. Tying products to TV programs, films, networks, and the cable services on which they appear give media firms distinct brand identities that create new marketing horizons for massive amounts of commodities. Cable channels and broadcast networks alike now strive to be regarded as brands, especially desirable to specific demographic groups targeted by advertisers, especially children who watch Disney and Nickelodeon. Disney now has over 600 retail stores selling branded products, and Time Warner is in hot pursuit with a couple hundred stores. Viacom has also entered the branded retail-marketing venture. It is this latest aspect of the merger/synergy structure that reduces the cultural differences between movies and advertisements, programming and promotion, entertainment and shopping.

As detailed previously, these economic practices also affect content, which is designed to conform to the atmosphere of what some describe as commercialtainment. Disney’s animated film *Hercules* illustrates the close connections between corporate synergy and sympathetic media content. In the Disney story, when Hercules becomes a hero he also becomes an action figure. The cultural icons of his success are prestigious tie-in products, from Air-Hercules sandals to soft drinks, all of which are sold, of course, in their own branded, retail outlet depicted in the film. At the time of the movie’s release, Disney made up the entrance to its store to look like the store in the film, and the tie-in theme park is also depicted in the text of the movie. The movie’s celebration of marketing synergy helps create a cultural attitude in its favor, which helps erase the distinction between cultural narratives, heroes, marketing, and merchandise.

While some critics see supra-narratives that extend and augment across media outlets and formats as constituting a creative realm of media and audience production, other analysts argue that they are indicative of a monolithic media world that crowds out smaller, creative alternatives. Those concerned with the excesses of commercialism argue that such narratives are only successful when they conform to a certain set of requirements, designed to target the highest paying markets. The now standard and highly formulaic action adventure narratives must be hyped with all the advertising that studio money can buy. Because advertising is needed to create the buzz (especially to teen audiences who see movies more than once and buy the tie-in merchandise), spot advertising is now a huge expense for media firms themselves. Such franchises are expensive to make and expensive to advertise, and this is a major
rationale for the mega-media corporation, because only they can afford the risk and costs.

Deregulation allowed TV programs to become advertisements. Industry conglomeration created the synergy needed for transforming the rest of entertainment into merchandise. The economics of media content has influenced programming and movie design in its favor, but it has also led to a type of economic censorship of shows and content that advertisers and corporations object to.

**CBS AND VIACOM: A CASE OF ECONOMIC CENSORSHIP**

As the summer of 2001 drew to a close, in the hot days of August and network reruns, the *New York Times* reported that CBS was shelving several episodes it had planned to rerun of its primetime courtroom drama, *Family Law*. The episodes dealt with the death penalty, abortion, gun control, and interfaith marriage. These are the issues that win or lose presidential elections, they shape public policy, and have enormous impact on personal life. They all represent important controversies, unsettled in the minds of the American public, and the country is in great need of as much public discussion about these matters as possible, whether it is on a fictional drama or nightly news broadcast. The shows were pulled because of advertising pressure from Procter & Gamble; the company deemed the episodes too controversial and threatened to withdraw its commercials. CBS succumbed to the pressure and shelved the episodes.

This incident illustrates the commercial forces at work that often determine which programs are made available to the public, and which are not. The decision to pull the programs was the outcome of these regulatory, economic, and structural changes within the industry. In May 2001, CBS’s parent company Viacom signed a $300 million advertising contract with Procter & Gamble (P&G), the largest advertiser on TV. Conditions of the media buy stipulated that P&G would spend about one-third of its total advertising budget on ads for products such as Oil of Olay, Pantene, and Tide detergent, most to be aired on CBS. In securing the huge revenue source for Viacom, CBS agreed to work with the company on projects suited for its needs. It is common industry knowledge that P&G is careful about the programs that surround its products, and it employs a private screening agency to monitor the episodes of TV programs that carry its commercials.

The contract involving such large sums of advertising dollars was made possible because of the 1999 merger between Viacom and CBS, creating at the time the world’s second largest media corporation. The $80 billion merger, made possible by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, resulted in a vertically integrated company that was allowed to control two TV networks. For the first time in history, TV networks were allowed to own cable systems. Viacom, primarily a cable firm (with a significant library of television classics), could now control TV networks. In addition, previous regulation limited a single company from owning TV stations that reached over 25 percent of the national audience, but after 1996 the maximum audience percentage was raised to 35. Even with the increase the CBS/Viacom deal was over the limit, yet the FCC allowed the merger to take place.
One of the economic incentives for mega media corporations is the ability to secure the largest portion of national advertising revenue. CBS had learned these strategies with their radio properties soon after the Telecommunications Act. Robert McChesney reported that by September 1997, after quickly purchasing the new legal limit of radio stations (eight in a single market), CBS became one of three companies that controlled more than 80 percent of the ad revenues in about half of the top 50 markets. These station monopolies allow companies to corner national advertising, but result in a less competitive, less diverse market system. Independent stations cannot acquire the high-paying national clients, and smaller advertisers cannot obtain the same rates bought by big-time commercial buyers. Massive ad buys of the kind made by P&G result in fewer alternatives for broadcasters if a major sponsor threatens to pull its commercials. That is exactly what happened at CBS. The summer rerun period is not known for high ratings. The threat made by P&G carried weight because it was to sponsor four commercials for the single episode. Replacing those would not be easy for an August rebroadcast.

But CBS had reason not to pull the hour-long drama. It was the only one in the series nominated that year for an Emmy Award, television’s highest honor. Dana Delany, playing a single mother whose son is shot by the gun she owns, was nominated for a guest-actress award. Networks routinely rerun their Emmy-nominated programs in August because voting is still taking place. The willingness to pressure the network might have been more understandable had the program been unbalanced, but the episode presented both sides. While dramatizing the often-tragic outcome of gun ownership, the law firm in the series nevertheless defends the mother’s right to own a gun.

This incident became the topic of news because the award-nominated actress herself drew attention to the incident. But in this era of media consolidation, the press has not done an admirable job of reporting on industry conglomeration. When mergers occur, problems are downplayed and there is little public discussion. Tom Brokaw’s terse statement about the CBS/Viacom deal is illustrative of the coverage. “What does that mean for the average viewer? Well, probably not very much” (Action Alert 1999).

PRESSURES ON THE PRESS

Nonfiction programming, news and information have not been insulated from the consequences of megacorporate ownership and hypercommercialism. Hard-hitting investigations that challenge corporate practices, power, and wealth are rare in this media environment that continually promotes consumption. It has long been understood that even though media organizations are large profit-making organization, information and uninhibited public debate are so essential for democracy that they should be insulated from commercial pressures. This is often referred to as the division between church (the editorial division of a company) and state (the rest of the corporation and its business practices). Media managers and owners have offered congressional testimony confirming this separation. But researchers have documented troubling cases where promotion,
entertainment, and other profit-making priorities have crossed the line into news divisions and affected editorial decisions (see “The Suit against NBC” sidebar).

FOX NEWS AND MONSANTO

One case illustrates these concerns. In December 1996 investigative reporters Steve Wilson and Jane Akre were hired by Fox 13 in Tampa Bay to do hard-hitting local reporting. They quickly uncovered a story critical of Monsanto, the largest agrochemical company, the second largest seed company, and the fourth largest pharmaceutical company in the world, and a main advertiser on the Fox Network nationally. Monsanto produces a synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH) marketed under the name Prosilac. Prosilac is banned in Canada and Europe because of its links to cancers of the colon, breast, and prostate, and the bacterial and antibiotic residues left in milk. Akre found that virtually all milk sold in Florida came from cows injected with Prosilac, and even though labeling is required, consumers were not being informed. After two months of investigation, the reporters produced a news report. But the story was pulled (Wilson 1998). As the incident became well-known among First Amendment scholars and critics, they found that Monsanto was a client of Actmedia, an advertising firm also owned by Rupert Murdoch, who owns NewsCorp, the parent company of Fox News. The case raised concerns about the decreasing number of companies that control the media, and their willingness to protect corporate interest instead of informing the public.

MARKET JOURNALISM

The overall negative effects on journalism are multifaceted and come from a combination of commercial factors. Editor-at-large of the Columbia Journalism
Hypercommercialism

Review, Neil Hickey has tracked newsroom developments and he makes the following points: editors pull back coverage of major advertisers to protect ad revenue. They work with marketers, advertisers and promotion experts on story ideas, collapsing church and state, and losing editorial independence. They acquiesce to shrinking news holes that augment the bottom line. Executives cut budgets to satisfy demands for higher profit margins and fail to reinvest in training, support, staff and equipment. Taken together, according to Hickey, these things constitute the “fatal erosion of the ancient bond between journalists and the public” (Hickey 1998).

At the same time, journalists and critics alike have lamented the changes in serious news reporting (Koppel 1997). They point to newsmagazines and other nonfiction fare produced in entertainment divisions and designed to compete for ratings, which use dramatic production techniques, such as intense and mysterious soundtracks to tell theatrical tales and juicy plots of murder and mayhem. Such ratings-boosting fare offers distraction and visceral responses in a world becoming more complicated and less comprehensible.

Most disturbing is the habitual suppression of an entire terrain of information deemed unacceptable to corporate business interests. A conglomerate such as Disney has declined to allow ABC news to cover conditions at its theme parks, and the company is not eager to air stories that detail the conditions under which Teletubbies are made. Few investigative reports show Chinese workers toiling up to 16 hours a day for less than two dollars to make the merchandise sold in Disney’s retail outlets. And with the shared directorates between Time Warner and Chevron Corp., it is no wonder that Chevron’s role in the destruction of Nigerian wetlands was identified as a censored news story by Peter Philips and Project Censored. From information about faulty and unhealthy products, to the human and environmental consequences of some corporate practices, critical information is harder to find outside the Internet and alternative media outlets. Critics charge that news produced in the age of hypercommercialism increasingly reflects the interests of the wealthy few that own and advertise on the media.

CONCLUSION

The current reliance of commercialtainment of all sorts, and the branding and merchandising of programs and media companies alike, together with programming pressures from advertisers and their agents, are the result of media conglomerations and corporate friendly regulatory decisions. These changes have raised fundamental questions about democracy and the First Amendment. For fictional fare, as creators lose production independence, the singularly positive portrayals of products and corporate sponsors should not be considered programming in the public interest, but uniquely beneficial to commercial interests. At times, corporate interests are at odds with consumer needs and the public’s right to be informed. Analysts wonder if this increasingly hypercommercialized landscape can serve the democratic needs of the public. If not, can the course be changed in a direction able to reenvision a more inclusive, less commercial communication system?
See also Advertising and Persuasion; Alternative Media in the United States; Branding the Globe; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Internet and its Radical Potential; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Reform; Media Watch Groups; Minority Media Ownership; Product Placement; Ratings; Reality Television; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; TiVo; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; Video News Releases; Women's Magazines.


Robin Andersen
INDEPENDENT CINEMA: THE MYTH AND NECESSITY OF DISTINCTION

In discussing film, production personnel, fans, and critics alike regularly distinguish between “mainstream cinema” and “independent cinema.” If judged by economical, ideological, or aesthetic parameters only, though, it does not make sense to have film history, or parts of it, split up between films that are purportedly independent from corporate or government influence, and films that are reputedly fully manufactured and designed through commerce and policy. In every one of the former cases, there are some “big money” strings somewhere; and in every of the latter cases, there is some room for autonomy. Yet the distinction constantly reappears throughout debates on cinema. What, then, is behind this distinction, why is it so persistent, and what is independent cinema?

The mainstream–independent distinction is one of cinema’s most enduring frames of reference. Precisely because of its power, which is largely rhetorical, it is an instrument of debate used to support arguments about historical and contemporary developments in the economics, ideologies, and aesthetics of cinema. In that sense, the distinction between independent cinema and mainstream cinema is both mythical and necessary. It is mythical, because in the same way myths underscore cultural histories and ideologies as foundational stories, the repeated and continuously updated use of the mainstream–independent cinema distinction underscores beliefs about what cinema is and should be. And it is necessary because such myths not only inform but actually enable the historiography of cinema, its policies, and its practice. As with all belief systems, even if the distinction itself is questionable, the actions in its name are important in creating everyday understandings of film and media practice.
THE BATTLEFIELD METAPHOR

Definitions of mainstream and/or independent cinema often appear futile; every attempt presents an easy target for refutation, leaving us with a battlefield of opinions and discussions, and it is precisely in this battlefield metaphor that the opportunities for a meaningful approach to the distinction mainstream—inddependent lie.

Mainstream cinema occupies the high ground on the battlefield—its position is unquestioned. While perhaps no one has a surefire definition of what constitutes mainstream cinema, it is safe to say that not too many people seem to care. Debates about kinds of mainstream cinema aside (like blockbusters), and debates around certain kinds of genres like drama or romance exempted, it appears that mainstream cinema seems pretty well understood in a common sense. It is formulaic, commercial, top-down, and centralized-control driven (especially in terms of budget and planning), and it aims for wide distribution in order to entertain the largest common denominator of audiences. The general ease with which descriptions like this are accepted for mainstream cinema is probably the result of “mainstream” being a “center-position,” a position in a debate that is seen as the norm. It is considered evident and self-explanatory, motivated, confident, and secure. In terms of our battlefield metaphor, it is on top of an elevation, in plain sight, overseeing the grounds—static, but in charge.

Independent cinema, on the other hand, occupies the “outsider-position.” It is hidden in the bushes, moving like a band of guerrillas, sneaky and swift, but also outnumbered, divisive, and internally divided. Practitioners of cinema cannot seem to agree what “independent” means, but they all refer to it as some kind of “counterforce.” For James Mangold, “independent” signifies an attitude “against the system, against the grain.” Kevin Smith uses a negative definition: “Can this movie ever be made in a studio? If you say no, then that’s an independent film.” Ted Demme invokes a degree of individuality: “If it’s personal to a director, then it’s an independent.” For Nancy Savoca, it is a mindset: “Independent film is really a way of thinking.” And for Alan Rudolph the term is useless: “If you’re truly independent, then no one can really categorize you and your film can’t be pigeonholed”—hence it cannot be called anything, and certainly not “independent.” Academics and critics also appear to struggle with the term. For Emmanuel Levy, independent cinema is characterized by two disguises it can switch between: independent financing, or independent spirit. For Jonathan Rosenbaum, independent means being able to intervene at crucial stages, like having “final cut” over your film. For Geoff King, independent cinema covers a range of practices, hovering in between nonindustrial cinema (like handcrafted avant-garde films) and Hollywood’s centralized mode of production. It is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to see all of these attempts to describe a dynamic, constantly moving concept as similar to reconnaissance work: trying to map what’s out there, without really capturing it.

As anyone who has ever played chess, Stratego, or Risk knows, battles are about momentum. All the directors, academics, and critics mentioned above can be seen as describing parts, moving fragments of a broader “independent”
opposition to the mainstream. This is how we may need to approach the distinction: mainstream cinema is the largest force on the field, and independent cinema gets the attention because of the inventiveness of its movements.

INDEPENDENT CINEMA: A TIMELINE

1909—Formation of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPCC), founding the industrial organization of standardized film production.
1909—Carl Laemmle starts the Independent Motion Picture (IMP) Company and lures Florence Lawrence and later Mary Pickford to become his stars, “IMP girls.”
1912—MPPC patent infringement lawsuit against IMP fails; Hollywood becomes America’s main film production center.
1909–18—Installation of Hollywood’s major studios, with strong connections to exhibition and distribution.
1919—Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene) and the start of the European avant-garde.
1928—Un chien andalou (Luis Buñuel) ignites surrealist cinema.
1945—Rome, Open City (Roberto Rossellini), the start of Italian neo-realism.
1946—Launch of the Cannes Film Festival.
1948—The “Paramount” decision, declaring illegal vertical integration of studios.
1959—Independent cinema and the new wave: A bout de souffle (Jean-Luc Godard), Les 400 coups (François Truffaut), Les cousins (Claude Chabrol), and Hiroshima Mon Amour (Alain Resnais) set off the French new wave.
1959—High points of independent exploitation cinema: A Bucket of Blood (Roger Corman), Plan Nine from Outer Space (Ed Wood).
1960—Start of campus film societies throughout the United States.
1963—Breakthrough of the American underground: Scorpio Rising (Kenneth Anger), Flaming Creatures (Jack Smith), Blow Job (Andy Warhol).
1967–69—The influence of Roger Corman: Wild Angels, The Trip, Bonnie and Clyde (Arthur Penn), Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda), Who’s That Knocking at My Door? (Martin Scorsese), Targets (Peter Bogdanovich).
1972—Porn chic: Deep Throat (Gerard Damiano), Emmanuelle (Just Jaeckin), Heat (Paul Morrissey), Score (Radley Metzger).
1975–76—High point of the midnight movies circuit: El Topo (Alejandro Jodorowsky), Hooper), The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Jim Sharman), Salo (Pier Paolo Pasolini), Eraserhead (David Lynch), Shivers (David Cronenberg).
1976—Tax laws in several countries hit independent cinema exhibition.
THREE MOMENTS OF MOMENTUM

There are, largely, three moments in the history of cinema in which discussions over the distinction mainstream–independent have determined how we understand film and its relationship to culture: (1) the period around World War I, stretching out into the 1920s as far as the advent of sound, when Hollywood installed itself as the center of commercial filmmaking; (2) the late 1950s, stretching out into the 1970s, when the French nouvelle vague set the tone for a new framework in which auteurs (usually directors) became a pivotal mechanism of discussions of cinema; (3) and the late 1980s/early 1990s, stretching out across the 1990s, in which American independent cinema evolved from a single-person endeavor into a close and often comfortable alliance with mainstream Hollywood—encapsulated in that fashionable hybrid term: “Indiewood.”

Before we examine each in turn, though, first a qualification: it is a gross generalization to claim that outside these three moments the distinction was not present, or relevant. The moments in film history that fall outside the three key ones remain relevant, as points of inspiration of resistance. For instance, early 1930s exploitation cinema, in and around Hollywood, can safely be regarded as relating as much to the mainstream–independent distinction as any other moment, as the production and reception histories of Dracula, Frankenstein, Freaks, King Kong, and less reputable films testify. Another qualification relates to the institutionalization of the term “independent.” While the term “mainstream” is equally elusive, it is frequently employed, unproblematically so. But “independent” seems, by its very nature of “outsidership,” to be asking for challenge. The three moments explored in more detail here have all consciously employed the label “independent” or “indie” as a trademark term to identify parties during a certain period. In each case, the term originated as a resistance against what was perceived as a monopolistic situation. But in each case it remained active even when the situation had changed dramatically, and “independents” seemed to have become very much like the institution they resisted.
**Moment 1: Early Cinema and Hollywood (1909–18)**

If we judge, as Tom Gunning does, early cinema to be a “cinema of attractions” in which it is the prime interest of films to attract spectators, then this applies to both mainstream and independent cinema. In the case of mainstream cinema, it means there is space to lay the foundations for formulaic but robust patterns through which audiences can be entertained, shocked, or humored—in other words, there is a space for an industry. According to Georges Sadoul, 1909 marked an important moment in this industrialization, when representatives of the world’s major patent holders, distributors, and producers (Pathé, Eastman, Edison, and others) met to discuss conditions for controlling the movie business, and formed the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) trust to regulate it. No sooner than its installation, exhibitors and rogue producers tried to circumvent and resist the MPPC’s efforts, and, calling themselves “independents,” they moved productions out of reach of the MPPC’s areas of control to the geographical fringes of established production areas (such as California, Canada, Belgium, the Balkans, and Latin America).

The appeal of the independents’ adventurous use of technology, scenery, and personnel and their “crazy” attitude quickly made them audience favorites, and led to the move to Hollywood and the installation of the star system (Florence Lawrence and Mary Pickford becoming “IMP girls,” as one slogan had it—IMP standing for Independent Motion Pictures, later to become Universal). By the end of World War I, the independents had managed to establish wide networks of exhibition and distribution that cornered the market, and led to the classical Hollywood studio system. As one critic said after the birth of United Artists: “The patients are taking over the asylum.”

By the mid-1920s, the former independents had become the mainstream, and a new resistance rose, this time against them. It consisted of cine-clubs, political networks (especially in Europe), and avant-garde movements (like surrealism). While this new resistance never declared itself “independent” (it rather saw itself as serving “greater” needs), it did form significant inspiration for a second moment.

**Moment 2: Art House, Exploitation, and the New Waves (1959–75)**

By the late 1950s, a new opportunity arose for a public debate over the distinction between mainstream and independent cinema—alternatives to mainstream became visible and desirable again. World War II had destroyed much of Europe’s commercial cinema (with notable exceptions, like the United Kingdom), and the 1948 “Paramount decision” had declared Hollywood’s vertical integration of production, distribution, and exhibition illegal. European art-house films (like Rossellini’s *Rome, Open City*), and U.S.-grown exploitation movies, like those from Roger Corman’s AIP (American Independent Pictures), profited from the opening, and gradually, in bits and pieces, grew into an alternative for mainstream cinema. The 1959 breakthrough of the French “nouvelle vague,” which combined art-house and exploitation elements, gave that development...
momentum, and publicized it as a new boom of independent production that favored auteur-led enterprises—as Jean-Luc Godard noted, “Tout est possible.” Of the many factors facilitating the momentum, the most significant were a vibrant exhibition circuit—comprising festivals, art-house theaters, midnight movies, grindhouses, drive-ins, clubhouses, and campus societies—and an equally vivid film press, encompassing liberal criticism as well as widely available fan magazines and underground publications.

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, it guaranteed visibility and continuity to auteur and independent alternative cinema. It gave Corman the opportunity to offer chances to young talents like Francis Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma, Jack Nicholson, Robert De Niro, Jonathan Demme, Stephanie Rothman, and Peter Fonda; it enabled awards, and success, for the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, Bernardo Bertolucci, Akira Kurosawa, and Rainer-Werner Fassbinder; it created networks of support for revolutionary “Third World Cinema,” shaking off cultural colonialism (Cuban cinema, Cinema Novo, even Canadian cinema); it turned obscure underground fare like Flaming Creatures, Scorpio Rising, Eraserhead, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, and Andy Warhol’s films, into international cult phenomena, and it was lenient and permissive towards films testing the boundaries of taste and decency (like Plan 9 from Outer Space, Sins of the Fleshapoids, Emmanuelle, Deep Throat, and Salo)—if nothing else, it established independent cinema’s “cult appeal” as a prime source of attraction for audiences.

By the late 1970s, though, much of the momentum was lost, interrupted, or destroyed by stringent new tax laws (against exhibitors mainly), a recovery of New Hollywood (fuelled by some of the Corman babes, and quick in recuperating independent genres like horror and science fiction), economic crises, and contra-democratic backlashes curtailing emergent cinemas.


It is fashionable to claim that the wave of independent cinema called “indie” from the late 1980s throughout the 1990s was incorporated in the mainstream movie business so quickly that it is no more than a blip in the wider scheme of cinema history, a hit-and-run if we stick to our battleground metaphor. But as hit-and-runs come, this one left permanent traces. Gaining momentum since the late 1980s, when, seemingly coincidentally, films without any industry backup to speak of, by young filmmakers unaffiliated with the trench warfare of Hollywood (or similar industries in India, Hong-Kong, or Mexico), or centralized state funding (especially in the European Union, Canada, or Australia) enjoyed success and acclaim. For once, the underlying common thread did not seem to be exhibition or distribution, but a cultural aesthetic: these were films that shared styles and concerns with their audiences. Steven Soderbergh’s Cannes prize-winner Sex, Lies, and Videotape is usually seen as its symptomatic flag-bearer: small-sized, ironic, immoral, self-reflexive, hip and cool, stylish, hedonistic, noncommitted, challenging (or confusing) gender roles, and filled with doubt and angst.
Before long, the “indies” became associated with the cultural sensitivities of a young and disillusioned post–baby boomer generation, Generation-X: AIDS, paranoia, ennui, rock music, and the impossibility to find true love and meaning in life on a wasted planet. Until 1994, at least, there was no mistaking the momentum of this wave, as evidenced by the films of Hal Hartley, Quentin Tarantino, Richard Linklater, Gus Van Sant, Alyson Anders, Kevin Smith, Todd Haynes, and veterans like Jim Jarmusch, David Lynch, or the Coen Brothers. Nor was it limited to the United States. The films of Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Pedro Almodovar, Aki Kaurismaaki, Lars Von Trier, the French renaissances of Belgian émigré Chantal Akerman and Polish immigrant Krzysztof Kieslowski, Cyril Collard’s Les nuits fauves, Eric Rochant’s Un monde sans pitié, and multiple others all seemed imbued with the same sensibilities. The new “indie” momentum nurtured liberal political efforts, and Anders’s, Rozema’s, and Akerman’s contributions to feminist cinema are a good example of its acute awareness of cultural politics. Next to that, “indies” harbored black, queer, and gay and lesbian cinema of liberation, whose aesthetics of parody, self-awareness, and activist audience role of “reading against the grain” (queering cinema) it encouraged. The films of John Singleton, Spike Lee, Gregg Araki, or Nicole Cohn are integral parts of that effort.

But even as this sort of new liberation rose to prominence, it got tangled up in a sort of middle ground in which its progress was compromised—much faster than any previous independent “wave.” Allen J. Scott sees the emergence of a tripartite system of film production, distribution, and consumption as the main cause for this. Up until the 1990s, the realms of independent and mainstream cinema could, at least theoretically, be clearly separated. But since then, synergies, franchising, branching, and multiplatform collaborations had turned the wasteland in between the two (the terrain in between the mainstream’s top of the hill, and the independents’ bushy lowlands) into a separate area of convergence. Production and distribution companies like Miramax, festivals like Sundance, awards like the Césars, and the Méliès network of genre festivals in Europe all operate in between the two poles, like Bertold Brecht’s Mother Courage trying to stop the war but ultimately extending it, and increasingly becoming a force in their own right—it even got a name: Indiewood, and it was, again, Steven Soderbergh who was seen as symptomatic of its development. Commentators differ over when exactly Indiewood brought down the “indies,” and some argue that its momentum is still alive, surviving the tripartite distinction.

CONCLUSION

With the confusion surrounding the third moment of momentum of “independent” fresh in the public’s mind, all debate over whether or not true independent cinema actually exists is conflated and convoluted—impossible to determine amidst the mists on the battlefield. If we try to look to the history of “independent” cinema, it is, however, possible to observe several moments in which, if not the actual existence of “independent” cinema itself, then at least very heated debates about and beliefs in its existence, can be identified. And that is, after all, what
matters: the distinction between independent and mainstream cinema has offered so much food for thought and discussion that its place in the discourse of cinema history and theory is undeniable.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Cultural Appropriation; The DVD; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Online Digital Film and Television; World Cinema.


Ernest Mathijs

INNOVATION AND IMITATION IN COMMERCIAL MEDIA

Popular media are often condemned for being repetitive, formulaic, and lacking originality. How accurate are such accusations, or might popular culture be a bit more complex than this generalization? How do innovations emerge from a system of formulas and imitation? And why would so many people find pleasure in media that seem to only offer “more of the same”?

One of the most frequent ways that critics decry a lack of quality and value in popular culture is by accusing mass media of being overly formulaic and repetitive. Such critiques are based on some underlying assumptions: originality is the most valued element of culture, imitation is a sign of creative poverty driven by the industrial nature of popular culture, and true enjoyment can only stem from innovative cultural expressions. While this hierarchy privileging creative originality over formulaic repetition is so widespread to be almost common sense, the actual history of cultural forms suggests that there is a more complex interplay between the processes of innovation and imitation that complicates these basic assumptions.
**THE CRITIQUE OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY**

The most profound and influential critique of the imitative nature of popular culture can be attributed to a group of mid-twentieth-century critics typically labeled the Frankfurt School, especially in the work of Theodor Adorno. For Adorno and his colleagues, all of American popular culture—which at the time referred to commercial radio, early Hollywood film, and jazz and popular music as components of a total “culture industry”—was not only perceived as low in aesthetic value, but also contributed to social control and oppression. They believed that popular culture had a numbing, pacifying effect upon its consumers, dulling their critical abilities and potentially enabling the rise of a fascist regime or the continued exploitation of the working class. Adorno offered still-relevant critiques of the standardization of cultural forms, the impact of “pre-digested” media requiring no mental or emotional engagement for consumers, and the “pseudo-individuality” of popular culture that appeared to offer something new. While it is easy to dismiss their broad generalizations as extremely elitist and lacking an understanding of the diversity of popular culture, the Frankfurt School’s critical impulse to view popular media as part of a politically dominating culture industry remains powerful and prevalent for media critics decades after their initial writings.

**STRATEGIES OF COMMERCIAL CREATIVITY**

For many critics of mass culture, there is an inherent conflict between commercial goals and creativity. Within commercial mass media, all decisions are driven, at least in part, by financial and profit motivations. Television networks, film studios, music labels, or other parts of the media industry will rarely invest in creating and distributing a cultural product that they believe will lose money, as such companies must ultimately turn a profit to remain in business. Media industries always consider how a new product fits into established trends, taps into well-known traditions, or offers something familiar to an audience. However, they also realize that merely offering an identical product will not meet consumer demands—people do not want to buy a CD, watch a show, or go see a film that is an exact copy of what they already know. Creating commercially successful mass media involves a delicate balance of offering something familiar along with something new, an alchemy of innovation and imitation.

Cultural industries and the creators working in commercial media rely on many strategies for blending innovation and imitation. *Formula* is a broad and disparaging term, but every medium establishes standards and norms that audiences come to expect. For instance, most media have standard lengths, as pop songs are a few minutes long, television episodes fit 30- and 60-minute timeslots, and feature films run for around two hours. *Genres* are crucial categories that offer assumed structures, themes, styles, imagery, and desired reactions—audiences know what to expect when they watch a sitcom or listen to a country song, and industries try to meet those expectations by adhering to genre conventions. Formulas and genres not only guide the creation of commercial culture, but are used to promote and market new works, reaching out to established audiences.
looking to find something new but not too different from their established tastes. For critics skeptical of commercial culture, formulas and genres are recipes to limit creativity and innovation, restricting cultural expression to predefined standards and limited possibilities.

Another strategy of commercial culture is to build explicitly upon previous success, such as the widespread proliferation of sequels, prequels, remakes, spin-offs, and clones across media. In the contemporary media landscape, most media production occurs within a few conglomerated corporations that use synergy as a strategy to maximize the profits of any successful content across their various media holdings. Thus, a successful comic book like *Batman* will spawn cross-media incarnations across the landscape of the Warner Bros. corporation, spawning feature films, musical soundtracks, animated television adaptations, stories in news magazines, video games, and any other media properties that might tap into the property’s established fan base and name recognition. For many critics, such cross-media cloning dominates and crowds out the creative marketplace, eliminating more original works that might not work as well as a video game or action figure.

Other media productions present themselves as original and new works, but use a logic of recombination, merging established precedents into new examples—*CSI* combines the detective procedural from *Law & Order* with the scientific investigation from medical dramas, and then spawned a full franchise of spin-off programs mimicking the original formula. And some cultural products do not even hide their lack of originality, as with the proliferation of pop starlets and boy bands who do not deny how they are created by the industry to mimic previous hit makers, with televised programs like *American Idol* and *Making the Band* documenting the imitative process at work. While critics of a more traditionalist perspective see such artificial practices of manufactured celebrity and mass-produced fame as vulgar and distasteful, many viewers and listeners embrace such examples, explicitly embracing the machinery of imitation and the culture industry. Is this a new phenomenon unique to the contemporary media landscape?

**The Cycle of Imitation**

Innovations and imitations tend to cycle through commercial media. We can look at the case of reality television in America for an example of a cycle of innovation and imitation at work. Traditionally, prime-time television has offered either fictional scripted programming or public affairs offerings of news and documentaries. In the summer of 2000, CBS aired *Survivor* to surprising ratings success, triggering a wave of reality programs across the prime-time schedule. *Survivor* itself was not a fully original offering, as it was a remake of a Swedish program, and the reality format itself had clear precedents in the game show genre and with earlier programs like *The Real World* and *Cops*. Yet once CBS struck ratings gold through this innovative recombination of previous programming and Americanization of European formats, all networks and cable channels began to imitate *Survivor* under the new label of “reality television.” Many subsequent programs emerged by remaking European hits (like *The Mole* and *American Idol*), or by combining *Survivor*’s competitive elimination structure
in new scenarios (like *The Amazing Race* or *The Bachelor*). Often such genre cycles emerge quickly in response to an innovative hit, but flame out from oversaturation of imitations that fail to capture the pleasures of the original. Certainly many of these reality television imitations were short-lived, pale comparisons to what appealed to viewers initially about *Survivor*, but many offered new pleasures and potential ways for audiences to engage with a form of programming that felt innovative, even if it was developed through imitation. Thus despite the predictions of critics and many industry executives in 2000, the reality television trend has persisted for years, becoming a new staple of prime-time programming across the world.

### A HISTORY OF IMITATION

While many critics decry today’s media industries as nothing more than a factory for creating identically shallow cultural products, a more careful look at the relationship between creativity and imitation complicates this simple condemnation. Throughout the history of literature, music, and other art forms, imitation has been a central facet of creative expression. The early landmarks of Western culture, Greek drama and poetry, were nearly all retellings of well-known myths and histories, not original creations emerging from a singular creative genius. Shakespeare based nearly all of his plays on other dramatic works and historical myths, making each masterpiece in some way an “imitation” of a previous work. Classical music is similarly based upon a number of established “formulas” for structuring works, adhering to dance forms or building upon a previous composer’s themes and styles. Renaissance art offered “remakes” of the same Biblical and historical scenes, and the model of artistic apprenticeship encouraged artists to learn to imitate and “clone” previous works and styles. In these examples, artistry arises not from sheer originality, but through the ability to express preestablished forms and stories in new ways, offering innovation through combination and alteration, not the singular creation of unique and unprecedented works.

Popular culture similarly thrives on this logic of imitation yielding creativity. Popular music legends like the Beatles and the Who built upon preexisting forms of blues and rock ‘n’ roll to offer something new in the way they adapted well-established models into their own style, later incorporating external influences like Indian music and operatic structures. Film masterpieces like *The Godfather* series revisited the traditions of gangster films, but inflected them with ideas about American immigration and capitalist business models—just as *The Sopranos* reworked *The Godfather* mythos by incorporating elements of suburban family drama and psychoanalysis. The entire musical genre of hip-hop is based upon a process of building upon previous works through the act of sampling, resulting in creative reworkings of an entire history of music through an aesthetic of remixing, imitation, and commentary. These and many other truly innovative examples of popular culture offer creativity as *synthetic*, building upon established models and traditions, not a romantic myth of originality detached from previous cultural works.

Instead of being directly opposed to innovation, imitation might be seen as a complementary process, present within nearly all modes of creative practice.
In fact, pure innovations that wildly diverge from existing norms and traditions are often difficult for audiences to understand and respond to, as they seem too detached from the cultural expectations that go along with any medium. Such radical innovations rarely emerge in commercial culture, belonging to an avant-garde aesthetic that addresses a narrow and elite niche of media consumers. More influential innovations come from reworking the well-known and common elements of our shared popular culture, whether it is *Fargo*’s playful take on crime film conventions or the thematic mixture of teen drama and horror film in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

**THE PLEASURES OF IMITATION**

Why might audiences seek out cultural forms that are overtly imitative rather than original forms? One key motivation is to manage expectations, as a viewer wants to anticipate what they’ll encounter in something new—we want to know when we see a film whether we are likely to laugh at or be scared by the events on the screen. Likewise, we take comfort in knowing that a television episode will offer a short narrative to be resolved by the end of the hour, guaranteeing storytelling closure following expected conventions. Even beyond genre and structural expectations, there is a distinct pleasure to be had in viewing the familiar and comfortable, knowing that something new will resemble other pleasurable experiences. People become fans of a certain genre or style, coming to appreciate the nuances and subtle differences between similar programs or songs—for a fan of dance music, romance novels, slasher films, or soap operas, there are tremendous distinctions between different examples of what might seem mere clones to a novice audience member. Finally, creators and audiences both enjoy working within the parameters of conventions, exploring how media can simultaneously adhere to established structures and offer something new within the confines of genres and formulas.

Innovation and imitation are thus not mutually exclusive practices, nor can we view one as innately more valuable or pleasurable than the other. However, we can not deny that many imitations in popular media, perhaps even the majority of them, are failures, falling short of their object of mimicry and offering nothing creative beyond the act of cloning. But we cannot attribute such failures to the imitative process itself, as many original innovations fail as well, offering new ideas and forms that cannot deliver on their ambitions or meet audience expectations. Both innovation and imitation have important roles to play both within the creative process and the way that consumers engage with popular culture. As creators, consumers, and critics, we need to think carefully about the balance between these two impulses, and recognize the important roles that both practices offer to our understanding, appreciation, and critical analysis of commercial media, not reducing imitation and innovation to a simplistic hierarchy of value.

See also Cultural Appropriation; Hypercommercialism; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Ratings; Reality Television; Runaway Productions and the
Globalization of Hollywood; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; World Cinema.


Jason Mittell

INTERNET AND ITS RADICAL POTENTIAL

As cyberspace becomes interwoven with the developmental life of individuals, their cultures, and their societies, the Internet increasingly coordinates and structures communications. Social scientists and humanities researchers debate how and whether the Internet reinforces existing power relationships, or frees up sociality from entrenched controls. This article offers a social history of the Internet. In the process, it explores the Internet’s “radical potential” for transformative social change.

Networking and electronic messaging lay on the fringes of geek subculture for decades before the Internet introduced cyberspace to American consumer culture. The Internet was once the esoteric domain of information scientists working in the U.S. military industrial complex in the 1960s. Its subsequent exploration and development by visionary technologists with communitarian ideals (the so-called New Communalists) exposed some radical potentials of networking for communications. However, the takeover of the Internet by consolidated media and telecom companies threatens to transform the Internet into another mass media platform.

OPEN NETWORKS BASED IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGIES

The early Internet was developed to be a “dead man’s switch” for nuclear retaliation against a first strike by the USSR. Military, industrial, and academic collaborations on early digital networking supported the Internet’s development. The stockpiling and preparation of a continual nuclear deterrent was at the center of the U.S. Cold War strategy. After 1953, both the United States and the Soviet Union maintained thermonuclear weapons deliverable via bombers, and later, via intercontinental ballistic missiles. The tenuous balance of the peace hinged upon the deterrent effect of a “mutually assured destruction” (MAD)
that would be reliably delivered by the opponent’s returned strike. But, owing to false alarms, technical malfunctions, and deficiencies in the AT&T network that made fail-safe communications unworkable, MAD was a giant accident waiting to happen. The command and control system needed strong reliability that could be provided by digital communications networks.

**DARPA**

The United States created the Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA and DARPA) in 1958 to develop responses to the Sputnik satellite launch by the USSR. ARPANET was the prototype of today’s Internet, and adopted packet switching in 1973 for creating “interlinking packet networks” (Cerf, n.d.). This project developed TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) and IP (Internet Protocol), the system of basic protocols for the Internet, around which new protocols are still developed. The ARPANET and the early electronic data networks bypassed the vulnerabilities of the circuit-switched, analog AT&T telephone system. “Packet switching” broke up continuous messages into standardized chunks, and distributed them through the network in a more efficient way that also provided a more reliable alternative to circuit-switched telecommunications systems available through AT&T. The best feature of the ARPANET was that the system could continue to operate even if a portion of the network was disabled or destroyed. Technically, today’s Internet is an elaboration of ARPANET—a software protocol and communications convention for passing standardized packets of data across heterogeneous and interconnected computer networks.

DARPA’s mission was, and remains, “to assure that the U.S. maintains a lead in applying state-of-the-art technology for military capabilities and to prevent technological surprise from her adversaries” (DARPA 2003). DARPA cultivates flat organization, flexible roles, “autonomy and freedom from bureaucratic impediments,” technical and scientific expertise, and managers who “have always been freewheeling zealots in pursuit of their goals” (DARPA 2006). The ARPANET’s development as an information-sharing system, in addition to being a command-and-control system, reflects DARPA’s culture of sharing information. J.C.R. Licklider of MIT envisioned a knowledge management project in 1962 that he called the “Galactic Network” that could be enabled through networking: As Barry Leiner and colleagues (2006) explain, “He envisioned a globally interconnected set of computers through which everyone could quickly access data and programs from any site.” Licklider and others contributed to the notion of hypertext that was already behind Vannevar Bush’s notion of the “memex” machine.

**PACKET SWITCHING**

Paul Baran, an innovator in packet switching, explains that the ARPANET was not designed merely to survive a first strike by the USSR, nor just to carry the launch orders for a retaliatory second strike against the USSR, but to convince the Soviet military leaders that a reliable and automatic mechanism existed to
deliver the retaliation. The creation of redundant paths for packets to reach intended receivers, even if a part of the network is disabled, was the feature of the ARPANET that made it superior to circuit switching on the telephony model. The techniques of open network architectures and signaling were debated publicly by technologists at ARPA and the RAND Corporation (a U.S. defense contractor), in hopes that the Soviets would learn of the U.S. system and also adopt it. In other words, in spite of the paranoia and secrecy surrounding the Cold War military industrial complex, “our whole plan, the concept of packet switching and all the details, was wide open. Not only did Rand publish it, they sent it to all the repository laboratories around the world” (Baran, in Brand 2001).

MOVING BEYOND THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The Internet’s growth beyond the military industrial complex was spurred by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), which subsidized connectivity for research universities and other knowledge centers while providing linkages for international networks. The NSFNET “backbone” that was designed to carry bulk Internet traffic was initiated in 1986 and added onto later by NASA and the Department of Energy. International networks such as NORDUNET, BITNET, and EARN connected European academic institutions. BITNET merged with other academic networks into the Corporation for Research and Educational Networking (CREN). Consortia arrangements developed independently of these organizations as new federal and state governments, municipal governments, and corporate members developed “peering” relationships to share growing traffic loads collaboratively.

Despite repeated claims by the United States that democratic and global governance of the Internet is just around the corner, the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) still retains formal control over the “root” of the Internet, which is the cluster of servers that maps domain names to unique Internet protocol addresses (such that typing www.prwatch.org takes you to IP address 209.197.113.33). The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) manages the creation of top-level domain names and country code domain names and the accreditation of domain name registrars. As there can be only one authoritative root server, the ICANN’s proxy management of domain names for the DOC keeps the United States in charge of “ruling the root.” The ICANN also settles disputes involving the registration of trademarked names in “cyber-squatting” battles. Other global organizations contribute to Internet governance. The Internet Society is an nongovernmental organization that promotes technology development conducive to open standards, protocols, and administration of the Internet. It has been instrumental in providing training and education while collaborating to establish servers and connectivity in countries around the world.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

The discovery of “cyberspace” by the popular press in the early 1990s occurred as an important genre of science fiction, such as the cyberpunk writing of
William Gibson, who was attaining subculture status in North America. While the liminal experience of cyberspace in cyberpunk science fiction was dystopian and difficult to hype, another technoculture that was more amenable to the popular press portrayed cyberspace as an “electronic frontier.” John Perry Barlow, Stuart Brand, and other denizens of the WELL electronic bulletin board network joined publishers of Wired magazine to cultivate and court the “Digital Generation.”

Personal computers with modems and software applications such as the Mosaic Web browser permitted a mass market for Internet-ready machines by 1995. E-mail was a “killer app” that hooked new users. The development of the free and open-source Linux operating system and the Apache Web server software platform enabled low-cost Web presence for Web page publishers; and popular search engines, message boards, and chat rooms provided a sense of direction in cyberspace for new (or “newbie”) users. The “Internet Christmas” of 1998 inaugurated a takeoff phase for the diffusion of the Internet, as personal computer makers bundled systems with user accounts for AOL and other Internet service providers (ISPs). Internet Christmas signaled that the unruly potentials of the Internet had been tamed for “e-commerce,” and that commercialization would proceed apace without excessive risk of regulatory interference.

TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY

Telecommunications policy and intellectual property law reforms in the United States were implemented to promote private capitalization of the Internet. Federal policy makers exploited the utopian rhetorics of cyberspace to promote the Internet as a commercial mass medium on the U.S. model of private ownership. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 accomplished a large-scale deregulation of information services to promote commercialization, even as it attempted (unsuccesfully) to impose harsh censorship via the “Communications Decency Act.” Networking was protected from public interest regulation, which gave upstart hardware and software developers more leeway in competing with established media and telecom companies while providing incentives for established players to develop new business models largely free of regulations.

Policy makers set the commercialization trajectory early in the Clinton administration during the “National Information Infrastructure” (NII) discussions organized by Vice President Albert Gore. This program unlocked markets for carrying traffic and for providing content. The administration expanded the NII principles globally to the “Global Information Infrastructure” (GII) guidelines, as the “content” industries pressed for unprecedented intellectual property protections in what became the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) in the United States and the multilateral rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The DMCA, more than any other legislation, helped effect a “transition from an incentive model of copyright to a control model” that has roiled the Internet’s cultures of sharing and gift economies ever since.
AL GORE’S INTERNET?

During the Clinton administration, Vice President Albert Gore organized the “National Information Infrastructure” (NII) discussions that led to the commercialization of the Internet. The accelerated delivery of Internet technology to a mass public created the World Wide Web among other services, and the Internet rose to occupy a major place in the national imagination. When published reports quoted Al Gore as saying, “I invented the Internet,” the phrase was considered an outrageous exaggeration, and he was roundly criticized for attempting to take credit for the most important technological development of the century. A few years later, during his bid for the White House in the presidential elections of 2000, he appeared on the David Letterman show and in a comedy routine, presented a Top Ten list of presidential slogans that had been rejected by the Gore/Lieberman ticket. One of the rejected campaign slogans was, “Remember folks, I invented the Internet and I can take it away.” Gore received a hearty applause for his self-mocking script, though he did not become the 43rd president of the United States, and the controversy still plagues him.

INCREASING LEGAL BOUNDARIES

The failure of Napster to defend a business model based on peer-to-peer file sharing set an important precedent for digital distribution of media. The MGM v. Grokster case decided in 2005 by the U.S. Supreme Court benefited the content industries by exposing technology companies to damages from “secondary liability” for copyright infringement. While it did not go quite so far as to overturn the landmark Sony Betamax ruling, which protected multipurpose information technology designers and also the rights of fair use, the ruling created a new “inducement” doctrine for copyright that introduces new risks to technology innovators whose creations imperil established technology standards and business models. These precedents have eroded the Internet’s ability to disrupt the system of intellectual property ownership dominated by a handful of transnational corporations.

A “WALLED GARDEN”?

Once the “content industries” had tamed the Internet to their liking, telecom carriers began to press for the ability to impose price discrimination on packets received from competing services. The operation of Internet service “tiers” for prioritized access and distribution of data departs dramatically from the “network neutrality” principles by which telecom carriers and ISPs have handled traffic traditionally. Cyberlibertarians, media reformers, and consumer groups are alarmed by attempts to erode and bypass these conventions. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Michael Copps is critical of the “access tiering” anticipated as media conglomerates try to extract fees “from anyone who wants to reach their millions of customers.... A handful of broadband barons is poised to destroy what is so precious about the Internet.” Such a structure would allow one or two companies to provide the “last mile” of
Internet connection to virtually all American homes.” Citizens’ access and free speech rights, and equal access to broadband Internet services may be affected by policy-making (or lack of policy-making) at the FCC and in Congress. As the content industries and the telecom giants press for the right to limit competitors’ access to their own broadband infrastructures, “netizen” activists are formalizing a federal network neutrality policy.

As access tiering by monopoly or oligopoly ISPs looms as an industry norm, would-be challengers to their market power have been handicapped by the U.S. courts. In a 2005 case that strengthened the hand of the telecom conglomerates, the U.S. Supreme Court removed the ability of Congress or the FCC to require cable broadband networks to interconnect competitive broadband Internet providers. Since the U.S. Supreme Court decided the “Brand X” case, the cable operators offering broadband modems and the telcos offering DSL are legally sanctioned to deny potential competitors access to their customers by network interconnection. As the content industries can now safely enjoy monopolistic rent-seeking privileges online, so too the carriers have become sanctioned gateway monopolists extracting rents through the exercise of immense “network power.” Absent effective public interest regulation and network neutrality rules, the next phase of consolidation between media and telecom companies is likely to be massive cross-ownership of broadband content providers and carriers, who will provide “walled gardens” of branded content, with limited or no access to unaffiliated parts of the Web. They will privatize the benefits of an open network, while imposing new social costs, such as closed standards, anticompetitive business practices, greater privacy risks, and continuing erosion of fair use and equitable access to infrastructures.

CONCLUSION

The radical potential of the Internet to overturn long-established power structures has been tempered by deep changes in legal norms, concentrated market power of the major players, and new techniques for harnessing digital culture industries and locking down digital culture. The Cold War history of the Internet demonstrates that, in the end, technocrats privileged the values of openness, interdependence, and decentralization in a survivalist strategy for a different age. These principles, expressed by an open Internet, are eroding, as are peaceful alternatives to nuclear proliferation in an increasingly dangerous world. While cyberspace may not yet completely reflect the values and norms of North American mass society and consumer culture, and still retains alternative and diverse potentials, the rationalization and commercial pressures on the Internet exerted by the economy and the state are broad and deep.

Knowing that corporate colonization of the Internet is, in the end, negotiable, a variety of activist movements are pushing back with proposals for policies on net neutrality, competitive access, community networking, and a reformed copyright and patent framework. Grievances expressed about privacy violations by state and corporate actors are accumulating in court claims coordinated by non-profits like Electronic Privacy Information Clearinghouse (EPIC) and Electronic
Internet and Its Radical Potential

Frontier Foundation (EFF). Cyberliberties activists still use the Internet for bridge-building between students, researchers, artists, programmers, nonprofits, and other beneficiaries of the “free culture” that is enriched and made accessible in cyberspace. Other varieties of resistance to corporate colonization of the Internet include “hacktivism,” culture jamming, and academic research of digital copy protections. The conflicts over corporate penetration of cyberspace illustrate how struggles over new-media technologies are connected to larger issues of social and economic equity, peace, human rights, and freedom of expression. The economic and political changes proposed to resolve these Internet issues will reflect the broader social commitment to the values of freedom and openness.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Blogosphere; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; iTunes Effects; Media Reform; Net Neutrality; Obscenity and Indecency; Online Publishing; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Regulating the Airwaves; Surveillance and Privacy.


Patrick Burkart
Particularly in the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. media’s methods of representing Islam, Arabs, and people of Middle Eastern descent have been the subject of much criticism. Critics have argued that the media’s representational strategies have deteriorated, going from bad to worse. The dominant pattern of American media representations of Islam has a long history, stretching back beyond recent film, television, and news reports to earlier traveler’s tales and colonial endeavors.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Historically, there has been little direct contact between the United States and the region of the world where Islam grew and flourished, that is, the Middle East and North Africa. In the nineteenth century, there were occasional travelers to the region, such as Mark Twain and Herman Melville, and brief military interventions in North Africa. Thus, unlike various European colonial powers, such as Britain and France, the United States did not have a sustained presence or direct involvement with the world of Islam. As a result, knowledge that was produced in the United States of this region, and of Islam, was of an abstract and second hand nature.

Media representations of the Middle East drew heavily from European vocabularies. In early film this meant characterizing the Middle East by a few handy caricatures—vast desert spaces, populated by scimitar-wielding sheiks wearing long white robes, who lived in huge palaces with harems and dancing girls, and were surrounded by snake charmers and flying carpets.

It was only after World War II that the United States turned its attention to the Middle East and became a dominant force in the region. In this context, knowledge had to be produced to help the United States better achieve its foreign policy objectives. Various “area studies” programs were founded after World War II and the Middle East became a subject of inquiry.

**ORIENTALIST SCHOLARSHIP AND MODERNIZATION THEORY**

Many distinguished scholars from Europe traveled across the Atlantic to take leadership positions at universities in the United States. The end result was the production of at least two ways of understanding the world of Islam: European Orientalist scholarship, and the research conducted from a social scientific approach. The latter championed modernization theory, and argued that developing nations could advance by modernizing their economies with the assistance of the United States. By and large, the news media covered the Middle East during this period in ways similar to the rest of the world, they followed the modernization frameworks set by policy makers. Within the context of the Cold War, the U.S. capitalist/modernizing view was held as being superior to the Communist ideology of the Soviet Union. While Islam made an occasional appearance, it was not until the 1970s that it would be a subject of sustained attention.

Orientalist scholars have long viewed the Middle East through the lens of an imaginary construct called “Islam.” Edward Said, a prominent critic of Western
practices of conceiving and creating ideas about Islam, argues that this image of Islam has little to do with reality and the ways in which Islam is practiced around the world, and more to do with the justifications that were needed by various empires to continue their domination of the region. Islam and the West were counter posed as two separate and distinct entities. In this rhetoric, the West is associated with freedom, democracy, women’s rights, liberty, civilization, and Christianity. The world of Islam, its polar opposite, is seen as evil, barbaric, uncivilized, unscientific, and home to a people who hate freedom and are irrational. Thus, it was argued that the superior West should colonize and civilize the backward peoples of the world of Islam.

Said also argued that the common caricature of Islam created a sense of regional identity for Europe and the West, via a process known as othering, whereby an individual or group takes all the qualities that they do not wish to be associated with them and attaches these to another individual or group, allowing a seeming contrast to be constructed that flatters the individual or group doing the othering. This false binary was particularly convenient for colonizing forces in drawing attention away from their own systematized acts of barbarism and of suppressing and denying personal freedoms that regularly accompanied the process of colonization and control.

THE 1970s: THE OIL CRISIS AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The Orientalist view of the Middle East was one among many within the academy and the media. However, since the 1970s it has become the dominant perspective. And since the events of September 11, 2001 it has received a further boost. In the 1970s, two events set the stage for how the Middle East would be understood in the United States. The first was the oil crisis of 1973–74 and the second was the Iranian revolution of 1979. Before the oil embargo instituted by the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC), the term Islam barely existed in the culture and in the media. When, all of a sudden, oil prices rose precipitously it was a sharp reminder that oil and energy resources were not “ours” for the taking but rather, according to the rhetoric of the time, were controlled by irrational Muslim men in white robes. Various films, such as Network, drew on this theme of rich and powerful sheiks out to control the United States and the world.

Following this event, coverage of the Middle East focused on various crises in the region. The world of Islam, which had largely been marginal to the media, became news worthy in the context of political crises. These included the civil war in Lebanon, the war between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and perhaps most importantly the Arab-Israeli conflict. With the United States squarely in Israel’s camp, the Palestinian struggle for national liberation came to be viewed through the rubric of terrorism. The news and entertainment media would largely reflect the view held by political elites.

The most dramatic event, however, that thrust Islam into the spotlight was the 1979 Iranian revolution, which brought the Muslim cleric Ayatollah Khomeini to power. The media presented the revolution as a religiously driven movement
that unseated the pro-Western Shah. In reality, it was a popular uprising sparked by many factors including the Shah’s rampant corruption and use of intimidation and violence to silence critics. Workers, women, students, and other forces held demonstrations and strikes to demand economic and political justice. Khomeini was able to finally assert control of the movement two years later, and only because he proved most adept at maneuvering between the various forces. Yet, in the United States this popular uprising was seen as a medieval yearning on the part of the Iranian people to found an Islamist state. When students took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held U.S. personnel hostage in response to the United States giving sanctuary to the Shah, they were presented as violent, dangerous, and virulently anti-American. Two images that were used frequently by the news media were angry mobs burning U.S. flags, and the stern face of the bearded and turbaned Ayatollah Khomeini.

Images of Islam as violent and dangerous were exacerbated by domestic events, particularly media depictions of the Nation of Islam during their involvement in civil rights protests in the United States. News reports in the late 1950s and 1960s, such as Mike Wallace’s report for CBS, *The Hate That Hate Produced*, often constructed The Nation of Islam’s message as one of hate, intolerance, and “revenge,” and their spokespersons Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, and later Louis Farrakhan as dangerous and irrational radicals. Thus, even far from the shores of the Middle East, Islam was viewed with suspicion and depicted as wedded to a philosophy of conflict. Furthermore, since the civil rights era, media reports and retrospectives have often belittled the Nation of Islam’s prominent role in the struggle for racial equality, and have marginalized their voice in American politics.

However, not all parties of political Islam were viewed as irrational and dangerous. This is because at various points the United States has supported Islamist groups when they have proved as effective means to weaken leftist and secular groups. For instance, the United States supported the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and viewed the group as a bulwark against the secular nationalist President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Similarly, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the United States supported, trained, and funded the Islamist Mujahideen fighters. The film, *Rambo III*, is dedicated to the Mujahideen “freedom fighters.”

**MUSLIM BAD GUYS**

The Islamic “bad guy” has become a stock character in Hollywood television and film. More recently, it is the pervasive image of the Arab terrorist that we see, in films such as *True Lies* and *The Siege* and in television shows such as *24*. But even before the terrorist depiction, there were films such as *Midnight Express* that suggested a cultural disposition and proclivity toward violence, repression, and injustice by stranding the protagonists in a Turkish prison, where torture and chaos reign. Disney’s *Aladdin* even begins with a song whose lyrics note of Arabia, “They cut off your ear / If they don’t like your face. / It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home.” The Hollywood association between Muslims and danger has become so solidified
a link that even films without Muslim characters can wheel them in to create a sense of danger, as for instance with the brief threat of Arab terrorists that bookends Back to the Future, or as in The Insider, a film about the American tobacco industry, in which the credentials of Al Pacino’s Lowell Bergman as a fearless reporter are established during the opening credits by showing him blindfolded and surrounded by threatening Arabs taking him to interview the leader of a terrorist organization in Lebanon. Meanwhile, on television, Children Now’s “Fall Colors: Prime Time Diversity Report” reveals that in the 2003–2004 season, 46 percent of all Arab/Middle Eastern characters on prime time entertainment programs were criminals (compared to 15 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, 10 percent of African Americans, and 5 percent of White characters), thereby leaving few other images to contradict the landslide of news and entertainment depictions of the Muslim bad guy (See http://publications.childrennow.org/assets/pdf/cmp/fall-colors-03/fall-colors-03-v5.pdf).

POST 9/11

Since 9/11, the demonization of Islam and of Muslims has only intensified. One of the justifications for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was the liberation of Afghan women. This rationale has a long history in Orientalist rhetoric, and asserts that Muslim women need to be rescued from Muslim men by White men who better understand their interests. In reality, the condition for most Afghan women, particularly those in the rural areas, only deteriorated after the U.S. war.

Domestically, thousands of Muslims and Arab Americans have been detained, harassed, and deported since 2001. Such blatant violations of civil liberties are justified by the argument that security threats must be quelled at any cost. Television shows like 24 and Sleeper Cell reinforce the idea that there are enemies in our midst who must be vanquished through any means necessary. The news media have failed to expose the injustices faced by Muslims and have, for the most part, accepted the so-called war on terror rhetoric. After 9/11, images of Middle Eastern men were constantly shown on television, identified as Islamic extremists and terrorists. Image and identifier merged and were generalized, helping to codify Islam and terrorism in the eyes of the public, an association that already existed in popular films and media depictions. At its root, this rhetoric casts the world into two camps: the side that represents civilization, democracy, and rationality and the side that is intent on violence, destruction and the creation of an Islamic state—Islam vs. the West. In many ways, the rhetoric in the media has come full circle reflecting some of the key themes developed by early Orientalist scholarship in the nineteenth century, in the process alienating and vilifying Arabs, Arab-Americans, and other people of Middle Eastern descent.

See also Al-Jazeera; Bias and Objectivity; Hypercommercialism; Parachute Journalism; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Propaganda Model; Representations of Race; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; World Cinema.

Further Reading: Bernstein, Matthew, and Gaylyn Studlar, eds. Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997; Esposito, John. The
Apple’s iPod digital player and iTunes music service presently dominate the online music industry. Apple has kept its position by maintaining tight control over its players and services, but many of its innovations have been adopted by competitors at lower prices. Will the future see a continuation of Apple’s policy of offering individual downloads, or will alternatives emerge?

With the slogan “Rip, Mix, Burn,” Apple introduced its iPod portable music player in October 2001. The slogan referred to the ability of Apple computers to copy music and create customized CDs. Record company executives were appalled, arguing that they were losing millions of dollars a year to illegal downloads. They claimed that the slogan was an invitation to steal copyrighted material. But the slogan was consistent with Apple’s “Think Different” strategy, a strategy that has paid handsome dividends.

Since it was founded in the late 1970s, Apple has cultivated an image of a company that is “different.” Cofounder Steve Jobs initially suggested that its

Digital Rights Management

Digital technologies allow a potentially limitless number of copies to be made that are identical to the original. To thwart this, Apple’s iTunes service, as well as all the online services that provide authorized content from the four major record companies, includes digital rights management (DRM) in its files. DRM takes two forms: encryption, which allows only authorized users to play back files by requiring them to purchase an electronic “key”; and watermarking, an “electronic fingerprinting” technology which restricts copying to a limited number of players and copies and also enables files to be traced back to their original users. Both DRM components were given force of law by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998. The DMCA made it a crime to bypass DRM, even if we make copies for personal, noncommercial use after purchasing an original copy of a CD, DVD, or digital file. A comprehensive DRM system, such as Apple’s Fairplay system, covers the entire life cycle of products, from mastering to manufacturing to distribution to playback.
computers be encased in exotic hardwoods, and a famous 1984 Super Bowl ad introducing Macintosh computers implicitly compared Apple’s competitors to Big Brother. Apple has aggressively promoted a branded “digital lifestyle” throughout its history. The company’s products are noted for innovative hardware and software that is easy to use. Among other things, Apple introduced the mouse, the graphic user interface, color monitors, and laser printers into personal computing.

Despite these innovations, Apple has captured less than 2 percent of the global market for personal computers. Why is this the case? Apple has kept control over its computer operating system, rather than licensing it to other manufacturers (except for a brief, unsuccessful experiment in the mid-1980s). From its inception, Apple rejected the component model followed by its competitors in favor of an end-to-end business model that binds hardware and software into a complete package. The Wall Street Journal explained the difference:

In the component model, many companies make hardware and software that runs on a standard platform, creating inexpensive commodity devices that don’t always work perfectly together, but get the job done.

In the end-to-end model, one company designs both the hardware and software, which work smoothly together, but the products cost more and limit choice. (Mossberg 2006)

Apple introduced its iPod digital music player in October 2001 for $399, and the dangling white cords of its headphones quickly became a status symbol. By August 2005, an estimated 21 million iPods had been sold, accounting for one-third of Apple’s overall revenues. A month later, in September, Apple unveiled a lower-priced version, the iPod Nano. The New York Times hailed the Nano as “gorgeous, functional, and elegant…to see one is to want one” (Pogue 2005), while the Wall Street Journal stated that the player, the size of five credit cards stacked together, was “gorgeous and sleek…beautiful and incredibly thin…I am smitten” (Mossberg 2005).

Apple’s users pay a premium for its elegance and user-friendliness. The company rationalizes its profits on grounds that it devotes massive resources to upgrading existing designs and developing new products. However, its competitors have quickly incorporated Apple’s technological innovations into their own products and offered them at lower cost. As a result, Apple has moved further into Web-based services while maintaining its tradition of end-to-end control. The coupling of the iPod music player and iTunes online music service is a case in point. Apple’s strategy with iTunes was based on two principles: all downloads were priced at 99 cents each, and these downloads could be played only on iPods.

THE iTUNES “EXPERIENCE”

Apple unveiled its iTunes music store in April 2003. The iTunes service is intended to create an “experience” as much as a store, and “personalization” is a key part of the “experience.” Users can post playlists to iTunes and compare their
music tastes with others (including recording artists and celebrities). iTunes makes additional recommendations based on a customer’s previous selections. As one recording industry executive stated, “Until Apple, it wasn’t cool to buy digital music. This was about getting to that pivotal group of people—the people who buy the cool sneakers and wear the right clothes—and showing them that legally downloading music could be cooler than stealing it” (Black 2003).

Within six weeks, Apple had sold 3.5 million songs online. In addition to iTunes’s attractive interface and personalized features, a major attraction was its simple pricing. Each download costs 99 cents, and users can “cherry pick” their favorite songs rather than purchase an entire CD. Given that CDs cost an average of $14 and feature an average of twelve songs, the 99-cent rate is slightly less than the cost of a song on CD. It should be noted, however, that iTunes downloads cost ten times more than 45 rpm singles did in the 1950s when adjusted for inflation, even though downloads have no costs for manufacturing, warehousing, and shipping (Harmon 2003).

Some artists, such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Metallica, were unwilling to license their recordings to iTunes because they believed that selling individual songs would break up the artistic continuity of their CDs. The Beatles continue to be holdouts, and other groups offer only a smattering of their recorded output on iTunes. The “unbundling” of CDs also met with resistance from the recording industry, which is concerned that downloads will cannibalize CD sales. The four major record companies (Universal, Sony/BMG, Warner, and EMI, who collectively sell 85 percent of recordings around the globe) would prefer a variable pricing model for downloads rather than a flat 99-cent fee. New singles or hits in demand could sell for $1.49, while “oldies” or less popular cuts could sell for less than 99 cents. Apple does allow variable pricing for downloads of entire CDs, yet the company expressed concern that higher prices for individual downloads would send potential customers in search of songs fleeing to unauthorized peer-to-peer networks.

By October 2006, Apple’s iPod accounted for 76 percent of digital music players, and iTunes music store was responsible for 88 percent of digital music sales (Mossberg and Boehret 2006). However, Apple sees little money from the sales of iTunes downloads. Out of each 99-cent download, the record company receives approximately 30 cents, the artist receives twelve cents, middlemen receive ten cents, and song publishers receive eight cents. Of the remaining 40 cents, up to 23 cents go to credit card processing fees. That leaves 17 cents to pay for bandwidth charges and costs related to maintaining the iTunes Web site, as well as customer service. Essentially, Apple is using the iTunes store (which is relatively unprofitable) to bolster sales of its iPod players (which are highly profitable). Given the iPod’s success, Apple appears to be transitioning from computers into consumer electronics, using services like iTunes to spur demand for its products. In a move that signaled their intention to move into video hardware and software, Apple unveiled a Video iPod in October 2005, which featured a 2.5-inch screen and sold for $299 or $399, depending on storage capacity. The iTunes service also offers downloads of TV shows, short films, and music videos for $1.99 each.
Apple continues to maintain tight control over the creation, manufacturing, and distribution of its products, leading critics to charge that the company is more concerned with maintaining the market dominance of their costly and highly profitable players than with allowing an open market for digital music. The company has refused to make iTunes software compatible with music players from other manufacturers. MP3 files may be converted to Apple’s proprietary AAC format, but songs purchased from other services, such as Napster, will not play on iPods. If a user wants to shift from an Apple player to a rival brand, he or she must replace all the music they downloaded from the iTunes store. As The Economist put it, “It is as though a person’s entire record collection worked on only one brand of gramophone” (“Apples Are Not the Only Fruit,” 2006).

In addition to tethering Apple users to its proprietary formats, the rights of users can be altered at any time at Apple’s discretion. The Apple system initially allowed downloads to be burned onto 10 consecutive CDs; after that, their order must be rearranged to prevent widespread copying. In May 2004, Apple reduced the number of CD copies from 10 to 7, while raising the number of playback devices from 3 to 5. The system also detects and blocks similar playlists, and does not allow songs to be edited, excerpted, or sampled except exclusively on Apple’s terms.

**MUSIC AS A SERVICE, RATHER THAN A PRODUCT**

To date, three primary approaches to authorized music delivery have developed:

- The à la carte model used by Apple, in which customers buy individual tracks. After downloading, the songs can be copied (with restrictions) onto portable players and burned onto CDs.
- The subscription model used by Emusic, in which customers pay a monthly fee and download a specified number of songs per month. Subscribers to
Emusic, which features artists that aren’t signed to major record companies, pay $9.99 per month to download 40 songs or $14.99 to download 64 songs.

- The streaming model, such as RealNetworks’ Rhapsody, in which users pay a monthly fee to listen to songs online. Customers then pay an extra fee (usually less than a dollar per track) to download songs for CD burning or to add them to portable players.

To date, the iPod has reaped spectacular profits for Apple, and iTunes dominates the online music market, but the future of both is far from certain. Despite the growing capacity of digital music players, a study in September 2005 found that half of iPod owners had less than 100 songs stored on their players, with the average loaded with just 375 songs (Austin 2005). A 60-gigabyte iPod will hold 15,000 songs; consumers are unlikely to spend $15,000 to fill it up. Cell phones or similar “all in one” devices ultimately could absorb the functions of portable music players such as the iPod; similarly, the streaming model, which provides flows of music on demand, may be the most likely model for the long term. Such services will also have important “community” features, such as sharing playlists, and members may suggest songs by directly offering clips to each other (Rhapsody already features such capabilities). As music becomes a service instead of a product, people will be less and less concerned with owning music; instead, instant access will be more important.

Musical recordings have a relatively short history, and their physical forms shape the ways we interact with them and how we perceive their value. The “album” originated in the early twentieth century with bulky collections of 78-rpm discs. These discs were limited to three or four minutes per side, which shaped the contours of the modern pop song. Each subsequent format, from LPs to CDs, has been more compact while allowing more storage and greater possibilities for programming by users; an iPod can store up to 15,000 songs in a box smaller than a deck of cards. Each format also has reduced our physical interaction with music, such as changing LPs or loading CD players. An iPod can be programmed to play until its battery expires. With LPs and CDs, the work as a whole must initially be engaged on the creator’s terms. With an iPod, the user has complete control over the flow of music.

**A BRIEF TIMELINE**

October 2001—Apple introduces the 5GB iPod.
April 2003—iTunes launches online, charging 99 cents per song.
September 2005—Apple introduces the iPod Nano.
October 2005—Video iPod unveiled; video purchases made available on iTunes.
September 2006—Feature film purchases made available on iTunes; 80GB iPods released;
  Apple announces that 70 percent of car models in the U.S. for the next model year will offer the ability to connect an iPod.
Unlike earlier forms of recording, digital files have no physical presence unless they are burned into CDs. Since they have no physical form, we view digital files as inherently less valuable than LPs or CDs. This lack of physicality undermines the notion of intellectual property, which in part accounts for the widespread copying of software and public support of file sharing. At the same time, digital files enable us to sample, collect, and trade music in new ways. While these files lack physical presence, possessing them in many ways is more intense and intimate than older “hard goods” such as LPs and CDs. For example, digital files enable us to contain huge amounts of data in small devices. We also can sort and regroup these files effortlessly, which transforms the listening experience. A collection of digital files in a hard drive becomes what one writer termed “an ocean of possibility [in which] daily life gets a different kind of soundtrack, endlessly mutable and instantly reconfigurable” (Moon 2004).

Older forms of copying recordings required substantial time and attention, while digital files allow for easy copying and customization. We simply “grab” cuts and “drag and drop” them into personalized collections. The popularity of digital files, as well as music in the form of telephone ring tones, indicate that access and convenience are increasingly important to listeners. Music becomes “less about an artist’s self-expression than a customer’s desire for self-reflection” (Goldberg 2000). In cyberspace, people collect lists rather than objects. As the physicality of recordings fades away, the playlists posted by customers of iTunes and other services may replace the mix CDs currently traded among friends. These playlists may be geared to a theme, an event, an experience, or a relationship. They also serve as a sort of “branding” for the creator.

The disappearance of hard goods, in the form of physical recordings, heightens the transition from a world of cultural goods to a world of cultural services. The result is that “value” is not an inherent character of the product, but the manner in which it reaches the consumer. The popularity of song files and playlists indicates that digital value is created through process, rather than products. In cyberspace, the old market-based economy of buyers and sellers is replaced by a new network-based economy of servers and clients. Rifkin claims that “in markets, the parties exchange property. In networks, the parties share access to services and experiences...based on network relationships, 24/7 contractual arrangements and access rights.” As music loses its physicality, value must be created through networks and “experiences” like iTunes, which tether listeners to companies through proprietary hardware and restrictions on use. Ultimately, digital formats may cause music to return to an intangible essence altogether, in which it “would stop being something to collect and revert to its age-old transience: something that transforms a moment and then disappears like a troubadour leaving town” (Pareles 1998). We no longer will “own” recordings; instead, we will access them in fleeting ways on corporate terms.

See also Digital Divide; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Mobile Media; Online Digital Film and Television; Piracy and Intellectual Property.

Further Reading: “Apples Are Not the Only Fruit.” The Economist (July 8, 2006): 75; Austin, Ian. “Objects in Ears Are Not as Full as They May Appear.” New York Times,

*Tom McCourt*
JOURNALISTS IN PERIL

Journalism can be a dangerous job. Each year dozens of journalists are killed in incidents all over the world. Some of the reporters die accidentally in the course of their work. Many others are murdered for reasons relating to their reporting. Why has journalism become one of the most dangerous professions on earth?

The amount of risk in the work of a journalist depends on the kind of reporting a particular journalist undertakes. Investigative reporters and correspondents who cover armed conflicts face the greatest dangers, but many journalists make enemies in the course of doing their work. Others find themselves in dangerous places while covering breaking news. As a result, journalism can be considered one of the world's most dangerous occupations.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the recent upsurge in terrorist activity—and the response to it—have proven to be deadly stories to cover. “Journalists hoping for a career overseas face perils that did not exist when I began my foreign coverage in Southeast Asia in the 1950s,” says Peter Arnett, an award-winning reporter who covered the war in Vietnam as well as the 1991 war in Iraq. “We... rarely faced an issue more dangerous than expulsion,” he explains. Journalists have traditionally been considered objective observers instead of participants in a conflict or story, which kept them for the most part from being targeted for violent actions. But over the past three decades and especially since the September 11 attacks in 2001, the profession has seen the continual erosion of its independent status. “Being a journalist used to be a badge of neutrality, which hopefully would get you safe passage from both sides. Now it's just the opposite,” says Susan Bennett of the Freedom Forum, a free press foundation. Many people now see reporters, like soldiers, as fair game for attack.
Media organizations like the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) painstakingly document attacks on journalists. CPJ found that 580 journalists were killed between 1992, when it started keeping records, and 2006. That is an average of three journalists killed per month—a shockingly high statistic. In 2006, IPI statistics show that 100 journalists were killed around the world. This is the largest number of reporter deaths in one year in recent history, and is due mostly to the increasingly dangerous situation in Iraq.

CPJ says that most of the journalists killed in recent years were specifically targeted because of their work. “If popular imagination suggests journalists are typically killed by an errant bullet or a mortar bomb in battlefields, CPJ’s data show that the majority—seven out of every 10—are targeted in retaliation for their reporting and hunted down to be murdered,” wrote CPJ’s Matthew Hansen. “Even in war zones, CPJ’s analysis shows, murder is the leading cause of death.” Worse, most of those who took retribution killed with impunity. CJP found that 85 percent of the killers faced neither investigation nor prosecution for their crimes.

A QUESTION OF REVENGE

In the United States, our Bill of Rights—the first 10 amendments to the Constitution—specifically spells out freedom of speech and freedom of the press as basic rights to which all citizens are entitled. The American founders understood that a free and vibrant press was essential, and that the press should serve as a watchdog over the government keeping elected officials accountable to the
public. Yet even in America, journalists are sometimes attacked and even killed for what they have written. In many other countries, where freedom of the press is not as entrenched as it is in the United States, revenge killings of journalists are commonplace.

The point of the revenge killing is to punish a journalist for what he or she has written, and to scare other journalists from pursuing similar subjects. “A journalist is the voice of his or her community,” says Pedro Díaz Romero, former human rights prosecutor for Colombia’s attorney general’s office. “To take the life of a journalist is to shut down a channel of information for the community. And after one journalist is killed, you may not need to kill another, as a threat or act of physical intimidation may be enough to send the message to the community at large.” Some of the most common places for revenge killings are countries that have been racked by war—including Iraq, Algeria, and Bosnia. But the killing of journalists is also widespread in some nations that are relatively stable but fairly lawless, like Russia and the Philippines.

**REAL PEOPLE, TRUE CRIMES**

In the Philippines, where more than 80 percent of the public gets its news from radio, broadcast commentators constitute the majority of victims of revenge killings. One of them was Apolinario “Polly” Pobeda, the popular host of an AM radio show in Lucena City. In May 2002 two men stopped Pobeda as he was riding his motorcycle to work and shot him repeatedly. Pobeda suffered seven gunshot wounds, including one to his head. On the radio program that he hosted, “Nosi Balasi” (“Who Are They?”), Pobeda had often criticized corrupt local officials—particularly Lucena’s mayor, whom the journalist had accused of being involved in the local drug trade. “My husband was killed because he exposed the wrongdoing of the government,” Rowena Morales says. According to his wife, Pobeda had received repeated anonymous death threats, including one about a month before his murder—but he had kept on working.

In Russia, the spread of capitalism has fueled corrupt business deals worth billions of dollars, with government officials often benefiting from the same industries they are supposed to be regulating. After the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, a new breed of journalist was born who after years of Soviet control was anxious to do real independent reporting. But some of those investigations had deadly consequences.

One of the most courageous journalists to work in Russia in its post-Soviet years was Anna Politkovskaya, a reporter for the Moscow-based newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. Politkovskaya came to fame for her fearless coverage of two separate wars in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya. Politkovskaya investigated such dangerous topics as the disappearances of young Chechen men, often without a trace, by Russian soldiers, and of torture of Chechens by Russian officers. Politkovskaya’s reporting won her awards around the world, but it also made her enemies. Politkovskaya had been threatened and attacked numerous times in retaliation for her work. In February 2001, CPJ research shows, security agents detained her in Chechnya. She was kept in a pit for three days without...
food or water while a Russian officer threatened to shoot her. Later that year, she had to flee to Austria after receiving death threats from a military officer accused of crimes against civilians. She returned to Russia and continued to work but those she exposed kept her in their sights. One afternoon in October 2006, Politkovskaya was shot and killed as she carried groceries into her apartment building. It was clearly a professional contract killing and those who worked with her understood it was linked to her work.

**COVERING WARS**

War is always a dangerous place for journalists to work. Reporters have been killed covering wars as long as there has been modern journalism. But the dangers are increasing. In World War I, for example, only 2 reporters were killed, according to statistics from the Freedom Forum. The battlefields of Europe became more dangerous during World War II, and from 1941 to 1945, 69 war correspondents lost their lives covering the conflict. One of the most dangerous assignments was flying with Allied troops on bombing raids over Nazi-held territory when planes were regularly shot down. The most famous reporter to travel with foot soldiers was Ernie Pyle of the Scripps Howard newspaper chain. Even though Pyle made it through the whole war in Europe unhurt, he was hit in the head and killed by a Japanese sniper while on a routine patrol near Okinawa in

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**VERONICA GUERIN: IRELAND’S CRUSADING JOURNALIST**

Veronica Guerin’s murder in 1996 caused headlines around the world. She was Ireland’s best known and most fearless crime reporter. The IPI lists her as one of its “50 Heroes of Press Freedom.”

In 1994, Guerin started to write about crime for Ireland’s Sunday Telegraph. She took on criminal bosses and drug lords in her fearless reports. Guerin used nicknames for underworld characters to avoid libel laws, but she still made her point—and plenty of enemies. In 1994 and 1995, Guerin was shot at and physically attacked in response to her work. She was offered protection by her paper, but complained that it got in the way of her reporting. “I vow that the eyes of justice, the eyes of this journalist will not be shut again,” she said after one of the attacks. “No hand can deter me from my battle for the truth.”

On June 26, 1996, Guerin was sitting in her car outside of Dublin, at a stop light, when two men on a motorcycle drove up to her car and shot her dead. Her death, the first ever of an Irish journalist, shocked the nation. Irish Prime Minister John Bruton called it “an attack on democracy.” The following criminal investigation led to over 150 arrests and a hunt against Irish organized criminal gangs. Several men were later jailed for Guerin’s murder.

Guerin’s life has been immortalized in two movies and several songs. The IPI writes, “Veronica Guerin devoted her career and life to exposing the drug barons and leading figures in Dublin’s underworld. ‘I am simply doing my job,’ she said. ‘I am letting the public know how this society operates.’ She paid the ultimate price for her pursuit of truth.”
1945. Covering the Vietnam War was also dangerous; the Freedom Forum lists 63 journalists who lost their lives there.

Modern insurgent movements create a particularly dangerous atmosphere for the journalists who try to cover the countries in which they operate. Consider the case of American Daniel Pearl, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. Starting in October 2000, Pearl served as the South Asia bureau chief for the paper, based in Bombay, India. After the September 11th attacks, he frequently traveled to Pakistan on reporting trips. On one of those trips, Pearl asked his contacts to arrange a meeting with a leader of an insurgent group. Instead, on January 23, 2002, Pearl was kidnapped. Pearl's religion—Jewish—was one of the factors in his kidnapping and murder. Although the kidnappers sent a list of demands, which included the release of all Pakistani prisoners from U.S. custody, there were no negotiations. Pearl was beheaded by his kidnappers, four of whom were later caught and brought to justice. A major Hollywood movie made about Pearl's murder has brought worldwide attention to his case—and to the perils faced by reporters trying to cover modern terrorism.

The single most dangerous place for journalists to work since 2003 has been Iraq. The American-led war that overthrew Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein led to an upsurge in ethnic violence. More journalists have now died in Iraq since 2003 than died covering World War II or the Vietnam conflict.

Foreign reporters, included several Americans, have been killed in Iraq. This loss of life in Iraq began during the invasion itself, in March 2003. The award-winning writer Michael Kelly, editor of the Atlantic Monthly and a columnist for the Washington Post, was the first American journalist to die during the Iraq war. While embedded with U.S. troops, Kelly was killed when the Hummer in which he was riding went off the road into a canal to try to avoid enemy fire. In one of the most controversial incidents, one Ukrainian and one Spanish television cameraman were killed on April 8, 2003, when a U.S. tank fired directly into Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, where most of the foreign press corps was living during the invasion. The U.S. military was roundly criticized after that incident because it had been informed that journalists were staying in that particular hotel. Reporters also refuted U.S. claims that troops were being fired upon when they attacked the hotel. Later a tank commander said the camera lenses had been mistaken for binoculars used to spot targets.

That same day, Tareq Ayoub, a correspondent for the Arabic news channel Al-Jazeera was killed when U.S. forces fired a missile into the station's Baghdad office. Al-Jazeera, based in Qatar, had been highly critical of the Bush administration—and said that it had specifically alerted the Pentagon to the location of its Baghdad office so that its journalists would not be attacked. The U.S. military never said whether the missile attack on Al-Jazeera was intentional or accidental—but the incident, like the Palestine Hotel attack, was decried all over the world. In a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the Committee to Protect Journalists wrote that, given the protection journalists receive under the laws of war, “these attacks violate the Geneva Conventions.” Other international journalists and press freedom organizations also condemned the
U.S. attacks. Reporters Without Borders declared, “We can only conclude that the U.S. Army deliberately and without warning targeted journalists.”

The vast majority of the journalists who have died in Iraq have been Iraqis. About a third of them have been killed in bomb or mortar attacks, simply due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time, according to CPJ. The organization estimates that about two-thirds of those who have died have been the victims of revenge killings, in incidents tied specifically to their work. A wide range of Iraqi media outlets, and of foreign media with Iraqi employees, have been affected. Among the worst hit have been state-owned media like the television station Al-Iraqiya and the newspaper Al-Sabah, because of their ties to the U.S.-supported Iraqi government. Those two media outlets have been particularly hard hit by insurgents: on a regular basis their reporters have been murdered and their offices have been attacked.

A typical case of an Iraqi journalist targeted for his work is So‘oud Muza-him al-Shoumari, a correspondent for the satellite channel Al-Baghdadia. Al-Shoumai, who did on-camera reporting and anchored a news program, was found shot in Baghdad on April 4, 2006. Al-Shoumari had regularly confronted Iraqi police about suspicions that they were committing extrajudicial killings. He regularly interviewed authorities about human rights violations and the daily suffering of the Iraqi people. These kinds of revenge attacks are sometimes related to the reporters’ ethnicity, either the majority Shiite or minority Sunni branches of Islam. In the case of al-Shoumari, who was a Sunni, his colleagues suspect it was members of a Shiite militia who killed him.

THE PLUSES AND MINUSES OF EMBEDS

The streets of Iraq, and to some degree Afghanistan, are now so dangerous that foreign journalists can barely travel and find it difficult to work. “It’s hard to imagine anywhere more difficult,” says Alastair Macdonald, Baghdad bureau chief for the Reuters news agency. “I don’t wake up every morning sweating about the risks I’m taking, but I do know that if I walk 100 yards to the edge of our secure area and out on the streets I’d be taking a major, almost suicidal, risk.”

In order to get out of their hotels and to cover the work of troops first-hand, reporters can be “embedded” with the American military, or with other coalition forces. During an “embed,” journalists are assigned to a military unit and go out into the field along with it. The good thing about these “embeds” is that they give reporters the chance to get onto the front lines with the troops and to see things they would not see otherwise. The bad thing is that journalists increase their already high level of risk by being embeds, because the soldiers and their convoys are constantly coming under attack.

Although the vast majority of victims of violence in Iraq were not embedded when they died, several of the Westerners killed or seriously injured in Iraq sustained their injuries while they were embedded. On May 29, 2006, CBS cameraman Paul Douglas and soundman James Brolin were killed when, on an embed, they got out of their car to inspect a checkpoint. On January 29, 2006, ABC
anchorman Bob Woodruff was seriously injured when an improvised bomb went off near the tank where he was traveling as an embed. Woodruff, who was standing in the hatch of the tank with most of his body exposed, sustained serious head injuries. Although he was in a coma for weeks and underwent several surgeries, he survived and made a miraculous recovery.

**LESSENING THE DANGERS?**

Journalists pick their profession despite the dangers. Some of them choose ways to lessen the amount of risk they face. For example, journalists may turn down assignments to war zones or stay away from investigative reporting. Yet other journalists face the risks with quiet stoicism because they understand that the regular people they cover often have it even worse than the journalists. “There is a constant concern for safety,” explains ABC News correspondent Jake Tapper, who has spent a great deal of time in Iraq. “It takes a real toll on you, but it makes you appreciate how difficult, in a far deeper way, it is for the troops there and the Iraqi people.”

Yet many journalists are willing to face great risks because they believe that they are telling stories that need to be told. “Journalism is a high calling and sometimes a mortal one. Journalists risk their lives to bring the story of war home,” said Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. “They are as courageous as aid workers, doctors, nurses, even soldiers. People who give their lives so that the public can understand the world should be perceived as patriots and heroes.” Whether reporters are perceived as heroes or not, the reality is that the profession of journalism is now, and will always be, laden with risks.

**See also** Al-Jazeera; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Bias and Objectivity; Embedding Journalists; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment.


Beth Knobel
MEDIA AND CITIZENSHIP

In today’s large-scale societies, most communication about politics takes place through mass media. This places unique responsibilities in the hands of media organizations and journalists. The successes and failures of media in making citizenship possible have been and continue to be hotly debated. In particular, since the 1960s, there has been a decrease in political engagement and participation, and the media coverage of politics is often blamed for causing cynicism. Though today we have an unprecedented access to political information and participation, there is only limited evidence that the rise in new technologies and new forms of participation has truly transformed citizenship.

In historical terms, the idea of citizenship is a relatively new arrival. Though the ancient Greeks famously whiled their hours away talking about politics and making political decisions in the Assembly, their political arrangement—democracy through direct participation—was an anomaly that was viewed with equal measures of contempt and ridicule by their contemporaries. The idea of citizenship has only really gained strength since the mid-1700s, even if the roots of democratic thought have been around for much longer.

Many observers tie the rise in notions of democracy and citizenship to the emergence of the printing press—the first true mass medium. Benedict Anderson argued that newspapers contributed to the formation of the nation-state through the creation of “imagined communities” of readers within geographical and linguistic boundaries. To Anderson, “The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983, p. 6).
Alongside the rise of the democratic nation-state, of course, came the idea of citizenship as a form of belonging to the nation. The German sociologist Jürgen Habermas saw print media as providing unprecedented opportunities for citizens within particular nations to hold governments accountable for their actions, and for enabling debate about important issues. The rise of democratic nation-states, starting in the late eighteenth century, brought with it a newly complex set of relationships between governments, citizens, and media. In democratic societies, governments cannot simply rule with the absolute power of emperors and kings. Instead, democratic governments depend upon public approval for their legitimacy. And while ancient Greek city-states were small enough to be governed through face-to-face discussion, our large and complex societies require mass media to facilitate the process of communicating government decisions and expressing public opinion. Under such circumstances, the media have a complex set of responsibilities. As Jefferson famously quipped, “If I had to choose between government without newspapers, and newspapers without government, I wouldn’t hesitate to choose the latter.” Democratic thinkers often describe the media as a “fourth estate,” or as a crucial check on the power of government. By scrutinizing the actions of government and other concentrations of power in society, media ensure the accountability of these organizations. Further, the media are responsible for undertaking surveillance of the environment and informing citizens of what is happening around them, providing them with the knowledge to understand the meaning and significance of ongoing events. Finally, the media are expected to provide a platform for public political discourse, serving as a channel for the advocacy of diverse political viewpoints and thereby facilitating the formation of public opinion.

For their part, citizens are expected to take an active part in democracy. At a minimum, they must stay informed about ongoing events in society, and about how their governments are reacting to them, in order to be able to make rational decisions in elections (see “Why Citizens Need the News” sidebar). Some scholars, however, believe that such a level of participation is inadequate. The idea that citizens need to be more intimately involved in politics is not new; the eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that “the English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing.” Today, a growing chorus of scholarly, political, and journalistic voices expresses concern about the limits to citizen participation within the framework of representative democracy, suggesting that citizens ought to be actively engaged in making the decisions that shape the futures of their countries by participating in direct discussion of political matters through the mass media.

**WHY CITIZENS NEED THE NEWS**

Providing information to citizens is seen as one of the most important roles of the media. The reason why this role is so central is that in today’s mass societies, where political decisions often are made in locations and contexts distant from the citizens affected by them, most of us have little chance of finding out about these decisions without drawing in some
way on the mass media. In order to make informed and rational decisions in elections, and, more broadly, to understand events that affect their lives, citizens are therefore expected to seek out information from media. We need to understand the policies and characters of those who represent us in government, but also how global events like tsunamis and terrorist attacks as well as local events like school closings and festivals impinge upon us. While newspapers were once the dominant political medium, television has been the most significant source of information for most people since the 1970s. Today, the average American spends 4.5 hours a day watching TV, though most of their television consumption is entertainment-oriented rather than political. By contrast, the Internet is emerging as a key source of political information—according to a study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 26 million Americans used the Internet every day in August 2006 to gather information about the upcoming midterm elections.

**CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES: A CRISIS OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS?**

It is certainly the case that alongside the rise of increasingly sophisticated forms of communication between politicians and citizens, there has also been a corresponding decline of participation in politics. At least since the 1960s, observers have noticed that in Western democracies, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, fewer people are voting in elections. This period has also seen a decline in other forms of political engagement, such as newspaper readership, membership in voluntary associations, and trust in politicians. As a result, there is a “crisis of public communications” (Blumler and Gurevitch 1997). Because of the limited opportunities for participation, people may be turning away from conventional institutions, including parties and elections, and engaging in other forms of political action. Certainly, during the same period, there has been an increase in “single-issue politics,” where people mobilize around a particular cause—including environmental politics, antidevelopment activism, antiwar protests, and the global justice movement. Some blame the crisis of public communications on the media, suggesting, among other things, that the negative tone of campaign reporting turns off citizens because it makes them view politics as a dirty game for insiders, where citizens can only be passive spectators or couch potatoes.

In recent years, scholars have invested hopes in new media technologies and genres as a way of enhancing citizenship and boosting political participation. First, some suggest that new television genres, such as talk shows and comedy, can engage groups who are otherwise disenchanted with politics. A study conducted by the Pew Center for People and the Press after the 2004 presidential elections showed that young people (anyone under the age of 30) increasingly rely on shows like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* for their political information—21 percent cited these as their main source of knowledge about the elections.

Secondly, ever since the invention of the Internet, its interactive potential has been much heralded by observers (see also “Television Talk Shows, Politicians,
and Democracy” sidebar). Research shows that although governments and political parties have invested heavily in interactive Web sites and online information provision, new technologies do not necessarily challenge the top-down orientation of conventional politics. As James Janack found in his study of discussion on Howard Dean’s campaign blog, supporters of Dean controlled debate to focus it on issues of strategy and style over substance. Contributors who wanted to actually discuss politics were silenced by other posters who felt that such discussion was inappropriate.

Nevertheless, new technologies have made possible media forms that are more participatory and democratic. They have led to the rise of citizen journalism, and user-created content, which is now an increasingly important part of the content produced by mainstream news organizations. In addition, there are today at least 60 million active blogs—a number that is rapidly increasing.

At the same time, we are faced with new questions about how media should handle the realities of an increasingly globalized world where the nation-states to which citizens belong are undermined by transnational and global developments and interests. Some observers suggest that the global nature of life in contemporary societies is shifting our allegiances in all areas of life. We engage with global corporations like Nike and Coca-Cola, social movements like Greenpeace, and many of us are part of or affected by the unprecedented movement of individuals and groups across previously fixed national borders. The question on the minds of many scholars today, then, is whether mass media can contribute to the formation of citizenship that goes beyond the nation-state.

**TELEVISION TALK SHOWS, POLITICIANS, AND DEMOCRACY**

Since the 1970s, television has been the most important source of political information for citizens. Television’s emphasis on visually appealing, short-and-snappy personalized storytelling has, according to some observers, fundamentally transformed the nature of political discourse. In particular, new television genres, such as talk shows, are seen by politicians as a crucial way of reaching women, ethnic minorities, and other groups in society that are less tuned in to conventional politics. As a result, presidential candidates have increasingly subjected themselves to the talk-show treatment. Bill Clinton was one of the first to do this when he played the saxophone on the Arsenio Hall Show. In the 2000 Gore–Bush contest, both candidates appeared on Oprah Winfrey within a few weeks of each other. George Bush talked about his struggle with alcoholism, revealed that his favorite sandwich is peanut butter and jelly on white bread, and his favorite gift is kissing his wife. Gore, on the same show, said that his favorite breakfast cereal is Wheaties and that his favorite musical group is the Beatles. Critics allege that such appearances blur the boundaries between politics and popular culture. They fail to test the policies of politicians, but merely highlight their personalities. As such, they might risk trivializing politics and alienating voters. Supporters of talk-show politics, on the other hand, contend that by bringing politics and popular culture closer, we can engage people who are otherwise turned off from politics.
If anything, the growing availability of mass media technologies, and their increasing complexity, raises more questions than ever about the relationship between media and citizenship.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Blogosphere; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Nationalism and the Media; News Satire; Political Entertainment; Propaganda Model; Public Opinion; Public Sphere; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Karin Wahl-Jorgensen

MEDIA AND THE CRISIS OF VALUES

The conflict between the need for free expression and the importance of social responsibility has always accompanied the study of literature, the fine arts, and various forms of information transmission since at least the time of Aristotle’s *The Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. However, concern for such values surged when printing technology made newspapers, magazines, and books available on a much wider scale and as literacy became more widespread. The advent of new technologies in the twentieth century—film, radio, sound recording, television, the Internet—has provoked even more discussion, pitting defenders of freedom of expression against guardians of public morality and responsibility. Groups such as the Parents Television Council, whose stated mission is “to ensure that children are not constantly assaulted by sex, violence, and profanity on television and in other media,” represent one side of the issue. Other groups, such as media-watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), which attempts to offer “a well-documented criticism of media-based censorship” and advocates “greater diversity in the press,” champion the ideal of freedom of the press. Can a balance be struck between these two camps so that human values can guide the production and usage of the media today?

The discussion of values in the media divides itself into considerations of: (a) the role of the media in society as either a major influence on public attitudes and behavior, or merely a reflection or reinforcement of a given society’s values; (b) the specific mechanism of media influence on the values of readers,
AGENDA SETTING: ALL MONICA ALL THE TIME

In late January 1998, all the major media in the United States and many other countries were focused on the upcoming visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba. Of the pontiff’s many trips, this was considered one of the most historic, since he would be meeting with Fidel Castro, an avowed Marxist dictator who had officially banned the practice of the Catholic religion in his country. The event was featured on the cover of several major news magazines and the anchors of the major network nightly news were heading to Havana for live coverage of the visit. On Friday, January 23, Tom Brokaw of the NBC Nightly News announced that every edition of the following week’s news would include features about the contemporary situation in Cuba.

The next day, Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern, revealed that she had been conducting a sexual affair with President Bill Clinton. Within hours, all coverage of the Pope’s visit to Cuba ended, and virtually every television channel, every newspaper, every magazine, and every Internet blog was devoted almost exclusively to the sexual scandal. The historical visit of the Pope to Cuba, with its ramifications for the relationships of the United States, the Catholic Church, and Communism, was forgotten.

What put the Lewinsky story at the top of the media agenda? What made this story such a significant matter? The people’s right to know? The well-known power of sexual scandal to sell newspapers and raise ratings? A “vast right-wing conspiracy” against a popular liberal President? This and many other examples of the media’s ability to set the agenda of public discourse and the motives that drive the agenda-setting process fascinate media critics across the political, moral, and ideological spectrum.

viewers, or listeners; (c) the rights and duties of government to control media activity; (d) the rights and obligations of those who own or control the means of media production; and, finally, (e) the aesthetic values of the media as art forms.

MEDIA CONTENT

A great deal of the popular discussion of values in the media revolves around the question of content. Studies of media effects keep revolving around the presentation of sexuality, violence, gender, race, and politics and their influence on media consumers. It has often been pointed out that the concern about such influence over the centuries has usually emerged from the elite members of a culture and their perception of the lower classes as helpless in the face of the media onslaught. The thinking that developed in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, used the model of the media as a “magic bullet” or a hypodermic needle, transmitting messages to the mass of poorly educated, passive, and easily influenced media consumers, whose opinions and behaviors were bound to be heavily influenced by the media’s overwhelming messages, such as Hitler’s (and some would say Roosevelt’s) political propaganda, the sexual allure of Hollywood
movie stars such as Rudolph Valentino or Mae West, or the glorification of violence in gangster movies and pulp fiction. This theory, however, was not based on actual sociological data and, in its simple form, has been largely discredited by subsequent empirical research.

After World War II, however, more scientific studies of the media in Europe and America, using controlled experiments, interviews, and other sociological methods, found that people were much more selective in their media usage than previously thought, tending to pay attention to and remember the media messages that were more consistent with the personal values and attitudes they already held. Conservative or liberal citizens would read magazines and newspapers and listen to radio messages that reinforced their political viewpoints. Media theorists concluded that most media messages, rather than forming or changing public values and attitudes, tended to reinforce those already in place. It also became clear, on the basis of the sociological research, that the mass media represented only one of many influences on an individual's opinions, attitudes, and behavior. The media's messages are always competing with the influence of family, friends, coworkers, religious leaders, and educators, as well as many popular role models and opinion leaders. Meanwhile, according to these "limited-effects" theorists, the general consensus of public opinion in American society exerts a centripetal pull towards a common set of values—ideals of financial success, family solidarity, respect for the law, and other "respectable" attitudes and behaviors—to which both mainstream and marginalized members of society pay allegiance. The mass media, in their search for as large an audience as possible, strive to reflect that consensus.

The cultural revolution of the 1960s, however, challenged both this view of a naturally developed "American consensus" and the role of the media as a mere reflection of the values of the culture. Many experts began to ask whether, rather than reflecting social values, the media actively shape public attitudes and opinions and create cultural meaning. They also claimed that the values thus created by the media tended to benefit the socially, financially, and politically powerful while marginalizing and disempowering the poor and powerless members of society. They pointed, for example, to the massive amounts of advertising and media depiction of such addictive and health-threatening products as tobacco and liquor (while other substances, such as marijuana, were represented as dangerous and socially disapproved) as well as fast food, airline travel, and other products and services that are harmful to the environment and personal health.

They pointed to the coincidence of the campaigns on behalf of gas-guzzling automobiles in post–World War II America with the major legislation for interstate highway construction, the decline of support for public transportation in most urban areas, and the growth of the energy industry. They demonstrated many similar connections between the media promotion of certain messages and the financial interests of large corporations and their political allies.

This depiction of the media as actively creating and promoting social attitudes was reinforced by the findings of other researchers, who studied the long-term reinforcement of certain values and attitudes through a steady, consistent presentation of a message in a specific direction. The portrayal of minorities
in subservient and demeaning roles in Hollywood films, for example, or the
depiction of foreigners as dangerous in television series, or the presentation of
impossible standards of beauty in advertising, all serve to reinforce the hege-
mony of certain social groups and to marginalize and disempower others.

**SPECIAL MODELS OF MEDIA INFLUENCE**

Whatever theory is followed, much research is still being conducted to de-
termine whether the consumption of media messages serve as: (a) a stimulus to
certain behavior and a reinforcement of values and attitudes (the predominance
of white males as financial or political power figures in the news); (b) the mod-
eling of behavior (the 1950s television family life on *Father Knows Best* or the
glamour of drug consumption by the Beatles and other popular musicians of the
1960s); (c) a catharsis of socially unacceptable behavior (pornographic material
or violent video games as cathartic release, political satire as an escape valve for
the discontent citizenry); or (d) desensitization, whereby previously objection-
able attitudes or behavior no longer shock or offend as, for example, society be-
comes accustomed to more permissive sexual mores, more levels of aggression
or frankness in language and behavior, or various alternative lifestyles that move
into the mainstream.

Definite conclusions are hard to reach. George Gerbner’s Mean World Index,
for example, has demonstrated a strong correlation between the heavy viewing
of television and the formation of a view of the world as dangerous. But even
this study could not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between media and
social behavior. Despite many controlled laboratory experiments and years of
qualitative research, opinions still vary on the effect of the mass media on con-
sumer opinion and behavior and whether they tend to merely reflect or actively
mold social values.

Whatever theory holds sway, there always remain several constant questions
about bias in the presentation of news stories or portrayals in entertainment; the
appeal to sensationalism or shock value to promote television ratings, sell news-
papers, or pack the movie theaters; the agenda-setting that decides what merits
front-page coverage or more television or radio time; the bottom-line quest for
revenue from subscriptions or advertising income; and other matters, which all
affect the content of the media.

**GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP AND REGULATION**

Does the government have a right—and even a responsibility—to regulate
the activity of the mass media in order to safeguard society against any harm?
The role of the mass media in the United States is largely shaped by the First
Amendment, which states that “Congress shall make no law... abridging the
freedom of speech or of the press.” Over the more than 200 years since the U.S.
Constitution was written, various legal rulings, including Supreme Court opin-
ions, have extended the protection of the freedom of the press to advertising,
film, entertainment content in magazines and newspapers, and to television and
radio. Such decisions go hand in hand with the general legal attitude that forbids “prior restraint,” the attempt of the government to prevent the publication or broadcast of expression. Even this principle, however, has been abandoned in a few cases of national security or other situations where media information might present a “clear and present danger” to society. There are also legal restrictions against and punishment for libel, obscenity, and indecency. Pornography, however, is protected as a case of freedom of expression. The distinction among these items and the application of each term to a specific case is, of course, quite complex. In most cases, consistent with the “prior restraint” principle, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or the courts are reactive rather than proactive, waiting until after the questionable media message has been published or transmitted and complaints are received.

The government has considerably more control over radio and television content and production because of the ownership situation of these media. Broadcast media, unlike books, newspapers, magazines, film, and sound recording, make use of a portion of the electromagnetic spectrum that is seen as a limited natural resource, like land and water, and therefore requiring distribution by the government.

Meanwhile, the FCC, with its five commissioners appointed by the White House, is often criticized in terms of the balance it should be maintaining between the interests of the industry owners and those of the consumers, as well as its relationships with lobbyists, media corporations, and politicians. Like many members of federal regulatory commissions, the FCC members are recruited from and often return to the executive offices of the very industries they are supposed to be regulating during their time in public office, raising the question of conflicts of interests.

**RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEDIA OWNERS**

Media ownership in the United States is corporate and profit-driven, as opposed to the paternalistic system in the United Kingdom and Canada, for example, or the state control of the media in China or Cuba. This has led to a general understanding of media ventures not as public services but as opportunities to achieve gigantic profit. The Hollywood studios, the national radio and television networks, and the newspaper giants have become some of the country’s most profitable industries. This has led to the creation of a business oligopoly, in which the smaller media operations cannot compete with the media giants. In recent years, even this elite group of media owners has merged and concentrated media ownership into the hands of a very few media conglomerates, creating a situation where a megacorporation’s reach extends to every area of media activity. (See “Conglomeration and Media Monopolies” for examples of the rise of the major media corporations and their relationship to the FCC.)

The principles that govern corporate efforts to achieve maximum profitability cannot automatically be applied to media corporations. Whereas McDonald’s sells food products and General Motors sells automobiles, the product of media corporations is: (a) information, which ideally should be helping to develop
the well-informed citizenry on whom a legitimate democracy depends, and (b) entertainment, whose social impact should not be underestimated. Media conglomerations have led to the replacement of independent bookstores by the giant bookstore chains, the presence of only one major newspaper in most metropolitan areas, the automation of local radio stations, and the prominence of blockbuster movies over smaller studio or independent films. While this might be seen as simply another case of survival of the fittest in the corporate media jungles, other critics point to the elimination of the competitive incentive and other benefits inherent in capitalist business practices and the homogenization of media consumers.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of globalization provokes new questions of human values. The worldwide dominance of the Hollywood film industry and the American music industry, for example, raises the specter of corporate and cultural imperialism. The convergence of media messages, the partnership of political and corporate elites, and the “echo effect” of the same corporate-driven messages being delivered worldwide threaten to drown out or marginalize alternative voices. (See “Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity” for specific examples of such “media imperialism.”)

AESTHETIC VALUES

The media are rightly evaluated in terms of the quality of their artistic elements. Critical reviews are issued and awards are given for almost every genre of mass communication. Pulitzer Prizes are bestowed annually on newspaper writers and photographers as well as theatrical presentations; National Book Awards are given to works of both fiction and nonfiction. Academy Awards are given to films, Emmy Awards to television productions, Peabody Awards to radio and television programming, and Grammy Awards to achievements in an ever-expanding list of sound-recording categories. All such awards represent critical judgment of artistic achievement in various mass media. Some would maintain that, in considering a work of art, aesthetic qualities such as verbal eloquence, visual composition, or dramatic or musical skill must be considered as paramount in this area even if, in some cases, the judgment that is rendered may conflict with other values. Is nudity in a film (American Beauty) or in a live performance (Hair), obscene language in a novel (James Joyce’s Ulysses or Toni Morrison’s Beloved), or violence on a television show (The Sopranos) essential to the artistic integrity of the material in question? Can a musical performance that is considered by many to encourage antisocial behavior or encourage stereotypes (such as rap music) still be acknowledged as artistically valid and even praiseworthy for aesthetic reasons? Should the sexual display or the religious imagery of Madonna’s performances be defended as exercises in artistic license, or can there be legitimate concern that such artistic expression is a degradation of moral standards or a mockery of religion? May ethnic slurs or demeaning images of racial groups be allowed as free expression, or should they be treated as hate speech and therefore liable to judgments beyond the boundaries of aesthetic norms?
SUMMARY

In the areas of media content, social influence, government control, business interests, and artistic merit, the ongoing tension between individual expression and initiative versus the interests of society at large will continue to pose important questions about human values.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Children and Effects; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Global Community Media; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Hypercommercialism; Media Literacy; Obscenity and Indecency; Pornography; Ratings; Regulating the Airwaves; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Violence and Media.


Michael V. Tueth, S. J.

MEDIA AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

The development of mass media in the twentieth century transformed the way political candidates run for public office, and in doing so changed forever the American electoral process. Political campaigns use media to reach vast numbers of voters, and candidates hire cadres of media professionals to produce slick advertisements and formulate compelling sound bites at costs that escalate with every presidential campaign. As American democracy continues to adapt to ever more sophisticated media marketing strategies, visual and rhetorical
devices have drawn fire from critics who worry that in an age of mass media, it may be getting harder, not easier, for the public to decide who can best represent their interests, values, and vision for the future.

During elections, audiences come to know and recognize political candidates primarily through the mass media imagery, interviews, and events that depict them. Debates, conventions, campaign stops, and political advertisements reach millions of viewers, and candidates have access to the public in ways unthinkable before mass media. Television has been an especially important player since the 1950s, heralding the most significant changes in the way elections are carried out. As the broadcast medium brought sights and sounds into the homes of the American electorate, pictures of candidates and advertisements provided voters with new ways to choose their leaders. The successful 1952 campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower played to television audiences with skillfully stylized, fast-moving ads. Democratic opponent Adelaide Stephenson understood less about television formatting, and because of his lengthy speeches became known as an “egghead.” Political strategists have learned over the years to carefully hone their candidate’s speech and image, turning the media into a battleground for electoral victory, while often losing sight of the issues. Elections now include targeted, negative advertisements, zinger sound bites in televised debates, and lavish convention spectacles, all part of stage-managed campaigns. Many complain that contemporary electoral campaigns in this media age often seem to obscure more than they illuminate about politics and the candidates they promote.

**THE PARTY CONVENTIONS**

Historically, conventions were contentious gatherings where party platforms were debated and hammered out, and politicians vied for their party’s
nomination. Now, both political parties pick their candidate before they ever hit the convention floor. In recent years, editors, journalists, and TV hosts have complained that the national party conventions have become little more than carefully choreographed infomercials, selling candidates and parties in nationally televised feel-good events where balloons drop amid sparkling atmospheres, red, white and blue banners, and sounds of patriotic pop songs. Throughout convention week, media time is filled with highly produced docu-videos, carefully crafted rhetoric, and image-enhanced candidates. With so few delegates willing to enter into on-camera debate in the name of party unity, members of the news media have begun to ask what is left to cover. Some networks now say they will no longer carry national presidential conventions during prime time.

**VISUAL LANGUAGE**

Election campaigns, ideally, should inform voters about the candidate’s past political actions and current policy formulations in order to understand their divergent visions of democracy and how their leadership will affect the country. Yet viewers are often expected to judge candidates’ personal attributes, and even qualities of character, such as integrity and trustworthiness, through pictures. Television images of some candidates fail to convey those qualities. For example, negative opinions of Michael Dukakis were evoked by images that seemed to make his head appear too large, and his shoulders too small. He was labeled “a wimp” during the presidential race against George H. W. Bush in 1988, a negative attribute based solely on appearance, not substance. Many credited much of the success of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton to their ability to appear sincere and humane on camera.

**Racially Coded VisualMessages in the 1988 Presidential Campaign**

Negative advertisements are able to create powerful impressions of candidates and their positions, often using questionable visual strategies that evoke anxiety and fear. The most historically significant example of such a campaign is the racially charged presidential campaign of 1988 in which George H. W. Bush defeated Michael Dukakis.

The 1988 Bush campaign, headed by Lee Atwater, exploited white fears of black criminals by featuring Willie Horton in advertisements. After the Democratic convention early in the race, Dukakis enjoyed high poll numbers, but the Bush campaign conducted focus groups and found that the Horton incident would be a damaging issue for Dukakis. Horton, in jail for murder, had raped a white woman and assaulted her fiancé while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison. Three other white inmates had also escaped the furlough program, one a police officer who committed murder while on leave. But the Republican campaign focused on Horton. One ad designed by Bush supporters featured a criminal mug shot of Horton, and the official campaign spot made it seem like
many dangerous murderers had escaped while on furlough. Though untrue, the grainy black and white images of dark criminals walking through prison gates raised fears about the program, and misrepresented the facts. Viewers were not told the program was actually started by a previous Republican governor. After the election, critics pointed out that the metaphor of a white woman being raped by a black man has long been associated with white fear toward African Americans, and the coded visual language of the attack ads excited those fears.

Negative attack ads have become features of most media campaigns, and while some say they contain useful information for the electorate, others argue that the visual manipulation of pictures and graphic imagery create implied meanings hard for candidates to address in issues debates. Voters now regularly assert that they do not like it when candidates “go negative,” and would like to hear more about issues, but polling data shows ironically that negative advertisements are often effective tools in winning elections.

**CANDIDATES AND POPULAR MEDIA**

During the 1990s, political candidates broke out of the confines of serious news programming and began to visit shows across the media spectrum. From Bill Clinton playing the saxophone on Arsenio Hall, to George W. Bush talking to Regis and Kathy Lee, presidential candidates now make appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and other late-night venues as well. Viewers want to see the candidates in casual, unscripted settings where they can be themselves, and such appearances bring the democratic process into the daily lives of millions of diverse potential voters. Oftentimes, however, the potential for serious discussion is overshadowed by more trivial fare that has come to be known as “politics lite.” Many serious topics could be discussed and debated on talk shows, but hosts such as Oprah mostly ask candidates questions about what they ate for breakfast and which is their favorite color. Such personal trivial pursuits of the candidates led one MTV viewer to ask Bill Clinton if he wore “boxers or briefs?”

When George W. Bush appeared with Regis Philbin during the 2000 election, he opened his jacket for viewers to see what he was wearing. Governor Bush was dressed like the celebrity host, wearing the dark matching signature tie and shirt, the Regis line of clothes. By doing so, the candidate was using celebrity association, a marketing strategy that seeks to transfer the popularity of the host onto the politician. In this way, candidates now sell an image of themselves to media audiences and associate themselves with the popularity already enjoyed by celebrities, hoping to turn that recognition into votes without having to elaborate their political views. In contemporary media-driven campaigns, voters are often entertained as audiences and addressed as consumers, not informed as citizens or provided with political positions.

News figures have criticized the candidates for doing what they call feel-good interviews on talk shows like Regis, Oprah, and Rosie O’Donnell, allowing them to avoid the serious press with their tough questions. But the “serious” press has also been criticized for not asking issue-oriented questions during campaigns.
ELECTIONS AS HORSE RACES

The news media have a tendency to report elections as if they were horse races, frequently citing poll numbers and using visuals that turn states either red or blue as they tally up the electoral college votes. These stories come with greater regularity as Election Day grows near. With a seemingly endless supply of sports metaphors, news stories make the race more exciting by talking about how the candidate must “step up to the plate,” deliver a “knock-out punch,” or do well in the “final stretch.” In this way, news commentary focuses more on strategy details and numbers and less on political platforms and visions. In the excitement, a critical approach to what are often persuasive forms of campaign strategies is lost. Journalists often report admiringly on a candidate’s ability to garner higher numbers, and many times inadvertently, they legitimate the superficial, image-based, marketing strategies employed to win votes.

TELEvised DEBATES

Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy went on television in the first debate to be broadcast live in 1960. It came to be called the Great Debate, because it demonstrated the power of the image. Those who watched the debate on television judged Kennedy to be the winner, and more of those who listened on the radio believed Nixon had won. Over the years, after many such televised events, the visual image of the candidates, their clothes, expressions, and nonverbal cues, continues to create enduring impressions, making some argue that in the age of the image, substance and political content are lost. But documentaries, and many other uses of film and video that educate and inform, show that information and understanding do not necessarily have to be lost in a visual age. Candidates explaining their preference for policies and their stands on issues in a debate format should elucidate much, even on television. Increasingly, it is the way the medium is used as a marketing tool, not its inherent failure, that creates problems for democracy. Though debates are
billed as spontaneous, unscripted interactions, candidates are highly coached by political consultants adept at shaping messages that have been carefully tested. Candidates memorize many of the same sound bites that appear in their campaign advertising, repeating single, unexplained phrases over and over. In his first debate against George W. Bush, Al Gore repeated 10 times that he would put social security in a “lock box.” After the debate, much of what the public learns depends on how the news media report and interpret it. News commentators and campaign strategists themselves provide political “spin” after each debate. Their job is to assure viewers that their candidate won, and that image and appearance should be taken as the legitimate measure of a candidate’s worth: the color of their tie really does mean something. Critics charge that there remain few dedicated political analysts in the media who are willing to keep public officials accountable for what they say by checking the facts or comparing their current statements with previous positions. Instead, the media personalities and marketing consultants act as theater critics, evaluating the candidates’ performance, image, and delivery. After half a century of image politics on television, the image itself has become the topic of legitimate news.

**CYNICISM AND SATIRE**

To those citizens who wish to be taken out of the confines of simple self-interest and contemplate a better world on a bigger scale, the simple slogans that pass the test of focus groups rarely challenge existing economic or social disparities and other social problems that trouble American democracy. Seeking solutions to serious problems and creating a better world is the stuff of political vision, but such visions usually take more than sound bites to express. Marketed messages are not a language that can question why so many young black men are in jail, or why one out of five children in this country go to bed hungry. Politicians are left with vague generalities that do not offend swing voters, or narrowly defined issues dictated by political consultants. Some media critics argue that hour-long dramatic series such as *Law and Order* and *West Wing* present more clearly articulated issue debates than most of what is on TV during election campaigns.

As superficial language and marketing persuasions permeate campaigns, the formats begin to look predigested and carefully crafted, and they have become the brunt of jokes on late-night comedy satire. The popularity of those programs has shot up, especially among the young. In 2000, a poll done by the Pew Center for People and the Press showed almost half of people in their twenties were getting their election news from late-night talk show hosts such as Jon Stewart, Bill Maher, David Letterman, Jay Leno, and Conan O’Brien. The popularity of TV’s political comedy is an indication to some that young people are becoming more cynical, dropping out of politics and refusing to vote. To others it indicates the sophistication of viewers who reject the way politicians “stay on message” with prepackaged rhetoric. Recent concerts to “rock the vote” have attempted to reinvigorate a youthful electorate and bring them back into the election process.
FOLLOW THE MONEY

Most importantly, media campaigns are expensive, with the combined costs now reaching the trillion-dollar figure. As the costs of political advertising on television and other media outlets continue to rise, only those who are already wealthy or well funded can afford to run for political office. In 1997, President Clinton made a speech asking broadcasters to offer free time to political candidates, but with billions of dollars at stake media corporations lobbied heavily on Capitol Hill to defeat the proposal.

Such huge sums of money in the political process have serious consequences for democracy. Both Republicans and Democrats throw lavish parties at their national conventions, paid for with money from wealthy contributors and large corporations. When parties and candidates must continually raise money to cover the costs of pricey media campaigns, they become dependent upon and beholden to the corporate dollars that fund them. The Center for Public Integrity and other public interest groups have worked hard on this issue, looking for the most effective ways to achieve campaign finance reform.

THE FUTURE AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Initiatives to make television more open to unscripted candidates with less money are in the works, but much of the continuing debate about the electoral process and democracy is taking place around new media technology. Many have looked to the Internet as part of the solution to the problems of influences and entrenched media practices. Online discussion and commentary is seen as a place where average citizens can have a greater voice in politics, but that will be restricted to a small group with access and resources who can use the familiar language of politics. With the development of the Internet, the American democratic process continues to adapt to new media technologies.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Bias and Objectivity; Blogosphere; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media and Citizenship; Media Literacy; Media Reform; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Nationalism and the Media; News Satire; Political Entertainment; Political Documentary; Public Opinion; Representations of Race.


Robin Andersen
MEDIA LITERACY: CREATING BETTER CITIZENS OR BETTER CONSUMERS?

Since the 1930s there has been a small but growing movement of educators who stress the importance of media literacy. Media literacy has been broadly defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce messages in many forms of media. While it is the most media-saturated society, the United States lags behind other industrialized nations in media education. Media education is still not a regular feature of the U.S. educational system and there are many differing perspectives over precisely what constitutes media literacy. At the heart of these debates is the question of whether media literacy should be about teaching people the skills and knowledge they need to be more sophisticated consumers of media or the skills and knowledge they need to be more engaged and critical citizens.

Advocates of media education argue that we must all learn how to make sense of electronic and visual media just as we have to learn traditional literacy skills such as comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of written texts. Educators take it for granted that students must be taught how to interpret and produce texts such as poems, stories, and essays. From a media literacy perspective, we should also be students of the media and learn how to critically engage with advertisements, television programs, films, and new media forms as well. Although most of the 50 states now include some mention of media literacy in their educational standards, media education has yet to become a full part of the curriculum in most schools. Only a small percentage of students in the United States participate in any focused media education. The move away from educational practices that encourage critical inquiry and the increased emphasis on standardized testing that emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century has stalled attempts to advance media literacy in the nation's schools. However, a growing media literacy movement composed of educators, activists, independent media practitioners, and concerned citizens is fighting to establish the importance of media education in a world that is saturated with media images and stories.

MEDIA SATURATION AND THE NEED FOR MEDIA LITERACY

For the citizens of industrialized nations media are inescapable. In the United States, for example, virtually every home includes at least one television, and two-thirds of households have three or more. In these homes, the television is on for almost seven hours a day and the average American watches over four hours of television daily. Television is, of course, only one of many media technologies that compete for our time. Use of the Internet and other new media, such as video games, is rising every year. As new forms of media are introduced, however, television viewing is actually increasing rather than declining. People are simply adding to their overall electronic media exposure every year. Because we live in media-saturated environments it is essential that we engage in critical reflection on the media that are so much a part of our daily routines. This will
not happen automatically, however. Media are ubiquitous. In other words, there is so much media in our lives, and media images surround us to such a great extent, that they have become almost invisible. As the media scholar Marshall McLuhan is quoted as saying, “We don’t know who discovered water, but we’re pretty sure it wasn’t a fish.” The notion that educational interventions are necessary for individuals to achieve an elevated understanding of the media is at the heart of the U.S. media literacy movement that has been developing in various forms since the 1930s.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA LITERACY MOVEMENT

In the 1930s a number of English teachers in Madison, Wisconsin, became concerned about the social impact of commercial radio and formed a small group dedicated to studying radio programming. This group added television to their mission in 1953 and became the American Council for Better Broadcasting. Thirty years later they changed their name to the National Telemedia Council (NTC) and they continue to operate under this title. The avowed mission of the group is not to critique the media industries but to encourage appreciation of quality programming. As stated on their Web site: “From the beginning, we have taken a positive, non-judgmental attitude and embraced a philosophy that values reflective judgment and cooperation rather than confrontation with the media industry.”

This cooperative approach marked the first three decades of media education until the rise of the critical viewing movement in the late 1960s. Concerns about the effects of television violence helped spur public and private investment in media education efforts, which peaked during the 1970s. This critical viewing approach was aimed at critiquing media messages and pointing out the possible negative effects of media consumption.

Despite the spread of media education in the 1970s, the 1980s saw a conservative turn in education that emphasized a focus on traditional reading, writing, and computation skills. Few new media education programs or innovations were introduced during this decade and media literacy fell by the wayside throughout most of the United States. This was not true in other parts of the industrial world however, as media education continued to develop and expand. Small pockets of media educators continued to communicate with one another, and toward the end of the decade two important groups were founded in California: Strategies for Media Literacy, in San Francisco, and the Center for Media and Values (later to be called the Center for Media Literacy) in Los Angeles.

During the 1990s a growing number of conferences and publications indicated that the media literacy movement was again on the rise in the United States. In 1992, the Aspen Institute sponsored a conference with the goal of creating a recognizable identity and clear mission for an increasingly disparate movement. It was at this conference that the standard definition of media literacy was first developed: “A media literate person can access, analyze, evaluate, and produce both print and electronic media.”

Another key development occurred in 1997 when the Partnership for Media Education (PME) was formed to, among other things, organize annual national
conferences for media practitioners and educators. This small group became the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) in 2000. According to their Web site they are “the first national membership organization dedicated to media literacy.” Like the NTC, AMLA is concerned with not being confrontational with the media industries. In their own words: “While media literacy does raise critical questions about the impact of media and technology, it is not an anti-media movement. Rather, it represents a coalition of concerned individuals and organizations, including educators, faith-based groups, health care-providers, and citizen and consumer groups, who seek a more enlightened way of understanding our media environment.”

Despite AMLA’s mission of creating a broad coalition, the organization’s approach is not without controversy. AMLA accepts funding from media corporations such as Time-Warner, which has led some in the media literacy community to question whether this compromises their ability to promote critical thinking about media. In 1999 Channel One was one of the sponsors of the National Media Education Conference put on by AMLA’s predecessor, PME. Channel One is a private for-profit enterprise that provides television equipment to schools at no financial cost. They also produce a daily news program that includes 10 minutes of editorial content and two minutes of advertising. Teachers in Channel One schools are required to show the program each day and students are required to sit through it. Critics of Channel One say that the news programming is devoid of any substantive content and the real point of the programming is to expose a captive audience to commercials. A 2006 study supported this criticism when it revealed that students remembered the ads but not the news stories covered in a given program. Because of Channel One’s involvement in the 1999 conference, some media educators boycotted the event.

In response to these concerns over AMLA’s focus on cooperation with corporate media, in 2002 a number of educators, media practitioners, and activists founded the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME). Believing that sponsorship always affects outcomes, ACME is committed to complete independence from the media industries and accepts no corporate funding. ACME advocates for a three-pronged approach to media literacy that includes media education, independent media production, and media reform activism. At the core of the ACME philosophy is the notion that both media content and the social context in which content is produced are important. ACME thus supports a type of media education that concerns itself not only with analyzing media messages but also with understanding media industries and their practices and motivations. In regard to the major difference between the two organizations, it is stated on the ACME Web site: “AMLA seeks to be a ‘big tent’ media literacy organization and specifically rejects ‘media bashing’ which we view as a limitation on criticism and reform.” The split between AMLA and ACME is evocative of the disparity in media literacy advocates’ views on the philosophies, goals, and strategies of media education. In fact, ACME advocates the use of the term media education as distinct from media literacy, where media literacy is focused on messages while media education deals with both messages and structures.
THE MEDIA LITERACY DEBATES

There is quite a bit of disagreement among media literacy advocates about key issues related to media education. For example, AMLA describes the functions of media literacy in this way:

Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages. (AMLA http://www.amlainfo.org)

While this commonly accepted approach to media literacy is focused on messages, or the content of media, others have argued that content must be understood contextually. A contextual approach focuses on issues such as ownership of the media, structural factors behind what sorts of messages are produced and by whom, what is missing from media content, the consequences of growing up in an environment saturated with commercial values, and the role of the media in promoting or inhibiting democracy. The message-based approach, however, advocates for a version of media literacy that focuses on teaching students to be more adept consumers of media messages, rather than both critical readers and active participants in, and even challengers of, the media system itself. This difference in philosophy is indicative of just one of a number of unresolved issues in the media literacy community.

Renee Hobbs, one of the founders of AMLA, has framed these differences in approach and philosophy among media literacy advocates as the “Seven Great Debates.” The questions addressed in these debates can be recognized as falling into two broad and overlapping categories: questions about media education strategies and questions about media education goals.

MEDIA EDUCATION STRATEGIES

One of the key strategic debates revolves around the teaching of media production skills as a central aspect of media literacy education. Advocates of a focus on production argue that it allows students to directly experience the media literacy insight that all media messages are constructions rather than reflections of the real world (see “Core Concepts of Media Literacy” sidebar). They also suggest that students can be empowered by learning how to use media technologies to create artistic and creative media of their own. Skeptics, however, argue that too often media production education simply teaches students to imitate familiar commercial media forms and conventions, without any critical reflection on the power of those conventions to shape our values and beliefs.

Another issue of contention related to educational strategies is whether media literacy should be focused on popular culture. Educators and administrators often discount the importance of popular culture, dismissing it as something that is trivial and has no place in the academic environment. Most media literacy advocates, however, recognize the central role that popular culture plays in our lives. In fact, many media educators would agree that the so-called popular
culture created by commercial industries has now become the culture in which we all grow up, rather than something that stands outside, or on the margins, of culture itself.

A third strategic debate in the media literacy movement is about whether media education can best operate within traditional school settings. While schools do represent the most organized and widespread method of formal education in industrialized nations, critics argue that the central mission of schools is to reproduce the status quo and reinforce existing social hierarchies. Scholars like Henry Giroux point out that learning does not take place only in schools but that the media themselves offer powerful stories, information, arguments, and images that teach us about the world and our place in it. Furthermore, since media affect us all, media literacy should not be considered an educational project that is only meaningful to children. Those who suggest that media literacy is needed for adults as well as children therefore argue that it must be developed both inside and outside of traditional educational settings.

Finally, media literacy proponents also differ on whether media literacy is most effective when it is taught as a stand-alone, self-contained subject area or whether it should be integrated throughout the curriculum. Some educators suggest that media are so pervasive, and have such a powerful impact on our understanding of the world, that the topic must be addressed in fields such as history, civics, science, literature, and so on. Others, however, suggest that media deserve focused critical attention all on their own. These educators worry that a purely integrative approach runs the risk of avoiding important questions about the media themselves while marginalizing key issues related to media and the role they play in shaping our identities and our societies.

**MEDIA EDUCATION GOALS**

The first of the debates about media education goals revolves around the question of whether media literacy should adopt a so-called protectionist stance. In other words, should it be about protecting people, primarily children, from the negative influence of mass media in promoting violence, irresponsible sexual behavior, unhealthy eating habits, sexist and racist stereotypes, and the like? Or does this sort of approach run the risk of alienating students who do take real pleasure in the media that they use on a daily basis?

Another central question about the goals of media literacy is whether media education should have an explicit political agenda. Some in the media literacy movement claim that it is possible, indeed desirable, for media education to be nonideological—focused on developing autonomous critical thinking among students without embracing a particular point of view. Others, however, argue that there is simply no such thing as purely autonomous thinking and that all of our understandings of the world are embedded within unstated ideological assumptions. These educators believe it is impossible to address the role of the media in society without acknowledging social inequality and hierarchies of power.

A third debate, which at its core is about the goals of media education, is about the role of corporate funding of media literacy projects and curricula.
AML A, for example, does accept corporate funding, based on the rationale that commercial media must take responsibility for educating consumers about the material they produce and distribute. They also point out that media literacy education in the United States is still underdeveloped and the visibility and financial resources of big media organizations is necessary in order to get the message out to as many people as possible. ACME, on the other hand, believes that funding from corporate media inherently limits the critical possibilities of media education and hinders the potential for connecting media literacy to issues of media reform and activism. For example, Channel One's "Media Mastery" media literacy curricula, which has been made available to thousands of schools, does not include any mention of the corporate role in shaping media content.

**CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY**

Despite many differences in their approaches to media literacy, many educators and advocates agree on a number of core concepts, such as the following:

1. All media are constructed and media construct our sense of reality. Media images do not just appear from nowhere. They are made by people and organizations in order to convey particular ideas. Media therefore are not just reflections of reality. Most of what we think we know about people, places, and events that we have not experienced comes to us directly from media. Even when we experience something ourselves our understandings of what we have experienced may be shaped by media images and stories.

2. Different members of the audience will interpret media in different ways. Not everyone will respond to media messages in the ways that the producers intend. Our backgrounds play an important part in how we read a given message. However, media messages will often be read similarly by large numbers of people and often we do accept the producers’ vision.

3. Most media is created by profit-oriented businesses and has commercial implications. In the United States only a small number of large corporations own and control the vast majority of the media people read, see, and hear. The primary purpose of this media is to generate profits for the shareholders of the corporations. Information and entertainment are secondary considerations. In television, for example, the point of the programs is to get viewers in front of the set so that they may be exposed to the “real” programming—the commercials.

4. Media contain value messages and have social implications. All messages reflect the biases of their producers. Even media that appear to be just for entertainment tell us stories about the world that suggest how we should think about it. Movies, for example, show us images of men and women interacting and suggest to us what it means to be a real man or a real woman and what are acceptable sorts of gender relations.

5. Each medium has a unique aesthetic form that influences its content. A news story in a primarily visual medium such as television will convey its messages differently
and affect us differently than if it appeared in a primarily print medium such as a newspaper. Media are art forms as well as forms of communication and can be appreciated for how they use the unique qualities of each medium to connect with their audience.

PUTTING THE DEBATES IN CONTEXT: CONSUMERISM VS. CITIZENSHIP

The standpoints that various media educators adopt on the questions noted above are a function of their overall perspectives on the purpose of media literacy. Underneath these various debates about strategies and goals, the essential question that really divides the media literacy community is this: Is media literacy aimed at creating more sophisticated consumers of media or is it about nurturing engaged citizens? It is one thing to teach children how to decode an advertisement for fast food, for example, so that they may see how the image of a hamburger is artificially constructed, and doesn’t resemble the actual product that you purchase at the counter. It is another thing entirely to encourage an understanding of fast food as a megabillion-dollar global industry that is spreading particular industrial practices and ways of thinking about food, labor, the environment, and the like throughout the world. The consequences of these varying approaches are very different. The student who learns the tricks behind fast-food advertising, but stops there, may feel that this wisdom is sufficient and that they are now free to enjoy their burger and fries from a more informed perspective. The student who learns about the fast food industry’s unfair labor practices, cruel treatment of animals, negative impact on the environment, and contributions to obesity and rising health care costs may choose to have a completely different relationship with these companies in the future. This student may simply decide to stop patronizing fast food establishments or they might get involved in working for reform of the industry or educating others about its harmful practices.

Each of the seven questions noted in the debates listed above may be understood in terms of this crucial difference in understanding the central purpose of media literacy.

MEDIA EDUCATION STRATEGIES AND THE CONSUMER/CITIZEN QUESTION

For example, the perspective of media literacy advocates on the teaching of production skills as part of a media literacy curriculum is informed by their position on whether media literacy is about creating sophisticated consumers or engaged citizens. While most educators would agree that teaching production skills can be an important part of media education, they differ on the context in which those skills are taught. Simply teaching the technology, without considering larger questions of how the technology is a crucial part of a hierarchical system where dominant ways of seeing are defined by those in positions of power in society, can lead to students simply trying to emulate what they are so
used to viewing every day on their television screens and computer monitors. Advocates of media education for citizens rather than consumers believe that students should also be asked to consider how technology may be used to either resist or, more commonly, reinforce systems of social control. These students would be asked to produce their own media that comment on or go against the grain of the commercial media forms that they are so used to seeing.

Media educators’ positions on popular culture in the classroom likewise can be understood as an expression of their overall stance on the central underlying issue of consumerism versus citizenship. Critics argue that we should acknowledge the pleasure that we derive from popular culture. But, they say, we cannot ignore the ways in which so much of popular culture encourages a consumerist relationship to the world, and discourages critical thinking about social issues, while simultaneously reinforcing politics of divide and conquer that turn citizens against one another based on differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Rejecting popular culture outright, however, as vulgar and trivial, ignores the crucial role that it plays in shaping our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world we all inhabit. Media educators who are concerned with fostering citizens who are capable of thinking critically about key issues facing our society (war, the environment, poverty, inequality, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) believe that they must engage with the popular culture that shapes our deepest understandings of these issues.

Educators’ perspectives on whether media literacy is primarily about creating better consumers or better citizens also play out in the debate over whether media literacy is best promoted in traditional school settings. While the purpose of schools in democratic nations is purportedly to prepare students to assume an active role as participants in their societies, critical education scholars have argued that this is primarily a myth. From a critical perspective the real mission of the U.S. education system is to teach students to willingly accept their preassigned social roles based on the socioeconomic, racial, and gender groupings to which they belong. Those who advocate for a critical sort of media literacy aimed at developing citizens who can challenge established power relations are thus more prone to advocate that media education should take place on a large field encompassing many sites in addition to and outside of traditional school settings. They also contend that in the current media-saturated environment a well-developed sort of media literacy is needed not just for schoolchildren but for adults as well. Community groups, alternative media organizations, religious institutions, libraries, and other public spaces all represent potential alternatives for media education.

However, because schools will invariably play a central role in the development of media literacy efforts, advocates from both perspectives also debate on how best to implement media education in schools. The question of whether media education should be focused in courses specifically about the media or integrated throughout the curriculum may also be understood within the framework of consumerist versus citizenship approaches to media literacy. Those who advocate for a sort of media literacy that is concerned with the relationship between media and democracy would seem to be naturally in favor
of courses in history and social studies, for example, dealing with the role the media play in shaping our understandings of the world and public opinion about important social issues. However, from this perspective it is also crucial to have courses specifically devoted to media education in order to avoid losing focus on the centrality of media to the promotion of democracy.

MEDIA EDUCATION GOALS AND THE CONSUMER/CITIZEN QUESTION

In regard to the question of whether media literacy should assume a protectionist stance, those who argue against protectionism point out that people actually receive a lot of pleasure from the media they use and that attempting to protect them from something they have freely chosen is, at best, heavy-handed and insensitive, and at worst, an attempt to justify censorship. However, for those who emphasize the cultivation of engaged citizens rather than sophisticated consumers, a critical stance on the media does not assume that people must be protected from “bad” media and it does not ignore the pleasure that media provide. These critics do argue, however, that the stranglehold of commercial media on our culture is detrimental to democratic ideals. They suggest that, contrary to supporting censorship, they want an opening-up of the media system to more diverse voices and ideas. While recognizing that media do offer audiences all sorts of pleasures, they also ask how commercial industries have come to define what pleasure is and why there is such a narrow range of acceptable pleasurable images on display in the mass media—extremely limited notions of femininity, masculinity, and proper gender relationships, for example.

Educators’ perspectives on whether media literacy should be explicitly political or ideological are also clearly related to their sense of its purpose. Those who believe that media literacy should be about cultivating citizenship unavoidably must deal with what might be considered political issues—issues of power, control, access to resources, and the ability to create and implement public policy. Critics of this sort of approach to media education argue that teachers should not impose their own ideological perspectives on students and that a political approach runs the risk of alienating students, parents, administrators, and school boards. Responding to this criticism, others suggest that the avoidance of issues such as media ownership and control, corporate concentration and conglomer- eration, and hypercommercialism and profiteering in the mass media is tacit acceptance of the status quo and therefore just as political as focusing in on these trends and raising critical questions about their impact on democracy. They also argue that asking students to recognize and think critically about power in the media and in the real world, and how it impacts on their lives, is not the same as pushing a particular political ideology on students.

Finally, the different positions that media literacy advocates hold on the role of corporate sponsorship of media education are also quite clearly a function of whether they believe that media literacy is a matter a learning how to read messages in a more sophisticated manner in order to be better consumers of media, or whether media literacy must go beyond messages in order to ask citizens to
confront the power of the media industries themselves. Clearly, from the latter perspective, corporate sponsorship of media literacy projects and curricula means that the potential to confront corporate power will be severely diminished. Advocates of citizen-oriented media education argue that lessons in media literacy created by the Time Warner corporation, for example, will never address questions about the monopolization of the media environment by a small handful of profit-oriented firms and whether or not this is good for democracy.

**See also** Advertising and Persuasion; Children and Effects; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Reform; Media Watch Groups; Public Access Television; Television in Schools; Violence and Media.


*Bill Yousman*

**MEDIA REFORM**

“Media reform” refers to a broad-based social movement that aims to improve existing telecommunications laws, regulations, and policy in order to bring about a more democratic media system. Issues that media reformers are concerned with include media ownership; the regulation of the television, cable, and radio industries; the quality of journalism; intellectual property; the future of the Internet; and the ideological dominance of commercialism over civic values of community, democracy, and communication rights.

The media reform movement is concerned with a broad range of issue areas and is comprised of a network of diverse local, regional, and national organizations committed to a wide array of strategies and tactics. Since the advent of radio technology, citizens and corporations have made organized efforts to influence media laws, regulations, and policies. In general, the media reform movement addresses the effects of a for-profit media system that increasingly fails to fulfill the communications needs of a democratic society. According to the media reformers, media systems should supply the critical information that citizens need to make decisions in a system of self-governance and representative government, and they should provide a forum for civil debate. The failure to meet these requirements is sometimes referred to as the “democratic deficit” by media critics and reformers. Media reform is also concerned with the increasing concentration of media ownership; in the last 20 years, the number of major corporations who own the vast majority of media companies has decreased
from 50 to 10 large conglomerates, according to industry analyst Benjamin Bagdikian. As fewer corporations control more and more channels of information, there is less access to a diversity of viewpoints. Media reformers note that the main motivation for the media companies is profit rather than their role as information providers in the public sphere. Another area that media reform works on is the hypercommercialization and privatization of public spaces and forums.

**EARLY CHALLENGES TO COMMERCIALIZING THE BROADCAST SYSTEM**

Media reform scholar and activist Robert McChesney notes that the history of citizen resistance to the commercial radio system is often ignored and marginalized. In general, traditional broadcast histories generally agree that the public was not opposed to the trend of private enterprise regulation of the broadcast media system. McChesney argues that this historical consensus naturalizes the system of corporate ownership of the broadcasting infrastructure by marginalizing or ignoring resistance and diverse perspectives about the early direction of broadcast regulation, especially by educators who understood the powerful potential of the mass media. Scholars and public interest historians

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

The media industry is changing rapidly. Concentration of ownership in all forms of media is increasing.

**Television**

According to the Stop Big Media Coalition, between 1995 and 2003, 10 of the largest TV-station owners went from owning 104 stations with $5.9 billion in revenue to owning 299 stations with $11.8 billion in revenue.

**Newspapers**

Stop Big Media also reports that two-thirds of independent newspaper owners have disappeared since 1975. At time of printing, less than 275 of the nation’s 1,500 daily newspapers remain independently owned, and more than half of all U.S. markets (cities and regions) are dominated by one paper.

**Radio**

Since the Telecommunications Act of 1996, radio has become the most concentrated medium—at one point Clear Channel Communications owned more than 1,300 radio stations, in addition to 42 television stations in 28 different broadcast markets.

have demonstrated that there has always been citizen resistance to the trends of corporate media. When uncovered, these marginalized historical moments offer lessons to today’s reformers.

CIVIL RIGHTS, CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, AND MEDIA REFORM

An example of a marginalized historical moment of media reform is the WLBT television licensing case. During the late 1950s, civil rights activists in Jackson, Mississippi, were actively working to get better coverage on their
local television station, WLBT. Despite filing continuous Fairness Doctrine complaints to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding racist coverage at WLBT, the station remained completely biased in their support of segregation. The Fairness Doctrine was regulated by the FCC and required broadcasters to present controversial issues of social significance in a fair, equal, and balanced manner. Some complaints about the station included, but were not limited to: no coverage of the civil rights movement in Mississippi or nationally, outright support for segregation and racist policies through opinion and news pieces, and interrupted broadcasts from national news networks, especially during the airing of the announcement of the Supreme Court decision that desegregated the school system (*Brown vs. Board of Education*).

In addition, Jackson had a 40 percent African American population, while the television station had an entirely white staff. Local organizers in Jackson gained the attention and the support of the leadership of United Church of Christ and other allied religious denominations. The United Church of Christ had recently created the Office of Communications, Inc. (OC, Inc.), headed by Everett Parker. Working with local civil rights organizers in Jackson, Everett Parker and OC, Inc. challenged the broadcasting license of WLBT, which was up for renewal in 1964.

The license challenge launched a 16-year legal battle over the Jackson station. This challenge was the first time a broadcast license had been challenged over unfair/unbalanced coverage. There was no process for citizens to get a hearing with the FCC. The only people who could participate in the regulatory process were economic stakeholders or people who had electrical interference issues with the station. The FCC denied the license challenge. OC, Inc. appealed the decision a number of times until the license was eventually revoked. Afterwards, a lengthy period of transition occurred, during which WLBT became more diverse, produced better coverage of civil rights issues, and improved the reporting and portrayal of the African American community of Jackson. It became the first majority black-owned television station in the South. The “WLBT case,” as it came to be known, created a legacy of citizen involvement with media. Additionally, as a result of the WLBT case, OC, Inc. challenged the FCC to incorporate an Equal Employment Opportunity rule. This rule took effect in the 1970s under continuous pressure from OC, Inc and led to affirmation action programs in the broadcasting industry.

**MEDIA OWNERSHIP**

Media ownership is at the center of many policy debates and media reform campaigns. In the last two decades, the number of corporations that own major media outlets, like television stations, radio stations, cable, book publishing companies, and music labels has gone from 50 to a concentration of 10 major corporations. Media ownership rules have been increasingly relaxed. In this round of deregulation, laws that formerly regulated the industry to correct market failures such as monopolies and price-rigging were removed or changed, usually to the benefit of corporate interests. The 1996 Telecommunications Act
Meda Reform

is a classic example of a deregulation law that encouraged media companies to concentrate their ownership of radio stations. In 1995, one owner could own no more than 65 radio stations nationwide; after the act, one owner could own an unlimited number of radio stations. By the year 2002, the corporation Clear Channel owned 1,300 stations across the United States. In 2003, another phase of deregulation began, because the 1996 Telecommunications Act required the FCC to review ownership laws every two years.

In late 2002, the FCC proposed that similar deregulation policies take effect in the television and newspaper industries. Unlike 1996, when there was minimal citizen awareness of media ownership issues, in 2003 a broad-based coalition of bipartisan organizations, citizen groups, academics, media workers, artists, and consumers organized and inundated the FCC and the U.S. Congress with over 2 million comments stating that the change in ownership laws was unnecessary and bad for democracy. Despite this unprecedented outcry, the FCC approved the ownership changes. However, a lawsuit brought by the low power FM activist group, Prometheus Project, and the public interest law firm, the Media Access Project, successfully got a stay on the enactment of the law. The appellate court decided that the FCC had failed to adequately research the impact of concentrated ownership on diversity and localism.

THE INTERNET AND BROADBAND

Despite the seeming ubiquity of the Internet, many Americans are still without access to the Internet. Media reform is concerned with a variety of aspects related to the Internet and broadband connectivity (high-speed Internet access). Media and information technologies are increasingly converging, or coming together to be accessed on the same “pipe” or connection. Telecommunications policies are being designed currently, yet there is limited debate about the direction of these policies that will dramatically affect the future of the Internet. Media reformers work to bring awareness of the potential impact of these policies.

In 2006, Congress took up a major overhaul of the Telecommunications Act called the Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement Act of 2006, or COPE Act. This act attempted to encourage increased deregulation of the telecommunications industry. Included in this act was a stipulation that would have ended network neutrality, commonly known as “net neutrality.” Despite over $175 million spent on lobbying by larger corporations, the COPE Act was successfully resisted by media reform organizations. Net neutrality is one of the key design principles of the Internet that ensures that the network does not discriminate between types of information or the types of parties involved and that information transmitted through the Internet can be equally accessed by all Internet service providers and users.

While the 2006 COPE Act was defeated, corporations are still lobbying for a rewrite of the Telecommunications Act that would have significant implications for the future of the Internet. Media reformers are seeking to write net neutrality into the law.
STOP BIG MEDIA COALITION

In response to a new round of FCC-proposed ownership law changes, media reformers created the Stop Big Media Coalition in 2006. The coalition is actively working to educate the general public about the impact of the ownership rule changes, similar to the campaign of 2003. This round of rule changes includes removal of ownership restrictions on newspapers and television stations. Media reform experts predict that if the rules are enacted, one company could own the major daily newspaper, eight radio stations, and three television stations in the same town; thus consolidating the flow of local political and cultural information through one corporation. The FCC and major media corporations state that consolidation will not hurt the diversity of viewpoints available because people can access information via the Internet. Additionally, the U.S. television spectrum, through which television is broadcast, is transitioning to a digital system, which allows television stations to broadcast on multiple channels in just one analog (nondigital) station. However, the ownership rule changes will also permit one owner to broadcast on 12 to 18 digital channels. In the fall of 2006, media reform research revealed that despite work to increase diversity in ownership of television stations over the last 20 years, women, who comprise 51 percent of the U.S. population, own less than 5 percent of all commercial television stations; and minorities, who comprise 33 percent of the U.S. population, own less than 4 percent of all commercial television stations.

In addition to organizing in response to the proposed ownership rule changes as well as Internet regulation policies, media reformers are actively working to ensure that public broadcasting systems like PBS and National Public Radio are adequately funded by the U.S. government. Media reformers are also working to expand the number of community media outlets, like low power FM radio stations, which broadcast at very low wattage. Finally, media reformers continue to strengthen networks and collaborative strategies in order to expand public interest and concern over the future of democratic media systems.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; Hyper-commercialism; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Literacy; Media Watch Groups; National Public Radio; Net Neutrality; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Pirate Radio; Regulating the Airwaves; Surveillance and Privacy; Video News Releases.

Embedded in the First Amendment’s protection of freedom of the press is the notion that any democratic society requires an active and empowered media serving as “watchdog.” But when the media become many citizens’ only or key source of much information, watching the watchdog has often proved as complicated and involved a task as watching others in power, leading to the foundation of numerous media watch groups of various political stripes. What role do such groups play in policing and/or affecting media coverage?

Media watch groups have proliferated to a point where any complete assessment of the field is impossible. Some have ceased operations, but just as new media provide unlimited growth possibilities for fresh publications and broadcasts, the business of watching media for bias, inaccuracy, and obscurantism continues to involve steadily greater numbers of participants. Whether the audience for media watch reporting is growing in proportion to the supply of material is unknown, but the fecundity of the field guarantees a continuing presence of checks and balances against poor journalism practice—and against flawed media criticism. Yet somehow, plenty of both persist. The fragmentation of media watch activity and its relatively low profile among most readers and viewers suggests that even amid greater scrutiny than ever before, media outlets can put forth lazy, biased, and inaccurate reporting with only limited exposure to broadly publicized censure and concomitant possible abandonment by audiences. Media watch organizations find themselves targeted in turn, often by each other, sometimes for their methodology, more often still for their perceived ideological bias.

Increasingly widespread distrust of media may be considered at least partially an effect of media watch activity, as could declining audience share for the most powerful and established media producers. The work of media watch groups, whose reporting and analysis may be carried onward to larger audiences through other channels, including well-funded partisan operations reaching targeted recipients as well as broader constituencies made aware of selected controversies by media coverage. As mainstream media have begun to pay attention to the myriad alternative perspectives circulating on the Internet, the chance of a media watch group’s reporting finding larger audiences and achieving an impact grows.

Brenna Wolf
Consider the example of the much-covered downfall of radio personality Don Imus following his racist slur about the Rutgers University women’s basketball team after their advance to the 2007 national championship game: Imus, who for an extended period managed to balance a serious persona ratified by prestigious political and media guests with a crude jokester persona that brought him a large audience, was suddenly brought low not only because of his own clumsy response and a cultural tipping point involving the identity of his victims, the political climate of the moment, and evolving standards for public discourse, but because his words were propelled into the court of public opinion by a media watch organization. The impact of the work of a diligent young researcher for Media Matters for America was not immediate, for the antennae of the public are not generally attuned to such frequencies, but it began there, and its growth was sustained by the ready provision of contextual material. Another media watch group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), sent detailed quotes from Imus’s long track record of such offenses to online subscribers. That and other documentation reverberated over the Internet and was amplified in the blogosphere, making it impossible for mainstream media to continue to accept the phrase as a harmless joke. The reexamination of not only Imus’s oeuvre but of his guests’ association with him, the networks of influence that keep alive voices of intolerance, and the evolution of standards for mediated discourse was also led by media watch organizations from across the spectrum, as conservatives reacted to perceived censorship by liberals decrying racism and sexism. Imus was ultimately dislodged from his radio and cable television shows by the market consideration of lost advertisers rather than any sudden media watch group–inspired development of corporate morality, but the imbroglio demonstrated that a market for the products of such critics clearly exists in the realm of public opinion.

PROMINENT MEDIA WATCH GROUPS

That represents a change from the long-time status quo, which had largely allowed mainstream media to ignore external critiques. The student-staffed Project Censored, founded by Sonoma State University professor Carl Jensen in 1976, has regularly identified important news under-covered by the mainstream press, but its annual reports are seldom recognized in the media they criticize. Even as the organization has grown under Jensen’s successor Peter Phillips into an operation that wins awards, publishes a yearly book, and achieves widespread recognition in alternative newspapers and on the Internet, it remains as unknown to most Americans as the stories ignored by major media. Other media watch organizations generally suffer the same fate. Most remain barely known, if at all, by the public, but like Media Matters’s Imus report, their work can percolate through layers of media cross-reporting, sometimes surfacing to embarrass friends and foes alike.

For example, FAIR, known for its criticism of proconservative bias in media, attracted attention for its study critiquing the selection of experts appearing on the PBS show NewsHour, debunking some conservatives’ notion of a “liberal”
bias on the program by pointing out that white males constituted a grossly disproportionate majority of guest experts, even on stories focused on minority concerns. By extending its focus from facts to sources, FAIR, which since 1986 has emphasized “media practices that slight public interest, peace and minority viewpoints,” has demonstrated recognition that opinion and analysis require every bit as much attention as news reporting. Like Project Censored, FAIR advocates for more diversity of coverage rather than the curtailing of expression contrary to its aims. From supporting more coverage of the popular nuclear freeze movement during the Reagan administration to its advocacy on behalf of small publishers threatened by proposed postal rules favoring large entities, FAIR has sought to encourage greater attention to populist causes affected by disproportionately scant coverage.

Less inclined to point to lacunae in the news landscape and more focused upon negating ideological enemies is the Media Research Center (MRC), founded in 1985. The MRC claims the mantle of “America’s Media Watchdog,” calling itself at the top of its home page “The Leader in Documenting, Exposing, and Neutralizing Liberal Media Bias.” Its emphasis on the liberal political leanings of what it claims is a substantial majority of journalists, and the notion that such beliefs regularly affect coverage, is a leitmotif of media criticism from the right. Claiming the support of public opinion, which also registers a higher degree of belief in liberal bias than conservative bias (among those detecting any bias), MRC further personalizes its approach through the prominent featuring of the opinions of its founder and president, L. Brent Bozell III. The organization boasts a $6 million annual budget, which supports both news- and entertainment-oriented analysis, as well as its own news service and free-market institute.

THE JOURNALISM REVIEWS

Established watchdogs such as the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) and the American Journalism Review (AJR) retain a voice as media watch organizations even as their editorial energies are channeled more toward reporting on media issues rather than systematically monitoring bias. CJR’s famed “Darts and Laurels” feature approaches the criticism function in highly truncated form, but the pithy summaries of good and bad journalistic practice likely receive more attention than all of the more lengthily analyzed correctives of competitors combined, at least among journalists.

DIY MEDIA WATCHDOGS

Established leaders in the media watch field, already experiencing the flux created by the growth of the Internet, may face new competition from not only new sources, but alternate modes of discourse. Fresh on the heels of the success of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, YouTube and other Web sites have arrived to offer a gigantic new community of users the opportunity to practice their own forms of media vigilance. Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook invite their users to rank and rate news according to their own
preferences. With democratization often comes dilution of critical sensibility, but the invitation to participate in shaping or reshaping media’s messages portends new horizons for media-watching cohorts joined together in new ways. When MoveOn.org sought to energize its members in 2004, one of its gambits was to coordinate house parties featuring Robert Greenwald’s documentary detailing the nefarious methods of Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News, “Outfoxed.” Citizens’ acquisition of the lexicon and outlook of media watch professionals is likely to continue apace. With ever-increasing numbers of news consumers obtaining their information from the Internet, ready access to media beyond the nation’s borders can serve as a reality check against nationalist and establishmentarian blinders, though guidance may still be needed for the majority who would not yet think to explore abroad, even at the keyboard. A Babel of voices may diffuse some of the critical clarity required to upgrade journalistic standards, and even invite more vague and misleading reportage geared toward the lowest common denominator. But the wisdom of crowds will be tested as engagement with the ethos of critical media consumption is given the opportunity to grow.

**SCHOLAR WATCHDOGS**

While *CJR* and *AJR* are affiliated with educational institutions, their perspectives more closely mirror the backgrounds of the professional journalists who guide them than those of media studies and journalism scholars. The scholarly practice of media criticism has enjoyed an extended boom, however, and many media watch groups cite scholars from diverse disciplines on framing, agenda-setting, and priming, to name a few of the more prominent theoretical constructs. Other media critics straddle academe and journalism, attracting multiple and mixed constituencies in the process. The media-focused work of foundations such as Annenberg and Pew attracts substantial attention, while media watch communities of a sort could also be said to revolve around specific columnists, such as *The Nation’s* press critic Eric Alterman, Professor of English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, who is also senior fellow and “Altercation” Weblogger for Media Matters for America, having been dropped as a blogger by MSNBC.com. Scholarly credentials might boost a writer’s status as an avatar of media criticism, but the lack of same could hardly be said to stand in the way of participation through readership and subscriber status, letters to the editor, and informal opinion leader activities. Readers of *The Nation*, like those of publications such as *CounterPunch*, *The Progressive*, *Mother Jones*, or the *American Prospect*, could be classed generally as media watch groups in their own right, highly attuned to the procorporate bias of mainstream media and not shy about trumpeting it.

Numerous academic scholars have over the years also developed media critiques for educational and documentary videotapes produced by a variety of independent media organizations. One of the first such productions featured Professor Herbert I. Schiller in a humorous critique of the *New York Times*, produced by the Paper Tiger Television collective, which began as a public access channel in New York City in the early 1980s.
Some scholars have emerged as leaders of different kinds of media watch organizations. A notable example is Robert McChesney, a media historian who is founder, president, and board chairman of Free Press, a policy-oriented organization emphasizing democratization of U.S. media systems. Active in media literacy circles vigilant against increasing corporate control of the national communication sphere, McChesney and his allies in and beyond academia have foregrounded political economy, where the template for journalism is constantly being transformed. Ben Bagdikian, former dean of the graduate journalism school at the University of California, Berkeley, laid out the rationale for emphasizing media ownership and control in his classic Media Monopoly, which through successive new editions chronicled the ever-shrinking number of major corporations controlling the vast majority of U.S. media. Much of the media activism of politically active groups such as MoveOn.org and Free Press concentrates on policy issues, watching media less for what it says than for who controls what gets said, and through what avenues.

“FOLLOW THE MONEY!”

The famed Watergate source Deep Throat’s instructions to reporter Bob Woodward in All the President’s Men—“Follow the money!”—applies to the criticism not only of media but of media watch groups. Accuracy in Media (AIM), a conservative voice founded in 1969 by Reed Irvine and now chaired by his son, Donald Irvine, makes the case that Media Matters, for example, is beholden to the Democratic Party and especially to Hillary Clinton, and that its partial funding by billionaire George Soros through the Democracy Alliance contributes to a liberal bias in its reporting. Diverting attention from the precipitating phraseology in the aforementioned Imus case to how it was reported, AIM suggested that “something is fishy” in the Imus affair, blaming ideological bias born of Media Matters’s funding source for its approach to reporting Imus’s comments. AIM, which claims to have started with a budget of $200, does not disclose the sources of its own reported annual budget of more than $1 million on its Web site, where it invites “strapped” donors to give the organization their cars if they lack cash to donate. Mediatransparency.org documents a steady stream of funding—millions of dollars over the years—for AIM from various iterations of the Scaife Foundation, perhaps the single most significant funder of rightist political causes in the United States with more than $340 million invested so far in ventures that include the Arkansas Project, which unsuccessfully sought to destroy President Bill Clinton with reports that included unsubstantiated murder allegations. Just ahead of the 2000 presidential election, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review publisher Richard Mellon Scaife demanded that all photos of and prominent references to Democratic candidate Al Gore be removed from the paper’s front page, leaving Republican George W. Bush to dominate that key space. Searching AIM’s Web site reveals no reference to that affair.

Funding remains a key determinant of any media watch group’s sustainability. AIM and MRC are the major media watch groups on the right, with MRC
claiming a budget five times the size of its older peer. Project Censored’s use of students to perform much of its work has kept it going strong despite limited funds. FAIR, an early pacesetter, has in some respects, such as its $800,000 annual budget, been eclipsed in the increasingly crowded field on the left by Media Matters’s deepened pockets ($6 million annual budget) and the rise of Free Press from a project of the Media Education Foundation to an independent and influential organization with a $5 million annual budget, raised mostly from foundations. Other foundation-supported media watch groups include the Institute for Public Accuracy, led by Norman Solomon, and the Media Alliance, which supports political action and other activities beyond critique. The Center for Media and Democracy, which sponsors PR Watch, Sourcewatch, and Congresspedia, spends about a half-million dollars a year, most of it from a long list of foundations, and gets a good deal of bang for its buck by dominating criticism of the influential public relations industry. Also dominating its media watch sector is the Adbusters Media Foundation, which publishes the 120,000-circulation “culture-jamming” Adbusters magazine, operates a Web site, and runs PowerShift, an advocacy advertising agency. Diversified approaches to economic survival can be found in the model of Media Channel, produced by Globalvision New Media, a project of the Global Center. Fledgling media organizations can use the Global Center Foundation as a fiscal sponsor by paying it an administrative fee, keeping open a door for still more media watch and activism organizations to join the field.

Locally focused media watch efforts in the United States appear to have a more difficult time staying afloat. Grade the News (GTN), an award-winning media watch site focused on the San Francisco Bay Area, had to curtail its activities with the lapse of a Knight Foundation grant, just as the region’s journalistic quality absorbed a major blow with the takeover of almost all of its newspapers by the budget- and staff-cutting Medianews Group. GTN’s methods, utilizing metrics such as column inches; numbers of seconds devoted to broadcast stories; source diversity; and story impact estimates, generate grades for newscasts and newspapers. As incubators of novel media watching praxis, locally based enterprises offer many interesting models that may take root if they survive their beta stages. Retro Poll, also based in the Bay Area, uses students and volunteers to survey randomly generated national samples, measuring responses to opinion questions against answers to factual questions about news, to show that people relying on certain news sources have an inferior grasp of documented facts, correlating with distinct opinion responses at odds with what has in some quarters been referred to as “the reality-based community.” News Trust, which allows its readers to rate stories, and applies measures to rate and weight the value of the raters and the ratings, offers a model for media watching that invites scalable applications with potential value for prospective news consumers and producers alike. As Web 2.0 generates new interactive methods of surveillance of and feedback to news producers, the world of media watching is likely to evolve in diverse and unpredictable directions, but the struggle for funding will continue to mute the effects of most such enterprises.

Hope springs eternal for the prospects of a media watcher breaking through to broader consciousness through the viral characteristics of the Internet, but
there is little hope for the sector as a newsstand financial proposition. In print, *CJR* and *AJR* survive on reputation and a mix of funding, and trade publications such as *Editor & Publisher* continue to perform media watch functions, mostly for industry audiences. The high-profile bust of *Brill’s Content*, a glossy media criticism magazine that briefly achieved a circulation of more than 325,000 but never made money and folded not long after reducing its frequency from 10 annual issues to 4, provides a cautionary tale for anyone hoping for an expanded audience for journalism critique. *Brill’s Content*, which attracted advertising befitting an anticipated high-end readership, did bid to engage a broader segment of the public in holding media to account, but its financial failure demonstrated that media watch entrepreneurship has its limits, and that the consumer market alone will likely not sustain such a scale of activity. The issue of advertising revenue to support critical journals also poses a particularly difficult problem in an age when commercial ad buyers have demonstrated their willingness to exert significant influence over media content, making challenging independent analysis all that more difficult to disseminate to a broad public.

THE FUTURE OF MEDIA WATCHING

One of the simplest and most direct models of media criticism to emerge has come from another old media format: television. When Jon Stewart plays back the self-contradicting statements of politicians and juxtaposes official absurdities against common sense, using visual evidence, along with the obligatory look of exaggerated befuddlement, he and the producers of *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central advance media criticism to a stage many consider long overdue. Fans of *The Daily Show* and loyal members of *The Colbert Report*’s “Colbert Nation” in effect become part of a media watch community that not only calls to account those in power as mainstream media seldom have, but ignites in a difficult-to-reach demographic an actual interest in the news, even as trends show declining newspaper readership and news awareness among young people.

Meanwhile, much media critique will, of course, remain trenchant and continue to be a main feature of alternative media and publications, even as it finds its way into more mainstream venues such as Comedy Central. The growth of Internet bloggers able to disseminate almost instantaneous comments about news stories, reporters, errors, exaggerations, and outrages in a media environment ripe with such fare guarantees the continuation and growth of media watching.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Bias and Objectivity; Blogosphere; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Global Community Media; Hypercommercialism; Media Literacy; Media Reform; News Satire; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering and Tabloid Media; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Christopher A. Vaughan

MINORITY MEDIA OWNERSHIP

For many years, minority-owned media have provided audiences with content they could not find in the mainstream media. Now, as the buying power of minorities grows, media giants are targeting minority audiences they long ignored. Should government play an active role in helping minority-owned media remain competitive?

In the United States, minorities owned mass media outlets as early as 1780. Though now “minority” tends to be synonymous with people of color, minority-owned media included non-English-speaking European ethnic groups for nearly 200 years. (The French language *La Gazette Francaise* was launched in 1780 in Newport, Rhode Island.) Wherever immigrants, exiles, foreign businesspersons, or colonizers gathered in large numbers, news publications emerged to serve the new communities.

Now, however, minority-owned media typically refers to outlets owned by and targeting African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Indians, and Arab Americans. The owners are either immigrants or native born as are their audiences. They trace their tradition back to the Spanish-language *El Misispi*, launched in 1801; the African American *Freedom’s Journal* founded in 1827; the Cherokee language the *Cherokee Phoenix*, first published in 1828; and the Chinese-language the *Golden Hills News*, established in 1854, to name a few. In the twenty-first century, such media outlets include newspapers, magazines, broadcasting outlets, and Web sites.

TIMELINE

1801—Spanish-language *El Misispi*.
1827—African American *Freedom’s Journal*.
1828—Cherokee-language the *Cherokee Phoenix*.
1854—Chinese-language the *Golden Hills News*.
1949—WERD-AM in Atlanta, the first black-owned station, goes on the air.

1973—TV 9, Inc. v. FCC, 495 F.2d 929, 937 (D.C. Cir. 1973), directs the FCC to give favorable consideration to an applicant who proposed to include ethnic minorities among its owners and managers.


1990—U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. FCC, 497 U.S. 547 (1990) that the government's purpose in promoting diversity in programming by its distress sale policy and consideration of minority ownership in comparative licensing hearings is constitutionally valid.


2001—Viacom acquires the Black Entertainment Television network (BET) for $3 billion.

2001—The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), reports that minorities own 449 of the 11,865 full-power commercial radio and television stations in the United States, a mere 3.8 percent.

2003—The FCC votes to relax its media ownership rules.

2003—The FCC approves the merger of Univision, America's dominant Spanish-language TV network, and Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation, the largest Spanish-language radio network.

2004—In Philadelphia, in Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC, 373 F.3d 372 (2004), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia rules that the FCC made irrational and inconsistent assumptions in reaching its justifications for easing ownership rules. The court also orders the FCC to consider proposals to promote minority ownership.

2004—La Opinión and El Diario/La Prensa, the largest and oldest Spanish-language newspapers in the United States, merge to form ImpreMedia LLC.
2005—Comcast acquires substantial interest in the new TV One, targeting African Americans.


2006—The FCC starts public hearings on its proposal to revise media ownership rules.

2007—Federal regulators approved the sale of Univision to Broadcasting Media Partners Inc.

WHAT DOES “MINORITY OWNED” MEAN?

“Minority owned” doesn’t quite mean what it used to. In the past, minority ownership typically meant full financial ownership of a media company. During the latter part of the twentieth century, however, minority ownership required only 51 percent of a company’s voting stock be held by one or more minority members under federal law. In the twenty-first century, however, federal lawmakers and regulators are considering whether federally regulated broadcast outlets may be merely minority controlled. That would mean minorities who run but own less than 51 percent of stock in a radio or television station would still qualify for government tax breaks and other incentives, even though whites own the majority of stock in the company.

WHY GIVE INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE MINORITIES TO OWN RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS?

First, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulates and awards licenses to broadcasters. By law, the commission must regulate in the public interest. The public interest is served in part by “the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources,” the FCC has said, and media targeting minorities has long played a major role in bringing diverse views to the public. The FCC, however, had operated for nearly 40 years before it first took race into consideration when awarding licenses to own and operate broadcasting stations in 1973.

Under the First Amendment, print outlets cannot be regulated. Consequently, a revision of the meaning of ownership would have no legal or regulatory authority over newspaper, magazine, and book owners. Nevertheless, some are troubled by the emergence of newspapers and magazines aimed at minorities but not fully owned by them. Historically, a minority media outlet’s audience was its owner’s community. For the most part, owner and audience shared the same cultural values, the same collective identity. And while profit was important to minority media owners, the message was always as important, sometimes more, particularly with African American and Latino media owners. The content they produced had political and cultural significance for their audiences and challenged the white establishment.

Critics of minority-controlled media fear that the traditional political and cultural message will be diluted under white ownership that sees its audience mostly as a commodity to sell to advertisers. In 2001, for example, the
National Latino Media Council, a coalition of Latino civil rights and media organizations, unsuccessfully petitioned the FCC to deny approval of the then pending NBC-Telemundo merger. Among the concerns the council raised was that after the buyout, “programming aimed at Latino audiences [would be] in the hands of non-Latinos, and we cannot dismiss the importance of Latino ownership.”

DOES CONSOLIDATION HURT OR HELP?

The survival of minority media ownership became a hot-button issue in 2001. That October, General Electric Company–owned National Broadcasting Co. (NBC) acquired Telemundo Communications Group for $1.98 billion. The following month, global media colossus Viacom acquired the Black Entertainment Television network (BET) for $3 billion. Even before BET and Telemundo changed hands, Time Warner had acquired ownership of African.com and Newblackvoices.com in 2000. According to a 2001 report by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), minorities owned 449 of the 11,865 full-power commercial radio and television stations in the United States, or a mere 3.8 percent. Of that small percentage, 426 were commercial radio stations, or 4 percent of total commercial radio ownership. The remaining 23 were commercial television stations, or a paltry 1.9 percent of the country’s 1,288 commercial television licenses. Meanwhile, minorities of color represent about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

The merger and buyout trend continued. By 2005, the media conglomerate Comcast, the largest U.S. cable TV operator, owned a substantial interest in the new TV One, targeting African Americans. Time, Inc., a division of the media colossus Time Warner, bought full ownership of the black-owned Essence Communications, the publisher of the successful Essence magazine targeting black women.

Consolidation—or concentration of ownership by a small number of companies in one industry—of course transcends the minority media market; it is a worldwide business phenomenon in the twenty-first century. Many argue that when big companies become bigger, small and local ones have difficulty competing for advertisers and investment capital. Minority broadcasters, mostly single-station owners, say recent industry trends have made it nearly impossible for them to grow or stay in business. Should government play an aggressive role to help minority-owned media remain competitive?

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OR FREE MARKETS?

One camp—minority broadcasters, media reform advocates, civil rights activists, and liberal legislators and regulators (mostly Democrats)—say Congress and the FCC must do more to enable minorities to own broadcast stations. Generally, this camp believes that the government has a social responsibility to ensure that the publicly owned television and radio airwaves provide diverse views. Without ownership by minorities (and women), issues
that interest minorities are less likely to be aired. They point to a number of studies that have found links between minority ownership and increased public affairs programming and news relevant to minority audiences. They contend that government should actively promote more minority ownership by, for instance, reviving a 1978 program to allow a capital gains tax break to anyone selling an outlet to a minority buyer stemming from the Statement of Policy on Minority Ownership of Broadcast Facilities and the Failing Station Solicitation Rule of 1999 to make it easy for minority bidders to buy stations through an auction process.

The leading advocates for increased government regulations to promote minority media ownership include the Media Access Project, Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, and the Media Access Project.

Generally, media executives, free-market advocates, legislators, and regulators (mostly Republicans) muster in the opposing camp. They gather under the big tent of deregulation. They believe that government should do as little as possible to compel broadcast owners to meet their public interest obligations. Allow companies to compete for customers, they contend, and the public interest will be served because companies will be forced to give the public what it wants or go out of business. They don't believe that minority ownership necessarily provides programming diversity. Based on this view, BET, now owned by Viacom, still has to give its African American audience meaningful content or it will lose money. So even if small black-owned outlets go out of business, black consumers will still be able to get black-centric content from BET, the deregulation camp contends.

List-leading proponents of free-market solutions to achieve diversity include former FCC commissioner chairman Michael Powell, Adam D. Thierer of the Progress and Freedom Foundation, and Mara Einstein of Queens College in New York City.

The primary theater for this battle was the six public meetings that the FCC scheduled in 2006 and 2007 for discussion of its media ownership rules. The FCC’s six media ownership rules in question limit the number and types of media outlets a company can own. The FCC, dominated by deregulation-minded commissioners, revised the rules in 2003, generally allowing any one entity to own more and different types of media. But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia (Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC, 373 F.3d 372 [2004]) ruled that the FCC made irrational and inconsistent assumptions in reaching its justifications for easing ownership rules. The court also ordered the FCC to consider proposals to promote minority ownership.

How further deregulation of media ownership limits might affect ownership by minorities and women was an important question for debate at those public hearings. Media reformists argued that without ownership limits, media conglomerates are likely to buy more broadcast stations, newspapers, magazines, and Web sites that target minorities and dilute their distinctive ethnic-centered content and coverage of issues important to people of color.
THE QUESTION OF CONSOLIDATION

Is consolidation among minority media owners a winning counteroffensive to prevent white-owned corporate media giants from owning minority media? Maybe.

In early 2004, Lozano Communications Inc., the owner of Los Angeles–based La Opinión, merged with CPK Media, the owner of New York–based El Diario/La Prensa, to form ImpreMedia LLC. La Opinión was established in 1926. El Diario/La Prensa was founded in 1913. “The opportunities this new company presents for La Opinión and its readers allow us to become competitive on a national level,” said Monica Lozano, CEO of the newspaper and senior vice president of ImpreMedia.

By 2007, ImpreMedia had become a Latino-owned news publishing giant; it owned and managed the largest distribution of Spanish-language print media in the United States. In addition to two original newspapers, the company owned El Mensajero in San Francisco, La Raza in Chicago, and Vista magazine, among its 10 print publications and 8 online properties by 2007. The New York–based company’s outlets reached a combined 10 million adult Latinos each month that year.

In 2003, the Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation, once the largest Spanish-language radio network in the United States, merged with Univision. As a result, Univision became the largest Spanish-language television and radio broadcaster operating in the United States. The Department of Justice and the FCC approved the merger that year. But by 2007 it was no longer minority owned. In March of that year, federal regulators approved the sale of Univision to Broadcasting Media Partners Inc., an investor group that includes Madison Dearborn Partners, Providence Equity Partners, TPG, Thomas H. Lee Partners, and Saban Capital Group.

COMMUNICATION POLICY AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

Congress’s Communication Act of 1934 created the FCC to regulate the electromagnetic airwaves in the public interest. Though the meaning of public interest has changed over the years, the belief that licensees should serve minority interests stems from the FCC’s “Blue Book,” developed in 1946 to measure radio broadcasters’ performance. Those concerns were iterated in the FCC’s “1960 Program Policy Statement,” which dealt with television programming. The FCC, however, did little to ensure that minority interests were served. In the 1950s, for example, while the black press flourished, only one minority-owned and operated station, WCHB in Inkster, Michigan, existed, founded in 1956. (Black-controlled Radio One currently owns WCHB.) WERD-AM in Atlanta, the first black-owned station, went on the air in 1949.

That started to change when civil rights activist Everett C. Parker, director of the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, filed a “petition to deny renewal” with the FCC against WLBT-TV in Jackson, Mississippi, on grounds that the station discriminated against African Americans. In United Church of Christ v. FCC, 359 F. 2d 994 (D.C. Cir. 1966), the federal D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the members of the public who could show that a licensing decision would harm them could participate in the licensing process.
Specifically, the court told the FCC that African Americans in Jackson, Mississippi, had the right to challenge the renewal of a license to a radio station owner accused of racial discrimination. WLBT lost its license.

That ruling created a process that greatly increased a minority’s chances of owning a station. That process was a comparative renewal hearing. In such hearings, the FCC compared the merits of an incumbent station licensee with a new applicant and granted a license to the one who could best serve the public interest. (Under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, comparative renewal hearings were eliminated, allowing the FCC to grant a broadcaster’s renewal application if the FCC believed statutory requirements were met.)

In 1973, a federal court ruling, TV 9, Inc. v. FCC, 495 F.2d 929, 937 (D.C. Cir. 1973), directed the FCC to give favorable consideration to an applicant who proposed to include ethnic minorities among its owners and managers. That ruling prompted the FCC’s landmark Statement of Policy on Minority Ownership of Broadcast Facilities, 68 F.C.C. 2d 979 (1978), in which it adopted a policy of promoting minority broadcast ownership. The FCC said minority broadcast ownership tended to create more diverse programming.

In the 1980s, the FCC and the courts affirmed the desirability of media ownership diversity. But in the 1990s, the forces behind the anti–affirmative action movement dampened that commitment. The 1978 program allowed a capital gains tax break to anyone selling an outlet to a minority buyer. As a result, 200 minority-owned stations were launched within less than 20 years. But the incentive was killed in April 1995 because of allegations of fraud. Mark Lloyd, director of the Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, said, “The Republican Congress teamed up with President Clinton to kill the most effective method for increasing minority ownership, the tax certificate. With minority-owned broadcast licenses stuck at around 3 percent, loss of the tax certificate makes any progress beyond that invisible ceiling impossible.”

In Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena, 515 U.S. 200 (1995), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that so-called minority preference policies could only be justified by a compelling government interest, narrowly tailored to achieve the goal, and the least restrictive means for achieving it, or “strict scrutiny.” This ruling made affirmative action minority ownership programs highly suspect and overturned Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. FCC, 497 U.S. 547 (1990) use of the intermediate scrutiny test. After the Adarand Constructors ruling, the FCC abandoned a proposal for credits to help minorities and women bidding in the auction of FM licenses in 1995.

In 2003, the FCC repealed the Failed Station Solicitation Rule (FSSR) 1999 Television Rule Review, 14 F.C.C.R. 12,903, PP 13–14, 74, created to foster minority television ownership by requiring public notice of a sale of a TV station. The following year, the court in Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC said the repeal was unjustified because the FCC had not considered the impact the repeal might have on declining minority station ownership. The court also noted that the FCC had not yet considered the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council’s proposal for prohibiting race and gender discrimination in the buying and selling of broadcast outlets.
BEYOND BROADCAST

Beyond the FCC deliberations in 2007, the battle of media ownership deregulation and its impact on minority media ownership were certain to continue at other public meetings, in news periodicals, on Web sites, in federal courts, in Congress, and in the court of public opinion. For example, African Americans have been the most vocal in voicing their concerns about the consolidation of media outlets targeting minorities in the hands of white ownership. In a story about Time Warner’s purchase of Essence in 2005, the black-owned Chicago Defender likened the reaction in some black circles to Robert L. Johnson’s sale of BET to Viacom in 2001 as a “firestorm.” In that news report, Linda Jefferson, senior vice president and director of media services for black-owned Burrell Communications, said she was troubled by the sale of Essence because “a growing issue is the lack of African Americans ’controlling our own stories.’” Earl Graves, the founder and owner of Black Enterprise magazine, lamented that “there wasn’t an open bidding process in which black entrepreneurs could have made an offer for the company and possibly preserve Essence as a black-owned business and institution.”

But Ed Lewis, the founder of Essence Communications, and the African American who sold Essence to Time Warner, reasoned that even under white ownership Essence would remain a black women–centric publication: “[Time Warner] has no desire to change what has been a rock solid mega-brand, which we have done for over 35 years. And from the standpoint of the editorial tone of the magazine, it’s always going to be the same because that’s what’s most important with regard to how we disseminate the kind of information that African American women want.”

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Hypercommercialism; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Reform; Media Watch Groups; Regulating the Airwaves; Representatives of Race; Shock Jocks.

MOBILE MEDIA

Mobile media have been with humanity since we began walking and talking simultaneously. Today’s technologies give us the capacity to reach anyone at any time, regardless of where we or they might be. But this means we also are on call, literally, whether we want to be or not. Mobile communication begins in every human being. We walk and we talk. The act of being human is an act of mobile communication.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MOBILE MEDIA

Technologies entered the process of mobile communication with the invention of portable writing systems. Carvings on a wall are not mobile. Scribblings on papyrus, parchment, and paper are—because they can be carried along with us. Writing implements ranging from brushes to quills and pens of various shapes and constructions allow us to become producers as well as consumers of mobile written media.

The end of the nineteenth century brought a burst in both traditional portable written media and new media that extended the range and content of communications. Laptops in Victorian times were fold-up, portable desks, not computers, and the Kodak camera, introduced by George Eastman in 1888, was a camera that anyone could take anywhere.

Mobility in media progressed only slightly in the first part of the twentieth century. Radios by Transitone placed in automobiles in 1929 were the rare step forward. But the transistor, invented in 1948, revolutionized communications, and embodied Buckminster Fuller’s “dymaxion principle” (*Nine Chains to the Moon*, 1939) of technologies getting smaller and smaller and doing more and more. It did not take long for radios to move from behemoths in the living room to devices you could hold in your hand and take with you on a walk in the park.

The ancestors of the cell phone soon followed, but it would be decades before cell phones would become widespread. In the meantime, portable communication devices had a vibrant life in fiction, ranging from Dick Tracy’s talking wrist watch, to car phones in movies such as in the 1951 version of the movie *Sabrina*, to *Star Trek*’s communicators—which many cell phones have come to resemble in the twenty-first century.
A TIMELINE OF MOBILE MEDIA

3000 B.C.—Reed pens and papyrus in use in Egypt.
300 B.C.—Paper in China.
100 B.C.—Parchment in Pergamom.
1450 A.D.—Gutenberg introduces printing press in Europe.
1850s—First modern fountain pens in Europe.
1870s—Victorian portable laptop desks in widespread use.
1880s—Waterman mass-produced fountain pens.
1888—Kodak camera by George Eastman.
1929—Transitone radios in automobiles.
1946—Motorola and Bell operate first commercial mobile phone system.
1948—Transistors invented independently in the United States and in Europe.
1973—Martin Cooper of Motorola makes first call on handheld mobile phone.
1981—First laptop computers.
1992—PDAs (personal digital assistants).
1998—Bluetooth standards established.
2001—iPod launched by Apple.
2002—First widespread cameras in cell phones in the United States.
2006—80 percent of world’s population has cell phone coverage; 2+ billion in use.
2007—iPhone launched by Apple.
2007—More than 100 million iPods in use.

THE MODERN ERA

Microchip technology replaced the transistor in the 1980s and facilitated the rise of laptop computers. RadioShack’s M100 was an early successful model, and by the end of the decade IBM-compatible laptops weighing a few pounds or less were commonplace.

The cell phone became ubiquitous in many parts of the world in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. Eighty percent of the world’s land mass had mobile phone service in 2006. Japan, Israel, and Hong Kong, among other nations, have more than 100 percent cell phone saturation (meaning there are more cell phones than people in those countries). As of 2007, Africa had the sharpest growth rate in cell phones. Historians of technology call this kind of growth “leapfrogging”—it occurs when a culture with few technological assets catapults to the most advanced stages.

Advances in wireless technology such as Bluetooth have made cell phones not only wireless but “handless.” At the same time, integration of cell phones with laptop Internet functions resulted in all-purpose, small, mobile communication devices, with which users could not only talk, but send text messages, watch television programs downloaded from the Web, listen to radio via live-streaming, and in fact receive on this one device the dozens of services that only a decade
earlier had been dispersed over discrete, nonintegrating media such as television, radio, and the Internet.

MOBILE USES AND CONCERNS

As a device for receipt of content formerly available only via mass media, the new all-purpose mobile communication device stirred little controversy until the corporate giant Verizon attempted to restrict text messages from a pro-choice group to consumers who had signed up to receive them. Immediate and overwhelmingly negative responses to the announcement caused Verizon to rescind the policy (Liptak 2007). The specter of corporate censorship was then added to other controversial issues raised by the use of cell phones. As a device for conversation—as in talking on the phone in public or driving one’s car while talking on the phone—the cell phone has been the object of a variety of social concerns.

These concerns include the appropriateness of talking on the cell phone in certain public places, ranging from restaurants to movie theaters to funeral homes. Such battles over proper social cell phone etiquette have resulted in their being banned in certain places in the United States—such as the “quiet” cars on Amtrak trains. Talking and driving presents the use of two powerful technologies, a combination that many believe pushes human multitasking abilities to the edge. Highway safety agencies tie cell phone use to car accidents and numerous states levy hefty fines on those who find it hard to separate driving from talking on their cell phones. Another set of concerns pertains to the “right” of people not to answer their cell phones when called—to be offline or unavailable, without insulting the caller.

Cell phones have also been at the center of debates over surveillance and privacy. Many parents in particular have enjoyed the access to their children that phones give them, allowing them to “check up” on children at all hours. The devices also convince many parents that their children are safer, since they are able to call home or emergency services in a matter of seconds. But teens may be less enthusiastic about their parents’ abilities to keep a cellular leash on them. Surveillance issues are also writ large with the advent of better mobile tracking that allows authorities to locate a cell user: when our every call can be recorded and geolocated, many worry about the potential for abuse of such information, especially when phones are being used by political dissidents. Some in the medical profession, such Dr. George Carlo have attempted to raise issues of harmful medical side effects of cell phone use. Such concerns are usually not taken seriously, and debates over health issues remain underreported by the mainstream media.

Whatever the resolution of such social issues, mobile media continue to increase in popularity, and indeed have become extensions of the self for many people. What the device looks like when in use, when held close to one’s ear, has become as significant a criterion in the decision to purchase as what the device can do and how it can perform. Meanwhile, the photos, songs, and icons one chooses to carry in one’s phone are used to announce and perform various individual and group identities.
In recent years, too, the camera function of cell phones has allowed various forms of citizen journalism, or at least a contribution to the journalistic process, with newsrooms soliciting and often using photos sent in real time to them by everyday citizens. The most notable cases of cell phone journalism was the stealth recoding of the assassination of Saddam Hussein, which caused international embarrassment to the United States because of its sensitive political nature and the perceived brutality of the recorded scene. Certainly, if concerns over surveillance surround cell phones, the devices’ camera function also allows a different form of surveillance, as users have employed cell phones to record everything from unethical behavior by teachers, to police treatment of protesters, to breaking news events. With YouTube and other social networking sites allowing instantaneous and mass circulation, we may be entering an era of do-it-yourself reality television and journalism, in which the cameras are always potentially rolling.

THE FUTURE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

iPods, introduced in 2001, are a distinctly twenty-first-century portable medium and have none of the controversy surrounding cell phones. This is because the iPod is fundamentally a one-way medium, the equivalent of the transistor radio from half a century earlier, in which users listen to music obtained from the Internet at times of their choosing. But iPods, handheld computers, cell phones and now iPhones are becoming increasingly integrated in single devices that do all the tasks of these previously distinct mobile media.

This enormous growth of mobile technology has taken a toll on older media, ranging from public phone booths—disappearing rapidly from public places—to paper telephone directories, neither of which is necessary when everyone has a cell phone in his or her pocket. As advertisers seek space on every emerging medium, shifting revenues to new media devices, critics worry about the intrusion of commercial messages into yet another personal space.

We can expect even more of this in the future, as older technologies continue to merge into and be co-opted by new all-purpose mobile media—which may, at some point, come to be implanted in our bodies, as the ultimate convenience or intrusion, depending upon one’s point of view.

See also Blogosphere; Hypercommercialism; The iTunes Effect; Media Reform; Online Digital Film and Television; Online Publishing; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Surveillance and Privacy; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Paul Levinson
NARRATIVE POWER AND MEDIA INFLUENCE

Pluralistic democracy depends on a contest of competing public narratives. Media present a variety of different and sometimes conflicting stories within a multicultural and, thereby, mirror the distribution of political power in society. Narrative analysis can provide a critical lens for understanding media power and influence.

Narrative communication is as old as bards and as contemporary as bloggers. Whether stories are told by word of mouth or transmitted by satellite, they help to shape community and to define culture. Narrative communication is an interactive collaboration between speaker and listener, writer and reader, or producer and viewer, situated in a particular social context. The tellers of tales ascribe meaning to behavior, foundation to belief, and root to ritual. They wield great power even when committed to neutrality or objectivity.

A narrative is composed of two elements: story and storyteller. These are so tightly interconnected as to seem inextricable (“Who can know the dancer from the dance?”). Yet, when one hears the caution to “consider the source,” analytical distinctions have already emerged. Story consists of four components—character, event, place, and time. No story can exist without at least one character, although that character needn’t be human or even familiar to human experience. (Think of the fabled Chicken Little or Ray Bradbury’s Martian.) Further, any story must include at least one event: something happens. Not every action needs be visible, as in a person’s thinking process that leads to a difficult decision. Characters and events are necessarily located some place—real or imagined, internal or external, recognizable or alien. Finally, the characters, events, and locale of a story are situated in time, whether measured by
Storytelling, the second element of narrative communication, is comprised of (1) a narrator, (2) an audience, and (3) the sequencing of information. Stories do not exist apart from their telling. Some narrators are clearly visible in their own stories, standing center stage. Others are virtually invisible, hidden behind the scenes. Likewise, some narrators are reliable, and others prove untrustworthy. A teller and an audience cocreate meaning. When they fail in that effort, a frustrated teller might say, “I guess you just had to be there,” acknowledging both the importance of context to a story and the difficulty of narrative collaboration with an audience. Inasmuch as storytelling occurs in time, a narrator must sequence events, one before the other, each new word or image supplanting its predecessor. Temporality makes narrative more akin to dance or music than to painting or architecture. A story, when it is being told, is never there all at once. Even when two events occur simultaneously in the story (e.g., the gangland execution of rivals at the same moment that the murderer stands up at a family baptism in The Godfather), the telling of those events cannot be simultaneous. A narrator must decide how and why to sequence information for an audience, choosing what details to include or exclude, what characters to empower or marginalize, what events to promote or demote. In other words, how a story is told is telling in itself.

AN EXAMPLE: THE U.S. PRESIDENT AS NARRATOR

Consider the narrative role of a U.S. president. “Commander-in-Chief,” “Chief Executive,” and “Party Leader” are among the more familiar titles accorded any president. However, “national narrator,” an unacknowledged role, trumps the others in potency. Every four years, citizens of voting age have the opportunity to elect the narrator of their collective story. Who tells the nation’s story makes a substantial difference to the story itself, as well as to its audiences. Which characters will be cast in major roles? Who will be marginalized as minor characters? Who will become hero, and who villain? Who might be silenced altogether?
Narrative Power and Media Influence

Narrative studies is an interdisciplinary drawing intellectual perspectives from the arts, humanities, social and behavioral sciences (especially cognitive psychology), and natural sciences (especially neuroscience applied to memory). Narrative studies seeks to address four questions:

1. How do human beings acquire knowledge through stories and storytelling?
2. How do human beings store and retrieve knowledge through stories and storytelling?
3. How do human beings disseminate knowledge through stories and storytelling?
4. How do human beings validate or invalidate knowledge through stories and storytelling?

The concurrent study of media is implicated in each of these questions.

Which events will take prominence in the national plotline, and which will be subordinated or denied? What locales will be privileged? What themes will emerge?

When pulling the curtain on a voting booth, a citizen considers which presidential candidate is more likely to tell the nation’s story in a way that values his or her own viewpoints, priorities, and communities. The meaning of the story to multiple audiences, both domestic and international, resides in the sensibility of its teller. Think how different the American story sounded when told by John F. Kennedy versus Richard Nixon, or consider the differences between Bill Clinton and George W. Bush as national narrators.

For most of U.S. history, women have been relegated to the status of minor characters. Until emancipation, African Americans were not considered characters at all. Hundreds of years passed before women and persons of color moved from the margins of America’s story toward its center. The same could be said of the events, places, and times featuring those characters. The power of a teller to construct narrative reality is so great, and the attendant privilege so seductive, that most tellers are reluctant to relinquish their role. (Witness the 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution legislating presidential term limits.) America’s story is likely really to change when the demographic profile of the storyteller changes. Electing a woman or person of color as national narrator will represent a fundamental power shift; both possibilities have encountered considerable cultural resistance.

**THE NARRATIVE ROLE OF MEDIA**

It might seem that representatives of the media—professional print and electronic journalists, as well as citizen journalists in digital formats—would fit into a narrative model as meta-narrators, secondhand reporters of other people’s stories and storytelling. The word “reporter” itself reinforces presumptions of impartiality and distance, as in court reporter. However, the narrative role of media is much more significant than the reporter model suggests. Media
representatives—whether writers, broadcasters, documentarians, or bloggers—reveal their points of view with every word choice, photo selection, and edit. They define character, underscore event, privilege place, and announce time. They roll out a story incrementally, one moment at a time, in order to prompt specific interaction with an audience. It would be much healthier for the democratic contest of narratives to acknowledge this power of media rather than to ignore or deny it.

In 2007, in the wake of multiple campus shootings at Virginia Tech University and the media coverage that followed, one student spoke her frustration to a TV broadcaster: “You’ve got your story.” She made her point with the second pronoun: “You’ve got your story.” Apparently, this student, a first-person participant, felt co-opted into “your” [the broadcaster’s] story. Bill Moyers, legendary independent journalist, looks to the Internet to democratize media monopolies, empowering more first-person storytellers: “Freedom begins the moment you realize someone else has been writing your story and it’s time you took the pen from his hand and started writing it for yourself.”

In acknowledgment of media influence, consider five guidelines of narrative ethics:

1. To ensure fairness to all “characters,” determine whose story is being told, and the possible consequences of giving voice to another.
2. To ensure fairness to all “audiences,” determine what selection and sequencing of information will best assist comprehension and responsiveness.
3. To ensure fairness to “events,” determine all relevant contexts, including “place” and “time,” required for understanding.
4. To ensure fairness to other media sources, any secondary or tertiary representation should specify prior transformations from medium to medium (e.g., a TV broadcast, edited into a clip for YouTube, then incorporated into a blog).
5. To ensure fairness to oneself as “narrator,” interrogate all human sources for the accuracy and completeness of their statements.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Bias and Objectivity; Blogosphere; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Minority Media Ownership; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Public Access Television; Representations of Class; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.

The news and public affairs programs of National Public Radio (NPR) have been showered with awards. Its affiliated stations provide the sole outlet for non-commercial radio programming in many communities. To the majority of the American public, National Public Radio is public radio. Yet the system has faced many internal and external challenges throughout its history, and it is arguable as to how “public” NPR remains today.

Public radio in the United States was formally inaugurated in 1970 with the creation of NPR (replacing National Educational Radio) and the earmarking of federal funds for the production of programming. NPR’s founders hoped that renaming the system “public” would have greater appeal than the often dry and amateurish “educational” system it replaced. However, the name change raised several implications that were ignored at the time of NPR’s founding and continue to nettle it to the present. First, a “public” broadcasting system implies ownership by the public. Yet National Public Radio and its television counterpart, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), as well as many public radio and television stations, are privately owned and operated on a nonprofit basis, which raises significant barriers to public participation. A second problem concerns its contradictory mission. Public broadcasting was designed to promote national identity through broad appeal; at the same time, it was intended to represent public diversity by giving a voice to those who are overlooked or ignored by commercial broadcasters. Finally, public broadcasting differentiates itself from commercial broadcasting on grounds of “quality.” Yet “quality” cannot be defined objectively, involving as it does both innovation and a canonical approach to culture, and sophisticated production values versus rough-hewn “authenticity.” Given its often-contradictory mission, public broadcasting in the United States operates in a highly uncertain environment.

Public radio has attempted to cope with these uncertainties in several ways. First, it has increasingly sought to develop a “brand” by standardizing programming in a manner similar to that of commercial broadcasters. Public radio stations seek “core” audiences that will provide them with funding; therefore, these stations devote more and more of their airtime to programs produced by NPR and other services in order to build a consistent audience base. These programs attract upscale audiences who will contribute financially to stations, yet they squeeze out local innovation, public involvement, and service to minorities—all of which are central tenets of public broadcasting’s mission. Second, public
radio on the local and national levels has adopted audience research methodologies developed by commercial broadcasters. Consultants and focus groups are used for decisions on programming, audiences are “managed” and packaged for advertisers, and more and more stations have replaced volunteers with employees. Third, public radio increasingly defines audiences through ratings, which are also used by the commercial broadcast industry. Public broadcasters can’t quantify “service” as commercial broadcasters can quantify profits, yet ratings provide them with a numerical basis for decision making. In theory, ratings indicate popular preferences; in practice, they provide proof of demographics to potential sponsors. As a result, public radio increasingly resembles its commercial counterparts. As NPR and its affiliate stations increase efficiency in an uncertain environment, these measures undermine the very reason for their existence.

**PUBLIC RADIO INTERNATIONAL**

Although many people view NPR as the primary organization for public radio in the United States, Public Radio International (PRI) actually distributes more programming to stations. PRI was founded in 1982 as American Public Radio (APR), a consortium of stations located in large markets—Minnesota Public Radio, New York’s WNYC, Cincinnati’s WGUC, San Francisco’s KQED, and KUSC in Los Angeles. These stations, which produced much of their own programming, chafed under NPR’s control of programming distribution. APR’s first program was Minnesota Public Radio’s *A Prairie Home Companion*, which initially was rejected by NPR. The program subsequently became one of public radio’s major successes.

Rather than providing a complete schedule of programming, as did NPR, APR offered individual programs to public radio stations on an exclusive market-by-market basis. As NPR focused on news following its near-demise in the early 1980s, APR became the largest supplier of cultural programs in public radio. In response to a threatened antitrust suit from APR, NPR began “unbundling” its programs, offering them as groups, in 1987. However, APR offered producers more money, and many popular NPR programs, such as *Mountain Stage* and *Whad’ya Know*, jumped to APR distribution. Costs for the most popular programs rose dramatically for stations at a time when many of these stations were hard hit by declines in federal and state funding.

In 1994, reflecting its broader goals and growing collaboration with the BBC, APR changed its name to Public Radio International and began producing as well as distributing programming. PRI continued to draw listeners through programs such as *Marketplace*, which attracted corporate funders and reflected public radio’s increasingly close ties to business. PRI has distributed many of public radio’s most notable programs, yet these programs come at a high cost. By offering individual programs to stations, PRI introduced marketplace economics into the public radio system. While this move may have led to greater competition and, arguably, more diversity, critics have noted that PRI has devoted most of its efforts to reaching upscale audiences through classical music and business-oriented news and public affairs programming, relegating the less popular “conscience” items to NPR and other sources.
HISTORY

National Public Radio can trace its lineage to the University of Wisconsin, where experimental station 9XM (now WHA) was established in 1914. Before World War I, many land-grant colleges in the Midwest were broadcasting educational programs as well as news and weather. By 1925, 171 educational organizations had stations on the air, accounting for almost one-third of the radio stations in the United States. However, by 1936 only 38 educational radio stations remained due to Depression-era funding cuts as well as federal regulations (most notably, the Communications Act of 1934) that favored commercial broadcasters. The Ford Foundation, which throughout the 1950s and early 1960s nearly single-handedly set the agenda of what would become public broadcasting, virtually ignored radio; it was added to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 only at the last minute. While the number of noncommercial radio stations had grown throughout the 1950s, most were low-powered student laboratories with very limited budgets. A 1969 study recommended that federal funding be directed to the most well-established noncommercial radio stations as a form of triage, and that a national programming service be created to provide consistent programming to these stations. The resulting service, NPR, was formally incorporated on March 3, 1970.

A former executive recalled that “in part, NPR was a missionary enterprise whose role was to broadcast programs which would not be commercially viable” (Looker 1995, p. 113). NPR’s first production was a tape of 20 concerts by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and it began live programming with coverage of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Vietnam in April 1971. NPR’s flagship program, All Things Considered, was modeled on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) This Country in the Morning, whose “long-form” reports of narratives interspersed with “actualities” (taped interviews and ambient sound) marked a significant departure from the 60-second news spots that were standard fare on commercial network radio. All Things Considered’s first broadcast, on May 3, 1971, was carried by 104 stations and included nearly half an hour of excerpts from May Day protests by Vietnam veterans, a 16-minute story about a heroin-addicted nurse, a CBC piece about war, and a contribution from WOI in Ames, Iowa, about waning business at a barbershop. It concluded with a conversation between poet Allen Ginsberg and his father.

All Things Considered won its first Peabody Award for excellence in radio journalism in 1973, yet the program’s success heightened tensions between NPR and its affiliated stations. Local station submissions to NPR were intended to account for one-third of All Things Considered, yet many were rejected on grounds of poor quality or lack of national interest. In addition, NPR reporters would at times suddenly “appear” to cover an event in a local affiliate’s coverage area without giving the station prior notice, and the varying length of the program’s segments offered few opportunities for local stations to address listeners. The biggest complaint, however, was that much of All Things Considered’s “populist” programming was at odds with the high-culture
agenda of the university stations that formed the backbone of the public radio system. While these stations may have welcomed the raised profile and prestige afforded by national programming, many chafed at carrying programs that did not “fit” their affluent audiences or clashed with classical music programming.

Such conflicts are inevitable whenever new structures are overlaid on older organizational forms, and station representation has been an ongoing source of conflict within the public radio system. Public radio has been subject to fluctuations in federal and state funding, which contributes to the system’s instability. NPR continued to turn in a “hard news” direction with the implementation of Morning Edition in November 1979. Reflecting the growing clout of consultants with backgrounds in commercial radio, Morning Edition was designed on a “clock hour” format, with set time segments for stories and frequent cutaways to local stations. To some critics, Morning Edition represented a milestone in NPR’s history: the transformation from a program, or series of contiguous programs, to a service, or as Looker notes, “something that listeners would not listen to from beginning to finish” (1995, p. 123).

**THE REAGAN YEARS**

The election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980 plunged public broadcasting into crisis. The new administration initially proposed to end all funding for public broadcasting; the final budget included drastic funding cuts. NPR then embarked on a series of self-sustaining venture capital projects that would replace government funding by 1987. The projects were ill-conceived and haphazardly implemented, however, and NPR came within 24 hours of filing for bankruptcy in June 1983. The network was rescued by a last-minute loan from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, but the bailout would have a cost. NPR would have to open its satellite system to competitors such as American Public Radio, and nearly all federal funding would go to stations, who then would purchase programming from NPR and its competitors (NPR presently receives only 2 percent of its funding directly from the federal government). NPR would stake its reputation on news and public affairs programming, and cultural and performance programming would continue largely as afterthoughts.

NPR showed a profit by 1985, but the days of significant innovation at the network were over. National programming decisions were now driven by stations, which increasingly relied on commercially derived audience research methodologies to determine their schedules. As federal and state funding continued to shrink, listener donations became the fastest-growing sector of support for public radio stations. These stations sought shows that would retain audiences in midday and during evenings (after the “tent poles” of Morning Edition and All Things Considered), as well as shows that could be “stripped,” or programmed at the same time every day. Programming that didn't fit into this mold was axed; one public radio consultant quipped that the best time to schedule radio drama was “1938” (Stavitsky 1995).
One of the most notable recent trends in public radio has been the development of “superstations” whose signals, relayed by repeater antennas and satellites, may cover statewide areas or reach across the United States. The first, and leading, public radio superstation is Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), which extends into seven states and Canada. MPR originated with KSJR, a classical music station located northwest of Minneapolis, in January 1967. Under the leadership of William Kling, the station developed a regional news service and formed MPR in 1974. Within a year, MPR operated six stations around Minnesota. MPR greatly benefited from its association with A Prairie Home Companion, establishing a marketing operation in 1981 to sell merchandise related to the program, and was a principal partner in the formation of American Public Radio in 1983. By the end of the 1980s, MPR controlled 17 stations, including operations in North Dakota and Idaho.

MPR spent much of the following decade expanding and consolidating its operations. In a controversial move, it took over KPCC in Pasadena, California, in 1999. In 2004, MPR broke off from PRI and formed American Public Media to distribute its leading programs to stations, including A Prairie Home Companion and Marketplace. American Public Media also offers a syndicated classical music service to public radio stations. Its defenders laud MPR's expansion and professionalism, while its detractors fault it for focusing on entrepreneurial activities and edging out smaller, localized stations. Its success has ensured that MPR has, in many ways, set the agenda for public radio in the United States.

The 1990s and 2000s

NPR had come of age by the mid-1990s. Newsweek hailed NPR as “the New Yorker of the airwaves,” and President Bill Clinton told an assemblage of NPR executives and funders, “I’m just an NPR kind of president.” NPR’s coverage of the first Gulf War raised its listenerhip by 30 percent, and more of its news and public affairs programming focused on Beltway politics, establishing NPR as a player on the Washington scene. By 1997, Morning Edition and All Things Considered alone consumed 40 percent of NPR’s budget. As it targeted opinion leaders and wealthy audiences on the local and national levels, underwriting announcements became integrated into public radio programming. The system became increasingly reliant on companies engaged in controversial policies and activities, such as Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland, and Wal-Mart, who see public radio sponsorship as an inexpensive and effective form of “damage control” for their corporate images. Public radio increasingly promoted programs like Car Talk, which, in addition to showcasing corporate funders, created opportunities for merchandising spin-offs. Consultants framed “audience service” in terms of listener dollars raised per program; by this logic, Car Talk was the most important “service” offered by public radio.

NPR’s occasionally tenuous finances were stabilized when it received a $236 million windfall from the widow of McDonald’s founder Ray Kroc in 2003. Yet NPR has hesitated to share its fortunes with stations. Instead, the
network has been pouring more and more money into its news operations, and news continues to dominate cultural programming at the local level. Daytime classical music and evening jazz, which historically comprised the bulk of station broadcasts, have fallen by the wayside as stations (particularly those in large markets) switch to all-news programming, relying heavily on NPR satellite feeds and augmenting them with syndicated news and talk programs. In addition, larger stations have aggressively expanded their operations by acquiring additional stations. Iowa, Colorado, and Minnesota public radio now operate as umbrella organizations that feed programs to local affiliates. NPR currently operates two channels on Sirius satellite radio, but the “tent poles” of Morning Edition and All Things Considered remain firmly staked to terrestrial broadcasting. Stations, which purchase programming from NPR and other suppliers, would never allow their two chief moneymakers to bypass them.

NPR also has entered the webcasting fray by offering streams of programming to stations for rebroadcast on their Web sites, and the results have confounded consultants who claim that public radio listeners approach radio passively, listening to stations rather than discrete programs. A director at Boston’s WGBH found that Morning Edition was downloaded approximately 14,000 times a week in December 2005 despite no promotion whatsoever. In contrast, the program’s RealAudio stream drew less than 50 listeners a week (Janssen 2005). Yet the existence of a digital divide ensures that substantial portions of the U.S. population will lack access to broadband technology in the foreseeable future (although NPR historically has had little interest in less-than-affluent audiences). Most importantly, the local stations that form the core of the public radio system largely vend the programs—they don’t create them. Instead, many public radio stations have become little more than jukeboxes for syndicated programming.

A 2005 Harris Poll found that NPR was the most trusted news source in the United States. NPR has cultivated an affluent, graying audience of approximately 20 million listeners per week, yet it has had little success in attracting young or minority listeners, which bodes ill for its long-term future. More ominously, nearly half of all public radio stations in the United States operated in the red in 2003. The New York Times noted that “To remain viable, many managers say that their local stations must gain more leverage vis-à-vis NPR by producing and promoting more of the kind of distinctive, localized programs and segments that help shape public radio’s eclectic character” (Clemetson 2004). Radio is uniquely suited to fill the role of a public medium. Its low cost and mobility afford a sense of immediacy and flexibility that make it ideal for reflecting a community’s history and constructing a community’s possibilities. As it is buffeted by technological change and internal politics, public radio may have to rediscover the concepts of localism and diversity if it is to remain viable in the twenty-first century.

See also Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Media and Citizenship; Nationalism and the Media; Pirate Radio; Public Access Television; Public
Nationalism and the Media

Throughout the last century, the mass media often played a key and defining role in projects of nationalism: Hitler’s use of radio and film helped fashion Nazi Germany, Roosevelt’s “fireside chats” on national radio aimed to unite America in tumultuous times, Mao’s “little red book” gave a bible of communism to China, and, more recently, extremist Hutus used the radio in Rwanda to provoke a genocidal campaign against the country’s Tutsi population. The media can espouse and transmit a national ideology, it offers us access to moments of shared national glory or failure, it tells the national history, and it creates images of our fellow citizens. To what degree, then, is the media responsible for nationalism, for the construction of national identity, or indeed for the very idea of the nation?

As Benedict Anderson argues, the nation is an “imagined community”—we can never see all of our fellow citizens or commune with them; rather, we create constructs and images of what the nation is, what it means to belong to the nation, who belongs and who does not, and what the purpose and character of the nation are. To a certain degree, each one of us may operate with slightly different notions of what the nation is, since some of these acts of national construction will occur at a personal level. However, all nations also engage in communal and shared acts of construction. With few other institutions that address an entire country’s population, the media frequently becomes our national “construction site.” Not only does the media circulate images of the nation for nearly all to see, hear, and read, but it also mediates our access to most other countrywide institutions, such as our national leaders, government, holidays, and public figures.

Thus, for instance, terms such as “American way of life,” “all-American boy or girl,” or “American values” are frequently defined in and by the media.
Blockbusters with megalomaniacal villains and plots often pose a threat to the “American way of life,” and hence define what that way of life entails. Stars such as Julia Roberts, Reese Witherspoon, Tom Hanks, and Will Smith are marketed as and become national illustrations of the “all-American,” from the way they look and dress to their mannerisms and character. And “American values” are embodied particularly in the nostalgic dream-worlds of *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Waltons*, and other earlier family sitcoms and dramas.

Meanwhile, the news constantly draws lines around the nation, telling us where and what to care about as “our own,” whether this be through coverage of disasters and tragedies that focus most attention on dead Americans and their stories, or whether this be as simple and mundane an act as reporting on “American” weather, business, or sports news. More prominently, in times of war or crisis, much news coverage eschews the rest of the world’s news to offer more in-depth coverage of the ongoing conflict. Behind newsroom editors’ and producers’ decisions here is the belief that we care more (or only) about those of our own nationality than about others—but their decisions perpetuate such patterns of caring, by imploring us to care about such issues more than about others. In other words, on a daily basis, the news reinforces the borders between the “us” of our nation, and the “them” of the rest.

**MAKING THE NATION**

Far from just demarcating the borders of the nation, though, the media plays a key role in filling it with meaning. As literature and history instructors have long complained of, many people are introduced to national literature and history through the media, whether this be filmic adaptations of American novels, or blockbuster recreations of history, as with, for example, *Pearl Harbor*, *Titanic*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. Many young people now “know” the 1950s, 1960s, or...
Through media such as *I Love Lucy*, Jimi Hendrix albums, or *Saturday Night Fever*, respectively. Similarly, our political system and America’s allegiance to democracy and capitalism become embedded in certain media narratives, whether overtly or subtly. All the while, the fires of national supremacy and superiority are quite often stoked by romanticized retellings of moments in history—as in *U571*, a film that rewrites the capture of the German enigma machine in World War II as an American, not British, accomplishment—and by replaying moments of legitimate triumph, as in national sporting events. For better or worse, few things are as capable of waving the flag as are the media.

As a result, numerous leaders have discovered ways to manipulate the media directly, or via falsified information, in order to fashion the nation in their preferred image. From fear mongering to censorship, savvy and powerful leaders can frame the agenda for media discussion, especially in journalism. Particularly if the press is weak or acquiescent, political leaders can literally edit recent history for their own purposes, with the media becoming either a knowing or unwitting accomplice. Indeed, in times of war or national crisis, leaders have often called upon the media to do their “national duty” by putting the requirements of nationalism and patriotism “before” journalistic ethics, as if a commitment to journalistic ethics was not itself a patriotic act. Hence, for instance, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, journalists were encouraged and/or shamed into reporting favorably on the administration and its policies, lest they appear “anti-American.” At times like this, one wonders if the media regards its duties as those of journalistic vigilance, or of flag-waving.

**Exclusion and Inclusion**

The media also holds considerable power to determine who belongs in the nation and who does not. Identity often works through “alterity,” meaning that we all tend to identify ourselves by who and what we are *not*. Thus, as an instrument
of national identity construction, the media offers us images that include and exclude. In particular, film and television narratives have notoriously depicted citizens of other countries and races in demeaning and inferior ways, allowing us to feel nobler by comparison. Films such as *Black Hawk Down*, for example, perpetuate centuries-old racist depictions of Africans as savages; whereas depictions of Britons in film and television frequently posit them as upright, humorless, class-obsessed snobs. In general, one often finds foreign women depicted in wholly sexual terms, as if the world existed for American male sexual conquest; while foreign males are either comically inept and effeminate fops, or overly aggressive and predatory. Such types allow the American characters in a film to retain the role of sympathetic hero, and allow the audience to feel assured in the righteousness of their national identity, but in the process they create wholly erroneous and offensive depictions of foreigners.

Many such images and types then spill over from the realms of fiction into journalistic reporting, which can tend to rely upon age-old racist and nationally chauvinist depictions in telling the supposed truth of the world’s events. We see foreign nations most often in the news when they are struck by war, famine, or disease. Similarly, such types are rife in the tourist industry, as nations and national identities are branded for marketing purposes, creating, for instance, the “spiritual” East Asian, or notions of “wild” Africa. With today’s globalized media system, American images of foreigners are traveling overseas with ease, and thus risk threatening international relations when foreigners are faced with demeaning images of themselves in media as diverse as blockbusters, magazine ads, and cable news.

Furthermore, however, such images create considerable problems for national identity back home in America too. With each demeaning image of a foreigner, immigrants or those of the same racial background as the imagined foreigner are then faced with the task of overcoming the image. When many media texts so gleefully depict Arabs as insane, wife-beating terrorists, for instance, Arab Americans face considerable prejudice that effectively excludes them from feeling welcomed into the American national identity. Thus, while media images

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**EARLY LANDMARKS IN NATIONALISTIC MEDIA**

1933—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt begins delivering his radio “fireside chats.”
1935—Leni Riefenstahl directs a Nazi propaganda film of the 1934 Nuremberg rallies, *Triumph of the Will*.
1940—Winston Churchill addresses England with his famous, “We shall fight them on the beaches” speech.
1953—The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) offers extensive coverage of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
1964—*Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, or the “Little Red Book,” is released in the People’s Republic of China. Over 900 million copies are believed to have been published and circulated.
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of American and not-American may at times be helpful tools for creating ideal notions of Americanness that call upon all Americans to live up to and earn the label of “American,” they can also place obstacles in the way for those of certain national, racial, religious, and ideological backgrounds.

MEDIA BATTLEGROUNDS

However, to see the media as a purveyor of racist and exclusionary images alone would be a considerable mistake. After all, precisely because the media is often a key site of national identity construction, it is also a key battleground, in which national identity can be debated and challenged. Bold and innovative journalism, films, songs, television, and other media can challenge a nation’s ideas of itself, can call for reflection upon and revision of past constructions, and can pose new images. No national identity is written in stone. The past century has shown how thoroughly a nation can redefine itself: Russia went from monarchy to communism to attempts at capitalist democracy; many of the world’s countries have gone from being colonial vassals to independent nations; and numerous countries have divided into several smaller nations. Therefore, the media can always play a role in scrambling former identities and reevaluating them for the future.

Nevertheless, as much potential as the media have, we must always inquire into the interests of those who own the media if we are to determine which messages and images of nationality will be welcomed and which will be actively excluded. Hence, in America, with most media outlets running as commercial ventures owned by a few large corporations, we might expect anticapitalist messages to struggle reaching the light of day. Or, in countries where dictators strictly police the media, democratic messages will be rare. In this way, those who control the media have significant influence over defining the nation. If the media is a battleground for determining national identity, many Americans have no access whatsoever to media production, and thus have no access to the battleground; as a result, although it is often said that there are “two Americas”—one Republican and one Democrat—a third America exists of a vast population who are continually under- or misrepresented by a media system over which they have no control.

At the same time, though, independent media sources have always existed in even the most brutal dictatorships, allowing underground poetry, film, literature, or news to implore citizens to rethink official, mainstream scripts of national identity. Blogs, for instance, have been used to considerable success in numerous countries, and political protest music has thrived since the advent of recorded music. Such independent voices may lack the volume and reach of their mainstream equivalents, but they still ensure that national identity never truly atrophies in one position.

TRANSNATIONALISM AND BEYOND

As much as the media creates national borders, increasingly it is also moving beyond these borders, too. Thus, just as the media can create national identity,
a growing number of films, programs, Web sites, and so forth are creating transnational identities. Sizeable immigrant communities often establish media that speak to their consumers not just as Americans, or as citizens of another nation, but as both. Many of America’s larger cities have foreign-language radio stations and television programs addressing such individuals and communities, while cheaper international phone charges, the Internet and e-mail, and large networks of piracy and legitimate media trade allow people to live in one country but feel connected to more than one. Home, in other words, is becoming ever more a mindset, and one that requires no set physical location.

American media are particularly pervasive around the world, leading some to worry about the prospects of American national identity seeping into especially the younger, media-hungry generations of non-Americans. By contrast, non-American media does not often travel as easily around the world, and thus we must not overstate the possibilities for a mediated transnational identity. Nevertheless, when, for instance, one can check a foreign newspaper daily online, watch imported videos, listen to imported music, and subscribe to foreign satellite stations, one may be able to be American and another nationality.

Meanwhile, the explosion of global media also increases the possibility that some of us will fashion cosmopolitan, global identities, leaving the notion of the singular national identity behind us. Or, if not truly international identities, at least the media might fashion regional identities, as, for instance, the European Union funds trans-European media initiatives, or as Al-Jazeera and other satellite services address transnational viewerships predominantly in a set range of countries.

Ultimately, then, the media have been the very tools that made national identity and nationalism arguably the most important unit of identity for twentieth-century world politics, and it continues to do so; however, the media is now also offering alternatives and ways beyond the nation for some, and ways to challenge and attack mainstream myths of nationality for others.

See also: Al-Jazeera; Alternative Media in the United States; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Islam and the Media; Media and Citizenship; National Public Radio; Political Documentary; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Public Opinion; Representations of Race; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; World Cinema.

Network Neutrality—or “Net Neutrality” for short—is the guiding rule that preserves the free and open Internet. Net Neutrality mandates that Internet service providers not discriminate including speeding up or slowing down Web content, based on its source, ownership, or destination. Net Neutrality protects consumers’ right to direct our online activities based on our own personal motivations. With Net Neutrality, the network’s job is to move data in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Nondiscrimination provisions like Net Neutrality have governed the U.S. communications networks since the 1930s. On June 27, 2005, in a 6 to 3 decision (National Cable & Telecommunications Association vs. Brand X Internet Services), the United States Supreme Court ruled that cable companies like Comcast and Verizon are not required to share their cables with other Internet service providers (ISPs). This controversial decision put Net Neutrality provisions in jeopardy.

This ruling in part followed the FCC’s decision in 2002, which stipulated that cable companies do not offer telecommunication services according to the meaning of the 1996 Telecommunication Act. The FCC ruled that cable services are information services, which manipulate and transform data instead of merely transmitting them. “Since the Act only requires companies offering telecommunication services to share their lines with other ISPs (the so-called ‘common carriage’ requirement), the FCC concluded that cable companies are exempt from this requirement” (see http://www.buzzflash.com/contributors/05/07/con05238.html).

The requirement of “common carriage” basically enforced net neutrality. Being deemed a common carrier meant that a transportation is considered a public service and must be upheld universally without discrimination. After telecommunications companies became exempt from the rules of common carriage, many public interest groups pushed for some kind of neutrality rules, so that ISPs could not discriminate against Web sites. Cable and phone company lobbyists pushed to block legislation that would reinstate Net Neutrality.
FLASHPOINTS IN NETWORK NEUTRALITY

1. In 1860, a U.S. federal law subsidizing a coast-to-coast telegraph line stated that “messages received from any individual, company, or corporation, or from any telegraph lines connecting with this line at either of its termini, shall be impartially transmitted in the order of their reception.”

2. In 1937, the SEC. 202. [47 U.S.C. 202] Discrimination and Preferences stated that; “(a) It shall be unlawful for any common carrier to make any unjust or unreasonable discrimination in charges, practices, classifications, regulations, facilities, or services for or in connection with like communication service, directly or indirectly, by any means or device, or to make or give any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person, class of persons, or locality, or to subject any particular person, class of persons, or locality to any undue or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage.”

3. As early as 1957, business users and corporations began to lobby for a policy allowing them to build wholly proprietary systems.

4. In 1968, at a proceeding known as the Computer Inquiries, the FCC decided that the companies providing communications services would not be allowed to interfere with or discriminate against information services.

5. In 1980, at the Second Computer Inquiry, the FCC decided that even regulated telecommunications companies, which were the foundation of the U.S. telecommunications infrastructure, would be allowed to establish subsidiaries that could bypass existing regulation.

6. In 1982, when a federal court broke up Ma Bell, it required the Baby Bells to “provide nondiscriminatory interconnection and access to their networks.”

7. The early infrastructure of the Internet was created by DARPA with ongoing support from government officials as a U.S. publicly funded research network governed by an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) that prohibited commercial activity. In the early 1990s, the existing Internet infrastructure was privatized and the AUP prohibiting commercial activity was lifted.

8. In 1992, the advancement of The National Information Infrastructure (NII) initiative sought to “Promote private sector investment, through appropriate tax and regulatory policies.”

9. In 1996 there was an amendment to the Common Carrier provision in the 1934 Communications Act (44), asserting that the term telecommunications carrier means any provider of telecommunications services, except that such term does not include aggregators of telecommunications services. The ruling further stipulated that “a telecommunications carrier shall be treated as a common carrier under this Act only to the extent that it is engaged in providing telecommunications services” This amendment amounted to removing the existing Common Carrier requirements from Internet Service Providers.

10. In 2002 the FCC issued a Declaratory Ruling for cable modem service, classifying it as an “information service.” This classification change meant that cable companies
The Net Neutrality debate began to heat up in early 2006 as a House Energy and Commerce Committee bill was tabled that included the provisions essentially mandating Net Neutrality. On one side ISPs like AT&T, Verizon, and Comcast lobbied hard to remove Net Neutrality provisions from the bill, while civil society groups like Free Press and the Center for Digital Democracy began rallying public support for Net Neutrality.

On April 24, 2006, a band of consumer and public interest groups calling itself the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition, launched a campaign claiming to “defend the free and open Internet.” Charter members of the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition include: Professors Larry Lessig of Stanford University and Tim Wu of Columbia University, Free Press, Gun Owners of America, right-of-center Instapundit blogger Glenn Reynolds, MoveOn.org Civic Action, Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America, Public Knowledge, Common Cause, the American Library Association and U.S. PIRG. Later the coalition swelled to “more than a million everyday people who have banded together with thousands of non-profit organizations, businesses and bloggers” (see http://www.savetheinternet.com/coalition).

Around the same time the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition formed, an anti-Net Neutrality coalition dominated by corporations with a financial stake in an unregulated Internet, called HandsOffTheInternet, began advocating against Net Neutrality rules.

On June 8, 2006, the House Energy and Commerce Committee passed the Communications Opportunity, Promotion, and Enhancement (COPE) Act (HR 5252) with a 321–101 vote, without the accompanying Network Neutrality Act (HR 5273). The Net Neutrality Act would have essentially made Net Neutrality an enforceable law.

After the COPE Act passed, the house the bill moved to Senate, with advocates on either sides engaging in a fierce battle to sway this critical vote. Supporters of the COPE Act claimed the bill would support innovation and freedom of choice. Net Neutrality advocates said that its passage would make ISPs gatekeepers of the Internet.

The June 28, 2006, Senate vote on a Net Neutrality friendly amendment offered by senators Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), fell to a 11–11 tie. Shortly after, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) placed a “hold” on the COPE Act legislation essentially stalling the bill until changes were made.

HandsOffTheInternet claimed that this sticks consumers with a high bill and lets big new media corporation off the hook. They also claimed that they have
not and will not discriminate against Web sites. They claimed that Net Neutrality is a new regulation that “fundamentally changes the Internet.”

However, those fighting for Net Neutrality pointed to statements made by William L. Smith, chief technology officer for Atlanta-based BellSouth Corp., saying that “an Internet service provider such as his firm should be able, for example, to charge Yahoo Inc. for the opportunity to have its search site load faster than that of Google Inc.” (see http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/30/AR2005113002109_pf.html). The SavetheInternet.com Coalition also pointed to existing cases of discrimination such as the 2004 case where North Carolina ISP Madison River blocked their DSL customers from using any rival Web-based phone service (see http://www.freepress.net/news/13604).

Not long before the Senate voted on the COPE Act, Alaska Republican Ted Stevens, head of the Senate Commerce Committee, made the fateful remark: “The internet is not something that you just dump something on. It's not a big truck. It's a series of tubes.” The statement was humorously conveyed on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, and even remixed into a techno song, which was widely distributed online. Shortly after the Ted Stevens debacle, the SavetheInternet.com Coalition received a further boost when Internet pioneer Sir Tim Berners-Lee forcefully argued in favor of Net Neutrality in a New York Times interview (see http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/27/technology/circuits/27neut.html?ref=circuits).

Over the summer, hundreds of Internet users concerned about Net Neutrality inundated the Internet with videos and blog entries encouraging fellow citizens to get involved in the issue. As the Senate's August recess drew to a close, citizens supporting Net Neutrality rallied in 25 cities nationwide, delivering SavetheInternet petitions to their senators and urging them to oppose the phone and cable companies’ attempts to gut Net Neutrality. The citizen-led movement would later be described by Salon as “a ragtag army of grass-roots Internet groups, armed with low-budget videos, music parodies and petitions” (see http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2006/10/02/slayers). The telecoms employed Mike McCurry, Bill Clinton’s former press secretary, to lead their lobbying effort with the industry-funded group HandsOfftheInternet. The group produced its own online videos poking fun at the SavetheInternet.com Coalition and relaying their view of Net Neutrality.

Throughout 2006, the nation's largest phone and cable companies spent more than $100 million on D.C. lobbyists, think tanks, ads, and campaign contributions to defeat Net Neutrality. During this same time, the SavetheInternet.com Coalition grew to include 850 groups, some previously mentioned, making it a formidable grass-roots organization. The coalition also includes thousands of bloggers and hundreds of small companies that do business online. This diverse coalition resulted in more than 1.5 million Americans contacting their representatives urging them to support Net Neutrality. The HR 5252 bill died with the end of 109th Congress, and the situation looked positive for Net Neutrality proponents with the new Democrat controlled House and Congress.
On December 28, 2006, AT&T officials agreed to adhere to Net Neutrality provisions if allowed to complete an $85 billion merger with BellSouth. The SavetheInternet.com Coalition called this “a victory we can hang our hats on.”

A VICTORY WITH HISTORIC PROPORTIONS

Regardless of the side one is on concerning this issue, one thing is for sure: the outcome is bound to shape our communications system well into the future. Shortly before AT&T agreed to abide by Net Neutrality provisions, remarks made by Geov Parrish of WorkingforChange.com, indicated the serious and contentious nature of the struggle: “Name the last time a lobby with that much power and money was stymied in its top legislative priority by a citizen movement…Offhand, I can’t think of any examples at all. And this during the most corrupt, lobbyist-pliant Congress in recent American history” (see http://www.workingforchange.com/article.cfm?ItemID=21498).

In keeping with past success, SavetheInternet.com launched the latest manifestation of the campaign with an online video called “Save The Internet: Independence Day.” The video outlines how everyday Internet users and grass-roots organizations can save Internet freedom. “Save The Internet: Independence Day” quickly made its way around the net through users sharing the video with friends and family. Also crucial to the circulation of this video are independent media outlets and bloggers, who are also threatened by a non-neutral Internet.

MAKING NET NEUTRALITY LAW AND MORE

In 2007, the SavetheInternet.com coalition began pushing Congress to make Net Neutrality law. Using their (now award winning) “Independence Day” video, the coalition began campaigning for a faster, more open, and accessible Internet. On January 8, senators Byron L. Dorgan (D-S.D.) and Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) sponsored the Internet Freedom Preservation Act of 2007, which would protect Net Neutrality.

On June 11, 2007, at the SavetheInternet “Party for the Future” celebration of Net Neutrality victories, the SavetheInternet.com Coalition unveiled the “Internet Freedom Declaration of 2007.” The Declaration sets forth a plan not just for winning Net Neutrality in Congress, but establishing faster, universal, and affordable broadband for everyone. The declaration calls for “World Class Quality through Competition,” “An Open and Neutral Network,” and “Universal Affordable Access.” The declaration is a big step in media reform, changing the terms of debate from defending against further media deregulation, to demanding a truly public media infrastructure.

In March 2007, SavetheInternet.com supporters rallied for “in-district” meetings with members of Congress and their staff. The rallies resulted in several members pledging to support Net Neutrality legislation when it came to a vote in Congress.

On March 15, 2007, all five FCC Commissioners were brought before the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet to testify about
their decisions regarding Net Neutrality. Members of the House pressed FCC chairman Kevin Martin to take a stronger position in support of Net Neutrality. The hearing was the first time in three years that commissioners had appeared before the subcommittee.

In May 2007, an "Ad Hoc Public Interest Spectrum Coalition" made a proposal to the FCC on how the auction of the valuable 700 MHz spectrum should be conducted. The 700 MHz spectrum can be used to offer wireless Internet and the proposal asserted the auction should provide “new entrants (to) have the opportunity to enter the market in competition with incumbent providers” (see http://www.publicknowledge.org/node/962). The coalition includes the Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, EDUCAUSE, Free Press, Media Access Project, New America Foundation, and U.S. Public Interest Research Group. As of June 4, a quarter-million people have contacted the FCC urging the agency to use the 700 MHz spectrum to offer a more open and competitive Internet service ecology.

On March 22, 2007, the FCC unanimously voted to seek public comment on the possibility of adding a Network Neutrality principle to its 2005 Internet Policy Statement. The comment period ended on June 15, 2007, and tens of thousands of submissions were made.

In 2007, Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Barack Obama, and Bill Richardson, among others, all stated their strong support for legal protections for Net Neutrality. Supporters were joined by GOP candidate Mike Huckabee (R-Arkansas), who told a collection of bloggers that Net Neutrality must be preserved.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Blogosphere; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Digital Divide; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media Reform; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Public Access Television; Regulating the Airwaves; Surveillance and Privacy; Video News Releases.

NEWS SATIRE: COMEDY CENTRAL AND BEYOND

Can we connect the rise in popularity of news satire programs like The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and The Colbert Report to reported lows in news consumption from traditional news programs among American youth, and if so, how? Critics of news satires contend that they engender cynicism and withdrawal from meaningful politics, offering a poor substitute for the news, while supporters see them as accessible supplements, offering contextualization of the news, critical media literacy skills, and hence a helpful addition to our daily news consumption.

At day’s end, as millions of Americans ponder their choices for an evening’s entertainment and/or for receiving the nightly news, in recent years an unlikely pair of competitors have been added to the mix: Comedy Central’s The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (1999–) and The Colbert Report (2005–). Both shows deal with current news, but in a satiric-parodic manner, poking fun at newscasters, analyzing and commenting on sound bites and newscaps, subjecting newsmakers to lampooning and silly interviews, and yet also frequently offering a substantive critique both of news delivery and of the topics under discussion. Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have staged something of a coup in the realm of

JON STEWART ON CROSSFIRE

A lightning rod event that threw Stewart and his love-hate relationship with traditional news into the very center of the spotlight was his appearance on CNN’s now-defunct Crossfire (1982–2005) in 2004. Three years later, the clip of this appearance remained one of the most requested and watched television moments on Internet sites ifilm.com and YouTube.com, with nearly 4 million views at ifilm alone. Hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson invited him onto their one-a-Democrat/one-a-Republican show, no doubt expecting Stewart the funnyman to appear; rather, Stewart opened by imploring them, as representatives of mainstream news media coverage, to “stop hurting America.” Stewart objected to the divisiveness, and spurious desire to reduce any and all matters to an argument, promoted by Crossfire and other programs of its ilk. Calling such a format “theater” and “hackery,” Stewart received significant applause and support from the in-studio audience. His appearance also inspired intense discussion on blogs and at watercoolers across the country about the appropriateness of his comments, but more so, about the appropriateness of debate shows such as Crossfire and Hannity and Colmes (Fox News Channel, 1996–). It marked a rare moment in which a guest of a news show openly and without restraint challenged the very format of a news show, and thus, given the experimental format of The Daily Show itself, Stewart’s appearance had many talking about what news shows should look like.
news consumption, leading to accolades as various as *The Daily Show*’s Television Critics Association Award in 2004 for Outstanding Achievement in News and Information, and Stewart’s nomination as *Entertainment Weekly*’s Entertainer of the Year in 2004; and leading to criticism that both make a mockery of the news and of politics.

**THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART**

*The Daily Show* premiered quietly with then-host Craig Kilborn in 1996, offering a playful look at the day’s news. After three years with the show, Kilborn stepped down and was replaced by Jon Stewart. Rapidly, the nature of its news and political satire developed, and with especially strong coverage of the 2000 and 2004 election campaigns (the former presciently named “Indecision 2000”), *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*’s star was in the ascendancy. Audiences are treated to 15 minutes of play with and satiric commentary on the news before Stewart welcomes a guest, who can range from a media figure, to a writer of a political bestseller, to a politician. Stewart’s comic style is quite unique, mixing funny faces and “shtick” with often astoundingly incisive and even unforgiving interviews, in unpredictably uneven amounts. By 2004, Stewart and his show were in the media spotlight, as people tried to work out whether this was a hard-nosed journalist with a comedian inside him, or vice versa.

For instance, *The Daily Show*’s Indecision 2004 election coverage included, amongst hours worth of other segments, an item on the Democratic primaries that reported on a debate as if it was a rap “battle” or contest, a piece that mocked special interest group attack ads on the candidates, and the parsing of and commentary on each of the presidential debates. The rap battle played with the alienating language and countenance of many politicians, pointing to their inapproachability to youth, and to politics’ existence on a very upper-middle-class Ivy League plateau. The satiric attack ads encouraged viewers to distance

**STEPHEN COLBERT ADDRESSES THE PRESS**

Colbert’s own *Crossfire* moment came in 2006, when invited to speak to the White House Correspondents Association awards dinner, a yearly gathering of White House press, politicians, and the president. Colbert stayed in character, delivering, through backhanded satire, a damming critique of the Bush White House and of the press’s own lack of effectiveness in reporting on national and international matters. Another clip in heavy demand on YouTube.com, before C-SPAN lay legal claim to it and themselves circulated it to thousands of viewers, the speech was met with a cool reaction by the press corps, and they did not even discuss it publicly until a few days later when Internet buzz demanded it. As did Stewart’s *Crossfire* appearance, or Stewart’s follow-up interview on PBS’s *Charlie Rose Show*, Colbert’s act of exporting his news and political satire outside of the comfortable borders of his show into another venue underlined the degree to which the new news satire of Stewart and Colbert is often as much political as it is entertainment
themselves from the larger-than-life assertions and allegations that such ads tend to peddle. And the debate coverage interrupted candidates’ carefully rehearsed platitudes with irreverent response and objection. The various skits and interviews offered pure slapstick and transgressive humor, but also devious satire.

**CREATING CYNICAL “STONED SLACKERS”?**

Behind some commentators’ concern regarding the show was the supposition that *Daily Show* viewers might be using the show as an outright substitute to watching or reading the news. Since the rise of David Letterman, Jay Leno, and Conan O’Brien in the 1990s, with their own fondness for little quips and even preproduced segments regarding the day’s news, and given the overall popularity of late-night talk shows with young viewers, some had correlated this with disturbingly low voter turnout rates and political apathy amongst the young, worrying that such shows might be creating a nation of ill-informed citizens gaining all their news from jokes. This background murmur increased in volume in 2004, when Stewart’s coverage of the presidential election and campaigning frequently threw him into the public eye, and when news sources as various as Ted Koppel, the *Boston Globe*, and Bill O’Reilly suggested that *The Daily Show*’s viewers were learning all their news from the show. As Stewart himself has often been quick to point out, the show’s prime commitment is to entertainment, and so segments and jokes are constructed with comedy more than informational vigor in mind.

O’Reilly also charged *Daily Show* viewers with being little more than “stoned slackers” who mindlessly accept Stewart’s own politics as their own. Moreover,

**TIMELINE**

1993—*Politically Incorrect* with Bill Maher debuts on Comedy Central.
1996—*The Daily Show* debuts on Comedy Central with host Craig Kilborn.
1997—PI moves to ABC, becoming the first and only of the new wave of political satires to exist on network television.
1999—Kilborn leaves *The Daily Show* and is replaced by Jon Stewart.
2000—*The Daily Show* reports at length on the presidential election, “Indecision 2000.”
2001—*The Daily Show* wins its first Peabody Award for its election coverage.
2002—PI cancelled by ABC, following advertiser boycott.
2003—*Real Time with Bill Maher* begins on HBO; *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* debuts on MSNBC.
2004—Stewart appears on and attacks *Crossfire*; *Dennis Miller* begins on CNBC.
2005—Stewart hosts the Oscars; *The Daily Show* wins its second Peabody Award for its election coverage.
2006—Colbert delivers an infamous address to President G. W. Bush and the White House Correspondents Association.
some have expressed concern that *Daily Show* viewers will come to see all politics as a joke, replacing caring with cynicism, action with laughing. Critics contend that, rather than seek to change the system, the show and its resulting audience subject the system to nothing more than a few jokes. Or, as Michael Kalin wrote in the *Boston Globe*, “Stewart’s daily dose of political parody…leads to a ‘holier than art thou’ attitude toward our national leaders. People who possess the wit, intelligence, and self-awareness of viewers of The Daily Show would never choose to enter the political fray full of ‘buffoons and idiots’. Content to remain perched atop their Olympian ivory towers, these bright leaders head straight for the private sector” (Kalin 2006).

**CREATING CRITICAL NEWS CONSUMERS?**

However, critics of *The Daily Show* have often overlooked the degree to which many of its jokes require a fair knowledge of the news to understand and appreciate what is being said in the first place. Behind Stewart’s tomfoolery is often a sophisticated analysis or discussion of the news that assumes foreknowledge of the players and issues involved. Indeed, charting empirically what before was only casual intuition, in 2004, a National Annenberg Election Survey concluded that late-night comedy viewers were more likely to know issue positions and backgrounds of presidential candidates than were nonviewers, and that *Daily Show* viewers were particularly well informed, possessing “higher campaign knowledge than national news viewers and newspaper readers—even when education, party identification, following politics, watching cable news, receiving campaign information online, age, and gender are taken into consideration” (National Annenberg Election Survey 2004). The study asked six questions about candidate’s platforms and policies to 19,013 adults, and whereas those who had watched no late-night comedy programs in the previous week averaged 2.62 correct answers, and whereas Letterman and Leno viewers averaged 2.91 and 2.95 respectively, *Daily Show* viewers averaged 3.59. The Annenberg study was careful not to suggest causation—it remained unclear whether *The Daily Show* created or simply attracted better-informed viewers—but it adds empirical weight to the notion that *The Daily Show* appears more likely to be cultivating knowledge, and inspiring news discussion, rather than silencing it. Certainly, in premier universities across America, one can often hear students and professors alike discussing items from last night’s *Daily Show*, or wondering aloud how Stewart will respond to today’s news.

News satire’s potentially positive effects on its audience include: (1) offering news-processing time, (2) making news accessible, and (3) teaching critical media literacy. News often flies by us at a remarkable speed, usually dictated in a firm, all-knowing manner. As such, it constantly risks passing us by as confusing and decontextualized. By poking fun at the news, though, news satire can encourage viewers to examine daily events more closely and to think about them more deeply. Thus, news satire can allow us the time to think about issues embedded in the news that a newscaster’s 30-second article overlooked.

Moreover, whereas the realm of news and politics have often proven alienating and distant to the common person, and youth in particular, comedy can
empower an audience member by positing them as a knowing insider. This presumption of knowingness will be highly problematic and worrying if it is not accompanied by actual information, but when information is present, comedy can sometimes offer a greater sense of personal involvement. Comedy even allows a degree of honesty and frankness that the news’ stated obsession with objectivity can sometimes obscure; indeed, as Jeffrey Jones argues of news satire, “there seemingly is an underlying recognition that [it] expresses a measure of truth, honesty, or reality that is missing from more formulaic political coverage” (Jones 2004, p. 6). The “inside the Washington beltway” mentality behind much news coverage misses multiple perspectives and opinions, and even when presented gutturally and in incomplete form, some of these perspectives are welcomed and given voice in news satire, as perhaps the preeminent form of political entertainment. Hence, whereas critics like Kalin see The Daily Show as disconnecting viewers with politics, the show might instead (or, in addition) connect and welcome some to politics.

Curiously, meanwhile, for all the powers that many attribute to the media (believing that they cause violence, eating disorders, rampant consumerism, short attention spans, and so forth), media literacy programs and courses are still too rare. However, in concentrating not only on the news, but on how it is told, The Daily Show and other news satires may play a small role in shoring up this gap, and in teaching critical media literacy. In particular, the news’ memory is often tragically short, as best illustrated when The Daily Show contrasts political speeches of today with directly contradictory remarks by the same speaker a year ago, when the nightly news has already forgotten the earlier speech. Similarly, when Stewart, as a comedian, can ask more incisive and probing questions of his political guests than do his millionaire newscaster counterparts, one is forced to demand more of traditional news.

THE Colbert REPORT AND REAL TIME WITH BILL MAHER

For its part, The Colbert Report took aim at a specific format, and even a specific show: Bill O’Reilly’s The O’Reilly Factor (Fox News Channel, 1996–). Colbert made a name for himself on The Daily Show as a field reporter and “analyst,” frequently adopting an abrasive, unapologetically defensive character that segued easily into his mock role on The Colbert Report as an unabashedly Republican, O’Reilly-worshipping journalist. Colbert’s show involves numerous self-laudatory homages, includes frequent irate monologues delivered to the camera, and specializes in inflammatory rhetoric, as does its satiric target. More directly parodic than The Daily Show, The Colbert Report thus directs its audience’s attention to news format and news personalities alike.

Bill Maher has also proven to be an unflinching new news satirist of note, in some senses Stewart and Colbert’s forebearer. With Politically Incorrect (Comedy Central, 1993–97; ABC, 1997–2002) and then Real Time with Bill Maher (HBO, 2003–), Maher mixed news satire and “straight talk” with a news talk show format, often to considerable success—and controversy. As do Stewart and Colbert, Maher adheres to the belief that the news and the world of politics are so heavily steeped in spin, deceit, and ignorance that the common person’s
laughing attention is the first tonic needed in a lengthy recovery period, and he seeks to deliver and direct this attention weekly. More openly opinionated than either Stewart or Colbert, Maher has adopted a more angry style that is warmly appreciated by his fans, but that also keeps away many detractors. Indeed, Maher illustrates the fine line between levity and seriousness that news satire must walk, for Maher’s clearly stated libertarian-meets-liberal politics and his off-the-cuff remarks have angered some viewers, even leading to an advertiser boycott and the eventual cancellation of *Politically Incorrect* in 2002, following post-9/11 comments that some found to be offensive.

**BEYOND COMEDY CENTRAL**

Maher, Stewart, and Colbert could all be accused of preaching to the converted, in that they tend to attract like-minded audiences, and thus one might regard skeptically the notion that their political humor or media literacy primers have lasting importance. However, as in religion, perhaps “preaching to the converted” is the most common form of preaching, concentrating on renewing and reinvigorating the “faith” and conviction of the converted. Countless polls reveal low levels of trust in journalists and in politicians, and yet many of us revert to blind trust of them in many instances; the power of news satire, even when reiterating the already known, then, may lie in its ability to offer reminders of the severe problems with news and political rhetoric, and therefore of the continuing need for vigilance and attention.

The popularity of news satire has clearly created a stir in the news community. Stewart in particular was a frequent guest or topic of many traditional news programs in 2004 especially, but beyond Stewart, several news channels have experimented with adding humor and satiric commentary. Thus, for instance, CNBC hired comedian Dennis Miller to mix news talk and comedy in his ill-fated *Dennis Miller* (2004–05), while more successful has been MSNBC’s *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* (2003–), whose host regularly mixes reporting with impressions of popular culture figures, amusing graphics, and a generally sardonic wit applied to most items. Therefore, albeit slowly and gingerly, news satire is expanding into the news itself, no doubt setting the stage for another round of debates regarding the future of news and the appropriateness of news satire within that future.

**See also** Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Literacy; Political Documentary; Political Entertainment; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Public Opinion; Public Sphere; Ratings; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.


Jonathan Gray
OBSCENITY AND INDECENCY

Areas that have challenged the media's right to freedom of speech have long revolved around issues of human sexuality, and expressions and language that violate standards of taste and decency. The history of censoring sexually explicit scenes considered to violate standards of decency goes back to the early days of film. As social mores and community standards have evolved over the years, so too have legal protections and the definition of what is acceptable and what is not on television, radio, and film. The changes in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) policy brought about by the wardrobe malfunction that exposed Janet Jackson's breast during her halftime performance with Justine Timberlake illustrate that these topics remain battleground issues for the media.

OBSCENITY

Given our Puritan heritage, the long history of battles fought over the definition of obscenity, and the measures taken to stop it, should come as no surprise. Under British law in the time of the monarchies, sexually explicit writings and images were considered “obscene libel,” and were outlawed. When the Puritans left Britain to pursue religious freedom, they brought their codes of sexual modesty and chastity with them. Hundreds of years later, despite the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, America remains a country in which depictions of nudity and sexuality make many uncomfortable and are frequently met with calls for sanction or censorship. Despite the fact that the First Amendment provides for the separation of Church and State, this is one area in which religious beliefs about sexuality and sin have consistently spilled over into the realm of law.
Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both the federal and state governments passed laws to stop the flow of material considered to be obscene or indecent. In 1842 Congress passed the first antiobscenity statutes, barring the “importation of all indecent and obscene prints, paintings, lithographs, engravings and transparencies.” This statute was amended numerous times to include photographs, films, and phonograph records. The Comstock Act of 1873 made it illegal to use the U.S. postal system to distribute obscenity. At that time, “obscenity” was defined as material that has a “tendency to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences.” This broad definition was used by both the U.S. Customs office and U.S. Postal Service to ban such works as Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

With the arrival of cinema in the early twentieth century, efforts to stop the flow of erotic imagery in this country intensified. City and state censorship boards sprung up around the country to prohibit the exhibition of films containing sexually explicit scenes. In 1915, the Supreme Court upheld the practice of these censorship boards, arguing that film was not covered under the First Amendment. This gave the green light to film censorship all over America. In response, the movie studios banded together in the 1930s to adopt the Hays Code, a set of self-imposed decency standards designed to “clean up” Hollywood and protect the studios from the loss of revenue caused by local censorship. These standards were later abandoned when the Supreme Court reversed its original position on cinema, granting the medium First Amendment protection in 1952.

By the middle of the twentieth century, as sexual mores began to change, an increasing number of court cases began to challenge the various antiobscenity statutes around the country. Finally, in a series of rulings, the Supreme Court developed a legal definition for the obscenity (see “Defining Obscenity” sidebar). Once they had defined this category of speech, they ruled that any form of communication meeting the criteria of obscenity is not protected by the First Amendment. This means that federal or state laws banning obscenity do not violate the First Amendment. Because of the great variety of sexual and moral standards throughout our country, the Supreme Court left it up to the states to determine if, and to what extent, they would ban obscene communication.

Ironically, the issue of obscenity is one of those rare topics that has the power to unite political activists from both ends of the political spectrum. Conservative voters often express concern about obscenity on the basis of the threat that they feel it poses to the family. On the other hand, some liberals are also concerned about obscenity, arguing that pornography contributes to violence against women. Here we see that calls for censorship can come from both the right and the left, sometimes on the very same issue, even if for very different reasons.

The development of new communication technologies has greatly complicated the issue of obscenity in our country. In 1957, when first defining obscenity, the Supreme Court included the “contemporary community standards” clause into the definition in an attempt to take into consideration the reality that
American sexual and moral standards vary widely by locale. Yet, new means of transmitting sexual imagery have rendered this standard difficult to apply. When a small town decides that they don’t want pornographic magazines in their local bookstore, residents seeking such material have the option of buying it in a larger city, where fewer restrictions exist. But whose values should determine the national standards regarding “taboo” material for electronic media? The Internet allows for the transmission of explicit imagery to anyone with a computer, regardless of where they live, making it very difficult to set or enforce obscenity or indecency laws governing computer communication. Each time a new communication technology is invented, providing new ways to disseminate controversial content, our national commitment to freedom of speech is tested once again. Given the political and religious diversity of our country, the continuing development of communication technologies, and the ever-popular nature of sexually explicit media content, the issue of free speech and obscenity is sure to continue challenging future generations of Americans.

**INDECENCY**

In addition to American concerns about sexually explicit media content, our nation also has a long history of identifying certain words and images as taboo, and therefore off-limits in “polite society.” At one time in our nation’s history, social convention served as an effective censor of “vulgar” language or gestures, and most people were willing to abide by the unwritten rules of convention. With the many social changes of the late twentieth century, these rules, like so many others, were gradually tested. Because both radio and television are regulated by the U.S. government, these channels of communication have been the terrain on which the debate about the boundaries of propriety has taken place.

The FCC, which sets the rules governing our broadcasting system, has defined indecency as “language or material that, in context, depicts or describes,
in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities.” Indecent programming contains patently offensive sexual or excretory material that does not rise to the level of obscenity. Since obscenity lacks First Amendment protection, it cannot be broadcast on the public airwaves. Indecent speech, on the other hand, is covered by the First Amendment, and thus cannot be barred from the airwaves entirely. This poses a dilemma: how can a free society balance the rights of adults to consume adult-oriented material with the goal of shielding children from language or imagery that some feel is inappropriate for young audiences?

The solution, as devised by the FCC, in response to several key Supreme Court rulings, is known as the “safe harbor” provision, which prohibits the broadcasting of indecent material between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Broadcast companies, stations, and on-air personalities violating this rule are subject to fines. Like the laws prohibiting obscenity, rules restricting indecency are inconsistently enforced, with great fluctuations depending upon the political/religious climate predominating in the nation at any particular time. When our nation is in a more conservative period, greater concern is expressed about the transmission of such material.

The fines imposed on broadcasters by the FCC for indecency violations were, at one time, set at a relatively low rate of several thousand dollars per incident, and only rarely enforced. This changed significantly following an incident involving singers Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake, in which Ms. Jackson’s breast was inadvertently exposed to a national audience watching the CBS television coverage of the half-time performance of the 2004 Super Bowl. In response to the tremendous public outcry about the event, particularly from conservative viewers, Congress and the FCC raised the indecency fines to over 20 times their original level. Viacom, then owners of the CBS network, were fined a record-breaking $550,000 for airing the incident, despite the fact that all parties involved claimed that the “wardrobe malfunction” had been an accident.

During the same period, “shock-jock” radio personality Howard Stern, long famous for his “off-color” language and humor, became a target for public concerns about indecency on the airwaves. Clear Channel Communications, the national radio chain that had carried Stern’s syndicated program, dropped him from their program line-up after being charged heavy fines for airing his material. In a move clearly designed to send a strong message, the FCC also issued fines of over half a million dollars to Stern himself for violating restrictions on broadcasting indecency. Some critics at the time argued that the real reason for the strong stand taken against Stern was that the radio personality had begun to use his airtime to criticize President Bush.

Whether it was indecency or politics that turned Stern into a target, it was a new communication technology that provided the “solution.” In a development that illustrates the power of new media to allow “taboo” messages to bypass existing restrictions on controversial speech, Howard Stern moved from broadcast to satellite radio, which, at the time of this writing, is not governed by content restrictions on indecency.
THE COMMUNICATIONS DECENCY ACT

The Communications Decency Act attempted to introduce a wide range of broadcasting-type controls on the Internet. When the act passed into law on February 1, 1996, as part of the Telecommunications Reform Act, it met with protest from a broad range of groups promoting freedom of speech, from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF). The EFF launched a blue ribbon campaign calling for Internet users to protest the legislation by displaying the anticensorship blue ribbon on their Web pages.

Critics charged that the Communications Decency Act was one of the most restrictive forms of censorship applied in the United States and that it turned the Internet from one of the most free forums for speech to one of the most tightly regulated. The Act made it a crime to knowingly transmit any communication accessible to minors that could be considered “obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, or indecent.” It also prevented any publicity of abortion services. Publishers of offending material could be prosecuted, but also those who distribute it—Internet service providers. In an attempt to avoid prosecution, they may have had to act as private censors. The penalty was a sentence of up to two years in prison and a $100,000 fine.

By June 1996, a three-judge panel in Philadelphia ruled that the Act was unnecessarily broad in its scope, violating constitutional guarantees to freedom of speech. The Act also infringed on privacy rights by empowering federal agencies to intervene in, for example, the sending of private e-mail between individuals.

On June 26, 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the district court judges that the Act was unconstitutional. The judges pointed out, in part, that TV and radio were originally regulated because of the scarcity of room in the airwaves, which is not true of the Internet. The judges stated that the concern to protect children “does not justify an unnecessarily broad suppression of speech addressed to adults. As we have explained, the Government may not ‘reduc[e] the adult population . . . to . . . only what is fit for children.’”

After the Communications Decency Act was struck down, new legislation was passed, the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The federal statute requires Internet blocking of speech that is obscene, or “harmful to minors,” in all schools and libraries receiving certain federal funding. CIPA, also known as the Internet Blocking Law, was also challenged. The EFF charged that the law damages the free speech rights of library patrons and Web publishers.

On June 23, 2003, the Supreme Court upheld CIPA. The court found that the use of Internet blocking, also known as filtering, is constitutional because the need for libraries to prevent minors from accessing obscene materials outweighs the free speech rights of library patrons and Web site publishers. However, many independent research studies show that Internet blocking software is incapable of blocking only the materials required by CIPA. The CIPA law is problematic because speech that is harmful to minors is still legal for adults, and not all library patrons are minors.
CONCLUSION

Debates regarding obscenity and indecency are so heavily charged because they speak to core values and behavioral norms by which various groups and individuals expect or demand others to live. Thus, for instance, gay and lesbian literature, film, and television have often been coded as obscene or indecent when judged from a conservatively heteronormative value system, resulting in parental warnings being attached to programs that in any way mention, much less depict, gay or lesbian sexuality. Even medical terminology remains obscene and/or indecent to some, especially in media that is available to children. This poses the significant problem to regulators and producers of determining a standard definition of “obscenity” and “indecency,” and predictably entails outrage and activism on behalf of those who disagree with the standard of the moment.

As the reactions to obscenity and indecency change with varying levels of severity, as rules and conventions ebb and flow, and as ever-developing media technologies introduce new battlegrounds, so too will our definitions of what should and should not be said or shown change in the future. Obscenity and indecency are likely to form the substance of many a debate long into the future, as we use media depictions and imagery as the fodder for vigorous discussion over what constitutes appropriate behavior both inside and outside of the media.

See also Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Reform; Pornography; Regulating the Airwaves; Representations of Women; Shock Jocks; Youth and Media.


ONLINE DIGITAL FILM AND TELEVISION

As the distribution of film and television becomes increasingly available through the Internet in digital form, it continues to influence the modes of production, business models, marketing, cultural practices, and meaning creation that surround the consumption of the new products. The current conflicts that are being negotiated between public and private space, programming and on-demand consumption, sharing and piracy, and corporate control and publicity
are also part of a much longer history of film and television distribution of the postwar era.

Online video, both downloaded or streaming, has become a widely practiced form of film and television consumption. The term “online video” generally refers to video received over an Internet connection through the use of a browser or other video application. The relatively new method of distribution and exhibition, in conjunction with the increasing affordability of digital video for production, also has changed the definition of what constitutes film, television, or entertainment online. Consumers of online visual media watch a range that includes pirated movies, professional or home-recorded television shows, home movies, music videos, amateur or “independent” films, and so on. Because of the broad, growing, and free (with an Internet connection) selection of “shows,” various media corporations assess whether to fight the new modes of production to consumption (in the form of lawsuits) or embrace them (as opportunities for publicity).

QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT

The battles currently being fought often reiterate the history of film against television, quality versus content, and public space versus private. From the mid-1950s to 1960s, primarily in the United States and parts of Europe, television overtook film as the primary vehicle for visual entertainment. Although viewers had to watch small, black-and-white screens, they enjoyed the free entertainment brought to their homes (once they invested in the set). As Hollywood saw its viewership and revenue drop, many of the major studios invested in productions that would be differentiated from television’s low quality: widescreen color spectaculars such as *Ben-Hur* (1959). Similar to early television, online video continue to be a low-resolution and small-screen medium, a quality still necessary to make download times invisible to the viewer. One of the first applications for streaming video was RealVideo, first released in 1997 as part of a media player application, RealPlayer. Upgraded from an earlier audio-only product, the new RealPlayer provided low-grade video during a time when most Internet consumers were using telephone modems with low bandwidth connections of 14.4 or 28.8 kilobytes per second. By the early 2000s, streaming video has been taken over by the dominant PC penetration of Flash Player-based playback technology (started by San Francisco company Macromedia), which has had greater success at embedding video within a Web page and, consequently, has played a part in the explosively successful practice of online video sharing on Web sites such as YouTube.

Like the battle between the quality theater screen versus the black-and-white television (and quality Beta videotapes versus VHS during the video age), currently there is some division between the television screen and the computer monitor. On one end, some television set manufacturers create product differentiation by following the path of the home theater from the 1980s, emphasizing large screens, high-fidelity sound systems, and, in the 2000s, high-definition images. On the opposite end of the spectrum, manufacturers have taken notice
of the fact that there is a significant consumer base for low-grade media distribution given the wide popularity of Flash Player for online video and the relative success of portable media devices such as DVD players and video iPods. As of the publication of this entry, the gap between the TV set and computer monitor is nearly closed as LCD monitors and flat-panel television sets are designed to perform similar or the same functions. Cable providers work to control the broadband Internet market as well as offer Internet access through the cable TV user interface. Computer and operating system manufacturers are offering home theater or media PCs that come ready with TV tuner cards, personal video recorder (PVR) software, DVD drives, and remote controls. As a result, viewers often use one screen for many of the same purposes, such as browsing the Internet with their computers, watching DVDs off of a DVD player or a DVD drive on their computers, and watching streaming media through their browsers or through digital cable.

**IN-HOME AND ON-DEMAND VIDEO**

One quality of online video that differentiates it from television (both broadcast and general cable) is its availability at all times and in almost all locations. Viewers with broadband Internet access can visit a site such as YouTube and watch TV episodes when they want and as many times as they want. With the

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YOUTUBE

From 2005 to 2007, YouTube has become the most extensively used video sharing Web site for users to become both online media creators and consumers. YouTube's service is a Web site where visitors can upload and share their own digital video clips as well as watch others' contributions.

The company was founded and developed in 2005 in Menlo Park, California, by three friends who also found investments from a venture capital firm. In just over a year, YouTube's success made it a hot commodity that was eventually fetched by Internet search engine and advertising company, Google Inc., for $1.65 billion in Google's stock. The site's success can be attributed to various reasons such as the spreading availability of broadband by 2005, the founders' astute understanding of the emerging market of sites such as MySpace, and the existing penetration of Macromedia's Flash Player 7 in PCs.

It is YouTube's policy to forbid uploaded content that constitutes copyright infringement, but in practice this is not stringently policed. By late 2006 and into 2007, the company had taken measures to survey more closely and prohibit piracy. Once put into full effect, it remains to be seen how much this will influence traffic to the site, since a good portion of viewers visit the site to share user-recorded selections. Other than copyrighted materials, YouTube prohibits other content such as pornography or the glamorization of criminal conduct.
increasing use of high-speed connections and wireless routers in the home, viewers can also move about their houses with portable computers and not be tied down to the location where the larger and immobile TV set resides. In metropolitan areas, Wi-Fi connections are becoming increasingly available for free or for purchase in cafes, public areas, and trains, making it possible for users with laptops or other portable Wi-Fi devices to access online video in public locations as well. Steps also have been taken to make Wi-Fi access possible during air travel as well as make video viewable on mobile phones.

The success of on-demand video is part of a history of in-home visual media consumption marked first by the success of television over the movie theater and then by the mass-market spread of video rentals in the 1980s. Consumers responded positively to the opportunity to see a movie at home rather than see it on the big theater screen at a higher price. With the introduction of thinner and lighter DVD technology, by the late 1990s, it became possible to establish different business models such as that of Netflix, an online DVD rental service that sends discs to customers by mail. This business and cultural model further focused attention on the home because the spectator did not even need to leave the home to access a copy of a movie. This cultural practice, however, has been challenged by the other component of the on-demand concept—spontaneity—which is still an advantage of traditional video rental stores. Consumers who cannot wait for movies to arrive by mail or who prefer to decide on a movie on the spot will still choose to go to a rental shop rather than use an online DVD rental service.

Both qualities of delivering selection directly to the viewer and the spontaneity of on-demand service were part of a broader concept of video-on-demand (VOD) that has been in development since the 1990s and in wider practice in the 2000s. While media services such as YouTube and Movielink realize VOD online where media can be downloaded or streamed, cable television providers have been developing digital cable to realize the ability to offer movies and shows on demand. Comcast, the largest cable provider in the United States, began offering Digital Cable On-Demand in 2001, a service that allows subscribers to watch a selection of movies for free or for pay and to select, play, pause, rewind, and fast-forward the movie as if using a VCR or DVD player. Online, a similar viewer experience is available on sites such as archive.org for free and several other sites for pay. The initiative to create services such as this has come from the development of VOD, but also from the competitive success of TiVo, which since 1999 tapped into a user experience that viewers readily embraced with usage and subscriptions. TiVo offered a digital video recorder with an electronic programming guide and user interface that acclimated users to a VOD paradigm before broadband was developed in the early 2000s. With it, viewers could choose, record, and play back programs with ease. Online video consumption is also shifting as consumers increasingly are using video game consoles as digital video recorders and some are subscribing to services that allow viewers to access their recordings online from any Internet-connected computer or laptop.
CULTURAL AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

The cultural practices that drive many of the above business models and technological innovations also mutate as services and restrictions are delineated by the various industries. Many user communities celebrate the opportunities to connect with media content and other users, opportunities that are not available in movie theaters or on television. For example, fans of old European movies can share their copies through peer-to-peer file sharing sites, diasporic Asian communities can watch the most recent television episodes from their homelands through bit torrent, and viewers from different countries can share international shows within a browser (from Turkish news on YouTube to South Park on Comedy Central.com). Many of these practices that have brought users together and communities closer to their homelands are opposed by media corporations because of the unmeasured or pirated nature of the shared media and consumption.
Some corporations not only battle the dissemination of copyrighted materials being distributed by users, but also oppose a type of user-created programming. In the same way that friends and communities shared mixed audio cassette tapes in the 1980s and 1990s (songs arranged and “programmed” for a target audience), online video sharing sites such as YouTube give users the chance to gather their own selection of clips on personal pages. The pages showcase their personal user-created content as well as videos collected from other sources with the intention often being, as with MySpace pages, to program media that defines the tastes and interests of the page owner. As a result, these user pages can be bookmarked to target their own audiences who migrate to their programming. For instance, users whose interests range as widely as political campaign materials, parkour demos, geriatric video blogs, and up-to-the-minute episodes of *American Idol* can go to their favorite sites to one-stop shop for the latest entries. Frequently, the amateur programmers who offer these video content sites edit out commercials or mix together free and copyrighted material, a characteristic that viewers usually enjoy and that concerns broadcasting companies. Activists such as Stanford Law Professor Lawrence Lessig and scholar/musician Paul Miller (aka DJ Spooky) speak out publicly in support of creative rights and against copyright legislation that they believe unconstitutionally inhibits the progress of science and useful arts.

Some independent online productions have found particular success from the cultural phenomenon of “viral video,” which addresses the traffic that a particular video clip or video producer attracts through word of mouth, Internet sharing, and community-based popularity and aggregator sites such as Digg and Netvibes. Within weeks or just hours, a popular video on YouTube can spread internationally through the above “viral” networks of individual users and community sites sharing the video clip. Often the popularity of a video is a one-time sharing experience; in other cases, it can lead to the continued success of a strong fan base as has happened with, for instance, Flash-based online cartoon Homestar Runner and the fictional serial webcam video blog, Lonelygirl15.

These operations were started by individual or group artists who looked to the Internet as a positive outlet for distribution and attention. Many corporations, on the other hand, have been more wary and slower to catch on. One example of corporate reaction to viral videos is the explosive success of “Lazy Sunday,” a comical music video that was featured on a December 2005 episode of NBC’s *Saturday Night Live* (*SNL*). Fans downloaded and shared several copies of the video on YouTube until the number of hits exceeded 5 million by February 2006. NBC’s response at that point was to demand the removal of all user-added copies of the video from YouTube. Since then, NBC has tried to find a balance and to use YouTube to attract and measure their viewership. The broadcasting company set up its own branded presence on YouTube and was more prepared for the success of its next *SNL* Christmas video, “Dick in a Box,” which it not only posted on YouTube but also touted as the version that could not be aired on the FCC-controlled broadcast television. This move showed how corporations like NBC were attempting to capture the same sort of success realized by independent viral video producers and they were working within a rhetoric of “the director’s cut.”
More versatile media companies have made use of viral video to get in touch with their viewers and to gain attention for their products. For instance, cable stations such as Viacom-owned Comedy Central have taken opportunities to use the Internet to interact with viewers and to initiate culture-producing activities. Comedy Central (after having pulled most of its content from YouTube) offers almost all episodes of its popular *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* on its Web site edited in much the way that fans edit clips for sharing on YouTube. Comedian Stephen Colbert has called upon his viewers to contribute erroneous information on the collaborative Web encyclopedia, Wikipedia, as well as offered a “green screen challenge,” for which viewers could use green screen footage from his visit to Skywalker Ranch to contribute their own movies on YouTube. In a similar vein, the marketers of the 2006 movie *Snakes on a Plane* included an online contest to which groups could submit their own short movies based on the ad-lib, “[Animal] on a [mode of transportation].” Finally, some movie distributors have purposely fed corrupted versions of movies into bit torrent communities so that user-pirated movies, once shared and opened, do not show the expected movie. Porn video companies have made use of the model but to their advantage; they send out files mistitled as mainstream movies that, once downloaded and opened, show pornography and feature their Web site addresses to attract more traffic.

Online film and television has just started its first wave of popularity. It remains to be seen how the media and the online communities will continue to grow in the future and how corporations will shut down or work with pirated material that is shared between peers.

**See also** À La Carte Cable Pricing; Alternative Media in the United States; Digital Divide; The DVD; Internet and Its Radical Potential; News Satire; Online Publishing; Piracy and Intellectual Property; TiVo; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Tamao Nakahara
ONLINE PUBLISHING

The introduction of new do-it-yourself (DIY) digital publishing software and the emergence of online communities engaged in both creative and collective-intelligence endeavors have created new opportunities for—and raised new concerns about—public expression and the circulation of knowledge. Contemporary debates about online publishing raise important questions about who should have the right to determine/police access, accuracy, creativity, ownership, reliability, and value in a networked era and they point to the changing roles, standards, and styles of reading and writing in American society and around the globe.

THE DEBATES

On the one hand, there are those who see user-friendly online publishing tools—blogs, wikis, Web video—as contributing to the emergence of new modes of multimediated, nonlinear, and interactive writing that provide new creative freedoms and possibilities for artistic and public expression. These same tools and platforms also potentially provide opportunities for historically marginalized communities to gain voices by circumventing traditional publishing routes that had previously ignored or misrepresented them, or spoken on their behalf. All of these possibilities are championed as both challenging the status quo by redefining who has the right to publish and whose voices have the rights to be heard as well as contributing to new democratic possibilities for exchanging ideas. On the other hand, critiques of digital publishing have ranged from the reactionary to the critical. While some complain about a decline in standards for both writing and reading—of poor grammar, inaccurate and “undesirable” information, and an erosion of expertise—others point to the limitations imposed on true creative and public expression by transnational corporations threatening to prosecute perceived intellectual property and digital copyright infringements (more reactionary voices have pointed to the increased opportunities for intellectual property theft that accompany digital publishing endeavors). Additionally, critics have argued that the creators of Web 2.0 and other writer-friendly technologies continue to set the standards by which these technologies can be used and narrowly define modes of creative expression. Moreover, opportunities for participating in these new publishing worlds are still hampered by a digital divide that limits both access to technologies and knowledge of how to use them. In this regard, the Internet still remains largely a domain for middle-class white men.

CREATIVE FREEDOMS

One of the key debates concerning digital publishing has been the degree and types of new creative freedoms it affords both professional and nonprofessional writers (even as these same technologies blur distinctions between professional and nonprofessional writing). Arguably, free online software and services like Blogger, Drupal, and Wordpress allow users to easily create, customize, and
manage their own Web sites, blogs, and other multimedia projects. Coupled with collaborative open-source code sharing initiatives and emerging DIY cultural attitudes, these technologies are imagined as encouraging experimentation with new forms of online publishing while also lowering the entry bar for technologically disinclined users by providing quick, easy, and affordable (in many instances, free) access to avenues of creative production for anybody with Internet access.

Digital editing software like Adobe Premiere, FinalCut Pro, or Windows Movie Maker make it easy to create original films without film processing costs or (much) technical know how. These same software programs also allow users to play with and rearrange existing media materials into parodies, thematic compilations, and mash-ups that combine distinct media sources—such as clips from the ABC series *Desperate Housewives* and Madonna’s “Material Girl”—in order to generate something new, occasionally critical, but always meaning-altering. Video hosting sites like YouTube, Veoh, or Vimeo make such creations available to large numbers of online users, who are free to comment and must—consciously or not—incorporate these new possibilities into their lexicon of available meanings and understandings for existing media texts and how they are expected to engage with them.

Additionally, digital technologies and software open up new opportunities for online publishing that are at once multimediated and nonlinear. Online writing initiatives can easily combine text, video, audio, and animation fields in nonderivative ways that allow new types of stories to be told where each mode of writing adds something new to the overall meaning or means of engaging with the piece. Hyperlinks and trackbacks permit pieces to be written (and read) in nonlinear ways, much like a puzzle that has more than one way of being correctly assembled, offering multiple directions and interconnections, each producing new overall meanings that emerge based on the ways the different parts have been assembled.

The popularization of online blogs has redrawn the lines between public and private forms of writing, providing open forums for writers to share personal experiences and opinions, anecdotes and impressions, with the possibility of receiving feedback from readers they have never met about their innermost thoughts and feelings. These same spaces can also serve as sites of critical discourse and deliberation outside of officially sanctioned channels, offering original and filtered entertainment reviews and political commentary. In some instances, amateur critics like Harry Knowles at AinItCoolNews.com have gained semiprofessional recognition because of the popularity of their Web sites. Web sites like TelevisionWithoutPity.com have marketed themselves as offering snarky fan-written reviews of popular television series even though the majority of writers for the site are paid freelance journalists.

Online publishing endeavors also allow historically marginalized communities a public voice and community-building network that bypasses traditional publication and publicity channels that have previously either ignored or misrepresented them, or spoken on their behalf. While Web sites dedicated to creating works of fiction and reporting news that address gay, lesbian, bisexual, and
transsexual (GLBT) communities (and offer new opportunities for the general public to engage and learn about issues that concern this community) provide positive outlets for expression, online publishing also offers the same expressive opportunities for those promoting hate speech and bigotry.

Meanwhile, fan fiction sites have emerged as consumers have claimed the rights to create original stories based on their favorite media texts and make them publicly available. Fans of the series Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman wrote an entire fifth season for a series that ABC cancelled after four. Often, fan stories focus on character relationships, plot devices, or thematic concerns that are only tangentially addressed in the official text and are, therefore, not derivatives, but (unofficial) extensions of a story world originally created by others. These online publishing initiatives raise important questions about both who has the right to tell stories about popular but privately owned heroes and which stories count in terms of the overall meanings accrued by particular characters. Why does fiction about Batman written by GLBT fans not count as canonical even when it might be more innovative than the officially sanctioned stories commissioned by Time Warner Incorporated and DC Comics?

CREATIVE CONSTRAINTS

The creative freedoms potentially offered through online publishing possibilities must first overcome cultural, economic, and legal constraints in order to truly revolutionize how writing transpires. As the example of unsolicited fan fiction suggests, questions over ownership, fair use, and intellectual property violation pose real obstacles for creative engagement with popular culture. Fan sites face threats of legal action from intellectual property owners, particularly when fan art, fiction, and other community activities take the story in unapproved directions that challenge dominant cultural assumptions of good taste and morality as well as profits.

While fan art and fiction can be argued to constitute fair use of copyrighted materials, the uneven economic grounds upon which fans and owners do battle regularly favors the latter, who can—and have—dragged “violators” into court, forcing them to incur large legal expenses. These threats continue to deter creative expression even if they are legally permitted under fair-use statutes. Even when creators are willing to assert their fair-use rights, popular hosting sites typically espouse conservatism when it comes to threats of copyright violation. YouTube regularly yields to the demands of media owners to remove questionable materials, making it increasingly difficult for online publishing endeavors to find an audience or home in which to grow.

Creativity may also be constrained by the very tools provided for users to create online publications. Robert Schrag has argued that in assessing the creative opportunities generated by DIY technologies, it is necessary to consider the ways in which they already advantage certain modes of expression over others through the tool selection they provide and the tutorials they offer new users. Schrag suggests that these structures not only limit what counts as “allowable” creative expression, but also tend to “[nudge] the creative impulse toward the
slippery slope of commodification,” conflating creativity and consumerism. While user-generated Web content is largely believed to be noncommercial, the recent acquisition of YouTube by Google for $1.65 billion suggests that not-for-profit creative endeavors can be profitable for the corporations hosting such works.

Finally, creative freedom continues to be limited to those who have access to online publishing tools. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, as of June 2005, an estimated 65 million adult Americans, 32 percent of the U.S. population, do not have Internet access. These statistics are particularly revealing of discrepancies structured by age, class, race, disability, and education level. Thus, while online publishing offers possibilities for marginalized communities to express themselves, lack of access often reinforces existing publishing hierarchies that have traditionally limited their abilities to participate.

**COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE**

Another key debate about online publishing has focused on the emergence of collaborative communities working together to generate knowledge and information. Henry Jenkins has adapted Pierre Lévy’s work on collective intelligence in describing how virtual communities “leverage the combined [individual] expertise of their members” toward a shared knowledge-building task. Online knowledge communities privilege aggregate knowledge production and evaluation through collective deliberation designed to reach democratic consensus on what should or should not count as valid and valued information. These processes are evident in how Wikipedia works, where an informal, voluntary community of thousands each put their individual knowledge to work in collaboratively building a public encyclopedia. In theory, anyone can add to, delete, correct, or update a Wikipedia entry—with all changes tracked and recorded for both historical documentation and collective deliberation. In this manner, the community works to self-correct and filter out inaccurate information (see “Wikipedia” sidebar).

Online publishing collaborations that seek to harness collective intelligence in building participatory knowledge communities challenge (or threaten, depending on who you ask) established models of expertise that sought to locate knowledge solely in the heads of individual credentialed masters. Knowledge communities not only potentially challenge hierarchies of who gets to claim expertise, but also what forms of knowledge ought to be prioritized. Thus, the collaborative online works generated through collective intelligence might be central to revitalizing democratic notions of participatory citizenship by offering alternate sources of information than those privileged by state, corporate, and other institutionally bound forms of knowledge built on the expert paradigm.

Of course, any claims that online publishing will restore the vitality of the American public sphere must take into account the continued digital divide that limits the number of participants—and therefore the number of subjects and approaches being articulated—within any collective knowledge formation. For
WIKIPEDIA

A wiki is a type of Web log (blog) that is collectively worked on by multiple authors. Created in 2001, Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia written and edited by thousands of volunteers spanning the globe. According to the Web site, as of March 2007, there were over 75,000 active contributors (though only about 1,000 or so regular ones) working on more than 5,300,000 articles in more than 100 languages (though English far eclipses any of the other languages represented with approximately 1,670,000 articles). Daily, an average of 4,000 new articles are added to the site, though nearly half of those are deleted that same day for lack of value, accuracy, or proper sourcing. There were over 38 million visitors to the site in December 2006 alone, making it the 13th most popular destination on the Internet and the third most popular news and information source, beating out CNN.com and Yahoo News.

Reading and Writing Wikipedia

Wikipedia’s popularity has translated into the Web site’s regular use by high school and college students researching term papers and even by the American judicial system. Over 100 judicial rulings—13 coming from the circuit court of appeals, one step below the Supreme Court—have relied on Wikipedia in reaching their verdicts. Such widespread use has also produced a backlash over concerns about the site’s accuracy and verification standards. The site has been vandalized by intentional misinformation. An entry on John Seigenthaler, Sr. linked him to conspiracies about John F. Kennedy’s assassination. Seigenthaler was the one to identify the hoax. The site faced further controversy when Wikipedia’s founder, Jimmy Wales, violated the encyclopedia’s ban on self-editing. Wales thrice removed information from his own entry concerning former partner Larry Sanger that played up the latter’s role in founding Wikipedia.

In order to counter such problems, Wikipedia has recently adopted a more definitive editorial hierarchy, in which volunteer administrators have been given the authority to edit, remove, and prevent changes to particular articles. While the vast majority of articles remain open for anyone to edit, certain hotly contested or regularly hoaxed pieces are now protected or semiprotected (you must be a registered Wikipedia member for at least four days to edit a semiprotected piece) against changes. Amongst these entries are those on Albert Einstein, George W. Bush, Adolf Hitler, and Christina Aguilera. While implemented to ensure better quality control, protection practices reassert a hierarchy of expertise that Wikipedia’s open-access structures supposedly challenge. Perhaps not surprisingly, many college professors refuse to let their students quote Wikipedia as a source. Others, however, see Wikipedia as an opportunity to get students involved in community-based knowledge-building initiatives.

example, the majority of Wikipedia’s 1,025 entries in Swahili have been written by whites living in the United States because of a lack of access to computers in Africa. This raises important questions about who has the right to speak for whom and whether or not traditional power hierarchies structured along racial
and geographical boundaries are being recreated online despite the community-generated ethos of collective intelligence endeavors.

Moreover, much online collective intelligence is not directed toward challenging the political or economic status quo, but in actively participating within consumer culture. Fan sites that seek to collectively decipher spoilers about their favorite media franchises or to map the complex continuity of comic book superheroes—though often critical of how fans or popular properties are being addressed/exploited by corporate ownership—rarely make the leap to demanding revolution. Still, such communities do require a reimagining of the historic relationship between producers and consumers where the latter are no longer passive recipients of cultural product but active participants in shaping the outcomes. As a result, many creators now see the cultivation of fan communities through online play (hinting at future directions) and conversation (usually through “informal” chats) and a demonstrated willingness to acknowledge fan desires and frustrations and occasionally act on them as strategic viral branding strategies for ensuring consumer loyalty.

Skeptics dismiss collective intelligence as producing inaccurate—even occasionally purposely misleading—information and lacking an organizational infrastructure that can properly guard against misinformation (hence the often dismissive stance taken by academics when students cite Wikipedia as a source). Greater concern, however, might be directed toward the ways online information is often passively consumed rather than collectively generated. Collective intelligence is premised on the notion of an active community that not only pools its resources, but works together to self-correct information. The extent to which visitors to Wikipedia (or even to fan spoiler sites) enter prepared to actively participate by questioning and debating the information provided or by bringing their own knowledge bases into conversation with what the site already provides is unclear.

See also Blogosphere; Digital Divide; Google Book Search; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Online Digital Film and Television; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Surveillance and Privacy; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.

PAPARAZZI AND PHOTOGRAPHIC ETHICS

Visual imagery is a core component of communication media and stunning and controversial images circulate throughout the media spectrum. From advertisements to Internet sites, in newspapers and magazines, on billboards and television, photographs are used to create consumer desire, grab the attention of newsreaders, create fear and astonishment at disasters, and spark outrage for destruction, scandal, and abuse. We live surrounded in a spectacular visual geography, the world made visually available in ways unimaginable in the past. From the macro-photography of insects that awe and excite, to a microscopic world that unfolds before our eyes, the earth and its wonders seemingly come to life through photographs. Yet even in this proliferation of imagery, certain pictures become emblems for social concerns and others circulate as the icons of global controversy.

New technologies have expanded the possibilities for documentation, and the ways photographs can be taken and disseminated. Digital cameras and computers made the images of torture at Abu Ghraib possible, and cell phones allowed the clandestine footage of the execution of Saddam Hussein. Imagery of war is central to the history of photojournalism, and the representation of suffering and death remains a highly contested topic. Humanitarian workers recognize that the public must see suffering to understand the need for resources and relief. Yet graphic imagery can also create “compassion fatigue” and voyeurism, responses that distance viewers from feelings of empathy for the people shown suffering in photographs.

In the midst of this visual representation are the camera operators and editors, photojournalists and tabloid paparazzi, graphic designers and composers,
and the editors and news managers who decide what is welcome and culturally edifying, and what is outside the bounds of often nebulous ethical practices. Such practices are constantly in flux as ratings pressures and new media, bloggers, and the public challenge the constraints of traditional gatekeepers and expand the universe of image circulation.

**A HISTORY OF THE PHOTOGRAPH**

Since its invention in the mid 1800s with the first daguerreotype, photography has been appropriated for different scientific, cultural, artistic, and legal uses. In the age of enlightenment and progress, the photograph was seen as an essential technical tool, one able to probe the world and create representations more revealing than what the human eye could see. The camera lens was considered more accurate than the human lens. A series of images demonstrated how horses actually ran and forever changed their depictions in painting. Colonial photographers circled the globe and used the camera to capture and quantify other peoples and cultures, often as objectified specimens for scientific data. And early psychologists catalogued everything from human emotions to abnormalities through photographs, often of the disabled. The photographic process ultimately advanced to the point where it could record what humans could not see, everything from x-rays to microscopic photography.

At the same time portraits, once only the domain of the wealthy that could afford paintings, became accessible to a more general public through early traveling photography studios. In addition, artists used the camera to create beautiful images in painterly traditions, many of which became significant cultural treasures. With the advent of mass media in the twentieth century, films, newspapers, and magazines became dominant visual media. These developments were not without controversy, especially the introduction of first graphics, then pictures into the pages of the press, which were often sensational images that boosted the sale of newspapers. When television added sound and movement to imagery, it brought visual story telling into American living rooms. By the 1950s, television became the dominant mass medium, utilizing as never before, first film cameras then video technologies for visual forms of entertainment, sales, and news. Yet the still photograph and the photomontage remained essential components of the mass media and with digital technology they have moved easily into new media formats, including the Internet. These new technologies allow images to circulate the globe with an immediacy that makes any event or crisis known to the world, especially through the most dramatic visual representations.

**PAPARAZZI AND CELEBRITIES**

One of the most popular and contested terrains of entertainment practice and sensationalized nonfiction culture is celebrity reporting, and the candid photograph frequently leads the prize story. Those considered the most valuable are images often captured by daring and intrusive photographers willing to do
almost anything to get the shot. Paparazzi stake out events and locations for
days at a time, they follow, and sometimes stalk, stars and celebrities to get the
unusual picture able to command a high price. Those are the ones used to sell
tabloid papers and tease TV audiences to stay tuned through the commercial
break. Paparazzi bear an enormous cultural burden; they are under pressure to
record the most sensational situations, the most private celebrity moments, and
many times the most unflattering poses, for these are the ones that most interest
the public and please the editors. Yet they are often reviled by the same culture
they try to please by filling a quite evident demand. They are accused of violat-
ing the privacy of public figures and are sometime sued and even attacked by
those they try to capture visually. An outraged Alec Baldwin approached the
vehicle and started swinging at the photographer in front of his house trying to
get pictures of his wife Kim Basinger and their newborn baby. Analysts attempt
to account for this intrusive aspect of celebrity culture; some blame the sensa-
tional media, others the spoiled celebrities and ruthless photographers, while
still other lay the ultimate blame at the feet of the public and its endless desire
for titillating celebrity gossip.

It is most likely a combination of these factors, and most importantly the dy-
namics of the interaction between the culture of celebrity, and media practices.
As the most profitable, least difficult entertainment content, mainstream media
talk endlessly about the stars, who at the same time are promoting the mov-
ies, TV shows, albums, and products tied to cross-promotional deal and cor-
porate synergy. In addition, psychologists of media culture have identified the
“para-social interactions” that certain viewers experience with media celebrities.

CAMERON DIAZ AND THE PAPARAZZO

On November 10, 2004, the New York Post published a story about the actor Cameron
Diaz titled, “Cameron ‘Snaps.’” Most of the celebrity news piece consisted of two dramatic
photos. The larger image, taking two-thirds of the page, show Diaz physically attacking a
21 year-old “paparazzo” named Saul Lazo. She is shown swinging and grabbing the photog-
rapher’s camera in a scuffle that took place when Diaz and Justin Timberlake were leaving
a Hollywood hotel. The smaller inset photo pictures a distressed-looking Lazo grabbing
Diaz from behind in an attempt to retrieve his expensive camera. Readers are informed that
Diaz, 5‘9”, 117 pounds, is a fitness freak who is trained in the martial arts. Timberlake also
intervened, trying to stop the second photographer, Jose Gonzalez, from taking pictures of
the “wild melee.”

Timberlake evidently failed, and the two photographs were published in the Post as
“exclusive photos from U.S. Weekly” credited to Fame Pictures. Diaz and Timberlake report-
edly kept the pricey gear. The incident illustrates the pressures for exclusive, exciting, and
candid images, even as they are taken at increasing risk to photographers themselves for the
commercial benefit of media owners. Such candid shots please readers eager to gaze into
the private lives of celebrities, even as it angers those very “celebs” caught on camera.
Although they are seemingly larger than life, the familiar faces of those that entertain, advise, astonish, and annoy us can often seem like people we know personally. Folklorists understand that the stories and characters, the heroes and villains that populate fictional fare become the embodiment of our own deepest fears and greatest triumphs. As pivotal figures, celebrities themselves and their agents seek to control their own images and the range of information released to the public. The positive, hip personas created by a posse of promotional agents begin to seem stilted and commercial to fans and audiences, evoking the desire for more personal, unvarnished views. Celebrities complain that their personal lives should be off limits, yet paparazzi argue that they opened the door by working in the industry. These interconnected issues and practices have led to problems that revolve around questions of privacy, as opposed to spectacle, and voyeurism in contrast to participation and empathy. These same parameters frame debates about other uses of visual imagery.

**SPECTATOR CULTURE**

When viewers sit and watch, and look at magazines, images have been carefully arranged and presented for their fascination and pleasure. The world is set before their eyes, and the act of being a spectator feels natural, indeed comfortable. Such consuming visual choreography invites viewers to gaze at any aspect of the public or private world without feeling like they are violating the privacy of others. Learning to view the world in such a manner confers a sense of possession and privilege, and some media scholars argue that it leads to a cultural and public attitude that promotes voyeurism. Ensconced as we are in an endlessly reproduced visual world, the constant waves of images give no order of priority, and as Susan Sontag noted, the result is a kind of leveling of meaning in a fast-moving confusing world of pictures. Nowhere are these issues more important than in evaluating the representational styles of global crisis and conflict.

**WAR REPORTING**

Many dedicated photojournalists have taken pictures of the victims of war and humanitarian crises in different places and at different times around the globe. Many of those images have been printed and distributed in the United States and in the international press, and viewed by millions. Journalists, especially freelance photographers, risk their lives to document wars, disasters, and suffering, and some die in the process. Many believe their work will make a difference. Such dedication to life and death issues forces us to consider carefully the meanings and actual social impact of the visual record of war and suffering.

**Seeing and Believing**

War photographers often consider themselves the eyes of the world’s conscience. They hope that by capturing the most disturbing pictures they can arouse
the attention of the public and political leaders. They seek to bring home the “truth” of war. Many assert that visual documentation carries authority and credibility; we believe what we see, and when real suffering is brought to our attention, we cannot ignore it and we will take action to stop it. These somewhat more sophisticated pronouncements are other ways of assigning truth to the old adages “the camera never lies” and “a picture is worth a thousand words.” But if the camera never lies, we must ask what kind of truth it tells and what information is contained in its message.

The photograph is a powerful emotive, but as a single image, or even a collection, the information contained there is limited. We can feel shock or sorrow for those pictured as they lay dead or suffering, but the image cannot reveal what has happened to them. A graphic image of a dead body does not explain events that took place before or after the death, nor can it tell us who did the killing. It offers no political context, much less an analysis.

One example of this type of imagery is the news photographs of the civil war that took place during the 1980s in the Central American country of El Salvador. The United States supported the Salvadoran security forces, and the often-bloody conflict was depicted in the U.S. press. News photographs often showed gruesome piles of dead bodies and even severed heads in city morgues, individuals thrown along the side of the road, or being dug out of shallow graves. Most often such bodies were unable to be identified, and they remained anonymous with no personal history. When bodies are presented in this way, viewers cannot respond to the people they once were. There is little humanity left in a lifeless cadaver featured in a magazine layout.

**Hopelessness**

Both John Berger and Susan Sontag have written eloquently about what we can know from photographs of horror and what range of emotional response is possible. As a passive spectator looking at such pictures of the dead, the impression is one of finality, even disgust. The act exists in the past by the time it reaches the eyes of the magazine reader. There is nothing to be done at present. Such images proclaim forcefully that the worst has already happened. Such brutal images stand in contrast to another way of presenting the dead: showing them when they were alive. One example from that period of a more humane treatment was a picture on the June 6, 1983 cover of *Newsweek* magazine, which featured the first American adviser killed in El Salvador. It is altogether different from the Salvadoran cadavers. The *Newsweek* cover photo of Lt. Cmdr. Albert Schaufelberger, III, is very specific. His name is spelled out in full, and the photograph was taken when he was very much alive. Standing at a dignified three-quarter pose in uniform, the aura of his humanity and individuality is still present. The bold print announces, “Central America, The First Casualty.” Identified as the first casualty, we can only assume that the pictures of corpses printed for three years before the one American’s death seem not to have been considered with the same humanity.
Moral Engagement

The portrayal of human suffering without a rational explanation or cause poses another problem for photojournalism. When captions proclaim “victims of random violence,” or “political violence,” they elicit a particular response, one of bewilderment. Instead of being able to take action to alleviate the suffering, the viewer is frozen. Susan Sontag argued that the possibility of being “affected morally” by the photograph requires a relevant political consciousness. John Berger also pointed out that without a sociopolitical understanding, the viewer cannot act in a way that would prevent further suffering. Know the cases and sources of conflict is essential to understanding how it can be stopped. Chaotic violence in foreign countries becomes mystified without an explanation of its causes and possible solutions. Such mystification leads to vague assertions and a general sense of disgust. The countries become places “at war with themselves,” of simply emblematic of violent cultures that do not value life. As Susan Moeller pointed out in Compassion Fatigue, viewers can only feel pity for so long without drawing the conclusion that the people are simply “pitiful.”

Pictures that fail to explain violence accuses no one and everyone, the sense of moral obligation that would lead to a commitment is gone. The assumed effects of concerned photojournalism are nullified. As we lay the magazine down, the image has become a corruption, a distancing, an acceptance of the way things are. Each new photo layout positions the view now as a voyeur.

Photographs and Context

The visual image is a particular type of document. As time frozen, the photograph remains a moment yanked from the historical flow that produced it. The news photograph circulates through time and place, yet it is a moment frozen in temporal space. Time captured by the camera as a single image can then be placed into some other context: a news page, an art gallery, an anti-war pamphlet, or an assassin’s hand for identification purposes. This quality of the photograph enables it to be used to make a number of abstract points and convey a variety of meanings. The news text can direct the photograph’s meaning in ways that either evoke or block empathy for the dead.

Justifications

Pictures of dead bodies can be explained in numerous ways. Many news stories that contain images of suffering offer a variety of justifications for human loss. Victims of violence often lose their humanity and become pawns in a game of strategy of national interests; in whatever way those interests are articulated at the time. With regard to war and conflict in foreign countries, arguments include what would happen if the wrong people came to power, the overriding concern that the country would fall into the hands of the wrong people. Innocent victims caught in the cross fire become unfortunate but “necessary consequences” of fighting for abstract principles such as security or our way of life.
HIGH-TECH WEAPONS AND THE WAR ON TERROR

Over the years, media coverage of war has increasingly downplayed the death, pain, suffering and grief caused by war. During the first Gulf war, collateral damage became a common term for civilian casualties, and its cold, antiseptic sound helps distance the public from war’s human costs. During the first Gulf War, Time magazine identified dead or wounded civilians “who should have picked a safer neighborhood.” After 9/11 when the United States was criticized for killing civilians in Afghanistan, well-known New York Times commentator, Thomas Friedman, claimed that the people being bombed did not mind dying when he wrote, “It turns out many of those Afghan ‘civilians’ were praying for another dose of B-52’s to liberate them from the Taliban, casualties of not” (New York Times, November 23, 2001). Presently, in the midst of a continuing war, very few images of death or even wounded U.S. soldiers are published in the pages of the press or show on television. Instead, as the U.S. president called to expand the war on terror with the invasion of Iraq, television stories featured the power of the weaponry to be used; especially the high-tech bombs and aircraft, and those images became the visual icons of war. Imaging and emphasizing the drama, excitement and power of modern warfare represents conflict from a narrow perspective and allows the government, military, and the public to avoid debate about the deadly effects of war to noncombatants, as well as to those who fight.

Because photographs of suffering on their own cannot explain the causes of pain or suggest courses of action to alleviate suffering, such images should be presented with ethical parameters. Because death and suffering are often hidden aspects of our culture, images showing such taboo topics are often used as ratings-boosting fare. Only context that evokes empathy is able to prevent shocking images from becoming little more that titillating spectacles presented to an increasingly desensitized, voyeuristic public. With regard to the victims of war, both showing and not showing the death presents media dilemmas. Eliminating the images of war’s human cost, allows the public as well as those who call for military actions, to forget the consequences of war, and the responsibility of human destruction in its wake. Yet a context and treatment that objectifies or justifies suffering and the death of civilians is equally irresponsible.

HUMANITARIAN WORK AND THE NEWS CONTEXT

Humanitarian aide workers are well aware of the complexities of visual representation of crisis, and understand the need for coverage, but coverage that promotes civic engagement instead of compassion fatigue. They understand that horrific images must be contextualized with narratives of inclusion, personal stories able to evoke public empathy for the victims they are trying to help. Viewers must be able to recognize their shared humanity, not view the victims of crisis as outside the bounds of our own sense of community. It must be understood that people in crisis have done nothing to deserve such horrific conditions. Above all, visual imagery must not exploit suffering for commercial purposes, but seek to maintain the dignity of those depicted.
CONCLUSION

Compelling visual imagery enriches the lives of the public in many ways. Significant issues are enhanced through photojournalism when they convey information and knowledge, and edify the public. They bring global communities together when disasters strike and they can help mobilize international relief efforts. The best visual documentation is contextualized within a news frame that depicts and enhances working solutions and civic engagement.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Alternative Media in the United States; Bias and Objectivity; Celebrity Worship and Fandom; Disabilities and the Media; Hypercommercialism; Journalists in Peril; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Literacy; Parachute Journalism; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures; World Cinema.


Robin Andersen

PARACHUTE JOURNALISM: INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORTING

As a term, “parachute journalism” invokes both the exciting image of the scribe coming to the rescue from the sky and the pejorative notion of the unprepared neophyte landing over his head in a big story abroad, but in fact it involves a broad assortment of practices that share the characteristic of a reporter covering news in a place other than the ones in which he or she has experience. That defines much of journalism, from high-profile coverage of major wars and events of global significance, to local reporters who drive from their usual beat to encounter regional events where little reportage normally occurs. To the extent that an increase in parachute journalism reflects a decreased commitment by even prestigious news operations to maintaining staff in foreign bureaus, the phenomenon deserves some of the opprobrium commonly directed its way. But compared with foregoing coverage altogether, or leaving it to wire services alone, there is something to recommend the practice, especially where it is done with care and forethought, and where it is properly supported with local resources.
ETHNOCENTRIC PARACHUTES?

A key byproduct of news organizations’ reliance on parachute journalists is that we are often invited to see a distant world in chaos through ethnocentric perspectives. Foreign countries most frequently become news when they experience a coup, earthquake, or other such disaster. Amid such chaos, the highly paid, perfectly coiffed network correspondent hits the ground and calmly explains the catastrophe. Thus, while war, political scandal, famine, and pestilence rage on with foreign-looking others populating the television screen, the white American reporter can become the lone point of identification, as the rational observer providing viewers with a stark visual contrast between (foreign) chaos, and (Western) rational order. Moreover, when parachute journalists are unfamiliar with local customs and culture, they may prove poor interpreters of what both they and the camera witness, hence further exacerbating notions of foreign irrationality, and continuing an age-old subjugation of foreign voices, whereby the West speaks for and on behalf of “the rest,” and whereby the West is granted the power to make sense of and play cultural analyst to foreign nations and peoples. Travelers in a foreign land commonly focus on difference, strangeness, and peculiarity, as centuries of traveler’s tales have shown us, and so a perpetual risk for parachute journalists is that they make foreign cultures seem yet more foreign. For example, in times of war, divisions of “us” and “them” can be made all the more prominent when as viewers, much of our only contact with “them” comes through reporters who have little cultural understanding of those featured with their cameras and interviews.

In a world in which news often develops where no journalists are present, parachute journalism is an inevitability. Its various iterations unfold from circumstances guided primarily by the economics of news organizations. Even where full-time correspondents are stationed, they cannot be everywhere at once. A reporter schooled in the ins and outs of Jerusalem will likely discover in Tyre a new situation for which previous reporting has provided little or no preparation. The circumstances drawing journalists to a given locale often rapidly transform the setting and its significance, exacerbating the difficulty of operating safely and knowledgeably.

FINDING ONE’S LOCAL LEGS

The problem, while made more prevalent by the diminution of the foreign staffing by news organizations in recent years, is as old as reporting itself. Reporters not based in a place have an increased likelihood of getting basic facts wrong, drawing conclusions from insufficient evidence, and lacking historical and cultural familiarity with the settings in which their stories are situated. At the same time, the greater experience and sophistication of many correspondents whose employers can afford to “parachute” them into a situation can mitigate against such problems to a substantial degree. Purveyors of news are likely to select their best-qualified reporters, often with previous foreign
experience, to undertake the kind of spot reporting that market factors sometimes dictate. Sometimes contract journalists who are based in the region or who have considerable experience in the type of story being covered can provide a deeper level of background preparation, or better contacts on the ground; such stringers or freelancers typically come with references and a track record, yet they, too, may still be encountering a new situation, and can themselves be categorized as parachute journalists by dint of having sped to the scene from the nearest metropole. Whatever the degree of local knowledge the reporter brings to the situation, to those on the scene who have no experience with that reporter, the interloper might as well have dropped in from the sky.

Sometimes correspondents flown in from domestic or other foreign postings work together with such stringers or with local handlers (often called “fixers”). The image of the solo operator appearing on the scene with phrasebook, maps, and flak jacket fails to capture the more common reality of the parachute correspondent. The negative connotations of the term are not without foundation, however. From a local perspective, correspondents arriving from elsewhere often appear to lack proper contextual understanding and to rely disproportionately upon technology (which, in many instances, does not work properly away from communications centers; only the best-supported correspondents have satellite phones, for example).

**STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS AND RESPONSES**

Like much of journalism itself, however, unfavorable views of parachute journalism focus criticism disproportionately on the individual when it should be centered on structural factors generated by corporate profit incentives. Maintaining large—or any—numbers of foreign correspondents is an expensive venture. Thus some news organizations have found it more profitable to focus on local, often cheaper reporting: five minutes a day of celebrity gossip, for instance, will likely cost a small fraction of the price tag associated with keeping open a foreign news bureau. When news is a business, then, the high costs of international reporting often result in scaled-down coverage. At the same time, many news organizations regard the costs of high-quality international news reporting as simply not justified by matching levels of interest from readers or viewers, whose focus is most often local. Thus, when demand suddenly arises for coverage of one of the globe’s myriad uncovered locales, some solution is demanded, and parachute correspondents are summoned to the task. Low interest in international news may, of course, be a function of poor reporting or a lack of commitment to making international news more interesting, but with price differentials playing a key role in dictating decisions about coverage, news organizations have little impetus to approach international news with greater resources.

Parachute correspondence lacks the organic connection to a story ideally provided by a journalist experienced in the milieu at the center of the story, but given the unlikelihood of such situated reportage taking place from many of the world’s hot spots at a given moment, often the best that can be hoped for
is a well-prepared professional landing with access to a network of information and assistance, or failing that, with the resources and resourcefulness needed to develop such a network quickly. Such goals are most likely to be met by larger news organizations with reservoirs of talent experienced in previous episodes of sudden need for news from places not ordinarily covered, often including former foreign correspondents. Independent reporters with such experience do exist, however, and their regional basing can often make them equal or superior to their better-financed peers in a given situation.

In some instances, news organizations rely upon roving reporters who may visit a series of capitals and the odd hinterland locale, rather than remaining based in an area on a full-time basis. While not as beneficial as having full-time correspondents stationed throughout Africa, for example, the practice at least allows for semiregular contact with sources and some semblance of ongoing coverage of the region. Far from ideal, the arrangement serves nonetheless to maintain institutional ties while doubtless giving short shrift to many stories that require closer and more sustained attention.

To fill such gaps, a variety of journalistic operators and support personnel may in turn serve as parachute correspondents in less-scrutinized realms while maintaining more regular surveillance of population centers in which they live. Several types of correspondents combine to provide coverage of the vast, generally under-covered realms beyond the metropolitan centers of primary interest to readers and journalists. In addition to the shrinking number of journalists in longer-term foreign postings for such newspapers as the industry-leading New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal; chains such as McClatchy and Cox; and networks such as CNN; there are local journalists who string for foreign publications, freelancers who cover a region, and subject and area specialists who may travel or establish a domestic or foreign base from which they venture to cover stories as assigned, or on their own. Some will wear different hats over time. Virtually all will at some point share the designation parachute correspondent, and some will perform the variegated duties associated with such a catchall position much more effectively than others.

The question of quality of coverage will sometimes relate closely to the story being covered. A key distinguishing characteristic is often linguistic acumen: a journalist operating in a milieu where language differences preclude direct interviewing—a frequent occurrence, no matter how educated and skilled the reporter—is in need of an interpreter. The acquisition of cultural and historical background is of great importance, even if little such material makes its way into most reports; even the most up-to-date information is frequently misleading if presented absent adequate attention to context. Financial resources, such as the ability to hire the best fixers and interpreters, can make a large difference as well, casting a different light on the question, “What color is your parachute?” Indeed, those who have served in foreign-correspondent positions previously are the correspondents most likely to be called upon for future service, regardless of their experience in a given region. It is the skill set—the ability to operate efficiently in diverse foreign settings—that is most prized, and
part of that skill set is working with others who can bridge gaps in knowledge, access, and language.

While not inexpensive, coverage by parachute correspondents is generally much less costly than maintaining full-time correspondents in many locations, where salary, lodging, transportation, and staff support frequently require supplementation with full-time security. Many locations are considered hardship postings, and elite journalists are less likely to wish to remain in them for extended periods, reintroducing the element of lack of familiarity with each successive replacement. There is justification for bringing in an experienced reporter from another location to provide either periodic or crisis reporting. Research can be quickly assembled to provide background for a given situation, but it takes significant climbing of learning curves to gain the hard-earned experience of choosing the right vehicle and driver; disassembling a telephone and

JOHN BARRETT: PARACHUTE JOURNALIST BEFORE THERE WERE PARACHUTES

The practice of stationing foreign correspondents anywhere but in a very few important European capitals did not exist before the twentieth century, but reportage from around the world found its way home on a regular basis. When journalist-turned-diplomat John Barrett passed through the Philippines aboard an American ship following the outbreak of Asia’s first indigenous nationalist revolution against Spain in 1896, the archipelago and its nearly 8 million inhabitants were completely unfamiliar to U.S. readers. Barrett, addressing the relatively sophisticated readership of the North American Review, warned in 1897 against heeding advice from a breed of commentator increasingly ubiquitous amid the ever-growing news media: “Our commercial interests must not be kept from the conquest by the reports of retired manufacturers who have made their own fortunes at home and report impressions gained by superficial observations of leisurely travel; by correspondents who come in by one door, as it were, and go out by the next.”

Praising the islands’ “inexhaustible and varied resources, which at present are only partially developed,” Barrett pronounced the Philippines “a fit land for rebellion and insurrection,” claiming that “the spirits of air and earth alike nurture unrest.” His list of first impressions, trade statistics, and generalizations about the “lazy” but “gentle, polite and hospitable” Filipinos pointed to a certain covetous embrace of the milieu’s value. Noting that Manila’s battlements would be no match for American naval weaponry, he dismissed the inconvenient fact of the revolt as an unthreatening trifle, claiming without the benefit of having encountered the rebels in person that “it would appear to be only a question of a few months before the flame of revolution is reduced to a spark.” Within a year, U.S. troops would be on the ground on the main island of Luzon, and within two years they would be mired in a grisly guerrilla war that would in time bring thousands of U.S. casualties and uncounted hundreds of thousands of dead Filipinos. By then, Barrett had moved on to new adventures.

attaching alligator clips to a modem to transmit a story from the field; knowing when to hide, and how; how to detect surveillance, and how to escape it; how to arrange for travel documents, tickets, and lodging; and when to hit the dirt when certain sounds transmit the order to do so.

**PROSPECTS FOR PARACHUTE JOURNALISM**

Many reporters without such experience are thrust into situations calling for reportage from an unfamiliar locale, however, and the resourceful and experienced ones are able to operate effectively by remaining aware of their limitations and leveraging their strengths. A foundation in domestic coverage of a diasporic community can serve as excellent preparation for travel to the homeland of that population, especially if sources and references can be transmitted in the process. A specialist in a subject area—medicine or public health, for example—can tap into professional networks. A veteran war correspondent can forecast how weather, terrain, or other factors may influence the development of a situation.

Not all parachute correspondents are such experienced hands, however. The novelty of the embedded correspondents in the ongoing war in Iraq has brought undue confidence to many neophytes entering the war zone, and instances of touristic reportage divorced from balanced sourcing have increased. If such cases are taken as instances of parachute journalism, the bad odor associated with the term grows stronger. Such journalists might, however, be better classed under the new terminology, “embeds,” in that while they may appear suddenly and soon enough disappear from the milieu, they are in most instances joining a pack of journalists focused on the same general story, as opposed to entering into the situation as solo interlocutors.

Parachute journalism, then, is subject to a broad range of definitions, and even within a defined niche, the qualities brought to the practice by individuals and organizations that may be sponsoring them vary considerably. The phenomenon, with its roots in the first foreign reportage, has grown with the ease and affordability of transportation, and is open to a broader range of participants than ever before, guaranteeing that its lowest common denominators will continue to place the term and those it describes in an unflattering light. At the same time, it remains likely that elite practitioners of the craft will be among the most skilled, most experienced, and best supported journalists working. Just as journalism reaches new heights and depths with its expanding permutations, so, too, will parachute journalism continue to place side by side, in the settings of some of the world’s best stories, with adventurers, charlatans, and masters of the imperfect art of journalism.

**See also** Al-Jazeera; Embedding Journalists; Global Community Media; Hyper-commercialism; Journalists in Peril; Media Watch Groups; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Tourism and the Selling of Cultures.

**Further Reading:** Bullard, Frederick L. *Famous War Correspondents*. New York: Beekman, 1974 [1914]; Emery, Michael. *On the Front Lines: Following America’s Foreign Correspondents*
PHARMACEUTICAL ADVERTISING

In recent years, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has allowed pharmaceutical companies to advertise prescription medications directly to consumers. That decision led to a precipitous rise in drug advertising and a corresponding rise in demand for advertised medications. Indeed, as demand for advertised pharmaceuticals has increased, the prices for these brand-name medications have also climbed. Supporters of direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) suggest that pharmaceutical advertising improves patient education, promotes active participation in personal health, and also helps to destigmatize certain medical conditions. Critics, however, warn that DTCA represents an intrusion into the realm of personal health by commercial interests, drives up the cost of prescription medications, and threatens the economic sustainability of the American health care system.

Media critics have long expressed concern at advertising’s penchant for selling junk food, cars whose exhaust pollutes the air, cigarettes, alcohol, and other unhealthy or dangerous products. But what happens when advertising sells medicine and drugs? Beyond the prevalent, multimillion-dollar business in advertising directly to doctors, direct-to-consumer advertising through television, magazines, and other media has wedded the media, advertising, and health care in new and highly contentious ways. Balancing the pros and cons of DTCA regarding medicines and drugs forces one to consider whether the simultaneous capitalist and social motivations behind DTCA exist in a state of natural and inevitable conflict.
INCREASED EDUCATION, OR AN INFORMATION GAP?

Industry representatives and advocates suggest that consumer education—especially among some previously neglected minority communities—is a positive byproduct of DTCA. And FDA regulations seem to support this, with the law requiring any advertisement that gives information about a medication’s benefits to also give information about its risks. Furthermore, DTCA also benefits patients in the following ways: consumers may not be aware that treatments exist for certain conditions; they may suffer from symptoms without realizing that they are part of a treatable disease; new treatments may become available for existing medical conditions; or a new remedy with fewer side effects or more effectiveness may become available. In any of these cases, DTCA campaigns that educate consumers can be seen as being positive.

This benefit is particularly notable in one minority population, but woefully lacking in another: racial minorities, and the elderly, respectively. Racial minorities, traditionally “underserved by lower quality health care,” have seen a positive effect of DTCA in the promotion of dialogue between patients and their doctors. Conversely, the aging baby-boomer population in America is at particular risk for being overexposed to DTCA literature and underserved by its contents. The vast majority of advertised drugs are directed toward this population, and the demographic “accounts for $8.40 of every $10 of all prescription

REMOVING THE STIGMA OF DEPRESSION, BUT DOES EVERYONE HAVE IT?

Two separate DTCA campaigns for antidepressants highlight both sides of the debate as to whether DTCA destigmatizes difficult medical conditions or causes hyperawareness among consumers regarding otherwise “normal” symptoms.

“Depression Awareness Campaign,” 2003

As Schulz explains, with no single word in the Japanese language to “properly capture the generally accepted medical definition of depression as a chemical imbalance,” the campaign sought to generate public awareness of depression. The campaign communicated one consistent message: “Your suffering might be a sickness. Your leaky vital energy, like your runny nose, might respond to drugs.” The campaign framed both the disease and its treatment in the culturally understandable terms of “energy” and “vitality,” familiarizing consumers both with the symptoms and benefits of treatment.

Depression Campaign, 2001

Appearing on the heels of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, a DTCA campaign for Paxil emphasized the drug’s anti-anxiety benefits. The campaign listed symptoms indicative of chronic anxiety, including worry, anxiety, or irritability. This symptom list concerned some physicians: “At what point does an understandable response to distressing life events become an indication for drug treatment, and a market opportunity?” (Mintzes 2002, p. 908).
drugs sold in the United States” (Morgan and Levy 1998, p. 30). However, this is also the group at the highest risk for misunderstanding prescription drug ads, and for failing to clarify concerns with physicians. There is evidently an uneven distribution of benefits from DTCA education, with some populations benefiting and others at risk for serious side effects as a result of what Lisa Foley calls the “medication information gap.”

**DESTIGMATIZED BUT OVERMEDICATED?**

While DTCA can help to “normalize” previously misunderstood or stigmatized medical conditions, the proliferation of advertising for medical conditions across a spectrum of seriousness can also lead to a tendency to diagnose even the most minor of medical ailments as being suitable for prescription treatment. DTCA has the potential to destigmatize certain conditions, encourage a visit to a physician, and let people know “they’re not alone.” Advertisements for antidepressants, for example, have helped to mitigate the stigma of depression as being a sign of mental or emotional weakness (Schulz 2004, p. 39) and have instead normalized the medically accepted definition of depression as a chemical imbalance (see “Removing the Stigma of Depression, But Does Everyone Have It?” sidebar).

While serious medical conditions such as depression are certainly alleviated by widespread knowledge of the causes and potential treatments, there is the potential for other normally occurring medical “conditions” to be overemphasized by DTCA, and to be overtreated as a result. Physiologically normal conditions such as baldness, shyness, or the occasional inability to perform sexually are framed as serious medical conditions by DTCA campaigns and are presented to consumers as jeopardizing the very enjoyment of life itself unless treated with a prescription medication. Some critics worry that this trend will promote the development of what Barbara Mintzes calls a “nation of healthy hypochondriacs,” but not necessarily a healthier nation.

**PATIENT, HEAL THYSELF (“ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT . . .”)**

Just as in other forms of consumer advertising, DTCA taps into the deepest anxieties and worries of consumers about their health and well-being, and strikes an emotional chord in order to prompt patients to demand a specific medication. This is an anxiety that doctors traditionally would seek to alleviate through sound medical advice, rather than prey on. This forms the crux of the debate over the ways in which DTCA has profoundly altered the traditional doctor/patient relationship. In this traditional relationship, educated and specialized doctors dispensed advice and experience along with prescriptions. With the increase in DTCA, this relationship has morphed into a physician-patient-advertiser triad. In essence, there is now a third party looming large in the examining room: the pharmaceutical ad.

This emerging triad has prompted changes in both patient and physician behavior. Consumer surveys often show that consumers are more satisfied with the information provided by advertisements than by their physicians, and that
consumer confidence in the advice of doctors has dropped substantially in recent years. Patients arrive at medical appointments knowing what type of health care they want and how their doctor should provide it, and they frequently request specific branded medications. Recent studies have revealed that nearly half of all patients would try to persuade their doctor to prescribe the specifically requested drug (A. Brown 2001, p. 22), sometimes even changing doctors to get the desired prescription. There is also troubling evidence that doctors are not only experiencing, but succumbing to, consumer pressure to prescribe the most heavily marketed drugs. In 2004, doctors wrote nearly 35 percent more prescriptions for the drugs promoted most heavily to consumers than for others (Charatan 2000, p. 783). Even more worrying is the revelation that almost half of all doctors surveyed in one study acknowledged they’d “prescribed medicines they knew were ineffective, simply because they were expected to” (“A Spoonful of Sugar,” 2004).

By scientific rationale, prescription medications are chemical compounds designed to ameliorate a specific medical condition. Therefore, on a purely medical level, the choice of a prescription medication should be based on scientific efficacy and not on the strength of the related advertising campaign. By introducing branding practices and intensive advertising to the decision-making process, DTCA encourages consumers to pressure doctors for prescriptions based upon emotional appeal rather than on chemical/medical sensibility; contributes to the steady erosion of physician authority in the doctor-patient relationship; and leaves little room for truly private, privileged decisions based solely on medical authority.

THE RUNAWAY MONEY TRAIN

When examined from the perspective of the pharmaceutical industry, the DTCA trend has been phenomenally lucrative. When the same numbers are applied to the American health care system, however, it becomes apparent that the DTCA trend may be contributing to ever-escalating health care costs and may in fact threaten the long-term sustainability of the system.

There was a nearly 14,000 percent increase in DTCA spending between 1991 and 2005, and DTCA now ranks as the “fourth largest advertising category in the U.S. market, behind only cars and trucks, restaurants and movies” (Roth 2003, p. 180). The pharmaceutical industry’s willingness to commit to such enormous budgets is predicated upon the return on investment in the form of drug sales and high-profit margins of both moderately advertised and so-called blockbuster medications.

The pharmaceutical industry focuses on a select group of “blockbuster” medications each year: those that receive both the bulk of ad spending and the majority of subsequent prescriptions. In 1999, for example, just 10 medications accounted for nearly half of all DTCA spending, the industry concentrating its efforts on a few “blockbuster” medicines. A solid return on investment from such targeted spending is clear: 65 percent of total prescription drug sales in 2000 were for the most heavily advertised drugs (Alleyne 2002, p. 107).
Evidence shows that DTCA is one of the most cost-effective marketing sectors in the U.S. economy. In 1999, Pfizer spent $57 million to promote its antihistamine, Zyrtec, and saw a 32 percent increase in sales over 1998 revenues. This increase boosted Zyrtec’s drug-sales ranking by 23 spots, while a similar campaign increased Aventis’s competing antihistamine, Allegra, by 34 spots. There was no sudden exponential growth in pollen output or sudden increase in the number of people suffering from allergies. There was, however, an increase in the sale of prescription allergy medications as a result of the Allegra DTCA campaign (Mullen and Fisher 2004, p. 185).

**THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: COSTS AND PRIORITIES**

Much of the blame for skyrocketing health care costs has been directed at the increase in prescriptions for expensive, highly advertised medications instead of cheaper generic or over-the-counter equivalents (see “Brand Names versus Generic/Over-the-Counter: The Economics”). The National Institute for Health Care Management, for example, suggests that consumer advertising may be responsible for 10 to 25 percent of the recent increase in prescription drug spending. The increase in spending is vast: it is estimated that in 2002, Americans “paid almost $208 billion for prescription drugs…almost double that spent in 1996” (“TV Ads Spur a Rise in Prescription Drug Sales,” 2002, p. 998). As a percentage of total health care costs, prescription drug costs are the fastest growing, rising substantially each year. Growth of such speed and magnitude is exerting tremendous pressure on the budgets of individual consumers and on the financial viability of the health care system as a whole.

Just as it is critical to examine DTCA’s role in the increasing costs of health care in America, it is also important to identify where the gap is occurring. If vast sums of money are committed to DTCA campaigns each year, which budgets are being depleted within the pharmaceutical/health care industry, and to what effect?

The enormous financial rewards enjoyed by pharmaceutical companies as a result of DTCA campaigns has prompted a structural shift in recent years; today an ever-greater percentage of drug budgets in particular, and industry resources in general, are earmarked for DTCA. In 2000, 15 to 20 percent of total drug marketing costs (Bell et al. 2000, p. 329) were devoted to DTCA. By 2003, it was estimated that as much as 90 percent of a brand’s total promotional budget was earmarked for DTCA (Mehta and Purvis 2003, p. 194). The increase in advertising resources is mirrored by a shift in industry structure, as pharmaceutical companies downsize their research and development departments while bolstering marketing sectors.

Prompted by the earnings potential of DTCA, the shifting of both money and nonfiscal resources toward DTCA suggests the pharmaceutical industry is adjusting economically and structurally to enable a continuation and/or intensification of the DTCA trend. While this may make economic sense from the perspective of the pharmaceutical industry, it may leave a gap in the health care
system in the context of research/development, and impede research progress on medical conditions that lack “blockbuster” treatments.

**DOCTOR, THE CUSTOMER IS HERE TO SEE YOU**

Just as medications are seen less as chemical compounds than as consumer products in the DTCA prism, patients are positioned as mass-market consumers instead of as medical subjects. Close analysis of the discourses of the pharmaceutical industry reveals a tendency to frame potential consumers as sources of profit, rather than as individuals. This tendency can dehumanize individual patients in favor of a more dispassionate economic discourse.

Internal industry publications and sources frequently refer to consumers in terms of economic benefit, failing to acknowledge that real human suffering and varied personal experiences underlie each prescription. Consumers are

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**BRAND NAMES VERSUS GENERIC/OVER-THE-COUNTER: THE ECONOMICS**

One of the central debates in the study of DTCA is the promotion of brand-name medications that have equally effective, and, oftentimes, less expensive generic or over-the-counter equivalents.

**Example 1**

The acid-reflux/heartburn medication Nexium, and its over-the-counter counterpart, Prilosec, are virtually equal in terms of effectiveness. However, in the wake of a massive marketing campaign to promote Nexium, it has become one of the top-ten best-selling medications in the United States, garnering nearly $3 billion in yearly sales.

**Example 2**

A 1999 medical study revealed that neither heavily advertised Vioxx nor Celebrex “alleviated pain any better than the older medicines” (Berensen et al. 2004). Despite this finding, Vioxx’s 2003 sales topped $2.5 billion and comprised 11 percent of Merck’s total revenue that year (“Costs of Recall Hurt Merck’s Results; Lilly’s Profit Is Up,” 2004). In contrast, the over-the-counter pain relievers referenced in the study cost pennies a dose.

**Example 3**

The allergy market has been fundamentally transformed by DTCA campaigns for prescription antihistamines. Formerly dominated by over-the-counter remedies, now 53 percent of allergy sufferers buy prescription products (Aitken and Holt 2000, p. 82). One large health management organization (HMO) estimated that it spent “$20 million dollars paying for costly, heavily advertised, non-sedating antihistamines when generics would have sufficed” (West 1999).
classified according to measurements of “highest potential lifetime value,” “appropriate performance metrics,” and “value per patient (return per script multiplied by duration of use).” Just as the weakening of physician authority in the patient relationship can cause an imbalance in quality of care, the inflation of the patient’s economic value over his or her physiological health is a real and important byproduct of the DTCA trend.

There is evidence that even physicians have begun to refer to patients from within an economic framework. Surveys have found that many doctors have prescribed medications in order to satisfy patient demands and not to meet the specific physiological demands of the medical condition. In part, this acquiescence on the part of physicians can be attributed to the desire to maintain a positive working physician-patient relationship. Doctors do not wish to alienate patients or to lose business, and emphasize that there is a desire, as “with anyone else who provides service, to keep the customer happy” (D. Brown 2004). The designation of patients as “customers” is indicative of the ways in which the physician-patient relationship has adapted to the discourse of the DTCA trend. In this sense, the evolution—or degradation—of the relationship can be seen as: doctor-patient, to doctor-patient-advertiser, and finally to doctor-consumer-advertiser.

**CORNFLAKES, ACUPUNCTURE, AND ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINTS**

With advertising budgets for DTCA campaigns approaching or surpassing those for other categories such as consumer goods and food products, it is useful to compare both the type of advertising and its potential effects on consumers. It can be asked of DTCA, “If we start advertising [prescription medications] like corn flakes, does it trivialize medicine?” (Elliott 1998). Consumer products are generally harmless—the choice of one breakfast cereal or wrinkle-reducing cream over another isn’t likely to cause physiological harm to the consumer—while medications can seriously harm or kill patients if not prescribed or taken properly. Indeed, there is a substantial gap in the magnitude of the decisions involved in assessing risk and reward of, for example, a breakfast cereal, compared with a prescription medication.

This serious difference raises legitimate and important concerns about the advisability of treating prescription medications as if they were general, casual, and benign consumer products, and promoting them as such. Furthermore, a sense of “needing” a specific consumer product can be inspired by creative advertising, while “needing” prescription medications should ideally be based on physiological factors and physician recommendations. The similar advertising methods between prescription medications and general consumer goods encourage the stimulation of popular demand for products whose use should be based solely on medical need.

It is also worth noting that, as a product of the pharmaceutical industry with financial interests in the return on investment of DTCA campaigns, prescription medications tend to be favored in the media over other health alternatives.
The prevalence of DTCA and the cultural authority it holds as a mode of consumption effectively precludes alternative treatments, such as homeopathic or natural remedies, as well as unbranded generic or over-the-counter medications. In the context of the prevailing social order, DTCA privileges heavily advertised, expensive medications over all other possibilities. This is evident both at the micro-level, in the changing physician-patient relationship, and at the macro-level, with the increasing costs of health care in America.

The World Health Organization itself debates the merits of DTCA, arguing that it represents an “inherent conflict of interest between the legitimate business goals of manufacturers and the social, medical and economic needs of providers and the public to select and use drugs in the most rational way” (Mintzes 2002, p. 908). However, there is also indisputable proof that DTCA facilitates education and dialogue, as well as normalizes serious and previously stigmatized medical conditions. Presently, advertising’s persuasive modes remain the primary source of public knowledge about certain medical issues and medications. In the absence of effective alternatives such as public education campaigns at both national and global levels, critics can only hope that the profit motives of the pharmaceutical industry can be reconciled with the serendipitous byproducts of education and personal health empowerment.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Body Image; Disabilities and Media; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Product Placement; Video News Releases; Women’s Magazines.

Piracy and Intellectual Property

Do you own a computer or a cell phone? Do you download music, cut and paste text, stream movies or television shows, or “grab” pictures to post on your MySpace or blog? Do you always pay for using these media? If not, you may be a pirate! Your right to access and use cultural content on the Internet, radio, TV, CDs, and DVDs is threatened by a growing body of laws that privatize ideas and creative expressions and make criminals out of those who participate in the production and circulation of our common culture. Media industries say they need copyright protections to remain competitive. But many artists, academics, and public-interest groups suggest that some acts of piracy may be a justifiable response to this expanding legal framework.

Intellectual property (IP) refers to a set of legal rights granting exclusive use of particular immaterial products to an individual or institution. These rights recognize certain creative expressions—or ideas, such as a song, the design of a desk chair, a company logo or name (like Levi’s), a story, or a movie—as property that can be owned or exchanged. “Piracy” is the term widely used to describe the “theft” of IP; but given the intangible nature of what is “stolen,” the act of piracy is better described as an infringement on legal rights.

The rationale behind the protection of IP is that granting exclusive rights to economically exploit one’s creative work encourages innovation, which benefits society as a whole. But expansion of IP protections is encroaching on individuals’ ability to access and use shared cultural resources. This blocks the social...
circulation of ideas, which stifles creativity, thwarts innovation, and creates or perpetuates social and economic inequalities by establishing a market in privatized information. Is piracy—the infringement on IP rights—a justified response to this expanding legal framework that criminalizes participation and creative engagement with the production and circulation of cultural expressions common to a society?

**TIMELINE**

1709—Britain’s Statute of Anne is the first copyright law enacted.

1790—The Copyright Act of 1790 is the first U.S. federal copyright law, offering protection for a 14-year term with the option of one 14-year term extension.

1883—The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property is one of the first international IP treaties, requiring contracting states to recognize each other’s IP protection laws.

1887—The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works requires contracting states to recognize the copyrights of authors from other contracting states as they would their own.

1893—The United International Bureaux for the Protection of Intellectual Property (BIRPI), formed from the merger of two smaller bureaus established by the Paris and Berne Conventions, becomes the administrative body for the international protection of IP.

1909—The U.S. Copyright Act of 1909 extends the term of copyright to 28 years, with the option of renewing for another 28-year term.

1967—The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is formed as a replacement for BIRPI.


1976—The U.S. Copyright Act of 1976 extends the term of copyright to life of the author plus 50 years, or 75 years for works of corporate authorship.

1994—The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) shifts the protection and enforcement of IP onto the international trading system, requiring members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to adopt standardized IP laws or face trade and economic sanctions.

1998—The U.S. Copyright Term Extension Act (also known as the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act or the Mickey Mouse Protection Act) extends copyright protection to life of the author plus 70 years, or 95 years for works of corporate authorship.

1998—The U.S. Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) criminalizes circumvention of—and the production or distribution of devices or services for the circumvention of—systems that control access to copyrighted works, commonly known as Digital Right Management (DRM) systems.

PRIVATIZING IDEAS

There are five basic types of IP that fall into two categories. Industrial property rights are established through laws governing patents, trademarks, trade secrets, and industrial designs, while copyright laws govern the ownership and exchange of creative and artistic expressions that circulate more broadly in a society. There are also other forms of IP protection that do not fit into these categories, such as the registration of Internet domain names, geographical indications such as Kona coffee and Bordeaux wine, the layout of integrated circuits, and plant breeders’ rights. Though the duration of legal protection varies by type and by country, minimum international standards have been established for members of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Patents are granted to the inventor of a new product or process deemed to be practical and novel. When a patent expires, the invention enters the public domain and can be freely used and commercially exploited by anyone. Companies often attempt to extend legal protection by altering a product or offering it for a “novel” purpose. For example, in 2001 pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly lost a protracted legal battle to maintain exclusive rights to their most valuable product—Prozac—by repatenting it for a new use.

TRADEMARKS

Trademarks are distinctive signs—ranging from combinations of letters, numbers, and words, to visual symbols, sounds, shapes, colors, and fragrances—that link a particular product or service to a specific business. McDonald’s Golden Arches are a trademark, the word “Kleenex” is trademarked by the Kimberley-Clark company, and UPS holds a trademark on a particular shade of brown.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN RIGHTS

Industrial design rights protect the aesthetic value of nonutilitarian designs with original and unique visual appeal. Shapes, patterns, ornaments, and configurations can be considered IP as they are applied to clothes, fashion accessories, jewelry, cars, furniture, appliances, packaging—just about any manufactured good. The shape and layout of cell phones such as Motorola’s RAZR and Apple’s iPhone are examples of protected industrial design rights.

TRADE SECRETS

Trade secrets are forms of information that have economic value only if they remain secret. The recipe for Coca-Cola is a trade secret, as is the secret sauce in Big Macs. But the range of protections is vast: formulas, compounds, prototypes, processes, calculations, analytical data, sales and marketing information, customer lists, financial information, and business plans are only some of the possible forms of information that can be protected as trade secrets.
COPYRIGHT

Copyright is actually a bundle of rights that protects literary or artistic expressions by defining the conditions for their reproduction, distribution, importation, sale, derivative works, adaptation, translation, broadcast, exhibition, and public performance. Copyright encompasses, but is not limited to, books, plays, newspapers, computer programs, films, databases, musical compositions, paintings, photographs, maps, sculpture, architecture, and advertisements. “Fair use”—a legal concept specific to the United States—and the related “fair dealing” found in the common law of some other countries protect limited use of copyrighted materials for academic and research purposes.

PROTECTING MICKEY MOUSE

These categories of rights overlap in their protection of certain ideas. For example, Mickey Mouse is covered by both copyright and trademark. When the copyright on Mickey expires—which would have been in 2000, if not for a 20-year extension of copyright protection enacted by the 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act (sometimes called the Mickey Mouse Protection Act due to the extensive lobbying by Disney that aided passage of the law)—use of his image will still be protected as a trademark of Disney.

This wide range of IP protections attempts to remove from the public domain a vast quantity of ideas and expressions. Such privatization makes it difficult to create new ideas and expressions without infringing on those already protected. Is an act of piracy “theft” if it draws on the same common cultural resources from which the idea infringed upon was developed? Understanding both the emergence of IP rights and the current context in which they operate allows us to question the criminality of some acts labeled as piracy.

“CRACKING DOWN” ON PIRACY

On April 14, 2007, following a string of raids on illegal manufacturers, shops, street vendors, and homes spanning 31 provinces in China, authorities destroyed approximately 42 million pirated copies of CDs, DVDs, and print materials by bulldozer, bonfire, and shredding machine. These public spectacles were reminiscent of a similar media conflagration staged in Bangkok’s Pantip Plaza—which had been a veritable shopping mall of pirated goods—on the eve of China’s entry into the WTO in 2001. The bright glare of these public performances, designed to showcase China’s commitment to protecting IP, illuminates some key questions in the debate over the limits of IP protection, especially as it is globally propagated through international trade deals under pressure from private industries.

Public bonfires make for a good show but do little to staunch the flow of pirated media goods. The intangible digital data that comprise the copyrighted material on music CDs, DVD movies, computer software, and text files can be infinitely duplicated, and the availability
and affordability of technology used to do so has made pirated media cheap and widely available. China is criticized for not doing enough to protect IP rights, but given the indestructible and reproducible nature of information and media, what can really be done to protect it as property?

While the United States has focused on preventative measures, instigating youth education programs to publicize the criminality of IP rights infringement and relying on the “chilling effect” of threatened lawsuits, China has resorted to global displays of violent force that distract from their tacit policy of mostly looking the other way. Neither country has succeeded in deterring piracy, and increasingly, media industries are turning to DRM systems—copy restrictions encoded into the media materials themselves. But these are often “cracked” soon after they are implemented, opening them up to duplication and distribution in black markets, while limiting how legitimate consumers can use the media for which they have paid.

Though the film industry measures losses to piracy in the profit they might have made from legal sales, there is no reason to expect that those who buy a DVD for $2 would pay $30 if the pirated copy were not available. In China, the pirated copies are often all that is available, and the black markets in pirated goods may actually serve to introduce people in China to the Western culture of consumption, engendering demand for more products and opening new channels of distribution for legitimate markets.

CAN WE SHARE? THE COMMONS AND THE CREATION OF THE AUTHOR

The concept of granting and protecting rights that establish ideas or their expressions as property developed within a Western European philosophical and legal framework. Resources are seen as part of a “commons” shared by society, from which anything can only be “fenced off” by exclusive use rights—and thus become property—through the application of labor. Because we have a right to the work we do, we are able to claim rights over that which we work on.

FOLKLORE AND FAIRY TALES

But IP is not easy to separate from the commons. Unlike material property, IP is not “scarce”—it can be used without being used up. The almost infinite reproducibility of music, stories, images, and ideas allows them to circulate within a society as “public goods,” where they can be enjoyed and even used as the basis of new forms of expression without detracting from the “commons.” What amount of work does an individual have to do to modify an idea or expression common to society to be able to claim exclusive rights to it? What allowed the Brothers Grimm to claim authorship of fairy tales that had been circulating for centuries? How was Nirvana able to record and sell the traditional American folk song “Where Did You Sleep Last Night?” How can the ideas and cultural expressions we all share—public goods—be privatized?
THE PRINTING PRESS

While we have been creating, expressing, and inventing for millennia, legal protection of exclusive use rights to ideas and their representations only developed as a response to changes in the notion of authorship brought about by the rise of liberal individualism and the invention of technologies for mass reproduction such as the Gutenberg printing press.

THE AUTHOR

By making reproduction more time and cost efficient, the printing press greatly increased the distribution of texts, creating legal problems in publishers’ competing claims to the rights to copy remarkably similar manuscripts acquired from different “authors.” In response, Britain’s 1709 Statute of Anne—the first copyright law—shifted the right to copy from publishers to “authors.”

This legal creation of “the author” established a tension between the cultural commons and individual acts of creativity by suggesting that creative work can be quantified and judged in terms of how it exceeds the culturally common elements and ideas from which it is composed. When can someone claim their rendition of a song they heard from someone else as their own? How do we measure the difference? Can we own a five-note sequence? One note? Is borrowing a beat “fair use”?

DIGITAL SAMPLING

As with the printing press, the development of digital samplers led to legal disputes over the use and ownership of culturally common expressions, reiterating in the musical realm the problems of recognizing sole authorship. Hip-hop has a rich history of sampling, from deft disc jockeying to mix tapes, but the confluence of affordable audio reproduction technologies and the breakout popularity of records that sampled other music, such as the Beastie Boys’ 1986 Licensed to Ill, publicized the threat IP protection poses to artistic expression. Even now, long after the Supreme Court’s 1994 ruling in favor of 2 Live Crew’s fair-use claim to guitar, bass, and drum samples from Roy Orbison’s “Pretty Woman,” musicians are still threatened for their use of samples. Danger Mouse’s The Grey Album—a mashup of Jay-Z’s The Black Album and samples from the Beatles’ The White Album—has been the target of litigation by EMI, which owns the rights to the Beatles’ songs. Other music we never get a chance to hear. Public Enemy pulled the track “Psycho of Greed” from their 2002 album Revolverlution because of the exorbitant fee for using a sample from the Beatles’ “Tomorrow Never Knows.”

Our “rip, mix, and burn” culture suggests that many of us engage with these same processes of remixing and sharing cultural expressions, which blur the line between the commons and private ownership. Expanding IP protections attempt to redefine this line and to set the conditions for assessing the legality of our engagement with our own culture. Critics charge that instead of serving
the interests of individuals’ creative cultural expressions, such protections are designed to help the information and media industries maintain and expand markets.

**THE GLOBAL EXPANSION OF IP PROTECTION**

IP laws were for the most part developed by the United States and Western European nations under pressure from private industries seeking to protect current interests and create new fields for safe investment. The range of IP protections has been expanded sporadically since the eighteenth century to cover more forms of ideas and expressions for longer periods of time over a larger geographic area. But the international standardization and global implementation of national IP laws has only been achieved more recently through high-pressure trade negotiations dominated by a U.S.-led coalition of economically and politically powerful countries, who were in turn influenced by intense lobbying from multinational corporations heavily invested in knowledge-based industries such as the media.

Thus, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)—established in 1967 to “promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world”—was bypassed by the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) in 1994, and the WTO became the de facto governing body for international IP rights. All WTO member states must sign on to TRIPS, which requires that they enact IP laws modeled largely on those of the United States and European nations that were formed to protect the interests of private industries.

This has allowed multinational corporations to expand into developing nations under legal protection from the government, where they create new markets for previously acquired IPs and use their economic muscle to acquire new IPs for other markets. Not only does this give them an unfair advantage over local producers of valuable IPs, but also gives the multinationals a great deal of control over the circulation of cultural expressions in the public domain. For these reasons, many argue that the global growth of media piracy is a response to the simultaneous expansion of media markets and IP protections that greatly increase the availability of creative cultural expressions while severely delimiting how people can engage with them.

**See also** Branding the Globe; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Digital Divide; Google Book Search; Hypercommercialism; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Internet and Its Radical Potential; The iTunes Effect; Media Reform; Net Neutrality; Online Digital Film and Television; Online Publishing; Pirate Radio; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.

“Radio pirates” are those who broadcast without a license. Thus it follows that the first radio pirates were actually the early inventors of the 1900s like Guglielmo Marconi and Reginold Fessindon, themselves unlicensed because, of course, there was no license to be given out at a time when the medium was only just being invented. The term “pirate broadcaster” was initially used to describe amateurs who stepped on another hobbyist’s signal, and was coined at a time when there was no government regulation of the airwaves. Today, some activists prefer the term “microbroadcasters” or “free radio,” arguing that they are not criminals but rather, more like revolutionary pamphleteer Thomas Paine.

Pirate radio broadcasters have emerged—and continue to emerge—all over the world, in places that lack sufficient legal means for citizens to have access to the radio waves. They operate in opposition to government-controlled airwaves as a crucial means of providing information and news during times of civil unrest, and for some, just for fun, or “because we can.” Governments have used pirate radio as a means of broadcasting clandestine information across otherwise closed borders. Even in an era of increasingly Internet-based radio listening in the United States, FM pirate radio stations continue to emerge as forms of resistance to the corporate domination of the airwaves, and as alternative media outlets in their own right, in large part because radio is an affordable technology, easy to operate, and accessible for listening audiences.

In 1925, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson sent a telegram to then secretary in commerce Herbert Hoover, imploring him to “Please order your minions of Satan to leave my station alone. You cannot expect the Almighty to abide by your wavelength nonsense. When I offer my prayers to Him I must fit into His wave reception. Open this station at once” (Hadden and Swann 1981, pp. 188–89).
PIRATE RADIO AROUND THE WORLD

There is a tendency to write off pirate radio stations as one-off projects of hacks and kids interfering with legitimate radio stations just for fun. Or in Britain, the common narrative around pirates is that of a haven for gang culture, drugs, and underground garage and reggae clubs. While there are certainly examples of pirate stations that fit both these stereotypes, the failure of many media scholars, policy makers, and the general public to adequately account for the impact of pirate radio is a disservice to an important site of the battle over media ownership and “citizen” access to the airwaves.

As such, pirate radio exists in many shapes and sizes. Radio Venceremos ("Radio We Will Win"), for example, broadcast as an underground guerrilla radio station in opposition to the government from the highland jungles of El Salvador during the country’s civil war in the 1980s. The station was a crucial means of information for peasants and indigenous people, transmitting news, playing music, and serving as witness to war, airing live reports of air attacks, civilian massacres, and battles between guerrillas and government troops. The station broadcasts today from the capital city with a license. Pirate radio stations were also vital sources of news and information across Eastern Europe under communism, and in former Yugoslavia in opposition to Slobodan Milosevic. In Chiapas, Mexico, pirate radio continues to be an important communication tool used by the Zapatistas.

Pirate broadcasting is at times a dangerous business. Stations have been bombed or been the target of sustained government attacks and intimidation. Even in Tampa, Florida, pirate operator Doug Brewer had his station raided in 1995 by heavily armed agents from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), FBI, and local police. During the raid, Brewer and his wife were held at gunpoint on the floor while their equipment was raided and house ransacked. “I had absolutely no political agenda—at least not until they came in here with guns,” Brewer told the Los Angeles Times. “I just thought Tampa radio sucked and we had to do something to improve it” (Bennett 1998).

There are pirate stations like Galway Pirate Women in Ireland, broadcasting a range of programming made by and directed at women, the former KBLT in Los Angeles, a station that became an influential outpost for alternative music and hipster culture during its short life on air, or Radio Limbo in Tucson, which provided a cultural oasis in the city by playing a range of eclectic music not otherwise on air in the city. There is Reverend Rick Strawcutter of Radio Free Lenawee broadcasting in Michigan from a small room inside the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, battling the government over his right to broadcast, or patriot broadcaster Lonnie Kobres, who has the distinction of being the only person in the United States who actually went to jail for unlicensed broadcasting (typically the FCC confiscates equipment and may also levy fines). There are progressively radical or anarchist stations like Steal This Radio in New York, Freak Radio in Santa Cruz, and the San Francisco Liberation Radio, and radically conservative and sometimes survivalist or even white-supremacist stations. Despite deep ideological differences, these groups share a frustration with the government’s
system of allocating access to the airwaves. “What unites these microbroadcasters,” writes Rijsmadel, “is the systematic exclusion of them and their audiences—who frequently are also participants—from their local media, be it commercial or public, radio or television.”

WHY PIRATE?

Pirate radio is often the project of communities looking to fill a void on the radio and bring neighbors together. In Vermont, Radio Free Brattleboro fought their impending FCC closure with widespread support including that of the city council and Senator Patrick Leahy, himself a co-sponsor of legislation to expand low-power radio, in part because of pressure from the Brattleboro community he serves. In the United Kingdom, north London pirate Lush FM operates as a community-run station and is involved in local anti-gun and violence prevention programs. A recent survey by the British communications regulator concluded that one in six adults regularly listens to pirate radio, with the figure even higher in some of the most ethnically diverse and poorest neighborhoods in London (Ofcom 2000).

Pirate stations and their organizers have influenced policy decisions related to the allocation of radio licenses and the structure of broadcasting sectors. In the 1960s, an explosion of off-shore pirate radio stations emerged in the waters off the coast of Britain. These stations, set up on old fishing boats, served as alternatives to the monopoly the BBC had, at the time, over the airwaves. While the BBC was highly regarded for its role in providing quality news and public affairs, it offered only limited hours of pop music airplay during the height of popularity of British bands like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Pirate stations like Radio Caroline captured the zeitgeist of the times. As a result, many scholars credit the influence these stations had on the BBC’s decision to launch less-centralized local radio services and a pop music channel (BBC Radio 1—whose first DJs included a number of former pirates like John Peel). In Hungary, the first community station in the country began as a pirate in 1991, during the early post-communist years. Tilos Rádió (“Forbidden Radio”) defiantly went on air to bring attention to the fact that there were no legal means for community groups and independent broadcasters to apply for a license. Tilos was eventually licensed four years later, following the development of a media policy with strong support for community stations, and continues to be at the heart of cultural life in Budapest.

In the United States, a group of pirate broadcasters have been key actors in the movement to expand legal alternatives for community-based or amateur broadcasters. In 1986, housing rights activist Mbanna Kantako set up a radio station to serve the African American community of Springfield, Illinois. The station, WTRA, Radio of the Tenants’ Rights Association, began as a community organizing tool for the housing project. The station was ignored by authorities for several years, until it broke a story about what ended up being a high-profile police brutality case. When agents came to shut down the station, Kantako went downtown to the federal building and the police station and dared officials to
arrest him. When authorities realized such a course of action could backfire in the increasingly tense situation, they left him alone for years, spurring many to realize the FCC was not always ready to enforce its own regulations. WTRA is now known as Black Liberation Radio and continues to broadcast without a license, even after a raid of its equipment in 1999.

**TIMELINE**

1906—On Christmas Eve, Reginald Fessenden broadcasts the first-ever radio broadcast of music and voice over long distances. From an unlicensed station he built in Brant Rock, Massachusetts, his broadcast includes a reading and Christmas song, and is heard by unsuspecting wireless operators on ships as far away as off the coast of Virginia.

1937—The first experimental FM radio station, W1XOJ, is granted a construction permit by the FCC. The birth of FM—a cheaper and easier medium to build and operate than AM—eventually makes it possible for a movement of pirates to flourish.

1947—XERF, one of the most famous of the “border blaster” radio stations, begins operation from Cuidad Acuna just across the Rio Grande in Mexico. These border stations were not pirates, but represent early attempts at subverting the U.S. licensing system by broadcasting from stations licensed in Mexico near the U.S. border. Some border blasters did, however, broadcast content in violation of U.S. consumer protection law, such as a station in Kansas whose on-air healers advocated “goat gland surgery” to improve masculinity.

1958—Radio Mercur, the first known station to broadcast from a ship in international waters (the first offshore European pirate station) launches. Others, like Radio Caroline, follow in the 1960s, until passage of the Marine Broadcasting Offences Act of 1968 made such broadcasting practically illegal.

1973—The FCC refuses to renew right-wing, fundamentalist Christian radio operator Reverend Carl McIntire’s radio license for station WXUR because the station did not comply with the Fairness Doctrine, which required time be given to opposing viewpoints. In response, McIntire becomes a pirate, broadcasting off the coast of New Jersey from a former WWII minesweeper, marking a new era in his long-standing fight against the FCC—a battle he eventually lost, although an important precedent is set regarding the FCC’s authority to regulate offshore broadcasting.

1979—At the behest of newly created National Public Radio, the FCC eliminates class D licensing, a service used by many noncommercial, educational broadcasters. This move further fuels the explosion of pirates in the 1980s and 1990s.

1987—Mbana Kantako launches a pirate radio station in the Springfield, Illinois, housing project where he lives. The station later becomes known as Black Liberation Radio and is credited with inspiring a generation of future pirates.

1995—The FCC files a motion against California’s Stephen Dunifer and Free Radio Berkeley, sparking a prolonged court battle during which time pirate radio in the
United States flourished, echoing Dunifer’s call to have “a thousand transmitters bloom.”

1998—West Philadelphia’s Radio Mutiny and others stage the Showdown at the FCC, a protest in support of a community’s right to have access to the airwaves. The highlight of the demonstration is a pirate broadcast in front of the FCC’s headquarters in Washington, DC.

2000—The FCC creates the service for low-power FM radio (LPFM), allowing neighborhood-based groups the possibility to apply for low-power radio licenses. The service is curtailed soon after by Congress, which limits the areas where the service is available to the least populated parts of the country. As of spring 2007, activists like the Prometheus Radio Project are fighting to have this decision overturned.

2001—Reverend Rick Strawcutter of Radio Free Lenawee broadcasting inside the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ is taken off air by the FCC. Strawcutter is well known among pirates for his efforts in fighting the FCC to allow low-power stations to operate.

2007—Nevada pirate operator Rod Moses obtains permission from the FCC to continue broadcasting with a special temporary authority until he can apply for an LPFM license in a yet-undetermined future application window. Permission is obtained following the intervention of U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

**FREE RADIO BERKELEY VERSUS THE FCC**

Inspired by Kantako and others, a movement of pirate radio broadcasters emerged in the 1990s that directly challenged the government’s policy of ignoring community concerns. Microbroadcasters achieved some surprising victories in the courts, which threw into doubt the validity of the licensing system itself. Of significance was the case put forward by microbroadcaster Stephen Dunifer of Free Radio Berkeley, whose case compelled the court to strongly consider whether, as he claimed, under the stewardship of the FCC the public airwaves had become “a concession stand for corporate America.” Though Dunifer’s case was ultimately lost in the courts, a great deal of momentum was created and many otherwise law-abiding citizens were taking to the airwaves without a license as a form of protest against corporate domination of media.

Dunifer is an electrical engineer from Berkeley, California, who became frustrated with what he felt was a pro-Pentagon tenor of mainstream reporting during the first Gulf War in 1991. In response, he built a transmitter from scratch and carried it in a backpack up to the hills above Berkeley and began broadcasting. In time, the station began serving as a community station, open to programmers who contacted Dunifer and wanted to get involved. After a few years of covert broadcasting, Dunifer was caught by the FCC and fined $20,000. He vowed to continue broadcasting and publicly refused to pay the fine. The FCC then took him to court seeking an injunction against him.

His 1993 case was a turning point for the free radio movement. The National Lawyers Guild took his case, arguing the regulations were unconstitutional on the basis of the First Amendment right to free speech. They argued that the United
States's model of telecommunication regulations allows only a wealth-based broadcasting system and that the dominance of media by corporate interests is not accidental but is inherent in the design of the current regulatory framework. Dunifer made the claim that micro-radio is the “leaflet of the Nineties” and that to disallow it is tantamount to censorship. Free Radio Berkeley won an important Ninth Federal District Court decision in 1995 in which Judge Claudia Wilken refused to grant an injunction against Dunifer pending review of the constitutionality of current FCC licensing practices. It took four years for the case to make its way back through the system and in the meantime, Dunifer continued broadcasting in a quasi “not legal but not illegal” state. Dunifer eventually lost the case on technical grounds, as, since he had never actually applied for an FCC license, he was thus never officially denied one, according to the court’s ultimate decision.

During the time his case was pending, however, hundreds of people across the country took advantage of the apparent lapse in the FCC’s authority to regulate the airwaves and began their own unlicensed broadcasting. Accurate numbers are difficult to come by, but it seems upward of 1,000 pirate radio stations were in operation across the country in the early 1990s, echoing Dunifer’s call to see “a thousand transmitters bloom.” There were also conservative religious and politically right-wing stations that emerged, including some stations run by white supremacists.

Many of the politically progressive pirates responded en masse. Spearheaded by Dunifer and Free Radio Berkeley and organizer Pete Tridish (co-founder of the Prometheus Radio Project) and Radio Mutiny based in West Philadelphia, they began to mobilize. When Radio Mutiny’s studio transmitter was seized by FCC agents, the group responded by demonstrating outside the Liberty Bell in downtown Philadelphia. Activists with Radio Mutiny organized a conference of microbroadcasters and the “Showdown at the FCC,” in which 150 pirates gathered in Washington, DC, in October 1998. The highlight of the demonstration was a pirate radio broadcast on the steps of the national headquarters of the FCC.

**LOW-POWER FM (LPFM)**

By the late 1990s, the FCC had begun a serious crackdown on pirates across the country. But the sheer number of new pirate operators, and the community support many enjoyed, put the new FCC chairman William Kennard in an awkward position. Kennard admitted that the pirates had some legitimate concerns regarding the concentration of media ownership and lack of community access to the airwaves. Kennard was especially concerned about the declining number of minority-owned radio stations following passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The FCC chairman announced he would prioritize creation of legitimate opportunities for new voices on the radio dial. Robert McChesney put it this way, stating: “[The pirates] showed the FCC that low-power broadcasting is here whether you like it or not. And that they’re going to have to deal with it” (quoted in Markels 2000). In 2000, the FCC created a new service
for noncommercial low-power radio. While issues remain regarding the expansion of the service beyond small towns and rural parts of the country, LPFM is nevertheless an important milestone toward increasing public access to the airwaves.

It is significant that this movement of pirate radio activism took hold in the period prior to and around the passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, a time during which the radio industry was subject to massive consolidation of ownership, reduction and, in some cases, elimination of local influence over content and programming decisions. And public radio was increasingly being criticized by some for becoming increasingly national in focus and “beige” in sound. These criticisms remain in the foreground for alternative media advocates.

CONCLUSION

In short, pirate radio is deeply woven into the cultural fabric of our media landscape, emerging in a range of contexts for a variety of agendas across all political lines. It has demonstrated the need for more media diversity and public access and less corporate and government domination of the airwaves, has galvanized a movement of media activists, and has entered the cultural lexicon as an evocative symbol of media resistance. Pirate radio is both an alternative to mainstream media and a site where important battles over communication rights are taking place.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Global Community Media; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Hypercommercialism; The iTunes Effect; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; National Public Radio; Regulating the Airwaves.


Kate Coyer

POLITICAL DOCUMENTARY: FAHRENHEIT 9/11 AND THE 2004 ELECTION

For many, the year 2004 was a watershed moment in documentary history. Never before had so many documentaries, from Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11, to Morgan Spurlock’s Super Size Me, to Jehane Noujaim’s Control Room, played to packed houses in multiplexes across the country. What seemed most compelling about this spate of documentaries was not only their popular appeal, but their political nature. Whether aimed specifically at the presidential election, or looking critically at the war in Iraq, documentaries in 2004 worked not only to document, but to persuade. For some critics, this was a welcome countermeasure to a media that many believed had failed in its mission to inform the public. For others, however, this was a sign that a once venerated tradition had become tainted by a new media landscape driven by strident partisanship and geared towards the production of “infotainment.” But is political documentary really something new? And, more to the point, should documentary be “political” at all?

The reality is that political documentary has been around for as long as documentary itself. Indeed, documentary’s earliest pioneers put the form to explicitly political uses, whether it was the agitprop of Dziga Vertov, meant to communicate the values of revolutionary Russia to its people in the 1920s, or the advocacy films of John Grierson, geared towards educating the British public about issues of social concern in the 1930s. And in the U.S. context, political documentaries have always played a central role in the development of the form. For instance, in the 1930s, progressive film collectives such as the Workers’ Film and Photo League formed to champion political causes and expose the devastating effects of the Great Depression, while government-sponsored films, such as Pare Lorentz’s The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936) and The River (1937), constructed powerful appeals on behalf of the Roosevelt administration. In the 1940s, Hollywood filmmakers such as Frank Capra (the Why We Fight series, 1943–44) and John Ford (The Battle of Midway, 1943) were recruited to make the case for the U.S. government’s decision to enter World War II.

Later on, in the 1950s, journalist Edward R. Murrow took the government on with TV documentaries that advocated against the injustices of McCarthyism (See It Now, 1954) and exposed the mistreatment of migrant farm workers (Harvest of Shame, 1960). The 1960s and 1970s saw an eruption of political work by independent documentarians. Filmmakers like Emile de Antonio (In the Year of the Pig, 1969) and Peter Davis (Hearts and Minds, 1974) criticized both the effects of the war in Vietnam and the rationale for it, while women filmmakers tapped the powers of documentary to bolster the burgeoning feminist
movement through films that were experimental in form and political in content. In recent years, political documentary has flourished in a variety of forms and venues, as institutions such as PBS and HBO have created new exhibition possibilities for nonfiction filmmaking. In 1988, PBS created \textit{P.O.V.}, a series devoted to the development and exhibition of independently produced films. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, \textit{P.O.V.} has become a landmark showcase for nonfiction work that, in their words, “express[es] opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media.” In the 1990s, HBO also established itself as a major contributor to the political documentary scene, working regularly with such filmmakers as Barbara Kopple, Spike Lee, and Rory Kennedy, among others. In 2006, HBO premiered Lee’s critically acclaimed \textit{When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts}, his poetic treatise on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

**CAN DOCUMENTARY BE POLITICAL?**

It can be easy to forget how prominent political documentary has been in the past, however, because the phrase itself seems to be an oxymoron. How can a film claim to be both political \textit{and} a documentary?

Most people still consider “documentary” to be an objective style of filmmaking whose primary purpose is to record “life as it is” from a relatively neutral perspective. Film scholar Bill Nichols argues that, in popular parlance, documentary is understood to be what he calls a “discourse of sobriety.” In this vein, documentary is thought to have a kind of “kinship” with other serious systems of thought, such as science or economics, because they all claim to have an objective and transparent relationship to the real world. As media scholar Brian Winston has argued, this common understanding has led to the valuation of specific kinds of documentary over others. Certain generic conventions, such as the educational tone and journalistic style of documentaries in the Griersonian tradition, or the fly-on-the-wall aesthetic of “verite” filmmakers like Albert Maysles and Frederick Wiseman, have become markers of what constitutes a “real” documentary. Genuine documentaries, it is often claimed, are those that stand apart from their subject, observe reality from a distance, and through this process produce a neutral document of the world.

This notion of documentary as neutral observation is complicated, then, when we add the term “political” to the mix. Film scholar Thomas Waugh defines political documentary as displaying a commitment on the part of the filmmaker. According to Waugh, committed documentaries are films that claim solidarity with a specific group or coalition, take an “activist stance” towards certain issues or goals, and work within and alongside political and social movements. In this way, political documentaries would seem to constitute the very antithesis of the documentary form as it is popularly understood. The idea that documentary should be an objective, neutral discourse stands in opposition to films that claim a commitment to particular groups and specific goals. Meanwhile, the notion that the documentarian should stand outside and apart from his or her subject,
“observing” it from a distance, is clearly incommensurate with the practice of committed filmmakers speaking from within particular social movements. Seen from this perspective, political documentary starts to look a lot less like documentary proper, and a lot more like “propaganda.”

POLITICAL DOCUMENTARY AS “PROPAGANDA”

Accusations of propaganda, of course, beg a similar question: what do we mean by propaganda? Film scholars James Combs and Sara Combs argue that, separated from its usually negative connotation, propaganda is any form of communication geared towards the production of messages intended to influence popular opinion.

A MATTER OF DISTRIBUTION

While the production of political documentaries is nothing new, the manner in which they are being seen is. One of the most compelling aspects of the Fahrenheit 9/11 phenomenon was its spectacular success as a theatrical release, even out-grossing the other major Hollywood release that weekend, White Chicks, thus taking the top spot overall. However, while Moore blazed a new trail into the country’s multiplexes, his was not the only unique strategy for distributing political documentary.

Filmmaker Robert Greenwald took a different tack in 2002 when he produced Unprecedented: The 2000 Presidential Election, a film that looked closely at the controversy surrounding the fight over presidential votes in Florida. Greenwald chose to forgo traditional routes and distribute the film himself. He set up public screenings through liberal groups, such as the Nation Institute and the People for the American Way, while at the same time making a DVD version of the film available for purchase through political Web sites such as MoveOn.org. His guerilla-distribution tactics worked: the film sold over 30,000 copies in three days.

Greenwald has replicated this strategy with subsequent films, including Uncovered: The War on Iraq, Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism, Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (2005), and Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers (2006). The most important aspect of this strategy is timeliness—Greenwald’s films are meant to be seen “in the moment.” As such, they are made quickly on a low budget (often with funds from cooperating political organizations) and then distributed aggressively, utilizing incentives such as free screenings and low prices (the DVDs are often sold for $9.95). In this way, Greenwald is perhaps the quintessential “committed” documentarian of our time, working with specific political organizations to get a pointed message out in the hopes of raising consciousness and affecting change. In many ways, Greenwald is also the first political documentarian to utilize the new media landscape in an integrated fashion, combining any and all means of distribution strategies, from theaters to home video to the Internet. Indeed, Greenwald argues that his biggest contribution to the documentary field is precisely the development of what he calls an “alternative distribution model.” As such, he remains an important figure in the emerging documentary landscape.
opinion in one way or another. But we might wonder, what film doesn’t do this? Is any film—documentary or otherwise—devoid of messages and incapable of influence? A better question to ask might be: what messages are produced by any given film, and how are they meant to influence us? When the History Channel produces a documentary explaining how President Reagan’s nuclear policy helped to end the Cold War and protect America’s position in the world, we don’t often think of this as a piece of “propaganda.” But when a documentary challenges that perception, as Terri Nash’s antinuclear film If You Love This Planet did in 1982, then it can be labeled propaganda, and often is—as was the case in this instance, when the Reagan administration forced exhibitors to attach a propaganda warning label to every showing of Nash’s film. In fact, the real difference between these films lies in the types of messages they are producing. As Combs and Combs argue, a documentary that reproduces popular ideas and reinforces commonly held values constitutes a kind of “deep propaganda” that remains hidden precisely because the messages it puts forth are taken for granted by the culture at large. But when a film openly challenges common values and understandings, as Nash’s film did, its political commitments become more obvious.

THE “TRUTH” ABOUT DOCUMENTARY

If it is agreed that all documentary is, in essence, a form of propaganda, how do we go about evaluating documentaries, in general? For many critics, the important question shifts from one about truth to one about honesty. As cultural anthropologist Jay Ruby has put it, every documentary is “the interpretive act of someone who has a culture, an ideology, who comes from a particular socioeconomic class, is identified with a gender, and often has a conscious point of view” (Ruby 2000, pp. 139–40). The problem is that most documentaries never own up to this fact. Indeed, as Nichols points out, the structural aspects of documentary form that we often take for granted—authoritative voice-overs and illustrative visuals or long takes, a handheld camera and the use of available light and sound—are actually stylistic conventions geared towards producing the appearance of realism. In this way, the look, sound, and feel of documentary produces a kind of “reality effect” that encourages us to accept what it says at face value.

Thus, many critics have praised documentaries that exhibit a more “reflexive” style of filmmaking. Reflexive documentaries are films that call attention to themselves as films by breaking with traditional documentary conventions. Reflexive documentarians often put themselves on screen, speak in the first person, and admit what they have to say is their own opinion. In this way, rather than being more “truthful,” reflexive documentaries are simply more honest about the fact that all any documentary can do, in the end, is construct a particular interpretation of “the truth.”

CASE STUDY: FAHRENHEIT 9/11

All of these questions about documentary suddenly became very relevant in the summer of 2004 when Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 opened. Moore had
made a name for himself with the success of *Roger & Me* (1989), his irreverent look at the disastrous effects the GM plant closings of the mid-1980s had on his home town of Flint, Michigan. His style of filmmaking incorporates a number of “reflexive” techniques. Moore, himself, appears on-screen and provides a first-person voice-over. He routinely provokes the events he films, rather than simply recording what he sees, such as when he and his cameras “ambush” corporate and public officials, producing results that are both humorous and uncomfortable. And he often employs an ironic editing scheme, in which carefully chosen music or the insertion of old film and television clips provide an extra layer of “commentary” to the visuals we see on screen. Through these and other techniques, Moore displays a style that is unquestionably political and unapologetically personal. This being the case, when it was revealed that Moore’s next film would take on the president and the war in Iraq, film critics and political pundits alike took notice. *Fahrenheit 9/11* became a controversy before it even opened in the United States. The vociferous debate it spawned brings up a number of questions regarding the place of political documentary in contemporary culture.

As is often the case, the question of whether or not documentaries should be political was front and center. Critics of Moore predictably labeled the film a piece of propaganda. At best, they complained that Moore presented his information in a biased manner that ignored the “other side” and was geared more towards stoking viewers’ emotions than presenting them with the facts. At worst, they called *Fahrenheit* a “pack of lies” and labeled Moore a traitor. Supporters defended Moore by citing ideas such as the freedom of speech and artistic license. Some argued that while *Fahrenheit* itself was not balanced, Moore’s interpretation of events offered a much-needed counterpoint to the version usually given by the news media. Meanwhile, Moore defended himself by hiring a “war room” of lawyers to combat claims of inaccuracy, and answered accusations of bias by describing his film as a cinematic “op-ed” piece. But while *Fahrenheit 9/11* did much to provoke a widespread public discussion about political documentary, it was apparent that traditional notions of what counted as a documentary remained intact. For instance, while both supporters and detractors felt the need to bicker over Moore’s committed stance on political issues, they often championed films displaying a more “neutral” aesthetic, such as the “verite”-style films *Control Room* (2004) and *Gunner Palace* (2005).

Questions over the political nature of *Fahrenheit 9/11* were not the only debates that surrounded Moore and his film. Many critics worried about the way in which Moore’s narrative-driven, humorous style may have tainted a traditionally sober discourse with “show-biz” values. Should documentaries about serious issues be entertaining? Moore’s answer to this question is an unequivocal “Yes!” He has often railed about the fact that, traditionally, documentary has hampered its own ability to provoke social change by maintaining a set of conventions that are didactic and boring—a style he refers to as the “illustrated lecture.” Moore’s use of dry wit and conventional storytelling are geared towards making films that are both informative and fun. And it’s a tactic that has worked: Moore’s films have continued to outsell each other at the box office, and he currently holds the top three spots for most successful documentaries of all
time. But many critics worry that Moore's tilt towards entertaining means a tilt away from the factual. Indeed, this kind of anxiety often allows Moore's political opponents to dismiss his films out-of-hand, a tactic the Bush administration used when White House communications director Dan Bartlett told the press, “If I wanted to see a good fiction movie, I might go see Shrek or something, but I doubt I'll be seeing Fahrenheit 9/11.”

Fahrenheit 9/11’s popular success also raises questions about a related phenomenon. Michael Moore is not only a filmmaker—he is a celebrity, a movie star, and a political “brand name.” This, of course, has its advantages. Fahrenheit’s boffo box-office was driven by legions of Moore fans. Indeed, many critics credited Moore’s popularity alone for stoking interest in other political documentaries that year. There are, however, downsides to celebrity. Moore has become so personally connected to his films that, oftentimes, critics can’t seem to separate the filmmaker from his argument. At the end of the day, Moore's personal, entertaining style might have allowed his political opponents to engage in a tactic of discrediting the filmmaker rather than the film. This issue has haunted other political documentaries with recognizable personalities, such as Morgan Spurlock’s Super Size Me and the Al Gore film on global warming, An Inconvenient Truth (2006).

The most contentious debate that surrounded Fahrenheit 9/11 and, to a lesser extent, all the political documentaries that came out in 2004, was over what political effect these films might have on the voting public. Here, of course, “political effect” was understood in the most narrow sense of the term, namely: election results. Could a film like Fahrenheit 9/11 actually sway the election? Of course, the results of the 2004 election did not swing Moore’s way, and Bush’s victory led many critics to a rather damning conclusion: that the film was merely “preaching to the choir.” This accusation is often directed against political documentary, and indeed, many on the right were eager to repeat it. Some gleefully argued that not only did Fahrenheit 9/11 fail in its mission to unseat the President, but it actually aided in his victory. Does the election’s outcome mean that we should view Fahrenheit 9/11 as a failure? The rationale behind such declarations is specious, however, for it asks us to conclude that if Moore had not made his film, Bush would have lost, and that one documentary could wield enough power to be the deciding factor in a national election.

**WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

Perhaps the most relevant question to ask, then, when considering the recent popularity of political films, is: “Just what do we expect from a documentary?” Should a documentary be a film that attempts to achieve some kind of measurable social effect? Or should it be a film that simply adds constructively to the public discourse? Should documentaries be emotionally compelling and cinematically entertaining? Or should they be “sober” affairs geared towards serious deliberation? Should a documentary strive to maintain a sense of neutrality and objectivity? Or should it admit its biases up front and present us with a compelling argument? The heated controversy over Fahrenheit 9/11 suggests that these
questions are still very much on the table. Meanwhile, political documentary as a popular form shows no signs of slowing down. As such, it is time to reconsider just what role we want documentary to play in public life.

See also Al-Jazeera; Bias and Objectivity; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Nationalism and the Media; News Satire; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Political Entertainment; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Propaganda Model; Public Opinion; Public Sphere.


J. Scott Oberacker

POLITICAL ENTERTAINMENT: FROM THE WEST WING TO SOUTH PARK

At its best, entertainment can draw us in emotionally, making us care about its subjects, and its wide appeal can attract a considerably larger audience than more sober alternatives. Both of these attributes at times make it an ideal vessel for political information and discussion. Yet some critics see entertainment as an entirely inappropriate site for politics, while yet others see entertainment as incapable of dealing with the complexities and nuances of politics. Can entertainment and politics mix?

Political entertainment is any program, song, book, film, or other cultural product whose primary purpose is to entertain and amuse, frequently (though not necessarily) for commercial purposes, yet that also offers explicit political commentary. Entertainment is laden with other responsibilities—we look to it for escape and emotional inspiration, and to cheer us up, make us laugh or cry, and stimulate our imaginations—but some media products also get political, whether through serious narrative, satiric play, critical dialogue, or imaginative fantasy. The politics in question can be governmental (critique of the president,
for instance), social (feminist or antiracist, for example), or even media-related (criticizing the politics behind news coverage, for instance); can range from mild and playful to deep and biting; and can include both fiction and nonfiction.

The criticisms of political entertainment tend to stem either from a belief that entertainers should stick to entertainment, and hence that the marriage of politics and entertainment is inappropriate, or, alternatively, that as entertainment, it is insufficiently dedicated to its politics, producing “politics lite” or even a mockery of politics.

POLITICS AND ENTERTAINMENT AS AN INAPPROPRIATE MARRIAGE

Many of us divide our world into work and play, seriousness and fun, and to some, entertainment is thus a zone that must remain separate from the serious world of work and politics in order to maintain its claim to entertainment. A meaningful engagement with politics requires that we come face to face with much that is ugly in the world, and hence might seem to offer little room for laughter or joy. As such, entertainment frequently, and refreshingly, offers to take us away from such uncomfortable realities. At the end of a long day’s work, many people seek media entertainment as a refuge from the worries of daily existence, turning on the television, putting on a piece of music, or engrossing themselves in a film, for instance, in order to leave those worries far behind. We often welcome so warmly the imaginative universes that entertainment provides because of their difference from our lived environments; therefore, some
consumers aim to protect these universes from the semblance of “invasion” by the world of politics. Particularly when entertainers espouse political beliefs, then, pundits, letters to newspaper editors, and watercooler discussion alike will often question the entertainers’ right or legitimacy to interject politics into entertainment.

Proponents of political entertainment, however, point out that everything is political. Admittedly, a great deal of any film, show, song, or other product’s politics will be implicit, or subtle, and thus much entertainment will neither advertise its politics, nor necessarily be aware of them. Nevertheless, family sitcoms, for instance, posit very clear notions of what a neighborhood, a family, a man, and a woman are and are not; and even a seemingly escapist program such as The O.C. makes numerous subtle statements about everything from racial politics to poverty to the role of capitalism. We may agree or disagree with these politics, but they are always present, regardless of the product. Indeed, if one ever finds oneself in the presence of a seemingly unpolitical text, this means only that its politics are already one’s own politics, hence blinding the viewer or listener to their presence. Therefore, instead of regarding political entertainment as “pulling a fast one” on us by slipping a dose of politics into our entertainment, we might instead see it as more up front and honest. Politics is about more than just who to vote for in the next election; politics at base is about determining the ways in which all institutions and individuals should interact in society. Politics thus entails everything from what rights a parent has over their children, to what rights a community has over its public places and institutions, to millions of other decisions about what the world should look like and why. Consequently, politics inevitably fly by us in every which way in all entertainment, and so defenders of political entertainment argue that politics are always already present. We can discuss and debate which politics the media should embody, but we cannot wish the political out of entertainment.

POLITICS AND ENTERTAINMENT AS A DYSFUNCTIONAL MARRIAGE

Political entertainment has also been attacked, however, for being too weak. This argument is most forcefully leveled by Neil Postman in his invective against American television, Amusing Ourselves to Death. Postman charges American television with having become nothing but entertainment. Hence, Postman argues that entertainment has colonized politics, reducing serious issues to silly sound bites, flashy graphics, and popularity contests. To Postman, politics are a serious matter, and hence must be treated as such, and the moment that they are mixed with entertainment, the prerogatives of entertainment take over, automatically simplifying and trivializing important points in the process. Postman worries that such an approach to politics produces an apathetic and ill-informed populace, who would rather have a good laugh than ponder our future with due seriousness. A significant danger of political entertainment, then, is that in presenting itself as entertainment and politics, as consumers we may be engaging with entertainment alone, while only thinking that we are engaging with politics.
Of particular concern is entertainment media’s capacity for politics. In crude terms, we could ask exactly how much politics entertainment can hold. How can a four-minute song or a half-hour sitcom treat any topic with due complexity? As we have discussed, many citizens are weary of overt politics in entertainment; consequently, producers of political entertainment all too often err on the side of cautiousness, adding only a light political streak. Many of the sketches on *Saturday Night Live* are illustrative here: often, they will depict political figures, and they will reference contemporary political events, but ultimately little of depth is said. For instance, a sketch lampooning President Bush will play with his malapropisms and style of speech, and will offer quick commentary on a recent presidential policy or program, but the sketch will end there. For political decisions to be meaningful, surely we as a society must make them with as much information available as possible, but sketches of the *Saturday Night Live* variety offer little if any room for background information, potentially bastardizing the issues in question as a result.

**THE POLITICAL POWERS OF ENTERTAINMENT**

Nevertheless, critics of political entertainment as “politics lite” run the risk of holding out for the perfect political vessel. In truth, the often abstract and highly complex world of politics is usually simplified in the telling, regardless of the setting. Ideally, each of us could and would reserve significant time to learn about, discuss, and debate key political issues. But few of us do. Thus, a pragmatic approach to political entertainment might accept that it is an imperfect vessel, even one that will at times cause more problems and misunderstandings than it will resolve, but also that in offering any politics it is performing a potentially vital service to a fragmented, sometimes uninformed society.

Moreover, political entertainment can trump its more serious counterparts by making us care. The news in particular often suffers from telling us that *everything* is worth caring about, and that everything is an important story.
But 20 seconds later, the newscaster will move on, having forgotten this supposedly most important of stories. By contrast, entertainment can harness the affective powers of fiction by introducing us to characters and stories that hit home. Fictional characters and celebrities frequently become important individuals to many citizens, and we can also invest remarkably high levels of trust and admiration in them. Certainly, they can violate this trust and admiration, but in political entertainment’s better moments, they can harness such powers to attract our attention and mobilize us into action. “Free Tibet” concerts, political documentaries, and political raps, for instance, have proven powerful in mobilizing political support for otherwise hidden issues. Particularly when politicians and the realm of politics have suffered such losses in respect by many citizens, and when many citizens have turned in disgust from politics proper, entertainment at times craftily constructs a back door into politics.

Thus, for instance, in his book on *Serial Television*, Glen Creeber suggests that for all its glaring historical and cultural inaccuracies and ethnocentric outlook, the famed American miniseries, *Roots*, may have played a key role in introducing white Americans to some of the horrors of slavery and to African American culture. One could certainly imagine an educational program or documentary that would depict West African culture with more accuracy, and that would be substantially more honest and true to history. But with the powers of mass entertainment behind it, *Roots* drew huge audiences, and became one of the key popular-culture landmarks of its time.

Ironically, then, we find political entertainment in an odd position: it can trivialize politics, and as such may well be in part responsible for political apathy and misunderstanding; but it may also energize politics, make citizens care, and bring citizens to politics. Therefore, we would ultimately be wise to avoid mere generalization, and move towards evaluating specific instances of political entertainment.

**CASE STUDIES**

In recent years, one of the more successful instances of political entertainment has been NBC’s *The West Wing* (1999–2006). Eschewing the more usual television settings of court room, police station, hospital, or family home, *The West Wing* followed the lives of the fictional President Josiah “Jed” Bartlet’s White House staff in their place of work. Scripts frequently drew from ongoing political issues and discussions of the day, whether prominent (the death penalty, terrorism, or partisan politics, for instance) or backroom (such as an entire episode about the census). By giving a fictional glimpse into the lives of the world’s power brokers, *The West Wing* implored its audience to care about the issues that its characters wrestled with on a daily basis, and it neatly mixed substantial and often quite sophisticated discussion of politics with an entertaining format. Moreover, in doing so, it introduced many viewers to the fineries of who does what in American politics, teaching viewers the political process. One simply could not follow *The West Wing* without necessarily engaging with the sphere of politics.
Another television show, but markedly different in tone, Trey Parker and Matt Stone’s *South Park* hit Comedy Central in 1997. An animated sitcom, the show follows the lives of several young children in the small mountain town of South Park, Colorado. Infamous for its profanity, R-rated premises, and lethargic sense of humor, the show quickly gained a position of notoriety as did few programs before it, but behind the swearing and the fart jokes were often some smart examinations of American life and politics. Cultural controversies from the alleged anti-Semitism of *The Passion of the Christ* to the right-to-die debate surrounding the 2005 Terri Schiavo case were dealt with satirically, adding to cultural discussion of the issues as they occurred. For instance, the Schiavo-inspired episode ended with a broadside attack on the media’s ghoulish display of Terri Schiavo’s dying days, and a strong moral regarding the ethics of media coverage that was largely missing from public debate at the time. Frequently using language and premises to shock, *South Park* has followed in the noble satiric footsteps of eighteenth-century satirist Jonathan Swift by using entertainment to grab its audience’s attention and insert commentary into an ongoing debate. It has also managed the rare trick of mixing politics and youth appeal.

However, television by no means holds a monopoly on meaningful political entertainment. Many films, too, from *Crash* to *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Insider* to *Syriana*, *Bulworth* to *Erin Brockovich*, *Wag the Dog* to *Dr. Strangelove*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?* to *All the President’s Men*, and so forth, have mixed stellar performances and entertainment with political commentary. Meanwhile, music and book publishing have long been the media most known for political entertainment, with the likes of Eminem, Ani DiFranco, Rage Against the Machine, and Kanye West, and earlier favorites such as Phil Ochs, Woody Guthrie, John Lennon, and Bob Dylan in music, and a long history of uncompromising literature by writers such as Kurt Vonnegut and John Steinbeck.

**LIMITATIONS**

Undoubtedly, political entertainment has proven more hospitable to some ideas than others. Thus, for instance, tales of racial and gender politics are common, especially when the “bad guys” are specific, rather than a pervasive societal ill in general (though, for example, the 2004 film *Crash* serves as a notable exception). Political corruption is also most commonly dealt with when historical or fictionalized and generic. Overall, political entertainment seems most willing to take on general problems stated in the abstract, rather than engage with named policies, parties, and individuals. Multimedia corporations are still too timid in the face of potentially angry audience backlash, and too keen to protect their own interests, to open the doors of political entertainment too widely. Hence, as has been the case in all societies, we should still expect those in power to reign in and somewhat sterilize political entertainment to the best of their abilities, or simply to deflect its commentary to “safer” abstract topics with no specific incarnation.
THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Of utmost importance, though, is the audience, and thus a great deal of the potential power of political entertainment relies on how individual and communal audiences will react to and use it. If we ignore the politics, or if we use political entertainment as a substitute for a more serious engagement in politics elsewhere, then fears that “politics lite” is undernourishing us will be justified; but if we use it as a springboard to learn more and to do more, political entertainment could prove a vital component of a functioning democracy.

See also Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Narrative Power and Media Influence; News Satire; Political Documentary; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Public Sphere; Shock Jocks.


Jonathan Gray

PORNORGRAPHY

Pornography is defined in the New Oxford American Dictionary as “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.” While pornography involving children is widely condemned, it remains a serious international problem. Pornography involving adults, although contentious, is a massive international media industry.

Pornography—from religious, commercial, social, cultural, artistic, feminist, and gay-friendly perspectives—is variously defined, criticized, and defended. While obscenity historically has not been protected under the First Amendment, very little material has been found by the courts to meet the standard for obscenity. The pornography industry is a multi-billion-dollar one; novel technologies and media—beginning with the printing press and photography and
continuing through film, home video, cable television, the Internet, and digital imaging—historically have worked to expand its reach. Researchers study the impact and effects of pornography on individuals as well as society: who uses pornography and why; how pornography influences attitudes and behaviors, including misogynist attitudes and violence against women; the history of pornography; textual analysis of stories and images; and pornography as a cinematic genre.

Feminists particularly have engaged in wide-ranging debate, with some viewing pornography as a cornerstone industry in promulgating sexist beliefs, actively oppressing women and exploiting sexuality, and others claiming pornography as a potentially liberatory genre, stressing the importance of maintaining the freedom of sexual imagination. In recent times, sexual and sexually objectifying and violent images, based in pornographic conventions, increasingly pervade mainstream culture, raising further debates as to their impact.

**Pornography Timeline**

1500–1800—In Europe pornography was widely used as a shock vehicle criticizing religious and political authorities.

1524—Erotic engravings by Pietro Aretino along with a series of sonnets composed in Italy.

1534—Pietro Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* becomes the prototype for seventeenth-century pornographic prose.

1740s—Pornographic writings become considered a genre.

1769—The word *pornography* emerges in France.

1806—The earliest modern use of the word *pornography* found in Etienne-Gabriel Peignot’s *Dictionnaire critique, littéraire et bibliographique des principaux livres condamnés au feu, supprimés ou cénures*. The pornographic tradition in France strengthens.

1857—The word *pornography* appears for the first time in the *Oxford English Dictionary*; Obscene Publications Act is put into practice.

Late 1800s and early 1900s—Forms of filmic pornography, stag films, begin to circulate.

December 1953—*Playboy* founded by Hugh Hefner.

1959—Obscene Publications Act removes certain restrictions from texts that had been banned as obscene/pornographic if they could be justified as art.


1969—Supreme Court decision, *Stanley v. Georgia*, which held that people could view whatever they wished in the privacy of their own homes.


Late 1960s—Full-length pornographic films begin receiving cinema distribution.

1970—Report by the Commission on Pornography and Obscenity, created by President Johnson.

1970s—Video pornography appears.
1972—First mainstream hardcore pornography film Deep Throat is produced and shown in both adult as well as “public” theatres.
1973—Supreme Court decision, Miller v. California, setting up a community-standards approach to obscenity.
1974—Hustler first published by Larry Flynt.
1976—Women against Violence in Pornography is formed in San Francisco.
1980s—Pornography begins to be distributed over the Internet.
1984—Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon convince the Minneapolis City Council to adopt a civil rights ordinance allowing women to receive damages from the alleged harms resulting from pornography.
1990s—Pornographic magazines for women (Playgirl, Bite, For Women) become established.
1991—With the beginning of World Wide Web/Internet, porn becomes more popular; Nancy Friday’s Women on Top is published.
1992—Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling in R. v. Butler incorporates some elements of Dworkin and MacKinnon’s legal work on pornography into the existing Canadian obscenity law.
1998—Penthouse reveals explicit photos of oral, vaginal, and anal penetration as well as males urinating on females.
2005—U.S. District Court drops federal case against Extreme Associates.
2005—Under new ownership, Penthouse returns to “softer” photos and no longer shows explicit penetration.

HISTORY

Sexually explicit and arousing stories and depictions have from earliest histories been part of human cultures—in erotic contexts as well as, often simultaneously, sacred, artistic, folkloric, and political. Modern pornography began to emerge in the sixteenth century, merging explicit sexual representation with a challenge to some, though not all, traditional moral conventions, for pornography was largely the terrain of male elites and represented their desires and points of view.

In the United States, post–World War II and spurred on by new sexological research, reproductive technologies, emerging movements for social justice, and the formation of the modern consumer economy, the state began to retreat from some of its efforts toward the regulation of sexuality. This allowed the emergence of the modern pornography industry. Playboy was launched in 1953, followed by a number of “men’s” magazines, the large-scale production
Pornography

and dissemination of pornographic film and video, and the burgeoning of the industry through mainstreaming as well as enhancement by new technologies. Since 1957 the Supreme Court has held that obscenity is not protected by the First Amendment. In 1973, the Court gave a three-part means of identifying obscenity, including: Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work appealing to the prurient interest; whether the work is patently offensive; and whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary and/or artistic, political, or scientific value. All three conditions must be met for it to be considered obscene.

In the contemporary period, Fortune 500 corporations like AT&T and General Motors now have affiliates that produce pornography and, while it is difficult to obtain precise data, most researchers conclude that pornography in the United States annually results in profits from 5 to 10 billion dollars if not more, and globally $56 billion or more. Legal actions against pornography have virtually halted, highlighted by a 2005 obscenity case brought by the federal government against Extreme Associates, a production company featured in a 2002 PBS Frontline documentary, “American Porn.” Extreme Associates has an Internet site for members and also makes films featuring scenes of men degrading, raping, sexually torturing, and murdering women. A U.S. District Court judge dismissed the case. There was no dispute that the materials were obscene. Rather, he found that obscenity laws interfered with the exercise of liberty, privacy, and speech and that the law could not rely upon a commonly accepted moral code or standard to prohibit obscene materials.

DEFINITION AND DEBATES

Pornography is generally associated with deliberately arousing and explicit sexual imagery, which renders it deviant for traditional patriarchal religious orientations that continue to associate sexuality with sin, while equating chastity and strictly regulated sexual behavior in heterosexual marriage with goodness.

“I ONLY READ IT FOR THE INTERVIEWS”

In the wake of hard-core pornography, many companies have been remarkably successful selling “soft-core,” “artistic,” or “thinking man’s” pornography. Such pornography usually eschews showing the actual act of intercourse in photographic form, or close-ups in video form, and lays claim to legitimacy by surrounding itself with the nonpornographic. Leading the pack here is Playboy magazine, whose interviews with major intellectuals, politicians, and other cultural elites have allowed the infamous excuse for those buying the magazine that “I only read it for the interviews.” By avoiding the label of hard-core pornography, moreover, producers of many such images in this vein can also declare that they are merely continuing in the age-old tradition of art’s fascination with the nude. As a result, soft-core pornography fills much late night pay-cable programming, has worked its way down from the top shelf of the magazine rack, and often enjoys mainstream acceptance or at least tolerance.
“Family values” functions as a byword for antipornography patriarchal positions that condemn not only all sexual representations but also female sexual and reproductive autonomy, as well as any nonheterosexual and nonmonogamous sexuality. Some pornography advocates critique this heterosexist morality, identifying themselves as “pro-sex.” Others defend pornography by foregrounding it as a First Amendment issue. Both groups tend to defend sexual representations, as well as diverse adult consensual sexual practices, as a form of free speech and expression, as essential to the imagination, as an element of all of the arts, and as a potentially revolutionary force for social change.

Virtually all feminists argue that sexuality must be destigmatized, reconceptualized, and defined in ways that refuse sexist moralities. The association of sexuality with sin is a feature of specifically patriarchal (male-defined and dominating) societies. Such societies control and regulate female sexuality and reproduction, for example, by designating women as the sexual other while men stand in for the generic human, by mandating heterosexuality and by basing that heterosexuality in supposedly innate gender roles of male dominance and female submission. These societies foster conditions that impose a sexual double standard, selecting some women (associated with men who have some social power) for socially acceptable if inferior status in the male-dominant family, and channel other women, girls, and boys and young men (those without social power or connections) into prostitution and pornography. Patriarchal societies give men, officially or not, far more latitude in sexual behavior, and pornography and prostitution, institutions historically geared to men’s desires and needs, are the necessary “dark side” of patriarchal marriage and moralistic impositions of sexual “modesty.” In this way, pornography and conventional morality, though supposedly opposites, actually work hand in glove to assure male access to women, as well as male domination and female stigmatization and subordination.

Some feminists argue that as sexuality is destigmatized, “sex work,” including prostitution and pornography, can be modes whereby women can express agency and achieve sexual and fiscal autonomy. Those associated with what is defined affirmatively as queer culture, including gay, lesbian, transgendered, and heterosexual perspectives and practices that challenge conventional roles, often argue that open and free sexual representation is essential to communicate their history and culture and that social opposition to pornography is fundamentally based in opposition to sexual freedom and diversity.

Mainstream cultural critics of pornography point to the ways that contemporary pornography has become increasingly ubiquitous. They argue that pornography damages relationships between persons, producing unrealistic and often oppressive ideas of sex and beauty; that it limits, rather than expands, the sexual imagination; that it can foster addictive or obsessive responses; and that it increasingly serves as erroneous sex education for children and teenagers.

Antipornography feminists, while opposing censorship, point out that pornography is a historically misogynist institution, one whose very existence signifies that women are dominated. Pornography not only often openly humiliates and degrades women, but it brands women as sex objects in a world where sex itself is considered antithetical to mind or spirit. They contend that mainstream
pornography defines sex in sexist ways, normalizing and naturalizing male dominance and female submission and, by virtue of its ocularcentric and voyeuristic base, promotes a fetishistic and objectifying view of the body and the sexual subject.

Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon are well known for their radical feminist approach to pornography. In a model “Civil-Rights Antipornography Ordinance,” they propose an ordinance that would have nothing to do with police action or censorship, but would allow complaints and civil suits brought by individual plaintiffs. The Ordinance defines pornography in a way that distinguishes it from sexually explicit materials in general. Rather, pornography consists of materials that represent “the graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women” or “men, transsexuals or children used in the place of women.” Their extended discussion delineates specific elements, for example, women being put into “postures or positions of sexual submission, servility or display,” “scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture,” individuals “shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.” Although several communities passed versions of this law, it was overturned in the courts as a violation of the first amendment. At the same time, courts have recognized the use of pornography as a tool of sexual harassment, one that generates a hostile climate for women workers in offices, factories, and other job sites.

Numerous feminists link the practices and underlying themes of pornography to other forms of oppression. For example, Patricia Hill Collins links the style and themes of U.S. pornography to the beliefs and practices associated with white enslavement of Africans and their descendents—including bondage, whipping, and the association of black women and men with animals and hypersexuality.

USES AND EFFECTS

Research has examined the role of mass-mediated pornography in causing harmful or unwanted social effects, including the furtherance of sexism as well as violence against women and/or willingness to tolerate such violence; profiles of those who work in pornography as well as those who enjoy it; and the potentially addictive aspects of pornography.

Research into the uses and effects of pornography has been conducted employing experimental studies, anecdotal evidence from interviews and personal stories, polling, and statistical data asserting connections between existence or use of pornography and undesirable social phenomena. Two presidential commissions studied the effects of pornography, one beginning in the 1960s and the other in the 1980s. The first concluded that there were no harmful effects; and the second concluded that sexually violent and degrading pornography normalized sexist attitudes (e.g., believing that women want to be raped by men) and therefore contributed to actual violence. These conclusions have been subjected to wide-ranging debate, for example, around the validity of information obtained from necessarily contrived laboratory experiments (usually with male students), the difficulty of defining common terms like *degradation*, the
unwillingness of people to accurately report their own behavior, the political bias of the researchers, and so on.

Internationally, feminist researchers point out links between pornography and sex trafficking and slavery as well as the use of pornography in conquest, where prostitution is imposed and pornography is made of the subjugated women as well as men. For example, during the war between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, Serbian forces systematically raped women as a tactic of genocide and these rapes were photographed and videotaped. Sexual torture, photographed and displayed as kind of war pornography, also was practiced by U.S. troops against Iraqi prisoners in the American prison at Abu Ghraib in Iraq in 2003. Subsequently, investigators released photographs of male Iraqis sexually humiliated and tortured by U.S. soldiers. There also were pornographic videos and photographs made of female prisoners, but these have not been released. Feminist activists argue that in the case of war and forced occupation, pornography regularly is used to bolster the invading forces’ morale, and to destroy the self-regard of occupied peoples who are used for pornography as well as sex tourism.

CONCLUSION

Pornography is now openly diffused throughout American culture. Not only has it grown enormously as an industry, but, in mainstream imagery, other media outlets use typical pornographic images and themes in advertisements,
music videos, and video games, and to publicize celebrities or events. Pornography also has become a legitimate topic for academic study and the subject of college classes.

Research shows that more women now use pornography. As part of the feminist project of redefining sexuality, there has been a surge in erotic stories and images aimed at female audiences. Some feminists and/or those identified with queer communities have begun to produce what they consider to be subversive pornographies that challenge both traditional morality and the conventions of mainstream, sexist pornography, for example, by featuring models who are not conventionally beautiful and by valorizing nontraditional gender roles and nonheterosexual practices; by celebrating the body, sexuality, and pleasure; by acknowledging lesbian, gay, and transgender realities and desires; and by stressing female sexual desire and agency.

Some applaud this expansion of pornography as reflecting greater sexual autonomy for women as well as a liberalization of social attitudes toward sexuality. Others argue that the mainstreaming of pornography does not produce or reflect freedom, but instead represents a backlash against the women's liberation movement and furthers the commoditization of sexuality, for example, in the ways that young girls are now routinely represented, often fashionably dressed, as sexually available. The system of patriarchal domination has always, one way or another, colonized the erotic. Modern pornography furthers the interests not only of sexism, but also capitalism and other forms of domination. Sexuality, conflated with both domination and objectification, can more readily be channeled into, for example, the desire for consumer goods or the thrill of military conquest.

Visionary feminist thinkers aver that to be truly “pro-sex” we need to be critically “antipornography.” Eroticism is humanity’s birthright, a force of creativity, necessary to wholeness, and the energy source of art, connection, resistance, and transformation. Patricia Hill Collins urges both women and men to reject pornographic definitions of self and sexuality that are fragmenting, objectifying, or exploitative, and instead articulate a goal of “honest bodies,” those based in “sexual autonomy and soul, expressiveness, spirituality, sensuality, sexuality, and an expanded notion of the erotic as a life force.”

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Body Image; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Media and the Crisis of Values; Obscenity and Indecency; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Representations of Masculinity; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks; Violence and Media; Women’s Magazines.


Jane Caputi and Casey McCabe

PRESIDENTIAL STAGECRAFT AND MILITAINMENT

In an age of mass media, the public learns about war and understands its life and death consequences through television images and the many other sources of news narratives across the media spectrum. In addition to news, entertainment formats (frequently based on real combat) also present forceful images of war, weaponry, and the soldiers who fight and die in continuing global conflict. In recent years, a hybrid format that blurs the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, referred to as militainment, has been employed by the media and the military to represent war in our time. In addition, defining moments in the reporting of war and conflict are increasingly stage-managed by the Pentagon and White House public relations professionals.

Militainment and stagecraft are attempts to control media imagery and the meanings of war through fictional formatting, information management, and media choreography. These sophisticated strategies raise issues about the public’s ability to receive accurate information and a true picture of what war and conflict are actually like.

War is understood and interpreted, justified and judged through the media that tell the stories of war. Most civilians experience military conflict through the media, their impressions derived not from the battles in distant lands but from the manner they are rendered at home. Struggles over war’s true meaning, its values and necessities, play out on movie and television screens and in the photographs of newspapers and magazines. These representations are influenced by the demands of commercial media, politics, and military pressures. By the twenty-first century, the media has become the battleground where the struggle to win the hearts and minds of the public is carried out through the increasingly persuasive media management strategies of militainment and stagecraft.

THE BATTLE OVER PUBLIC OPINION

The process of negotiating the meaning of war and its depictions has been going on for centuries, but with mass media and new digital technology, that process has come to play a profound role in global conflict. Over the last century, the American public has at times expressed both favorable and disdainful
opinions about war and its necessities, and those attitudes have influenced the path of conflict. Over the years, elected officials and military planners have faced significant public opposition to war. Convincing the public that war is necessary, that all diplomatic channels have been exhausted, and that the call to military action justifies the inevitable loss of life in its wake requires persuasive and well-planned campaigns. Indeed, once war is waged, problems with battlefield logistics, military conduct, and casualty figures can be an even greater deterrent to favorable public opinion, or what has been referred to as “homefront morale.” Homefront morale and the public’s resolve to continue the fight depend on a complicated equation that compares the war’s justification with its destructive force. Once the public perceives that the cost in human life is too high a price to pay for the stated goals, opinion quickly turns against the war effort.

By the twenty-first century, images of soldiers and civilians who inevitably die in conflict, once prevalent on television during the Vietnam War, were all but eliminated from media coverage of the war in Iraq. In the absence of pictures of death and suffering, war is more easily depicted in favorable terms, as either an exciting video game, an action-packed battle film, or a rousing victory celebration. Shaping war narratives according to these formats lessens the emotional impact that grisly images from the actual battlefield might have. In doing so, the public is removed from the killing, which in a democratic system, is being carried out in its name.

PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE THANKSGIVING TURKEY WITH TROOPS IN THE GREEN ZONE, 2003

On Thanksgiving Day 2003, Air Force One left Washington, DC, on a secret trip that would carry a small group of aides with the president to the Baghdad Airport for a two-and-a-half-hour visit and photo-op with 600 U.S. troops lucky enough to be stationed in the Green Zone. The widely published image from this trip shows a beaming president wearing an Army flight jacket, cradling a bountiful golden-brown turkey generously garnished with grapes and all the trimmings. He appears to be serving dinner to the grateful soldiers who surround him. A moment of high patriotism, the picture was ubiquitous in the days that followed, and the president’s poll numbers shot up five points as criticism for his seeming indifference to the suffering of American troops was quieted.

It would take a week for the Washington Post to report that the president was not actually serving the soldiers, who were eating presliced turkey from canteen-style hot plates. It was six o’clock in the morning, and the turkey Bush held was inedible. White House officials rebuked those who called the turkey fake, insisting it was not a presidential prop, but a standard decoration supplied by contractors for the chow hall. In a burst of spontaneous enthusiasm, the president had raised the platter and the shutter clicked. To the company that produced a limited-edition Turkey Dinner Action Figure of the President for $34.95, it did not matter that some viewed the secret trip as a ploy, or even a cowardly act, because the president had been criticized for not attending services at U.S. military bases where the bodies of the fallen return home. It became “a piece of our nation’s history.”
PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE TOP GUN FLIGHT

One of the best illustrations of presidential stagecraft during the war in Iraq came after “major combat operations” were over. This dramatic visual event was staged in real time and performed by President George W. Bush. The president garnered much media attention when, dressed in a military flight suit in the cockpit of a fighter jet, he flew the plane and made a successful landing onto the aircraft carrier the U.S.S. Lincoln. He was welcomed by the military personnel who had just returned from Iraq. In front of a banner that hung from the ship’s upper deck proclaiming “Mission Accomplished,” President Bush told the country that the successful invasion of Iraq was over. The White House said the flight on the jet fighter was necessary because the carrier was too far out to sea to be reached by helicopter. In fact, a few columnists and alternative news sources reported that the ship was so close that it had to be turned around to prevent television cameras from catching the San Diego coastline in the background. More importantly, as history would show, the invasion of Iraq was just the beginning of a long, drawn-out conflict that would cost many more Iraqi and American lives. In hindsight, this incident has come to symbolically underscore a lack of military planning for a clear exit strategy from the country.

The stage-managed event was reported as news, and some television personalities, most notably Robert Novak, pointed out how well the flight suit fit the president. However, independent video editors revealed that the dramatic landing was virtually identical to visual sequences in the popular Tom Cruise film of 1986, Top Gun (see “Hollywood Victory,” distributed by Paper Tiger Television, New York). Mainstream commercial broadcasters made few critical comments that might have exposed the flight’s choreography, and question its message and purpose, most likely because such production values and fictional referencing have become standard features in commercial media’s programming design.

MERGING NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT

After the September 11, 2001, attacks on America, the Pentagon met with media industry producers and directors and requested that Hollywood join the fight against terrorism. The military and the media collaborated on such films and television programs as Behind Enemy Lines and ABC’s Profiles from the Front Line. This direct request from the White House formalized what was already an ongoing relationship between the film industry and the Department of Defense. Film scripts must be given the stamp of approval from the military, and the Pentagon is quite selective in choosing which movies it officially endorses with access to bases and ultra-high-tech weaponry. The films of Jerry Bruckheimer are popular with the Pentagon, and posters of his films hang on the walls there. Pearl Harbor got mixed reviews from critics, but its patriotic themes passed muster with the Department of Defense, and it was well supplied by the military.
RESISTING PENTAGON INFLUENCE

The first significant film to be set in the Persian Gulf depicting Desert Storm was Edward Zwick’s *Courage Under Fire* (1996). The film features Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Sterling (Denzel Washington), the leader of a tank battalion, who during the war had directed fire at a suspected enemy vehicle, only to find that he had destroyed one of his own. After the war he struggles to come to terms with this incident of friendly fire that bears an uncomfortably close resemblance to actual conduct in the war. Sterling is dispatched to investigate events surrounding the death of Captain Karen Walden (Meg Ryan), a Medivac helicopter pilot killed in action. The film’s dark cast of the military goes further than friendly fire and portrays the mutiny, cowardliness, and incompetence of the soldiers Captain Walden helped save. Unable to accept orders from a woman, one soldier under her command leaves her wounded in the desert, telling the rescue pilot that she is already dead. The U.S. Army refused to supply equipment for the film unless Zwick changed the script. Refusing to depict the military and the war in a better light, Zwick made the film without assistance from the Pentagon.

When the United States began a bombing campaign over Afghanistan, press requests for access to the war were refused, but working for ABC’s entertainment division, Jerry Bruckheimer shot *Profiles from the Front Line* with full cooperation from the U.S. military. The series from Afghanistan aired on ABC during the buildup to war in Iraq, and *Profiles* was the first program to present a war through the same visual and narrative style used in reality television. Television news would later take its cues from movie producer Bruckheimer when the war on Iraq began.

This first “reality show” treatment of the war on terror made no attempt to cover civilians killed in the bombing of Afghanistan, and certainly offered no pictures of that reality. Much of the media coverage of the invasion of Iraq was foreshadowed by *Profiles from the Front Line*, and Iraq became the first war to be televised in real time with embedded journalists providing videophone pictures live from the desert battlefield. These compelling images featured brave soldiers fighting, but almost no images of death or suffering. Some alternative Internet sources showed the casualties of war, some of which were shut down by the Pentagon.

THE STORY OF SAVING PRIVATE LYNCH

At one point, the initial invasion of Iraq was stalled by sandstorms and heavy resistance around the capital of Baghdad. At that point, in the early morning hours of April 2, 2003, the military announced to reporters at Central Command in Qatar that a crack commando unit had rescued a young female private named Jessica Lynch. Commandos had stormed a Nasiriyah hospital and carried her to safety in a waiting Black Hawk helicopter. The gripping story was ubiquitously described in the mainstream media as a daring raid. *Time*
magazine asserted, on April 14, 2003, that Hollywood could not have dreamed up a more singular tale.

Doubts about the story’s authenticity were first raised by the London Times on April 16, 2003. After a thorough investigation, the BBC concluded that Lynch’s rescue was a staged operation. No embedded journalist accompanied the raid, and the green night footage was shot and cleverly edited by the military’s own Combat Camera as proof that a battle to free Lynch had occurred when it had not. On May 18, 2003, the BBC pointed out the fictional aspects of the raid, and observed that the Pentagon had been influenced by Hollywood producers of reality television and action movies, most notably Jerry Bruckheimer.

U.S. news headlines embellished the story, saying that Jessica had fought for her life, and had sustained multiple gunshot wounds. Some added that Jessica was stabbed by Iraqi forces, and even raped. Months later, it was reported that, in fact, no fighting had occurred, but rather Lynch suffered only accident injuries when her vehicle overturned. A medical checkup by U.S. doctors confirmed that Iraqi doctors had tended her injuries, a broken arm and leg and a dislocated ankle.

The incident demonstrates the use of militainment. The rescue of Jessica was a classic rescue narrative of mythic proportions told at a difficult time in the fighting to boost American morale and public support for the war. After the Lynch story, the downed statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad’s Firdos Square would become the icon of victory over Iraq. Only later would an internal Army study find that the statue toppling was a psychological operations maneuver—another staged event.

**WAR GAMES**

*America’s Army* was the first video game created by the military and was offered free to kids to download off the Internet on July 4, 2002. It became the number-one online action game in the country with more than 3 million registered players. Players are positioned as first-person shooters, and after basic training, the advanced “marksmanhip” is so realistic that the computer screen moves in time to the digital soldier’s breathing under fire. The online actors are patterned after the actions of real soldiers. Though the weapons, graphics, and settings are highly realistic, the violent consequences of killing are downplayed. The enemy is faceless and masked, and when hit releases a puff of red smoke and falls to the ground. As CNN reported, “From a propaganda perspective the Army has seemingly hit the jackpot. (And the Army readily admits the games are a propaganda device)” (CNN/money.com, June 3, 2002).

When video games depict violent combat but downplay the graphic images of death or other horrific aspects of war, they offer a sanitized version of fantasy combat, even while depicting actual battles. The visual styles and compelling participation offered to gamers turn the otherwise disturbing aspects of war and killing into excitement and entertainment. The recognizable imagery of video war games has become popular as a graphic style in many feature films depicting combat. Computer-based imaging is also seen in news coverage of war,
which often features digital graphics of high-tech weapons systems supplied by the Pentagon.

Video games are now used by the military for recruitment and training. The Department of Defense contracted with the company Ubisoft to help market and distribute America's Army. At a computer-gaming conference in early 2005, Ubisoft deployed the Frag Dolls, a group of young women gamers with names like Jinx and Eekers, to demonstrate America’s Army. The “booth babes” posed for pictures as they played the games, inviting young men to enter and occupy the gaming space. Eekers’s promotional blog about her Combat Convoy Experience can be found on the America’s Army Web site. These and the other points of convergence between the media and the Department of Defense have led to what some critics have called the military/entertainment complex.

The ongoing merger between the entertainment and military industries, together with the use of sophisticated media managing and stagecraft by the government, have raised serious issues for those concerned with the role of the media in a democratic society, especially during times of war. The public relies on the media to report the consequences of war, but when the industry is economically and culturally invested in the technologies of war, critics question its ability to be an independent source of information. Parents and educators worry that young people, especially military recruits, will be unprepared for the actual consequences of war. The audio-visual milieu that turns war into entertainment also lessens the public's ability to feel alarm and compassion for those who die in wars carried out in its name.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Embedding Journalists; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media Watch Groups; Nationalism and the Media; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Political Documentary; Political Entertainment; Propaganda Model; Public Opinion; Reality Television; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Women; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Video Games.


Robin Andersen

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Product placement is the intentional and strategic positioning of brand-name products and services in various media for the purposes of advertising and brand promotion. Examples include movies, TV shows, video and computer games, comics, novels, theater productions, even news shows. Why has this practice, sometimes called “branded entertainment,” grown into a $4 billion
industry in just a few years? Is it merely about adding “realism” to all of these media products, as the industry routinely claims? Or is placement perhaps a stealth way of advertising to distracted or impressionable audiences? What can the phenomenal growth of product placement tell us about the state of our media and entertainment systems?

In an ever more crowded commercial media environment, advertisers and their agencies must continually search for more effective ways of reaching their target audiences. Indeed, they refer to this self-generated crowding as “ad clutter”: a cacophony of advertising messages that is so busy and so overwhelming, it’s increasingly difficult to reach target audiences without the distraction of other competing commercial messages. Many in the advertising industry have become disenchanted with conventional advertising methods, such as TV and radio commercials, because viewers can skip, zip, zap, or TiVo their way around these messages.

Product placement offers a way to sidestep this issue by putting the ad message inside the media content it would otherwise bookend. The growing use of digital video recorders (DVRs) ensures that more products and ad slogans will be incorporated into popular TV programs. Added benefits for advertisers include the enviable and often exclusive association with a celebrity, an “event” movie, or a hit TV show; and the recurrent and expanding exposure brought by syndication, repeats, reruns, cable, DVD, international distribution, and so forth.

**FILMS**

An increasing trend toward product placement is also found in film production. The economic benefits of using placement are substantial. One reason is that some of the massive production costs associated with filmmaking can be significantly offset by cutting deals with advertisers to feature their products: either the advertiser pays handsomely to have their product appear in the movie, or the producers save substantially by having interested advertisers provide props, uniforms, trucks, even entire sets. Product placement in films once took the form of side deals between props managers and advertisers, with the former agreeing to add a product to a scene in return for a small amount of money, but the practice is now carefully coordinated by studios, and a potentially lucrative business. Indeed, carefully negotiated deals can save movie productions millions
of dollars. One recent deal involved the placement of one vintage Coca-Cola glass in a period scene in a movie about Bob Dylan. In return for this placement, Coca-Cola agreed to provide all the soda for the entire crew and cast for the duration of the production—a saving in the order of tens of thousands of dollars.

Such economic benefits further ensure that priority will often be given to dialogue, scenes, and entire scripts that lend themselves most readily to product placement. It also means viewers can expect to see more advertising inside movies—not just workaday “mainstream” comedies and romances (which are often positively saturated with placements—think of “star vehicles” for actors such as Tom Hanks and Adam Sandler, with Hanks’s *Cast Away* providing one of the garish examples of product placement by raising FedEx to the level of virtual co-star), but also in the work of more “serious” directors.

**HISTORY**

The movies were recognized as a potential advertising medium very early on. In a book published in 1916 titled *Advertising by Motion Pictures*, the author Ernest A. Dench wrote: “It will probably seem rather strange to you that an invention like the cinematograph, which has achieved widespread fame as a form of entertainment, can perform the functions of advertising, but it is none the less

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**PRODUCT PLACEMENT TIMELINE**

1982—*E.T.* features Reece’s Pieces. Sales jump 65 percent.
1999—“BMW gave us a lot of money if we put their car in the movie. So we did.” John Schwartzman, Director of Photography, *Armageddon*; “We used a TAG Heuer big clock, and I put that little TAG logo there and it saved me $75,000.” Michael Bay, Director, *Armageddon* (commentary tracks, special edition DVD).
2000—*Cast Away* features 56 appearances of the FedEx logo. A FedEx spokesperson says, “We’re a character in this movie.”
2004—U.S. product placement (all media): $3.5 billion.
2009—U.S. product placement (all media): $6.9 billion (projected).

Product placement, then, is just one advertising practice that has been long associated with film, and finds its place among other marketing strategies such as tie-ins, cross-promotions, and product merchandising. Indeed, it is a relatively new term for a practice that is almost as old as the medium of film itself. This has included payments by DeBeers to guarantee that diamonds would be mentioned in scripts, to the use of costume drama to promote the fashion industry.

Meanwhile, American television began as an advertising vehicle. The current practice of “spot advertising,” in which multiple advertisers’ products are shilled in commercial breaks during a program, was preceded by a system by which each program had a single sponsor. Television stars were expected to sell their program sponsor’s product in a variety of venues, including the program itself. Thus, for instance, the early sitcom *I Remember Mama* would often end with the narrator glowing about the beloved Mama’s insistence on making Maxwell House coffee, and even Fred Flintstone anachronistically smoked Winston cigarettes. However, with time, this practice waned somewhat, as television shows became too expensive for any one advertiser to financially support alone, and it is only in recent years that the practice is once more becoming prevalent, now often with multiple placements per program.

**OUT OF THE CLOSET**

The founding of the Entertainment Resources & Marketing Association (ERMA) in 1991 marked a moment of formalization of the industry, bringing product placement, as the first president of the ERMA put it, “out of the closet.” No longer was placement to be understood as a sporadic, almost experimental practice. In film, particularly, the early use of Reece’s Pieces in *E.T.* proved to be an enormous success, and when *Dirty Harry* used a 44 Magnum handgun, it was one of the most memorable moments in the film and became a staple of the sequels. Sales of Ray-Bans jumped when Tom Cruise wore them in *Risky Business*. These early successes established the practice, and the ERMA now represents the interests of dozens of agencies dedicated to brokering deals between advertisers and studios.

**STEALTH PERSUASIONS**

Product placement can be understood most simply as a form of “ad creep”: a symptom of advertisers’ escalating need to reach consumers in largely unfettered ways. The movies offer a wonderful environment for this: amazing sound systems, comfy seats, very few distractions, and the kind of ticket prices that would understandably make one reluctant to sully the experience with negative thoughts. The strange thing is we don’t actually notice brand appearances in movies all that much, unless we’re been reminded to look out for them. On the other hand, when we see an ad, it is clear to us that it has been designed to persuade us to buy a product. For this reason, when we look at ads, we do
Do you mind?

When placement agencies claim that most people really don’t mind product placement, one wonders whether it’s because we genuinely “don’t mind” or because we remain uninformed about how hard people are working behind the scenes to get those brands before our eyes. One infamous survey done in 1993 by researchers Nebenzahl and Secunda concluded that cinemagoers don’t mind placement. Their method? Asking people in movie lines whether they would prefer higher ticket prices instead. There was no third option.

Folks in the industry will claim publicly that they are simply providing realism: we live in a branded world, therefore the world on the screen would actually look “unreal” if it wasn’t also saturated with brands. Critics of the proliferating commercialization of the media charge that the persistent claim of added realism is disingenuous, and point to a variety of counter arguments:

• Placement agencies work to make (or save) money through advertising, otherwise they’d be called “realism consultants” or some such thing.
• If we look carefully at many, many movies (often older ones) we can see multiple ways in which scenes have been crafted so as not to emphasize
labels, signs, and logos. Directors are highly inventive, visual people: they can choose not to focus in on the logo on the hood of the car; not to make the actors turn their soda cans to camera, and so on. Indeed, placement often renders scenes *unrealistic*, as when multiple scenes from television’s *Frasier* ensure that the package of Pepperidge Farm’s Milano cookies are magically pointing label-out in each of three camera angles.

- Generic, “no-name,” or even invented brands have long been a part of the make-believe of the movies and television, the job of set dressers and prop masters; although the placement experts would have us believe otherwise, it seems hard to imagine moviegoers or television viewers leaving the theater or turning off the television in disgust at the lack of “real” brands. ABC’s immensely successful *Lost*, for instance, offers its castaway characters only a generic, fictional brand of food, with no noticeable audience attrition as a result.

- The kinds of movies that placement agencies love—big budgets, lots of action and effects, huge opening weekends, happy endings—are rarely about “real” things. More like asteroids or giant waves hitting earth, real life dinosaurs, the White House being shot up by a spaceship, a hero who gets out of scrapes with highly unlikely gadgets, and so on.

- When, occasionally, two movies with more or less the same theme emerge from Hollywood at about the same time (e.g., *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon*, *A Bug’s Life* and *Antz*), we would expect them both to have the same amount of product placement in them. And yet we find 18 brand appearances in *Capote* but only five in *Infamous*. (Both films are realist dramas that tell basically the same story about a specific period in the life of writer Truman Capote.)

Based on the evidence available, then, we should understand that product placement does not exist to beef up the “realism” of movies, their capacity to reflect precisely the world around us. Product placement is advertising by another name. While the negative consequences for the creative process of storytelling through the media of film or television are sometimes hard to quantify, there is no doubt that many films and television programs have been altered either before or during production—in order to accommodate products and services. Editing and pacing have been changed as the camera is held static to display a product logo. Dialogue and scripts are altered to include brands, and settings have sometimes been changed to foreground products. Manufactures pay higher sums to have the stars of the big screen mention their products, wear their clothes, and drive their cars, and increasingly, we are even seeing significant placement in trailers. For example, the trailer for *The Transporter 2* acted as an ode to Audi as much as an advertisement for the film. Film culture continues to confer artistic status to the medium, with awards given for editing, camerawork, acting, set, and costume design. Yet with product placement, the collaboration revolves around the motivation to sell, a motivation distinct from the necessities of character development, narrative, and filmic aesthetics.
PARODYING PLACEMENT

With movies such as Wayne’s World (see “Product Placement Timeline” sidebar), Hollywood has realized the benefits of presenting its placements periodically: not only do producers still get the money, but they seemingly escape the accusation of selling out, while the advertiser receives prominent exposure and seems cool, hip, and willing to take a joke—an arrangement, therefore, calculated to bring both parties maximum benefit. In this regard, we might be more impressed by the placement parodies in, for example, the films of Kevin Smith (Nails Cigarettes; Discreeto Burritos) and Quentin Tarantino (Big Kahuna Burger; Jack Rabbit Slim’s Restaurants). In The Simpsons, fictional brands such as Duff Beer, Lard Lad Donuts, or Laramie Cigarettes take the spotlight, thereby drawing viewers’ attention to the practices of product placement, while also avoiding using this seeming lesson of media literacy as yet another platform for advertising.

THE FUTURE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND THE FATE OF THE MOVIES

With the arrival of reality television, we have witnessed the summary collapse of the formal distinction between TV shows and the commercials they once sandwiched. Programs such as The Apprentice and Survivor allowed producer Mark Burnett to make vast sums in placement deals, basing entire episodes around the contestants’ need to advertise a certain product in the case of The Apprentice, and offering the food-deprived Survivor cast Doritos as a way of ensuring endless paeans to the wonders of the nacho chip. Similarly, American Idol judges drink nothing but Coca-Cola, The Amazing Race’s family edition showed endless scenes of contestants gassing their cars up at BP, and America’s Next Top Model’s reward of a Cover Girl contract ensures excited weekly mentions of the cosmetics company.

Movies, though, are not far behind, given their appeal to advertisers, and the relative lack of organized resistance to this practice. To take one example: Tom Hanks is a celebrated actor, but he’s also a gift to advertisers, since he appears to have no qualms at all about cozying up to products, as demonstrated by four of the most placement-saturated movies of recent times: Forrest Gump, You’ve Got Mail, Cast Away, and The Terminal. Such celebrated film stars of the past were reluctant to have their names associated with the commercial necessities of advertising, but Hanks’s newest film project is called How Starbucks Saved My Life.

Nonreality television, too, is growing more placement friendly, with numerous advertisers experimenting with “old-style” single sponsorship for one-off events, as when one season of 24 began without commercials, yet with continuous loving shots of hero Jack Bauer in his Ford SUV, and as entire episodes of the former ratings giant Friends revolved around the characters’ love of certain products, such as Pottery Barn furniture.

Judging by industry figures (see “Product Placement Timeline”) we can look forward to more and more placement, which may lead to fewer and fewer
movies that do not readily lend themselves to having their scripts transformed into two-hour shills. And a new moviegoing generation that never had the pleasure of seeing placement-free movies will wonder what all the fuss was about, while the marriage of culture and consumption—of understanding ourselves chiefly through the products we choose—will be all the more entrenched.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Branding the Globe; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Hypercommercialism; Independent Cinema; Media Reform; Mobile Media; Pharmaceutical Advertising; Reality Television; Runaway Productions and the Globalization of Hollywood; TiVo; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; Video News Releases.


Matt Soar

PROPAGANDA MODEL

In the 1980s, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky formulated and applied the “propaganda model” in their groundbreaking work, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. Since that time the model has become one of the most highly contested and debated models within communication studies. Herman and Chomsky argue that elite agenda-setting media play an important role in establishing a framework for what is called “cultural hegemony.” The general argument is that elite media legitimize dominant ideological principles and social institutions and defend the principal economic, social, and political agendas of powerful corporate, institutional, and state interests.
The propaganda model assumes that regularities of misrepresentation in media flow directly from the concentration of power in society. It holds that media interlock with other institutional sectors in ownership, management, and social circles, effectively circumventing their ability to remain analytically detached from the power structures of which they themselves are integral parts. The net result of this, the model concludes, is self-censorship, without any significant coercion. Media performance is understood as an outcome of market forces.

This model has been a battleground issue because it questions many of the basic assumptions of American democratic media practices, especially First Amendment guarantees of a free and open press able to provide citizens with the information they need to shape their own lives, elect their leaders, and create policies in their own interests. Yet like most critical ideas, the model challenges the media to live up to its democratic mandate and it points to the ways in which, and reasons why, the fourth estate often fails to keep the public informed. In addition, in a country that prides itself on its freedom of expression and civil liberties, the model asserts that Americans are the targets of an all-encompassing propaganda environment that is almost invisible and is infrequently identified as such. Though it presents at times devastating criticisms of the media that many believe to be extreme, over the past 20 years the model has proven to be a useful tool to scholars and analysts seeking to understand the complexities of how and why the media often fail to live up to their democratic mandate.

THE FIVE FILTERS

The propaganda model presumes that a series of five interrelated filters constrain how media create news. In brief, these influences include: (1) ownership, size, and profit orientation of dominant media firms; (2) advertising as the principle source of media revenue; (3) dominance of official sources within the news; (4) flak as a control mechanism; and (5) anti-communism and/or the dominant ideology as a means of social control. Herman and Chomsky maintain that these pressures on reporting are the most dominant elements in the news production process. The filters interact, but also operate individually and one filter may have more influence at any one point in time. How particular topics, issues, events, actors, and viewpoints are represented within the news, and whether they are present at all, is bound to the structural, institutional context(s) in which news itself is created and produced. The underlying assumption is that media shape public opinion by controlling what ideas are presented and how they are treated, and also by limiting the range of credible alternatives.

According to Chomsky, social control within the capitalist democracies is so effective because ideological indoctrination is combined with a general impression that society is relatively open and free. The view of dominant social institutions as autocratic, oppressive, deterministic, and coercive can be understood as the bedrock on which the foundations of the propaganda model
FROM THE COLD WAR FILTER TO ANTI-TERRORISM

Written at the tail end of the Cold War, Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model made note of the anti-Communist filter on news at the time. Like most Americans, many journalists had been trained to vilify Communism, and thus actions of Communist or even Socialist governments were reported with suspicion and wariness, and domestic policy reporting was careful not to appear in any way sympathetic to Communism or Communist causes. The result was yet another limitation on American journalism that predetermined the frame within which much world news was set, and that restricted the sort of reporting that could take place domestically. Twenty years later, post–Cold War, remnants of a long held anti-Communism, and hence of the anti-Communist filter, have not yet passed on, but they have been replaced more prominently with an anti-terrorism filter. Rhetoric similar to the Cold War era is once again common, as journalism participates in the Bush administration’s division of the world into the good guys and bad guys, lovers of freedom and forces of hate, the noble and the evil. Anti-Communism used to illicit conformity, in much the same way that anti-terrorism filter has used fear to stifle dissent and challenge long-standing civil liberties and freedoms.

As earlier, many journalists fear appearing to be “anti-American” by examining social or cultural issues behind “terrorism,” or even sometimes of interrogating the complicity of Western democracies in financing and establishing “terrorists.” Once more, then, much international news is framed and thereby told before a journalist even studies the facts, and much domestic policy reporting reacts to the much-hyped figure of the terrorist. As such, the anti-Communist filter has become, or, rather, has been supplemented by, the anti-terrorist filter.

are constructed. The propaganda model is first and foremost an institutional critique of media. It is a critical perspective, one that conceptually confronts how the interrelations of state, market and ideology constrain democracy, and it theorizes the operation of power in relation to dominant structural elements. Many scholars have embraced the model principally because it offers an attractive analytical framework, one that is oriented toward empirical research.

The propaganda model assumes that media choices pertaining to story treatment are fundamentally political choices. It predicts that the treatment accorded certain events, actors, and voices will differ in ways that serve political ends. The model has its own methodological approach to the study of news discourse.

CENTRAL METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES

Some commentators have suggested that Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model does not constitute a fully fledged analysis of media discourse because no single article or book chapter has been devoted to methodology alone, and scholars have been required to consult a diverse range of books and essays
ANALYZING INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE AS “PAIRED EXAMPLES”: EAST TIMOR AND KUWAIT

In the months following the August 1990 Iraq invasion of Kuwait, the Canadian News Index lists approximately 200 articles published in Canadian daily newspapers on the invasion. Most of the headlines that accompanied these articles were highly sensationalistic, purposefully designed to draw reader attention, such as “Kuwait Becomes ‘Wasteland’: Witnesses Recall the Horror of Iraqi Murder, Pillage and Rape” and “Atrocities Ravage Kuwait as ‘Time Is Running Out.’” In stark contrast, Indonesia’s 1975 invasion of East Timor was accorded an absolute low volume of news coverage within the Canadian media. The headlines reflected the overall differences in reporting. The East Timor headlines were just as the propaganda model would predict. Consider these two headlines, in comparison with the headlines noted above: “Reports Conflict on Timor” (December 9, 1975) and “Envoy Begins Timor Study in Jakarta” (January 16, 1976). The Indonesian invasion of East Timor had violated the same two basic proscriptions of the UN Charter as had Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait: right to territory and self-determination. The differences in treatment accorded the two cases by the Canadian media reflected how differently the two cases were treated diplomatically. Following the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, Canada went to war for the first time in 40 years. Following Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor, Canada presented Indonesia with $200 million in aid and abstained from voting on East Timor resolutions at the United Nations. Canada was the largest Western investor in Indonesia in 1975, when Indonesia invaded East Timor. Canada’s strong diplomatic and material support for Indonesia continued in the years that followed, even as Indonesia imposed forced relocation, sterilization, and near-genocide in East Timor.

on this aspect of the model. Yet it is clear from their writing over the years, that using the model requires an interconnected analysis that explores the interplay among ideology, power, and social inequalities. The methodology requires that media coverage be analyzed within the political and economic context. In his political writing, Chomsky often moves easily between discussing media coverage and comparing it to the historical facts of events reporting.

The model also suggests that comparing coverage of some topics, issues, and events, as opposed to others, may enable insight into broad patterns of media practice. Finding observable disparities in media treatments of similar historical events, or paired examples, also provides and level of critical insight. Coverage of victims in the news offers such a comparative critique.

VICTIMS IN THE NEWS: WORTHY OR UNWORTHY?

A central methodological technique associated with the propaganda model entails analysis of how victims are represented within media texts. The model predicts that worthy victims (victims of state terror enacted by official enemy states) will be the topic of significant humanistic coverage that will evoke sympathy and mobilize public opinion and outrage. Other the other hand, unworthy victims (victims of state terror enacted by United States, Canada, allies, and
client states) will be given little coverage with minimal humanization, and will be treated in ways that do not invite sympathy or indignation. Another dimension of this analysis (as well as other topics) is the inclusion or absence of photographs, since visual images have powerful influences on how news is framed and interpreted.

The methodological technique most favored by Chomsky is to explore the “boundaries of the expressible” on crucial topics according to both power and social class interests. Investigating the extent to which news coverage conforms to the boundaries of the expressible, or what can and cannot be said, entails observing what is present in the news frame and what is absent from it. Other qualitative criteria for criticism include, sources used, emphasis, placement, tone, fullness of treatment, and context.

The propaganda model assumes that public debate is set by powerful elites, and thus predicts that the primary sources of news will be “agents of power.” According to this framework, boundaries of debate are effectively defined by official sources that reflect the interests of power and social class, and the model predicts that debate will conform to these interests. Concurrently, applying the model entails examining the degree to which voices challenging the range of debate are present within (or absent from) media texts, and if they are presented in favorable and/or unfavorable terms and settings. Such omissions and style of presentation are ways of understanding the extent to which news language favors an official world view that promotes existing relations of power.

The model assumes that commercial media exist within a system of power and that the media are themselves fundamentally agents of social power. This assumption emerges from the model’s foundational assumptions regarding the structural organization of society.

The propaganda model suggests that media analysis should extend its qualitative criteria to include analysis of textual prominence. This involves evaluating features of media texts that reveals how they are structured or framed. Because of the top-down organization of news, headlines play a significant role in influencing readers understanding and interpretation news. The most important or newsworthy information is conveyed at the outset of media texts and are central to textual prominence. Fore-grounding and back-grounding determine what events, voices and/or facts are made explicit within media texts, and what is presented merely as trivial, or even omitted. The structure of news presentation offers another insight into the ways in which media texts are ideologically inflected.

Herman and Chomsky pay particular attention to presuppositions that undergird common sense understandings of reporting. News of a specific event may include themes from past events while simultaneously ignoring or omitting various facts and/or voices. As noted, the model suggests that analysis of historical and political-economic elements should also be firmly integrated into the media analysis.

The propaganda model and the methodological techniques associated with it allow for sophisticated analysis of media discourse that extends beyond
a mere reading of media texts. Quite clearly, the model is concerned to connect text analysis with political, social and economic elements. The model originated in the United States, but recent scholarship from Canada and the United Kingdom indicate that its explanatory power is not limited by geographic borders. And while more than 20 years have passed since the model was first advanced, it is more applicable today than ever before. Similarly, many assume that the model is ideal for exploring international news coverage, but recent scholarship has demonstrated that it is well suited for analysis of domestic news events.

DEBATING THE PROPAGANDA MODEL

There have been several criticisms leveled against the propaganda model over the past two decades. Some challenge what they see as a “conspiratorial” view of media. But Herman and Chomsky have stressed that the model does not assume conspiracy or deliberate intent on the part of news gatekeepers. Because it is a structural model, it is unconcerned with the inner workings of particular newsrooms and makes no claims regarding the organizational aspects of newsroom work. It does not assume that media personnel routinely make conscious decisions to align themselves with the interests of particular elites. The model’s focus is on how structural elements, including economics, impact media discourse. There exists a range of literature devoted to the social construction of news that is principally concerned with questions skewed toward newsroom practice.

THE QUESTION OF THE NEWS READERS, VIEWERS, AND MEDIA AUDIENCES

Possibly the most contentious aspect of the propaganda model for media studies scholars is the question of media effects and audience participation. The model has been challenged for seeming to present media audiences as passive and easily manipulated. Though the use of terms such manufacturing consent and brainwashing suggest a passive audience, Herman and Chomsky do not assume that viewers and readers are passively duped by the media. In fact, quite the opposite seems to be the case. Herman and Chomsky have written about instances when the media has not been effective, and Chomsky has also written at length about dissent culture and what he calls “intellectual self-defense.” Although Herman has noted that they make no claims regarding the overall effectiveness of the propaganda system, Chomsky has referred to the propaganda system as inherently unstable, and he understands that audiences read texts in complex ways, an idea related to other theories about the way audiences actively participate and subvert media texts.

The propaganda model’s overall program of inquiry, however, can be seen to highlight the fact that perception, awareness, and understanding are informed and constrained by the structure of news discourse. Most critical approaches to media assume that media discourses pervade subjectivity in some way, and are
influential in shaping perceptions and opinions. It is uncontroversial to suggest that media do have various impacts, although the range of those influences, especially with regard to behavior, remains highly contested. A range of scholarship exists that provides much empirical support for the notion that media are both culturally and politically influential, having intended effects on opinion and policy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the propaganda model is a critical approach, concerned with the interplay between power and ideology, and how these connect to social inequality and economic imbalances within the broader social world. It can also be seen to be a democratic approach, concerned with social injustices. Like critical discourse analysis, the propaganda model advocates an approach to the study of social forces that is accessible and can be read and understood by non-specialist audiences. The model's foundational assumptions and program of inquiry seem today to be even more relevant than when the model was initially originated, given the globalizing economy and the ever-increasing global power and reach of large corporations, in the face of growing powerlessness among the vast majority of the world's population.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Bias and Objectivity; Children and Effects; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Public Opinion; Public Sphere; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.


Jeffery Klaehn
PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION

The advent of cable television franchises across the country in the early 1980s gave rise to public access channels designed for community participation that offered alternatives to commercial television. The act of placing communications resources within the hands of community members was an attempt to empower public expression at the local level. However, public access has never become an institution within mainstream society and is continually struggling over production issues, day-to-day operations, and legislative challenges often driven by the commercial motives of mainstream media.

UN-TELEVISION: PUBLIC ACCESS AS A TV ALTERNATIVE

Regardless of the communications apparatus, public access television offers alternatives. Ideally, it is about replacing the consumer-driven imperative of commercial television with a medium directed by a community’s needs. Public access is part of a decentralized public media movement that seeks to empower the community through training in production technologies without the "professional" tampering of reporters, editors, and producers. Public access conceives the video maker as organizer, activist, and catalyst. This may be a difficult concept given cultural norms that applaud individual enterprise over group processes.

COLLECTIVISM AND PROCESS

Ceding authority and debunking the individualism of auteur theory is crucial to the collective ideal of public access, whose advocates argue that community members need to be empowered through inclusion and group participation. Collectivism strives to impartially allocate power so each individual is instrumental to the group project. Successful production models that embody this more egalitarian and process-oriented approach can be found in the work of Paper Tiger Television, Deep Dish TV, and Indymedia.

PUBLIC ACCESS AS MEDIA LITERACY

When nonprofessionals begin to produce media, they often start by imitating what they have seen on mainstream TV, especially young people intent on imitating popular music videos and other commercial formats. In the effort to help those eager to move from media consumers to media producers, public access staff often incorporate media literacy into their curricula and provide instruction beyond the technical aspects of production. Workshops facilitate discussions of television’s intersection with the social, political, and economic factors that influence the medium and the look of commercial programming, providing emerging media makers with the critical tools necessary to expand into creative uses of the medium and alternative constructions. Public access producers can then reapply the constructivist techniques of television in addressing personal and communal concerns.
PARTNERSHIPS AS SYNERGY OF MISSION RATHER THAN EXPLOITATION OF REVENUE STREAMS

To fulfill their mission as a community resource, public access television centers utilize partnerships with regional nonprofits. Some access centers located in cities like New York benefit from the cable operator’s large subscriber base and allocate monies from the franchise to community-based organizations in the form of grants. This money is then used to purchase equipment, train members, and support production projects to increase the diversity of producers and content, while solidifying partnerships between public access centers and their community members. Notable centers like Manhattan Neighborhood Network have jump-started the communications efforts of organizations working with homeless youth, immigrants, families of incarcerated people, and other underserved populations.

At other facilities like Brooklyn Community Access Television (BCAT), educational collaborations drive many partnerships. BCAT has joined with community colleges, youth organizations, cultural institutions, and advocates for victims of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS to both create programming and learn how regional television can assist in meeting their organizational missions.

In the winter of 2007, BCAT entered into collaboration with Girls, Inc. to teach video production and media literacy skills to young women in Brooklyn. These young women, ranging in age from 15 to 16, determined that the issue of sexual harassment was most relevant to them and their community and explored the subject through research, inquiry, and the active process of video making. The young women learned all aspects of production from conceptualization and planning through production, postproduction, distribution, and exhibition. They interviewed community members, asking them why some boys and men engage in unwanted sexual advances toward women and girls. They examined mainstream media’s influence on culture and how images help create the permissible environment for sexist behavior. Challenging these precepts through the construction of alternatives, these young women completed their project by screening their work to members of their community. The young women used the video to provoke discussion on a topic “normalized” by the conventions of a medium dominated by male ownership. Collaborations between organizations like BCAT and Girls Inc. return public access television to its oppositional role as agitator, reimagining television to serve our needs as citizens, residents, and people, and not just consumers.


COMMUNITY AND DIVERSITY

The public access television center is conceived as a physical space that should mirror its community, reflecting the diversity of its people and issues. It is a place where isolated and fragmented publics can be brought together creating a more cohesive entity.
The center should be a space for public mediation and the cultural celebration of difference. It is the role of access centers to facilitate social engagements by organizing screenings, discussion series, panels, conferences, and parties. It should be a facility for disseminating messages but also a place to have fun.

Those who work in public access point out that the most effective centers are designed as creative environments where new thoughts are welcome, where growth and enlightenment are realized through an atmosphere of social learning. An access center can be a place where seniors with different backgrounds, including some with strong religious ties as in some Brooklyn neighborhoods in New York, can be taught editing techniques and the social construction of gender stereotypes by artists/educators from groups traditionally locked out of mainstream participation such as lesbian, gay, and transgender communities. It is a place where understanding, sharing, and community are provoked and expanded.

Diversity in programming is severely limited when cable providers make it overly arduous to produce and program a show. This opens access up only to the passionate eccentrics of the community, defining the political base of public access as fringe and not representative of the broader, more dynamic community.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE OR TELEVISION PROGRAM?

Proponents of public access explain that as one of the few alternatives functioning outside of powerful media systems, public access should continue to embrace its oppositional character. Some lament that over time it has lost its antagonistic tone by appropriating the theory and practices of commercial television. Striving for “legitimacy,” some access centers are taking on the controversial role of creating content for their public access channels. However, without community involvement, programs concerning job growth or the economy, for example, are advised by local chambers of commerce rather than unions, labor groups, and other community organizations usually given little airtime on commercial and even public television.

Instituting professional programming practices at the local level would transform the nature and mission of public access. When public access programming aspires to be a regional version of CNN or NPR, it reinforces the opinion that public access television is merely a stepping-stone on the way to corporate media. Since access does not deliver lucrative markets to advertisers, it cannot be measured using a commercial broadcasting ratings system. Because of these factors, advocates argue that public access needs to be reconceptualized as a community resource rather than as a television program. They point to the history of its development and its unique vision in an age of highly centralized, corporate-dominated media institutions.

THE UNIQUE MISSION OF PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION

Public access has always been tied to community activism and social change, and is part of a long struggle to claim public space within emerging communications
technologies. It proposes a model of television based on need rather than aroused desire and consumer satisfaction. The direct precursor to public access television in the United States was Challenge for Change, a program of the National Film Board of Canada, directed between 1968 and 1970 by George Stoney, widely considered the father of public access television. Challenge for Change held with the basic tenet that film and eventually video can be used to foster dialogue between citizens and government and thereby facilitate participatory media. The actual development of public access television in the United States is often described as an accidental boon when the diverse interests of a fledgling cable industry intersected with the progressive ideals of media educators, artists, and activists. Organizations like the Alternate Media Center at New York University, founded by Stoney, and radical video collectives like Raindance, Videofreexks, Ant Farm, Global Village, and the May Day Collective were active participants and early innovators in the young medium. Some political activists viewed new communication technologies as pathways to developing an adversary culture critical of given economic and political structures. Michael Shamberg of Raindance described how information resources are vital to social models based on human needs. Manifestos concerned with the appropriation and reimagining of communication technologies advocated for people to petition and secure public access channels.

**WEAK AND DEPENDENT: THE LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION**

Public access television exists through the precarious arrangement of a contractual compromise between the private, profit-seeking cable companies and local municipalities often aligned with nonprofit organizations. Since the 1980s, public access centers have been dramatically compromised as private companies, operating as commercial ventures, seek to meet the minimal obligations of their franchises. Access centers are becoming more and more the exception, while drop-off playback facilities lacking production equipment, facilities, or staff are becoming the rule. In addition, shifting political winds along with funding shortages have repositioned independent video from its use as an instrument of social change to more standardized formats. Some charge that once the emphasis on community within public access is lost, the medium will be little more than a device of artistic vanity for individuals able to take advantage of access channels.

**THE CONTINUAL EROSION OF PUBLIC ACCESS**

Public access television continues to be challenged from a number of quarters, particularly the cable industry, that would like to take back channels for commercial motivations. Recent legislative maneuverings have been successful at moving authority over public access from local municipalities to state capitals. These structural changes have decreased channel capacity in some states and limited operating hours in others, further contributing to the ongoing erosion of
public access television. As of this writing, 23 states have either passed statewide legislation or have bills pending. Though federal bills sponsored by telecommunications companies seeking entrance to the television market failed, these continued assaults have raised alarms throughout the public access community.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

In an era of media convergence, many understand that public access centers need to stay relevant, but this does not mean that public access workers need attend the latest industry trade shows to survey new gadgets. To follow the unique mission of public access television would mean, rather, that it would take up the watchdog role of examining the convergence of media critically. Is the convergence being driven socially or commercially? Is this new development simply a better way to sell advertising and products? In terms of convergence branded as a “triple play” of services, whose interest is served, that of the communities or that of the media corporations?

The mission of public access television has not changed even as the technology has advanced. An access center’s relationship to the community is still the same. Residents are trained to use technology, and centers continue to provide distribution whether the mechanism is television or the Internet. The ideals championed by George Stoney and the video collectives of the counterculture remain access’s legacy into the digital age. Many access centers are introducing programs to teach community members how to produce video for the Web. Video blogging classes are increasing the community of producers and placing that community into a global environment. In these times, public access centers are becoming aggregators of media and information, collectors and distributors of digital files that are relevant and valuable to the communities they serve.

REALIZING A UTOPIAN VISION

Above all, public access television requires a utopian sensibility when looking at its prospect and processes. Paraphrasing the words of DeeDee Halleck, founder of Paper Tiger Television and consummate advocate for community media, public access is romantic, just as democracy, liberty, and the First Amendment are romantic. They are ideals valued and defended in the social consciousness of an autonomous people.

Today, public access TV is the incomplete promise of community media, and remains an unrealized ideal for direct democracy through civic engagement with media making.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Cable Carriage Disputes; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Global Community Media; Hypercommercialism; Media Literacy; Media Reform; Media Watch Groups; Minority Media Ownership; Net Neutrality; Pirate Radio; Public Broadcasting Service; Ratings; World Cinema.

Carlos Pareja

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE

The Right has long tried to dismantle the public broadcasting system, claiming the so-called public TV channel is too liberal and too elitist. The Left says that “creeping commercialism” and timidity are to blame for public television’s undemocratic tendencies. Both camps tend to oversimplify the issue for their own purposes.

The U.S. public broadcasting system comprises hundreds of local stations and several large national bureaucracies. The most recognizable symbol of this labyrinth is PBS, the logo of the Public Broadcasting Service, which appears on all nationally distributed public television programs, designed so that the letters P-B-S vaguely resemble the human brain. Since its creation in the late 1960s,

A PUBLIC BROADCASTING TIMELINE

1950—Ford Foundation takes up the cause of “educational” television.
1951—Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reserves 209 noncommercial television channels for educational use.
1953—First educational TV station (KUHT-Houston) goes on the air.
1962—National Educational Television Facilities Act is passed.
1964—Carnegie Commission on Educational Television is established; “Public Television: A Program for Action” is released in 1967.
1967—U.S. Public Broadcasting Act is passed.
1968—Children’s Television Workshop begins.
1969—PBS debuts.
1974—PBS Station Program Cooperative is launched.
1992—Newt Gingrich seeks to abolish federal funding for public broadcasting.
1996—House of Representatives votes to slash public broadcasting’s funding.
PBS has positioned itself as the “oasis” of the vast wasteland—a home for televised art, intellectual culture, education, and quality information in a sea of mass cultural mediocrity. For almost as long, PBS has also been the principal target of politically charged disputes over public broadcasting’s performance in the United States.

In one of the more recent salvos, in June 2006, Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives voted to “slash” funding for public broadcasting. Their decision reawakened a Congressional debate that spilled into newspaper articles, opinion pages, and talk shows. Because public television and public radio receive about 20 percent of their funding from annual Congressional appropriations (the rest comes from local and state governments, corporate sponsors, and private donations), these cultural institutions are particularly vulnerable to partisan political currents and must “prove” their value each time the federal purse is opened. Although Congress ultimately rejected the Republicans’ plan (for now), PBS remains trapped in a cycle of controversy.

HISTORY

Public television arrived late in the United States. Whereas the United Kingdom, Canada, and many other Western democracies developed public service approaches to broadcasting that were overseen by tax-funded national broadcasting authorities, the United States took a “free-market” approach to radio and television. Not everyone supported this path: throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, vocal educators, labor unions, and progressive reformers pressurized the federal government to allocate a significant portion of the spectrum to nonprofit channels. The corporate sector’s lobbying power, coupled with a distrust of “socialistic” activity in the American context, worked against this possibility, however. The 1934 Communications Act entrusted broadcasting entirely to the commercial market, presuming that private companies could turn a profit and serve the public interest as well.

In the 1950s and 1960s, fissures in the U.S. approach to broadcasting emerged. At this time, television culture was dominated by three networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), and most programming was geared toward a huge mass audience. High-placed critics began to protest what they perceived as television’s lowbrow homogeneity and worried that the nation’s most popular medium did little to instruct or enlighten citizens. To correct these problems, the prestigious Ford Foundation invested considerable private resources in National Educational Television (NET), a small-scale alternative devoted to “respectable” culture (opera, live plays, British dramas) and information (documentaries, panel discussions). However, Ford’s pockets were not bottomless and “educational” television remained a minor blip on the television landscape. Public investment was clearly needed to create a public alternative to market-driven commercial hegemony.

In the 1960s, the case for public television was advanced by many public figures, including former Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chair-
man Newton Minow and political columnist Walter Lippmann. In 1966, the philanthropic Carnegie Corporation of New York assembled a high-powered team of Ivy League intellectuals, renowned artists, university presidents, corporate executives, and other high-profile individuals to “look into” the issue; their report recommended “immediate federal action.” The Public Broadcasting Act was swiftly passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967, and programs carrying the PBS logo began to appear in late 1969. Defined as a “Chance for Better Television,” PBS claimed a redemptive cultural identity and cultivated an aesthetic based more on pre-electronic media such as live drama and the printed word than on contemporary TV formats. Because PBS had been created to solve a range of perceived cultural problems without fundamentally altering the economic landscape of commercial television, it could not compete for the hearts and minds of TV viewers and maintain its legitimacy.

The purpose of public television was sufficiently ambiguous to allow for alternative interpretations, however. While most bureaucrats, politicians, and supporters saw the new channel as a noncompetitive and altogether nonthreatening cultural forum for quality and “enlightenment,” others saw an opportunity to bring racial diversity, political debate, and countercultural values to television. In New York and other large cities in the contentious late 1960s and early 1970s, a small amount of provocative programming that challenged the social, political, and cultural status quo was produced under public television’s auspices. While this alternative material comprised but a small part of the overall PBS schedule, it was offensive to conservative politicians who sought to tame PBS’s nascent political bite. In 1971, President Richard Nixon vetoed public television’s federal funding and set into motion the rhetorical basis of a conservative assault on PBS that continues to this day.

PBS AND CHILDREN

Children’s programming is much more popular than adult PBS genres—largely because of Sesame Street. In 1969, Children’s Television Workshop (CTW), the creators of Sesame Street, appropriated the look and style of popular television—including TV commercials—to “sell” cognitive and social skills to children. Contrary to prime-time PBS, which focused on small and usually upscale audiences, the goal was to reach as many kids as possible. CTW was concerned with poverty issues and Sesame Street received some of its funding from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to operate as a televised Head Start program for poor preschool children, which provided an impetus to bring “disadvantaged” child viewers, in particular, into the public television audience. Producers cleverly fused fast-paced visuals, humor, irony, storytelling, and celebrity guest stars to educational lessons, creating a brand of television “edutainment” that was spun off into The Electric Company, Zoom, and other shows. Children’s programming continues to attract a cross-class, multicultural presence to PBS—but now as before, most kids tend to “drop out” of the public TV audience when they become adults.
FOR THE PEOPLE, NOT BY THE PEOPLE?
THE DEBATE OVER PBS

The disputes over PBS are predictable: while the minor details and individuals involved may change, the “positions” in the cultural battle over PBS generally do not. There are three major positions, emerging (more or less) from three sectors of society: neoconservative elites, the liberal upper middle class, and the intellectual/artistic Left. Each position claims to speak for the larger “public” being served (or not served) by the so-called public channel. Most ordinary people, however, have little voice in the ruckus over public television, or are even aware of it. PBS may be engulfed in periodic controversy, but it is off the cultural radar of most TV viewers.

The neoconservative critique of public television is based on two claims. First, it is argued that PBS programs are “slanted” in favor of people with liberal viewpoints and alternative lifestyles. This accusation is unproven and rather dubious, according to research studies of public television’s content. Second, PBS is said to cater to an “elite” slice of the population, in terms of income and education—an observation that is more valid. Officially, PBS claims to reach a broad spectrum of the population, so that everyone is included in the “public” it represents. Yet, PBS also envisions “selective” people who possess college and graduate school degrees, professional and managerial occupations, and disposable income as its core audience, particularly during prime time. Paradoxically, the ability to attract such upscale viewers is part of the “distinction” that has historically defined public television’s difference from commercial television in the United States. Neoconservatives point out the elitist dimensions of this mission—not to make public television more culturally democratic, but to privatize it. PBS should retain its distinction but be required to support itself commercially through the sale of advertising and merchandise, claim such critics. Or else, they argue, consumers who want “public” television should pay for it on a subscription basis.

Neoconservatives won the first battle over PBS by fusing perceptions of political bias in some programming to the larger problem of class selectivity and cultural elitism. In this way, the Right—as opposed to the Left—strategically

BUSTER

In March 2005, PBS caved in to conservative pressure by pulling an episode of Postcards from Buster, a children’s program. In the episode, a cartoon bunny visits Vermont, where he learns to make maple sugar and is invited to dinner at the home of children with two mommies; critics objected to the inclusion of homosexual lifestyles. According to Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the episode was yanked the same day that PBS received an official letter from President George W. Bush’s new Republican Secretary of Education, who condemned the episode and asked PBS to “strongly consider returning the federal money that went toward its production.”

established itself as the ally of the common people. What scholars call an “authoritarian-populist tactic” has since been also used by other right-wing cultural reformers, from Pat Buchanan to Ronald Reagan to Newt Gingrich, looking to privatize PBS. Such critics do not really represent the public, which is rarely consulted and never asked what it might like to see on public television. If public television is paradoxically “for the people, not by the people,” so too is the recurring conservative critique of its shortcomings.

Against the neoconservative position, liberal defenders argue that PBS brings integrity to television by providing a sophisticated alternative to market-driven infotainment. Unlike pay cable, it also “freely” disseminates enlightenment to the culturally deprived. According to this logic, PBS deserves public subsidy because it ensures the survival of “respectable” culture (as defined by educated tastemakers) while also offering the masses an opportunity to pursue informal education and cultural refinement through television viewing. The fact that most adults avoid PBS's curriculum much or all of the time is, significantly, downplayed. Instead, children's programs like Sesame Street, which tend to attract a much larger and more socially and economically diverse audience than does prime-time PBS, are strategically accentuated in a metaphoric battle to save “Big Bird” from budget-cutting neoconservatives. The defensive position has succeeded in preserving a token amount of Congressional funding for PBS. However, it has also reproduced the system's internal elitism and therefore constrained thinking about how PBS might serve a broader range of cultural interests and tastes.

The intellectual/artistic Left's critique of PBS emphasizes intersecting problems of political censorship and discrete commercialization. Many activist filmmakers, media reformers, and progressive scholars see in public television an unrequited opportunity for communicative democracy. Because our corporately owned media system threatens the free exchange of ideas required of democracy, noncommercial “public” media spaces are paramount to a fair and just political system. PBS's potential to provide such an electronic public sphere is said to have been undermined by its reliance on corporate underwriters who do not wish to be associated with controversial programming. Corporate funding has, over the years, led to an overabundance of “safely splendid” programming—such as imported British costume dramas and nature documentaries—that crowds out provocative material, contend critics. The watchful eyes of conservative politicians looking for liberal or unconventional “bias” is another factor in the difficulties—and sometimes outright institutional censorship—experienced by independent producers who are deemed too controversial for PBS.

The Left provides a valuable counter-explanation to the “problem” with PBS. Challenging neoconservatives in Washington, this position maintains that a stable source of noncommercial funding is what is needed to ensure PBS's journalistic freedom and protection from political bias. However, critics from this camp tend to oversimplify the role of political economics by presuming that PBS was (or would be) democratic in the absence of corporate interference. They tend to overlook the politics of cultural value by replacing “safely splendid” ideals with their own class- and education-bound view of what counts as worthwhile television. Progressive intellectuals and “censored” PBS producers often distrust
REPUBLICANS VERSUS BILL MOYERS

Conservative politicians have long monitored PBS’s public affairs programs with an eye toward institutional censorship. In the early 1970s, when PBS was just getting started, Richard Nixon ordered White House staffers to scour its news and documentary programs for evidence of political and personal “bias” against the Republican president. More recently, in 2005, Kenneth Tomlinson, the Republican chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which oversees issues of “objectivity and balance” among other tasks, secretly hired a consultant with conservative ties to “conduce an analysis of the political ideology” of guests on the PBS program NOW and three other public television and radio programs. According to National Public Radio, which obtained the unreleased report, the guests were graded not just on their political viewpoints, but on “whether they explicitly supported policies of the Bush White House.” The CPB board is appointed by the president; Tomlinson was named chairman by George W. Bush.

Tomlinson complained that Moyers, whose journalistic commentaries have appeared on PBS since the early 1970s, was too liberal and “critical of Republicans and the Bush Administration.” In addition to commissioning the study, he hired a senior White House aid to “draw up guidelines to review the content of public radio and television broadcasts.”


habitual TV viewing and prefer serious information and avant-garde material over popular television formats, which they would just as soon leave to commercial channels. This failure to engage with the possibilities of popular public television has made it difficult for the intellectual Left to align itself with ordinary people in the cultural battle over PBS.

CABLE COMPETITION

As commercial cable has developed, PBS’s approach to quality and informal education has become somewhat redundant to the niche-oriented goals of the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and the Arts and Entertainment Network—as free-market conservatives and Leftist critics point out. The Right uses this redundancy as further ammunition in its quest to privatize PBS; the Left sees it as another reason to embrace provocative political programming the commercial market (no matter how many channels) is unable or unwilling to provide. There is another, perhaps more democratic possibility overlooked by this stalemate, that involves funding noncommercial versions of popular genres and formats, with no expectation of cultural or political enlightenment, along the lines of much public television in Britain. However, given the structures of U.S. broadcasting and the dominant frameworks for thinking about PBS’s role, this is not likely to occur.
PUBLIC OPINION: ARE POLLS DEMOCRATIC?

Opinion polls should, in theory, be a democratic force, closing the gap between citizens and their political representatives. However, as a form of public expression, polls are limited: citizens play little part in their subject or design, and many of the groups commissioning polls do not see them as a way of deepening democratic expression. Nevertheless, once we understand these limitations, polls can still play a role in keeping political elites in check. Further, they suggest a more progressive view of the world than the stereotypes often drawn upon to signify popular opinion.

In 1995, the democratic theorist James Bryce called for a means by which the “will of the majority of citizens” might be “ascertainable at all times.” His hope was to provide a greater balance between the power of the people and of their elected officials, thereby cutting the distance between the electorate and the political elite. When George Gallup’s polls made this possible in the 1920s, it seemed that we were on the dawn of a more democratic era.

But many a tale is founded on the idea that we should be careful what we wish for, and few would now regard opinion polls as the lifeblood of the democratic state. For many, polls litter rather than enhance the political landscape: they are derided as the tools of public relations consultants and spin doctors rather than lauded as the voice of the citizenry. They have contributed toward an ersatz democracy, a multiple-choice manufacturing turning active citizens into passive consumers.

So what went wrong? The answer, one might suggest, lies less with polls themselves than with the conditions in which they are produced and interpreted. Despite their limits, polls should not be dismissed as mere marketing tools or
as a symbol of political superficiality. For while Bryce’s vision may have been a little naive, opinion polls can have a democratic function and provide a check on political elites. Indeed, there is a case for us taking polls more seriously than we do now.

THE POINT OF POLLING

There has been a great deal of attention paid to the statistical shortcomings of polls. This is, in part, because they are often associated with predicting electoral outcomes: a complex matter that requires sophisticated sampling techniques (in order to predict who will actually vote, who is lying, etc.) and where the margin of victory may be less than the margin of error. In this spirit, scholars have often chided the news media for their failure to report or understand the technical aspects of polls.

If the debate about the ability of polls to forecast elections often takes center stage, we are better off seeing it as a trivial sideshow. This use of polls has very little to do with exploring or representing public opinion: their purpose is to provide a commentary on the electoral race. From a democratic point of view, this is an ultimately pointless exercise that might be done just as well by bookmakers.

Moreover, an obsession with accuracy is misplaced. Methods matter of course: there is no shortage of surveys based on ad hoc or self-selecting samples that cannot claim to be representative. But most opinion polling takes care to use sampling techniques designed to represent a broadly representative cross-section of the public. And while polls can never predict how people will vote with pinpoint accuracy, sampling techniques allow us to get a flavor of public attitudes using surprisingly small samples. We should not lose sight of how remarkable it is to be able to get a sense of what the population is thinking by talking to only a tiny fraction of that population.

But sampling, almost by definition, is not an exact science. Its statistical method is based on notions of probability rather than certainty. A good poll may claim to be accurate within two or three percentage points, but it does so on the basis of a level of probability (say, 95 percent). A poll that is a few percentage points out in predicting an election result is not so much “wrong” as misinterpreted.

We are, perhaps, seduced by the neat numerical precision that polls can provide. What is useful about polls, however, is their ability to suggest patterns and tendencies rather than their exactitude. Once we recognize this, we can see how the more profound limits of polls have less to do with science and more to do with the nature of the artifice. To put it another way, the issue is less who is asked, than what they are asked, in what context, and what we make of their responses.

THE PRODUCTION OF POLLS

There are three issues here. First, as many critics have pointed out, there is nothing authentic about the poll versions of public opinion (or, for that matter,
many other representations of public opinion). Polls do not so much measure public attitudes as manufacture them. After all, the conversation between the pollster and the respondent bears little relation to the way people generally talk about politics and current affairs. They are based on artificial, one-sided conversations, where the pollster chooses the subjects to discuss, asks all the questions, and offers a limited range of responses. The citizen plays a part, but it is a small and tightly scripted one. For some, this makes polls less a signifier of public attitude than a poor substitute for deliberative public discussion and debate.

This does not mean that polls are necessarily bogus or manipulative: the attempt to represent public opinion can be done in a way that tries to capture people's priorities, concerns, and beliefs. But it is a form of manufacture nonetheless, and the circumstances in which polls are produced will shape the nature of the responses. Although it may be difficult to get people to profess opinions they do not hold, the poll is an unthinking apparatus that can only reveal what it has been told to look for. The beauty of polling machinery lies in its propensity for statistical sophistication, not in its understanding of the everyday.

All of which raises important questions of authorship and motive. Although polls are extremely efficient ways to gauge public responses to specific questions, they are too expensive to be viable for ordinary individuals or citizens groups. Polls are therefore bound up in a political economy that favors corporate bodies: notably business and government. While there are some institutions—notably universities or public agencies—with a genuine commitment to using polls purely as a form of democratic expression, the motives behind the commissioning opinion polls are not always so laudable. To be able to claim to speak on the public's behalf is a powerful political or marketing tool.

Some have argued that polls are democratic because they allow us to appeal to a broader citizenry than the cabal of well-heeled lobby groups who routinely try to influence the political process. This is certainly true in theory, but polls can also be used by those very same groups for their own ends. Indeed, it is the well-heeled lobbyists who are most likely to have the resources and the motive to commission them. Many polls may have thus very little to do with public consultation, and can be designed primarily as a way to highlight a consumer need, a legislative issue, or simply to grab a headline.

So, for example, Jon Kronsik examined a poll commissioned by an insurance company, whose function was clearly to create an impression that public opinion favored legislation that insurance companies were pressing for. While the poll may have been statistically beyond reproach, he showed how it was as much an exercise in manipulation as consultation. It was designed to promote a cause, and the failure of news reports in the *New York Times* to point this out highlights the importance of understanding the political economy of polls.

Similarly, it is worth considering why news media polls tend to proliferate during election periods. This is not, in most cases, to fulfill a Brycean vision to bring political representatives closer to those who elect them. On the contrary, only rarely do we see polls that ask people which policy initiatives they really want from their politicians. Instead, we are obliged to conform to the main party agendas by simply stating who we will vote for, rather than what we want
POLS AND THE MANUFACTURED CENTER

A common strain of journalistic thinking, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, is that the broad mass of the public occupy a space somewhere to the right of the middle of the road—a place that, in a kind of symbolic symmetry, is often referred to as “middle England” or “middle America.” And while there are certainly issues where we find majority opinion in precisely that space, it is notable how often polling data cast doubt on this assumption. What we often find, instead, is that many aspects of the center/right policy leanings favored by many political and business leaders have little majority support amongst the general population.

In the United States, for example, large sections of the public are skeptical about many features of the pro-business globalization model that both main parties generally adhere to, while research suggests that if given information about the size of the military budget, most would prefer cuts of a magnitude that few political leaders would dare contemplate. In Britain, polls suggest little support for the gradual move towards the “reform” of public services through privatization and (somewhat convoluted) market mechanisms. These divergences between public and elite opinion are muffled by a conventional wisdom that assumes a population symbolized by a mythic and metonymic “middle,” whose center/right leanings we could expect to be sympathetic to globalization, militarism, and a pro-business, privatization agenda.

them to do. During campaigns, polls are generally commissioned to inform a well-rehearsed narrative about who is winning and what the outcome might be. They are there to make news rather than to inform the democratic process, and they tell us very little about what people actually think.

POLS AND THE NEWS MEDIA

This raises a second, more general point: in the public sphere the news media play a key role in mediating public opinion. It is not just that newspapers and broadcast news outlets regularly commission polls; polling information is much more likely to influence public policy or debate if it is in the public eye. The role polls play in the political process depends upon, to a large extent, how conspicuous they are. This means that polling information tends to become significant only when it is regarded as newsworthy.

If polls are themselves a way of mediating public opinion, then their findings are subject to another level of selection and interpretation by the news media. These two forms of mediation can often overlap: opinion polls, especially those conducted by news organizations, are often written around a news agenda. The poll thereby feeds back the narrative of news, sustaining an impression of synchronicity between the news world and public opinion.

A third issue follows from this. Our opinions about politics and public affairs are based on a series of assumptions about the world, much of which comes from the news media. The news media not only interpret polls for us, they
provide the informational context on which our opinions are based. So, for example, if we think, on the basis of what we read, that immigration is running at unsustainably high levels and is a major burden on public services, we are more likely to support efforts to curtail it. Or if we repeatedly see experts telling us that a foreign government poses a serious and imminent threat to the security of the world, we are more likely to support military intervention against that government.

An intelligent reading of polling data will acknowledge this, and in cases where media coverage is prominent and germane to the question being asked, polls may be as much a measure of the influence of the news media as anything else. This understanding is increasingly informing opinion research, which is beginning to explore the links between knowledge and opinion. For it is here that we are most likely to see the ideological play of media influence: the media may not foist opinions upon us, but they provide an informational climate which makes some opinions more tenable than others.

Work by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland has explored the way in which misunderstandings about foreign policy have developed, and we can see how those misunderstandings have shaped public opinion. So, for example, in 2003, their research found that a number of erroneous assumptions about Saddam Hussein were widespread among the U.S. population, and these assumptions clearly informed the case for war with Iraq. Similarly, the U.S. group Retro Poll, run by citizen activists, carries out polls exploring the relation between assumptions and attitudes, partly to demystify conventional wisdom in the mainstream news media.

In sum, the technology of polling is a useful way of finding out what people within a society think and assume about the world. But the political economy of polling and its dependence upon the news media mean that many polls are not primarily there to do this. The first question we should ask of polls is not to quibble about sampling, but as to who commissioned and designed them, and to what end.

TOWARD A MORE DEMOCRATIC USE OF OPINION POLLS

The media and politicians are sometimes accused of paying too much attention to polls, thereby pandering to a kind of unprincipled populism. There is, however, very little evidence for this. Politicians certainly use polls, but this generally has more to do with market research than a desire to do the people’s bidding. Polls are more likely to inform matters of presentation rather than matters of policy.

The media use of polls is also very far from being a tale of slavish adherence. Research suggests that journalists tend to use polls less as a form of genuine enquiry than to bolster the prejudices of the newsroom. So, for example, King and Schudson describe how, during the Reagan era, journalists assumed their own impressions of the president—as affable and likeable—were held by a majority of the public. They thereby ignored a great deal of polling evidence to the contrary, focusing only on those snippets that supported their assumptions.
Indeed, while journalists have long been criticized for a failure to appreciate the meaning and technical limits of polls, what is more striking is their comparative absence in news reporting. It is fairly commonplace for both print and broadcast news to reference public opinion or to represent the citizenry, but most of these references are impressionistic and make no use of polling data. If the news is full of reporters making speculative assumptions about public attitudes or “vox pops” reacting to a news story, this is rarely backed up with the kind of evidence polls provide. Lewis, Inthorn, and Wahl-Jorgensen’s study of how the public are represented in U.K. and U.S. television news suggests that only between 2 and 3 percent of references to public opinion in mainstream news programs involve polling data.

We can see, under these circumstances, how conventional wisdom about public opinion may have little evidentiary basis (see “Polls and the Manufactured Center” sidebar). Polls that fly in the face of journalistic assumptions, far from being newsworthy (as we might assume) tend to make little impact. So, for example, polls show far less support for cutting taxes and public spending than most journalists usually suggest. Similarly, during the BBC’s coverage of the shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007, correspondent Matt Frei suggested that most U.S. citizens did not support greater gun control—a view that fits a media stereotype but that is flatly contradicted by most polling data.

In short, there is a very real sense that paying more attention to polls would indeed, as James Bryce hoped, identify the gap between the public and their representatives. Whether they would lessen that gap is another matter, although once it becomes a conspicuous part of public debate, public opinion can be a powerful force, informing the way in which news stories are framed and played out. So, for example, media coverage of war tends to be more critical when polls show substantial public disquiet.

This is not to suggest an empty-headed embrace of opinion polling, more that we give more credence to the careful use of polling technology. There is nothing sacrosanct about the answers people give to polling questions, but if we appreciate the constraints that polls put on public expression, as well as the informational context in which people respond to them, they can be a powerful democratic force.

See also Bias and Objectivity; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Propaganda Model; Public Sphere; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.

Justin Lewis

PUBLIC SPHERE

As modern industrial life has linked the concerns and fates of millions of individuals in forms of social and political organization such as nation-states, interpersonal and mediated communication have become critical aspects of the political process. The space and mode in which such communication takes place is the “public” or the “public sphere.” In the indirect, representative democracies of many Western countries as well as other forms of modern political organization, the public sphere is thus a crucial battleground and space in which citizens seek to impact on the formulation of political will.

The “public sphere”—as opposed to related yet more commonplace terms such as “the public,” or “public opinion”—is primarily an academic concept that seeks to analyze forms of public and political discussion and debates in modern societies. While few dispute the immense significance of mass communication in achieving and maintaining political power in contemporary societies, the notion of the public sphere links the analysis of media industries, technologies, and content with the exploration and, crucially, evaluation of the

JÜRGEN HABERMAS

Jürgen Habermas (born June 18, 1929, in Düsseldorf) is a German philosopher and sociologist who has been associated with the second generation of the Frankfurt School, a group of scholars originally based at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, whom from broadly Marxist, yet also psychoanalytical perspectives sought to critically assess modernity and its prevalent social, cultural, and economic conditions. While Habermas’s work departs substantially from many conceptual traditions of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, he shares with its most prominent exponents, such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, an emphasis on the role of (mass) communication in the analysis of modern societies. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, written as Habermas’s habilitation—a substantial thesis that qualifies scholars in the German academic system to obtain the rank of professor—and first published in German, thus set the framework for much of Habermas’s subsequent work, including his magnum opus, Theory of Communicative Action (1981).

Habermas himself was a professor at Frankfurt University between 1964 and 1971 and from 1982 until his retirement in 1994. In recognition of his work, he has received numerous awards and remains one of the most influential European philosophers who is still actively engaged in the public debate as in his outspoken protest against the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.
depth and quality of the engagement of individual citizens in political debates and decision making, forcing us to interrogate exactly how the media speaks to, engages, and involves citizens in the political process.

**THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

The concept of the public sphere attracted increasing academic attention in North America following the translation of Jürgen Habermas's critical study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* into English in 1989, nearly three decades after its original publication. In this first of his major works, Habermas undertakes a broad historical analysis into the development of public debates in modern societies. In particular, he identifies the political debates among the early modern bourgeoisie in England, France, and later Germany, as an ideal type of public debate. This early modern bourgeois public sphere preceded the arrival of media industries and their commodification of information and political debate as well as the emergence of powerful structures of government in modern nation-states interfering in a range of social, cultural, and economic processes. Thus, for a brief historical window, political communication, according to Habermas, took place in an open, unrestricted fashion, often finding its locus in publicly accessible coffee houses and salons and through the circulation of nonprofit media (such as pamphlets) written and circulated by members of the public. This emerging public sphere was inherently modern by breaking the feudal control over public communication, which had thus previously not been public at all.

Moreover, in its earliest manifestation, it embodied the qualities that Habermas identifies as the key features of the public sphere: open, unrestricted access for all citizens and a rational dialogue among all participants, which in turn is based on the separation of private and public realms, as citizens met in public places such as coffee houses where they could congregate to discuss pressing issues of the day free from coercion. Habermas's definition of the public sphere reflects these qualities: “By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Habermas 1989, p. 136).

Yet, making his analysis of the structural transformation of the public sphere foremost a chronology of its historical decline, Habermas suggests that the forces of modernity also led to its demise: he identifies the increasing power and hence involvement in a range of social, cultural affairs of the modern nation and welfare state as the culprit in the downfall of the public sphere. Drawing on C. W. Mills's distinction between “public” and “mass,” Habermas argues that the formation of public opinion shifted from an unrestricted communicative environment to a state of mass communication in which opinions are expressed by a small elite excluding the public from the opinion-making process: “With the interweaving of public and private realms, not only do the
A GLOBAL PUBLIC SPHERE?

Following Habermas’s analysis of the emerging public sphere in England, France, and Germany, the concept of the public sphere continues to center on the modern nation-states. However, over the past half century, various transnational or even global spaces of public debate have formed: shortwave radio stations such as BBC World were aimed at a global audience during the Cold War and continue to do so today; the arrival of multichannel television in the 1980s led to an internationalization of televisual content and the rise of transnationally transmitted news networks such as CNN; and since the 1990s the Internet has provided an increasingly universally accessible forum of political information and debate alike. At the same time, pressing political concerns ranging from environmental risks such as global warming; the threats of nuclear technology and genetic engineering; questions of security and political or religious violence; and concerns over human rights, equality, and poverty all expand beyond national boundaries as well as the influence of individual nation-states and are commonly taken up in form of social movements and nongovernmental organizations (such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, etc.). Whether, however, these spaces of transnational communication constitute a meaningful public sphere remains hotly contested: On the one hand, such transnational dialogue appears vital in the face of global challenges and risks. On the other, transnational public spheres—like other alternative public spheres—do not map onto transnational legislative and governmental structures. Conversely, supranational and region states such as the European Union have so far failed to establish a single regional public sphere to inform their democratic institutions.

Political authorities assume certain functions in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labour, but, conversely, social powers now assume political functions. … Large organizations strive for political compromises with the state and with one another, excluding the public sphere whenever possible” (Habermas 1989, p. 141.) This collusion between the state and other large-scale organizations, including broadcasters and publishers, leads in Habermas’s words to the “refeudalization” of the public sphere, a state in which citizens are once more marginalized or even excluded from meaningful public debate. The public debates that take place in and through mass media such as television (for example, during televised parliamentary debates, in news programs, or in talk shows) or radio (for instance, in phone-ins) are thus a “pseudo-public and sham private sphere of cultural consumption” (Habermas 1989: 160) that, by being part of a privatized nexus of mass production and mass consumption, are inherently apolitical.

CRITIQUE OF HABERMAS’S WORK

Following the belated translation of Habermas’s analysis of the structural transformation of the public sphere, it quickly became one of the most widely used sources in the analysis of contemporary political communication in the
English-speaking world. Despite its popularity, however, it has attracted a substantial body of criticism. Much of the scrutiny has centered on the historical details of Habermas’s account of the early public sphere. It is now widely accepted that the early bourgeois public sphere Habermas depicts is an idealization that fails to account for a number of historical realities: Habermas underplayed the significance of state institutions in the early bourgeois public sphere (see Ely 1992; Price 1995), and while he acknowledges the role of the development of capitalism and industrialism in the rise of the bourgeois public sphere, he fails to account that they also inevitably led to the formation of media industries and thus the monopolization of public debates. Most importantly, however, Habermas has come under attack for his failure to acknowledge the profound social barriers excluding vast sections of the population from participation in the early bourgeois public sphere: circles of discussion and debate in Europe’s early modern coffee houses were not only limited to those who through their social status and economic capital could frequent such places—thus excluding a wide section of the population on the basis of class alone—but also discriminated on the grounds of gender, age, class, ethnicity, and/or nationality. The early bourgeois public sphere was hence far from the ideal communicative environment Habermas originally suggested.

**ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC SPHERES**

It is this criticism on which many media and communication scholars have focused in coming to a more optimistic assessment of the current state of the public sphere. If the early public sphere in fact excluded large sections of the population, the contemporary public sphere with different print, broadcast, and online media at its heart appears as relative progress and comparatively more democratic than its predecessor. Studies of different media, genres and texts such as television news, talk shows, or the Internet thus suggest that mass media, rather than exercising monopolistic control over public debate, offer opportunities of engagement and participation to many citizens while being widely and openly accessible. Researchers focusing on popular media content in particular have contrasted Habermas’s notion of the bourgeois public sphere with a “post-modern public sphere” that expands far beyond the traditional realm of political debate, eroding boundaries between the private and the public, between politics and entertainment (see Hartley 1997; McKee 2005). As John Hartley, a leading proponent of this position, argues, “The major contemporary political issues, including environmental, ethnic, sexual and youth movements, were all generated outside the classic public sphere, but they were (and are) informed, shaped, developed and contested within the privatized public sphere of suburban media consumerism” (Hartley 1997, p. 182).

Habermas has in turn responded to particularly the feminist critique of his original work (see Fraser 1992) by conceding the inaccuracy of his historical analysis and acknowledging its limitations. The significance of *The Structural Transformation* thus does not lie in being a historical study: rather, it derives its value from offering a model of public debate and political communication that
sets out ideals for democratic societies to aspire to, regardless of whether they have been met in the past. This normative model of the public sphere calls for the media to involve all citizens in a rational dialogue that is at the heart of all democratic decisions.

While many of these values—unrestricted access to a public realm that fosters a rational dialogue and informs political decision making—are desirable to most of us, the ideals of Habermas’s work cannot be as easily divorced from the details of his analysis. His concept of the public sphere is tied to early modern nation-states and thus to a particular social-institutional context. From this follows the possibility of multiple public spheres, in the first instance in different nation-states but secondly also within and across different nation-states following lines such as gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. Yet, the notion of multiple public spheres not only constitutes a remarkable departure from the term Öffentlichkeit in Habermas’s original work, which literally translates as “publicness” and hence describes the state of being public rather than a given space. This opposition between public spheres and publicness highlights fundamental concerns regarding the legitimacy of contemporary political processes and the effectiveness of contemporary public discourses. Whereas publicness is inherently tied to a given political system, public spheres (corresponding with distinct audience groups) lack a clear integration into political systems.

This disjuncture between spaces of debate and realms of political decision-making creates the democratic deficits in mediated democracies Nicholas Garnham describes: “The problem is to construct systems of democratic accountability integrated with media systems of matching scale that occupy the same social space as that over which economic or political decision will impact. If the impact is universal, then both the political and media systems must be universal” (Garnham 1992, p. 371). Alternative public spheres in the realms of popular culture, subculture, or transnational communication (see “A Global Public Sphere?”) thus provide important spaces of debate, but they sever the fundamental link between citizens’ participation in public debates and governance. Yet, as both the early bourgeois and the contemporary public sphere have failed to accommodate unrestricted, rational debates that translate into the formulation of laws and government actions, the concept of the public sphere continues to serve as a powerful reminder to question the working of contemporary, mediated democracies.

See also Alternative Media in the United States; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Global Community Media; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Independent Cinema; Media and Citizenship; Media and Electoral Campaigns; Media Watch Groups; Nationalism and the Media; Political Documentary; Political Entertainment; Public Broadcasting Service; Public Opinion.


Cornel Sandvoss
RATINGS

Do the ratings systems that measure the audiences for media such as television, radio, and the Web accurately reflect what the public is consuming? If not, what are the consequences? For years, scholars and industry executives alike have debated whether various audience measurements are accurate or not. Critics of such measurement systems argue that they present a distorted view of who is watching or listening, and that these distortions lead to programming that does not serve the interests of all viewers and listeners. These criticisms have become more pronounced in recent years, as the media environment grows more complex and the ratings firms introduce new—and sometimes controversial—measurement systems.

Ratings are the “currency” of the media industry. They provide information on how many people watched a particular television program or channel, listened to a particular radio program or station, or visited a particular Web site. Ratings are produced by outside (or third party) measurement firms such as Nielsen.

TIMELINE OF AUDIENCE MEASUREMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

1929—The first radio ratings (called the “Crossleys” after lead researcher Archibald Crossley) are established by a consortium of advertisers. Telephone surveys are used to gather listening data.

1936—Two MIT professors introduce the first “audimeter” device, which automatically records radio-tuning behaviors. The rights to the device are immediately purchased by Arthur C. Nielsen.
Media Research (for television and the Web) and Arbitron (for radio). In addition to evaluating how well shows are performing, ratings also provide information on the key characteristics of media audiences—such as their average age, income, and their gender distribution, to name just a few of the demographic characteristics that ratings firms measure these days.

SETTING ADVERTISING RATES

Advertisers use ratings data to decide where to advertise and how much they are willing to spend. Media programmers use ratings data to decide how much to charge advertisers, as well as to decide which television and radio programs and Web sites to continue, and which ones to cancel. Ratings provide the ultimate measure of how programming is performing, and so survival depends upon performing well in the ratings.

Different media have their ratings calculated differently, though always by an independent third party responsible for providing independent and accurate information that both advertisers and programmers can rely on. Television ratings, for example, are provided in the United States by Nielsen Media Research. Nielsen produces its national television ratings by installing electronic “people meters” in a national sample of 10,000 television households. These households have agreed to have their viewing measured in exchange for a very small payment from Nielsen. A meter is attached to each television set in the house. Whenever a household member sits down to watch television, she or he must
“log in” to the meter via an assigned button on the remote control. When that household member finishes watching television, she or he must remember to “log out.” Each person in the family has a different button assigned, and demographic information about each individual is gathered by Nielsen, so that when one member of the family is watching TV—say a 13-year-old male—Nielsen knows that a 13-year-old male is watching. By gathering this information from thousands of households, Nielsen is able to produce the ratings reports that tell advertisers and television programmers not only how many people are watching each television program, but also what the composition of this audience is, in terms of characteristics such as age, gender, and income—characteristics that advertisers consider important in making decisions about where best to advertise certain products.

**RADIO AND WEB RATINGS**

Radio still relies primarily on a system of paper diaries that samples of radio listeners carry around with them for a week at a time. Radio ratings in the United States are produced primarily by the Arbitron Company. Participants in the Arbitron measurement system are expected to record in their diary all of their radio listening, including the station channel and call letters. At the end of the week, diaries are sent back to Arbitron via mail for tabulation and a new diary is received. Once the tabulations are complete, detailed quarterly ratings reports are produced that tell advertisers and radio stations how many (and what type of) people were listening to each station at different times of the day and different days of the week. This rather antiquated system is in the process of being replaced with an electronic system (called the Portable People Meter), in which participants carry cell phone–size devices with them that automatically pick up all radio signals the participant hears.

The World Wide Web also has a ratings system in place. The primary method of producing Web ratings involves placing monitoring software on participants’ hard drives. This software keeps track of each Web site that is visited, and for how long the site is visited. This information is then automatically sent, via the Internet, back to the measurement company for tabulation. There are a few different companies involved in Web audience research in the United States, including a subsidiary of Nielsen Media Research called Nielsen/NetRatings, and a competitor called comScore. As with television and radio, participants in Web site ratings measurement provide demographic information about themselves so that the measurement company can produce ratings reports that indicate how many different people of what age, gender, and income visited a given Web site in a particular month and how long the typical visitor stayed on the site.

**PROMINENT RATINGS-RELATED CONTROVERSIES IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING**

1969—NBC cancels the science fiction television series, *Star Trek*, after only three years on the air due to low ratings. The show goes on to become a surprise hit in syndication,
spawning 11 feature films, five spin-off television programs (including an animated children’s program), and a multitude of books and merchandising efforts.

1983—A letter-writing campaign overseen by Dorothy Swanson leads CBS to reverse its decision to cancel the series Cagney & Lacey. In the wake of the success of this campaign, Ms. Swanson went on to found the organization Viewers for Quality Television, which for 16 years advocated on behalf of high-quality television programs and is credited with extending the life span of a number of high-quality programs that might otherwise have been canceled.

1996—CBS first moves, and then cancels the long-running mystery series, Murder, She Wrote, despite the fact that the program was attracting a larger audience than competing programs on ABC and NBC in its Sunday night time slot. However, because Murder, She Wrote tended to attract older viewers, it was earning significantly less in advertising revenues than programs with much smaller audiences.

1996—FOX cancels America’s Most Wanted, one of the network’s highest-rated shows, reportedly because the network wanted to replace the program with a show that could be more profitable in after-markets such as syndication and DVD sales. A letter-writing campaign, which included requests from the director of the FBI, governors of 37 states, and police departments from around the country, led FOX to quickly reverse its decision.

2005—FOX revives the animated prime-time program, Family Guy, which it canceled in 2002 due to low ratings, due primarily to the strength of the program’s DVD sales and the performance of reruns on the Comedy Central cable network.

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CRITICISMS, SCIENCE, AND ACCURACY

All of these ratings systems have a number of traits in common. Perhaps the most important is that they produce ratings from a sample of the total audience, yet the ratings numbers are presumed to represent the total population of television, radio, and Web users in the United States. This may seem somewhat surprising given that these samples are in fact quite small in comparison with the total size of the audience. For instance, Nielsen/NetRatings monitors the Web usage of only 140,000 of the more than 70 million households with Internet access in the United States. Similarly, Nielsen Media Research monitors the television viewing of only 10,000 of the more than 100 million television households in the United States.

How can the television viewing habits of only 10,000 households accurately represent the tastes of over 100 million U.S. television households? The answer lies in the process of sampling. Ratings firms strive to develop representative samples. A representative sample is one that accurately reflects the characteristics of the broader population from which it was drawn. There is an entire complex science devoted to the process of sampling, and ratings firms are experts in this science, as the quality of their product depends on the extent to which it accurately reflects the media consumption habits of the population as a whole. Just as political polls project election outcomes based on surveys of representative
samples of only a few thousand voters, so too do ratings firms project the media consumption habits of the population from representative samples of just a few thousand media consumers.

A key question that frequently arises in the ratings world, however, is how confident can we feel in the accuracy of these samples? We have certainly seen political polls get election outcomes wrong in recent years, so we know that sampling is an inexact science at best. Might there be reason to believe, for example, that there are too many men in the sample, or not enough African Americans? This kind of sampling error can arise for any number of reasons. Some categories of people may be less inclined to agree to participate in the measurement process. Young people, for instance, often are less willing to have their radio listening measured than older people. Similarly, Hispanic households have proven less likely to participate in the TV measurement process than white households. The more people who refuse to take part in the measurement process, the less likely that the sample that ultimately is created will accurately reflect the population as a whole.

Some segments of the viewing or listening public might be neglected for a wide range of logistical reasons. Until recently, for instance, Nielsen Media Research did not include college dormitories in its sampling. Similarly Web ratings services often have found it difficult to measure the behavior of workplace Web users since most companies have tended to forbid the placement of the necessary monitoring software on workplace computers. These shortcomings limit the extent to which the sample can accurately reflect the population as a whole. If the sample does not accurately reflect the population as a whole, then the accuracy of the ratings produced from this sample becomes questionable.

There are other potential sources of inaccuracy beyond sampling. What happens, for instance, if large percentages of the people who receive radio diaries don’t bother to put them in the mail at the end of the week? Or if some people wait until the end of the week to fill their diary out but can’t remember accurately what stations they listened to during the week and for how long? Or what if somebody has a friend who is a DJ at a local radio station and to help that friend out decides to write in his diary that she listened to her friend every day for three hours when in fact she didn’t? These kinds of examples illustrate other very important potential sources of inaccuracy in the ratings data that the media and advertising industries rely upon every day.

What does it mean if the ratings are inaccurate? It is around this question that some of the most intense controversies surrounding audience ratings have arisen. When we consider that programmers and advertisers make their decisions based on ratings data, if the ratings are inaccurate, these organizations will make decisions that do not accurately reflect the tastes and interests of the viewing or listening public. Inaccurate ratings can, for instance, make a television show appear to be doing worse than it actually is. For instance, for years, NBC complained that the fact that Nielsen Media Research did not measure viewing in college dorms meant that the ratings for Late Night with Conan O’Brien (which is very popular with college students) were being undercounted, and that the show was actually much more popular than the ratings reports would
suggest. Similarly, for years the system of measuring television audiences has been criticized for containing flaws that overrepresent broadcast television viewing relative to cable television viewing.

RATINGS AND PROGRAMMING FOR MINORITY AUDIENCES

The stakes get even higher when we consider the issue of programming targeting the needs and interests of minority communities. For instance, in recent years a number of industry and advocacy organizations charged that the Nielsen Local People Meter (LPM) dramatically undercounted African American viewers. The LPM is an effort to place the same technology used to calculate national TV ratings into local television markets, where, until recently, Nielsen still relied on paper diaries. As the groups opposed to the LPM argued, any undercounting of African American viewers would lead programs that target African American viewers to appear less popular. This would lead to diminished advertiser support for these programs and then to a greater likelihood that these programs would be cancelled. As a result, members of the African American community would have fewer programs targeting their tastes, preferences, and interests to choose from. In this way, what has been called “diversity of programming” would be diminished. This controversy grew so heated that in 2004 congressional hearings on the subject were held as Congress considered the possibility of directly regulating television and radio ratings firms in part to make sure that their methods sufficiently measured the viewing habits of all demographic groups. However, one key issue that arose during these proceedings involved the question of whether the new measurement system truly was inferior to the old system in terms of measuring African American viewers, or whether the issue of minority programming was being used by some broadcasters to stall the new system since the new system eliminated some of the shortcomings in the old system that artificially favored broadcast television over cable television.

The nature of this controversy helps to illustrate important truths about ratings—they are always inaccurate to some degree, and new measurement systems likely will improve upon some existing inaccuracies but also may introduce new ones. And, perhaps more important, any inaccuracies often can be helpful to some groups while being harmful to others. Some of the harshest critics of the media also point out that ratings only measure “exposure” to individual programs, and neglect to measure how audience members feel about the programs they watched (for example, how much they like or dislike individual programs). A system that measured not only audience exposure, but also audience appreciation (called Television Audience Assessment), was briefly introduced in the late 1970s, but failed to catch on with advertisers or programmers. For these reasons, the systems for providing audience ratings often become contentious battlegrounds around which media industry executives fight for measurement systems that present their programming in the most favorable light. And when new audience measurement systems are introduced that have the potential to completely reshape the media marketplace, these battles can become particularly fierce.
See also Cable Carriage Disputes; Hypercommercialism; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; Net Neutrality; Online Digital Film and Television; Public Opinion; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises.


Philip M. Napoli

REALITY TELEVISION

From the evolving Survivor series to Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, the phenomenon known as reality TV has transformed the face of television and changed the way programs are produced, distributed, and consumed. For more than a decade, reality TV has exerted considerable influence on media economics, program aesthetics, and industry practices, and raised critical issues for participants and viewers alike. Reality TV has become a battleground for media observers and critics, who charge that these popular programs expose private spaces, encourage voyeurism, and claim that entertainment is reality in competitions that often lead to ridicule and humiliation.

Reality television is simultaneously a genre, a format, a technological form, a series of experiments, a celebrity-making machine, an interactive aesthetic, and a political ideology. While its history is contested and its boundaries are fuzzy, reality TV is without doubt one of the most significant developments in twenty-first-century media.

PREDECESSORS

Many of the characteristics found in reality TV can be found in TV programs from decades ago. Bringing cameras into people’s everyday lives as entertainment can be traced back to shows like Queen for a Day and This Is Your Life in the 1950s. This attention to “ordinary people” could later be found in Real People and That’s Incredible!, shows that highlighted unusual abilities. Daytime talk shows continued this focus on everyday lives, as well as featuring “make-over” segments (central to later reality TV). America’s Funniest Home Videos and
America’s Funniest Pets didn’t just portray everyday people—they relied on footage supplied by them.

The 1973 PBS 12-episode series An American Family is also a significant precursor, as it followed the lives of one family, the Louds, for seven months. Candid Camera was a wildly popular program that can be seen as an ancestor to recent prank-oriented programs like Punk’d, SpyTV, Boiling Points, Girls Behaving Badly, and Scare Tactics. Game shows have been a staple of television since its inception, and find new formulations in reality programs called “gamedocs” (e.g., Big Brother, Survivor, The Bachelor/ette, The Apprentice, The Amazing Race, Treasure Hunters, Project Runway, and So You Think You Can Dance?). One particular game show, Battle of the Network Stars, turned celebrities into the contestants (in 2005 we saw a short-lived homage called Battle of the Network Reality Stars). Shows like Cops, America’s Most Wanted, and People’s Court can also be viewed as nascent reality TV, focusing on real people from a law-and-order perspective and relying on a range of documentary, recreated, and scripted footage.

Regardless of these various influences and precursors, it is generally agreed that two programs signaled the rise of contemporary reality TV. The first is MTV’s The Real World. Premiering in 1991, The Real World was an early “docudrama” following the lives of seven young house inhabitants cast by the network. The Real World is one of MTV’s strongest franchises, and its producers, Bunim/Murray, went on to create similar shows like Road Rules (the cast lives in an RV and faces challenges) and the hybrid RW/RR Challenge.

The second major programming breakthrough was CBS’s Survivor, premiering in 1999. Unlike The Real World’s cable status, Survivor demonstrated that reality TV could be popular and profitable on a broadcast network. Created by Mark Burnett, Survivor was a blockbuster gamedoc hit involving isolating contestants on an island and subjecting them to challenges. Each week, a contestant was voted off by their tribe until the finale, where the last two contestants were subjected to questioning and a vote from a jury comprised of the nine most recently exiled cast members. Survivor’s massive popularity not only ensured its return, but also opened the floodgates for a whole host of programming that quickly changed the face of television.

ENDEMOL

The Dutch production company Endemol is, along with Mark Burnett, the most successful reality TV producer. A hybrid of its founders’ names (John de Mol and Joop van den Ende), the company is responsible for the first international reality hit, Big Brother. First premiering in 1999 in the Netherlands, Big Brother eventually was adapted to 70 countries. Big Brother encapsulates two characteristics that made Endemol such a media juggernaut. First is its global outlook. Endemol recognized that it was preferable to make programming adaptable to many regions and cultures rather than sell the same show to a presumed monolithic global audience. This allowed national markets to claim they were producing local programming rather than importing foreign media products. Their second contribution is related
to the first, namely the selling and promotion of formats rather than fully formed shows. Formats are templates (an ensemble of rules and procedures around a central idea) which can, like code, be modified depending on context. Among the Endemol empire’s products are Fear Factor, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, Gay, Straight, or Taken?, Changing Rooms, Deal or No Deal, and 1 vs. 100.

**FORM/GENRE**

There is wide debate over the validity and accuracy of the name “reality TV.” The most basic comment is that the term covers too many types of programming to be useful. What does The Surreal Life have in common with Design on a Dime, or Punk’d with Queer Eye for the Straight Guy? Some programs have a game component, others are about style makeovers; some focus on celebrities, others on ordinary people; some focus on pranking people, others on therapeutically rehabilitating them; and there is a varying degree of scriptedness in each. The wide range and sheer amount of programming make reality TV a dubious and exhaustive category.

Another more philosophical criticism leveled at the label is that these programs cannot be said to be accurately representing reality. Take the case of The Real World: the cast members are selectively chosen, their conditions are highly unusual (free food and booze in a lavish house), their antics are often provoked or staged, and the result is a highly edited package. Reality TV’s roots in documentary styles and aesthetics (like An American Family) further complicates its relationship to reality.

For these reasons, a host of names have been proposed to divide reality TV into various subgenres or to clarify its representational status: gamedoc, docu-soap, factual entertainment, postdocumentary television, dramality, reality sit-com, lifestyle programming, unscripted drama, actuality programs, experiment TV, virtual TV, neo-verite, and more pervasive forms of “infotainment” or “edutainment.” Perhaps reality TV is not a genre at all, but an array of formats. Reality TV can be seen as a medium, a recombinant series of formats that fuses narrative, previous television genres, games, documentary styles, drama, and skills/education. Its experiments and formats have appeared on news channels (CNN’s Turnaround) and influenced film documentaries (Super Size Me). More importantly, the emergence of reality TV has demonstrated that reality can be a marketing tool, and that these kinds of classifications are products of a convergence of industry, critical, and audience expectations.

**CONTROVERSIAL SHOWS**

Besides the ongoing debates around reality TV as a whole, a few programs generated significant controversy when they were released. A couple of months before the premiere of Survivor (often noted as the beginning of the second wave of reality TV), FOX broadcast Who
Wants to Marry a Multi-millionaire?, derided by critics as a new low in television. The program was essentially a beauty contest in which 50 women competed for a marriage proposal from a millionaire whose identity was only revealed at the end of the contest. Another FOX product that sparked outrage was Who’s Your Daddy?, cancelled after its first episode. An adopted woman faced 25 men, each of whom claimed to be her biological father. Her objective was to discern this person via interviews. If she did so, both would win prize money, but if she picked the incorrect man, he would take the prize. The use of torture-like challenges (such as those in Fear Factor) has caused consternation among critics and audiences. The Chair and The Chamber premiered within a week of each other in 2002, and each depicted contestants undergoing extreme environmental disturbances testing their endurance of external stimuli for money. A few years later, a humorous version of this format found expression in Distraction, a quiz show that gave contestants easy questions while they underwent painful or humiliating tests (clothespins on the face, getting pummeled by food items, put in a box with insects). In the United Kingdom, however, torture took on a more serious political tone with 2005’s controversial The Guantanamo Guidebook, which re-created interrogation scenes from Camp X-Ray. Finally, Welcome to the Neighborhood was a game show in which white conservative suburban residents judged which of the competing families was to win a dream house in their cul-de-sac. Among the family applicants: Hispanic, pagan, gay, African American, tattooed, and Korean. The show’s trailers and promotional material were so incendiary that the series never made it to the air.

ECONOMICS

The 1980s saw a number of economic developments that set the stage for the rise of reality TV. The growth of cable and satellite technology created more video outlets for programming. At the same time, production costs were increasing (especially for directors, professional writers, and celebrity actors). To increase profits, networks and production companies cut back on labor costs. In response, a wave of strikes by numerous entertainment industry unions threw the industry into crisis. In 1988, a 22-week writers’ strike delayed the opening of the fall season. Meanwhile, programming that did not rely on professional writers remained unscathed. In addition, the astronomical success of America’s Funniest Home Videos in the early 1990s proved that nonscripted, cheap, audience-supplied content could be popular and profitable. Reality TV emerged, then, partially as a cost-cutting strategy.

Ten years later, reality TV proved that it could create blockbusters as well. Survivor creator Mark Burnett devised marketing and production strategies that transformed the economics of television. Television’s basic pre-Survivor business model involved a network investing in a production company’s program from the outset, taking most of the risk in hopes of big returns in future advertising. Burnett’s model was this: he would pre-sell sponsorship of the program (e.g., getting Doritos to pay to place its product as one of the contestant’s rewards), taking on more of the risk at the beginning. Then, because the network invested little at the beginning, he was able to keep much more of any future ad revenue.
In essence, this pre-selling puts more responsibility on shows’ producers and leads to a blurring of programming and marketing (e.g., *The Apprentice*, which designs entire episode challenges around a marketing stunt for a sponsor).

**AUDIENCES/INTERACTIVITY**

One of the key defining features of reality TV is its integration of audiences into its programming. Audiences have been called “co-programmers” and “co-producers” by industry producers. We can think of this in terms of a broader media culture process of interactivity. First, a number of programs use audience voting to determine their outcomes (including the most popular reality TV franchise of all time, *American Idol*). Second, a number of virtual and material interactions with reality TV stars are encouraged. Viewers can chat online with contestants after an episode, and MTV hosts club events where fans can mingle with select *Real World* cast members. Finally, the fact that most of the programs are composed of “ordinary people” means that the audience (not just of any particular program, but of the genre) functions as a potential pool of contestants and participants.

Obviously this does not mean ordinary people get to design the scenarios, cast the program, edit the text, or reap the profits that producers do. But it does mean that the audience is incorporated as a variable into the design itself, and that ordinary people are transformed into players and participants whose actions can alter future arrangements.

**ISSUES AND THEMES**

A variety of motifs and cultural issues can be found in reality TV, and they are worth mentioning briefly. Reality TV is both symptom and cause of an intensified celebrity culture. It holds out the promise that anyone can become a star, even if briefly. Be it in music (*American Idol*), business (*The Apprentice*), modeling (*America’s Next Top Model*), theater (*Grease: You’re the One that I Want*), or back on reality TV (see the careers of Survivor’s Johnny Fairplay and *The Real World’s* Trishelle ConNatella and Tonya Cooley), celebrities can be made in the genre. At the same time, celebrities themselves are brought closer to ordinary people. They are made into contestants (as in *Celebrity Mole, Celebrity Fit Camp, I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!, The Surreal Life, Celebrity Boxing, and Celebrity Fear Factor*) or their lives are treated as ordinary people (as in *The Osbournes, Newlyweds, The Anna Nicole Show, The Simple Life, Breaking Bonaduce, Run’s House, Being Bobby Brown, Hogan Knows Best, Shooting Sizemore, and My Fair Brady*). VH1 even calls their cluster of these shows “Celebreality.”

Makeovers are another key theme in reality TV. We could even say that reality TV is a medium whose central operational imperative is transformation. As just mentioned, transformations occur by turning ordinary people into celebrities and celebrities into ordinary people. Home improvement and redeesigning shows (such as *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, Design on a Dime, Trading Spaces, While You Were Out, Garden Police*, and much of the lineup on
the Home & Garden, Style, and Discovery Home channels) make a game out of domestic rearrangement and reorganization, as do shows in which personal transformation is fused with property improvements (as in *Pimp My Ride* and *American Chopper*).

Personal transformations occur through style overhauls (as in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *What Are You Wearing?*, *Ambush Makeover*, *What Not to Wear*, *How Do I Look?*, and *Starting Over*), seduction training (*From Wack to Mack*, *How to Get the Guy*, *Can’t Get a Date*, and *Wanna Come In?*), bodily alterations (*Extreme Makeover*, *The Swan*, *Biggest Loser*, *I Want a Famous Face*, and *Dr. 90210*), and entire life overhauls (*Made*, *Camp Jim*, *Changing Lives*, *Intervention*, and *ToddTV*). Other programs’ focus on transformation is more subtle, as when contestants talk about the “learning process” of encountering different types of people and living situations in MTV’s *The Real World* and *Road Rules*, or CW’s *Beauty and the Geek*, as well as personal growth through self-knowledge in *Big Brother*, *The Amazing Race*, and *Survivor*.

Youth and the nuclear family are two demographics as well as central social clusters in reality programs. Broadcast networks consistently run prime-time shows like *Trading Spouses*, *Wife Swap*, *Nanny 911*, *Supernanny*, and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, each of which takes the nuclear family as its subject. Meanwhile, MTV targets youth around a variety of issues facing them: friendship (*Laguna Beach*, *Why Can’t I Be You?*, *You’ve Got a Friend*), courtship (*Parental Control*, *Date My Mom*, *Next*, *Engaged and Underage*, *Room Raiders*, *Dismissed*), family (*Damage Control*, *One Bad Trip*, *My Super Sweet 16*), jobs (*I’m from Rolling Stone*, *The Assistant*, *8th and Ocean*, *Power Girls*), and tolerance (*Boiling Points*).

**REALITY ACTIVISM AND COUNTER-INTERVENTIONS**

Reality TV’s reliance on audience interactivity and immersion into everyday life has produced some interesting unintended consequences. The first season of *Big Brother* (U.S.) saw an ongoing series of interventions by activist fans, both online and in the material world. Tactics involved throwing tennis balls with messages into the house’s yard, communicating with megaphones, and flying planes with banners (with messages like “Big Brother is worse than you think—get out now”). A group calling itself Media Jammers claimed responsibility for some of the banners and tried to influence the audience voting. Activists plotted online to convince contestants to stage a walkout and split the winnings. The houseguests came close to doing so, but after a series of producer interventions (an attempted bribe; disseminating information to one houseguest via an exiled contestant; limiting the online video feed to prevent viewers from hearing the contestants’ deliberation; further controlling the communication coming in from outside) ultimately surrendered to the producers’ design. Subsequent seasons eliminated the audience voting component. Culture jamming also describes the events surrounding the *Real World: Chicago* season. In a number of seasons, the *Real World* cast has encountered hostility from ordinary people, at times resulting in bar brawls and arrests (a variation of this happened when the *Project Runway* contestants left New York for
Paris, only to be pelted with eggs by a Frenchman from his apartment). This antagonism took on a humorous political tone in Chicago when 350 activists, artists, and neighbors staged a “protest” party outside of the building where the show was being taped. Chanting “Free the Real World 7,” the pranksters closed down the block for hours with their exuberance, and demanded that MTV surrender its production equipment so that the people “could do something real with it.”

THE POLITICS OF REALITY

Criticisms of reality TV have come from many quarters and different sides of the political spectrum. For some, reality TV is a morally bankrupt phenomenon, one that thrives on humiliation, degradation, and interpersonal conflict as spectacle. Shows like Fear Factor, Are You Hot?, and Flavor of Love highlight the basest of instincts, while programs like The Swan and My Super Sweet 16 privilege superficial values of consumerism and outward attractiveness.

Other criticisms go beyond moral condemnation to address issues of representation and stereotyping. The casting of character types (often with the help of psychological consultants) designed to cause conflict on a show like The Real World are cited as promoting stereotypes. At times, programs take racial stereotyping as their focus (such as Black.White., The White Rapper Show, and College Hill). Gender and sexual norms are reinforced in many courtship shows (as in The Bachelor/ette, Flavor of Love, Joe Millionaire, and Beauty and the Geek), while others promote typical gay characters (especially the lightning-rod program Queer Eye for the Straight Guy). Survivor and other island-setting programs (as well as the globe-trotting The Amazing Race) have come under scrutiny for their exploitation of exotic imagery and local cultures.

Finally, a number of cultural critics have analyzed reality TV as part of a broader shift in governing and social control strategies. Reality TV can be seen as the cultural expression of contemporary surveillance society. By playing on audience voyeurism (especially in shows like Big Brother), programs often seem to function to make this surveillance both natural and pleasurable. Monitoring technologies are a central component of some programs (as in Exposed, Room Raiders, Spying on Myself, and One Bad Trip). Spy techniques like disguises and deception are part of the whole prank-show subgenre (see Punk’d, Scare Tactics, Boiling Points, Girls Behaving Badly, Spy TV, My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance, Joe Millionaire, and Joe Schmo).

Privacy is more than just a single issue in this programming: it constitutes the very material for the medium. Not surprisingly, a number of reality TV programs take place in the home, traditionally the seat of privacy. From the range of home improvement/decoration/organization programs, to the domestic displays of wealth in Cribs, to the experimental homes of Big Brother and The Real World, private space is increasingly becoming a spectacle. In addition to private spaces, the very relationships that comprise the private sphere (family, courtship, friendship) also find themselves the target of surveillance reality. The “confessional” (direct-to-camera interview sessions) is a staple of reality TV.
programming, sometimes requiring a special room for these personal revelation sessions.

Reality TV’s interventions into private spaces, as critics have argued, have an educational or training component. They provide models of behavior with implications for shaping selves into citizens. Reality TV or “lifestyle” television acts as instructional programming whose effect is to encourage self-responsibility, self-entrepreneurialism, and self-improvement. According to some cultural analysts, these interventions are integral to a neoliberal form of governance, in which political solutions are outsourced to private citizens and groups, while the populace learns to become responsible by relying on various lifestyle experts. Others note that this training parallels the forms of labor required in an information society or post-Fordist economy. Programs like The Apprentice are obvious choices, but numerous others encourage individuals to learn the art of self-promotion, ways of being adaptable to new tasks, and working in collaborative team-based projects (e.g., Project Runway, Top Chef, Dream Job, Kept, I Wanna Be a Hilton, The Scholar, The Contender, Who Wants to Be a Superhero?, Hell’s Kitchen). As a result, individuals learn to become flexible and to be constantly open to new experiences, but also to new program commands and external stimuli. In addition, subjects learn how to strategize and work the rules of any game so as not to get eliminated. While the programs stimulate and draw upon the powers of transformation, those desires are often organized around narrow values pertaining to competition, fame, and money.

See also Celebrity Worship and Fandom; Dating Shows; Embedding Journalists; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Hypercommercialism; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Media and the Crisis of Values; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Product Placement; Ratings; Representations of Class; Representations of Women; Surveillance and Privacy; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


Jack Z. Bratich
REGULATING THE AIRWAVES: “A TOASTER WITH PICTURES” OR A PUBLIC SERVICE?

At the heart of American broadcasting policy has been the licensing of public airwaves to private radio and television broadcasters. In exchange for their licenses, broadcasters have been required to serve the “public interest, convenience, and necessity,” a phrase that continually has confused, emboldened, and troubled broadcasters, regulators, and citizens alike. What constitutes the public interest and who composes the broadcasting public have been consistent areas of contestation and conflict; at stake in these struggles have been the contours of broadcaster obligations to audiences and the parameters of acceptable governmental interventions in the workings of the broadcasting industry.

In 1961, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Newton Minow labeled television as a “vast wasteland,” and appealed to broadcasters to improve their programming and to uphold their public service obligations to audiences. Twenty years later, FCC Chairman Mark Fowler referred to television as a “toaster with pictures,” which suggested that broadcasting was an industry that did not require special regulations or considerations. This comment signaled his commitment to the deregulation of broadcasting and to his vision that the public interest would be best served if broadcasters could operate in a free market unfettered by government regulations.

These two poles, the “vast wasteland” that requires active regulation of the airwaves, and the “toaster with pictures” that favors deregulation, epitomize the tension that has characterized U.S. broadcasting policy since its inception. At the core of this debate have been competing ideas about the relationship between broadcasters and the publics they serve. Some regulators have seen their interests as compatible and have insisted that the best way to serve the public is to bolster the broadcasting industry itself. Others have understood their interests to conflict and have fought to impose regulations on broadcasters to ensure that the needs of the public are met.

The history of broadcasting regulation has also been the history of public activism to influence how broadcasters and their regulators understand the meaning of the “public interest.” Activists from across the political spectrum have participated in this conversation and have helped shape the direction not only of broadcasting regulation, but of the broader conversation over the role of broadcasting in American life.

A TIMELINE OF COMMUNICATIONS REGULATION

1912—Congress passes the Radio Act of 1912, which gives the Commerce Department the power to assign frequencies and to license radio operators. This act marks the first time that the federal government exerted its authority over wireless communication and crafted a policy that ranked how it was to be used.

1922–25—Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover holds four National Radio Conferences, which bring together individuals representing the interests of the government,
technicians (scientists and engineers), and representatives of the radio industry to map out a policy for broadcasting.

1934—Congress passes the Federal Communications Act and establishes the FCC.
1941—FCC issues *Report on Chain Broadcasting* that outlines restrictions and modifications on the network-affiliate relationship.
1941—FCC establishes restrictions on radio station ownership.
1943—Supreme Court rules in *National Broadcasting Co. v. United States* that the FCC has the power to regulate radio networks, and affirms that the scarcity of the spectrum legitimizes the public-interest responsibilities imposed on broadcasters.
1946—FCC issues its “Blue Book,” *Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcasters*, which defined for broadcasters how the FCC would ascertain whether license renewal applicants had fulfilled their public interest obligations.
1949—FCC establishes the Fairness Doctrine.
1952—FCC issues its *Sixth Order and Report*, ending the four-year freeze on licensing television stations. The FCC approves licensing stations in both the Very High Frequency (VHF) and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) bandwidths. It also reserves 242 licenses for noncommercial, educational broadcasters.
1956—FCC implements its 7–7–7 rule, which prohibits a single entity from owning more than seven AM stations, seven FM stations, and seven television stations nationally.
1960—FCC issues the *Programming Policy Statement*, which outlines 14 elements necessary for broadcasters to fulfill their public-interest obligations. It also requires broadcasters to ascertain the needs of the communities they serve.
1962—Congress passes the All-Channel Receiver Act and the Educational Television Facilities Act. The first act requires television set manufacturers to produce television sets that can receive both VHF and UHF signals. The second act allocates federal money to states to establish or enhance educational broadcasting services.
1962—FCC passes the Anti-trafficking Rule, which requires owners to wait three years before they can sell a station.
1966—U.S. District Court rules on *Office of Communication of United Church of Christ vs. Federal Communications Commission*. The case provides members of the public legal standing to participate in broadcast license renewal hearings.
1967—Congress passes the Public Broadcasting Act, which creates the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private nonprofit corporation to promote public broadcasting.
1969—Supreme Court rules in favor of the FCC in *Red Lion Broadcasting v. Federal Communications Commission*, thereby upholding the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine.
1970—FCC establishes the Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR) and the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (Fin-Syn).
1975—FCC bans cross-ownership of broadcasting stations and newspapers.
1978—Supreme Court rules in favor of the FCC in *Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation*.
1978—FCC establishes policies to favor minority ownership of broadcasting stations.
1981—FCC replaces the license renewal process, which had required a detailed report, with a “postcard renewal process.”

1982—FCC extends terms of broadcasting licenses, which previously had been set at three years. Radio broadcasters’ license terms are raised to seven years, television broadcasters’ to five years.

1984—FCC eliminates the Anti-trafficking Rule.

1984—FCC raises the 7–7–7 ownership rule to a 12–12–12 rule.

1984—Supreme Court rules in *Federal Communications Commission v. League of Women Voters* that the amendment to the Public Broadcasting Act that forbids editorializing on a noncommercial station violates the First Amendment. This ruling is the first time the Court finds a broadcasting regulation to be unconstitutional.

1985—FCC eliminates the numerical cap on television station ownership and replaces it with an “audience reach” limit. The limit holds that no entity can own television stations that reach more than 25 percent of that national television audience.

1987—FCC repeals the Fairness Doctrine. Congress passes a bill to legislate the Fairness Doctrine, which is vetoed by President Reagan.

1990—Congress passes the Children’s Television Act.

1995—Fin-Syn Rule and the Prime Time Access Rule are eliminated.


2003—FCC proposes to relax media ownership rules. A widespread public campaign to fight further deregulation is mounted in response. The FCC receives close to 1 million e-mails and letters opposing the new rules.

2004—As part of an omnibus spending bill, Congress raises the national ownership limit of television stations from 35 percent to 39 percent.

2004—In *Prometheus Radio Project v. Federal Communications Commission*, the U.S. District Court issues a stay on the FCC’s media ownership rules.

2006—FCC fines 20 CBS stations $550,000 for a 2004 Super Bowl broadcast in which musician Janet Jackson’s breast was exposed on air.

**BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BROADCASTING POLICY**

The federal government has regulated radio since 1912, when Congress gave the Commerce Department the authority to license users of the electromagnetic spectrum. Fifteen years later, Congress passed the Radio Act of 1927, which established a temporary agency, the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), which was charged with granting broadcasting licenses to applicants who could best serve the “public interest, convenience, or necessity.” The FRC initially interpreted the “public interest” as the “best possible broadcasting reception conditions throughout the United States.” The FRC initially preferred stations that had the best technical equipment, a policy that favored radio networks and network affiliates, who had the capital and technology to produce quality-sounding broadcasts. The FRC also favored “general public interest stations” over “propaganda stations,” for example those run by labor unions or political parties.
A concerted effort against “balkanizing the dial,” the FRC privileged broadcasters with programming strategies to meet the needs of a general listenership. In its early licensing decisions, the FRC favored a broadcasting system predicated on national commercial networks and cast suspicion on other uses of radio.

During the period between 1927 and 1934, a broadcast reform movement—composed of private foundations, educators, intellectuals, churches, and others—fought for a new regulatory paradigm that would diminish the primacy of commercial, network stations within the burgeoning radio industry. The 1927 Radio Act had had dire consequences for educational broadcasters; in 1927, 94 educational institutions had broadcasting licenses, a number that dwindled to 49 by 1931. The FRC reassigned educational broadcasters to less desirable frequencies, reserving the more powerful ones for commercial broadcasters. Allies in Congress proposed legislation that would reserve a set percentage of stations for educational broadcasting. At the core of this movement was the presumption that the dominance of commercial broadcasters squandered the possibilities of radio, and consequently diminished the potential for public service that the medium offered. In response, the national networks successfully launched a public relations campaign to extol the benefits of the status quo and to publicize the educational and service capabilities of commercial broadcasters.

When Congress passed the Federal Communications Act of 1934, which reiterated almost word-for-word the Radio Act of 1927, it cemented the failure of the broadcast reform movement to realize an alternate system of broadcast regulation. The act replaced the FRC with the FCC, a permanent regulatory agency that would regulate all telecommunications—not just broadcasting, but telephony and telegraphy as well. Members of the FCC, who would be appointed by the president but would answer to Congress, would have the power to license broadcasters, allocate channels, renew broadcasting licenses, and guard the airwaves to protect the public interest. This act would remain the basis of U.S. broadcasting policy until 1996, when Congress passed the Telecommunications Act.

If initially federal regulators understood that the best way to serve the public interest was to support the growth of a stable broadcasting industry, then later the emphasis would shift to a new definition of the public interest. This new model asserted that the best way to ensure that the public’s interest was met was to foster competition, diversity, and localism in the broadcasting industry. However, regulators, legislators, and the courts would disagree over the best way to accomplish these goals.

For some, the path required imposing regulations upon broadcasters. The FCC, beginning in the 1960s, required broadcasters to fill out lengthy renewal forms in which they would detail how they had fulfilled their public service obligations. In the 1970s, the FCC created the Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR) and the Financial Interest and Syndication Rule (Fin-Syn), both intended to bolster local and independent programming. The PTAR restricted stations to three hours of network programming during prime time, in the hopes that that the fourth hour would be filled by local programming. Fin-Syn forbade networks from having a financial interest in, and domestic syndication rights for, its
entertainment programming. The goal of Fin-Syn was to increase the power of independent producers to gain access to airtime. The FCC also imposed ownership restrictions on how many stations a single company could own and passed rules to encourage minority ownership of broadcasting stations.

In the 1980s, the FCC implemented a new direction in broadcasting policy: deregulation of the broadcasting industry. It adopted a “marketplace approach” to broadcast regulation, one that led it to remove many of the regulations it had imposed in the past. During this decade, the FCC expanded the length of a broadcasting license to five years for television stations, seven years for radio; it also eliminated the lengthy license renewal process. The FCC also repealed the Anti-trafficking Rule, which had required station owners to wait three years before they could sell their stations. The FCC additionally reformed its broadcast ownership rules, allowing single entities to expand their holdings.

This era of deregulation was codified by Congress when, in 1996, it passed the Telecommunications Act. Among its other provisions, the act removed the national cap on how many radio stations a single company could own and raised the number of television stations a single company could own. It also diminished the ability of the FCC to revoke a broadcasting license and required the FCC to examine its media ownership rules every two years to ascertain if they still served the public interest.

REGULATING SPEECH

A persistent area of conflict in broadcasting regulation has been the tension between the First Amendment rights of broadcasters and their public service obligations. This friction is evident in the 1934 Federal Communications Act, which defined broadcast speech as speech protected by the First Amendment, but also prohibited “obscene, indecent, or profane language” and required broadcasters to allow political candidates access to the airwaves.

One of the early concerns of regulators was that broadcasters could use the airwaves as bully pulpits to promote their views. In 1941, the FCC instituted the Mayflower Doctrine, which prohibited broadcasters from editorializing on the air. By the end of the decade, however, regulators acknowledged the public-square function of broadcasting and asserted that, for citizens to participate knowledgeably in democratic processes, they must have access to the arguments that affect the exigent issues of the day. In 1949, the FCC established the Fairness Doctrine. The Fairness Doctrine had two requirements: (1) broadcasters had an affirmative obligation to air issues of public concern to their communities and (2) they must provide airtime to both sides of the issue.

Broadcasters chafed at the Fairness Doctrine and argued that it violated their First Amendment rights. The Supreme Court, in its Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC (1969) decision, upheld the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine. The Court ruled that the right of the public to hear multiple viewpoints trumped broadcasters’ claims to free-speech rights. In addition, the Court held that because broadcasters had access to a resource, the airwaves, denied to most people, they had different responsibilities than newspapers or other organs of the press.
Though the Fairness Doctrine typically applied to news and public affairs programming, in the 1960s the FCC expanded its reach. For example, in 1962 John Banzhaf filed a complaint under the Fairness Doctrine against CBS’s New York stations; Banzhaf had requested airtime to respond to claims made in cigarette ads. The FCC decided that the Fairness Doctrine can apply to advertising and other forms of programming, a decision affirmed by the U.S. District Court.

Public interest groups in the 1960s and 1970s drew on this expanded definition of the Fairness Doctrine in their campaigns to diversify the content of broadcast programming. Specifically, one of the main activist strategies members of the public used during this period was to file with the FCC a petition to deny the license renewal of a local broadcasting station that, according to the petitioners, had violated its public interest obligations. In their petitions, activists often pointed to how stations violated the Fairness Doctrine in their news and entertainment programming, as well as in their choice of advertisements.

One of the priorities of the FCC during the deregulatory climate of the 1980s was to repeal the Fairness Doctrine. Rather than facilitate discussion over public affairs, detractors argued that the Fairness Doctrine had had a “chilling effect” on broadcasters who had shied away from controversy for fear of Fairness Doctrine–based complaints to the FCC. In 1987, the FCC rescinded the Fairness Doctrine. Congress passed a bill that made the Fairness Doctrine law, which was vetoed by President Reagan.

**REGULATING DECENCY, PROTECTING CHILDREN**

The impact of broadcasting on children has been a consistent concern for regulators and activists. The FCC and Congress routinely have required broadcasters to provide programming specifically for children and have worked to shield children from indecency and violence on the airwaves. Public interest groups also have targeted children as part of the broadcasting public in particular need of protection.

In the 1940s, the FCC issued its *Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcasters* (also known as the “Blue Book”). The Blue Book pointed to programming for children as a necessary component of broadcasters’ public interest obligations. Indeed, when the FCC expanded the license renewal process, it required broadcasters to document the shows they had provided for children. The continued importance of children’s programming has been so persistent that, in the midst of the widespread deregulation of the 1990s, Congress passed the Children’s Television Act, which required broadcasters to air at least three hours each week of educational programming for children. It also limited the amount of advertising during children’s programming.

Children’s advocates have not always been satisfied with the efforts of broadcasters to serve and protect children. In 1968, concerned mothers formed Action for Children’s Television (ACT), an organization committed to reforming network television to make it more responsible to children. In the early 1970s, ACT members successfully encouraged the FCC to examine rules regarding children’s television and to develop a permanent children’s unit as part of the
agency’s infrastructure. In addition, ACT filed a petition with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to ban commercials for sugar-based foods (cereals, candy) and toys on television. The ACT campaign garnered substantial public interest, drawing attention to ACT’s concerns over the health hazards of manipulative television advertising and transforming cereal commercials to be more sensitive to their impact on young audiences.

The hazards of indecent programming on children also have spurred both federal regulation of the airwaves and public interest campaigns to stem its ubiquity on television. The 1934 act prohibited indecent speech from the airwaves, though what constitutes indecency has been a contested issue. In the 1970s, for example, the FCC had sanctioned a Pacifica radio station for airing a broadcast with alleged indecent language, George Carlin’s “seven dirty words” routine; the station disagreed that this routine was “indecent” and questioned the FCC’s authority to police its content. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the FCC in its Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation (1978) decision, and ruled that the FCC has the authority to determine what constitutes indecency and to prohibit indecent broadcasts when children were likely to be part of the broadcasting audience.

Congress, in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, also acted to protect children from indecent programming. It required television manufacturers to install a V-chip in television sets that would allow parents to block programming unsuitable for children. The act also required the television industry to develop a ratings system, similar to that of the motion picture industry, which would alert viewers to programming inappropriate for children. Both the V-chip and the television ratings system would come under attack, the former for being difficult to use, the latter for being difficult to understand.

The brief exposure of Janet Jackson’s breast during the halftime show of the 2004 Super Bowl catapulted the issue of broadcasting decency into the national headlines and onto the FCC’s agenda. The Parents Television Council (PTC), a watchdog group founded in 1995, solicited hundreds of thousands of people to complain to the FCC that the airing of the breast constituted an indecent broadcast. The FCC in 2006 fined 20 CBS stations for this broadcast. Since the 2004 Super Bowl incident, the FCC has increased the number and amount of fines for indecency it has imposed on broadcasters.

REGULATING OWNERSHIP

The FCC and Congress continually have considered the impact of who owns the media on service to the public interest. Broadcasting policy has addressed concerns over horizontal integration (how many broadcasting stations a single company could own) and vertical integration (whether a single company could have holdings in multiple media markets). People who favor restrictions on media ownership have claimed that the consolidation of media threatens diversity, competition, and localism—the core values of the public interest. Those who oppose restrictions counter that concentration can help promote these values; they currently also argue that the rise of new technologies like DVD players
and the Internet have diversified the media landscape, eliminating the need for ownership restrictions.

In 1941, the FCC imposed its first restriction on media ownership: it prohibited a single company from owning more than one same-service (AM or FM) station in the same market. Five years later, it stated that a company could not own more than one national radio network. In 1964, the FCC put restrictions on TV station ownership, ruling that an entity under specific circumstances could own at most two stations in the same market. In the 1970s, the FCC also prohibited cross-ownership of a newspaper and a broadcasting station in the same market and cross-ownership of a radio and television station in the same market. The FCC also placed caps on how many broadcasting stations a company could own nationwide.

The turn to deregulation loosened many of these ownership restrictions. The 1996 Telecommunications Act raised the national limit on how many television stations a company could own and erased a national limit on radio station ownership. In 2003, the FCC voted to further relax media ownership restrictions and was met by heavy public and congressional opposition.

At stake in these battles over media ownership has been a fundamental disagreement over the relationship between media ownership and media content. On the one side, people argue that diversity in ownership promotes diversity in viewpoints expressed over the air. On the other, detractors posit that what promotes diversity of views is the diversity of media outlets available to consumers, regardless of who owns them. It is a battle that may persist as a mainstay on the FCC’s agenda, as media concentration and the development of new technologies continue to change the media landscape.

See also À La Carte Cable Pricing; Cable Carriage Disputes; Children and Effects; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Reform; Minority Media Ownership; National Public Radio; Net Neutrality; Obscenity and Indecency; Pirate Radio; Pornography; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service.

REPRESENTATIONS OF CLASS

U.S. media simultaneously ignore class-based inequalities and convey the mythical idea that anyone can rise above their socioeconomic origins if they just work hard enough. While representations of class are not as controversial as the media’s treatment of gender and race, they are no less important as cultural indicators of unequal power relations.

Did you ever notice how many doctors, lawyers, and business executives populate the fictional and nonfictional worlds of U.S. television? Like other forms of commercial media, TV dramatically overrepresents the lives—and lifestyles—of well-educated, upper-income professionals. As social critic Barbara Ehrenreich points out, about 70 percent of people in the United States can be considered “working class,” in that they perform monotonous (and often low-paid) forms of manual and service work, labor for wages instead of salaries, and often do not have college degrees (Ehrenreich 1998). Yet, we rarely see their experiences on the job, in the community, or at home reflected on the screen. As numerous media scholars have shown, when working-class people do appear in the media, they are often shown to be pursuing the American dream of upward mobility—or else they are often blamed for failing to “pull themselves up by the bootstraps.” Given the stigma ascribed to working-class people by mediated images and discourses, it is not surprising that most Americans reject that label. According to

TITANIC

The 1997 blockbuster Titanic reworked the cross-class romance narrative—a staple of Hollywood film—at a moment of growing class polarization. In the midst of corporate downsizing, cuts to social welfare programs, and looming economic recession, the film offered a feel-good story about a poor artist who is traveling in steerage and a pampered socialite who is traveling first-class. Defying the steep social hierarchy inherent to the two-tier spatial organization of the ship, Jack and Rose fall in love and eventually come to reject the European-coded class hierarchies of the “bygone” era depicted by the film. Celebrating Rose’s voluntary downward mobility and situating vivid social and economic inequalities squarely in the past, Titanic reaffirmed the American dream of classlessness at a moment of impending doubt about the future of the middle class. Filmed in Mexico to exploit the cheap labor of “runaway” movie production, the film offered a quintessentially American fantasy in which the structural inequalities of the global capitalist order can be overcome by the choices of plucky individuals.

cultural analyst Benjamin DeMott, the media perpetuate a political paradox, in that the majority of people in the United States prefer to identify as middle class, despite their unequal access to society’s material and educational resources.

SELLING THE DREAM: COMMERCIALISM AND CLASS REPRESENTATION

Commercialism is a powerful filter when it comes to class representation. Take the case of television. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when TV was getting its start, the major networks broadcast “urban, ethnic, working class family sitcoms” as well as live anthology dramas that dealt with the everyday realities of working-class life (Boddy 1992). By mid-decade, however, all of these programs had been cancelled or drastically modified to meet the promotional demands of the consumer economy of which television was an integral part. Sponsors preferred stories about well-to-do suburban families; social realism, they claimed, didn’t foster the “right” mood for selling products. By accommodating the advertising system from which it profited, TV also constructed white, heterosexual, upper-middle-class family life as an idealized cultural “norm.” Although we now have many more broadcast and cable channels available to us, television’s class bias hasn’t changed much. Indeed, many critics argue that the fragmentation of the television landscape can never foster class diversity because the emphasis is still on selling products to the “right” customers.

CHEATS, REDNECKS, AND BUFFOONS: PATHOLOGIZING CLASS INEQUALITY

What sociologists call “class” stems from a combination of education, income, and culture in capitalist societies: a person’s job, schooling, and family origins are indicators of class position, and these factors in turn shape a person’s lifestyle and “taste” in everything from beer to television programs (Bourdieu 1984). Class differences are not inborn but are socially produced within unequal power relations. The upper classes are not inherently more intelligent, ambitious, or sophisticated than the majority of the population: they simply control more financial, educational, and cultural resources and are able to pass these resources from one generation to the next. Why then do people appear to accept relatively stable class hierarchies? One reason is that the U.S. media soften the harsh injustices of the capitalist class system by perpetuating intersecting fantasies of individual class mobility and “classlessness.”

Media representations of class promote the notion that anyone can transcend the circumstances of their birth if they work hard enough. This logic is democratic in that it subverts efforts to regulate and maintain “fixed” class positions common to aristocratic societies. However, it also has a troubling flipside in that it assumes that wealth is something to be gained individually (rather than shared socially) and that the identities, tastes, habits, and lifestyles of the upper-middle class are inherently superior and thus universally desired. Moreover, most individuals are not able to “overcome” class disadvantages and inequalities
on their own, particularly at a time when social programs (such as federal student aid) designed to level the playing field have been cut and the gap between haves and have-nots has grown wider. Because the media ignore the structural circumstances that work against class fluidity, class differences are all too readily ascribed to individual pathologies and lifestyle choices.

The news media’s construction of the “welfare mother” exemplifies this pattern. Since welfare reform gained political currency in the 1980s, news stories have coded the typical recipient as young, female, irresponsible, lazy, immoral, and often black—even through white people have historically benefited most from need-based government programs. Blending ideologies of race, gender, and class, news discourse has attributed systemic poverty not to the persistence of social inequalities or the uneven distribution of resources, but rather to the pathological ethics, work habits, and character flaws of poor people and poor women of color in particular. In so doing, say media scholars, the news has supported a policy trend based on the argument that social welfare programs designed to soften the harshest blows of the capitalist economy are no longer necessary (Gilens 2000).

Fictional media also tend to represent working-class life as a “deviation” or pathology. Poor and working-class characters are underrepresented in entertainment genres; when they do appear, they are often slotted into one-dimensional roles such as criminal or servant-helper. When working-class people take the lead, they often play for laughs. In a study of TV sitcoms, media scholar Richard Butsch found that working-class men are almost always depicted as stupid, lazy, and narrow-minded buffoons who deserve their low-paying, low-status jobs. Indeed, characters from Ralph Kramden (The Honeymooners) to Archie Bunker (All in the Family) to Al Bundy (Married with Children) and Homer Simpson (The Simpsons) are little more than caricatures of bad taste, vulgar habits, muddy thinking, and undeveloped morals. These representations situate working-class men as hapless “others,” says Butsch—fodder for voyeuristic amusement, but not positive identification or political action (Butsch 1992).

JUST DO IT: CLASS MOBILITY AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION

The patterns of representation discussed so far coexist with the discourse of class mobility in U.S. media. The inflation and normalization of class privilege is tolerated in part because the media also circulate rags-to-riches mythologies and how-to advice for achieving the good life. Hollywood is a major source of these inspirational stories. From Good Will Hunting (about a janitor who is discovered to be a math genius) to the Rocky series (about a working-class boxer who becomes world champion), Hollywood films have often taken dramatic class mobility as a central theme. While male characters often rise on the basis of their hard work and individual talent/merit, women’s mobility on screen has traditionally been linked to beauty capital and romantic trickery. In the gendered class fantasies played out in classic Hollywood films like Sabrina, Pretty Woman, and Born Yesterday, for example, a woman’s good looks are her ticket out of the dingy world of class oppression.
Representations of Class

**ROSEANNE**

When it comes to working-class representation on TV, *Roseanne* (ABC Television, 1988–97) is the exception to the rule. Based on the comedy of Roseanne Barr, this family sitcom explored the trials and tribulations of a white, blue-collar family of five from the vantage point of its feisty matriarch. *Roseanne* brought a distinctly feminine—and often explicitly feminist—face to the working-class hero, who has been historically coded by labor organizers as male. The program dealt regularly with “downbeat” issues such as workplace discrimination, low wages, lack of job security, unemployment, and social discrimination, which are routinely ignored by other sitcoms and by TV news, even though they impact many people. While *Roseanne* didn’t delve too deeply into the politics of capitalism, it did express the everyday injustices and resentments it breeds. For many critics, *Roseanne* remains the most dignified portrait of working-class life to ever appear on television in the United States.

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Popular journalism complements these Hollywood mythologies by focusing on their real-life equivalents. As DeMott points out, “humble” socioeconomic origins claimed by pop stars like Britney Spears, sports figures like Michael Jordan, and CEOs like Donald Trump are accentuated as can-do parables by our celebrity-oriented media culture. This affirmative discourse tempers the stigmatized view of the working class by affirming that anyone, regardless of birthright, can aspire to follow in the footsteps of these successful and admired individuals. While most people recognize this as an unlikely fantasy, the growth of the self-help industry, combined with cultural trends like reality TV, promises ordinary people the chance to “make over” themselves in more believable ways and offer instructions for doing so. Programs from *Dr. Phil* to *I Want to Be a Hilton* to *What Not to Wear* promise to help facilitate individual class mobility by teaching people how to develop a “winning attitude,” dress for success, or perfect their manners and personality. These programs acknowledge that class is partly a matter of access to “approved” cultural resources, and in so doing they may demystify the way that class inequality is perpetuated. However, the programs inevitably downplay the shared politics of class oppression and help to perpetuate the same class-based cultural hierarchies they claim to alleviate at the individual level.

**DON’T ENVY THE RICH**

While media promote self-transformation techniques and fantasies of class mobility, they also characterize the super rich as dysfunctional, greedy, and out of control. From Hollywood films like *Wall Street* to television programs like *The Simple Life* and *My Super Sweet Sixteen*, these cautionary tales present privileged elites as objects of moral scorn rather than envy or emulation. Yet, whether it is

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corporate raiders or leisure-class prima donnas who we love to hate, these mediated personifications of excess ambition and/or inherited privilege do little to challenge the class bias perpetuated by U.S. media. The structural inequalities that produce extreme wealth are deflected onto individual character flaws in these cautionary tales of wanting too much or wandering too far from our place in what DeMott calls the myth of the “imperial middle.” Ultimately, unflattering representations of the rich encourage us to accept profound class inequalities, not challenge them.

Representations of the “noble” poor complement this particular strand of media discourse. Every so often, poor people are not stigmatized but are instead validated for possessing better ethics, morals, and character than the rich. For example, the poor hero of the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is far more likeable than the spoiled rich children he encounters. Sometimes, as in Hollywood’s version of the Charles Dickens novel *Great Expectations*, lower-income characters achieve spectacular upward mobility, only to denounce the superficial riches—and people—they find populating the land of plenty. Other times, they hold on to their “poor” values symbolically. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, for example, young Charlie ends up owning the factory, but prefers to live in the same run-down house where he was born, and thus the dilapidated house is moved into the gleaming factory. Either way, these stories deflect structural inequalities, discourage class envy, and confirm the idea that fixed class positions are irrelevant in the “classless” society.

**CLASS AND IDENTITY POLITICS**

Media representations of class (particularly in the United States) have not provoked as much criticism as representations of gender and race, for several reasons. The myth of classlessness makes it difficult to think critically about class inequality, despite its presence in our lives. Working-class people are encouraged to aspire to mobility dreams and transform themselves on an individual basis instead of embracing their shared class status as a rallying point for broader socioeconomic changes. There is no positive “identity politics” associated or emerging from the working classes, partly because working-class life is deeply stigmatized, and partly because the myth of the American dream encourages us all to chase materialism and pursue self-betterment.

**See also** Communication and Knowledge Labor; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Minority Media Ownership; National Public Radio; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service; Reality Television; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.


Laurie Ouellette

REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY

What does it mean to “be a man,” and how do the media answer this question for us? Masculinity is probably most often assumed to be a natural phenomenon that is coextensive with the biological condition of maleness. In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, social scientists began to make a distinction between sex (male and female; both biological conditions) and gender (masculinity and femininity), and to view the latter as a socially constructed phenomenon, something that is created and maintained by the operation of a complex set of social institutions and structures. The media in particular have been seen as having a key role in shaping our ideas about what masculinity is, and in producing ideals and norms of masculinity through the images of and narratives about masculinity that they circulate. These images of masculinity often conflict with each other, making masculinity itself a highly contested category and raising questions about what masculinity is and what it means.

HISTORY

The impetus to create representations of masculinity is not a particularly recent development. Some of the earliest examples of representations of masculinity date back to ancient Greek statuary such as the much-copied Discobolus of Myron (460–450 B.C.). These statues, and their Roman successors, provided idealized images of the male body, muscular and virile. Often these images represent men engaged in sporting activities that serve to magnify the impression of physical power associated with our ideas about what masculinity is. Although there have been numerous changes in what is considered to be the masculine norm since the time of the ancient Greeks, the ideal of masculinity captured in Greek statuary has proven to be an enduring one. Its influence can be detected in the way that the male body is portrayed in some of the art of Renaissance
Representations of Masculinity

Italy and is particularly pronounced in statuary created by the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. It is an ideal of masculinity that still persists to some extent today, sometimes in a greatly exaggerated form found within the relatively marginal subculture of body builders, but also in more mainstream representations of masculinity (see the discussion of Stallone, Willis, and Schwarzenegger below).

The longevity of these idealized images of masculinity and the widespread adoption of these ideals within an array of different cultural contexts can have the effect of endowing this ideal of masculinity with an aura of naturalness; in effect, repeated exposure to these images conditions our everyday understanding of what a man should be like, so much so that we assume that it is men’s nature to be muscular, athletic, and competitive. However, more recent thinking on the subject suggests that it is more accurate to think of gender not as natural condition but as a set of practices that are performed by the individual, a “script” that is acted out. Understood in this way, it is possible to see that the singular term, masculinity, is not really adequate to describe the variability and complexity of every way of performing manhood, and for this reason it has recently become more usual to talk about masculinities in the plural and to recognize that there may be significant variations between different types of masculinity. Most particularly, ideas about masculinity have been subject to historical and geographical variation: what it means to be masculine may be very different at different historical times and in other parts of the world. Even in a particular historical moment and geographical location, there will be considerable variations in masculine types, particularly when gender intersects with other major components of social identity such as race and ethnicity to produce specific masculine identities.

FEMALE Masculinity

If masculinity is nothing more than an elaborate masquerade, if the relationship between masculinity and the male body is merely an arbitrary convention rather than an essential one, then is it possible to have masculinity without the male body? Yes, according to certain thinkers working within “queer theory,” most notably Judith Halberstam. Halberstam argues that the most complicated and interesting manifestations of masculinity are to be found not in the normative straight white male but in the more transgressive forms of gender identity encountered in women who perform masculine identities: the “stone butch,” the “drag king.” These gender performances are not perverse or deviant appendages to normative gender configurations, but illustrate the constructedness of all gender identities and reveal the role played by power in elevating certain normative identities to privileged positions of widespread acceptance.

This detachment of masculinity from the male body may be most striking when witnessed in overtly gay and lesbian contexts, but these are not the only manifestations of the phenomenon. Several well-known, mainstream Hollywood movies have utilized images of powerful, muscular women: Linda Hamilton in Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991), Demi Moore
Representations of Masculinity


**PERFORMING MASCULINITY**

The idea that gender (masculinity and femininity) amounts to a performance of a particular kind of identity can be traced back to the late 1920s, when psychoanalyst Joan Riviere published a now famous article, “Womanliness as Masquerade,” in which she suggested that women who operated in a male-dominated field adopted a façade of femininity as a defense against any feeling that they may be challenging the men they worked with. The idea that elements of our identities may be something that we perform, rather than inherent qualities that we possess, gained further ground in the 1950s when sociologist Erving Goffman suggested in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* that our everyday social interactions amount to an act of self-presentation or identity performance. The idea that our identities are performative rather than inherent has been very influential on recent critical thinkers such as Judith Butler who, in *Gender Trouble*, argues that masculinity and femininity are nothing more substantial than pure performances of gender: scripts that are learned and internalized by individuals and, as such, are unstable and open to variation and challenge.

**FILM AND MASCULINITY**

In modern times, writers on gender and culture have come to regard the media as a key institution for shaping our conceptions of masculinity. Not only are many media representations literally performances, but the media are seen as a key source of the images of masculinity that shape contemporary ideas about what it means to be a man. Representations of masculinity abound in all media, of course, but our focus here is on film. As the preeminent medium of entertainment for the first half of the twentieth century, and with many blockbusters of the latter part of the twentieth century centering action on lone male hero figures, film has been a key source of debate about how masculinity is represented in the media. We could also argue that many of television’s key scripts for men were learned from film, such as the hard-nosed detectives of the *CSI* and *Law & Order* franchises that reference heroes of film noir.

Much of the debate over representations of masculinity in film has focused on what representations are acceptable, particularly so far as the depiction of male sexuality is concerned. For much of what is known as Hollywood’s classical period (from around 1915 to the early 1960s), Hollywood operated a system of self-regulation known as the Production Code, which provided rules governing what sorts of representations were morally acceptable in Hollywood films. In 1934, Joseph Breen became head of the Production Code Administration. Breen, a staunch Catholic, held deeply conservative views about the depiction of sexuality, particularly homosexuality, and this limited the extent to which what Breen frequently referred to as “pansies” or “sissy types” could be explicitly depicted onscreen.
Notwithstanding this strict regulation of the screen, filmmakers found ways around the code, incorporating into their films subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) hints at homosexuality. Notable examples include *Bringing up Baby* (1938), which contains a memorable scene in which Cary Grant, wearing women’s clothing, exclaims, “I just went gay all of a sudden!” and *Rope* (1948), in which the relationship between the two central characters, Brandon Shaw (John Dall) and Phillip Morgan (Farley Granger), two young men who share an apartment and who together murder a third man for thrills, has been understood by critics to be a thinly veiled depiction of homosexuality. Further well-known examples of filmmakers’ efforts to evade the constraints of the Production Code include *Some Like It Hot* (1959), in which Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon spend most of the movie passing as women, and *Spartacus* (1960), in which Tony Curtis’s character, Antoninus, becomes the “body servant” of Laurence Olivier’s character, Marcus Licinius Crassus.

Since the demise of the Production Code in the 1960s, filmmakers have had greater scope for exploring the complexity of masculine identities. In *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), for example, the traditional rugged western tough-guy figure, familiar from countless earlier movies featuring unambiguously heterosexual actors such as Gary Cooper and John Wayne, receives a rather different treatment when Joe Buck (Jon Voight) comes to New York and is drawn into the world of male prostitution. In one exchange that tells us much about changing attitudes toward masculinity in America between the western movie’s heyday in the 1950s, and the time of *Midnight Cowboy*’s release, Joe’s friend, Ratzo Rizzo (Dustin Hoffman), tells Joe that his western clothing is “strictly for fags,” to which Joe responds, “John Wayne! Are you tryin’ to tell me he’s a fag?”

**CASE STUDY: THE 1950s “CRISIS OF MASCULINITY”**

It is common now to read about masculinity “in crisis,” or, alternatively, of the “crisis of masculinity.” However, what this “crisis” amounts to, what caused it, and where it came from are difficult to pin down. Indeed, it is probably more accurate to talk about periodic crises that surface from time to time in response to particular social circumstances rather than a singular crisis afflicting a monolithic and transhistorical masculinity. The suggestion that masculinity is in crisis belongs to the post–World War II period and predominantly to Anglophone Western cultures. The origins of this idea can perhaps be attributed to the shifts in gender roles that were brought about by World War II and the decades that followed. In the 1950s, social changes brought about a perceived “crisis” concerning masculine identity and the role of men in society.

During the 1950s, anxieties about masculinity arose from conflicts between different conceptions of what a man should be. The tough, invulnerable masculine type that had dominated representations of masculinity during the war was less appropriate for a postwar world in which commerce and consumerism replaced combat and fear as the defining features of society. While more traditional representations of men as rugged, tough individualists did not disappear—see the films *High Noon* (1951), *Shane* (1953), or *The Searchers* (1956), for example—
new stereotypes of masculinity that reflected these new priorities also began to appear in movies.

One of the key stereotypes of masculinity during the 1950s revolved around the twinned concepts of the “breadwinner” and the “domesticated male.” This figure reflected both traditional assumptions about men’s economic position in the family as well as a more progressive belief in the need for a more equal distribution of responsibility in the home between men and women. This latter aspect provoked concern that traditional qualities of manhood were being eroded. Consequently, this stereotype of 1950s masculinity quickly became a figure of ridicule. In January 1954, Life magazine published a humorous article titled The New American Domesticated Male, which poked fun at these men who struggled to conform to the demands of work and home life. The following year, moviegoers were presented with one of the most memorable portrayals of this new type of man in Nicholas Ray’s Rebel Without a Cause. While James Dean’s portrayal of one of the era’s other key ways of representing men—the rebel—is probably the best-remembered feature of the movie, the film’s depiction of masculinity in crisis is enacted through Jim Stark’s (Dean’s character) relationship with his father, Frank (Jim Backus), an almost cartoonish vision of the domesticated male. Jim longs for a father he can look up to as a role model, someone who can show him how to be a man, but Frank is a timid man who is afraid of his domineering wife and possesses no authority in the home. In a key scene, Jim catches his father

**MASCULINITY AND RACE**

Within much of the debate about masculinity, it is possible to overlook one of the fundamental assumptions that often underlies both representations of masculinity themselves and discussion about those representations: that the presumed normative masculine identity is white. In the past, representations of nonwhite masculinities have either been sidelined or have only taken center stage when they are presented as a problem. Despite the existence of distinctive and assertive nonwhite masculinities—the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam, for example, or the identities assumed by young men influenced by gangsta rap, which may be less formally constituted but are no less distinctive, and signal clear affinity with an identifiable community—and despite the undoubtedly increased visibility of race in recent years, white male characters generally remain the central figures, even in apparently liberal-minded cultural productions. In The Shield (FX, 2002–), for example, while numerous African American and Latino characters occupy positions of authority, their actions are repeatedly undermined by the actions of a white male detective, Vic Mackey (Michael Chiklis). Similarly, while 24 (Fox, 2001–) may provide the first representation of an African American U.S. president, his attainment and continuing possession of power relies almost entirely on the actions of the maverick agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland), a white man. The construction of Bauer’s character most closely resembles that of the western heroes of numerous films from the 1950s: the maverick, the outsider, the man who does “whatever a man has to do,” and his role in underpinning a representation of a nonwhite president illustrates the extent to which conservative values and assumptions continue to inform representations of racially marked masculinities.
tip-toeing around the house to avoid waking his sleeping wife, while attending
to domestic chores and wearing a frilly apron. The scene captures perfectly the
fears that are compressed into the term “crisis of masculinity”: fear that men were
yielding power and authority to women; that they were, in the process, thereby
becoming feminized; and that these powerless, feminized men were unable to
provide adequate male role models for the next generation of young men.
These fears remained central to 1950s anxieties about masculinity for the re-
mainder of the decade. In 1958, Look magazine published a series of articles
under the rubric “The Decline of the American Male,” and later that year col-
lected these articles together in a book of the same title. These articles state
clearly the nature of the 1950s crisis of masculinity: the fear that the man of
the time was “no longer the masculine, strong-minded man who pioneered the
continent and built America’s greatness” because “from the moment he is born,
the American boy, is ruled by women.” And, thus dominated by women, the
domesticated male of the 1950s would be “demasculinized” and incapable of
acting as a role model for his sons, whom he “either deserts . . . because he is too
busy making a living, or confuses . . . because he does the same household chores
as the boy’s mother.”
The “breadwinner” and “domesticated male” stereotypes were by no means
the only visions of masculinity in 1950s America. As indicated earlier, the
more traditional “tough guy” survived through the decade in certain films and
the “rebel” became an important motif in the representation of younger men.
The introduction of Playboy magazine in 1953 also revitalized the “bachelor” as
a masculine type (single men above a certain age had previously been regarded
as sexually suspect). Perhaps, after all, it is this fragmentation and proliferation
of possibilities for masculine identity that was at the heart of the “crisis” in the
1950s, since it spelled the end to any clear, unequivocal understanding of what it
means to be a man.

CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY

In the same way that representations of masculinity in the 1950s reflected the
concerns of the time about the position of men in society, it is possible to detect
in more recent representations of men some of the anxieties that dominate dis-
cussion about men and the relationship between the sexes. In the 1980s, much
attention was given to a new masculine type, the “New Man.” The New Man
represented a more sensitive type of masculinity, a man who embraced women’s
equality and undertook his fair share of domestic chores, who was in touch with
his “feminine side” and unafraid to show emotion. However, just as the figure
of the domesticated male of the 1950s had produced anxiety and concomitant
efforts to restore more conventional visions of masculinity, the “New Man” was
also rapidly counterpointed by a resurgence of more traditional masculine fig-
ures that emphasized the familiar “manly” characteristics of muscular physical-
ity and rugged individualism, for example the characters developed by actors
such as Sylvester Stallone in the Rambo series of films (1982, 1985, 1988), Bruce
Willis in the Die Hard series (1988, 1990, and 1995), and Arnold Schwarzeneg-
Toward the end of the millennium, these continuing anxieties about the character of masculinity were evident in an expanding array of “pop-psychology” paperbacks concerned with masculinity, by authors such as Anthony Clare and Guy Corneau. As in the 1950s, fragmentation and the loss of a coherent sense of what it means to be a man again became key themes. Nowhere are these themes more evident than in the film *Fight Club* (1999). Here the key narrative device involves the revelation that the two central male characters—Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) and the narrator (Edward Norton) are in fact one person; that Durden is a projection of the narrator’s ideal of masculinity. *Fight Club* presents a powerful metaphor for the loss of a sense of masculine identity that characterizes contemporary debates about masculinity “in crisis.” The name of Norton’s character is never revealed; he is known only by a number of pseudonyms and through a series of depersonalized emotions that he uses to refer to himself—“I am Jack’s smirking revenge,” and so on—creating a strong impression of the loss of any sense of self. Although *Fight Club* ultimately restores the narrator to a more normative masculinity by positioning him within a romantic couple—with its implications of family, stability, settling down, and so on—most of the film provides a remarkable vision of the ambiguities that beset contemporary masculinities and of the conflicts that follow from the loss of clearly demarcated gender roles.

See also Body Image; Dating Shows; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Narrative Power and Media Influence; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Reality Television; Representations of Class; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Shock Jocks; Violence and Media.

Further reading:

Mike Chopra-Gant

**REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE**

In the new millennium, in a country where discrimination based on race is now illegal and visual culture is becoming more diverse, are racial depictions
getting better? What constitutes or creates “better” representations, and is improvement only relative?

The representation of race has been a topic of discussion since the beginning of film exhibition at the turn of the twentieth century and even more since the start of television broadcasting in the late 1940s. In fact, the questions, public debates, and private reactions connected to the representation of race in culture precede film and television, having a history in theater, literature, and journalism. What makes race such a powerful cultural, intellectual, and political issue is that it is also deeply personal. Race is something that is not only represented, it is something that is perceived; hence, race is about how an individual is understood (or misunderstood), and how a person is ultimately treated (or mistreated) in society. Film and television play an important role in communicating—sometimes dictating—social roles and social hierarchies according to racial, class, gender, sexual, national, and religious identities.

**TIMELINE**

1950s—Amos ‘n’ Andy airs and is canceled after two seasons as a result of strong NAACP protests. The Nat King Cole Show is canceled due to lack of sponsorship and poor ratings. Television westerns replicate the film genre’s tendency to depict Native Americans in homogeneous ways as either threatening enemies to Western expansion, or as a peace-loving people in need of modern assistance.

1950s–60s—Civil rights movement is broadcast on national television news.

1960s—Asian servant characters such as Hop Sing in Bonanza, Kato in The Green Hornet, and Mrs. Livingston in The Courtship of Eddie’s Father appear.

Julia premieres, starring Diahann Carroll and produced by Hal Kanter specifically as an apology for earlier depictions of African Americans; the program becomes controversial, liked and disliked by African American as well as white American viewers for its “unrealistic” portrayal of a beautiful African American nurse.

1960s–70s—Vietnam War receives increasing, and increasingly negative, coverage, along with antiwar protests.

1970s—Norman Lear produces a number of social commentary series such as All in the Family and several spin-offs, Maude, Good Times, The Jeffersons, and Sanford and Son. Chico and the Man, starring Freddie Prinze, was similar in format to Sanford and Son in its portrayal of a father/son–like relationship between an auto garage owner and a mechanic, Chico. It broke ground as a successful series with an ethnic lead character. The series included the same producers as Julia (Hal Kanter) and The Courtship of Eddie’s Father (James Komack).

Several popular television programs emerge that represent whiteness in nostalgic ways, for example, The Waltons, Little House on the Prairie, and Happy Days.

1980s—The Cosby Show rises to the top of the ratings and remains the number-one program for most of the decade. (The working-class, feminist series Roseanne eventually rivals The Cosby Show in the late 1980s.)
An era of affluence and excess is ushered in during the Reagan years, reflected in television programs such as *Dynasty* and *Dallas*, which were about extremely wealthy white businessmen and their families who had made their fortunes in the oil industry.

1990s—The Rodney King beating is caught on home videotape. The LA uprisings are seen across the country, even internationally, as representing “race riots” and civil unrest in the United States.

O. J. Simpson is seen driving a white Bronco in a slow-speed police car chase; the O. J. Simpson trial becomes one of the most watched media events in television history. Reactions to the O. J. Simpson trial and its verdict are clearly divided along racial lines, demonstrating, on one hand, a distrust in the criminal justice system that many have had for deeply historical reasons, as well as, on the other hand, a return to tropes of black masculinity (as threatening) and white femininity (as idealized and innocent) that informed people’s judgments.

2000s—The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, marks a new era in the representation of American patriotism and national identity, often positioned in opposition to “undemocratic” or “extremist” Others.

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* celebrates its 20th year. The program has become the most popular daytime talk show on television, and Oprah Winfrey is not only one of the most powerful people in the business of media, but she is an undeniably influential figure in the culture and politics of American life today.

**WHAT IS A STEREOTYPE? WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF A STEREOTYPE?**

While there are specificities to different racial and ethnic groups, there are also commonalities in the general pattern of maintaining a status quo social hierarchy (social order) through the use of images and stories in American media culture. These images have taken the form of visual tropes or deep-seeded stereotypes such as: black men as threatening, black women as “sassy,” Asian and Asian American women as exotic yet passive, Asian and Asian American men as lacking “masculinity,” Latinos assumed as being noncitizens, Native Americans as so-called “noble savages,” and more recently, those who look to be Middle Eastern as “suspected terrorists”; the suspicion of those who are Islamic as so-called enemies to democracy has become particularly intense since the start of the second war in Iraq in 2003, with news images being perceived by some with a sense of threat. This list names just a few of the associations linked to images of racialized figures that we see on television. All, however, contribute to a larger discourse of ideal whiteness—and Americanness—by representing nonwhite races in a lesser or undesirable position.

A stereotype is a kind of iconic shorthand; it is a “controlling image” that involves a process of objectification, subordination, and justification (Hamamoto 1992, p. 4). The function of a stereotype is to display and express power. Using stereotypes is not only a way to disempower, debase, or humiliate the target of a stereotype, it is also a means to benefit the comparative figure, that is, the
lead character in relation to, literally, the supporting character. Often, the “racial sidekick” serves to enhance white (and often male) superiority in the text; examples include Tonto to the Lone Ranger, Kato to the Green Hornet, the buddy genre, as well as a long history in film and television of the racialized servant. Racial stereotypes have been part of our visual and cultural lexicon since the first interactions between people of different races. How can we move beyond stereotypes in representational culture, on the part of both creators of television as well as consumers of it?

ON SCREEN

The place to start when thinking about race and representation is to consider what we see (or do not see) on television and in film. Background characters or supporting roles played by actors of color are far more common than lead roles. Stereotyped images are more common than rich, complex characters of color. While the quantity of characters of color is a concern, it is the quality of the roles that must be assessed. There has been, no doubt, an increase in the number of actors of color working and appearing in the media overall; African American faces are seen frequently, Latinos have become more noticeable, there are a handful of Asian Americans when there used to be one or none, though there are virtually no identifiable Native Americans populating the television and film landscapes except as requisite props in a Western setting. While one could argue that progress is being made inasmuch as there is steadily an increase in the number of faces and actors of color appearing on the small and big screens since previous decades, the questions to ask about these appearances include:

- Are these characters important to the main plotline, and are the performers equally promoted as cast members if the series is popular or the film is a hit?
- Do these characters of color challenge and perhaps even disrupt traditional expectations of certain racial groups, or are they attached to stereotypical notions in updated costume?
- Can such roles potentially widen the imagination of viewers, not only in terms of representing race, but also in terms of representing race relations in a multicultural country such as the United States? Ideally, new roles for performers of color would be integrated into a popular vision that does not reproduce racial hierarchy and is not solely about white subjectivity—in other words, we need more film and television roles that share the perspectives of racial characters in substantive ways.

BEHIND THE SCREEN/BEHIND THE SCENES

How do these kinds of roles get created? Before an actor gets on television or is seen in a film, before she or he is even able to audition for a part, the role has to be written. Writers who have unique and lesser-known stories to tell can widen and deepen the range of characters represented in the media, and conscientious
nonminority writers can expand their work to be more inclusive or less superficial in writing characters of color. Casting directors have the powerful ability to cast in creative and diverse ways; for example, even if a part does not specifically call for a “minority” actor to play it, the casting director could intervene in the process by suggesting or hiring an actor of color. *Grey’s Anatomy’s* Sandra Oh, for instance, is an actor who has been cast in parts not originally intended as “an Asian role.” In a visit to the University of California, Santa Cruz in May 2004, she informed my students that one of the biggest challenges she faced as a performer was to be allowed to audition for roles that writers, producers, and casting directors didn’t expect or see an Asian face in. Oh has taken charge of such roles with talent and charisma, and has helped expand peoples’ expectations of who a person of Asian descent is, what she can be like, and how she acts.

Producers and show runners also have the power to include or exclude substantive rather than stereotypical characters of color in their films and television programs, and to lobby for a media piece that is innovative in the way that it represents race and race relations. Ultimately, executives are the ones whose decisions affect which films and programs are greenlit, which will be championed and promoted, and which will be placed in the advantageous slots on the movie release or television schedule.

**IN FRONT OF THE SCREEN**

Where does the viewer fit in this discussion of race and representation? Is there anything that audiences can do to affect change? Network executives, advertising sponsors, studios and their investors depend on audiences to watch their programs and to pay to see their films. Viewing practices can be gauged through such mechanisms as the Nielsen ratings (which measure how many people watched a certain television broadcast) to determine what programs to develop and place on the schedule, or through focus-group surveys of soon-to-be-released films to determine, for example, what kind of ending viewers prefer.

Executives and producers create films and programs based on what they anticipate audiences will like, based on what they assess has already been popular. The primary goal in making most of mainstream film and television is not to produce beautiful art or to stimulate critical thinking, but rather, to create audiences (through the creation of “entertainment”). This usually maintains the status quo, that is, idealized stories of white (upper-)middle-class families, heroes, and heterosexual (monoracial) romances have worked in the past and therefore, executives bank on similar fare to work in the future. When the television programs *Lost* (2004–) and *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005–) became unexpected hits, an industry term emerged: “multicultural casting.” Moreover, because multiracial casts were deemed popular, other networks offered new programs with that similar concept, for example, *Heroes* (2006–). A somewhat racially diverse cast existed in programs like *ER* (1994–), but a deliberate “rainbow coalition” cast became a major trend only because one network tried it in two programs.

It is important to realize that these two programs had people of color employed as writers, producers, and executives who, together, created this new television format; but equally if not more important, it took audiences’ acceptance and
rallying around such representations of race and race relations to establish multicul
tural casting as a legitimate and significant new form.

Changes and improvements can happen because the system allows for (or more precisely, cannot prevent) social input—the media industry can be pushed because it relies on individual viewers, and more specifically, categories of viewers. The most coveted and valuable set of viewers for executives, marketers, and advertisers is the 18-to-34 demographic, and therefore, the viewers in this group have the most power to influence what stays on the air and what innovative, unusual, untraditional programs might get canceled. The choice of programs and films that one watches and supports makes a difference in the kinds of representations—of society, family, friendships, lifestyles, values—that continue to be seen and circulated in popular culture. The media industry is neither inherently conservative nor progressive. Film, and television in particular, are formations that can sustain the status quo, contain counter-hegemonic stories and images, and yet also facilitate advancements and absorb changes in the representations of race and race relations.

**THROUGH ACADEMIA, AND THROUGH SOCIAL ACTIVISM**

It seems a tautology to believe that viewers aren’t interested in seeing African Americans in serious dramas or Asian American men as romantic lead characters, and therefore, that is why television programs and films with such stories aren’t made. Researchers and students in fields such as sociology, psychology, communications, and film and television studies theorize, analyze, and collect data about diversity in the media. Ideally, the work of academics will reach and interface with those working in the media industry. Activist organizations also work to affect changes in the way that Hollywood represents race, race relations, and American culture.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has been vigilant about film and television representations since the birth of cinema marked by protests against D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* in 1915. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is one of the oldest and most influential civil rights organizations, concerned with many realms including the media. In the fall of 1999, the NAACP protested just before the new television season was to begin. The concern was that in the line-up of 26 new shows, none had any major characters of color. How, at the turn of the new millennium, in the United States, could not a single show be offered with a lead who was not white? From whence did this come—from unimaginative and racist writers, producers, and networks, or from dull and complacent audiences? It took the tenacity and organization of the coalition of ethnic media watch groups who joined the NAACP, American Indians in Film and Television, the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, and the National Latino Media Council, to threaten boycotting television networks in order to bring about some changes. In some cases, the changes were last minute; in others they were seemingly superficial (an industry term, “coloring up,” emerged)—but there have been changes nonetheless.

While protesting in front of a station or studio does not affect ratings in a direct sense, it can serve to embarrass executives (or viewers), forcing them to
at least consider the grievances at hand. The NAACP has succeeded in serving as a materialized voice shouting into the halls of executive and production offices. Consciousness-raising can help to increase audiences’ awareness about, and hopefully their desire for, more complex characters of color in film and television. Media culture is contradictory: on one hand it is hegemonic; on the other hand, because hegemony is a social existence that people are not coerced into but consent to, it is contestable. Media culture needs to be contested.

**HOW IS DIVERSITY DEFINED? WHY IS DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA VALUABLE?**

Professor George Gerbner, who conducted research on television representations of gender roles, racial characters, class, and occupational categories for over three decades, states in the Media Education Foundation’s video *The Electronic Storyteller* that “To be invisible in visual culture is to not have power in society.”

In studying the topic of race and representation in the media, there is production and business on one hand, and reception and culture on the other, although the two realms are clearly connected. Diversity is housed in many fields: diversity is a cultural issue, an issue of politics; it is an issue in the marketplace (in systems of business); diversity is also a moral issue, a moral imperative for some. What makes approaching the goal or notion of “achieving diversity” challenging is the that people working on it are coming from different worlds, or different worldviews.

The question of how to define diversity in terms of representation remains open; for example, it has yet to be determined what the standard is that marks an adequate number or fair representation of racial characters. Must it be proportionate to the percentage of African Americans, or Latinos, or Asian Americans, and so on, in U.S. society? This leads us back to the quantity-versus-quality question, and perhaps there ought to be goals other than sheer/mere numbers. In terms of employment, the question remains: at what point will we know we have arrived at an equitable distribution of opportunity in the industry? Moreover, it is not easy to tangibly or materially monitor and secure that a process of production is diverse (Robinson 1996).

Beyond the numbers, ensuring a diversity of ideas—on screen, behind the screen, and ultimately, in front of the screen out there in “the real world”—is the goal of increasing diversity and improving the representation of race in Hollywood. Working towards diversity is part of a process of social change through media culture and media consumption. Viewers make up a consumer group as well as a social body and a political and ideological constituency—we are all viewer-citizens who are actively (though sometimes unconsciously) engaged in cultural production and in the generating of social values. Diversity in the representation of race and race relations on television and in film is important because such images and stories can limit or expand our expectations, about others as well as about ourselves.

Are racial depictions in American television and film getting better? In general, yes, though there are still moments of egregious and racist representations
of people of color to be aware of, and to contest. We can be cautiously optimis-
tic, and yet acknowledge that many of the improvements are relative to shifts
in society about race in general. Therefore, the question to focus on should be:
are the media industry and its consumers active in improving racial depictions?
The answer to this question remains open, as the goal of racial equality has yet to
be fulfilled. Progress is being made, certainly, but we still have work to do.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Dating
Shows; Islam and the Media; Media and Citizenship; Media Literacy; Minority
Media Ownership; Nationalism and the Media; Parachute Journalism; Reality
Television; Representations of Class; Representations of Masculinity; Representa-
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L. S. Kim

REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

Media representations of women have been the focus of feminist critique for
decades. Critics charge that media images represent exceedingly narrow forms
of femininity that function to perpetuate and uphold the status quo in a patri-archal society. Women are most often portrayed as victims, especially of sexual violence. In addition, media representations send mixed messages to women, calling on them to be virginal and innocent yet sexually alluring and adventurous, independent in their thinking yet committed to pleasing men. These contradictions cause many women to experience a conflicted relationship with mass media.

Women were being represented visually long before the advent of modern media, and analyses of centuries-old painting and sculpture demonstrate gendered conventions in the visual construction of women. But the proliferation of media in our lives today has upped the ante in the debates over media representations. This is especially the case since scholars began to recognize that the media perform a key ideological function in helping to define the ways a society understands the world, and therefore have a significant political impact. This works in large part through the development of stereotypes, which simplify complex situations into routine ways of thinking that come to seem natural or common sense. These stereotypes are most effective when they are plausible and when they are not transparent about the value system that guides them.

To understand how gender stereotyping works, it is important to know that scholars distinguish the biological differences represented by the terms “male” and “female,” and the social, historical, and cultural meanings of “feminine” and “masculine” that have come to be associated with these biological differences. Notions of femininity and masculinity, in other words, are socially constructed and create a commonly understood form of gender difference. This then functions to create a gender hierarchy and the power structure that such a hierarchy justifies and maintains. In sports for example, this hierarchy promotes the idea, represented in media, that male athletes are important for their athletic abilities, while female athletes are primarily interesting in terms of their femininity and sexuality. This reinforces the notion that female athleticism is less important or less interesting than male athleticism, a notion that research has shown to be widespread among sports fans of both sexes. This gender hierarchy in turn supports patriarchy, a system in which men dominate decision making and have authority over women and children.

Stereotypes of women create images and expectations about what women “are really like,” in addition to policing those images culturally by presenting them as a means of comparison against those who do not fit them. Critics of media representations of women argue that the world’s actual diversity of women is challenging to male authority, so that the media’s transformation of this reality into manageable images of what femininity should look like comforts men, especially those who actually do wield power.

Yet critics also point out that there is a diversity of women and women’s experiences, so that we must not essentialize them, thereby assuming that all women share the same experiences. Any individual’s experiences and perspectives depend on a multiplicity of factors, including her race, age, sexual orientation, and class experiences. While it is important not to essentialize women by assuming a common experience shared by all women, it is also important to recognize
the similarity of the constraints placed upon all women by virtue of their being female in a patriarchal world.

In order to understanding the power of stereotypical media images, it is also important to be aware of the concept of *intertextuality*, which recognizes that an individual text never stands alone but that the multitude of images that pass by our eyes every day constantly refer to and build upon each other. This is increasingly the case in the contemporary age of technological convergence, where media are converging in digital platforms. This means that when we think about media representations, we must recognize that they have an impact beyond the intentions of individual authors and media makers. Their intentions form only a component of how texts are understood by audience members, each with their own experiences and social positions that shape how they read and understand media texts. Nevertheless, feminist critics have been quick to point out that while audience members read a text differently based on their individual experiences, the utopian vision of some scholars who celebrate the audience’s control over the construction of meaning from media texts is unrealistic. While the audience may be active in interpreting media texts, the media do play a key ideological function in developing ritualized ways of presenting images of the world that exclude as much as they include, and that emphasize certain aspects of reality while downplaying others.

**LAURA MULVEY AND THE MALE GAZE**

Laura Mulvey’s 1975 article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” provided a groundbreaking conception of the viewing audience that changed the way media spectatorship would thereafter be understood, researched, and theorized. At a time when most scholars were analyzing stereotypes in the media, Mulvey took the pleasure viewers feel in the experience of watching movies as her starting point. She argues that classical Hollywood films prioritize the perspective of the masculine subject both visually and through narrative by forcing the audience to regard the text through the perspective of the (heterosexual) male. The female body thus becomes an object of the camera and of male desire, and women characters’ experiences onscreen are presented with an eye to how men would react to these events. Mulvey coined the term “male gaze” to describe how men are the subjects doing the looking while women are objects to be looked at. This also means that women viewers must experience the narrative secondarily, through identification with the male subject. They must learn to perceive themselves as objects to be scrutinized, and thus to watch themselves being watched by others. In this way, Mulvey argues, films make voyeurs of both male and female members of the audience so that the act of objectification becomes a source of pleasure in the viewing experience.

Mulvey’s essay helped establish feminist film theory as a legitimate field of study. It was groundbreaking in its recognition that sexism can occur not only through media images, but also in the ways that a text is presented, whose perspective is privileged in that presentation, and what that says about the intended audience. The essay provoked heated debate
Representations of Women

and critique, which Mulvey answered in a follow-up article entitled “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.’”

STEREOTYPICAL IMAGES OF WOMEN

In the twentieth century, images of women in the media have largely been linked with a consumerist lifestyle and a rather domesticated version of femininity, and these stereotypical ways of representing women are consistent and enduring over time and across media forms. A large body of research has shown that sex stereotypes such as women’s “compassion” and men’s “aggressiveness,” for example, lead people to expect men and women to have different personal characteristics that relate in turn to their integrity and their different areas of competence.

In addition, feminist researchers have for decades pointed out the artificial yet stereotypical divide between the public sphere, largely assumed to be the domain of men, and the private sphere of the home, stereotypically the domain of women. This public/private divide has reinforced notions of women as incompetent in the public sphere, and even when successful professional women are the focus of media attention, they are often represented in ways that emphasize their competence in the private sphere, rather than their professional abilities. Early studies of media images, for example, demonstrate that in the Victorian era, lifestyle magazines modeled, through their editorial and content, a specific class-based, “proper” lifestyle that placed women firmly in the private sphere of the home. Women’s first inroads as media makers, such as in children’s programming, the writing of women’s magazines, or by focusing on issues such as health, education, and welfare, functioned to reinforce rather than challenge the public/private divide. Also, women’s comparatively late start as media producers meant that once they did enter the media field, they had to enter on male terms and emulate the actions and voices of men. While women have made increasing inroads both as media makers and in media images, the public/private dichotomy remains persistent in the popular media.

The most common representation of women in the media is as victims, most commonly of sexual violence. Other consistent media images include women as hypersexualized or as whores; women as nurturing and caring, based on their role as mothers; and women as inscrutable and dangerous. Women are often represented as monstrous creatures, including as vampires, witches, and beings possessed by otherworldly life forms. While men appear in some of these roles as well, what differs in these representations is that women appear monstrous and dangerous specifically because of their sexuality, or their identity as female. This is mirrored in the common practice of representing women as body parts to be fetishized, rather than complete human beings. Another growing concern is the increasing eroticization of very young girls, and the linking of childlike innocence and vulnerability with the potential for becoming a victim of violence. This is especially alarming when combined with representations that suggest
that women are only teasing when they reject men’s advances, and that when they say “no,” they really mean “yes.”

An issue of special concern in relation to representations of women involves the media’s narrowly conceived image of female beauty, in particular the overwhelming emphasis on thinness. The standard of female beauty stereotypically portrayed in the media is unrealistic for the vast majority of women, yet all women must deal with the personal and social consequences of such a narrowly defined sense of what makes a woman beautiful. As a result, most girls and women report feeling alienated from and dissatisfied with their bodies, and many develop problematic relationships with food and dieting. (For more information, see “Body Image.”)

Many of the commonplace media representations of women (and the expectations they engender) involve contradictory messages about how women should behave. On the one hand, women are expected to be chaste and pure, but on the other, they are also encouraged to be sexually adventurous. Women are told to be tolerant of those who are different, while at the same time they are fed image after unending image representing an especially narrow version of feminine beauty. Women are told they should be independent and free-thinking, while at the same time they are consistently coached to please the men in their lives. As Susan Douglas points out in Where the Girls Are, these contradictory messages “make us the schizophrenics we are today, women who rebel against yet submit to prevailing images about what a desirable, worthwhile woman should be.” This causes women to develop a conflicted relationship with mass media, and makes the transition to adulthood especially difficult for girls.

In addition to the often contradictory messages and stereotypical representations that do exist, it is important to recognize the significant absences in media representations of women: women of color, lesbians, disabled women, and older women make few appearances in the media. When representations of lesbians do appear, for example, they paint these women as unusual by focusing on their “deviant” sexuality, rather than representing them as leading normal lives. In addition, the vast majority of studies in English on women in the media focus on Western cultures and almost always on white women, although this has been changing in recent years.

Yet it is not images alone that define representations of women in media; this also occurs through mediated voices. Whereas men are often presented in media...
other women, that large numbers of professional women had decided to forgo their jobs in order to stay at home with their children, and that single women over 30 had a very small chance of getting married. In essence, Faludi argues, the popular media was promoting the idea that the women’s movement was women’s worst enemy.

Using data from a wide variety of government and university studies, the popular press, and personal interviews, Faludi interrogated and debunked these myths about the status of women that were current at the time she was writing. She critiqued the press for not challenging these myths and for reinforcing the idea that feminism is to blame for the (supposed) unhappiness of women. She argued that if women are indeed unhappy, this stems from the fact that the struggle for equality remains unrealized. She also pointed out that the backlash is a historical trend that tends to appear when women have made substantial gains in their struggle for equal rights.

As the voices of experts and authority, women’s voices are often featured in “soft” areas, such as advertisements for baby products, cleaning goods, pet foods, or luxury items, particularly those aimed at male purchasers (such as chocolates and perfume). In addition, stereotypes about “feminine discourse” include social (rather than linguistic) concepts such as gossip, bitching, and nagging, for which there are no masculine equivalents. This concept of a “feminine discourse” in contrast to more masculine forms of communication is especially prominent in debates about gendered representations in the stereotypically “feminine” genre of soap operas.

**WOMEN AND/IN SOAP OPERAS**

Soap operas have been widely studied, perhaps because they are hugely popular in both Western and non-Western countries. One significant debate that has arisen from these studies is whether or not soap operas represent a form of “feminine discourse” that is cause for celebration, or whether this conception reaffirms gender essentialism and the image of women as more concerned with relationships and talk, rather than action. The conventional view is that soap operas are a women’s genre, and therefore do reproduce “feminine discourse.” Critics argue, however, that the gap between the male and female audience for soaps is not as large as most people suppose, and that if soaps are deemed “feminine” because they deal with everyday problems and are set primarily in the private sphere, then this further perpetuates, rather than proving, a gender essentialism.

While some scholars have argued that soap operas provide a positive image of gossip and that female soap opera fans gain pleasure from the texts in ways that undermine patriarchy, others find little evidence that this playful use of soaps subverts dominant discourses. While soap operas do provide a wider variety of images of women than other media, research on the contents of soap operas indicates that soap characters are represented as flawed individuals, living complicated lives that nevertheless remain within the expectations of patriarchy. Structural answers to complex problems are not addressed in these programs, so
that violence against women, racism, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, and other issues are always represented as problems facing individuals rather than society as a whole. These representations in turn suggest that the solutions to these problems are also individual rather than social concerns, thereby ignoring the structural constraints facing women in a patriarchal society.

WOMEN AND/IN SPORT

Sport is recognized as an expression of the sociocultural system and as mirroring the values of the society in which it takes place. It provides a society with ideas about honor and heroism, and its games are often seen as symbols of personal or larger social struggles. For this reason, critics of the gendering of sport and sports media argue that the playing field itself can be seen as a metaphor for gender values in the United States, and that by limiting women primarily to stereotypical support roles such as cheerleader and spectator, the media function to maintain the status quo assumption that women should be subservient to men. In addition, the emphasis on violence in sports is also a concern for critics who argue that this practice socially sanctions violence and, combined with sexually charged media representations, antagonism towards women.

Perhaps most telling about the media and their impact on sport, however, are the findings of research examining the media treatment of female athletes. Since the passage of Title IX federal legislation in the early 1970s that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex for federally funded education programs, the number of females involved in sport has risen significantly. Yet the portrayals of female athletes have reinforced the gender hierarchy in sport, paradoxically functioning to resist fundamental social change while simultaneously representing such change as an indication of progress in gender equity.

While media representations in sport feature a growing number of women, there is nevertheless a consistent underreporting and underrepresentation of female athletes in sporting events. When women are represented, they are depicted as participating primarily in individual and aesthetic sports (such as figure skating and gymnastics) rather than team sports. Female athletes are consistently marginalized or trivialized through photographs depicting them in passive roles, coverage that focuses on their physical appearance rather than their athletic abilities, their representation as having character flaws and emotional instability, or images of female athletes on screen while the accompanying commentary focuses on male athletic performance. In sport as in other media genres, women are represented with a focus on their sexuality rather than their abilities, as exemplified in media coverage of tennis player Anna Kournikova. This also implies that only the most glamorous female athletes are worthy of media coverage, and the general absence of minority, lesbian, and disabled women athletes in media coverage sends the message that sport should be limited to white, heterosexual, nondisabled women. Thus, in maintaining stereotypical images of femininity and masculinity, the media have functioned in sport as they have in other genres to maintain the status quo and the superiority of men, even while paying lip service to progress.
THE MOMMY WARS

Physically placed on opposite sides of the aisle on the set of the Dr. Phil show, female participants in the episode “Mom vs. Mom” found themselves pitted against each other in a showdown between stay-at-home moms and working mothers. Shortly after its opening segments, the show got nasty, with participants insulting each other and audience members “meowing” the mothers onstage. This event was an extreme example of how entrenched ideals of the “perfect” mother combine with the demands of a consumer society to place mothers in a no-win situation.

Feminist critics note that the “Mommy Wars” as constructed in mainstream newspapers and magazines and on the daytime talk shows are simplistic, a diversion that redirects public attention from the real problem: the lack of support and respect for caregiving in the United States. Media representations of the Mommy Wars make the assumption, for example, that stay-at-home moms never return to the workplace, and working women never leave it. This does not reflect the reality that women move in and out of the workforce, that one-third of U.S. women work part-time, that there are an increasing number of stay-at-home dads, and that both women and men are finding new and creative ways of handling the balance of work and home life. It also ignores those women who do not have children.

Ultimately, critics argue, by pitting mothers against each other, the media-constructed Mommy Wars let politicians off the hook. Dividing women destroys their ability to act as a unified interest group to push for change. As critics point out, the Mommy Wars do not lead to questions about the workplace itself; rather they prompt women to judge and undermine other women. They also divert attention from the role of men, who increasingly wish to play a bigger role in family life, and negate the issues facing the growing number of single mothers who do not have the option of staying at home to raise their children. And lest we forget, critics point out that the sensationalism and controversy surrounding the Mommy Wars helps to sell newspapers, magazines, TV shows, and radio broadcasts.

A positive development has been the growing number of mothers working to change the degree of support for all families. These women have called for a halt to the Mommy Wars. Shortly after the Dr. Phil show “Mom vs. Mom” aired, two of its guests considered to be on opposing sides of the Mommy Wars publicly called on mothers to stop the hostilities and work together to improve the status of families and the lives of children. Their statement redirected the argument from one about women to one about families and children, and urged mothers to “set aside any negative reactions you have to ‘mommy war’ comments and join us in moving beyond this media-exaggerated conflict.” They called for increased flexibility in the workplace for parents, including the kind of paid parental leave enjoyed in almost all countries outside the United States, a lower tax burden on families, and health insurance for children. Organizations involved in the effort agree they are facing an uphill battle, since they are calling for a cultural shift from a focus on conflict and consumerism to a commitment to compassion. These groups nevertheless remain committed to pushing for change, not least for what that will mean for our children.
WOMEN AND/IN THE NEWS AND POLITICS

Women remain underrepresented in most areas of the news, including in their work as politicians (and therefore news makers). They are featured much less often than men in the programming itself, and as anchors, reporters, commentators, and experts. They are also underrepresented in technical areas and in decision-making positions in the media; women still only represent a small percentage of media executives, with white middle-class men occupying the vast majority of positions at all levels. In addition, decades of research have shown that the five journalistic norms—objectivity, news values, the use of official or institutional sources or "experts," work routines that privilege certain types of news, and structural constraints—all privilege a patriarchal worldview. This results in media coverage dominated by images of male professionals, while professional women remain largely absent, further reinforcing the idea of the public sphere as masculine.

These trends harm the interests and performance of women media workers and politicians, since (male and female) journalists seek out few women as sources, not in outright dismissal of their talents, but because of unconscious tendencies to see women as less qualified. Scholars have found that U.S. journalists tend to rely on symbiotic relationships with a limited range of "official," almost exclusively male sources, primarily political and military figures, and then to report directly what they say, at times even glorifying them. As a result, the culture of most newspaper and broadcast organizations as well as the political arena is still being defined in predominantly male terms.

News and politics, therefore, as with most media content, overwhelmingly reflect male perspectives on the world. Yet feminist critics of this situation do not assume that an increase in women in these areas will necessarily improve the situation. Some argue, in fact, that women often actively choose not to go into the news or politics rather than deal with the need to survive in these male-dominated fields. But more importantly, for a woman to be successful, she has to be willing to play with the boys on their own terms, or at least to put up with a masculinized environment in which she is not as valued or as well paid as her male colleagues. This is arguably apparent in the recent increase in attractive young women news anchors, very often partnered with older, more serious male counterparts. In these instances, the male anchor generally introduces the more serious, leading stories of the newscast, while the younger woman introduces the human interest or other "soft" stories aired later in the program.

Research has also shown that inadequate coverage of women is a worldwide phenomenon. Rarely do media quote women, let alone focus on their concerns, and when women are featured on screen, men overwhelmingly dominate the discussion. The "public" as represented in the news is also male-dominated, in that more men than women are asked to provide "man-on-the-street" interviews. Women also tend to be featured in stories about accidents, disasters, and domestic violence rather than in stories that feature their abilities or expertise, and stories about political or economic success are almost always about men.
Researchers have demonstrated that the sex of a woman is always the media’s focus when she is producing or making the news. This is in large part because the economics of the media industries rely on the commodification of women as cheap labor (still consistently cheaper than their male counterparts) and their sexualization as employees and in media images as ways of using sex to increase the bottom line. Female politicians are far more often referred to by age than their male counterparts, and comments on their clothing, hairstyle, and other stylistic concerns are often included in coverage of their activities; this is not the case when male politicians are covered in the news. Women in the news industry have described the same phenomenon, whereby their physical appearance is far more a focus than their professional abilities. In addition, comparison of news coverage of male and female politicians has shown that female politicians are often referred to in comparatively unflattering and highly personal terms, and that while male politicians are usually referred to by their surnames, the media often use female politicians’ first names. Even the few positive portrayals of female politicians and news workers, however, often gloss over the difficulties these women have faced in balancing their professional and personal lives, thereby reproducing gender inequities by implying that women who cannot balance these aspects of their lives have somehow failed.

In addition, scholars have critiqued the concept of “objectivity” as journalism’s primary claim to legitimacy in U.S. news, arguing that the concept is highly problematic and reflects a male view of the world. The concept assumes that reporters can get at the “truth” of any situation by adhering to certain procedures, regardless of their gender, race, and class experiences. A belief in the possibility of “objectivity” assumes that a journalist has the needed insight to ask government officials and corporate representatives tough questions, and that such experts do not have agendas of their own. Some female journalists argue, therefore, that true “objectivity” requires that male values be balanced by female ones in a given news account or range of accounts, and that this must be accomplished by hiring equal numbers of male and female journalists as well as by using equal numbers of male and female sources. Others argue that the concept of “objectivity” must be jettisoned altogether, and that the news should be working instead to present a multiplicity of viewpoints on a given issue.

MOVING FORWARD

One concern of feminist scholars is that despite the decades of challenge to media representations of women, the balance of power remains largely unchanged. They point out that contradictory or challenging images of women do not necessarily lead to social change. For example, while there has been an increase in lead female roles in crime shows and action movies that functions to challenge normative assumptions about the role of women in society, these representations still largely conform to stereotypes of normative femininity in that the characters are most often white, slender, and conventionally attractive, are presented as less capable than their male counterparts, and are frequently relegated to the role of sidekick. In addition, strong female role models
are often represented as exceptions, and their presence has been used as an excuse to criticize and deny the need for feminism. Strong women are often represented as deviant and dangerous, and tend to get their just deserts in the end; take *Thelma and Louise*, for example, in which the two drive themselves off a cliff at the end of the movie. Sigourney Weaver in *Alien*, while widely recognized as the first significant female action hero in the science fiction genre, is still commodified as a sex object and made available for the *male gaze* (see “Laura Mulvey and the Male Gaze”). The popular heroine Lara Croft of the virtual game *Tomb Raider* is another example of a recent crop of tough but highly eroticized heroines in media texts that provide paradoxical readings. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for example, can be read as empowering for women, but also as a male Lolita fantasy. Nevertheless, the increase in female role models in the media does provide women and girls with more strong female role models than ever before.

Feminist critics have increasingly called attention to the ways in which ownership issues affect content. They argue that representations of women in the media will not change substantially until there is significant change in the gender makeup of those who construct and produce media images, as well as those who make content and hiring decisions. It is hoped that such changes will transform the masculinized culture of contemporary media and the images they produce, and offer women a diversity of media images that more accurately reflects them and their experiences.

**See also** Advertising and Persuasion; Body Image; Dating Shows; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Representations on TV; Pornography; Reality Television; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Shock Jocks; Women's Magazines.


Lisa Brooten
The United States has a long history of dominance in the global export and circulation of movies and television programming. However, in our current era of rapid media globalization, American film and television producers have begun to actually take their projects outside of the United States in search of less expensive production conditions in other countries. These enterprises, which are referred to as “runaway productions,” have increased at such a dramatic rate that American media industry critics have lobbied for legislation to encourage producers to bring their projects—and the jobs they provide—back home. Runaway productions are also not without detractors in their host countries, where concerns have been raised about a new form of American media imperialism in which domestic labor and financial resources are seen to fuel the Hollywood machine at the expense of local media production.

The Director’s Guild of America (DGA) defines runaway productions as any American movie or television program that is developed specifically with the intent of being broadcast or screened in the United States but is filmed entirely in another country. These projects fall into two categories: (1) creative runaways and (2) economic runaways. Creative runaway productions are those that are shot on location outside of the United States for aesthetic reasons such as unique physical landscapes or exotic locales that are integral to the plot or “look” of a movie or television project. Economic runaways, on the other hand, are developed outside of the United States for the primary purpose of saving money on production and labor costs and thereby increasing the profit potential of the final product.

Creative runaways are not a new phenomenon. Since the early days of the Hollywood studio system, some movie directors have chosen to film their projects outside of Los Angeles—and the United States—to add artistic value to the story. This form of “locations shooting” reached a high point in the 1970s when a new generation of American movie directors sought a higher degree of realism and authenticity in their films than could be achieved in the more artificial environment of the studio backlot or soundstage. These individuals unintentionally blazed the trail for future economic runaways by establishing strong working relationships with policy makers, producers, and other creative media personnel in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom, as well as other countries throughout Europe. Those working within the Hollywood industry were not overly concerned about creative runaways as such productions tended to be intermittent, few in number, and often of the lower-budget, artistic variety. However, the economic runaways that followed in their path a decade later would become a major source of alarm for the Los Angeles production community. These subsequent runaway productions not only tended to be big-budget feature films but also television movies and, even more disturbing to those in Los Angeles, ongoing television series and serials.
“HOLLYWOOD NORTH”

Countries that facilitate American runaway productions are always concerned about the vulnerability of their locations industries. For instance, when the lead actors of *The X-Files* demanded that the series relocate to Los Angeles so that the cast could be closer to their families, media insiders forecasted the start of a trend where other shows would follow suit and “run back home.” These fears were exacerbated when the Canadian dollar began to rise in value in 2005—almost reaching parity with the U.S. dollar—and it was assumed that the Vancouver production service sector would collapse in the face of reduced economic incentives. These dire predictions have, thus far, not been realized. New American television series such as *Men in Trees* (ABC), *Smallville* (WB), and *Supernatural* (WB) have located in Vancouver to fill *The X-Files* vacuum, despite the less-than-favorable currency exchange rate. So, while a permanent relationship between “Hollywood North” and Los Angeles can never be guaranteed, there are signs that a combination of economic and more intangible creative factors have somewhat solidified the relationship between the two cities.

**ECONOMIC RUNAWAY PRODUCTIONS**

Television and movie productions “run away” from the United States to countries that offer particular cultural and economic advantages such as favorable currency exchange rates, linguistic and cultural similarity to the United States, and the presence of a relatively developed domestic audiovisual industry that can be incorporated into the American production. For these reasons Canada, Australia, and Britain have become the most important service locations for American runaways. Canada, in particular, successfully exploited several competitive advantages to attract American productions and thus over 80 percent of runaways are located there.

For the past two decades, the strength of the U.S. dollar in comparison with the Canadian dollar meant that American producers could gain more value for every production dollar spent if they filmed their project in a Canadian city. This resulted in significant savings for higher production values considering that at one point in the 1990s the U.S. dollar was worth more than $1.40 Canadian. However, currency exchange rates were not all that Canada had to offer. Because Canadian urban and rural areas look similar to their American counterparts, it was easy for producers to make it appear that their movie or television series was set in the United States. The fact that Canadians look and sound very similar to Americans also allowed U.S. producers to cast local actors in secondary roles and thus save the expense of bringing an entire troupe of actors with them from Los Angeles or New York. Moreover, Canada offered a critical mass of production crews who had received quality training within the well-established domestic public broadcasting system.

The Canadian federal and provincial governments were quick to realize the economic potential of establishing the country as the premier site for American
runaway productions and developed a range of financial and infrastructure incentives to ensure the longevity of the country’s new “locations industry.” These included the provision of tax rebates and credits for every American production facilitated in the country as well as the construction of studios and soundstages that could accommodate U.S. blockbuster films. Investments were also made in postproduction facilities that would enable the Americans to complete all facets of their projects within Canada. The success of these efforts is witnessed not only in the hundreds of American movies and television series now filmed in Canada but also in the number of jobs and ancillary profits that have been generated by economic runaway productions. Servicing U.S. productions has become a multibillion-dollar industry in Canada.

**CASE STUDY—“HOLLYWOOD NORTH”: VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

Audiences in the United States probably do not realize that Vancouver is the third-largest production site for American movies and television series after Los Angeles and New York. And for those who have heard of Vancouver’s success in establishing itself as the major locations service industry in North America, it was probably the television series *The X-Files* that brought the city to their attention. The series’ creator, Chris Carter, needed a forest for a UFO landing scene in the show’s first episode and, as forests are scarce in Los Angeles, he headed north to Vancouver to find the backdrop he needed. What began as a creative runaway, or single location shot, became the most famous economic runaway in the television industry. Carter found that Vancouver not only offered him the requisite scenery and atmosphere he wanted for *The X-Files* but also a solid production infrastructure that included state-of-the-art studio facilities and crews that had garnered years of experience working on other American runaway productions. As a result he made the city the permanent production home for *The X-Files* and his two later series *Millennium* and *The Lone Gunmen*.

*The X-Files* was the apex of a larger 20-year economic strategic plan for British Columbia. In 1978, the provincial government created the B.C. Film Commission with the mandate to attract and facilitate international film and television production as a means to diversify a resource-based economy that was vulnerable to the boom–bust patterns of global commodities markets. While the B.C. Film Commission set about promoting the city of Vancouver to Los Angeles–based producers, the province invested millions of dollars in building studio space to secure potential runaway productions. Today, Vancouver is home to the largest special-effects stage in North America and, consequently, has been able to attract high-budget feature films such as *Jumanji*, *Blade*, and the *X-Men* franchise. This investment in infrastructure gave American producers the confidence to completely relocate their projects to Vancouver. The first, and most influential, was Stephen J. Cannell, who went further than most producers and built North Shore Studios in the 1980s for his series *21 Jump Street*, *Booker*, and *Wiseguy*. Cannell’s positive experiences laid the groundwork for other American producers to “run away” to British Columbia.
Canadian writer and director Chris Haddock is an example of the new cross-border cultural producer that has emerged from the globalization of the Hollywood industry. Haddock gained experience writing for the American runaway action-adventure series *MacGyver*, which filmed in Vancouver in the 1980s. The professional network and experience he developed in the locations industry enabled him to establish his own production company, and he now develops crime and suspense dramas for both American and Canadian television networks. He was the first producer to sell a Canadian television series to a major U.S. broadcast network: CBS. This series, *Da Vinci’s Inquest*, was already a prime-time hit for the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) and became a critical and audience success in the United States, where it was acclaimed for its edgy feel and unique storytelling (and it did not even hide the fact that it was set in Canada). The series has been sold in 85 countries and Haddock continues to develop new television and film projects for both Canadian and American distribution.

Vancouver was able to edge out other Canadian cities, such as Toronto and Montreal, in the competition for American runaways because of the province’s unique physical landscape. The diversity of locations available in a coastal province that also includes a glacier mountain range and a dry, rugged interior region means that producers can find almost any type of natural setting to suit their stories. Vancouver can be, and has been, the stand-in for Tibet, Montana, California, and numerous other places. The added bonus for American producers is that they can oversee their productions in Vancouver and—within the span of a two-hour flight—be back in Los Angeles for office meetings or family time. This confluence of factors earned the city the moniker “Hollywood North” and made it the global model for other aspiring runaway locations cities.

**RUNAWAYS AS OUTSOURCING**

Canada’s success in attracting and keeping American runaways generated a heated response from members of the Los Angeles production community. They argued that every job offered to a Canadian actor or crew member was one that was lost to an American and, at the same time, every dollar spent on production in Canada was one not invested in the United States. They saw runaway productions as similar to other forms of labor outsourcing, such as that found in the automobile and information technology industries, in an age of economic globalization. Consequently, the major audiovisual labor unions—including the Directors Guild, Producers Guild, Screen Actors Guild, and Writers Guild, among dozens of others—came together to form the Runaway Production Alliance, an association that lobbied the American government to introduce legislation that would stem the tide of economic runaways from Hollywood. In 1999, the Directors Guild and the Screen Actors Guild commissioned a study that found that the number of runaway productions between 1990 and 1998...
had increased by 185 percent, with an economic loss of over $10 billion to local production spending, merchants and hotels, and lost tax revenues. They estimated that more than 23,000 jobs in the entertainment industry had been lost to runaways, particularly in the more technical sectors of production: costuming, lighting, transportation, catering, and the like.

The Runaway Production Alliance's lobbying efforts were rewarded when the American government legislated the American Jobs Creation Act in 2004 and included provisions that offered production incentives for film and television projects that stayed in the United States. It is too soon to tell whether these incentives will prove sufficient to reverse the trend in economic runaways. The runaway productions industry has matured to the extent that major Hollywood studios have invested directly in infrastructure development in other countries. As the Directors Guild/Screen Actors Guild study reported, in the year 1998 alone Fox built a multimillion-dollar studio facility in Australia while Paramount and Disney both built studios, soundstages, and production offices in Vancouver. These companies are now so firmly entrenched in other countries that the new American production incentives may prove too little, too late.

In this respect, runaway productions must be seen as a component of larger processes of economic globalization. Media companies, just like any other type of corporation, have taken advantage of trends toward the deregulation of domestic monopolies as well as foreign investment legislation in order to consolidate their operations. Today, the majority of American media organizations are part of larger global conglomerates that no longer view national borders as an obstacle to their goals.

**RUNAWAYS AS PRODUCTION IMPERIALISM**

Given the economic gains the country has made from U.S. runaway productions, it might be surprising to note that there are Canadian critics of the domestic locations industry. In Canada, the structure of media policies and the national public broadcasting network itself was developed in relation to concerns about cultural imperialism from the United States. This fear is based on the presumption that the cultural identities of smaller nations are threatened when the media products of a larger nation come to dominate the viewing habits and leisure time of their citizens. As most major Canadian cities are within a few hundred miles of the U.S. border, Canadian audiences have freely watched American programming since the inception of television. And American movies dominate Canadian theater screens as most of these venues are owned by U.S. companies. Some of the criticisms of Canada's evolution into "Hollywood North" extend this argument to imply a possible new form of production imperialism. Here, Canadians are not only audiences for American movies and television programs but now they are helping to produce them as well. Consequently, Canada becomes a branch plant for the Hollywood industry and the domestic resources that are invested in economic runaways create profit for those headquartered in Los Angeles, where control over decision-making remains. In turn, Canada becomes merely a backlot where anything that can identify the country
is erased and transformed to look like someplace in the United States—the ultimate form of cultural imperialism, you might say.

This form of production imperialism is also seen to negatively impact those with the least decision-making power in both the Canadian and American industries: the production crews and other “noncreative” personnel. Cross-border labor cooperation becomes impossible as members of Canadian and American audio-visual trade unions are forced to compete with one another to attract and maintain productions in their respective communities. The potential here is what some media researchers have called “the race to the bottom”—characteristic of economic globalization in general—wherein laborers may agree to cuts in wages, benefits, and working standards in order ensure that jobs remain within their community.

**BLIND SPOTS**

Debates that focus on the economic dimensions of runaway productions tend to neglect the dynamic changes occurring from the creative elements of transnational production relationships. In this respect, processes of economic globalization are also intricately tied to cultural globalization. As these industries become increasingly mobile, we now find cultural producers working across borders and contributing to the emergence of new creative networks and partnerships. These have led to new types of television programs and movies produced through international co-ventures—where producers from two or more countries work together to develop a story—which may offer not only a greater quantity of programming, globally, but also greater diversity in the forms (or genres) or topics that we see broadcast or exhibited on our screens. These new global productions also help feed the increased demand for media content as television channel capacity grows exponentially. And even the DGA study noted that television and film production in Los Angeles has increased annually despite the corresponding increase in runaway productions. Servicing runaways can also provide creative opportunities for workers in the locations city as they can garner greater skills and financial resources to invest in projects for development in their domestic television and film sectors. Therefore, the creative and economic aspects of runaway productions must never be seen as mutually exclusive of one another.

**See also** Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Branding the Globe; Communication and Knowledge Labor; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Hypercommercialism; Independent Cinema; Nationalism and the Media; World Cinema.


Serra Tinic
SENSATIONALISM, FEAR MONGERING, AND TABLOID MEDIA

Telling a friend that he or she looks sensational may be an effective way to give a compliment, but describing a newspaper as full of sensationalism is considered a disparaging remark, and is usually reserved for what has been coined the tabloid media. Tabloid TV and newspapers may be popular, but they constitute a major battleground issue with critics who charge them with doing a disservice to democratic society. Others say they measure the limits of our constitutional right to freedom of expression. Sensationalism in the news has a long history with very negative connotations, yet despite these condemnations it still attracts attention and faithful audiences. In spite of accusations that sensational stories appeal to base instincts, defenders point out that news without an audience is not useful. Critics counter that news produced only to titillate an audience can also be dangerous.

Recognizable sensationalism in the media is found most frequently in stories about crime, celebrity, sex, disasters, and violence, which are often presented with lurid details that shock the sensibilities and arouse emotional reactions. Sensationalism refers not only to the content, but also the style of presentation. Such stories focus on attention-grabbing devices that hail viewers and readers to stay tuned or buy the newspaper because of a jaw-dropping cover. Sensational news is not necessarily false, but it is often times misleading. Researchers have also found that sensationalism, especially with regard to crime and violence, can have serious social consequences (see “Did You Know? CBS and Fox: From Wrestling to News to “Reality/Comedy Hybrid”).
DID YOU KNOW?

CBS and Fox: From Wrestling to News to “Reality/Comedy Hybrid”

With no journalistic expertise, former beauty queen Lauren Jones made the transition from being a WWE wrestler to becoming a news anchor for CBS affiliate KYTX in Tyler, Texas, in June 2007. Female journalists have been systematically marginalized throughout the news business, but Jones was retained in an attempt to boost the ratings of the self-described “Eye of East Texas.” KYTX had been mired in a ratings slump, so station owner Phil Hurley recruited Jones, who also had previous experience as one of “Barker’s Beauties” on the game show *The Price is Right*. Publicity photos announcing the new position pictured Jones in an alluring pose wearing a leopard-print V-neck top and a red miniskirt on the set. Zap2IT.com reported that she also had on-camera skills from a former stint as the “Hobo Bikini Model” on *Wonder Showzen*.

When Hurley hired Jones, the CBS affiliate also provided the premise for *Anchorwoman*, a new FOX reality TV show billed as a “comedy/reality hybrid” that premiered in August 2007. The FOX press release promoting the series promised that Jones would have ample opportunities for conflict with other station celebrities including reporter Michelle Reese and anchor Annalisa Petraglia. KYTX is also the home of the beloved mascot, Stormy the Weather Dog, and industry reports wondered if Jones would get along with Stormy. With the hire of Jones, the collaboration between CBS and FOX represents a qualitative leap in sensational megacorporate media practices and a stunning merger of news with the reality-show production values of shock, voyeurism, and revealing titillation. It also represents a step backward for women with aspirations to serious journalism who continue to be evaluated on their ability to allure instead of by their professional skills and dedication to keeping the public informed.

Critics hold that media sensationalism stems from increased bottom-line management and that media have been on a downward spiral, increasingly looking for stories that boost ratings and sell papers instead of reporting that informs the citizenry about important issues of the day. The axiom for some of the worst local television news has been historically, “if it bleeds, it leads,” a phrase that indicates the preference for graphic television footage. While the visual nature of television lends itself to sensational news coverage, and dramatic footage can often drive the news agenda, the pioneers of sensationalism forged a path long before the video camera was invented.

THE AGE OF YELLOW JOURNALISM

Attention-grabbing news is not unique to the present media landscape. The print media employed the strategies and styles of the tabloid press in earlier times during the era of “yellow journalism.” At the end of the nineteenth century, the penny press had been flourishing for 50 years and editors were proud of producing newspapers everyone could read, presenting news from the rest
of the world and from their own reporters. Then two publishers, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, bought newspapers and began a competition that led to the newspaper wars of the New York City press barons. Hearst, who owned the *New York Journal*, and Pulitzer, who published the *World*, tried to outstrip each other in circulation, and in doing so began the long historical run of media sensationalism in the American press. This era of newspaper competition was coined “yellow journalism” due to the two publishers’ fight over which paper would gain more readers by carrying a popular cartoon strip that featured the Yellow Kid as its main character. The publishers also competed for readers and sales in other ways. They tried to beat each other out in getting the latest news, but they went far beyond scooping the competition. They turned to different types of stories, from crime and violence to exposés about the sex lives of the wealthy, to boost circulation. They encouraged their reporters to try various gimmicks to attract attention. One of the most expensive stunts was a trip around the world mimicking Phineas Fogg’s 80-day whirl written by Jules Verne. Pulitzer had reporter Nellie Bly (aka Elizabeth Cochrane) travel the global sending dispatches back for publication in the *World*. Hearst hired another reporter to follow Bly who wrote articles for his *Journal*.

**SENSATIONAL REPORTING AND THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR**

One of the most notorious cases of sensational reporting was coverage leading up to the Spanish American War of 1898. On the island of Cuba, insurgents had rebelled against oppressive Spanish rule as early as 1868, but in 1895 revolution was rekindled when the United States imposed tariffs on Cuban exports, an action that led to massive unemployment and economic hardships. After coverage of the French and Indian War increased circulation for the *New York Journal*, William Randolph Hearst understood that war coverage was good for business. So when Cubans tried to free themselves of Spanish rule, Hearst sent reporter Richard Harding Davis and artist Frederick Remington to cover the situation. After a few months in Cuba, Remington cabled his editor and complained that there was no war and therefore, nothing to draw. Since he could not actually see the fighting, he was bored and wanted to return to the United States. Reportedly, Hearst sent a return telegraph to Remington that read: “Please remain. You furnish the pictures, I’ll furnish the war.” A century later, with complete access to all Hearst historical documents, biographer David Nasaw confirms that no such cable from Hearst can be verified. (As Nasaw documents, reference to the message first appeared in the 1901 autobiography of *Journal* reporter James Creelman.) Nevertheless, these words are memorialized as a way to remember this period. The stories in Hearst’s *Journal* were embellished with simplified and exaggerated narratives of damsels in distress and patriotic fervor against Spanish colonialism in North America. Sensational swash-buckling coverage in the *Journal* caused circulation to soar. The Spanish American War of 1898 may not have been started by the press, but its eager support by the American public is understood to be a result of sensationalistic reporting.
Media interest in stories that attract attention but fail to adequately explain world events and their causes has not abated. The proliferation of plays, movies, books, and essays pondering the rise of media sensationalism and the dangers it poses has continued. The case of O.J. Simpson serves as a vivid example of how media sensationalism can capture the public's attention and shape perceptions of justice.

THE O.J. SIMPSON CASE: OR, WHY IS EVERYONE WATCHING A SLOW CAR CHASE ON A FREEWAY?

On a June evening in 1994, television stations across the country interrupted their programming to show footage from a Los Angeles television station. Viewers watched as police cars chased a white Ford Bronco on the L.A. freeway. Why became clear as the chase continued: a football hero-turned-celebrity pitchman, O.J. Simpson, had been charged with murdering his ex-wife, Nicole Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman. Simpson was running away from arrest. The public was captured, and the sheer quantity of media reporting made history. The three broadcast networks aired 874 stories about the Simpson case in 1995; CNN had broadcast 388 hours of O.J. Simpson by the time the jury began deliberating in 1995; Court TV aired footage from “pool” reporters and made it available to all other television outlets; book deals were made for millions of dollars.

It had all the necessary elements for a sensational news serial; crime, drama, and hot pursuit of a fallen football hero. Simpson had won the Heisman Trophy, became a sports commentator, and went on to appear in commercials for a car rental company. The entire country came to recognize the familiar footage of the athlete hurtling over luggage in the TV advertisement. The story themed one of the most iconic white racial fears; a black man was charged with killed a white woman. Simpson’s legal defense team became known as the “dream team,” with well-known lawyer F. Lee Bailey. In front of a predominately black jury, compelling evidence was presented of racial prejudice on the part of the arresting police officers. As the trial progressed other social issues emerged, including domestic violence and orphaned children. And the unbelievable drama was set against the backdrop of America’s storied land of Hollywood. Although O.J. Simpson was found not guilty by the court in 1995, most of the public did not agree, but opinion was divided along racial lines. African Americans were more likely to believe Simpson was innocent and treated badly at the hands of law enforcement and the court system, a belief underscored by unequal treatment of people of color in the criminal justice system.

The fallout from the O.J. Simpson episode led to many social realizations. Racism remained an enduring feature of American society. The inordinate coverage brought attention to many social issues. Viewers were informed about the U.S. justice system. They learned how a judge can control a courtroom, or lose control of it; what evidence is admissible and how it can be presented; and that a jury can be sequestered to allow for media coverage. Spousal abuse and violence against women, topics often hidden from public view, were brought into the open, and the media augmented coverage with reports on what victims can do to protect and defend themselves. In an unusual rejection of shocking, sensational media fare, in 2006 public outrage prevented Rupert Murdoch’s media empire from publishing Simpson’s book, If I Did It.
poses for professional journalism all attest to the social problem, yet it continues. Some scholars argue that it comes about as a result of economic forces; others suggest that technology has fostered more sensational reporting; and others still find positive content in some sensational news, arguing that it attracts attention to issues that would otherwise be ignored in public discourse.

**CONSTRAINTS FACED BY JOURNALISTS**

Studies find that most journalists understand their role and responsibilities in a democratic society. They see themselves as members of the fourth estate who serve a public service function, keeping those in power accountable to an informed citizenry. This position tasks the media to be a watchdog over government. Herbert Gans and others find that professional journalists value their role in helping the public remain free by participating in self-governance. But good reporting takes resources, time, and legwork. Many media managers and owners run their companies as businesses rather than journalistic enterprises. With the increasing corporatization of the media, returning profits to stockholders often takes resources out of the newsroom. Under such economic constraints, reporting has shifted toward sensational stories that are easier to get and report quickly. Research and investigation into stories about health care, education, transportation, and housing take time, skill, and staff support. Such reporting must be carefully prepared, studied, and presented in some detail. Experts must be consulted and legal actions sometimes taken to uncover information guarded by those in positions of wealth and power. With existing commercial demands on media, many journalists and editors admit that this type of support is increasingly scarce in the newsroom.

**CONGLOMERATION AND THE NEWS**

During the era of yellow journalism, individual publishers owned their own papers. Beginning in the 1980s, business-friendly deregulation allowed single corporations to buy numerous media outlets including cable companies, production companies, publishing houses, and broadcast stations. Today such centralization of ownership has changed the landscape of American media. Most newspapers and television networks, including local radio and TV stations, now belong to large conglomerates that are publicly owned and nationally based. The resulting ownership structure has left most media outlets far removed from the communities they are mandated to serve.

**GENERIC NEWS**

Media corporatization and centralized ownership have resulted in the convergence of programming on different media owned by any single company. News that is produced for a number of stations, cable services, and publication simultaneously is referred to as generic news. Because generic news is centrally produced for distribution across the county, stories often focus on topics of national interest instead of reporting on regional or community concerns.
Changing corporate ownership has affected local news reporting in other ways as well. When stations in the same region belong to one corporation, owners will often pool newsroom production, uniting the news staff who must then share the same news library and resources. The same editors and reporters will produce the news for the various outlets, and also write the news for the converged Web site. Though communities may have the same number of stations, fewer reporters will be producing the news. In this way, corporations return profits to their stockholders by making news cheaper to produce, but with reduced news budgets and staff, reporters are racing to get stories out. Corporate profits also demand increased circulation and ratings and these combined economic requirements have ratcheted up the need for quick, attention-grabbing content. Today reporters often fill the news hole with the easiest reporting on crime, celebrity, scandals, sports, and entertainment. Newsrooms send staff reporters out to cover the ever-present accidents, fires, and burglaries, and treat each as if they were the worst in history. Covering the weather has become a prominent feature of much local news reporting, and it is easily hyped with dire predictions about “your morning commute” as the unwitting journalist reports “live” in the street, drenched from rain or snow, in what has become the excessively dramatized daily weather report. Such exaggerated treatment of often trivial topics has become a favorite target for political satirists such as Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show*.

**TIMELINESS AND THE SERIALIZED SCANDAL**

Sensational news is often the latest installment of the hottest scandal. In these cases, the speed of news-gathering and reporting allows for little reflection and requires rapid response and repackaging of stories already in circulation. A shocking story that captures national headlines can become highly cost-effective as it is serialized into a continuous stream of reporting that fills up the news cycle and offers the latest details to a public eager for the hottest revelation. This type of coverage has resulted in the excessive treatment of stories such as the O. J. Simpson murder trial, the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and the fall of celebrity socialite Paris Hilton, just to name a few. As journalists chase the same story lest they be left out, they become desperate to find another detail, angle, or personal intrigue, and reporters and news anchors often fill in the blanks with endless speculation, dubious assertions, or groundless rumors and gossip, much of which simply does not classify as serious journalism. Media critics and analysts argue that in many of these cases, news is hard to distinguish from popular fictional genres such as soap operas and crime dramas. As news merges with the formats and genres of fictional programs and narratives, it serves to reinforce fundamental cultural and social beliefs instead of offering unvarnished accounts of events of the day.

**SYNERGY AND INFOTAINMENT**

With fewer and fewer resources available to gather and produce meaningful news, and with increasing expectations for ratings-producing content, newsrooms come to rely on the entertainment divisions of the parent company for news
content. The latest contestant expelled from this week's network reality show will be featured as a newsmaker. Tie-in stories from network programs feature the characters and real-life dramas of those who act in and are portrayed on fictional TV, and news agendas feature topics driven by entertainment programs. This strategy also serves to promote the network and its programming in a marketing compliment known as synergy. Such convergent content transforms much of non-fiction programming, especially local news, into little more than infotainment.

THE NEWSMAGAZINES

Newsmagazines are another focus of criticism, with much of the condemnation coming from former news figures such as Walter Cronkite and established journalists such as long-time CBS producer Don Hewitt. These professional insiders view the current state of journalism through a highly negative lens. They point out that newsmagazines are produced by network entertainment divisions and must compete with other fictional fare aired during prime time on other channels. Viewers come to expect entertaining plots and emotional sagas punctuated with shocking revelations in programming fare better suited to deliver audiences to advertisers than informed citizens to the voting booth.

GEORGE GERBNER AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF “MEAN WORLD SYNDROME”

George Gerbner held one of the most prestigious positions in the field of communication in the American academy. For 25 years, from 1964 through 1989, he served as dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. There he helped shape one of the most significant and influential projects to be undertaken in media research. It is often claimed that there are so many other influences on behavior and perceptions that it is impossible to measure the effects of television, yet Gerbner did just that. In 1968 he founded the Cultural Indicators Research Project, which tracked and catalogued the content of television programs. The project designed a complicated methodology, one that sought to find a cognitive media influence, not a simple behavioral effect between viewing and engaging in violent behavior. Surveys were designed that recorded the impact that programming had on viewers' perceptions and attitudes. The findings exposed disturbing truths about the influence of television on the public. The research identified a “mean world syndrome,” finding that heavy doses of crime and violence on TV reinforced the worst fears in the minds of viewers. Heavy viewers perceived the world as a scary place and experienced a heightened sense of danger. Gerbner took the findings out of the groves of academe and into the halls of Congress, where he hoped to have some effect. His testimony before a subcommittee on communications in 1981 is as relevant today as it was then. Gerbner said the deeper problem with violence-laden television is that “fearful people are more dependent, more easily manipulated and controlled, more susceptible to deceptively simple, strong, tough measures and hard-line postures…. They may accept and even welcome repression if it promises to relieve their insecurities.”
CRIME AND FEAR-MONGERING

Even a casual news consumer will not have missed the flood of stories about scary criminals, unsafe streets, and what some media watch groups term simply “mayhem.” Local news usually garners the worst of these criticisms, but the stunning increase in such visceral fare on the flagship network news programs is a measure of the transformations of news in the corporate age. Long-time journalism educator W. Lance Bennett notes that during the 1990s there was a precipitous rise in the number of crime stories that aired annually on the three network evening news programs on NBC, CBS, and ABC. From 1990 to 1998, the number of crime stories rose from 542 to 1392. The increased popularity of news about violent crime occurred at a time when the actual levels of most violent crimes in American society had dropped significantly. This disjunction between the news reality and the social reality of crime is also reflected in the reporting of homicides. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Richard Morin noted that between 1993 and 1996, the number of murder stories increased by 700 percent. During this same period, the actual murder rate dropped 20 percent. Robert Entman and others have also demonstrated the disproportionate number of African American criminal perpetrators featured in scary mug shots on late-night local news.

TECHNOLOGY, NEW MEDIA, AND SENSATIONALISM

The greater speeds with which audiences can be measured have increased the tendencies for news outlets in all formats to play to fear, outrage, and the vicarious story. Now that reporters are also racing to get their stories on the Internet, they are seeking as many “hits” as possible, and computer technology allows those hits to be counted and reported instantaneously. Reporters and their owners are finding out immediately which stories, and which aspects of those stories, are getting attention. As much as the professional ethics codes hold that journalists should not pander to lurid curiosity, as the media converge and move toward the Web, such tendencies continue. As visual images augment online content, they also attract browsers with stories that satisfy the curious and expose the private.

IMAGERY AND SOUND

Many critics find a connection between the visual aspects of news reporting and the tendency toward sensationalism. Here too, visual imagery has long been employed as an attention-grabbing device. There has always been an interest in using type and woodprints to highlight print and newspaper stories. When the half-tone process was invented in 1880, photographs were easily inserted into newspapers and it became much easier to arouse the reader’s emotions and curiosity. Lurid photos of condemned criminals being executed made the front page.

With the advent of radio broadcasting, announcers read newspaper copy over the air and learned to use their voices with the microphone to enhance the delivery of the news. Reporting during World War II, legendary CBS broadcast
journalist Edward R. Murrow pioneered verbal pacing to enhance immediacy. With “This . . . is London,” a phrase he used to open his stories of the bombing of Britain, Murrow was bringing the war home to listeners in the United States; but it was also the beginning of using the technology to elicit emotional responses from the audience, a major aspect of sensationalism.

When television was added to the media mix, the camera would be driven to find ever more evocative images. Because television has the ability not only to tell the news but to show it as well, there was increased pressure for visuals. Talking heads in front of the camera did not take full advantage of the medium, and news producers began to understand that dramatic action kept audiences “glued” to the screen. To get onto the evening news, reporters would have to supply images to help tell the story. The technical progression from television camera to portable camcorders to microwave relays and satellites all encouraged live coverage of news. With the start of CNN news on cable television, the need for colorful graphics and dramatic imagery only increased. As more 24/7 news channels delivered over cable and satellite competed for audiences, visual and audio techniques pioneered unprecedented dramatic packaging.

Nowhere were these audiovisual techniques employed to produce greater drama than with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Cable and network shows added music, sound techniques, and pulsing special effects awash in red, white, and blue to introduce war coverage of Iraq. After the rush to war and its promotion on mainstream media, the papers of record (the New York Times and the Washington Post, most proximately) were compelled to apologize for their failure to verify the war’s justifications. Many media scholars charged that, steeped in sensationalism, the mainstream media failed to prepare the country for the real consequences of war, such as the chaos and death that followed a conflict little understood, and without significant public commitment. Without engaging in serious debate from numerous sources, including the voices of dissent, and in the absence of information able to provide adequate understanding of war’s costs, the public was deprived of its right to participate from an informed perspective on the significant national security decisions made in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Well before the invasion of Iraq, international news coverage on American media had been the topic of criticism, tending in equal parts toward the sensational, or forgotten amidst the proliferating consumer and lifestyle fare. Although the world is more globally connected than ever, most American media companies steadily reduced their coverage of foreign news and closed international news bureaus during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Television networks cut their reporting staff under pressure from corporate owners to reduce operating costs and increase profits, measures that deprived Americans of the ability to follow developments in countries across the globe. The lack of breadth and depth of foreign news has long engendered harsh evaluations, with critics charging that coverage of the world is not sufficiently complex across
WOMAN FALLS THROUGH A GRATE

Consider the stories and headlines that appeared in different newspapers on the same day. The New York Daily News (May 18, 2007) headline read “HER GRATE ESCAPE.” On the same day another tabloid, the New York Post, led with “GRATE! ANOTHER CON ED PLUNGE.” But the New York Times ran the story, “Senators in Bipartisan Deal on Broad Immigration Bill.” The story about the woman’s mishap was featured in the Metro section on page 6 in the Times with the headline, “Manhattan: Woman Falls Through Sidewalk Grate.” What is important to note is that the next day the papers reported that Con Edison was going to check all of their grates. The coverage brought action.

the news spectrum. These critiques are encapsulated in the phrase “coup's and earthquakes,” which is also the title of one book about international news reporting, and conveys the idea that foreign countries are brought to the attention of the American public only when they experience a disaster or government overthrow. Even then, the coverage is only justified by the drama and sensational images that attract viewers. Such infrequent and sensational reporting fails to allow readers and viewers to understand the economic and political causes of such events, or to be able to evaluate the long-term solutions to those and other global problems. Under these conditions, increasingly complex global issues remain underreported, with news managers often asserting that the public is uninterested in international news. Critics and other news professionals counter that it is up to journalists and editors to make the world comprehensible in a way that interests the public.

**BENEFITS OF SENSATIONALISM**

The harmful and beneficial aspects of sensationalism continue to be debated. There are different perspectives that point to the positive effects of sensationalism and its ability to attract attention to social problems and its role in shaping values. Some argue that sensationalism encourages the public to engage in the political life of the country. Though scandal coverage can be titillating, it is nevertheless important news when a local politician is caught taking bribes. Indeed, when houses catch fire and cars are involved in traffic accidents on crowded highways, reporting these stories brings people important information.

Some critics also note that “real” or “hard” news is often elite news, catered more to an upper-middle-class audience than to the broad spectrum of the American public as a whole, and that it is also often inordinately concerned with masculine interests. As such, some either defend sensationalism as reflective of a democratization of the media, or at least see it as an outgrowth of the tendency of “hard” news to alienate many viewers.

Some analysts also make the case that sensationalism serves society by codifying social beliefs and values. When we see the sinner get caught, the underdog triumph, and the hero fall, we are clarifying our notions of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice. The President Clinton/Monica Lewinsky story...
(1998) of a young intern becoming involved sexually with the U.S. president was one such story. As James Carey argued in *Communication and Culture*, the stories in the media demonstrate the forces at work in our world and serve to help us shape our value system.

**CONCLUSION**

The tilt toward sensationalism can be very slippery. News that misleads the public prevents it from accurately determining which course of action to take, which bill to support, and which politician deserves to lead. Important news can be trivialized and trivial matters given undue attention. Infotainment can lead to a cynical public, one that no longer trusts the accuracy and intentions of the press. Many argue that the public-interest function of journalism must be remembered and reasserted in the age of increasing sensationalism. As stated in a code of ethics written in 1923, “The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare” (Wright 1996). A more recent code rearticulates the need for journalists to be honest and fair. They are enjoined not to oversimplify or to report facts and information out of context. The media and the public struggle to find a shared set of values and practices able to fulfill the information needs of a democratic, self-governing society. The media are to attract us and inform us; give us what we want and what we need.

**See also** Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Bias and Objectivity; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Media and the Crisis of Values; Media Watch Groups; News Satire; Obscenity and Indecency; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Public Opinion; Ratings; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Shock Jocks; Video News Releases; Violence and Media.


Margot Hardenbergh

SHOCK JOCKS: MAKING MAYHEM OVER THE AIRWAVES

The emotional persuasiveness of person-to-person communication over the radio has been evident since the birth of the medium. Something about a voice emanating out of the very air commands an audience’s attention. Many radio personalities have employed that power without any thought to pushing the envelope of acceptable speech, while others have engaged in questioning their limits almost without license. When does public speech possibly pollute the airwaves and has the very medium itself been shocking audiences, in one way or another, throughout its history?

The term “shock jock” has come into vogue as a shorthand designation for a radio personality who uses the power of his or her microphone in order to either rile up or titillate the audience. One can distinguish between two types of shock jocks. First are those with an ideological axe to grind who ridicule if not ravage the views of their opponents. The currently most popular of those figures (Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage) tend to be conservative in their politics, although those in opposition to their positions have established a beachhead, the Air America network, to counter their preeminence on the dial. The second type of shock jock appeals to listeners through either disregarding or intentionally deflating the rules of publicly permissible speech as propounded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The currently most popular of those figures (Howard Stern; Opie and Anthony) litter their broadcasts with sexual innuendo if not on occasion outright obscenity. The ultimate aim of both camps, admittedly, comes down to ratings and the maximization of their share of the audience, yet in some cases, shock jocks act in a deliberate manner in order to convince the public to adopt their positions and act upon them in such a way as to influence public life.
While contemporary shock jocks engage in a form of extreme public speech not heard by past generations over the airwaves, the very medium of radio has possessed a capacity to shock since its very beginning. Admittedly, audiences accepted and accommodated radio as a form of public communication in relatively short order after the first national broadcast by the RCA network in 1921. However, we should recall that each consumer invites the participation of others into their lives by choice. In its essence, radio can be thought of as a kind of desired or designated intrusion, a fact that was authoritatively demonstrated in recent times by the excessive amplification of boom boxes. Once radios became reasonably affordable, around 1927, the technology came to be thought of as a kind of acoustic hearth, though audiences expected those who entertained them to wipe their shoes, so to speak, before they crossed the threshold of their homes.

This desire not to be disturbed or dismayed by what was broadcast over the air particularly applied to announcers and later disc jockeys, the predecessors to and, in some cases, influences upon present-day shock jocks. On-air personalities received considerable leeway to display the full range of their idiosyncrasies, but announcers were expected to be virtually invisible and extinguish any quirks from their personalities. Some compared the phenomenon of their voices to God, as they came invisibly out of the very air, and they were expected, like the deity, to promote and not abuse community standards.

This trend began to change with the emergence of the disc jockey, a position that while not inaugurated by Martin Block and his show Make Believe Ballroom in 1934 is by many associated with him as its originator. He gave a name and defined personality to a figure that heretofore remained anonymous, even if the music he played was the audience-friendly pop tunes of the day. Disc jockeys adopted an even more colorful role with the emergence of rhythm and blues and subsequently rock 'n' roll in the 1940s and 1950s. They broke the moderate mold not only by the type of music they played but also and more importantly through the manner with which they presented it. Individuals like Hunter Hancock of Los Angeles, the black announcers on Memphis's WDIA (Nat Williams and Rufus Thomas), and most famously Alan Freed of Cleveland and later New York injected a more raucous tone to their position. They concocted idiosyncratic vocabularies, solicited the opinions of their teenage listeners, and enthusiastically advocated the music they played. Even now, tapes of their broadcasts retain a vibrancy and audacity that time has not erased.

Many parents and some politicians feared the power these men held over their children and worried that the repertoire they featured threatened the very fabric of society. Some less open-minded citizens even called attention to and chastised the disc jockeys for playing music that they felt encouraged racial integration. When government investigations called attention to the fact that many of these men accepted payments for records they played, known at the time as
“payola,” hearings were held in Washington and some careers ended, Freed’s most notably. The furor that followed toned down the audacity of the disc jockeys, as less threatening figures, like American Bandstand’s Dick Clark, adopted a posture that parents found acceptable. Nonetheless, the transformation of the on-air announcer from a virtual nonentity to an audacious individual with a definite personality was complete.

**VOICES IN THE NIGHT**

Some individuals saw in radio the opportunity to speak, person to person, through a microphone and conceived of their broadcasts as a sphere of self-expression. None, perhaps, succeeded more in shocking portions of the public with his adoption of the airwaves as a kind of personal podium than Jean Shepherd. It was not that he had a polemical axe to grind, but, instead, Shepherd thought of the medium as a means for transforming the minds of his listeners toward a more imaginative, even anarchic way of thinking. Some think that Shepherd single-handedly invented talk radio, even though his antics had their predecessors, like Los Angeles’s Jim Hawthorne, who from the 1940s to the 1960s played records backwards and invited listeners to call in, only to hold his receiver up to the microphone and allow them to address the audience at large. Shepherd started his pioneering broadcasts on New York’s WOR in 1955. Much of the time, he engaged in a kind of storytelling about his youth that one hears today in the monologues of Garrison Keillor about Lake Wobegon. (The popular film *A Christmas Story* [1983] adapts Shepherd’s work and employs him as its narrator.) He also would sometimes solicit his listeners to engage in group actions that bear a surprising resemblance to the contemporary phenomenon of flash mobs; he would announce a time and place for them to meet and engage in some spirited action, a practice he called “the Milling.” Other times, he urged them to throw open their windows and shout slogans to the open air, something like the broadcaster Howard Beale in the film *Network* (1976). Station owners and some listeners found Shepherd disturbing as he not only broke conventions but also refused to bend to preconceived formats. His ultimate aim, he stated, was to combat “creeping meatballism,” a poetic phrase for objectionable forms of conformity.

**EXPLODING THE PLAYLIST**

If Shepherd shocked some by treating his broadcasts as a kind of public conversation, then the advocates of free-form radio in the 1960s triggered equally aggressive responses by expanding, if not exploding, the barriers that existed as to what kind of material, either music or speech, might be broadcast. Most disc jockeys were cobbled by playlists dictated by management and exercised little to no influence over their choices. Even if they did, their shows were routinely defined by particular genres of expression. It was considered unfashionable to mix together disparate styles; rock was kept apart from country, or rhythm and blues from concert music. The airwaves were, in effect, ghettoized, with little
intermingling of material. Correspondingly, audiences tended to associate themselves with distinct bodies of sound and self-censored what they did not want to hear.

This straightjacket upon the repertoire presented on radio was removed in large part by the practices advocated by the San Francisco–based disc jockey Tom Donahue. A veteran of a number of markets, Donahue quit KYA in 1965 when controls over his material reached the breaking point. He turned instead to the newly emerging technology of FM and the opportunity presented by the troubled station KMPX to initiate a new approach. Starting in 1967, Donahue exhorted his fellow disc jockeys to play the kind of music they would for their friends and disregard any form of niche thinking. The result was a kind of sonic smorgasbord that paralleled the mashing together of forms of expression that could be heard in the city's premier music venues at the time: the Fillmore West and the Avalon Ballroom. Donahue encouraged his news staff to adopt a similarly unorthodox stance, and it resulted in what the news director, Scoop Nisker, characterized as “the only news you can dance to.” Other stations, particularly on the FM bandwidth, followed Donahue’s lead. Much as audiences appreciated the transformation, the radicalization of radio staff dismayed the owners of KMPX. They objected to the spillover of anarchy from the airwaves to the office spaces. This led to a strike, and, eventually, Donahue’s migration to KSAN. Free-form radio itself eventually fell prey to the segmentation that affected American society as a whole, when the antiwar movement and the counterculture of the 1960s collided with the self-involvement of the following decade. Many if not most radio stations returned to a predetermined and circumscribed playlist, yet for many the shock of hearing such a wide array of sounds remains one of the high points of the radio medium.

SEVEN DIRTY WORDS

Donahue’s expansion of the forms of expression included on radio itself drew upon certain programming practices of the noncommercial network known as the Pacifica Foundation. A group of stations in New York, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Berkeley, and Houston, the foundation was founded by Lewis Hill in 1949. The inaugural signal, KPFA in Berkeley, initiated the organization’s commitment to spurning advertising as well as government or corporate support, and to permitting free speech over its airwaves. Over the years, the organization has assimilated any number of points of view and styles of presentation, some of which resemble the first-person mode of Jean Shepherd (Bob Fass’s “Radio Unnameable,” heard on New York’s WBAI) while others promote specific segments of the political or social spectrum, though customarily from a left-of-center perspective. Many listeners, should they chance upon a Pacifica station by accident, would be shocked and find the range of voices a virtual cacophony, the adoption of off-center ideologies strident in the extreme. Faithful consumers, however, regard Pacifica as the lone exception to the medium’s virtual expulsion of radical perspectives and acceptance if not promotion of the almighty dollar.
The most shocking element of Pacifica’s history and a groundbreaking influence upon what kind of speech could be aired occurred when WBAI broadcast an infamous track, “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television,” from comedian George Carlin’s 1972 *Class Clown.* (A routine featured on Carlin’s subsequent album, *Occupation: Foole* [1973], covered much of the same material.) This list of commonly used expletives was perhaps not officially prohibited from radio, yet a complaint to the FCC was made by a father who heard the track with his son. The FCC did not reprimand WBAI but put the station on notice that “in the event subsequent complaints were received, the Commission will then decide whether it should utilize any of the available sanctions it has been granted by Congress.” Pacifica appealed the notice, which was overturned by the Court of Appeals. The FCC brought the matter to the Supreme Court, which came down in favor of the FCC in 1978. This decision codified indecency regulation in American broadcasting. Even though subsequent rulings amended its dictates, such as the provision that some questionable speech is permissible depending upon one’s perspective, whether or not any individual amounts to a shock jock depends upon where one stands in the political spectrum. For those on the right, Rush Limbaugh speaks truth to power; for those on the left, Al Franken holds those who wield power inappropriately to the fire of necessary criticism. Nonetheless, sometimes individuals are hired and promoted to the public as fair and polite when even a cursory investigation of their public activities reveals that they are partisan in the extreme.

Take the hiring by CNN Headline News in January 2006 of Glenn Beck to host a one-hour prime-time talk show. The president of the network, Ken Jautz, describes Beck as follows: “Glenn’s style is self-deprecating, cordial; he says he’d like to be able to disagree with guests and part as friends. It’s conversational, not confrontational.”

However, when one consults Beck’s comments on the air prior to his hiring, they do not come across as either civil or conversational. They seem little more than one-sided invective. For example, he apparently so loathes the antiwar politician Dennis Kucinich that he stated in 2003, “Every night I get down on my knees and pray that Dennis Kucinich will burst into flames.” The next year, he crossed the line even more emphatically when he characterized Michael Berg, the father whose son was beheaded in Iraq, as “despicable” and a “scumbag” because he deigned to criticize President George W. Bush.

Perhaps the most indefensible, if not alarmingly over-the-top, comment from Beck came in his attack on the filmmaker Michael Moore. In 2005, he mused on the air about killing him: “I’m thinking about killing Michael Moore, and I’m wondering if I could kill him myself, or if I would need to hire someone to do it. No, I think I could. I think he could be looking me in the eye, you know, and I could just be choking the life out—is this wrong?”

It remains a quandary what is more disturbing: that CNN would hire and defend a man who makes these kinds of statements or whether he was being anything other than disingenuous when he inquired of his audience if his sentiments were over the top?
if children are not part of the audience, the decision holds to this day. There
remains a window of opportunity for shocking language between the hours of
10 p.m. and 6 a.m., but, otherwise, none of the seven dirty words should pass the
lips of anyone heard over the air during the course of the rest of the day.

CAN THEY SAY THAT?

The jumping-off point for the present-day profusion of shock jocks is hard to
isolate. Nonetheless, it remains clear that while the announcer on WBAI took
the words out of George Carlin’s mouth, these current performers do not achieve
any of their audacity secondhand. It is also important to stress how virtually all
of them emerged from more mainstream broadcasting as disc jockeys as well as
how much they acknowledge their debt to and the influence of on-air personali-

ties from the past, like Jean Shepherd. Some may as well have watched, or even
been fans of, two short-lived television figures who virtually broke through the
third wall of the screen, so vehement were their opinions: Joe Pyne and Alan
Burke. Pyne broadcast a syndicated show from Los Angeles from 1965 until his
untimely death from cancer in 1970; Burke appeared in New York City from
1966 to 1968 and turned to Miami-based radio during the 1970s and 1980s. It
may seem more than a bit of a leap from the “Shut up, creep!” of Pyne and Burke
to the outright obscenity of the current shock jocks, but a lineage between the
two certifiably exists.

Other legal and institutional factors contributed to the emergence of the
shock jocks. During the course of the Reagan administration, the FCC began to
lean less heavily on the regulatory throttle, in particular so far as station owner-

ship was concerned. More and more entities were brought up by broadcasting
conglomerates, such as Clear Channel, and owners sought formats that could
appeal across broad geographical and ideological segments of the population.
Sexual innuendo, frat-boy shenanigans, and spirited diatribes against one’s op-
ponents fit the bill. Also, the regulations regarding the need for all sides of an
issue to be publicly aired became trimmed, so that the aggressive defense of po-
lemaic positions did not require any counterpointed alternative. The adoption
of the airwaves as a personal soapbox therefore acquired the sanction both of
the law and the corporate bottom line.

Don Imus unleashed his loose cannon on WNBC in New York City in 1971;
Howard Stern joined him there in 1982; Rush Limbaugh began his career in
1984 in Sacramento, California; Michael Savage unleashed his vitriol fist over
San Francisco’s KGO in 1994. While all four of them commonly stretch the
boundaries of taste and legally protected speech, each operates under his own
agenda. Stern, the “King of All Media,” aims to goose the adolescent mentality of
listeners any way he can; Imus oscillates between the outrageous and the ideo-
logical, maintaining a need both to crack a crude joke and tweak the sensibilities
of those he considers unwise or effete; Limbaugh engages his loyal listeners as
a virtual cheerleader for their common conservative social and political philoso-
phy; and Savage savages that which he dislikes with an acid tongue and the utter
conviction of a true believer. All four men have also successfully engaged in
media other than radio, publishing books and appearing in films or on recordings. Each maintains a loyal and considerable following as well as receives some of the highest salaries in broadcasting.

None of them continue, however, without opposition or outcry. The phenomenon of the shock jock certainly has been a mainstay of columnists and op-ed writers for some time, and many individuals need only the slightest provocation to bang the drum about these men’s latest foolhardiness or faux pas. Most notably, the comedian Al Franklin published a best seller, *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*, in 1996 and subsequently achieved his own on-air slot with Air America as a proponent of the liberal opposition. At the same time, sanctions of a more serious nature have been threatened against shock jocks. Stern in particular tussled repeatedly with the FCC, and some feel that part of the reason he signed up with the satellite system Sirius radio in 2006 was in order to circumvent the restrictions applied to terrestrial broadcasting. For the most part, these broadcasters continue in their established modes of calculated offense, engaging their fans as broadcasting’s bad boys and shocking their detractors as near-criminal abusers of the public airwaves.

**CRASH AND BURN**

The phenomenon of shock jocks in general and Don Imus in particular occupied a brief but heated news cycle in April 2007. For years, Imus committed and subsequently apologized for a number of definitely offensive and debatably funny comments that amounted to little more than sophomoric exercises in sexism and racism. From referring to the African American journalist Gwen Ifill as a “cleaning lady” to characterizing Arabs as “ragheads” to denigrating the African American sports columnist Bill Rhoden as a “New York Times quota hire,” Imus has engaged for years in a free-for-all of invective. While one might argue that these comments amount to protected speech in the service of comedy, albeit a fairly sophomoric category of comedy, they nonetheless come across as hurtful, possibly hateful, and certainly mean-spirited.

One of the paradoxes of Imus as a personality, however, remains that this schoolyard potty mouth coexists in a kind of Jekyll-Hyde or symbiotic relationship, depending upon one’s perspective, with a thoughtful, well-prepared, and consistently intelligent interviewer. Many individuals who frequent Imus’s microphones praise him as one of the most astute and committed commentators on the public airwaves; *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich repeated these remarks at the climax of Imus’s latest, and most incendiary, collision with the limits of free speech. For years, the program oscillated back and forth between the cerebral and the coarse, and many listeners, and some participants, chose to ignore the elements of that dialogue that offended or bored them.

This process came to a head on April 4, 2007, when Imus, and his cohort, Bernard McGuirk, dismissed the Rutgers University women’s basketball team as “nappy-headed hos.” This was Imus’s retort to McGuirk’s characterization of the predominantly African American squad as “some hard-core hos.” Almost immediately, a torrent of anger ensued, and two days later Imus apologized for
Survellance and Privacy

The rise of an information-based economy and the threat of terrorism in the post–Cold War era have created a climate in which individuals find themselves subjected to increasingly comprehensive forms of commercial and state surveillance. Debates over the consequences of an emerging surveillance society have focused on the tradeoff between the perceived benefits of surveillance, including security and convenience, and the potential threat to privacy and individual autonomy. These debates take place amid shifting cultural expectations and norms about privacy reflected in a media culture that increasingly portrays...
surveillance as a form of entertainment and equates willing submission to monitoring with both celebrity and security.

BACKGROUND

Thanks in part to the capabilities of new information and communication technologies and in part to the development of strategies for political and economic control in an information-dependent world, we are living in an increasingly monitored world. Surveillance has become a unifying theme not just in the worlds of marketing and policing, but also in popular culture and even in interpersonal and family relationships as individuals adopt monitoring practices modeled by authorities. Parents, for example, can install monitoring devices in their children’s cars and children can load keystroke-monitoring software on their parents’ computers. The forms of anonymity and privacy associated with modernity are likely to continue to erode as we find our financial transactions, our personal information, and even our movements throughout the course of the day subject to increasingly pervasive forms of commercial, state, and peer surveillance. The future envisioned in Steven Spielberg’s thriller *Minority Report*, in which retailers customize advertising based on biometric monitoring and the government uses location-tracking devices to police traffic, is neither as far off nor as improbable as it might seem.

In part, the move toward increased surveillance is driven by its supposed benefits, including increased security and convenience. We routinely accept forms of state or police monitoring—airport security checks, closed-circuit video cameras,

SEARCH ENGINES AND YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

In August of 2006, the Internet service provider AOL publicly released a database of Internet search terms entered by 658,000 AOL subscribers over a period of three months. The company replaced the names of subscribers with numbers in order to protect their anonymity, but in some cases the search terms themselves provided ample data for identification purposes, as demonstrated by the *New York Times*, which tracked down one user based on a series of keywords that provided clues about her location and last name. The release of the search data, which the company later described as a mistake, was originally intended as a form of outreach to the research community designed to foster the development of data-sorting techniques. Although AOL removed the data from its research Web site shortly after its release, the data had already been downloaded several hundred times. The release demonstrated how much information Internet users routinely disclose about themselves, very likely without considering the potential consequences. Earlier in the year, it was revealed that the government had sought search-term records from some of the nation’s most popular search engines as part of its attempt to control access to online pornography. The owners of three major search engines including AOL reportedly complied, demonstrating that search engines don’t just provide users with information, they gather information about them that can be used by both commercial entities and the state.
and so on—in the hopes that these technologies will reduce the threat of crime and help to keep us safe. We are also coming to accept more comprehensive forms of commercial monitoring as we surrender detailed information about our shopping habits and preferences by using loyalty cards, credit cards, or shopping online. Often, but not always, we are provided with the offer of compensation, convenience, or customization in return for providing personal information to marketers.

However, as monitoring practices become more sophisticated, powerful, and pervasive, critics worry that the potential for abuse increases and that the emerging surveillance society threatens to erode forms of personal autonomy and privacy that we have come to associate with democratic freedom. Given the rapid development and decreasing cost of technologies that gather, store, and sort personal information, combined with the increasing demand for such information, it is likely that concerns over the threat to privacy will only increase in the foreseeable future. As a society we will be forced to decide what legal limits we want to impose on the development and deployment of surveillance technologies, since neither state agencies nor commercial entities seem likely to do so on their own.

**SURVEILLANCE**

Any discussion of the apparent conflict between surveillance and privacy should start with the disclaimer that the concept of privacy is a culturally and historically variable one, and that of surveillance an ambivalent one. Typically the conflict is framed as one in which surveillance plays the role of villain and privacy that of victim. But surveillance has numerous beneficial uses in contemporary society, and we depend upon forms of state and commercial monitoring for security as well as efficiency and convenience (Lyon 2001). The government’s collection of census data, for example, helps shape the allocation of political representatives in the United States as well as the distribution of government benefits. The operation of a democratic society is predicated on the ability of elected representatives to monitor the wants and needs of their constituents, and the complex financial systems upon which we depend rely on strategies for identification and verification to prevent fraud and facilitate commerce. Finally, we depend on government oversight to ensure that both individuals and private corporations follow the law.

**STATE SURVEILLANCE**

Its practical uses notwithstanding, the notion of surveillance tends to retain sinister overtones, not least because it implies unequal relations of power. Engaging in the practice of surveillance means more than just gathering information; it means exerting some form of control over those who are subjected to it. This fact is most obvious in the case of surveillance by the state, which can bring its policing and military power to bear on those whom it monitors. When state surveillance power is not held publicly accountable, it can be abused by
those who exercise it, as, for example, in the case of attempts by the FBI to use information about the private lives of Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lennon for political manipulation and blackmail. But even when surveillance power is not deliberately abused, as long as it is backed up by the threat of force, it serves as a form of social control, fostering conformity with the rules set by those who exercise it (Foucault 1977).

COMMERCIAL SURVEILLANCE

Although private companies do not have armies to impose their will on the populace, their ability to use information about consumers to make decisions about whether to provide them with access to goods and services might still be considered a form of power. Marketers gather information about consumers to determine ways to target them more effectively, and in so doing may help reinforce economic and informational barriers experienced by underprivileged or minority populations (Gandy 2001). In the future, as data gathering becomes more invasive and marketing more sophisticated, we may have to worry about advertisers finding ways to target us at moments when we are most vulnerable, impressionable, or insecure. The ability, for example, to determine when consumers are most likely to make an impulse purchase based on data about their past behavior or even their vital signs might be considered a form of surveillance-based power.

At the same time, surveillance-based entertainment has proven to be an effective way for media outlets to produce inexpensive content. The reality TV genre not only markets voyeurism as a form of entertainment, it puts a game-show face on the post–Cold War specter of Big Brother, portraying willing submission to monitoring as a form of self-expression, therapy, and democratization of celebrity culture. Surveillance, such shows imply, can be good fun and good for us.

PRIVACY

Many of the concerns over the use and abuse of surveillance center upon the threat it may pose to privacy, the right to which, although not written into the U.S. Constitution, is generally considered to be a core attribute of a liberal democratic society. Privacy scholar Jeffrey Rosen, among others, has argued that privacy plays a crucial rule, paradoxically, in providing the distance necessary to maintain personal, political, and professional relationships. Not only are there spheres of our private lives over which we wish to maintain control, but our acceptance of the social roles of others relies on particular aspects of their lives remaining private. Our ability to interact with some individuals as employers, others as family members, and still others as teachers or students depends on the ability of all concerned to selectively disclose information about ourselves—to retain some sense of control over which aspects of our lives are available to whom. Consequently, the threat posed by surveillance is not simply the prospect of abuse—that state or commercial agencies might use information gathered about individuals for illegitimate purposes—but of a loss of autonomy.
The privileging of the private realm as a locus of freedom and autonomy is a historically distinct development that corresponds to the rise of the middle class in modernity. Hannah Arendt points out that in the Athenian polis, the realm of privacy was equated with unfreedom—a realm relegated to the satisfaction of the most basic of human needs and functions (food, shelter, reproduction). In the modern era, it becomes—at least for bourgeois men—a site of refuge from the demands of public and professional life. For women, however, the private realm tended to remain a site of domestic labor and dependence. The feminist rallying cry that the “private is political” highlighted the way in which the construction of the private sphere served as cover for the exploitation and disempowerment of women.

**PRIVACY PROTECTION**

In part as a response to past abuses of state surveillance power, and in part as an expansion of constitutionally guaranteed protections against illegal searches and seizures of citizens’ property, the legislature has placed limits on the ability of intelligence agencies to monitor the populace. However, these limits have been challenged by government agencies in their pursuit of national security during the post-9/11 era.

Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the U.S. Department of Defense created the short-lived “Information Awareness Office” to coordinate intelligence efforts in fighting terrorism. One of the goals of the office was to create a “database of databases” that would aggregate information about citizens contained in both public and private databases as a means of identifying suspicious behavior. Because of concerns over such programs, the office was shut down in 2003. However, the government continues to enlist the aid of private companies to assemble and scour electronic databases of information about U.S. citizens and residents in the name of national security (O’Harrow, Jr. 2005). Critics of such efforts point to the lack of government accountability associated with covert surveillance. Supporters invoke the notion of a trade-off between privacy and security and argue that in the post-9/11 era citizens need to surrender their expectations of privacy in the name of safety.

But the history of government agencies using surveillance against law-abiding citizens was repeated in the post-9/11 era, when police and law enforcement officers infiltrated peace groups and others opposed to government policy and the Iraq war.

**SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES**

The advent of digital technologies and of networked, interactive communication devices is helping to make surveillance cheaper, easier to conduct, and more powerful. Recent developments on the cutting edge of surveillance strategies include biometric detection and identification technologies, including “smart” cameras designed to “recognize” individuals based on traits including their facial features, retinas, and even the way they walk.
The rapid development of digital information-gathering and storage devices has facilitated the creation of searchable electronic databases. Digitization is making it easier to transfer, copy, compare, and combine personal information stored in both public and private databases. State and commercial entities can use search algorithms to sort through such data and identify both potential consumers and potential suspects—a process commonly referred to as data mining. When millions of records can be stored on portable hard drives, it also becomes easier to steal, copy, or circulate this information.

As we go online to shop, to stay in touch, and to work, we generate an ever more comprehensive portrait of searchable electronic data about ourselves. Search engines collect information about the keywords we use to surf the internet, browsers gather data about the sites we visit online, ATM machines keep track of where we withdraw money, and cell phone companies can monitor our movements throughout the course of the day. We are rapidly moving toward what Bill Gates has described as a “fully documented life”—one in which all of our movements and transactions are redoubled by information about them that can be digitally stored and searched.

**BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES**

In the United States, there has been a tendency on the part of the populace to distinguish between state and commercial surveillance and to be more concerned about the former. In the post-9/11 era, however, the distinction between these two forms of surveillance is becoming increasingly blurred, as government officials seek access to commercial databases to identify potential security threats. Database companies are building lucrative new markets in government security contracts, many of which are classified—sometimes, ironically, in the name of privacy protection (O’Harrow, Jr. 2005).

**GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

One of the ongoing debates in the government’s declared war on terrorism is likely to be just how much surveillance power it should be granted in the name of national security. In December 2005, the New York Times revealed that President George W. Bush had authorized a covert National Security Agency program to monitor international telephone conversations of U.S. residents suspected of links to potential terrorist threats. The program was controversial because it sidestepped laws requiring the government to obtain search warrants through a special court designated for this purpose by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The program was deemed illegal by a U.S. district judge in 2006, but the decision was appealed by the government. Republican legislators responded to the controversy by seeking to pass legislation that would officially sanction the wiretapping program. The legal back-and-forth is part of an ongoing struggle between a government seeking surveillance power in the name of national security and a populace wary of unaccountable state monitoring.
PRIVACY PROTECTION

Although there is no right to privacy as such in the U.S. Constitution, a patchwork of privacy protection has been pieced together, largely in response to perceived threats as they emerged. The Constitution protects citizens against “unreasonable search and seizure” and requires state authorities to demonstrate probable cause for such searches. However, it has little to say about the threat of commercial surveillance or invasive news coverage—something that was addressed by the attempt to formulate a common-law right to privacy by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis in 1890. The Privacy Act of 1974, passed in response to revelations about abuses of government surveillance activity, placed restrictions on the ability of the government to gather information about private citizens and required a measure of government accountability, as did the subsequent Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978.

With respect to commercial surveillance, there have been occasional proposals for an e-commerce privacy act that would regulate the use of information gathered online. Objections regarding the cost of such regulations have sidelined these proposals, with the result that, with the exception of certain information, including financial and medical records, online privacy policies are largely the result of industry self-regulation. As such, they remain subject to change and only minimally enforced (Solove 2004). At the same time, private companies have demonstrated that their financial interests may well trump privacy concerns, as demonstrated by the admission by Internet giant Yahoo! Inc. that it had turned over data to the Chinese government that was used to convict a Chinese journalist of leaking state secrets.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

There is little doubt that both state and commercial imperatives will continue to encroach on personal privacy, and it seems likely that a time will come when legislators will be forced to further clarify the limits of both types of surveillance. Until then, some people are relying on technological solutions such as Internet browsers that anonymize personal information and encryption technology that protects e-mail and telephone communication. Public-interest groups such as the Center for Digital Democracy and the Electronic Privacy Information Center attempt to counter public habituation to the prospect of an increasingly monitored society by providing the resources and rationale for policies that preserve citizens’ control over their personal information. At stake is the preservation of a core value of democratic society—one whose protection may well have to be bolstered by a multifaceted critique of surveillance not just as an unwanted intrusion but as a form of coercive control that can be used for purposes of social sorting and economic exploitation (Gandy 2001).

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Anonymous Sources, Leaks, and National Security; Blogosphere; Communication Rights in a Global Context; Google Book Search; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media Reform;
Net Neutrality; Piracy and Intellectual Property; Public Opinion; Ratings; Reality Television.


*Mark Andrejevic*
TELEVISION IN SCHOOLS

Using television for classroom teaching has been embraced and challenged in many forums that have been linked to the regulation of networks and initiatives to address teacher shortages. It has generated controversial pedagogical programs and business propositions dating back to the initial introduction of the medium. While the medium introduced significant potential for bringing expanded and up-to-date content to students, at issue are the place and value of mass or popular culture in education; the influence of commercial entities on school curricula; the incursion of advertising into the school day; and more broadly, the enveloping of young people's lives in consumer culture.

The educational potential of television has inspired much discussion and debate from the earliest introduction of the medium. Like many innovations in communication technology, television presented new ways of conceiving education and curriculum. Schools have historically been seen as in need of reform, and the widespread availability of television coincided with particular stresses in the United States in relation to classroom overcrowding, teacher shortages, and the need for educational materials that address current or timely content. In light of these “crises,” television provided certain advantages over earlier media such as books. It was argued that television technology could allow a small cadre of expert teachers in various subjects to reach a multitude of students in classrooms with teachers who wouldn’t need to be trained in as many subject areas. Unlike textbooks, content could be broadcast live or recorded shortly before each lesson. This would allow material to be updated and revised on a continual basis. Television was also seen as a way of allowing students access to distant places that were becoming more and more relevant.
to their lives in an era of rapid globalization and U.S. involvement in regions throughout the world.

The discussion of these educational potentials has always been met with strong reactions and concerns. It is important to note that there are distinct controversies surrounding the use of television technology per se and commercially produced television. There are those who have challenged the use of television out of a concern for the loss of live interaction between students and teachers. They point out the one-way nature of the viewing/listening experience shaped by the technology. From a more traditionalist perspective, many educators, parents, and advocacy organizations have opposed TV in schools, arguing that it potentially displaces teaching of core skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) and the canon of classic literature. In this regard, the overall negative influence of film and television inside and outside of school has often been construed as contributing to a decline in literacy and high culture. Some progressive educators and organizations see the importance of addressing television content in school curriculum as part of developing media literacy, some arguing for the need to provide children tools to critically analyze media, but also suggesting the benefits of tapping students’ interests and expertise in mass culture as a means of fostering higher levels of engagement. From both ends of the political spectrum there has been significant opposition to commercial television or advertising to captive student audiences.

**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

School-based use of television can be understood as part of a series of audiovisual technologies that were introduced to the educational system since the later half of the nineteenth century. The founding of major U.S. museums in this period was closely linked to belief in visual experience as a means of education that was particularly powerful and accessible. This was particularly significant in this period of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity due to waves of European and Asian immigration. We can speak of a visual, and later, audiovisual education movement that spawned the adoption of heavily illustrated dictionaries and textbooks by schools. U.S. schools in the first few decades of the twentieth century purchased stereoscopic viewers and millions of stereographic image sets. This was followed by a broad embrace of 35-mm slide sets, and later film strips accompanied by audio cassettes. Film was used in schools beginning in the 1910s, but due to expense was limited to larger and wealthier schools. Smaller-format 16-mm film, which was introduced in 1924 for home or amateur filmmaking, began to be used for newsreels, and allowed for affordable, greatly expanded production and projection of educational films beginning in the 1930s. Shortly after its introduction, radio began to be used for education in the late 1910s, and gained extensive use in schools by the 1930s. When television became widely available in the late 1940s, it was practically predetermined that its educational potential would be exploited, despite significant continued opposition to audiovisual media in schools. Following this continuum, since the mid-1990s computers and networked communication have become embraced
by schools, displacing some of the focus on and debate around classroom uses of television, but not all.

The 1950s saw the first major wave of implementation of television usage in schools, paralleled by the licensing of the first educational channels at the beginning of the decade. Some of these channels were directed at in-school audiences and others were meant to provide alternatives to the mainly entertainment-related commercial stations. In 1952, against the opposition of commercial broadcasters, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set aside a portion of the airwave bandwidth for educational use. A major force that underwrote lobbying for this move was the Ford Foundation, which had emerged as the leading proponent of educational television (ETV) in the United States. The foundation promoted ETV through two of its largest programs: the Fund for Adult Education (FAE), which was directed at public education outside of schools, and the Fund for the Advancement of Education (TFAE), which was focused on school and college education. While the FAE became the leading force behind educational education, the TFAE funded an array of influential experimental programs designed to be models for demonstrating the efficacy of teaching by television. These programs encompassed large schools and some entire districts and continued into the mid-1960s.

Notable examples were carried out in New York City’s Chelsea school district, and Hagerstown, a suburb of Washington, DC. In 1957, the fund published a report by Alexander Stoddard titled *Schools for Tomorrow*, which stressed the teaching of very large classes to alleviate classroom crowding and limit numbers of teaching positions needed. He also argued that broadcast lessons would bring a wider range of subject matter and a higher caliber of teaching to remote and rural schools. The report was presented to superintendents of districts throughout the country in order to solicit their cooperation in pilot teaching projects as part of the Ford Foundation’s National Program. Based on this effort, the foundation funded modestly sized experiments with the introduction of ETV in over 800 hundred primary and secondary schools in municipalities throughout the United States, along with several more comprehensive studies. Approximately 200,000 students were involved in these projects. Along the lines suggested in *Schools for Tomorrow*, almost all of these projects employed television to reach exceptionally large classes: up to 175 in elementary classes, and from 200–500 in junior and senior high schools. And the foundation also supported a much-publicized large-scale ETV experiment in American Samoa, an island under American control in the South Pacific that was carried out by its affiliate, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, using closed circuit television (see “Early Experiments in ETV” sidebar).

It is worth noting that the promotion of television in schools was linked to an important shift that was taking place with regard to the role of the federal government in U.S. educational policy. From the nation’s founding until the 1950s, educational policy had been the largely unchallenged domain of state governments. Attempts to shift some control over education to the federal government were framed by what was perceived as a crisis in education that began in the years immediately following the Second World War. The goal of remaining
competitive, if not dominant, in an increasingly global culture was put forth in arguments for shifting power over education from the local and state governments to the federal level. With the rapid development of communications technologies, the struggle for a technological edge in the Cold War became a strong justification for centralization of education and at the same time an argument for employing these very technologies in teaching.

CRITICAL VIEWING AND PRODUCTION-ORIENTED CURRICULA

Much of the initial push to use television in schools involved implementation of programs with specifically educational content designed to replicate, supplement, or supplant school curricula, and was often motivated by a vision of automation, centralization, and efficiency. By the beginning of the 1960s, educational uses of audiovisual media came to be framed against what Newton Minow, then chairman of the FCC, described as “a vast wasteland.” He was speaking to what educators and advocates of learning and much of the public had come to see as television’s threat to literacy.

Perhaps ironically, in the decades that followed, many educators responded by bringing television, even commercial television, into the classroom. The response most openly embraced within official curricula during the years leading up to the early 1970s was the so-called inoculation or moral approach, described by James Halloron and Marsha Jones as an attempt to address the harmful or dangerous qualities of mass media. This approach advocated teaching students about television so that they could resist its negative influence. By the mid-1970s, a growing number of educators began to argue for the need for curricula that helped to promote critical viewing practices, a tendency that had strong proponents in England and Australia. The key difference being that by this point there was a broader understanding that, for better or worse, mass media serves an important role, and that rather than trying to protect youth from it, educators would do better to develop skills for analyzing and interpreting what they view.

This embrace of promoting media literacy has spawned a variety of approaches...
with differently inflected goals and justifications. Advocates of critical pedagogy including Henry Giroux, Peter L. McLaren, and others have suggested the importance of valuing and respecting students’ knowledge and expertise in the realm of mass media culture in order for education to be authentically engaging with their lived experience. Steven Goodman, founding director of the Educational Video Center in New York City, is one of a number of pioneers of approaches that aim to facilitate critical viewing practices while engaging students in video or television production. The work of these in-school and after-school programs is rooted in the belief that students can learn a great deal about the biases and gaps in mass media representations by engaging with representational practices within their own local communities.

**CHANNEL ONE: COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF SCHOOLS**

By far, the largest incursion of television into U.S. schools has taken place under the auspices of the business initiative Channel One, which provides schools with loans of television, video, and satellite technology in return for a commitment to have their students watch its daily 12-minute news program replete with product placement and two minutes of advertising. Founded in 1989 by Whittle Communications, and currently owned by Primedia, Channel One is watched by 7 million middle school and high school students throughout the country. This amounts to nearly 30 percent of U.S. teenagers. Participating schools agree to have 80 percent of their students watch 90 percent of daily programs.

It is not surprising that any single entity with such influence on education would draw a great deal of concern and scrutiny from parents, educators, government officials, and anyone concerned with teens and young adults. And indeed Channel One has. Critics across the political spectrum have challenged the ethics of requiring students to watch commercial advertising, essentially questioning the right to sell students’ time and attention to advertisers within a compulsory education system. This has aligned conservative groups and leaders (including the Family Research Council; Focus on the Family; American Family Association and Phyllis Schlafly; and the Southern Baptist Convention) with consumer advocates (such as Ralph Nader) and liberal and progressive groups (including the National Education Association, the American Federation of...
Teachers, the Media Education Foundation, and the American Academy of Pediatrics). Resistance has also been expressed at the level of school governance: both New York and California school systems banned Channel One from their public schools, though California later lifted its ban.

The criticisms of Channel One extend beyond the advertising embedded in their programs. Many have argued that the programs do not represent serious educational content and that less than half of the material is actually news-related. And some feel strongly that Channel One represents a model of education that is authoritarian, taking from educators the responsibility for making decisions about how and what to teach their students. Medical and parent groups have objected to the lifestyle and dietary models promoted by the program.

In light of this criticism and organized opposition, it is striking that Channel One has been able to gain such broad penetration within U.S. schools. It is worth noting that the rise of Channel One was coincident with several other tendencies that have placed pressure on schools, perhaps influencing them to negotiate agreements with private businesses that would have seemed unlikely in the past. These include the advocacy of school choice and voucher systems that allow families to opt out of the public system and shift tax dollars to private schools; the increasing popularity of home schooling; and the proliferation of commercially run for-profit charter schools.

CONCLUSION

Debates over television’s place in classrooms and schools continues, in large part because television represents so many different things to different people: to some, it offers solutions to educational dilemmas; to others it promises to offer the very future of education; while to others its mode of delivery and its preferred images represent an apotheosis of education. Debates over television in schools are, therefore, effectively debates over what both education and television are, and, importantly, what they should or could be.

See also Advertising and Persuasion; Children and Effects; Digital Divide; Hypercommercialism; Media Literacy; Product Placement; Public Access Television; Public Broadcasting Service; Youth and Media Use.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, television transformed from a self-contained medium controlled by broadcasters into a key part of broader digital technology systems. One major innovation that helped lead this change was the digital video recorder (DVR), best known by the brand name TiVo. How did TiVo transform television, and who ended up better or worse in its wake?

In 1999, two rival companies introduced similar products that would eventually change the way that Americans watch and think about television. Both ReplayTV and TiVo marketed DVRs, devices that shifted control of the television schedule away from networks and into the hands of viewers. At first glance, a DVR seems to be little more than a high-tech videocassette recorder (VCR), allowing viewers to easily record programs onto a compact hard drive instead of bulky tapes. But the functions and possibilities of DVRs proved to be much more of a radical break from conventional television viewing than even the devices’ inventors had probably anticipated, challenging long-established norms of television production and reception.

THE BROADCAST TELEVISION MODEL

Throughout the last half of the twentieth century, television was the dominant mass medium in the United States, offering the most popular leisure time activity for most Americans, and trailing only sleeping and working as a dedicated portion of everyday life. Viewers took the basic system of watching television for granted—channels were received over the air or later through cable or satellites, and the programming on each channel was scheduled and controlled by the broadcaster. If you wanted to watch television, you had to watch whatever was airing at that moment on whichever channels you received. Viewers learned when their favorite show was on, and TV Guide became the magazine with the highest circulation by helping viewers navigate the television schedule.

The television industry took advantage of their ability to schedule programs by developing clever techniques to attract viewers—running similar shows together in line-ups, placing new shows after an established lead-in, placing
a weaker show in a *hammock* between two hits, and *counterprogramming* against another network’s hit to appeal to a different audience. Specific time slots were developed to appeal to particular audiences, such as daytime soap operas for stay-at-home women, Saturday morning cartoons for kids, and prime time for the largest mass audience. The most important scheduling technique for networks was the placement of advertisements within a single program, paying for the network’s operation by charging sponsors to access the attention of a show’s viewers. The entire commercial broadcasting system depended on the ability to attract viewers via a consistent schedule of programming with embedded advertising slots that could be sold to the highest bidder.

**PLAYBACK CULTURE**

DVRs were not the first technology to threaten this model of broadcasting. The VCR emerged as a popular device for consumers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, offering viewers the ability to both record television broadcasts and play back prerecorded videotapes. While the ability to record broadcasts was a major feature of the VCR, the device’s popularity was driven by the video rental market, as consumers used their televisions to watch films on demand. The practice of *timeshifting* television programming using the recording function of VCRs was far less common, popular only with a minority of technologically savvy viewers, dedicated fans, and video collectors. In part, this was due to the notoriously complicated procedures needed to program a VCR to record, leading to widespread jokes about unprogrammed VCR clocks flashing 12:00 due to confused users. With a VCR, timeshifting was a practice that required extra effort, planning, and technological savvy.

While DVRs enable a similar possibility of timeshifting, they offer more than just a sophisticated VCR. DVRs take the signal from cable, satellite, or an
antenna and digitally record the content to a hard drive. A TiVo is always recording the signal it receives, buffering 30 minutes of programming to allow viewers to pause live television, rewind live material, or record an entire program even while partway through. With a VCR, you must actively choose to timeshift, going through the often fraught process of programming your machine to record a program, and then later using the VCR to play it back. With a DVR, you are always in the timeshifting mode, as it is actively standing by, ready to timeshift. If timeshifting is an exceptional practice for a VCR, it is the norm with TiVo—our default mode of using a DVR is to reject the schedule-driven framework that traditionally structures the experience of watching television, replacing it with an on-demand viewer-controlled mode of viewing.

Once most DVR users get the hang of its fairly simple user interface, which mimics a standard computer menu system, watching live TV becomes a last resort. While the typical television viewer of the twentieth century used the schedule to shape and determine what and how to watch, TiVo takes the schedule offline, enabling viewers to turn the various options within the television schedule into a menu of potential files to be downloaded into one's own personal collection of programming. This menu-driven mode of viewing is heightened by a DVR's electronic program guide (EPG), an interactive grid of the television schedule providing future television programs, episode titles, and descriptions, all to be recorded at the push of a button, a development that has also helped lead to the declining relevance of TV Guide.

**LEARNING TO WATCH TV AGAIN**

DVRs discourage modes of viewing more typical of conventional television—channel surfing is rare, as the EPG provides a quick assortment of identifiable options if the menu of recorded programs doesn't hold any appealing options. TiVo users need not arrange their own schedules to view a program, as it reschedules any “appointment television” and overrides scheduling strategies like hammocks and lead-ins. With a DVR, television rarely is “just on,” as anything deemed worth recording deserves more attention than background viewing. And the feeling that “nothing is on” becomes nearly extinct—a well-maintained DVR always has worthwhile options on tap customized for the viewer's tastes. These ways in which we have traditionally watched television, both technologically and culturally, disappear as the DVR interface becomes the default mode of engaging with television. This becomes particularly significant as many aspects discouraged by TiVo, like indiscriminate audiences, aimless surfing, and background viewing when nothing’s on, are facets of television that have been negatively linked to condemn the medium. Critics often characterize watching media like television as an inherently passive “lean-back” practice when compared with more interactive and engaging “lean-forward” media like computers—DVRs make television viewing more like using computers, getting presumably passive viewers to lean forward and engage actively in their own viewing practices.

The rise of the DVR has transformed the ways that the industry operates—even though DVRs are by no means as widespread as other technologies like
VCRs and DVD players, the industry has tried to adapt to how DVRs change the underlying practices of commercial television before the devices are commonplace in most homes. For the industry, the most significant shift in television viewing is that DVR users are much less likely to watch advertisements, using the technology to fast-forward through commercial breaks. Sponsors recognize this threat, and thus are less willing to pay for ad spots that will be actively avoided by technologically savvy viewers. The threat of DVRs has helped lead to a dramatic rise in product placement in programming in the 2000s, making sponsored promotions a key component of the program itself. Additionally, the industry recognizes that without scheduling techniques to guide viewers to their programs, they need to develop strategies to attract audiences to individual programs more than established line-ups.

One of the most significant aspects of DVRs is how they fit in with a broader logic of technological convergence. In the digital age, media that have traditionally been distinct are coming together via computers and other digital technology—users can browse, store, and consume their photographs, music collection, and video files on personal computers and portable devices like iPods. Television has had a bumpy role as part of convergence strategies, as early devices like WebTV failed to catch hold with consumers and the bandwidth demands made online video a rarity for years. But through devices like TiVo, video game consoles like Xbox and PlayStation, the rise of digital HDTV sets, and innovative broadband video distribution, televisions are becoming part of a home network of digital devices, rather than stand-alone boxes that only receive broadcast signals. DVRs offer features like TiVoToGo™ that allow users to transfer television programs across home networks to personal computers and mobile devices. This technology has emerged alongside the television industry offering its shows via online distribution through iTunes or the networks’ own Web sites. Such developments suggest that not only will the television schedule cease to be the defining structure for accessing programming, but that the television screen itself will serve as only one option for viewing the content we traditionally think of as “television.”

It is hard to predict what the future of DVRs will bring. Viewers who have adopted the technology are passionate about the opportunities and control that it offers, with many TiVo owners becoming active promoters of DVRs as the only way they would ever watch television. Certainly, for such TiVo devotees, the ability to control what and when they watch seems central to their new understanding of how television can be experienced and enjoyed. The industry views the rise of DVRs as inevitable, and thus is preparing new strategies to make programming profitable even when viewers control the schedule and can fast-forward through ads. While most insiders predict that DVRs will eventually become as commonplace as the VCR, there will be a transitional stage of a DVR divide where significant numbers of television households will be DVR users while a large number watch via traditional means. How the industry addresses these two different constituencies will vary, probably guided by which group is viewed as the most lucrative audience to sell to by advertisers. However, such technological shifts are difficult to anticipate—certainly few would
have predicted in 1999 that an unknown technology firm would create a device that would trigger such a profound transformation of how television had been watched and aired for more than half a century.

See also The DVD; Internet and Its Radical Potential; The iTunes Effect; Net Neutrality; Online Digital Film and Television; Product Placement; Ratings.


Tourism and the Selling of Cultures

As a huge global industry, tourism spans the world, and makes objects of people, places, meanings, and experience. A vast publishing and media apparatus promotes this: visitor’s guides, travel literature and programs, holiday brochures, route maps, and itineraries. As pleasure- and treasure-hunt, tourism commodifies culture and turns local lives into service support in several ways. It is true that tourism can be presented as an educational boon, and we have to take seriously the ideology that travel broadens the mind, though surely this has its privileges. As market for the strange, the curio, the souvenir, and the remote, tourism brings all “Chinese Walls” battered and bruised into the guidebooks and snapshot albums of the bargain-hunting hordes, for good and ill. The reduction and destruction of everyday lives that tourism visits on the peoples and places of the “underdeveloped” world are inevitable consequences of global inequality: the wealthy travel for relaxation or self-interest, the rest of the world smoothes the way. This divide at the heart of tourism prevails even as some may make the case for travel as a force for cultural preservation; as an opportunity for exchange; or to see tourism as solidarity and as a kind of charitable aid. On the whole, tourism suffers from a bad press on this what we sometimes call our lonely planet.

Tourist sites and experiences are glossed in promotional literature with a well-known and now instantly recognizable code: sunsets over palm fringed beaches; temples and monuments in jungles or deserts; curious modes of transport—the camel, the elephant, the auto-rickshaw or canoe; smiling cherubic youth; feathered warriors; or remote Masai women in costumed undulating dance. The adventure of tourism in the so-called third world mixes these exotics with pleasure getaways—luxury resorts (swimming pools just meters away from pristine beaches seem clearly excessive), home comforts, and promises of safety, running
water or fully-catered adventure treks (with Nepalese Sherpas perhaps to carry any real weight, and political concerns safely tucked away in the nontourist peripheries, beyond the register of mainstream journalism or guided itinerary).

Ever-increasing numbers of people in the developed world seem motivated by a need to escape the routines of salaried employment so as to enjoy sunscreen-smothered leisure time on a remote beach, quaffing tropical drinks with mini-umbrellas, all served by pretty much anonymous Others called Enrico, Joy, or Tran. But it must also be considered redeeming to some degree that tourists might be genuinely and ethically motivated by an interest in the experience of other cultures and in meeting people different from those they usually find in the comfort of their familiar surrounds. Certainly, with global conflict and paranoia at a premium, the importance of intercultural exchange cannot be understated. A growing market exists for “ecotourism” in particular, where travelers (strictly differentiating themselves from the masses of “tourists”) follow trails and “off the beaten track” pathways that cater to those who wish to “tread lightly” on apparently fragile foreign soil. There is certainly merit in avoiding those forms of tourist infrastructure that have required wholesale rezoning of residential land into golf courses and the like. If an alternative tourism can thereby skirt the repurposing of all aspects of a given local economy into a touristic service sector, souvenir shopping, and adventure playground (read here the transformation of seafront areas into hotel strips, the lowering of water tables via demand for swimming pools and fantasy garden-scapes) then this must be credited as an advance on mass tourism. But we must also ask if those who wish to tiptoe through remote and pristine lands do not also inevitably bring the tourist hordes in their wake—opening up new curiosities for the expansive hunger of development.

The trouble with much tourism literature has been that it must ignore the politics of commodification, inequality, and exploitation at the exact moment that these matters are the very basis of the possibility of “third-world” tourism. If there were no wealthy tourist elite (or relative elite) looking for leisureed rest and/or exotic experience outside of their everyday world; equipped with incomparably larger wallets, travelers cheques, and credit cards beyond the grasp of locals; and supported with a massive infrastructure and the paraphernalia (from deck chairs and ocean liners, climbing equipment and jet skis, even the accoutrements of adventure tourism, etc.) there would be no tourist economy. As a consequence, in a competitive market, the travel magazine version of the world of tourism must present the beach, the pina colada, the “interesting” cultural life of others, as packaged and ready for sale. The educational dimension of culture then becomes a secondary consideration. Inequality is reduced to cultural difference, and may sometimes be presented as something the tourist economy can even alleviate. Some tourists, moreover, see their travels as a form of charity, grandiosely imagining their contribution as consumers to entail a global redistribution of the wealth that allows them to travel in the first place. In Denis O’Rourke’s film The Good Woman of Bangkok, you can hear sex tourists brag that their custom keeps Thai women from a life of poverty. In the Americas, spring-break festivities in the Caribbean or in South America occlude a more urgent educational agenda. In South East Asian hotels, the arts of Wayang Kulit
and Gamelan, not to mention less salubrious traditions, are maintained through nightly performances for businessmen who pay top dollar for entertainments they need not fully understand. Or rather, they pay for the experience of difference, of not understanding otherness. The exotic is its own reward—does it matter that these traditions are reduced in cultural importance on the way? Some would argue against such traditionalism.

**THE BENEVOLENCE OF TOURISM AND CHARITY WORK**

A guilty secret resides at the heart of third-world tourism. Holidays in other people’s misery seem inappropriate and though the beaches are beautiful, the tsunami was a tragedy. The equation can be resolved by charitable donation or by the presence of the tourists themselves. After the Asian tsunami of 2004, rebuilding of destroyed tourist resorts in India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia was soon followed by calls for the tourists to return, as part of the reconstruction. There is a cultural maintenance aspect here that deserves attention: In circumstances of dire wealth disparity and limited economic means, the tourist economy provides cultural workers with an expressive outlet. Ritual forms morph into entertainments, but are nevertheless preserved—albeit in museumized forms. This is a difficult evaluation to make—as many of the needed tourist dollars are not actually spent in the affected countries when one takes into account the destinations of profits from tourism after airline ticketing, charter and package tour bookings, hotel and food chains (McDonald’s and Coca-Cola all over Thailand, for example) and even sale of travel guides and the market in television travel shows. Ultimately, only a very small percentage of the economic return from global tourism reaches local entrepreneurs in each case: the structure of colonialism prevails where the brochures are printed in the United States; the airlines are based in Paris, Denver, or Frankfurt; the booking agencies in London or Tokyo.
In recognition of this, a subcategory of traveler (also known as backpackers, ecotravelers, or development workers) seeks out charitable works; a few days at a Mother Teresa clinic, or volunteer washing of elephants at a nature reserve or similar. This kind of benevolence is authorized and approved in many travel guides, and in newspaper advertisements and documentary programs, through the mechanism of a heart-tugging image of an always-smiling child that would be the necessary motivator for even a gesture (“send just a few coins”) of care or concern for dispossessed human beings. Clearly charitable activities, even where they “help” a bit, are also part of the benevolent self-deception of the tourist gaze serving to deflect meaningful recognition of gross economic privilege, and, along the way, turning guilt itself into a commodity form. The consuming “gaze” is self-deceiving if the traveler really believes that a few days of volunteer work in Calcutta (see Hutnyk 1996) can excuse a month of hedonism on the beach in Goa. Similar logics justify the carbon-footprint calculations of even the most well-meaning environmental traveler—to walk in the pristine rain forest and leave a “soft footprint” is still to treat the planet as an object for rapacious use, locals be damned.

SOUVENIRS

Tourists collect experience, but we have to have mementos to remind ourselves that the fantasy was real—the same photographs of the smiling kids, various knickknacks and trash purchased from the local flea market, from the beach trader, from the state emporium, or from the airport departure lounge. Thus, trinkets are then displayed on shelves at home, gathering dust, or gifted to relatives and friends not lucky enough to have been there. Postcards similarly gloat and preen. The overarching theme here is that the world experience is reduced to mere bric-a-brac. The complex global forces of capital, of work and leisure, of the division of labor and the vast networks of information and infrastructure—planes, hotels, servants, right through to Kodak processing labs and Internet travel blogging—is miniaturized in handy squares or convenient packets that can fit neatly onto the luggage rack. The idea of the souvenir is reduction itself—the veneer of the trinket, the face, ironically, of exploitation writ large. That we have learned not to read these signs in any wider register is also part of the sanctioned ignorance that tourism authenticates.

POST-TOURISM

As tourists and travelers will be the first to proclaim of course, we are, many of us, fully aware of this hypocrisy, so much so that the inauthentic has become a part of the quest—and may be called “post-tourism” in one of those not-quite-ironic neologisms (Urry 1990) that allow the nominated suffix to continue beyond its justified shelf life. Searching out the most gaudy, plastic, outrageous object allegedly proves one has not been duped by the exotica-merchants. To be in pursuit of the authentic is an essentialist trap, but to have continued past this to accept inauthenticity as part and parcel of the contemporary mixed-up
and “complex” world still leaves commodification intact. A grinning fascination with the curio and knowing awareness of the predicaments of exoticization does not in actuality undo any of the structures of inequality that such “post-tourists” would wish to avoid. What kind of self-deception is this that extends tourist purchase to the most esoteric of objects at the same time as it can buy up the mundane? I have seen tourists purchase gaudy plastic tap handles for their metropolitan bathroom fittings, or plastic models of the Taj Mahal, with flashing lights, as a tongue-in-cheek, high-kitsch souvenir. Arguably, post-tourist irony here does not break with trinketization at all, but rather confirms the process, and extends it exponentially.

TRINKETIZATION

The word trinketization will stand for the process of downgrading the material cultures of the world into a grand compendium of trash. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss famously lamented this when he saw the detritus of the West thrown back into the face of humanity; this trash culture has now become the detritus of all our lives, and we revel in it. Does this not suggest the need for a political diagnosis of tourism as rampant exploitation? The argument here is not for an end to tourism; it is thoroughly unlikely that could even be considered and the planetary consequences are obscure; but might we look towards the remote possibility of a still better tourism, an ethical and even revolutionary tourism? What of those travelers who expressly seek out meetings with the Maoists in Nepal, who march in hope of a meeting with the reds of the Himalaya, or those who travel to learn from the Ogoni in Nigeria of their struggle against the multinationals? There are travelers who go to seek sun and friendship, and this seems worthy, but others go further and seek out local authors, artists, performers: a cultural exchange program is not a forlorn idea. I have seen a travel group barter performances with street musicians in a way that was only possible on the basis of the same commercial exchange that the critic of tourism in me deplores. Mass tourism is destructive, but there are those
who take seriously the possibility of alternatives that do more than just talk the talk—for a new tourism perhaps?

**WHAT THEN OF TOURISM CONCERN, AND SO FORTH?**

Isn’t the solution to relax, to stop moralizing against tourism and against those who claim tourism could be better (soft-footprinters)? For tourist resorts and pleasure peripheries to circumvent the attacks of critics, there needs to be problem-solving of issues like employment security, wage reform (in many cases, actual wages would be a start), workplace regulation, civic responsibility, impact on water table (the beach hotels in Goa are particularly irresponsible, as in many other coastal areas), cultural uplift, political support, promotional drive, sustainable movement. Organizations such as Tourism Concern (http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/) aim to merge a critique of the destructive aspects of mass tourism with maintenance of the adventure of travel; Tourism Concern claims to “fight exploitation” and seems to do so with a positive and progressive compromise that would mitigate destruction. In case after case, I find this overly optimistic, but the orientation of the critique is perhaps the best we have. Coupled with consumer advocacy and environmental concern (vapor trails and aircraft pollution lead to global warming—“Is that journey necessary?”) there seems just the glimmer of hope that the exponential rise in travel may not destroy us all—but current forecasts seem bleak. Second only to the war economy as a site of expansion and investment, the global-mediated market of tourism strips all demand. The tourist hordes resemble an all-consuming plague and the planet is ravaged as if by locusts, thereby chewed into bits.

**LIMITATIONS**

The trouble with making the case that tourism turns everything into trinkets is that a theoretical approach that pursues this line is in danger of becoming a part of the problem as well. The world becomes a kaleidoscope of fascinating sites in the same way that theoretical analysis all too easily can latch on to any example and use it for its argument—just like I used the example of meeting “the reds” as a case for better tourism. What would not be subject to postironic touristic exoticization? The Guardian newspaper today, as I write (December 20, 2006), reports the mayor of war-torn Grozny planning tourist visits and mocking the idea with the question, “But will bullet proof vests be supplied?” Yes, we can imagine how the war-devastated landscape of the Chechnyan city might become a stop on some adventure tour, which might also then take in other “dark tourism” sites, not all of them inappropriate as places to visit—holocaust memorials, Iwo Jima, former prisons, and locations of famous battles (Gallipoli) might also be on the itinerary. To call this trinketization would miss the emotional purchase of such investments, despite the raw fact that investment is also behind the touristification of war. The problem with trinketization here is that analytical purchase is also often reduced to a facade in much of what passes for the study of tourism, as if replicating the exotic gloss of the brochures also
amounts to an adequate examination of the global predicament (for several examples of this, see Clifford 1997). What chance is there that travel really broadens the mind of the analyst also?

**See also** Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; Global Community Media; Nationalism and the Media; Paparazzi and Photographic Ethics; Parachute Journalism; Representations of Race; World Cinema.


*John Hutnyk*

**TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AND MEDIA FRANCHISES**

While media franchises have long offered official toys, bed linens, trading cards, and the like, in recent years, several media franchises have begun to use multiple media platforms to tell stories. The narrative of *The Matrix*, for instance, unfolded across three films, a video game, comics, and a series of anime short films. Such initiatives can be criticized for being yet more instances of corporate synergy, whereby media producers squeeze more money from their consumers, sometimes carrying them in the process from advertising venue to advertising venue. However, they also potentially expand the story world and the prospects for viewers’ creative means of engaging with stories, thus contributing to the development of a new form of multimedia storytelling.

Taken by itself, the term “transmedia” simply describes the process of content moving or expanding from one medium into another. As such, transmediation can describe practices ranging from adaptation (e.g., turning a novel into a film) to merchandising (e.g., creating action figures in the likeness of film characters). However, the notion of *transmedia storytelling* is more specific, and is used to describe the process of further developing a coherent narrative (or elaborating...
a narrative universe) by distributing related story components across multiple media platforms.

One compelling example of transmedia storytelling came in 1998, when producers of the teen drama *Dawson’s Creek* launched a promotional Web site called Dawson’s Desktop. At the time, most Web sites developed for television shows worked as “virtual press kits,” letting visitors read short character and actor biographies, browse plot summaries, and download production photos or short video clips. Dawson’s Desktop took a different approach: rather than providing information about the show, it offered new content that extended the show’s narrative in between episodes and let visitors feel as if they were entering the world of the show itself. Visitors to the site were able to explore what appeared to be the title character’s personal computer, reading his e-mails and logs of

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**1980s MEDIA FRANCHISES**

While most major media franchises of the 1980s expanded to include both licensed merchandise (toys, clothing, breakfast cereal) and transmedia components (films, television series, video games, comic books), many of the most popular franchises were actually financed and launched by merchandisers to help sell their products.

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<td>Hallmark</td>
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<td>American Greetings</td>
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<td>Tonka Toys</td>
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<td>Tyco Toys</td>
<td><em>Dino-Riders</em> (1988)</td>
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<td>Mattel Toys</td>
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<td><em>She-Ra</em> (1985)</td>
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<td>Hasbro Toys</td>
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<td><em>Jem &amp; the Holograms</em> (1985)</td>
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Ironically, one of the catchphrases introduced in *Jem & the Holograms* might as well have been a catchphrase for the entire decade: “Showtime, synergy!”

However, as some short-lived examples demonstrated, not all toys and entertainment characters were capable of supporting transmedia franchises: one animated series, *Rubik, The Amazing Cube*, revolved around the Rodriguez siblings, a group of three children who learned that their Rubik’s Cube would come to life and lead them on magical adventures when all of his colored squares were lined up correctly.

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his online conversations with other characters, seeing the Web sites he visited, and so on. Dawson’s Desktop was updated before and after each episode, and at random intervals during the week, to include new e-mails in which Dawson or other characters discussed events of the most recent episode. From this main site, fans could also follow links to other fictional sites, including a Web site for Dawson’s high school newspaper and a site for the show’s bed and breakfast, complete with a guestbook and 360-degree virtual tour.

However, while Dawson’s Desktop had a commercial aspect, allowing fans to purchase Dawson’s Creek–branded merchandise, it also allowed for a new type of interaction between television viewers and television content. Dawson’s Desktop contributed to the story world, providing viewers the opportunity to read characters’ reflections on events, as well as reactions to events not discussed on the television show. It is also important to note that Dawson’s Desktop was free; while the site generated a limited amount of revenue through the sale of merchandise, and helped to promote the show, it offered little or no direct remuneration. This raises a series of interesting questions. In particular, we might ask: how are we to make sense of such a Web site and such an investment? What function(s) do sites like Dawson’s Desktop provide for their accompanying programs? And, most importantly, are these transmedia extensions being developed primarily to tell better stories, or to generate higher profits?

**MAKING MONEY FROM SYNERGY**

A key principle of corporate synergy is to make as much money out of a media product as possible. Recently, media corporations have moved to establishing significant networks of horizontal integration, wherein a conglomeration will work with or purchase companies whose businesses work alongside one another (as when News Corp owns both a movie and a television studio), and vertical integration, wherein a conglomeration will work with or purchase companies up or down stream from one another (as when News Corp owns the Fox Network and multiple Fox broadcast stations). As these forms of integration become more common, corporations increasingly move to repurpose material across their various companies. Rather than perpetually developing new stories and characters, synergy draws upon existing entertainment properties, with preestablished audiences, and attempts to generate as much revenue as possible. As a result, if a movie is successful, not only will it likely receive a sequel, but the company owning it may authorize a spin-off television show, a comic book, a line of toys, a musical, cross-promotional deals with fast-food companies, an amusement park ride, and so on. Meanwhile, each “platform” serves as an advertisement for the others, and hence for the whole, thereby allowing media corporations to make money from their advertisements.

The most significant shift toward horizontal integration and media franchising came in the 1930s, when Walt Disney introduced a new business model that he described as total merchandising. Under this model, all Disney products served dual purposes: branded merchandise, television shows, animated movies, and
amusement park rides all simultaneously functioned as entertainment and as advertisements for every other Disney product. Disney’s characters were not the first to be featured on merchandise or appear in multiple media, but they were almost certainly the first characters designed to serve as entertainment “brands.” Today, Disney continues to expand its total merchandising model, using almost every film and television series it releases as the basis for a franchise, complete with toys, amusement park rides, merchandise, comic books, and fast-food tie-ins, not to mention resale on DVD and VHS.

Star Wars, too, proved a watershed moment in the evolution of both blockbuster films and blockbuster synergy: Star Wars toys sold like few other consumer items in history, producing over $100 million in profits for toy company Kenner and selling over 42 million units in their first year alone, and the franchise later expanded to include several spin-off television shows, multiple video

THE LOST EXPERIENCE: TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVE AS INTERACTIVE TELEVISION

Lost’s most ambitious transmedia experiment to date was, without question, a summer-long interactive narrative campaign (or “alternate reality game”) called “The Lost Experience.” Developed as a collaborative venture between the show’s producers and broadcasting affiliates on several continents, the Lost Experience required players to work together and seek out clues both on and offline that would advance an original narrative developed for the game, which provided a wealth of insights and clues into the core mysteries depicted on the television series. In order to fully immerse players in Lost’s narrative world, the Lost Experience unfolded across a wide range of media platforms and sites, including the following:

• Lost’s fictional Hanso Foundation ran fake advertisements on television and in national newspapers, providing URLs and other clues for players.
• Players could “hack” into voice-mail systems and e-mail accounts to access private messages and hidden content, and could exchange instant messages with several of the game’s characters.
• Content was distributed on a range of preexisting commercial Web sites, including Amazon, Blogger, MySpace, and YouTube, to make the game seem more real.
• More than a dozen fictional Web sites were launched, including sites for the Hanso Foundation, a blog for one of the main characters, and several message boards for players to share “conspiracy theories.”
• A series of podcasts was released, culminating in a live event where players could call in, share their theories, and interact with one of the characters.
• Several of the game’s characters appeared in public: one character was interviewed on The Jimmy Kimmel Show, while another interrupted a Lost panel at the San Diego ComicCon 2006 to accuse Lost’s producers of participating in a conspiracy.
• Fake “Apollo Candy Bars,” which had appeared on Lost, were distributed in public locations around the world, with over a thousand containing codes that needed to be entered online to complete the story.
games, and a second trilogy of films among its rapidly growing army of products and platforms.

Examples of synergy and transmedia franchising are particularly prominent in children’s media, since children represent a vast, ongoing market for entertainment products. The 1980s, in particular, brought an explosion of youth-focused media franchises. Countless film, television, and comic book characters were introduced (or reintroduced) as transmedia franchises, complete with comic books, multiple cinematic releases, animated television series, and a wide range of toys and branded merchandise. In fact, during the 1980s, many of the most popular entertainment franchises were launched not by media companies, but by merchandisers and toy manufacturers looking to build audiences (and markets) for their properties (see “1980s Media Franchises” sidebar).

**PLAYING WITH SYNERGY**

Criticism of media synergy is rampant, especially that directed toward children, as corporations are seen as taking advantage of children’s desires to fit in with peers, and charged with persuading them to believe, for example, that their favorite TV characters chose their own clothes, when often what they are watching is the outcome of a merchandising contract. In this way, they are accused of promoting conformity and creating legions of consumer zombies who will follow wherever the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Pokemon, or He-Man may lead.

However, while adults may see such franchises as exploitative, to see children’s involvement with such media franchises as nothing more than mindless consumerism overlooks the appeal that such franchises hold for children. Star Wars, Care Bears, or G. I. Joe toys empower children to “participate” in their fictional worlds by giving them control of the characters and allowing them to construct their own narratives. While much of the resulting play may simply mimic the narratives depicted on television or film, it can also provide a space for creativity and imagination, allowing children to repurpose characters or rewrite scenarios to reflect their own interests, desires, and needs. This does not mean that all media franchising offers such benefits: in many cases, the products of media synergy are still developed primarily to generate revenue. But while branded bed linens, breakfast cereals, and soft drinks encourage children to consume *products*, it is important to recognize that toys, games, and many other franchise products can enable children to interact with, and take control of, a franchise’s stories, themes, and characters.

Arguably one of the greatest experiences of watching a good film or television show is the experience of entering its world for just a moment. Such play with synergy may therefore promise yet more involvement. Such was the case, for instance, with Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez’s *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), which positioned all of its promotional materials as “real,” as with the film itself, which purported to show the last days of three missing teenagers who went into the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland, never to return. *The Blair Witch Project’s* clever pretense of reality helped lend the film added
THE YEAR OF THE MATRIX

Following the success of The Matrix in 1999, creators Larry and Andy Wachowski released two sequels, The Matrix Reloaded and The Matrix Revolutions, in 2003. Rather than positioning the films as mere sequels, however, the Wachowski brothers insisted on using the films as components in a larger, more elaborate, and more interactive transmedia narrative. Rather than simply reproducing key moments from the Matrix films, the Wachowskis developed the Matrix “spin-offs” to expand their narrative canvas, using an array of media forms—including comics, video games, animated short films, and more—to provide new original content that enhanced and extended the events of the films. This year-long rollout of Matrix-related content led many journalists to refer to 2003 as “the Year of the Matrix.”

The videogame, Enter the Matrix, allowed players to guide two supporting characters from the films through the events that occurred in between their on-screen appearances, and in doing so, to discover additional details and plot points that were referenced in the films. Enter the Matrix also incorporated almost two hours of exclusive narrative-expanding scenes written by the Wachowskis, and featuring the film actors, which were later added into a “director’s cut” of the film as part of a 10-disc DVD collector’s set.

The Wachowskis also oversaw the development of a series of nine short anime films, collectively called The Animatrix. Four of these films, written by the Wachowskis themselves, were particularly important to the larger Matrix narrative, including The Second Renaissance, Parts 1 & 2, which depicted the historical events that led to the franchise’s central conflict between humans and machines, and Final Flight of the Osiris (often described as The Matrix 1.5), which depicted the events between the first and second films of the trilogy. While all nine films of The Animatrix were released on DVD, however, four of the films were made available for free on the Matrix Web site in the months leading up to the release of the second film, and Final Flight of the Osiris was shown in theaters before screenings of Stephen King’s Dreamcatcher.

But if “the Year of the Matrix” worked to demonstrate the possibilities for transmedia storytelling, it also illustrated the inherent challenges of these possibilities: many reviewers and viewers accused the film of exploiting the success of the first film, and perceived projects like The Animatrix and Enter the Matrix as crass attempts to cash in on fan enthusiasm. Others, lacking the desire to piece together the narrative from so many different components, simply felt that the Matrix had become too complicated and demanding, and found the films difficult to understand. These problems indicate the degree to which transmedia stories must now carefully balance some viewer’s desires to dig deeper into the story world with other viewers’ desire not to feel left out.
THE NEW ERA OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

From this framework, we might then understand today’s expansion of storytelling across media as providing greater opportunities for involvement, and as representing development in narrative form and technique, not just an explosion in cross-media promotion. The Web site for season 1 of Fox’s hit television show, 24, for instance, included links to the fictional White House and access to the main characters’ Counter Terrorism Unit personnel files, both of which provided information not in the television show, and yet that also allowed audience members to better understand the characters and the world they lived in. The first season of 24 was also followed by the publication of a book, 24: The House Special Subcommittee’s Findings at CTU, which let viewers review transcripts, diagrams, and other important documents used during meetings of a fictional congressional committee that convened to discuss the events shown during the season.

More recently, elaborate transmedia campaigns have been developed around elaborate television programs such as Lost (ABC) and Heroes (NBC) to serve a range of creative, promotional, and financial purposes. For example, Lost has all of the standard trappings that make up modern media franchises: visitors to the show’s official Web site can purchase clothing, action figures, collectible trading cards, key chains, posters, soundtrack albums, a board game, and so on. However, the show’s producers have also experimented with several more innovative and compelling transmedia extensions. These experiments include:

• Launching a Web site for the fictional Oceanic Airlines (www.oceanic-airlines.com), whose Flight 815 crashed during the pilot episode, thereby establishing the show’s narrative premise. The Web site contained clues and possible leads for solving mysteries within the show.

• Publishing Bad Twin, a detective novel “written” by one of the show’s minor characters, which appeared on-screen during the second season and tantalized fans by providing additional material that could be scavenged for narrative clues.

• Producing The Lost Diaries, a series of short videos slated for distribution as exclusive cellular phone content, and written as “home videos” shot by one of the show’s main characters.

• Writing and running “The Lost Experience,” an elaborate alternate reality game (ARG) that unfolded across several media platforms, and provided viewers with additional narrative details as reward for solving a series of challenges (see “The Lost Experience: Transmedia Narrative as Interactive Television”).

Yet, while Lost’s producers have been able to pursue these types of synergistic storytelling innovations, corporate synergy also continues to manifest itself in more crass and exploitative forms. One excellent example is the set of “Official Lost Jigsaw Puzzles,” which promise fans exclusive access to “secret” information about the show’s mysteries: viewers who purchase and complete all four puzzles, place them together, turn them over, and shine an ultraviolet light on
them will be able to view an important map that appeared as a fleeting (and incomplete) on-screen image during the show. Unlike the examples above, these puzzles have no place in Lost’s larger narrative; instead, they take advantage of the show’s mysteries, and sell otherwise unremarkable merchandise by “bundling” it with exclusive “insights.”

**CONCLUSION**

One of the clear signs that transmedia storytelling might be developing new ways to tell stories, and not just new platforms from which to reap profits, is that many writers and directors are becoming intimately involved in the transmedia proliferation of their products. The Simpsons’ creator Matt Groening plays a key role in developing Simpsons products; Lost executive producers Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof were outspoken critics of Lost’s early “novelizations” and are now more closely involved in sculpting the show’s transmedia existence; the Wachowski brothers were active in writing The Matrix into and across various media (see “The Year of The Matrix”), and so forth. Indeed, some transmedia platforms are now experiencing legal challenges and slowdowns as writers and cast members are demanding to be paid separately, arguing that their contractual obligation to take part in promotional activities does not cover all such platforms. And, as many transmedia tales have also been synergistic goldmines for their corporate parents, often the economics of the media industries have encouraged media corporations to vigorously pursue and solicit projects that can cross various media. Concerns regarding the hidden persuasions of product placement and the monopolistic tendencies of synergy continue to exist, but they are now being accompanied by some writers’ and consumers’ excitement at the prospect of yet more developed story worlds.

**See also** Advertising and Persuasion; Children and Effects; Conglomeration and Media Monopolies; Hypercommercialism; Innovation and Imitation in Commercial Media; Product Placement; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


*Ivan Askwith and Jonathan Gray*
USER-CREATED CONTENT AND AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The rise of user-created content has altered the relationship between media producers and consumers. The volume and quality of material produced by audiences is seen as evidence by some of the democratization of the media space. At the same time that spaces dedicated to user-created content blossom, large media companies are incorporating audience-produced content into their products and inviting audiences to participate. This trend has raised questions, however, about content ownership, the value of cultural labor, and the right to use commercial media content and make meaning.

The rise and high visibility of user-created content is associated with both the development of consumer-level digital production and editing tools, and the maturation of the Internet as a platform enabling “push-button” publishing of text, images, video, and audio. Though tied to more recent technological and cultural developments, particularly the convergence of media devices and platforms, and the emergence of Web 2.0, user creativity, and its incorporation by professional media agencies has a longer history. The “letter to the editor” in the newspaper is a good example of early modes of audience participation in mainstream media. Magazines too have long invited audiences to submit content such as articles, personal stories, and recipes. Radio has made extensive use of the audience in the form of talk-back and call-ins. Similarly, television programs such as America’s Funniest Home Videos relied heavily, if not wholly, on user-created content. Outside of these narrow, sanctioned media spaces, community and activist media sectors, as well as fan productions, have long demonstrated the creative capacity of nonprofessional media producers.
The development of digital camera technologies and domestic-level editing software equipped media consumers with tools previously locked in the domain of media professionals. Throughout the 1990s, multimedia applications became an important part of the home computing and electronics market, sometimes becoming central to product differentiation. Apple’s 2001 campaign for iTunes, for instance, touted the software’s ease for managing music and compiling mix albums, encouraging users to “rip, mix, burn.” The development of the Internet as an open platform offered publishing and distribution options outside of publicly regulated spectrum and free of the necessity to invest in complex expensive machinery (such as large printing presses). Equipped with technology and skills, more and more audience members have become media producers, creating and distributing their own content.

Describing activities ranging from writing fan fiction, categorizing content, and editing photographs, to lip-synching to pop songs, reassembling video materials, and creating bedroom confessionals, user-created content exists at the friction point between a skilled and technologically enabled audience and a media industry looking to regain market share. Media markets have been continuously fragmenting since the 1970s as new services (cable, satellite) and new devices (VCR, DVD, video game consoles) competed for audiences’ time. No longer enjoying a monopoly over either the production or distribution of media content, large media producers see user-created content as both a competitor and a new strategy to engage their audience.

**CURRENT TV**

Run by a company lead by former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, Current TV combines user-created content and professionally produced material. The station is presented as an attempt to democratize television production. Available via cable and satellite since 2005 (with a second network in the United Kingdom and Ireland launched in 2007), 30 percent of the content on Current TV is user-created. Users create 3- to 7-minute “pods” that are submitted to a voting process that registered members of the Current TV Web site participate in. Videos “greenlit” through this process are placed on the schedule amongst other short-form programming, which is a mix of documentary; news and current affairs; informational; and entertainment content, including a number of programs produced by Internet search company Google. The station encourages advertisers to engage its viewers to produce advertising, compensating users for advertising screened on Current TV and requiring advertisers to purchase the content should they wish to use it on other platforms.

While in many ways providing a space for “everyday” young people, Current TV’s emphasis on high visual quality means it is far from an open system and it has been criticized for favoring content that too closely resembles traditional television fare. Though it supports user-created content, the network has to compete in a system still ruled by the logics of subscription television, meaning it must produce content watchable on a television in a lounge room. Furthermore, the sequencing of content on television requires consistency in quality, a situation not readily experienced, nor it seems required, online.
**COMPETITION**

Grassroots or citizen reporting and Internet journalism are a good example of the rise of user-created content as a competitor to established media. Whether frustrated by a lack of local coverage, interested in niche topics not more widely reported, close to the action at a crucial moment (see Owen 2005), or disenfranchised with corporate media, citizen journalists, bloggers, and social news sites have emerged as significant alternatives to the mainstream press. It has been heavily debated (and at times litigated) whether blogging and citizen reporting constitutes journalism and should be afforded the same legal protections as “professional” newsgathering, so that, for instance, in December 2004, Apple filed suit against numerous blogs that were reporting rumors about Apple products, while in 2005, blogger Josh Wolfe was detained over his refusal to hand over to police footage shot at a political protest. At the same time, though, user-created news activities have prompted a renegotiation of the relationship between established news services and their audiences. In part as a response to citizen news, most mainstream news services have introduced opportunities for users to participate, submit pictures, comment on stories published online, or participate in officially run news blogs. Citizen journalism has both prompted discussion about the distinctions between professionals and amateurs as well as forcibly transformed news reporting from a one-way lecture into a conversation.

Similar questions about the blurring of lines between professionals and amateurs are raised by sophisticated user-created projects such as Wikipedia. An online encyclopedia project, Wikipedia operates on a belief that over time accurate entries will be produced by informed, well-meaning participants. Maintaining an open editing policy, Wikipedia challenges the expert paradigm, recognizing knowledge can come from nonformal sources of expertise, such as the detailed knowledge produced by fans and enthusiasts. The project is often criticized for valuing the consensus of the crowd over the credentials of individual authors writing entries. This criticism is frequently rebutted by pointing out that on the whole, Wikipedia has been found to be no less reliable than professionally reviewed sources such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Terdiman 2005). While this may be true, Wikipedia often strains under its own policy of openness as users with vested interests wrestle to have their perspectives on a topic included and vandals deface entries under the cover of anonymity.

**CO-OPTION**

While Wikipedia is a nonprofit organization, mobilizing user creativity is a strategy increasingly adopted in businesses, leading to the rise of what are referred to as prosumers (Toffler 1980) or produsers (Bruns 2005)—“productive” consumers or users. By providing spaces for users to participate, some media corporations are attempting to incorporate user creativity within the established value chain of media production. This value chain places the professional media producer on one end, the media consumer on the other, and the transfer of content for profit from producer to consumer in between.
User creativity, however, recasts the audience as a media producer, somewhat disrupting this model. Typically, media corporations have claimed ownership and exclusive rights over content submitted to them, while policing the permitted uses of content they produce. As such, news services, for instance, claim the right to use (usually for free) and re-license (usually for profit) user-submitted photos. This model has become more problematic with the rise of services where users are the predominant content producer. For instance, virtual world Second Life provides an open play space where users can build objects and create artifacts their avatars can interact with and move amongst. Early into its existence, Second Life’s creators Linden Lab changed the rules of participation, assigning the intellectual property rights to objects to the users who created them. This has led to a flourishing “virtual economy” within Second Life where users on-sell virtual goods. This is a virtual economy not everyone can participate in, however. As much as digital publishing tools enable “everyday” people to participate in the media space, this participation requires access to technology and an Internet connection, as well as a certain degree of technological and creative skill. As such, while user-created content is enabled by the rise in consumer-level digital tools, the continued existence of a digital divide means some people face technological, social, economic, and cultural barriers to participation.

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN USER-CREATED CONTENT**

1989—America’s Funniest Home Videos premierses on the ABC Network. At the time of publication, the program, based on Tokyo Broadcasting System program Fun TV with Kato-chan and Ken-chan, is still on the air.

July 1995—MTV News: Unfiltered premierses. Viewers called MTV and pitched stories about their life. The network headed out to shoot short (no longer than 4 minutes) stories on Hi-8 video, which were then edited together into a hosted program. The program is cited as a key inspiration for Current TV (see below).

December 1995—Web-hosting service GeoCities launched (after a brief period as “Beverly Hills Internet”). While a paid premium service was later added, GeoCities continued as a free service even after its acquisition by Yahoo! in 1998.

September 1997—User-submitted “nerd” news site Slashdot is launched (http://www.slashdot.org). Slashdot is one of the longest established user-submitted news sites on the Web.

August 1999—Pyra Labs launches Blogger, a free Weblog publishing tool. Google acquired the service in February 2003. The simple interface and free site-hosting helped to popularize the format.

October 1999—iMovie, a consumer video editing program based on the code used for professional digital editing software, is bundled as a standard offering from Apple Computer Inc. iMovie was later joined by iTunes, iPhoto, iDVD, GarageBand, and iWeb, the last four of which are digital editing programs.

July 2003—Social networking site MySpace launches. Allowing users to create Web page profiles customized as they like, and connected to their friends’ profiles, the service
quickly becomes a key site for both identity expression and marketing. News Corporation acquired the service as part of a US$580 million deal in July 2005.


October 2004—New York rap outfit Beastie Boys gives camcorders to audience members attending their Madison Square Garden concert with the instructions to film the concert. The footage was edited together into the film *Awesome; I Fuckin’ Shot That!* and premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

November 2004—“User driven social content” Web site Digg launches. Digg is one of the most successful user-created news sites, with a feature set often copied.

February 2005—YouTube launches. The site enables users to post short video clips that can be viewed and voted upon by other users. YouTube allows people to embed the content on their blogs and Web sites.

July 2005—Photographs from cell phones make their way into the mass-media coverage of the bombings in the London underground. These photos are some of the most compelling images of the event.


June 2006—Lonelygirl15 first appears on YouTube. Mimicking the confessional style of teen video blogs, the series sparks speculation over whether the video diaries hosted by “Bree” are genuine or not. In September 2006, it was revealed to be a narrative experiment by fledgling filmmakers Mesh Flinders and Miles Beckett.

October 2006—Google buys YouTube for US$1.65 million.

December 2006—*Time* magazine announces “You” as the “Person of the Year.”

February 2007—User-generated commercials for Doritos premiere at Super Bowl XLI.

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**RE-USE**

User creativity raises further questions of ownership as productive audiences adapt, interact with, and build upon commercially produced popular culture. Though the confessional video journal might be seen as the public face of video-sharing sites, creative reworkings of popular culture such as mashups, fan tribute videos, and re-edits of movie trailers are also predominant. Similarly, many fan Web sites trade fan fiction—original stories featuring characters from their favorite texts. These forms of collage, manipulation, and creation are not intrinsically new, but the distribution options provided by the Internet have raised the profile and exposure of this sort of activity.

Some copyright owners have responded by using legal tools such as those provided by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act to have these works taken
down. They see these uses as unauthorized, violating copyright laws that bestow the right to profit from creative endeavors on the original creator. Where the title of a property may be registered as a trademark, copyright owners have also used trademark law to have works removed. These actions are seen as necessary to protect both the commercial investment in the creative property, which in many cases is substantial, and to reduce potential confusion over what is, and what is not, an official product. This latter concern has been heightened by the increasing quality of amateur productions. Fan film *Star Wars: Revelations* (available at http://panicstruckpro.com/revelations), for instance, sports CGI effects almost as impressive as the official *Star Wars* films, despite being produced on a fraction of the budget.

An alternative perspective sees this re-use of commercially produced media as noninfringing and legitimate in an age of digital content and productive audiences. Lawrence Lessig argues that people have long remixed their culture through activities such as quoting favorite lines or using television episodes as the basis for jokes. Technology has finally caught up with this practice to enable this remixing to make use of the content itself. Similarly, Henry Jenkins suggests that user creativity represents a similar range of behaviors traditionally understood as folk culture—culture produced outside of the commercial realm.

Seeking to capitalize on creative audiences, some media producers have invited audiences to remix their content. A number of musicians have released tracks expressly inviting audiences to remix them. In a promotion for director Richard Linklater’s 2006 film *A Scanner Darkly*, permission was given for the trailer to be re-edited using online video site JumpCut. Similarly, in early 2007 the SciFi Network made audio and video clips of *Battlestar Galactica* available for download, encouraging users to mashup the clips with their own content and send the clips back to the network where a prize will be awarded for the best video.

**MEANING**

In addition to questions about the right to use content, user creativity has raised questions about the meanings cultural goods have. Policing unauthorized uses of commercial content is a process that aims to ensure copyright owners are in charge of how these goods are represented. Permitting productive audiences to use copyright material exposes copyright owners to risks that their content will be used for purposes they may not have anticipated and may not agree with. While some have no qualms about this—indeed the Creative Commons licensing system was developed with permitting re-use in mind—others are particularly wary.

A similar competition, conducted by General Motors for their Chevy Tahoe SUV in March 2006, provided users with music and video of the Tahoe and invited them to make an ad for the brand. Some of the entries Chevy received back were highly critical of the car, poking fun at Chevy drivers and criticizing the motoring industry. In a somewhat surprising decision, Chevy decided to allow these entries to remain on the competition site, along with the more
glowing endorsements. Chevy’s response was that they had always anticipated some negative responses, that the brand could weather it, and that it would be disingenuous to remove critical videos. While this opinion may not be held by all who propose such campaigns, this perspective is indicative of the way user creativity is changing the relationship between media producers and media consumers.

See also Audience Power to Resist; Blogosphere; Cultural Appropriation; Digital Divide; Global Community Media; Media Literacy; Mobile Media; Net Neutrality; Online Digital Film and Television; Online Publishing; Pirate Radio; Public Access Television; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; Youth and Media Use.


*Joshua Green*
VIDEO GAMES

Video games are an important entertainment industry and common leisure pursuit, played by people the world over. However, video games continue to be deeply controversial. Playing video games is often viewed as mainly the activity of adolescent boys, and games are seen as isolating and antisocial, creating a generation of socially dysfunctional and unfit children. Worse still, it is alleged that the often high levels of violence in many video games encourage heightened aggression in the vulnerable young minds of those who play them.

Though the origins of digital gaming can be traced back to the 1950s, it was not until the late 1970s and 1980s that digital gaming began to develop as a common leisure activity. Today, video games are a major global industry. Global game sales exceed U.S. $21 billion, with the largest game market still undoubtedly in the United States, where game sales in 2005 were in excess of $7 billion. A recent poll by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) suggested that 42 percent

GAME TERMINOLOGY

The term “video games” is sometimes used to refer to all forms of electronic/digital games played on games consoles, computers, arcade machines, cell phones, and other gaming hardware, while others use it specifically to refer only to console games. To avoid confusion, some authors and organizations have adopted other terms such as “digital games” or “entertainment software” to refer to all forms of electronic gaming.
of all Americans planned on purchasing at least one game in the following year. Games sales are now comparable to cinema box office takings and today more video games are sold in the United States and United Kingdom than books.

**GENDER**

Contrary to popular belief, video game playing is not restricted solely to male adolescents. The ESA suggests that 69 percent of video game players are over the age of 18. Though digital gaming is by no means a level playing field when it comes to gender, the ESA suggests that 38 percent of gamers are female, and in Johannes Fromme’s study of over a thousand German schoolchildren, almost a third of girls (and 55.7 percent of boys) claimed to “regularly” play digital games, while it has been suggested that in Korea women make up to close to 70 percent of gamers (Krotoski 2004).

However, statistics on game-playing patterns, particularly in relation to gender, can hide continuing discrepancies and imbalances between the gaming patterns of men and women. Studies suggest that on average women continue to be less likely to play video games than men, and those who do play tend to play a lot less frequently than their male counterparts. In particular, these discrepancies are much greater for adult men and women. This is most likely because women’s leisure time continues to be more restricted and fractured than men’s; and because video games continue to be created and marketed primarily towards men and feature “masculine” themes, such as violence and male participation sports, with female characters often absent or sexualized within games (Crawford and Gosling 2005). Technology also continues to be primarily “controlled” by men (such as the placing of game machines in “male” spaces, such as the bedrooms of male siblings), which means that game machines and gaming are infrequently seen as belonging to women within households.

**VIDEO GAME TIMELINE**

1952—Cambridge University doctoral student Alexander “Sandy” Douglas produces a computer version of “noughts and crosses” (tic-tack-toe).
1958—Physicist William Higinbotham at Brookhaven National Laboratory produces a basic tennis simulation.
1962—A team of researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology produces a game called *Spacewar*, which becomes the first distributed game, circulated between computer labs.
1973—Atari launches the arcade version of *Pong*.
1975—Atari demonstrates *Home-Pong* at toy industry exhibition.
1977—Atari launches the Video Computer System (VCS).
1980—Release of *Space Invaders*, *Pac Man*, and *Battlezone*.
1981—IBM releases the 8088 processor, leading to the first IBM PCs.
GAMING AS VIOLENT

It is evident that violence or violent themes and/or action are present in a large proportion of video games, with some of the most successful and popular games such as the Grand Theft Auto series or God of War involving high levels of violent content. Games are now being used for military training and recruitment, such as America’s Army. Because of this, some express concern that violence in video games could/can lead to heightened aggression. In particular, due to the “interactive” nature of gaming, some authors suggest that violence in video games could potentially be more damaging than that seen in television and film. While television viewers are (largely) passive, video games often require players to actively direct the (in-game) aggression, and hence the aggression/violence is more “participatory” (Emes 1997).

However, the relationship between violent games and gamers (as with violence on television and viewers) is far from conclusive. In particular, such research has been heavily criticized for its often inconsistent methodologies and small and unrepresentative sample groups. It has also been criticized for overestimating the ability of games to influence the specific attitudes and behavior of individuals and/or groups, and for seeing gamers as passive and vulnerable to representations of violence within games (Bryce and Rutter 2003).

GAMERS AS “MOUSE POTATOES”

A further criticism often leveled at video gaming is that it is an antisocial and isolating activity, producing a generation of passive “mouse potatoes.” However, this wholly negative attitude towards video gaming continues to be questioned in ongoing research. One study of over 200 London schoolchildren found no evidence to suggest that those who regularly played video games had fewer friends (Colwell and Payne 2000). Gamers are not “absent,” but rather constitute active participants within the games they play. Digital gaming is an expression of human
MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE PLAYING GAMES (MMORPGs)

One of the biggest gaming phenomena of recent years has been the rapid growth of MMORPGs, such as World of Warcraft, EverQuest, and Lineage. These games allow the player to create characters (“avatars”) that they control, and to play out adventures in an online world inhabited by other players from all over the (real) world. Games often allow characters to develop careers, not just as warriors or wizards but also professions such as dancers, miners, or doctors; some games also allow players to own vehicles, pets, and property (such as houses and shops) and even get married. These games have proved hugely popular with many players, with EverQuest frequently referred to by gamers as “EverCrack,” due to its “addictive” qualities. Nick Yee, who runs a research Web site (the Daedalus Project) on MMORPGs, suggests that nearly 19 percent of over 2,900 gamers who completed his online survey stated that they play MMORPGs over 30 hours per week and over 40 percent in excess of 20 hours per week, and the current (in March 2006) number of players of World of Warcraft now exceeds 6 million—greater than the population of Libya.

performance and can be a very sociable activity—with gamers playing each other online, meeting up at conventions, and more commonly, playing with friends or family members. In particular, research undertaken for the Interactive Software Federation of Europe suggests that 55 percent of gamers play with others.

Likewise, the argument that playing video games can negatively affect levels of sport participation has been challenged by several authors. For instance, Fromme’s study of German schoolchildren found no evidence to support the assertion that playing video games reduces a child’s participation in sport. On the contrary, he suggested that his survey had produced some evidence to suggest that “daily use” of digital games was positively associated with increased levels of sport participation. Similarly, a study of U.K. undergraduate students found no evidence to suggest that playing video games could have a negative affect on patterns of sport participation, but rather that sport-related video games could actually inform and increase both the interest and knowledge of sport of some game players (Crawford 2005).

GAMING THEORY

Video games have also grabbed the attention of researchers eager to understand the interaction between gamers and the games they play. However, different researchers and authors have adopted different approaches to studying video games. In particular, it is possible to identify a divide between theorists (such as Murray) who have sought to understand video games by drawing on and developing a film and media studies approach, and those (such as Frasca) who adopt a more psychologically influenced focus upon patterns of play (a perspective called “ludology”).

Adopting a media/film studies approach to video games does not simply mean that video games are viewed as “interactive” films, but it provides certain “tools”
to help gain a more in-depth understanding of video games. For instance, some argue that games can be understood as a “text,” just as any other media form, such as a book, television show, or film. This text can then be studied to look for meanings, both obvious and hidden, within these. From this perspective, it is also possible to study the narratives (stories and themes) within games in the same way we can with film, or study the rules and conventions of gaming using similar tools to those employed in understanding poetry.

However, there are those who question whether video games can be understood as a “text” in the same way as “older” media forms (such as television, radio, and cinema), as, unlike these, video games are not set and rigid, but can vary depending on how the player interacts with them (Kerr et al. 2005). This is a similar argument offered by a “ludology” approach, which suggests that while traditional media (such as films) are “representational” (i.e., they offer a simple representation of reality), video games are based around “simulation,” creating a world that gamers can manipulate and interact with.

Nevertheless, the degree of flexibility within a game should not be overemphasized. In particular, the degree of “interactivity” a gamer has with, or over, video games has been questioned by numerous authors. For instance, new technologies (such as DVDs) are frequently introduced and sold to the market using the selling point of their increased “interactive” qualities. The user’s level of control or interaction with the medium, though, is still restricted by not only the limitations of technology but also the aims of the designers and manufacturers.

A limitation with early studies that draw on both film/media or ludology approaches is that in many cases gamers were frequently seen as isolated individuals, rather than understood within a wider social setting. However, there is an increasing awareness of the need to include an understanding of the role and importance of gaming within its social setting, such as how people talk about games with friends and family, how they fit into our leisure patterns and everyday lives, and how they can inform some people’s identity and sense of who they are (Crawford and Rutter 2007).

Video gaming today is a major leisure and cultural activity, engaged in by many people all around the world, often taking up a sizable proportion of their leisure time. As with any cultural activity, it is impossible to categorize this as either wholly “good” or “bad.” Video games are often violent and can be sexist, homophobic, and racist—as can any media form, such as film, music, and literature. However, video games are also an important industry; they allow people to relax, and can be a source of conversation and identity for many. It is therefore important that we understand gaming within a wider social and cultural setting, sometimes as shocking, sometimes awe-inspiring, but more often a relatively normal and mundane pastime engaged in, and discussed, by many.

**See also** Children and Effects; Digital Divide; The DVD; Online Digital Film and Television; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Transmedia Storytelling and Media Franchises; Violence and Media; Youth and Media Use.

**Further Reading:** Bryce, Jo, and Jason Rutter. “Gender Dynamics and the Social and Spatial Organization of Computer Gaming.” *Leisure Studies* 22 (2003): 1–15; Colwell, John,

Garry Crawford

**VIDEO NEWS RELEASES: A HIDDEN EPIDEMIC OF FAKE TV NEWS**

Of all the public relations tactics to shape news content, video news releases (VNRs) are the most intrusive and widespread. VNRs are sponsored video segments that mimic independent news reports, but promote the sponsor's products, company, or preferred policies. Television stations routinely air VNRs during news programming, but almost never disclose them to viewers. Since the sponsors that fund VNRs, the public relations (PR) firms that produce them, and the TV stations that air them all benefit from nondisclosure, how can viewers’ “right to know” where their news comes from be protected?

The public expects that “news” is information that has been gathered and verified by a journalist acting as a fair observer. A fair observer may have a point of view, but should avoid—or at least fully disclose—any potential, perceived, or real conflict of interest.
“Fake news” occurs when PR practitioners adopt the practices and/or appearance of journalists, to insert persuasive messages into news media. While fake news is obviously bad news, it’s very good for PR. For example, praise for Brand X has much more credibility when it is relayed by a seemingly independent reporter or commentator, rather than an actor in a commercial or a Brand X spokesperson in any setting.

The dominant form of fake news is the VNR. VNRs are sponsored, prepackaged video segments and additional footage created by PR firms, or by publicists within corporations, government agencies, or nonprofit organizations. A VNR presents its sponsor’s message using a format and tone that mimic independent television news reports. Nothing in the material for broadcast identifies the

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A VNR

VNRs are usually part of larger PR campaigns, launched to burnish a client’s image, improve product sales, respond to negative developments, or support policies favorable to the client. Broadcast PR firms often work as subcontractors to the firm leading the overall PR campaign. In addition to producing VNRs, broadcast PR firms may arrange satellite media tours—a series of TV interviews conducted remotely, which often follow a script similar to the VNR—or produce the radio equivalent of a VNR, called an audio news release (ANR).

Once a PR firm scripts, films, and edits a VNR, it distributes and promotes the segment to TV newsrooms. Common VNR delivery methods include satellite and online video channels, as well as the video feeds of such major news companies as CBS, FOX, CNN, and the Associated Press. In its 2003 annual report, the firm Medialink Worldwide boasted that its VNRs, ANRs, and print materials “reach more than 11,000 newsrooms” and “more than 11,000 online multimedia newsrooms.” The firm D S Simon Productions promises, on its Web site, to maximize TV broadcasts of its VNRs, with “300 targeted pitch calls to broadcast networks, network affiliate news feeds, national cable outlets, regional cable networks, and syndicated shows, as well as local network affiliates and independent TV stations.”

After receiving a VNR, TV newsroom staff can incorporate the footage into newscasts in various ways: by airing the entire, prepackaged and narrated segment; by airing an edited version of the prepackaged segment; by mixing and matching footage from the prepackaged segment with additional unnarrated video footage provided by the PR firm, called B-roll; or by mixing any of the VNR video with other video footage. A study by the Center for Media and Democracy found that the vast majority of VNR-derived news segments did not contain any independently generated video. In nearly 85 percent of the VNR broadcasts documented, all of the video and information presented in the aired news segment came directly from the VNR package.

Using electronic tracking systems, broadcast PR firms determine how widely a VNR is aired. The firms share this information with the client that sponsored the VNR. Firms may also boast about high VNR placement rates to prospective clients, as a way to prove—as one D S Simon Productions advertisement asserts—that “we get you on television.”
segment as a VNR or discloses its sponsor. VNRs are just one of many deceptive PR techniques. Yet, they represent a substantial degradation of the modern information environment, for two reasons. One is that television is the most popular news source in the United States. The other is that inserting VNRs into TV newscasts is a widespread and undisclosed practice.

**WHO'S BEHIND YOUR NEWS?**

Indeed, VNR use appears to be near universal. Nielsen studies in 1992, 1996, and 2001 found that 100 percent of TV stations surveyed aired VNRs. In 2003, the chair of the major broadcast PR firm Medialink Worldwide told a radio reporter, “Every television station in America with a newscast has used and probably uses regularly this material from corporations and organizations that we provide as VNRs.” In the 1990s and early 2000s, many TV stations increased the amount of time allotted to news programming while either decreasing newsroom budgets or simply maintaining them at previous levels. This trend made VNRs increasingly popular among newsroom staff. “Local broadcasters are being asked to do more with less, and they have been forced to rely more on prepackaged news to take up the slack,” explained Project for Excellence in Journalism director Tom Rosenstiel and political science professor Marion Just in a March 2005 *New York Times* op-ed piece.

The number of VNRs produced and delivered to TV newsrooms is significant. An academic study from December 2000 credited Medialink Worldwide with producing 1,000 VNRs annually, “roughly double the number of its nearest competitor.” That study, by Mark Harmon and Candace White at the University of Tennessee, also stated that “a typical newsroom may have ten to fifteen VNRs available per day.” In 1990, the magazine of the Society of Professional Journalists estimated that 5,000 to 15,000 VNRs are distributed each year.

VNRs usually arrive in TV newsrooms as part of the station’s satellite or online video feeds (see “The Life Cycle of a VNR” sidebar). Such feeds offer a wide range of video, from independently produced news segments to VNRs to advertisements. Some TV newsroom personnel have claimed that they have mistaken VNRs for “real” news, since both can be downloaded from the same source. However, video providers claim to have clearly segregated VNRs from real news in their feeds, following the controversy over Bush administration VNRs (see below). In addition, as they enter newsrooms, nearly all VNRs list their sponsors in the opening frames. These frames are used to inform newsroom personnel only; they are neither intended for nor formatted for broadcast. Nonetheless, PR executives often point to them as evidence that they have done their ethical duty.

Despite these measures and despite journalistic codes and TV station policies that call for clear identification of all VNR footage, disclosure to news audiences is exceedingly rare. In a two-part study that tracked nearly 70 VNRs released in 2005 and 2006, the Center for Media and Democracy documented 140 VNR broadcasts during TV news programming. In only two of those broadcasts did
the TV station provide clear disclosure of the source of the VNR footage to news viewers.

Peter Simmons, an Australian academic with Charles Sturt University’s School of Communications, has written that “individual journalists and public relations practitioners perceive their work to be enhanced when news release material is used without disclosure.” Another finding of the Center for Media and Democracy’s study supports his assertion. When one PR firm started mentioning the sponsors at the end of its prepackaged VNRs, using on-screen labels and verbal statements, TV stations removed these notifications and still failed to provide disclosure to viewers in 12 out of the 15 instances documented.

**CASE STUDY: “OIL LOBBYIST’S ‘NEWS’ DENIES INCONVENIENT TRUTHS”**

In June 2006, the broadcast PR firm Medialink Worldwide put out a VNR titled, “Global Warming and Hurricanes: All Hot Air?” The firm identified “TCS Daily Science Roundtable” as the client behind the segment. But Medialink didn’t disclose that TCS Daily is a Web site published by Tech Central Station and was, at the time, a project of the Republican lobbying and PR firm DCI Group. Or that DCI Group counts among its clients ExxonMobil. Or that ExxonMobil gave the Tech Central Science Foundation $95,000 in 2003, for “climate change support.”

The VNR features Dr. William Gray and Dr. James J. O’Brien, who are identified as “two of the nation’s top weather and ocean scientists.” Gray denies that there’s any link between global warming and the severity of recent hurricane seasons. “We don’t think that’s the case,” he says. “This is the way nature sometimes works.”

In reality, the link between climate change and hurricane severity has not been disproved. Peer-reviewed scientific studies on the issue have reached conflicting conclusions, though an in-depth analysis reported in September 2006 found “a large human influence” on rising sea-surface temperatures, which lead to stronger hurricanes. The same month, *Nature* magazine reported on a position paper from federal scientists that linked intensified hurricanes to global warming; the document was reportedly quashed by the Bush administration.

Drs. Gray and O’Brien are meteorologists with extensive experience predicting hurricanes. However, neither of them are impartial. In June 2006, Gray told the Denver Post that global warming is a “hoax,” something that “they’ve been brainwashing us [with] for 20 years.” O’Brien is associated with corporate-funded organizations that question climate change, as a member of Tech Central Station’s “Science Roundtable” and as an expert at the George C. Marshall Institute.

Sadly, none of these affiliations, caveats, or complexities were communicated when WTOK-11 (Meridian, Mississippi) aired as “news” an edited and revoiced version of the TCS Daily VNR on May 31, 2006. Viewers were also not told that the segment was paid for and scripted by oil company lobbyists.
WHAT’S THE LAW?

Much of the debate over disclosure has focused on VNRs from the U.S. federal government. In 2004, the Bush administration was revealed to have funded VNRs on such controversial topics as the No Child Left Behind education policy and the Medicare prescription drug plan. A March 2005 *New York Times* exposé detailed the undisclosed broadcast of Bush administration VNRs on Iraq, Afghanistan, and airport security, among other issues, while noting that VNR use also occurred in the Clinton administration.

The nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, the Government Accountability Office, ruled in 2005 that any government VNR that does not make its source clear to news audiences constitutes illegal covert propaganda. However, the Bush administration’s Justice Department and Office of Management and Budget dismissed that ruling, claiming that government VNRs are permissible, as long as they are “informational.” Temporary measures passed by the U.S. Congress required “a clear notification” for government VNRs, without defining what that means. These measures have since expired, leaving how and whether to disclose government VNRs to the discretion of the federal agency and the television stations involved.

Commenting on the debate over government VNRs, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein wrote, “The surprising thing, though, is nobody bothered to mention that there are separate disclosure requirements enforced by the FCC under the Communications Act.” As summarized in an April 2005 public notice from the FCC, the Act’s sponsorship identification rules require that “whenever broadcast stations and cable operators air VNRs, licensees and operators generally must clearly disclose to members of their audiences the nature, source and sponsorship of the material.” The FCC also asserts in the notice, “Listeners and viewers are entitled to know who seeks to persuade them.”

However, as of early 2007, whether and how the Communications Act (which was written in 1934) and its sponsorship identification rules (which reflect the radio payola controversies of the 1950s) apply to VNRs remained controversial questions. The FCC has not penalized any TV stations for airing VNRs without disclosure. The agency did open a VNR investigation in August 2006, sending letters of inquiry to the owners of the 77 TV stations named in the first part of the Center for Media and Democracy study.

Lawyers representing the public relations industry and broadcasters have challenged applying the Communications Act to most VNRs. They maintain that the Act only requires VNRs to be disclosed if the segments deal with controversial or political issues, or if TV stations are paid to air them.

Advocates of VNR disclosure have made three basic arguments, with regard to current laws and regulations. One is that the Communications Act’s sponsorship identification rules apply when payment is made anywhere up or down the chain of production of broadcast material. Since sponsors pay PR firms to produce VNRs, the sponsor must be revealed to news audiences when a VNR is aired. The second argument is that VNRs save TV stations...
HOW CAN I TELL WHAT’S A VNR?

Unfortunately, it’s difficult even for savvy viewers to identify undisclosed VNR footage that has been inserted into television newscasts. PR firms are adroit at wrapping their clients’ messages in a TV news-like tone, and some TV news is bad or even promotional without being sponsored by undisclosed clients. Still, there are characteristics common to VNRs, which viewers can consider VNR “red flags.” These include the following:

- There is no local footage for local TV newscasts
- No local people are interviewed, again for local TV newscasts
- There are positive mentions of particular products, companies, or policies
- No reporter is shown on location, or the reporter shown does not usually appear on the station

thousands of dollars in production, filming, and editing costs for each minute that VNR footage substitutes for the station’s own reporting. Therefore, a VNR represents a substantial in-kind contribution or “consideration” paid to TV stations, which also triggers the Act’s sponsorship identification requirements. The last pro-disclosure argument points to TV stations’ obligation to serve the “public interest, convenience and necessity,” as described in the Communications Act. In exchange for their free use of the public airwaves—a limited and valuable resource—stations agree to act as public trustees. Broadcasting promotional segments while denying viewers the information needed to evaluate what’s being presented as “news” is clearly not in the public interest. Therefore, airing undisclosed VNRs violates the terms of stations’ licenses, as well as the Act.

Whether current laws and regulations mandate VNR disclosure is not an academic question. If the FCC were to begin actively requiring VNR disclosure, all TV stations—broadcast and cable—would feel the effects. Moreover, all VNRs—whether sponsored by public or private entities—would likely be covered. This is an important point; as of early 2007, all of the disclosure measures debated and passed by Congress applied to government VNRs only. Yet, companies fund the vast majority of VNRs. In 2004, the chair of the Medialink Worldwide firm told a trade magazine that government agencies account for only 5 percent of his business.

It is possible that new rules, legislation, and/or court decisions may be deemed necessary to clarify TV stations’ obligations with regard to VNR disclosure. This is not surprising, and may well be the best way for Congress and the FCC to catch up to what has been a common media practice for decades.

DEFENDERS OF THE STATUS QUO

As might be expected, the broadcast PR firms that produce VNRs don’t want independent oversight of their industry. Broadcasters’ groups have taken a similar stance. As controversies about undisclosed VNRs have surfaced repeatedly
over the years, these groups have steadfastly promoted industry self-regulation and opposed any government action.

In 1991, the nonprofit organization Consumers Union released a report called, “Are Video News Releases Blurring the Line between News and Advertising?” In 1992, TV Guide ran a cover story on VNRs titled “Fake News.” In an accompanying editorial, TV Guide suggested that “when a TV news organization includes film or tape prepared by an outside source in a broadcast, the label ‘VIDEO SUPPLIED BY [COMPANY OR GROUP NAME]’ should be visible for as long as the material is on screen.” In response, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) promoted a voluntary “Code of Good Practice for Video News Releases.” The chair of the firm Medialink Worldwide explained at the time, “When you see a potential problem, whether real or imagined, you respond. We’re taking a page right out of the crisis management textbooks.”

In 2004, after the Government Accountability Office found some government VNRs to be covert propaganda, PRSA suggested that publicists not use the word “reporting” when narrating VNRs. In June 2005, PRSA called for “vigorous self-regulation by all those involved at every level in the production and dissemination of prepackaged broadcast materials.”

On behalf of broadcasters, the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) issued new ethical guidelines for VNR use, following the March 2005 New York Times exposé on Bush administration VNRs. In June 2005, RTNDA told the FCC that an “informal survey” of its members had confirmed their adherence to voluntary disclosure standards. Shortly afterward, RTNDA’s president compared VNRs to the Loch Ness monster, telling the Washington Times, “Everyone talks about it, but not many people have actually seen it.”

In 2006, following the first part of the Center for Media and Democracy’s study and the FCC’s subsequent launch of its VNR investigation, 15 broadcast PR firms announced the formation of a new lobbying group, the “National Association of Broadcast Communicators.” This group subsequently issued joint statements with PRSA, objecting to the FCC investigation. RTNDA went further, asking the FCC to halt its investigation and casting aspersions on the Center for Media and Democracy and its research. The PR industry and broadcasters’ groups additionally claimed that any VNR disclosure requirements would abridge broadcasters’ First Amendment rights and impede the “free flow of information.”

In response, Peter Simmons asked about “the quality of the information flowing freely to the public.” He added, “When information flows as news, the public’s interest is best served when it can make decisions about the credibility of the information based on clear identification of the source and balanced discussion of motives.” Such sentiments echo the FCC’s stated principle, that “listeners and viewers are entitled to know who seeks to persuade them.”

While the debate over TV stations’ VNR disclosure responsibilities continues, broadcast PR firms are increasingly exploring online venues for VNRs, including news Web sites, video blogs, video search engines, video podcasts, and cell phones. “Hurt by public criticism of VNRs, possible Federal Communications Commission oversight, and a shrunken news hole, these companies
Concerns about media and violence have historical roots going back to the Victorian era when the newly emerging middle classes expressed anxiety over the working class reading “penny dreadfuls” instead of more wholesome fare such as “morally uplifting” literature. The modern era, on the other hand, led to numerous studies that have become known as the “media effects” literature, which has sought to demonstrate a causal connection between media
representations and acts of real violence. While some claim to have demonstrated behavioral effects of media violence, critics charge that the research is flawed in various ways. Many also claim that debates over media and violence are often a cover for other anxieties that remain too threatening for many people to talk about. What are the real issues being concealed by the debates over media and violence?

For the past 40 years, researchers have been investigating what effects exposure to violent images have on children and adults, especially with regard to stimulating aggression or aggressive thoughts. The results of this mountain of studies remain inconclusive with causal links between images of violence and actual violent or aggressive behavior hard to track with any degree of accuracy. Early studies attempted to document the impact that violent movie images had on children, followed by television images and now video game interactions. Critics say these research models are flawed, and suffer in differing degrees from inadequately defined objects of study, inconsistent definitions, misapplied research methodologies, experimental limitations, and grossly simplified models of human behavior. Nevertheless, these studies have shaped public debate on the relationship of media technology, play, and child development. A brief word is in order about what concepts these studies have been based upon and the definitions of violence and aggression that underlie them.

The obvious question to ask is what is meant by “violence” and “aggression” with regard to media and its effect on people. The problem resides in both the conflation of real violence with its representation in TV, film, or video games and in what activity is presumed to be violent or aggressive. In some studies, the Three Stooges, Roadrunner, and Bugs Bunny are placed in the same category as horror slasher films and real news violence, simply based on the actions of the characters involved—who hit whom, how often, and so on. There is no meaningful distinction drawn between real and fictional violent representations, or between types of fictional violent representations and their contexts. The second point is the meaning of “effects.” It is presumed that media have effects on people, but what those effects are is presumed to revolve around aggressive or passive activity, as if these are the only ways to understand how media influences individual behavior. For example, we rarely ask what kind of effect book reading, bicycling, or playing football have on subjects unless we have a predetermined answer in mind. Thus, some people would object to others reading certain kinds of books because of the violent or sexual imagery conveyed through words. However, this speaks less to the position of the reader and more to the concerns of the one objecting to the material. In other words, what is measured, if anything, is more the subjective concern of the researcher or the offense to those who would act as moral arbiter, and less the actual effect on the subject in question. Those skeptical of media effects studies charge that researchers consistently draw spurious causal connections between data that remain mere correlations, and point to the following conceptual confusion and logical flaws: (1) the simplistic theories of self used by some psychologists and child development specialists; (2) the moral agendas of political figures and those with a religious or cultural objection to
media representations; and (3) legitimate concerns by parents who perceive their children as “out of control.”

**MODELS AND TRADITIONS OF RESEARCH**

Social learning theory, developed by psychologist Alberto Bandura in the 1970s, is a modification of B. F. Skinner’s behaviorist theories applied to adolescents and aggression. His research attempted to understand the interactions between the self and environment (reciprocal determinism) and set the initial standard for conducting studies of media and violence. Based on principles of observational learning or modeling therapy and self-regulation, Bandura illustrated his points with the famous Bobo doll studies. In these experiments he had a fellow experimenter strike a Bobo doll, designed for that very purpose, while children observed on a TV monitor. When given the Bobo doll the same children proceeded to strike the doll as they had witnessed. This was considered evidence that children “model” the behavior of others. What was not considered was the “meaning” the Bobo doll had for the children. The doll was designed to be struck, so this tells us little about aggression connected to modeling behavior, other than the children figured out this is what you are supposed to do with this type of toy. What was demonstrated was more the authority of the experimenter than any inherent aggression as a by-product of modeling behavior.

Bandura claimed that effective modeling depended on various degrees of attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation. He argued that children model the behavior of adults and other children, including media representations, hence, the concern over the consumption of violent media images. While this can explain the fact that people do model the behavior of others, even virtual others, it cannot explain what that modeling means to the individual. The issue of motivation is central, but cannot be answered by this type of behaviorist framework, because it does not offer an explanation for how interpretation can modify behavior. How do children, in fact, understand violent media representations, and do they make distinctions between real and fictional violence?

Anderson and Bushman’s General Aggression Model (GAM), based on the earlier work of Bandura and others, attempted to go beyond the limitations of social learning theory, assigning priority to feelings, thoughts, and physical responses to violent media in specific situations leading to a presumed interpretation on the part of the subject. The problem, however, resides in how the GAM understands violence and aggression. The GAM perspective is often guilty of conflating the violence of horror films and “shooter” video games with the supposed earlier violence of Pac-Man, argued as desensitizing the public to real life violence. Again, the issue is one of understanding the differences between real-life aggression and violence and fantasy aggression or violence. This conflation is made consistently by critics of violent media representations.

The catharsis model, meanwhile, assumed that consuming violent media works to lower aggression, to “let off steam.” A favorite position of defenders of violent films, TV shows, and video games, the catharsis model was based on the
work of Seymour Feshbach and Robert D. Sanger, in *Television and Aggression: An Experimental Field Study*, conducted in 1971. This model attempted to offer evidence that people can benefit from consuming violent fantasies since they can give us a safe way of coping with our anxieties and general fears. Unfortunately, their studies have not been adequately replicated and remain more of a hypothesis than a testable reality.

The cultivation theory of George Gerber, former dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, proposed a broader cultural or ideological critique of violent media. Often referred to as the “mean world syndrome,” cultivation theory used content analysis and surveys, avoiding the problems of the experimental laboratory setup. Cultivation theory argued that heavy consumption of media led to the cultural effects of political passivity and a greater tolerance for real-world violence. The problem here is that fearful people may be drawn to watching more television for a variety of reasons, which points out the additional problem of not addressing individual variations in how people consume and understand media.

**CRITICS OF EFFECTS RESEARCH**

Jonathan Freedman, in *Media Violence and Its Effect on Aggression: Assessing the Scientific Evidence*, examined most of the experimental studies conducted on violence in media and found them lacking in both consistent definitions of what constitutes aggression or violence, as well as flawed methods of research and a continuing confusion of correlation with causation. The work of Barker and Petley in their volume, *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, along with the work of David Gauntlett in that same book, deepens the critique voiced by Freedman. One of the major flaws of these studies is their set of assumptions about human subjects. These assumptions give no room for people, children, or adults to interpret or make sense of their own actions. Meaning, though, is important. How we understand fantasy and reality, imagination and reason, aggressive play from real assault, is critical in our ability to assess risk to ourselves and to others. The media effects perspective, unfortunately, does not take meaning seriously, assuming that people are either overtly or covertly manipulated into believing and acting the way that they do simply by exposure to media images. The larger social context within which we understand images, our everyday lives, families, social groups, and so forth is almost never integrated into this type of research on media and violence.

For example, Jeffrey Goldstein argues that the absence of volition in media effects research combined with not taking seriously the social context of media consumption distorts the understanding of the role media play in the lives of children and adults. Some researchers take this lack of choice even further, arguing that the meanings we make of media violence are not significant, because our making sense of the world is only accomplished through predetermined social lenses that condition us to look at the world in a very specific way, what is often called “interpolation.” This position is refuted by the research of James Tobin, who in *Good Guys Don’t Wear Hats: Children’s Talk about the Media* looked at
how children actually understood the film medium, violent or otherwise, and pointed out the wide variety of interpretations children actually make of their experiences with media. Violent images may frighten one child and simply bore another. One cannot find a given interpretation as the “correct” one way to understand fictional violence over any other.

The real social lives of humans, our families, friends, and authority figures—that is, the larger social context—do indeed shape our responses to violent media images. The degree to which each of these variables influences behavior, and the combination of these multiple influences on behavior, has proven to be the most difficult measure for media researchers. Further complicating research models remains the distinction between fantasy violence and real violence, a differentiation especially important for children. The point here is that children have to make these distinctions in order to understand how to survive in the real world. Adults can more easily blur these distinctions if they have already established what is real and what is fantasy to begin with. Tobin’s studies demonstrate that children make this distinction between fantasy and reality at a very early age.

Hence, it is not surprising that advertisers and filmmakers work hard to break these barriers down in order to cement audience identification with the product or film work at an early age. However, the fact that customers, whether children or adults, play with these boundaries, through their own critiques, jokes,

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**MORAL PANICS AND MEDIA FEARS**

“Moral panic” was a term originally developed by Stanley Cohen in his 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*. He described the organized public campaign of harassment against the emerging youth subculture of mods and rockers by the media and agents of public control, law enforcement, politicians and legislators, action groups, and the public at large. This panic over an emerging youth subculture was stimulated by converting mods and rockers into folk devils, as repositories of public anxieties over widespread social change. Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda in *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* as well as Barry Glassner’s *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* and Karen Sternheimer’s *It’s Not the Media: The Truth about Pop Culture’s Influence on Children* extend this analysis to all types of media representations. Earlier examples of media moral panics can be seen during the 1950s with the moral campaign, organized by Dr. Fredric Wertham, a New York psychiatrist, that attacked horror comic books as contributing to juvenile delinquency. As John Springhall points out in his book, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1820–1996*, these patterns of social dread reflected the anxiety and fears of an emerging middle class over a corruptible working class who ignored socially “uplifting” reading in favor of “dime novels” or “penny dreadfuls.” Harold Schechter, in *Savage Pastime: A Cultural History of Violent Entertainment*, describes the extreme forms of entertainment which both the early middle and working classes of pre-Victorian Europe enjoyed, making modern-day panics over television, film, and video game violence seem silly by comparison.
parodies, imitations, and other forms of meaning-making, indicates that humans are active producers often at odds with commercial producers.

MORAL PANICS AND MORAL ENTREPRENEURS

The persistence of such controversy around media effects research may be understood as a deeper crisis in how we think of children, technology, and threats in the modern world. These periodic concerns expressed as anxiety over “media violence” are given the term moral panics.

Moral panics are public campaigns that often call for censorship or express outrage at behavior or fantasies of particular lower-status social groups when those same groups are perceived as escaping the control of the dominant status group. They occur often during periods of social and technological change and may crystallize around a particular emotional issue. The early Salem witch burnings were facilitated by the panic induced by male clergy members who felt threatened by the increasing power of women in the church. Closer to our time period, concerns over comic books, pool hall attendance, heavy metal and rap music, television violence and sex, films, and a host of media activities have come under public scrutiny for their supposed corruption of morals and youth. In the 1980s, the Parents Music Resource Center went after heavy metal bands for their supposed effect on youth and the belief that such music “caused” teenage suicides. Today, it is conservative groups like Focus on the Family attacking Barbie dolls and Teletubbies or the Parents Television Council decrying acts of television violence and gore, while liberal groups attack the computer games Manhunt and Grand Theft Auto for their racial and gender stereotypes and simulated sex in hidden codes. While racists and sexist attitudes persist in our society, the degree to which media cause those attitudes has yet to be demonstrated by effects research, and media and First Amendment scholars argue that the values of an

MORAL ENTREPRENEURS AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Originally coined by the sociologist Howard Becker in his 1963 work, Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance, moral entrepreneurs work as crusading reformers attempting to clean up what they perceive as the failure of lower-status groups. With humanitarian intents, such groups and individuals often work in a paternalist fashion to shape the behavior of those in social classes below them, usually taking on and being offended by the representations of working- or lower-class culture. Moral entrepreneurs work to mobilize social groups and the public at large against what they perceive as threats to the dominant social order, helping to define what is considered deviant behavior. The use of labeling and stereotyping often operates in constructing definitions of what is deviant. These labels are, in turn, used by moral entrepreneurs to support their actions against the offending representations. For example, by invoking moral outrage against rock music, the Parents Music Resource Center signaled to concerned parents that they shared their values and concerns. This solidarity is, in turn, cemented by creating an “out” group, while reinforcing the prejudices of the “in” group.
open society and that the attendant civil liberties enjoyed therein outweigh unproven media effects assertions.

What is interesting is that in most of the qualitative studies of children and media violence, when asked if they were affected by violent images, most children responded with the assertion that they were not affected but their younger peers were affected. Middle-class parents often voiced the same concerns—they are not affected but those lower-class folks down the block might be harmed. In other words, the panic over media and violence can be clearly viewed as a panic over status and power, with the higher-status groups—parents over children, middle class over working or lower class, whites over blacks, and so on—asserting their so-called moral authority in order to protect some supposed moral boundary of society.

The fact that these concerns over media and violence are most often promoted by advocacy groups who claim that they have children’s welfare at stake, as well as media pundits, politicians looking for votes, and professional experts and organizations, indicates that the issue of media violence is one that lends itself to the work of moral entrepreneurs. Occupying a privileged position in society, such moral entrepreneurs are able to exploit their social position to assert their authority in reinforcing conventional “common-sense” folkways that appeal to many parents anxious over the behavior of their children.

“OUT OF CONTROL”: FEARS OF YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY

The third point, that parents feel their children are out of their control, is understandable given the rapid rates of technological change, the decrease in public play areas, the rise of the Internet, and the expansion of widespread social and political inequality leading to less opportunities in life for members of both the working and middle classes. According to Dr. Henry Jenkins, director of the Comparative Media Studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the moral panic that surrounds the issues of violence and media can be traced to our fear and anxieties over adolescent behavior, a fear of new technology, and the expansion of youth culture throughout the media landscape into all areas of everyday life. In addition, the deep fear of the intermingling of the private and public spheres of everyday life is expressed not only in terms of parental fear of children being exposed to media violence, but also in images of sexuality and online predatory behavior. Given the widespread adult ignorance of technology and science, it should not be surprising that when their son or daughter knows more about the technology than they do, parents feel at a distinct disadvantage. Such competency on the part of one’s children raises a host of questions about parental authority as well as ideas of childhood innocence, which is challenged as children gain more knowledge through the Internet, television, and film.

Indeed, the old Victorian myth of innocent children without greed, desire, or competency is under attack. The response by parents is often to either demonize children, to ignore them, or to idealize them as little angels, all revealing a lack
of understanding of the complex reality of childhood in the modern world. But seeing technology and media violence as destroying the innocence of childhood is just as misleading as assuming that children are powerful liberators of modern technology and can easily withstand onslaughts of media violence. What is required, as Gerard Jones points out in Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence, is for children to feel safe in playing with their fantasy monsters, whether it is in a book, on television, in film, or a video game. Playing with and killing monsters in a fantasy world may be just another way to keep these monsters from becoming our everyday harsh realities.

See also Children and Effects; Government Censorship and Freedom of Speech; Media Literacy; Obscenity and Indecency; Pornography; Presidential Stagecraft and Militainment; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks; Video Games; Women's Magazines; Youth and Media Use.


Talmadge Wright
WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Women's magazines are among the most popular forms of print media in America, yet ever since the 1830s, when they began to succeed commercially, there has been heated debate surrounding their impact on women. Still in play today is the critique spearheaded by Betty Friedan in her groundbreaking best-seller, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan charged that women's magazines make women miserable by telling them their only success in life lies in fulfilling their femininity. At the same time, other critics have castigated women's magazines as proto-feminist, claiming that they divert women from their true sources of satisfaction—hearth, family, home. Still others have criticized women's magazines for their many contradictions. Of these, some argue that competing visions offer women valuable life choices, while others say mixed messages ensnare women in anxiety and self-doubt. What's really going on? Do popular women's magazines harm and oppress women?

A scathing critique of women's magazines was the fulcrum on which Friedan's book turned. Friedan named the “problem that has no name,” the consistent, coercive rendering of women as weak and passive, devoid of worldly ambition, and dependent upon men for both personal identity and fulfillment. And the central culprit in the creation and maintenance of this, the feminine mystique, was the popular women's magazine.

A long line of criticism has echoed Friedan. Contemporary commentators decry popular women's magazines for debilitating women, making them dependent on men (and on the magazines themselves), preventing self-realization, promoting self-denial, and creating the woman reader as little more than consumer, ornament, maid, or baby machine. These arguments remain strong across
academic disciplines, and are also articulated, in updated form, in the contemporary media itself. Naomi Wolf’s best-seller, *The Beauty Myth*, for example, argues that the gaunt, youthful model supplanted the happy housewife heroine as the new arbiter of successful womanhood, taking over the work of social coercion in an effort to undo the progress feminism had accomplished.

At the same time, other critics have seen women’s magazines as excessively progressive. A study by the conservative Media Research Center in the mid-1990s concluded that women’s magazines are left-wing playbooks for liberal activism. Christina Hoff Sommers, writing in the *Washington Post*, accused top titles including *Redbook, Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping*, and *Parenting* of advancing feminist “Ms.-information.” Soon Danielle Crittenden’s *What Our Mothers Didn’t Tell Us* and Wendy Shalit’s *A Return to Modesty* explicitly allied women’s magazines with the feminist movement, and blamed magazines for leading women away from their true pursuit of happiness—domesticity.

A third group of critics assumes both these lines of argument are accurate, and *that* is the problem. They complain that women’s magazines argue both for and against sexual freedom, careerism, financial independence, couplehood, and the thinness ideal. With so many competing ideas all under the same roof, how is a reader to avoid a sense of frantic confusion and anxiety about how to add it all up right?

**“POLYVOCALITY”: PSYCHIC TRAP OR LIBERATING CHOICE?**

Women’s magazines exhibit what media theorists call “polyvocality”—a message that contains many voices. In fact, multiple messaging is a structural hallmark of the American magazine from its rise in the early republic.
American women's magazines have always been a decidedly miscellaneous form. Even the earliest versions in the 1790s contained various types of fiction, including travelogues, short stories, poems, “observations,” parables and fragments, as well as nonfiction genres from advice, to instruction, to argumentative essays, to reportage, even music. They have always been composed of multiple departments and carried the contributions of different writers as well.

Scholars have mapped the polyvocality of women's magazines into the present day, despite ever-increasing marketing sophistication over time. But opinions diverge sharply on how these multiple voices play for readers. Some say the many voices all gang up to deliver the same, wrong message (whatever that message may be). Others say they bind women in a web of opposing goals. But recently, a number of scholars have seen the many voices as competing at times—and have explored the openings and options that may arise from divergent ideas and discursive competition on the page. Recent scholarship has emphasized collisions between editorial commentary and fiction, feature articles and reader letters, and all of these and advertising.

COMPETING INTERESTS: OPENING OPTIONS OR ZERO-SUM GAME?

In contemporary women's magazines, the competing voices are seen to spring from competing interests at the heart of the enterprise itself. One the one hand, women's magazines seek to serve the interests of their readers. On the other, modern magazines depend on advertising to provide substantial portions of operating revenues as well as profits. Thus, advertiser interests, too, must be satisfied or the magazine folds. These two sets of interests are generally viewed as battling it out in a zero-sum game: what advertisers want for women—essentially, that they remain focused on their “jobs” as wives and mothers—is the opposite of what women want for themselves; when advertisers win, women lose.

Formally, this was not always the case. For their first 100 years or so, there was limited advertising in women's magazines. They were subscription-supported and copy came from amateur writers who contributed on a voluntary basis. Until the rise of the mass-market magazine in the 1890s, advertising mainly occupied small boxes on back pages, leaving the bulk of the book to be dominated by readers, writers, and editors.

The mass-market magazine model changed all that. It worked by charging subscription prices too low to sustain production costs, let alone profits, but low enough to be affordable to huge groups of readers of modest means nationwide. The amateur contributors who once provided copy were thereafter relegated mainly to roles as readers; professional writers, hired by professional editors, with the increasing input of rising marketing departments, created most of the content. Advertisers, eager to promote burgeoning new product lines, supported it all in exchange for well-positioned access to the eyes and minds of masses of women.

The standard histories say this mass-market formula was pioneered by Munsey's, a general-interest magazine, in late 1893. Owner Frank Munsey had lost
a fortune in the “panic of 1893,” one of the nation’s worst depressions, and could get no credit. He was desperate for cash. So, he lowered his subscription prices from the then-standard 35 cents a copy to 10 cents. The magazine became an immediate smash, and Munsey was able to set high advertising rates based on his unprecedented circulation. In a short time, competing titles including Collier’s, Century, and the muckraking McClure’s followed suit.

Too bad that history is wrong. In fact, the leading women’s magazines of the era had used a low-price formula to grow larger earlier than all these magazines. As early as 1891, the Woman’s Home Companion achieved circulation of 125,000, the Delineator topped 393,000, and the Ladies’ Home Journal, the leader of them all, garnered a circulation of over 600,000 by dropping prices to 11 cents a copy, using advertiser support to do it.

Being at the forefront of this particular innovation may be a dubious distinction, however. The mass-market magazine model shifted the dynamics of reader content and control solidly in favor of advertisers. But is it a zero-sum game? Critics from Friedan forward argue that advertisers demand women’s domesticity since it best promotes product consumption. Rather than presenting new possibilities, magazines catering to advertiser interests emphasize existing gender norms and the traditional lifestyle of housewife and mother.

Yet recent work on women’s magazines reveals that the equation was and is not that simple. Considerable tension persists between the internal impulses to set boundaries and to stretch them. Issues like paid work and working mothers have consistently seen mixed messaging, leading several scholars to conclude that these collisions ultimately expand the boundaries of acceptability of work outside the home. What’s more, advertiser interests have not always lined up with patriarchal concerns. Some products sell better to women as individuals, as workers, as heroines, or other identities, rather than as wives or mothers—it depends on the product. And market competition has sometimes pushed the top titles to validate new ideas in order to distinguish themselves from rival publications in the increasingly competitive women’s magazine market.

There have always been gendered limits to how far any women’s magazine would go. Yet the dynamics of the form and development of the industry have not made it easy to promote any single course as right for all women.

**WOMEN’S MAGAZINE MANTRAS: INDIVIDUALISM AND CONSUMERISM**

Amidst the debate about the politics of American women’s magazines, there are two related areas of fairly wide agreement. The first is that women’s magazines tend to promote individualistic solutions rather than collective, political, or activist ones. The other is that consumption is generally presented as the best solution to most problems.

The tendency toward individualistic solutions may be a defining “attitude” of the women’s magazine in contemporary times. If you are unhappy with your salary, women’s magazines will provide money-saving tips—not information about how to fight wage inequality or understand the gender wage gap. If you
are exhausted by the struggle to balance work and family, women's magazines will provide time-saving tips or relaxation exercises to do at lunchtime or in the supermarket—not address the “second shift” of housework and childcare or corporate resistance to viable work/life balance options for the vast majority of women and men. Women's magazines will give stay-young, stay-slim exercises and make-up tips, but will never discuss female objectification or the overwhelming importance of sexual allure in women's lives.

Some say this spin is simply consistent with the American cultural zeitgeist, with its mixture of psychologizing and can-do-ism that renders most problems a question of individual effort and outlook, of pluck and luck. Others argue that the emphasis on coping disempowers women and accommodates the status quo: it turns justifiable outrage at structural inequities into personal failings or lack of effort, depriving inequality of its mobilizing power and drowning women in guilt.

Historically, women's magazines have organized women for collective action. During the “muckraking” era in the early twentieth century, all the top titles ran intensive campaigns explicitly designed to mobilize readers for reform—both inside and outside the home. The “big six” magazines organized campaigns against adulterated foods, patent medicines, child labor, corruption in public schools, and legal rights of mothers (particularly in divorce); they advocated for child welfare legislation and to help children in inner cities. These efforts have largely been ignored by journalism history, even though women's magazine campaigns continued longer than the celebrated muckrakers did and directly organized reader action: they offered free kits, formed leagues, and fostered local lobbying groups; they circulated shopping guides and monthly consumer research reports; they formed and financed information networks and institutes. (The renowned “Good Housekeeping" Seal of Approval," first awarded in 1905, emerged from the magazine's extensive campaign against adulterated food beginning in 1900.)

Social consciousness remains in the editorial mix of contemporary women's magazines, but such explicit social organizing is much lower on the editorial to-do list today. And the shift from social improvement to individual betterment is linked to the rise of consumerism in the 1920s. Whereas a women's magazine in the nineteenth century might have included features on pending legislation of interest to women and families, by the mid-1920s the same magazine would have been more likely to run an article on how individual mothers could enhance their own and their children's physical well-being. And most of the time, the magazine would recommend the purchase of a product to do it.

The gradual shifting of political impulses into consumer choices has led some critics to label all women's magazine content “covert advertising.” In this view, contents conspire in promising to improve women's lives, but actually function to raise their anxieties—which are then assuaged by the prospect of purchasing advertised products.

More recently, however, the interplay of gender, politics, and consumption has been emphasized, portraying women's magazines in less starkly sinister terms. The 1920s may have been the age of ascendant consumerism, but it was also the dawn of women's enfranchisement, and women's magazines had to pay
serious attention to both. Editorial content and especially advertising often incorporated political language and longings beginning in this era. Ad and feature copy linked consumption to greater political freedom, self-representation, “liberation” from household responsibilities, and more. These moves are seen by some as legitimating politics in women’s identity, self-definition, and social role. As a result, merging of politics and product consumption may have increased women’s interests in real rather than consumer politics.

Today, the appropriation of political messages by consumer culture has become a widespread phenomenon across the media. But it remains a matter of debate whether or not those maneuvers replace political actions with consumer purchases. Does the pervasive use of political ideals to promote products extinguish the political content, or raise it for audiences, repeatedly, nearly everywhere they turn in our media-saturated culture?

**WOMEN’S MAGAZINE AUDIENCES**

Arguments and answers both depend greatly on audiences. Every camp of the women’s magazine controversy relies on certain assumptions about how women readers read. Whether you argue that women’s magazines disempower readers by telling them that their greatest satisfaction lies in fulfilling their femininity; steer women 180 degrees wrong by telling them their greatest satisfaction lies in independence and careerism; or cynically trap them in schizophrenic self-doubt—any of these positions envisions a reader unable to navigate magazine form and content to satisfy her own interests and pleasures.

The issue of audience agency and creativity is itself much debated in media studies. And women, particularly audiences of so-called women’s genres like soap operas, romance novels, and women’s magazines, have been a special focus of concern. Unlike elite and highly educated readers, popular audiences of women are often seen as passive, suggestible dupes, unable to make what they will of a media text, to master it in their own terms.

Yet media research on audience reception repeatedly finds that all kinds of audiences actively interpret what they read, see, and hear, without any special academic or analytic training to do so. Audiences are not free agents with an unlimited range of options, of course: content sets some limits to coherent readings, and it takes intellectual and social resources to decode creatively—particularly to resist or oppose dominant or “preferred” meanings. However, audiences of all sorts have proved capable of creative and self-serving interpretation, and women have repeatedly shown themselves to be as adept as anyone at constructing their own meanings from media texts.

The elitism that underlies a good deal of scholarly commentary about women’s magazine readers is somewhat ironic since women’s magazines are simultaneously accused of an elite bias: they are about hegemonic straight, white, middle-class women, and exclude or marginalize racial, ethnic, sexual, and socio-economic differences. These demographic biases have always been present in women’s magazines. The earliest versions appeared when only the upper crust of American women—white and bourgeois—could afford subscriptions that cost
nearly what a skilled tradesman would earn in a week. Moreover, only this elite group was sufficiently educated to read and contribute, and had the leisure to do so. Cheaper, mass-market women’s magazines made their predecessors suddenly look literary and elite by comparison, but the outreach to a mass audience still did not embrace diversity. Today, some women of color appear in top women’s titles, yet the image of women and audience of interest remain decidedly white, heterosexual, and middle class.

**NEW NICHES, NEW READERS—SAME DEBATES?**

American media forms have tended to develop similarly, evolving from an elite, to a popular, to a specialized stage. For women’s magazines, the 1970s saw
the transition from the popular to the specialized phase. Television had eroded the mass-market ad base, so advertisers and readers turned to special-interest magazines. New technologies made quality publication at smaller circulations possible, and more sophisticated marketing helped both publishers and advertisers target these new niche audiences. Finally, social changes, including both the civil rights and women’s movements, gave readers a dawning awareness of their identities and clout in the public sphere, including the marketplace.

The 1970s saw the birth of the black women’s magazine, *Essence*, and the feminist magazine, *Ms.*; in the 1980s, *Working Woman* and *Working Mother* appeared; the 1990s saw *Latina* and Oprah Winfrey’s *O*. These and others partly redressed the hegemony of straight, white, middle-class women across the women’s magazine category.

But within the new niche women’s magazines, the old controversies remain. *Ms.* and *Working Woman* may have made feminists and even some lesbians visible; *Essence* and *O* may have given some voice to women of color; *Latina* may have articulated ethnicity with female agency. But, at heart, do they merely repackage the same old individualistic and consumerist solutions? If difference becomes visible by including darker shades of make-up to the recommended product lists and choice comes down to the right to wear a low-cut blouse to work, is that progress?

A wider range of cultural ideas and images—even product lines and fashion statements—could give readers materials from which to construct new understandings of themselves and others. Further, when it comes to interpretation, media scholars have shown that social context matters—a lot. Beauty copy may read differently if you’re from a traditionally derided or invisible group. Consumption could have a different meaning, too, if you’re from a historically disadvantaged group. Individualistic solutions may offer empowerment if you are overdue for progress because the social and political will has stalled. For most women worldwide, even that much self-reliance remains a near-radical goal.

Yet, can the potential we see in such readings truly make a difference for women? That question animates the new generation of debates about the impact of women’s magazines on women’s lives.

**See also** Advertising and Persuasion; Alternative Media in the United States; Audience Power to Resist; Body Image; Hypercommercialism; Media and Citizenship; Minority Media Ownership; Public Access Television; Public Sphere; Representations of Class; Representations of Masculinity; Representations of Race; Representations of Women; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media; Shock Jocks.

WORLD CINEMA

Much of the works of filmic art known as world cinema are unknown to audiences in the United States. It is often said that American English-speaking viewers will not tolerate subtitles, and dubbing dialogue over the voices of actors after the film is made is not an ideal alternative. But the world’s cinema provides a rich tapestry of the globe, with images of stunning landscapes, remote countries, and narratives of life recognizable as part of the human condition. Even though the vast majority of such films never find their way into American multiplexes, it can be argued that cinema is especially important to an increasingly interconnected globe, one often lacking the mutual understanding needed in a world of diverse peoples and cultures. Though U.S. feature films and summer blockbusters are exported around the globe, cinema from other parts of the world, its stars and filmmakers, also exert significant influence over international moviemaking, including Hollywood.

Films are made around the world under a variety of conditions, sometimes supported by cultural institutions and government financing, at other times suppressed through state censorship or lack of funding. Many films are international collaborations of extraordinary talent. Through the course of making films, producers and directors are required to hurdle logistical as well as creative obstacles and must overcome many financial barriers. Such necessary accommodations often move the medium forward in unexpected ways. In the face of adversity, many astounding works of art are created with little money, at times using nonprofessional crews and actors, some shot in remote, rural villages, others set in dangerous, unprotected urban neighborhoods. From the gritty streets of Mexico City, director Alejandro Inarritu turned threatening conditions to his advantage by employing young gang members to protect the equipment while he made the critically acclaimed film Amores Perros. Inarritu won three awards at Cannes and an Oscar nomination for the film.

Iranian director Jafar Panahi was accustomed to extreme conditions while on location from his experiences making documentaries at the battlefront during the Iran/Iraq war. His first feature film, The White Balloon, is the story of a seven-year-old girl Aida Mohammadkhani, determined to find a special fish for a New Year’s celebration. Panahi’s camera follows Aide through the tangled city streets of Teheran as she struggles to find her way. Shot in real time with many first-time crewmembers, nonprofessional actors, and a tiny budget, the film is exquisitely crafted, and mostly improvised. For his efforts Panahi’s Balloon won the Camera D’Or at Cannes in 1995. Iranian filmmakers are legendary for their
collaborative spirit, and the making of *The White Balloon* was no exception. Panahi had invaluable help from master director Abbas Kiarostami.

**IRANIAN NEW WAVE CINEMA**

Iranian cinema became widely known to American audiences in 1997 with the U.S. release of Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s *Gabbeh*, a film that vibrates with color and a magical carpet. *Gabbeh* is a life-affirming fable about a carpet that holds the secrets and tales of lost love in rural Iran. Color becomes the visual metaphor for life, and his pallet is pulled from the sky, the fields and flowers, and transfixed into the carpets of the nomadic clan he follows.

That same year Abbas Kiarostami won the Palm D’Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *A Taste of Cherry*, the enigmatic, postmodern film with an unexpected twist that set international critics abuzz debating the film’s final scenes. But well before that, Kiarostami launched the Iranian New Wave with his Koker trilogy, *Where Is My Friend’s House?* (1987), *And Life Goes On* (1992), and *Through The Olive Trees* (1994). Kiarostami was well known to international filmgoers after *Close-Up* (1990), an extraordinary work that weaves a true story into a feature film. Combining the real with what is fiction is a narrative form that runs through Iranian New Wave cinema.

The early films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf are woven out of his struggle against oppression and ultimate rejection of war and violence. Drawing on his own success, he founded the Makhmalbaf Film House to support other young Iranian filmmakers. His wife Marzieh Meshkini learned to make films at the school and went on to direct *The Day I Became a Woman* (2000), a three-part film celebrating the lives of three women of different ages.

Samira, Makhmalbaf’s eldest daughter, began watching her father make films when she was eight years old. He let her quit Islamic high school at the age of 15, taught her filmmaking, and helped her make two award-winning features by the time she was 21. Samira’s second film, *Blackboards* (2001), follows itinerant schoolteachers who carry their blackboards on their backs as they hunt for students in villages through the mountains of Iranian Kurdistan. The young director chased the fog through the mountains of Kurdistan to get the right shots, and the result is a captivating set of vivid imagery. Working primarily with nonprofessionals, Samira Makhmalbaf incorporates the many, often deadly hazards faced by the schoolteachers into the film. The blackboards take on new roles and become visual metaphors when used to carry heavy loads and after being dismantled and used as splints for broken bones.

**CINEMA AND ITS CULTURE**

Films often serve as a catalyst for public dialogue about a whole range of issues, including humanitarian concerns about justice, equality and human well being in general. Indeed, part of the definition of cinema itself expands outward from the making and viewing of a movie on its own, to include the “cultural sense” made of it by audiences, writers, scholars and critics alike. One unique
approach to discussing international art-house films is found in a book of interviews by writer Liza Béar, who talked to many first-time directors from around the world. Such writing helps illuminate the filmmaking process and the shared partnerships that develop among actors, directors, crews, and producers.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

Twenty years passed between the time Shawn Slovo witnessed the events in Johannesburg in 1963 and the moment she started writing the script for *A World Apart*, an autobiographical film told from the perspective of a 13-year-old girl who tries to make sense of apartheid and the hushed, secretive world of her activist parents. The daughter of Ruth First, played by Barbara Hershey, the film depicts one of the most repressive moments in South Africa when the ANC and the Communist Party were outlawed and their members exiled. As a child, Slovo was forced to share her parent’s love with their struggle for justice and equality and her mother’s death in 1982 left their relationship unresolved. In this film, the writer struggled to create a work of fiction from childhood memories.

Directed by Chris Menges, *A World Apart* was shot in Zimbabwe with a cast that included many first-time actors. Menges’ interest in Slovo’s screenplay stemmed from his experiences with apartheid while shooting a program in
South Africa for British television. Slovo and Menges worked closely on the set shaping scenes and dialogue to foreground the politics while maintaining the power of the personal story. Menges won the Special Jury Prize for First Feature at Cannes in 1988 for *Apart*.

As might be expected, this groundbreaking film about apartheid, released while the writer was still in exile, sparked heated controversies, some more surprising than others. Some critics and audiences disparage scenes in *A World Apart* for the depiction of laughter and happiness at a dinner in the meager home of poor black Africans. They questioned whether scenes of joy and dancing should be included in stories of pain and tragedy.

**CUBAN CINEMA**

Cuban cinema in the latter half of the twentieth century created a repertoire of films that chronicled the changes from a colonized society to a revolutionary one. In *Memories of Underdevelopment*, Tomas Gutierrez Alea’s 1968 masterpiece, film audiences see the country’s transformation through the eyes of a Europeanized Cuban intellectual who ultimately decides to stay, but longs for his former decadent life.

Two years earlier, Alea’s adventurous mix of satire, slapstick and farce made fun of the tyranny of bureaucratic red tape in *Death of a Bureaucrat*. When a loyal Cuban is buried with his workers card and his widow can’t get her pension, the film portrays the maddening bureaucratic rules in the traditions of film comedy, from Bunuel to the satire of Billy Wilder, and comedic strategies that trace back to Buster Keaton.

In a surprising revelation in a commentary included on the DVD release of *Boogie Nights*, director Paul Anderson admits that he refers to a scene from the early Cuban revolutionary film, *I Am Cuba* (1964). This is all the more surprising because the Soviet/Cuban collaboration is widely interpreted to be a work of propaganda. The Soviets reportedly wanted to emphasize the evils of colonialization, especially the actions taken by American corporations, and some scenes are considered overstated, even cartoonish. Yet many directors (including Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese) have admired the stunning camerawork, especially impressive because of the early, heavy equipment available at the time. Ironically, *I Am Cuba* is a cult classic.

**CREATIVITY**

Some of the best writing on film and its art seeks to understand the creative process and the conditions and experiences that spark an idea. French director Francois Ozon incorporates the enigma of creativity into the plot of his Hitchcockian thriller, *Swimming Pool* (2003), as Ozon told Liza Béar, “creativity is not something that just happens, that falls on you from the sky, but something very concrete.’ Yet long-time director from France Agnes Varda, with five decades of experience, found her creative inspiration in a chance encounter, a brief emotional moment that triggered her desire to launch a film.
Directors of notable films sometimes draw on the talents and spontaneity of the actors they work with to move the story forward, and hone the dialogue. Full of passion, fantasy and an ironic twist, Speaking Parts (1989) is directed by Atom Egoyan, who first created memorable characters as a playwright. Egoyan and the film’s driving force, actress Arsinée Khanjian who plays Lisa, are both members of the Armenian diaspora who met during the thriving Toronto theater scene of the 1980s. They reveal a collaboration that results in a rare conceptual film about the nature of human desire and its interaction with the power of the image, a process fraught with certain dangers.

Some of the best examples of world cinema demonstrate a sensibility that foregrounds the profoundly social nature of the human condition. Stories that explore the longings of the human heart and the passions that bind one to another are tied to places and their histories, demonstrating that what it means to be human is not shaped in a void. As characters move through history, they are caught within declining empires, economic dislocations, repressive governments, class conflict, dangerous urban environments, or the beauty, mystery, and danger of the natural world.

HONG KONG

It was not surprising when the transfer of Hong Kong to mainland China became the setting for a film. The troubling, unfulfilled desire depicted in Chinese Box (1997), a film by director Wayne Wang, stars Maggie Cheung and Jeremy Irons, and expresses the ambivalence the director felt toward the changeover. Best known for his films about San Francisco’s Chinatown, Wang returned to his former homeland to give narrative and visual treatment to the historic moment. Wang and his films illustrate the movement of directors across national borders, often resulting in works of keen cultural observations and hybrid forms.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Hong Kong film movement flourished. J. Hoberman of The Village Voice noted that at its height, colonial Hong Kong incubated a “sensationally florid” film culture. One of its most exciting directors, Wong Kar Wai, made Fallen Angels (1995) and Chungking Express (1994), films that feature the street antics of ex-cons and create memorable portraits of honky-tonk Hong Kong. When Wong Kar Wai directed his romantic mystery In the Mood for Love (2000), the production took an unexpected turn when his longtime cameraman could not work on the film. Having to frame his own shots in the absence of his cinematographer, Wai took his own work to another level style and filmic content.

WORLD WARS

A classic genre, the war film has been made around the world by different directors, about past wars remembered, with interpretations that invariably influence the present. They sometimes tell unexpected narratives about humanity and the quest for peace.
In 1989, French director Bertrand Tavernier’s *Life and Nothing But* told a classic story of war and the social unraveling that occurs in its aftermath. Set in the year 1920, two women must wait to find the remains of their loved ones who have been listed as missing in action in World War I; only then can each attempt to create a new future. Almost a century later, another French director interprets the incredible loss that was the Great War. In *Joyeux Noel*, director and writer Christian Carion tells the story of the Christmas truce of 1914 when soldiers crossed the line into no-man’s-land between the trenches in at least a dozen spots along the Western Front. For a few hours it becomes common ground as they eat, sing, smoke, and celebrate mass together. Nominated for a Golden Globe and an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film of 2006, the film won the 2005 Audience Award at the Leeds International Film Festival. In an interesting international reference that demonstrates the shared nature of global film language, in the opening battle scenes some of the tracking shots through the trenches are styled in a similar fashion to Stanley Kubrick’s 1957 film *Paths of Glory*.

In other cases, a director’s personal history has been shaped by war and experiences that are brought to bear on their films. Raised in France, Karim Dridi is both an insider and outsider. Dridi’s father was a Tunisia military officer when he met Dridi’s mother, a French nurse, on the battlefield during the Algerian-Tunisian war. Through an intimate portrait of family life, in *Bye Bye* (1996), his second feature film, the director seeks a cultural common ground that reaffirms our shared humanity regardless of race, religion, or nationality.

**AUSTRALIAN FILM**

When Peter Weir brought the Australian landscape to life in the atmospheric *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), it was a pivotal moment in the country’s film history. The stunning landscapes of Australia’s desert outback had been featured in *Walkabout*, the 1971 British production by Nicolas Roeg in which two abandoned English children encounter an Aborigine on a ritual quest, and the three unlikely companions start their odyssey across the desert. But Peter Weir was born and educated in Australia, having made short films and Australian television programs and documentaries. Two years after *Picnic*, Weir would continue to explore the ambivalent interrelationships between native Aboriginal culture, Australian landscapes, and European modernity, in the film *The Last Wave*, themes that became iconic in Australian film.

Weir’s 1981 film *Gallipoli*, scripted by prominent Australian playwright David Williamson, is regarded as classic Australian cinema, and the film was instrumental in giving Mel Gibson his long run as a major international film star. Weir would go on to make movies in the United States, with the wildly popular *Witness* (1985), a thriller set in Amish country, and the less accessible, *Mosquito Coast* (1986), both starring Harrison Ford.

By 1998, Peter Weir made the self-referential satire about the excesses of media power, control, and money, in the satirical “reality” film *The Truman Show*, which demonstrated his international significance as a major media figure.
AUSTRALIAN FILM RENAISSANCE

During the mid-1970s, Australia was experiencing the heady period called the Australian Film Renaissance, and directors Jane Campion and Gillian Armstrong received their degrees from the Australian Film and Television School. They would soon add their visions to the aesthetic explorations that came to define Australian Cinema.

Gillian Armstrong gave life to the plucky young female protagonist in her 1979 film, *My Brilliant Career*. In doing so, Armstrong helped Judy Davis, the star who played the 16-year-old aspiring writer who is determined to get out of the bush, become one of Australia's most popular actors at the age of 23 and just out of drama school. Both Armstrong and Davis influenced a generation of women struggling to define themselves on their own terms. Nine years later in *High Tide*, the two reunited to tell the story of another woman and a complex emotional struggle. This character lives in a trailer park, the back-up singer for a band in a small coastal town whose life is forever changed after a surprise meeting with the teenage daughter she abandoned at birth.

In 1992 Gillian Armstrong directed *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, a drama propelled amid the interior spaces of a Sydney household where sibling rivalry, generational conflict, and family loyalties play out in the life of a writer. Her quintessential themes elucidate the personal and social conflicts between art and life. Gillian Armstrong was awarded the Order of Australia in 2007.

Judy Davis enjoys an international reputation, and throughout her career worked in a number of countries, including the United States. She had a preference for the auteur and literary, and accepted supporting roles in such films as David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* (1991), and the Cohen brothers' *Barton Fink* (1991). She returned to Australian cinema and under the direction of writer/actor/producer Peter Duncan, she received the Best Australian Actress Award in 1996 for *Children of the Revolution*. The quirky, epic farce also starring Sam Neill and Geoffrey Rush was distributed in the United States in 1997, and is a rare political satire about communism, one with a singularly Australian voice and unique vision of the dark comedy of global affairs.

Best known to American moviegoers for her film *Piano*, Jane Campion helped define Australian cinema as a writer-director and then producer. With its dark, defiant female protagonist, *Piano* won the 1993 Palme D’Or at Cannes, making her the first woman ever to win the prestigious award. She also won the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay at the Academy Awards that year and was nominated for Best Director. But her list of honors before *Piano* demonstrated the filmmaker's growing significance. Her first feature film *Sweetie* (1989), won the Georges Sadoul prize in 1989 for Best Foreign Film, as well as the LA Film Critics’ New Generation Award in 1990, the American Independent Spirit Award for Best Foreign Feature, and the Australian Critics’ Award for Best Film, Best Director and Best Actress. Her 1990 film, *An Angel At My Table*, also enjoyed international recognition with seven different awards, including the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival, and prizes at the Toronto and Berlin Film Festivals.
Jane Campion went on to produce *Love Serenade*, the debut feature by Australian director Shirley Barrett that won Camera D’Or at Cannes in 1997. The film’s surreal, melancholy atmosphere seems to emanate from the small town in the country’s south where two sisters fall for the same big-city DJ. The film moves through the stark openness of empty, fenced yards, and these bleak spaces make the lush, fetid swamp, the setting for the film’s finish all the more surprising. In this story of youthful passions and middle-aged dalliance, Barrett’s characters embody the tension of the place and the actions of the sisters seem to spring from the landscape itself. Nature and its atmospheres, and the characters that come to life in its settings connect Australian films and fascinate the world.

**DISTRIBUTING WORLD CINEMA**

In the pre-cable, pre-video, and pre-DVD mid-1970s, a vital repertory theater circuit existed with over two hundred venues across the United States. In those years, one notable independent distributor called Kino International was founded to supply classic and foreign language art films to those venues. Kino boasted a rare collection of cinematic masterworks available for theatrical distribution. Their first collection was a library of over one hundred European and Asian art films of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. As technology and media corporations continue to transform, so does the availability of international films in theatrical releases. Art-houses and 35 mm films are harder and harder to find. Sometimes classic art films are shown at public theaters and film festivals, and audiences are able to see films on the big screens for which they were originally intended. With the transition to video and DVD, by the 1980s it became difficult

**HOLLYWOOD POACHING**

While world cinema often struggles at the American box office, and while—right or wrong—American distributors often declare that Americans don’t like foreign films, Hollywood frequently models its scripts off successful world cinema. Hence, for instance, 2007’s Oscar winner for Best Picture and Best Director, *The Departed* (2006) is a remake of Hong Kong directors Andrew Lau Wai-Keung and Alan Mak Siu-Fai’s *Infernal Affairs* (2002), numerous Japanese horror films have been remade in Hollywood, including *Dark Water* (2005), *The Ring* (2002), and *The Grudge* (2004); and even classics such as John Sturges’s *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) or Sergio Leone’s *A Fistful of Dollars* (2004) are remakes of, respectively, Japanese director Akira Kurosawa’s *The Seven Samurai* (1954) and *Yojimbo* (1961).

In another form of poaching, Hollywood often woos foreign directors, cinematographers, actors, and, recently, stunt choreographers with its larger budgets and increased glamour and audience. Thus, for instance, from Jet Li and Chow Yun-Fat to Mike Myers and Nicole Kidman, Peter Weir and John Woo to Alfonso Cuaron and Peter Jackson, many of “American” cinema’s top talents and earners are from other countries, sometimes (as with Jackson) to the benefit of the development of local cinema, but more often at the expense of their potential contribution to that development.
to find video distributors interested in purchasing small art films and world cinema. Today, a few independent labels carry DVDs, such as Masters of Cinema and the Criterion Collection. Kino On Video also disseminates contemporary world cinema to communities and institutions, works that are often unavailable to the public outside of a few big cities. A few notable film classics sometimes shown in these venues are worth mentioning.

**Classics**

One early ode to nature is a classic of world cinema and can still be found on film, playing at some festivals. *Dersu Uzala* is set in the icy forests of eastern Siberia. The film explores the friendship that grows between a Russian surveyor and Dersu, the old hunter of the Tiaga. Akira Kurosawa, best known for his original Samurai films that proved key influences on the work of Steven Spielberg, George Lucas (whose *Star Wars* very roughly follows the plot of Kurosawa’s *Hidden Fortress*), Martin Scorcese, Francis Ford Coppola, and the “spaghetti westerns” of Sergio Leone, made the film late in life. With its epic turn-of-the-century storyline and its intimate portraits, many critics consider it Kurosawa’s masterwork. Released in 1975, *Dersu Uzala* was the winner of the 1976 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

One of the best and most influential portraits drawn of the enduring character type, the femme fatale was done in the 1929 German film *Pandora’s Box* by G.W. Pabst. A talented young woman with a penchant for the part, Louise Brooks starred as Lulu, and her character inspired many imitators in the years that followed.

German director Fritz Lang’s first talkie, *M* (1931), is a renowned classic. Peter Lorre stars as a child murderer who is tracked by police through the streets of Berlin. The city is portrayed as a gridlike, paranoid nightmare, and this early use of sound heightens the film’s impact and demonstrates the enormous potential of soundtracks for enhancing the art of film.

With the death of Ingmar Bergman in 2007, the Swedish film director some critics refer to as the master filmmaker of the twentieth century, tributes to his life and art noted how influential his style and themes were to world filmmakers, including such American directors as Woody Allen. Bergman made about 50 films throughout more than 40 years, many intensely focused on the relationships between men and women and the role of God in the human psyche.

*La Vie De Boheme* (1992), the story of struggling artists in Paris, is a quintessential art-house film by Finnish director Aki Kaurismaki. Reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard’s filming from the 1960s, it brings the world of struggling artists, their defiance, determination and frustrations to life in actions that unfold in tiny apartments and the cafés of modern-day Paris. A coproduction with France, Italy, Sweden, and Finland, the film is based on the novel, *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*, by Henri Murger published in the 1850s.

**NEW GERMAN CINEMA**

The New German Cinema that began of the early 1960s and lasted into the 1980s was based on a call to rethink the filmmaking of the time, dictated as it
was by commercial demands. In 1962 a group of young German filmmakers signed the Oberhausen Manifesto, a declaration that encouraged quality art-house films. The work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders, among others, found international acclaim and returned German cinema to quality it had enjoyed during the Weimar Republic. In 1979, *The Tin Drum* became the first German film to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Several writers and critics have noted the similarity between Werner Herzog’s surreal tale, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972) and Francis Ford Coppola’s 1979 classic work of war and madness, *Apocalypse Now.*

**CENSORSHIP**

Global cinema has also been the subject and target of censorship. In *Beijing Bicycle*, the theft of a mountain bike sets in motion a contemporary tale of class conflict and social dislocation, yet in the new China, neither this nor the other four feature films directed by Wang Xiaoshuai was theatrically released. Many filmmakers courageously resist the dangers posed by ideologues who would control the speech and art of others. Romanian filmmaker Lucian Pintilie was forced into exile in 1972 because he refused to submit his art to what he called the capricious demands of the system. He explained that one day the censors want one thing, the next day something else. After the fall of the Ceaucescu government, Pintilie returned to his country and directed *The Oak* (1992), a scathing social satire that portrays the process by which people acquiesce to their leader’s injustices, who gradually and irreversibly become accustomed to the evil that becomes banal.

Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky’s feature debut *Ivan’s Childhood*, about the lost spirit of a soldier boy, slipped past the censors to win the Golden Lion for Best Film at the 1962 Venice Film Festival. What might have looked to the censors like a patriotic hymn to the Red Army was internationally acclaimed and widely understood as work of outrage against violence. Although *Ivan’s Childhood* made it through the bureaucracy, Tarkovsky’s subsequent films were heavily scrutinized and suppressed.

The bleak, wintry landscapes of a country retreat outside Moscow are featured in *Tema (Theme)*, a film made by Soviet director Gleb Panfilov. The film details the passions and (mis)fortunes of a famous Russian playwright, Kim Yesenin. *Tema* was shown in the United States for the first time in 1987 at the New York Film Festival. Made in 1979, *Tema* stayed on the shelf for eight years because Panfilov had refused to alter the film’s content. It was finally released under Glasnost and won the Golden Bear Award at the 1987 Berlin Film Festival.

Moshen Makhmalbaf experienced the economic constraints imposed on filmmakers in Iran under the government of the Shah. Though a less direct form of censorship, it was a stifling of expression nonetheless. After the revolution he visited his grandmother’s grave to tell her about the changes in Iran, from a film making industry influenced by Hollywood and motivated by the singular desire to make money, into a humanist one. That change led to the flowering of Iran new-wave cinema. Filmmakers now work under the eyes of government censors.
in which whole topic areas are cordoned off. Yet the stories Iranian directors tell are vivid portraits of a people and their culture, from the extremes of crowded cities to dry, desert landscapes.

Kiarostami’s film, *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), has suffered a type of distribution censorship. Although Miramax contracted to distribute the film, it had an exceptionally short run in some major U.S. cities. Since then, though Miramax still has the rights to the film, it has been completely unavailable and has never released on video or DVD.

Self censorship and market censorship—adhering to the often rigid aesthetic and economic necessities needed to get films made—are equally dangerous forms of constraining speech and stifling freedom of expression. The personal and cultural interactions so important to world cinema have also been blocked by visa denials. In 2002, the United States denied Abbas Kiarostami’s visa after he was invited to the New York Film Festival to show his film *Ten*, a portrait of six Iranian women. In protest, Finnish director Aki Kaurismaki refused to attend the festival even though his film *The Man Without a Past* was also being shown. Kaurismaki said, “As a private citizen of Finland, I accuse the U.S. government of violating the Geneva Convention. If international cultural exchange is prevented, what is left?” The head of the festival, Richard Pena, also stated to the press that the denial of Kiarostami’s visa was “unjust, extraordinarily shortsighted and a snub to a major Muslim artist.”

Although Cuban filmmakers work under the eyes of government censors, their films contain ample criticism of the socialist revolution they often lovingly depict. As some writers have observed, many Cuban artists and directors have supported censorship because they feel constructive criticism is accepted. Making their socialist society better by criticizing the bad and presenting other options is one thing, but proposing an end to the revolution, in their eyes is another. Cuban cinema has been called nationalistic, but patriotic tendencies can be traced through the films of many nations, especially those of the United States.

And as Canadian filmmaker Denys Arcand learned, censorship is not always about the failure to express a political opinion, but can also be personal, such as when an individual declines to express an emotion. This was the point the director tried to express in his film *Barbarian Invasions* (2003). In the film, he tried to repair his own past through a dialogue between a son and his father. As the director, he could make the son say that he loved his father.

**CONCLUSION**

By 2007, global cinema had demonstrated its enduring value and essential qualities. Three of the five films nominated for an Academy Award for best-director were foreign filmmakers (“Oscars Go Global” 2007), and many films that won Oscars included international participation. With seven nominations, including best picture, Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu’s film *Babel* links families on three continents to a tragic event in the African desert. Brad Pitt and Australia’s Cate Blanchett were the featured stars, but Mexico’s
Adriana Barraza and Japan's Rinko Kikuchi both received nominations for best supporting actress.

The participation of global directors, talent, and locations comes at a significant moment in America's media culture. News reporting featuring global events and cultures diminished significantly during the last two decades of the twentieth century, making the filmic representation of the world all the more important. Films are also one of the only avenues open where people from other cultures speak in their own voices and construct their own images. In addition, world cinema is thriving at a time of declining interest in going to the movie in the United States, the once most dominant form of the American popular arts experience.

Indeed, as budgets and box-office returns continue to be the measure of success in Hollywood, critics argue that films suffer. By 2007, movie attendance in America had reached its lowest point in 10 years. Though some of that decline can be attributed to the availability of video and DVDs, the two most-cited reasons for staying home were rising ticket prices and the quality of the films (Gabler 2007). Hollywood features suffer, and lose some of their magic and imagination, when marketing departments make bottom-line demands that affect creative content. Under such conditions, going to the movies is bound to lose some of its fascination. In the hands of many global filmmakers, the inspiration and practices of making movies are decidedly varied, and usually quite distinct from commercial motivations.

See also Al-Jazeera; Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora; Cultural Imperialism and Hybridity; The DVD; Global Community Media; Hypercommercialism; Independent Cinema; Nationalism and the Media; Parachute Journalism; Representations of Race; Sensationalism, Fear Mongering, and Tabloid Media.


Robin Andersen
YOUTH AND MEDIA USE

Communications technology has come a long way. E-mail, instant messaging, blogs, and other new features in communications technology have all revolutionized the way the world communicates on a fundamental level. But no group of people has these tools mastered more than young people. As a population, youth have traditionally been presumed to play a passive role in mass media, perceived as sponges at the mercy of media messages, and absent from the production process. Yet today’s rapidly changing communications environment has been cause for some to believe the role of youth in mass media is no longer as one-sided. Has the relationship between mass media and youth really changed? And if it has, how so?

Young people have historically played an interesting, yet for the most part static role in the public policy of mass communications. The dominant tradition behind discussions of youth and media, particularly in the United States, has been that of studying “effects.” For many years, the prevailing school of thought asked what the impact of media messages was on young impressionable minds. As a group primarily observed by adults and the like, youth and their relationship with media have been largely misunderstood, and for good reason: young people live in a complex, rapidly changing environment, and today’s communications environment is no different.

Attempting to describe youth generations, particularly that of today, poses a great challenge. Historically, research on children or youth has more often than not considered this population in negative rather than positive terms. And when displayed in a positive light, they are too often thought of merely as “someone who is not taking drugs or using alcohol, is not engaging in unsafe sex, and is
YOUTH MEDIA

Youth media programs are on the rise, both in number and prevalence. The National Federation for Community Broadcasters holds a nationwide conference, each year in a different location. Since the late 1990s one of the key features of this conference has been the National Youth in Radio Training Project (NYRTP). The program brings young people working in radio and other media formats together for skills and leadership training, and to meet other young people producing media content. This has been just one example of the increasing presence of youth in mass media. With support from local communities, youth media programs are being developed in more than half the country. In 2005, 31 states were found to be directly served by a youth media program. Of the programs currently in existence, Youth Radio has been a leader and set a number of standards for many other aspiring programs. Today, the organization offers training in radio production, video production, music production, and web design. Youth Radio is a prime example of what youth media are doing in the United States. Yet the idea and progress is growing worldwide. Your World Your Voice is an organization that brings the many varieties of youth media programs worldwide together, allowing an open exchange of perspectives, opinions, and self-expression on a host of issues affecting young people throughout the world, from health care to artistic expression. Youth media today can be described as a movement, encouraging young people to take action and become active participants in their communities, both local and global. Not all young people are fortunate enough to have these services at their disposal. And many who do not take advantage. Yet for those who do engage in these programs, the benefits can be felt for the participants as well as their respective communities, ranging from personal levels of achievement, all the way to changes in public policy.

not participating in crime or violence” (Lerner 2004, p. 1). But youth are a multidimensional, complex, and sophisticated segment of the population, as much as any other group of people. Here, we consider how media portray youth, how this unique population selects and consumes media, their media of choice, and how more and more young people are producing media themselves.

IMAGES OF YOUTH

George Bernard Shaw once said, “Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children.” Media images of youth have for too long relied on the traditional effects perspective that young people are lacking in positive contribution to society. In 1995, Youth Vision held focus groups with 80 Chicago adults to explore the sources of adult hostility toward youths. Adults’ attitudes cited “gangs, drugs, sex, and a general feeling that youth are out of control,” that youths have no respect for adults, and that teens in groups look threatening. Most felt that media played an important role in informing these opinions. Unfortunately, media messages appeared to be distorting adult perceptions. While youths accounted for 16 percent of murder arrests and 9 percent of homicides, they
accounted for 48 percent of the stories on violence as a public issue. National crime and violence stories painted the same image. In this case, the press overplayed youth violence 3 to 20 times more than what youth actual contributed to murder arrest rates (Males 1998, pp. 281–82).

Neil Howe and William Strauss are scholars of historical trends. They identify a pattern in which most Americans figure that history generally moves in straight lines. Many people blame the failures and problems of their own generation on the generations that follow them. Howe and Strauss, as well as other scholars of youth, have shown that history in this case does not repeat itself. Younger generations are overall achieving far greater success in almost all areas of life—you just wouldn’t know it from most common sources of news or information. Just a few high-risk indicators illustrate the progress. The United States has enjoyed a plunge in youth crime, the speed and distance of which has no precedent since the birth of modern data. From 1993 to 1998, the rate of murders committed by youth aged 12 to 17 fell by 56 percent, and the teen murder-victimization rate fell by almost the same. Violent deaths at schools declined from a high of 55 in the 1992–93 school year to 25 in 1998–99. From 1993 to 1998, the rate for all serious violent crimes committed by youths aged 12 to 17 fell by 45 percent, and the victimization rate fell nearly as much (38 percent). With respect to education, standardized measurements show progress. Measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, or “Nape”), millennial 9- to 13-year-olds are doing as well or better in math and science than any Gen Xer did at that age. Though verbal skills show less-clear trends, millennials are now writing as well as Gen Xers in the early 1980s and a bit better than Boomers in the early 1970s. Additionally, all ethnic groups are improving faster than the average for all other groups. From 1973 to 1996 white students increased by 3 scale points, blacks by 16, and Latinos by 18 (Howe and Strauss 2000, pp. 162–206).

MARGINALIZED, NOT APATHETIC

One of the biggest factors leading to the status of youth in media is that most sources of news/information are primarily guided towards adults. A study released by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press claimed that young people read the newspaper, watch television news, and listen to news on the radio at much lower rates than their older counterparts. To many of us, this isn’t so surprising. But beneath the veneer of common knowledge lies a good reason. When exposed to typical news programming, “students can be seen struggling to connect the ‘political’ dimensions of their everyday experiences with the official discourse of politics encountered through the media” (Buckingham 2000b, p. 203).

We must see how programs define the interests of young people, address and target their audience through the use of visual and verbal language, and finally, consider whose voices are heard within these programs and how they are sanctioned to speak. The common perception that young people are disengaged and apathetic about news, politics, and civic engagement may be no truer for young people than it is for all age groups.
RELEVANCY, LANGUAGE, AND FRAMING

When political messages are targeted at young voters, addressing the concerns and issues specific to young people and speaking the language of the youth, youth audiences are easily engaged. Young people can and do participate in politics and select news media if they can find a way to connect with it. Rather than assuming those absent from the news media audience could not care less about the political process and how it affects them, we might instead ask how media enable viewers to define their relationship with the public. Young people choose to get their political information less through the usual adult news sources, and have turned to comedy shows, Internet Web sites, and chat rooms. Despite a dramatic decline between 2000 and 2004 in traditional news sources, Kohut notes that there have been large increases for comedy TV shows (up from 9 percent to 21 percent), and the Internet (up from 13 percent to 20 percent). More than twice as many teens reported regularly learning something from comedy TV shows in 2004 than they did in 2000. One show that has a particular appeal to young people is The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. Fully 13 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds report watching the show regularly, compared with 6 percent of the general public. The Daily Show is a comic and edgy news show, leading some to feel that The Daily Show does not qualify as being "news/political." On the other hand, many feel that maybe our understanding of what is and is not "political/news" is not adequate for the changing face of programming today.

For instance, MTV has long been thought of as a music/entertainment TV channel. But this isn't always the case anymore. In some cases, MTV connects with CNN to host presidential political debates. These debates have purposely been set up to include a young audience and have a youthful feel to them. Debates like these result in large, young audience that is engaged and active in discussion. Even though the content here may be no different than that of traditional debates, the audience perspective is different. Youth participants at these types of youth-specific debates feel that candidates are more interested in them, as opposed to the traditional format. They are also more likely to believe that candidates are more interested in youth concerns, and that young people do have a say in government. Based on this, it may be the case that young people feel more connected to the political process when media make an attempt to speak in the language of young people. If this is true, and most news/political programming is directed towards adults, then young people's alienation from and cynicism about politics could be interpreted as a result of exclusion and disenfranchisement, rather than ignorance or immaturity.

YOUTH COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT:
GRABBING THE BULL BY THE HORNs

Traditional news sources in many cases have marginalized youth from any potential audience. But youth still have an active relationship with a variety of media sources. The relationship between youth and the communications
technology environment they live in has resulted in more choices, and a greater degree of relevancy among those choices.

The Kaiser Family Foundation’s Generation: M study characterized young people’s media environments in 1999 as “media rich.” In 2004, an update on the original study saw dramatic changes, so much so that they decided to change the term to “media saturated.” The study showed that in 2004, 99 percent of American youth had at least one television; 97 percent had their own VCR; 34 percent had their own digital recording device; 86 percent had their own computer; 12 percent had their own laptop; 13 percent had their own handheld Internet device; 74 percent had access to the Internet; and 49 percent had high-speed connections in their home. While many young people’s homes do not reflect this “media-saturated” picture, the primary socioeconomic-related differences appear for computers, Internet connections, and Internet-based programs. This being said, previous young generations could not have foreseen such a world.

Young people are taking advantage of this new climate to great lengths. Nowhere is this seen more than with Internet usage. The Pew Internet and American Life project provides the most comprehensive data on the role of Internet use. According to the study, there are many reasons to believe that today’s youth have the biggest impact on digital communication technology. Internet users aged 12 to 28 years old have embraced the online applications that enable communicative, creative, and social uses. Eighty-seven percent of 12- to 17-year-olds are actively online, the most prominent of any age group. When online, they are looking for interactive media. Sixty-six percent of online 12- to 17-year-olds have downloaded audio files; 31 percent of online teens actively download videos. In addition to simply connecting to the Internet, over half of online youth are active “content creators,” as they “create a personal webpage; create a webpage for school, a friend, or an organization; share original content they created themselves online; or remix content found online into a new creation.” One-third of online teens report sharing their own artwork, photos, stories, or videos with others via the Internet. It must be noted that the picture of youth and the Internet is not entirely positive. There have been a number of cases where the convenience and super-fast speed of communication allowed by the Internet have resulted in gratuitous, violent, and highly charged available content. We cannot say what percent of youth are utilizing the Internet for “bad”, or for “good”—just as we cannot for adults—but young people are certainly finding many creative and reflective uses for new media in particular.

In addition to the role of the Internet in young people’s active consumption and production of media, some traditional news sources are finding ways to incorporate youth as part of their audiences and content contributors. Youth media programs worldwide have been in existence for at least 20 years. These programs have been providing training to preschool students up to high-school students in field production, studio production, media analysis/critical viewing, and media distribution and evaluation in audio, video, animations, print, photography, and other media formats. However, among all the formats used, computer based multimedia (e.g., Web design, digital video/audio, etc.) make up that largest percentage (54 percent). Yet what may be most important is the type
of programming youth are creating. Seventy-six to one hundred percent of the time, news and documentary programming make up the largest two categories of programs produced.

Youth media programs provide numerous benefits for youth consumers and participants. They prepare youth for a digital world, facilitate learning in academic subjects, offer healthy recreational activities, prepare youth for future careers, and strengthen their respective communities. Yet more important than any of these stated benefits, youth media programs give youth a voice, sometimes rare in an adult-run world. Youth media programs provide the training and venue for youth to provide for their own.

CONSIDERING CONTEXT

Many youth are defying the stereotypes of apathy so prevalent in much youth-related public policy. To be sure, not all young people are proactively taking control of this situation or engaging in civic life. Still, it is only when accounting for the fact that youth engage in a multifaceted, complex, and diverse world that we can begin to understand how youth appear in, consume, produce, and utilize media to continue their development as individuals, groups of citizens, and members of the global community.

See also Alternatives to Mainstream Media in the United States; Children and Effects; Digital Divide; Internet and Its Radical Potential; Media and Citizenship; News Satire; Online Publishing; Political Entertainment; User-Created Content and Audience Participation.


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