Gender, Race, and Class in Media

Fifth Edition

Gender, Race, and Class in Media

A Critical Reader

Fifth Edition

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PREFACE

Despite the introduction of two new members to the editorial team, the overall goal of the fifth edition of *Gender, Race, and Class in Media* remains the same as in previous editions: to introduce undergraduate and graduate students to some of the richness, sophistication, and diversity that characterizes contemporary media scholarship, in a way that is accessible and builds on students' own media experiences and interests. We intend to help demystify the nature of **popular culture** and **emergent media** by examining their production, analyzing the **texts** of some of the most pervasive forms or **genres**, and exploring the processes by which audiences make meaning out of media images and stories—meaning that helps shape our economic, cultural, political, and personal worlds. We start from the position that, as social beings, we construct our realities out of the cultural norms and values that are dominant in our society. Media and popular culture are among the most important producers and reproducers of such norms and values.

We have designed this as a volume to help teachers (1) introduce the most powerful theoretical concepts in contemporary media studies; (2) explore some of the most influential and interesting forms of contemporary popular culture; and (3) focus on issues of **gender** and **sexuality, race,** and **class** from a **critical** perspective. Most of the readings in this book take an explicitly critical perspective that is also informed by a diversity of approaches, such as **political economy, feminism, cultural studies, critical race theory,** and **queer theory.** We have chosen readings that make the following assumptions, as we do: (1) that industrialized societies are stratified along lines of gender and sexuality, race, and class; (2) that everyone living in such societies "has" gender and sexuality, race, and class, and other aspects of social identity that help structure our experience; and (3) that economic and other resources, advantages, and privileges are distributed inequitably, in part because of power dynamics involving these categories of experience (as well as others, such as age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, ability, or disability). Our selection of material has been guided by our belief that an important goal of a critical education is to enable people to conceptualize social justice clearly and work toward it more effectively. For us, greater social justice would require a fairer distribution of our society's economic and cultural resources. In the current political era, we see these commitments as more urgent than ever.

Our book is situated within both media studies and cultural studies. When Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez started working on the first edition of *Gender, Race, and Class in Media* in the early 1990s, cultural studies was a relatively new academic field in the United States, although it had been popular for some time in England (where it originated at The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham). The cultural studies approach has now been dominant in U.S. media studies for more than a generation. Cultural studies has heavily influenced several other interdisciplinary fields concerned with social issues and representation, such as American studies and gender and women's studies.

The field of cultural studies is actually **multidisciplinary,** drawing on insights and approaches from history, critical race studies, literary studies, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Because of its **progressive** politics and because it offers a

much broader and apparently more democratic definition of culture than was used in humanistic studies such as literary criticism in the past, many scholars and students particularly interested in race, gender, sexuality, and class have been attracted to its theories and potential for **activism.** (For a more extended discussion of the development of multiculturalism and cultural studies in the last decades of the 20th century, see Douglas Kellner's reading in Part I.)

In this fifth edition, we continue to emphasize three separable but interconnected areas of analysis: political economy, **textual analysis,** and **audience reception.** It is crucial to integrate all three to provide a holistic understanding of the entire media culture communication process, from production through consumption. Indeed, one of the initial goals of cultural studies was to contextualize the media text within the wider society that informs its production, construction, consumption, and, more recently, distribution along a range of **media platforms.**

Traditionally, political economy has looked at the ways the profit motive affects how texts are produced within a society marked by class, gender, and racial inequality. Who owns and controls the media? Who makes the decisions about content? How does financing affect and shape the range of texts produced? In what other ways does the profit motive drive production? These are central questions political economists ask. Examining this economic component is still essential to an understanding of what eventually gets produced and circulated in the mainstream commercial media industries. However, with the advent of **new media** technologies that enable consumers to produce and widely distribute their own content, we must broaden our view of production, as many of the readings in this book do.

Media representations are never just mirrors or "reflections of reality" but, rather, always artfully constructed creations designed to appeal to our emotions and influence our ideas, and especially our consumer behavior. Therefore, to educate ourselves as consumers, we need tools to help us closely examine the ways all cultural texts—from TV sitcoms, dramas, or reality shows to video games, YouTube videos, and social media sites—are structured, using complex combinations of words, sounds, and visual languages. Critical textual analysis provides a special focus on how to analyze the **ideological** significance of media texts—that is, to look at how, through the use of certain codes and conventions, they create or transmit meanings that may challenge or reinforce the economic, social, cultural, and political status quo.

Media studies has long acknowledged that audiences also have a role in creating the meanings of media texts, and for at least a generation, ethnographic audience reception research has focused on this dimension. By observing and talking with actual consumers of media texts—as opposed to critics—much has been learned about how we are active as we interpret, make sense of, understand, and use such texts within our everyday social and private lives. These studies have played an important role in complicating the older view of media audiences as passive, or even brainwashed, recipients of prepackaged meanings. Clearly, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, political beliefs, age, religion, and more are important factors that can help explain the different meanings that various audiences appear to take away from an advertisement, movie, video game, blog, or sitcom. Studies of **fans**—those dedicated consumers of media texts who build community around their experiences of consumption—go even further in exploring how consumers of media texts can produce meanings quite different from those intended by the original text producers. With the advent of new media aided by the Internet, the debate over audience exploitation versus empowerment has only intensified.

However we conceptualize the media audience in the age of the Internet, it is still vital to study all three components of media representations—production, text, and consumption—to understand how such texts can and do strengthen—or perhaps in some ways undermine—our dominant systems and ideologies of gender and sexuality, race, and class inequality.

In this fifth edition, we have maintained our thematic focus on gender and sexuality, race, and class, because we believe that media studies needs to address the issues of social inequality that continue to plague our society and undermine its democratic potential, perhaps even more now than when the first edition of this anthology appeared. Some of the readings in this book employ an **intersectional** analysis—that is, one that complicates each of these social categories by examining how they interact with one another. Whenever possible, we have selected articles that give voice to the multiple levels of analysis needed to make media studies a truly **multicultural** endeavor. We acknowledge the ever-intensifying interrelationships among media cultures globally while continuing to focus primarily on the North American examples of media texts that we see as most likely to be familiar to instructors and students working with this book.

For the fifth edition, we again located, read, and discussed many new journal articles and book chapters. We reached out to colleagues who do media research and teach media courses, and we listened to students to learn what they found compelling in former editions. Twenty-seven chapters in this edition are either new or substantially updated. This reflects both the rapid evolution of the field and our desire to provide analysis of relatively recent and current media texts likely to be familiar to students. Several "classic" readings (like Janice Radway's **ethnography** of women who are voracious readers of romance novels), which first appeared in earlier editions, still offer important and clearly articulated historical and theoretical insights into media analysis.

We've grouped our selections into thematic sections that highlight some of the important changes that have taken place in the worlds of popular culture and emerging media over the past several years and that also reflect our experience of student interests. As in the fourth edition, we include an index of individual reading topics, which will allow instructors to create alternative groupings of readings to suit their own course designs. We hope that instructors and students will find the themes and genres represented in this collection provocative, stimulating, and an invitation to engage in further thinking, research, and perhaps even media activism.

In condensing previously published journal articles and book chapters, we have often had to omit quite a lot of detail from the originals, while preserving central arguments and challenging ideas. The omissions are carefully noted with the use of ellipses (. . .). By judiciously cutting the overall length, we have aimed to make cutting-edge scholarship as accessible as possible for undergraduate and graduate students alike. Our brief introductory essays to each section highlight key concepts and identify some interesting connections among the readings in that section. We continue to welcome comments from users of this book about our selections, about what worked well in the classroom and what did not. We especially invite suggested articles for future editions.

At the end of the book, we provide some supplementary resources for the teacher. In addition, we have included a selective list of the many media activist organizations easily located on the Internet. We hope this will be useful for those who, inspired by the progressive ideals espoused by many of the writers in this collection, would like to explore this kind of grassroots consumer and citizens' activism on behalf of a more democratic media culture in the future.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Visit **http://study.sagepub.com/dines5e** to access online resources including articles from previous editions, video links, web resources, eFlashcards, recommended readings, SAGE journal articles, and more.

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- **Sample course syllabi** for semester and quarter courses provide suggested models for use when creating the syllabi for courses.

- Lively and stimulating **class activities and course projects** that can be used in class to reinforce active learning. The activities apply to individual or group projects.

- **Video and multimedia links** that appeal to students with different learning styles.

- **Web exercises** direct both instructors and students to useful and current websites, along with creative activities to extend and reinforce learning or allow for further research on important chapter topics.

- **Articles from prior editions** are also included online.

The open-access Student Study Site includes the following:

- Mobile-friendly **eFlashcards** reinforce understanding of key terms and concepts that have been outlined in the chapters.

- **Video and multimedia links** appeal to students with different learning styles.

- **Web exercises** direct readers to useful and current web resources, along with creative activities to extend and reinforce learning or allow for further research on important chapter topics.

- Interesting and relevant **articles from prior editions** of the book provide a jumping-off point for course assignments, papers, research, group work, and class discussion.

Throughout our book, key concepts important for students to discuss and digest appear in boldface. These are defined in more detail in the Glossary at the end of the volume. Some instructors have found it useful to assign the Glossary itself as a reading early in a course, for the benefit of students new to media theory and critical cultural studies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACH TO MEDIA

Theory

In this book, we offer a selection of critical examinations of popular culture and emergent media to exemplify a powerful method of analysis you will be able to apply on your own to other examples. In this way, we hope to promote and support critical **media literacy.** While there are many ways to think about media literacy, for the purposes of this book, we argue that in a postindustrial society dominated by corporate media and commercial messages media literacy can be one tool to help limit the **discursive** power of media in our lives. While a sophisticated level of media literacy cannot replace other efforts to democratize our society's economic and cultural resources, in our view, it does give audiences the skills necessary to analyze and question the ideologies that often work at a subtextual level within media narratives and images.

We begin with media theory because we think students will find it useful to have a good grasp of several central concepts, illustrated in an introductory way here, before going on to tackle later readings in which an understanding of these concepts is often presumed. In the media theory section, we especially highlight the central concepts and terms of the field of cultural studies as applied to **media culture.** As in all the other sections of this book, the chapters in this section are in dialogue with one another in many ways. In these opening comments, we give only one possible reading of the ways their main themes connect.

We open with "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," by Douglas Kellner (I.1). This essay sets out the three-part approach to cultural studies (political economy/production, textual analysis, and audience reception/consumption) that characterizes this field. Like Kellner, we believe that to understand a media artifact such as a TV show, advertisement, social media site, or online digital game, one must be able to understand the socioeconomic context in which it is created (political economy/ production); analyze its constructed meaning(s) through careful attention to its particular visual/verbal/ auditory languages, or **codes** (textual analysis); and determine its actual impact on individuals and groups and how these audiences contribute to the meaning-making process, and even to the production and distribution of cultural products (audience consumption/production). In addition, Kellner points to the importance of intersectional considerations of gender, sexuality, race, class, and more, as categories of difference and social analysis in cultural studies work.

In "The Meaning of Memory" (I.2), an important historical background piece that sheds light on how and why corporations came to dominate media culture so heavily in the United States, George Lipsitz shows how the needs of the national economy in the post–World War II period facilitated the development of mass television production. He explores how the increase in the sale of televisions and the development of a group of situation comedies were used to transform a traditional, ethnic immigrant ideology that stressed values of community, thrift, and commitment to labor unions into an **American Dream ideology** that stresses **individualism, consumerism,** and suburban domesticity—values consistent with the needs of the expanding postwar **capitalist** economy.

In subsequent decades, media industries have changed dramatically as a result of mergers and buyouts. Commercial entertainment today is a highly profit-oriented business controlled for the most part by a small number of giant corporations. In "The Economics of the Media Industry" (I.3), David P. Croteau and William D. Hoynes focus on the concentration of ownership in these industries, showing why this is an important problem in a purportedly democratic society.

Giant media **conglomerates** are able to "assemble large portfolios of magazines, television stations, book publishers, record labels, and so on to mutually support one another's operations" (a process called "horizontal integration"). They also use "vertical integration"—"the process by which one owner acquires all aspects of production and distribution of a single type of media product"—to gain further control over the market. As the authors point out,

> In this era of integrated media conglomerates, media companies are capable of pursuing elaborate cross-media strategies, in which company-owned media products can be packaged, sold, and promoted across the full range of media platforms. Feature films, their accompanying soundtracks and DVD/Blu-ray Disc releases, spin-off television programs, and books, along with magazine cover stories and plenty of licensed merchandise can all be produced and distributed by different divisions of the same conglomerate. (p. 28)

In these ways, corporate media giants benefit economically from conglomeration and integration and, arguably, make it "more difficult for smaller media firms to compete," but even more worrisome is the potential for such conglomerates to translate media ownership into political power. Offering examples from the United States (Michael Bloomberg), Europe (Italy's Silvio Berlusconi), and the United Kingdom and Australia (Rupert Murdoch), the authors warn that "owners can systematically exclude certain ideas from their media products." Building on political economist Herb Schiller's concept of "the corporate voice," they ask us to consider whether "the corporate voice has been generalized so successfully that most of us do not even think of it as a specifically corporate voice: That is, the corporate view has become 'our' view, the 'American' view, even though the interests of the corporate entities that own mass media are far from universal" (p. 32).

One way of thinking about how the corporate view becomes woven into dominant ways of thinking about the world is the theory of **hegemony** that James Lull explores in his chapter (I.4). While Karl Marx was one of the first major social thinkers to explore how the ideologies of the ruling class become the mainstream ideas of the time, theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Stuart Hall helped develop the more nuanced concept of hegemony that Lull defines as "the power or dominance that one social group holds over others" (p. 34). As Lull points out,

> Owners and managers of media industries can produce and reproduce the content, inflections, and tones of ideas favorable to them far more easily than other social groups because they manage key socializing institutions, thereby guaranteeing that their points of view are constantly and attractively cast into the public arena. (p. 34)

Though many critical studies of media owned by private companies use the concept of hegemony, at first it seems more difficult to apply this notion to the Internet, which has been seen as a kind of "public sphere" in which many voices are heard, because there are often-obscured, profit-oriented entities in control of production and distribution of online content. Indeed, somewhat grandiose and utopian claims were made in some circles about the new era of free expression and democratic cultural production the Internet would bring with it. But as John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney remind us in "The Internet's Unholy Marriage to Capitalism" (I.5), there is a need to think more critically about the relationship between the Internet and capitalism. They argue: "There was—and remains—extraordinary democratic and revolutionary promise in this communication revolution. But technologies do not ride roughshod over history, regardless of their immense powers. They are developed in a social, political, and economic context" (p. 37).

The authors provide an account of the Internet's origins and an extensive analysis of the ways its development has been shaped by market forces. They conclude:

> In a world in which private riches grow at the expense of public wealth, it should not surprise us that what seemed at first the enormous potential of the internet—representing a whole new realm of public wealth, analogous to the discovery of a whole new continent, and pointing to the possibility of a vast new democratic sphere of unrestricted communication—has vaporized in a couple of decades. (p. 41)

Like the Internet, television was also considered by some as a medium that could help spread knowledge, debate, and diverse perspectives around the globe. However, as Michael Morgan and James Shanahan's chapter on television and the **cultivation** of **authoritarianism** (I.6) demonstrates, television narratives are no less ideological than other forms of media storytelling in their contributions to our perceptions and attitudes about the world and our place in it. Morgan and Shanahan's contribution to this volume is based in the important theory of cultivation first advanced by the late media scholar George Gerbner. Gerbner posited that in the television age much of our sense of reality came to us through the screens that dominated our living rooms. As Morgan and Shanahan explain,

> Gerbner and his colleagues argued that heavy viewers of television drama tended, over time, to absorb images and lessons from the consistent messages of television's story system. Noting that television messages often tend toward a formulaic demonstration of power that includes the frequent use of violence, Gerbner et al. showed that heavy television exposure cultivates a sense of fear, anxiety, and mistrust, with worrisome implications. (p. 46)

Morgan and Shanahan's chapter focuses on the 2016 election season and the rise of Donald Trump as they ask, "might television viewing . . . contribute to the level of support for the candidacy of Donald Trump?" (p. 47) Operating out of the assumption that stories matter and that television is more than "just entertainment," cultivation researchers argue that television texts, like all media and popular culture texts, contain ideological messages that influence the worldviews of their audiences.

Analysis of the ideological dimensions of popular images and narratives is thus an important component in understanding how media texts work, especially when linked with background knowledge about the producers' political and economic interests; however, as suggested by the Morgan and Shanahan chapter, there is another element that students of media culture need to take into account. Cultivation research is based in comparison of the content of television messages to the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of heavy viewers of those messages. Thus, these researchers go beyond analysis of content to examine the impact of that content on audiences. And, irrespective of whether any media text appears to encode dominant or subversive cultural ideas, Kellner's cultural studies approach also reminds us that we cannot simply assume that we know how consumers of media texts actually read or **decode** them (constructing meaning from texts for themselves). For that piece of the equation, we must turn to studies of audience reception—how particular media consumers understand and use media texts.

Scholars widely agree that consumers of the media should not be conceptualized as passive pawns of media imagery, completely controlled by the dominant culture, but there are several different ways of understanding audience activity. First, according to the influential concept of **oppositional readings,** initiated by Stuart Hall (and also discussed by Kellner in I.1), the meaning of media texts cannot be established by only one critic's decoding of the text—no matter how subtle and full—because all texts are to some degree "open" (**polysemic,** or capable of multiple meanings). Therefore, we must also seek to know how audiences, both as individuals and as members of various communities, bring different experiences and complex identities to the processes of reading/viewing by which they actually feel, think about, and come to understand these texts.

According to Hall's paradigm, audience members may do one of three things in relation to the intended or **preferred meanings** encoded in the text: (1) accept them uncritically and read the text as

its producers intended, (2) produce a **negotiated reading** (partially **resisting** the encoded meaning), or (3) create an oppositional reading of their own, completely rejecting the preferred meaning of the text.

Janice Radway's classic ethnographic research into audience reception of romance novels was an early and influential study of how specific readers actually engage with a mass media text. In "Women Read the Romance" (I.7), Radway looks closely at how a group of White lower-income women in the 1970s and 1980s negotiated with the genre of the romance novel, in terms of both the books they selected and the ways they actually read the text and appropriated and changed its meanings. Radway acknowledges that "romance reading . . . can function as a kind of training for the all-too-common task of reinterpreting a spouse's unsettling actions as the signs of passion, devotion, and love" (p. 58). Yet she sees, in these women's selection of certain books as favorites and their rejection of others, an active tendency to critique certain patriarchal masculine behaviors, substituting an ideal of the "nurturing" male that might have been miss-ing in their own family lives. Through the act of reading itself, she argues, this group of women romance readers escaped temporarily from familial demands on their time, and Radway interprets this action as potential **resistance** to, or refusal to accept completely, the patriarchal restrictions on their lives. While encouraging respect for women's own experiences as cultural consumers, however, Radway warns that we should not confuse modes of resistance that reside in textual consumption with more practical, real-world modes of resistance (such as organized protest against the patriarchal abuses women meet in real life).

Radway's work helped establish the field of media audience studies, which has since developed into a rich body of research and interpretation. At the same time, over the past two decades or so, a distinct subfield of audience study has emerged, devoted to one particularly active kind of text consumer—the fan. In an early and influential essay, "*Star Trek* Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching" (I.8), Henry Jenkins III drew our attention to "a largely unexplored terrain of cultural activity, a subterra-nean network of readers and writers who remake [media texts] in their own image." For Jenkins and many who have been influenced by his work,

> "fandom" is a vehicle for marginalized subterranean groups (women, the young, gays, etc.) to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; it is a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a fashion that serves different interests, a way of transforming mass culture into popular culture. (p. 63)

Drawing on the theories of Michel de Certeau and his own studies of fans organized around their mutual appreciation of the long-running science fiction television series about space exploration by a team of diverse characters, Jenkins brought to light a fascinating body of fan fiction, written for the most part by female fans, whom he conceptualized as

> reluctant poachers who steal only those things that they truly love, who seize televisual property only to protect it against abuse by those who created it and who have claimed ownership over it. In embrac-ing popular texts, the fans claim those works as their own, remaking them in their own image. . . . Consumption becomes production; reading becomes writing; spectator culture becomes participatory culture. (p. 68)

Following Jenkins's lead, contemporary fandom studies foreground the **agency** and creativity of culture consumers who go on to produce their own cultural materials, often through such "poaching" of ideas and materials from the original mass-produced texts. Emergent digital technologies have clearly added to the opportunities available to do-it-yourself cultural producers outside of the commercial world of the media industries, including fans. Moreover, some individuals and groups have taken advantage of **social networking** platforms to facilitate not only fandom but also political activism.

Some critical media theorists have warned (as Kellner does) of the dangers of overemphasizing the power of media audiences to resist or effectively challenge the dominant ideologies that normalize social and economic inequities, simply through their activities as consumers—even if they become devoted fans. After all, as Morgan and Shanahan's chapter reminds us, it is the heaviest users of media content that are

most likely to accept the ideological tendencies of the content they love, without even being consciously aware that they are being influenced.

Throughout this section of the anthology, the notions of both media power and resistance to that power have already frequently surfaced, as they will throughout the rest of the book. Richard Butsch provides us with a detailed and challenging discussion of these notions in our final chapter of the section, "Reconsidering Resistance *and* Incorporation" (I.9). Some strands of cultural studies work on the media tend to ignore the more structured analysis of political economy, which foregrounds the inequality of access to media resources. Butsch's chapter is both a critique of an overly celebratory use of the idea of audience resistance and a call for a more nuanced understanding of how resistance and "incorporation" (the process by which resistance is co-opted and contained within hegemony) work together. In this way, he works to bridge competing paradigms within media studies.

We have aimed in this book to contribute to the project Butsch calls for. We invite you, the reader, to engage in a critical analysis of your own media consumption, exploring how you may be at times resisting the dominant ideologies while at other times unwittingly internalizing the "corporate voice" and weaving it into your own social construction of reality.

1 CULTURAL STUDIES, MULTICULTURALISM, AND MEDIA CULTURE

Douglas Kellner

Radio, television, film, popular music, the Internet and social networking, and other forms and products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities, including our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our conception of class, ethnicity and race, nationality, sexuality; and division of the world into categories of "us" and "them." Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture. Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed.

We are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society, and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages. The media are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy: They contribute to educating us how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire—and what not to. The media are forms of pedagogy that teach us how to be men and women. They show us how to dress, look, and consume; how to react to members of different social groups; how to be popular and successful and how to avoid failure; and how to conform to the dominant system of norms, values, practices, and institutions. Consequently, the gaining of critical media literacy is an important resource for individuals and citizens in learning how to cope with a seductive cultural environment. Learning how to read, criticize, and resist sociocultural manipulation can help one empower oneself in relation to dominant forms of media and culture. It can enhance individual sovereignty vis-à-vis media culture and give people more power over their cultural environment.

In this chapter, I will discuss the potential contributions of a cultural studies perspective to media critique and literacy. From the 1980s to the present, cultural studies has emerged as a set of approaches to the study of culture, society, and politics. The project was inaugurated by the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which developed a variety of critical methods for the analysis, interpretation, and criticism of cultural artifacts. Through a set of internal debates, and responding to social struggles and movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Birmingham group came to focus on the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, including media culture. They were among the first to study the effects on audiences of newspapers, radio, television, film, advertising, and other popular cultural forms. They also focused on how various audiences interpreted and used media culture differently, analyzing the factors that made different audiences respond in contrasting ways to various media texts, and how they made use of media in their personal and social lives in a multiplicity of ways.[1]

Through studies of youth subcultures, British cultural studies demonstrated how culture came to constitute distinct forms of identity and group membership for young people. In the view of

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This piece is an original essay that was commissioned for this volume. It has been updated from an earlier version that appeared in the third edition.

cultural studies, media culture provides the materials for constructing views of the world, behavior, and even identities. Those who uncritically follow the dictates of media culture tend to "mainstream" themselves, conforming to the dominant fashion, values, and behavior. Yet cultural studies is also interested in how subcultural groups and individuals resist dominant forms of culture and identity, creating their own style and identities. Those who obey ruling dress and fashion codes, behavior, and political ideologies thus produce their identities as members of specific social groupings within contemporary U.S. culture, such as White, middle-class, conservative American men, or lesbian African American women, for instance. Persons who identify with subcultures, such as punk culture or Latino subcultures, dress and act differently than those in the mainstream and thus create oppositional identities, defining themselves against standard models.

Cultural studies insists that culture must be studied within the social relations and system through which culture is produced and consumed and that the study of culture is thus intimately bound up with the study of society, politics, and economics. Cultural studies shows how media culture articulates the dominant values, political ideologies, and social developments and novelties of the era. It conceives of U.S. culture and society as a contested terrain, with various groups and ideologies struggling for dominance (Kellner, 1995, 2010). Television, film, music, and other popular cultural forms are thus often liberal or conservative, or occasionally express more radical or oppositional views—and can be contradictory and ambiguous as well in their meanings and messages.

Cultural studies is valuable because it provides some tools that enable individuals to read and interpret culture critically. It also subverts distinctions between "high" and "low" culture by considering a wide continuum of cultural artifacts, from opera and novels to soap operas and TV wrestling, while refusing to erect any specific elite cultural hierarchies or canons. Earlier mainstream academic approaches to culture tended to be primarily literary and elitist, dismissing media culture as banal, trashy, and not worthy of serious attention. The project of cultural studies, in contrast, avoids cutting the field of culture into high and low, or popular versus elite. Such distinctions are difficult

to maintain and generally serve as a front for normative aesthetic valuations and, often, a political program (i.e., either dismissing mass culture for high culture/art or celebrating what is deemed "popular" while scorning "elitist" high culture).

Cultural studies allows us to examine and critically scrutinize the whole range of culture without prior prejudices toward one or another sort of cultural text, institution, or practice. It also opens the way toward more differentiated political, rather than aesthetic, valuations of cultural artifacts in which one attempts to distinguish critical and oppositional from conformist and conservative moments in a given cultural artifact. For instance, studies of Hollywood film show how key 1960s films promoted the views of radicals and the counterculture and how film in the 1970s was a battleground between liberal and conservative positions; late 1970s films, however, tended toward conservative positions that helped elect Ronald Reagan as president (see Kellner & Ryan, 1988). During the Bush–Cheney era, there were many oppositional films, such as the work of Michael Moore, and liberal films that featured black heroes and anticipated the election of Barack Obama (Kellner, 2010). For instance, African American actor Will Smith was the top grossing U.S. actor during the Bush–Cheney era, Denzel Washington won two Academy Awards and played a wide range of characters, and Morgan Freeman played a president, corporate executive, crime figure, and even God, attesting that U.S. publics were ready to see African Americans in major positions in all arenas of society. This is not to say that Hollywood "caused" Obama's surprising victory in 2008 but that U.S. media culture anticipated a black president.

There is an intrinsically critical and political dimension to the project of cultural studies that distinguishes it from objectivist and apolitical academic approaches to the study of culture and society. British cultural studies, for example, analyzed culture historically in the context of its societal origins and effects. It situated culture within a theory of social production and reproduction, specifying the ways cultural forms served either to further social domination or to enable people to resist and struggle against domination. It analyzed society as a hierarchical and antagonistic set of social relations characterized by the oppression of subordinate class, gender, race, ethnic,

and national strata. Employing the Italian sociologist Antonio Gramsci's (1971) model of hegemony and counterhegemony, it sought to analyze "hegemonic" or ruling, social, and cultural forces of domination and to seek "counterhegemonic" forces of resistance and struggle. The project was aimed at social transformation and attempted to specify forces of domination and resistance to aid the process of political struggle and emancipation from oppression and domination.

For cultural studies, the concept of ideology is of central importance, for dominant ideologies serve to reproduce social relations of domination and subordination.[2] Ideologies of class, for instance, celebrate upper-class life and denigrate the working class. Ideologies of gender promote sexist representations of women, oppressive ideologies of sexuality promote homophobia, and ideologies of race use racist representations of people of color and various minority groups. Ideologies make inequalities and subordination appear natural and just and thus induce consent to relations of domination. Contemporary societies are structured by opposing groups who have different political ideologies (liberal, conservative, radical, etc.), and cultural studies specifies what, if any, ideologies are operative in a given cultural artifact (which could involve, of course, the specification of ambiguities and ideological contradictions). In the course of this study, I will provide some examples of how different ideologies are operative in media cultural texts and will accordingly provide examples of ideological analysis and critique.

Because of its focus on representations of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and its critique of ideologies that promote various forms of oppression, cultural studies lends itself to a multiculturalist program that demonstrates how culture reproduces certain forms of racism, sexism, and biases against members of subordinate classes, social groups, or alternative lifestyles. Multiculturalism affirms the worth of different types of culture and cultural groups, claiming, for instance, that Black; Latino; Asian; Native American; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ); and other oppressed and marginalized voices have their own validity and importance. An insurgent multiculturalism attempts to show how various people's voices and experiences are silenced and omitted from mainstream culture, and struggles to aid in the articulation of diverse views, experiences, and cultural forms from groups excluded from the mainstream. This makes it a target of conservative forces that wish to preserve the existing canons of White male, Eurocentric privilege, and thus attack multiculturalism in cultural wars raging from the 1960s to the present over education, the arts, and the limits of free expression.

Cultural studies thus promotes a critical multiculturalist politics and media pedagogy that aims to make people sensitive to how relations of power and domination are "encoded" in cultural texts, such as those of television and film, or how new technologies and media such as the Internet and social networking can be used for oppositional pedagogical or political purposes (Kahn & Kellner, 2008). A critical cultural studies approach also specifies how people can resist the dominant encoded meanings and produce their own critical and alternative readings and media artifacts, as well as new identities and social relations. Cultural studies can show how media culture manipulates and indoctrinates us and thus can empower individuals to resist the dominant meanings in media cultural products and produce their own meanings. It can also point to moments of resistance and criticism within media culture and thus help promote development of more critical consciousness.

A critical cultural studies approach—embodied in many of the articles collected in this reader—thus develops concepts and analyses that will enable readers to analytically dissect the artifacts of contemporary media culture and gain power over their cultural environment. By exposing the entire field of culture and media technology to knowledgeable scrutiny, cultural studies provides a broad, comprehensive framework to undertake studies of culture, politics, and society for the purposes of individual empowerment and social and political struggle and transformation. In the following pages, I will therefore indicate some of the chief components of the type of cultural studies I find most useful for understanding contemporary U.S. society, culture, and politics.

COMPONENTS OF A CRITICAL CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACH

As a theoretical apparatus, cultural studies contains a threefold project of analyzing the production and political economy of culture, cultural texts, and the audience reception of those texts and their effects in a concrete sociohistorical context.

This comprehensive approach avoids too narrowly focusing on one dimension of the project to the exclusion of others. To avoid such limitations, I propose a multiperspectival approach that (a) discusses production and political economy, (b) engages in textual analysis, and (c) studies the reception and use of cultural texts.[3]

PRODUCTION AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Since cultural production has been neglected in many modes of recent cultural studies, it is important to stress the importance of analyzing cultural texts within their system of production and distribution, often referred to as the political economy of culture.[4] Inserting texts into the system of culture within which they are produced and distributed can help elucidate features and effects of the texts that textual analysis alone might miss or downplay. Rather than being an antithetical approach to culture, political economy can actually contribute to textual analysis and critique. The system of production often determines, in part, what sorts of artifacts will be produced, what structural limits will determine what can and cannot be said and shown, and what sorts of audience effects the text may generate.

Study of the codes of television, film, or popular music, for instance, is enhanced by studying the formulas and conventions of production, which are shaped by economic and technical, as well as aesthetic and cultural, considerations. Dominant cultural forms are structured by well-defined rules and conventions, and the study of the production of culture can help elucidate the codes actually in play. Because of the demands of the format of radio or music television, for instance, most popular songs are 3 to 5 minutes long, fitting into the format of the distribution system, just as the length of content on YouTube or Twitter has technical constraints. From the early years of the Internet to the present, there have been legal and political conflicts concerning file sharing of music, other forms of media culture, and information, situating media culture in a force field of political conflict. Because of their control by giant corporations oriented primarily toward profit, film and television production in the United States is dominated by specific genres such as talk and game shows, soap operas, situation comedies,

action/adventure series, reality TV series, and so on, which are familiar and popular with audiences. This economic factor explains why there are cycles of certain genres and subgenres, sequelmania in the film industry, crossovers of popular films into television series, and a certain homogeneity in products constituted within systems of production marked by relatively rigid generic codes, formulaic conventions, and well-defined ideological boundaries.

Likewise, study of political economy can help determine the limits and range of political and ideological discourses and effects. My study of television in the United States, for instance, disclosed that the takeover of the television networks by major transnational corporations and communications conglomerates in the 1980s was part of a "right turn" within U.S. society, whereby powerful corporate groups won control of the state and the mainstream media (Kellner, 1990). For example, during the 1980s, all three networks were taken over by major corporate conglomerates: ABC was taken over in 1985 by Capital Cities, NBC was taken over by GE, and CBS was taken over by the Tisch Financial Group. Both ABC and NBC sought corporate mergers, and this motivation, along with other benefits derived from Reaganism, might well have influenced them to downplay criticisms of Reagan and generally support his conservative programs, military adventures, and simulated presidency.

Corporate conglomeratization has intensified further, and today Time Warner, Disney, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, Viacom, and other global media conglomerates control ever more domains of the production and distribution of culture (McChesney, 2000, 2007). In this global context, one cannot really analyze the role of the media in the Gulf War, for instance, without also analyzing the production and political economy of news and information, as well as the actual text of the Gulf War and its reception by its audience (see Kellner, 1992). Likewise, the ownership by conservative corporations of dominant media corporations helps explain mainstream media support of the Bush–Cheney administration and its policies, such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Kellner, 2003, 2005).

Looking toward entertainment, female pop music stars such as Madonna, Britney Spears, Beyoncé, and Lady Gaga deploy the tools of the glamour industry and media spectacle to become

icons of fashion, beauty, style, and sexuality, as well as purveyors of music. And in appraising the full social impact of pornography, one needs to be aware of the immense profits generated by the sex industry and the potential for harm endemic to the production process of, say, pornographic films and videos, and not just dwell on the texts themselves and their effects on audiences.

Furthermore, in an era of globalization, one must be aware of the global networks that produce and distribute culture in the interests of profit and corporate hegemony. The Internet and new media link the globe and distribute more culture to more people than at any time in history, yet giant media conglomerates and institutions, such as the state, that can exert censorship continue to be major forces of cultural hegemony (see McChesney 2013). Yet political economy alone does not hold the key to cultural studies, and important as it is, it has limitations as a single approach. Some political economy analyses reduce the meanings and effects of texts to rather circumscribed and reductive ideological functions, arguing that media culture merely reflects the ideology of the ruling economic elite that controls the culture industries and is nothing more than a vehicle for capitalist ideology. It is true that media culture overwhelmingly supports capitalist values, but it is also a site of intense struggle between different races, classes, genders, and social groups. It is also possible in the age of new media and social networking for consumers to become producers of their own media content and form, including oppositional voices and resistance. Thus, to fully grasp the nature and effects of media culture, one needs to develop methods to analyze the full range of its meanings and effects that are sensitive to the always mutating terrain of media culture and technology.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The products of media culture require multidimensional close textual readings to analyze their various forms of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies, image construction, and effects. "Reading" an artifact of media culture involves interpreting the forms and meanings of elements in a music video or television ad as one might read and interpret a book. There has been a wide range of types of textual criticism of media culture, from quantitative content analysis that dissects the number of, say, episodes of violence in a text to qualitative study that examines representations of women, Blacks, or other groups, or applies various critical theories to unpack the meanings of the texts or explicate how texts function to produce meaning. Traditionally, the qualitative analysis of texts attended to the formal artistic properties of imaginative literature—such as style, verbal imagery, characterization, narrative structure, and point of view. From the 1960s on, however, literary-formalist textual analysis has been enhanced by methods derived from semiotics, a system for investigating the creation of meaning not only in written languages but also in other, nonverbal codes, such as the visual and auditory languages of film and TV.

Semiotics analyzes how linguistic and nonlinguistic cultural "signs" form systems of meanings, as when giving someone a rose is interpreted as a sign of love or getting an A on a college paper is a sign of mastery of the rules of the specific assignment. Semiotic analysis can be connected with genre criticism (the study of conventions governing long-established types of cultural forms, such as soap operas) to reveal how the codes and forms of particular genres construct certain meanings. Situation comedies, for instance, classically follow a conflict/resolution model that demonstrates how to solve certain social problems with correct actions and values, and they thus provide morality tales of proper and improper behavior. Soap operas, by contrast, proliferate problems and provide messages concerning the endurance and suffering needed to get through life's endless miseries, while generating positive and negative models of social behavior. And advertising shows how commodity solutions solve problems of popularity, acceptance, success, and the like.

A semiotic and genre analysis of the film *Rambo* (1982), for instance, would show how it follows the conventions of the Hollywood genre of the war film that dramatizes conflicts between the United States and its "enemies" (see Kellner, 1995). Semiotics describes how the images of the villains are constructed according to the codes of World War II movies and how the resolution of the conflict and happy ending follow the tradition of Hollywood classical cinema, which portray the victory of good over evil. Semiotic analysis would also include study of the strictly cinematic and formal elements of a film such as *Rambo,* dissecting the ways camera angles present Rambo as a god or how slow-motion images of him gliding through the jungle code him

as a force of nature. Formal analysis of a film also includes how lighting is used to code characters as "good" or "evil," or how any of the technical features of film production can help generate meanings.

Similarly, a semiotic analysis of James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) would reveal how the images in the film present an anti-militarist and pro-ecological agenda, although the narrative form celebrates a White, male savior, replicating more conservative narratives. *Avatar* also demonstrates how fantasy artifacts can project a wealth of political and ideological meanings, often ambiguous or contradictory. Discussions of *Avatar* have also generated heated debates in the politics of representation, concerning how the film has represented gender, sexuality, race, the military, and the environment, as well as other themes and dimensions of the film (see Kellner, 2010).

The textual analysis of cultural studies thus combines formalist analysis with critique of how cultural meanings convey specific ideologies of gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and other ideological dimensions. Ideologies refer to ideas or images that construct the superiority of one class or group over others (i.e., men over women, Whites over people of color, ruling elites over working-class people, etc.) and thus reproduce and legitimate different forms of social domination. Ideological textual analysis should deploy a wide range of methods to fully explicate each dimension of ideological domination across representations of class, race, gender, and sexuality, and other forms of domination and subordination and to show how specific narratives serve interests of domination and oppression, contest it, or are ambiguous (as with many examples of media culture). Each critical method focuses on certain features of a text from a specific perspective: The perspective spotlights, or illuminates, some features of a text while ignoring others. Marxist methods tend to focus on class, for instance, while feminist approaches highlight gender, critical race theory emphasizes race and ethnicity, and gay and lesbian theories explicate sexuality. Yet today, the concept of "intersectionality" is often used, and many feminists, Marxists, critical race scholars, and other forms of cultural studies depict how gender, class, race, sexuality, and other components intersect and co-construct each other in complex cultural ways (see Crenshaw, 1991).

Various critical methods have their own strengths and limitations, their optics and blind spots. Traditionally, Marxian ideology critiques have been strong on class and historical contextualization and weak on formal analysis, while some versions are highly "reductionist," reducing textual analysis to denunciation of ruling class ideology. Feminism excels in gender analysis and in some versions is formally sophisticated, drawing on such methods as psychoanalysis and semiotics, although some versions are reductive, and early feminism often limited itself to analysis of images of gender. Psychoanalysis in turn calls for the interpretation of unconscious contents and meaning, which can articulate latent meanings in a text, as when Alfred Hitchcock's dream sequences project cinematic symbols that illuminate his characters' dilemmas or when the image of the female character in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), framed against the bar of her bed, suggests her sexual frustration, imprisonment in middle-class family life, and need to revolt.

Of course, each reading of a text is only one possible reading from one critic's subjective position, no matter how multiperspectival, and may or may not be the reading preferred by audiences (which themselves will be significantly different according to class, race, gender, ethnicity, ideology, and so on). Because there is a split between textual encoding and audience decoding, there is always the possibility for a multiplicity of readings of any text of media culture (Hall, 1980b). There are limits to the openness or polysemic nature of any text, of course, and textual analysis can explicate the parameters of possible readings and delineate perspectives that aim at illuminating the text and its cultural and ideological effects. Such analysis also provides the materials for criticizing misreadings, or readings that are one-sided and incomplete. Yet to further carry through a cultural studies analysis, one must also examine how diverse audiences actually read media texts and attempt to determine what impact or influence they have on audience thought and behavior.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION AND USE OF MEDIA CULTURE

All texts are subject to multiple readings depending on the perspectives and subject positions of the reader. Members of distinct genders, classes, races, nations, regions, sexual preferences, and political ideologies are going to read texts differently, and cultural studies can illuminate why diverse audiences interpret texts in various, sometimes

conflicting, ways. Media culture provides materials for individuals and communities to create identities and meanings, and cultural studies work on audiences detects a variety of potentially empowering uses of cultural forms. One of the merits of cultural studies is that it has focused on audience reception and fan appropriation, and this focus provides one of its major contributions, although there are also some limitations and problems with the standard cultural studies approaches to the audience.[5]

Ethnographic research studies people and their groups and cultures and is frequently used in an attempt to determine how media texts affect specific audiences and shape their beliefs and behavior. Ethnographic cultural studies have indicated some of the various ways audiences use and appropriate texts, often to empower themselves. For example, teenagers use video games and music television to escape from the demands of a disciplinary society. Males use sports media events as a terrain of fantasy identification, in which they feel empowered as "their" team or star triumphs. Such sports events also generate a form of community currently being lost in the privatized media and consumer culture of our time. Indeed, fandoms of all sorts, from *Star Trek* fans ("Trekkies"/"Trekkers") to devotees of various soap operas, reality shows, or current highly popular TV series, also form communities that enable them to relate to others who share their interests and hobbies. Some fans, in fact, actively re-create their favorite cultural forms (see examples in Jenkins, 1992; Lewis, 1992; and Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007). Other studies have shown that audiences can subvert the intentions of the producers or managers of the cultural industries that supply them, as when astute young media users laugh at obvious attempts to hype certain characters, shows, or products (see de Certeau, 1984, for more examples of audiences constructing meaning and engaging in practices in critical and subversive ways).

The emphasis on active audience reception and appropriation, then, has helped cultural studies overcome the previously one-sided textualist orientations to culture and also has directed focus to the actual political effects texts may have. By combining quantitative and qualitative research, audience reception and fandom studies—including some of the chapters in this reader—are providing important contributions to how people interact with cultural texts.

Yet I see several problems with reception studies as they have been constituted within cultural studies, particularly in the United States. Importantly, there is a danger that class will be downplayed as a significant variable that structures audience decoding and use of cultural texts. Cultural studies in England were particularly sensitive to class differences—as well as subcultural differences—in the use and reception of cultural texts, but I have noted many dissertations, books, and articles in cultural studies in the United States in which attention to class has been downplayed or is missing altogether. This is not surprising, as a neglect of class as a constitutive feature of culture and society is endemic in the American academy in most disciplines.

There is also the reverse danger, however, of exaggerating the constitutive force of class and downplaying, or ignoring, such other variables as gender and ethnicity. Staiger (1992) noted that Fiske, building on Hartley, lists seven "subjectivity positions" that are important in cultural reception—"self, gender, age-group, family, class, nation, ethnicity"—and proposes adding sexuality. All these factors, and no doubt more, interact in shaping how audiences receive and use texts and must be taken into account in studying cultural reception, for audiences decode and use texts according to the specific constituents of their class, race or ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, and so on.

Furthermore, I would warn against a tendency to romanticize the "active audience" by claiming that all audiences produce their own meanings and denying that media culture may have powerful manipulative effects. There is a tendency within the cultural studies tradition of reception research to dichotomize between dominant and oppositional readings (Hall, 1980b). "Dominant" readings are those in which audiences appropriate texts in line with the interests of the dominant culture and the ideological intentions of a text, as when audiences feel pleasure in the restoration of male power, law and order, and social stability at the end of a film such as *Die Hard,* after the hero and representatives of authority eliminate the terrorists who had taken over a high-rise corporate headquarters. An "oppositional" reading, in contrast, celebrates the resistance to this reading in audience appropriation of a text. For example, Fiske (1993) observed (and implicitly approved) resistance to dominant readings when homeless individuals in a shelter cheered the violent destruction of police and authority figures during repeated viewings of a videotape of *Die Hard*.

Fiske's study illustrates a tendency in cultural studies to celebrate resistance per se without

distinguishing between types and forms of resistance (a similar problem resides with indiscriminate celebration of audience pleasure in certain reception studies). For example, some would argue that the violent resistance to social authority valorized in this reading of *Die Hard* glamorizes brutal, masculinist behavior and the use of physical violence to solve social problems. It is true that theorists of revolution, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, and Herbert Marcuse, among others, have argued that violence can be either emancipatory, when directed at forces of oppression, or reactionary, when directed at popular forces struggling against oppression. In contrast, many feminists and those in the Gandhian tradition see all violence against others as a form of brutal, masculinist behavior, and many people see it as a problematic form of conflict resolution. Thus, audience pleasure in violent resistance cannot be valorized per se as a progressive element of the appropriation of cultural texts. Instead, difficult discriminations must be made as to whether the resistance, oppositional reading, or pleasure in a given experience should be understood as progressive or reactionary, emancipatory or destructive.

Thus, while emphasis on the audience and reception was an excellent correction to the one-sidedness of purely textual analysis, I believe that in recent years, cultural studies has overemphasized reception and textual analysis while underemphasizing the production of culture and its political economy. This type of cultural studies fetishizes audience reception studies and neglects both production and textual analysis, thus producing populist celebrations of the text and audience pleasure in its use of cultural artifacts. This approach, taken to an extreme, would lose its critical perspective and put a positive gloss on audience experience of whatever is being studied. Such studies also might lose sight of the manipulative and conservative effects of certain types of media culture and thus serve the interests of the cultural industries as they are presently constituted.

No doubt, media effects are complex and controversial, and it is the merit of cultural studies to make the analysis of such effects an important part of its agenda. Previous studies of the audience and reception of media privileged ethnographic studies that selected slices of the vast media audiences, usually from the sites where researchers themselves lived. Such studies are invariably limited, and broader effects research can indicate how the most popular artifacts of media culture have a wide range of effects.

One new way to research media effects is to use Google, or databases that collect media texts, to trace certain effects of media artifacts through analysis of references to them in the journalistic media. Likewise, a new terrain of Internet audience research studies how fans act in chat rooms or on fansites devoted to their favorite artifacts of media culture. New media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other social networking sites produce forums for more active audiences, as well as new sites for audience research. As audiences critically discuss or celebrate their preferred artifacts of media culture and, in some cases, produce their own versions, disseminated to audiences throughout the Internet and via new digital technologies, media culture expands its reach and power while audiences can feel that they are part of their preferred cultural sites and phenomena. Studies are proliferating in this field, examining how Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other new media are used by individuals and groups in diverse ways, from sharing pictures and media content to social networking to political expression and organizing and pedagogical purposes (Kellner & Kim, 2010).

TOWARD A CULTURAL STUDIES THAT IS CRITICAL, MULTICULTURAL, AND MULTIPERSPECTIVAL

To avoid the one-sidedness of textual analysis approaches or audience and reception studies, I propose that cultural studies itself be multiperspectival, getting at culture from the perspectives of political economy, text analysis, and audience reception, as outlined above. Textual analysis should use a multiplicity of perspectives and critical methods, and audience reception studies should delineate the wide range of subject positions, or perspectives, through which audiences appropriate culture. This requires a multicultural approach that sees the importance of analyzing the dimensions of class, race and ethnicity, and gender and sexual preference within the texts of media culture, while also studying their impact on how audiences read and interpret media culture.

In addition, a critical cultural studies approach attacks sexism, heterosexism, racism, and bias against specific social groups (i.e., gays, intellectuals, seniors, etc.) and criticizes texts that promote any kind of domination or oppression. As

an example of how considerations of production, textual analysis, and audience readings can fruitfully intersect in cultural studies, let us reflect on the Madonna phenomenon. Madonna came on the scene in the moment of Reaganism and embodied the materialistic and consumer-oriented ethos of the 1980s ("Material Girl"). She also appeared in a time of dramatic image proliferation, associated with MTV, fashion fever, and intense marketing of products. Madonna was one of the first MTV music video superstars who consciously crafted images to attract a mass audience. Her early music videos were aimed at teenage girls (the Madonna wannabes), but she soon incorporated Black, Hispanic, and minority audiences with her images of interracial sex and multicultural "family" in her concerts. She also appealed to gay and lesbian audiences, as well as feminist and academic audiences, as her videos became more complex and political (e.g., "Like a Prayer," "Express Yourself," "Vogue," etc.).

Thus, Madonna's popularity was in large part a function of her marketing strategies and her production of music videos and images that appealed to diverse audiences. To conceptualize the meanings and effects in her music, films, concerts, and public relations stunts requires that her artifacts be interpreted within the context of their production and reception, which involves discussion of MTV, the music industry, concerts, marketing, and the production of images (see Kellner, 1995). Understanding Madonna's popularity also requires focus on audiences, not just as individuals but as members of specific groups—such as teenage girls, who were empowered by Madonna in their struggles for individual identity, or gays, who were also empowered by her incorporation of alternative images of sexuality within popular mainstream cultural artifacts. Yet appraising the politics and effects of Madonna also requires analysis of how her work might merely reproduce a consumer culture that defines identity in terms of images and consumption. It would make an interesting project to examine how former Madonna fans view the superstar's evolution and recent incarnations, such as her many relationships and

marriages and ongoing world tours, as well as to examine how contemporary fans view Madonna in an age that embraces pop singers such as Beyoncé and Lady Gaga.

Likewise, Michael Jackson's initial popularity derived from carefully managed media spectacles, first in the Jackson Five and then in his own career. Jackson achieved his superstar status, like Madonna, from his MTV-disseminated music videos and spectacular concert performances, in which promotion, image management, and his publicity apparatus made him the King of Pop. While, like Madonna, his frequent tabloid and media presence helped promote his career, media spectacle and tabloids also derailed it, as he was charged with child abuse in well-publicized cases. After his death in 2009, however, Jackson had a remarkable surge in popularity as his works were disseminated through the media, including new media and social networking sites.

CULTURAL STUDIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

As discussed above, a cultural studies that is critical and multicultural provides comprehensive approaches to culture that can be applied to a wide variety of media artifacts, from advertising and pornography to Beyoncé and the *Twilight* series, from reality TV and *World of Warcraft* to Barbie and *Avatar*. Its comprehensive perspectives encompass political economy, textual analysis, and audience research and provide critical and political perspectives that enable individuals to dissect the meanings, messages, and effects of dominant cultural forms. Cultural studies is thus part of a critical media pedagogy that enables individuals to resist media manipulation and increase their freedom and individuality. It can empower people to gain sovereignty over their culture and struggle for alternative cultures and political change. Thus, cultural studies is not just another academic fad but, rather, can be part of a struggle for a better society and a better life.

NOTES

1. For more information on British cultural studies, see Agger (1992); Durham and Kellner (2012); During (1992, 1998); Fiske (1986); Grossberg (1989); Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler (1992); Hall (1980b); Hammer and Kellner (2009); Johnson (1986–1987); O'Connor (1989); and Turner (1990). The Frankfurt school also provided much material for a critical cultural

studies approach in its works on mass culture from the 1930s through the present; on the relation between the Frankfurt school and British cultural studies, see Kellner (1997).

2. On the concept of ideology, see the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1980), Kellner (1978, 1979), Kellner and Ryan (1988), and Thompson (1990).

3. This model was adumbrated in Hall (1980a) and Johnson (1986–1987), and guided much of the early Birmingham work. Around the mid-1980s, however, the Birmingham group began to increasingly neglect the production and political economy of culture (some believe that this was always a problem with their work), and the majority of their studies became more academic, cut off from political struggle. I am thus trying to recapture the spirit of the early Birmingham project, reconstructed for our contemporary moment. For a fuller development of my conception of cultural studies, see Kellner (1992, 1995, 2001, 2010).

4. The term *political economy* calls attention to the fact that the production and distribution of culture take place within a specific economic system, constituted by relations between the state and economy. For instance, in the United States, a capitalist economy dictates that cultural production is governed by laws of the market, but the democratic imperatives of the system mean that there is some regulation of culture by the state. There are often tensions within a given society concerning how many activities should be governed by the imperatives of the market, or economics, alone and how much state regulation or intervention is desirable to ensure a wider diversity of broadcast programming, for instance, or the prohibition of phenomena agreed to be harmful, such as cigarette advertising or pornography (see Kellner, 1990; McChesney, 2007).

5. Influential cultural studies that have focused on audience reception include Ang (1985, 1996), Brunsdon and Morley (1978), Fiske (1989a, 1989b), Jenkins (1992), Lewis (1992), Morley (1986), and Radway (1983). On "fandom," see Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2007).

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2

THE MEANING OF MEMORY

Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs

George Lipsitz

THE MEANING OF MEMORY

. . . In the midst of extraordinary social change, television became the most important discursive medium in American culture. As such, it was charged with special responsibilities for making new economic and social relations credible and legitimate to audiences haunted by ghosts from the past. Urban ethnic working-class situation comedies provided one means of addressing the anxieties and contradictions emanating from the clash between the consumer present of the 1950s and collective social memory about the 1930s and 1940s.

The consumer consciousness emerging from economic and social change in postwar America conflicted with the lessons of historical experience for many middle- and working-class American families. The Great Depression of the 1930s had not only damaged the economy, it also undercut the political and cultural legitimacy of American capitalism. Herbert Hoover had been a national hero in the 1920s, with his credo of "rugged individualism" forming the basis for a widely shared cultural ideal. But the depression discredited Hoover's philosophy and made him a symbol of yesterday's blasted hopes to millions of Americans. In the 1930s, cultural ideals based on mutuality and collectivity eclipsed the previous decade's "rugged individualism" and helped propel massive union organizing drives, anti-eviction movements, and general strikes. President Roosevelt's New Deal attempted to harness and co-opt that grass roots mass activity in an attempt to restore social order and recapture credibility and legitimacy for the capitalist system (Romasco 1965). The social welfare legislation of the "Second New Deal" in 1935 went far beyond any measures previously favored by Roosevelt and most of his advisors, but radical action proved necessary for the Administration to contain the upsurge of activism that characterized the decade. Even in the private sector, industrial corporations made more concessions to workers than naked power realities necessitated because they feared the political consequences of mass disillusionment with the system (Berger 1982).

World War II ended the depression and brought prosperity, but it did so on a basis even more collective than the New Deal of the 1930s. Government intervention in the wartime economy reached unprecedented levels, bringing material reward and shared purpose to a generation raised on the deprivation and sacrifice of the depression. In the postwar years, the largest and most disruptive strike wave in American history won major improvements in the standard of living for the average worker, both through wage increases and through government commitments to insure full employment, decent housing, and expanded educational opportunities. Grass roots militancy and working-class direct action wrested concessions from a reluctant government and business elite—mostly because the public at large viewed workers' demands as more legitimate than the desires of capital (Lipsitz 1981).

Yet the collective nature of working-class mass activity in the postwar era posed severe problems for capital. In sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts, workers placed the interests of their class ahead of their own individual material aspirations. Strikes over safety and job control far outnumbered wage strikes, revealing aspirations to control the process of production that conflicted with

capitalist labor-management relations. Mass demonstrations demanding government employment and housing programs indicated a collective political response to problems previously adjudicated on a personal level. Radical challenges to the authority of capital (like the 1946 United Auto Workers' strike demand that wage increases come out of corporate profits rather than from price hikes passed on to consumers), demonstrated a social responsibility and a commitment toward redistributing wealth, rare in the history of American labor (Lipsitz 1981:47–50).

Capital attempted to regain the initiative in the postwar years by making qualified concessions to working-class pressures for redistribution of wealth and power. Rather than paying wage increases out of corporate profits, business leaders instead worked to expand the economy through increases in government spending, foreign trade, and consumer debt. Such expansion could meet the demands of workers and consumers without undermining capital's dominant role in the economy. On the presumption that "a rising tide lifts all boats," business leaders sought to connect working-class aspirations for a better life to policies that insured a commensurate rise in corporate profits, thereby leaving the distribution of wealth unaffected. Federal defense spending, highway construction programs, and home loan policies expanded the economy at home in a manner conducive to the interests of capital, while the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan provided models for enhanced access to foreign markets and raw materials for American corporations. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 banned the class-conscious collective activities most threatening to capital (mass strikes, sympathy strikes, secondary boycotts); the leaders of labor, government, and business accepted as necessity the practice of paying wage hikes for organized workers out of the pockets of consumers and unorganized workers, in the form of higher prices (Lipsitz 1981).

Commercial network television played an important role in this emerging economy, functioning as a significant object of consumer purchasers as well as an important marketing medium. Sales of sets jumped from three million during the entire decade of the 1940s to over five million a *year* during the 1950s (*TV Facts* 1980:141). But television's most important economic function came from its role as an instrument of legitimation for transformations in values initiated by the new economic imperatives of postwar America.

For Americans to accept the new world of 1950s' consumerism, they had to make a break with the past. The depression years had helped generate fears about installment buying and excessive materialism, while the New Deal and wartime mobilization had provoked suspicions about individual acquisitiveness and upward mobility. Depression era and war time scarcities of consumer goods had led workers to internalize discipline and frugality while nurturing networks of mutual support through family, ethnic, and class associations. Government policies after the war encouraged an atomized acquisitive consumerism at odds with the lessons of the past. At the same time, federal home loan policies stimulated migrations to the suburbs from traditional, urban ethnic working-class neighborhoods. The entry of television into the American home disrupted previous patterns of family life and encouraged fragmentation of the family into separate segments of the consumer market.[1] The priority of consumerism in the economy at large and on television may have seemed organic and unplanned, but conscious policy decisions by officials from both private and public sectors shaped the contours of the consumer economy and television's role within it.

COMMERCIAL TELEVISION AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

Government policies during and after World War II shaped the basic contours of home television as an advertising medium. Government-sponsored research and development during the war perfected the technology of home television while federal tax policies solidified its economic base. The government allowed corporations to deduct the cost of advertising from their taxable incomes during the war, despite the fact that rationing and defense production left business with few products to market. Consequently, manufacturers kept the names of their products before the public while lowering their tax obligations on high wartime profits. Their advertising expenditures supplied radio networks and advertising agencies with the capital reserves and business infrastructure that enabled them to dominate the television industry in the postwar era. After the war, federal antitrust action against the motion picture studios broke up the "network" system in movies, while the FCC sanctioned the network system in television. In

addition, FCC decisions to allocate stations on the narrow VHF band, to grant the networks ownership and operation rights over stations in prime markets, and to place a freeze on the licensing of new stations during the important years between 1948 and 1952 all combined to guarantee that advertising-oriented programming based on the model of radio would triumph over theater TV, educational TV, or any other form (Boddy 1985; Allen 1983). Government decisions, not market forces, established the dominance of commercial television, but these decisions reflected a view of the American economy and its needs which had become so well accepted at the top levels of business and government that it had virtually become the official state economic policy.

Fearing both renewed depression and awakened militancy among workers, influential corporate and business leaders considered increases in consumer spending—increases of 30% to 50%—to be necessary to perpetuate prosperity in the postwar era (Lipsitz 1981:46, 120–121). Defense spending for the Cold War and Korean Conflict had complemented an aggressive trade policy to improve the state of the economy, but it appeared that the key to an expanding economy rested in increased consumer spending fueled by an expansion of credit (Moore and Klein 1967; Jezer 1982). Here too, government policies led the way, especially with regard to stimulating credit purchases of homes and automobiles. During World War II, the marginal tax rate for most wage earners jumped from 4% to 25%, making the home ownership deduction more desirable. Federal housing loan policies favored construction of new single family detached suburban housing over renovation or construction of central city multifamily units. Debt-encumbered home ownership in accord with these policies stimulated construction of 30 million new housing units in just twenty years, bringing the percentage of home-owning Americans from below 40% in 1940 to more than 60% by 1960. Mortgage policies encouraging long term debt and low down payments freed capital for other consumer purchases, while government highway building policies undermined mass transit systems and contributed to increased demand for automobiles (Hartman 1982:165–168). Partly as a result of these policies, consumer spending on private cars averaged $7.5 billion per year in the 1930s and 1940s, but grew to $22 billion per year in 1950 and almost $30 billion by 1955 (Mollenkopf 1983:111).

For the first time in U.S. history, middle-class and working-class families could routinely expect to own homes or buy new cars every few years. Between 1946 and 1965 residential mortgage debt rose three times as fast as the gross national product and disposable income. Mortgage debt accounted for just under 18% of disposable income in 1946, but it grew to almost 55% by 1965 (Stone 1983:122). In order to insure eventual payment of current debts, the economy had to generate tremendous expansion and growth, further stimulating the need to increase consumer spending. Manufacturers had to find new ways of motivating consumers to buy ever increasing amounts of commodities, and television provided an important means of accomplishing that end.

Television advertised individual products, but it also provided a relentless flow of information and persuasion that placed acts of consumption at the core of everyday life. The physical fragmentation of suburban growth and declines in motion picture attendance created an audience more likely to stay at home and receive entertainment there than ever before. But television also provided a locus redefining American ethnic, class, and family identities into consumer identities. In order to accomplish this task effectively, television programs had to address some of the psychic, moral, and political obstacles to consumption among the public at large.

The television and advertising industries knew that they had to overcome these obstacles. Marketing expert and motivational specialist Ernest Dichter stated that "one of the basic problems of this prosperity is to give people that sanction and justification to enjoy it and to demonstrate that the hedonistic approach to life is a moral one, not an immoral one" (Jezer 1982:127). Dichter went on to note the many barriers that inhibited consumer acceptance of unrestrained hedonism, and he called on advertisers "to train the average citizen to accept growth of his country and its economy as *his* growth rather than as a strange and frightening event" (Dichter 1960:210). One method of encouraging that acceptance, according to Dichter, consisted of identifying new products and styles of consumption with traditional, historically sanctioned practices and behavior. He noted that such an approach held particular relevance in addressing consumers who had only recently acquired the means to spend freely and who might harbor a lingering conservatism based on their previous experiences (Dichter 1960:209). . . .

FAMILY FORMATION AND THE ECONOMY—THE TELEVISION VIEW

Advertisers incorporated their messages into urban ethnic working-class comedies through indirect and direct means. Tensions developed in the programs often found indirect resolution in commercials. Thus Jeannie MacClennan's search for an American sweetheart in one episode of *Hey Jeannie* set up commercials proclaiming the abilities of Drene shampoo to keep one prepared to accept last minute dates and of Crest toothpaste to produce an attractive smile (*Hey Jeannie:* "The Rock and Roll Kid"). Conversations about shopping for new furniture in an episode of *The Goldbergs* directed viewers' attention to furnishings in the Goldberg home provided for the show by Macy's department store in exchange for a commercial acknowledgment (*The Goldbergs:* "The In-laws").

But the content of the shows themselves offered even more direct emphasis on consumer spending. In one episode of *The Goldbergs,* Molly expresses disapproval of her future daughter-in-law's plan to buy a washing machine on the installment plan. "I know Papa and me never bought anything unless we had the money to pay for it," she intones with logic familiar to a generation with memories of the Great Depression. Her son, Sammy, confronts this "deviance" by saying, "Listen, Ma, almost everybody in this country lives above their means—and everybody enjoys it." Doubtful at first, Molly eventually learns from her children and announces her conversion to the legitimacy of installment buying by proposing that the family buy two cars so as to "live above our means—the American way" (*The Goldbergs:* "The In-laws"). In a subsequent episode, Molly's daughter, Rosalie, assumes the role of ideological tutor to her mother. When planning a move out of their Bronx apartment to a new house in the suburbs, Molly ruminates about where to place her furniture in the new home. "You don't mean we're going to take all this junk with us into a brand new house?" asks an exasperated Rosalie. With traditionalist sentiment Molly answers, "Junk? My furniture's junk? My furniture that I lived with and loved for twenty years is junk?" But in the end she accepts Rosalie's argument—even selling off all her old furniture to help meet the down payment on the new house, and deciding to buy new furniture on the installment plan (*The Goldbergs:* "Moving Day").

Chester A. Riley confronts similar choices about family and commodities in *The Life of Riley.* His wife complains that he only takes her out to the neighborhood bowling alley and restaurant, not to "interesting places." Riley searches for ways to impress her and discovers from a friend that a waiter at the fancy Club Morambo will let them eat first and pay later, at a dollar a week plus ten percent interest. "Ain't that dishonest?" asks Riley. "No, it's usury," his friend replies. Riley does not borrow the money, but he impresses his wife anyway by taking the family out to dinner on the proceeds of a prize that he received for being the one-thousandth customer in a local flower shop. Though we eventually learn that Peg Riley only wanted attention, not an expensive meal, the happy ending of the episode hinges totally on Riley's prestige, restored when he demonstrates his ability to provide a luxury outing for the family (*Life of Riley:* R228).

The same episode of *The Life of Riley* reveals another consumerist element common to this subgenre. When Riley protests that he lacks the money needed to fulfill Peg's desires, she answers that he would have plenty if he didn't spend so much on "needless gadgets." His shortage of cash becomes a personal failing caused by incompetent behavior as a consumer. Nowhere do we hear about the size of his paycheck, relations between his union and his employer, or, for that matter, the relationship between the value of his labor and the wages paid to him by the Stevenson Aircraft Company. Like Uncle David in *The Goldbergs*—who buys a statue of Hamlet shaking hands with Shakespeare and an elk's tooth with the Gettysburg address carved on it—Riley's comic character stems in part from a flaw which in theory could be attributed to the entire consumer economy: a preoccupation with "needless gadgets." By contrast, Peg Riley's desire for an evening out is portrayed as reasonable and modest—as reparation due her for the inevitable tedium of housework. The solution to her unhappiness, of course, comes from an evening out rather than from a change in her own work circumstances. Even within the home, television elevates consumption over production; production is assumed to be a constant—only consumption can be varied. But more than enjoyment is at stake: unless Riley can provide her with the desired night on the town, he will fail in his obligations as a husband (*Life of Riley:* R228; *The Goldbergs:* "Bad Companions"). . . .

"Mama's Birthday," broadcast in 1954, delineated the tensions between family loyalty and consumer desire endemic to modern capitalist society. The show begins with Mama teaching Katrin to make Norwegian potato balls, the kind she used long ago to "catch" Papa. Unimpressed by this accomplishment, Katrin changes the subject and asks Mama what she wants for her upcoming birthday. In an answer that locates Mama within the gender roles of the 1950s, she replies, "Well, I think a fine new job for your Papa. You and Dagmar to marry nice young men and have a lot of wonderful children—just like I have. And Nels, well, Nels to become president of the United States" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). In one sentence Mama has summed up the dominant culture's version of legitimate female expectations: success at work for her husband, marriage and childrearing for her daughters, the presidency for her son—and nothing for herself.

But we learn that Mama does have some needs, although we do not hear it from her lips. Her sister, Jenny, asks Mama to attend a fashion show, but Mama cannot leave the house because she has to cook a roast for a guest whom Papa has invited to dinner. Jenny comments that Mama never seems to get out of the kitchen, adding that "it's a disgrace when a woman can't call her soul her own," and "it's a shame that a married woman can't have some time to herself." The complaint is a valid one, and we can imagine how it might have resonated for women in the 1950s. The increased availability of household appliances and the use of synthetic fibers and commercially processed food should have decreased the amount of time women spent in housework, but surveys showed that home-makers spent the same number of hours per week (51 to 56) doing housework as they had done in the 1920s. Advertising and marketing strategies undermined the potential of technological changes by upgrading standards for cleanliness in the home and expanding desires for more varied wardrobes and menus for the average family (Hartmann 1982:168). In that context, Aunt Jenny would have been justified in launching into a tirade about the division of labor within the Hansen household or about the possibilities for cooperative housework, but network television specializes in a less social and more commodified dialogue about problems like housework: Aunt Jenny suggests that her sister's family buy her a "fireless cooker"—a cast iron stove—for her birthday. "They're wonderful," she tells them in language borrowed from the rhetoric of advertising. "You just put your dinner inside them, close 'em up, and go where you please. When you come back your dinner is all cooked" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). Papa protests that Mama likes to cook on her woodburning stove, but Jenny dismisses that objection with an insinuation about his motive, when she replies, "Well, I suppose it *would* cost a little more than you could afford, Hansen" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). By identifying a commodity as the solution to Mama's problem, Aunt Jenny unites the inner voice of Mama with the outer voice of the sponsors of television programs. . . .

Prodded by their aunt, the Hansen children go shopping and purchase the fireless cooker from a storekeeper who calls the product "the new Emancipation Proclamation—setting housewives free from their old kitchen range" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). Our exposure to advertising hyperbole should not lead us to miss the analogy here: housework is compared to slavery, and the commercial product takes on the aura of Abraham Lincoln. The shopkeeper's appeal convinces the children to pool their resources and buy the stove for Mama. But we soon learn that Papa plans to make a fireless cooker for Mama with his tools. When Mama discovers Papa's intentions she persuades the children to buy her another gift. Even Papa admits that his stove will not be as efficient as the one made in a factory, but Mama nobly affirms that she will like his better because he made it himself. The children use their money to buy dishes for Mama, and Katrin remembers the episode as Mama's happiest birthday ever (Meehan and Ropes 1954).

The stated resolution of "Mama's Birthday" favors traditional values. Mama prefers to protect Papa's feelings rather than having a better stove, and the product built by a family member has more value than one sold as a commodity. Yet the entire development of the plot leads in the opposite direction. The "fireless cooker" is the star of the episode, setting in motion all the other characters, and it has unquestioned value even in the face of Jenny's meddlesome brashness, Papa's insensitivity, and Mama's old-fashioned ideals. Buying a product is unchallenged as the true means of changing the unpleasant realities or low status of women's work in the home.

This resolution of the conflict between consumer desires and family roles reflected television's social role as mediator between the family and the economy. Surveys of set ownership showed

no pronounced stratification by class, but a clear correlation between family size and television purchases: households with three to five people were most likely to own television sets, while those with only one person were least likely to own them (Swanson and Jones 1951). The television industry recognized and promoted its privileged place within families in advertisements like the one in the *New York Times* in 1950 that proclaimed,

"Youngsters today need television for their morale as much as they need fresh air and sunshine for their health" (Wolfenstein 1951). Like previous communications media, television sets occupied honored places in family living rooms, and helped structure family time; unlike other previous communications media, they displayed available commodities in a way that transformed all their entertainment into a glorified shopping catalogue. . . .

NOTE

1. Nielsen ratings demonstrate television's view of the family as separate market segments to be addressed independently. For an analysis of the industry's view of children as a special market, see Patricia J. Bence (1985), "Analysis and History of Typology and Forms of Children's Network Programming From 1950 to 1980."

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3

THE ECONOMICS OF THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

David P. Croteau and William D. Hoynes

A great deal of the media content we consume is produced by media companies and most of the media in the United States and other Western democracies are for-profit businesses. Like all businesses, they are influenced by issues such as profitability, cost containment, and evolving ownership patterns. To understand the media, then, we must have some sense of the economic dimension of the media industry. (For a more in-depth treatment of the economic dynamics that shape the media industry, see Croteau and Hoynes 2006; for a focus on the global dimension of media, see Flew 2007.)

CONCENTRATION OF OWNERSHIP

One of the clearest trends in media ownership is its increasing concentration in fewer hands. In his classic book, *The New Media Monopoly,* Ben Bagdikian (2004) argued that ownership of media had become so concentrated that by the mid-2000s only five global firms dominated the media industry in the United States, operating like a cartel. Bagdikian identified the five dominant companies as Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Viacom, News Corporation, and Bertelsmann, all multimedia entertainment conglomerates that produce and distribute newspapers, magazines, radio, television, books, and movies. According to Bagdikian, "This gives each of the five corporations and their leaders more communication power than was exercised by any despot or dictatorship in history" (Bagdikian 2004: 3).

In the years since the publication of *The New Media Monopoly,* the media landscape has changed considerably. For example, in 2006 Viacom split

into the CBS Corporation and Viacom, Inc. But even in the face of such change, media ownership remains highly concentrated in the 2010s. Within each sector of the media industry, a few large companies tower above their smaller competitors. For example,

Movies. The global motion picture industry is dominated by six companies—Comcast's Universal Pictures, Viacom's Paramount Pictures, Time Warner's Warner Bros., Walt Disney Studios, the News Corporation's 20th Century Fox, and Sony Pictures Entertainment. In 2012, Sony led the way with worldwide box office revenues of $4.4 billion, with less than half of its ticket sale revenue ($1.77 billion) in North America. Its top film, the James Bond movie *Skyfall,* made more than $1 billion at the global box office. Time Warner was a close second at the global box office, with $4.25 billion in 2012 ticket sales. The remaining four major motion picture companies each brought in more than $2 billion in global ticket sales in 2012: Fox ($3.7 billion), Disney ($3.6 billion), Universal ($3.13 billion), and Paramount ($2.4 billion) (McClintock 2013). In addition, some of the leading "independent" film companies are owned by the industry giants—Focus Features (Comcast), Fox Searchlight (News Corporation), Sony Pictures Classics (Sony/Columbia), Paramount Vantage (Paramount), and New Line (Time Warner).

Television. Unlike other media sectors, broadcast television has become somewhat less concentrated since the 1990s when FOX joined ABC, CBS, and NBC to expand the number of major broadcast networks to four. In 2006, Warner Bros. and CBS partnered to launch a 5th broadcast network, the CW Network, after the two partners shut down

their separate fledgling networks WB and UPN. While cable television has offered the most new programming, the major cable television channels are often owned by the same companies that own the broadcast networks. For example, Time Warner (co-owner of the CW Network) owns CNN, HBO, TBS, TNT, Cartoon Network, truTV, Turner Classic Movies, and Cinemax. The News Corporation (owner of Fox) also owns FOX News, FOX Business, FX, SPEED, FUEL TV, Fox Movie Channel, Fox Soccer Channel, and National Geographic. Disney (owner of ABC) owns ESPN, Disney Channels Worldwide, ABC Family, and SOAPnet Networks; and Disney is also part-owner of several other major cable channels, including A&E, Lifetime Television, the History Channel, and the Biography Channel.

The major players in the television industry are leaders in other media sectors as well. Comcast, owner of NBCUniversal, is the nation's largest cable television company and the nation's largest Internet service provider, as well as one of the major players in television production and distribution. In addition, the broadcast television networks and the major movie studios typically share owners. Four of the five broadcast networks are owned by media conglomerates with major film studios: ABC (Disney), NBC (Universal), Fox (Twentieth Century Fox), and CW (Warner Brothers). And these major movie studios are the leading producers of prime-time programming for network television, accounting for about 90 percent of the series on the major networks (Kunz 2009). This kind of ownership structure makes it very difficult for independent producers to consistently get their programs on broadcast television.

Book Publishing. The global English-language book market is dominated by the "Big Five" publishers—Penguin Random House, HarperCollins (owned by News Corporation), Simon & Schuster (owned by CBS Corporation), Hachette Book Group, and Macmillan. Some analysts believe that additional consolidation of the book industry is on the horizon (Pfanner and Chozick 2012).

U.S. Magazines. Time Inc. (property of Time Warner, which operates, among others, the premium cable television network HBO, Warner Brothers, and CNN) towers above its competitors. Its 21 U.S. publications in print, online, and via mobile devices reach more than 138 million

people (nearly half the U.S. adult population) and control a 21.5 percent share of domestic magazine advertising spending (Time Inc. 2013).

Recorded Music. Only three companies are responsible for the vast majority of U.S. music sales. Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group accounted for more than 87 percent of total U.S. music sales in 2012 (Christman 2013). (Universal purchased the number four music company, EMI, in late 2012, but European antitrust regulations required Universal to sell some of EMI's labels. In early 2013, Universal sold Parlophone—the label with rights to albums by a variety of popular artists, such as Coldplay, Radiohead, and Pink Floyd—to Warner Music Group.) Each of the big three controls a number of smaller labels and local subsidiaries.

Radio. Clear Channel, with more than 850 radio stations in 2012, is the dominant player in the U.S. radio industry. Clear Channel's radio stations and online and mobile applications reach 237 million listeners in the United States each month (Clear Channel 2013). . . .

The major media companies own vast portfolios of products, spanning the range of media formats and delivery systems. Indeed, the media giants own such a dizzying array of entertainment and news media that the scale of their operations may surprise many readers. Because most products carry a distinct name, rather than the label of the corporate owner, most media users are unaware that a large number of media outlets are actually owned by a single corporation. In the world of newspapers, for example, chains such as Gannett and MediaNews own newspapers all over the country. . . . In 2013, Gannett owned more than 80 daily newspapers, including *USA Today,* the best-selling newspaper in the United States, alongside hundreds of websites and 23 television stations in the United States (Gannett 2013). MediaNews Group, the second largest newspaper publisher in the country, owns more than 60 newspapers, including the *Denver Post,* the *Detroit News,* and the *San Jose Mercury News* along with 450 websites and more than 200 specialty magazines (MediaNews Group 2013). At the newspaper chains, each paper has a different name, and it is not always apparent to readers that a paper is part of a national chain. Similarly, in book publishing, the major companies have so many different imprints

that even a conscientious reader is unlikely to know the common owners of the different imprints. For example, Bertelsmann's Penguin Random House, far and away the largest English language book publisher in the world, owns more than 75 publishing imprints. . . .

CONGLOMERATION AND INTEGRATION

Concentration of media ownership means that fewer corporations own the media. At the same time that concentration of ownership has been occurring, conglomeration has been taking place. That is, media companies have become part of much larger corporations, which own a collection of other companies that may operate in highly diverse business areas.

Much as in other industries, the largest media companies are growing in size and reach as they purchase or merge with their competitors. In the United States, media outlets are among the most attractive properties to both potential investors and buyers. While some high-profile mergers ultimately fail—including AOL-Time Warner (which split into two companies in 2009) and Viacom-CBS (split in 2006)—the process of conglomeration in the media industry is continuous. For example,

- Google purchased over 125 companies between 2001 and 2013, including YouTube (2006), online advertising company Doubleclick (2007), the Zagat restaurant guide (2011), and GPS navigation firm Waze (2013).

- Yahoo bought about 80 companies, including Internet radio site Broadcast. com (1999), job search engine HotJobs. com (2002), and the blogging site Tumblr (2013).

- In addition to dozens of newspapers, the News Corporation bought 20th Century Fox (1984), the Metromedia group of television stations (1986), MySpace (2005) (later sold), and Dow Jones, owner of *The Wall Street Journal* (2007).

- AOL bought early online service provider Compuserv (1997), the web browser Netscape (1998), the Moviefone data base (1999), Mapquest (1999), the online music store MusicNow (2005), and the news/entertainment site *The Huffington Post* (2011).

- The cable giant Comcast purchased a number of smaller cable companies over the years, including AT&T Broadband (2001). It partnered with Sony to buy MGM and its production studio, United Artists (2005), and NBC Universal—acquiring a controlling stake in 2011 and the remainder in 2013 (see Figure 3.1).

- Walt Disney Company acquired (and later sold) Miramax Films (1983), CapCities/ABC (1995), Marvel Entertainment (2005), Pixar animation studios (2006), and Lucasfilm (2012)—owner of the *Star Wars* franchise.

Media—in both news and entertainment forms—are a key segment of the American economy and are attractive to growing conglomerates. The media industry produces high visibility, substantial profits, and a major item for export to other countries.

Concentration has affected the relationships among various media organizations within a single conglomerate. Economic analysts have long used the terms *horizontal integration* and *vertical integration* to describe two types of ownership concentration in any industry. In the media industry, vertical integration refers to the process by which one owner acquires all aspects of production and distribution of a single type of media product. For example, a movie company might integrate vertically by acquiring talent agencies to acquire scripts and sign actors, production studios to create films, manufacturing plants to produce DVDs, and various venues to show the movies, such as theater chains, premium cable channels, broadcast television networks, and Internet-based streaming services. The company could then better control the entire process of creating, producing, marketing, and distributing movies. Similarly, a book publisher might integrate vertically by acquiring paper mills, printing facilities, book binderies, trucking firms, and Internet booksellers. . . .

Horizontal integration refers to the process by which one company buys different kinds of

FIGURE 3.1 ■ Anatomy of a Media Conglomerate: Comcast Corporate Holdings

Cable Television	• Largest video provider in the United States, through Comcast Cable—more than 22 million subscribers
Internet Service	• Largest residential Internet service provider in the United States—19.4 million customers
Phone Service	• 4th largest phone company in the United States—10 million customers
Broadcast Television	• NBC television network • Telemundo, Spanish language network • 10 NBC-owned local television stations • 15 Telemundo-owned local television stations
Cable Television Networks	• USA Network • Syfy • E! • CNBC • MSNBC • Bravo • Golf Channel • Oxygen • NBC Sports Network • Style • MLB Network (joint venture with Major League Baseball) • NHL Network (joint venture with National Hockey League) • 10 regional sports networks • 3 regional news networks
Film	• Universal Pictures • Focus Features
Internet Sites	• Hulu (online video) • Fandango (movie ticket sales) • Daily Candy (fashion and restaurant news) • Television Without Pity (TV fan site)
Theme Parks	• Universal Studios Florida • Universal Studios Hollywood
Sports and Entertainment	• Philadelphia Flyers, NHL hockey team • New Era Tickets ticketing company • Wells Fargo Center sports arena

Source: Comcast Corporate website.

FIGURE 3.2 ■ Vertical and Horizontal Integration in the Media Industry

Example of Vertical Integration:

MUSIC	BOOKS	FILM
Musicians	**Authors**	Actors
Talent agencies	**Literary agencies**	Talent agencies
Music labels	**Publishers**	Film studios
Sound recording manufacturers	**Paper mills and printers**	Film and DVD manufacturers
Internet digital music distribution sites	**Internet booksellers**	Movie theaters

Example of Horizontal Integration:

MUSIC	BOOKS	FILM
Musicians	Authors	Actors
Talent agencies	Literary agencies	Talent agencies
Music labels	**Publishers**	**Film studios**
Sound recording (CD) manufacturers	Paper mills and printers	Film, videocassette, and DVD manufacturers
Internet digital music distribution sites	Internet booksellers	Movie theaters

Note: Shaded, bold-faced companies are owned by the same corporation.

media, concentrating ownership across differing types of media rather than up and down through one industry. In horizontal integration, media conglomerates assemble large portfolios of magazines, television stations, book publishers, record labels, and so on to mutually support one another's operations. In a classic example, when

Warner Bros. released the 2001 film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* its then-parent company AOL Time Warner pursued an elaborate multimedia strategy to cash in on the Harry Potter franchise. AOL's online services provided links to various Harry Potter web pages, including sites for purchasing the Harry Potter merchandise that

AOL sold. The company's movie information site, Moviefone, promoted and sold tickets to the film, while company magazines *Time, People,* and *Entertainment Weekly* featured prominent Harry Potter stories. In addition, AOL Time Warner used its cable systems and cable networks for massive promotion of the film, and the company-owned Warner Music Group released the Harry Potter soundtrack. More recent blockbusters such as *The Avengers* (Disney 2012), *The Dark Knight Rises* (Warner Bros. 2012), and *Avatar* (Fox 2009) have employed similar strategies, taking advantage of new promotional channels, such as blogs, smartphone apps, and social networking sites.

In another example, Disney turned its sports cable franchise ESPN into a multimedia cross-promotional vehicle, developing ESPN.com, ESPN Classic, ESPN2, ESPNEWS, ESPN Deportes, ESPNU, the ESPN Radio Network, *ESPN: The Magazine,* an ESPN news service, ESPN3 (a broadband service), and ESPN Mobile, all working together to promote Disney's growing list of ESPN products. Such cross-media promotion can be a very powerful strategy. One experimental study found that a coordinated television and print ad campaign for a television program was far more effective than single-media campaigns; cross-media campaigns "resulted in higher attention from audiences, improved memory, greater perceived message credibility . . . and higher viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions" (Tang, Newton, and Wang 2007: 132). This kind of opportunity for cross-promotion is one of the driving forces behind the growth of horizontally integrated media companies.

CONSEQUENCES OF CONGLOMERATION AND INTEGRATION

While the trends in media ownership may be of interest in themselves, our prime concern is with the relationship between ownership and the media product. What are the consequences of integration, conglomeration, and concentration of ownership?

Integration and Self-Promotion

The economic factors propelling both vertical and horizontal integration are clear: Owners perceive such arrangements as both efficient and profitable.

The cultural consequences are more ambiguous. However, an institutional approach suggests that such ownership patterns are likely to affect the types of media products created. In particular, integrated media conglomerates seeking the benefits of "synergy" are likely to favor products that can best be exploited by other components of the conglomerate. (Synergy refers to the dynamic where components of a company work together to produce benefits that would be impossible for a single, separately operated unit of the company.) For example, horizontal integration may well encourage the publication of books that can be made into movies and discourage the publication of those that cannot. Or it might encourage the creation of TV talent search programs because they can generate new musical acts who are contractually obligated to record for the company's music label, featured in the company's magazines, played on the company's radio stations, and showcased on their websites. More generally, promotion and marketing are likely to dominate the decision-making process within a horizontally integrated media industry.

Vertical integration becomes especially significant when the company that makes the product also controls its distribution. For example, a corporation that owns a mail-order book-of-the-month club is likely to prominently feature its own publications, limiting competitors' access to a lucrative segment of the book-buying market. Or a company with a movie studio can highlight its own films on its movie cable channel.

The possibilities for fully using horizontal and vertical integration are startling. In this era of integrated media conglomerates, media companies are capable of pursuing elaborate cross-media strategies, in which company-owned media products can be packaged, sold, and promoted across the full range of media platforms. Feature films, their accompanying soundtracks and DVD/Blu-ray Disc releases, spin-off television programs, and books, along with magazine cover stories and plenty of licensed merchandise, can all be produced and distributed by different divisions of the same conglomerate—with each piece serving to promote the broader franchise. One consequence of integration, then, is an increase in media cross-promotion and, perhaps, a decrease in media products that are not suitable for cross-promotion. It also makes it more difficult for smaller media firms to compete with the major corporations who

can use their vast and diverse holdings to saturate consumers during their promotional campaigns.

The Impact of Conglomeration

What has the growth of large multimedia firms over the past few decades meant for the news, television, radio, films, music, and books we receive? In other words, to what extent does conglomeration affect the media product? The loudest warnings about the impact of conglomeration have come from within the news industry, in part because some news media had traditionally been sheltered from the full pressure of profit making. For example, for much of television history, respectable television news divisions were understood to represent a necessary public service commitment that lent prestige to the major broadcast networks. They were not expected to turn a substantial profit. However, that changed with the takeover of news operations by major corporate conglomerates during the 1980s.

Ken Auletta's *Three Blind Mice* (1991) paints a vivid picture of the clash that ensued during that time, when new corporate owners took over the major television networks and their news divisions. For those who worked at NBC News, for example, the purchase of the network by General Electric led to conflicts about the meaning and role of television news. In most of these conflicts, the new corporate owners ultimately prevailed. As Auletta tells it, when General Electric took over as the new owners of NBC, they

> emphasized a "boundaryless" company, one without walls between News, Entertainment, Sales, and other divisions. . . . At NBC's annual management retreat in 1990, many of the 160 executives questioned why Sales or Entertainment couldn't have more input into news specials, or why News tended to keep its distance from the rest of the company, as if it were somehow special. (p. 564)

General Electric chair Jack Welch even specified that *Today Show* weather reporter Willard Scott should mention GE lightbulbs on the program. According to former NBC news president Lawrence Grossman, "It was one of the perks of owning a network. . . . You get your lightbulbs mentioned on the air. . . . People want to please the owners" (Husseini 1994: 13).

Since that time, the network news programs have faced stiff competition from the 24-hour cable news channels, yet they are expected to turn a profit by attracting audiences that owners expect and advertisers demand. One result has been an increased emphasis on entertainment and celebrities on the network news—what former CBS news anchor Dan Rather called "the Hollywoodization of the news" due to the growth of "stupid celebrity stories" (*Brill's Content* 1998: 117). The changes that were seen as a threat to serious broadcast news in the 1980s and '90s are now the norm in the industry, with the broadcast networks now routinely incorporating entertainment, celebrities, human interest, and other light fare into their broadcasts. . . .

Conglomeration has affected print journalism as well. Some critics have long argued that corporate takeovers of print media put the emphasis on attracting and entertaining consumers rather than on informing citizens (Squires 1993). In this context, newspapers become increasingly colorful, focus attention on the lives of celebrities, and print sensationalistic stories about dramatic and bizarre happenings. One example is NewsCorp's head Rupert Murdoch—now best-known as the owner of FOX—who launched his career by buying up newspapers in Australia and England and converting them into down-market tabloids that specialized in sex, scandal, and celebrities. This was epitomized by his purchase of Britain's *The Sun,* which became notorious—and popular—for its scandalous coverage, even adopting a "Page Three" feature—a daily photo of a topless or nude model (Braid 2004). The 2011 phone-hacking scandal in England, which led to the shutdown of Murdoch's British tabloid *News of the World,* showed how far profit-focused news organizations can go in search of a story. Hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of phones were hacked by reporters at the newspaper, who sought titillating information about crime victims, their families, and celebrities. In the report on the scandal commissioned by the British government, Lord Justice Leveson concluded that "there has been a recklessness in prioritising sensational stories, almost irrespective of the harm that the stories may cause and the rights of those who would be affected (perhaps in a way that can never be remedied), all the while heedless of the public interest" (The Leveson Inquiry 2012: 10). . . .

Media Control and Political Power

Can concentrated media ownership be translated into undue political influence? Most people recognize the importance of such a question in examining the government's control of media in totalitarian nations. It is clear in such situations that state ownership and exclusive access are likely to affect media products. In the United States, most discussion about the First Amendment and free speech also focuses on the possibility of government censorship. This discussion is generally blind, however, to the impact of corporate ownership.

In addressing this concern, Bagdikian (2004) has argued that the United States has a "private ministry of information," metaphorically referring to the type of government-led propaganda system that exists in totalitarian societies. In the case of the contemporary United States, however, private interests, not the government, largely control this information system. Bagdikian suggests that when a small number of firms with similar interests dominate the media industry, it begins to function in a way similar to a state information system. It is hard to question the underlying argument that those who own large media conglomerates have at least the potential to wield a great deal of political power.

How might ownership of media translate into political power? It is possible that those building media empires could use their media outlets to promote a very specific political agenda. Furthermore, when media barons become candidates for major office, their media holdings can be invaluable political resources. Perhaps the starkest example of this in a Western democracy is the case of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, who managed to use ownership of private media to gain public office—which then enabled him to influence public media.

Silvio Berlusconi, a media magnate and the dominant force in Italian broadcasting and publishing, was elected prime minister three times (1994, 2001, and 2008). For Berlusconi, ownership of television and radio clearly had great political value; he owned strategic assets that were unavailable to other political actors. In the 2001 electoral campaign, he was given four times the exposure of his rival candidate on the television networks that he owns. After winning that election, he went on to effectively control 90 percent of Italian television programming (*The Economist* 2001). That's because Italian prime ministers have the right to replace the boards of directors of the three public television channels, known as RAI, and thus can influence RAI's editorial choices. In subsequent election campaigns, Berlusconi not only had his own private television networks as a political resource, but he also influenced the public channels.

Berlusconi's domination of television was so great that, after the 2001 election and again in 2004, the European Federation of Journalists called for new regulations limiting media ownership. In 2004, both the European Parliament and the Council of Europe condemned the open conflict of interest between Berlusconi's role as prime minister and that of media magnate. The corrosive effect of this arrangement on Italian democracy was so serious that Freedom House, an independent watchdog group that produces annual rankings of freedom and democracy around the world, downgraded Italian freedom of the press from "free" to "partially free" (Freedom House 2004). After Berlusconi launched a series of attacks and lawsuits against the press, Reporters Without Borders (2009) declared that Berlusconi "is on the verge of being added to our list of Predators of Press Freedom," which would be a first for a European country (Ginsborg 2005; Hine 2001). Berlusconi resigned as prime minister in 2011 in the midst of a sex scandal. In 2013, however, he was once again a prominent figure in national politics, and he lost a close election for a fourth term as prime minister.

Though the media environment is quite different largely because of the vast size of the U.S. media industry, private media ownership can be a huge political asset in the United States too. Media entrepreneur Michael Bloomberg amassed a fortune selling technology and media products to businesses. He drew on the widespread recognition of his brand-name line of Bloomberg business media products—and the enormous profits they have generated for him—in his successful campaign to become New York City mayor in 2001. In the process, he spent $69 million of his own money—more than $92 per vote. Bloomberg won reelection in 2005 then successfully had the term-limit law changed so he could run again (and win again) in 2009. There has long been speculation that Bloomberg, one of the 10 wealthiest people in the United States as of 2012 (Forbes 2012), will one day launch a presidential bid.

In some cases, owners of media companies have direct control over media products and thus are able to exert political influence by promoting ideas that enhance their interests. Conservative media magnate Rupert Murdoch, for example, has used a variety of his News Corporation's media holdings to advance his political and economic goals. In 1975, he had his Australian newspapers slant the news so blatantly in favor of his conservative choice for prime minister that Murdoch's own journalists went on strike in protest. His British papers played a crucial role in the 1979 election of British conservative Margaret Thatcher. In 1995, Murdoch financed the multimillion-dollar start-up of the high-profile conservative U.S. magazine *The Weekly Standard.* In 1996, Murdoch's News Corporation initiated a 24-hour news channel, Fox News Channel (headed by Rush Limbaugh's former executive producer and long-time Republican Party political consultant, Roger Ailes), that many have argued promotes a consistent conservative agenda (Ackerman 2001; Aday 2010; McDermott 2010). When Murdoch's News Corporation bought Dow Jones in 2007, it took over as owner of *The Wall Street Journal,* one of the most influential—and editorially conservative—papers in the country.

More recently, Charles and David Koch, the billionaire brothers who helped support the Tea Party movement and who provide major funding to the conservative movement more broadly, sought to purchase the Tribune Company, the owner of several prominent newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune.* News of the Koch brothers' interest in the newspapers sparked concern among journalists worried that the Kochs were primarily interested in the potential political value of the newspapers. The Koch brothers later dropped their efforts to buy the company.

However, some media outlets, especially news outlets, rely on a perception of objectivity or evenhandedness to maintain their legitimacy. Journalists often see themselves as members of a sort of fourth estate, complementing the executive, legislative, and administrative branches of government. Their job is to act as watchdogs over politicians (Louw 2010; Schultz 1998). As a result, with perhaps the exception of Fox News, most major news media outlets will not consistently and blatantly promote a single political agenda. Instead, viewers are more likely to find such an approach on cable programs that focus on analysis and commentary or on the growing number of ideologically driven websites and blogs.

The process of using media to promote a political agenda is more complex than simply feeding people ideas and images that they passively accept. Owners can use media sites to disseminate a specific position on a controversial issue or to help legitimize particular institutions or behaviors. Just as important, owners can systematically exclude certain ideas from their media products. While control of information or images can never be total, owners can tilt the scales in particular directions quite dramatically.

Ownership by major corporations of vast portfolios of media gives us reason to believe that a whole range of ideas and images—those that question fundamental social arrangements, under which the media owners are doing quite well—will be visible primarily in low-profile media. This does not mean that all media images and information are uniform. It means that some ideas will be widely available, while others will be largely absent. For example, stories critical of gridlock in the federal government are frequent; in contrast, stories critical of capitalism as an economic system that can facilitate inequality are very rare. There is no way of proving the connection, but the media's focus on the shortcomings of the government, rather than of the private sector, seems consistent with the interests of the corporate media owners.

This process is most obvious in products that directly address contemporary social and political events, but it also happens in entertainment products. Consider, for example, the depiction of gays and lesbians on prime-time television. For most of U.S. television history, there were virtually no gay or lesbian characters. As gay rights advocates made advances in the 1980s and 1990s, gay and lesbian characters began appearing, though infrequently and in often superficial depictions. Also, gay characters faced constraints that heterosexual characters did not; for example, they typically did not kiss, even as popular television continued to become more explicit in depictions of heterosexual sex. It was not until 2004 that the first television drama series to revolve around a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered characters appeared; *The L Word* ran from 2004 to 2009 on the premium cable channel Showtime. There is no conspiracy here. More likely, a small number

of profit-making firms that rely on mass audiences and major advertisers simply avoided potential controversies that might threaten their bottom line. As network executives and major advertisers began to define such images as more acceptable to mainstream audiences, lesbian and gay characters have become more commonplace and more diverse in recent years (GLAAD 2012). . . .

The political impact of concentrated corporate ownership, however, is both broader and subtler than the exclusion of certain ideas in favor of others. Herbert Schiller (1989) argues that "the corporate voice" has been generalized so successfully that most of us do not even think of it as a specifically corporate voice. That is, the corporate view has become "our" view, the "American" view, even though the interests of the corporate entities that own mass media are far from universal. One example of this is the entire media-generated discourse—in newspapers, television, radio, and magazines—about the American economy, in which corporate success provides the framework for virtually all evaluations of national economic well-being. Quarterly profits, mergers and acquisitions, productivity, and fluctuations in the financial markets are so widely discussed that their relationship to the corporate voice is difficult to discern. The relationship between corporate financial health and citizen well-being, however, is rarely discussed explicitly—even in times of serious financial crisis. During the economic crises of 2008–2009, the U.S. news media were remarkably unquestioning of the message from both government and the private sector that a massive and immediate bailout of banks, Wall Street firms, and other corporate interests was absolutely essential.

A concentrated media sphere can also undermine citizens' capacity to monitor their government's war-making powers. McChesney (2008: 98) argues that "those in power, those who benefit from war and empire, see the press as arguably the most important front of war, because it is there that consent is manufactured, and dissent is marginalized. For a press system, a war is its moment of truth." The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was justified by the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. The news media reported these WMD charges uncritically, relying on official sources and without in-depth investigation, effectively affirming the Bush administration's rationale for war. According to one study of U.S. news media coverage in the first three weeks of the Iraq war, pro-war U.S. sources outnumbered antiwar sources by 25 to 1, thus making it very difficult for citizens to access critical perspectives on the war (Rendall and Broughel 2003).

One possible political consequence of the concentration of media ownership is that, in some ways, it becomes more difficult for alternative media voices to emerge. Because mass media outlets in all sectors of the media industry are large mass-production and mass-distribution firms, ownership is restricted to those who can acquire substantial financial resources. In the age of multimillion-dollar media enterprises, freedom of the press may be left to those few who can afford to own what has become a very expensive press.

The Internet offers the possibility for small producers to create professional-looking alternative media—from websites and blogs to mobile apps and streaming video. However, without a means to effectively promote such sites, and without the budget to pay for staff to continuously produce substantive new content that continues to draw users, most online alternative media are limited to relatively small niche audiences. Television and the major daily newspapers—along with the online content associated with these major media—are still the main sources of news for most of the population.

In the end, ownership of the means of information becomes part of larger patterns of inequality in contemporary societies, and large media conglomerates can use their capacity to shape media discourse and their substantial financial resources to influence public policy. In this sense, mass media institutions are no different from other social institutions; they are linked to the patterned inequality that exists throughout our society. . . .

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4 HEGEMONY
James Lull

Hegemony is the power or dominance that one social group holds over others. This can refer to the "asymmetrical interdependence" of political-economic-cultural relations between and among nation-states (Straubhaar, 1991) or differences between and among social classes within a nation. Hegemony is "dominance and subordination in the field of relations structured by power" (Hall, 1985). But hegemony is more than social power itself; it is a method for gaining and maintaining power.

Classical Marxist theory, of course, stresses economic position as the strongest predictor of social differences. Today, more than a century after Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote their treatises about capitalist exploitation of the working class, economic disparities still underlie and help reproduce social inequalities in industrialized societies. . . . Technological developments in the twentieth century, however, have made the manner of social domination much more complex than before. Social class differences in today's world are not determined solely or directly by economic factors. Ideological influence is crucial now in the exercise of social power.

The Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci—to whom the term *hegemony* is attributed—broadened materialist Marxist theory into the realm of ideology. Persecuted by his country's then fascist government (and writing from prison), Gramsci emphasized society's "super structure," its ideology-producing institutions, in struggles over meaning and power (1971; 1973; 1978; see also Boggs, 1976; Sassoon, 1980; and Simon, 1982). A shift in critical theory thus was made away from a preoccupation with capitalist society's "base" (its economic foundation) and towards its dominant dispensaries of ideas.

Attention was given to the structuring of authority and dependence in symbolic environments that correspond to, but are not the same as, economically determined class-based structures and processes of industrial production. Such a theoretical turn seems a natural and necessary development in an era when communications technology is such a pervasive and potent ideological medium. According to Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, mass media are tools that ruling elites use to "perpetuate their power, wealth, and status [by popularizing] their own philosophy, culture and morality" (Boggs, 1976: 39). The mass media uniquely "introduce elements into individual consciousness that would not otherwise appear there, but will not be rejected by consciousness because they are so commonly shared in the cultural community" (Nordenstreng, 1977: 276). Owners and managers of media industries can produce and reproduce the content, inflections, and tones of ideas favorable to them far more easily than other social groups because they manage key socializing institutions, thereby guaranteeing that their points of view are constantly and attractively cast into the public arena.

Mass-mediated ideologies are corroborated and strengthened by an interlocking system of efficacious information-distributing agencies and taken-for-granted social practices that permeate every aspect of social and cultural reality. Messages supportive of the status quo emanating from schools, businesses, political organizations, trade unions, religious groups, the military and the mass media all dovetail together ideologically. This inter-articulating, mutually reinforcing process of ideological influence is the essence of hegemony. Society's most entrenched and powerful institutions—which all depend in one way or another on the same sources

for economic support—fundamentally agree with each other ideologically.

Hegemony is not a *direct* stimulation of thought or action, but, according to Stuart Hall, is a "framing [of] all competing definitions of reality within [the dominant class's] range bringing all alternatives within their horizons of thought. [The dominant class] sets the limits—mental and structural—within which subordinate classes 'live' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them" (1977: 333). British social theorist Philip Elliott suggested similarly that the most potent effect of mass media is how they subtly influence their audiences to perceive social roles and routine personal activities. The controlling economic forces in society use the mass media to provide a "rhetoric [through] which these [concepts] are labeled, evaluated, and explained" (1974: 262). Television commercials, for example, encourage audiences to think of themselves as "markets rather than as a public, as consumers rather than citizens" (Gitlin, 1979: 255).

But hegemony does not mature strictly from ideological articulation. Dominant ideological streams must be subsequently reproduced in the activities of our most basic social units—families, workplace networks, and friendship groups in the many sites and undertakings of everyday life. Gramsci's theory of hegemony, therefore, connects ideological representation to culture. Hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions. Its effectiveness depends on subordinated peoples accepting the dominant ideology as "normal reality or common sense . . . in active forms of experience and consciousness" (Williams, 1976: 145). Because information and entertainment technology is so thoroughly integrated into the everyday realities of modern societies, mass media's social influence is not always recognized, discussed, or criticized, particularly in societies where the overall standard of living is relatively high. Hegemony, therefore, can easily go undetected (Bausinger, 1984).

Hegemony implies a willing agreement by people to be governed by principles, rules, and laws they believe operate in their best interests, even though in actual practice they may not. Social consent can be a more effective means of control than coercion or force. Again, Raymond Williams: "The idea of hegemony, in its wide sense, is . . . especially important in societies [where] electoral politics and public opinion are significant factors, and in which social practice is seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which in fact express the needs of a dominant class" (1976: 145). Thus, in the words of Colombian communication theorist Jesús Martín-Barbero, "one class exercises hegemony to the extent that the dominating class has interests which the subaltern classes recognize as being in some degree their interests too" (1993: 74).

Relationships between and among the major information-diffusing, socializing agencies of a society and the interacting, cumulative, socially accepted ideological orientations they create and sustain is the essence of hegemony. The American television industry, for instance, connects with other large industries, especially advertising companies but also national and multinational corporations that produce, distribute, and market a wide range of commodities. So, for example, commercial TV networks no longer buy original children's television shows. Network executives only want new program ideas associated with successful retail products already marketed to children. By late 1990 more than 20 toy-based TV shows appeared on American commercial TV weekly. Television also has the ability to absorb other major social institutions—organized religion, for instance—and turn them into popular culture. The TV industry also connects with government institutions, including especially the federal agencies that are supposed to regulate telecommunications. The development of American commercial broadcasting is a vivid example of how capitalist economic forces assert their power. Evacuation of the legislatively mandated public service ideal could only have taken place because the Federal Communications Commission stepped aside while commercial interests amassed power and expanded their influence. Symptomatic of the problem is the fact that government regulators typically are recruited from, and return to, the very industries they are supposed to monitor. . . .

HEGEMONY AS AN INCOMPLETE PROCESS

Two of our leading critical theorists, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, remind us that hegemony in any political context is indeed fragile.

It requires renewal and modification through the assertion and reassertion of power. Hall suggests that "it is crucial to the concept that hegemony is not a 'given' and permanent state of affairs, but it has to be actively won and secured; it can also be lost" (1977: 333). Ideological work is the winning and securing of hegemony over time. . . . Ideology is composed of "texts that are not closed" according to Hall, who also notes that ideological "counter-tendencies" regularly appear in the seams and cracks of dominant forms (Hall, 1985). Mediated communications ranging from popular television shows to rap and rock music, even graffiti scrawled over surfaces of public spaces, all inscribe messages that challenge central political positions and cultural assumptions.

Counter-hegemonic tendencies do not inhere solely in texts. They are formulated in processes of communication—in the interpretations, social circulation, and uses of media content. As with the American soldiers' use of military gas masks as inhaling devices to heighten the effect of marijuana smoke, or the homeless's transformation of supermarket shopping carts into personal storage vehicles, ideological resistance and appropriation frequently involve reinventing institutional messages for purposes that differ greatly from their creators' intentions. Expressions of the dominant ideology are sometimes reformulated to assert alternative, often completely resistant or contradictory messages. . . .

Furthermore, resistance to hegemony is not initiated solely by media consumers. Texts themselves are implicated. Ideology can never be stated purely and simply. Ways of thinking are always reflexive and embedded in a complex, sometimes contradictory, ideological regress. . . .

Audience interpretations and uses of media imagery also eat away at hegemony. Hegemony fails when dominant ideology is weaker than social resistance. Gay subcultures, feminist organizations, environmental groups, radical political parties, music-based formations such as punks, B-boys, Rastafarians, and metal heads all use media and their social networks to endorse counter-hegemonic values and lifestyles. Indeed, we have only just begun to examine the complex relationship between ideological representation and social action.

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5

THE INTERNET'S UNHOLY MARRIAGE TO CAPITALISM

John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney

The United States and the world are now a good two decades into the Internet revolution, or what was once called the information age. The past generation has seen a blizzard of mind-boggling developments in communication, ranging from the World Wide Web and broadband, to ubiquitous cell phones that are quickly becoming high-powered wireless computers in their own right. Firms such as Google, Amazon, Craigslist, and Facebook have become iconic. Immersion in the digital world is now or soon to be a requirement for successful participation in society. The subject for debate is no longer whether the Internet can be regarded as a technological development in the same class as television or the telephone. Increasingly, the debate is turning to whether this is a communication revolution closer to the advent of the printing press.[1]

The full impact of the Internet revolution will only become apparent in the future, as more technological change is on the horizon that can barely be imagined and hardly anticipated.[2] But enough time has transpired, and institutions and practices have been developed, that an assessment of the digital era is possible, as well as a sense of its likely trajectory into the future.

Our analysis in this article will focus on the United States—not only because it is the society that we know best, and the Internet's point of origin, but also because it is there, we believe, that one most clearly finds the integration of monopoly-finance capital and the Internet, representing the dominant tendency of the global capitalist system. This is not meant to suggest that the current U.S. dominance of the Internet is not open to change, or that other countries may not choose to take other paths—but only that all alternatives in this realm will have to struggle against the trajectory now being set by U.S. capitalism, with its immense global influence and power. . . .

The Internet, or more broadly, the digital revolution is truly changing the world at multiple levels. But it has also failed to deliver on much of the promise that was once seen as implicit in its technology. If the Internet was expected to provide more competitive markets and accountable businesses, open government, an end to corruption, and decreasing inequality—or, to put it baldly, increased human happiness—it has been a disappointment. . . .

We do not argue that the initial sense of the Internet's promise was pure fantasy, although some of it can be attributed to the utopian enthusiasm that major new technologies can engender when they first emerge. (One is reminded of the early-twentieth-century view of the Nobel Prize-winning chemist and philosopher of energetics, Wilhelm Ostwald, who contended that the advent of the "flying machine" was a key part of a universal process that could erase international boundaries associated with nations, languages, and money, "bringing about the brotherhood of man."[3]) Instead, we argue that there was—and remains—extraordinary democratic and revolutionary promise in this communication revolution. But technologies do not ride roughshod over history, regardless of their immense powers. They are developed in a social, political, and economic context. And this has strongly conditioned the course and shape of the communication revolution.

This economic context points to the *paradox of the Internet* as it has developed in a capitalist society. The Internet has been subjected, to a

significant extent, to the capital accumulation process, which has a clear logic of its own, inimical to much of the democratic potential of digital communication, and that will be ever more so, going forward. What seemed to be an increasingly open public sphere, removed from the world of commodity exchange, seems to be morphing into a private sphere of increasingly closed, proprietary, even monopolistic markets.

. . . We hope to provide a necessary alternative way to imagine how best to develop the Internet in contrast to the commodified, privatized world of capital accumulation. This does not mean that there can be no commerce, even extensive commerce, in the digital realm, but merely that the system's overriding logic—and the starting point for all policy discussions—must be as an institution operated on public interest values, at bare minimum as a public utility.

It is true that in any capitalist society there is going to be strong, even at times overwhelming, pressure to open up areas that can be profitably exploited by capital, regardless of the social costs, or "negative externalities," as economists put it. After all, capitalists—by definition, given their economic power—exercise inordinate political power. But it is not a given that all areas will be subjected to the market. Indeed, many areas in nature and human existence cannot be so subjected without destroying the fabric of life itself—and large portions of capitalist societies have historically been and remain largely outside of the capital accumulation process. One could think of community, family, religion, education, romance, elections, research, and national defense as partial examples, although capital is pressing to colonize those where it can. Many important political debates in a capitalist society are concerned with determining the areas where the pursuit of profit will be allowed to rule, and where it will not. At their most rational, and most humane, capitalist societies tend to preserve large noncommercial sectors, including areas such as health care and old-age pensions, that might be highly profitable if turned over to commercial interests. At the very least, the more democratic a capitalist society is, the more likely it is for there to be credible public debates on these matters.

However—and this is a point dripping in irony—such a fundamental debate never took place in relation to the Internet.

. . . The lack of debate about how the Internet should be developed was due, to a certain extent, to the digital revolution exploding at precisely the moment that neoliberalism was in ascendance, its flowery rhetoric concerning "free markets" most redolent. The core spirit was that businesses should always be permitted to develop any area where profits could be found, and that this was the most efficient use of resources for an economy. Anything interfering with capitalist exploitation was bad economics and ideologically loaded, and was usually advanced by a deadbeat "special interest" group that could not cut the mustard in the world of free market competition and so sought protection from the corrupt netherworld of government regulation and bureaucracy.[4] This credo led the drive for "deregulation" across the economy, and for the privatization of once public sector activities.

The rhetoric of free markets was adopted by all sides in the communications debate in the early 1990s, as the World Wide Web turned the Internet seemingly overnight into a mass medium. For the business community and politicians, the Internet was all about unleashing entrepreneurs, slaying monopolies, promoting innovation, and generating "friction-free capitalism," as Bill Gates famously put it.[5] There was great money to be made. Even those skeptical toward corporations and commercialism tended to be unconcerned, if not sanguine, about the capitalist invasion, as the power of this apparently magical technology could override the efforts of dinosaur corporations to tame it. There was plenty of room for everybody. The Internet bubble of the late 1990s certainly encouraged capitalism's embrace of the Internet, and U.S. news media could barely contain themselves with their enthusiasm for the happy couple. Capitalism and the Internet seemed a marriage made in heaven.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

A more sober analysis, however, can locate certain inconsistencies, if not contradictions, in ascribing so called "free markets" to the Internet, beyond the fact that the Internet's very existence was a testament to public sector investment. . . .

First, the dominant wires that would come to deliver Internet service provider (ISP) broadband

access for Americans were and are controlled by the handful of firms that dominated telephone and cable television. These firms were all local monopolies that existed because of government monopoly licenses. In effect, they have been the recipients of enormous indirect government subsidies through their government monopoly franchises. . . . The telephone companies had lent their wires to Internet transmission and, over the course of the 1990s, they—soon followed by the cable companies—realized it was their future, and a very lucrative one, at that. All the more so, considering that ISP's are the only entry point to the Internet and digital networks.

These telephone and cable giants came to support the long process of what was called the "deregulation" of their industries that came to a head in the 1990s, not because they eagerly anticipated ferocious new competition, but because they suspected deregulation would allow them to grow ever larger and have more monopolistic power. . . .

Deregulation has led to the worst of both worlds: fewer enormous firms with far less regulation.[6] To top it off, the political power of these firms in Washington, D.C. and state capitals has reached Olympian heights. . . . Unlike firms in many other nations, U.S. telephone and cable firms are not required to allow competitor broadband ISPs access to their wires, so there is virtually no meaningful competition in the now crucial broadband ISP industry. Fully 18 percent of U.S. households have access to no more than a single broadband provider—a monopoly. . . . Meanwhile, four companies control the mushrooming U.S. wireless market, and the two leaders—AT&T and Verizon—are in the process of amassing one hundred million subscribers each. With dreams of converting the Internet into an expanded version of cable television, all of these firms have spectacular incentive to "privatize" the Internet as much as possible, and to use their control over broadband access as a bottleneck where they can exact additional tolls on users. Moreover, with little meaningful competition, as the FCC acknowledges, these firms have no particular incentive to upgrade their networks.[7]

Remarkably, the United States, which created and first developed the Internet, and which ranked, throughout the 1990s, close to first in world Internet connectivity, now ranks between fifteen and twenty in most global measures of broadband access, quality of service, and cost per megabit.[8] There is no incentive to terminate the "digital divide," whereby poor and rural Americans remain unconnected to broadband far beyond the rates in other advanced nations; a digital underclass encourages people to pay what it takes to avoid being unconnected. There is a striking comparison here to health care, where Americans pay far more than any other nation per capita, but get worse service, due to the parasitic existence of the health insurance industry. President Barack Obama said that if the United States were starting from scratch, it would obviously make more sense (from a public welfare standpoint) to have a publicly run health care system, and no private health insurance industry.[9] The same overall logic applies to broadband Internet access, in spades. . . .

MARKET CONCENTRATION IN MULTIPLE AREAS

. . . Capitalist development of Internet-related industries has quickly, inexorably, generated considerable market concentration at almost every level, often beyond that found in non-digital markets. What this means is that there are multiple areas where private interests can get a chokehold on the Internet and seize monopoly profits, and they are all being pursued. Google, for example, holds 70 percent of the search engine market, and its share is increasing. It is on pace to challenge the market share that John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil had at its peak. Microsoft, Intel, Amazon, eBay, Facebook, Cisco, and a handful of other giants enjoy considerable monopolistic power as well. The crucial Wi-Fi chipset market, for example, is a duopoly where two firms have 80 percent of the market between them.[10] Apple, via iTunes, controls an estimated 87 percent market share in digital music downloads and 70 percent of the MP3 player market.[11]

This, too, runs directly counter to the notion of the Internet as a generator of competition and consumer empowerment, and as a place for an alternative to the top-down corporate system to prosper. Writers like Clay Shirky and Yochai Benkler wax eloquent about the revolutionary potential for collaborative and cooperative work online. Some of this has carved out an important niche on the Internet, which stands as a tangible reminder