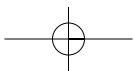
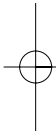
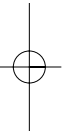


PART I

Placing the Media



Media in Context

1

Human beings have always lived in a world of communication, but we live in a world of *media* communication, where we can travel great distances and across centuries, all in the comfort of our own living rooms. We can “see” what is happening across the globe or out in space or even in unfamiliar neighborhoods of our own cities. We can recreate the Civil War or picture life after a nuclear holocaust. We can vicariously experience enormous suffering and great joy. And we can hear the sounds of other cultures and sense how different peoples experience the world. We may discover that others in the world live very differently from us. We can learn that not everyone lives in the world of media communication and that not everyone who *does* lives in the same way.

The media have become an inseparable part of people’s lives, of their sense of who they are and of their sense of history. The media provide an ever larger part of the imagery and soundtrack of people’s memories. Some of our most powerful, most intensely emotional, and most important moments are intricately bound up with the media: the 1963 Kennedy assassination and funeral, urban riots from 1965 to the present, the Watergate hearings in 1973 and 1974, the 1986 Challenger disaster, the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the 1995 O. J. Simpson trial and bombing in Oklahoma City, Princess Diana’s funeral in 1997, the Columbine High School shootings in 1999, the Millennium celebrations, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the second Iraq War of 2003.

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From a less subjective point of view, the media seem to dominate and demand more and more of people's attention. For the media seem increasingly to have become the news. More and more political issues and debates revolve around the media themselves: There have been numerous cover stories about rap music and violence, about pornography (in cyberspace and on television), about the role of the media in elections, about staging the news, about new telecommunications laws and deregulation, and about new technologies.

If we live in a world of media, it is still important to remember that we do not live in a media world. The media bring the world to us and help to shape that world, but there is still a reality outside of the media. It is becoming harder all the time to tell the real world from the media world, but it is essential to know the difference if diverse peoples and nations are to live together in peace. This book is about the ways in which the world and the media make each other, about *mediamaking*.

Whereas the world has a kind of durability and reality that resists the media's ability to remake it, the media have a kind of ephemeral quality that make them hard to hold on to. Most stories are fleeting and short lived, and they go out of date all too quickly. But some stories live on in popular memory. Nevertheless, we must choose examples if we are to study this relationship between the world and the media. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, provide a recent illustration of the complexity and the power of the media in contemporary life as well as of many of the problems the contemporary media pose.

In the early morning hours of September 11, 2001, groups of hijackers took control of four different planes, two departing from Boston heading to Los Angeles, one from Newark going to San Francisco, and one from Washington's Dulles Airport en route to Los Angeles. At 8:45 a.m., American Airlines flight 11 slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City. Alerted that there had been some sort of collision involving a plane and the WTC, many television stations trained their cameras on the burning building. When United Airlines flight 175 hit the south tower of the WTC at 9:06 a.m., the collision was carried live on national TV.

A third flight, American Airlines flight 77, was flown into the side of the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., at 9:40 a.m. Aboard the fourth flight, United Airlines flight 93, the hijackers instructed the passengers to call their loved ones from their cell phones or the airplane phones in the seats in order to say goodbye. With these calls, the

passengers were made aware of the fate of the other hijacked planes and realized what was happening to them. A group of passengers decided to fight back against the hijackers. At 10:37 a.m., the plane hit the ground in a rural area outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and all were killed.

Not only were these events an unprecedented tragedy, and a tragedy covered extensively by the media, but also several of the key events occurred on live television: the second plane hitting the WTC and the subsequent collapse of both towers. The major networks broadcast uninterrupted coverage, commercial free, for three days. Television, as it had during past crises, was the primary source of news, images, and information about these events for the majority of the U.S. population (J. Carey, 2002). In addition to this, the media coverage that day revealed the extent to which the mass media have globalized. Live broadcasts from Cable News Network (CNN) went to all the CNN outlets worldwide. Local media outlets from Brazil to Singapore would show a live feed from CNN rather than their own news, especially in the hours soon after the events took place. Live images from U.S. broadcasters were taped and rebroadcast on television globally. Besides the simple fact of this being a cataclysmic event, the WTC employed citizens from a great number of different countries.

But the events of September 11 were also a time when a new medium—the World Wide Web—came into its own as a disseminator of news and information. Initial reports described the Internet as a failure during the crisis because news Web sites were quickly overwhelmed and users found their Internet connections unreasonably slow as networks were overloaded (Rappaport, 2002). But the Internet quickly recovered, and by afternoon the Web established itself as a significant source of news and information. An estimated 40% of Internet households visited Web sites dedicated to news (up from 12% prior to the attacks). Media researcher Paul Rappaport (2002) draws this conclusion:

The Internet emerged from September 11 as a mainstream channel for obtaining news. The events of September 11 empowered users to become active participants in the organization, collection and dissemination of news. It appears that these efforts were long lasting. After September 11, a larger percentage of Internet households continued to rely on Internet news sites when compared to pre-September 11 levels. (p. 256)

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One and a half years later, when the United States went to war with Iraq, the Pew Internet and American Life poll showed that “77% of online Americans turned to the Internet in connection with the war” (Rainie, Fox, & Fallows, 2003, p. 2).

After the events of September 11, the Internet also became a site of alternative news, of information not provided by the established news outlets. Individuals’ personal narratives about their experiences that day (including personal photographs and video) were posted to a myriad of Web sites, and innumerable discussion sites appeared where debate over the events, the responsibility for them, and appropriate courses of action raged. The Internet also provided opportunity for a number of alternative theories as to the nature of the attacks to be posed and discussed.

And the Internet was put to more personal uses during the crisis, when e-mails and instant messages were used to contact loved ones in New York and Washington, D.C., once the phone lines became overloaded. The Web also became a site of personal memorials for the victims of the attacks, and acted as a place for counseling and solace for the survivors.

There are a number of ways in which the events of September 11 can be used to springboard a discussion of the mass media today. These have been just a few. Others include the representation of Muslims and those of Middle Eastern descent in the media, the question of civil liberties in the wake of the passage of the Patriot Act, the effect of the WTC images on the audience, and so on. We will return to the example of September 11 throughout the book as different perspectives on the mass media are presented.

The event becomes entwined with the media representations of the event. Though this was an event witnessed first-hand by possibly millions of New Yorkers, for the rest of the country and the world the event is inseparable from its images. Everyone knows that there is a difference between the media coverage and the actual events, we know that thousands of people lost their lives that morning, yet there is no way to imagine or comprehend the attack except through media images. As time has passed, it has become even more difficult to separate the events from the media’s images; even people who were there have had to negotiate with the representations and images that have bombarded them ever since.

The example of the events of September 11 illustrate what we mean by saying that human beings live in a world of media but not in

a media world. Communication has always been a crucial aspect of human life, but in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the Western industrial democracies, the media have become so intertwined with every aspect of our reality that the line between the two, media and reality, has become blurred and even porous. To try to isolate the media from other parts of our lives—as if we could talk about media *and* politics, media *and* culture, media *and* society, media *and* economics, or media *and* audiences—even for the purpose of study is an oversimplification. For the media are already implicated in these other realms: The media are already involved in making them what they are, even as these other realms are involved in shaping the media.

Consequently, this book is based on a different model of the place and power of the media in contemporary life: the model of *mediamaking*. This term is intentionally ambiguous. It implies that the media are *themselves being made* while they are simultaneously *making something else*. Above all, it suggests that we must see the media and all of the relationships that the media are involved in as active relationships, producing the world at the same time that the world is producing the media. This means that the media *cannot* be studied apart from the active relationships in which they are always involved: We cannot study the media apart from the context of their economic, political, historical, and cultural relationships. Studying the media is not an additive process, as if we can first understand the media and then add their effects on politics and economics. But at the same time, we cannot study some real political or economic events and then hope to understand the role of the media in representing them. To repeat ourselves, the media are constantly being made by the very same relationships that they themselves are making. If this sounds circular and somewhat confusing, think about the relationships in your own life. Virtually by definition, relationships are matters of reciprocal influence.

Making is the primary activity of media: making money, making everyday life, making meaning, making identities, making reality, making behavior, making history. And it is in these various activities of making that the media themselves are made, that we can speak of the media as making media. *Making*, then, points to the fact that the world of human life is a world of *practices*. Practices are the various forms of human activity that transform some aspect of human reality. Practices are activities that change the world, such as political practices, economic practices, intellectual practices, social practices, sexual practices,

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and so on. We must always be aware of the complexity of the media in relation to human practices as we attempt to understand the contributions that the media make, both positive and negative, to the very form and substance of contemporary social existence.

In this chapter, we will discuss the dimensions of the concept of media and its relation to the idea of mediation. Then, we will present the two dominant models of communication that have influenced the study of media. What each model presents is a way of analyzing the media that uncovers media's power to effect or control.

MEDIA AND MEDIATION

Defining and Distinguishing the Media

Everyone is familiar with the term *media*; people see it and use it all the time. But what do they mean? Many people use the term *media* to refer to television, yet the term cannot be limited in this way, although television is certainly one of the most important media of our times. (Note also that *medium* is singular and *media*, plural: *television is a medium; the media are . . .*.) Some people assume that the media are simply technologies that can be described in terms of the hardware of production, transmission, and reception. Although technology is obviously crucial to contemporary communications media, they cannot be understood simply as hardware, as if they existed independently of the concepts people have of them, the uses people make of them, and the social relations that produce them and that are organized around them every day.

Let's begin by outlining how the media can be described and differentiated. There are many ways of categorizing media, precisely because they are complex and multidimensional structures or formations.

We can categorize the media according to the geography or type of social relationships they are designed to construct or used to support: *Interpersonal media* are primarily used for point-to-point, person-to-person, communication; *mass media* are primarily used for communication from a single point to a large number of points, or from a single source to an audience that includes many people. Whereas interpersonal media usually give the communicator a good deal of control over the audience, mass media allow the communicator little power to

select and little likelihood of knowing much about the audience. Whereas interpersonal media enable the sending and receiving of messages from both ends, mass media tend to separate the sender and receiver. Interpersonal media include the telephone and the telegraph. Mass media include newspapers, magazines, books, radio, broadcast, satellite and cable television, film, records, and tapes. There is a third category, *network media*, which can be used as either interpersonal or mass media; even more important, they can also be used to create a new geography of social relations, connecting many points to many points, all of which can be both senders and receivers. Examples of network media are teleconferencing, the postal service, fax, e-mail, the World Wide Web, and new hybrid cellular telephones connected to the Internet. These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, we often think of the telephone as an interpersonal medium, but at the turn of the last century, it was also used as a mass medium, broadcasting news and even opera performances into the home.

We can categorize the media according to a number of different *modalities*. One modality is the channel used in communicating: print (books), electronic (television), chemical (film). Another modality is the sense experience on which particular media operate: visual (books), aural (radio), tactile (Braille), mixed (television). Economic modalities are important, as well: directly purchased media (books, records, magazines, and tapes), media that can be delivered to an audience without direct cost (network television or radio), media that charge for general access (cable television, Internet providers), and media that charge for the right to view specific content (pay television, films).

We can categorize media by the *institutions* that produce and disseminate them. For example, we distinguish network television from local independent television stations from cable systems. We also distinguish between media produced by corporations (like television networks and film studios), those produced independently (known as *grassroots* or *alternative* media), and those produced for personal use (like home videos). We can distinguish different *technological manifestations*, especially of what appears to be the same communication technology: Think of the difference between a family television, the large television in a sports bar, and the Diamond Vision screen behind the stage at a concert arena. But there are also different *uses* of a technology: The same television set can be used to watch broadcast or cable television (in other words, receive a TV signal), to watch a prerecorded

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videotape or digital video disc (DVD), to play a videogame, or to surf the Internet (with WebTV and its counterparts).

We can also distinguish different forms of *media content*, which often cut across the media technologies themselves, as when we talk about entertainment or fictional programming, news or journalistic content, and advertising content. We can make finer distinctions among these, as when we separate soap operas from situation comedy shows from Westerns and action adventure fare, all located within the category of television entertainment.

Two other distinctions are worth making in the effort to locate and define a useful concept of communications media. First, we can distinguish communications media from other kinds of *information technologies* that are also involved in processes of communication. These include patents, copyrights, photocopying, and non-Internet computer programs. Second, we can distinguish media from culture. In fact, one of the most common misuses of the term *media* equates it with popular culture. People tend to confuse television as a medium of communication with the entertainment content that defines the vast bulk of its programming. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the new technologies of communication have quickly evolved into the major sources of popular culture, and most of the major forms of popular culture are not only distributed by but have often emerged in one or more of the mass media.

This confusion and conflation has resulted in a persistent and common form of criticism of the media: that each new media technology threatens other, more traditional, forms of popular culture. (See Box 1.1, "Sousa on the Menace of the Phonograph.")

BOX 1.1

Sousa on the Menace of the Phonograph

Every new media technology is greeted with alarmist rhetoric. Often, the most extravagant and dire consequences are predicted as the inevitable result of the introduction of the technology. In the early part of the twentieth century, the phonograph was widely disseminated, and the recorded music industry grew rapidly. Here is what John Philip Sousa (1906), perhaps the greatest American composer of marching songs

(including “Stars and Stripes Forever”), said about the consequences of the phonograph’s popularity:

Sweeping across the country with the speed of a transient fashion in slang or Panama hats, political war cries or popular novels, now comes the mechanical device to sing for us a song or play for us a piano, in substitute for human skill, intelligence and the soul. Only by harking back to the day of the roller skate or the bicycle craze, when sports of admitted utility ran to extravagance and virtual madness, can we find a parallel to the way in which these ingenious instruments have invaded every community in the land. And if we turn from this comparison in pure mechanics to another which may fairly claim a similar proportion of music in its soul, we may observe the English sparrow, which, introduced and welcomed in all innocence, lost no time in multiplying itself to the dignity of a pest, to the destruction of numberless native song birds, and the invariable regret of those who did not stop to think in time. On a matter upon which I feel so deeply, and which I consider so far-reaching, I am quite willing to be reckoned an alarmist, admittedly swayed in part by personal interest, as well as by the impending harm to American musical art. I foresee a marked deterioration in American music and musical taste, an interruption in the musical development of the country, and a host of other injuries to music in its artistic manifestations, by virtue—or rather by vice—of the multiplication of the various music-reproducing machines. . . . When a mother can turn on the phonograph with the same ease that she applied to the electric light, will she croon her baby to slumber with sweet lullabies, or will the infant be put to sleep by machinery? Children are naturally imitative, and if, in their infancy, they hear only phonographs, will they not sing, if they sing at all, in imitation and finally become simply human phonographs—without soul or expression? Congregational singing will suffer also, which, though crude at times, at least improves the respiration of many a weary sinner and softens the voices of those who live amid tumult and noise. The host of mechanical reproducing machines, in their mad desire to supply music for all occasions, are offering to supplant the instructor in the classroom, the dance orchestra, the home and public singers and players, and so on. Evidently they believe no field too large for their incursions, no claim too extravagant. But the further they can justify these claims, the more noxious the whole system becomes.

Likewise, even fans of a new form of popular culture, especially when it is made available through new media, often themselves assume that the new form is inferior to the older forms it is replacing. Criticism of new forms of popular culture may turn into criticism of the media that carry them. Parents fret that electronic games keep their children away from better activities, such as reading or

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exercising. It is true that the media have become the primary space for new forms of leisure activities and popular culture. The twentieth century saw a transformation in older forms of culture as well as a redefinition of leisure and leisure activities. (See Box 1.2, “Leisure in ‘Middletown.’”)

BOX 1.2

Leisure in “Middletown”

One of the classic studies of American social life is Robert and Helen Lynd’s (1929) *Middletown*, the study of an American small town in the 1920s. The Lynds examined the changes that modernity brought to Middletown between the 1890s and 1920s, looking at such activities as making a living, making a home, training the young, using leisure, and engaging in religious practices and community activities.

Of particular interest to us is their examination of how the automobile and movies—both new technologies in the early 1920s—changed how Americans spent their leisure. The automobile was important for spreading the idea of vacation when families could travel relatively cheaply away from home. Moreover, and for the first time, ordinary Americans could go for a ride on any day of the week. Thus the automobile helped make “leisure time enjoyment a regularly expected part of every day and week rather than an occasional event” (p. 260):

Like the automobile, the motion picture is more to Middletown than simply a new way of doing an old thing; it has added new dimensions to the city’s leisure. To be sure, the spectacle-watching habit was strong upon Middletown in the [1890s]. Whenever they had a chance people turned out to a “show,” but chances were relatively fewer. Fourteen times during January, 1890, for instance, the Opera House was opened for performances ranging from Uncle Tom’s Cabin to The Black Crook, before the paper announced that “there will not be any more attractions at the Opera House for nearly two weeks.” . . . Today nine motion picture theaters operate from 1 to 11 p.m. seven days a week summer and winter; . . . twenty-two different programs with a total of over 300 performances are available to Middletown every week in the year. . . . About two and three-fourths times the city’s entire population attended the nine motion picture theaters during the month of July, 1923, the “valley” month of the year, and four and one-half times the total population in the “peak” month of December. (p. 263)

Understanding the media requires acknowledging and accounting for the complexity of the media. Every medium comprises and is shaped by technologies, social relationships (institutions), and cultural forms. Each of these ways of thinking about the media is important, for each contributes something unique to how we understand the media and their relationship to society and social reality. These three aspects of the media are central to our discussions throughout the book.

Technologies

When we think about media, the first thing that comes to mind is the various technologies of communication. *Technology is the physical means of producing, reproducing, and distributing goods, services, materials, and cultural products.* In the case of communication, technology includes the physical media and techniques, the technical practices and machinery, by which we communicate. Communication technologies are expanding and proliferating at an increasingly rapid rate. It wasn't until 1954 that television was in the majority of American households; by 1960, seven of eight families had TV sets. Stereos were nonexistent. There were no cassette tapes, no videos, no cable television, no satellites, no personal computers or personal data assistants, no video games, no cellular phones. Today, even as we write, new technologies are being announced all the time. We anxiously await the arrival of wearable computers, the continued miniaturization of devices, and, someday, teleportation devices. Imagine how our understanding of an event like the attacks of September 11, 2001, might change if the cellular telephones with the capability to capture and send digital still images and video that are now widely available had been commonplace then. What new images, perspectives, and stories could have been told?

Institutions

Technologies are not an independent part of society. Technologies are often created within, shaped by, and controlled by institutions involved in their production and use. *An institution is any large-scale entity, embodying a range of social relationships and social functions, created by humans to perform an essential function for a society.* An institution, then, is a specific social organization where particular decisions

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are made and can be carried out. For example, organized religion, the military, the school system, and the government or state can be seen as institutions. Their functions and relative power vary over time. The institution of contemporary mass media comprises industries (such as the television industry) and organizations (such as the National Broadcasting Company [NBC]) that use professionals—people who are trained in and paid for specific skills to produce and distribute media products to a market or audience. In addition, other organizations, such as government regulatory agencies and universities, may also play a role in the complex institutional existence of the media.

More specifically, the relationship between communication technologies and institutions has varied over time as well: In Western Europe through the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic church controlled the technologies of writing and manuscript production. Only the church was allowed to teach writing, and only the church had the resources to control the labor (of monks and priests) necessary for the arduous reproduction of manuscripts. Because of this, the church was able to control what was written and, hence, disseminated. When Johannes Gutenberg, with the backing of his banker, Johann Fust, coupled the printing press with movable type (individual letters of type that could be moved around and reused) in the fifteenth century, he challenged the power of one institution, the church. But the printing press was created within and became part of other institutions—medieval institutions such as guilds and later modern commercial institutions such as banks and mass media industries. And these, in their turn, controlled how the technology was used and what sorts of things could be written, printed, and distributed.

We could also discuss the long history of government regulation of communication and its technologies, from the licensing of printing presses to the licensing of broadcast stations today. Communication technologies are also developed within specific institutions. For example, there was great corporate interest in the development of radio and television in the United States, and great government interest in the development of those same technologies as a public service in the United Kingdom. Governments and corporate institutions also develop and decide the standards and norms for a technology: on what frequencies a broadcast technology can transmit, or how many scan lines will be in a television screen.

Cultural Forms

Many organizations in contemporary American society produce and distribute things; often, these items are meant to be sold and purchased to make a profit for their owners. Media organizations are no exception (although in some cases and in some other societies, media products are distributed freely). Yet media organizations produce something less tangible than the typical products of business. Rather than producing things (cars, toasters, coffee mugs), media organizations produce cultural *forms*; that is, formats, structures, ways of telling stories. By cultural form, we mean how the products of media technologies and organizations are structured; how their languages and meanings are structured into codes (see Chapter 5). For example, a typical product of television is the half-hour situation comedy or sitcom, such as an episode of *Will and Grace*. The cultural form of that product is how it tells its stories, a consistent plot structure, ways of presenting and resolving issues, or other genre conventions. It can also be a consistent look or image (a living room with a couch) or use of language (short, one-line quips rather than long, elaborate discourse). Though the idea of cultural form has much in common with the idea of genre, they are not the same thing. A newspaper is a particular cultural form, but it is not in and of itself a genre (though there are genres of newspapers). In many cases, especially when they are first introduced, new media technologies simply borrow cultural forms from older technologies. Early films look a lot like theatrical plays, early television copies the serial form of much radio programming, and so on. Cultural forms are an essential part of how the media make meaning. And cultural forms can be structured and influenced by institutions. For example, the fact that commercials appear every 10–15 minutes on American television, as opposed to every hour—or not at all—in other systems, is a decision of the broadcast companies and occasionally is federally regulated. Cultural forms are also structured and influenced by technologies. For example, you can display a more complex and detailed image on a large cinema screen, but that complexity and detail gets lost on the much smaller screen of a television.

What holds the three aspects of media—technology, institutions, and cultural forms—together, and what provides the unity of the concept of media, is the idea of *mediation*, to which we now turn.

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Mediation

The meaning of the complex term *mediation* has changed over the centuries, but there are consistent themes to these meanings. Rather than giving one definition of mediation, we will give you four of them, because there are four different ways that the term gets used, and all of them are relevant to the study of communication.

According to *Webster's New World Dictionary, Third Collegiate Edition*, a medium is "something intermediate . . . a middle state . . . an intervening thing through which a force acts or an effect is produced." A very old and commonsensical sense of the term is "to occupy a middle position or intermediary," as in interceding between adversaries in an attempt to reconcile a dispute. We still talk about mediating labor disputes between business and workers. Similarly, in Christian doctrine, mediation describes the role of Christ interceding between God and humans. So, the first definition of mediation is *interceding or coming between*.

A second sense of mediation contrasts the mediated with the immediate or the real: for example, when we contrast the media world with the real world, or when we think that there is a difference between objective knowledge and that which has been mediated through the interests of some party. This sense implies that *that which has been mediated has been biased or shaped by the mediator* and can be contrasted with immediate, objective information.

The third sense of mediation is a more modern sense that combines these two meanings. *Mediation is the space between the individual subject and reality*. That space is a space of experience, interpretation, and meaning. In other words, this definition of mediation implies that our notion of reality is always shaped by these things (experience, interpretation, and meaning), which come between one's self and reality.

Finally, there is a fourth sense of the term mediation that refers to a formal relationship that connects previously unconnected activities or people: for example, the relationship between the producer and the consumer of some message. In this sense, mediation refers to *how messages are transmitted from one person to another*.

The notion of communication is complex because it embodies all four of these senses of the term *mediation*: reconciliation or intercession, the difference between reality and an image or interpretation of reality, the space of interpretation between the subject and reality, and the

connection that creates the circuit of the communication of meaning. This complexity helps to explain the apparently contradictory effects of communication in society, but it also helps us understand why it is so difficult to arrive at a singular understanding of the process of communication. These different notions of mediation underlie the dominant models through which communication usually has been theorized.

TWO MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Any attempt to describe, explain, and understand the media must presuppose something about the nature of the process of communication, for it is assumed that this process defines the essential function or nature of the media. This task is made more difficult because communication is something that we take for granted all of the time. Yet the things that are most familiar are frequently the most difficult to notice, to say nothing of appreciate and comprehend, for we “know” them so comfortably and tacitly. The word *communication* comes from the Latin term for *common*. The question is, *What is it that is made or held in common through the process of communication?*

Communication is not only taken for granted in our society; it is often seen as a magical solution for many if not all of our problems. Some people assert that undesirable situations can be significantly improved through more effective communication. People write books claiming the key to success is better communication skills. People may act as if all of our problems were merely “problems of communication” and not real differences of opinion and values, skill and desire, resources and power. But improved communication may not be enough to relieve the racial tension in our society or, for that matter, to end a war. It may not even be enough to guarantee success in a career, a relationship, or life.

There are two different answers to the question of what constitutes the commonality implicit in communication. These have given rise to two fundamentally different perspectives on the process and practice of communication. The first perspective is grounded in the idea of *transportation*, in which some *thing*—a message or meaning—is transported from one place or person to another. Based on the image of transportation, scholars have developed a transmission model of communication. This model relies more on the fourth definition of

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mediation discussed above, the circuit of communication and meaning. The second perspective depends on the idea of the *production of a common culture* through which the concept of communication is closely tied to notions of community and communion. Communication, like communion, is a process by which a particular community is bound together. This common culture surrounds everyone and everything in its commonality; it is the groundwork upon which both community and every specific act of communication are built. Based on the assumption that a common culture is the basic context of communication, scholars have developed a cultural model of communication. These two models have played a central role in the development of the discipline of communication studies.

The Transmission Model

Modernization is closely tied not only to industrialization, but also to the development of new technologies that facilitated the movement of goods, people, and information. In the eighteenth century, modernization was crucially dependent on the development of modes of transportation, such as all-weather roads and canals. In the nineteenth century, modernization included the advent of the railroad, the telegraph, the elevator, and the telephone.

Among the earliest attempts to develop a theory of communication in the twentieth century, the most successful reproduced the commonsense assumption that communication looks exactly like transportation; that is, that *communication is the process of moving messages from a sender through a medium to a receiver*. The analogy to transportation is straightforward. In transportation, something—wheat, for example—is moved from a source to a receiver by a certain agency or medium—for example, a train. In communication, a message—a certain sentence or meaning, for example—is moved from a source to a receiver by a certain agency or medium—for example, a linguistic code carried through a telephone. In fact, as media scholar James W. Carey (1989) puts it, “In the nineteenth century . . . the movement of goods or people and the movement of information were seen as essentially identical processes and both were described by the common noun ‘communication’” (p. 15). By the time the discipline of communication had been established in American universities in the early twentieth century, this transmission model had become the dominant

model among communication theorists. Here is a typical diagram of this view of communication:

Source → Message → Receiver

The transmission model of communication is based on the interpersonal context, in which the major concern is the fidelity of communicating—that is, the accuracy with which the message is transported from one person to another in a linear trajectory—although the model may allow for feedback loops. This model assumes that all communication operates like interpersonal communication. At its simplest level, whether you are talking on the telephone or watching television, your first concern as a receiver of communication is whether what you are receiving is actually the same as (i.e., reproduces) the message that has been sent. The model implies that the major challenge of the process of communication is to successfully transmit the content of a message as if from the mind of one person to that of another—the exact thought and meaning in the mind of the sender is what can, should, and will be placed in the mind of the receiver. This sharing of meaning is called *understanding* or *intersubjectivity*.

The transmission model was the basis of Harold Lasswell's (1948) famous description of the study of mass communication. Lasswell, who wrote about mass media in the first half of the twentieth century, described the study of communication as a series of questions: *Who / says What / to Whom / through what Channel / and with what Effect?* Indeed, almost all of the scientific research in the field of mass communication is built upon this model. Drawing upon research methodologies in sociology, psychology, and social psychology, researchers have studied each of Lasswell's questions. Researchers have studied the "who" in studies of communicators—the people and organizations that produce media messages and control what gets transmitted. They have studied the "what" in systematic analyses of media content. And they have studied the "to whom" and "with what effect" in the voluminous research on the effects of media on audiences (see Chapter 10).

For example, the school shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 renewed debates about the effects of violence in the media on youth. For the most part, these debates relied on the transmission model of communication. They argue about *who* (the source—Marilyn Manson or the makers of video games) says *what* (the message of the

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songs or the violence represented in the games) through what *channel* (compact discs [CDs] and videogames) to *whom* (the receiver—impressionable youth) to what *effect* (the murder of 13 people and the deaths of the two shooters). This model assumes that these effects are relatively direct between source and receiver, and so people search for the source or sources of the violent behavior. We can also see this model at work in discussions of propaganda and even education (where it describes a particular model of lecturing: teacher → information → student).

The Cultural Model

The transmission model is the more prevalent model of communication in society today. The cultural model is less well known, so we will spend more time outlining it. The cultural model of communication draws a very close connection between the processes of social communication and the production of a common culture. The notion of culture is one of the most complex yet powerful concepts in modern thinking. Raymond Williams, a British literary critic and communication theorist, has traced the changing meanings of this term.

According to Williams (1958), the oldest use of the term *culture* already combined two different senses: On the one hand, culture involved notions of honor and worship; on the other hand, it described the agricultural process of cultivation, “the tending of natural growth.” By the nineteenth century, these two meanings were extended to human development, and culture came to take on new meanings. Now the term described the process of “cultivating” particular abilities, sensibilities, and habits in human society (such as when we think of a “cultured person”). It described a particular form of human association and existence (for example, in notions of “folk culture” and “images of the organic or natural community”). Increasingly, the notion of culture was used to describe a particular set of highly valued activities and the “creative practices” that produce them—culture as the set of artistic and intellectual activities and products. For example, one of the most famous definitions of culture was offered by the nineteenth-century English literary critic and state education bureaucrat Matthew Arnold (1869/1960): “The best that has been thought and said.” Finally, in its most recent form, culture becomes synonymous with the whole way of life of a society or people; thus we might talk about the culture of

the Middle East or of Iraqis or of African Americans or even of the dominant American culture.

Williams suggests that even as this last anthropological notion of culture becomes prevalent in contemporary language, the earlier meanings of culture remain active in our commonsense uses of the term. He explains that the reason culture became such an ambiguous and important term in our modern lexicon may have been that it offered a way of both describing and judging the changes that have radically altered the nature of social life since the seventeenth century. These changes, commonly referred to under the general term of *modernization* or *progress*, were so sweeping that they challenged any attempt to describe them or to judge them. The theory of culture is based on the attempt to describe the pervasive changes captured in notions of modernization and, at the same time, to identify some criterion against which these changes could be measured.

Williams notes,

Culture was not a response to the new methods of production, the new Industry alone. It was concerned, beyond these, with the new kinds of personal and social relationships: again, both as a recognition of practical separation and as an emphasis of alternatives. (p. xvi)

In his words, "The idea of culture is a general reaction to a general and major change in the condition of our common life. Its basic element is its effort at total qualitative assessment" (p. 295).

Williams makes an important addition to this history of the concept of culture. He argues that what connects the notions of a whole way of life and a privileged set of activities is a set of processes that can properly be called cultural and that are, above all else, ordinary. These processes are ordinary in the sense that they are routinely performed by everyone in their daily lives; they are the processes of language and meaning production, of sense making and interpretation, of communication. It is above all the ordinariness of communication that defines culture as art and that unites the various elements of a whole way of life. For Williams, the dilemma of modern life is not that there is a struggle between the creative (art) and the uncreative (popular culture), but that there is no way for the vast majority of the population to enter into more public and social processes of communication. To transform the culture of the society according to every individual's

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experience requires that people be able to use language and the media of communication to both speak within and transcend the already existing common or shared culture. This process is what Williams calls "the long revolution."

Individuals continually attempt to give meaning to their experiences. Interpretations are usually provided for them by the shared languages (verbal, literary, visual) of their culture. But people have to constantly struggle to find ways to interpret experiences that appear to have no place within the existing culture. They create such interpretations, Williams suggests, through their attempts to communicate their experience. Thus communication is a constant process of balancing the possibilities of the culture (social languages, shared experiences, and meanings) with the needs of individuality. If culture remained totally within the already constructed social language, everyone would understand everything, but there could be nothing new in the world. If culture were limited to the innovative realm of the individual, then shared understanding would be impossible. Culture as communication is the process of producing new shared meaning out of the interaction of historically given shared meanings and individually created meanings.

At the same time, for Williams, culture is the set of activities in which this process of producing new shared meanings is carried in the various forms of art and media communication. Making the leap from culture as art and literature to culture as film and television is a simple one. Today's media have certainly augmented older forms of art and have become the dominant means by which culture is created and shared.

The cultural model of communication sees communication as the construction of a shared space or map of meaning within which people coexist. Rather than a linear model, which first isolates the message and then sends it from one place or person to another, the cultural model emphasizes the fact that people already exist within a world of shared meaning that they take for granted. Without this common reality, communication would be impossible, and, in fact, the vast majority of our communication merely serves to ritualistically reproduce that system of shared meanings within which we live.

A number of writers have followed media scholar James W. Carey's (1989) ritual view of communication and suggested that one can look at media presentations as "rituals" to illustrate the ways in which the media function as a cultural forum. When we think of rituals, we think of ceremonies and religious events—a graduation, the

swearing in of naturalized citizens, a wedding, a Holy Communion. Rituals are formal but emotional public events, endlessly repeated, with special meanings for their present participants and equally important meanings for the wider society that has established them. A ritual serves to remind the society's members of cornerstone beliefs for that society. The ritual's repetition serves as a marker, both of the importance of those beliefs and of their durability. A cultural model of communication extends this notion of ritual to encompass all of the repetitive practices of communication, such as saying grace before dinner, answering the phone, or greeting a friend.

This system of shared meaning represents the world for us; it gives us a common picture of reality. This concept is often described as *ideology*. But *picture* is perhaps not the most accurate description of this process, for we live within these pictures of reality. *Map* may be a better term, although even that is too abstract and distant from the way in which, in this model, communication defines and determines our experience of the world. But communication as culture can never be limited to ritual, to the reaffirmation of what a community shares, for it must also allow for and even institutionalize the possibility of creativity, growth, and change.

In fact, the cultural model of communication lies within a broader set of theories of the social construction of reality. Such theories start out with the observation that human beings lack the instinctual relationship to reality that enables other species of animals to make sense of and respond to the world. Culture is for humans the compensatory medium of information without which we would be condemned to live in a chaotic reality. Without culture, reality would be available to us only as what William James called a "booming buzzing confusion"; with culture, reality becomes ordered and manageable. Culture exists, then, in a kind of space of mediation, the space between humans as incomplete animals and reality, the space of communication as the production of meaning. This is the third definition of mediation, from our earlier discussion. Human experience is defined in part by the contribution of the specific human culture that binds together a particular community or society. Human beings live in a meaningful world, which they have produced through their own culture. Culture is the medium in which human beings externalize (objectify) and internalize (subjectify) their meaningful experiences of the world. (Chapter 5 will consider these issues in greater detail.)

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Contrasting the Two Models

Consider the relation of the media to the attacks of September 11, 2001, again. Using a transmission model, the analyst understands news coverage primarily in terms of the information that is sent from the media to the audience, or from the government to the media to the audience. Researchers might study the relationships between the various organizations involved in producing various messages: They might look at how the messages are constructed and what correlations there are between features of the message and the audience's response to them; they might try to figure out how audience members process the messages, and what individual audience members do with them. But the transmission model cannot deal with the enormous amount of misinformation and redundancy in the coverage, or with the relationship between news and entertainment.

Using a cultural model, an analyst would ask very different questions and offer very different descriptions of those events. The analyst might begin by pointing out that the language and images (in other words, the cultural forms) used in the news are already understood by the audience; thus the attacks can be incorporated into already existing frames of reference. Some audience members reported that watching the coverage, even live as it happened, was like watching a movie. The live photos of actual events matched the cultural form of the disaster picture and seemed to follow the codes of contemporary special-effects sequences in popular film. Cultural forms give the audience a way of understanding these events—in this case, it was a way of understanding that was at odds with the seriousness of the events (this was not a film; thousands of people lost their lives). Two communication researchers have even argued that the cultural form of the media coverage itself (constant, uninterrupted television coverage; repetition of key images or videotape; the continual speculation as to who was responsible) was sufficiently similar to other media events of this type as to constitute a particular genre, the *disaster marathon*. This cultural form itself, they argue, greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the terrorists' goal; in other words, the form of the coverage enhanced the terrorists' message (Blondheim & Liebes, 2002).

Similarly, an analyst using the cultural model might offer a different account of people constantly viewing the war coverage on television. Rather than assuming that people are seeking information about the

attack, we might assume that television viewing in this crisis serves to create and reinforce our sense that we are part of a community that is sharing this highly emotional and dramatic event (as evidenced by the great increase in the display of flags and other patriotic signs soon after the events). More viewers watched the news in groups than usual (J. Carey, 2002). This is indeed a *media event*, through which we ritualistically share the experience of being part of the American community. In this ritual watching of television, we find a way of coping with the anxieties and fears of a people at war. In this regard, we can compare this event to other instances of national grieving or celebration in front of the television set, as when the Challenger space shuttle exploded after liftoff in 1986, when O. J. Simpson was tried for murder in 1995, or when the Millennium was celebrated.

A cultural model of communication might also begin by recognizing the enormous power of language, culture, and rituals, focusing its attention on the ways in which the coverage reaffirms the shared systems of meaning and values that define American culture. In this light, we can view the presentation of Osama bin Laden as an evil threat not only to peace but to the fundamental values of liberty, justice, and the American way. The coverage of the war on terror continuously reaffirms our own sense of our moral and technological superiority.

The model would also recognize that the very language used to describe the events of September 11, 2001, structures both our interpretation of those events and the possible responses to that event. For example, the events were labeled as an *attack*, which is an act of war, and the United States' response was made within that framework: A war on terrorism was launched, al-Qaida prisoners were considered prisoners of war and treated according to the rules of war. Conceivably, these events could have been labeled as *crimes* (theft, kidnapping, and mass murder) and the perpetrators *criminals* (rather than *militants* or *soldiers*). Our response to crimes involves a quite different procedure and different laws than war does.

Cultural reaffirmation is a constant element of our relationship to the media. In light of the cultural view, we can understand most of popular culture in terms of its constant affirmation and reproduction of already taken-for-granted meanings and values in American society: the importance of the family, belief in the power of the individual, the value of competition.

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There are a number of ways to distinguish between the two models. Many people assume that research carried on under the auspices of the transmission model is always quantitative, based on statistical analyses applied to data gathered through either experimental or survey research methods, whereas research within the cultural model is predominantly qualitative, based on either the researcher interacting with the people he or she is studying in natural settings (ethnography) or the interpretation of texts. However, this distinction is by no means absolute, and there can be qualitative work within a transmission model and quantitative work within a cultural model. The sociologist Edward Shils once made a similar distinction by suggesting that the transmission model had lots of answers, but the questions were usually so specific as to be uninteresting, whereas the cultural model had lots of interesting and important questions, but they were so difficult that no answers were possible. Underlining Shils's distinction is the fact that the transmission model develops by generating and accumulating specific answers from specific case studies, whereas research within the cultural model develops more as the result of theoretical argument. Rather than accumulating and averaging across specific results, cultural research develops increasingly sophisticated concepts to deal with its growing recognition of the complexity of the processes of media communication. In this book, we are concerned less with the specific findings of research than with the conceptual and theoretical tools that enable scholars and critics to understand the media in all their complexity.

The two models also have different relationships and responses to the idea of context. As we have already said, it is impossible to separate communication from its context, to isolate its forms and effects from its relations with other forms and institutions of practices. Researchers committed to the transmission model nevertheless make a choice to isolate specific aspects of the media and also to isolate the media from the various elements of the context. By focusing on particular relationships between elements of the media and other similarly isolated aspects of the context of social reality, such as a particular political campaign or a particular economic trend or aspect of the audience's identity or response, researchers hope to address very important questions about the influence or effect of the media on local events and circumstances, such as the effect of certain kinds of war reporting on public opinion about the war. Choosing the transmission model allows

researchers to study the impact of the media on individual members of society and the psychology of media impact on various subgroups in the audience according to the rules and methods of quantitatively defined science.

On the other hand, choosing the cultural model, because it highlights the context of media activity, allows the researchers to address questions about the ways in which particular media practices reinforce or challenge existing social trends and tendencies. Researchers do not use the cultural model to describe the immediate impact of a media product or message. Rather, because it places a particular media product or message in its context, this model will be used to identify the way in which such messages fit into larger structures of influence and effects. For example, a cultural study of war coverage would be likely to focus on the enduring images of militarism, moral purity, and belief in the power of technology to solve human problems. Some researchers are trying to find ways to reincorporate a commitment to context within the transmission model, and those committed to a cultural model often must limit the complexity of the context that can be taken into account.

Although many scholars assume that the transmission and cultural models of communication contradict each other—that they have to choose one model or the other—we strongly disagree. We believe that each model has something important to say about the complexities of communication in the contemporary world; the usefulness of each model depends on our particular questions about communication. Thus we prefer to think of the two models as complementary perspectives. However, we must not forget that even when the two models appear to be addressing similar questions, there are likely to be significant differences: what each means by “effects,” how messages are identified, how the relations between messages and effects are described and “measured,” the kinds of evidence used to establish such a relationship. Although the two models of communication suggest very different understandings of the process, it is necessary for us to hold both models of communication in mind constantly. The decision about which model is more relevant and useful in a situation depends upon the situation and our questions.

The relationship between these two models will become clearer as we proceed with this book, for we will draw upon the research and writing of both traditions of communication studies as we attempt to

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explain the *power* of communication in contemporary society. What unites these two models is that both help us gain a better understanding of the power of media communication.

MEDIA AND POWER

Identifying the relationships between media and power is pivotal to understanding contemporary society. The media have the power to engage and entertain, to create and destroy, to open spaces and to close them. Recognizing the context of the media reminds us that their power depends on their relations with other practices and institutions and that, consequently, they do not wield their powers alone but share them with these other practices and institutions. The notion of power operates at two levels: (1) capacity or determination, and (2) control.

Power as Effect

First, in its broadest sense, *power refers to the ability to produce effects, to make a difference in the world*. In this sense, every practice has a certain amount and type of power. For instance, television has the power to reorganize how we spend our time, whereas a magazine is less likely to reorganize our time. Television also has an impact on the spatial arrangements of our homes; one of the problems facing anyone who wants to purchase a new large-screen TV set is to find a room in the house big enough to accommodate this device. Magazines are unlikely to have the power to shape the spaces within which we live. In addition, every medium, from printed books to electronic networking, has significantly reshaped people's experience of time and their sense of history.

This view of power as the ability to produce changes or effects in the world is closely connected to the notion of *determination*. In its most common usage, determination is thought of as *causality*. For example, some people believe that the statistical relationship between education level and income level demonstrates a causal relationship: Higher education level necessarily brings about higher income. In this sense, education determines income. To use another example, many people have argued that exposure to pornography causes viewers to exhibit specific, demeaning attitudes toward women. Some people have even argued

that pornography is responsible for its users' violent behavior toward women. If that is the case, pornography can be said to determine attitudes and even behaviors toward women.

Another sense of determination follows from the more contextual vision of social life that we have advocated here. In this view, *the relationship of any practice to its effects cannot be isolated and identified, because it depends on the entire context.* What a specific practice or set of practices can do is limit and shape the outcomes; we then say the effects are *overdetermined*. Consider some examples: In this view, pornography cannot be isolated from a wider range of other media representations that portray women as objects to be used by men (think, for example, of many ads in such popular magazines as *Maxim* or *Vogue*). But the effects of even this broad range of media portrayals cannot be identified outside of the context of social relationships and other aspects of our culture that help to define, shape, and limit the construction of sexual identities and differences. These social relationships not only qualify the impact of pornography, they also help to explain its production: It is not surprising that pornography is a major product of a sexist society. That is why we can speak of the overdetermination of pornography's effects.

Let's consider again the relationship of education and economic success. How is this relationship overdetermined? Consider that access to education is itself dependent on many other factors, including social class, race, gender, and family income. Furthermore, the very meaning of education is constantly being challenged and rethought. Some ask whether life experience should earn credit in school or college; others debate whether the point of college is vocational training or general intellectual advancement. Similarly, current discussions around the question of multicultural curricula in colleges raise a number of crucial questions: Does becoming well educated mean learning about European-derived culture only, or should students be exposed to the broad range of cultures, ethnicities, and histories in the world? To the extent that education level is related to a whole host of other social factors in one's life that mediate its relationship to income level, that relationship is overdetermined.

Power as Control: Consensus and Conflict

There is a second meaning of the notion of power: *control* over people and resources. In this sense, power can be understood as producing,

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and then operating through or exploiting, social differences in the world. To begin to understand how media have power, we need a theory of how social differences are produced and of their importance in society. Some theories of society, commonly referred to as *consensus models*, emphasize the unity and harmony within society and the ability of different peoples to get along together. Typically, Americans think of their nation as a “melting pot” in which different groups come together in a common identity: We are all Americans.

One of the most influential examples of a consensus model of society in media theory is the work of John Dewey, the eminent philosopher, educational theorist, and communication critic of the first half of the twentieth century. Dewey (1925) offered a sophisticated cultural model of communication based on the idea that communication is the process through which different groups in the society come to understand and accept each other despite their differences. Communication is the means through which a nation forges a common identity, a common purpose, and a common resolve.

Dewey felt that the new media of communications were not meeting the challenge presented by the complex problems facing America at the turn of the twentieth century: vast immigration from eastern and southern Europe, shifts of population from rural to urban areas, and increasing economic interdependence among the different regions of the country. These historical changes in American life meant that different groups in the society were unable to understand each other and to act together toward a common goal. Dewey thought the mass media of the day (including newspapers, magazines, films, and later radio) were failing to fulfill their essential purpose of creating a common language that would result in a sense of national community with which people could understand each other and which would enable people to act together. This enormous faith in the power of communication and its ability to create new forms of unity out of the chaos produced by historical change explains Dewey’s belief that “of all things communication is the most wonderful” (1939, p. 385). Although Dewey was writing in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, his argument has a modern parallel: Throughout the 1990s the Internet was often seen as providing an opportunity to bring people together and to bring back a dimension of community that was seen to be missing in American life.

However, other theories of society, commonly referred to as *conflict models*, emphasize the conflicts and inequalities within social life and

the difficulties different groups have in living together. These critical theories of society emphasize the fact that the various resources of a society are unequally distributed according to various structures of social difference. Every society has resources that are highly valued: force, money, meanings, morals, identities, political position, emotions, pleasures, and so on. Some of these are more highly valued than others. Each of them enables those who possess and can use the valued item to have certain powers or capacities to make a difference (the first sense of power described earlier) in the world. The case of money is quite clear: Money can produce more money—when you know how to use it—and it can enable its possessor to purchase many other things as well. But as the old Beatles' song goes, "Money can't buy me love." On the other hand, we might not think of emotions as a resource of value until we think about the way in which people use emotion to control other people or the fact that people need emotional bonds to remain healthy. By the same token, the power to influence meanings—a topic we explore in detail in Chapter 6—is the power to define questions or the power to define what others view as important and how they think about them. It is the power to define what others take as common sense. This is power, indeed.

These resources are not equally distributed across all members of the society. Different groups have more or less access to resources and a differing ability to use them. Moreover, such groups are not randomly defined; the distribution of resources is organized hierarchically according to systems of social differences. Every society identifies a variety of features that differentiate groups, but only some features are considered relevant to the distribution of resources. For example, in American society, we certainly distinguish blond-haired, blue-eyed people from brown-haired, brown-eyed people. However, no one justifies segregation in schools according to such differences. On the other hand, we do organize the distribution of resources differentially by social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual identity, age, and differential abilities. And this is what critical scholars mean by a *system of social differences*.

For example, feminism is a theory of society that emphasizes the unequal distribution of resources by gender and sexuality: It describes a society that subordinates women and privileges men, and it labels this society as patriarchal. Although almost every society in human history has been patriarchal, feminism argues that it is important to identify the

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particular forms of inequality that characterize contemporary society. Women, for instance, tend to make less money than men and often they are expected to work in the home, without pay; women tend to be subject to verbal and physical violence by men; women tend to have less access to political power (in the United States, there has never been a woman elected president or vice president); women are often viewed and represented solely as sexual objects; and women are thought of in our society as being more emotional and less rational than men. You might think of many other ways in which women are subordinated to men in our society. Feminism is a theory of society that attempts to identify and challenge the subordination of women in these systems of difference. A feminist theory of communication examines the ways in which media communication contributes to these relations of inequality between men and women.

Other conflict theories of society look at the subordination of racial and ethnic groups relative to the White majority; of the working class relative to the wealthier elites; of children and the aged relative to young and middle-aged adults; of homosexuals relative to heterosexuals; of various religious minorities relative to the Protestant majority of America; and of the physically handicapped relative to the physically able.

In recent years, many of these subordinate groups in society have challenged their subordination—including their portrayals in and access to the mass media. Increasingly, questions of culture and media communication have been central in such struggles. These struggles are transforming the political and cultural life of the United States and the rest of the world. And they have had a profound impact on the study of media, for they have placed questions of power as control at the center of the discipline.

It is difficult to choose between consensus and conflict models of society. Media theorists who favor a conflict model of society generally view the more consensus-oriented alternative as defending the status quo, the current way of life and all of its inequalities. On the other hand, media theorists who stress the consensus model of society tend to defend their vision by appealing to the liberal faith that society is continuously progressing and that the lives of all people within society will improve in the future as they have in the past. Moreover, they argue that conflict theorists give too much importance to the problems of power and overlook progress and harmony in human life.

In this book, we use both models of society—the consensus and conflict models—because we believe both theories of society describe important aspects of the media’s role in making American society and people’s lives. As we have said, the media do play an important part in making the structured inequalities of different groups in the society. But, although we recognize that the media contribute to these relations of subordination, we also believe that the media have positive and beneficial effects in society. And we believe, like Dewey, that media help to make us a community. Many contemporary struggles have been addressed by the media in a variety of ways. Media have a vital role to play in transforming society and in producing a more equitable social structure.

Somewhere between the pessimism of the conflict model and the optimism of the consensus model, we have to find the space for an appreciation of both the positive and negative sides of the media’s role in American society. To become a critic of media is to walk a thin line between these two alternatives. The danger of pessimism is that you begin to think that people are so vulnerable to the media’s messages that every exposure to entertainment subordinates them further. However, the danger of optimism is to ignore the ways in which real people suffer as a consequence of the power of the media.

One final note: There is no correlation between social theories and communication models. Or, to put it differently, there is no necessary relation between one’s view of society and the model of communication one supports. Scholars who use a cultural model can hold to either a critical or a consensual model of society, as can those who use a transmission model. The questions facing communication scholars are too complex to reduce the field of possibilities before we have even begun.

SUGGESTED READING

Carey, J. W. (1989). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Narratives of Media History

2

To understand how the media operate today, we need a better understanding of how communication media have shaped and influenced human existence. Will the Internet fundamentally alter culture and society in the twenty-first century? Would we be able to tell if it did? We are, after all, sometimes quite blind to slow and gradual change around us: As Marshall McLuhan is reported to have quipped, "We don't know who discovered water, but it certainly wasn't the fish." (Actually, the line's probably from one of his promoters, Howard Luck Gossage). When we speculate about the future, we must ground such speculations and our understanding of contemporary media by considering the history of the relationship between communication and society. We believe that history is a useful guide to understanding the present and the future. In this chapter, we consider some of the narratives of media history.

Typically, media history is presented as a series of technological inventions, a story about great people and organizations, and an analysis of particular events shaped by communication technologies. For example, such histories focus on Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the moveable type printing press in the 1450s, Samuel Morse's invention of a workable electric telegraph in 1844, Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone in 1876, and so on.

However, there is another way of thinking about the history of the media, which emphasizes the role of communication in shaping

human existence. History is a retelling of the past, an attempt to explain how something that occurred in the past affects who or what people and society are now. But the story of the past can be told in many different ways. The French historian Fernand Braudel (1972) offers a set of categories for viewing the scope of historical events. First, there is the shortest unit of historical time, the *event*. An event is a thing like a war, a decree, a meeting, or the introduction of television. As pointed out above, most typical histories of media simply list a series of such events, each event focused on a technological development. Second, there is the level of the *conjuncture*, which describes short periods of time, usually measured in decades. Conjunctures comprise many events. For example, we speak of America in the postwar years and of the Roaring Twenties. Third, there is the level of *historical eras*, a period that can be viewed as a whole, usually less than a century, such as the Industrial Age, the Nuclear Age, or the Enlightenment. Finally, there are *historical epochs* representing major and significant transformations of human life that often cross national boundaries and that encompass events, conjunctures, and eras. Braudel refers to these as the *longue duree* or the long term, a temporal unit that encompasses centuries: for example, the Middle Ages and the Modern Period.

The three different historical narratives that we will consider here offer accounts of the role of communication and culture in human history. The first narrative theorizes the transformation from orality to writing to print to electronic communication. It is a grand narrative on the epochal scale, examining the impact of changes in the modes and technologies of communication across the *longue duree*. It asks, *To what extent has the history of communications fundamentally shaped the directions of human endeavor and social life?* The second historical narrative, on theories of the masses, is conjunctural in Braudel's sense and focuses on communication, culture, and social relationships in modern life. The third narrative describes a different transformation in the *longue duree*, the transformation from modernity to postmodernity. In this narrative, communication is seen as a part of a broader cultural transformation in history.

FROM ORAL TO ELECTRONIC CULTURE

The first of the narratives is the longest of the *longue duree* histories of media, from oral culture to electronic culture. But we should emphasize

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that although this can be seen as a narrative of historical periods (like geological epochs), it is actually a narrative of different cultures and there is much overlap between these cultures. In fact, different media cultures can be operating more or less simultaneously within a single society in a particular period.

In an oral culture, all interaction takes place in face-to-face situations. It is a preliterate society that has no shared form of fixing or writing messages. A writing culture is a literate society in which a shared system of inscription, or writing, exists so that communication can take place outside of face-to-face situations, across time and space. A print culture is an expansion of a writing culture by means of the printing press, but it also encompasses the consequent social and cultural changes that result from the proliferation of printed matter. In an electronic culture, communication can transcend time and space without physically moving the same object from one place to another. A variety of writers have described the general differences among oral, writing, print, and electronic cultures, including Walter Ong (1982), Eric Havelock (1982), Harold Innis (1950, 1951), Marshall McLuhan (1964; McLuhan & Fiore, 1967), and Elizabeth Eisenstein (1978).

Oral Culture

It is difficult to reconstruct what it was like to live in a purely oral culture. Scholars of oral culture have had to base their understandings of this epoch on the anthropological study of nonliterate peoples (for example, Walter Ong has looked at oral culture in Yugoslavia) and on the epic poetry of Homeric Greece (in the work of Eric Havelock).

Perhaps more than any other scholar, Walter Ong (1982) has characterized oral culture. First, Ong insists that there is a *different sense of time* in an oral culture. Because it has no records, its memory cannot be a recorded one; its history can only reside in the present moment, in the telling of its story. There is no way to go back and check the record to see if it differs from contemporary views of an event. There are no aids to recall the "facts" or even what other people have said in previous tellings. Ong says that "the past is indeed present but it is present in the speech and social institutions of the people, not in the more abstract forms in which modern history deals." Therefore, it is more

likely that both myth and facts are intertwined in an oral culture's memory of its past, much like people's family histories: For many who desire to rediscover their family history, all they have is what has been passed from generation to generation orally, and, not surprisingly, such stories are often conflicting and full of gaps that have to be filled in imaginatively.

Second, Ong argues that the *psychology* of oral cultures uses a different kind of memory system. Memory is not verbatim repetition; memory is thematic and formulaic. For instance, research shows that upon hearing a lengthy epic song just once, Yugoslav singers can repeat hundreds of lines, but no single singer, and no two singers, will ever sing the song in precisely the same way. Every singing is a different version of the epic. Yet the general story varies little from telling to telling, although the specific words that are used in the telling do differ. Hearing a new song, epic singers break it down and memorize the themes of the song. They then verbalize it in the formulas they have in their own stock of epic stories. Different epic singers become known for different phrases and ways of telling stories. The epic singers use certain aids to recall particular songs, such as strong visual imagery and mnemonic devices.

Third, in oral cultures, *performance* is more important than authorship, according to Ong. Every time a work is performed, it is reshaped by the performer and provides a new model for future performances. The notion of composition as fixing the form and sense of a message in an original act of creation does not exist in oral cultures. Instead, those with the best memories and those elders who have become the repository of knowledge are likely to be the most respected members of the culture. There are no authors in an oral culture; there are only performances.

Oral cultures are likely to be relatively homogeneous with respect to their knowledge and social norms. A relatively small number of people are likely to possess and control the knowledge of and stories about the culture, as well as their distribution. Power is concentrated in these few people.

At the same time, oral culture tends to be very public and shared across generations. Education or learning involves a lot of demonstration and participation on the part of the student and less attention to abstract principles and logics. Hence the world of children is less segregated from the world of adults. Children absorb the knowledge

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they will need during public rituals and public discussions. Notions of privacy and individuality are less important than a commitment to the social whole.

Social relations and social norms have to be more rigorously policed in face-to-face situations because there can be no recourse to some fixed text of rules or standards of conduct. It is the same with the very meaning of words and stories; meanings are always defined for the particular performance rather than in universal terms (i.e., there can be no dictionary).

For Ong (1982), oral culture represents a more personal and socially involved form of communication and consequently form of life. People rely on one another and operate collectively for the social good. At the same time, oral culture is rigid and extremely hierarchical, intolerant of differences and disagreements, and harsh on those who challenge or deviate from the social norm. Oral culture is resistant to radical change, though it does incrementally change over time as stories pass from generation to generation.

Writing Culture

The consequences of written forms of communication are quite extensive. The Canadian economist and communication historian Harold Innis (1950, 1951), for example, describes how written communication allowed societies to persevere through time by creating durable texts which could be handed down and referred to. This allowed for the control of knowledge by central hierarchies (such as a priesthood). But the invention of more transportable media, such as papyrus, allowed for centralized control to expand over a wider area. (See Box 2.1, "The Bias of Communication.") Writing changes the relationship between a communicator and the person with whom he or she is communicating. Audiences now can be remote in time and space, and the communicator can guarantee that the message received is identical with the one sent, without having to rely on the memory of a messenger. This means that a communicator can reach a much wider and disparate audience. To the extent that society was no longer dependent upon face-to-face communication, societies could expand their boundaries to encompass vast spaces and diverse populations. This was, as Innis (1950) argues, the beginning of empire.

BOX 2.1**The Bias of Communication**

The following is from Innis (1951):

A medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting. According to its characteristics it may be better suited to the dissemination of knowledge over time than over space, particularly if the medium is heavy and durable and not suited to transportation, or to the dissemination of knowledge over space than over time, particularly if the medium is light and easily transported. The relative emphasis on time or space will imply a bias of significance to the culture in which it is imbedded.

Immediately we venture on this inquiry we are compelled to recognize the bias of the period in which we work. An interest in the bias of other civilizations may in itself suggest a bias of our own. Our knowledge of other civilizations depends in large part on the character of the media used by each civilization in so far as it is capable of being preserved or of being made accessible by discovery as in the case of the results of archaeological expeditions. Writing on clay and on stone has been preserved more effectively than that on papyrus. Since durable commodities emphasize time and continuity, studies of civilization such as Toynbee's tend to have a bias toward religion and to show a neglect of problems of space, notably administration and law. The bias of modern civilization incidental to the newspaper and the radio will presume a perspective in consideration of civilizations dominated by other media. We can do little more than urge that we must be continually alert to the implications of this bias and perhaps hope that consideration of the implications of other media to various civilizations may enable us to see more clearly the bias of our own. In any case we may become a little more humble as to the characteristics of our civilization. We can perhaps assume that the use of a medium of communication over a long period will to some extent determine the character of knowledge to be communicated and suggest that its pervasive influence will eventually create a civilization in which life and flexibility will become exceedingly difficult to maintain and that the advantages of a new medium will become such as to lead to the emergence of a new civilization. (pp. 33–34)

The creation of the phonetic alphabet changed things even more. Walter Ong (1982) argues that the creation of the Greek alphabet (about 720 BCE) changed how the Greeks thought and handled knowledge.

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It was now possible both to think abstractly and to create canonical texts, texts that could be used to measure the truth of any specific performance of a story. Writing allows the creators of a story to ensure that it is recorded just as they intend it to be. Thus the function of memory changes from thematic and visual memory to verbatim memory. In fact, Plato argued against writing precisely because it would change the nature of memory and perhaps make people lazy since they would not have to rely on memory as much. At the same time, the existence of writing meant that memory itself could be judged or held accountable to something else (the text or the written word). This is the advent of writing culture.

According to the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964), "It can be argued then, that the phonetic alphabet, alone, is the technology that has been the means of creating 'civilized man' [*sic*]—the separate individuals equal before a written code of law" (p. 86). In oral cultures, the community is the basic unit of social existence. Individuals within such a community are defined by their place in the ongoing performance of social life. In a writing culture, fixed, written, and permanent rules or codes of law develop. Individuals can appeal to and be held accountable to such codes. At this point, the individual emerges as a unique entity separate from the community. When we can say "Joe says" or "Mary told me," then authorship has created individuality.

The separation of the individual from the community, from society, entails a different conception of space and time. In an oral culture, neither space nor time has much meaning apart from the particular place in which the community lives and the particular moment in time that defines the community's sense of the present. Writing allows for an understanding of both space and time as continua that encompass other groups of people, other places, and other times.

Those who possess the skill of writing and reading, those who are literate, are also powerful. Writing enables knowledge to be hoarded, because knowledge no longer requires public performance. Knowledge is stored in private places out of public sight, and the ability to read and to write the texts of knowledge is itself of value and therefore not widely available. This allows for the development of rigid hierarchies and of formal institutions of power, such as the Church and the state.

Print Culture

But the revolution that McLuhan grounds in writing was only completed—and at the same time, transformed—with the invention of the printing press and movable type. The ability to mechanically reproduce a text freed writing from its reliance on an elite group of individuals (such as monks in the Middle Ages), and it guaranteed that each copy of the text would be literally identical to every other copy.

A number of consequences follow the invention of the printing press. It took control of writing out of the hands of the Church and the scribes assigned to copying ancient texts. With printing came the possibility of spending time to create new knowledge, new texts, and new interpretations of old texts. Increasingly, this search for knowledge, this ability to compare a variety of texts, to seek out new ideas and interpretations, could not be entirely controlled by any one institution, especially the Church. Thus printing was instrumental in the development of a secular society and a body of writing about nonreligious life. Secular writers challenged the authority of the Church on religious and nonreligious matters in favor of individual conscience. The historian Elizabeth Eisenstein (1978) has persuasively argued that printing and the book were instrumental in the establishment of democracy in the upper middle classes of early modern Europe.

Walter Ong (1982) suggests that with writing, things were not just given but could now be questioned abstractly. Even more, because writing allows backward scanning, one can revise a text, going back and eliminating errors and inconsistencies. Although one can't take back a word once it is uttered, one can look over a text and change written words to ensure the meaning intended. Therefore, Ong argues, with writing comes a mindset that likes exactitude and precision, even in speech. This obsession with precision and exactitude gives rise to dictionaries embodying the desire to legislate the correct use of language.

Printing further reinforced the sense of individuality and privacy. Books, according to Ong, allowed for communication in private, reading by oneself, rather than in public settings. It also created a sense of the private ownership of words. Writing also separates the knower or speaker from what is known, therefore making possible introspection. "Opening the psyche as never before, not only to the external, objective world, [is] quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against

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whom the objective world is set," Ong wrote (p. 14). With printing, sight rather than hearing begins to dominate consciousness.

Printing enabled the emergence of the newspaper and novel. Although these forms of communication cannot be explained solely on the basis of the technology of printing (many other economic, social, and historical developments contributed to their emergence), it is fair to say that they could not have come into existence without the invention of printing technology. The merger of the printing press and movable type made texts cheaper, because it cost far less to make a second copy of a text than to write and produce the first copy. Affordable reading material helped to spread literacy.

Raymond Williams (1965) has pointed out the ironic consequences of this spread of literacy in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. For example, the working class was taught to read so that they could read the Bible as well as manuals for the new industrial machinery, but it was difficult to control what a literate audience consumed. Workers often read political tracts and newspapers, which contributed to the growing political gap between the classes of workers and capitalists of the Industrial Revolution. This helped create new political forms of organization and power, such as political parties and democratic governments.

Historian Robert Darnton (1995a, 1995b) found in an exhaustive survey of clandestine literature published in the conjuncture leading up to the French Revolution that such literature fell into two major categories—radical antistate and antichurch works, to be sure, but about *half* was pornography. Official suppression of both categories led to increasing resentment among the literate classes, and censoring the latter, Darnton argues, was as important in fomenting revolution as the former.

Marshall McLuhan (1964) makes another claim for the impact of printing technology: Printing altered the very structure of human consciousness and thought. According to McLuhan, the physical relationship between the reader's eyes and the text comes to define a linear mode of thinking. Just as eyes move across the page, line after line, in a rigorous and necessary way, so too does one begin to think in a similarly rigorous, linear fashion, one idea logically connected to the next.

The result of such linear modes of thought is a different conception of time and space. It is in the age of printing that European powers explored and colonized the world, spreading their culture, their politics,

and their religions across the globe. Time becomes a linear vector moving toward an indefinite future defined as progress. The belief in progress reinforced the drive for knowledge and discovery that printing had opened up. What followed was the age of scientific discovery.

Electronic Culture

When we think about electronic media, we are likely to think about radio, television, movies, and computers. But to understand these developments, we need to go back to the emergence of the telegraph in the nineteenth century. The telegraph had at least two important consequences: It reorganized people's perception of space and time, and it allowed for new kinds of organizational control. The telegraph enabled the almost instantaneous transmission of messages across space, and it fostered a rational organization of time. The need to coordinate the measurement of time around the globe gave rise to the establishment of standard time zones and the fixing of Greenwich Mean Time as the norm defining the correct time at any place in the world.

According to James W. Carey (1989),

The simplest and most important point about the telegraph is that it marked the decisive separation of "transportation" and "communication." Until the telegraph, these words were synonymous. The telegraph ended that identity and allowed symbols to move independently of geography and independently of and faster than transport. . . . The great theoretical significance of the technology lay not merely in the separation but also in the use of the telegraph as both a model of and a mechanism for control of the physical movement of things, specifically for the railroad. That is the fundamental discovery: not only can information move independently of and faster than physical entities, but it can also be a simulation of and control mechanism for what has been left behind. (pp. 213, 215)

The telegraph merely began a process that has continued to this day at an ever-increasing rate. Whatever one's opinions about the shape of the modern world, it is fair to say that the new electronic means of communication have revolutionized not only how people communicate, but how they live as well. If written media centralized and made knowledge hierarchical, and then the printing press began a process of dispersion and democratization of knowledge, then the electronic media have drastically accelerated both of these trends.

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If printing enabled the transmission of messages across time, their ability to cross space was still severely limited. Although a ruler could now send a message to the far reaches of his or her empire and be fairly certain of the accuracy of the transmission, the process relied on the physical transportation of the written message. Even books that could be sent around the world, creating a single audience for an identical text, required the physical movement of the book as an object. But with the advent of electronic means of communication, instantaneous transportation of messages around the globe became a reality. A new form of empire, expanded across space, becomes possible, according to Innis (1950).

When information is beamed through the airwaves or through wires and cable, it becomes far more difficult to regulate and control access to it; many commentators have noted that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the breakup of the Soviet Union were accelerated by the porosity of their borders to democratic messages from the West made available through the electronic media.

Furthermore, if print individualized and privatized what had been an essentially public oral culture, the effects of the electronic media have been both to reinforce the sense of individuality and privacy and to create new forms of what McLuhan (1964) has called the "global village."

Like books, the electronic media have become, over time, personal, mobile, and private. People no longer have to sit in large theater palaces or even in living rooms to watch movies or television programs; miniaturization allows them to carry music and television and computer networks in the palms of their hands. Furthermore, like books, the electronic media have developed in two directions simultaneously: They have created larger audiences for particular messages (the Bible and network television), and they have created highly selective audience segments organized around particular tastes, from philosophical books to the Home Shopping Network to thousands of Web sites on the Internet.

Thus, as J. W. Carey (1989) argues, the electronic media have radically transformed our awareness and conception of both time and space. Space now can be measured in temporal terms: by the time it takes to transmit a fax, a television image, a computer file. Space no longer appears to be an obstacle in the organization of social, political, and economic relationships.

Time, too, has changed in people's understanding. The invention of computers has speeded up this process, leading to the introduction

of almost infinitely small divisions. Can anyone imagine how short a nanosecond is? Time has become increasingly fractured and discontinuous. Printing challenged the stability and continuity of oral culture and created a commitment to change and progress; time in print culture was understood as continual, linking the past with the present. The electronic media seem to create real gaps between generations, and the time span of generational differences seems to get smaller and smaller even as the gaps become more and more pronounced.

There is a significant debate about the consequences of electronic communication for the exercise of control and power in the modern world. Some have suggested that the result of these technologies is the centralization of information and power; others argue that a countervailing tendency of the electronic media is to disperse and decentralize the control of information and power. The proliferation of regional television production centers (for example, Brazil and Mexico are major production centers for Portuguese and Spanish programming) and film production centers (such as Hong Kong and India) are examples of the diffusion or decentralization of power. Yet there has also been a reconcentration of power. The concentration of global film and television companies in a handful of corporations is a countervailing force to regional film and television production centers.

It is clear that with the electronic media, for the first time in history, the vast majority of the world's population can now participate in the dominant cultural forms and practices. There is some debate about whether the electronic media require literacy, whether the new media have introduced new forms of literacy, or whether they are creating an illiterate population. However, as Walter Benjamin (1969) argued in the 1930s, the incorporation of the masses into the cultural arena as both consumers and potential producers of cultural products is a revolution. The effects of this are not well understood.

Some observers of the contemporary world have argued that the electronic media are transforming basic modes of awareness and thinking. If oral cultures are largely aural, emphasizing hearing and sound, and if print cultures are largely visual, emphasizing sight and the ability to read, then the new electronic cultures are multisensorial, requiring a constant monitoring and coordinating of a wide range of sensory experience and information. Moreover, although it is difficult to know how to describe the formal properties of today's electronic media products, one thing is clear: They are rarely linear in their logic

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and narrative form. The linear conventions of both time and space are constantly violated and played with, and the traditional logic of rationality seems irrelevant. And the impact of these technologies on the evolution of human existence is not at all clear. We are simply too close to the historical emergence of these technologies.

Criticisms of Technological Determinism

Before we move on to the second narrative, we need to address an assumption that underlies some versions of the previous one: technological determinism. These grand narratives that lead from oral to electronic culture offer important insights about the role of communication in human culture, but they can be criticized as examples of theories of technological determinism. Technological determinism is the belief that technology is the principal, if not only, cause of historical change. Whether theories of technological determinism are optimistic or pessimistic about the present and the future, they assume that history is guaranteed in advance. Their proponents assume that the future is the result of the necessary and inevitable unfolding of the consequences of the past and present. Such theorists fail to adequately consider the ways in which people make history. When talking about the context of media power, one needs to recognize that the context is not stable and fixed; it is in fact constantly changing over and through time. Any discussion of media power must take history into account, both in the sense that the media themselves change through history and in the sense that the media's place and power in society are constantly changing.

It is perhaps easiest to identify technological determinism in the writings of Marshall McLuhan (1964; McLuhan & Fiore, 1967), who assumed that people's normal use of technology necessarily modifies their consciousness. McLuhan argued that the forms of communication technology (oral, print, electronic) available to people at a particular historical moment determine the ways in which they can perceive reality and the logics they use to understand it. To McLuhan, the content of the media, the actual messages, are irrelevant. This is the meaning of his aphorism, "The medium is the message."

McLuhan's theory clearly assumes that technology determines everything else in history and, moreover, that communication technology is the crucial invention for humankind. McLuhan's is only one version of the common view that places the burden of historical change on

the shoulders of communication technology. It is important to realize that on a smaller scale, many people make a similar assumption when they think about and often criticize “what television has done to society” or “how computers are changing the nature of work, social relations, and ways of thinking.”

In his book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Raymond Williams (1975/1992) offers a general critique of technological determinism. Williams argues that all of the versions of determinism assume that technological invention is accidental and that it is the result of “an internal process of research and development” (p. 7); but, he argues, these assumptions are both false. Communications technologies have always been sought in the context of solving particular social needs. These needs were often military and political, not economic and cultural. For instance, radio communication was first used by the Navy for ship-to-shore communication, and only later was it exploited for commercial purposes. Thus Williams argues that we need to restore human motivation and intention into our understanding of how technologies are created and their role in history. Technologies are used in direct response to perceived social needs and problems. They are not merely symptoms but are intentional attempts at solutions. In this way, Williams attempts to recognize the complexity of the relationships among media, their contexts, and the production of history. (See Box 2.2, “A Social History of Television as a Technology.”)

BOX 2.2

A Social History of Television as a Technology

The following is from Williams (1975/1992):

The invention of television was no single event or series of events. It depended on a complex of inventions and developments in electricity, telegraphy, photography, and motion pictures and radio. It can be said to have separated out as a specific technological objective in the period 1875–1890, and then, after a lag, to have developed as a specific technological enterprise from 1920 through to the first public television systems of the 1930s. Yet in each of these stages it depended for parts of its realization on inventions made with other ends primarily in view.

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Until the early nineteenth century, investigations of electricity, which had long been known as a phenomenon, were primarily philosophical: investigations of a puzzling natural effect. The technology associated with these investigations was mainly directed towards isolation and concentration of the effect, for its clearer study. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there began to be applications, characteristically in relation to other known natural effects (lightning conductors). But there is then a key transitional period in a cluster of inventions between 1800 and 1831, ranging from Volta's battery to Faraday's demonstration of electro-magnetic induction, leading quickly to the production of generators. This can be properly traced as a scientific history, but it is significant that the key period of advance coincides with an important stage of the development of industrial production. The advantages of electric power were closely related to new industrial needs: for mobility and transfer in the location of power sources, and for flexible and rapid controllable conversion. The steam engine had been well suited to textiles, and its industries had been based on local siting. A more extensive development, both physically and in the complexity of multiple-part processes, such as engineering, could be attempted with other power sources but could only be fully realized with electricity. There was a very complex interaction between new needs and new inventions, at the level of primary production, of new applied industries (plating) and of new social needs which were themselves related to industrial development (city and house lighting). From 1830 to large-scale generation in the 1880s there was this continuing complex of need and invention and application.

In telegraphy the development was simpler. The transmission of messages by beacons and similar primary devices had been long established. In the development of navigation and naval warfare the flag-system had been standardized in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the Napoleonic wars there was a marked development of land telegraphy, by semaphore stations, and some of this survived into peacetime. Electrical telegraphy had been suggested as a technical system as early as 1753, and was actually demonstrated in several places in the early nineteenth century. An English inventor in 1816 was told that the Admiralty was not interested. It is interesting that it was the development of the railways, themselves a response to the development of an industrial system and the related growth of cities, which clarified the need for improved telegraphy. A complex of technical possibilities was brought to a working system from 1837 onwards. The development of international trade and transport brought rapid extensions of the system, including the transatlantic cable in the 1850s and the 1860s. A general system of electric telegraphy had been established by the 1870s, and in the same decade the telephone system began to be developed, in this case as a new and intended invention.

In photography, the idea of light-writing had been suggested by (among others) Wedgwood and Davy in 1802, and the *camera obscura* had already

been developed. It was not the projection but the fixing of images which at first awaited technical solution, and from 1816 (Niepce) and through to 1839 (Daguerre) this was worked on, together with the improvement of camera devices. Professional and then amateur photography spread rapidly, and reproduction and then transmission, in the developing newspaper press, were achieved. By the 1880s the idea of a 'photographed reality'—still more for record than for observation—was familiar.

The idea of moving pictures had been similarly developing. The magic lantern (slide projection) had been known from the seventeenth century, and had acquired simple motion (one slide over another) by 1736. From at latest 1826 there was a development of mechanical motion-picture devices, such as the wheel-of-life, and these came to be linked with the magic lantern. The effect of persistence in human vision—that is to say, our capacity to hold the 'memory' of an image through an interval to the next image, thus allowing the possibility of a sequence built from rapidly succeeding units—had been known since classical times. Series of cameras photographing stages of a sequence were followed (Marey, 1882) by multiple-shot cameras. Friese-Greene and Edison worked on techniques for filming and projection, and celluloid was substituted for paper reels. By the 1890s the first public motion-picture shows were being given in France, America and England.

Television, as an idea, was involved in many of these developments. It is difficult to separate it, in its earliest stages, from photo-telegraphy. Bain proposed a device for transmitting pictures by electric wires in 1842; Bakewell in 1847 showed the copying telegraph; Caselli in 1862 transmitted pictures by wire over a considerable distance. In 1873, while working at a terminal of the Atlantic telegraph cable, May observed the light-sensitive properties of selenium (which had been isolated by Berzelius in 1817 and was in use for resistors). In a host of ways, following an already defined need, the means of transmitting still pictures and moving pictures were actively sought and to a considerable extent discovered. The list is long even when selective: Carey's electric eye in 1875; Nipkow's scanning system in 1884; Elster and Geitel's photoelectric cells in 1890; Braun's cathode-ray tube in 1897; Rosing's cathode-ray receiver in 1907; Campbell Swinton's electronic camera proposal in 1911. Through this whole period two facts are evident: that a system of television was foreseen, and its means were being actively sought; but also that, by comparison with electrical generation and electrical telegraphy and telephony, there was very little social investment to bring the scattered work together. It is true that there were technical blocks before 1914—the thermionic valve and the multi-stage amplifier can be seen to have been needed and were not yet invented. But the critical difference between the various spheres of applied technology can be stated in terms of a social dimension: the new systems of production and of business or transport communication were already organized, at an economic level; the new

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systems of social communication were not. Thus when motion pictures were developed, their application was characteristically in the margin of established social forms—the sideshows—until their success was capitalized in a version of an established form, the motion-picture *theatre*.

The development of radio, in its significant scientific and technical stages between 1885 and 1911, was at first conceived, within already effective social systems, as an advanced form of telegraphy. Its application as a significantly new social form belongs to the immediate post-war period, in a changed social situation. It is significant that the hiatus in technical television development then also ended. In 1923 Zworykin introduced the electronic television camera tube. Through the early 1920s Baird and Jenkins, separately and competitively, were working on systems using mechanical scanning. From 1925 the rate of progress was qualitatively changed, through important technical advances but also with the example of sound broadcasting systems as a model. The Bell System in 1927 demonstrated wire transmission through a radio link, and the pre-history of the form can be seen to be ending. There was great rivalry between systems—especially those of mechanical and electronic scanning—and there is still great controversy about contributions and priorities. But this is characteristic of the phase in which the development of a technology moves into the stage of a new social form.

What is interesting throughout is that in a number of complex and related fields, these systems of mobility and transfer in production and communication, whether in mechanical and electric transport, or in telegraphy, photography, motion pictures, radio and television, were at once incentives and responses within a phase of general social transformation. Though some of the crucial scientific and technical discoveries were made by isolated and unsupported individuals, there was a crucial community of selected emphasis and intention, in a society characterized at its most general levels by a mobility and extension of the scale of organization: forms of growth which brought with them immediate and longer-term problems of operative communication. In many different countries, and in apparently unconnected ways, such needs were at once isolated and technically defined. It is especially a characteristic of the communications systems that *all were foreseen—not in utopian but in technical ways—before the crucial components of the developed systems had been discovered and refined*. In no way is this a history of communications systems creating a new society or new social conditions. The decisive and earlier transformation of industrial production, and its new social forms, which had grown out of a long history of capital accumulation and working technical improvements, created new needs but also new possibilities, and the communications systems, down to television, were their intrinsic outcome. (pp. 8–13)

Technological determinism also ignores the active role of people (and social institutions) in making their own lives. It assumes that the use of a technology is prescribed by its own structure, rather than understanding that any technology can be used in any number of different ways and can be restructured according to the demands that different uses may impose. Depending on how people use them, technologies can have very different effects, not only on individuals but on society and history as well. That is, nothing essential to a technology determines its impact on its users. This is not to say that you can do *anything* with a technology. The shape and nature of a technology do not determine, but they can place limits—technological effects are therefore *overdetermined*.

THEORIES OF THE MASSES

A conjunctural narrative stresses the sociological nature and impact of the media in history. The most influential of these theories focuses on the changing nature of social relationships and cultural products: a theory of mass society and mass culture. There are at least two versions of this theory. One starts with social relationships and moves to culture. The other starts with cultural products and moves to society.

From Social Relationship to Culture

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emergence and development of the discipline of sociology was largely defined by the *theory of mass society*. Mass society theory held that as a result of various social changes, including industrialization, both the nature of social life and the form of social interaction were fundamentally altered for the worse. The Industrial Revolution had prompted a transformation from a rural, agrarian society in which people knew each other intimately and personally (in German, the *Gemeinschaft*) to an urban, mechanical society in which people did not know their own neighbors except in terms of their professional function (the *Gesellschaft*).

The social importance of the transformation is that, in the *Gesellschaft*, rather than being bound to one another by tradition and custom, mutual regard, and understanding, people now constitute a

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society *only* by formal, contractual relations. Think about the current popularity of marital and educational contracts. Social relationships are thus anonymous, alienated, and disconnected. The individual in the mass society is isolated and vulnerable to manipulation and coercion. He or she is denied the reinforcing support of primary groups, organized around family, church, work, and community.

The individual becomes part of a mass—undifferentiated, unsupported, and easy prey for authoritarian appeals. Such theories of mass society view culture as having become little more than a tool for manipulating the masses, for providing an artificial sense of security and belongingness, for appealing to people's irrational and lowest desires.

From Culture to Society

The theory of mass society reappeared in a slightly different form after World War II in the United States, when a wide range of social and cultural critics attempted to define the unique aspects of postwar American society and to differentiate it from the totalitarian societies that had emerged in Germany under Hitler's Nazism and in the Soviet Union under Stalin's communism. Identifying these two societies as mass societies, critics then had to address the question of whether mass culture inevitably produces a totalitarian mass society, because both Hitler and Stalin made important use of the media to create and maintain their power. But because the United States also has a mass culture, could there also be a totalitarian regime here? What is the relationship between a mass culture and a democratic society?

By far, the most popular response to these questions defined American society as fundamentally liberal: Critics argued that the diversity of American culture and the plurality of audiences for a range of cultural products guaranteed America's ability to resist the manipulation of authoritarian appeals. During the 1950s and 1960s, critics attempted to draw distinctions between different sorts of cultural products and between the different audiences to which these products appealed. These distinctions—high culture, mass culture, popular culture, folk culture, middlebrow culture—continue to play an important role in contemporary attitudes about media products. Critics also argued that different audiences responded differently, based on their own cultural background and resources, to the same media messages.

Such distinctions embody particular judgments about forms of culture and their legitimacy. To call something *mass* or *low* culture is to deny it value or prestige; for many years, it was enough to guarantee that such cultural products would not be the subject of serious critical scrutiny. Yet it is important to try to define these terms, as they have been and still continue to be used in public and critical debates.

People often assume that *high culture*, or what we commonly call art, is both spiritually and formally (or aesthetically) more developed than other forms of culture, such as mass, popular, or folk culture. High culture is produced by specially trained professionals and/or uniquely inspired creative individuals. This is the art that is collected, that sells for ever-higher prices, that appears in museums and is performed in concert halls. Within music and the visual arts, high art is defined by very particular formal rules; it is largely the art of the European, White, male, upper and middle classes since the birth of capitalism. It embodies specific values (individuality, the world as a set of objects to be possessed, etc.) that these classes fought to establish. These art forms themselves were often seen as quite revolutionary in their own time and were frequently suppressed and roundly criticized by the cultural elites of the day. Many of these forms, from the waltz to the novel, and many artists we now associate with Arnold's (1869/1960) "best that has been thought and said," from Shakespeare to Beethoven, were initially considered "too popular" or "too radical" and thus denied legitimacy. Yet, over time, as these classes and their values have come to dominate our lives, the art too has come to define the norm of legitimate cultural expression.

Folk culture refers to those cultural products and forms that can be traced to a particular community or socially identifiable group. Folk culture is assumed to be an expression of the experiences of this group. Folk artists are not professionals; usually, they are not distinguishable from the rest of the population, and the interaction that occurs between artist and audience is informal, because both artist and audience share a common life. Thus bluegrass has always been seen as folk music, with its roots in Appalachian culture. On the other hand, country music is more problematic, for it is too commercial and too dispersed to be easily seen as folk music. Similarly, for most of the twentieth century, blues was seen as a form of folk music, always traced to its roots in the African American population. On the other hand, rap music, although it certainly started within a certain Black community, would

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likely not be considered folk music. There are many critics who would defend both high and folk art against what they consider to be mass or popular arts, both because of their broad popularity and their commercial base.

We might take *popular culture* to be that culture which, regardless of where or by whom it is produced, speaks to a large public audience that cannot be simply described by a single social variable, such as class or gender or age. That is, popular culture does not assume anything about the artist. The artist can be formally trained, a professional, or an amateur with little or no formal knowledge of the aesthetic forms he or she is using. Many rock musicians—the late Frank Zappa is one example—have extensive classical conservatory training, whereas others have never learned to read sheet music. The artist may or may not be part of any community. It is irrelevant in the end. Moreover, the audience for popular art is itself diverse and complicated. It is not a community with a shared common set of experiences. It is simply some portion of what might be called “the people.” The people are not a class or a gender or a race or anything else; they are made up of different classes, races, genders, ages, and regions.

In some sense, popular culture sees itself in opposition to high art, although it often shares many of the same values. Popular culture is often seen by its fans (perhaps mistakenly, given the economics of popular culture) as working from the bottom up, or as coming from the people and their interests. An enormous amount of exchange takes place between these two bodies of cultural work, popular and high. Pop art makes high culture out of popular icons: In the 1960s, Roy Lichtenstein made art out of comic strips; Andy Warhol made it of Campbell’s soup cans. And numerous rock groups have attempted to appropriate techniques of classical music to produce what has come to be called “art rock” (for example, Genesis).

Finally, there is *mass art*. Is mass art something different from popular culture? Many critics will still argue that a distinction needs to be drawn between the two. Popular culture, it is assumed, somehow speaks to people’s experience or perhaps, as John Fiske (1989) argues, at least allows people the freedom to interpret the text to fit into their experiences.¹ Mass culture, on the other hand, is assumed to be purely and entirely commercially motivated; it is assumed to come from the top down, given to the people whether they like it or not. It is manipulative, attempting to force its audience to interpret its texts according

to the interests of those who have produced it for the masses. This is why critics of mass culture fear that it will inevitably lead to authoritarian political regimes.

Yet it is difficult to sustain these distinctions. Just about all of popular culture (and even folk culture) is commercially produced. And experience has taught us that it is difficult to predict the ways in which cultural products can be interpreted by various segments of the population. Making distinctions between cultural products and giving them different degrees and kinds of legitimacy is itself an expression of political and economic power (Bourdieu, 1984). This conjunctural narrative of media history emphasizes how these ideas of mass and elite culture have developed and changed over a period of decades. Pursuing this narrative further allows the examination of how media and media products were understood at these times and aids reflections on contemporary understandings of media products.

But it is important as well to consider such ideas within the framework of a longer historical time span, from modernity to postmodernity, where we look at, for example, how notions of both elite and mass culture are part of a formation of modernity.

FROM MODERNITY TO POSTMODERNITY

There is a third grand narrative about the role of communication and culture in history: the description of the passage from modernity to postmodernity. This passage takes place over the course of centuries, making this a narrative of the *longue duree*.

The Modern

There is vast disagreement over just when the modern era begins—and ends. Some critics mark the beginning of the modern with the end of the Renaissance period in the sixteenth century. Others locate the beginning of the modern with the advent of Enlightenment philosophy in the eighteenth century. Still others distinguish between the Enlightenment and the modern, dating the latter from the mid- or late nineteenth century.

Discussions of the modern are quite dense and difficult, for they entail the relationship among three different concepts or domains:

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modernization, modernism, and modernity. In its simplest terms, these can be understood respectively as the historical processes, cultural practices, and social experience of change.

Modernization describes the broad spectrum of interrelated historical forces that radically changed the world since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, and colonialism in Europe and America. Thus modernization is more than simply a question of industrialization, of the changing modes and relations of production. It includes as well new economic relations of distribution and consumption and new commodity markets. It includes new technologies and scientific developments, some of which contributed to changes in the patterns of social migration both within countries (urbanization) and across nations (diasporas). And it includes political (democratization, the modern nation-state, imperialism) and cultural events (public education and museums), as well as changes in the relations between them. For instance, Antonio Gramsci (1971) argued that, with modernization, ideological consensus, rather than force, began to play a central role in the legitimation of power. And Michel Foucault (1977) argued that modernization brought new forms of power—normalization, disciplinarity, governmentality, and biopolitics—through which governments increasingly attempted to regulate the population by making people the object of knowledge and producing subjects who were responsible for policing themselves according to the norms of power.

Modernism refers to the cultural forms, discourses, practices, and relations—both elite and popular, both commercial and folk—with which people attempted to make sense of, represent, judge, rail against, surrender to, intervene into, navigate through, or escape from the new worlds of modernization. These cultural practices and products were themselves shaped by the new forms of leisure and communications technology put into place by processes of modernization. That is, modernism usually refers to the cultural developments that began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And yet modernism is more often used to refer to cultural developments of the late nineteenth century, which fully expressed in a variety of ways the pressures and consequences of modernization. It indexes all of the developments in art, beginning with the emergence of Impressionism and ending with Abstract Expressionism (Picasso, Gauguin, Duchamps, Renoir, Kandinsky, Klee, Georgia O'Keefe). It included developments in literature, from the Bloomsbury group of writers in England such as Virginia

Woolf to self-conscious forms of writing offered by Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Luigi Pirandello, Samuel Beckett, and James Joyce. It includes as well the architectural innovations of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe. Modernism also has to include the new forms of mass media and popular culture—the dime novel, the Hollywood film, jazz, and the radio soap opera.

Modernity refers to the changing structure and nature of the lived social realities to which modernism and modernization responded and which were themselves shaped by both modernism and modernization. This is obviously an ambiguous and difficult concept to specify. It attempts to describe what it felt like to live in the new modern world, a world that attempted to break away from the customs, norms, and traditions of earlier generations. According to philosopher Marshall Berman (1982),

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (p. 15)

As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1967) put it, in modernity, “All that is solid melts into air” (p. 83). Marx was suggesting that modernity is the experience of constant change, flux, or transformation; the search for the new; the turning away from tradition. Modernity is not just the fact of the development and change, but the yearning for change. Modernity involves the recognition that change cannot be stopped and that if one stops to rest, the world will pass you by or you will be swept away by these changes.

Many different intellectual traditions of the twentieth century can be seen as responding to the perceived historical rupture that was signaled in different forms in a vision of the modern. The modern in every instance always implies this rupture, an alienation from some past that served critics both as a measure of the change and a norm against which to judge the changes. Sometimes, that past was defined by an image of community, of face-to-face communication, of pure art unsullied by the media and commercial interests, of traditional forms of value, rationality, and social relations. Think about how common it is for people who argue about the past to harken back to an idyllic time when “things were better,” when life was simpler, when people

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were happier. Thus the modern is defined on the one hand by the relations between modernization, modernity, and modernism. But, on the other hand, it is also defined by its opposition to the old, to tradition, to the past.

The Postmodern

Recently, some cultural and media critics have argued that another rupture in history has taken place sometime since the end of World War II, probably since the 1970s. Such critics argue that we are now living in a postmodern age.

Capitalism has changed. Transnational corporations, accountable to no nation-state or political ideology, have created not only global markets for goods and services but also global networks of production. New computer technologies have been applied to every stage of the economic process (such as manufacturing, financing, distribution, and exchange) resulting in decentralization and automation; markets and labor processes have been reorganized (emphasizing a multiskilled, involved labor force); unions have declined, with increases in subcontracting and part-time labor; economies of scope have risen (consumption-driven small-batch production runs with high levels of product differentiation) to replace economies of scale.

If modernity is about mass production, mass culture, everything mass, then postmodernity is about returning to the small and the flexible (flexible specialization of labor, flexible production). If capitalism in modernity is committed to maximizing profit by producing more for less and then attempting to persuade consumers to buy the products, capitalism in postmodernity is committed to maximizing profit by developing systems of production and distribution that can respond quickly to the different demands of smaller groups of consumers (obviously such demands may still be shaped by advertising). If modernity focuses on people as laborers, consumers, and family members, then postmodernity constructs and celebrates identities as multiple, fragmented subjects defined entirely by consumer and lifestyle choices.

In postmodernity, there is no human activity that is free from capitalism, commodification, and the profit motive. No space in people's everyday life remains outside these economic processes. This is most apparent in the case of culture and communication, which have become totally commercialized. The result is that "no society,

indeed, has ever been saturated with signs and messages like this one," according to the American literary critic Fredric Jameson (1992, p. 22). This "omnipresence of culture" has important consequences for the experience of postmodernity.

Another mark of postmodernity is the increasing mobility, both voluntary and forced, of human populations around the world. The migration of whole societies, the problem of refugees, the incorporation of migrant workers, have created a global, multicultural society that challenges the ability of any nation to define a reasonably homogeneous cultural identity or a set of cultural norms. The case of the failure of America's "melting pot" image is a telling example. Although the United States has always been a nation of immigrants, it managed, at least until World War II, to maintain a sense of itself as a whole, a European-derived, English-speaking nation. But new migrations—Asian, African, and Latino—have challenged this image and made it almost impossible to define a central cultural identity for the nation. Moreover, the American experience has become the norm in other parts of the world as well. People's identities have become fractured, pluralized, and hybridized, and populations that were silent and marginalized in the past have suddenly moved to the center of the historical and cultural stage.

The rapid development of new communication technologies, in particular the computer and other information media, is essential to postmodernity. According to the French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1988), who echoes McLuhan's (1964; McLuhan & Fiore, 1967) technological determinism, this is the most important factor bringing about the postmodern era.

Postmodernism as a set of cultural practices or a new aesthetic norm was first used in the field of architecture as a challenge to the high modernist form of the urban skyscraper, which typified most of twentieth-century urban building. Jameson (1991) has offered the most commonly used description of postmodernism by describing features that cut across many cultural forms and media.

First is the *disappearance of depth*. By this, Jameson refers to the irrelevance of anything outside of the text, of the normal assumption that cultural texts refer to something else—such as deeper meanings or the expression of an author's intention or the representation of an external reality. In postmodern texts, only surfaces matter, only images are real.

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Second is what Jameson describes as *pastiche*, which refers to the absence of any normative rules and definitions of coherent styles and forms. Perhaps the easiest examples to illustrate this are buildings by such postmodern architects as Philip Johnson and Michael Graves. Both of these architects combine elements from a wide range of historical architectural styles, from Greek arches to Gothic spires and modern glass walls, in one structure.

Third, Jameson points to the *schizophrenic* character of postmodernist works; such texts are frequently fragmented, both formally and temporally. Characters themselves are often inconsistent and seem utterly incapable of unifying past, present, and future into coherent stories, and authors seem unwilling to create coherent narratives.

Fourth, both history and the sense of history have been reduced to an experience of *nostalgia*, a romanticized longing for the past. The attempt to appropriate a missing past comes increasingly to resemble a search for a lost fashion, according to Jameson.

Last, and perhaps most controversially, is what Jameson calls the *postmodern sublime*. By this, he refers to that experience which cannot be represented in contemporary cultural codes. For Jameson, this unrepresentable dimension is the inability to construct maps of the contemporary spaces of everyday life within capitalism. As the world is changing so rapidly, under the influence of global, multinational capitalism and decentered communication networks, it has become more and more difficult to locate oneself within the system of social relationships and political geography. Jameson thinks that people need "cognitive maps" of the space of their social lives, where they fit in some idealized social structure. But these cognitive maps are ever harder and harder to maintain or even construct. If you have ever walked into a postmodern building, perhaps you can better understand this idea. One of the most common reactions to such buildings is that people often find it difficult to navigate—they can't quite figure out how to get from the lobby to their room, or from their room back to the lobby. Oddly enough, having made the trip once does not seem to make it any easier the second time.

Other critics have described the postmodern sublime in different terms. Perhaps the most important of these, and perhaps the most powerful description of the nature of the experience of postmodernity, is given in the work of Jean Baudrillard (1983b) and, in particular, in his notion of the *simulacrum*. According to Baudrillard, in the postmodern

world, the difference between an image (or code) and reality is no longer important. In fact, if anything, reality is measured against images rather than images against reality. Consider the image of a Boston sports bar on the television show *Cheers*. When the network wanted to go to such a bar during the World Series to interview local fans, what they ended up doing was going to the set of *Cheers* and interviewing the cast. Baudrillard would view this as perfectly reasonable and sensible in the postmodern age. How many times has someone seen a movie and said to him- or herself, *Didn't I read about this, or hear about this on the news, sometime in the past?* And then a few months later, they read about it or see it on the news and say to themselves, *Didn't I see this in a movie?* Baudrillard's point is that as the ability to distinguish reality from its images disappears, so does the difference between them.²

Consider Baudrillard's description of Disneyland:

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real and thus of saving the reality principle. (1983b, p. 25)

Finally, Baudrillard (1983a), drawing on McLuhan (1964), argues that this historical transformation has significant implications for the very nature of media and the possibilities of communication:

In short, the medium is the message signifies not only the end of the message, but also the end of the medium. There are no longer media in the literal sense of the term (I am talking above all about the electronic mass media)—that is to say, a power mediating between one reality and another, between one state of the real and another—neither in content nor in form. (p. 102)

Baudrillard's version of postmodernity depends on the power of the computer and other new information technologies to erase the

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distinction between the virtual and the real worlds. As a result, his theory of postmodernity is open to the charge of technological determinism. Other postmodernist visions, although not determinist, do tend to portray the future in rather apocalyptic and cataclysmic terms.

The problem with the narrative of the modern and the postmodern, and indeed the problem with any grand narrative that attempts to describe the world and its history on such a scale, is that it tends to assume that its descriptions are universal in character and that they are shared by everyone. This narrative assumes that everyone now living shares the experience of postmodernity, but this is not so. Modernity and postmodernity are relevant particularly to industrialized western nations and do not necessarily describe life in other places. Also, between industrialized nations, such notions vary: Japanese modernity and postmodernity (if these terms can even apply in the context of Japan) are different from that of the United States or Europe, for example. Also, even within a nation, different populations may have different experiences of the same events and spaces. For example, though the business traveler or tourist may get confused on the way from the lobby to his or her room in a postmodern hotel, the cleaning staff may suffer from no such confusion (indeed, they cannot if they expect to get their jobs done). In short, what narratives of the *longue duree* lack are the specificities of social forces that we get with narratives on the level of the conjuncture.

CONCLUSION

These narratives of media history offer insights into the role of the forms and modes of communication in human history. As we discuss the power and influence of today's media on modern life, we should keep these narratives in mind because debates about the power of the media are often debates about the future—about the futures we fear and the futures we desire. Every new form of communication has given rise to both optimistic and pessimistic visions of the future. The conclusions often depend upon conflicting definitions of what is important and what is trivial about the media, about what is fundamentally reshaping social life and what is a passing fad. We need to keep in mind then the relative scale of the changes that are occurring

(from daily events to epochal transformations) and the different stories of power that are told in different narratives. We also need to recognize that stories of future fear and future desire are often rooted in the stories we tell of our past.

NOTES

1. Indeed, Fiske (1989) makes the distinction that popular culture is culture that people themselves make (which encompasses what we have called folk culture). He contrasts this with mass culture, which consists of the mass-manufactured products distributed to markets. One way of thinking about popular culture is that it is not the mass culture product, but what people do with it. For example, popular culture is not an episode of *Alias*, but it would be *Alias*-watching parties, fan fiction based on the world of the series, and also practices of everyday life in which people draw on the characters and references to the show. This is obviously a different use of the terms than we have followed in this chapter.

2. Baudrillard (1983b) argues that there have been three stages of human history. He describes each stage by the nature of the assumed relationship between the image and reality. In the first stage, the image was seen as a counterfeit, as the approximation of a world whose truth always remained outside of the image. Thus there was assumed to be a natural truth—the law of god, for example—which images could only dimly copy. In the second stage, the image was taken to be the source of reality. Language produces reality, in much the way that we have described it in this text. But in the third, postmodern stage, neither term—language or reality—can be privileged, and the difference between them has disappeared or, in Baudrillard's terms, *imploded*. This is the simulacrum: the model against which both reality and its image are judged. The simulacrum is a model, like the genetic code.

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Media People and Organizations

3

Nothing could be more important in understanding the processes of making media than understanding *who makes the media* and *how the media are "made"*—the rules, practices, and procedures that govern what we see, read, and hear.

MEDIAMAKING AND LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

A key to understanding who makes the media is the idea of levels of analysis. By this, we mean that production of just about anything in an organized society involves phenomena at different strata, and at each of those strata or levels, variations are reflected in what is produced. As we ascend a "ladder of abstraction," we can think of media products as the creations of individual people, of media organizations, or of media industries. Furthermore, the media together constitute an institution, and the ultimate shape of media is influenced by the interaction of the media institution with other social institutions. Finally, media are influenced by the culture in which they are produced: American media, for example, are similar to the media of other industrial countries, but there are important differences between U.S. media and those elsewhere. Understanding who makes the media, then, prompts us to ask different sorts of questions, and get different

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answers, at several different levels of analysis—the individual, the organizational, the industrial, the institutional, and the cultural.

Media People

More than a million people are directly engaged in the creation of media in the United States. Some—Sheryl Crow, Jon Stewart, or David Letterman, for example—are well known and instantly recognizable, and they impart a particular flavor or spin to their products: A Sheryl Crow song covered by someone else isn't the same song; *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart is recognizably different than *The Daily Show* with Craig Kilborn. What makes them different are individual differences among their creators: differences in talent, creativity, energy, and a host of other "individual difference" variables—the interests, values, gender, and ethnicities of the individuals creating them. Sometimes, in fact, even in very complex media organizations, the persona of the star becomes virtually identified with the product itself: For example, though the title of his show is *Late Show With David Letterman*, the show is popularly referred to either as "David Letterman" or just "Letterman" (as in, "I saw Green Day on Letterman last night").

Media Organizations

However, *The Tonight Show*, starring Johnny Carson or Jay Leno, isn't just Johnny or Jay. Although Johnny or Jay (or David Letterman, Conan O'Brien, or Jon Stewart) is each obviously the linchpin of his program, these late night talk shows would not go on without a hundred other people in different roles to get the show on the air. In addition to the star, we need an announcer, a bandleader and band, a producer and director, three or more camera operators, lighting and audio personnel, makeup artists, joke writers, researchers, gaffers (electricians), interns, receptionists, custodians, and so on, not to mention the guests. Each performs a particular and essential role, and some clearly have more influence on the particular look or sound of the product than others. Moreover, *The Tonight Show Starring Jay Leno* is not just the product of these people *as individuals*; it is the product of an organization. The fact that media products are almost all created by complex organizations is important for several reasons. First, when

something is the creation of a single individual (for example, Stephen King), he or she has virtually total control over its creation and the shape the product takes. When products, however, are the creatures of organizations, “authorship” becomes more complicated, and interesting questions about creativity, control, and coordination of production can be asked.

And, as we note below, we actually know quite a lot about rules and regularities that govern the processes of media created by organizations. In *The Tonight Show* case, several organizations are necessary to get that program on the air—starting with its production company and the NBC Television network (a corporate division of the General Electric Company, Inc. [GE]). The show is piped into homes via a local television station and possibly a cable television organization as well (and the local TV station and cable company are likely owned by larger media chains). Some of these organizations have a great deal of control over both the overall shape of the program and what is on any particular program, and some have almost none. Equally important, organizations are bureaucracies, which means that they are hierarchically structured so that some people are superiors and others are inferiors; that they are governed by rules and routines that must be followed by all individuals; and that they strive for efficiency. We cannot account for how a particular program takes exactly the shape it does, even a particular Wednesday night *Tonight Show* episode, just by knowing all there is to know about the people preparing it. Characteristics of the organization, and of organizations in general, also help explain that. Put another way, a particular Wednesday night episode would be quite similar, although not exactly the same, regardless of whether the host was Leno or someone else, whether the first guest was Jennifer Lopez, Denzel Washington, or Lindsay Lohan.

Media Industries

Still a third layer must be described to begin to talk about how the media product takes the shape it does. At the *industrial* level, we would note that certain elements characterize the products of an industry, regardless of the people *and* the organizations within the industry. We all have expectations about what a newspaper looks like, what it contains, that are different from our expectations about a book, magazine, or television show. The differences are in content, style, and form, and

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they flow from the different expectations, practices, and routines that the makers of media products in each industry must follow; the differences also flow from cultural forms.

Each media industry, too, is characterized by different *genres* of product (see Chapters 5 and 6) that make the production of content predictable for both its producers and consumers. In the television industry, for example, we all have a very good idea what the “typical” television evening news program is like: *Channel 7 Eyewitness News* looks remarkably similar, whether we are watching Channel 7 in New York, Boise, or Sacramento. It will open with a teaser of the top few stories and a brief tape clip, and after a commercial break, it will feature half a dozen hard-news stories, all or almost all with tape; none of the stories will be longer than 90 seconds. There will be a male and a female anchor (the male will be older than the female), a weather person, and a sports anchor. One or two will be members of a minority group. Weather will be after the midprogram commercial break, and sports after the next break, and the “news team” will send us off with a “feel good” feature. The form is set and so familiar that we rarely notice it, much less stop to ask *why*.

A large part of the answer to why TV programs are so similar is that there are industrywide constraints—unwritten “rules” that characterize what TV is. Note that these rules are not chiseled in stone: They are not inherent in the medium itself, but evolve from complex interactions over time. They maintain themselves because they are familiar, taken for granted, and usually unquestioned, by both those in the industry and the audience. The format allows for a degree of predictability that is an important characteristic of the mass media, both for the audience and the producers. Even with a new medium such as the World Wide Web, there is pressure for content to look like it does on old media because these are comfortable and expected. For example, the online version of *The New York Times* still looks like a newspaper; in fact, the site gives you the option to view the news exactly as it is laid out in the print version of the newspaper.

New media are complex organizations, but can be complex in different ways from traditional media. Indeed, the Internet has allowed a great diversity of content to be made available, but much of this was not produced within the hierarchical, corporate organizations that shaped the mass media a decade ago. A different set of personnel is involved, including computer programmers and Web page designers,

though with the technology now available many of these tasks can be carried out by a single person.

Media as Institutions

There are two points we would like to make about the media as institutions. One is that it is often argued that the media constitute an institution in their own right; that despite their differences there are enough commonalities in what they do for people to be comfortable making statements like, “The media are” However, such statements are usually generalities that reveal more about the assumptions of the speaker about what the media are than about what actually is going on. The speaker might be speaking only about news organizations, or television, or corporate media.

The second point is that what media are—the roles and functions they fulfill, what they say—is shaped or constrained by the relationships that the media institution has with other institutions. When we get to this level of analysis, however, we usually can only infer institutional influence from interpreting the real behaviors of individuals or organizations representing those institutions—by doing history, as we describe in Chapter 2. We will discuss the relationship of media to other institutions later in this chapter. This is the level of analysis that looks at how the media in general influence and are influenced by institutions of government, religion, medicine, and so on.

Media and Culture

At the “highest” level of analysis, there are aspects of any culture, above, beyond, and outside its media, that are reflected in media content and form. The media do not reside outside their own society and culture, but are a part of them, both influencing them and being influenced by them in turn.

Probably the easiest way to see this is by using a comparative approach. If culture did *not* affect media, then media would be very similar in every society. TV news, for example, would be pretty much the same in, say, Italy as it is in the United States. But this clearly is not the case; not only is TV news different, but most other media are as well, not necessarily in broad form (even in other languages, we would recognize a Japanese newspaper or magazine as a newspaper or

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magazine, a Russian news broadcast as a news broadcast) but in other ways—in content, in treatment of content, and even in the assumed relationship that writers have with their audience. (See Box 3.1, “Cultural Differences in Media.”)

BOX 3.1

Cultural Differences in Media: U.S. and Italian TV News

An analysis of a week’s worth of Italian and American television network newscasts during then-President Reagan’s trip to Europe in June 1982 found that news broadcasts in the two nations varied dramatically, both in content and in *representational form*.

In both content and form, the differences are consistent with each nation’s culture and institutions. The content of American television paid far more attention to international news and to the nation’s chief executive, and slightly more attention to the national executive branch of government, compared to Italian TV news. Italian TV news, on the other hand, paid far more attention than American TV news to political parties and to labor unions (during the week, no American air time at all was given to unions). These differences reflect political reality: The center of national political power in the United States is the president and his administration, whereas in Italy, which has changed administrations slightly more often than once a year since World War II, the political parties and unions are the center of power.

One might have expected American TV news to devote more time to international news because it is an international power with extensive foreign interests and commitments, whereas Italy is not.

Even more interesting are differences in forms of representation. American network news programs tend to be thematic: TV news producers make a concerted effort to link stories together, to provide a common theme to keep audience attention. In the study by American scholar Dan Hallin and Italian researcher Paolo Mancini (Hallin & Mancini, 1985), Italian TV news tended to be disjointed, with one story wholly unrelated to the one preceding or following it. The same held true within stories: American stories tended to be unified by a common theme, and journalists tended to be interpretive; to our eyes, an Italian story would seem to be disconnected, and interpretation was usually left to the sources in the story rather than to the journalist. The unity, or lack of it, could be seen in

the way each medium used visual images: In American TV news, the visual image was intimately connected to the spoken text; in Italian TV, the moving image was usually literally background. The two also varied in their use of "the common man": In their study period, Hallin and Mancini found that one third of the people appearing on U.S. evening news programs were "nonofficials"—for example, protesters or families of soldiers—selected by journalists to portray average citizens. On Italian TV news, virtually all sources were people deliberately selected to represent the views of organized social and political groups.

Finally, the relationship between the news organization and its audience differed. When an American TV journalist uses the first person, especially the first-person plural ("we"), it is almost always to refer to the news organization: "Up the road at *our* foreign desk in London," Peter Jennings would say. But when an Italian journalist uses the first-person plural, it is to refer to himself or herself *and* to the audience: "Let's see what is going on in Lebanon." Moreover, they note, first-person usage by American TV journalists is rare; for Italian journalists, it is commonplace:

The television journalist in the United States, in other words, will not normally "cross the screen" to put himself "on the side" of the audience in relation to events; while the Italian announcer routinely moves back and forth across that invisible boundary. (Hallin & Mancini, 1985, p. 215)

Why were the narrative forms in each so different? Hallin and Mancini argue that part of the explanation derives from economic differences: American network TV news is highly commercialized, and its producers must fight for an audience by presenting an attractive, visually engaging package; Italian network TV news was not so constrained. But perhaps more important is that the programs reflect very different political cultures. In Italy, the "public sphere" in which ideology and policy are debated is very much filled by political parties, unions, and industrial associations, and on Italian TV, it is their representatives who provide meaning and interpretation of the day's events. In America, political parties are no longer strong or central enough to do this, and most other organized political groups—trade unions, industrial associations, and other interest groups—generally pursue narrow, not broad, political agendas. In the United States, Hallin and Mancini argued, the press and the presidency are the only two institutions strong enough and able to serve as the interpreters, the arbiters of political meanings, hence American TV news was more active and more autonomous than its Italian counterpart.

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MEDIAMAKING IN CONTEXT

Our discussion of levels of analysis should make clearer that media are “made” in a specific context. Individuals and groups do creative production work, but that work is guided and shaped by the organizations they work in. The individuals and organizations, in turn, are shaped and guided by the industries they inhabit, and the individuals, organizations, and industries reside in a society that shapes and guides them as well.

At each of these levels, different influences operate on the making of media.

People

The many individual characteristics of mass communicators can indeed influence the content and character of the products they create. At least since the 1960s, women and minority groups have actively argued and worked against their underrepresentation in the media industries. For example, the American Society of Newspaper Editors reported that in 2005, only 13.42% of daily newspaper newsroom workers were members of minority groups (5.5% African American, 4.3% Hispanic, 3.1% Asian American, and 0.6% Native American), a slight increase from the prior year, and women comprise about three eighths of the newsroom labor force, as they have for a number of years. Why is this a matter of concern? For at least two reasons: the desire of members of minority groups for equal access to jobs and fair consideration for promotion and advancement, and the belief that if minority groups are to receive fair and accurate portrayal in the news, minorities must be represented in newsrooms. In other words, this argument is that a personal characteristic of the journalist—in this case, ethnicity or race—can make a difference in *what* news gets covered and *how*. (See Box 3.2, “Media People.”)

BOX 3.2

Media People

In May 2003, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) estimated that more than 1.5 million people were employed (either full time, part time, or as freelancers) in mass communication. These included the following:

60,230 reporters, correspondents, and news analysts
43,740 writers and authors
108,990 editors
147,970 public relations specialists and an additional 58,490 public relations managers
182,600 marketing managers
71,100 advertising and promotion managers
57,740 photographers
21,430 camera operators
51,840 actors
54,370 directors and producers
15,100 film and video editors
32,750 art directors, fine artists, multimedia artists, animators, designers, musicians, and broadcast technicians.

These numbers do not include many others who are employed by the media, from delivery drivers to secretaries, or amateurs creating Web pages or fanzines.

Similarly, conservative critics of the news media have argued for many years that the media are liberally biased. Among the evidence they offer is survey data showing that American journalists, and especially "elite" journalists at the television networks and major newspapers, are more likely to identify themselves as political liberals than are Americans in general (see, for example, Lichter, Rothman, & Lichter, 1986). (We will see shortly that liberal critics argue that the media are conservatively biased, but their evidence comes from a higher level of analysis.) And several writers have suggested that the big-city and Jewish backgrounds of Hollywood producers and screenwriters have shaped the content of American motion pictures and television programs (Gabler, 1988; Stein, 1979).

There are two views about how individual differences influence media content. First is the view that individual creators derive from their backgrounds and experiences the attitudes and ideas that shape what they create. This is clearly the case, for example, in fiction writing, when authors may derive their characters and stories from people and events in their own lives. Second is the view that, to the degree that

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groups share a characteristic, then that characteristic may show up in much of the content produced by that group. In *The View From Sunset Boulevard*, for example, writer Ben Stein (1979) argues that big business is portrayed as corrupt or criminal on American television because the small number of TV writers and writer-producers (he estimates that no more than 200 people work steadily in the business) overwhelmingly share antibusiness attitudes.

These two arguments lead us in two directions. First, we need to divide values, attitudes, and norms that shape media content into two categories: those that are *occupational* or *professional*, those sets of values related to a person's media job, and those that are *general*, pertaining to someone's overall view of the world. In the former case, for example, public relations specialists certified by the Public Relations Society of America subscribe to a code of ethics that requires them not to intentionally deceive others. Second, we need to elaborate on the influence of work environment and professional background: How much—and how—an individual can shape a media product depends a lot on the power resources she or he can bring to bear when that product is created. Because most media are produced within complex organizations with hierarchical structures (that is, a boss makes and enforces the rules, and the subordinates follow them), we would expect that those higher up the organizational ladder should have the power: Presidents give orders, and those below carry them out, and this is the rule—sometimes. But the power to shape media products is not just top-down; media professionals do have some resources in making messages the way they think they should be made. In general, the power or autonomy that any worker has is directly related to that worker's indispensability to the organization in creating a media product.

Media scholar Joseph Turow (1984), borrowing from industrial sociologist Howard Aldrich, says that a useful way of understanding how media are made is a *resource dependence perspective*. By this, he means that we can better understand how media producers—individuals, organizations, and industries—behave by understanding how their resources are allocated. Many resources are necessary to produce anything complex—time and money, talent and creativity, expertise and energy, raw materials and prepackaged components. The act of creating media is one of bringing these resources together, and anyone who controls a resource that a media organization or industry needs has some power over the shape of the finished product.

In a case study of a California daily newspaper, sociologist Rodney Stark (1962) observed many years ago that reporters and editors could be divided into two groups, one of which—the “Locals”—supported the paper’s conservative politics, and a second group which did not. The “Pros,” the professionalized reporters, were able to keep their jobs and subvert some of the publishers’ biases because they controlled resources upon which the paper depended. Among these resources were reporting and writing talent, a sophisticated knowledge of the paper’s deadlines and editing routines, and expert knowledge of their “beat” specialties. In short, control of resources gave them a degree of power, independence, and autonomy; the greater the control over a resource on which a producer is dependent, the greater the power. In the recorded music industry, for example, established “track-record” artists can flex far more muscle in terms of creative control over their music than can newcomers.

The eminent German social thinker Karl Mannheim once observed that “strictly speaking it is incorrect to say that the single individual thinks. Rather it is more correct to insist that the individual participates in thinking further what other individuals have thought before” (cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 85). What this means is that, in all we do, we operate inside social systems that predispose us to think and act in ways that are patterned by that social system. The newspaper example shows that whereas some control over the product resides at the individual or “people” level, the product must be described in an organizational context.

Likewise, in a study of the creation of *Freestyle*, an educational TV program for public television, James Ettema (1982) noted that three groups—educators, evaluation researchers, and television production professionals—were supposedly granted equal power in making decisions about the show’s content, style, and format. On the planning committee to create the series, each had equal representation, and representatives of each group argued strongly to craft the show to suit its own interests. Over time, however, the TV production group, represented by the executive producer, won most of the arguments. He did so, Ettema argues, by appealing to his expertise about what makes “good TV,” a subject about which the educators and evaluators were ignorant, and his knowledge of what could be done given a set budget. Although his knowledge was an individual characteristic, the rules concerning TV technique and budget constraints

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belong at the higher, organizational, level of analysis, and to that, we now turn.

Organizations and Industries

At the level of organizations and industries, there is some blurring of the lines. *All* organizations and *all* industries, media and otherwise, are characterized by roles, rules, and routines as they attempt to cope with their environments, to bring order where there seems to be none: Where they vary is in their solutions to problems. Most TV production houses, for example, will have very similar structures and roles—people will have the same or similar job titles—and similar routines for writing and casting, production, and postproduction, but particular differences will show up in the shows they produce. Dick Wolf's Wolf Film Productions (*Law & Order*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Law & Order: Trial by Jury*, *Crime & Punishment*) are known to be gritty, "realistic" views of big-city crime, for example. We turn next to why and how rules, roles, and routines are used within organizations and industries, and how these ultimately shape the media, often in ways that are subtle and nonobvious.

Routines and Rules

For most of us, the first time we were assigned to write a term paper or research paper was a scary experience. What's a suitable topic? How long should it be? Where can I get information? How much do I need? How do I organize it? How much detail should I go into? How much of it should be my opinion and how much should be "just the facts"? When do I need to use a footnote? The teacher could answer some questions fairly specifically ("It should be 15 pages. It should open with a thesis statement stating a point of view, provide sufficient information to support the point of view, and close with a summary-and-conclusion."). Other answers were open-ended ("I'm not going to assign a topic; write on something you're interested in." [Yeah, right.]) Whereas writing that first term paper was hard, writing the second one was somewhat easier, and the third, a bit easier than that. That is so because we not only write the term paper but begin to learn the rules for researching, organizing, and writing them.

The same holds true for media organizations and industries. No creator ever sits down with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer screen) and says, "Now, what am I going to create for the media today?" The creator sits down with a set of ideas—and, as Mannheim noted, these ideas are not new ones but rather ones that are inherited (cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1991)—and in these ideas are the rules and routines for getting to work. The rules and routines, then, are what make media creative practices *efficient*.

In putting together any particular *Tonight Show*, the show's production team begins not with a blank slate, but with a lot of information—even before the first joke is written or the first guest invited—and a number of strategies for creating the show (for a more detailed discussion, see Tuchman, 1974). These unwritten rules and routines allow the team to organize its time productively: Months in advance, the producers and writers will know what nights the show will appear and what nights the host will be available or on vacation so that a replacement must be booked. At least two weeks in advance, the main star/guest must be booked so that her or his name will make the deadlines for *TV Guide*, newspaper television listings, and other promotional material. Lesser guests can be booked later, depending on availability and currency. Jokes for the monologue are written on the day of the show.

In one critical respect, TV talk shows are different from most other media products in that "outsiders" who contribute to the show—guests—are not directly motivated by money, because the union-scale appearance fee is nominal. Most celebrity guests appear on such shows to further careers, to promote themselves and their latest products: "Celebrities," Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan & Fiore, 1968) once commented, "are well known for their well-knownness."

How do guests make it onto the show? Not by chance. Established stars have established track records—they are familiar to audiences and "known" to the show's producers and host. Part of what they are known for, as sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1974) has noted, is for being "good TV." That is, they will, predictably, be humorous, attractive, nonpolitical, personable, and personal (but not *too* personal). All but the top few repeat talk-show celebrities will be "preinterviewed" by researchers and writers twice: Once to steer them toward topics that the host can later ask them about and to steer them away from taboo topics such as politics and the details of their breakup with

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ex-spouses, and a second time to prepare them for the night's show (the "spontaneous" dialogue between host and guest is largely scripted). All potential guests who are not big stars are preinterviewed, to be sure that the potential guest will be "good TV."

How does the program staff learn about potential guests in the first place? Celebrity helps, but researchers and staffers are always on the lookout for "new" faces to add some variety. Where do they find them? There are two principal sources: first, bookers and especially agents who want to place their clients—comedians, actors, recording artists, and book authors—on the shows for the favorable publicity to be garnered. Second, *other media* are a rich source of the offbeat, bizarre, and unusual performer or character.

This extended example shows several aspects of media organizations' rule-boundedness: First, the rules and routines help to assure that production will be smooth, efficient, and *predictable*, with few surprises for the producers. Second, the media end up being interdependent, relying on each other for the "raw material" that becomes their content. Third, not everybody is treated in the same way, as "stars" are governed by different rules than are unknowns. And, finally, the rules and routines that make putting media products together easier, more predictable, and efficient for their producers also makes them predictable for audiences. However, intermedia "borrowing" and predictability hinder novelty, spontaneity, and creativity.

A second example from the organizational-industrial level is the decision making that goes into getting TV programs on the air in the first place. There is no way to guarantee that a new product will be a hit. Given this uncertainty, however, media organizations do have rules for deciding what new programs will air: First, "track-record" producers (like Dick Wolf) have a decided edge, and production companies with successful shows will have an easier time getting new shows on the networks than will newcomers. Second, spin-offs and shows that imitate successful shows will also have an easier time. Third, shows featuring established stars (Matt LeBlanc, Pamela Anderson) are more likely to appear than shows featuring all new talent. Fourth, conventional and predictable shows will be most likely to air, in large part because the rules are enforced by cautious, risk-averse network program executives. However, occasionally, unconventional shows do get picked up by the networks, and occasionally (*All in the Family* in the

1970s, *Hill Street Blues* in the 1980s, *The Simpsons* in 1990, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* in 2003), they become hits.

Turow (1982) has shown that even for unconventional TV shows, the conventional rules apply. In a study of how three conventional TV programs and three unconventional programs made it onto the network program schedules, Turow found that the conventional shows had conventional origins—they were the products of studios and production companies that already had shows on the networks,¹ and they were approved by network program executives who were well established in the business. By contrast, the unconventional shows tended to be the creations of writer-producers whose track records, although extensive, were outside television, largely in films and theatrical productions. An important point is that established network executives and networks doing well in the ratings are not interested in unconventional, innovative shows: Truly new shows are championed by executives new to their jobs and willing to take risks to make their marks. Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) president Rob Wood told Turow that his ideas in his first few years as network president “were the freshest.” Later, he said, “You learn the rules too well and don’t think in new directions” (Turow, 1982, p. 121). And innovative shows tended to appear on networks either trailing in the ratings or anxious to appeal to attractive demographic groups to which that network was not presently appealing. Finally, Turow learned that unconventional shows took longer from their initial conception to airing—an indicator that networks were dragging their feet—and were far more likely to be placed in unattractive time slots than were more conventional shows. Thus breaking the rules is difficult, and programming executives sometimes set up unconventional programs to fail.

There are other values to routines and rules in that the process usually ensures some level of quality of the product. Content produced outside of traditional media organizations may be quite innovative and may provide alternative perspectives not heard elsewhere, but they often do not benefit from the cross-checking, editing, or even credibility of more mainstream media organizations. This is especially true in news, where rules for fact checking, cross-referencing multiple sources, and in-depth background research ensure the accuracy and credibility of what is reported. Nontraditional online news sources may or may not follow these routines. (See Box 3.3, “Indymedia,” and Box 3.4, “Matt Drudge: Trading Accuracy for Speed.”)

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BOX 3.3**Indymedia**

The following is from Kidd (2003):

Indymedia is made up of over sixty autonomously operated and linked Web sites in North America and Europe, with a smaller number in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The first IMC [Independent Media Center] was started in Seattle in 1999, just before the encounter between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the social movements opposed to its policies. Early on in the counter-WTO planning, several different groups had recognized the strategic importance of making an “end-run around the information gatekeepers” to produce their own autonomous media (Tarleton, 2000, p. 53). They were well aware of the limitations of depending on the corporate media to provide coverage, especially the necessary analyses and context for the complex changes threatened by the WTO regime. In fact, before the event, only a handful of articles in the U.S. corporate media had discussed the implications of the WTO meetings.

The IMC would not have been possible without the convergence of new levels of social movement organization and technology. In three short months in the fall of 1999, and with only \$30,000 in donations and borrowed equipment, Seattle organizers created a “multimedia peoples’ newsroom,” with a physical presence in a renovated downtown storefront and in cyberspace on the Web (Tarleton, 2000, p. 53). The IMC enabled independent journalists and media producers of print, radio, video, and photos from around the world to produce and distribute stories from the perspectives of the growing anti-corporate globalization movement. The IMC was the child of collaboration between local housing and media activists; journalists, independent media producers, and media and democracy activists from national and international arenas; and local, national, and international organizations active in the burgeoning anti-corporate globalization movement.

Second, the Seattle IMC drew from the technical expertise and resources of computer programmers, many of whom came from the open-source movement. While Bill Gates of Microsoft played a major role in bringing the WTO to Seattle, Rob Glaser, who made his millions at Microsoft, donated technical support and expertise, and in particular the latest streaming technologies, to the Indymedia Web site. “From the standpoint of all these independent media, the WTO couldn’t have picked a worse place to hold their meeting,” according to local media activist Bob Siegel. “I mean it’s Seattle—we’ve got all the techies you’ll ever want. . . . It’s perfect that the WTO came here. Perfect” (quoted in Paton, 1999, p. 3). Indymedia.org allowed real-time distribution of video, audio, text, and photos, with the potential for real interactivity through “open publishing,” in which anyone with access to the Internet could both receive and send information.

In just two years, the IMC network has become a critical resource for activists and audiences around the world, providing an extraordinary bounty of news reports and commentaries, first-person narratives, longer analyses, links to activist resources, and interactive discussion opportunities from around the world. In the beginning, they focused primarily on the anti-globalization mobilizations at the multilateral summits of neoliberal governance. At each of these meetings, they provided innovative international coverage, which often included collaborative initiatives with other media and social-movement activists. In the last year, and particularly since September 11, the network has added several new member sites and widened the scope of its coverage to include local, national, and international campaigns concerning anti-corporate globalization. (pp. 49–51)

Source: © 2003 from *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* by Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers. Reproduced by permission of Routledge/Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.

However, we should also note that routines and rules change over time. Currently new technologies are putting pressure on the news routines discussed above. News Web sites and 24-hour news channels emphasize the need to either break a story first or keep up with the up-to-the-second headlines from other sites. This pressure for speed often works against routines of double-checking facts and sources. As Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon (2001) put it,

The news industry has always placed a premium on speed. The question is not whether it is desirable in general for the news industry to hold workers to a standard of timeliness but rather whether recent changes in the profession have added a corrosive element to this perennial source of journalistic pride and pressure. (p. 140)

BOX 3.4

Matt Drudge: Trading Accuracy for Speed

The following is from Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001):

The Internet is a uniquely democratic news medium, with nothing—not time, not money, not editorial supervision—standing in between Internet newscasters and the material they wish to post. Nothing, that is, but the scruples of the

(Continued)

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(Continued)

person who does the posting. Hence the unique importance of journalistic standards in the Internet age.

If all Internet newscasters interpreted the standard of truth in the same manner as the leading journalists [. . .] this new medium would pose little challenge to the domain. But many Internet newscasters have little journalism training and little respect for the domain's codes and traditions. The most prominent of this new breed is Matt Drudge, a "one-man gossip and news agency," according to one recent account.¹ Drudge managed to first break the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, because he was willing to go with a story that *Newsweek*, among others, considered not yet adequately confirmed. In subsequent months, Drudge continued to scoop the established media on many juicy components of the story, including the telling proof of semen stains on Monica's blue dress. Drudge turned out to be right about most of the material that he posted, but he also made errors. His fame and notoriety grew with every scoop, and his *Drudgereport.com* gained a multimillion "circulation" that outnumbered every newspaper's in the land.

In a rare appearance before the National Press Club, Drudge repeated a statement that had scandalized the mainstream press corps when *Newsweek* first quoted it: "Oh, I guess I'm about 80 percent accurate, the body of my work." Earlier, Doug Harbrecht of the Press Club had asked Drudge, "Could you succeed as a journalist if you worked for an organization which required an accuracy rate of 100 percent, instead of 70 or 80 percent." Drudge was having none of it. "I'd rather stay in my dirty Hollywood apartment," he quipped.

Drudge painted a picture of an entrenched mainstream press that, prior to the Internet, monopolized the news and kept important information from the public. Editors have biases, as do the corporate chieftains that editors work for. "Clearly there is a hunger for unedited information, absent corporate considerations." What about the role of editors in making sure that a news story consists of confirmed facts rather than gossip? Drudge replied: "Well, all truths begin as hearsay, as far as I'm concerned. And some of the best news stories start in gossip. Monica Lewinsky certainly was gossip in the beginning. . . . At what point does it become news? This is the indefinable thing in this current atmosphere, where every reporter will be operating out of their homes with Web sites for free, as I do."

In the supercharged world of today's electronic media, Drudge may be winning the argument. And his influence is by no means confined to the Internet alone. According to the 1999 book *Warp Speed*, written by two journalists,² Drudge and his ilk have spawned a "journalism of assertion" that is forcing other mass media outlets to air sensational rumors before they can be properly verified, all in the name of keeping up with the competition.

The authors of *Warp Speed* believe that the "journalism of assertion" is eating away at the foundations of public trust for the press—a trust necessary for the survival of the extraordinary freedoms and privileges that the press

requires in order to serve a democracy. Other journalists concur. In a *Brill's Content* cover story on Drudge, Jules Witcover of the *Baltimore Sun* was quoted as calling Drudge "a reckless trader in rumor and gossip—[an] abomination of the Internet."³ And Joan Konner, the publisher of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, asserted that "by no reasonable measure [is Drudge] working in the public interest."⁴

In the same piece, *Brill's Content* estimated that, of the thirty-one exclusive stories broken by Drudge in 1998, ten (or 32 percent) were untrue or never happened, eleven (36 percent) were true, and the accuracy of the rest was in doubt.⁵ These figures make Drudge's claim to 80 percent accuracy look wildly exaggerated, and no reputable journalist would accept even that percentage as an adequate standard. The *Brill's Content* article concluded that, "in Drudge's case, he must achieve a higher level of accuracy in his reporting to gain genuine credibility." To which Drudge replied: "Screw journalism! The whole thing's a fraud anyway."⁶

Yet Drudge's work has not been entirely without value. He has shown us the potential of an astonishing technology—the Internet—to open up vast informational territories. Drudge is right when he claims that the "balanced" accounts provided by a small circle of mass media powerhouses can be a narrow balance indeed: in fact, it has sometimes led to an *imbalance* fostered by a closed set of unexamined establishment assumptions.

But Internet reporting, like any other news source, needs both internal standards and editorial monitoring if it is to become a moral force in its own right. The universal standard of truthfulness cannot be slighted in any sustained news endeavor, not for the sake of speed, nor for the sake of any other marketplace advantage. And news reporters will not be able to dismiss the editorial function without eventually suffering a ruinous loss of credibility, because the editorial function is the primary means the domain has evolved for checking its work against its accepted standards. In the end, if the Drudges of the world are to succeed in expanding journalism's capacity to accomplish its noble purposes, they will do so only by arming themselves with the best traditions of the domain. (pp. 146–148)

Notes

1. Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999, p. 11
2. Ibid.
3. McClintick, 1998
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 127

Source: From *Good Work* by Howard Gardner. Copyright © 2001 by Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon. Reprinted by permission of Basic Books, a member of Perseus Books, L.L.C.

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Roles and Reference Groups

Within media organizations and industries, roles and reference groups serve important functions. A *role* is the set of attitudes, values, and behaviors expected of any occupant of a position. A role can be a job title or occupation. A film editor does certain kinds of work—splicing different segments of film into each other to attain a meaningful narrative. However, how the film is edited—what the narrative is supposed to mean—is dictated by the film’s director.

Similarly, a *reference group* is any group of which one is a member and to which one orients his or her thinking and actions. We saw in the earlier example of the California newspaper that two sets of reporters (a role) allied themselves in two different reference groups, the Pros and the Locals.

Roles and reference groups are important for two principal reasons. First, doing anything as complex as assembling a media product requires people in multiple roles; each role carries with it different sets of behaviors and especially attitudes and values. Second, the existence of different reference groups helps us to understand the circumstances under which conflicts are more, or less, serious.

Role conflicts are inevitable because of the differences in values and attitudes implicit in different roles. In general, media production requires a three-tier structure. At the front end are “raw material” processors—the creative staffers such as writers, artists, or reporters who do the initial processing of media materials. In the middle are managers, editors, directors, and producers who coordinate the production and mediate between the front-end staff and top management. The top tier of executives sets budgets, makes corporate policy, sets organizational goals, and occasionally defends the organization’s employees from outside pressures (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Most media organizations, and hence their top managements, are most interested in making money: For a media enterprise to survive, it must do so, and thus top management generally has the strongest and most direct interest in questions of profit. Management’s vision of how to attain profit (or to meet other organization goals, such as respectability or prestige) may well not square with front-end staff. An example of such tension is that between news organization management and reporters and editors. A focus on profits often means cuts in newsroom staff, hampering their ability to cover the news adequately, and also pressures to report on stories that

will increase readership or viewership, regardless of newsworthiness (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001).

Institutions

We noted earlier that within a society or culture, various institutions shape media content. This is only half the equation: The media help influence the society and its institutions as well. If media content did *not* have an impact on a society and its institutions, then those institutions would have no interest in shaping the media. But the constant barrage of criticism media face from the government, the military, religious groups, and organized interest groups of all sorts is vivid testimony to the belief that the media have major impacts on public and private life.

The Nature of Institutional Relationships

In discussing the relationships between media and other institutions, we need to make two sets of critical distinctions. First is the degree to which the nature of the relationships is passive—that is, how much do the media *mirror or reflect the societies in which they exist*—or active—how much do media themselves *shape and change the society*? Second is the distinction between *formal* and *informal* constraints on media. Formal constraints are those codified into laws and regulations by the state. Informal constraints are all other mechanisms—ethical, social, economic, and cultural—that govern the media and shape their content.

In a comparison of U.S. and Italian TV news (Box 3.1), Hallin and Mancini (1985) argue that the cultural practices serve as *informal* constraints on the news people of each country: TV journalists' expectations of the implied relationship they have with the audience, for example, lead them to address their audiences in different ways. At the same time, Hallin and Mancini do not argue persuasively either way whether this relationship is active or passive; that is, whether the Italian media practice of addressing the audience in the first-person plural—*we* and *us*—results from a wider social practice, or whether it is actively used by journalists to encourage an audience bond, thus reinforcing a culturally familiar form of address. In large part, this is because extricating such practices from their context, and deciding whether one leads to the other or vice versa, is extraordinarily difficult.

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The line between formal and informal rules is a bit clearer. Laws are codified, written down. We can tell a great deal about any society by seeing how the law books and court cases say things run. Moreover, this division points out several other important factors in the relationships between media and other institutions:

1. Formal, institutional relationships are perhaps the most important ones for understanding how the media operate. They account, in large part, for relationships between government and the media, and they explain how a society views the nature of the public.

2. Formal relationships change over time. Historically, the relationship between media and government has varied. In the United States, for example, the long-term trend has been toward less formal restraint of the media—at the same time that informal control of the media, especially by the economic institution, has grown.

3. Formal relationships do not in and of themselves explain how the media are regulated; we must consider informal relationships as well.

Government-Media Relations

Among all institutions that media confront, government is most important. This is true for several reasons. First, worldwide, government control is direct—the government is the only institution that can legitimately use force to assure compliance. In other words, if an enterprise breaks a law, it will pay a fine, or its officers or employees might go to jail. To ignore the commandment of any other institution usually means only that organizations within the institution censure or expel you—or use the law, the government—to punish the offender. Second, government exerts control not only over media, but over other institutions as well, and control over other institutions may be indirectly reflected back into regulation of mass media. For example, the 1996 Telecommunications Law has enabled businesses previously not in mass media-related businesses—primarily telephone companies previously excluded from being content providers—to begin competing directly with television and cable; this provision was part of a complex lobbying effort with the Congress and the White House that also allows cable operators to compete with the phone companies for telephone

business. Third, the relationship between the state, or government, and the media is undergoing radical transformation worldwide. Increasingly, formal governmental control of the media is being supplanted by informal regulation by other forces, primarily those of capitalism, as governments substitute market forces for regulatory pressures. Expanding on these themes suggests a brief history of the nature of the relationship between the state and the media.

Government and media have always—at least since the development of truly mass media—had a rocky relationship. In 1690, a Boston printer, Benjamin Harris, published the first issue of the first newspaper in America, *Publick Occurrences both Foreign and Domestick*. As it happened, this issue included a story about brutalities committed by Indian allies of the colonial military. This first issue was also the last: Harris was forbidden by the colonial governor not only from printing any more issues of the newspaper but, for that matter, from printing *anything at all* without prior permission. Such *prior restraint* is unquestionably the most effective form of censorship, and it was typical not only in Boston but elsewhere in the American colonies, in Britain, and in Europe. It works not only directly—authorities can prevent the publication of anything critical of or offensive to the government—but also indirectly; as printers quickly figure out the sorts of material that censors are unlikely to allow through, they precensor it, not bothering to submit it to review.

A second and related form of censorship is *licensing*. Colonial printers were granted a royal or governmental license to print, but the license could be withdrawn—effectively forcing them out of business—if they printed anything the authorities did not like. Unlike direct prior restraint, licensing does not directly prevent a printer from publishing critical materials, but the cost of guessing wrong about what the authorities will tolerate is so high—loss of one's livelihood—that licensing serves about as well as prior restraint in stifling free expression.

A third form of censorship comes in punishing the publisher after something is published. Two forms were powerful means of suppression in the colonial period: criminal prosecutions for treason or giving aid or comfort to an enemy of the state and prosecutions for seditious libel, or any published material that, without justification, cast blame on any public man, law, or institution established by law (see Rivers, Peterson, & Jensen, 1971). Both seek to punish publishers for material that to some people's eyes does no more than inform people about or criticize the government. Both were infrequently used. The mere threat of imprisonment

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or death was generally sufficient to keep publishers from being too critical. Printing presses were so scarce in colonial days that it did not usually take much effort for officials to find out who had printed something; today, of course, anyone with a computer and a printer and/or an Internet connection, or a two-way radio can be a publisher.

How could the government get away with these forms of censorship? The prevailing political ideology of the day was fully supportive. The authority of the state—the crown, colonial officials, governors—was absolute. Neither the press nor any other institution had any “rights” with respect to the state or governing authority. In the United States, development of the philosophy of libertarianism was intermixed with a steadily increasing desire among the American colonists to free themselves from British rule. The press ultimately freed itself from direct governmental control.

In 1735—still 41 years before the American Revolution—a New York printer, John Peter Zenger, was charged with seditious libel for printing a series of scathing articles about the governor of New York. Zenger did not write the articles, but because they were anonymous, the officials had no one to prosecute but the printer. As the law was written, Zenger was clearly guilty. Truth (the governor, history suggests, *was* a lying, pompous scalawag) was no defense under the law, and the judge instructed the jury that in fact, the greater the truth, the more the harm, and thus the greater the libel. But Zenger’s attorney argued to the contrary, that the people should decide what is true and that a sovereign people should have the right to criticize those in authority. Zenger’s acquittal technically did not change the law, but seditious libel thereafter was no serious threat to colonial printers, and the idea that a sovereign people could decide what was true became a part of the American ideology.

The 1791 ratification of the Bill of Rights brought with it the First Amendment, which says in part, “Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech, or of the press.” Interpreted literally, this would mean that the press had become free from government interference. However, this was not to be, for several reasons at several levels. First, from the beginning of the republic until the early part of the twentieth century, the First Amendment was a restraint only on the federal government, not on the states. Second, even at the federal level, Congress managed to pass laws, especially the 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts, which managed to muffle publishers and writers by threatening criminal prosecutions for

sedition. Third, freedom of the press can mean different things to different people. True, the American press was in 1791, and is today, pretty much free from prior restraint or censorship by the government.² But courts have interpreted the First Amendment to say that some *classes* of expression are not constitutionally protected, including obscenity, libel and slander, and violations of national security.³ This basically means that some things that could be printed are subject to subsequent punishment, which serves, as we've noted, as a damper on their publication in the first place.

Nonetheless, the range of things that the government can prevent or punish through the application of law is quite narrow; virtually any criticism can be written, spoken, or broadcast; material that is tasteless, sensational, and even inaccurate (with a few exceptions⁴) is constitutionally protected as well. The most obvious exception involves over-the-air broadcasting, where the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has authority to fine broadcasters for crudities and sexual titillation that don't rise to the legal level of obscenity and pornography—the “seven dirty words” of George Carlin's classic routine, and, in 2004, the flashing of Janet Jackson's breast at the Super Bowl halftime show and Howard Stern's radio program. The 2004 episodes led to a firestorm of criticism of TV and the FCC, calls in Congress for much heavier fines on offending broadcasters (CBS was eventually fined a record \$550,000), and media conglomerate Clear Channel's dropping of Stern's program from six of its radio stations. (See Box 3.5, “Clearing the Air.”) To repeat, the law—in the colonial period and today—covers only what the government can prevent or punish. As we'll see, that's only a small part of this important institutional relationship.

BOX 3.5

Clearing the Air

Events in 2004 brought the relationships of government and the media into strong focus. In a matter of a few weeks early in the year, Janet Jackson suffered a “wardrobe malfunction” in a Super Bowl halftime show produced for CBS by Music Television (MTV) and Howard Stern aired a radio show featuring a discussion of anal sex. Shortly thereafter—and after tens of

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thousands of individuals and scores of conservative, religious, and child-advocacy religious groups registered complaints with the networks, the FCC and individual stations, the FCC reversed an earlier decision that a spontaneous outburst by U2's Bono at the televised 2003 Golden Globe awards ("This is really, really fucking brilliant!") didn't violate its offensiveness standards, and fined NBC. As noted, after Clear Channel (still, at this writing, contesting a \$495,000 FCC fine for the Stern radio program on six of its outlets) dropped the Howard Stern radio program from six stations, Stern very publicly accused the FCC of buckling to efforts to censor him for his repeated editorial attacks on President George Bush.

Broadcasters responded by tape delaying virtually every major live broadcast (including the 2004 Academy Awards, watched worldwide by at least a half billion people), and even the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) agreed to recut "foul" language in the "quality" British import miniseries *Prime Suspect*. In the meantime, in Congress—which writes the outlines of regulations the FCC then enforces—a number of bills were proposed to raise the dollar value of fines for episodes of indecency and, in one proposal, to include cable programming—never before regulated for content on the theory that since people pay to subscribe to it they want and know what they're getting—in indecency regulations.

However, by the summer of 2004, the move to tighten up on content regulation had begun to bog down: Public attention had moved away from the issue toward other concerns, especially after Abu Ghraib and other concerns about the Iraqi War. Government as an *institution* was also divided, with the executive branch more concerned with ownership rules, siding with media conglomerates. The *media* were not of one mind, either: The broadcast media were, by and large, compliant with toning down their content, largely because, as many argued, it was difficult to tell precisely what the rules were, while virtually all media, and many other groups, were concerned about overregulation of public expression—especially since the rules were not yet clear.

If earlier U.S. media history serves as any guide (the recurrent violence issue has tracked this way as well), we should expect to see the continuation of a cycle: Media pushing the limits of the allowable, followed by vocal elements of the public expressing outrage, followed by a flurry of governmental attention, followed by declining concern and inaction—and no tangible change in public policy. The political sociologist Murray Edelman (1964) also described this cycle in his classic book *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* some 40 years ago. Not much has changed.

Sources: Edelman (1964), Steinberg (2004).

The key word in understanding how the media and government interact is *relationship*. In a relationship, each party typically has something to give and something it wants to get, and relationships are reciprocal: To get something you want from someone else, you give something you have in exchange. Recall our earlier discussion of the resource-dependence perspective: What one party has to give is its resources; what it wants to get is the other party's resources. And by definition, in a reciprocal relationship, your resource is my need (if I didn't need it, it wouldn't be a resource for you, at least in dealing with me).

The major resource the media have is *publicity*, the ability to focus public attention on a topic or issue or person. The government and government officials need access to the public to focus public attention on problems and issues and especially to marshal public support for present policies and actions. This can be seen very clearly in election campaigns; a candidate needs media exposure to be seen as "viable," as having a chance of winning. The 1992 presidential campaign of Larry Agran, the Democratic mayor of Irvine, California, is a case in point. Virtually unknown to the national press and hence unreported on by them, Agran campaigned hard in New Hampshire but failed to attract much media attention. Why? Because he was an "unknown" and thus an "unviable" candidate. The evidence that he was unknown was easy to come by: Public opinion polls failed to find more than 1% or 2% of potential Democratic primary voters who expressed a preference for him. Early pre-election polls always favor candidates with high name recognition. In the early 1992 Democratic primaries, New York governor Mario Cuomo, who wasn't even a candidate, was leading in the preference polls. Agran was frequently excluded from media events, especially debates among the contending candidates, because he was viewed as not being viable. A similar situation was that of Ralph Nader's bid for the presidency as nominee of the Green Party in 2000. He was excluded from all televised debates despite a growing following. When one votes in presidential elections, one is likely to note any number of names on the ballot of whom one has never heard mention in the media, all of whom qualified for inclusion on the ballot. In brief, voter preference comes from publicity, the media provide the publicity, and their decision rule about news coverage largely comes from their estimate of viability, determined by voter preference polls and election results.

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If the media's major resource in dealing with government and political life is publicity, the government's and politics' major resources are the ability to supply "raw material" to the media, especially the news media, and their ability to set the rules of the game for the way the media operate.

Clearly, those in political and governmental circles are interested not only in getting publicity but also in having it be favorable publicity, what has come to be known as *spin control*. Governmental and political officials attempt to influence what is said, and how it is said, by controlling the access that the news media have to them and their activities. The media's need—and the officials' resource—is news. Sociologist Herbert Gans (1979), in a content-analysis study of national TV news and newsmagazines, estimated that three fourths of all news came from government sources.⁵ The dominance of the government as a source of news is understandable: The government acts on policies that affect us all, and hence its activities are news. Moreover, the media—and government—have adopted rules and routines that make covering government relatively efficient and predictable.

Government, political officials, and the military can control access in a number of ways. Getting favorable coverage means accentuating the positive and shrouding the negative by making access to symbols and messages that support your position easy and by making access to anything else difficult. Sources having great power—people such as the president, whom the press virtually must report on—enjoy a great resource advantage. The Gulf War of 1991 was another case in point. Although the nation's press corps complained bitterly over Defense Department restrictions on coverage, they by and large went along with these restrictions, for *not* reporting on the day's biggest news story was literally unthinkable, and General Norman Schwarzkopf and his staff controlled all access to the field. By the same token, those who have no such guaranteed access simply do not have it as a resource.

We noted earlier that the First Amendment protects freedom of expression—of speech and of the press—but under current court interpretations, this freedom basically covers what Americans say and print, but does not extend very far in covering anyone's ability, including the press's, to get access to information that the government, or other institutions, prefers to keep secret.

Relations With Other Institutions

We've noted before that the First Amendment grants the media substantial latitude in what they can say. It's important to remember, however, that it protects media only from government censorship; it does not apply to relationships the media have with other institutions (like advertisers) or with members of the public, who remain free to censor what they will.⁶ As may become clear from our discussions, whereas the history of formal control—control by government—of the news media is one of increasing freedom, the history of influence on the media by other social institutions shows no such pattern; the give-and-take pattern of fluctuating degrees of freedom enjoyed by the media depends on who has the upper hand in informal interactions between the media and other institutions.

The media clearly have important relationships with other institutions, and resource dependence marks these relationships as well. As is the case with government and the political sphere, the resources the media have are essentially publicity and legitimization, and the ones they seek are support, for attention, money, and content—the stuff of which media are made.

In the following pages, we look at media relationships with two other institutions—education and medicine. Two later chapters concern the media's interaction with two other critically important institutions—the economy and the public sector.

Education

The relationships between media and education are particularly close and complex. In the first place, much of our education is mediated; indeed, textbooks and educational materials account for almost a third of the \$36.6 billion spent annually on books in the United States.⁷ And if media are implicated in education, the reverse is true as well. Let's suppose that you're 20 years old and have watched—since you were 2—three and a half hours of TV a day, actually an hour less than the national average of four and a half hours a day. That means you've now watched about 29,900 hours of TV, or a bit under 3 ½ years of 24-hour days; that's about 1.8 times as much time as the approximately 16,000 hours you've spent in school (as a matter of fact, if you're an average American, you've spent more time watching TV than

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engaging in *any* activity other than sleeping).⁸ At least part of the time we're watching TV, we're also learning—education is not just the formal education we get in school.

At any rate, media may be used directly for education, with educators involved in planning and producing media, as the many programs of the Children's Television Workshop (*Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales*, *Sagwa the Chinese Siamese Cat*) attest. Media may also function incidentally as an educational outlet, as we learn much about the world beyond our immediate experience from the media.

Many educators are wary of TV and other media, feeling that watching television is negatively related to school achievement. Studies of the relationship show that it is neither simple nor straightforward. Some studies find this, but others don't; the best studies suggest that watching moderate amounts of TV has no relationship to how well students do in school, but watching 5 hours or more is hazardous to kids' grades. We may remind ourselves that the one nation in which kids watch more TV than in the United States is Japan, where students almost always score higher than American children on standardized tests.

The controversy over the use of Whittle Communications' *Channel One* in the nation's high school classrooms illustrates one relationship between the media and education. *Channel One* represents a media challenge to the traditional structure of the schools, which until recently have not been commercialized. Because *Channel One* carries age-appropriate advertising during its 12-minute daily newscast, it has focused attention on American schools as a site for marketers to reach student consumers. A Harris Poll estimates that the youth market (ages 8–21) is now a \$172 billion per year market, with preteens (8–12) spending \$19.1 billion of that ("Generation Y," 2003). *Channel One* is not alone in this regard. A continuing issue is the increasing presence of advertisements and corporate sponsorship in cash-strapped public schools. Corporations even produce education media such as videotapes and textbooks that are provided to the schools gratis, but that act as subtle and not-so-subtle advertisements for their sponsors.

Education is, however, dependent on the media, most particularly the news media, for information and viewpoints about how schools run, from basic questions of educational policy to mundane matters of what the school cafeterias will serve.

Medicine

Medicine and health care make up one of the largest and most important sectors of American social life and its economy: Health care costs now are almost one sixth of the Gross National Product (GNP), and the proportion of GNP devoted to health care is steadily rising. The monetary stakes alone, in what American health care is and what it will become, are enormous and likewise growing. Where do the media fit in? The networks and most large newspapers have correspondents who cover medicine and health as a regular beat, and a listing of magazines that accept advertising classifies more than 150 magazines under Health and Nutrition and more than 400 others under Medicine, Dentistry, and Nursing. (By comparison, Journalism and Writing has fewer than two dozen entries; see *Magazine Industry Market Place*, 1996.) While television news and newspapers tend to aim their coverage at explaining medicine and health to a mass audience and hence serve boundary-crossing functions (that is, they tell one institution, the public, about the workings of another), the vast majority of the magazines are specialized, or *intrainstitutional* media, informing an institution, or a specialized segment within it, about itself. But perhaps the most interesting place to look at the relationships between media and medicine is in television entertainment.

Doctor shows did not begin with *ER* and *Chicago Hope*. The genre has a history that predates the medium. *Dr. Kildare* began as a short story and became a radio show and series of movies (there were, in the 1930s and 1940s, fifteen *Dr. Kildare* movies) before it became the No. 1 television show in the 1960s. *M*A*S*H*, a variation on the genre, became the longest-running No. 1 show in TV history in the 1970s. Television studios and networks are attracted to medical shows because of their wide popularity, although, like shows of any other genre, not all succeed: Joseph Turow (1991) demonstrates that whereas 32 network medical shows ran for a full season or more from the 1950s through 1987, 22 others lasted less than a full season. TV writers and producers like medical shows because doctors and nurses (and even coroners, such as on *Crossing Jordan* or *Quincy*) are “good” central figures for a show. It’s easier to write drama or comedy when the main characters are people who routinely and credibly come into contact with a wide and changing variety of secondary characters. Turow argues that this interaction helps explain why professionals

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in general—lawyers, writers, and teachers as well as doctors—are overrepresented in TV entertainment programming. Besides, medical stories almost by definition involve life-and-death situations, easy for high drama.

The popularity of the genre, moreover, has not been lost on the medical establishment. Early on, from the doctor movies of the 1930s to the 1954 debut of the series *Medic*, the American Medical Association and the Los Angeles County Medical Association had enormous influence on the content of medical programs. The associations and the industry depended on each other: The TV producers got free technical advice to make shows accurate and realistic; in exchange, the medical associations were able to influence the portrayal of medicine on television—another example of the resource-dependence perspective.

CONCLUSION

The media do not exist “out there”: They are *made*. And understanding how they are made is somewhat like peeling an onion—to understand mediamaking requires us to look at more than one level. People—individuals—make media, but they do so in an organizational context: That is, to make media requires rules, roles, and routines, and each of these influences what can be made. Moreover, organizations exist within industries that shape or constrain them. Furthermore, that understanding is fostered by paying attention to the way media people, organizations, industries, and institutions share resources with others in what we label a resource-dependence perspective. Alternative or radical mediamaking focuses on reorganizing the ways information is processed and distributed to the public, creating new contexts and allowing for new voices and opinions to be heard.

NOTES

1. Until 1995, TV networks were barred by Federal Communication Commission regulations from producing their own prime-time entertainment programming. The regulations, aimed at fostering competition in entertainment production, meant that most prime-time network shows were purchased from Hollywood-based production companies, many of them affiliated with

movie studios. In 1997, networks owned or had ownership interests in 29 of 80 prime-time entertainment programs (for example, *Ellen* on ABC, *The Single Guy* on NBC), with the remainder produced by independent houses and studios (Sterngold, 1997). We must note that the formula for *All in the Family* was copied from a British sitcom, *'Til Death Us Do Part*, and *The Simpsons* was spun off from Fox's *The Tracey Ullman Show*.

2. This freedom was upheld most famously in the 1971 Pentagon Papers cases, in which President Richard Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, sought to keep *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Boston Globe* from printing excerpts of a secret Defense Department multivolume document on the origins and history of the Vietnam War. The papers had been surreptitiously photocopied by Daniel Ellsberg, who then made them available to the three newspapers. The U.S. Supreme Court said that prior restraints on the press were unconstitutional unless an extremely strong case could be made that publication would damage national security, and that the government had not been able to show that. It should also be noted that this prior restraint doctrine applies with greatest force to news; the Supreme Court as late as the 1950s was willing to say that local communities could prescreen motion pictures and decide whether they were suitable for local showing.

3. In trying a case involving freedom of the press, a court must decide whether material is or is not obscene, libelous, or slanderous; the publisher is protected if the material is found not to meet the legal definition but is subject to criminal prosecution, in obscenity cases, or to recovery of damages in libel cases. In theory, at least, prior restraints of material that would damage national security are still possible, although the government has not been able since the Pentagon Papers cases to prove any media publication would damage national security. It came close in 1979, when *The Progressive* magazine was prevented from publishing an article outlining how to make a hydrogen bomb. The government, however, dropped the case when the magazine was able to demonstrate that all the information contained in the article was already available in libraries and previously published articles, and the article appeared in the magazine.

4. The principal exceptions are in libel, slander, and deceptive advertising. Libel and slander are published or spoken, respectively, falsehoods that defame a person or corporation. Defamation, legally, is anything that exposes persons to hatred, contempt, ridicule; lowers them in the esteem of others; causes them to be shunned; or damages them in their business or calling. At present, the law of libel requires that, for a private individual to collect damages for libel, she or he must show that a defamatory falsehood was published either with knowledge that it was false or with lack of due care for whether it was true or false.

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Reflecting the concern that public debate should be, in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court, “uninhibited, robust and wide-open,” the standards applied to public figures (who presumably place themselves in the public eye on purpose) and government officials are even higher. To collect damages, they must prove that a defamatory falsehood was published with knowledge that it was false or with “reckless disregard” for whether or not it was. In deceptive advertising cases in the recent past, the federal government has moved largely against only flagrantly inaccurate advertising.

5. And fully one fifth of the news came from the president of the United States (Gans, 1979, Chapter 1). Virtually every subsequent content analysis of major news media has calculated similar proportions.

6. Legally, censorship applies only to restrictions by government. Thus, if Clear Channel drops Howard Stern from its stations, it may keep him from being heard in those communities, but that’s not true censorship (and the Internet makes it ineffective, since Stern’s program is available worldwide to anyone who can do basic audio streaming from a radio station carrying the program).

7. In 2002, they accounted for \$10.149 billion, according to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2003*. The percentage includes elementary, secondary, and college texts; standardized tests; and subscription reference services but excludes audiovisual media.

8. In addition, let’s assume that you’ll go to work at age 22 and work a 40-hour week until you’re 65, and that from 22 until age 72, you watch the national average of four and a half hours a day of TV (1,661 hours per year in 2001). That means that over the course of an average life, you’ll spend about 83,050 hours watching TV, about 86,000 hours working and about 16,000 hours in school. These TV use estimates are from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2003*; the school estimate is based on 6.5 hours a day for 180 days a year from age 6 to age 20; the work estimate includes a two-week vacation yearly.

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Media and Money

4

It is not possible to think of the modern mass media without also thinking about money, economics, and profit. The media are, for the most part, made up of and controlled by corporations that both invest an enormous amount of money in their media operations and expect to make at least a reasonable profit. After all, the media are big business, one of the biggest in the world. In 2002, the average American household spent over \$2,000 on entertainment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004); the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* for 2004–2005, produced by the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), stated that in 2001 consumer spending on media was \$673 per person per year, projected to increase to \$941 by 2007. It is worth remembering, however, that there are millions of people, even in America, who simply cannot afford to purchase many media products.

In fact, how the media are organized institutionally and how they operate to produce the particular kinds of products they do are significantly influenced, if not determined, by their relationship to money and profit. In the United States, people take it for granted that the media operate within and are part of a capitalist economy, in which they must compete for profit in the marketplace. But people are not always aware of the differences the system makes. For example, scholars and critics persistently argue about the extent to which, and how, the organization of media as largely profit-making ventures influences