

# Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media

**Special Issue: Broadcasting in the Americas**

**Guest Editors: David R. Spencer and Joseph D. Straubhaar**

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**Broadcast Research in the Americas: Revisiting the Past and Looking to the Future**

**New Discourses and Traditional Genres: The Adaptation of a Feminist Novel into an Ecuadorian Telenovela**

**Transnation: Globalization and the Reorganization of Chilean Television in the Early 1990s**

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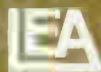
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**Research Pioneer Tribute: Rethinking Marshall McLuhan: Reflections on a Media Theorist**



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## Editor's Note: Broadcast Research in the Americas

Donald G. Godfrey

Broadcasting and the electronic media of the Americas is the primary theme of this special issue of the *Journal*. U.S. scholars have studied systems all over the globe, yet little is known about our closest neighbors, especially Canada and Mexico. Included in this special issue is research from a variety of different countries of North, Central, and South America. It is intended to encourage research on the broader spectrum of international topics relating to the countries and electronic media systems of the Western Hemisphere.

This issue was edited by two guest editors, David R. Spencer, Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario, and Joseph D. Straubhaar, Professor, Department of Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas, Austin. These coeditors began last year with a call for papers, which produced numerous submissions. A limited number were selected for publication here to illustrate the breadth of research activities currently being undertaken.

In the mid-1980s the first small steps were taken to eliminate the borders between two North America nations, Canada and the United States. Mexico eventually joined the agreement. Although it was relatively easy to figure out the dimensions under which hard goods could be shipped north and south, cultural goods were another matter. This collection of articles examines the role of North and South America media in a day and age of free trade. In many respects, it is a study in power and how one party relates to another when messages cross both borders and languages.

In this issue, two articles focus on South America. Avila-Saavedra looks at the *telenovela* in Ecuador, a soap opera genre also popular in Mexico, Central American, and South American television. Wiley discusses the evolution of Chilean television in a rapidly approaching globalized world. Two articles focus on a history and criticism of Canadian broadcasting. Terzic provides a glimpse of policy history and political economy as it relates to the development of the pay-per-view system in Canada. Darnell and Wilson look at the sexist language of Vancouver radio, "Talk Radio for Guys." Two articles on Mexico provide a look at Mexico's systems from a cultural perspective. Lozano discusses Mexico's public policies in relation to cultural diversity, and Wilkinson writes both history and critical analysis related to Mexican television within a North American Free Trade Agreement environment. Eyal and Cohen round out the Americas, researching the U.S. program *Friends*. Two additional articles continue the international focus of the issue, but reach across the oceans. Yuan and

Webster discuss channel repertoires in Beijing, and Van Buren researches hate speech in a critical analysis of anti-Arab Web animations.

The subject of international media is certainly not new to the *Journal*. However, as can be seen in the following *JOBEM* bibliography, provided by Professor Straubhaar, there has been comparatively little research from the last 50 years on U.S. systems and thus there is much yet to be accomplished. The purpose of this special issue is to provide a broad overview of what has been done, look at the current research, and hopefully provide a catalyst for future research ideas. This special issue begins with the *JOBEM* bibliography of research in the Americas. Next, the coeditors drafted an introduction summarizing the past research work with an eye toward the future.

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## Broadcast Research in the Americas: Revisiting the Past and Looking to the Future

Guest Editors

David R. Spencer and Joseph D. Straubhaar

Canada, Latin America, and the United States have assumed great international significance in the past few decades as borders wither, goods and people move more freely around the globe, and finance takes on a more integrated and powerful role in global marketplaces. Trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), transnational production ventures such as those springing up in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, Miami, and heavily traded regional markets in Latin America, for products such as *telenovelas*, to some degree advance trends that are likely to grow with little incentive to arrest development. The long experience of almost all the nations in the Americas with various modifications on commercial broadcasting also reveals trends that may be coming elsewhere. In this respect, the United States has been the leader in developing this pattern in both North and South America. Until recently, Canada resisted the trend to prioritize the commercial approach to electronic media. It should be noted that Canada is under no obligation to open its cultural markets to NAFTA. The Canadian government regards broadcasting as a cultural industry (Bird, 1988). Nonetheless, Canadian media are strongly supported by advertising, which has long been a significant force in industrializing nations like Brazil and Mexico and to a degree in smaller, heavily challenged cultures and states like Bolivia and Haiti.

Another fascinating precedent is the burgeoning U.S. Hispanic market, which represents both a settled large minority and a mobile diasporic population of recent migrants. In spite of its growing economic and cultural importance, the Hispanic culture and Hispanic language are not treated as equals to Anglo-Saxon and African American cultures and communities. Its extended history, its size, and its affluence may give some indication where other minority or migrant and scattered audiences in other American nations are headed, and particularly how they relate to the cultural indus-

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tries and broadcasters in both their cultures of origin and the culture that now holds them. Will they willingly abandon their respective heritage symbols to join the unilingual U.S. market? Will they react as others have done before them and retreat to the protection of culturally defined communities? Will they emerge as a multilayered audience attending to both? In this respect, Canada has greatly outdistanced the United States in dealing with similar kinds of factors.

## Globalization, Transnationalism, and Regionalism

Latin America and North America are interesting to other regions around the globe because they are advance harbingers of many trends associated with current market-driven or capital-driven globalization. All of the Americas, with the partial exception of Canada, have been primarily focused on commercial broadcasting since the early 20th century, due in part to the major economic influence of the United States and its models for commercial media (Janus, 1977; Schwoch, 1990). At the time, many Latin American countries saw these relations as top-heavy economic entities that in turn resulted in a cultural dependency on the United States (Cardoso, 1970). However, they can also see them as early developments in what is now called *globalization*. That is particularly true of economic globalization and cultural globalization.

Here the Canadian experience is a notable exception and to many degrees it remains that way. The first decade in Canadian broadcasting development was as haphazard and confusing as anything produced in the United States (Nolan, 1989). In essence, all licenses granted by the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries were intended for private development. Heavy restrictions were placed on the commercial use of broadcasting almost from the beginning, although the regulations did not hamper the curious and the adventuresome (Vipond, 1992, 2000). The broadcasting scene in Canada in the 1920s was populated by speculators, newspaper owners, churches, a large Toronto-based distillery, a Montreal electronics manufacturer and shortwave broadcaster, a couple of universities, and any one of a number of people wanting to test the waters.

As a result, it became quite easy for Canadian stations to affiliate themselves with the two earliest U.S. networks when those entities began to stretch their tentacles from coast to coast in the United States and began to look for new markets both north and south. However, when *Amos 'n' Andy* became the top-rated radio program in Canada, alarm bells went off. In 1929 the federal government appointed a three-person commission under the leadership of banker Sir John Aird to discuss the future of Canadian broadcasting. A towering figure in the private sector, Aird was expected to recommend the adoption of the U.S. model. Shock waves rippled through the financial markets when he did not (Spencer, 1992; Vipond, 1992).

What Aird proposed would prove to be a cumbersome hybrid of public and private partnerships. The government was to establish a governing commission, which it did.

The newly formed entity was given the mandate to set up its own stations, purchase others from private owners, and conduct affiliation agreements with the remainder. The restriction on commercial activity had been lifted by this point and it was expected that the newborn Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) would be self-sufficient at best or require a modest subsidy at worst.

Unfortunately, the CRBC was an administrative disaster and by 1936 it had been replaced by the totally public Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC; Nolan, 1986). Like its predecessor, the CBC was to build stations, produce programming, and attract advertisers. Much to the chagrin of the private sector, it was also given the role of broadcast regulator for the entire industry. In spite of demands from some highly influential lobbies such as the Canadian Radio League, the government chose to allow previously licensed private stations to continue to exist, albeit under the yoke of the CBC. Canada did not move to the totally public model of the United Kingdom and at the same time rejected the totally private, commercial perspective of the United States. When Leonard Brockington was appointed head of the CBC, one of his first initiatives was to turn over prime time on CBC Radio to U.S.-produced drama and comedy shows that also contained a lot of paid advertising. Brockington excused his actions by arguing that the new corporation needed to attract funds to produce top-quality Canadian programming. The rhetoric continues until this day (Peers, 1969; Raboy, 1990).

The CBC remained the dominant force in Canadian broadcasting both as a producer and regulator until the late 1950s. Facing continuing pressure from the private sector, which was chafing under CBC rule, the newly elected Conservative government of John Diefenbaker revoked the CBC's regulatory authority and passed it to a new agency, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG), itself succeeded by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in 1968. In 1960, the BBG called for applications for purely privately owned and operated television stations in the country's major markets. The call led to the formation of the country's first privately owned and operated television network, CTV. In 1970, the groundwork for an emerging new private network, Global Television, was laid out and in the mid-1980s Canada was witness to the emergence of its first cable-only, pay TV channels (Hallman, 1977).

Theories about cultural industries (Pasquali, 1977), dependent development (Cardoso, 1973), cultural impacts of U.S. television (Beltran, 1978), the force of commercialization (Beltran & Fox de Cardona, 1979; Fox, 1975), the impact of U.S. advertising agencies on media development (Janus, 1977), and the impact of U.S. foreign investment in media (Beltran & Fox de Cardona, 1979; Fox, 1975) were developed in Latin America. In turn, the issues experienced here were often applied to other parts of the world in advance of comparable issues raised as part of the cultural imperialism and globalization debates. So were cultural studies theories such as mediation of media by popular or working-class forces (Garcia Canclini, 1999; Martin-Barbero, 1987, 1993) and hybridity (Garcia Canclini, 1990, 1995).

There is little doubt and lots of evidence to support the contention that those issues that were debated in Latin America found a receptive audience in Canada. One Cana-

dian political scientist wrote a book called *Close the 49th Parallel* (Lumsden, 1970) that remained on compulsory university reading lists for years. With one tenth of the population of the United States and with a third of that one tenth not speaking English, Canada has always been more than sensitive to the impact that U.S. television could have north of the 49th parallel. Both Canadian linguistic communities reside within 90 miles of the U.S.–Canadian border, making U.S. television readily and reliably accessible over the air in most towns and cities. *Amos 'n' Andy* were long-forgotten characters when U.S. television spilled across the border in 1948. However, they were replaced by Sid Caesar, Milton Berle, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, and a host of others. Canadian television came 4 years later and from the beginning, Canadian broadcasting policy has been focused on dealing with U.S. penetration of Canada's airwaves (Hardin, 1985; Raboy, 1990).

When the BBG and CRTC came along, Canadian broadcasters were required to develop and promote Canadian-produced programming. This regulation also applied to music played on AM radio. The regulation did not apply to FM radio, which was in its infancy during the 1960s. In the early 1970s, Canadian cable systems had to get permission to add U.S. signals to their distribution networks and many channels were rejected. For example, Toronto cable systems were allowed to carry the Buffalo PBS station WNED–17 but not its affiliated WNEQ–23 channel.

In the early 1970s, the CRTC forced cable operators to black out U.S.-oriented commercial advertising when a Canadian station was broadcasting the same program at the same time as the U.S. network. This regulation is still in effect and causes much grief at Super Bowl time when Canadian stations are not permitted to show commercials produced for the spectacle in the United States. In the final analysis, Canada has shut the door to U.S. investment in Canadian broadcasting enterprises, although it does allow U.S. television producers to sell their products in Canada. Through digital cable, Canadian consumers can watch *The Sopranos* at the same time as viewers of HBO, but Canadian cable operators cannot distribute HBO itself.

The Americas have been a source of both industrial innovation and theory development in regional or cultural linguistic markets. Wilkinson (1995) developed the idea of cultural linguistic markets by examining the process of sales of television programming among Latin American countries. Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham (1996) applied that idea from research on Mexican exports to Latin America to find similar regional or cultural linguistic markets developing in Asia and elsewhere. Straubhaar, Fuentes-Bautista, Giraud, and Campbell (2002) applied and further developed that concept.

In this respect, Canada can offer some interesting insights. From the beginning of public broadcasting, Canada has been required to work in two languages and two cultures. The original CBC Radio network served both Canadian communities. When CBFT in Montreal came on the air in 1952, it broadcast in both languages until the completely English-language CBMT came on the air later that year. When the country suffered one more linguistic and cultural crisis in the late 1960s, the federally appointed Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recommended the

extension of French-language services across the country and an increase in English-language services in French Canada. This policy was designed to recognize two important cultural factors: first, that French-language communities existed in significant numbers outside Quebec; and second, that English-speaking minorities lived and worked among French-speaking citizens in Quebec. Both linguistic groups were entitled to have services on a national basis. The Trudeau government followed up on that recommendation and even in basically English-speaking cities such as London, Ontario, viewers can access virtually any French-language service. Of course, the reverse is true in most parts of French-speaking Canada.

NAFTA has been looked at as a prototype of other possible regional agreements in terms of how media and cultural industries like broadcasting may develop (Galperin, 1999). McAnany and Wilkinson (1996) brought a broad collection of Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. authors together to examine various issues and national perspectives on the impact of NAFTA on media. Both Canadian (de la Garde, Tremblay, Dorland, & Paré, 1994) and Mexican (Sanchez-Ruiz, 1994, 2001) scholars have been concerned that NAFTA has resulted in decreased national production, particularly in film, but perhaps also in television. Wilkinson reviews Mexican cultural policy in this issue to examine results of NAFTA, among other issues.

It goes without saying that Canadian viewers are close enough to the source of good U.S. programming and filmmaking to want the same for themselves. U.S. networks have been prohibited from entering Canada wholesale, but as noted earlier, their products can. For example, CTV broadcasts *Law & Order* on Fridays at 10 p.m. beside the NBC broadcast at the same time. When the United States introduced its variations on pay TV as Terzic's article in this issue demonstrates, public demand for the same went up in Canada. The regulators responded somewhat halfheartedly: No, Canada, you could not have MTV, but you could develop your own channel and it could be called MuchMusic. No, Canada, you could not import HBO, but the CRTC would willingly accept applications for Canadian variations on the same thing. Although one would have to scramble to find all the HBO offerings on Canadian television, they are there for the most part.

Latin America in particular shows both historical and contemporary cases of interest in the transnational or regional development of genres. First the radio soap opera evolved into the *radionovela* in the 1930s. Then the television soap opera evolved into the *telenovela* in the 1950s and 1960s. Both were truly regional interactions, led in both cases by Cuban adaptations of U.S. genres, but also incorporating a long history of Iberian- and Latin-language melodrama (Martín-Barbero, 1993). *Telenovelas* have developed country-specific variations in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, among others, but when new networks wanted to challenge dominant ones in both Brazil and Mexico, they borrowed the "country" variation dominant in the other country. So SBT challenges Globo in Brazil with romantic Mexican or Mexican-style *telenovelas*, whereas Azteca originally challenged Televisa with more nitty-gritty, social issue variations borrowed from Brazil and Colombia (Hernandez, 2001).

The closest creations to be found in Canada that would parallel these developments in Latin America are the French-language *téléromans*. They are not English in origin and definitely not U.S. in origin. In the early years of broadcasting in English Canada in both radio and television it was difficult at times to distinguish between the kind of programming produced in one country or the other. Both U.S. and Canadian radio stations carried popular U.S.-produced drama, mystery, and comedy programming. As noted earlier, the top-rated radio show in Canada in the late 1920s was *Amos 'n' Andy*. When television came in 1952, Canadians began to produce their own product, but in many cases, they copied successful U.S. formats. One of the more popular shows was *Your Hit Parade*. In Canada, it starred a popular crooner named Wally Koster who was never seen by a U.S. audience except in places along the border where Canadian signals invaded the United States.

Canada excelled in two fields: the production of news and current affairs and sports broadcasting (e.g., NHL hockey). Both the private and public sectors have extensive news and current affairs programming that is eagerly consumed by Canadian television viewers. The CBC runs its full-hour news and documentary programming at 10 p.m. in the evening on the major network. Viewers with cable can access the program at 9 p.m. on the CBC's 24-hour cable information channel NewsWorld. CTV still broadcasts its news program at 11 p.m. It also operates a cable news headline service called CTV News Net. The network's investigative program *W5* is now the oldest English-language current affairs show in the country. Parallels, of course, can be found in the country's French-language services. Both the CBC and private operators spend considerable sums on news and current affairs as part of regular programming and as anchor material for cable news operations. In addition, hockey in Canada still has the same kind of impact that football holds in the United States.

Transnational television industries are also showing innovative twists in Latin America. Along with Asia in the case of Star TV, Latin America has been distinctive in seeing regional satellite television develop as a partnership between dominant global firms, like Murdoch, and dominant regional networks, like Brazil's TV Globo, Mexico's Televisa, and Venezuela's Venevisión. Murdoch partnered with Globo and Televisa, and Venevisión entered into partnership with Hughes. However, Televisa and Venevisión joined together to buy part of U.S. Hispanic network Univision, and Globo struck a deal with rival Telemundo. Venevisión has also gone further than others to move significant production resources offshore into Miami to pursue transnational ventures (Mato, 2005). Canada has long been involved in various international ventures of this nature. The country is a member of the consortium that programs and provides programming for the international French-language service TV5. Although sales of commercial programs produced in Canada are rare on the international market, news and current affairs affiliations are quite common among Canadian, U.S., and European broadcasters. At one time, the French-language arm of TVOntario was the second most prolific producer of French-language children's programming in the world.

## TV, Satellite TV, and Cable TV

Cable and satellite television penetration is limited in Latin America, so broadcast television channels and networks continue to dominate the business more there than in some regions. However, to cover their bets, the largest networks in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela are also major players in satellite and cable television. That gives them mixed motives, however. They are unwilling to cannibalize their profitable broadcast audiences, so their ventures into pay television on satellite and cable have not been as aggressive as might have been expected by nonbroadcast television companies.

Latin American cable and satellite television audiences are limited, so broadcast television continues to dominate mass audiences much more than in many other world areas. Roughly 18% of Latin American households have pay satellite or cable (Hoag, 2003), but they are concentrated in Argentina, which had over 50% penetration before 2003, and Mexico, which has over 20% penetration and growing. Subscriber levels went down 20% to 30% in 2003 in Argentina and Brazil due to economic condition declines. Cable subscriber levels went up in Mexico (Breznick, 2003). Quite a few people, particularly in remote parts of large countries like Brazil, have satellite antennas without paid service that they use to receive regular broadcast network signals and improve reception.

The situation has been different in North America. The United States and Canada are both very heavily cabled, and over three quarters of their audiences subscribe to cable or satellite TV. There is virtually no area in Canada where a consumer cannot access either digital satellite or digital cable signals. Cable has been part of the Canadian broadcast psyche since it began in London, Ontario, in the late 1940s. The 500-channel universe has come to Canada with a vengeance. In fact, digital satellite and digital cable companies in Canada can now offer up to 800 channels, although several channels can be located at different spots on the dial. It is one of the fastest growing areas for large media companies such as Rogers, Shaw, and Cogeco. Even Mexico has been drawn further into cable development than most other Latin American countries, due partially to its proximity to U.S. signals and partially to the increasing familiarity many Mexican families have with U.S. channels as people circulate into the United States and back for work, family visits, education, and so on.

## Ownership

Latin America shows how distinctive regional patterns of ownership and control develop, but also how they change in interaction with global or transnational, regional forces. Most Latin American broadcasters developed originally as family businesses, as did many in North America. However, the Latin American companies often remained family dominated even as some of them grew into gigantic operations. The

Latin American media companies have not yet undergone the wave of corporate takeovers so visible in North America in the 1980s and 1990s (Auletta, 1991), but they interact with them closely. The largest Latin American broadcast conglomerates have borrowed models and ideas from the United States. However, the largest Latin American networks dominate their markets in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela much more than do current U.S. networks.

Part of that continuing contrast in ownership forms may be due to very different patterns of national regulations. Many Latin American governments have followed a pattern of giving media licenses to already successful media families, favored entrepreneurs, or even political partners. In this way, a former president of Mexico became a founding partner in Televisa (Paxman & Saragoza, 2001), and one Brazilian president, José Sarney, distributed hundreds of radio and television licenses to congressmen to obtain an extension of his presidential mandate. Such patterns rooted in national politics and history have strong continuities, but they now confront a production market and competition that is increasingly transnationalized. *Venevisión* seems to be dealing with its national political confrontation with President Hugo Chavez in part by shifting resources and attention away from Venezuela to transnational endeavors.

In this respect, Canada has followed the international experience with the lone exception of restrictions on actual ownership of stations and cable and satellite companies (Rutherford, 1978). However, the trend in the country has been toward concentration, with the biggest and most successful operators found in large conglomerates. CTV is part of the Bell Canada-Thomson corporate structure, although Bell is trying to reduce its holdings in the television network and its share in the national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, to focus on the increasing competition in telecommunications. Can West Global owns a national television service, a limited number of radio stations, and about 60% of the country's newspapers. CHUM Limited is a much smaller player with great ambitions. The company is a very successful national radio broadcaster with holdings in television stations, giving it claim to being large enough to form yet another private network. Toronto-based Standard Radio is now the largest radio operator in the country. The granddaddy of them all is Rogers Communications, with interests that include cable, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the sole ownership of the Toronto Blue Jays and the park in which they play. Rogers's competitors are Shaw Communications of Calgary and Cogeco, based in Montreal.

## Programming

Latin America became important as a case in point about the development of national and regional programming patterns, genres, and abilities as far back as the debate over program forms and flows that came up under the New World information and cultural dependency theory debates in the 1970s. Some of the first and most criti-

cal work about the cultural impacts of U.S. television (Beltran, 1978) and the apparently unequal flow of programming from the United States to developing countries and the force of commercialization (Beltran & Fox de Cardona, 1979; Fox, 1975) was done in Latin America. On the other hand, some of the first challenges to the idea of a continuing one-way flow of U.S. television overwhelming local production also came out of research on Latin America (Antola & Rogers, 1984; Straubhaar, 1982). Some of those studies highlighted increases in national production, particularly in *telenovelas*, and the beginnings of export of those programs within and even outside of Latin America (Marques de Melo, 1992).

As noted earlier, U.S. producers have a virtual free hand in selling their product to Canadian television stations. However, that does not mean that Canadian stations are free to do what they want with the material. The CRTC requires that Canadian broadcasters produce a significant amount of Canadian programming, including news and current affairs, talk shows, made-for-television films, and dramatic series. Of these categories, drama has proved to be the most difficult. It is the most expensive to produce and has little attraction in international aftermarket sales.

Very few Canadian programs make it to the U.S. market. *Due South*, the mountie and detective series set in Chicago, was one example. What Canada does export has a tendency to wind up on either PBS stations (e.g., programs such as *DeGrassi*, *The Second Generation*) or on arts-oriented channels such as Bravo. One notable exception is the current *CSI* series owned by Toronto-based Alliance Atlantis. However, that is about as far as the Canadian aspect of the series goes. The Alliance Atlantis highly acclaimed series about a news team called *The Eleventh Hour* could not find an aftermarket and was canceled after 2 years on the air. All in all, Canadian broadcasters have resisted the call for increased drama production. In spite of being grumpy, it does appear that the private sector is holding up its role in the issue. Late in February 2006, a survey by the Toronto broadcasting lobby group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting reported that CTV was producing more Canadian content than the publicly owned CBC (*The Globe and Mail*, 2006).

## Diversity

One of the issues facing the Americas, as with many nations and cultures in the world, is how to represent the diversity of cultures within and across nations in broadcasting and other media. Treatment of cultural diversity is a sufficient issue in many countries so that UNESCO (2005), after much debate, passed a formal Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Lozano in this issue examines the issue of cultural diversity in Mexican broadcasting.

One of the most influential theories to come out of Latin America, hybridity theory, deals with this question of internal cultural diversity and its relation to outside cultures. Although there are many approaches to this idea of hybridity (Kraidy, 2005), Latin America and North America have both best exemplified the cultural hybridity



that comes from massive migrations of Europeans or Africans (primarily via slavery) into lands occupied by indigenous peoples, and the resulting mixture of cultures. That cultural dynamic continues to pose acute issues for broadcasting in terms of how to represent such cultural diversity. In both the United States and Brazil, there have been severe issues of how to represent cultural minorities like African Americans or Afro Brazilians (Araujo, 2000), whereas Brazil, Mexico, the United States, and others also struggle with how to represent indigenous peoples and their cultures in broadcasting.

Canadians have been including aboriginal voices in programming for a number of years. The CBC production *North of 60* was one such example, but the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is a better demonstration of aboriginal achievement. The network is offered to Canadian viewers as a part of basic cable service. It is not a pay TV channel like other stations with a strong ethnic orientation. It broadcasts 24 hours a day with films, current affairs, documentaries, and news programming. It also broadcasts in several different aboriginal languages, as does the CBC's Northern Service.

Anyone having to deal with this touchy issue of ethnicity and its role in broadcasting should look north. Canada officially and legally supports multiculturalism and the broadcasting industry has responded in kind. When Rogers Communications purchased the financially troubled multicultural television channel CFMT in Toronto about a decade ago, skeptics were convinced it would only be a matter of time before the company applied to have its programming format changed. Instead, recognizing the changes in Canada's cities, the company invested heavily in the station, which devotes nearly all of its prime-time broadcasting to programming other than in English or French. The brand was changed to OMNI1 and along with newly licensed OMNI2, the stations gained access to satellite systems and are now national in scope.

Rogers Communications has reserved the 600 tier on its new digital service for programming other than in English. Nearly all of Canada's French-language services are bundled there and most are free to digital subscribers. The other channels are based on a pay service where viewers can access channels with a wide variety of third-language programming. For example, Fairchild Communications, which operates both a central Canadian and Western service, broadcasts in both Mandarin and Cantonese. Other third-language services feature channels from India, Sri Lanka, Poland, and other parts of the world.

The most obvious distraction is the fact that very few programs produced in English find their way into the French-language market and very few French-language shows find their way into the English market, although cross-pollination is increasing on a daily basis. One exception was the extensive historical multipart drama *Canada: A People's History*. The episodes were produced alternatively in both languages. However, one could argue that the need to modify Canadian programming for the respective market it is intended to attract is no longer as necessary as it once was. Bilingualism is increasing, and as noted earlier, the English and French services are now national. Many young Canadians have grown up in the bilingual and

bicultural environment and can access these programs whenever they wish. They need no intermediary. In fact it is becoming an increasing requirement in several economic and social sectors, academe included, that one must now be able to work in both languages.

## Audiences

Out of the Americas have also come a number of breakthrough studies in audiences for broadcasting. The United States has been the source of many types of audience research and theory. Work in the other nations of the Americas has in fact tended to focus originally on the impact of U.S. programming on those cultures. Beltran, Fox, and others noted earlier feared considerable impact on audiences of cultural imperialism. Oliveira (1986), in studies in Belize and Brazil, noted considerable impact of the consumer messages in both regular and satellite broadcasts in terms of turning audiences and cultures toward increased consumerism.

However, Latin American authors and studies also pioneered in showing that national television broadcasts, particularly in those countries with extensive national broadcasting, like Brazil and Mexico, were drawing much larger audiences and having much greater impacts (Kottak, 1990; Straubhaar, 1991; Tavola, 1985). Canadian scholars Hoskins and Mirus (1988) theorized that audiences apply a cultural discount against television programs that are linguistically or culturally unfamiliar, and Straubhaar (1991) argued that audiences are also drawn to programs that are culturally proximate or similar.

Some Latin American scholars, like Orozco Gómez (1996), also examined the way that audiences read and interpret television, often finding audiences to be very active in making choices and meaning. Martín-Barbero (1993) created an interesting concept, that a variety of groups and cultural forces help audiences mediate, think through, and understand the media. That idea has been enormously influential in Latin American research on media and audiences.

Latin America has also been the site of a large amount of ethnographic research. Unlike North America, where surveys and experiments are common, most academic audience research in Latin America has taken the ethnographic turn discussed by Ang (1992) and others. Jacks (1996) and Orozco Gómez (1996) reviewed Latin American ethnographic audience research, as did Murphy and Kraidy (2003), as part of a more global review. There are particularly strong ethnographic traditions in Mexico and Brazil. La Pastina (2004a, 2004b; La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005; Rego & La Pastina, in press) examined gender, understanding of product placement, perceptions of families and family size, and other issues in rural Brazil. Jacks and Tufte (1998) examined Brazilian middle-class use of television and cable TV. Orozco Gómez (1996) examined television reception among both adults and children in Mexico.

In Canada, with the exception of hockey broadcasts, the majority of television viewers love U.S.-produced programming. With regularity, the top 10 shows in the

country were produced outside the country. This frightened the spirits of the country's two most notable communications citizens, Innis (1951) and McLuhan (1964). McLuhan was not a particularly adamant nationalist. Innis, however, showed concern in most of his writings about the dependency cycle that Canadians have lived through by adopting various metropolitan entities such as France, Britain, and now the United States.

There are exceptions to the Canadian devotion to U.S.-produced programming. One notable exception is the devotion to the Canadian Football League shown by television viewers. It still outdraws the National Football League broadcasts on Can West Global. However, series such as *Law & Order*, *Cold Case*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *The Amazing Race* still rank among favorites in Canada. However, with the increasing fragmentation of audiences, no longer does the concept of mass media have as much meaning. As the years progress, Canadian viewers will be accessing more and more television and reducing the concept of mass even more.

The research contained in this issue presents some serious challenges for broadcast scholars. Today's societies live both in the world of Gordon Moore, who while managing Intel made some cogent remarks regarding the rapid increases in capacity of his company's product and the global village of McLuhan. As markets expand, in particular in countries such as China and India, the fundamental role of broadcasting within the community it serves and lives comes under increasing scrutiny. On one side the advocates who regard broadcasting as a critical player in nation building will take on those who see it as just another participant in expanding global markets. As both the Federal Communications Commission in the United States and the Canadian Radio and Television and Telecommunications Commission in Canada have realized, any form of nationalist code has become increasingly difficult to regulate. This is just one of many issues facing broadcast scholars in this day and age in every country. Another issue revolves around financing electronic media enterprises. Consumers today have far more choice than consumers just 10 years ago. They live in a universe that can offer more than 500 channels with increasing broadband and digital transmissions systems coming online. The very nature of the industry is changing. Viewers and listeners now make the choices. Add to this the impact of TIVO, personal video recorders (PVRs), and wireless telephones that include video broadcast capabilities, and it can be seen that fresh ideas are a must for those involved in international broadcast and electronic media research.

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## New Discourses and Traditional Genres: The Adaptation of a Feminist Novel Into an Ecuadorian *Telenovela*

Guillermo Avila-Saavedra

*This study explores the adaptation of the feminist Ecuadorian novel Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros into a telenovela, a Latin American form of serialized television drama that always comes to a narrative conclusion, which aired in Ecuador in 2004. Notions of genre theory, intertextuality, hegemony, and feminist criticism inform the analysis. Discourse analysis of the television text identifies recurring narratives and compares them to those found in the original literary work. The focus of the study is to reveal the degree to which the radical discourse of the novel was maintained, transformed, or eliminated in the process of adaptation.*

Through a textual analysis of the recent adaptation of Alicia Yáñez Cossío's (1979) novel *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros*, this study explores the paradoxical process of adapting a feminist novel into the genre of the *telenovela*, "a form of melodramatic serialized fiction produced and aired in most Latin American countries" (La Pastina, 1997, p. 1634). This study explores the ability of the *telenovela* genre to incorporate nonnormative discourses regarding gender roles and economic structures, and its potential to promote or prevent social change. It is an important project because Spanish and Portuguese-language *telenovelas* are immensely popular among millions of viewers in Latin America. It also contributes to the development of a body of knowledge on a genre that deserves scholarly attention due to its potential influence on the formation of cultural and social ideas.

Since the late 1970s, Latin America has witnessed the birth of a new generation of women writers, who examine social, economic, and political relations from a feminist perspective and produce new challenges to traditional structures. At the same time in the realm of mass media, *telenovelas*, often criticized for reinforcing traditional gender roles and patriarchal models of social relations, have remained an important social institution in Latin America.

Through textual analysis of the *telenovela*, this study identifies recurring narratives and compares them with those found in the original literary work to demonstrate the

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degree to which various aspects of the radical discourse of the novel were maintained, eliminated, or accommodated in the process of adaptation. The study relies on feminist approaches to media studies and the notion of hegemony as the process of cultural accommodation. To identify the elements of the *telenovela* as a genre and its potentially homogenizing discourse, notions of genre theory and intertextuality inform the analysis as well. The study provides insight into the textual range and limitations of an immensely popular genre.

## Genres and Intertextual Readings

The notion of genre analysis has its roots in literary criticism. Feuer (1992) explained that originally genre did not concern itself with cultural or historical characteristics but solely with the structural elements that serve to classify a literary work into a category of related works. Rosmarin (1985) discussed genre as those elements of a particular text that remind one of something else while remaining unique, therefore serving a purpose of classification but not of evaluation. In film, the notion of genre focused on the formulas devised by the studio industry to facilitate production and guarantee popularity of films (Altman, 1999).

It was not until the 1950s that a critical perspective, one that considers the text's relation with its intended audience, was brought into genre analysis. According to Feuer (1992), a new conceptualization of genre where "we can retain the method of literary definition of genres without necessarily retaining their content" (p. 141) is necessary for television. For example, the broad television definition of the soap opera does not account for stylistic and thematic differences between daytime and prime-time serials, nor for the cultural and social characteristics of Latin American *telenovelas*. In the relation between genre and television, particular attention must be paid to the social context in which the text is produced and received. Chandler (1997) noted that the advantage of television genre analysis is that "it confirms textuality as a function, and situates texts within textual and social contexts, underlining the social nature of the production and reading of texts" (p. 20). To the degree that television relies on standard interpretations of genres by assumed audiences, television genres can be defined as ideological products. Television genres can be understood as systems of shared cultural conventions, which are the product of social negotiation with the media. An ideological approach to television genre criticism envisions genres as ideological structures (Feuer, 1992).

The meaning that audiences make of a television text is not based on the interpretation of that particular text in isolation. According to Fiske (1987), horizontal intertextuality is based on relations between primary texts linked by genre, character, or content. Chandler (1997) emphasized the idea of genre as an intertextual concept, because each text is defined by the conventions of the genre where it is situated, and at the same time each new text serves to reinforce those conventions. Gray (2003) discussed the impossibility of examining a television text as stable and



independent, arguing that television textual analysis always requires locating the texts among other texts and in a social context.

Genre criticism of television is useful for understanding the triangular relation among producer, text, and audience (Fiske, 1987). Genres are valuable for television producers because they become standardized products that can be offered to advertisers. Genres also provide audiences with familiar products that fit their expectations. However, genres can also become instruments of power through their regulation of meaning and interpretation: "Genres are intertextual for they form the network of industrial, ideological, and institutional conventions that are common to both producers and audiences out of which arise both the program and the audiences' readings" (Fiske, 1987, p. 111). Television programs often can be understood only in relation to other television programs. Ideological approaches to genre criticism provide insight into the intertextual relations that encourage particular interpretations of television texts.

## Genres and Hegemonic Television Discourses

The notion of hegemony incorporates culture in the process of class struggle. Gramsci (1973) argued there is a tacit consensus between the ruling and working classes based on ideology. Strinati (1995) defined hegemony as a dynamic process where "dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinated groups through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus" (p. 165). Such consensual control occurs when individuals assimilate the views of the dominant groups as part of their common sense. Hegemony, therefore, can be understood as a set of values that comes to be accepted as the normal way through which culture and society appear naturally organized.

Hall (1999) invoked hegemony when he argued that ideologies are most effective when "we are not aware how we formulate and construct statements about the world, when our formations seem to be simply descriptive statements about how things are, or what we can take for granted" (p. 272). Discussing the cultural and ideological role of media in the process of hegemony, Hall (1993) described encoding as the moment when dominant normative messages are constructed and ascribed to media products. Decoding occurs when media messages are confronted and interpreted by audiences. The encoding-decoding model assumes that media texts are *polysemic*, or open to different interpretations. However, even through a resistant lens of interpretation, there is an awareness of a preferred reading consistent with dominant ideologies. The stylistic conventions of television genres may serve to reinforce hegemonic interpretations.

According to Casey (1993), "feminist theorists, among others, have focused on the way in which generically defined structures may operate to construct particular ideologies and values, and to encourage reassuring and conservative interpretations

of a given text" (p. 312). Media scholars with a poststructuralist feminist perspective "analyze the symbolic systems of film and television through which we communicate and organize our lives in an attempt to understand how is it that we learn to be what our culture calls 'women' as opposed to what are called 'man'" (Kaplan, 1992, p. 261). Media messages constitute pervasive discourses of power where the values and ideologies of a dominant class function as the hegemonic consensus. Kaplan argued that feminist media critics need to analyze media texts in the broader context of power discourses with special attention to female images and representations in the social, economic, and cultural context of television production and reception.

Foucault (1978) argued that the deployment of sexuality and the enforcement of rigid gender roles and family structures responded to the need to ensure a labor force that could sustain the system of capitalist production. Analyzing female representations in *National Geographic*, Parameswaran (2002) noted:

The pervasiveness of a certain brand of "empowered" modern femininity in consumer culture represents a subtle repackaging of patriarchy for capitalism. Far from promoting liberation, such imagery continues the "ancient" tradition of devaluing women through the sexiest glorification of a certain brand of physical attractiveness. (p. 294)

Clearly, the relations between political economy and feminist discourses as well as the insight they bring to the analysis of gendered texts are important.

### Defining *Telenovela*

The roots of Latin American *telenovelas* are in 19th-century European novels found in serialized format in newspapers and magazines. The first nonprint adaptation of one such novel occurred in Cuba in 1948 with the *radionovela* *El Derecho de Nacer*. The genre became immensely popular and was soon adopted by other countries and in the 1960s made the transition to television (Matelski, 1999). There are several characteristics that differentiate Latin American *telenovelas* from American soap operas: *Telenovelas* have a limited number of episodes and always come to a conclusion, *telenovelas* are usually scheduled during prime time, and *telenovela* actors can portray different roles in different productions without diminishing the characters' credibility.

Roura (1993) labeled the *telenovela* as "the empire of the domestic" (p. 37) and identified particular elements that characterize the genre. Traditional *telenovelas* require an evil female character, an "Eve," who is usually evil beyond rationality and comprehension. Her counterpart is a "Maria," the good female character defined as "virginal, submissive, good, loyal, naïve, fragile, and incapable of the sexual act" (Roura, 1993, p. 62). Other important elements are the male protagonist who is often the source of female antagonism, and the setting that displays luxury to highlight class differences, which often prevent the protagonists from being together.

Gomez (1996) articulated the themes that constitute the genre. Happiness is difficult and does not come easily, good eventually overcomes evil, the role of destiny shifts from sadistic force to provider of happiness, and the value of marriage is confirmed as a sacred reward.

Defining the boundaries of the genre can be problematic for *telenovela* research. Traditionally all *telenovelas* were constructed as love stories. These days, however, *telenovelas* can follow the adventures of a high school class or the successes of a fashion designer. According to Acosta-Alzuru (2003b), there are two broad categories of *telenovelas*: the *telenovela rosa*, which focuses on the romance and misfortunes of a heterosexual couple, and the *telenovela de ruptura*, which explores social issues perceived as problematic. Mandoki (2002) identified 15 very specific categories of *telenovelas*, classified by age groups and topics, although she acknowledged that they often overlap. Gonzalez (1992) argued that given the lack of a proper definition of the genre, each researcher has to articulate his or her own. This discussion is, however, purely academic. Audiences recognize a *telenovela* when they see one, based on its serialized format, the recurrence of actors, and the anticipated joyous conclusion.

Gonzalez (1992) pointed out the need for a cultural approach in *telenovela* research. He argued that although *telenovelas* are commercial products, their real significance lies in collective and cultural interpretation. Martin-Barbero (1993) highlighted the economic relevance of the *telenovela*, linking its commercial and cultural environments. He argued that *telenovelas*, with their emphasis on the dramatic elements of perceived ordinary lives, constitute a cultural defense against the increasing commodification of life. Straubhaar (1984, 1991) highlighted the role of the *telenovela* as a form of regional cultural expression that challenges notions of U.S. cultural imperialism and promotes a Latin American identity.

Beard (2003) analyzed three Mexican *telenovelas* that, due to their popularity and media monopoly, exercise great influence on the social construction of gender and the maintenance of cultural meaning. She argued that despite the perceived differences in terms of content, style, and intent, all three programs reflect images of gender, sexuality, race, and class that validate the dominant system in force. La Pastina (2001) identified cultural capital as a key variable in the process of interpretation among *telenovela* audiences in rural Brazil. Vink (1988) explored the influence of *telenovelas* on the working class of Brazil. He discussed the *telenovela* as a social discourse where "the dominant and best formulated discourses are those on personal and private relations: gender, love, marriage, and family; discourses on social classes and their relations are secondary" (p. 181). Acosta-Alzuru (2003a) examined a Venezuelan *telenovela* that its producers refused to label as feminist despite its innovative way of portraying gender roles. She argued that even when more positive gender portrayals are gaining a space, *telenovelas* still reinforce a notion of feminism as undesirable. However, this study deals with the adaptation of a literary work already perceived as radical and feminist. How the television adaptation approached the discourse is the subject of analysis.

## Method

The purpose of this article is to examine the dominant narratives and the construction of characters, female characters in particular, in the *telenovela* *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros* (Alvarado, 2004), which aired on Ecuavisa, Ecuador's biggest network, from February 2004 to July 2004. Through discourse analysis, the study compares the recurring narratives of the television text to the original literary work to determine the extent to which the radical discourse of the novel was modified in the process of adaptation. Discourse analysis is useful because it emphasizes not the meaning of the text but the social construction of meaning through the text (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000). For closer analysis, thirty 1-hour episodes were randomly selected from different points in time between the first and last episodes. The analysis starts with the original literary work; it then describes the production and reception context of the *telenovela* to focus on the textual analysis of the television product.

### *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros*

#### The Novel

With a vast production of poems, short stories, and novels, Alicia Yáñez Cossío is considered one of the most prominent Ecuadorian writers and is regarded as one of the few female voices in contemporary Ecuadorian fiction. Scholars find Yáñez Cossío's work to be in opposition not only to patriarchy but also to consumerism in capitalist societies and the importation of foreign ideas that undermine local identities (Boyles, 1993; Chuquín, 1992; Cushicondor, 1983; Handelsman, 1988). In 1972 Yáñez Cossío was awarded the national literary prize, and in 1997 with her novel *El Cristo Feo* she won the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz international award for literature written by women.

Her 1979 novel *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros*<sup>1</sup> is the story of Maria, a middle-class young woman who starts questioning the role of women in society as well as her own role in her marriage. In a search for her own identity, she abandons her husband. Pressed by financial needs and her lack of skills or formal education, she is forced to take a job selling beauty products door-to-door for Christine Farrow de Nueva York, a U.S. cosmetics company managed by Santos de Leon, a cold, impersonal boss. Through her job, which she finds humiliating, she meets a number of women who are also facing difficult situations: Pilar, who struggles in her job because of her lack of physical attractiveness; Gilda, a former prostitute seeking a new life; and Lupe, a mother recently abandoned by her husband.

Boyles (1993) identified two main themes in the narrative of *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros*: the birth of female consciousness and the commodification of women in capitalist societies. She noted that the "evil friend" character in the novel is not a

real person, but a stylistic device that leads to Maria's awakening and questioning of a world dominated by masculinity. Boyles argued that in the context of the novel, enlightenment cannot be achieved through traditional femininity, but only through the transition and growth of an individual. For Boyles, "Maria is a symbol of female self-awareness and potentiality on the eve of a new era" (p. 63). She argued that at different points in the novel all the female characters come to this realization. However, along with Maria's new self-awareness comes the need for economic independence in a world dominated by men where the rules of patriarchy become more evident to her.

*Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros* is a strong condemnation of capitalism and of the utilization of the female body for consumerism. Boyles (1993) noted how Maria and the other women are encouraged by their male boss to improve their physical attractiveness to sell cosmetics to other women, thus becoming commodities themselves. The novel criticizes the standards of attractiveness for success as defined by capitalism. According to Boyles (2004), the "black eyes" in the novel's title "refer to those women who exploit other women, falsely convincing them that their true value lies in their appearance" (p. 1).

In her stylistic and thematic analysis of *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros*, Cushicondor (1983) identified three main moments in the story of Maria: her marriage and separation, her search for work, and the progress of her job. She highlighted the absence of romance to construct the character of Maria. Cushicondor saw the novel as emblematic of the evolution of the role of women in society and as a criticism of capitalism. She noted all the concessions that women have to make to find jobs and described the selling of beauty products to other women as "psychological violence" (p. 83).

## The *Telenovela*

Ecuador has very limited domestic fictional television production. Most of the programming on Ecuadorian networks comes from the United States and other Latin American countries. *Telenovelas* from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela are extremely popular, although Ecuavisa, the largest network in Ecuador, has made continuous efforts to generate a domestic *telenovela* industry. On the network's Web site and in the related publicity, the adaptation of *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros* was portrayed as a project to make an "exportable" *telenovela*. To that end, Ecuavisa hired actors from Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela, who would provide faces familiar to viewers throughout Latin America, encouraging intertextual readings that would promote the popularity of the product. However, so far the *telenovela* has been aired only in Ecuador, during prime time, from February 2004 to July 2004, and in the United States during 2005 through the signal of Ecuavisa Internacional on DirecTV.

According to television critic Aguilar (2004), for a *telenovela* to be exportable it has to mask its origin and appear to take place "anywhere," a trend that is common in the

*telenovela* industry as a result of media globalization. Despite being an adaptation of an Ecuadorian novel and being set in the Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil, Aguilar argued that the *telenovela* lacks a national identity. Actors from different nationalities where Spanish is spoken with different accents and localisms are forced to speak in an indefinite way that according to Aguilar "is a Spanish that is not spoken anywhere, it is a nonexistent Spanish."

During an interview with an Ecuadorian newspaper regarding the premiere of the television adaptation of her work, Yáñez Cossío declared that she found very little of the intention of her novel in the *telenovela* (Medina, 2004). She was initially approached by Ecuavisa to collaborate in the adaptation, an idea that was later dropped when the task was assigned to screenwriter Ana Montes. The following section analyzes the television product in more detail. The analysis is not intended to reflect all the themes, narratives, or characters of the *telenovela*, but those that offer the most productive field of comparison with the discourse of the original literary work.

### **Maria: "I Want the Miracle of Love"**

The structural differences in the construction of the character of Maria are evident. In the novel she is a middle-class urban young woman who, through a process of self-awareness, decides to abandon her husband and is then forced to accept a job selling cosmetics. In the *telenovela*, Maria, played by Geovanna Andrade, is a young widow from a small rural town. Because of her knowledge about medicinal plants she is contacted by Christine Farrow, the cosmetics company, to assist in the development of a new line of "natural" cosmetics. She then moves to the city to work on a project in which she strongly believes. The fact that the *telenovela* Maria is a widow is important, because she has to be available for the romantic interest that will later appear, while remaining "good." In fact, it is later learned that Maria's marriage was never consummated and she is still a virgin. Maria's previous marriage does not harm the character's perfect heroine features: pure, naive, inexperienced, and yet ready to love.

Yáñez Cossío envisioned a character that defies traditional social conventions about marriage and the role of women. By making the character a widow, the *telenovela* undermines such discourse; Maria is alone by circumstances and not by choice. Even as the *telenovela* attempts to portray Maria as entrepreneurial and valiant, her power comes mostly from her ability to control her sexuality, or her ability to deny it. When she denies her body to the desires of her lover, in the context of the *telenovela* it is clear that it is not about her own emotions as much as it is about manipulating his:

Alvaro: Maria, look at me.

Maria: Alvaro, first I married a man that never awakened the passion inside me, who never found the way to love me, who never understood that the no of a woman

sometimes is just a yes. And now you, you're taking revenge, don't think I didn't see you liked me from the start, that's why you're taking revenge, because I didn't like you back. And you are the only one to blame that all the wonderful things we lived have transformed into this.<sup>2</sup>

This Maria is a classic *telenovela* heroine who bears little resemblance to the original character. Some characteristics, such as the simplicity of her wardrobe, are used in the novel to assert Maria's gender identity. In the *telenovela* they are used to portray purity and authenticity. Her anguishes and tribulations are not self-related but male-related, as when she remembers a kiss with Alvaro and says: "I want the miracle of love. I want it!" The *telenovela* constructs a dual personality for Maria: She is alone and lonely, she is independent but still believes in love, and she takes control of her life just until the right man comes along. Several scenes present an empowered Maria that defies male power, but it is all done in the context of traditional conventions of what is right and wrong and with true love as the ultimate goal.

### Alvaro and Gonzalo: Dual Masculine Roles

In the novel there are only two male characters: Maria's husband, who disappears from the narrative after she abandons him, and Santos de Leon, the boss at Christine Farrow. In the *telenovela*, Maria's husband is dead, although he reappears as a ghost. This addition, further explored later, allows for the introduction of a supernatural element. It also serves as a narrative device to control Maria's new love interest while preserving her innocence. This generic convention for a love interest that is absent in the original work is resolved in the *telenovela* by dividing Santos de Leon, the boss character, into two independent characters.

Gonzalo Armendariz, played by Henry Soto, is the character that most resembles the original character. He is cold, materialistic, and corrupt. He only appreciates women for their physical appearance. He has multiple affairs. He is aware that some of the cosmetics are harmful to women's health, but does not care. Gonzalo's antagonist is Alvaro Santos de Leon, played by Khotan, a young professional recently hired from Miami to develop a new line of natural products for Christine Farrow. He is attractive and idealistic, and he is immediately attracted to Maria both because of her beauty and because of her wisdom and knowledge about plants. He comes to represent the good side of the corporate world.

Critics of the novel highlight the absence of romance for the character of Maria, a notion that would be incompatible with the *telenovela* genre. Yáñez Cossio constructed a story in which men are often irrelevant and what matters are the rules of patriarchy. In her story, given the lack of male characters, women become the source of both compassion and abuse for one another. In the *telenovela* the male protagonist is also irrelevant in the sense that his role is passive. His importance lies in being the center of female attention. He becomes the goal to be achieved, therefore reinforcing the notion of women being defined by their relationships with men. The televised

Alvaro and Gonzalo allow for the construction of less ambiguous female characters where the boundaries of good and bad behaviors are clearly established.

### **Gilda: "Nothing Is Worth More Than Keeping Alvaro"**

The *telenovela* narrative requires a female antagonist, an evil Eve that brings sorrow to the good Maria. In the novel, the character of Gilda is presented as a former prostitute also working for Christine Farrow. For the *telenovela*, Gilda, played by Laura Suarez, becomes a model: "the face of Christine Farrow." It is interesting to note how the producers avoided a politically and socially difficult topic like prostitution by replacing it with modeling, another traditionally feminine activity. This seems to reinforce a social discourse under which even legitimate activities are not appropriate for "good" women. Unlike Maria, Gilda and the other models are portrayed as sexually liberated, selfish, and ambitious.

Gilda is beautiful and sophisticated although she hides a humble past. She is immediately attracted to Alvaro and will attempt anything to gain his love. In the novel, Gilda and the other characters are portrayed in all their complexity; nobody is inherently good or bad. The *telenovela* presents a world that is black and white, although the loss of characters' complexity is perhaps true of any novel adapted for television. Assuming the *telenovela* as a gendered text, the feminine universe is portrayed as simply a battle between good women and evil women for the right man. Maria's extreme kindness and purity are matched by Gilda's utter evil. The role of Gilda is to teach a lesson about the destructiveness of certain immoral behaviors as well as their consequences. The morality of the text is not only sexist but also intellectually unsophisticated:

Doctor: You're terrible, Gilda. I didn't mind lying to Alvaro about your pregnancy and your abortion. But from that, to throwing yourself under a car's tires!

Gilda: Please don't talk to me like that.

Doctor: But why did you do it?

Gilda: Because I am daring? Nothing is worth more than keeping Alvaro.

Doctor: But this time you risked your life; I don't know if you will be able to walk.

### **The Three Musketeers: "With Mothers Like Us, That's a Given!"**

In the novel, when she takes the job at Christine Farrow, Maria meets a number of women all facing desperate situations: a former nun, a single mother, and so on. In the *telenovela* some of these characters are maintained, but their contexts are completely different. At Christine Farrow Maria works with a group of women who identify themselves as "The Three Musketeers," performing the roles of allies and protectors of Maria. In fact, they live together in the same boarding house. Far from presenting an



ideal of female solidarity, this portrayal reinforces women's vulnerability and need to be protected. It is not a coincidence that the boarding house is called "Christ of the Mercy."

The character of Nachita, a former nun, and her tribulations in the outside world can be found in the novel, though in the *telenovela*, her naïveté is taken to an extreme. The roles of Pilar and Virginia, both single mothers, are based on the single original character of Lupe. This duplication is hardly surprising given *telenovelas'* usual glorification of motherhood. In traditional *telenovelas* mothers hold moral authority. In the original work, women show disgust with their work at Christine Farrow; in the *telenovela* they are excited about it. Based on the recurring discourse of "natural products with native plants," the text juxtaposes the work environment with the role of motherhood as a form of validation:

Virginia: You know what? I've never been so excited as with this project. I feel like when I went to the doctor and he told me I was pregnant.

Nachita: All we need now is for our baby-project to grow up healthy and well nurtured.

Pilar: With mothers like us, that's a given!

Once again the television adaptation presents a hybrid of characters from the original literary work and the traditional *telenovela* roles. True, these women have difficult situations and by facing them alone they are courageous. However, their basic moral structures, their desires, and their aspirations are far from radical.

## The Role of the Supernatural

According to Roura (1993), the supernatural is a recurring device in Latin American *telenovelas*. Witches, warlocks, and palm readers, among others, come to symbolize some kind of wisdom or power, at the same time blurring the frontier between good and evil. The original literary work uses at times stylistic devices similar to the "magic realism" popular in Latin American literature. However, the world the characters populate is real, material, and even harsh. The adaptation, however, makes room for the supernatural.

In the *telenovela*, Federico, Maria's dead husband, appears as a ghost when she shows interest in another man. This presence disturbs Maria greatly because she is not sure if it is the source of good or evil. In fact Federico has relied on the powers of an evil warlock to stay in a limbo between the two worlds. This is the same warlock that supplies Gilda with charms and potions to keep Alvaro with her. After suffering for a long time, Maria finally finds the help of a priest, Padre Tadeo, to "guide Federico into the light" and set him and Maria free. She is now finally a real widow and available for Alvaro.

Yáñez Cossío describes the world in very material terms. Although she relies heavily on allegories and abstractions, the story she tells feels very human, urban, and possible. In fact, the materiality of the world she describes is indispensable for

her criticism of capitalist organization. The decision of the producers to incorporate the supernatural element has different readings. On the one hand, it clearly trivializes the discourse of the original work. How can one take seriously the story of female independence when warlocks and ghosts are involved? The adaptation shows a compliance with the television genre that undermines the spirit of the original work. On the other hand, the supernatural has become almost a trademark of Latin American narrative through authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, and others. Given that Latin American *telenovelas* have been successfully exported to Europe, Ecuavisa might be attempting to exploit the exoticism of the supernatural to market its product. Whatever the reason, this addition is a rather disturbing element that undermines the original discourse and underestimates the audience.

### The Corporation: A Character With a Woman's Name

In the novel Christine Farrow de Nueva York (a fictitious company) is the U.S. corporation where a group of women find humiliating jobs selling cosmetics door to door. If one considers the company as another character, in the novel it exemplified the exploitation of capitalism and the commodification of women through emphasis on their physical appearance. In the *telenovela*, this character also had to be divided in two. The bad Christine Farrow is the one managed by Gonzalo Armendariz, the one who does not follow regulations for formulas and bribes officials. The good Christine Farrow is the line of natural products managed by Alvaro and inspired by Maria's knowledge about plants. This triangular validation of love–nature–cosmetic is exemplified in this scene:

- Alvaro: It is beautiful what you tell me. When you talk, I feel the world is all smiles. Nobody in the world talks to me the way you do. You have the gift to touch one's soul. I admire you and I'm grateful I met you.
- Maria: I'm also happy I met you, Alvaro. You've helped me so much. Thanks to you, I've been able to keep going.
- Alvaro: We've made a good team. I'm proud of the line we created. You know what I've been thinking?
- Maria: What?
- Alvaro: Even if these studies force Farrow Corporation to change its formulas, our line will remain untouched. You know why? Because it's pure ... these cosmetics are pure like you.
- Maria: Thank you for letting me help with the little I know.

The adaptation obviously could not condemn the cosmetics business as a whole but only some practices. The main advertiser for the *telenovela* is Yanbal, one of the biggest cosmetic corporations in Latin America. Yanbal introduces each new episode with the image of Maria and a voice-over that says "a Yanbal woman." During the last weeks of the *telenovela*, the company made its appearance through product place-

ment, providing the means for Maria's project of natural cosmetics. It is then revealed that not all cosmetic companies are as bad as Christine Farrow, because there are good companies like Yanbal.

Through the inclusion of the "new line of natural products" the adaptation successfully manages the ambivalence of portraying a corrupt evil corporation that closely resembles the line of business of its biggest sponsor. However, this effort also greatly undermines the original intent of the novel. In the novel cosmetics are seen as a U.S. intrusion based on superfluous and degrading standards of beauty. In the *telenovela* cosmetics are embraced as part of the feminine universe; they are unavoidable. The new "natural" line with the discourse of "native plants" and "native women," ambiguously defined as Latin and never explicitly Ecuadorian, is portrayed as something audiences can relate to and take pride in.

Virginia: This project has something ... I don't know ... something special.

Pilar: I am really proud to be part of this project.

Nachita: Because this is something ours ... made with our plants.

Pilar: I am really excited. I can't wait for all those girls to be buying our products.

Maria: It is wonderful that Alvaro was able to put this all together. Jobs for so many people, including us.

Alvaro: Maria, you're the soul of this project.

Women's difficulties in finding work because of lack of education and skills, the overestimated importance of attractiveness in capitalistic job markets, and the exploitation of the disadvantaged are all important themes in the work of Yáñez Cossío. The *telenovela* adaptation ignores these issues and presents cosmetics as a safe haven where any woman can find work.

## The Flexible Nature of Black Eyes

During an interview, Yáñez Cossío explained that the black eyes in her novel's title refer to women selling cosmetics to other women (Boyles, 1993). One might further find in the title references to blindness and even domestic violence. In the novel there are no textual references to black eyes at any point. The producers of the *telenovela* did not have similar interpretations, and black eyes became both the visual image of the product as well as part of the narrative. In the show's publicity, the network states that it specifically cast an actress with black eyes for the role of Maria. During the opening credits and before commercial breaks, the name of the *telenovela* is accompanied by a set of black eyes surrounded by plants of all sorts. The producers decided to make the black eyes, along with sentimental notions of nature, life on the countryside, and the wisdom of its people, part of the exoticism that defines the identity of their production. Arguably, what could have been intended as a symbol of violence and exploitation became a symbol of ethnicity.

At the end of the story, when it becomes evident that Christine Farrow is an evil corporation and all the "good" characters feel uncomfortable there, Maria starts thinking about opening her own business and has a vision:

Maria: I had a vision. It was beautiful. Women with black eyes. Women with black eyes looking at me with love, as if they had come from distant times to look at me, just to look at me.

Maria decides to start her own cosmetics company, which of course is called *Ojos Negros* and convince Pilar, Nachita, and Virginia to join and Alvaro to manage it. Maria explains her project in the following terms: "These are cosmetics made with native plants from Ecuador, made especially for women with brown skin." At that point, a darker skinned maid (darker skinned actresses are often cast as maids) exclaims, "Women like me!" Yáñez Cossío's work does not have a happy ending per se; Maria just abandons Christine Farrow for an uncertain future. While denouncing it, the literary work uses the cosmetic industry to discuss the economic independence of women, the revalorization of the Ecuadorian, and the approximation between classes. In the adaptation, cosmetics become less of a symbol and more of a narrative closure. Maria explains this paradox better: "I dream that all the benefits of our plants can heal and make beautiful all the women in Latin America, through our line. And also, give work to all the people who need it." In the adaptation, Maria succeeds not in spite of her work with cosmetics but because of it.

## Discussion

A discussion of the relative aesthetic values of the literary work and the television adaptation is not the point of this analysis, as for Mandoki (2002) *telenovelas* "need no training for appreciation, and their aesthetic value is as obvious to its fans as it's negligible to its detractors" (p. 183). What is important here is that *telenovelas* have the potential to reflect situations that are relevant for their audiences and therefore are an important field to explore media's social and cultural influence. The importance of this study lies not only with the popularity of the genre but also with the willingness of the producers to explore less traditional topics and their potential impact on social and cultural beliefs. It is important to understand how a genre that is constantly attacked for its conservatism deals with nonnormative discourses.

The purpose when analyzing the adaptation of a radical product such as *Yo Vendo unos Ojos Negros* was to understand the interplay among the formulations of genre, the normalization of hegemonic discourses, and intertextual readings to assess the potential of *telenovelas* to incorporate disruptive discourses of class and gender. Arguably, the network had good intentions when it chose a feminist text for a *telenovela*. It is true that Maria is not a classic *telenovela* heroine; she is a widow, so she is not pure in the classic sense. She is entrepreneurial and empowered enough to become

her own boss. However, this is contrasted by her traditional beliefs in love and marriage. Also, Maria does not defy capitalism; she becomes a capitalist herself. Some corporate practices are condemned, as is the notion of a Western ideal of beauty, both of which are central elements of the original text. However, the adaptation does not go as far as to reject capitalism's emphasis on physical attractiveness. The narrative's endorsement of "native beauty" is no more than an exploitation of exotic ethnicities.

In a recent interview, Yáñez Cossío expressed disappointment with the adaptation and explained that she expected something different and "not the classic *telenovela* we all know" (Medina, 2004). It is evident that the limitations of the genre and the requirements of the market imposed severe modifications on the original discourse. On the other hand, this analysis suggests that it would be too simple to dismiss the potential of the *telenovela* genre. The adaptation will reach a much greater audience than the novel ever did. Although it is debatable whether the televised text is feminine or feminist, some of the original ideas remain. Elements that were tentatively but successfully attempted on this production will find firmer ground in future productions. Flexibility is the very nature of the process of hegemony; an idea that has the potential to challenge dominant ideologies is incorporated into the mainstream cultural system after having been stripped of any perceived radicalism, but the dominant discourse itself has been modified.

According to Fiske (1987), genre is the most powerful form of horizontal intertextuality. In the case of the adaptation, genre is the same but format has changed. Therefore this analysis is not only concerned with the *telenovela* but also with what happens when a radical text retains genre but shifts to another medium that requires its adaptation. The reasons are evidently structural and technological but presumably also commercial and political. The fact that the network adapted this text is evidence of the evolution of the industry. The classic formulations of the genre are no longer considered commercially viable or promising. If this is happening in Latin American television, then this new breed of *telenovelas* deserves scholarly attention. Perhaps it is worth wondering if the revolution will indeed be televised.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In English, "I sell black eyes."

<sup>2</sup>This translation of the *telenovela's* dialogue and others that follow are the author's own.

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## Transnation: Globalization and the Reorganization of Chilean Television in the Early 1990s

Stephen B. Crofts Wiley

*During the early 1990s, Chilean television was transformed radically by processes of deregulation, privatization, transnational investment, technological change, and ideological liberalization. Chilean media were integrated into global structures of ownership, infrastructure expanded dramatically, and Chileans gained access to a broad range of international programming. However, a substantial national televisual space persisted and thrived. National programming expanded and commanded the highest ratings among Chilean audiences despite the growing availability of imported fare. The Chilean case illustrates how national media culture is neither obliterated by globalization nor simply resistant to it. Instead, national media spaces are reorganized by transnational structures and processes.*

In 1988 a broad coalition of centrist and center-left political parties—the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Coalition of Parties for Democracy)—defeated Chilean General Augusto Pinochet in a national plebiscite, paving the way for a transition to civilian rule after a decade and a half of military dictatorship. However, 2 years remained before the military government would step aside and allow the first civilian government to take office. Anticipating the transfer of power, the Pinochet government initiated a radical transformation of the political and economic framework that had structured Chilean television under authoritarian rule. University-run television stations were privatized, broadcast licensing was deregulated, and cable television was allowed to develop in a regulatory vacuum.

In this way, the framework within which Chilean media and telecommunication infrastructure would develop in the post-Pinochet years was largely predetermined by the military regime in the final 2 years of its rule. On the one hand, the military government pushed for the accelerated, deregulated development of private media in the late 1980s to create a strong, procapitalist cultural apparatus that would stave off any potential statist tendencies of the entering civilian government. Cable television was

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allowed to develop in the final years of the military regime without the prior establishment of a legal or regulatory framework. In 1989, the Pinochet government promulgated an 11th-hour communication law that created private television in Chile for the first time and virtually privatized much of the broadcast spectrum by granting indefinite spectrum rights to private broadcasting licensees. The new law also facilitated foreign ownership of Chilean media and placed few restrictions on either vertical or horizontal cross-ownership. In the meantime, the military government deliberately bankrupted the state-run *Televisión Nacional* (National Television [TVN]), Chile's largest and most influential network, in an effort to debilitate a potential ideological tool of the new government (J. Navarrete, personal communication, August 19, 1997). On the other hand (and somewhat paradoxically), the military put into place a powerful state apparatus of moral regulation, the *Consejo Nacional de Televisión* (National Television Council [CNTV]), to guarantee the "correct functioning" of Chilean television—that is, its "constant affirmation" of national values, morality, and good taste. The ideological prohibitions on left-wing political parties formalized by Article 8 of the military constitution of 1980 also remained in place during the plebiscite; the presence, in the new Congress, of senators appointed by the military would make it very difficult to alter that document in the posttransition years. In short, before stepping down, the Pinochet government had set the parameters for the development of a postauthoritarian cultural environment that was morally conservative but, at the same time, thoroughly transnationalized and radically neoliberal in economic terms.

Patricio Aylwin, Chile's first democratically elected president since the 1973 coup, assumed office in 1990. Under the Aylwin government, Chilean television experienced the consequences of the regulatory changes initiated by the military regime. There was a rapid and substantial influx of private investment in broadcasting and cable television from both foreign and domestic sources. As a direct consequence, television broadcasting infrastructure expanded dramatically. Cable television grew rapidly as well, linking the wealthiest Chileans to the transnational media flows of CNN, MTV, and ESPN, as well as a wide range of European and Latin American channels. Chilean producers also began to export their programming beyond national frontiers: to other Latin American countries, to North America, and to Asia. At the same time, the deregulatory climate quickly led to the rise of domestic and transnational media conglomerates and the concentration of media ownership, raising questions about the pluralism of Chilean news and public debate. Given the increasing dominance of transnational corporations, these developments also raised questions about the very survival of Chilean national media.

As it turned out, the increasing enmeshment of Chile's media system in global networks of investment, ownership, and technology did not obliterate either national media production or Chileans' preference for national programs. In fact, immersion in a sea of imported programming appeared to heighten the demand for national content, although that content was now seen against the backdrop of a broad range of programs from other parts of the world. In terms of both program production and audience practices, then, the transnationalization of Chilean television went hand in

hand with a resurgence of the national. However, this should not be understood as the persistence of a preexisting national cultural formation in the face of global flows. Instead, it should be seen as a reorganization of national televisual culture in a new, more deeply transnational economic and technological context. The new televisual assemblage rearticulated Chile as a *transnation*—a national space constructed within, rather than against, the global, regional, and local flows of capital, technology, cultural production, and audience practices.

The Chilean case illustrates the complexity of the nexus between the national and the global and the need for concrete historical studies that move beyond a dichotomous view of globalization and the nation-state (Wiley, 2004). Debates about globalization have often pitted globalists against skeptics (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999). Whereas the globalists argue that globalization radically deterritorializes older social and political forms, including nations and states (e.g., Appadurai, 1990; Castells, 1996; Morley & Robins, 1995), the skeptics point to the continuing salience of the nation-state as a unit of political, economic, and cultural organization (e.g., Hirst & Thompson, 1996; Smith, 1995; Waisbord & Morris, 2001). Other analysts have sought to move beyond this dichotomy to understand national and regional forces as operating alongside or within the dynamics of globalization (e.g., García Canclini, 1989; Massey, 1993; Miller, 1996; Sassen, 1991; Yúdice, 2001). The transnationalization of Chilean television in the early 1990s provides a concrete case for investigating the actual workings of denationalization, transnationalization, and renationalization (Wiley, 2003, 2006). By taking a closer look at the ways in which the "Chileanness" of Chilean television was rearticulated in the context of increasing transnational connectivity, it becomes possible to rethink the implications of globalization for national media spaces more generally. The remainder of this section provides a brief review of recent research on the role of the media in the Chilean transition to democracy and global connectivity.

The Chilean transition to democracy has been widely analyzed (Americas Watch, 1988; Foxley, 1995; International Commission of the Latin American Studies Association to Observe the Chilean Plebiscite, 1989; Lagomarsino, Lewis, Sensenbrenner, & Wortley, 1988; Moulián, 1997; Munizaga, 1988; Muñoz, 1990; Petras & Leiva, 1994; Puryear, 1994; Silva, 2004). A number of studies have also addressed the role of media in the transition, focusing on the importance of television in the 1988 plebiscite on General Pinochet's continued rule (CIS [CED–ILET–SUR; Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo (Center for Development Studies; CED)–Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales (Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies; ILET)–Instituto de Investigación Social y Documentación (Institute for Social Research and Documentation; SUR)], 1989; Hirmas, 1993; Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Munizaga, 1988; Portales, Sunkel, Hirmas, Hopenhayn, & Hidalgo, 1989; Wiley, 2003, 2006). Many analysts ascribe a pivotal role to the media in Latin America's recent transitions to democracy (e.g., Skidmore, 1993). Others, however, are more cautious and warn analysts against overvaluing the influence of the media (Davies, 1999; Hirmas, 1993).

The policy changes and technological developments of the Chilean media in the posttransition period have been the subject of a number of studies, mostly conducted

by intellectuals and professionals connected to the Concertación governments. Brunner and Catalán (1995) provided a detailed summary of the regulatory changes affecting broadcasting and press freedom from the end of the Pinochet era through the early 1990s. Various branches of the Chilean government have conducted ongoing research on the development of television infrastructure, programming genres, and audience preferences (CNTV, 2005; Departamento de Estudios, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997). A collection of essays by Chilean media professionals and researchers published by the Chilean government's Secretaría de Comunicación y Cultura (Secretariat of Communication and Culture) chronicles the processes of technological change, market liberalization, and transnationalization of the Chilean media in the early 1990s (Halpern & España, 1995). Whereas most of the essays in this book praise the "modernization" of Chilean media (Cuadra, 1995; Lutz, 1995; Seissus, 1995), others (Paulsen, 1995; Pellegrini, 1995) question the near-complete lack of a regulatory framework to guide the process of privatization and transnationalization.

More recent studies of Chilean media have focused on the concentration of ownership in the 1990s, the continuing limits on the development of a vigorous independent press, and the displacement of traditional party politics by a political marketing model in which candidates are presented to a telemediated audience as competing products. Some analysts have portrayed the increasingly central role of television and the rise of the political marketing model as a process of political "modernization" (Brunner & Catalán, 1995; Catalán, 1995; Tironi & Sunkel, 2000). Others have been sharply critical of the transformations of the Chilean media—and especially the demise of the independent printed press—in the post-Pinochet years (Bresnahan, 2002; LaMay, 2004; León-Dermota, 2003; Moulián, 1997; Silva, 2004; Sunkel & Geoffroy, 2001). They often criticize the Concertación governments for demobilizing the Chilean public, who had become energized through their participation in the plebiscite; for unproblematically embracing the Pinochet government's *laissez-faire* policy toward media ownership; and for failing to define a clear regulatory framework to guide communication development in the post-Pinochet conjuncture.

Although an abundance of research addresses the Chilean political transition, the 1988 plebiscite, and the limits to press freedom in the posttransition period, only a few studies of the globalization of Chilean media have been published. One collection of suggestive essays derives from a 1995 conference on Latin American media and the challenges of globalization in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico (Barrios, 1995). Analyzing the Chilean case, Catalán (1995) and Tironi (1995) both noted the resurgence of nationally produced programming despite the expansion of cable channels and foreign-owned private broadcasting. Halpern (1995) discussed the difficulty of regulating television content in the context of rapid technological development (cable television, satellite television, and Internet) and the influx of foreign programming. Although these essays illuminate a number of significant issues, they offer preliminary and largely speculative discussions of globalization in the Chilean context. Davies (1999) provided a detailed and well-documented history of Chilean communication scholarship as an element of transnational hegemony, although his analysis of the role of national intellectuals in the production of hegemony focuses on the role of the intelligentsia to the near

exclusion of popular culture and mass media. Wiley (2006) offered a detailed analysis of the plebiscite juncture as the construction of a national hegemonic movement from transnational economic, technological, and cultural flows. Wiley (2003) discussed the shifting logics that structured Chilean media before, during, and after that pivotal event in 1988. This study addresses the need for a close historical analysis of the transformation of Chilean television in the early post-Pinochet years.

The article begins with a brief background discussion of Chilean television technology and policy in the final years of the military regime. Next, it describes the expansion of broadcast and cable television infrastructure, changes in television programming, and new trends in audience viewing practices in the early 1990s. It then presents an analysis of the implicit and explicit logics that shaped those changes: the informal rules, as well as the formalized laws and policies, that structured the new media environment. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of the Chilean case for research on globalization and the reorganization of national media spaces. This study is based on archival research and on open-ended interviews conducted by the author with government officials, journalists, media executives, and communication scholars in Chile.

### **Background: Chilean Television at the End of the Pinochet Era**

The dramatic transformation of Chilean television infrastructure in the early 1990s is best understood in contrast to the relative stagnation of infrastructural development and programming in the late 1980s. It was also the direct result of policy changes enacted by the military government at the 11th hour. Ownership of television sets had been growing during the 1980s, but only slowly, and there had been little expansion of television production or distribution. There were both political and economic reasons for this. On the one hand, the military government, like the civilian governments before it, saw television as a powerful and potentially dangerous ideological tool. Therefore, although it had encouraged the spread of television set ownership in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it had limited the growth of broadcasting by refusing licenses to new university stations and to private corporations, reserving television for itself and a handful of closely monitored university stations. The major universities themselves were run by military appointees during the dictatorship, so their television stations served as *de facto* organs of government propaganda. On the other hand, the existing stations could not grow significantly in a nationally defined market dominated by two large networks—TVN and Universidad Católica Televisión (Catholic University Television [UCTV])—that captured nearly all the available advertising revenue. Nor did other stations have the capital necessary to create a national broadcasting infrastructure. The political limitations on licensing, as well as the economic limits of a national market (national in terms of audience definition, signal coverage, and sources of capital) combined to construct a national broadcasting terrain that was easily managed by the

military government; relatively homogenous in terms of audience composition; coextensive with national territorial boundaries; and limited, in terms of signal source availability, to two dominant national channels and two or three regional channels, all controlled, directly or indirectly, by the government (for a discussion of the factors that limit national media production capacity, see Straubhaar, 2002).

That arrangement was about to undergo drastic change, however, as the military government, foreseeing its own marginalization from power following the 1988 plebiscite, took steps to weaken government-run media and stimulate private media ventures. These changes had been envisioned, in broad terms, 10 years earlier, in the military constitution of 1980, but the fact that the military government retained control of television had made it unnecessary to enact the required legislation. Now, following General Pinochet's plebiscite defeat (but before the formal inauguration of civilian rule), the military government rushed to establish a legal and institutional framework that contrasted sharply with the one that had operated under authoritarian rule. Law 18,838, promulgated by the military government in September 1989, legalized existing cable television transmission; authorized private television broadcasting for the first time ever; opened Chilean media to foreign investment; and, with the partial exception of TVN, terminated public funding of broadcasting once and for all (Brunner & Catalán, 1995).

Law 18,838 created one of the most lax regulatory regimes in the world: Broadcast licenses were granted for indefinite periods, with no limitations on their resale or transfer. No restrictions were placed on foreign investment, media cross-ownership, or multiple operations in a single service area. No public service requirements were created, and both broadcasting and cable licenses were to be granted on the basis of purely technical criteria (Brunner & Catalán, 1995). In short, a vast portion of the Chilean media landscape was effectively privatized and denationalized, paving the way for a wide range of domestic and transnational corporate ventures.

### **The Expansion of Television Infrastructure in the Early 1990s**

Those ventures formed quickly, and the next 4 years were characterized by the explosive growth of media corporations, communications infrastructure, and television programming in Chile. Between 1990 and 1994, the Chilean communications sector grew at a rate of 20.1% annually (compared to approximately 6% for the economy as a whole), and during the same period, the size of the communications sector more than doubled, in economic terms, from 1.2% of gross domestic product to 2.5% (Tironi, 1995). Chileans were incorporated unevenly into these new media spaces, however. What was once a relatively homogenous national broadcasting terrain was quickly evolving into a complex, but clearly dualistic, assemblage of media access and use. This section describes these transformations of broadcast and cable infrastructure, Chileans' access to television, and audience practices.

## Broadcast Television Infrastructure

Following the influx of private investments, both broadcast and cable television grew rapidly. Two new private broadcast networks were created with Chilean capital in the early 1990s, then quickly internationalized. Megavisión was started in 1990 by the Chilean financial group Ricardo Claro, and in 1992 sold 49.5% of its stock to the Mexican television giant, Televisa. La Red, owned by the COPESA media group, began transmission in 1991, and in 1993 sold 49% of its stock to the Canadian multinational, CanWest Global Communications (Pellegrini, 1995). These were the first private broadcasters in Chilean history.

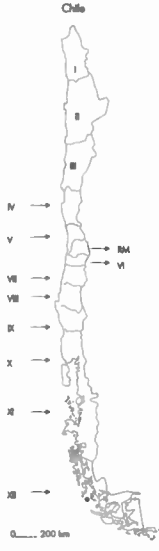
During this same period, many regional, university-based broadcasters closed down due to the elimination of public funding and the general financial crisis of the Chilean universities. These included stations of the Universidad Austral in Valdivia, the Universidad de Bío-Bío in Chillán, the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso's extension in La Serena, and Channel 5 in Concepción (Departamento de Estudios, 1997). In 1993, one of Chile's major university channels, RTU of the Universidad de Chile, sold 49% of its stock to Venevisión, a Venezuela-based corporation and another Latin American media giant. By 1997 Venevisión had acquired 99% of the company, "definitively closing the era of university television in Chile" (Seissus, 1995, p. 27). The network was renamed Chilevisión.

The influx of capital, and particularly foreign capital, made it possible for the new networks to expand rapidly, both in terms of number of stations and in terms of total broadcasting hours. Between 1990 and 1994, the number of regional or national broadcasting networks in Chile doubled, from 5 to 10, and the number of broadcast hours tripled, from about 16,000 per year to about 46,000 per year (i.e., from an average of 43 hours per day to 126; Catalán, 1995). By 1994, 5 networks had national coverage: TVN, UCTV, and Chilevisión covered 100% of the Chilean territory; La Red reached 85%; and Megavisión served 80% (Departamento de Estudios, 1994). Significantly, all 5 of these national networks were based in Santiago (see Table 1).

Technological change played a role in the expansion of broadcasting infrastructure as well. Satellite delivery of signals, which was much cheaper than the land-based microwave repeater stations previously used by TVN to cross Chile's mountainous terrain, allowed the new networks to quickly reach the entire Chilean territory. Megavisión, for example, contracted with the Chilean telephone company ENTEL in 1992 to deliver its signal via satellite (Departamento de Estudios, 1994).

The expansion of the new private networks was also facilitated by the fact that their transnational connections gave them access to foreign programming at lower prices. This overturned the traditional advantage of TVN and UCTV, which in the 1970s and 1980s were the only networks big enough to afford the large-scale purchase of imported (primarily U.S.) programming. In other words, the supply-and-demand dynamics of the Chilean television market were now synchronized, in large part, with dynamics of the global market, rather than those of a state-defined national market. To the extent that capitalist forces (rather than state structures) define and shape social

**Table 1**  
**Origins and Coverage of Chilean Television**  
**Broadcasting Networks, 1997**

Region of Origin <sup>a</sup>	Network	Regions Covered	Chile 
II	Telenorte	I, II	
V	UCV-TV	IV, V, RM, X	
VIII	Canal 9 de Concepción Canal 11 de la Universidad de Concepción	VIII	
RM	Televisión Nacional (State) Universidad Católica Televisión (University) Megavisión (private) Chilevisión (private) La Red	National	
RM	Rock & Pop (private)	RM, VI	

*Note:* From Departamento de Estudios (1997, p. 7). Map from Favi et al. (2001). Used with permission.

<sup>a</sup>Chile is divided into 13 administrative units. There are 12 numbered regions, numbered consecutively from north to south (see map). The greater Santiago area, in the middle of the country, has no number and is instead referred to as the Región Metropolitana (Metropolitan Region [RM]).

space by determining the spaces of communication infrastructure, Chile was becoming increasingly integrated into regional and global culture.

### Cable Television Infrastructure

Cable television transmissions began in Santiago in the late 1980s, before legislation existed to regulate the new technology. The communication legislation created by the military government in 1989 granted the CNTV the power to oversee the new industry, but growth of cable television remained largely unregulated. As a result, multiple cable providers constructed overlapping networks in Santiago's wealthiest neighborhoods, whereas poorer regions of the capital city and cities in other parts of the country had access only to broadcast television.

Like broadcast television, however, cable grew explosively following the influx of foreign investment. The largest cable companies included *Metrópolis*, owned by the Ricardo Claro media group in a 50% partnership with the multinational TCI-Bresnan;

Intercom, started by the Augustín Edwards group, which sold 80% of the company to the Chilean Telephone Company (later called the Chilean Telecommunications Company); Cablevisión, whose majority owner is the multinational United Holdings International; VTR, owned by the Luksic media group; and Cablexpress, owned in equal parts by I. M. Trusty, Sonda, Penta, and Teleducto (Boada, 1995; Departamento de Estudios, 1994; Pellegrini, 1995). The myriad of companies soon consolidated, however, leading to a duopolistic cable market. By 1997, *Metrópolis* had merged with Intercom, and the joint venture controlled 43% of the cable market. VTR had merged with Cablexpress, controlling 55% of the market (Departamento de Estudios, 1997).

Cable infrastructure soon reached most of the country. In 1990, there was one cable operator in Chile. Based in Santiago, it had fewer than 20,000 subscribers. By 1995, there were 20 cable operators in more than 50 cities, with nearly 500,000 subscribers (about 15% of households) across the country (Catalán, 1995). By 1997, nearly all Chilean cities of 70,000 or more had at least one cable television service, and there were approximately 1 million subscribers—about one quarter of all households (Departamento de Estudios, 1997). In terms of signal availability, the arrival of cable television signified a tenfold increase in programming hours. Whereas broadcast television provided 40,000 hours per year of programming in 1994, pay television added 450,000 more, for a total of nearly half a million hours per year (Brunner & Catalán, 1995). In other words, whereas broadcast television contributed 109 hours of programming per day to the Chilean media assemblage, cable supplied more than 1,000 hours.

The two largest Chilean broadcasters were also beginning to export programming via satellite to Latin America and other world regions. TVN had initiated satellite transmission via *Panamsat I* in 1986 and was exporting 12 to 15 hours of programming per day in 1995. UCTV, the Catholic University network, began transmitting 8 hours of programming per day via *Panamsat 3* in 1994, cycling through the same 8 hours three times daily to produce a full 24-hour transmission (Pellegrini, 1995). By and large, however, despite the transnational nature of satellite technology, the Chilean broadcasters remained focused on the domestic market, devoting few resources to export strategies. According to some, this was due to Chileans' "insular mentality and inward focus" and the habit of seeing Chile as a consumer, rather than a producer, of cultural goods (J. A. Vargas, personal communication, August 26, 1997). Others cited the difficulty of Chilean dialect of Spanish for other Spanish speakers, and the idiosyncratic themes of Chilean humor and dramas (Pellegrini, 1995).

## Access to Television

By the late 1990s, then, the Chilean territory was blanketed with a robust broadcast and cable television infrastructure. How was the population incorporated into these networks of television signal delivery? Several interesting observations can be made. First, by 1995, close to 100% of Chilean households had television sets (Brunner & Catalán, 1995), making broadcast television a thoroughly popular medium in terms of



access. In fact, the average number of television sets per household had reached 1.9 in 1993 (Departamento de Estudios, 1995a), suggesting that many families were able to view different channels simultaneously in different parts of the house (and implying a shift from collective family viewing practices to segmentation and individual viewing). This was the case for lower income families as well as upper income households, although to a lesser degree: In 1993, the average number of sets per household was 2.5 for the wealthiest third of the population, 2.1 for the middle third, and 1.5 for the poorest third (Departamento de Estudios, 1995a). The average number of sets per household was slightly higher in major cities than in smaller ones and rural areas (Brunner & Catalán, 1995).

Second, although cable television reached every large and middle-sized city in Chile by 1996 and about one quarter of Chilean households had cable by that date, access was strongly skewed by income. Nearly 70% of the wealthiest third of households had cable by 1996; in the middle third, 37% had cable; and in the poorest third, only 12%. Cable subscriptions were increasing fastest in the middle-income sector, because most upper income households already had the technology (Departamento de Estudios, 1997). In other words, whereas broadcast television clearly constituted a national popular media space, cable television during this period still did not include many households in the middle- and lower income majority.

Third, in contrast to broadcast television, access to cable television was not as strongly influenced by the centripetal forces of the urban monopole that is Santiago. The Metropolitan Region (greater Santiago) had by far the largest number of cable subscribers because it had, by far, the largest population in the country. However, cable development was strong in many of the other regions of the country, particularly in the north (Regions I, II, III, and IV) and in the extreme south (Region XII). Measured as a percentage of population, cable subscriber rates in those regions were actually above the national average. Thus, although cable television constituted a more or less elite media space in Chile in the 1990s, it was a decentralized network, with important developments outside the Santiago megalopolis.

So, by the mid-1990s, private investment—both Chilean and transnational—had greatly expanded television infrastructure in Chile, both broadcasting and cable. A multifaceted broadcasting infrastructure had developed, with several national and regional networks, both public and private. Nearly all of the Chilean population had access to broadcast television by virtue of owning a television set. A rapidly expanding cable television infrastructure also spanned the territory, but only about one fourth of the population was incorporated into that network—primarily the upper and upper-middle-income households in urban areas.

Now it is important to consider the purposes these networks were being made to serve. How were broadcasters and cable operators using their signal delivery systems? In other words, what were they showing? What were Chilean viewers doing with television? How much were they watching, and what were they watching? Did the transnationalization of media ownership lead to a homogenization of programming, or to a withering of nationally produced programs in the face of imported shows? In fact, it did not, as the following section will show.

## Programming

Given the vast influx of foreign investment, transnational joint ventures, and global media programming (especially via the new cable networks), one might have expected nationally produced programming to diminish. In fact, the opposite occurred, in both broadcast and cable television. On broadcast television, the proportion of programming produced in Chile surpassed 50% for the first time ever in 1994 and continued to increase during the late 1990s (see Table 2). The predominance of nationally produced programming was even more pronounced during prime-time hours: In a sample of prime-time programming on all broadcast networks in 1998, 81% of the programs were Chilean productions (Catalán & Souza, 1999). Clearly, the incorporation of Chilean television broadcasting into regional and global media networks did not entail an obliteration of national media production and circulation.

Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that national programming constituted a significant portion (although not the majority) of cable television fare as well. There were 71 channels available on Chilean pay television in 1994 (Brunner & Catalán, 1995). Of these, 47 originated outside the country (66%) and 24 from within Chile (34%). Of the foreign channels, 25 were from other Latin American countries (including 11 from Argentina alone), 15 originated in the United States, and 7 were from Europe (Brunner & Catalán 1995). The following year, there were 150 total channels, and the proportion of Chilean signals had increased to 47% (71 Chilean channels; Catalán, 1995). Of the 79 foreign channels, 32% were from the United States and 34% from Argentina. The channel listing of the Intercom company in 1995 shows the wide variety of international programming that was available to Chilean cable subscribers, a far wider range of international channels than what is typically available on U.S. cable systems (see Table 3).

**Table 2**  
Sources of Programming on Chilean Broadcast  
Television, 1971–1997

	Nationally Produced	Imported
1971	45%	55%
1976	14%	84%
1987 <sup>a</sup>	40%	60%
1994	54%	46%
1997	63%	37%

*Note:* The table does not list local or regional channels often included in the packages offered by specific local cable providers. From Altamirano (1987, p. 65), McAnany (1987, p. 59), Consejo Nacional de Televisión (as cited in Pellegrini, 1995, p. 48), and Catalán and Souza (1999).

<sup>a</sup>Figures for 1987 are approximate, as given by McAnany (1987).

**Table 3**  
**Channels Available on Intercom Cable, 1995**

ATC (Argentina)	Worldnet (U.S.)	Plaza Mayor
América 2 (Argentina)	ESPN (U.S.)	ARTV
CVD (Argentina)	CNN (U.S.)	TVN (Chile)
Globo (Brazil)	MTV Latino (U.S.)	UCTV (Chile)
TVE (Spain)	TNT (U.S.)	La Red (Chile)
TV5 (France)	Fox (U.S.)	Megavisión (Chile)
RAI (Italy)	Cartoon Network (U.S.)	Chilevisión (Chile)
ECO (Mexico)	Discovery (U.S.)	Rock & Pop (Chile)
Deutsche Welle (Germany)	CableCine	
HBO Olé (Miami)	TeleUno	

Note: From Boada (1995, p. 106).

## Audience Practices

Although broadcasters and cable providers increased the supply of both Chilean and imported programming, Chileans did not, on average, increase their consumption of television (Catalán, 1995). However, not surprisingly, average daily hours viewing broadcast television decreased for upper and upper-middle-income groups, whereas they increased for the lower income households (Seissus, 1995). The downward trend of middle- and upper income broadcast television consumption is almost certainly due to the acquisition, by these socioeconomic sectors, of newer technologies such as cable television, VCRs, and Internet-linked home computers (Seissus, 1995). The increase in television consumption among lower income sectors, on the other hand, may be due to the expansion of available broadcast channels and the relaxation of authoritarian censorship. In other words, after 1990, there was more television to watch and there was less ideological control of its content.

Broad indicators of viewing practices also show that, in the midst of the explosion of global media offerings, Chileans preferred national programming. For example, of the 100 most watched programs on broadcast television during a sample 3-month period in 1994, 86% were produced in Chile and 13% were from the United States (Pellegrini, 1995). These trends continued into the late 1990s as well. From 1994 to 1997, the average audience share of nationally produced programs (compared to foreign productions) rose 10 points, from 53% to 63% (Marín, 1999, cited in Catalán & Souza, 1999). Additionally, all 10 of the most watched programs between 1996 and 1998 were Chilean productions (Catalán & Souza, 1999). Furthermore, cable subscribers, who could choose among a wide range of foreign and domestic channels, still dedicated two thirds of their viewing time to national broadcast channels (Catalán, 1995). Thus the influx of foreign programming did not supplant Chileans' attention to national news, shows, and *telenovelas* (soap operas); it provided (especially

for upper income viewers) a new, transnational context within which nationally produced programs were viewed. This tendency continued during the 5-year period from 2000 to 2005 as well. By 2005, nationally produced programming comprised 66% of total programming on broadcast television (CNTV, 2005).

Chilean television infrastructure was developing within the broader context of rapid growth of communication and media technologies in general. Radio was experiencing a dramatic resurgence and telephones were becoming increasingly available. New technologies such as home computers, videocassettes, CDs, and video games were also becoming more and more common elements of everyday life, particularly in Santiago and other urban areas. The proliferation of these technologies was creating a multitude of information and entertainment alternatives to television, especially for wealthier Chileans. Television remained the central media activity for most Chileans in the 1990s, however, both in terms of time spent with the technology and in terms of reliance on the medium for news and information (Departamento de Estudios, 1995a). Television, more than any other medium, was the central site for the rearticulation of national culture. The remainder of the article examines the logics that governed the reorganization of Chilean television in the early 1990s and analyzes the form and effects of national logics in that process.

### **Implicit Logics and Explicit Policy Governing Infrastructure Development**

Studies of globalization and its effects on national media are frequently based on the a priori adoption of a particular definition of space—for example, the nation, the public sphere, or the capitalist system—as a fundamental conceptual frame (for critiques of this tendency, see Shome & Hegde, 2002; Wiley, 2005). This perspective is apparent in questions such as “What is the effect of capitalism on the public sphere?” or “How is the national identity of nation X altered by the arrival of global commercial culture?” Such frames can be useful heuristic or rhetorical devices, but they often impede analysis when the boundaries and the coherence of the spaces being analyzed are at issue. Such is the case in this study of Chilean television. Up to this point, the object of analysis has been defined as a national television system. But how can the analyst assess the impact of global technologies or transnational investments on the nation if it is assumed, at the outset, that the nation is the fundamental (most salient) form of social space?

Analysts can sidestep this problem by defining the media in question as an assemblage of technologies and social practices that are not necessarily national (or public, capitalist, etc.; Wiley, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006). Such an assemblage is perceived to have a degree of coherence that permits the analyst to engage it as an object of analysis, but it is not defined, in advance, as any particular type of social space. Nationality (or democracy, capitalism, etc.) can then be understood as an organizational logic rather than a form of social space, that is, as one particular principle according to

which an assemblage functions. This makes it possible to ask what logics structure the assemblage without assuming, in advance, that one particular logic is foundational. For example, one can ask to what extent the assemblage is organized by national logics; that is, to what extent are the technologies and the social practices in question shaped by a widely shared commitment to a place-based collective identity rooted in premodern ethnicity (Smith, 1995) or in enlightenment notions of citizenship (Habermas, 1994)?

This also makes it possible to investigate the relation between different logics that shape a particular assemblage. For example, do statist (bureaucratic) logics effectively circumscribe the logics of nationality and capital, creating (through law and regulation) a nationally defined market? Or are the capitalist logics that structure the assemblage expressions of a broader, global assemblage of media ownership, investment, and advertising, which the nationally defined bureaucracy is unable to regulate? Or again, can bureaucratic logics and logics of capital be articulated to logics of the public, that is, to principles of freedom of expression and accountability to a people? If so, must the assemblage, organized as a public sphere, necessarily be a nationalized one?

The Chilean televisual assemblage underwent a series of radical transformations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These changes were described earlier in broad strokes, focusing on the development of broadcast and cable television as one set of technologies. What logics governed these changes? To what extent was the transformation of this media assemblage shaped by national logics? How were logics of the national conditioning other logics, or being conditioned by them? The final section of this article first examines the implicit logics shaping the changes in Chilean television in the early 1990s (i.e., organizational logics that structured the assemblage but were not formalized in law or regulation). It then discusses the instances in which such logics were made explicit and formalized as policies.

## **Implicit Logics**

In general, the transition to civilian rule was accompanied by a shift in the communications sector from state-mediated national capitalism to relatively unmediated transnational investment capitalism. That is, during the 1980s, bureaucratic-authoritarian logics organized Chilean broadcast television as a government-controlled, but commercially financed, national space, whereas in the 1990s, civilian state logics delineated, within a national framework, the technical parameters for transnational capitalist media development. Under the first regime, the nationalist ideological project of the military (as defined by the doctrine of national security) structured television production and broadcasting directly, constituting a nationalized broadcast space that was commercially financed and dependent on the global media market for programming, but ideologically regulated on the national level by two morally conservative institutions (the CNTV and the National Council of Cinema Evaluation). During

the Pinochet era, national cultural production and capitalism were thus mediated by the authoritarian logics of military government.

Under the civilian regime, in the 1990s, state logics constituted the technical conditions for capitalist development of the media, and national logics were mediated directly by the logics of transnationally articulated capital. For example, broadcast licenses were granted for spectrum use within the political boundaries of the country. Marketing and advertising strategies were defined in terms of a national audience, although that audience was increasingly segmented. That is, the state (a nationally defined bureaucratic assemblage) created and guaranteed the technical and political conditions for capitalist appropriation of media technology and practices (and harmonized its technical parameters with those of other states, e.g., through the North American Free Trade Agreement). However, transnationally articulated capitalism, not the state, now mediated the articulation of national space according to logics of profit.

In the midst of these rearticulations of capitalist, state, and national logics, where can logics of the public be found? Public participation and debate were muted in the early 1990s, as Chileans cautiously emerged from 16 years of military rule and the legacies of authoritarianism, including fear and the deeply instilled habits of self-censorship in the media, the political leadership, and the populace. Although broadcast television clearly became a milieu for significant public participation (if not debate) during the plebiscite of 1988, the *Concertación*, after taking power, quickly demobilized the millions of people involved in that historical transformation (Wiley, 2006). By the mid-1990s, the Chilean public was therefore constituted, to a large extent, through advertising and programming decisions. That is, logics of the public, like national logics, were increasingly mediated by the deepening logics of transnational capital.

In Chile, this was especially troubling because the capitalist construction of the public as potential consumers leads to a dual society and, some argue, to the social disarticulation of one sector (the globally connected elites and upper middle class) from the other (the mass audience constituted by broadcast television and radio). In fact, the marketing strategies through which media analysts construct the Chilean public (e.g., the Time, Inc. "People Meter") have frequently excluded the poorest 10% of the population altogether, because they are not considered potential consumers (Seissus, 1995). In other words, in a deregulated context where capitalist logics drive infrastructural development, the wealthy are incorporated into a broader range of global media flows and those who lack value as consumers are left out.

The point is not so much that postdictatorial Chile was divided into information haves and have nots, although that was very much the case. Rather, the interesting fact is that the new televisual assemblage, unlike the national broadcast assemblage of the Pinochet years, incorporated the wealthy in one way (with direct access to Latin American and global channels and the resulting exposure to different languages, foreign media, segmented advertising and programming strategies, uncensored material, etc.) and the poor in another (with access mediated by the national broadcast sta-

tions as importers of programming and advertising, a larger percentage of nationally produced programming, a mass audience strategy, and nationally based moral regulation). As Seissus (1995) pointed out, Chilean audiences during this period were organized into a "dual society" of media practices: a large, upper and upper-middle-class minority connected to the new transnational spaces of cable television, videocassettes, video games, and the Internet; and a lower and lower-middle-class majority connected primarily to nationally produced broadcast television.

## Explicit Policy Changes

The most important explicit policy change for the postdictatorial period took place before the actual legal transition to civilian rule: the creation of private broadcasting and the legalization of cable television under the Pinochet government's Law 18,838 of September 1989. Few significant changes occurred in explicit communication policy during the early 1990s because the Concertación accepted, for the most part, the framework inherited from the authoritarian government. The provisions of the military constitution and Law 18,838 have already been discussed. This section first analyzes the policy discourse of the Concertación leadership in the area of communication regulation. It then examines the explicit policy changes established by the Concertación in the early 1990s.

The Concertación communication policy leadership, many of whom were interviewed by the author in 1997 (J. J. Brunner, personal communication, August 28, 1997; S. España, personal communication, August 22, 1997; P. Halpern, personal communication, August 5, 1997; E. Tironi, personal communication, August 13, 1997), believed that government regulation of communication was impossible, undesirable, or both. Typical of this position was the argument that the technological advances of some media outpace the ability of bureaucratic agencies to control them (Halpern, 1995), or that the hyperconnectivity and the sheer volume of media flows makes it extremely difficult to monitor new media (Pellegrini, 1995). Others claimed that regulating international investment, ownership, and technology could, paradoxically, retard growth of the communication sector and therefore impede Chile's ability to "project national identity beyond our borders" (Departamento de Estudios, 1995b). In general, the Concertación's policy discourse in the early 1990s was antipolicy—in other words, against policies that might make media corporations accountable to a logic of the public, rather than solely to logics of capital. This discourse was framed by a conceptual dichotomy that in fact permeated much of Chilean political culture in the postdictatorial years: the state–market dichotomy. Although the state's role in creating and maintaining private media property (e.g., broadcast licenses) remained implicit, the explicit discourse called for a reduced state role in all other realms.

Two very explicit policy changes did occur, however. In April 1992, the Concertación passed new communication legislation, Law 19,131, that partially modified the regulatory framework created by Law 18,838. Although the intention

of Law 19,131 was to "re-establish the status of television frequencies as national resources for public use" by limiting broadcast licenses to 25 years, the change was small, and unlimited licenses in existence at the time of the law's passage were exempted (Brunner & Catalán, 1995). Similarly, the new law sought to ensure Chilean ownership and management of broadcast media, but legal loopholes allowed virtually complete foreign control. For example, the Venezuela-based multinational Venevisión was able to acquire 99% of Chilevisión because the University of Chile could claim to be transferring only the use, not the ownership, of the VHF frequency it controlled (Departamento de Estudios, 1995b).

One significant change created by Law 19,131 was in the composition of the CNTV, the state agency charged with overseeing the "correct functioning" of Chilean television. Under Law 18,838, the CNTV had been structured as a sort of national security council of television morality: It was required to include representatives of the Supreme Court, the Armed Forces, and the university chancellors. The new law, by contrast, allowed the president to choose the entire council, which then had to be ratified by the Senate (Brunner & Catalán, 1995). Although this procedure clearly made the CNTV more directly accountable to the public (as represented by the president and Senate), it did retain the general commitment to an apparatus of moral regulation of some sort.

## Conclusion

The transformation of Chilean media in the early 1990s may be characterized as a shift toward limited ideological liberalization within a broader framework of commercialism and transnationally open neoliberal capitalism. Under the new, more democratically constituted CNTV, moral and ideological restrictions on what could be shown on Chilean television were gradually lessened. This led to a broader range of programming and a gradual opening up of public discussion to topics previously subject to censorship or self-censorship. However, ideological liberalization did not extend to the basic parameters of Chilean economic development. The fundamental tenets of neoliberal capitalism—privatization, radical openness to the global market, and deregulation of corporate behavior—could not be questioned, and these were the basic parameters that defined the restructuring of the media and telecommunication sectors. The profound transformation of Chilean television in the early post-Pinochet years was therefore characterized by deepening commercialization, diversification of programming sources, transnationalization of investment and ownership, and increasing corporate concentration.

However, these changes should be understood not as a shift from national media organization to globalization, but as a shift from one articulation of transnationality to another. Chilean television, radio, and other media had relied on foreign technologies, practices, and contents from their inception—and indeed, as discussed earlier, the percentage of imported programming on Chilean television was higher in the



1980s under the military regime than it was in the 1990s after the return to civilian rule and the opening of the Chilean communication market. It was not the existence of transnational connections per se that changed in the early 1990s, but the ways in which those connections were made. To put it another way, the imposition of a transnational capitalist logic does not necessarily imply the dissolution of a statist logic or the dismantling of nationally organized practices and spaces (Straubhaar, 2001, 2002; Waisbord & Morris, 2001). As Hall (1997) noted, capitalism works through difference, rather than eliminating it.

After being thoroughly incorporated into the global networks of investment, media ownership, and programming, a national Chilean televisual assemblage persisted and indeed thrived. Theories and analyses of globalization should therefore aim not so much to determine which logics dominate in a particular context and which are weakened, but to examine the specific sites in which those logics are articulated to one another and the specific forms those articulations take. From this perspective it can be said, in general, that the transformation of Chilean television in the early 1990s was not a change from statism to capitalism, nor a change from national autonomy to globalization. Rather, capitalist logics remained dominant, as they have since the mid-1970s in Chile, but there was a shift from one articulation of capitalism to another.

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# Canadian Hardware, Foreign Software: The Political Economy of Pay-Per-View

Marilyn Terzic

*This research explores the interplay of corporate strategy and government policy as related to the English-language pay-per-view film services offered by Viewer's Choice Canada to digital cable subscribers in eastern Canada (i.e., Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces). Specifically, it traces the historical development of pay television policy and analyzes the pay-per-view industry's structure and competitive dynamics.*

On February 1, 1983, the introduction of First Choice, currently known as The Movie Network, marked a significant step in the evolution of Canada's video industry. For a nominal fee, cable subscribers were able to watch uninterrupted and unedited versions of top box office releases that had completed their theatrical runs. Not only were Canadian audiences provided with an alternative to going to the cinema, but they were given the opportunity to purchase the programming of their choice, at a price they were prepared to pay. However, pay television was more than just another vehicle for the influx of U.S. films and made-for-cable programming. For the Canadian program-production industry, it was a means by which it could attempt to repatriate viewers to Canadian programming, strengthen its position within the marketplace, and establish new sources of revenue and investment funds. Most important, it was a solution to the underutilization of works created by domestic independent program producers in a television and feature film industry that produces the majority of its works in-house.

The cable television industry has always faced the problem of becoming, very quickly, a mature industry. As its markets became saturated, the growth in its customer base leveled off. Consequently, broadcasters and cable operators were not only faced with the challenge of creating more programming, but also of developing new service formats that would allow consumers to personalize their viewing experiences. The introduction of pay television and specialty channels was a key step in this direction. As Perrin Beatty, the Canadian Minister of Communications, pointed out, "The viewer, not the broadcaster and certainly not the government, is king. The disappearance of a captive audience has forced us all to reexamine not only how we do, but

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what we are doing" (Canadian Cable Television Association, 1992, p. 12). The next step, then, was to offer Canadians the option of purchasing programming on a per-event basis.

By law, the Canadian broadcasting system is "a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty ... [and should] serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the [country's] cultural, political, social and economic fabric" (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, 1991a, section 3). The law is founded on public, private, and community undertakings, each of which are subject to ownership restrictions and content regulations. Foreign ownership is effectively permitted up to 46.6% (33.3% at the holding company level and 20% at the licensee level; Dalfen, 2003). Content regulations require broadcasters to dedicate a minimum amount of time for the exhibition of Canadian programming; private broadcasters and program undertakings are required to make significant financial contributions to the production of domestic programming as well. These laws have been hotly contested. Pay television's ability to contribute to the achievement of these objectives has fueled significant policy debate (e.g., Feldman & Janisch, 1982; Globerman, 1982; Jaffee, 1980), as did the type, scope, and structure of service that should be offered (e.g., Black, Woodrow, & Woodside, 1982; Peers, 1982), in addition to its potentially adverse effects on the Canadian communications industry (e.g., Bernstein & Goldberger, 1982; Shields, 1980a).

Economics, too, were a part of the debate. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) faced criticism for pay television's limited success and ultimate demise. According to Hardy (1983), the weak economic climate of the 1980s combined with the increased scheduling of films on network television contributed to the public's tepid response. In his view, "pay television [should have been] licensed [in the 1970s]. As all product life cycles tend to be determined by buyer habits and available substitutes, pay television ... arrived too little and too late for the really big profits" (p. 37). Furthermore, as part of their conditions of license, pay television service providers were not permitted to offer free previews, the single most powerful and effective marketing tool for selling subscriptions. Even though this decision would soon be reversed (CRTC, 1984), cable operators deserved a fair share of the blame as well. Their unpreparedness and lack of sophistication in aggressively marketing discretionary services, as well as their seemingly high installation and subscription fees, left little to be desired (Gelman, 1983; Hardy, 1983). The variation of monthly rates among cable operators was not well received by their clients either (Hardy, 1983).

There has been little research relative to these debates in the scholarly journals of broadcasting and mass communication and nothing relative to the English-language pay-per-view services. Among the first of the few were Peers's (1969, 1979) definitive studies of politics and Canadian broadcasting, but these predate the consideration of cable and particularly pay-per-view. Johansen (1973a, 1973b) was first to examine the CRTC and Canadian content regulations pointing out the necessity in content regulation for the preservation of Canada's cultural fabric and noting the inconsistency in

the CRTC's cable policy. Audley (1994) reviewed the voluminous literature on public policies affecting the mass media. Collins (1995) compared the development of broadcasting policy in Europe and considered its relevance to Canada. Hoskins, Finn, and McFayden (2000) provided a context for the cultural research, and subsequently (Hoskins, Finn, & McFayden, 2001) speculated on what the Canadian broadcasting system would look like without the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Wagman (2001) focused on the various interrelations between the Canadian sound recording industry, cultural policy critics, and the overall influence of the CRTC in the licensing of MuchMusic (Canada's national music video service). Murray (2001) explored the cultural perspective and argued for a link between education and policy. Demers (2003) reported on the various issues of ownership policy and convergence in Canada. Most recently, Killingsworth (2005) examined specialty cable channels and their lack of financial success. However, little has been written specifically about Canadian policy development and Canadian pay-per-view.

This research explores the interplay of government policy and corporate strategy as related to the English-language pay-per-view film services offered by Viewer's Choice Canada to digital cable subscribers in eastern Canada (i.e., Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces). Specifically, the history of pay television policy in Canada is examined. Thereafter, the prospects for pay-per-view, in terms of the industry's structure and competitive dynamics, are described using Porter's (1998) *Competitive Strategy* as a framework.

## History of Pay Television in Canada

### The Etobicoke Experiment

The history of pay television in Canada spans over 4 decades. The idea of selling a television service to consumers, instead of financing it through advertising or government subsidies, originated in Etobicoke, Ontario, when a test market for a new coin-box system was launched on February 26, 1960. International Telemeter, a subsidiary of Famous Players and Paramount Pictures, provided the service. Programming during the trial's first year consisted of films, sporting events, and special presentations. The selection had proved popular among subscribers as its prime-time viewership exceeded that of U.S. broadcast networks by 18% ("What They Pay," 1960). In 1961, Telemeter acquired the rights to the Toronto Argonauts football games as well as the Toronto Maple Leafs away-from-home hockey matches ("Hockey-on-Tour," 1961). This was considered to be a major coup for the service provider because the majority of its offerings were either second-run or low-budget fare (Mullen, 1999). Regardless, Telemeter would eventually fail to build on its earlier success. On April 30, 1965, whether because of content or format, the experiment was terminated; subscriptions had fallen from a high of 5,800 to 2,500 and Telemeter had suffered losses of \$3 million (Shields, 1980b). Despite the demise of

the Etobicoke experiment, Telemeter was still actively pursuing connections with the cable television industry. Later that same year, the firm was planning a programming experiment in Montreal that would offer three pay channels on an 11-channel cable television system. Although the experiment was never carried out, interests in pay television were greater than ever.

### **The 1970s: A Decade of Uncertainty, Debate, and Regulatory Drama**

The turn of the decade brought forth a rapid expansion of the cable television industry. Cities were installing cable systems and the technology for more advanced systems was starting to surface. From the consumer's standpoint, cable was economically attractive; from the cable operators' standpoint, added channel capacity was economically lucrative. However, the cable industry would have to face a long and arduous battle before it would benefit from the new sources of growth and revenues that pay television would have to offer.

As early as 1972, cable operators sought licenses to provide their subscribers with pay-per-channel services featuring films and specialized programming. The CRTC chose not to consider any of the applications, because no general policy on pay television had yet been established (CRTC, 1972–1973). In October 1972, the CRTC issued its first public statement on pay television. Although it acknowledged the “significant role [that discretionary channels would play] in the development of the Canadian broadcasting system, [the Commission was uncertain of] their precise potential for service to the public, and their effect on television broadcasting and cable television services” (CRTC, 1972, p. 3). Nonetheless, it was prepared to consider “experimental proposals ... if in the opinion of the Commission, they are likely to contribute to the achievement of establishing broadcasting policies” (p. 3).

Pressured by both the film and cable television industries alike, the CRTC, under the chairmanship of Harry Boyle, reevaluated its stance on pay television. In a position paper published in February 1975, the CRTC expressed its opinion against the introduction of pay television because of its disruptive effects on the broadcasting system. Its concerns were based on three key issues: siphoning, audience fragmentation, and the extent to which pay television could be used as a vehicle to further the production and exhibition of Canadian programs. The CRTC continued considering pay television proposals on a case-by-case basis, but its inception was nowhere near, as the CRTC (1975) alluded to its skepticism regarding the prospects of the service:

Can a service be developed, devoid of commercial content and without interruption of program material, which will be of sufficient interest to the public to be marketable and financially sound and at the same time provide a new impetus to the growth of the Canadian program-production industries? (p. 4)



The following year, the newly appointed Minister of Communications, Jeanne Sauvé (1976), disposed a more positive outlook on the industry. In her address to the Canadian Cable Television Association (CCTA), she described the introduction of pay television as "most exciting, because of its potential to improve programming and real program choice" (p. 5). Although this would require a significant restructuring of the broadcasting system, the need "to solv[e] the most crucial problem in Canadian broadcasting, that is, the underdeveloped state of the Canadian program-production industry" (p. 5), far outweighed any negative consequences. To this effect, she proposed:

First, [pay television] must provide a range of programming which does not duplicate that now offered by broadcasters and must do so without siphoning programs from the broadcasting system. Second, it must ensure the production of high-quality Canadian programs that Canadians will watch. Third, it must ensure that programs are produced in Canada for international sale. (Sauvé, 1976, p. 6)

Meanwhile, the CRTC (1980) formally called for submissions on "the form and function of an organization to assemble, produce, and acquire pay television programming for distribution to licensed broadcasting undertakings" (p. 53). Of the 105 submissions that were received, few had met the CRTC's requirements. As a result, the CRTC requested a revised set of submissions and called for a public hearing on June 13, 1977, to consider them. By that time, 181 submissions had been received. Strong opposition had been expressed against the introduction of pay television "by established [public and private] broadcasters who feared the competition, by telephone companies who resisted cable's proliferation of services and technological advance, and by cultural nationalists" (Babe, 2005, para. 1); they essentially reiterated the CRTC's (1972, 1975) earlier views that pay television would not contribute to the "furtherance of the objectives" set out in the Broadcasting Act of 1968. Nevertheless, the cable television industry maintained a consistent viewpoint, emphasizing once more the significant benefits to the Canadian program-production industry.

In March 1978, the CRTC issued its much-anticipated *Report on Pay Television*. The document outlined the Commission's views and presented its arguments in support of a single national network operated by a private rather than a public agency, subject to CRTC regulations regarding Canadian content, siphoning, and the allocation of revenues. The report also examined the possible ways in which the consumer should be charged for the service. According to the CRTC (1978), a pay-per-channel system should be employed at first, "However, it will be necessary to design the exhibition system so that a transition can be effected between the subscription and pay-per-program methods as the pay television system develops and matures" (p. 47). Overall, some legislative progress was made, but the CRTC still felt that "it would be premature and impossible to endorse the introduction of a national pay television system at this time" (p. 54). Once again, its decision stemmed from the overwhelming degree of opposition to the introduction of pay television and the fact that most of the

proposals it received failed to "achieve an acceptable level of commitment to present broadcasting objectives and requirements" (p. 36).

In the same year, the CRTC (1978) conducted a survey to assess public opinion and consumer demand for pay television. People ( $N = 2,289$ ) were sampled from across the country. Forty-three percent of the respondents were living in cable-receiving homes, and even fewer had any significant prior knowledge of pay television (CRTC, 1978). Not surprisingly, the survey yielded unfavorable results. The CRTC's (1978) findings revealed that "pay television [was] not considered essential [and there was no] compelling demand for this potential new programming service, [even among cable subscribers]" (p. 34). Contrary to these findings, an attitudinal survey conducted by Nielsen-Ferns showed that over half of the respondents welcomed the idea of pay television and would likely subscribe to it (CRTC, 1981). Although the study was based on a prime-time subscription channel, the demand for pay television was still overwhelming, hence questioning not only the reliability and validity of the CRTC data, but the Commission's ability to maintain and preserve the country's cultural broadcasting industry.

Faced with threats that the cable industry might simply go ahead on its own and introduce pay television without government approval, the CRTC had another dilemma to contend with: satellite master antenna television systems. By 1978, not only were unlicensed receiving dishes beginning to spring up in northern and remote areas of the country to pirate U.S. television signals, but pay television operations in bordering cities were starting to spill over into Canadian markets. Time was of the essence and the implementation of a pay television system was an urgent priority, as David Hobbs, the Executive Director of Communications of Ontario's Ministry of Transportation and Communications, explained:

The longer the introduction of a pay-for-service or program system is delayed, the greater threat there will be of Canada becoming even more of a captive software market. ... By far the most practical and important way of getting pay television working for Canada is to get pay television operating in Canada as quickly as possible. (CCTA, 1979, p. 4)

All the same, the CRTC refused to budge on the issue. Instead, in a subsequent report, the Consultative Committee on the Implications of Telecommunications for Canadian Sovereignty (1979) echoed the CRTC's prevailing opinion that at present there was no evidence of a "substantial demand for the introduction of pay television. There is thus no need for hasty action" (p. 47).

### **The 1980s: The Time to Make a Move**

In January 1980, the CRTC, at the request of the federal Department of Communications, initiated its third inquiry into pay television. Under the chairmanship of CRTC Vice-Chairman Réal Therrien, the nine-member Therrien Committee (comprised of

both federal and provincial representatives) issued a call for submissions for satellite distribution and pay television services. Three hundred and eighty-seven submissions were received, half of which focused on pay television; public hearings were held in March and April of the same year. Despite their long-standing opposition to pay television, the CRTC was no longer going to side with the public and private broadcasters. Discretionary services were soon to be licensed and the situation needed to be addressed in a proactive rather than a reactive manner; hence the broadcasters emerged as competitors to the cable operators. A consortium comprised of the CBC, Canadian Television Network (CTV), and the French-language *Télé-Diffuseurs Associés* (TVA) proposed to administer their own private-sector monopoly and to reinvest the profits in the program-production industry; they "even agreed on a split of the pay television pie, 60-40" (Kirby, 1980b, p. 10). The cable operators also expressed their preference for a single, privately owned, national pay television agency. Although it would not remit any portion of its earnings to improving Canadian programming, their outfit would be subject to a 30% Canadian content requirement, thus giving the country's public broadcaster, "the CBC, a passing hip into the boards, by noting that 'it wants to run a 100% American channel'" (Kirby, 1980b, p. 10). In the end, the competing proposals were, at best, "artfully constructed packages designed to protect established interests" (Kirby, 1980a, p. 9).

In July 1980, the Therrien Committee convened and issued a complete report. By that time, 35 nonnetwork programming services were being transmitted on U.S. satellites and the number of Canadian households with the required receiving equipment was rising at an alarming rate. Thus, before U.S. cable television could gain a foothold in Canada, a consensus was reached: Approval should be given to the introduction of pay television. On the one hand, the CRTC sided with the cable operators' views arguing that pay television would "offer a new and unique opportunity to foster the beneficial development of the Canadian program-production industry while supporting and complementing the Canadian broadcasting system and catering to the needs of Canadian viewers" (CRTC, 1980, p. 58). On the other hand, it supported the CRTC's (1978) proposed guidelines pertaining to Canadian content and methods of paying for discretionary services. However, it backed neither party's position on the issue concerning the organization and administration of a pay television system. According to the Therrien Committee:

All models presented for a single national pay television agency would have power that would not, in the opinion of a majority of members, be to the best interest of the Canadian public. [A pay television system should] be responsive to viewer choice and be effectively regulated in the public interest, while affording the opportunity to producers to market their programs as freely as possible. [For this reason,] a Canadian pay television system should not be entrusted to a single national agency. (CRTC, 1980, p. 74)

Late in October 1980, both the CRTC and the federal government endorsed the Therrien Committee's recommendations. Six months after this decision, the CRTC is-

sued a call for applications for pay television services. Fifty-three applications were submitted, of which 27 were selected to be heard at the CRTC's public hearing on pay television in the fall of 1981. From this point, as Woodrow and Woodside (1982a) put it, "The scramble for pay television was on in full force and it was up to the CRTC to make its decision" (p. 56).

## Viewer's Choice Canada: An Overview

Bids for a Canadian pay-per-view television service had been rejected by the CRTC since 1984. In line with the Therrien Committee's recommendations, the CRTC (1986b) expressed its concern regarding "the stability and growth of Canadian pay television and specialty programming services and the possible impact the implementation of one or more pay-per-view programming services might have on existing discretionary services" (section 1). Nevertheless, proponents of the new service continued to challenge the CRTC's strongly held views, grounding their arguments in the benefits of increased diversity and programming choice, as well as the potential to expand both the market for Canadian program producers and their access to distribution systems (Munro, 1988). Finally, in 1991, the CRTC approved an experimental and temporary license to Viewer's Choice Canada (VCC) on the basis of the parent company's expertise in the pay television industry.

VCC is a general partnership consisting of Astral Broadcasting Group (50.1%), Rogers Pay-Per-View (24.95%), and CTV Specialty Television Enterprises (24.95%). This English-language service is offered to digital cable subscribers residing east of the Manitoba-Ontario border. As the name implies, pay-per-view consists of programming that is paid for on a per-event basis. To place an order, the client, using his or her remote control, first selects the desired program from an on-screen guide and then enters a security code to complete the transaction; the charges are applied to the cable subscriber's monthly statement. Currently, it is estimated that 1.23 million households (or 24% of cable subscribers) in eastern Canada are equipped with the required set-top boxes to access pay-per-view services. The response rate to pay-per-view offerings ranges from 2% to 5% (Vogel, 2004).

The programming is comprised of two categories: movies and events (i.e., live sports, concerts, and made-for-pay specials). Each month, VCC carries more than 20 first-run film titles and 30 events. Films are delivered 24 hours per day with staggered 15-minute start times on multiple channels. To remain competitive with home video rentals, feature films are priced at \$4.99 and adult programming at \$8.99. Event pricing ranges from \$6.99 to \$49.99.

Pay-per-view revenues are smaller than subscription pay television revenues, but still represent an important revenue stream. In 2004, Astral reported \$21.4 million in revenues from VCC and an average annual growth rate of 18.8% (CRTC, 2006). Movie revenues tend to lead event revenues by a four-to-one margin (Higgins, 2003).

## Industry Structure and Competitive Dynamics

Porter's (1998) *Competitive Strategy* provides a unique framework for the analysis of the evolution and structure of competitive industries. Development and competition come not only from current rivalry, but also from the underlying economics of the industry itself. To this effect, Porter suggested five interdependent forces that can be used to assess a firm's potential and risk. These variables include barriers to entry, power of buyers, power of suppliers, threat of substitutes, and rivalry. The data derived from Porter's five-forces model provide the framework for evaluating the prospects for VCC.

### Barriers to Entry

Barriers to entry prevent potential rivals from entering a market. They seek to strengthen the competitive position, market shares, and revenue streams of incumbent firms, all while creating the ideal conditions for a highly concentrated industry. In regards to pay-per-view, barriers to entry arise from capital requirements, operating expenses, economies of scale, product differentiation, and government policy.

*Capital Requirements.* Significant financial resources are needed to construct a pay-per-view facility and to acquire programming rights. These necessities create a barrier to entry for anyone challenging the established players. In Canada, prospective service providers are required to apply for a license and must "prove [to the CRTC that] they [have] the financial power to absorb start-up costs and to remain in the Canadian broadcasting landscape over the long term" (Wagman, 2001, p. 56). VCC controlling partner Astral is Canada's largest broadcaster of English- and French-language specialty, pay, and pay-per-view television services. In 2005, its subscription fees and pay-per-view sales generated \$316.8 million in revenues (Astral Media, 2005).

*Operating Expenses.* Operating expenses, such as administrative, technical, and marketing fees require considerable financial disbursements. Administrative and technical costs are relatively fixed and independent of subscriber numbers. Marketing expenditures, on the other hand, are not only substantial in the start-up phase, but often remain high for several years. In 2004, VCC spent nearly as much on promotional fees as it did on maintaining its broadcasting facilities (CRTC, 2006). In addition to the specialty channel advertisements; the direct mail inserts; and the trailers, schedules, and descriptions that are typically featured on its barker channel, VCC's promotional efforts are concentrated on targeting existing pay television subscribers by means of *MovieEntertainment*, formerly known as *Feature* magazine. In addition to its lifestyle and entertainment features, this monthly paid publication provides detailed programming information for premium television services. This, in turn, enables VCC to pro-

mote as well as position itself as a value-added service to discretionary channel programming. The magazine is distributed to The Movie Network subscribers.

Overall, operating expenses require significant cash outlays. Consequently, firms entering the pay-per-view business should have substantial capital resources to sustain any economic setbacks. In its initial proposal to the CRTC, Astral projected net losses of \$4.4 million for VCC's first 4 years of operations (Siklos, 1991). Likewise, in its first 2 years of operations, Bell ExpressVu's Vu! direct-to-home pay-per-view service suffered losses of \$18.3 million and \$5.5 million (CRTC, 2002b). New firms should then expect to operate at a deficit for the first 2 to 4 years of operations.

*Economies of Scale.* Economies of scale refer to the decline in long-run average costs as the production volume increases. They create a barrier to entry because they force potential entrants to come in at a large scale (Porter, 1998). However, entry into the pay-per-view industry is deterred by the economies of vertical integration. Canada's Astral Communications, currently known as Astral Media, is involved in the production, processing, duplication, and distribution of film, television, and video. In fact, Astral's Home Entertainment division is Canada's largest video distributor (Gray, 1993). This element alone strengthens VCC's position as an industry leader as it may entitle the pay-per-view service provider to preferential rates and, to some extent, the proprietary rights to the programming of its choice. However, in line with the Commission's mandate to promote market conditions in which the supply and demand of goods and services are reasonably equal, the CRTC (1995b) "expects VCC to adhere to its commitment to treat distributors on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis, with no preferential treatment being given to the productions distributed by Astral" (para. 16). Astral secured distribution agreements for theatrical and home video products with Sony Pictures Entertainment Company, The Walt Disney Company, Turner Home Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Brothers, and the Lyons Group; it has also established relationships with Paramount, Universal Studios, Columbia/TriStar, and New Line.

In 2000, Astral divested itself from its film distribution unit (Lamey, 2000). Regardless, its healthy relationship with its suppliers benefited the pay-per-view service provider, for this transaction did not seem to have an impact on the price, quality, and quantity of feature films it acquires. Instead, VCC's increased programming expenditures appear to be a function of its expanded channel offerings: The greater the number of first-run films it features, the greater the licensing fees. The average number of pay-per-view channels per cable subscriber was 4 in 1992, 8 in 1996, and 40 in 2000.

*Product Differentiation.* VCC's success is based on its ability to differentiate itself from other forms of in-home entertainment media in four important ways. A quick glance at the insert in *MovieEntertainment* reveals that VCC's programming consists of a number of carefully selected Hollywood "hits and misses." This marketing strategy is due in part to the video store's changing role—that is, from one of renter to retailer. As a result, VCC showcases films that people want to rent and not necessarily

buy. VCC also offers the convenience of ordering films on a per-event basis. Thus, the client is only paying for the program he or she wants to see. In terms of convenience, VCC has the distinct advantage of delivering the product to the client's home, with no pickup or return required by the client. In short, there is never a sellout, never a line, and never a late fee. Last, the pay-per-view service provider has derived benefit from its monopoly status in terms of acquiring a loyal customer base. If customers are satisfied with the quality and service they have received, they are likely to become brand loyal to VCC. Differentiation, therefore, "creates a barrier to entry by forcing entrants to spend heavily to overcome existing customer loyalties" (Porter, 1998, p. 9).

*Government Policy.* The most difficult and critical barrier to overcome is obtaining a license to operate a broadcasting network. Following the CRTC's (1982) first call for applications for pay television services, only six proposals were approved. Broadcasting licenses were issued to those who best met the following objectives. According to the CRTC, pay television should:

[(a)] contribute significantly to the broadcasting system by increasing the diversity of programming available to all Canadians from coast-to-coast and by enhancing the quality and distinctiveness of Canadian programs, ... [(b)] provide new opportunities and revenue sources for the program-production industry in Canada, ... [and (c)] provide new opportunities for developing programs that reflect the various regions of Canada. (p. 9)

Still, there was more to pay television than Canadian content issues, as the number of firms that would be allowed to operate within the industry was also of great concern.

Years before its inception, much debate was centered on the issue of whether or not pay television services should be provided under competitive or monopolistic conditions. Proponents of monopoly solutions (e.g., MacDonald & Rumsey, 1982; Peers, 1982) grounded their arguments in the Canadian broadcasting tradition. In their view, a single national pay television agency would best serve the country, as it would provide the means of ensuring the maximum use and production of Canadian programming. At the same time, it would be in a position to generate the most funds for the program-production industry because of economies of scale and because it would not have to compete with other networks for the rights to foreign programs. Conversely, advocates of a competitive market structure (e.g., Bernstein & Goldberger, 1982; CRTC, 1980) emphasized the benefits of competition in terms of consumer choice. The Therrien Committee further expressed its opposition to a tight vertically integrated monopoly, arguing that there had to be room for experimentation and changes in programming formats (CRTC, 1980). For this reason, as Hobbs aptly pointed out, "the basic elements of a pay television system should best be left to the industry and not to a system that is rigorously controlled by bureaucrats" (CCTA, 1979, p. 6).

Despite the rhetoric of competition, the CRTC's preference for a protected monopoly arrangement would soon become clear, as it created the ideal conditions for such a market structure in its own legislature. Under the licensing scenario set out in Decision 82-240, the CRTC, foreseeing the demise and uncertainty of a competitive industry, maintained that

there will be no more than two discretionary general interest services competing in any one area. In the Commission's view, the licensing of additional discretionary general interest pay television services would jeopardize the ability of applicants licensed as a result of this decision to maximize opportunities for funding of Canadian programming. (CRTC, 1982, p. 12)

However, does increased funding yield greater prospects for the exhibition of Canadian productions?

By its third year of operations, First Choice was required to devote half of the network's prime-time content to Canadian programming (CRTC, 1982). This condition of license was short-lived. The limited availability of Canadian productions led to an increased number of repetitions, which, in turn, resulted in a significant drop in subscriptions. The movie channel petitioned this condition of license, arguing that programming control was necessary for its survival. Its demands were met, and on September 2, 1986, First Choice's 50% quota was reduced to 30% during prime viewing hours (i.e., from 6:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.) and to only 20% throughout the remainder of the broadcast day; its expenditure commitment for Canadian programs was equally reduced from 45% to 20% of gross revenues (CRTC, 1986a). Currently, The Movie Network must devote at least 25% of its airtime to the distribution of Canadian programs (CRTC, 1995a, 2001a). Its quota during prime viewing hours remains unchanged.

The conditions of license for VCC differ. In 1991, VCC was licensed with an obligation to contribute, on average, \$1 million per year to the Harold Greenberg Fund, a national private agency that provides script development loans and equity investments for feature film and television productions (CRTC, 1991b). In 1995, as part of its renewal application, VCC proposed a condition of license that would provide it with the option of contributing a fixed maximum amount of \$1 million or 5% of its net revenues, whichever amount was greater, to the production of Canadian feature films (CRTC, 1995b). The proposal was approved. However, in 1998, following a 21.1% decline in revenue (CRTC, 2002b), VCC asked the CRTC to amend this very same condition of license (CRTC, 1998b). To maintain an "orderly market," that is, one in which existing licensees can sustain a profitable outfit and make ample contributions to the broadcasting system, the CRTC granted VCC's request. Over its remaining license term, VCC is required to contribute a minimum of 5% of its net revenues to the fund (CRTC, 1998a). VCC must also maintain a minimum ratio of Canadian to non-Canadian programming of 1:20 for first-run film titles, and remit 100% of the net revenues earned from the exhibition of these films to their respective right holders (CRTC, 1995b, 2002a).



## Power of Buyers

The power of buyers refers to the extent to which consumers are able to negotiate lower prices. Due to the lack of competition in pay-per-view, such bargaining power is virtually nonexistent. Moreover, homes equipped to receive pay-per-view services tend to have a more upscale profile than broadcast and basic television households (Sherman, 1995). These individuals tend to be younger than regular subscribers and have higher incomes; some even have small children. They are generally regarded as being less price sensitive and are likely to buy into the convenience aspect of the service.

## Power of Suppliers

Pay-per-view operators rely primarily on one supply area: Hollywood. The studios not only exercise control over the distribution process, but also have a bearing on their films' profit potential. As a result, the pay-per-view industry's commercial success ultimately depends on the release windows.

Feature films are first distributed "to the market that generates the highest marginal revenue over the least amount of time. They then 'cascade' in order of marginal revenue contribution down to markets that return the lowest revenues per unit time" (Vogel, 2004, p. 93). However, according to a Goldman Sachs report, "pay-per-view funnels between \$0.45 and \$0.50 of every subscriber dollar into the pockets of the studios, compared with only \$0.20 of every videocassette dollar" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 128). Consequently, the 60- to 90-day home video to pay-per-view window was shortened. In fact, as Eastman and Ferguson (1997) explained, some studios began offering 30-day windows to service providers who would guarantee a minimum buy rate:

The problem with long windows ... is that an overabundance of hit movies during the home video window tends to decrease the buy rate during the pay-per-view window. Even *Jurassic Park* (which grossed \$320 million in theaters) missed expected revenues because of overexposure. (pp. 326–327)

Under current windowing schedules, films are released into the pay-per-view market 30 to 45 days after their home video release.

## Threat of Substitutes

The threat of substitutes refers to the ease with which consumers can choose alternative products or services to satisfy a given need. Substitutes can either threaten a firm's market share or can limit industry profits by placing a ceiling on the prices that

firms can charge (Porter, 1998). Thus, part of building a strong industry position depends on differentiating one's self from substitute products.

Canadians are more inclined to watch films at home than at the cinema (Statistics Canada, 2005a). Therefore, as movie attendance dwindles and revenues from film distributions to theaters suffer sharp declines, consumers are turning to one of the following five alternatives for first-run feature films. They may (a) opt for a subscription-based channel such as The Movie Network, (b) lease the film from a video rental outlet, (c) obtain the film by mail by means of an online rental agency, (d) buy the film on DVD, or (e) order the film via video-on-demand services.

*The Movie Network.* The Movie Network is a subscription-based, English-language pay television service offered to cable-receiving homes across eastern Canada. The service is composed of five channels. M, the main channel, shows newly released movies, special events, and Home Box Office (HBO) and Showtime films and series. MFun airs comedies, whereas MExcess focuses on action and adventure movies. MFest broadcasts independent films and MMore provides additional screenings of popular films and made-for-pay titles. Altogether, The Movie Network offers its subscribers more than 150 uncut and commercial-free titles to choose from each month, including more than 30 premieres. Still, even though The Movie Network may offer its subscribers an unprecedented array of exclusive and original programming at a fixed monthly rate, one must bear in mind that films are aired 10 to 12 months after their theatrical release. This may be frustrating for the subscriber, but the release window, set by the Hollywood majors, enables home video to become their premier revenue source (Arnold, 2005). Price is another source of consumer discontent. Research conducted on the causes of pay television disconnects found that the average subscriber feels that he or she is paying too much for a service that he or she barely uses, whereas the film enthusiast is dissatisfied with the number of repetitions (Joint Communications Corporation, 1984). The results of the study also revealed that most customers who canceled their pay television subscriptions are not willing to reconnect (Joint Communications Corporation, 1984). Not surprisingly, the average churn rate for premium subscriptions is estimated to be as high as 50% (CCTA, 1987).

Needless to say, subscription-based pay television channels pose little if any threat to pay-per-view services. In effect, the success of one depends largely on the success of the other. VCC is a marketing-intensive business that relies on an impulse buying strategy to attract customers (Eastman & Ferguson, 1997; Sherman, 1995). Therefore, until digital cable services become more commonplace, VCC will have to rely on existing The Movie Network subscribers to establish and build its customer base.

*In-Store Video Rentals.* Canadians spend more than \$2 billion annually renting Hollywood blockbusters, art house films, documentaries, and exercise videos (McKay, 2002). Specifically, 61.4% of households rented videotapes in 1999, spending an average of \$164 on them (Statistics Canada, 2003), compared with \$74 in 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1999). Despite these promising figures, the video rental in-

dustry is in decline. A decade ago, the sale of videos for rental accounted for three quarters of distributors' revenues; today it is less than half (Maddox, 2003). As a result, distributors have entered into revenue-sharing arrangements with retailers, selling titles at wholesale prices in exchange for a percentage of the rental revenue. As Dana and Spier (2001) explained:

Traditionally ... Blockbuster Video bought recently released videotapes through a distributor for about \$65 a copy and would keep all of the revenue from the subsequent rentals ... [Today,] videos are purchased by rental outlets for about \$8 each and the rental revenue is shared: the video retailer keeps 45% of the revenue, the movie studio gets 45%, and the remaining 10% goes to Rentrak, Blockbuster's distributor. (p. 224)

In turn, Blockbuster has not only increased its inventories sevenfold, but the surplus of stock has enabled the video rental chain to guarantee the availability of its recently released film titles. (Blockbuster Movie Pass, a subscription rental program that allows customers to rent an unlimited number of films in-store, is not yet available in Canada.) Blockbuster has also eliminated late fees on store rentals, which have been a primary consumer irritant (Knox, 2004). The move is part of efforts to combat increased competition from discount retailers and pay-per-view services.

Simply put, rental store profitability is largely dependent on newly released films that have enjoyed much success at the box office. With the peak rental period for a major release now as short as 2 weeks and most of the rental income earned in the first 8 weeks, video retailers need to maximize rentals before demand slows (Maddox, 2003). As such, maintaining a viable rental business rests on the window between video and pay-per-view releases. For this reason, VCC positions itself as a complementary service by offering, for the most part, less popular film titles.

*Online DVD Rentals.* In contrast to the success that Blockbuster and Netflix have enjoyed in the United States, online DVD rentals are expected to have a negligible effect on in-store rentals, let alone the pay-per-view industry. If anything, they will have a far greater impact on network broadcasters, as a new type of television viewer is emerging: marathon episode watchers. According to Rosenbloom (2005):

Some [of these individuals are devout] fans who want to see a favorite series uninterrupted by commercials. Others are catching up on the early seasons of shows they have just begun to like. Then there are those people who intentionally miss new episodes of a favorite series, preferring to see them all at once on DVD, like an epic film. ... Marathon viewing of series is creating a new breed of television aficionados, some say, people with a sharper eye for narrative twists, suspense techniques and character development. Like film buffs, they become familiar with the names of the directors and writers of a series, pick up on nuances others may have missed and acquire a deeper appreciation of plot lines. (para. 13-16)

In October 2005, the most requested Netflix DVDs were episodes of *Lost*, *Six Feet Under*, *Chappelle's Show*, and the original BBC version of *The Office*.

To date, only a handful of online rental agencies have emerged. Interestingly, Rogers Video, one of Canada's leading video retailers, has confirmed that it will not be entering the online rental market, "citing the high cost of postage and [the] lack of Saturday delivery" (Brieger, 2004, p. FP01), thus raising significant concerns about the market's growth and earnings potential. In Canada, Zip.ca is the leading online DVD rental service with a subscriber base of 25,000 (i.e., 65% of the Canadian online rental market; Netherby, 2005). Noteworthy competitors include canflix.com, cinemail.ca, and dvdhype.com.

*DVD Sales.* With at least one DVD unit in over two thirds (68%) of all Canadian households (Statistics Canada, 2005b), the plummeting prices of DVD players have expanded the market for such consumer electronics from the early adopters to the late majority of film enthusiasts who would rather buy their titles than rent. Therefore, to compete with other forms of in-home entertainment media, DVD distributors have chosen to release different versions of films (i.e., standard, widescreen, and limited edition box sets) on video, each of which is geared to a different market segment. In Canada, annual DVD sales are estimated at \$1.8 billion (Statistics Canada, 2005a) and are expected to surpass the \$4 billion mark by 2007 (McKay, 2002). DVD households purchase, on average, 16 discs a year, compared to five or six videotapes for each VCR household (Damsell, 2003).

All things considered, DVD sales are unlikely to impact pay-per-view purchases as there is relatively little overlap between the two media. Pay-per-view services are analogous to video rentals, relying on a carefully selected number of major films and lesser known but promotable titles every month, whereas DVDs follow a sell-through pattern, in which case a film is priced to be bought rather than rented by consumers. Furthermore, as film archives become more widely available, it is likely that classic films will become the source of greatest revenue. In a sense, this has already happened because as of 2005, the only market that continues to grow is the sale of old television shows (Hernandez, 2005). In fact, "buyers of TV titles are far more active consumers than typical DVD collectors. They [purchase] an average of 25 DVDs a year" (Hernandez, 2005, p. 1).

*Video-on-Demand.* Video-on-demand services are classified by the CRTC (2003) as pay television programming undertakings. Thus, they are essentially subject to the same Canadian content regulations as pay-per-view services. Among the conditions of license, video-on-demand services are required to carry, at all times, a minimum ratio of 1:20 Canadian to non-Canadian feature film titles and must contribute 5% of their annual gross revenues to a Canadian production fund that is independent of the licensee (CRTC, 1997). As such, the CRTC's (1997) legislation is "consistent with the Commission's policy objective to promote enhanced consumer choice and Canadian programming, [as well as to] foster fair competition within an increased reliance on

market forces" (para. 21). This is of particular importance because most of the cable operators that carry VCC have launched their own video-on-demand services (e.g., Cogeco Video on Demand and Rogers on Demand; see CRTC, 2000, for complete terms of license). The deployment of video-on-demand services across most digital cable systems in eastern Canada was completed in 2004; test markets have been conducted since 2002 (MacLean, 2002).

In contrast to pay-per-view, video-on-demand services are unquestionably superior in terms of choice and convenience. First, video-on-demand libraries contain more than 2,000 titles including newly released films, classics, and children's programs. However, up to 80% of the total on-demand content consists of free network television programs (Thomson, 2004). This not only provides cable subscribers with the possibility of watching their preferred shows at their leisure, but it also creates confidence among consumers about the ease, utility, and reliability of the technology. Not surprisingly, "video-on-demand users [have] express[ed] higher-than-average levels of satisfaction with their television service provider. Among those who have used [video-on-demand], 58% say it increased their enjoyment of TV" (Brent, 2005a, p. D2). Second, video-on-demand provides viewers with the distinct advantage of controlling both the scheduling and sequencing of a film. This convenience, though, comes at a price. First-run films are priced higher than their pay-per-view counterparts (Kari, 2003), despite the fact that they are released to both markets at the same time. Are consumers willing to pay a premium to avoid a 15-minute wait time? Will increased customer satisfaction and the added convenience of video-on-demand be sufficient to overcome existing loyalties to VCC? Can video-on-demand and pay-per-view coexist? The answers to these questions will become apparent within the next 2 to 4 years, at which point the financial prospects of video-on-demand and its impact on the pay-per-view industry can be accurately assessed.

At any rate, video-on-demand is expected to "emerge as a business by exploiting extremely discrete areas of interest" ("CableFOLKS," 2004). Digital offerings represent a significant means by which cable companies can protect their analog customer base from competing satellite providers. Therefore, to entice their clients into the digital realm, cable operators have introduced video-on-demand content for niche audiences (e.g., Bollywood movies). Nevertheless, there continues to be a considerable overlap between video-on-demand and pay-per-view's first-run film offerings. For this reason, the importance of programming should never be underestimated. Suppliers can affect an industry through their ability to control the price and quality of purchased goods. This factor alone can have a considerable impact on VCC's future, because, for the first time, the pay-per-view service provider may find itself competing for the rights to major motion picture titles—especially because "the enthusiasm of cable operators for video-on-demand is driving movie buy rates to the point at which video-on-demand harvests more revenue for the company than standard multi-channel pay-per-view" (Dempsey, 2004, p. 12). How will this affect VCC's relationship with its suppliers? Will Hollywood studios offer incentives, yet again, to the service

provider that offers them the better buy rate? Will VCC find itself in a bidding war with the video-on-demand service providers? Again, only time will tell.

## Rivalry

Finally, rivalry describes the intensity with which firms in an industry compete. It is the result of various interacting structural factors, including the number of competitors in a market, the lack of product differentiation or low switching costs, and the ease with which new firms can enter an industry (Porter, 1998). Domestic films on pay television, in general, stir very little interest among Canadians. Instead, the key source of growth for pay-per-view services lies in adult programming (Brown, 1995; Kari, 2002, 2004, 2005). VCC's buy rates for adult films are six times greater than for Hollywood titles (Fraser, 2001). Not surprisingly, Playboy had expressed interest in the Canadian pay-per-view market. In July 2001, its application for three digital television services (*Spice Platinum*, *Spice Platinum 2*, and *Spice Live*) was denied (CRTC, 2001b; Kari, 2001). Thus, VCC continues to maintain its monopoly status in eastern Canada, and given the early stages of video-on-demand, no significant rivalry exists as of yet.

In short, VCC has successfully maintained its position as an industry leader by providing its clients greater flexibility and control over the choices they make. Over the next few years, it will undoubtedly face increased competition from firms offering innovative means of streaming feature films into eastern Canadian homes. Even though these newer video-on-demand services may be delivered by superior and more-open ended technologies (e.g., Internet Protocol), they will ultimately pose little if any threat to VCC. Despite the recent rise in subscriptions, Canadians have not been quick to adopt digital cable services, let alone personal video recorders. Thus, in light of the meager 4% of cabled homes that are "equipped with these leisure time-altering gadgets" (Anthony, 2004, para. 3; Brent, 2005b), it is unlikely that a sufficiently large number of Canadians will be purchasing any additional receiving equipment any time soon.

## Conclusion

Canadian content was the whole purpose of pay television. At first, the challenge was to find a way in which one could create a distinctive pay television system that would provide new opportunities and revenue sources for the program-production industry without disrupting the existing broadcasting system. Indeed, pay television may have once been hailed as the "opportunity Canada has been waiting for ... [and as] the best friend Canadian culture ever had" (Fraser, 1999, p. 191). However, the fact remains that the availability and attractiveness of American programming is a long-standing phenomenon. Therefore, by itself, pay television can neither be ex-

pected to finance the expansion of the Canadian program-production industry, nor to repatriate viewers to domestic programming. Instead, as discretionary services prospered, an important policy shift—from cultural regulation to industrial development—occurred. Pay television and pay-per-view had become “one of several prospective services that could expand the market and improve the competitive position of existing firms within the communications industry and, both in terms of hardware and software, encourage the creation of a new, high-technology information industry” (Woodrow & Woodside, 1982b, p. xviii). Thus the challenge VCC faces today is no longer predicated on content issues, but lies in preserving the pay-per-view industry itself. As analog cable subscribers steadily migrate to the digital domain and as video-on-demand libraries continue to expand, VCC will have to reposition and perhaps even rebrand itself. Whether the broadcaster will seek new distribution outlets or shift the emphasis of its programming remains to be seen. In the end, the service provider that best responds to its clients’ needs will prevail. After all, people buy programming, not technology.

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## Macho Media: Unapologetic Hypermasculinity in Vancouver's "Talk Radio for Guys"

Simon C. Darnell and Brian Wilson

*In this article, the researchers report findings from a study that investigated the social construction of masculinity in programming offered by "MOJO Radio—Talk Radio for Guys," a station launched on August 6, 2002, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. These results support the notion that commercial media targeted toward certain male demographics employ traditional concepts of hypermasculinity to construct a representational space for "guys" to assert their gendered identities. The research also sheds light on the decisions that guided MOJO programming in relation to the shifting political and regulatory economy of commercial broadcasting in Canada.*

On August 6, 2002, "MOJO Radio—Talk Radio for Guys" was launched in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The station's format was designed with the explicit aim of "delivering the male" audience to advertisers (Sparks, 1992), a strategy confirmed in a launch-day press release from Corus Entertainment (MOJO Radio's owners) that described how the new station "fills a void in the Vancouver market by providing a forum for men to discuss and debate issues that matter to them, from health and fitness to cars, careers, beers, business, women and sports" (Corus Entertainment, 2002). In this way, MOJO Radio was tactically positioned to reflect men's apparent interests and buying habits, and to disseminate messages linked to portrayals of a type of masculinity (believed to be) most appealing to their target audience.

The station, and its Toronto-based affiliate (also called MOJO Radio and launched in 2001), emerge at a time when numerous commentators are engaging questions about the state of masculinity in the 21st century (Beynon, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004). Underlying expositions on the topic is an assumption that many North American men are experiencing a "crisis of masculinity." This crisis, according to authors like White and Gillett (1994) and Dworkin and Wachs (2000), is based on the notion

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that men are confused about the roles and identities to which they should aspire at a time when social and cultural definitions of manhood are ambiguous and in transition. In contrast, the prototypical male of the 1950s, for example, was more clearly positioned to strive to be a breadwinner for a family, a role that impacted the goals and expectations of men in private and public spheres. With the subsequent movement toward gender equality both at work and at home, so this argument goes, men became perplexed about the constitutive aspects of their gendered social roles, concerned about their apparent loss of traditional forms of power, and thus reacted with fear to an increasingly "feminized" culture and society.<sup>1</sup> The apparent responses to this crisis have taken a number of forms, including an increased emphasis on hypermasculine pursuits (e.g., high-risk sport participation, bodybuilding) that are presumed to aid men in their attempts to recuperate a clearly defined sense of what it means to be a man (White & Gillett, 1994).

Corporate entities like Corus Entertainment would appear to be capitalizing on the apparent destabilization of contemporary masculinity by offering a radio-based escape to manhood. On a broader social level, however, the messages offered by MOJO would seem to contribute—intentionally or unintentionally—to a mass-mediated backlash against threats to the tradition-based social advantages experienced by some men (a suggestion investigated in depth as part of the study reported in this article). According to Brayton (2005), Savran (1998), and others, this backlash initially emerged as a reaction to the social- and policy-related changes that resulted from feminist and civil rights challenges to a status quo that favored wealthy, White men.<sup>2</sup> Although this backlash has taken various forms, including semiorganized men's rights movements, it is within popular culture that the most pronounced and visible versions of a "return to manhood" motif can be found. This observation is particularly compelling in relation to Whannel's (2002) argument that "forms of popular culture are revealing sites in which to examine unstable attempts to deal with crisis" (p. 8; cf. Brayton, 2005). Brayton pointed to the relatively recent launch of MTV's Spike Network—the self-proclaimed "first network for men," a channel that features hypermasculine, made-for-TV sports and entertainment programming like *American Gladiators* and *Slamball*—as a stark example of this kind of popular cultural backlash. Another illustration is the cover of a recent *MacLean's Magazine* (a publication recognized as "Canada's news magazine") titled "Age of the Wuss," which includes a story under the headline "He's Come Undone" lamenting the loss of the confident, assertive, powerful, hypermasculine man in contemporary North American society (Gillis, 2005, p. 28).

According to scholars like Messner (2002), this sort of mass-mediated narrative reinforces and reproduces dangerous cultural norms around relationships and health. Those working and researching in these areas have argued for years that males are socialized by the media (and other influential institutions and individuals) to strive for an idealized, prototypically masculine identity that requires the suppression of emotions and the development of a powerful and intimidating persona and physique (White & Young, 1999). Messner and Stevens (2002) and Gannon, Glover, and Abel

(2004) similarly argued that mass-mediated celebrations of hypermasculinity are detrimental because males who conform to such an ideal are implicitly or explicitly supporting a culture that is rife with systemic social problems such as violence against women by men, violence against men by men, reckless participation by men in leisure activities that results in injury and sometimes death, and an inability or unwillingness among men to admit vulnerability (leading to anxiety and depression; cf. Poon, 1993; Sabo, 2004; White & Young, 1999). It is this argument that guides much of the critique offered in this article.

Still, it is important to note that while constituting a compelling case for critically analyzing the programming contents of MOJO radio, the suggestion that programming for men is inherently or unconditionally detrimental to the social health of men (and women) does not account for the often subtle contradictions embedded in media depictions of masculinity. For example, researchers have identified instances where the prototypical "macho" male is satirized and parodied within programming that targets the "guys' guys" demographic, leaving space for progressive and critical readings of masculinity by audience members (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000).

With sensitivity to this more nuanced position as well as the knowledge that images of macho masculinity are both pervasive and might have negative social consequences, a textual study of MOJO radio contents and texts was conducted. The research was guided by the following set of questions: In what way(s) is masculinity promoted in the content of the station's programming? What forms does this promotion take? What ideologies are reinforced or reproduced? Are there spaces where alternative understandings of what it means to be a man are made available? What do these spaces look like?

This study contributes to an area of research focused on masculinity and media that has been scarcely studied in the Canadian context. That this study is about Canadian-based radio is especially relevant considering that radio airwaves in Canada are subject to guidelines devised by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)—guidelines that are especially oriented around the protection of "Canadian content," but also toward equity in representation. There is a relevant history of CRTC policy development around gender that forms the backdrop for this study, in particular a decision made by the Commission on April 2, 1984, to grant a license to The Sports Network (TSN), a Canadian-based sports channel seeking to target a largely male audience and demographic. Sparks's (1992) study "Delivering the Male': Sports, Canadian Television, and the Making of TSN" is instructive here, especially his summary of negotiations between the CRTC and TSN, where he illustrated how the Commission's decision "provided a framework of guidelines and restrictions that in many respects amounted to a *laissez-faire* endorsement of current market practices, particularly with regard to the network's preferred audience(s) and programming contents [i.e., boys and men]." Sparks also showed that "standards of objectivity and balance were not well specified, particularly with respect to the equitable representation of women and men in event coverage, news, and information," a point of particular relevance to this

study of MOJO radio if one considers the approval of TSN as a precedent-setting case in CRTC guideline development.

Of course, developments in both the CRTC and MOJO take place in a social and cultural context where neoliberal policies—such as deregulation of media ownership—currently proliferate. Until recently, for example, CRTC regulations prevented the monopolizing of radio stations by media conglomerates (Bélanger, 2006). However, according to Stuparyk (2004), in 1998, pressure from large corporations led to the CRTC's decision to relax regulations about ownership. Since this decision, "three media giants have swallowed up almost all of the high profile stations, and a significant chunk—22 percent—of the 668 independent commercial radio stations in Canada: Corus Entertainment owns 52, Standard Broadcasting 51, and Rogers Media Inc. 43" (Stuparyk, 2004). Nylund (2004) linked these sorts of developments with the rise of conservative talk radio formats that "contain public expression within corporate, capitalist ideologies that reinforce dominant social relations" (p. 138). In a similar way, the corporatization of radio is linked to the increased tendency among media producers to engage in niche marketing, creating programming targeted at specific demographics within audiences. In the case of (sport) talk radio stations like MOJO, the White middle-class man between 24 and 55 years of age, an extremely desirable audience niche, is the target. With this in mind, the following discussion of MOJO-produced radio messages should be understood in a social and cultural context where conservative definitions of what it means to be a man are offered as part of a corporate project to sell an audience to advertisers.

Additionally, this study's focus on messages contained in Canadian radio for men is unique in a research context where images of masculinity on television and in film are predominantly studied. The research is also intended to contribute to a continually evolving understanding of the ways in which conventions around media production in radio and television are both similar and distinct across various formats and within national contexts. Further, attention is paid to the theoretical and substantive implications of broadcasting messages that are produced in the United States (messages initially intended for a U.S. audience) and subsequently broadcast over Canadian airwaves.

### **Hegemony, Masculinity, and Media: A Review of Theory and Research**

This examination of MOJO radio is informed by a range of studies in the field of gender and media that demonstrate how decision makers in the media industry—both subtly and overtly—contribute to dominant cultural understandings of what it means to be a man. The assumption underlying much of this research, and a premise of this article, is that mass media portrayals of males and females are constructed in ways that privilege a hegemonic version of masculinity, one that is associated with the traits of men who possess power because of their imposing physical presence, their

success in occupational settings, their power over women, their obvious and emphasized heterosexuality, or their independence (Kimmel, 1994). This hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to other forms of masculinity as part of a "gender order" or hierarchy, according to Connell (1995) and others. In this framework, nonhegemonic forms of masculinity include "marginalized masculinities" and "subordinate masculinities" (Connell, 1995, pp. 78–81).<sup>3</sup>

Mass media are important in the reproduction of these understandings of masculinity (and the structure of power these understandings support) because they include images or offer commentary that would lead many viewers to assume that the "gender order" described earlier is natural and unchangeable (Wilson, 2007). Douglas (2002), for example, discussed the role that talk radio—specifically programs featuring outspoken conservative hosts (Rush Limbaugh) or shock-jocks (Howard Stern)—play in reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies and relations. Nylund (2004), extending an argument made by Fared (2000) about backlash and a crisis of White masculinity, went so far as to suggest:

With White masculinity being challenged and decentered by feminism, affirmative action, gay and lesbian movements, and other groups' quest for social equality, sports talk shows, similar to talk radio in general, have become an attractive venue for embattled White men seeking recreational repose and a nostalgic return to a prefeminist ideal. (p. 139)

Nylund (2004) and Douglas (2002) acknowledged in this context that although there is a range of masculine performances enacted on mainstream talk radio (i.e., Limbaugh compared to Stern), these performances work together, collectively challenging "the most revolutionary of social movements, feminism" (Douglas, 2002, p. 485).

Outside of radio, a key study that demonstrates both the extent to which, and ways in which traditional masculine values are promoted in televised hypermasculine sports programming was conducted by Messner et al. (2000). Their findings illustrated that White males are the "voices of authority" regarding sports (especially on sports highlight and talk shows), that "women are sexy props or prizes for men's successful sport performances or consumption choices," "that aggressive players get the prize; nice guys finish last," that "boys will be violent boys," and that real men will give up their bodies "for the team" (Messner et al., 2000, pp. 385, 387, 389).

Although Messner et al.'s (2000) empirical confirmation of a "televised sports manhood formula" is a crucial contribution to the body of work on masculinity and media, what is also notable is their recognition of "discontinuities" within their findings (p. 393). Specifically, Messner et al. referred to the television commercials that accompany sports programming, arguing:

Although the dominant tendency in commercials is to either erase women or present them as stereotypical support or sex objects, a significant minority of commercials present themes that set up men and boys as insecure and/or obnoxious shmucks and women as secure, knowledgeable, and authoritative. (p. 393)



Findings from Nylund's (2004) research into messages about masculinity within a U.S.-based sports talk radio show were strikingly similar to Messner et al.'s (2000) in this regard. Nylund found that although the contents of the radio show hosted by celebrity fast-talker Jim Rome generally reproduced and reinforced traditional understandings of masculinity through commentary and discussion that made light of, and implicitly tolerated, misogyny, violence, and heterosexual dominance, periodically the show included commentary that endorsed and advocated a liberal stance on homophobia—a stance sometimes taken by Rome in on-air discussions about gender issues and sport. In related research focused on popular television sitcoms like *Coach* and *Home Improvement*, Craig (1993) and Hanke (1998) described the existence of, potential of, and contradictions within (as well as humor at the expense of) traditional portrayals of hypermasculinity. With respect to the analysis of MOJO radio, the key point is that programming decisions, such as those made by producers of the prime-time sitcoms just referred to, can be viewed as both progressive insofar as they allow space for dialogue about the absurdity of some norms associated with "real men," and regressive in the sense of letting men off the hook for bad behavior because they are just "boys being boys."

With these contradictions in mind, a research protocol was developed to enable an analysis of the content of MOJO radio that attended to dominant constructions of gender (as well as its intersections with race, social class, and sexuality) within the station's on-air content, and remained sensitive to moments where nontraditional and self-reflexive understandings of manhood were privileged.

## Research Method

Data collection for this project took place between October 25 and December 9, 2002. Using a programmable videocassette recorder connected to an AM radio receiver, on-air audio programming was recorded onto VHS tapes. Six hours of programming was recorded each day over 15 separate days, totaling 90 hours of radio programming, which constituted the initial sample size. The 6 hours of programming recorded each day captured the initial hour of six separate daily programs featured on the MOJO network. Thus, the complete sample consisted of 90 hours of programming (15 hours from each show) from six different shows over 15 days. The regular programs included *The Jesse Dylan Show*, *Scruff Connors-Nationwide*, *Bill Courage*, *Tom Leykis*, *Loveline*, and *The Phil Hendrie Show*.

Of these six regular programs, two were locally produced and originated in Vancouver (*The Jesse Dylan Show* and *Bill Courage*), one was a national program originating in Toronto (*Scruff Connors-Nationwide*), and three were U.S. programs rebroadcast through MOJO as an affiliate (*Tom Leykis*, *Loveline*, and *The Phil Hendrie Show*). In three separate instances over the 15 days, regular programs were preempted for play-by-play coverage of the Vancouver Giants and the Western Hockey League All-Star Game, and in one case, the broadcast schedule was

changed to facilitate *Women on Men*, a locally broadcast program featuring women's perspectives on male-female relationships.

The data were analyzed by a primary coder who (a) listened to the first 30 minutes of each hour of recorded programming, and (b) coded the results as they related to specific themes. Thus, the sample of programming used in the data analysis was 3 hours each day over 15 days for a total of 45 hours. The initial themes used in the coding and analysis, developed jointly with a secondary analyst, were purposely broad to reflect the major topics relevant to the analysis. At the same time, however, the primary coder remained open to unanticipated themes that emerged throughout the analytic process. The initial themes were sex, sports, violence, consumerism, and masculinity. In the initial phase of analysis, notes were taken as they related to these themes. The counter times on the VCR of each thematic instance were recorded so that the researcher could revisit specific examples and reconsider emergent themes where necessary. Reading and rereading the analysis transcripts and grouping together similar types of data led to the creation of the seven themes discussed later, in the Results section.

This methodological approach was guided by an interpretive and critical understanding of media messages as texts. The study of messages recorded from MOJO would be considered both a textual analysis (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1990) and contextual or ideological analysis (Fiske, 1990; Kellner, 1995). The textual analysis was conducted with particular sensitivity to contradictions and unanticipated themes embedded in the (radio) contents (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). An ideological or contextual analysis of the media focuses on the ways in which dominant power relations are reproduced and reinforced. Doing contextual analysis in this framework means conducting not only a microlevel analysis (like the coding referred to earlier), but also attending to the ways in which cultural practices or texts are "articulated into a particular set of complex historical, economic and political relationships (Howell, Andrews, & Jackson, 2002, pp. 154-155). With this in mind, MOJO-produced radio messages were considered against a history and politics of gender relations and within an increasingly neoliberal, deregulation-oriented economic system.

## Results

The data described next include three types of on-air content: the radio shows that constituted MOJO programming, the self-promotional advertisements that aired regularly between scheduled programs, and the commercial advertisements that ran on MOJO. The results illustrate how the complementarity of programming, promotional material, and commercial advertising served to construct a celebratory sense of traditional masculinity, and, in turn, to construct the station's airwaves as a representational, if not tangible, social arena in which men could revel in hypermasculine rhetoric.

## Theme 1: Unapologetic Hypermasculinity

The content of MOJO radio constituted, and was constitutive of, a social reclamation project characterized by men's reassertion of traditional masculinity and the demarcation of specific gender boundaries. MOJO radio was a site at which men could unabashedly express (hyper) manhood in an environment free from guilt or social constraints. MOJO radio ran regular self-promoting spots during commercial breaks that reflected and reinforced the self-constructed cultural identity of the station. This collective identity was defined by the triumphant return of males, communicated through tag lines such as "MOJO 730, Talk Radio for Guys," and "Guys Are Back," and jingles that included lyrics like "I am a man, I am what I am, I am a man." These types of promotional statements served to establish the appropriate gender norms in which to comfortably situate the men-first focus of MOJO programming. At the same time, the content of MOJO radio begged an important question regarding the focus and format of the station: If guys had indeed come "back" to reclaim their dominant position within the gender structure of Canadian (or Western) culture, from where had they returned? The political implications of this question and its instigating statement are markedly increased given that the return of men was never questioned or discussed meaningfully as part of MOJO radio content. Moreover, promotional statements like "Guys Are Back" created an adversarial gender stance, positioning, and perhaps uniting, men against "the Others" (women, politics, society, etc.) that had previously driven them away.

An important distinction emerged through the analysis of MOJO radio, one that became central to the formation and representation of unapologetic masculinity—namely, the difference between men and guys. Promotional material used the terms *man* or *men* on occasion, but much more regularly and actively employed the terms *guy* or *guys* as, presumably, a more appropriately descriptive term of the typical MOJO listener, the station's targeted demographic, and the culture of the station's content. The understanding of guys as a regressive term appeared to be intentional, serving not only to reduce the formality of MOJO content, but to suggest a return to the essentially pleasurable, and previously denied activities of masculinity, as this regular promotional piece showed:

Male narrator: Ah, there's women, there's sports. I could give you lots of reasons. But isn't it just great being a guy? And you have beer, and you're sitting around on a Sunday in your gotch [*sic*]. I could go on and on. It's just great being a guy.

Female voice: [Exasperated tone] Oh brother!

Female announcer: This is talk radio for guys. MOJO radio.

This example illustrates the type of masculine revelry constructed through MOJO culture, specifically, the masculinity of being a guy, not a man. Whereas traditional manhood may include notions of social responsibility or breadwinning—stereotypical constructions in their own right—"guy-ness" or the act of being a guy, appeared to ab-

dicating males from social obligations so they could return to traditional male pleasures, such as drinking beer and lounging. The disapproving female gaze and her rejection of "the guy" and his masculine revelry provides less than subtle irony in this promotional piece. As further analysis will demonstrate, this recurring, ubiquitous, and often anonymous female character has implications for the social construction of a gender binary within MOJO culture, in addition to representing the dilemma faced by men in their quest to simultaneously celebrate manhood while negotiating social and sexual relations with women.

The gender dynamic of men negotiating or aggressively asserting their masculine space in the face of social constraints was regularly played out during live radio broadcasts on MOJO as well. Male broadcasters often used the format and the supportive male culture of the on-air broadcast to reassert their masculine and sexualized focus, often leaving female broadcasters with a difficult choice: either play along with the joke (and be welcomed as one who was hip to the male culture) or endure relegation as a woman who did not understand traditional masculinity and was attempting to force her constraining disapproval on men. In other cases, such as the following example from *The Jesse Dylan Show*, female broadcasters were sexualized and in turn (sarcastically) criticized for both demonstrating and protecting their sexual identities.

Jesse Dylan: Claudine [female cohost] is not here today. She's gone down to Los Angeles to be with her love. Apparently, the man of her life left her for a career in L.A., she's gone to see if they can't put it back on the rails and we wish her all the best, we really do. Because God knows, it's difficult trying to—as handsome as Chris and I are...

Chris [cohost]: One day, I'm gonna snap! I'm gonna lose it!

This male–female DJ dynamic was also present on *Bill Courage* although not played out in such an adversarial fashion when compared to *The Jesse Dylan Show*. On *Bill Courage*, the male host and his female cohost engaged in more egalitarian dialogue or friendly banter, often covering 10 minutes or more of live radio. Often, the topics of conversation and the relations between the two personalities suggested a genuine fondness and a mutual respect. At the same time, however, during all of the coverage analyzed in this study, the cohost of *Bill Courage* was referred to on five separate occasions in terms of her heterosexual attractiveness (i.e., a hot blond) whereas Courage himself was never described in reference to his physical attractiveness.

The only other female broadcaster who enjoyed significant air time during the course of the study was also a journalist for a local commercial newspaper for whom she penned a social column well known for its often titillating descriptions of the social exploits of young people around town. In a clearly related manner, her work on MOJO, both as a guest host and as the host of *Women on Men*, engaged a voyeuristic sensibility wherein men could acquire dating tips to improve their own social and sexual performance, phone the station to talk to women about relationships and sex, or, as the name of the program suggested, simply be aroused by listening to women talk about dating and sex.

## Theme 2: Men, Women, and the Gender Binary

Closely tied to the unapologetic masculinity of the MOJO radio culture was the way in which programming consistently worked to position traditional masculinity in opposition to femininity. The hypermasculine form constructed through the MOJO experience was reinforced not only through the celebration of the quintessential qualities of manhood, but also through consistent and socially structured reminders of what men are not.

For example, a MOJO promotional spot entitled "Guys What Sound Like Chicks [sic]" aired 11 times during the study and employed gender- and race-based humor to claim and reinforce differences between men and women based on the sound of their voices. In the spot, a male narrator employing a thick working-class, European immigrant accent comments, in an unbelievable fashion, that the feminine voice heard singing "O Holy Night" is that of a male, or more accurately, a guy.

Man: And now MOJO radio presents "Guys What Sound Like Chicks." OK, let's roll the tape.

[Voice singing "O Holy Night."]

Man: That's a guy! Yeah, that's a guy! Anyways, talk radio for guys, MOJO radio. Can you believe that's a guy!? OK, he's a kid, but he's a guy kid! What?

Female announcer: Talk radio for guys. MOJO radio. The all new AM 730.

Clearly, this piece was intended to be humorous (discussed further later both in terms of the narrator's ignorant surprise to an operatic falsetto as well as the gender-bending quality of a male singing in a high voice). However, in terms of gender construction, the promo also serves to create a baseline of normativity. The promo is only funny and meaningful if one understands that men possess low voices and women high voices. It is the creation of a gender binary that provides the ingredients for this juxtaposition and, more generally, serves as the gendered backdrop for much of MOJO's on-air content.

## Theme 3: Commercial Manhood

This study also considered how the advertising and marketing of products and services influenced, or were influenced by, the declaration of masculine airspace on MOJO radio. Not surprisingly, the results showed that, with few notable exceptions, commercial advertising on MOJO aligned with the hypermasculinity celebrated in the station's promotions and programs. For example, an advertisement for a brand of chicken ran seven times during the study with the tag line "When not just any cock'll do." This style of overt sexual innuendo fit within the cultural understandings of the station content and seemingly served two purposes: One, to celebrate the loosening

of political correctness required to make this type of advertisement appropriate, and two, to position the product as hip, evidenced by its acceptance and support of the "rebirth" of masculine culture.

Another example of the mixing of gender and sex in advertising on MOJO featured a cable hockey network. In this advertisement, the male narrator of the commercial speaks to a woman on the phone to make plans for a date. Eventually, after several failed attempts to agree on a time, it becomes obvious that the man is unable to meet the woman given the overwhelming number of hockey games that are available on cable television. Eventually, the woman (whose voice is never heard during the spot) becomes frustrated and hangs up the phone, leaving the man to wallow in the consequences of his decision:

[Phone rings.]

Man: Hello? Oh, hi Natasha. Dinner? Your place? You know I'm there, baby. Ha! Next Thursday? Let me check, oh sorry, I can't. The following Wednesday? Nah, I got something on. Friday? Yeah, yeah Fri—no, I'm busy Friday.

Narrator: If you're a Canucks fan, consider your calendar filled. With 46 Canucks game, Rogers SportsNet Pacific is the home of hockey that matters.

Man: Wait, let me check December. Natasha? Hello?

This example also illustrates the continued celebration of oppositional masculinity in that the man is unwilling, or perhaps unable, to modify his relationship with hockey to cultivate a relationship with a woman. At the same time, the man's bewildered tone at the conclusion of the spot implies that he wishes to be with the woman—his incompetence is not a lack of desire—but hockey has to come first. This commercial not only aligned with MOJO sensibilities but also engaged other important themes in this analysis, namely the relation between traditional masculinity and sports, and the male pursuit of women.

Other regular commercial content on MOJO was less obtuse in its reproduction of hypermasculinity—such as advertisements for products like wedding engagement rings, tires, auto dealerships, financial management, sports gambling, and stereo equipment:

Narrator: Ever wonder what it would be like to have a real home theatre system? No, not one of those pathetic systems with tiny cubes for speakers and wimpy, weigh nothing amplifiers. I mean, a high-performance, killer system. Head into Speaker City and get into a truly great home theatre system. Speaker City. Expensive sound without the expense.

In another ad aimed at the typical male consumer, a local professional hockey player seemingly clears the way for a quick and easy automobile purchase.

Matt Cooke: Hi, I'm Matt Cooke from the Vancouver Canucks. With all the clutching and grabbing out of the way, it makes my job a lot easier. If you're look-

ing for a new car or truck, and don't want to deal with the clutching and grabbing, go see my friends at Metro Motors.

Narrator: Metro Motors has year-end prices on all 2002 models.

Matt Cooke: Metro Motors. Three Blocks East of Coquitlam Centre in beautiful Port Coquitlam.

Jingle: Metro Motors! Our reputation rides with you!

Although not overt in their celebration of typical masculine behavior, these types of ads nonetheless implied traditional male activities based on the normative understandings of masculinity.

Still, there were notable exceptions to the celebratory masculine forms of advertising on MOJO radio. Several regular advertisements supported a position of social responsibility. For example, regular public service announcements ran on MOJO that encouraged listeners to donate blood, suggested regular eye exams to detect preventable eye conditions, and in one particularly self-reflexive message, MOJO radio identified itself as a member of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council and invited listeners to write to the station to express their reactions, positive or negative, to the station's content. Overall, the message of social responsibility that aired most regularly on MOJO centered on the importance of responsible alcohol consumption:

Man: Excuse me. I'd like to make a toast, to my wife. Joyce, ahhh, it's hard to believe. Twenty years! In fact, when I look at you seated here amongst all our family and friends, I have to say you look as beautiful now as you did on our wedding day.

Woman: Martin! I'm over here.

Narrator: A little alcohol can affect you more than you think. Remember, plan a safe ride home before you go out. Drinking Driving Counterattack. A message from the broadcasters of BC.

It is important to note that advertisements that could be described as socially responsible ran, on average, one to two times during a half-hour segment, a small component of the 10 to 12 ads that typically ran during that time. Still, this example demonstrates some measure of social responsibility within the commercial format and cultural sensitivities of MOJO radio.

#### Theme 4: Masculinity and Spectator Sports

Not surprisingly, MOJO cultivated a strong link between traditional masculinity and spectator sports. This relation was manifest in several forms. First, during local newscasts, which took place on an hourly basis during *The Jesse Dylan Show* and *Bill Courage*, nearly half of the time dedicated to the total newscast was devoted to sports coverage. Sports that regularly and repeatedly received coverage included male professional North American sports, specifically "the big four" of the National Hockey League, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, and Major League Baseball. Local sports were reported first—an indication of newsworthi-

ness—only if the story focused on the Vancouver Canucks, the local NHL team that generally dominates commercial sports media coverage in Vancouver.

However, beyond the presence of sport on MOJO and the implied linkages between masculinity and sport culture, there was also clear evidence that sport coverage on MOJO served to support traditional notions of masculinity. For example, during Giants hockey broadcasts, MOJO would hold a contest during power plays (the instance during a hockey game when one team is penalized and the other team has more skaters on the ice) in which a fan drawn at random was eligible to win a cash prize if the Giants scored. Although not an uncommon activity during hockey broadcasts, MOJO's power play contest was named the Kal Tire Man Advantage, illustrating not only the commercial links among masculinity, hockey, and traditional male products, but also subtly reinforcing the unapologetic celebration of patriarchy that defined the MOJO format. Although the extent to which the naming of the contest was intentionally used as a tool to assert hegemonic masculinity is open to debate, the fact remains that of all the names available for this contest, MOJO chose one that actively celebrated male dominance.

Although it is impossible to know for certain, it is reasonable to suggest that sports that did not align with traditionally male meanings and understandings of sport would not have been afforded significant coverage on MOJO. The results do indicate that nearly every instance of sports reporting captured within this study featured men playing sports; men broadcasting and analyzing sports; and the coverage of sports, such as hockey, that represented traditional, aggressive, invasive team sports. The exceptions occurred on 12 occasions, when a female newsreader either reported sports scores or provided sports updates as part of a news broadcast. There appeared to be no legitimate social space for nontraditional sport or sport for, or played by, women.

## Theme 5: Sex and the Pursuit of Women

The pursuit of women by men—a theme underlying much of MOJO's programming—ranged from the voyeuristic, characterized by men listening in on female conversations or analyzing female psychology, to the instructive, in which information was offered by "experts" to better prepare men for the successful pursuit of women and sex. Inherent in this theme was the reproduction of a gender binary in which the male MOJO listener was understood to be detached from women, to such an extent that further information was required for him to understand and better relate to females. In other words, these types of promotional tools assumed an inability of men to "understand" women, which presented a serious problem for MOJO listeners, not in terms of establishing a mutual respect with women, but to satisfy their sexual desires.

An example of this theme was discerned from a promotional segment, one that occurred on a daily basis throughout the analysis, entitled "Ask a MOJO Model." This spot involved female voices, assumed to be the voices of attractive MOJO models, answering questions provided by a male voiceover. However, it is important to note that



the male voice had clearly been overdubbed after the recording of the models' responses, to provide a humorous cooptation of the women's answers, often based on sexual innuendoes and suggestive references.

- Female narrator: It's time to ask a MOJO model, brought to you by Diva's Den, the salon.  
 Male: OK, so what do you fantasize about, hmmm? Y'know, when you're not the subject of a fantasy, er, yourself. What would that be?  
 Model 1: I'll say absolute romance.  
 Male: [Sarcastic tone] Romance!  
 Model 1: Something out of *Blue Lagoon*.

In this example, and each instance of "Ask a MOJO Model," the male narrator was clearly excited to gain insight into the models' psyche and desires, even though the "dialogue" was simply his reaction to the model's monologue. Further, this spot created an antagonistic dynamic through which the narrator could celebrate his good fortune in being close to attractive women but could not participate in an actual dialogue, leaving him with limited social tools, such as sarcasm, with which to engage the models. Thus, although the spot was portrayed as a vehicle to provide men with useful information about women, the sarcastic humor injected into the promo served to construct attractive (in heterosexually normative terms) women as socially distant or, with respect to sexual pursuit, unattainable, to the extent that the male narrator was left to hijack the conversations to fulfill his voyeuristic desires.

These types of promotional spots were often contradictory or illogical when considered as a whole. On the one hand, the culture of MOJO appeared to promote an unapologetic reveling in traditional masculinity and the need to reclaim cultural space presumably lost through women's successful rejections of patriarchal structures. At the same time, these statements were often juxtaposed with the constant male desire to attract women, or, in some cases, to conquer or be conquered by them. The following promotional spot, in which a male narrator claims his defiance in the face of pressure to relinquish patriarchal control, only to end up submitting (or humiliated) before a dominatrix, ran almost daily.

- Man: When it comes to women, their demands, their needs, the things they say and do, a guy will never sacrifice his pride or dignity. Integrity, that's everything. Compromise our guyness? Play the role of subservient? Never.

[Music interrupts.]

- Woman: Shut up and bark like a dog!  
 Man: Ruff.  
 Woman: Bark, bark!  
 Man: Ruff, ruff.  
 Woman: A big dog!  
 Man: RUFF!  
 Female announcer: Vancouver's only talk radio for guys. MOJO Radio. The all new AM 730.

The result of this promo is a muddled male character who seemingly cannot make up his mind about whether to dominate or be dominated by women, further implying that a partnership with a woman based on respect is not a viable alternative.

At the same time, the pursuit of women was also manifest in a more straightforward manner. In these instances, MOJO programming included attempts to provide men with the required tools to meet and have successful (sexual) relationships with women. One promotional piece provided men with tips on how to meet women, including when to approach a woman for the first time, appropriate language to use, and positive grooming techniques. Although this seemed to imply the possibility of more meaningful or progressive relationships with women as compared to "Ask a MOJO Model," it is important to note that this promotional spot ran just once over the course of the study whereas "Ask a MOJO Model" ran on a daily basis and on most days, several times a day.

The male pursuit of women featured prominently in regular MOJO programming as well. Although the topic was discussed occasionally on both *The Jesse Dylan Show* and *Bill Courage*, this pursuit theme was the primary focus of *Women on Men*, a program aimed at meeting the needs of men in their pursuit role. Interestingly, the host of *Women on Men* spent one of the weeks in the study as the guest host of *Bill Courage* and often her pursuit topic would carry over to the show as she hosted. For example, in the week that this personality sat in as the host of *Bill Courage*, her question of the day—a tool used to frame the daily discussion topic and to motivate listeners to phone in to the show—ranged from the best way "to melt a woman's heart" to the biggest turn-ons and turn-offs during a romantic relationship.

The most overt example of the pursuit theme, however, occurred during *Tom Leykis*, which took the male drive for sex, and the female relations embedded therein, to its misogynistic extreme. Loyal listeners of *Tom Leykis* claimed to follow "Leykis 101," the host's "rules" for encounters with women, anchored in overtly sexist and patriarchal social interpretations. In the culture of *Tom Leykis*, women were tolerated if they were willing to engage in sex, but with the understanding that they each had an "expiry date," presumably linked to age (i.e., older women lose their sex appeal) or tied to the pressure to commit that "forces" a man to leave the relationship. In this sense, *Tom Leykis* represented a paradox of masculinity by condemning but also celebrating or deriving pleasure from the traditional notion of the male as socially dysfunctional, incapable of meaningful relationships, and consistently suspicious of women as predators of men's personal space and social authority.

## Theme 6: Marginalizing Masculinities: Sexuality and Race

The construction and celebration of hegemonic masculinity produced through MOJO Radio included exclusive notions of sexuality and race that, although not clearly constructed in terms of a binary, were nonetheless present in promotional material and program content. One example was a promotional spot that aired regularly

(six times) on MOJO over the course of the study entitled "Scary Facts" in which a male voice described "things that are kind of scary." The voice was clearly male but feminized in such a way as to denote a stereotypically gay identity. It is important to note that this was not a regular occurring spot on MOJO over the span of the study and did not recur with near the same frequency as, for example, "Ask a MOJO Model." However, it was an important promotional tool in that it served to reinforce and reconstruct the oppositional nature of masculinity, this time with respect to femininity, homosexuality, or alternative social understandings of manhood.

Although the oppositional nature of masculinity and homosexuality was clear, if not frequently projected through MOJO content, even further below the cultural surface of the radio station were notions of race. *The Jesse Dylan Show* employed a regular ethnic character, Ramesh, to pose as a dissatisfied retail customer and make phone calls complaining to customer service agents while the rest of *The Jesse Dylan Show* on-air crew, and MOJO listeners, followed along. Key to Ramesh's character was his thick Indo-Canadian accent and his relentless tirades against the people and products that failed to meet his expectations.

Another more malicious use of ethnic humor took place during the news and sportscast of *The Jesse Dylan Show*. In this bit, the coanchors discussed the merits of using Western constructs of gender to embarrass and subsequently expose potential terrorists and supporters of the Taliban, an idea based on an Australian model. Although this antiterrorist tirade was not representative of regular MOJO content, it does show how race was embedded or intertwined with notions of gender to contribute to a racialized sense of hegemonic masculinity within the culture of MOJO. Notions of sexuality, and the oppositional positioning of gay identity in pieces like "Scary Facts" also worked to constrain and normalize the social construction of the MOJO guy.

## Theme 7: Contradictions Within MOJO Culture

The gender codes generally promoted on MOJO were, on occasion, contradicted by content or programming that displayed a heightened sense of critical awareness or cultural sensitivity. This type of sensitivity was not a critical self-reflexivity in which the practices of MOJO Radio were analyzed or opposed, but rather manifest in the discussion of social issues that ranged beyond the celebration of hypermasculinity. For example, one week of *Scruff Connors-Nationwide* featured a guest host whose topics for discussion strayed from the traditional MOJO format toward content including national politics, environmental responsibility and activism, and philosophical discussions of Canadian identity. Guests included a Canadian actor and playwright, and an author and journalist who had covered environmental issues surrounding natural gas extraction in Alberta. Still, even within this more sensitive culture of talk radio, there was evidence of gender boundaries being demarcated. For example, when signing off or leading to commercial breaks the host would remind listeners to return

to the program by using the phrase "Come back to me brothers." Sexual double entendres were a popular gender tool for this host as well.

*The Phil Hendrie Show* also provided an interesting example of the contradictory messages found within MOJO Radio content. This popular U.S. talk show rebroadcast by MOJO combined an odd mix of low-brow comedy and mockumentary impressionism as well as satiric discussions of the social issues of the day. Hendrie, a host of impressive vocal talents, would consistently create characters to draw attention to, and ultimately satirize a range of important issues, including the U.S. War on Terror.

When considered against the results of the study as a whole, *The Phil Hendrie Show* was difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, his critical sensibilities and independence from the male-female binary provided a fresh perspective within the MOJO culture of patriarchy. At the same time, the content of his program often relied on the types of sexual innuendoes and voyeuristic pursuits regularly featured in other MOJO programming, which seemingly served to confirm a place for *The Phil Hendrie Show* within the cultural confines of the station's format.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The overarching finding of this study is that messages embedded in MOJO's on-air broadcasts reinforced and reproduced a hegemonic masculine power structure. This aligns with findings from previous studies regarding the production of masculinity in media targeting a young adult, heterosexual, and male demographic. More specifically, that a "return to traditional forms of manhood" was celebrated in a variety of ways on MOJO is consistent with work by authors like Messner et al. (2000), who described a televised manhood formula. For example, the findings reinforced the notion that (White) men were understood as voices of authority, and that hypermasculine sports (prioritizing aggression, violence, and sacrifice), combined with talk-show commentary about these sports, received a wealth of air time. This study also revealed that women are either absent, sexualized, or used as a template against which men can assert antifeminist or antifeminine rhetoric—a finding akin to those described in Messner et al.'s (2000) and Nylund's (2004) work. The focus on sex and the pursuit of women that was the basis for so many of MOJO's on-air discussions confirm what Hare-Mustin (1994) referred to as the "heterosexual male sexual drive discourse" (p. 24) and what Nylund (2004) referred to as an ideological justification for media contents that reinforce "women's subjugation as they become defined as existing solely for men's pleasure" (p. 146). The use of humor and parody around stereotypes associated with gay men and Indo-Canadian men found in this study is comparable to findings by authors like Dworkin and Wachs (1998), who, in their work of media, race, and sexuality, described how the identities of gay athletes and African American athletes were commonly marginalized and presumed "deviant" (i.e., deviating from a taken-for-granted set of societal and social norms). That is to say, in both cases, media messages were identified that reinforced a marginalized positioning for these social groups.

At the same time, a key finding of this study was not highlighted in previous research. Traditional masculinity, as it was promoted on MOJO, often focused on and portrayed pleasure-seeking, beer-consuming, couch-sitting, sports-watching guys as opposed to men who may more closely represent traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity mentioned earlier (power, success, independence). This celebration of an excess and pleasure-driven masculinity is not unexpected, however, given that MOJO sought to create a young, heterosexual male "audience commodity." In essence then, the promotion of a "consuming guy" serves the purposes of the most powerful men in media—the owners of the corporations that control radio stations. With this in mind, it is reasonable to suggest that the creation and maintenance of a radio station based on the celebration of masculine culture was, in many respects, a means to a profitable end. However, as Sparks (1992) argued in his study of masculinity and TSN referred to earlier, this sort of analysis, although likely accurate, is overly simplistic:

TSN's emphasis on a masculine network image and traditional men's sports should not be *idly* dismissed as yet another instance of the crass pursuit of media profits or the naive celebration of masculinity, even though this may be tempting. Both explanations fail to engage the political and economic issues which surround the case.

Sparks's suggestion is even more incisive now, 14 years later. The production decisions of the commercial media not only hinge on the strategic importance of the audience commodity in terms of decision making, but the focus on building audiences tends to narrow the range of acceptable interpretations and production choices available to media producers (Darnell & Sparks, 2005; Sparks, 1992). In other words, when presented with an array of format options, media producers and managers tend to choose traditional and proven formats that present greater financial security and less risk. Further, the increasingly deregulated radio industry in Canada has not only paved the way for niche stations like MOJO Radio, but has also allowed a select few media conglomerates to begin monopolizing ownership of Canadian stations. It is not a stretch to argue that these developments reflect changes made in countries like the United States, where deregulation and other neoliberal-inspired developments have led to a slackening of content regulations and media ownership guidelines, creating a political economy in which a small number of media owners produce relatively homogenous programming—programming that increasingly features "politically incorrect" talk and sport radio formats that cater to White, middle-class men between 24 and 55 years of age (Nylund, 2004, p. 138; cf. Cook, 2001).

Similarly, it is notable that MOJO radio included a wealth of content produced in the United States, a finding that raises the issue of the Americanization of talk radio content (an issue discussed in depth by authors like Winter & Goldman, 1995), and also the need to account for how local context impacts the ways in which this U.S.-based content might be received in Canada. Although this specific issue is beyond the scope of this study's findings, it is suggested that Canada, although having a deserved reputation as being socially progressive on a number of levels, does possess

a sport media culture that reveres, for example, the hypermasculinity of men's hockey—a sport with a long history of violent and abusive behavior clearly tied to hegemonic masculine power structures (Wilson, 2006). Dangerous hazing rituals and violence in nonsport settings by hockey players are part of a “boys will be boys” culture that exists around minor hockey, and sexual abuse of minor players by coaches, and violence against women by some hockey players—abuses that often go unreported, or result in a stigmatized accuser when reports are publicized—are but some examples that have been extensively examined in the work of Robinson (1998). Gillett, White, and Young (1999) similarly discussed the widespread popularity of politically incorrect Canadian hockey icon Don Cherry who coached the 1970s Boston Bruins NHL team (known for their tough and aggressive style of play). Cherry is featured as a hockey celebrity through his line of *Rock'em, Sock'em* videos that include extended segments with “best hockey fights” and “best bodychecks,” and for years has been featured on a between-periods segment during CBC broadcasts of NHL games called *Coach's Corner*. It is reasonable to suggest that U.S.-based talk radio reaches some Canadian audiences who are seasoned by broadcasts of men's hockey, audiences potentially receptive to hypermasculine themes in the same way that Nylund (2004) found audiences to be receptive to *The Jim Rome Show*. In a similar way, Vancouver would be a receptive environment for the talk radio genre given the existence of long-running and popular talk and sports radio on CKNW, although there is no research that speaks to the gender-related messages offered on this particular station. It is worth noting in this context that MOJO has recently altered its format from a more broad-based “for men” programming model to one that is a largely sports talk (which also targets middle-class men aged 25–54, a demographic identified in a 2002 press release by Corus Entertainment).<sup>4</sup>

Two other points should be made regarding the potentially subversive utility of MOJO for audiences, potential that may or may not have impacted production decisions. First, as with Nylund's (2004) and Messner et al.'s (2000) work, there were moments in this research where traditional masculine codes were subverted through discussions about prosocial issues and through discussions with guests that would not be generally associated with a hypermasculine talk show format. Similarly, humor was sometimes used to challenge and satirize conservative understandings of social issues, akin in some respects to the progressive uses of humor identified in sitcoms like *Coach* and *Home Improvement* (see Hanke, 1998).

Second, the production of MOJO Radio speaks to the importance of social class in terms of understanding cultural productions and the ways in which individuals, and classes of individuals, engage with cultural forms in meaningful and pleasurable ways. That is to say, MOJO Radio may not have only represented a male escape from the social constraints of gendered political correctness, but may have also represented a form of class identity construction that is in opposition to the elitist dispositions associated with Canadian high culture and the traditional ruling class tastes. This point is akin to one made by British sociologist Paul Willis (1990) in his book *Common Culture*, who argued that common cultural activities (referring to everyday

cultural activities of many lower and middle-class males, which may include spectator sports), although conventionally dismissed as nonlegitimate forms of cultures, should be taken as seriously (i.e., as legitimately) as high cultural activities. Other research has similarly suggested that these associations between class, taste, and culture—and the cultural struggles inherent to them—need to be accounted for when critiquing and interpreting activities like the “consumption” of radio messages (cf. Holt & Thompson, 2004).

In concluding this study, it is important to acknowledge that without research that focuses on what MOJO’s audience members do within these moments of contradiction, or how they understand more traditional messages about masculinity, it is difficult to assertively speak about media impacts. However, it is reasonable to argue, based on the analysis of MOJO’s content across various genres of programming—and given the preponderance of similar messages in television media described in studies referred to throughout this article—that messages supporting the need for a return to traditional manhood are offered to audiences intertextually, and for this reason are extremely powerful (Dewhirst & Sparks, 2003). This area of research would benefit from studies focused specifically on the ways in which texts about masculinity are interpreted—studies that are sensitive to the local and national contexts in which the messages are transmitted, and the social positioning of audiences. In conducting such future research, it would be crucial to acknowledge that definitions of dominant and marginal forms of masculinity will vary from country to country, and within national contexts, and that these labels are only guides for understanding masculine archetypes that exist, in the life worlds of men and boys, in complex and contradictory forms (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Moreover, and following the progressive work of media researcher and theorist Sut Jhally (1999) and antiviolence educator Jackson Katz, who designed the acclaimed teaching video and education guide entitled *Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity*, information about audience interpretations should be used to (a) inform media literacy programming aimed at young males and females; and (b) inform activist work by organizations like Canada’s MediaWatch that aims to influence CRTC policy by promoting existing knowledge about relations among gender, violence, health, and media contents. The hope is that such work could play a role in inspiring critical thinking about the taken-for-granted production practices among those who disseminate images of hypermasculinity, and, in turn, aid in minimizing the potentially negative impacts of media messages that play a part in defining and reinforcing traditionally narrow codes of acceptable masculinity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>It is important to note, following the work of Beynon (2002) and Nylund (2004), that the “crisis of masculinity” should not be viewed as an exclusively contemporary phenomenon. In fact, and as Nylund stated (drawing on Beynon, 2002), “there are many historical periods when mas-

culinity appeared to be in crisis" and that it could be argued that "crisis is constitutive of masculinity itself" (p. 164).

<sup>2</sup>Although some men have claimed a marginalized status because of changes in societal structures (e.g., affirmative action programs), this status would seem absurd to anyone perusing research on power relationships in the workplace (that tend to show White men inhabiting the upper rungs in employment hierarchies), or studies that compare incomes among men and women (cf. McKay, 1999).

<sup>3</sup>African American athletes are an example of a marginalized masculine identity because the successes of some of these athletes do not "trickle down" to other African American men; therefore, the relations of power are not interrupted despite the powerful and revered masculine personas of many celebrity sport stars (Connell, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>Shortly before this article went to press, MOJO radio again changed its format (on June 5, 2006) to one that emphasizes talk, traffic, and weather. Apparently, MOJO had difficulty competing with Vancouver station TEAM 1040, its more established rival in the all-sports genre in the Vancouver area.

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## Public Policies and Research on Cultural Diversity and Television in Mexico

José-Carlos Lozano

*The issue of how to preserve and promote cultural diversity in Mexico has not been central in policy debates and regulations. However, scholars, politicians, and public officials increasingly are debating how to promote and maintain cultural diversity here. This article reviews the current Mexican debate on policies related to the promotion of cultural diversity through television, using the concepts of source, content, and exposure diversity. The article argues that current commercial strategies in Mexico do not stimulate cultural diversity in media content. Instead, it advocates a mixed system of media with different mandates and modes of financing.*

The issue of how to preserve and promote cultural diversity through the mass media has been central in policy debates and regulations both in Europe and in North America. In the beginning of the 21st century, with the huge importance and technological developments of the mass media, the debate about how to reconcile the commercial imperatives of the media with the social goal of the promotion of cultural diversity has become even more crucial. More than any other cultural medium, the mass media (radio, television, and film, in particular) have become the arena where cultural supply is structured and where cultural identities are depicted and shaped. These media create, distribute, and promote the symbols and resources that are appropriated and redesigned by audiences. As Golding (1998) argued, the mass media "are unique in providing both goods that command a critical place in the modern economy as well as providing the vehicles by which the symbols and values that people deploy in making sense of their lives are delivered and disseminated" (p. 16).

The idea of national audiences pertaining to a homogeneous group of people with similar interests, backgrounds, and ideas has never been in agreement with social reality and seems meaningless in the face of the processes of migration and multiculturalism that characterize contemporary countries and regions. This is the case in Mexico, with a heterogeneous audience with diverse ethnic, geographic, and class backgrounds that asks for plural public debates and access to the media.

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What are the alternatives to promote and maintain cultural diversity in a country closely integrated with the United States, not just through economic trade but through the mass media? A starting point may be to discuss whether the media should fulfill a social role and whether they should be prompted or forced to promote cultural diversity. The answer to this question seems to be clear. The legal framework of Mexico, as is the case in Canada and the United States, expects the media, in particular electronic media, to promote diversity. The standing Radio and Television Federal Law in Mexico, although it does not explicitly mention the promotion of cultural diversity as a goal, mandates that radio and television stations foster gender equality and respect for the rights of vulnerable groups (Reglamento de la Ley Federal, 2003). It also explicitly prohibits any content that discriminates against ethnic groups (Ley Federal de Radio y Televisión, 1962, Art. 63).

As Freedman (2004) argues, references to diversity and pluralism appear in policy or legal documents that are highly deregulatory and liberalizing in character. This is true in a U.S. case, where a recent review by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of media ownership regulation ended in a decision to loosen ownership rules and sanction further cross-media ownership (Freedman, 2004). It is also true for the Mexican case, where federal administrations have advocated neoliberal policies from the mid-1980s to the present day (Lozano, 2003). Mexican audiovisual and telecommunications industries have experienced significant changes since the early 1980s, consolidated in the 1990s, and have dramatically transformed the supply and consumption of these services in the early 2000s. Many years before the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Mexican government embraced trends and economic policies geared toward liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of the economy in general, and in particular the audiovisual and telecommunications sectors (Covi, 2000; Gómez Mont, 2000; Sánchez Ruiz, 2000a). In contrast with the nationalistic and protectionist policies embraced by the different administrations since Mexico's independence in 1910 up to the 1970s, the 1980s represented a radical shift toward the adoption of neoliberal strategies and models. After a severe economic crisis in 1982, the administration of Miguel de la Madrid decided to open the economy in unprecedented ways. In his administration, Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the government privatized and deregulated many aspects of production and commerce. This was also true of Mexico's electronic media and telecommunications sector.

In the NAFTA negotiations, the Mexican government decided not to ask for a cultural exemption clause, unlike Canada, which had decided to exclude its cultural industries from the treaty to be better able to protect them. Following the logic of the neoliberal policies espoused by the Mexican administration, culture was considered strong enough to be able to defend itself without any governmental policies safeguarding it (Gómez, 2004). The only restrictions imposed by the Mexican government in the NAFTA agreement were limits to the percentage of foreign investment in paid television (49%); the requirement to dub imports in Spanish, and a quota of 30%

of screen time in theaters for Mexican films (a quota that would decrease every year until reaching zero); and the prohibition of foreign nationals owning any percentage of broadcasting stations.

The consensus among communication scholars in Mexico—along with many of their colleagues in Canada and the United States—is that much more needs to be done to make sure the mass media will in fact promote and maintain cultural diversity. In fact, what is needed is the development and adoption of long-term communication policies because Mexico has never had a comprehensive state policy on media and telecommunications, only short-term reactions to what is already happening in the media market (Casas, 2006; Lozano, 2003).

This article uses as a basis for discussing cultural diversity policies in Mexico the analytical framework developed by Napoli (1999), who distinguished among three broad components of media diversity: source diversity, content diversity, and exposure diversity. Next, Napoli's components and subcomponents are used to review today's situation in Mexican television.

## Dimensions of Diversity

### Source Diversity

In many policy debates, source diversity is seen as the most important factor to foster diversity in the mass media. According to Napoli (1999), this dimension has been traditionally conceptualized by policymakers in three separate ways: "(a) in terms of the diversity of ownership of content or programming, (b) in terms of the diversity of ownership of media outlets, and (c) in terms of the diversity of the workforce within individual media outlets" (p. 9). The distinction between content ownership and outlet ownership is relevant only if networks buy their television content from independent companies that sell their programs to the networks. This was the case in the United States from 1970 to the early 1990s, due to the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (or "Fin-Syn") of the FCC that "constrained the then three networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) from producing all but a small amount of the programs they broadcast in prime time and barred them from participating in the syndication of prime-time series" (Bielby & Bielby, 2003, p. 574). The goal of this policy was to force the owners of the channels of distribution to look for independent producers for sources of programming. The rules attempted to promote diversity and competition in the supply of prime-time entertainment programming and to forestall vertical integration. In the mid-1990s the FCC removed these regulations, allowing the networks to either produce their own prime-time programming or to continue buying it from independent producers. The result, according to Bielby and Bielby, has been "a reduction in the number of organizational settings in which those who create television series are employed, and an increase in corporate control over the circumstances under which they practice their craft" (p. 593).

Mexican regulations have never put any constraints on Mexican media networks in relation to in-house productions. Television conglomerates like Televisa and TV Azteca are free to produce whatever percentage of programming they want, and there are no policies or incentives that may prompt them to buy programming from national independent sources. In fact, both networks handle their total national programming in-house (Estrada, 2004). In its beginnings, due to its lack of experience and capital to produce all of its programming in-house, TV Azteca made an alliance with Argos Producciones, an independent producer that provided the network with successful *telenovelas* like *Nada Personal* (1996), *Mirada de Mujer* (1997), and *Demasiado Corazón* (1998). By the end of the 1990s, however, TV Azteca decided to produce all of its programming and reduced the number of hours produced by Argos from 5 to 1 daily, and later completely broke off its relationship with the independent company. Televisa, on the other hand, had the tradition of producing everything in-house and was not interested in buying content from independent producers. In 2000, Argos signed an agreement with Telemundo in the United States. Today, this network broadcasts Argos productions on its TV affiliates and participates in their distribution and commercialization in other countries (Lord, 2005). Argos president Epigmenio Ibarra has publicly asked for a license to start a new TV channel, criticizing the existing duopoly, but the government and current regulations have not allowed that to happen.

This situation in the Mexican media market reflects the historical disinterest of federal officials in tackling the issue of how to foster diversity in the national television system. The issue of how to make companies that control the distribution of content to the audience balance their own productions with alternative and independent sources of production has not been addressed.

In many countries of the world, media policies promoting diversity have focused mainly on curbing the concentration of ownership. The assumption has been that a diversity of owners will result in a diversity of content and points of view for audiences. Although this causal link has not been supported by empirical evidence (Napoli, 1999), many scholars and policymakers continue advocating strategies to avoid concentration of media ownership. In the United States, as has already been argued, recent rulings loosening ownership rules and allowing cross-media ownership (Freedman, 2004) and even the FCC policy of minority licensing preferences have come under sharp scrutiny by the courts. Horwitz (2004), however, argued that although modest, there is significant evidence of format variety brought by minority ownership of broadcast stations. Van Cuilenberg (1998), analyzing the European case, also defended the need for media policies focused on competition, preventing media concentration through setting maximum levels to media ownership.

Mexican policies, however, have not paid consistent attention to these kinds of structural regulations, opting rather for general and abstract guidelines geared toward promoting what scholars call *behavioral regulation*, regulation directed at the actions of the sources. The liberalization and deregulation reforms of the broadcast sector in the last decade have not been particularly objective and balanced. The government's neoliberal policies that were supposed to promote competition and growth have

managed to favor some groups or companies over others, generating a preferential consolidation in the different sectors (Crovi, 2000; Sánchez Ruiz, 2000b). According to Mexican scholar Sánchez Ruiz (2000a), the Mexican market structures today are highly oligopolistic in movies and television, and there is a high degree of transnational articulation, uneven in relation to its major commercial partner.

As Lawson (2001) argued, economic liberalization may have certain consequences for the mass media that work against increasing media competition:

One cautionary note suggested by the Mexican case is that unrestrained economic reform often leads to the establishment of private monopolies or oligopolies, including in the media. Mexican television, for instance, remains dominated by a duopoly that continues to constrain diversity and independence. (p. 241)

That Televisa and TV Azteca represent a duopoly in Mexico is supported by the following data: Combined, they own 98% of the total number of TV stations in the country (Estrada, 2004). Televisa has interests in television production and broadcasting, production of pay television programming, international distribution of television programming, direct-to-home satellite services, publishing and publishing distribution, cable television, radio production and broadcasting, professional sports and live entertainment, feature film production and distribution, and an Internet portal. Televisa also owns an unconsolidated equity stake in Univision, the leading Spanish-language media company in the United States. In 2005, the company aired 91 of the country's top 100 programs, capturing 71.3% of the sign-on to sign-off audience share (Televisa, 2005). TV Azteca, on the other hand, operates two national television networks through 315 owned and operated stations across Mexico. TV Azteca affiliates include a television network in the United States (Azteca America Network) and Todito.com, an Internet portal. TV Azteca also operates Azteca Internacional, which reaches 13 countries in Central and South America, and Azteca Music, a recording company with strategic associations with multinational producers and radio stations. TV Azteca also has 46.5% equity stake in Unefon, a wireless telecommunications provider, and a 50% equity stake in Cosmofrecuencias, a wireless broadband Internet access provider (Televisión Azteca, n.d.). Both Televisa and TV Azteca participate in the New York Stock Market.

An attempt in 2002 by Mexican legislators to pass a new Federal Communication Law established a limit of 25% of total market share for a media company in any city of the country, an unprecedented measure in Mexican media regulation. The initiative was the result of months of negotiations among a plural group composed of legislators, scholars, media representatives, and civil organizations. However, without prior warning, President Vicente Fox passed a new regulation on October 10, 2002 updating the 1973 provisions of the Federal Radio and Television Law with no mention of the limit of 25% of total market share or any other limit on ownership. Mexican legislators, scholars, and opposition figures reacted angrily to this decree, but they were unable to change it. At the end of that year, the Mexican Senate received a new

law initiative based mainly on the proposals of the original group, and by the end of 2005 the Evaluation Commission of the House and Senate had ended the stages of diagnosis, evaluation, analysis, and consulting of relevant actors in different Mexican cities, and were ready to present the project to the other commissions in Congress. One of the most interesting proposals included in the initiative was the creation of a National Council of Radio and Television, with the authority to grant authorizations and sanction broadcasters who would not fulfill their legal obligations. In addition, the initiative established that no additional radio or TV station would be granted to any private organization controlling more than 35% of the local market in question (Villamil, 2004). Due to the strong lobbying of Televisa and TV Azteca, this comprehensive reform was never considered. Instead, in the first week of December 2005, the Chamber of Deputies approved in record time, without a single vote against, a new bill presented by a PRI representative and a former employee of Televisa, and turned it over to the Senate for discussion and approval. The Senate attempted to discuss it and approve it quickly, but public outcry, an avalanche of press coverage, and lobbying by the Minister of the Interior of the Fox administration convinced enough senators to stop the fast track and take more time to discuss it and analyze it (Villamil, 2006). The initiative was called the "Televisa law" by some senators and journalists, who accused Televisa of drafting the legislation itself (O'Boyle, 2005; Padilla, 2006). Senator Javier Corral, one of the authors of the original bill that was never able to move from commissions to the plenary, accused the new proposal of trying to benefit Televisa and TV Azteca by giving them the right to offer new channels in the spectrum freed up by the transition from analog to digital terrestrial broadcasts without a government concession. The new law, according to Corral, would allow Televisa, just by submitting a simple application, to double its number of channels to eight without tendering or bidding against other parties. The Senate discussed the bill, and on March 30, 2006, the bill was approved 81 votes to 40 with 4 abstentions. Televisa's aggressive lobbying during a presidential campaign was seen by some analysts as the main reason the bill was finally approved (O'Boyle, 2005).

## **Content Diversity**

According to Napoli (1999), content diversity has three different subcomponents: format or program-type diversity, demographic diversity, and idea-viewpoint diversity.

Format or program-type diversity refers to the category designations given to radio formats and individual television programs. It addresses the range of different types of television shows from which a viewer can choose during an hour of television time. Programs should provide comprehensive and factual coverage of the different opinions relevant in society, and the various social and cultural groups must be allowed to voice their opinions (Hoffmann-Riem, 1987). Here, the assumption is that the greater the scope of genres and different types of programs, the greater the satisfaction of information, entertainment, or education needs of diverse audience groups. Some



genres appeal to women, some to men; some to particular groups of youngsters, some to old people; some to one particular ethnic minority, some to another ethnic group. Many studies in the United States, however, have documented the reliance of TV commercial networks on a few repetitive genres designed to appeal to all kinds of audiences (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Gutiérrez Gea, 2000). Although this makes sense in commercial terms, it represents the worst possible strategy for fostering diversity. In Mexico, several studies have shown that diversity in program and genre type is extremely low (Crovi & Vilar, 1995; Huerta & Lozano, 2001; Lozano & García Nuñez de Cáceres, 1995; Sánchez Ruiz, 1995). A study of 4 weeks (1 week for each trimester) in 1999 by Huerta and Lozano (2001) corroborated this conclusion: Only three genres (fiction, children, and information) accounted for between 70% and 80% of total time, a very high concentration of genres.<sup>1</sup> Genres like sports, variety shows, documentaries, game shows, comic shows, talk shows, and cultural and educational programs appeared only marginally. Martínez and Lozano (2005) reached similar conclusions in their vast longitudinal study of 12 weeks (1 week for each month) of 2003: Concentration of genres was extremely high in Mexican open national TV whether the content originated in Mexico or in the United States.

What about diversity within programs in the same genre? Have scholars found significant differences in the characters, topics, stories, locations, and ideas presented within a single genre? Current research shows this is highly unlikely. Commercial programs tend to rely on repetitive formulae, using very similar situations and characters to be attractive to the widest possible audience (Hoffmann-Riem, 1987; Van Cuilenberg, 1998). Recent findings at the Center for Communication and Information Research of the Tecnológico de Monterrey show local and imported television content in Mexico lack meaningful diversity when looking at characters and images portrayed in each category of genres (see Flores & García, 2005). In the United States, White, male, adult characters are the rule (Gerbner et al., 1994). In Mexico, less research has been done on this topic, but the available evidence shows that White, adult male and female characters are much more frequent than *mestizos* (brown, dark-skin, hybrid features of White and Indian mix), and that Native Mexican Indians are almost nonexistent in the world of TV (Flores & García, 2005).

Geographic location is another category where scholars find very low diversity. Instead of locating their information and fiction stories everywhere in the country, so that they can depict and represent the widest range of situations, events, cultural traits and characters, fictional and nonfictional TV programs, whether Mexican or U.S., focus their attention on the central powerful cities, like New York, Washington, and Los Angeles (in the case of U.S. content) or Mexico City (in the case of Mexican content). There is no available research on this topic in Mexico, but it can be argued that current content transmitted on Mexican TV is far from the ideal of including local, regional, national, and international locations. News programs, *telenovelas*, game shows, and so on, with some exceptions, tend to be located in Mexico City.

Idea diversity, unfortunately, has not been studied consistently either, despite its relevance. It is a possible outcome of source diversity and program-type diversity; it may also come from within a particular program. For democracy to be reinforced and cultural diversity to hold in a society, idea diversity in television content should be actively and permanently promoted. Methodological and operationalization problems, however, make the measurement of idea diversity in television content difficult, which explains why research in this line of study is so rare.

## Exposure Diversity

The final approach to measuring and evaluating cultural diversity in television is looking at the patterns of exposure of audience members. Many policymakers do not take into account how audience members tend to consume the available supply of television content, believing that regulating supply should take care of consumption diversity. Some scholars, however, convincingly argue that exposure diversity is a fundamental variable to be taken into account in policy discussions and strategies.

According to Napoli (1999), the concept of exposure diversity is divided into two components: horizontal diversity and vertical diversity. The former "refers to the distribution of audiences across all available content options, whereas vertical exposure diversity refers to the diversity of content consumption within individual audience members" (p. 26). Surveys about the exposure of audience members to different programs and genres show that the distribution of audiences across available content options is too restricted. A large survey carried out in the three largest Mexican cities—Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey—found that audience members preferred news programs, U.S. movies, sports, and *telenovelas* (Cerdeña, 1999). Although Cerdeña found some significant differences between men and women, each group was still restricted to very few different types of programs. In Monterrey, Mexico, a recent telephone survey also confirmed the same patterns (Lozano, 2004). What is needed in Mexico, however, is to carry out studies like the one done by Napoli (1997), looking at the distribution of rating points for television programs to determine whether audiences consume program types in proportion to their availability. If this is the case, and Napoli found a very strong positive relation for the U.S. case, then it could be argued also for the Mexican case that audiences do not select purposively the type of programs they really need or want, but choose only among what is most widely available.

Also according to Napoli (1999), vertical diversity refers to the exposure patterns within the individual audience member over time. For this, the media behavior of each individual must be tracked, as opposed to aggregated rating points. This kind of research is even scarcer in Canada and the United States, and almost nonexistent in Mexico. Future studies on the relation between media content and cultural diversity will need to include this dimension as a priority if one is to understand the real degree of diverse cultural content to which individual audience members are exposing them-

selves. Studies about the other kind of exposure, for the time being, suggest that vertical exposure may be as limited and focused on a very small number of genres and program types as horizontal exposure.

## Discussion

Unfortunately, current commercial strategies and goals both at the national and international level do not stimulate cultural diversity in media content. As Hoffmann-Riem (1987) argued, because of the market structure, certain content and program fields find it more difficult to be considered in the media market than others: "Commercial broadcasters prefer programs with a favorable ratio of revenue to production or purchasing costs" (p. 64). He mentioned other reasons for the electronic media's lack of interest in promoting cultural diversity: (a) the tendency to transmit programs with mass appeal, reducing their content to the lowest common denominator for the largest possible audience (these programs can be broadcast in many areas and can be shown as repeats at a later date); (b) entertainment programs have a structurally induced advantage over other programs, especially if they do not relate to current events; programs that refer to regional, local, or even national topics, and programs for less wealthy target groups such as children, the elderly, or society's fringe groups have poor commercial potential; and (c) to reach as large an audience as possible, the media try not to offend the target recipients in any way: "Dropping controversial issues, omitting cultural differentiation, taking greater care when dealing with clashing interests, and exercising restraint when formulating opinions are just some of the recipes for success" (p. 65). The commercial television markets, consequently, offer insufficient incentive for the full consideration of local, regional, and national, cultural and social diversity.

The hesitation of governments to regulate and force media to do a better job in the stimulation of diversity may come from a tension between the dual role of the mass media and the interests and expectations of audience members. As Golding (1998) explained, governments must take account of the media's standing as cultural institutions, "serving the political and cultural needs of the community in unique fashion, while at the same time they must consider the contribution of the media as industries at the key nodes in the nation's economic fabric" (p. 10). In addition, governments have to recognize that their populations confront the media in two roles, as consumers and citizens. "In these two roles their needs, and their demands for government action, may well be incompatible" (p. 10).

What Van Cuilenberg (1998) argued for the European case seems completely valid for the North American countries:

There is a clear and distinct relationship between diversity and tolerance. In our multicultural and multi-ethnic societies tolerance is of utmost importance. Diverse information on different cultures and different patterns of values, norms and ideas may contribute to mutual respect and acceptance. (p. 39)

However, as Hoffmann-Riem (1987) concluded, if proper communication policies are not adopted, the viewing patterns and perceptions of reality of the mass audience will probably be shaped primarily by other types of programming, especially mass entertainment: "It will be difficult to preserve specific traditions, moral concepts, or self-awareness of a society if the media content provided and consumed by the majority of the people is determined by the commercially induced characteristics already outlined" (p. 66).

Suggesting and adopting communication policies useful to promote cultural diversity, on the other hand, it is not an easy task. Some policies that may be considered unquestionably adequate to promote cultural diversity may achieve the exact opposite. The current tendency in the countries of North America is to formulate policies designed to regulate competition and ownership in the media with the objective of maximizing the number of outlets and emphasizing audience choice between these outlets. However, as many scholars have shown, deregulation and liberalization have generated more concentration and consequently a reduction of diversity in production and program type, geographic, and idea diversity (Bielby & Bielby, 2003; Freedman, 2004; Horwitz, 2004) despite the multiplication of outlets.

Some scholars have also warned that it is not just a matter of increasing the number of media channels or the type of content in each genre. It sounds paradoxical, but this in fact may lead to a less diverse diet of programming. If each particular individual would find content especially suited to his or her own demographic, ethnic, religious, and cultural characteristics, he or she would not watch programs with other values, ideas, representation of groups, or geographic locations. This is why policymakers should take into account not only content diversity, but also exposure diversity:

Without greater empirical attention to the exposure dimension of diversity, policy-makers are guilty of dangerously uninformed decision-making. ... Policies need to be assessed and critiqued not only from the perspective of how they contribute to the diversity of content available, but how they contribute to the diversity of content consumed. (Napoli, 1999, p. 29)

What would be reasonable policy alternatives for the promotion of cultural diversity in Mexican mass media? Scholars differ and are more prone to pointing out the shortcomings of current policies than to making proposals that overcome the limitations and failures of the current ones. One suggestion that is more appealing and sensible for Mexico is the one advanced in the European case by scholars like Curran (1991), Horwitz (2004), and Thompson (1995). According to Curran (1991), for example, what is needed is

a more mixed system of mass media with different mandates and different modes of financing. It is some combination of a mixed system of media and curbs on media concentration that will best secure a diversity of viewpoints and content. (p. 65)

Thompson (1995) proposed a similar model, calling it regulated pluralism. In his view, this principle should advocate the traditional liberal emphasis on the freedom of expression and on the importance of having media institutions independent of state power. However, it should also recognize that the market left to itself "will not necessarily secure the conditions of freedom of expression and promote diversity and pluralism in the sphere of communication" (p. 241). Thus, Thompson suggested legislation restricting and limiting mergers, takeovers, and cross-ownership in the media industries, and also concerned with actively promoting "favourable conditions for the development of media organizations that are not part of the large conglomerates" (p. 241). The British scholar acknowledged that the form of ownership and control in the media industries frequently is not a reliable indicator of the content and orientation of the material produced, and explained that a commercial basis may not lead to less criticism, quality or scarcity of public discourse. He ended his proposal arguing that because contemporary media are increasingly transnational in character, any public and national policy should put the international dimension at the center of the debate.

Public service media should exist and be supported to achieve higher and deeper levels of cultural diversity provided they are not forced to look for advertisement to subsist. Research evidence shows that the degree of different content, program types, geographic locations, and so on between private and public channels is much higher than between private channels owned by different organizations (De Bens, 1998). Following Curran (1991), Horwitz (2004) explained that these public service organizations should be fed by peripheral media sectors, "three of which are intended to facilitate the expression of dissenting and minority views": (a) a civic sector, (b) a professional media sector, and (c) a social market sector. The proposal of Curran and Horwitz may be considered more viable in Western Europe (in fact, it is inspired by different practices of different European countries), but may be the best policy Mexico could adopt if it is really going to establish policies useful for promoting diversity. Canada has a long tradition of public broadcasting service that in one way or another, with emphasis varying according to the ideological positions of the government, has been able to differentiate substantially from the content, goals, and characteristics of private media (Collins, 1990). In the United States, the Public Broadcasting Service is also a significant source of diversity and differentiation in comparison with the commercial networks.

Although in Mexico public television has a long history, it has never been a priority for the government. The first public channel (Channel 11) was founded in 1959 by the National Polytechnic Institute. For more than 3 decades it was only seen in a small part of Mexico City, but today it is included on most cable systems in the country. In 1972, the administration of Luis Echeverría Álvarez turned XHDF, a D.F. private channel, into a public channel and founded the Mexican Rural Television Network, which in 1983 became the Mexican Television Institute (IMEVISION) to bring together the different federal television channels available at the time. With two national channels, 7 and 13, IMEVISION had the potential to become a real alternative to the pri-

vate monopoly of Televisa, but never received enough funds and in practice was only used as a propaganda machine by the government. In 1993, the Salinas de Gortari administration privatized the national channels of IMEVISION, except for Channel 22, which became a cultural channel (Mejía Barquera, 1998; Zarur, n.d.). Today, the two main national public TV channels, Channel 22 and Channel 11, are distributed in most of the country either by open air or through paid TV, providing content and formats strikingly different from the ones supplied by commercial channels. In addition, 24 other public stations operate in the different states of the country through a special permit of the Mexican government that prohibits them from selling advertising, and with funds coming from the local state governments. Ten years ago, these 26 federal, state, and academic public TV stations decided to create the Educational and Cultural Radio and Television Stations Organization. One of the main goals of this organization has been to convince the federal government to establish a legal framework for the proper functioning of this type of broadcasting. For example, public stations want legal mechanisms guaranteeing the participation of other public sectors and citizens in the programming, content, and evaluation of their stations (Granados Chapa, 2004). Despite their importance and tradition, however, public stations were left out in the bill approved by the Mexican Congress. The Red de Radiodifusoras y Televisoras Educativas y Culturales de México, A.C. (Mexican Network of Educational and Cultural Radio and Television Stations) sent a letter to the Senate before the final vote questioning the lack of references and provisions for strengthening public radio and television stations in the new initiative (Velázquez, 2005), but the bill was approved without any amendment in favor of the public stations.

To suggest the adoption of policies supporting and expanding public service television in Mexico's audiovisual space, in a time when deregulation, liberalization, and privatization seem to be the processes championed by current administrations may seem out of order. In fact, according to Casas (2006), the Mexican government has never developed nor adopted formal communication public policies except for a *laissez-faire* approach in which regulations have typically been established after commercial mass media have grown, and then only to guarantee technical aspects, instead of supervising source and content diversity (Casas, 2006). She argued that historically the Mexican government has allowed the emergence of cultural industries that have been able to develop their own operating rules, with regulations appearing much later primarily as an official acknowledgment of the current state of affairs.

As shown earlier, available research shows clearly that policies and positions like the former have not contributed to fostering cultural diversity in broadcasting. If governments are serious about promoting cultural diversity through the mass media, and if they are really worried about the potential loss of the rich and extraordinary diversity of cultural, social, and ethnic manifestations that are so important for the success of societies, then they will have to acknowledge the relevance of public media to achieve the objective of allowing all groups of society to be represented and to be able to communicate and influence all others.

## Note

<sup>1</sup>The category of fiction included movies, sitcoms, and *telenovelas*; the category of children included cartoons, game and contest shows, comedies, and educational programs; the category of information included news programs, current affairs programs, and panel or interview shows.

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## Cultural Policy in a Free-Trade Environment: Mexican Television in Transition

Kenton T. Wilkinson

*As Mexico's government undertook neoliberal reforms to join the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, a number of scholars questioned the cultural consequences of closer media ties to the United States and Canada. Government officials countered that Mexico's strong identity needed no protection. This study situates the disagreement within cultural policy traditions, and examines how Mexican television broadcasting changed under globalization forces—including domestic competition, international market expansion, and new technology development—during the 1990s and early 2000s. The study concludes that insufficient attention was given NAFTA's impact on Mexico's own television industry, which strongly influences culture.*

Questions concerning what constitutes Mexican national culture, how it should be manifest, and the state's role in its protection and promotion changed considerably from the conclusion of the Mexican Revolution in 1920 through the 7-decade rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI by its Spanish acronym) to opposition candidate Vicente Fox's astounding election to the presidency in 2000.

This study focuses on a confluence of late-20th-century developments that are likely to influence Mexico's cultural politics and social change well into the new century. Certain developments, such as accelerated technological change and neoliberal economic reform, follow general global trends; others, like participation in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), are unique. Given Mexico's historic emphasis on national culture and long-standing concern about cultural encroachment by the United States, one would have expected ardent public discussion of free trade's potential impact on Mexico's culture and cultural industries. None developed, however. Rather, government representatives avoided or dismissed the issue, whereas academic researchers and public intellectuals—joined under the term *cultural intelligentsia*—focused on outcomes for Mexican culture and identity. This disconnect represented a lost opportunity for cultural policy in Mexico. Contemporary political, economic, and technological forces are challenging established communication pol-

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icy and practices in Mexico, as an overview of broadcast television in the 1990s reveals. Mexico's cultural policy must become more dynamic and inclusive to meet new demands and opportunities.

## The Evolution of Cultural Policy

During the 20th century, cultural policy played a key role in articulating and implementing the state's will in the areas of public education, support for public art, and the protection of cultural sovereignty. In the period immediately following the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), cultural policy pursued objectives outlined in the Constitution of 1917: to develop an enlightened, nationalist middle class able to withstand the negative influences of caudillos and oligarchs while ameliorating traditional social antagonisms (Tovar y de Teresa, 1994). The state supported numerous public art projects, but also recognized the mass media's potential to guide cultural processes unleashed by the Revolution toward the social-integration and institution-building goals of modernization. Radio and film received particular attention from the state, which backed film production at the Churubusco studios built in 1944, and expanded radio into rural areas. The 1930s and 1940s also saw the development of government institutions to protect and promote Mexico's cultural heritage. These included the National Institute of Fine Arts, the National Institute of Anthropology and History, and the Cultural Economics Fund, which supported intellectual pursuits such as scholarship, publishing, and exhibits.

Following World War II and continuing through the 1960s, Mexican cultural policy shifted toward social justice as the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the nonaligned nations sought a third path toward development during the Cold War. Increased attention was paid to promoting the cultural production of indigenous communities through low-cost, low-technology media such as radio and artisanship.

As concerns broadcasting, the 1960 Federal Radio and Television Law was not promulgated until 1973, nearly a quarter-century after Mexico's first television broadcast. It implemented the so-called 12.5% rule, granting the federal government greater access to public airwaves that were under commercial control. The broadcast policy was intended to dovetail with others in education, telecommunications, and health, but seldom achieved its aims and was lightly enforced (Díaz de Cossío, 1988). President José López Portillo (1976–1982) sought to limit private influence over mass media while expanding individual rights to information, yet one analyst characterized his administration's efforts as a "resounding failure" (Caletti Kaplan, 1988, p. 67). In this period, the government also acquired its own television network, *Imevisión*, which struggled to compete, but has become an important private player in a new era of Mexican broadcasting.

The 1980s through 2000s saw transformations challenging cultural and media policymakers across the globe. The accelerated development of new technologies

coincided with significant realignment of existing communication industries even as new industry sectors emerged. At the same time, neoliberal economic reforms reduced governments' regulatory influence over media-related industries and encouraged greater private-sector participation in the creation and dissemination of cultural products (Lewis & Miller, 2003).

The impact of these changes has been particularly strong in Mexico, where implementation of NAFTA has combined with political opening to challenge the status quo on numerous fronts. Notions of what constitutes culture, national cultural heritage, the state, the public, and identity have come into question. Notable shifts include efforts to understand and destigmatize popular culture, recognize the many ways that cultural production contributes to Mexican heritage, and disentangle the complexity of discourses and identity options available to contemporary audiences (González, 2001; Joseph, Rubenstein, & Zolov, 2001). The daunting challenge to formulate and implement appropriate cultural policy for ever-expanding media sources reaching an increasingly heterogeneous and fractured society has been compounded by the pro-business orientation of public policymaking in Mexico since 1982. Private entities such as the Televisa media conglomerate have assumed a more active role in promoting Mexico's cultural heritage, even as the state has given priority to cultural practices that appear to be losing influence. Thus, it should come as little surprise that a significant gulf separated the country's policymakers from the cultural intelligentsia, those scholars and cultural critics who sought to elucidate the cultural consequences of Mexico's joining NAFTA.

Each group addressed the cultural implications differently. Government representatives were responsible for conceiving and implementing policy for an agreement dominated by trade and economic issues. Due to the accelerated pace they kept and the political minefield they were traversing, officials largely avoided the volatile issue of culture, making little effort to address concerns expressed by the intelligentsia or the public. For its part, the intelligentsia raised significant issues regarding the agreement's impact on culture and identity, but mostly overlooked key economic considerations such as shifting structural conditions of domestic cultural industries or Mexico's competitiveness in international cultural markets. Against the backdrop of disconnect between these groups, this study examines developments in Mexico's domestic television industry from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s to assess how neoliberal economic reform has affected an industry Monsiváis (1996) considered "the main translator of the Mexican experience in Mexico" (p. 138).

### The Official View

Mexico's Secretary of Industry and Commerce, Jaime Serra Puche, was the member of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government (1988–1994) most directly responsible for selling Mexico's participation in NAFTA to the Mexican people. Serra Puche emphasized the need for public discussion of free trade during appearances at

"Information, Opinion and Dialog" forums hosted by Mexico's Senate in March and June 1991. In the first forum he cited the need to "open communication channels between the government and society to allow a greater number of representative opinions from diverse regions and movements to be heard" (Serra Puche, 1991, p. 656). Only 3 months later, he returned to the Senate to declare:

In this dialogue, the contribution of the communication media has been decisive; they have opened spaces for the inclusion of opinions, commentary, and criticism from all political persuasions and social groups. The number of articles, reports, interviews, editorials, and roundtables regarding topics related to the treaty is impressive. It represents solid proof of the dedicated participation of society, as well as the seriousness of your spokespersons and representatives. (p. 657, author's translation)

The cultural intelligentsia held a contrary view of the Mexican government's public information and discussion efforts. According to the anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1992), the general public was ill-informed about the signatory countries' positions on key issues, and, ultimately, only the opinions of industrialists were taken into account by negotiators. Monsiváis (1992) characterized the government's attitude toward the public as "depreciative and paternalistic" (p. 206). Political economist Gustavo del Castillo Vera (1995) noted:

In Mexico, the consultative process on this theme has been characterized by the lack of openness and centralization of decisions within a small bureaucracy, even when public hearings are held where representatives of industrial and other distinct interest groups and experts participate. (p. 351)

Castillo Vera concluded his analysis by questioning Mexico's future "within a half-closed negotiation characterized by obscurity and centralized decision-making" (p. 352).

Critics maintained that when government officials referred to cultural issues, they often did so dismissively. The standard response to questions regarding NAFTA's impact on culture was that it was not on the negotiating table (María y Campos, 1992). In what became a commonly cited exchange, here is how Secretary Serra Puche responded when asked whether including cultural industries in the agreement would affect Mexico's national identity: "This has little relevance for Mexico. If you have time you should see the [art] exhibit 'Mexico, Thirty Centuries of Splendor,' and you will realize there is no cause for concern" (cited in García Canclini, 1996, p. 143). In his second address to the aforementioned Senate forum Serra Puche (1991) stated:

[Our] strategy does not limit or erode sovereignty nor lead to the loss of cultural identity. ... The exercise of sovereignty and the affirmation of cultural identity do not exist in hypothetical isolation. Both are realized in the daily cultural and economic exchanges among nations, groups, and individuals. (p. 659, author's translation)

Thus, Serra Puche conceded that globalization brought Mexico into closer contact with other cultures, but where his critics saw opening communication industries as a broader conduit for outside influence, he saw a strengthening of cultural sovereignty and national identity.

Official pronouncements concerning culture and free trade were also criticized as contradictory. Monsiváis (1996) reported Serra Puche claiming on one occasion that art was not subject to intervention, and that Mexicans need not be told how to create it; on another occasion, he exhorted Mexicans to cling to their culture so it would survive. Monsiváis (1992) also noted an incongruity in the statements at the Senate forums made by Miguel Alemán Velasco, a politician, businessman, and former president of the Televisa media conglomerate. First, Alemán Velasco professed not to be concerned about "the hamburger civilization" (p. 208); later, he said that the importation of publications should be closely monitored to preserve national principles and cultures.

### **The Cultural Intelligentsia's View**

As Mexico began negotiating to join NAFTA, communication and cultural policy studies in the country were also changing. The heyday of cultural dependency theory had passed, and many scholars were taking more interpretive approaches to studying cultural industries and their audiences. Yet most scholars continued to believe that cultural products generally, and television programs especially, carry a potent mix of economic power and cultural persuasion. When these products are traded across national boundaries, they bear the qualitative stamp of their culture of origin. During the NAFTA negotiations, Mexico's cultural intelligentsia emphasized increased cross-border communications and the ascendancy of electronic media as purveyors of cultural material in their calls for public discussion of free trade and its long-term ramifications. Unfortunately, the intelligentsia's appeals for cultural policy reform were articulated in venues that were easily ignored by government representatives. Such lack of interest or response is a key element of the government's authoritarian tendencies that many Mexicans hoped would change when political democratization followed economic opening as experts predicted it would (Teichman, 1997). Within the political realities of the early 1990s, little attention was given to cultural policy. The following are major issues raised by the cultural intelligentsia.

### **The Effects of Technological Development**

Because much of the hardware, software, and attendant "technocracy" (Postman, 1993) that penetrates international markets originates in the United States, some observers equate the adoption of new technologies and cultural practices with Americanization (Herman & McChesney, 1997). Thus, it is argued, the potent combination

of media, technology, and market holds significant power to urge media audiences toward key Western ideals such as free-market capitalism, individual rights and liberties, and political democracy. A number of Mexican scholars noted that these processes had evolved with mass media throughout the 20th century, but were likely to deepen with NAFTA (cf. Esteinou Madrid, 1991; Sánchez Ruiz, 1992). The anthropologist Néstor García Canclini (1992b) pointed out that cable television and video markets grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, thereby accelerating "in-home" cultural consumption to the detriment of film, live performance, and other cultural industries requiring people to congregate outside of their homes. Many cultural observers expressed concern about the long-term impacts of such developments on Mexicans' traditional collectivism and national identity.

### Achieving Parity

Another issue concerned the possibility of leveling the playing field among the signatory nations. The cultural intelligentsia expressed concerns over how free trade could be negotiated so as not to exacerbate inequities between the signatories, or among socioeconomic classes within Mexico. The economist Mauricio de María y Campos (1992) acknowledged that small percentages of Mexicans enjoyed similar standards of living as Canadians and Americans, but feared the effects of free trade on the values and cultural traditions of those who did not. Bonfil Batalla (1992) poignantly asked, "What will be leveled, where are we headed, and how? What does it mean to level the conditions of Mexican society with the other two in terms of lifestyle, aspirations for the future, and culture?" (p. 177, author's translation).

Although these difficult questions may not have been answered completely, they could have been addressed by the Mexican government. The mean household income decreased between 1994 and 2002 with severe downturns following the peso devaluations of 1994 to 1995 and the U.S. recession of 2001 (Molina & Peach, 2005). Castañeda Paredes (2003) concluded, "Free markets do not 'level-the-playing-field,' as policy-makers claim, and the present-day battles over social disparities and the degeneration of public interest objectives reflect a deepening divide between social classes" (p. 279).

Some scholars noted that Mexico's cultural industries were preparing to play on a field they knew to be uneven. Enrique Sánchez Ruiz (1992), a communication scholar, argued that the United States' comparative advantage in cultural production and distribution together with the closed nature of its wealthy English-language market rendered the economic game unwinnable. He maintained that Mexico should be exerting its energies to protect its cultural and ideological autonomy. María y Campos (1992) offered data documenting imbalances among the signatory nations' cultural industries. Where Mexico might gain ground, in his view, was the U.S. Spanish-language market, which was growing rapidly and had emerged as the wealthiest Spanish-speaking market in the world (Sinclair, 1999). As will be seen, Mexico also had a historic foothold in the United

States through Televisa's investments in television. Cultural and linguistic proximity reinforced this footing.

## Cultural and Linguistic Protection

Notwithstanding the cultural-linguistic conduit to the fastest growing population sector in the United States, the cultural intelligentsia expressed concern for shielding Mexico's distinctiveness from Anglophone cultural influences. María y Campos (1992) acknowledged a natural protection provided by the Spanish language and Mexico's cultural idiosyncrasies, as government officials had maintained, but stressed that as Mexicans' consumption habits transformed under globalization, this barrier would become more permeable. Others noted that U.S. influence in Mexico's media and consumer goods sectors predated NAFTA, making it difficult to isolate cultural effects directly attributable to the agreement (Bonfil Batalla, 1992; Esteinou Madrid, 1991).

María y Campos's (1992) view is representative of many who addressed cultural issues as NAFTA emerged:

The problem is that ... at century's end a national cultural project has yet to be defined that recognizes the technological revolution and growing economic globalization, and that strengthens our identity in light of our multicultural and multiethnic idiosyncrasies as well as the various demands of Mexico's great socioeconomic contrasts. This is the Mexican government's responsibility. (p. 293, author's translation)

Clearly, this is a tall order for any government to fill, but the scholars cited herein found Mexico deficient in several respects: The cultural aspects of technology had been ignored in favor of the security and ideological concerns (García Canclini, 1997), the cultural manifestations of economic globalization were not being addressed (María y Campos, 1992; Sánchez Ruiz, 1992), and identity issues had not been adequately considered (Bonfil Batalla, 1992; Esteinou Madrid, 1991). These insufficiencies were due in part to the uneven history of cultural policy formulation and implementation already reviewed. Certainly, the persistence of challenges to the articulation and enforcement of robust cultural policy has favored private interests' domination of cultural production and consumption as well as transnational media interests' steady advance into Mexico. The broadcast television industry experienced substantial change in the 1990s, and provides a potent example given that two thirds to three quarters of Mexicans rely on TV as their principal source of political information (Lawson, 2002).

## Mexican Broadcast Television and NAFTA

When representatives of Canada, Mexico, and the United States began formal negotiation of a free trade agreement in 1991, Mexican negotiators had already witnessed the



potential volatility of cultural issues. Canada's exception of cultural industries from the 1989 Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement provoked vehement opposition from the U.S. trade representative. In response, the United States included a clause permitting retaliatory action in other industries if access to Canada's cultural markets was restricted (Galperin, 1999; McAnany & Wilkinson, 1996). Mexican negotiators recognized their limited leverage as the weakest partner in the three-way trade deal and emphasized that existing regulations already protected Mexico's cultural industries from influence and control by foreigners.

A principal goal of the aforementioned Federal Radio and Television Law is "to raise the cultural level of the people, preserve their customs, traditions and characteristics, and enrich the values of Mexican nationality" (Emery, 1969, p. 19). Several provisions aim specifically at limiting foreign influence: Article 65 prohibits the retransmission of foreign programs without prior consent of the government; Article 73 mandates the promotion of Mexican artistic values and stipulates that a majority of Mexican nationals appear in programming; and Article 75 requires that programs be broadcast in Spanish. These articles have frequently been violated and only rarely enforced. By contrast, ownership and participation in the operation of broadcast stations by nonnationals have been regulated more closely. Broadcast licensees are prevented from having foreign partners, transferring their concessions to nonnational entities, or accepting "diplomatic intervention" from any foreign state or international agent (Subsecretaría de Radiodifusión, 1976, pp. 302–303).

It must be kept in mind that these rules were adopted under a relatively protectionist regulatory paradigm at a time when broadcasting enterprises were privately held. Under the open-market paradigm of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, stock in large media concerns is publicly traded, and foreign investment in Mexican industry is actively encouraged. During the 1990s the government enacted changes intended to accommodate the new trade agreement while still providing a measure of protection for Mexico's cultural industries. Principal among these was permitting foreign investment in audiovisual industries up to 49%, and establishing a 30% quota—reduced to 10% in 1997—for Mexican films shown in national theaters (Galperin, 1999).

As Mexico's media regulations loosened, competition in its television industry increased. The following is a brief statistical profile of the television market in 1993, on the eve of NAFTA's ratification:

- 27% of Mexico's 92.3 million people lived in its three largest cities (and principal television markets): Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey (*BiB World Guide*, 1994, p. A-231).
- 15.3 million households owned at least one television set and watched an average of 2.9 hours per day (*BiB World Guide*, 1994, p. A-231).
- 245 broadcast stations and 334 low-power repeaters reached 49% of the population (Mayagoitia, 1993).
- 115 pay television systems reached 7% of television households (Mayagoitia, 1993).

- Mexico's annual advertising expenditure was U.S. \$1.5 billion, of which U.S. \$945.9 million (63%) was spent on television (*BiB World Guide*, 1994, p. A-231).

These figures reflect a relatively mature Latin American television industry, but say nothing about content that appeared on the channels.

Studies of television programs aired in Mexico indicate that foreign—and especially U.S.—programs have maintained a strong presence for decades. In the 1970s, Televisa aired 61% local programs and 39% imported, mostly U.S. material (Noriega & Leach, 1979). A study of all Mexico City channels in the early 1980s indicated that 45% of prime-time programming was imported, of which 95% originated in the United States. A similar study in 1990 revealed 48% imported programming during prime time, with 70% coming from the United States (Sánchez Ruiz, 1992). Statistics like these fanned the cultural intelligentsia's fears of a deluge of U.S. programming unleashed by NAFTA, but they must be balanced with viewing data. Lozano (1996) pointed out that the most widely watched national networks, Televisa's Channel 2 and Televisión Azteca's Channel 13 broadcast Mexican programs in prime time. He concluded, "the strong U.S. media content of Mexican television was not mirrored by high levels of audience exposure to it" (p. 163). Concerns about exogenous influences may have caused observers to underestimate the impact of an internal development holding real potential to transform Mexican television: the privatization of the Imevisión network in 1993.

## Domestic Competition

Televisa's monopoly control of broadcast television (85%–95% share of viewership and advertising revenues, by most estimates) has been challenged since 1993, when the government privatized its Imevisión network (Toussaint Alcaraz, 1998). Imevisión had long been stagnant due to an inflated payroll, revolving-door leadership, feeble programming, and a notoriously small prime-time audience. These weaknesses came to exemplify inefficiencies of government-run industries and rendered the network a leading candidate for privatization. The network's estimated value, the potential impact on Televisa's cozy relationship with the ruling PRI, and public pressure to democratize Mexico's media made the sell-off, as the *New York Times* put it, "the most politically sensitive deal in President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's campaign to scale back the economic role of the state" (Golden, 1993, p. D6).

An investment group led by Ricardo Salinas Pliego, the president of the Elektra and Salinas y Rocha retail chains, prevailed with a bid of U.S. \$642 million and renamed the network Televisión Azteca. Because the winning bid was \$100 million higher than the nearest competitor's, speculation quickly arose that the winners had paid too much and were perhaps implicated in the illegal financial schemes of President Salinas de Gortari's brother Raúl (Preston & Dillon, 2004).

The new owners acted quickly to cut costs, improve efficiency, and broaden the network's reach. Because the network was in a leveraged position financially, and at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis Televisa, it sought international partnerships. Potential partners included NBC, Antena 3 of Spain, and Silvio Berlusconi's Antena 5 (Aguilar, 1993). The historical ties between U.S. and Mexican television, geographic proximity, and the high-profile NAFTA were among the factors that favored partnership with a U.S. company. Establishing an avenue for future expansion into the U.S. Spanish-language sector was an additional motivation.

Within its first year, TV Azteca announced a partnership whereby NBC would provide programming, technology, and promotional assistance in return for an option to acquire up to 10% of Azteca stock by the end of 1997 (Malkin, 1994). NBC cited NAFTA as a key factor influencing its decision to enter the partnership. The relationship became strained in the wake of the 1994 peso devaluation, however and was not resolved through arbitration until May 2000 (Hernández & McAnany, 2001). TV Azteca also entered a programming agreement with the U.S.-based Telemundo Network—both hoped to shore up their competitive footing with Televisa.

The programming that Televisión Azteca received through its partnerships was complemented by in-house productions. Confronting the vast production and distribution resources of Televisa was no minor task. Hernández (2001) argued that Azteca's initial strategy was to concentrate on low-cost entertainment programs, but within 2 years it had entered an expensive, direct competition with Televisa. Azteca aired its first in-house *telenovela* (soap opera) in 1996. *Nada Personal* contrasted sharply with the entrenched rag-to-riches formula of Televisa *novelas* by centering on a fictitious federal attorney general who becomes enmeshed in a web of violence, corruption, and narcotics trafficking (Hernández & McAnany, 2001). The *telenovela* makes faintly disguised references to political scandals that began unraveling Mexican politics in 1994 and that vilified the PRI in many Mexicans' minds. In challenging 4 decades of television tradition and demonstrating that Mexican audiences were interested in nonformulaic programming, *Nada Personal* signaled an opening of public expression and mainstream political satire that accompanied the substantial social and economic changes wrought by neoliberalism. Strong symbolic value accompanied airing of *Nada Personal* in that TV Azteca sought to differentiate itself from Televisa as the network not beholden to the ruling PRI. News programming was another front on which Azteca sought to underscore the distinction.

Mexican viewers had long been suspicious of Televisa's principal newscast, *24 Horas* (Trejo Delarbre, 1985). The program's veteran anchor, Jacobo Zabludovsky, was perceived as sympathetic to the PRI, and it was common knowledge that the network's former president and principal stockholder, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo (1930–1997), had once identified himself as a "foot soldier of the PRI." TV Azteca emerged at an opportune time to benefit from the low credibility of *24 Horas* and the rise in opposition politics at the local, regional, and national levels. Some Mexicans had joined opposition candidate Manuel Clothier in protesting outside Televisa's headquarters following the suspect 1988 elections that brought Carlos

Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) to power, and displayed anti-Televisa posters and bumper stickers (Lawson, 2002). Thus, by 1994 Televisión Azteca's national newscast *Hechos* was well positioned to attract audiences and advertisers.

Shortly after acquiring the network, Ricardo Salinas Pliego dutifully professed his admiration for President Salinas de Gortari, yet the objective of winning over disgruntled Televisa viewers required distancing his network from the PRI (Ortega Pizarro, 1993). The implication of some PRI leaders in the tragic murders of prominent PRI politicians Donaldo Colosio and Francisco Ruiz Massieu, together with a variety of political and economic scandals following the peso devaluation of December 1994, bolstered Azteca's cause (Preston & Dillon, 2004). The network deliberately contrasted the look and tone of its nightly newscast with that of Televisa, as Robinson (1997) pointed out:

TV Azteca's nightly news is conducted by Javier Alatorre, 35 years of age, who reads the news on "Hechos" with an astute and ironic smile, and raised eyebrows. Jacobo Zabłudovsky, patriarch of Televisa's "24 Horas" program, 69 years of age, remains seated like a statue retelling the events of the day. Guess which newscast is number one? (p. 13)

In mid-1996, the battle for audience share assumed a public demeanor as the competing networks used Mexico's airwaves to trade accusations of corruption. Ricardo Salinas Pliego eventually admitted to receiving U.S. \$29 million from off-shore accounts of Raúl Salinas de Gortari, the brother of the former president, who is serving a 27-year prison term for orchestrating the murder of Francisco Ruiz Massieu (Preston & Dillon, 2004). Salinas Pliego's admission led to immediate speculation that Raúl Salinas had influenced the selection process during the privatization of Imevisión. Some of the unsuccessful investor groups claimed their bids were rejected because they had refused to collaborate with the president's brother (Preston, 1996). Following Salinas Pliego's disclosure, Raúl Salinas revealed one of his closest business associates: Abraham Zabłudovsky, the son of Jacobo and also an anchorman at Televisa (Sutter, 1996).

Notwithstanding an exhortation by President Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) to end—or at least stop airing—the feud, accusations continued into the fall of 1996, until Emilio Azcárraga Milmo forbade Televisa representatives from further commenting on it. Although the content of this news battle was detrimental to Mexico's image, it demonstrated a freedom of expression in news reporting that had been absent from television broadcasting for 40 years.

The increased competition in domestic television broadcasting was fostered by neoliberal economic reforms ushering Mexico's entrance into NAFTA, and became manifest in broadcast television content following the Imevisión privatization. Other than María y Campos (1992), no prominent Mexican scholar or policymaker adequately emphasized this potential outcome, nor have competition and its consequences been adequately analyzed since the privatization. This is a substantial over-

sight, given the centrality of economics in contemporary cultural policy debates as well as Mexico's formidable presence in other Spanish-language television markets.

## International Expansion and Competition

In 1991, when the Mexican government announced its plans to privatize *Imevisión*, Televisa's international reach had been widely reported in the national press and documented by journalists and academics alike (e.g., Trejo Delarbre, 1988). Some international aspects of TV Azteca's founding and development have already been identified, but they should be considered in light of Televisa's international activities.

### U.S. Spanish-Language Television

Televisa's involvement in U.S. Spanish-language television began shortly after it formalized efforts to export programming (Fernández & Paxman, 2000). Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta (1895–1972) organized U.S. and Mexican investors to establish two companies in the early 1960s. Spanish International Network (SIN) provided programming and advertising sales for Spanish International Communications Corporation (SICC), a television station group. SICC stations aired Televisa programming, produced with pesos, which was imported and distributed by SIN. Advertising revenues accrued in dollars, the common currency of international business and a stable counterbalance to the volatile peso.

The network and station group expanded in step with U.S. Latino market growth for 25 years. In 1986, two legal challenges led the Federal Communications Commission not to renew SICC's broadcast licenses, and a partnership of Hallmark Cards Corp. and First Capital Corp. purchased the station group for U.S. \$301.5 million. A year later, to secure access to affordable programming for their six full-power UHF stations and dozens of low-power and satellite translator stations, the new owners spent another U.S. \$300 million to acquire the network, SIN. The investment did not meet expectations, and an expensive venture into Spanish-language television ended in 1992, when Hallmark sold the network and station group (renamed *Univisión* in 1987) to an investment group consisting of A. Jerrold Perenchio, a prominent U.S. media investor and producer; *Venevisión*, a media conglomerate based in Venezuela; and Televisa.

*Univisión*'s virtual monopoly on U.S. Spanish-language television came under challenge in 1986 when a new network named *Telemundo* began acquiring stations in key Latino television markets. This rivalry previewed effects of the *Imevisión* privatization that would challenge Televisa's tight hold on Mexican television 5 years later. However, due to the high cost of building a network, acquiring (non-Televisa) programming, and initiating in-house production, *Telemundo* was under financial strain from its inception and has changed owners several times.<sup>1</sup>

The nexus between the Mexican and U.S. Spanish-language television markets is evident in Telemundo's role in the privatization process that yielded Televisión Azteca. As Mexican investor groups prepared their bids to acquire the network, Televisa's numerous news outlets emphasized Telemundo's financial woes (Mejía Barquera, 1993). Clearly, it was in Televisa's competitive interest to underscore its U.S. rival's troubles, but there was a personal element as well. Telemundo's president at the time, Joaquín Blaya, had previously been the chief executive officer of Univisión and bad blood had developed between Blaya and Televisa's leadership over the circumstances of his departure. Blaya relished the possibility of exporting Telemundo programs to Mexico. He told the press, "Televisa is terrified of competition. It doesn't know how to compete in a free market" (Abelleira, 1993, p. 12). Blaya found an audience in Ricardo Salinas Pliego, and TV Azteca entered a programming partnership with Telemundo in 1996. The plan for Azteca's *telenovelas* to appear in the United States via Telemundo and for Telemundo-produced programs to air in Mexico met with limited success before dissolving (Hernández & McAnany, 2001). In 2001 Azteca partnered with Pappas Broadcasting of Visalia, California, to launch Azteca América, an over-the-air and cable network that reached 42 U.S. cities in late 2005 (Romano, 2005).

This brief overview has provided only a glimpse at the historic, intricate relation between Mexican television and the U.S. Spanish-language sector that merits closer attention by policymakers and researchers alike. Because the U.S. Spanish-language television sector is growing at nearly three times the rate of the English sector it may safely be assumed that the industries and their audiences will remain closely intertwined and dynamic well into the future (Wentz, 2005).

## Hemispheric Expansion

The Mexican networks' international expansion efforts have not been limited to the United States, of course. Televisa's efforts to export television date from the late 1950s. Emilio Azcárraga Milmo lobbied hard, although ultimately unsuccessfully, for a broadcasting concession in Spain as its broadcast system deregulated, but his company's main expansion efforts have been in the Western Hemisphere (Sinclair, 1999). In the early 1990s, Televisa sought partial ownership of broadcast stations in Chile, Peru, and Argentina, as television commercialized and deregulated. The company withdrew following the 1994 peso devaluation, however. Various programming agreements with Latin American broadcasters were launched with mixed success as the hemispheric trade in audiovisual products accelerated (Wilkinson, 1995).

For its part, Televisión Azteca reached into Central America through partnerships or partial station ownership in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. In keeping with the synergy strategy so dear to the communication industries of the 1990s and 2000s, Televisión Azteca expanded southward in step with the Salinas Pliego family's Elektra retail stores, which, of course, sell television sets. This experience in smaller markets

aided Azteca's subsequent move northward into the rough-and-tumble U.S. Spanish-language industry.

Accelerated technological change is a key feature of media globalization in the free trade era. It presents formidable obstacles to cultural policymakers through rapid transformation of the competitive environment for media companies around the globe, including Mexico. Two technologies of particular consequence to Mexican television are direct-to-home television (DTH) and the Internet.

## Direct-to-Home Television

The DTH gambit to beam programs (and advertising) straight to the homes of consumers raises new policy issues as it requires substantial capital, advanced technology, and volumes of programming. The Latin American DTH market opened in 1996 amid reports of untapped subscribers and sizable profit potential. It has redrawn some historic competitive alignments in the region's media. Initially, Televisa joined a chief regional rival, TV Globo of Brazil, in the Sky Latin America partnership, which also included Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. as an equal (30%) partner, and Liberty Media Corp (10%). Sky's principal competitor was DirecTV Latin America, known until November 2000 as Galaxy Latin America. Hughes Electronics, a subsidiary of General Motors and AT&T, was DirecTV's principal shareholder, with a 78% stake. Regional partners included the Cisneros Group, the owners of Venevisión, and Grupo Clarín, an Argentine media conglomerate. Note that Televisa and Venevisión are partners in the U.S. Univisión network, but joined opposing forces in the DTH competition. (TV Azteca was not included among the investors in either system.) Both DTH services lost money for 8 straight years until Rupert Murdoch ended the costly competition by purchasing controlling interest in GM Hughes for \$6.6 billion in 2003, and then merged the two services in 2004. Sky Mexico is now owned 57% by Televisa and 43% by DirectTV ("Direct TV Is Investing," 2004). The shifting alignments of competitors wrought by DTH is evidence of the considerable impact that global economics and technological change are having on cultural markets.

## The Internet

The Internet is another important new media sector opened by technological change and globalization. Mexico's Internet development has been coterminous with DTH television growth, and is also closely coupled with economic conditions. As occurred elsewhere, high hopes for steady growth in Mexico's computer and Internet markets fueled venture capital investment from the late 1990s through the technology sector's sharp downturn in early 2001. Mexico's relative position as an Internet market is similar to its status in DTH television: Growth has lagged behind most Western nations, but it is among the more dynamic national markets in Latin America.

There were an estimated 300,000 Internet users in Mexico in 1994 (Cevallos, 2000). According to InternetWorldStats (2006), by the end of 2005 this figure reached just under 17 million—this among a population of approximately 105 million. As in the United States and Canada, developing e-commerce has been the primary focus of the consumer market, but Mexico's low credit card and telephone density, marginal phone service, high service costs, and package delivery challenges pose significant barriers to e-commerce growth (Curry, Contreras, & Kenney, 2001). For diversified media concerns like Televisa and Televisión Azteca, portals permit the creation of synergies among their entertainment and information offerings as well as through ties-ins with other products and services.

Televisión Azteca acquired its portal, Todito.com, in February 2000. In addition to the niche-oriented interactive channels—live chat, e-commerce, and classified ads found on many portals—Todito offers digitized streaming video of TV Azteca's programs and tie-ins to its various shows, stars, and advertisers. Todito.com also provides a third (cyber) leg to the aforementioned synergy between TV Azteca and various retail enterprises controlled by the Salinas Pliego family. Televisa's portal, Esmas.com, launched in May 2000. At the unveiling Televisa's CEO, Emilio Azcárraga Jean, characterized the Internet as "the most important project for Televisa today" (Crane, 2000, p. 42). Yet despite the growth figures already cited, e-commerce remains a small market in Mexico, and challenges to its expansion persist (Palacios, 2003). Internet portals cooled as a competitive front for the networks following the technology downturn in 2001, but remain important to the networks' efforts at developing synergies among their diverse media holdings. Both DTH and Internet combine the political, economic, cultural, and technological forces demanding the attention of cultural policymakers.

## Conclusion

This study recounted the disjointed discourse surrounding potential impacts of NAFTA in Mexico's cultural sector, described significant shifts in the country's television broadcasting industry, and outlined the internationalization processes and technological developments impacting over-the-air broadcasting. Cultural policymakers did little to assist Mexican society in navigating the challenges accompanying cultural change under free trade. This was a lost opportunity given cultural policy's potential to guide the dynamic relations among the state, communication industries, and the public in discussions of preferred outcomes and policy options. These closing paragraphs reaffirm the relevance of cultural policy to broadcasters and the public, and identify areas where policymakers and researchers might focus their attention to bolster the efficacy of Mexican cultural policy.

The interests of television broadcasters have long been represented in government through industry associations like the *Cámara de la Industria de la Radio y Televisión*, and the historic nexus between media owners and the ruling government (recall



Emilio Azcárraga's "foot soldier of the PRI" comment, and Ricardo Salinas Pliego's professing his admiration for President Salinas de Gortari). There have also been conflicts of interest among government officials such as Senator Miguel Alemán Velasco, a former president of Televisa, who chaired the communication and transportation committee as DTH satellite policy was decided—at the time his family owned 14% of Televisa shares worth more than U.S. \$600 million (Millman, 1996). Although these conduits of influence persist—as exemplified by proposed changes in broadcast law that would favor the two television networks discussed earlier (Malkin, 2006)—they have altered through changes such as increased competition, greater transparency deriving from publicly traded stock, and influence from foreign investors and markets.<sup>2</sup> Because Mexico's television networks now operate in fluid environments, an opportunity has opened for new modes of interaction with the government, including policymakers, their shareholders, and the public.

In this study, the public is constituted by two overlapping groups, the mass of Mexican citizens who have contributed to the remarkable political transformation in their country since the mid-1980s, and television audiences who have witnessed and facilitated change in Mexican television. Because civic participation is crucial to democratization, the public must be afforded more chances to participate in government, including policy-related decision making. As has been seen, the pre-NAFTA dialog forums were more motivated by pro-NAFTA public relations than by citizen participation; more recently public outcry against proposed changes to media law have underscored the need for greater transparency in policymaking (Malkin, 2006).

Unfortunately, communication researchers have been less prolific than economists and political scientists in assessing the social impacts of trade liberalization and democratization in Mexico. The cultural intelligentsia raised important questions prior to NAFTA, but has done little to follow up, and the output of communication researchers specializing in Mexico has been sparse—a regrettable situation given the dynamics of industry and social change described herein. As Mexico's domestic communication industries and the U.S. Spanish-language sector become more closely integrated, communication scholarship would benefit from comprehensive industry analyses as well as studies of audiences' interpretations of cross-national media content.

This study has reviewed historic shifts in the focus of cultural policymaking, the vitality of which has waned in recent decades. Mexico's cultural policymakers could reinvigorate their domain and support democratization by engaging the concerns of the other three groups discussed here: intellectuals, the public, and communication industries. The responsiveness of cultural policy to social concerns could increase through greater attention to intellectuals' research regarding cultural production, cultural sovereignty, and the media's influence on social change. Increased recognition and scrutiny of the interplay among political, economic, and cultural forces in the production, dissemination, and interpretation of mass media messages such as television programs would help policymakers respond more directly to the networks without coddling them. Cultural policymakers would also promote civic participation by

monitoring public opinion regarding media and providing relevant information for the public in advance of civic forums, elections, and other public venues. If the formulation and implementation of cultural policy is to keep pace with the rapid changes in contemporary cultural industries, it needs to readjust its focus, extend its parameters to interact with policy processes in other branches of government, and heed more closely the contributions of Mexico's intellectual community as well as the concerns of its citizens.

As NAFTA was being negotiated, Mexico's cultural intelligentsia raised an important issue: "how resilient [Mexican] culture can be, and if the elements that comprise that culture are capable of withstanding the intrusive effects of another culture that monopolizes the means of cultural diffusion and penetration" (Castillo Vera, 1995, p. 349). This question provided an important counterweight to the government representatives' view that culture was irrelevant. Unfortunately, however, the intelligentsia largely overlooked cultural industries' economic dimensions such as potential benefits of neoliberal reform like challenging Televisa's virtual monopoly through the Imevisión privatization, strengthening Mexico's position in international Spanish-language markets, and broadcasting's role in the substantial political, economic, and social changes that Mexico experienced in the 1990s. Schmidt (2001) stated, "It remains a major challenge for analysts to discern the ways in which highly visible social and cultural changes intersect with the issues of political power and economic policy" (p. 47). Because media, especially television, are at the center of this intersection it is regrettable that the cultural intelligentsia paid insufficient attention to key economic aspects of foreign and domestic cultural industries when evaluating potential effects of a largely economic accord. Although formidable challenges face the diverse players whose interests converge in contemporary Mexico's complicated web of commerce, policy, and culture early in the 21st century, there are new opportunities for positive change in which cultural policy could play a pivotal role.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In 1986, Saul Steinberg's Reliance Capital Corp. acquired two stations and began buying or building others in principal U.S. Spanish-speaking markets. Sony and Media Liberty acquired Telemundo in 1997 for U.S. \$540 million; in 2001, NBC purchased the network for U.S. \$2 billion (plus U.S. \$700 million in debt).

<sup>2</sup>García Canclini (1992a) cited the absence of reliable information on investments, audiences, and markets in the cultural industries as an impediment to adequate analysis. Later in the 1990s, this problem diminished somewhat as the demand for investment and audience data increased, and some companies became publicly traded, requiring them to disclose financial data.

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## When Good *Friends* Say Goodbye: A Parasocial Breakup Study

Keren Eyal and Jonathan Cohen

*This study examines viewers' reactions to parasocial breakup with mediated characters in light of interpersonal and mass communication theories. Following the airing of the last episode of the television show Friends, 279 students completed surveys assessing their viewing habits, their attitudes toward the show and their favorite character, and their loneliness. The intensity of the parasocial relationship with the favorite character is the strongest predictor of breakup distress. Other predictors include commitment and affinity to the show, the character's perceived popularity, and the participant's loneliness. The results shed light on the similarities and differences between parasocial and social relationships.*

Final episodes of long-running and greatly loved television series achieve famously high ratings (Battaglio, 2001). It was hardly surprising, then, that an estimated 51 million viewers tuned in to view the final episode of *Friends*, which aired in the United States on May 6, 2004 (Associated Press, 2004). Although viewers were no doubt aware that they would be able to see their friends from *Friends* over and over again in reruns and DVDs, the last episode seemed to mark a farewell of some import to many millions. The vast majority of viewers know that their relationships with television characters are imaginary (Caughey, 1985), and yet, as the ratings numbers and the general commotion around this and other finale shows suggest, the end of such relationships is emotionally meaningful. What do viewers feel when relationships with television characters come to an end? To what extent are separations from television characters similar to endings of personal relationships? What factors impact the intensity of feelings associated with such breakups? Which viewers experience these feelings more strongly than others? This study attempts to answer these questions with data collected from viewers immediately after the end of *Friends*.

This study is set within the framework of parasocial relationships (PSRs). Initially defined by Horton and Wohl (1956) as a "seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer" (p. 215), PSRs have been widely studied, both in terms of

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their development and in terms of their influences on viewers' emotional states and reactions to television exposure (e.g., Auter, 1992; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Turner, 1993). PSRs are now understood to be an integral and important part of many people's systems of social relationships and "the distinction between social and parasocial relationships, which Horton and Wohl [1956] assumed was so obvious, is increasingly complex and hard to define" (Cohen, 2004, p. 200). As discussed later, the topic of PSRs is, in fact, now recognized as a potential contact point between mass media and interpersonal theories (Turner, 1993). Researchers are increasingly applying interpersonal, relational, and developmental theories to the study of PSRs (Cohen, 2003; Cole & Leets, 1999; Isotalus, 1995). This study contributes to this literature by applying aspects from theories of relational development to the study of people's parasocial relationships with mediated characters. It extends this literature by examining the application of theoretical premises regarding relational dissolution to the study of the termination of imaginary relationships.

## *Friends*

*Friends* came on the air in 1994 following NBC's success with *Seinfeld*, and like its predecessor, was created as a sitcom set not in a family home or business, but rather focused on a group of young single adults. In an age of segmented viewing when the viewing unit is no longer composed solely of nuclear families, the time was ripe to experiment with moving the focus of sitcoms away from families. Furthermore, a program about young, urban singles made sense based on the belief that viewers relate and identify with those who are similar to them and the special attractiveness of the 18-to-30 demographic to advertisers. However, unlike *Seinfeld*, famous for being a show about "nothing" (CNN, 1998; TV Tome, 2005), *Friends* was a show about something: It explored the interpersonal relationships of its stars as a basis for its plot and humor. This heightened the potential for viewers to feel like they were a part of this group of friends, a feeling Auter and Palmgreen (2000) showed to be an important part of relationships with the characters. Over 10 years viewers were invited to watch these six friends interact, learn about them in intimate and meaningful ways, and vicariously experience the trials and tribulations of young adulthood. Most of the college students who took part in this study were still in elementary school when the show first aired and grew up watching the show. It is thus not surprising that the show's ending would be an emotional experience for many of them.

## **Parasocial Relationship**

As the significance of PSRs in the process of media influence has become more apparent (Basil, 1996; Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003; Papa et al., 2000), researchers have become interested in exploring such relationships and understanding how they impact viewers. Somewhat to their surprise, researchers have consistently found that

relationships with television characters do not replace relationships with friends, but rather complement social relationships (Kanazawa, 2002; Perse & Rubin, 1990; Tsao, 1996). Feelings toward television characters do not generally serve as a replacement for primary social relationships but rather keep one company (Isotalus, 1995) and like ordinary friendships serve to provide people with social enjoyment and learning.

PSRs are a set of feelings viewers develop toward media characters that allow viewers to think and feel toward characters as if they know and have a special connection with them. These feelings extend beyond the moment of viewing (Horton & Wohl, 1956) and continue from one viewing situation to the next. Such relationships originate from repeated viewing of characters that simulate social interaction, and they develop and strengthen over time (Isotalus, 1995; Perse & Rubin, 1989; R. B. Rubin & McHugh, 1987; but see also Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). As viewers are exposed to characters over a longer period of time and more frequently, they develop more confidence in their attribution of how the character will behave and have less uncertainty in their relationships.

Television characters provide viewers with one-way relationships, and the intimacy they offer is, as Horton and Wohl (1956) argued, only at a distance. Nonetheless, Koenig and Lessan (1985) found that viewers rated favorite television characters as further from themselves than friends but closer than acquaintances. Newton and Buck (1985) concluded their findings by suggesting that television can be seen as a significant other. Thus, television personalities are a significant part of one's social network, although their social and emotional functions seem to be limited compared to close family and friends.

In terms of their effects, Fisherkeller (1997) suggested that at least for some teens, media characters serve as models for how to achieve goals that are related to the development of their identities. Other scholars have shown that imaginary relationships with media characters have real social consequences, such as increasing the persuasive power of public service announcements when they feature celebrities with whom viewers have PSRs (Basil, 1996; Brown et al., 2003). Similarly, Sood and Rogers (2000) linked the effects of education-entertainment programming to the development of PSRs with soap opera characters. Most recently, Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2005) found that parasocial contact and relationships can change attitudes about homosexuality. The importance of mediated relationships, and their similarity to social relationships, therefore, suggests that the end of a long-standing and popular show like *Friends* should also be significant and that it may be a cause of some distress. It also remains to be seen whether and how the one-way and distant nature of such PSRs leads to differences in the responses to their end.

### Parasocial Breakup

The notion of parasocial breakup (PSB; Cohen, 2003) describes a situation where a character with whom a viewer has developed a PSR goes off the air. This may happen



because a show ends, because a character is taken off the show, or because something happens to the actor or actress who plays the character. In turn, a viewer may decide to stop watching the show or become less interested in or less devoted to the character.

The dissolution of close social relationships has been found to lead to depression and is a common reason for seeking psychological counseling (McCarthy, Lambert, & Brack, 1997). In regard to celebrities, Meyrowitz (1994) described extreme reactions exhibited at the death of celebrities such as Elvis Presley and John Lennon. Based on his analysis of these extreme cases and his discussion of more general patterns of responses to the death of what he called "media friends," he concluded that, "these relationships have features that are very human, very warm, and very caring" (p. 80). Although the myths, rituals, and pilgrimages that have come to surround the death of media megastars do not characterize common responses to the end of most television series, they do point to the emotional potential of imaginary relationships.

Research has found that though the dissolution of parasocial relationships is less stressful than that of close relationships, it follows some similar patterns (Cohen, 2003, 2004). Cohen asked respondents to imagine how they would feel if their favorite television persona would be taken off the air. He found that like in social relationships the stress of (imagined) breakup was strongly related to the intensity of the relationships. However, women, who generally report stronger PSRs (e.g., Tsao, 1996), did not report expecting higher levels of distress if their favorite television personality went off the air (Cohen, 2003). This finding echoes the fact that, although women tend to have stronger interpersonal relationships, they are better able to cope with the end of these relationships (Helgeson, 1994; Simpson, 1987; Sprecher, Felmlee, Metts, Fehr, & Vanni, 1998). Teenagers who are generally seen as more emotional and more involved with media characters than adults were also found to expect stronger emotional responses to PSB than adults (Cohen, 2003).

These studies were able to confirm the idea of PSB by showing that people expected to be sorry when their favorite character went off the air, and to establish a basis for comparing PSB to social breakup. However, the hypothetical nature of the studies leaves several issues open. First, it is possible that although people expect to be distressed when a liked character goes off the air (perhaps because they use heuristics from interpersonal relationships) in reality such separations will leave viewers with little distress. Alternatively, one could imagine that the distress and sadness felt in real time may be much greater than the low levels reported in a hypothetical study. In addition, because previous studies focused on finding similarities between social breakup and PSB, they did not provide a basis for explaining what people feel and why some are more distressed than others.

Based on the similarities between PSRs and social relationships both in relationship development and dissolution it seems logical to turn to the literature on breakup of personal relationships to hypothesize regarding the breakup of relationships with television characters. In considering the applicability of research on the breakup of close relationships to understanding audience reactions to PSRs, several factors must

be considered. First, despite the popularity of some media friends, the reliance of viewers on media characters is relatively small. From a dependence perspective, Drigotas and Rusbult (1992) found that dependence on a relationship for satisfying needs was related to less likelihood of breaking up. It is likely, then, that the less one is dependent on a relationship for need satisfaction the less distress its breakup should cause. Therefore, the levels of distress from PSB are expected to be lower than those found in close relationships. Second, whereas romantic breakups often catch the noninitiating partner unprepared, in today's media-saturated environment the ending of popular shows is preceded by a long period of preparation. This preparation is likely to reduce the distress of the breakup, as is the lack of guilt surrounding the breakup. In sum, it is unlikely that very high levels of distress are experienced following PSB.

Because successful television shows often last several years, relationships with popular characters are likely to be well-established, long-term relationships. Because duration of relationship has been found to be positively associated with distress at breakup (Simpson, 1987), it is likely that long-term viewers will experience stronger distress than viewers who have watched over a short period of time. Similarly, closeness has been found to also positively predict distress (Simpson, 1987), suggesting that commitment to viewing the show—not just viewing duration—may serve a similar function. In other words, it is not just the frequency or amount of viewing that is important, but the quality of viewing and the extent to which people feel that they are dedicated to the show are also meaningful aspects to examine. In addition, the attractiveness of media characters and the public acknowledgment of such attractiveness are likely to increase the desirability of the relationship and the distress at its dissolution. Finally, Simpson found that believing one could not easily find a desirable alternative partner made the breakup more distressing. Applying this to PSB, to the extent that relationships with characters that are perceived to be more popular are seen as more socially desirable, it can be expected that the more popular the character with which one is breaking up, the more distress will be experienced.

## Hypotheses

The main goal of this study is to identify the predictors of PSB. However, as assumptions regarding PSB follow closely from those regarding PSRs, it is first important to replicate earlier research to establish the predictors of PSR in the sample reported here. Following this replication analysis, a series of hypotheses are posed regarding the predictors of PSB.

Clearly, the most important factor in explaining and predicting the distress viewers feel when faced with the dissolution of a PSR is how intensely they feel toward the character with whom they engage in the PSR. Therefore:

H<sub>1</sub>: The more intense the PSR the more distress viewers will report following PSB.

Because the duration of and commitment to a personal relationship are related to postbreakup distress, the following hypotheses are offered in the context of PSBs:

- H<sub>2</sub>: The longer a viewer reports watching *Friends* the more distress he or she will report following the end of the show.
- H<sub>3</sub>: The more committed viewers report themselves to be to watching *Friends* the more distress they will report following the end of the show.

Because PSRs in an ensemble show such as *Friends* are developed within the context of the show as a whole it would be expected that the emotional connection that is lost at the breakup of such relationships would be affected by one's attachment to or affinity to the show as a whole.

- H<sub>4</sub>: The more a viewer holds positive attitudes toward the show the more distress he or she will report following the end of the show.

In addition to show-related variables, clearly PSB should be associated with factors related to the characters. The extent to which the relationship with the character is valued should increase the distress that its dissolution will cause. Hence, the following hypotheses are offered:

- H<sub>5</sub>: The more a viewer reports his or her favorite *Friends* character is *perceived as being his or her overall favorite television character* the more distress he or she will report following the end of the show.
- H<sub>6</sub>: The more a viewer reports finding his or her favorite *Friends* character *attractive* the more distress he or she will report following the end of the show.

Based on research showing that the more the partner is perceived as hard to replace the more distressing is the breakup, it would be expected that:

- H<sub>7</sub>: The more a viewer considers his or her favorite *Friends* character to be *popular* (among others) the more distress he or she will report after the end of the show.

To test these hypotheses, a survey was circulated among college students over a 2-week period starting about 10 days after the airing of the last episode of *Friends*. Because new episodes were generally aired once a week, on Thursday, viewers should have started missing the show only a week after the last episode. Hence, data collection started on the Monday following the completion of this 1-week period.

## Method

### Sample

Participants in this study were 298 undergraduate students at a large West Coast university. This sample is similar to that employed in much previous research on

PSRs, which has focused on the same population (Auter, 1992; Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; R. B. Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 1993). Additionally, the focus of this study on one show that has been a top-rated television show for years minimizes concerns about the lack of generalizability of college students' typical viewing habits to other populations.

The students completed a survey voluntarily and received credit for a communication course as compensation for their participation. Nineteen students (6%) reported never having watched even one episode of the show and were excluded from further data analyses, resulting in a sample of 279 participants. Of these participants, 225 (81%) were women and 52 (19%) were men. Two participants did not report their gender. The average age of participants was 19.46 years ( $SD = 1.36$ ), with a range of 18 to 27 years.

## Procedure

One week after the final episode of *Friends* was aired in the United States, pen-and-paper surveys were made available for participants to complete at their convenience. The period of 1 week after the final episode aired was chosen because *Friends* was a weekly sitcom and it was therefore expected that viewers would feel the loss of the show and miss it about a week after the last episode aired, when a new episode did not air in its usual time. To take into consideration the length of time that passed between the last episode being aired and the questionnaire completion, participants were asked to indicate the date on which they completed the survey.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the participants (61%) completed the survey during the first week in which it was made available (i.e., between 1 and 2 weeks after the final episode of the show was aired). About one fourth of the sample (25%) completed the survey between 2 and 3 weeks after the final episode was aired, and only 12% completed the survey between 3 and 4 weeks after the final episode was aired.

## Measurement

The survey included questions about participants' PSR and reactions to the breakup of their relationship with their favorite *Friends* character, their viewing of the show *Friends* (both duration of viewing and commitment to the show), their affinity toward the show, their attitudes toward and feelings about their favorite character on the show, as well as questions about participants' loneliness and demographics. The show *Friends* revolved around six main characters: Monica, Rachel, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross. Participants were asked to indicate which of the six characters was their favorite and respond to statements about this character.

*Parasocial Relationship.* Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with five statements assessing the intensity of their PSR with their favorite character. Re-

sponse options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The commonly used A. M. Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) measure of parasocial interaction has often been adapted in previous research, for example, to measure related yet more generalized constructs, such as parasociability, a person's likelihood to parasocially interact (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). The measure also has been widely criticized for measuring other types of relationships with and perceptions of characters (e.g., identification, realism; Cohen, 2001). In addition, in this study the authors were concerned with the strength of the relationship with characters rather than measuring the level or quality of interaction that occurs during viewing. Thus, in this study, items were specifically chosen because they are believed to tap most directly the concept of PSRs, and not other related concepts (see the Appendix).

Responses to these items were averaged together to create a measure of PSR, with a Cronbach reliability of  $\alpha = .71$ . Although this value is lower than most previously published assessments of the scale's reliability (e.g., Perse & Rubin, 1990; A. M. Rubin et al., 1985), it is consistent with other studies (e.g., Hoffner, 1996). Additionally, participants' average scores on the scale in this study ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) are consistent with previous research on the construct, where scores ranged from about 2.70 ( $SD = 0.68$ ; A. M. Rubin et al., 1985) to 3.86 ( $SD = 0.67$ ; Hoffner, 1996).

There was a significant difference between the genders,  $t(273) = 2.91$ ,  $p < .01$ , with men reporting significantly less PSR with their favorite *Friends* character ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) than women ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ). The difference in PSR between the genders found in this study is consistent with past research (Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Also attesting to the validity of this measure is the fact that PSR is positively correlated with both affinity toward the show ( $r = .69$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the extent to which the character is a favorite one on television overall ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Parasocial Breakup.* Thirteen items assessed participants' PSB with their favorite *Friends* character after the show went off the air. These items were taken from Cohen (2003), where the concept of PSB was explicated and the scale constructed and validated. Items represent both an emotional dimension (e.g., "Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel more lonely") and a behavioral one (e.g., "Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I tend to think of him or her often"; see Appendix for a complete list of items). Responses to these items ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and scores were averaged to create a measure of PSB, with a Cronbach reliability of  $\alpha = .81$ . Participants averaged below the midpoint of the scale ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ), but slightly higher than previous samples that responded to this scale (Cohen, 2003). There was a significant difference between the genders,  $t(271) = 3.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , with men reporting significantly less distress following PSB with their favorite *Friends* character ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ) than women ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ). Similar to Cohen, this study finds a strong and positive correlation between PSB and PSR ( $r = .68$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The consistency in the measure of PSB between this study and Cohen's study, which was conducted in Israel and included samples of different ages (including a

high school student sample and an adult sample), suggests that the measure of PSB is reliable and valid across different ages and cultures.

*Viewing of the Show.* Participants had followed the show an average of 5.72 years ( $SD = 2.96$ ), longer than half the period of 10 years it was on the air. Participants' level of commitment to the show was assessed by asking about their dedication to viewing episodes of the show during the final season, with response options ranging from 1 (*I used to watch the show but stopped before it came off the air*) to 5 (*I never missed an episode and even taped ones I missed*). Participants were fairly committed to the show as evidenced by their average score of 2.99 ( $SD = 0.97$ ) on the 5-point scale, suggesting that on average they tended to watch episodes of *Friends* whenever they had a chance to do so throughout the past season. The two measures of amount of viewing the show and commitment to the show were moderately and positively correlated with one another ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ).

*Attitudes Toward the Show.* Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with 15 statements about the show. These statements assessed attitudes and behaviors toward the show, specifically evaluating the affinity that viewers felt toward the show and how much they liked it. Affinity toward the show reflects a positive disposition toward it and an intention to view it because of an emotional connection to the show, whereas viewing amount merely reflects the frequency of viewing, be it incidental or as a result of others in the household watching it. Affinity toward the show also reflects such positive dispositions before and after the viewing itself, such as searching for information about the show on the Internet, thinking about the show before and after it is aired, and considering the show to be important to one's life. Examples of items include, "I enjoy watching *Friends*," "When *Friends* comes on, I switch the channel" (reverse coded), and "I really get involved in what happens to the characters on *Friends*." The full list of items is included in the Appendix.

Response options to this measure ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Responses to all 15 statements were averaged to create one measure of affinity toward the show. The Cronbach reliability of this measure was  $\alpha = .91$ . Participants averaged slightly above the midpoint of the scale ( $M = 3.27, SD = 0.71$ ), with significant differences between the two genders,  $t(275) = 6.75, p < .001$ . Men reported significantly less affinity toward the show ( $M = 2.71, SD = 0.71$ ) than women ( $M = 3.39, SD = 0.65$ ).

It should be noted that the measure of affinity to the show was positively correlated with both amount of viewing the show ( $r = .49, p < .001$ ) and with commitment to the show ( $r = .63, p < .001$ ). These correlations are consistent with the notion that those who watch the show frequently and those who are committed and dedicated viewers will have more positive attitudes toward the show. However, the moderate correlation between amount of viewing and affinity toward the show suggests that the two measures tap different constructs. The higher correlation with commitment to the show is also not surprising considering that commitment to the show likely implies a

positive disposition toward it. However, the two constructs do not fully overlap with one another, as commitment reflects primarily an attitude while viewing whereas affinity toward the show extends beyond the duration of viewing itself.

*Attitudes Toward the Favorite Friends Character.* Participants were asked to what extent their favorite *Friends* character is also their favorite television character overall, with response options ranging from 1 (*My favorite Friends character is my LEAST favorite overall TV character*) to 5 (*My favorite Friends character is my MOST favorite overall TV character*). For many respondents the favorite *Friends* character was also a favorite character on television overall, evidenced by the average response to this item being slightly above the midpoint of the scale ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ).

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that their favorite *Friends* character is attractive. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), participants averaged 3.62 ( $SD = 1.04$ ) on this measure, indicating they found their favorite *Friends* character to be fairly attractive. There were significant differences on this measure,  $F(5, 267) = 14.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , with Rachel emerging as the most attractive favorite character ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) and as significantly more attractive than all other characters, except Monica. Ross was the least attractive ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ).

To assess the perceived popularity of each of the *Friends* characters, participants were asked to rank the six characters in terms of perceived popularity. In other words, participants were asked to rate each character in terms of their perceptions of how popular they were among other viewers. Participants ranked the characters from 1 (*most popular*) to 6 (*least popular*), providing an ordinal-level measure of character popularity. This is in contrast to the PSR and PSB measures that assess the degree to which the participant himself or herself likes the character.

*Participant Measures.* In addition to asking for participants' gender and age, their level of loneliness was also assessed. Previous research has not found loneliness to be as strong a predictor of PSR intensity as was initially speculated (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985), but whereas this variable may be less meaningful in the creation of imaginary relationships, it may play a central role in the reactions to the dissolution of these relationships. After all, people who have fewer social relationships may experience greater difficulty letting go of any relationship, even an imaginary one. Participants were asked to respond to 12 statements about themselves, including "I often feel in tune with the people around me," and "I have trouble making friends." Most of the items were adapted from the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996). Four items were added to tap the more social dimensions of loneliness (e.g., "I have trouble making friends"). The full list of items can be found in the Appendix. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Responses were averaged to create an overall loneliness score, with a Cronbach  $\alpha = .88$ . Participants averaged 2.05 on the scale ( $SD = 0.54$ ), indicating overall low levels of loneliness. There was a significant

difference between the genders,  $t(272) = -2.47, p < .05$ , with men reporting significantly more loneliness ( $M = 2.22, SD = 0.58$ ) than women ( $M = 2.01, SD = 0.53$ ).

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Of the six *Friends* characters, more participants (31%) chose Rachel as their favorite character. She was followed by Chandler (20%), Joey (20%), Phoebe (14%), and finally Ross (7%) and Monica (5%). The usual pattern of gender choices was found, although in a less pronounced fashion, as the majority (60%) of participants chose favorite *Friends* characters of their own gender. Men were far more likely to choose male characters (76%) as their favorite than female characters (24%). Although to a lesser degree, women were also more likely to choose female characters (59%) than male characters as favorites (41%). The trend of choosing same-sex characters was significantly more pronounced for men than for women,  $\chi^2(1, N = 271) = 5.59, p < .05$ .

Table 1 details the distribution of choices of favorite characters, along with the mean PSR and PSB scores and popularity rank for each *Friends* character. As the table illustrates, Rachel, who was most frequently chosen as favorite, was also the character with whom participants felt the strongest PSR ( $M = 3.37, SD = 0.60$ ) and PSB ( $M = 2.31, SD = 0.56$ ).

**Table 1**  
Choice of Favorite *Friends* Character, PSR, PSB, and Perceived Popularity of Character Relative to All Other *Friends* Characters

Character	N	PSR		PSB		Popularity	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Rachel	87	3.37	0.60	2.31	0.56	1.87	1.60
Chandler	57	3.08	0.67	2.06	0.44	3.67	1.18
Joey	56	3.08	0.61	2.18	0.53	3.27	1.62
Phoebe	39	2.99	0.58	2.08	0.52	4.27	1.62
Ross	19	2.68	0.65	1.90	0.44	4.73	1.79
Monica	15	3.13	0.78	2.09	0.58	3.20	1.01
Total	273						

Note: PSR = parasocial relationship; PSB = parasocial breakup. PSR response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores represent greater PSR with the character. PSB response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores represent greater PSB with the character. Lower popularity scores represent greater perceived popularity. Popularity was measured on an ordinal (rank order) scale, so that each character's score is dependent on all other characters' scores.



Consistent with past research (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985), participants' loneliness was not significantly associated with any of the other measures in the study, including affinity toward the show and attitudes toward the favorite character. Past research also has shown that loneliness and other social deficiencies are unrelated to parasocial relationships (Tsao, 1996).

As Table 1 indicates, in terms of perceived popularity, Rachel was also perceived to be the most popular *Friends* character, relative to all characters. Characters' popularity was related to attitudes toward the show and the favorite characters (popularity-show:  $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ; popularity-PSR:  $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ; popularity-PSB:  $r = -.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The more popular the favorite *Friends* character is perceived to be, the more affinity participants have toward the show, the greater the PSR with the character, and the greater the PSB.

Before proceeding to the main analysis, an analysis was conducted to replicate earlier findings by examining the predictors of PSR. Participants' gender and loneliness were entered on the first step. On the second step, program-related variables were entered: length of time participants had viewed the show, their commitment to the show, and their affinity toward the show. On the third step, character-related variables were entered, including the extent to which the *Friends* character chosen as favorite is an overall television favorite character, the perceived popularity of this character relative to all other *Friends* characters, and the character's attractiveness.

The results of the first regression assessing PSR predictors are presented in Table 2. Variance inflation factors (VIFs) for all independent variables in the regression were tested. None exceeded 2.57, indicating no problem with multicollinearity in this analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The equation explained 51% of the variance in PSR. As can be seen, the remaining significant predictors of PSR in Step 3 are gender ( $\beta = -0.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ), affinity toward the show ( $\beta = 0.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the extent to which the favorite *Friends* character is an overall favorite television character ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the character's attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Hypotheses Testing

The second stepwise regression equation examined the predictors of PSB with favorite *Friends* character. The same predictors used to examine PSR were entered into the regression, with two changes. First, PSB was entered as the dependent variable. Second, because of the prediction that PSR leads to PSB, PSR was entered on Step 4 of the regression analysis. Table 3 presents the results of this regression analysis. Again, VIFs for all independent variables in the regression were tested. None exceeded 2.59, indicating no problem with multicollinearity in this analysis. The equation explained 57% of the variance in PSB. As can be seen, the remaining significant predictors of PSB with favorite character were participants' loneliness ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ), commitment to show ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), affinity toward show ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), perceived popularity of the favorite character relative to all other

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting**  
**Parasocial Relationship With Favorite *Friends* Character**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Gender (females)	0.25	0.11	0.15*
Loneliness	0.00	0.08	0.00
Step 2			
Gender (females)	-0.17	0.08	-0.10*
Loneliness	0.05	0.06	0.04
Years	-0.01	0.01	-0.06
Commitment	-0.02	0.04	-0.04
Affinity toward show	0.74	0.06	0.77***
Step 3			
Gender (females)	-0.29	0.09	-0.17***
Loneliness	0.08	0.06	0.06
Years	-0.01	0.01	-0.06
Commitment	-0.03	0.04	-0.05
Affinity toward show	0.60	0.07	0.63***
Perceived character popularity (reversed)	0.00	0.02	0.01
Favorite character	0.08	0.04	0.12*
Character attractiveness	0.14	0.04	0.22***

Note:  $N = 254$ . Step 1:  $R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(2, 252) = 2.87$ ,  $p < .06$ . Step 2:  $R^2 = .47$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .45$ ,  $F(5, 249) = 44.04$ ,  $p < .001$ . Step 3:  $R^2 = .51$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(8, 246) = 32.21$ ,  $p < .001$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

*Friends* characters ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and PSR with the character ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Based on the preceding equations, Hypothesis 1 was supported, with PSR being the most significant predictor of PSB. Not surprisingly, the more intense the relationship was, the more distressed viewers were when it ended. The second hypothesis was not supported. After controlling for the intensity of the relationship, duration of viewing did not significantly predict PSB. Hypothesis 3 was supported with commitment to viewing the show significantly and positively predicting PSB. Affinity toward the show was found to significantly predict PSB, supporting Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 5 was not supported because once PSR was controlled, the degree to which the favorite *Friends* characters were overall favorites did not significantly predict PSB. Hypothesis 6 was also not supported, as character attractiveness was not found to be a significant predictor of PSB. In support of Hypothesis 7, popularity emerged as a significant predictor of PSB, so that the more popular the character is perceived to be, the greater the PSB reported by participants.

Although the authors did not hypothesize this relationship, participants' loneliness was significantly related to PSB, when PSR was controlled, such that more lonely viewers were more distressed at breakup. This finding is interesting as, like in previous research (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985), loneliness did not predict PSR in this study but it did predict PSB. This finding is consistent with research that has

**Table 3**  
**Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting**  
**Parasocial Breakup With Favorite *Friends* Character**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
<b>Step 1</b>			
Gender (females)	0.27	0.09	0.20**
Loneliness	0.06	0.06	0.06
<b>Step 2</b>			
Gender (females)	-0.08	0.07	-0.06
Loneliness	0.09	0.05	0.10*
Years	0.00	0.01	0.01
Commitment	0.09	0.03	0.17**
Affinity toward the show	0.45	0.05	0.58***
<b>Step 3</b>			
Gender (females)	-0.12	0.07	-0.09+
Loneliness	0.11	0.05	0.12*
Years	0.00	0.01	0.00
Commitment	0.08	0.03	0.15*
Attitude toward show	0.37	0.06	0.48***
Perceived character popularity (reversed)	-0.03	0.02	-0.09+
Favorite character	0.06	0.03	0.11*
Character attractiveness	0.05	0.03	0.10+
<b>Step 4</b>			
Gender (females)	-0.03	0.07	-0.02
Loneliness	0.09	0.04	0.09*
Years	0.01	0.01	0.03
Commitment	0.10	0.03	0.18**
Attitude toward show	0.17	0.06	0.21**
Perceived character popularity	-0.03	0.02	-0.09*
Favorite character	0.04	0.03	0.07
Character attractiveness	0.01	0.03	0.01
Parasocial relationship	0.32	0.05	0.40***

Note: Step 1:  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(2, 249) = 5.23$ ,  $p < .01$ . Step 2:  $R^2 = .47$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .43$ ,  $F(5, 246) = 43.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Step 3:  $R^2 = .50$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(8, 243) = 29.86$ ,  $p < .001$ . Step 4:  $R^2 = .57$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(9, 242) = 35.74$ ,  $p < .001$ .

+ $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

found that a person's psychological composition does contribute in some ways to the development of imaginary relationships (Turner, 1993) and seems to suggest that some psychological aspects are more relevant to the breakup of PSRs than to their development. The fact that the predictive value of loneliness remained above and beyond that of PSR intensity indicates that lonely viewers are likely more dependent on their relationships with their favorite characters and hence feel more anxious on relationship dissolution.

Overall, the results of this study show that, beyond PSR, the intensity of PSB is predicted by several other factors, including commitment and affinity to the show, the perceived popularity of the favorite *Friends* character relative to all other *Friends* characters, PSR with the favorite character, and loneliness. The results show that some of the predictions drawn from research on interpersonal relationships held up in mediated relationships, whereas other factors that impact personal breakups did not carry over to mediated relationships.

## Discussion

The data in this study shed light on the factors that explain people's reactions to the end of a relationship with a television character. They indicate that viewers' reactions are explained by factors other than the intensity of such relationships. Other factors predicting the reactions to PSB, that remained significant after controlling for PSR, were commitment to the show, affinity to the show, the perceived popularity of the favorite character, and participants' loneliness. Together with PSR these factors explained 57% of the variance in reaction to PSB, suggesting that the use of theory from interpersonal settings to understand this phenomenon is warranted, but that mediated relationships operate somewhat differently than social relationships.

The generally low levels of PSB raise a few interesting issues. On the one hand they are consistent with previous research suggesting the reliability of the measure. On the other hand they suggest that although this study shows that reactions to PSB follow similar patterns as breakup in social contexts, they seem to be less stressful than breakup of close friendships or romantic relationships. In contrast, the higher levels of PSR reported in many studies suggest that the relationships themselves are quite enjoyable and meaningful. It may be, then, that the one-way nature of the intimacy involved in PSRs allows for enjoyable relationships that keep one company and entertain but do not facilitate great dependence, which would make the anxiety at the end of the relationship very strong. This finding is in line with Koenig and Lessan (1985), who suggested that television characters are closer to an individual than mere acquaintances, but not quite as close as friends. This suggests that some emotional distress is likely when mediated relationships dissolve but that this distress is likely to be weaker than the distress experienced following social breakups. In addition, the socially shared nature of the end of a series as well as the long lead time viewers have to expect such a breakup may mitigate its negative effects. Also, the fact that one of the

main characters in the show, Joey, was known to be starring in a new spinoff series starting the following fall season also could have contributed to the generally low levels of PSB reported in this sample. Finally, the relatively high frequency of reruns and repeated airing of the show's episodes, as well as the availability of DVD collections of the episodes, also likely alleviated some of the anxiety associated with the show's ending, as viewers knew they could rely on those for continued interactions with the show's characters. Still, one can conceive of reruns and DVDs for shows that no longer run as similar to looking at photos or home videos of a lost friend or partner. They may help, but it is not really the same. What is lost is the participation in the progression of the story.

That the duration of viewing did not predict PSB is surprising. It was expected that, like in other relationships, as relationships last longer their demise is more painful (Simpson, 1987). At the bivariate level the length of relationships was correlated with PSB ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ) but this relationship disappeared once other variables were included in the model. This suggests that the effect of length of relationship on PSB operates through variables like commitment and affinity rather than directly.

The importance of commitment to PSB (but not to PSR) is noteworthy. It may be that commitment and intensity operate independently while in a relationship, but once the show goes off the air the disappointment is increased when viewers are committed. Because in this study PSB was measured so that it was related to the end of *Friends* as a whole and not only to removing a specific character, this feeling of disappointment may have spilled over into this measure. On the other hand, the PSR measure was specific to the favorite character and was not affected by these negative feelings. Perhaps a study exploring the removal of a character from an ongoing show would provide a better indication of whether the commitment to the show has an independent contribution to PSB.

Whereas affinity to the show is a predictor of both the intensity of the relationship and reactions to its dissolution, attraction predicts PSR but not PSB and commitment and popularity predict breakup but not the strength of the relationship itself. The fact that the perceived attractiveness predicted PSR but not PSB further suggests that how much one finds a partner attractive is crucial during the relationship but at breakup, perceptions of how others perceive the former partner are more important.

The contribution of popularity seems consistent with the notion that the stress following from the end of a relationship is related to the perception that others will see this as a loss of something valuable (Simpson, 1987). In other words, breaking up with someone who is perceived as a "great catch" and who is more likely to quickly move on is more damaging to one's self-image than a breakup with someone less socially valued. Although this argument makes little sense when applied to PSR it nonetheless seems to be part of the way viewers think about such relationships.

There are some differences between how respondents report feeling about their favorite characters (PSR) and how they believe others feel about the same character (perceived popularity). This demonstrates the individuality of such choices and that they are at least partially independent of perceptions of public celebrity. Specifically,

the data suggest that for those characters who are most liked (i.e., Rachel) and least liked (i.e., Ross), there is consistency in the extent to which they are liked by respondents, are perceived as popular, and the levels of PSR and PSB that participants experience with them. However, for other characters there is less congruence between the measures. It would be interesting for future investigations to examine the source of the discrepancy between individual liking and perceived popularity.

Finally, this study provides an interesting test of various theoretical explanations of gender differences in favorite character selection. It is well documented that when children are asked to select a favorite character, boys overwhelmingly prefer male characters, whereas girls select both male and female characters (Feilitzen & Linné, 1975; Hoffner, 1996; Reeves & Miller, 1978). A similar trend has been documented among college students and adults (Cohen, 1997, 2004). Three explanations are possible for these findings: (a) a psychological explanation argues that women have a greater capacity than men to empathize with those who are dissimilar from them; (b) a more sociological explanation suggests that because of the greater social status men enjoy it is deemed proper for women to admire men but not vice versa; and (c) an explanation based on gender media representation argues that there are more male characters and that they usually get better roles than female characters, making them more appealing to viewers of both genders (Reeves & Miller, 1978). This study of *Friends* provides a test of the third explanation in that there are three male and three female characters who enjoy relatively equal status on the show. The fact that the gender difference in selecting favorite characters appears in this study suggests that even when a show provides equal representation this does not eliminate gender difference in selections of favorite characters.

Additionally, this study extends the examination of gender differences in PSRs by testing the mechanisms through which such relationships occur. Previous studies often simply reported the correlations between gender and PSR at the bivariate level. This study found a strong gender difference on affinity toward the show and a strong correlation between affinity and PSR and PSB. Controlling for affinity, the relationships between gender and PSR and PSB change from positive to negative. It is likely that women's PSRs with television characters operate through their attitudes toward the shows and once such attitudes are statistically controlled, the relationship is reversed.

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, the authors used a convenience sample of undergraduate students that consisted mostly of women. Future research should attempt to use more balanced samples as males and females differ on some key constructs, including PSRs. Second, this study excluded nonviewers of the show *Friends*. Those participants who reported never having watched at least one episode of the show were asked to answer only a few questions about themselves but were excused from responding to any questions about the show and its characters. Therefore, the authors were unable to compare these nonviewers to the viewers in the sample except to say that there was not a significant difference between them in terms of their loneliness scores,  $t(293) = 0.95, p = .34$ . Although fu-

ture research could benefit from comparing nonviewers with other viewers, especially heavy ones, in this study nonviewers constituted only 6.4% of the sample. Moreover, although nonviewers may exhibit some distress over the ending of the show, this is more likely to be a secondary effect resulting from the distress experienced by other people around them rather than a direct effect, and is not likely to have a profound psychological effect on these nonviewers.

The focus of this study was on PSB in a specific case where both the show and the character are going off the air. Future research should examine the nature of PSB with a character that is leaving an ongoing show. Researchers should also examine other genres. For example, with the growing popularity of reality shows, many of which eliminate characters on a regular basis, it would be interesting to examine how viewers react when their favorite character is "voted off" the show. Another genre is soap operas, which have often been studied with regard to PSRs (Perse & Rubin, 1990; A. M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Sood & Rogers, 2000). Several generic differences exist between soap operas and situation comedies such as *Friends* and these may play a role in the levels of PSB exhibited by viewers. For example, the different tone of the show—dramatic in soap operas and humoristic in comedies—may be important. Also, on soap operas characters are frequently eliminated or the actors that portray them change while the show continues. The continuation of the show along with the large cast of characters that typify most soap operas may mean that the departure of one character is felt less strongly than when a show goes off the air altogether.

Another direction for future research is to examine the personality characteristics that viewers bring with them to the screen and how these interact with the experienced PSB. It has been established that there are some similarities between mediated and interpersonal relationships and that there are individual differences in how viewers react to the breakup of mediated relationships. Considering the overall low levels of PSB reported in this study, it may seem that the breakup of a mediated relationship is not a disturbing phenomenon for most people, but it may be a particularly upsetting situation for certain people who are especially attached to the mediated characters or who are prone to extreme effects of relationship dissolution. Research focusing on such extreme cases should include measures appropriate to assess individual differences, such as extreme emotionalism, and state variables such as depression and mental instability.

In sum, these findings oppose the view that developing attachments to characters is no more than an illusory and escapist diversion for lonely viewers and support the notion that mediated relationships are part of one's wider social life (Caughy, 1985). At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear that scholars of mediated relationships need to start examining the differences, as well as the similarities, between social relationships and PSRs. PSRs seem to carry less emotional intensity than close or romantic relationships, and their one-sidedness seems to have implications for the way they develop, as does the more public nature of the shared knowledge there is about the characters and actors and the shows of which they are part. Solving the riddle of how mediated and social relationships compare with each other involves a

unique blend of perspectives from within the communication discipline. A better understanding of this question touches on questions of media effects, of technology and its effects on emotions and a sense of presence, and a keen understanding of interpersonal relationships. Thus, gaining new insights into mediated relationships promises to produce gains in each of these areas, and, more important, to enhance understanding of how they overlap and interact to provide new insights into the mysteries of human communication.

## Appendix

### Measure of Parasocial Relationship

1. I like my favorite *Friends* character.
2. I would like to meet my favorite *Friends* character in person.
3. I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite *Friends* character says.
4. My favorite *Friends* character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.
5. I like hearing the voice of my favorite *Friends* character in my home.

### Measure of Parasocial Breakup

1. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel more lonely.
2. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel angry.
3. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I plan to watch other programs with the same actor.
4. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I am less excited about watching TV.
5. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I tend to think of him or her often.
6. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I watch reruns or taped episodes of *Friends*.
7. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel sad.
8. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I don't miss him or her as much as I thought I would (reverse).
9. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel like I lost a good friend.
10. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I found a different TV personality to like (reverse).
11. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel a void in my life.
12. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I look for information about him or her in other places (e.g., talk shows, newspaper, Internet).
13. Now that my favorite *Friends* character is off the air, I feel disappointed.



### Measure of Affinity Towards the Show *Friends*

1. I often search for information about *Friends* in magazines, online, and in other television shows or films.
2. I think that my life is a lot like that of the characters on *Friends*.
3. I wish I had friends like the characters on *Friends*.
4. I enjoy watching *Friends*.
5. *Friends* is very important to me.
6. I do not relate at all to the characters on *Friends* (reverse).
7. I rarely think about *Friends* before or after I watch the show (reverse).
8. I still hope that *Friends* will return to TV.
9. I often watch reruns of *Friends*.
10. When *Friends* comes on, I switch the channel (reverse).
11. I really get involved in what happens to the characters on *Friends*.
12. Watching *Friends* is a waste of my time (reverse).
13. I really get the characters on *Friends*.
14. I still can't believe *Friends* is off the air.
15. While viewing *Friends* I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program.

### Measure of Participants' Loneliness

1. I often feel in tune with the people around me (reverse).
2. I have many friends (reverse).
3. I often lack companionship.
4. I often feel alone.
5. I am satisfied with my social life (reverse).
6. I often feel there are people I can talk to (reverse).
7. I often feel there are people around me but not with me.
8. I have trouble making friends.
9. I often feel isolated from others.
10. I often feel close to other people (reverse).
11. I generally find that people want to be my friends (reverse).
12. I often feel my relationships with others are not meaningful.

### Note

<sup>1</sup>The length of time that passed between the final *Friends* episode being aired and the completion of the survey by participants was significantly and negatively associated with their affinity toward the show ( $r = -.13, p < .05$ ), their PSR with their favorite *Friends* character ( $r = -.13, p < .05$ ), and their PSB with their favorite *Friends* character ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ). These negative correlations can be interpreted in two ways. It may be that the more time passed after the airing of the last episode, the less positive these attitudes became. Alternatively, it may be that those participants who had less affinity toward the show and the characters to begin with took longer to com-

plete the survey after the show ended. When entering this variable as a predictor in subsequent regression equations, it did not emerge as a significant predictor of either PSR or PSB. Because of this and because of the lack of clarity regarding the direction of causality with these outcomes, the variable of length of time between the show ending and survey completion was not included in data analyses.

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## Channel Repertoires: Using Peoplemeter Data in Beijing

Elaine J. Yuan and James G. Webster

*Channel repertoires, the subsets of available channels that viewers actually watch, have typically been measured by relying on respondent recall. Using minute-by-minute peoplemeter data from Beijing, this study operationalized channel repertoire as the channels actually watched for 10 or more consecutive minutes during the week. On average, Chinese viewers used 13 channels, about one third of those available. Older network and local channels accounted for most of the time spent viewing. A regression model was established in which total time spent viewing TV and cable subscription explained 65% of the total variance in repertoire size.*

Every year, television viewers around the world have more channels from which to choose. In the United States, for example, the average household receives more than 100 channels of programming—a threefold increase since 1990 (Nielsen Media Research, 2004). In China, the world's largest television audience has seen a fourfold increase in less than a decade (CVSC-Sofres Media [CSM], 2004). We have known for some time that Americans cope with this abundance by winnowing the field to a smaller channel repertoire within which regular viewing occurs (Ferguson, 1992; Ferguson & Perse, 1993; Heeter, 1985; Heeter, D'Alessio, Greenberg, & McVoy, 1983; Neuendorf, Atkin, & Jeffres, 2001). The precision of that information, however, often leaves something to be desired. To date, no study has extended this line of research beyond the U.S. marketplace. This research adds to that literature by (a) investigating channel repertoires using peoplemeter data, thus affording a more finely calibrated look at channel use; and (b) documenting the use of channel repertoires in Beijing, suggesting that this behavior is characteristic of audiences in channel-rich environments worldwide. The authors find that although a large number of channels are

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sampled each week, a small number account for the lion's share of viewing. Variation in those repertoires is most easily explained by structural factors (i.e., viewer and channel availability), as specified in the theoretical framework developed by Webster and Phalen (1997).

## Channel Repertoires

Heeter et al. (1983) coined the term *channel repertoire* to describe "the set of channels watched regularly by an individual or household" (Heeter, 1985, p. 133). Using household-tuning data collected at a cable headend, Heeter et al. (1983) found that although the cable system offered subscribers 34 channels, the average home watched fewer than 10 a week. These repertoires were conceptualized as a mechanism that viewers used to cope with an increasingly abundant and complex media environment (Heeter, 1985). Early studies (Heeter & Greenberg, 1988) further established that repertoires varied in size (with cable subscribers watching more than nonsubscribers) and composition (with major broadcast networks common to most repertoires, but dissimilar combinations beyond that).

Subsequent research has elaborated on definitions of channel repertoire and sought to further explain variation in repertoire size and composition. Some studies have continued to define repertoires as the total number of all channels watched over a certain period of time—usually a week (Heeter, 1985). Others have drawn a distinction between total channel repertoires (TCRs) and "mindful" channel repertoires—those that come to mind without aided recall (Ferguson & Perse, 1993). Neuendorf et al. (2001) grouped channels into "sets," which were summed to create repertoires, and they attempted to weight channels or sets by the frequency of viewing. Regardless of the definition, the overall pattern is clear: Viewers with abundant choices watch far fewer than the total number of available channels. This is consistent with a recent industry estimate that the average U.S. household watched only 14.8 channels in the course of a week (Nielsen Media Research, 2004).

Researchers have tried to explain variation in the size of repertoires using a range of predictor variables. Webster and Phalen (1997) offered a useful theoretical framework for summarizing these results that draws a distinction between microlevel and macrolevel structural determinants. Some studies favor the microlevel determinants by hypothesizing the individual viewers' media use and demographic characteristics as the primary predictors of the channel repertoires. Heeter (1985) found that the viewers who had an exhaustive channel-search pattern had larger channel repertoires, and that education was a positive predictor of repertoire size. Neuendorf et al. (2001) found that the use of other mass media explained a small portion of the variance of channel repertoire.

A smaller number of studies have considered variation in what Webster and Phalen (1997) identified as structural variables. These include audience availability and the number of choices in the viewing environment. Ferguson and Perse (1993)

operationalized availability as the time spent watching television and the number of choices as a cable–no-cable dichotomy. They concluded that “audience behavior can be explained well without considering individual audience characteristics. The findings show in a powerful way that TCR is a function of audience availability as it interacts with media structure” (p. 42). Table 1 summarizes the principal academic studies of channel repertoires, their operationalizations of the construct, methods, and key findings.

Two limitations in this literature are apparent. First, in the wake of Heeter et al.’s (1983) groundbreaking study, investigators have relied on some form of recall to assess the size and composition of repertoires. In the increasingly complex television viewing environment of the 21st century, which features dozens of channels and near universal penetration of remote control devices, such methods produce suspect results (Webster, Phalen, & Lichty, 2006). Second, the findings are based exclusively on U.S. viewers. It seems likely that viewers in similarly complex media environments would adopt similar coping mechanisms, but that is yet to be demonstrated. This study takes advantage of peplemeter data collected in Beijing to address both shortcomings.

## Chinese Television

A few words about the nature of Chinese television and its audience may be useful. Chinese television has undergone significant growth since the 1980s (Chang, Wang, & Chen, 2002). Currently, with some 1.2 billion viewers, it has the world’s largest audience. In some metropolitan areas such as Beijing, audiences have an ever-growing number of channels delivered by cable and satellite systems. Figure 1 shows the dramatic increase in channel availability for Beijing’s audience in the last 8 years.

In Beijing, 95% of the households have at least one TV set with a remote control. The availability of increased programming coupled with low subscription fees has resulted in a combined cable and satellite penetration rate of almost 90%, a level slightly higher than the comparable U.S. national average (Nielsen Media Research, 2004). An average adult viewer spends about 200 minutes a day watching television, or about 80 minutes less than a typical American (Veronis Suhler Stevenson, 2004).

There are three categories of television in the Beijing market. First, China Central Television (CCTV), the only national television service, has 12 channels. About half of those channels are broadcast over the air. These have a longer history and enjoy higher audience shares than the newer cable channels. Except for CCTV-1, which has a breadth of programming comparable to a traditional U.S. broadcast network, each of the other CCTV channels specializes in one or two specific program categories such as news, sports, music, lifestyle, and so on. Second, the local service (i.e., Beijing Television [BTV]) has 9 channels, most of which are distributed via cable. Among these channels, BTV-1 has comprehensive broadcast programming, and the rest of the channels are more or less specialized. Third, there are approximately 50

distant channels from other provinces and cities that are brought to the Beijing audience by cable. Similar to "superstations" in the United States, these distant channels offer a broad range of content.

Today, most Chinese television is advertiser supported, so, much like their U.S. counterparts, Chinese broadcasters need data on the size and composition of audiences at both the national and local levels. Audience viewing data in China are collected by CSM using peplemeter panels. These panels are created through a process of multistage area probability sampling, in which each stage is stratified and sample elements are drawn in proportion to their incidence in the population. Similar to the meters Nielsen Media Research uses to produce national audience ratings in the United States, the CSM peplemeter is an electronic device attached to the TV set that automatically records the minute-by-minute viewing behavior of all the members of the household. Such meters are known to produce a much more precise record of viewing behavior than either diaries or telephone recall techniques and have become the preferred method for measuring television audiences worldwide (Webster et al., 2006).

## Hypotheses and Questions

In contrast with previous studies, this study employs detailed minute-by-minute peplemeter data for 1 week. The literature clearly indicates there is no one universally accepted way to define channel repertoires, so it was decided to operationalize the construct in three different ways. Although they are closely related, each has certain virtues and limitations. First, TCR was defined as all the different channels watched during the week. This definition is standard in most earlier research. It is the most generous, or inclusive, of all measures. Second, primary channel repertoire (PCR) was the total number of channels viewed for 10 or more consecutive minutes at least once during the week. This definition most closely approximates that used by Nielsen to compile its channel repertoire data (Nielsen Media Research, 2004). The PCR is necessarily smaller than the TCR. This more conservative measure seemed to be a useful addition because the channel repertoire construct emphasizes the regularity and stability of channel use. PCR disqualifies those channels that appear on the record as a result of channel surfing rather than sustained viewing. Finally, daily channel repertoire (DCR) was defined as the number of channels viewed for 10 or more consecutive minutes on an average day of the week. For example, if a viewer watched TV on the first, second, and then the last day of the week, and the number of channels watched each day was 6, 8, and 10, respectively, then the size of the DCR was 8. Hence, the DCR excludes from the average days when no viewing occurs. DCR, the authors believe, provides a conservative picture of what a typical day is like—at least in terms of channel usage—for a Beijing TV viewer.

Webster and Phalen (1997) identified two broad perspectives that were most often used to explain audience behavior. The first emphasizes structural factors "that are

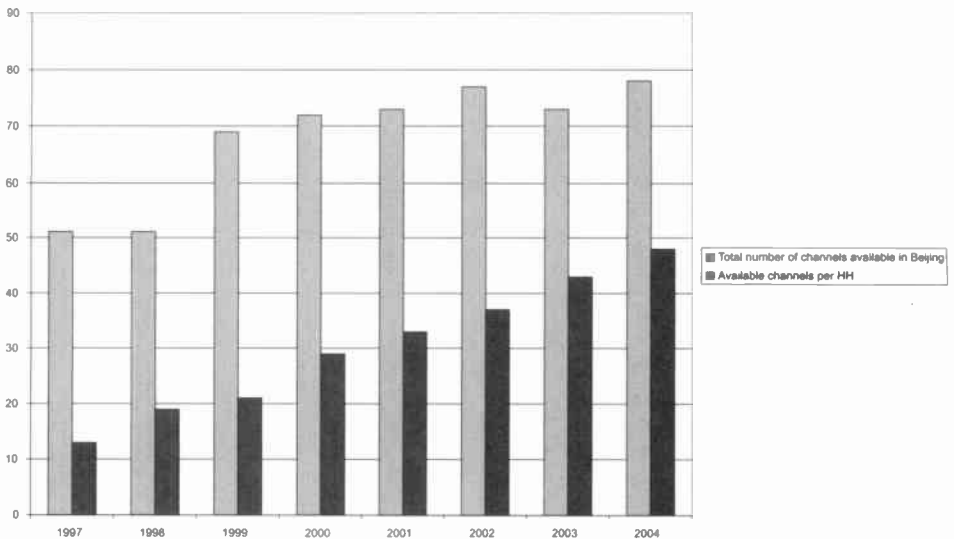
**Table 1**  
**Summary of Previous Channel Repertoire Studies**

Reference	Method	Definition	Significant Predictors
Heeter & Greenberg (1988, chap. 4)	Minute-by-minute household viewing data	Channel repertoire: A set of channels to which a viewer is loyal	N/A (the origin of term "channel repertoire")
Heeter (1985)	Door-to-door survey recall	Channel repertoire: Number of different channels watched one or more days per week Cable channel repertoire: Number of cable channels regularly viewed Viewing concentration index: The collection of the sum of the channel share squared	Education, cable subscription, time spent viewing TV, choice process variables
Lochte & Warren (1989)	Weekly diary	Channel repertoire: The channels watched regularly (at least 5% of the time)	N/A (it confirmed the existence of the channel repertoire)
Ferguson (1992)	Telephone recall	Channel repertoire: The sum of all channels watched by aided recall (broadcast channels) and unaided recall (cable channels)	Channel repertoire: cable subscription, RCD use, RCD motivation variables



Ferguson & Perse (1993)	Telephone recall	Total channel repertoire: The sum of all channels watched by aided recall Mindful channel repertoire: Unaided recall	Total channel repertoire: cable subscription, television exposure, channel changing Mindful channel repertoire: cable subscription, television exposure, intentionality, effort, changing channels motives, affinity
Ferguson & Melkote (1997)	Telephone recall	Broadcast channel repertoire: The sum of broadcast channels and the cable channels that are identical to broadcast channels watched by aided recall Cable channel repertoire: The sum of all cable networks watched by aided recall	Cable channel repertoire: Time spent viewing TV, age and education combined
Neuendorf et al. (2001)	Telephone recall	Repertoire: The total number of channel sets ever viewed Frequency-weighted repertoire: The sum of all 37 frequency of viewing measures, after each is standardized Primary Repertoire: The number of channel sets viewed at least daily Secondary repertoire: The number of channel sets viewed at least weekly Tertiary repertoire: The number of channel sets viewed weekly or less, but at least occasionally	Repertoire: Time spent viewing TV Frequency-weighted repertoire: Time spent viewing TV Primary repertoire: Age, income, time spent viewing TV Secondary repertoire: Time spent viewing TV

**Figure 1**  
**Channel Availability in Beijing**



Note: From CSM Establishment Survey data.

common to, or characteristic of, the mass. These macro-level factors may be built on individual behaviors, but they reveal themselves only in the aggregate" (p. 24). Those factors include audience availability and the structure of media environment. The second perspective denotes the importance of individual viewer traits in making program choice.

Audience availability is known to have a great influence on television viewing. Program choice is dependent on an individual's availability to view television. The total time that viewers spend viewing TV (TSV) is commonly used to indicate audience availability. Heeter (1985) found television exposure, measured as the total time spent viewing, was among the best predictors of the size of channel repertoires. Ferguson and Melkote (1997) also found a weak positive relation between channel repertoire and total television viewing (i.e., people who spent the most time with TV were likely to have larger channel repertoires). Thus, it is hypothesized that audience availability will be positively related to the channel repertoire among Chinese viewers:

H<sub>1</sub>: Viewers who spend more time watching TV will have larger channel repertoires.

Ferguson (1992) and Ferguson and Perse (1993) found that a dichotomous cable subscription variable was the most important predictor of channel repertoire in their

multiple regression models. However, when channel availability is measured as a ratio-level variable that differs from home to home, it is only weakly related to repertoire size (Ferguson, 1992). Nielsen Media Research has also consistently reported that as the number of channels available increases, the number of the channels viewed for at least 10 minutes expands, but at a diminishing rate. That is, when channels are scarce, viewers watch almost all of them. When channels are abundant, repertoires tend to top out at 15 to 20 channels. For instance, households with 7 available channels watch 3 or 4, whereas homes with 180 channels watch an average of 19 (Nielsen Media Research, 2004). Hence, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>2</sub>: Cable subscription will increase the size of the channel repertoires.

Meanwhile the individual, or microlevel, factors seem to play a limited, but potentially significant, role. Ferguson and Melkote (1997) found a relatively modest relation between demographic variables and the number of channels in one's repertoire. Neuendorf et al. (2001) posited that seniors and viewers of lower socioeconomic status would spend more time with television, and therefore were likely to maintain larger channel repertoires. They also hypothesized that males would have larger channel repertoires, as they were more likely to have "an instrumental viewing style, with goal-directed reasons for watching, and intentional, concentrated and selective use of television" (p. 466), whereas females, who are more relationship-oriented, would tend toward smaller channel repertoires. Although few studies indicate that there are major effects of demographics such as age, gender, or income on the size of channel repertoires, this study takes the opportunity to retest those hypotheses with the more precise measures of channel usage available in peoplemeter data:

H<sub>3</sub>: Age is positively related to the size of channel repertoire.

H<sub>4</sub>: Males have larger channel repertoires than females.

H<sub>5</sub>: Income is negatively related to the size of channel repertoire.

Webster and Wakshlag (1982) noted that viewers tend to watch TV in the company of others, and that group composition affects program choice. However, the findings of the previous research have been inconclusive with regard to the influence of group viewing on the size of channel repertoires. Heeter and Greenberg (1988) speculated that those who view in groups might experience less channel changing than those who view alone because the group tended to constrain individual discretion. However, contrary to expectations, more channel changing was found in the group situation than alone. This suggests that household size might be related to the number of channels an individual sees and led to the following research question:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Will the number of viewers in the household affect the size of channel repertoires?

## Method and Data Analyses

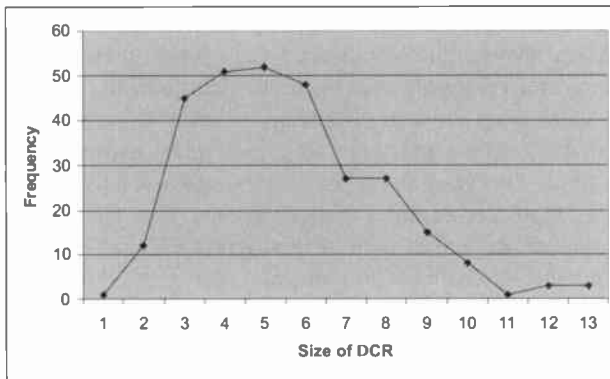
This study was a secondary analysis of CSM peplemeter panel data collected during the first week of March 2002 in Beijing, China. The 300-household sample is representative of 2,698,000 television households in the Beijing urban area. The week was chosen because it had no atypical events that might have distorted normal viewing patterns. Individuals 18 years old and over were the units of analysis. Only one individual was randomly selected from each household to be included in the final data analysis. Excluding those who had not watched any TV during the week, the total sample size was 294.

In 2002, the average number of channels receivable per household was 37 (CSM, 2004). Of the 294 viewers sampled, the average size of the TCR was 25.33 ( $SD = 12.70$ ). The average PCR was 13.48 ( $SD = 7.22$ ), and the DCR was 4.52 ( $SD = 2.26$ ). However, such means can be deceptive. Figure 2 is a frequency distribution of DCR.

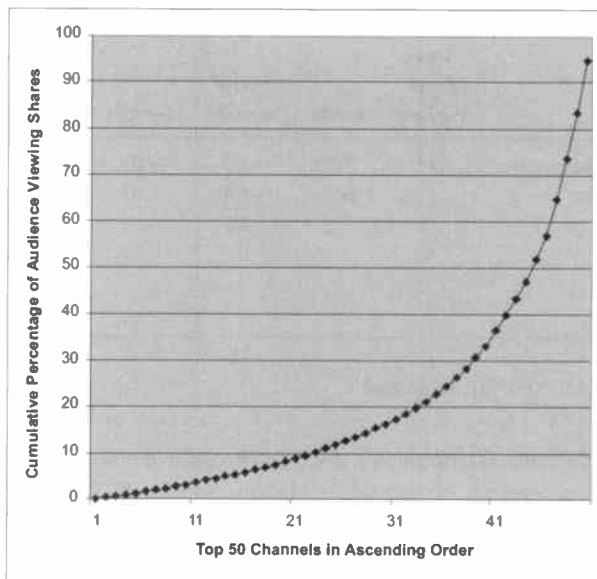
The distribution has a notable positive skew. This suggests that means, which are the statistic typically reported in the literature on channel repertoires, are inflated by the small number of viewers who have much larger channel repertoires than the rest of the viewers. As a result, median channel repertoire sizes may be a fairer reflection of viewing behavior. In this study, these were TCR = 26, PCR = 13, and DCR = 4.

Further, it should be noted that even among those channels that are viewed, a handful dominate the attention of the audience. In fact the top 10 channels, which were the national network channels and local channels, accounted for 58% of all the time viewers spent watching television (CSM, 2004). Such data are sometimes represented in the form of a Lorenz curve, which is used by audience researchers to illustrate audience concentration (e.g., Neuman, 1991; Webster & Lin, 2002; Yim, 2003). The channels were arranged in ascending order along the horizontal axis and the cumulative percentage of the viewing shares was plotted on the vertical axis. If each channel

**Figure 2**  
Frequency Distribution of DCR



**Figure 3**  
**Concentration of Audience Shares**



had an equal share then one would expect a straight line (i.e., the equality line, rising at 45 degrees). Concentration is evident in the extent to which the observed curve deflects from the equality line. As can be seen in Figure 3, the majority of the small channels had a modest contribution to the slowly rising curve and the channels with the largest share at the end turned it upward sharply.

As might be expected, the three measures of channel repertoires were correlated. The correlation coefficient between TCR and PCR is .82; TCR and DCR, .63; and PCR and DCR, .84. All correlations were highly significant ( $p < .001$ ). On average, the viewers spent 94% of their TSV watching PCR channels. Therefore, to simplify the reporting of subsequent correlational analyses, the authors settled on PCR as the preferred measure of channel repertoire. (When the same analyses were performed using TCR or DCR as the dependent variable, the results were substantially the same.)

Table 2 is a correlation matrix that depicts the relations among all macro- and microlevel variables and PCR. TSV, an index of audience availability, was highly correlated with PCR ( $r = .74, p < .01$ ). It thus confirmed the findings of the previous studies that TSV is positively correlated with channel repertoire, fully supporting Hypothesis 1. It is also worth noting that light viewers not only had smaller PCRs but also watched these channels less frequently than heavy viewers. The frequency of watching PCR channels was highly correlated with the time spent watching the PCR channels ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ). Cable subscription was also highly correlated with PCR ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

**Table 2**  
**Correlations Matrix Between the Structural and Individual Factors**  
**and Primary Channel Repertoire**

	Time Spent Viewing	Cable	No. of Viewers	Gender	Age	Household Income
Primary channel repertoire	.74**	.37**	-.03	-.05	.19**	.04
Time spent viewing		.05	-.04	-.01	.28**	-.03
Cable			-.05	.01	.10*	.28**
No. of viewers				.02	-.14*	-.01
Gender					.04	-.00
Age						-.02

Note:  $N = 294$ .

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

Even though the authors employed a much more sensitive measure of channel usage than most previous research, no significant relations between PCR and gender, income, or number of viewers in the home were found. There was a weak positive relation between age and PCR ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) but that was likely an artifact of the relation between age and TSV ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ). Therefore Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were unsupported.

To offer a parsimonious explanation of variation in channel repertoires, a hierarchical forced entry regression was performed; the results are shown in Table 3. As would be expected from the results of the correlation matrix, TSV enters the equation first, followed by cable subscription, coded as a dummy variable. Those two factors explained 65% of the variance in repertoires. No other factors (i.e., individual audience factors of gender, age, and household income) added significantly to the predictive power of the equation.

**Table 3**  
**Regression Model of Primary Channel Repertoire**

	$\beta$
Block 1: Structural variables	$R^2 = .65, F = 212.96, p < .001$
Time spent viewing	.72**
Cable subscription	.35**
Block 2: Individual variables	$\Delta R^2 = .00, \Delta F = 1.18, p = .32$
Gender (male = 1, female = 2)	-.05
Age	-.04
Household income	-.04
No. of viewers	.04

Note: The regressions are all hierarchical forced entry.

\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

## Conclusion

Our study confirmed the existence of the channel repertoires among Beijing television viewers. In a typical household with 37 channels, an average viewer would normally encounter about 25 different channels (TCR) during a week, 13 of which would be watched for at least 10 consecutive minutes (PCR). However, these means tend to overstate repertoires, because they are distorted by the few viewers who had large repertoires. In fact, of the 294 viewers, about 55% watched 4 channels or fewer on a daily basis (DCR).

The total number of channels watched (TCR) had a wide range of values at the individual level. By that measure, some people watched as many as 51 channels during the week. A more conservative measure, and the preferred operationalization of the construct, was PCR. With its 10-minute threshold, it was most consistent with industry-based definitions. Although it was highly correlated with the other two measures, it filtered out much of the "noise" (e.g., fast-paced channel surfing) captured by peplemeters.

TSV and cable subscription explained about 65% of the variance in PCRs. This relatively simple model explained more variance in channel repertoires than any other reported in the literature thus far. The overall pattern, though, is consistent with earlier studies that found macrolevel structural factors to be the most important predictors of channel repertoire size (Ferguson, 1992; Ferguson & Perse, 1993). Conversely, even though the authors employed a more sensitive measure of channel use than previous research, repertoires could not be explained by the viewer's age, gender, income, or the number of viewers within the household. Despite whatever theoretical appeal they may have, these microlevel factors are of very little value in predicting channel repertoires.

Although this study does a good job of describing the size of channel repertoires and establishing the generalizability of this phenomenon outside the United States, much related research remains to be done. For instance, relatively little is known about the composition of the channel repertoires. Future studies should consider how different kinds of people construct not only repertoires of different sizes, but different substance. Moreover, the increased availability of technologies like digital video recorders and video on demand may cause one to rethink the entire concept of repertoires altogether.

For now, the results clearly suggest that Chinese viewers deal with an abundance of viewing options much like U.S. viewers and, presumably, viewers in the rest of the world. Greatly increasing the number of available channels results in moderately larger repertoires. The typical Beijing viewer watches only about one third of the available channels in any meaningful way in the course of a week. Further, whereas many channels are briefly sampled, the older more established channels continue to dominate TSV. In Beijing, the dominant channels are the national broadcast networks and local channels. Distant channels, now available on cable, captured only a tiny share of viewing and were often ignored altogether. It appears that the dramatic

expansion in the number of channels available to the Chinese audience has, thus far, produced only modest changes in the program choices of the typical viewer.

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# Critical Analysis of Racist Post-9/11 Web Animations

Cassandra Van Buren

*This study employs a critical historical approach to situate a corpus of 106 post-9/11 anti-Arab Web cartoons as populist wartime narrative that remediates U.S. racist animation and racist wartime cartoons produced during World War II. Analysis of the production, distribution, and exhibition circumstances, as well as general narrative strategies deployed in the animations, demonstrates that these amateur texts resurrect and reproduce racist narrative strategies employed historically in professionally produced government-sanctioned animation. These cartoons illustrate how animators can use the Web as a folk venue for racist wartime animations that are currently unrepresentable by dominant mass media.*

Within a day of the September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda attacks in the United States, amateur animations, depicting the humiliation, torture, and death of Osama bin Laden, Taliban, and other Arab and Muslim characters began appearing on U.S.-based Web animation portals such as About.com's Political Humor site and Newgrounds.com. Narratives centered on shooting, bombing, torturing, and humiliating the Arab characters. Hastily created and aesthetically crude in execution, the pieces had thin plots and relied heavily on anti-Arab representations to depict meaning and sentiment. One such animation, *The Fingers of NYC* (Stitch, 2001), was posted on September 12, using a still photo of the Statue of Liberty and a crudely drawn animation of Uncle Sam shooting an Arab man in the head after the Arab whimpers in a faked accent, "Oh, please, but I like America!" This and other like animations appeared to be not much more than the scribblings, almost akin to graffiti, of a few emotionally raw individuals with Web access, expressing the immediate confusion and rage many U.S. citizens felt in response to the 9/11 attacks.

During the days, months, and years that followed 9/11, dozens more anti-Muslim and anti-Arab<sup>1</sup> cartoons were posted to Web animation portals by amateur and freelance animators, indicating a trend rather than mere oddity. As of June 2005, the author's effort to comprehensively count publicly accessible, free-of-charge, English-language anti-Arab animations on the Web yielded 106 cartoons. Viewings of the animations climbed into the multimillions at one portal alone by June 2005

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(Newgrounds, 2005d). As the U.S. invasion of Iraq was threatened and finally commenced on March 20, 2003, additional anti-Arab plot possibilities became a part of the animators' grab bag, including the anti-Hussein narrative. Several pieces emerged as Web "classics," enduring in their Web-based exhibition spaces for 4 years or longer as the U.S. War on Terror and the U.S.–Iraq war continued. What is striking about post-9/11 anti-Arab animations is the similarity of their imagery and narrative themes to those used in prior animations, despite markedly different production, distribution, and exhibition methods. In particular, they appear to remediate theatrically released World War II racist animated propaganda films developed and distributed by particular U.S. animation houses in collaboration with the U.S. government. The rapid generation and exhibition of the post-9/11 animations, seen in parallel with the gradual removal of like animations in the traditional U.S. mass media channels of commercial film and television since the end of World War II, indicates vacillating attitudes about the social acceptability of governmental and corporate use of the animated form in the service of racially charged wartime propaganda.

This study explores the ways in which post-9/11 anti-Arab Web animations situate the Web, and the new media technologies that support it, as a cultural space that can be used by animators to recirculate and commercialize images involving race and racism during wartime. The theory of *remediation*, as developed by Bolter and Grusin (2000), is employed to frame the discussion of the cultural logic of the Web as a remediated and remediating space in which the new medium gains currency through homage to older forms, and simultaneously older media forms maintain currency by incorporating elements of the new. These Web animations are considered as a group in a comparison of production, distribution, and exhibition circumstances during World War II and today. In addition, a catalog of narrative themes is provided, along with critical analysis of the animations' metanarrative. That post-9/11 anti-Arab Web animations were created by amateurs and freelance animators speaks to a shift in how animated wartime propaganda has been deployed over the years since the advent of the animated film form. In the absence of corporate-produced and government-influenced wartime animations, such as were produced and exhibited in the United States for the World War II propaganda campaign, these violent, vengeful, and racist Web animations are notable. The production, portal-based exhibition, and online longevity of the pieces indicate that the affordances of the Web and new media technologies constitute a new production, distribution, and exhibition site for animators to create and exhibit animated narratives. By engaging the myth of the Web as an amateur, folkloric, and grassroots cultural space, the animations, their creators, and the host sites and animators have eluded organized public criticism for their role in these negative constructions of "Arabness." Although the ideological power of these texts may be disavowed, due to their apparent status as citizen-generated populist speech, in aggregate the metatext shows the Web can serve as a critical cultural location at which the animators employ the Web to stabilize their identity and power as they consider and confront an enemy-other: the Arab Muslim world.

## Historical Animated Racial Stereotyping

Animation has been dependent on simplistic iconic representation, including stereotypes, for narrative shorthand and comedic potential due in part to animation's inheritance from the tradition of cartooning and its satirical mechanisms, and use of caricature as a specific design strategy in which particular bodily or environmental elements are foregrounded or exaggerated (Wells, 1998). Although the use of stereotypes is commonplace across all narrative forms, and is not inherently ideologically problematic, stereotypes of particular groups in certain historical moments are damaging. However, they are not damaging because they misrepresent a reality; they are damaging because they fixate on a moment in one singular representation, denying the possibility of change, play, and difference (Gilman, 1985). In the case of racial or ethnic stereotyped representations in U.S. mass media, the dearth of a diverse range of representations of characters from minority groups means that the stereotyped negative representations can constitute the only mass media representations such groups have. Advocates for racial and social justice believe the prevalence of negative racial stereotypes has deleterious effects on the progress of their causes.

The animated form, with its dependence on the narrative legacies of print caricature, has long resided in the cultural realm of folk and popular culture. In the United States during the early period of animation and through the development around 1913 of a more organized system of small animation studios, the form was the experimental province of tinkerers and amateurs, as well as lightning sketch artists, cartoonists, and performers (Crofton, 1993). The early stages of the projected animated film form were the result of multiple and diverse efforts by cinematic inventor-tinkerers and their devices, including Plateau's Phenakistoscope (1831), Horner's Zoetrope (1834), Sellers's Kinetoscope (1861), and the Praxinoscope, patented in 1877 by Reynaud (Wells, 1998). In 1888, Reynaud first used his device (which had been used as a children's toy) to exhibit the first projected animated film, *Un bon bock, or A Good Beer* (Bendazzi, 2001). Early animation was in part characterized by its crude, amateur aesthetic, absent or undeveloped plots, use of negative racial stereotypes, and resistance to the trappings of high art and high culture through its reliance on narrative elements such as pornography, the barnyard milieu, simplistic justice, sadism, and slapstick humor. As such, this type of early animation has been understood as rooted in populist folk art traditions (Panofsky, 1974; Waller, 1980). Thus, the impact of animation has historically been read within the context of popular culture as comic, escapist, frivolous, and devoid of political or sociological significance. This reading of the animated form conflates "seriousness with solemnity, and comedy with 'escapism'" (Wells, 2002, p. 5).

To the contrary: Both animated and comic discourses are intrinsically alternative to dominant texts (e.g., live action, serious dramatic narratives), and as such animation can provide an ideal format for the subversive smuggling of representations of certain ideas into mass media that might otherwise be taboo or unrepresentable (Wells, 2002). Therefore, animated narratives can provide important insights in investigations

of cultural phenomena. Above all, the animated form enunciates its inherent otherness in the media landscape and ability to represent difference, while traversing the tensions of difference and otherness in the narratives it conveys (Wells, 2002). In the case of early animation, attendant stereotyping may be understood as related to animators' ambivalence and ignorance about race relations as well as lack of control over the emerging animation technologies and the nascent animated form.

The animation industry has historically been most heavily populated by creative workers who were White male Protestants, largely uncritical in their use of racial stereotypes (Cohen, 1997). According to Cohen (1997), animators in studios in the early years were "more or less unsophisticated in their humor and social behavior" (p. 50) and were unaware that the racial and ethnic stereotypes they engaged in their daily lives, and repurposed in their animations, were offensive or harmful to others. For example, Fleischer studio animator Myron Waldman reported that in the 1930s, Jewish caricatures were objected to by Jewish animators, but because no African American animators worked at Fleischer, nobody was around to object to negative portrayals of African Americans. By the time cinema sound technology was in use, negative stereotypes of virtually every racial and ethnic group had been used as narrative devices in animation.

Sampson (1998) collected and catalogued a comprehensive filmography, including historical reviews and press releases, of U.S. animated cartoons produced between 1900 and 1960 that make ample use of stereotypes of Blacks and African Americans that construct them in negative characterizations. As an aside he noted that Jews, Italians, Native Americans, and Asians have also continually been targets of animators' "humor" (p. vii). Although the Hays Office Production Code of 1930 prohibited offending any nation, race, or creed, animated films continued to represent racial minorities as negative stereotypes, indicating that standards of what was to be considered offensive or damaging were unstabilized.

Of particular relevance to this study, as narratives that provide a foundation for interpreting post-9/11 anti-Arab animations, are those cartoons Sampson (1998) discussed that construct Arabs in negative characterizations. These works illustrate that the use of negative stereotypes to represent Arabs is not a recent phenomenon in the U.S. cultural lexicon. Sampson documented that the Arabs in these earlier animations are often characterized by affording them various African American dialects and accents, a narrative move that addresses a complexity in and conflation of racial tensions among White Americans, producers and audiences alike.

Organized mass resistance to racism in animation has impacted the social acceptability of such representations, altering how animators and their organizations conduct business. After decades of sporadic yet organized mass complaints and protests about racist, sexist, and otherwise troubling representations in animated film, animation studios, their parent corporations, and television companies grew loathe to screen cartoons that were likely to generate controversy. For example, in 1945 animator Walter Lantz was reported to be retreating to the woods after complaints from "pressure groups" and others who objected to racist representations in his *Swing Sym-*

*phony* cartoons. Lantz and his distributor Universal faced more controversy just 3 years later when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) raised objections to his cartoon *Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat*, leading to news media coverage of the protest (Cohen, 1997). By 1958, animation distributors and television stations were cutting racially offensive scenes from previous theatrical cartoons (Cohen, 1997).

Anti-Arab representations in U.S. mass media have not escaped organized criticism and demands for modification. For example, there were citizen protests against the anti-Arab representations in the Hollywood film *The Siege* (Wilkins & Downing, 2002), and Arab American groups objected to an array of anti-Arab representations in the 1992 animated Disney film *Aladdin* (Felperin, 1997). Current censorship by television channels and other mass media companies of cartoons containing racist stereotypes, previously exhibited in movie theaters, illustrates the attention mainstream media companies now pay to community groups' organized complaints about objectionable themes and characters (Cohen, 1997; Sandler, 2003). In the present cultural climate, professional animation companies and media conglomerates in the United States risk damaging their brands if they produce or distribute grossly racist caricatures and stereotypes in the same manner<sup>2</sup> such companies felt free to in previous historical periods (Sandler, 2003).

Professional animators during the pre-World War II period had clearly developed a well-honed visual and aural stockpile of negative caricatures and plots to quickly pull out and use when expedient. This stockpile proved highly valuable when animation houses were tapped by the U.S. government to assist in the war propaganda effort during World War II. Animators were apparently able to quickly adapt their caricature strategies to the current enemy races: the Germans, Italians, and Japanese. As Cohen (1997) noted, "sensitivity took a back seat to the war effort in the forties" (p. 50). Similarly, general U.S. audiences, accustomed to viewing racist animations during peacetime, were well-situated to view with little or no protest those wartime cartoons that used stereotypes to construct enemies as others and motivate the emotion necessary for supporting and waging war.

## World War II Animated Propaganda in the United States

According to Shull and Wilt (2004), U.S. animations involving war themes and characters can be traced back to 1915, when the already-established "Col. Heeza Liar" animated series featured the large-nosed diminutive main character as a war correspondent in *Col. Heeza Liar in the Trenches*. Put into the context of the numerous mass media channels used to distribute wartime propaganda, animation has been just one method for communicating the common themes of the enemy as stranger, aggressor, subhuman or nonhuman, godless, barbarian, greedy, anarchist, terrorist, outlaw, torturer, rapist, and as death itself (Keen, 1986). Animation was thought to be a near-ideal vehicle for war propaganda, thanks to animators' ability to graphically and

quickly convey messages, including that which was otherwise unrepresentable. The animated form's knack for harnessing humor as a communicative tool enabled audiences to laugh at the enemy and feel better amid the otherwise tense and tragic circumstances of wartime (Braamhorst & van Waveren, 1997).

As U.S. involvement in World War II increased, the number of war-related animations kept pace. The day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Army took over Disney Studios and stayed for a full 7 months (Watts, 1995), making it resemble nothing if not a military facility (Braamhorst & van Waveren, 1997). All but three U.S. animated war-related shorts were produced by the major animation studios: Warner Brothers, Famous Studios/Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Disney, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, and Screen Gems/Columbia Pictures. These seven major studios controlled the entire market (Shull & Wilt, 2004), indicating a cooperative effort on the part of corporations and government in producing war propaganda. Although there was little formal collaboration between the government and studios, the Office of War Information kept tabs on the U.S. animation houses during the war, providing and enforcing content guidelines and giving comments on film scripts and final prints (Shull & Wilt, 2004). Some 290 war-related animated short films were made during World War II in the United States for commercial release, of which more than 85% were screened before audiences (Shull & Wilt, 2004). Given the fact that theatrical cartoons produced in the 1930s and 1940s were made for general audiences and viewed by people of all ages in movie theaters, these animated shorts were narratives designed for mass audiences, and they document the types of messages the U.S. government wished to communicate to its citizens of all ages (Shull & Wilt, 2004).

During World War II, the Hollywood animators who produced cartoons for the dual purpose of entertainment and propaganda created virulently stereotypical representations of Japanese, Germans, and Italians in such works as *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, *The Ducktator*, *You're a Sap Mr. Jap*, *Tokio Jokio*, *Japoteurs*, and *Scrap the Japs*. As part of the war propagandists' strategy, enemies were typically depicted through stereotype and caricature meant to dehumanize them in the eyes of the viewer, thus smoothing the process of emotional distancing necessary for waging and supporting the war effort. As was the general narrative strategy employed in animation prior to the war, the task of dehumanizing the other was mainly accomplished through use of animal caricatures whose characters were developed merely to the level of hackneyed stereotype, devoid of the richer characterizations and humanization afforded to positive animal characters such as Mickey Mouse. The use of negative animal caricature was meant to communicate that the enemy was subhuman and deserved to be defeated or killed (Shull & Wilt, 2004). One particularly common representation in propaganda in many forms was of Japanese as insects that needed to be exterminated (Waller, 1980). The general U.S. public was receptive to the racist representations contained in these and other cartoons because of highly developed national unity against wartime enemies (Sampson, 1998). During this period it was not considered morally wrong or distasteful for the U.S. government and animation studios to traffic in negative imagery, as long as doing so was in the service of the war effort.

Racist caricature, such as was acceptable and even lauded during World War II in the United States, became increasingly socially unacceptable once progressive social movements, such as the civil rights movement and the second wave of feminism, gained increased power in the 1960s and 1970s (Wells, 1998). Sandler (2003) discussed moves by large brand-conscious media corporations such as Disney and AOL Time Warner toward reducing and eventually eliminating mass public access (via Disney media outlets, Cartoon Network broadcasts, etc.) to previously released animations featuring war propaganda such as *Der Fuhrer's Face*. Historical overtly racist caricature is now relegated to hard-to-acquire archival collections and videos and unauthorized exhibition. Ironically, these historical animations are now often seen by U.S. youth in classrooms as part of regularly taught history curricula meant to introduce students to the mechanisms and history of wartime propaganda.

Modern animation companies generally eschew such grossly negative representations. Searches for government-sponsored animated wartime propaganda associated with the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and 1991's Operation Desert Storm yield no results, signifying the pull-out of large animation houses and the U.S. government from a propaganda strategy that served so well during World War II. However, racist wartime caricature that achieves a sort of propaganda effect is experiencing renewed life on the World Wide Web, where the animated war propaganda form is remediated.

### Post-9/11 Anti-Arab Web Animations

When the unique ability of animation to represent the otherwise unrepresentable is combined with the World Wide Web as an alternative media space, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the most culturally taboo narratives are circulating as animations on the Web. The Web has become a central cultural site where a myriad of forbidden narratives and other expressive forms are exhibited. For instance, Frank (2004) documented the use of the Internet and Web to circulate and exhibit electronic folklore called "photoshops" that include anti-bin Laden and anti-Afghanistan images. Kuipers (2002) wrote about the circulation of visual disaster jokes on the Internet after 9/11, including those that showed bin Laden, the war in Afghanistan, and the World Trade Center (WTC) as sites at which net-citizens (netizens) react to mainstream media coverage of the WTC attack. These netizen uses of the Internet to circulate material of a possibly offensive nature have met with little censure from justice-oriented community groups, provided the taboo narrative or expression appears to be the work of an individual rather than a government, organized group, or corporation.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, the Internet has been imbued with the myth that it is a more democratic forum for citizen expression than other communication media such as commercial radio and television, periodicals, books, and films. This myth is in place due to the relative ease with which individuals may create, exhibit, and distribute their messages to a potentially large audience, and the loose (in comparison to some other countries) U.S. regulation structure in which the Internet functions.

As a potentially interactive and collaborative communication space, the Internet allows users to express themselves in ways that interact with racial ideologies brought along with them as they address and engage the Internet, a cultural space that allows people to propagate, disseminate, and commodify representations of racism (Bendazzi, 2001; Nakamura, 2002). To consider the Web in this way is a critical strategy similar to employing the theory of Orientalism, so labeled by Said (1978, 1997) in his critical analyses of Western ideology and colonialism through the examination of Western discourse about the Orient in general, and the religion of Islam and Muslim peoples in particular. Critically interpreting the phenomenon of amateur post-9/11 anti-Arab Web animations involves the stance that this group of animations situates the Web as a location where the animators may conduct the work of stabilizing identity and power in oppositional terms to the constructed enemy-Other: the Arab Muslim world. Concurrently through the logic of remediation, the old visual and narrative forms of animated racist representations and racist war propaganda are refurbished and revitalized with an aura of high-tech glamour, and the Web as a new medium is afforded increased cultural status among animators, animation fans, and anti-Arab racists through its use as an exhibition space for animated racist war propaganda.

## Method

In the study, the research questions were as follows: How do the production, distribution, and exhibition circumstances of post-9/11 racist wartime cartoons on the Web differ from the production, distribution, and exhibition of World War II era U.S. racist cartoons? What major and minor themes, character types, and plots are post-9/11 Web animators using to communicate their stories? What do these common themes, character types, and plots indicate about the legacy of racist wartime animation?

To gather texts for inclusion in this study, *Web animation* is defined as those animations created for the Web that create the illusion of motion, rather than record motion as in live action film (Furniss, 1998). Thus, live action films and videos posted on the Web were excluded. The scope of the study was further limited to linear narrative animations as relevant texts, excluding interactive animated games. This exclusion was warranted because considering interactivity involves a separate set of theoretical considerations and literature (e.g., hypertext theory and author–reader agency in relation to the narrative), and is therefore beyond the scope of a single article-length study. Of linear-animated narratives, the author strove to develop as comprehensive a list of English-language public texts as possible (in effect, attempting a census) to capture the range of such works available on the Web. Using major Internet search engines including Google, Teoma, Alta Vista, MSN Search, and Yahoo!, bimonthly searches were conducted starting in September 2001 and ending in June 2005 for relevant animations using keywords such as Arab, Islam, Muslim, Taliban, Osama, bin Laden, Saddam, Hussein, Iraq, cartoon, and animation. As animations were dis-



covered, they were downloaded for the purpose of archiving, repeated viewing, and content cataloging.

The Web sites that hosted or linked to the greatest number of anti-Arab animations at U.S.-based portals were Newgrounds, with 42 bin Laden (Newgrounds, 2005c) and 15 Hussein (Newgrounds, 2005b) pieces, and About.com, with 23 bin Laden (Kurtzman, 2005a) and 21 Hussein (Kurtzman, 2005b) pieces, with some animations duplicated at both sites. Other animation portal sites, containing far fewer animations and links, included Madblast.com, Atomfilm.com, Entertainmail.net, and iFilm.com, with between 2 and 12 animations each. Occasionally the author found animations hosted by the creators themselves at off-portal sites such as Evildave.com; such pieces were typically also cross-posted at the animation portals. The total number of English-language animations considered at publicly accessible, fee-free sites across the Web was 106.

## Remediation

The theory of remediation as developed by Bolter and Grusin (2000) names and traces the formal processes of remediation, transparency, and hypermediacy. Through these processes older media forms, as both root of and rival to the new, gain reaffirmed importance when creators and users incorporate formal elements of new media forms. An example of this dynamic is when television programming incorporates animated graphics that resemble the flat, solid-color 2-D look of Macromedia Flash animations on the Web. Newer media forms, on the other hand, acquire heightened cultural status by refashioning earlier forms, such as when the Web is used by people to circulate and access representations of oil paintings, photographs, films, and television clips. Thus, the theory of remediation refutes the critical assumption that new media achieves cultural currency by radically departing from the old, and that those who create using older media forms are resistant to incorporating elements of newer forms.

Although the theory of remediation is useful and instructive here, there are two ways in which this study moves away from the original argument. First, Bolter and Grusin (2000) limited the discussion primarily to formal remediation, and did not directly address narrative remediation. Second, although the authors at one point wrote that they wished to treat "digital technologies themselves as hybrids of technical, material, social, and economic facets" (p. 77), the general absence of human agency in the discussion points to underlying technological determinism. Therefore, this study of racist Web-based wartime animation invokes the theory of (formal) remediation and additionally considers narrative remediation, eschewing the flavor of technological determinism in Bolter and Grusin's argument as it appears to privilege technology as a self-propelled rather than human-produced phenomenon. By foregrounding the analysis in circumstances of production, distribution, exhibition, and narrative strategies, both historical and current, the racist animations un-

der consideration here are grounded as expressions of human material, cultural, and political work.

## Results

The circumstances of production of wartime anti-Arab Web animations are dissimilar to the U.S. studio production system in which World War I and II animations were created, and dissimilar to the studio-government collaboration that occurred during World War II in particular. The advent of the personal computer, the Internet, and especially the Web has altered the conditions of U.S. media production and distribution such that it is feasible for many (although not all—access and skill differentials factor largely in the persistence of digital divides) individual citizens to make their own media content and exhibit it to audiences outside their immediate social and familial networks. This relative ease contributes to the folkloric aspect of the Web, because ostensibly anyone with access to the right hardware, software, and minimal skill set can contribute. Further, the aesthetic qualities of these animations, with the unskilled drawing, simplistic scene design, crude character development, low-quality audio, choppy motion, and undeveloped or nonexistent plots, signify their nonprofessional or folk nature.

The people creating these animations appear to be amateurs and freelance animators rather than individuals who are professionals employed at animation companies. Similar to many forms of graffiti, which are scribbled anonymously or with pseudonyms or nicknames, the authors of these animations are often difficult to determine for those who do not personally know the creators. The practices of animators on the Internet make it very difficult to verify the "real" identities and vocational status of those who post animations, another phenomenon that contributes to the folk aura of these Web animations. In many cases, the animators use pseudonyms such as "CarrotClock" and "brokenpuppy" rather than full legal names. Another way in which the animations signify nonprofessional status is that there are often discrepancies between the titles of the animations as contained within the pieces themselves, the titles the animators enter when self-submitting their work to the portals, and the titles used by portal staff when indexing the animations. This indicates a lackadaisical stance toward the naming of pieces in comparison with professionals, whose commercial livelihoods depend on extreme accuracy and consistency in the correctness of titles and production credits.

Reading through the animators' notes to viewers posted on Web pages from which the animations are linked, it is possible to summarize the reasons they give for having created and posted these animations. Mainly, amateurs are motivated by personal reasons related to rage over the 9/11 attacks and the desire to offer their work for criticism by other members of the portal community. When the post-9/11 animators posted notes on hosting pages about the purpose of their work, the most frequent rationale had to do with venting anger, frustration, or resolve to seek ven-

geance against the attackers. For instance, animator Michael Bregman (2001) wrote, "This is my little way to vent my anger and pain about what happened at the World Trade Center in New York. I hope it will put a smile or two on people's faces." JmBd (2001) wrote, "Osama! If you see this then this message is for you, you dirty \_\_\_\_\_!!!! WATCH IT!" Matt Coupe (2001) wrote, simply, "\_\_\_\_ you bin." A smaller group of animators use the anti-Osama and anti-Hussein pages as a narrative thread around which they may build a cartoon to post for others to view and criticize. Creator notes posted with these animations invite viewers to criticize technique. For this group, the point seemed to be the chance to enhance technical animation skills such as audio optimization and design, rather than necessarily making a political statement. Anti-Muslim and anti-Arab animation is the narrative-du-jour for use as a vehicle for attracting feedback for skill development.

In contrast, freelance animators posted pieces to promote their businesses or produce income through Web advertisements. Rather than posting for emotional, political, or skill-development reasons, these animators posted for profit-oriented reasons. Here, the overt commodification of racism on the Web is apparent. For example, freelancer Jeff Swenson created *Taliban Women's Revolt* on commission for an adult humor site that was used to promote a pay site. According to Swenson, "the client wanted something satirizing the Taliban and as usual it had to be twisted or in bad taste" (J. Swenson, personal communication, December 10, 2003). At Newgrounds (2005e), animators are encouraged to post their work as follows:

Flash content is the driving force behind Newgrounds; if you have some decent talent, try submitting some movies to The Portal! Even if you run your own site, submitting movies to The Portal is a great way to pull traffic. You'll see an immediate boost in visitors to your website!

The circumstances of how viewers access these animations are markedly different from the ways audiences viewed prior wartime animations. As discussed earlier, previous animations were seen by general audiences in groups in movie theaters as prefeature shorts and fillers. In contrast, post-9/11 animations are exhibited via hosting primarily by commercially sponsored animation portals that feature these and many other animations as content for the purpose of attracting Web surfers, thus generating advertising revenue. Although the sites in this study were unwilling to disclose site traffic pattern data, it is probable that viewers of Web cartoons reach the animations via four possible routes: (a) search engines, (b) browsing links at animation portal sites, (c) link sharing with other people, and (d) clicking links posted at other Web sites. Viewers are not restricted to citizens of any one nation, and can potentially include people from anywhere in the world who have access to the Internet, including Arabs, Muslims, Al Qaeda members, and even bin Laden and Hussein themselves. Thus, the pieces function within a double mode of address, simultaneously addressing those identifying as survivors of the 9/11 attack and their sympathizers as well as those identifying as the perpetrators or aggressors in the attacks and their sympathizers.

These animations are messages from amateur and freelance animators, yet because they are exhibited via a medium that reaches potentially millions of viewers, they begin to approach the impact of mass media messages in terms of scope and reach. Unlike prior theatrical animations, which were viewed by general audiences, somewhat captive as they waited for the feature to commence, these works are seen only by those who actively pursue them. According to the Newgrounds (2005d) viewing statistics featured on each animation's page, numbers ranged from 44,951 to 2,766,923 views for the bin Laden animations and 46,293 to 477,994 views for the Hussein animations as of June 20, 2005. These numbers do not include views at other portals, the animators' own Web sites, or other sites legally or illegally hosting the animations. Because the Newgrounds site does not specify whether these data track individual views of the animations, or discrete computers as tracked through Internet Protocol addresses, it cannot be determined with accuracy how many individual people are watching the animations. It is likely that some viewers watch certain animations only once; some watch certain cartoons several times; and it is also likely that, in some cases, two or more people are viewing the same screen simultaneously.

Editorial selection processes occur at the animation portal sites. Although the path to exhibition differs from the theatrical industrial system in place during World War II that shaped how people saw World War II narrative animation, the effect of the portals' selection processes is similar to the extent that it limits and channels what Web surfers see. The gatekeeping mechanism portal sites serve for Web users (see Hargittai, 2004), functionally filtering, limiting, and guiding users to preselected sites, approximates the restrictive role of the theatrical distribution and exhibition system in place during World War II in the United States (see Bordwell, Staiger, & Thompson, 1985; Wasko, 1982).

At Newgrounds (2005a), animators can self-submit via a Web form, but submissions are subject to a set of rules, and are further subject to review by the owners of the site. At [politicalhumor.about.com](http://politicalhumor.about.com), editor Dan Kurtzman is entirely responsible for featured content and is motivated by advertising revenue generated according to site visitation statistics. He hand-picks the animations he links to, considering (a) what he thinks is funny, (b) what he thinks is of potential interest to his audience, and (c) what has already proven popular at other sites. Some of the animations are those submitted to him by readers, and others he finds on his own by browsing other sites and reading blogs (D. Kurtzman, personal communication, October 19, 2003). The other portal sites also bear the mark of a human editor or filter who selects what visitors see when visiting the site in that not all animations are featured on all sites, and that links to animations often include a short editorial or promotional comment designed to sum up and promote the animation, encouraging a click-through.

## **Narrative Strategies**

In this study, post-9/11 anti-Arab Web animations are considered as a group, focusing on production, distribution, exhibition, and general narrative strategies rather

than close textual analysis of individual animations. Although many of the animations featured bin Laden and Hussein explicitly as primary targets of violence and humiliation, several featured generic Arab and Muslim characters. The overall dearth of Arab and Muslim characters in the Western media landscape invites interpretive slippage from bin Laden and Hussein in particular to Arabs and Muslims in general.

After reviewing, summarizing, cataloging, and archiving each animation, analysis of narrative strategies showed that these animations consistently employ a set of stock milieus, narratives, characters, caricatured visual elements (turbans, desert settings, etc.), plots, and audio elements, affording grouping into two main categories, each of which contains subcategories and overlapping elements: (a) the revenge narrative, including the subthemes of violence against and humiliation of Arab characters; and (b) the deviance narrative, including subthemes of Arab characters' deviance from Arab and Muslim culture and depiction of (putative) Arab culture as deviant from (and therefore inferior to) Western values and practices. These narrative strategies correspond fully with Orientalist tropes that construct Islam and the Arab world as other.

The most prominent narrative strategy involves depictions of revenge against Arabs. Depictions of violent revenge range from off-camera violence to extended, highly detailed, gory scenes of compound violent acts. Cartoons often feature the characters of bin Laden and Hussein as the victims of vengeful violence and humiliation. Some animations feature generic Arab male characters in the role of victim. More subtle and complex are those humiliation narratives that work by disempowering Arab leaders by placing them as having power and status equal to or less than other characters in the animation. For example, in *Power Puff Girls ...* (Bregman, 2001), bin Laden is easily vanquished by the fictional little girls. In *Osamafeld* (Jacob, 2001), the animator communicates humiliation by inserting Hussein and bin Laden into the context of the U.S. sitcom *Seinfeld* as mere comedic relief. These animations in particular, along with the entire category of anti-Arab Web animation, humiliate by reducing Arab world leaders and devout Muslims to mere characters in the landscape of U.S. popular culture. The violence and humiliation occur both diagetically, within the narrative of the animation, and nondiagetically. A diagetical example occurs in *Osama ...* (Maxmanx, 2001), in which bin Laden is shown being personally assaulted by George W. Bush. A nondiagetical example, or one where the viewer may perceive the Arab character's humiliation without the target character displaying signs of knowledge of the humiliation, is found in *E! Bin Laden*, which shows an animated interview with a former roommate of bin Laden who reveals an embarrassing story (Stamper, 2001). These narratives are dependent for their effectiveness on the understanding of the viewer that the situations the characters are placed in, and the behaviors and characteristics with which the characters are endowed, are meant to communicate vengeful humiliation.

The second main narrative category involved depictions of Arabs as deviant, either in terms of Arab or Muslim culture and values, or Christian or Western culture and values, or both. Deviance is constructed as either generalized deviance or sexual deviance in particular. Often deviance is related within the narratives to hypocritical or blasphemous behavior, in relation to Islam, Christianity, or both. Arabs are shown as

godless both because they do not adhere to Christian principles and they do not even adhere to their own religious and cultural norms. Alternately, the cartoons in which Muslims are portrayed engaging in abhorrent behavior may be read as insults to Islam, as if such practices were routine and expected according to Islamic precepts (Oska, 2003; Stamper, 2001). Many animations utilize two or more narrative strategies in the course of one story. For example, it is common for the animators to depict the Arab characters as deserving victims of both violence and humiliation (Ratatat, 2001). Such practices described are abhorrent to both Western and Arab cultures.

The power of these animated narratives moves beyond their simplistic plots, characters, and selective audience. Their power also lies in the double logic of (a) their role in the rejuvenating remediation of the animated film form and racist narratives, in effect paying homage to previous racist animations by reinvigorating their role in culture through the aura of new media; and (b) simultaneously heightening, among particular audiences, the cultural status of the Web as a new medium by incorporating the "classic" form of animation and racist war propaganda narratives. The racist animated form has been revived in Web animations that remediate racist animated caricatures from history by borrowing heavily from narrative and visual strategies employed in the past. Jingoistic wartime icons such as U.S. flags, valiant U.S. soldiers, and savage animal-like enemies are recycled in the Middle Eastern desert landscape. The racist animated form is afforded a regained cultural foothold due to its newfound association with the hip, modern, high-tech ethos of the Web, as well due to its narrative "facelift," achieved by amplifying and foregrounding folkloric strategies such as crude aesthetic style, simplistic plots and characters, and use of explicit graphic narrative elements including brutal sadism, gore, pornography, bestiality, and scatological themes.

This is in stark contrast to the absence of wartime racist animation in modern mainstream mass media and the high production values and relatively sanitized, wholesome narratives characteristic of mainstream animation shown currently on television and in mainstream commercial movie theaters in the United States and the industrialized West at large. As modern film and television venues, with their corporate ownership and desire to protect their brands, are not free to display the kinds of grossly racist, violent, and sexually crude representations contained in these Web cartoons, Web animations and portals are a vehicle for the smuggling of otherwise unrepresentable stories and images into mass media channels. In these alternative venues it is permissible, even expected, that the violence suffered by the Arab characters, and the degree of gore and explicit sexual imagery used, far surpass the depictions of animated violence and negative stereotype that have been historically permissible or would be permissible today in dominant media channels. Thus, through these animations, the Web is constructed as an alternative space that can be used to accommodate narratives that were once accepted and lauded by mass audiences, but are now culturally problematic. The Web's status among audiences suspicious of or dissatisfied with mainstream mass media as an alternative media space is heightened as it is used to host animations deemed too crude or offensive for general audiences.

## Conclusion

The popular phenomenon of post-9/11 racist wartime animations demonstrates that anti-Arab discourse is thriving on the Web, uniform and ubiquitous in its mediated representations. The animations, individually and as a group, show an ongoing subcultural conviction that negatively portrays the Arab culture. By creating these animations, animators wish to construct themselves and their ideological position as morally righteous, all-powerful, and just. The cultural logic of Orientalism, along with the remediation of racist animation and wartime animated narratives, are enunciated clearly in these animations. These legacies provide the material and practices the animators were able to draw from as they hastily assembled their arsenal of plots, characters, milieus, and themes. It appears that these amateur animators have internalized the narrative strategies of wartime propaganda, including the use of racist stereotype, and reinscribed Orientalism as part of a new medium.

What is distinct, then, about post-9/11 wartime animations that has allowed them to escape mass organized protest that has occurred in the past against mass-mediated racial stereotypes? Searches of mass media news databases during the research timeframe yielded no reports of mass organized protests against these Web animations; the only observable criticism was scattered remarks posted by portal visitors, disapproving of the racist representations. These remarks failed to result in a single Web cartoon being pulled from exhibition, nor did they result in the generation of organized criticism campaigns such as those lodged by the NAACP and against Disney's *Aladdin* as discussed earlier. In contrast, protest against the FOX TV network's thriller program *24* (Finkle, 2005) serves as a reminder that dominant media organizations face negative impacts when they engage in gross negative stereotyping. During the 2005 season of *24*, Arab Muslims were portrayed as violent terrorists. Fox rebutted Muslim organizations' criticism with claims that the show also portrayed "good" Arabs; in the face of protest FOX eventually offered its affiliates protolerance public service announcements, including one featuring the show's star, Kiefer Sutherland (Rohan, 2005).

There are several possible reasons why there has been no organized criticism against these cartoons. First, the Web, in relation to its mythic status as an alternative media space, is home to a wide range of messages in a variety of forms. The folkloric aspect of the Web, in which postings seem to be the mere musings of an individual, allows these animations to mask the aggregated ideological power of their racist, caricatured depictions. In comparison to previous U.S. wartime animations, these Web cartoons are created by individuals rather than governmental or corporate entities, thus diffusing the possibility of a singular, institutional target against which to lodge organized protest. Second, in contrast to World War II propaganda animations that were screened before general audiences for the purpose of persuading those doubtful of the war effort and reinforcing the mindset of the convinced, and in contrast to racist commercially produced animation also screened before general audiences, Web-based animations are viewed primarily by those individuals who seek them. There-

fore, the function of these Web animations is primarily to reinforce the opinions of seekers, rather than convince (and at times offend) the doubtful. Lack of exposure to dissenting viewers helps to minimize the likelihood of mass protest. Third, because many of the cartoons focus on identified leader-enemies during wartime, viewers may feel less inclined to protest racist caricature in this instance, despite the ways in which animators caricature the characters' Arab or Muslim status over and above their leader status. Finally, during wartime dissent is often read by government and other hegemonic entities as antipatriotism, and there was initially a marked reluctance to criticize anti-Arab and anti-Muslim actions, media depictions, and so on.

To critically interpret this case as an instance in which the Web is used to communicate and stabilize dominant Western ideology demands the examination of the ways in which animators portray the Arab world as other. On the whole, the metanarrative of these animations is post-9/11 rage; the communication of the threat of imminent and terrible consequences to befall the Arab and Muslim enemies of the West; the exercise of a myriad of revenge and humiliation fantasies currently at play in the minds of the animators and their viewers; and the spirit of camaraderie between animator and sympathetic viewer, and animators with one another, as they create and share their work.

These narratives expose the powerlessness the animators feel in the face of terrorism, in that the reaction they have is to create, post, or view cartoons laden with racist, spiteful, and puerile images and plots as fantastic and wishful rehearsal for a victory that is unlikely to occur in reality. The animators and supportive audience members expose their desire for mastery and control over both their anxiety about that which is uncontrolled as well as over the constructs of vulnerability, dependence, trust, and terrorism. In doing so, they have remediated and rejuvenated a type of animated narrative that was and is shameful and damaging to the cause of racial justice. As the years have progressed without the capture of Osama bin Laden, and as Saddam Hussein was at large for so long after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and because the U.S.-Iraq War did not result in the speedily constructed stable democratic conditions that U.S. leaders initially predicted, the animators' fervent deployment of violence, gore, scatology, and homophobia against Arab and Muslim animated enemies only seems more revealing. These cartoons are possibly the closest the animators may come to confining, controlling, and vanquishing the elusive and enduring Arab other.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The term *anti-Arab* is used to refer to the group of Web animations that includes anti-bin Laden, anti-Hussein, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab narratives. Although each person and group embodies specific cultural, ethnic, national, political, and religious identities, and the author does not advocate conflation of these identities at the expense of their uniqueness, the animators and their animations have engaged in narrative slippage between individuals and groups to the extent that it is impossible, in this space, to extract and separate all the levels at which this slippage occurs in the animations. Narratives considered anti-Arab are those that depicted Arab,



Muslim, and Taliban characters, including bin Laden and Hussein characters, as villains or suffering various forms of violence, humiliation, and death.

<sup>2</sup>This is not to suggest that animated television programs and films are free of reductive and negative stereotypes based on race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and so on; rather, companies now attempt to avoid the types of caricatures that have garnered complaint in the past.

<sup>3</sup>A similar argument (Dundes, 1966), regarding the folkloric nature of bathroom stall graffiti, posits that the favorite topic of folklore is that which is taboo in the culture. The anonymity afforded by the bathroom stall, similar to the putative anonymity of the Internet, enables the relatively risk-free expression of ideas that might otherwise be unrepresentable.

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## Gandhi Meets Primetime

James F. Scotton

**Kumar, S. (2006). *Gandhi meets primetime: Globalization and nationalism in Indian television*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. 240 pages.**

Kumar is not sure how satellite television is changing India but he is quite sure it is shaking up long-accepted notions of just what India is. His book argues that the "imagined community" (p. 2) of India of the 1947 founders of the Republic is being shattered by satellite TV. In its place has come "the unimaginable communities of electronic capitalism" (p. 14). Gandhi, the "Father of the Nation" (p. 150), is used as the revered symbol of what the political and cultural elites wanted India to become: a political (if not social and economic) utopia with a united people struggling and sacrificing for future generations.

This was certainly the "imagined community" of Doordarshan, the stodgy government television monopoly established in 1959. It was the only television choice for Indians for 3 decades. Then along came satellite TV or "electronic capitalism." Starting in 1991 with CNN, satellite television grew phenomenally. Murdoch's STAR-TV from Hong Kong and India's own Zee-TV brought a "cultural mishmash" (p. 191) of mostly entertainment programs. Indian audiences loved them, and in 1992 cable operators were hooking up nearly 10,000 homes per day. Programs in Hindi, "Hinglish," and a multitude of "electronic vernaculars" (p. 12) burst forth from satellites. One result, the author laments, is that India is rapidly becoming a nation of consumers and ideals of Indian nationalism are being submerged as advertisers target cultural, linguistic, and regional subgroups.

Kumar's first chapter provides background on the early conflicts over Indian television. Then he picks and chooses his subjects and incidents to make an interesting if at times hard-to-follow argument about how television does (or does not) affect the audience. Chapter 2 reviews the cultural implications of advertising for television sets—ads that sought to persuade Indians to buy television sets by suggesting that reality and modernity were on your TV screen. Then the reader is taken on a ride through political and social theory—Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud make appearances—that is spiced up with lots of gossip about Indian TV. It can be interesting—even titillating at

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times—although Kumar's efforts to make everything relate to his theorizing are sometimes a strain on the reader. Elaborate sentences abound. A linguistic device to carry the theorizing along and relate it to television's effects is his repetition of one question: "Is there an Indian community of television?" (p. 191). The author provides five versions of this question, changing the emphasis in each version. Of course, each change of emphasis brings a different answer, but in the end his answer seems to be "no." Still, Kumar leaves the decision to the reader as he even cites critics who say that television should not be used to gauge the "Indian community."

Kumar uses the image of Gandhi throughout the book. He examines "the crucial role that television plays in articulating the many uses and abuses of Mahatma Gandhi's status as the father of the Nation of postcolonial India" (p. 15). The abuses, of course, come from those "unimaginable communities of electronic capitalism" that make up satellite TV. Kumar cites "a transient moment of unspeakable transgression of Mahatma Gandhi's name" (p. 155) on a STAR-TV channel in India. In May 1995, a guest on a talk show hosted by an Indian (well, half-Indian) woman called Gandhi "a bastard bania" (p. 157), a pejorative term for a miser. There was a public uproar and politicians called for banning STAR-TV. In the end, Kumar suggests that only in the moment when the "Father of the Nation" was publicly insulted did the "imagined community" of India come together.

*Editor's Note:* As BEA celebrated its 50th anniversary and the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* reached its half-century of research excellence, we have honored our research pioneers. These tribute essays began with Volume 49, Issue 1, and continued into the 50th anniversary issue of the Journal, in 2006. This endeavor was undertaken with the encouragement of the BEA Research Committee and was spearheaded by Michael D. Murray, University of Missouri–St. Louis. As we bring these tributes to a close, we particularly want to thank the authors who have suggested and contributed essays honoring those who have set foundations in broadcasting and electronic research.

## **Sydney W. Head (1913–1991): Remembering the Founder of Modern Broadcasting Studies**

**Compiled and edited by Christopher H. Sterling,  
with contributions from Claude-Jean Bertrand,  
Douglas Boyd, Donald R. Browne, Susan Tyler Eastman,  
Kenneth Harwood, Rebecca Hayden, John Michael Kittross,  
and Lemuel B. Schofield**

More than any other single individual, Sydney W. Head created the modern academic field of electronic media teaching and research. Although many others wrote earlier textbooks or undertook important research, Head's (1956) *Broadcasting in America* provided a broader and lasting scholarly basis for the analysis of radio and television's development and impact. It appeared in the midst of his 1955 to 1957 term as the first president of the new Association for Professional Broadcasting Education (APBE), predecessor of today's Broadcast Education Association (BEA). His landmark book, which went through nine editions over 4 decades, was later joined by Head's other pathbreaking books in broadcast programming and international broadcasting.

### **An Active Life**

Sydney Warren Head, the elder of two sons of Albert and Catherine Riley Head, was born in London on October 9, 1913. The family emigrated to the United States in 1920,

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and Head grew up and attended schools in Springville (outside of Sacramento) and then Palo Alto, California, where he graduated from high school. For 2 years he attended what is now San Jose State University. For a time during the depression of the 1930s, Head worked (first on a road crew and then as a fire lookout) in the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal agency providing outdoor employment for young men.

A family friend financed his further education, and Head took both his undergraduate (1936) and master's (1937) degrees in theater at Stanford University. He began his long fascination with acting with the newly founded Palo Alto Community Theatre in 1933 and became lifelong friends with the director and his musician and choreographer wife. His M.A. thesis offered a textual history of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (comparing the Quarto of 1600 with the Folio of 1623). After serving as technical director of the University of Colorado's theater in 1937–1938, Head took up duties teaching English, speech, and drama at the University of Miami in 1938, where he soon developed the school's first courses in radio broadcasting. Deciding to pursue an academic career, he began working toward a Ph.D. in theater and broadcasting at the University of Iowa in 1941–1942, but further study was interrupted by the coming of war.

Beginning in the fall of 1942, Head was trained as an Army enlisted signals intelligence specialist, based in Washington, DC. As he already understood German, he studied Serbo-Croatian and Japanese, eventually doing top-secret traffic analysis of enemy radio communications. In April 1945 he shipped out from Seattle to Honolulu on a ghastly troopship voyage (his vivid description of this trip survives). Later that year Head returned to his theatrical experience, serving as a director and actor with the Maurice Evans "soldier show" unit into early 1946, when he left the Army as a staff sergeant.

Head returned to the University of Miami to found one of the country's first free-standing departments of broadcasting in 1946, serving as well as director of broadcasting and film services for the university. He managed to find time to continue with some acting on the side. His teaching duties helped to focus his doctoral work and in 1952 he was granted his Ph.D. in mass communications at New York University, with a dissertation (under the supervision of Professor Charles A. Siepmann) on "Television and Social Norms: An Analysis of the Social Content of a Sample of Television Dramas." An article drawn from it—his first broadcasting-related publication—appeared in *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* (Head, 1954).

Head continued his administrative and teaching duties at the University of Miami until 1960 when he was named to head a National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) three-man team studying the role and potential of educational radio services in the Sudan from 1961 to 1963, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Under a series of different grants and agencies (including a Fulbright award), Head remained in Africa for the rest of the decade, spending most of his time in Ethiopia, with some periods in Somalia, the Sudan, and Ghana. In 1976 he revisited Ghana on a Fulbright senior lectureship. Several journal articles resulted from these projects, as did some commercial consulting activity in Ethiopia (and some health problems, including malaria).

A few months after returning to the United States, in January 1971 Head joined the growing department of Radio-TV-Film at Temple University in Philadelphia, marking his resumption of academic life after a decade overseas. During his time there, he taught courses in broadcast law and policy, comparative broadcasting systems, and a survey course on broadcasting in America. Drawing on his long experience at Miami, he ran a distinctly tight ship during one semester as acting chair. He "retired" in 1980 to his Coral Gables, Florida, home and focused on his research and writing. Two years later he purchased his first home computer, which greatly aided in his many writing projects and correspondence. From 1982 to 1989, he taught as an adjunct faculty member in the University of Miami department (by then a full school) he had founded decades earlier. (In 2002 the school established the Sydney and Dorothy Head Reading Room in their new communications building as well as a Sydney Head Distinguished Lecture series.)

Head married the former Dorothy Brine of Boston in 1949 (they had no children). In the days before personal computers, she typed the manuscript copy for each of his books. In 1989 he moved to the coast of central California and died there on July 7, 1991, at the age of 77. Atypical for most academics, obituary notices appeared in many broadcast industry trade publications, attesting to the role he had played, and the influential industry leaders he had taught over the years.

### Founding APBE/BEA

In a letter written shortly before his death, Head outlined his multiple reasons for helping to create APBE in 1955. Existing organizations simply did not fill the bill—he felt that the NAEB, for example, "was hopelessly unsuited to the task because its whole philosophy hinged on implacable opposition to the main sources of jobs for our graduates." The Association for Education in Journalism seemed to see "broadcasting as a minor adjunct to the newspaper press," although publishers actively supported journalism education—something few broadcasters did.

In a similar fashion, Head felt that existing academic departments (e.g., speech, English, political science, journalism, business, or electrical engineering) "dealt with broadcasting in too narrow a fashion, if they dealt with the subject matter at all." Along with a few others, he saw broadcasting as an emerging and exciting field of study in its own right. The scholarly work already accomplished had earned (and the growing field needed) its own academic association, as well as its own scholarly journal to record and lend credence to the research work being done.

Building on a failed earlier attempt to develop an accredited body for emerging broadcast programs, Head thus helped to lead the effort to create APBE in 1955, working with supportive officers (especially Harold Fellows) of the National Association of Broadcasters. He coauthored an article on the "new era" in broadcast education in the inaugural issue of *Journal of Broadcasting*, while serving for 2 years as APBE's first president.

## Landmark

In the early 1950s, Head was approached by Houghton Mifflin editors interested in developing a replacement for Judith Waller's *Radio the Fifth Estate*, a college text that had first been issued in 1946 and revised in 1950. The eventual result was a very different type of book, the first appearance of *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of Television and Radio* (Head, 1956). This landmark offered the first multifaceted scholarly analysis of the rise and role of U.S. broadcasting, both describing and critiquing an industry then in the midst of the radio-to-television upheaval. Head designed it to be more than an undergraduate textbook—he hoped (correctly as it turned out) it would have reference value to those teaching in the relatively new and growing field of broadcasting studies. Thus he sought to apply related areas of scholarly social science discourse (e.g., psychology) so the new discipline would have a stronger academic grounding. Unlike the books that had preceded it, Head's book purposely ignored hands-on production aspects of the field, focusing instead on broadcasting as a regulated business, an entertainment and news medium, and a social organization. This one book went a long way in helping to raise the academic status of the field, because other disciplines began to take the study of broadcasting more seriously.

That first edition of *BIA* (as it became known to many of us) would remain in print for more than 15 years, revered as “the bible” by teaching faculty and (although perhaps less so) by several generations of students—until they later realized what a gem it was. That the book had developed a central place in the field is evidenced in *Encyclopedia Americana*'s invitation to Head to author its entry on television in 1966.

In 1972 the long-awaited second edition of *BIA* appeared, delayed in large part by Head's decade in Africa. Assisted in part by another grant from the Kaltenborn Foundation, *BIA* was totally rewritten to reflect 16 years of dramatic changes in the field of broadcasting. Head also wrote the book's first instructor's guide. After a much shorter interval, this was followed by a third edition (1976). Head took early retirement from the Temple University faculty in 1980 to devote himself full time to the writing of the next (fourth) edition of *BIA*, which during the 1970s had clearly reestablished itself as the leading text in its field, despite growing competition.

The fourth edition (with Christopher Sterling, whom Head had invited to become a collaborator) appeared in 1982. By now others were authoring the related instructor and student manuals. Head and Sterling, with contributions from Lemuel B. Schofield (University of Miami) and Susan Tyler Eastman (Indiana University), wrote the much-revised fifth edition (1987). Through all these changes, the book remained very much the product of Sydney Head. He actively participated in the thorough rethinking, updating, and constant re-editing of all *BIA* editions through the sixth in 1989. Three later editions appeared after his death, revised by others. That this basic text remained in print through successive editions for more than 4 decades—selling well over 200,000 copies all told—surely attests to its central role in helping to chronicle and shape the field that its author helped to define.



## International Broadcasting

Building on his decade-long experience in and contacts throughout Africa, Head initiated a new series of books with Temple University Press on "International and Comparative Broadcasting." The inaugural volume was his own edited (his role was far stronger than that—many of the pieces had to be substantially rewritten) collection of original contributions by a host of authorities, *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television* (Head, 1974). It provided the first in-depth English-language treatment of a fast-changing continent and its varied Francophone and Anglophone systems of radio and some television. Further volumes in the series, edited or authored by others, included a survey of broadcast systems in Asia and the Pacific, a study of international radio services, and books on French and German broadcasting.

As Donald Browne recalls:

I remember Head's interest in African broadcasting very well, because the two of us were among the very few scholars *anywhere* in the world who had such an interest in the 1960s. Head was an assiduous reader, and decided that my interest must be genuine because I'd written several articles on the subject. (Head had little patience with "one-shot wonders.") He invited me to contribute to *Broadcasting in Africa*, which was sure to be a time-consuming effort if only because so little about it had been published, at least by scholars. He developed an impressive array of contributors—including a few who turned out to be one-shot wonders and poor scholars to boot, in that they couldn't measure up to Head's exacting standards for clarity of expression and documentation. In its time the book was easily the most thorough source of information on its subject, but few of its readers could realize how much each contributor owed to Head's meticulous and demanding editorial supervision ("guidance" is too mild a term!).

That experience highlighted yet another aspect of Head's scholarly persona: his unbounded generosity in the form of sharing material and ideas with those who in his opinion would make good use of both. He was an indefatigable gatherer of factual material, careful in his assessment of it, and ever ready to check it out with the help of others who might be well-informed on the subject at hand. For him, scholarship was very much a two-way street. At its core, it seemed to be driven by a wonderful mix of curiosity, thoroughness, skepticism, and a strong desire to see our field take its place in the ranks of established disciplines. He maintained that scholarly outlook until the end of his life, just as he maintained his "citizen of the world" persona that inspired his interest in the practices and problems of broadcasting around the globe.

Doug Boyd recalls:

I first met Sydney Head when he asked me to speak to his international communication class at Temple in late 1973 just after I joined the University of Delaware faculty. Being direction-challenged, I managed to arrive only after the class was over! In spite of that, he was kind enough to take me to lunch, and we became friends. As Don

Browne is my academic father (he guided me through the graduate program at Minnesota), Head was surely my academic grandfather. His befriending of this then-young international scholar was vital to my career.

We shared an interest in the Arab world, Sydney having spent time in the Sudan. During a Fulbright-sponsored speaking tour there in 1977, I was visiting the Sudanese radio facilities outside of Khartoum, and while talking with the director of radio, I noticed the first edition of *Broadcasting in America* on his desk. When I asked about it he jumped up and said, "You know Dr. Head? Please come and sit in this chair—it was his when he was here."

Head always encouraged me, and was the inspiration for as well as the editor of the first edition of my *Broadcasting in the Arab World* (Temple, 1982) which appeared in his international series. Among my acquaintances, Sydney Head was the first to personally own an IBM Selectric typewriter, later a personal computer, and finally a laptop. He always looked ahead for ways to increase the efficiency of his scholarship.

Between editions of *BIA*, Head somehow found time to write a pathbreaking book, *World Broadcasting Systems: A Comparative Analysis* (Head, 1985). As with *BIA*, and unlike most earlier studies of radio and television in different nations, Head went to some pains to provide an analytic and systemic work that focused on themes rather than countries, describing similarities and differences among nations for a better understanding of important overall trends. At his own cost, he also assembled a nearly 100-page update at the end of 1987, making it available to university faculty adopters. Unfortunately, and despite his best efforts, this work did not enjoy the success or impact of *BIA*, perhaps because it would have forced too many instructors to totally revise their traditional courses.

## Programming

Susan Tyler Eastman remembers:

While at Temple University, Head and adjunct colleague Lewis Klein came up with the idea for a book on television and radio programming that eventually became *Broadcast Programming: Strategies for Winning Television and Radio Audiences* (Head, 1981). They envisioned a series of chapters contributed by industry professionals that would provide concrete examples of the strategies behind programming practices at different levels of the electronic media business. After several years in which other activities claimed their attention, they looked around for someone to help implement the book and (at Sterling's recommendation) hesitantly picked me, then a untried assistant professor, also at Temple. Head contributed three analytic chapters to begin the first edition.

Having taught me how to write textbooks with his close editing, after the first edition, Head (and Klein) gradually withdrew from the book's writing and logistics. Because most professionals tapped as potential authors proved unable to articulate long-term visions and lacked the objectivity to write about more than their own situa-

tions, [we] turned increasingly to academics. Nonetheless, Head and Klein's perception of applied programming guidelines continues to underlie the book's evolving scholarly approach. Later expanded by incorporating cable and Internet programming, the book has evolved into *Media Programming*. Head, on the theoretical side, and Klein, on the applied side, left a legacy that has lasted for more than 2 decades and through what will soon be eight editions.

Becky Hayden, Head's editor at Wadsworth, recalls:

Great pleasure in working with Sydney, not only for his innovative approach to world broadcasting, but also for our shared interest in writing, grammar, editing, illustrations, and design. We also enjoyed talking about travel, reading, and theatre, and visiting with friends at conventions.

## Word Smithing

Sydney Head loved the English language and it showed in his superlative ability to edit and improve both his own writing and that of his collaborators on his many book projects. A compliment on one's writing from Head was a compliment indeed. Reviewing one early memo looking toward a revision of *BIA*, we find Head stressing the need for "the writing style to ensure simplicity, directness, and variety." Although most patient with his coauthors the first time or two around, he could become quite firm and demanding with later drafts!

After Head asked him to write a chapter for the fifth edition of *BIA*, his University of Miami colleague, Lem Schofield, remembers what transpired:

I had only recently joined the UM faculty, having spent the previous many years in various legal and management positions at the broadcast station, group, and network levels. This background, together with my confidence that I could handle the writing aspect (after all, I had won writing prizes in high school and had had two articles published in *TV Guide*), persuaded me to agree to his request. How tough could it be?

Sometime later, with a satisfied smile on my face, I handed Syd my first chapter. Two days later he returned it to me with what seemed to be hundreds of corrections, additions, and deletions on every page. It was only then I realized that what I had given him was a *draft*, not the finished product. My first reaction was anger. Then, as I read and considered his notes, time and again I said to myself, "Yup, that's better. He's right." I quickly revised the chapter, incorporating each of his suggestions, and resubmitted it to him. Two days later, back it came, again with penciled emendations on every page. As I recall, I prepared, in all, six drafts of that chapter before Syd reluctantly said, "I guess we'd better send it along to the editor."

This was the beginning of a long relationship during which Syd served as valued and patient mentor and teacher. He strengthened my love of the English language and, especially, of correct grammar. He introduced me to the concept of "tight writing." He demonstrated the value of editing, of rewriting, of always trying to make it

better. He was a meticulous and enthusiastic researcher and insisted on absolute factual accuracy ("If you're not sure, check it; if you're still unsure, take it out"). He refused, utterly and without question, to participate in the growing practice of "dumbing down" academic materials to make them easier for "today's students."

(A unique exception to this policy occurred in the late 1980s when Head's publisher strongly urged him to produce a paperback "brief" edition of *BIA* to meet changing market competition. Head agreed, a decision he almost immediately regretted.)

Susan Eastman adds:

I think I would call Sydney's style "dense writing." Every sentence had to add something new to what had been said. He taught me to use headings and subheadings to articulate structure and to cut any sentence that had no fresh meat, no new content. No "tell me what you are going to tell me" sentences. No hunting around to make an idea clear. And he was a perfectionist about the tiniest details of punctuation and irate about less than ideal grammar. Written English was not going to evolve [read: decline] as far as he was concerned. And he made me into as testy an editor as he was, though never as brilliant a writer. I know Sydney had a sense of humor, but sadly it didn't get into his writing. To him textbook writing was always intensely serious.

## Reviewing a Career

Head was the recipient of many awards beginning with a Rockefeller Fellowship in 1942, a Kaltenborn Foundation fellowship in 1952 (to assist in the preparation of the first edition of *BIA*), and another Kaltenborn grant 2 decades later (for *BIA*'s second edition). Head also received a Fulbright award for research work in Africa in the 1960s, and another for a senior lectureship in Ghana in 1976. He received two Broadcast Preceptor awards (one for the second edition of *BIA*, the other for the first edition of the programming book) from San Francisco State University.

BEA's New Faculty Research Grant, honoring both Sydney Head and Harrison B. Summers (another broadcast education pioneer), was established in 1993 by Becky Hayden to promote research by untenured electronic media faculty.

In 1983 BEA presented Head with its highest honor, the Distinguished Education Service Award, in recognition of his multiple and stellar services to the field. He often described himself as merely a "writer of textbooks." One small indicator of how wrong and limited that self-assessment was came shortly before his death. Unable to attend the annual BEA convention because of his illness, he was remembered by scores of former colleagues and students with a T-shirt on which all had written encouraging comments in multiple colors. Becky Hayden took the T-shirt to him directly after the convention and he immediately put it on (there are photos of him proudly wearing it) and its outpouring of love and support very much brightened his final weeks. A year later, after his death, Head's career was the subject of a 1992 BEA conference panel session (featuring four of the authors of this piece) that shed light on

different facets of the man and his work, especially his emphasis on critical thinking, concise writing, and clear analysis.

Demonstrating remarkable control and dedication, Head studied and wrote almost every day. He took the time and effort to index each of his own books. As Ken Harwood puts it, "Despite occasional setbacks here and abroad, he offered sage advice, penetrating editing skills along with a gentle sense of humor. He viewed diverse people and places benignly." He could readily admit when he was wrong, and as a fine editor himself, took the editing suggestions of others on his own work with aplomb and gratitude.

Claude-Jean Bertrand remembers how helpful Head was to young scholars (many of them abroad), doing his best to provide the information requested of him. Bertrand also remembers him as someone who never lost track of time, indeed, of being

an eccentric, and (English) eccentrics these days are very rare. I remember the first time I met him, in the mid-1970s, on a Saturday morning. He arrived early by train from London for what I thought was to be a weekend in Paris. I picked him up at the station and drove him to Versailles, which he wanted to see. Then, around 11:00, as we were walking in the park, he said, "Maybe we should start moving back to Paris because my train is at 2:00."

Head enjoyed a variety of outside interests in addition to theater and the arts. He was one of the few Westerners to learn and treasure Amharic, the language of Ethiopia—and helped to instill its charm in others. Ken Harwood distinctly remembers Head's great patience at teaching some of the language to him. Head also developed a strong interest in modern African art, and actively supported and promoted the work of several artists. His Philadelphia and Coral Gables homes were filled with the lovely results. As several of us happily learned, Head was a gourmet cook, often featuring dishes from Africa and elsewhere he had traveled. Living in Florida helped promote his love of sailing, and his final years in California encouraged his interest in flowers and gardening.

Sydney Head accomplished what few academics ever do—he helped to redefine and shape a whole field of scholarly endeavor. All of us today—and our students in coming generations—are indebted to him.

### Sydney Head's Media Writings

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## Rethinking Marshall McLuhan: Reflections on a Media Theorist

Donald A. Fishman

One of the striking features of mass communication theory in the millennial decade has been the reemergence of Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980). McLuhan's prominence is not what it was during the peak of his influence during the mid-1960s, but McLuhan is currently undergoing a revival. *Wired* magazine and various Internet-oriented publications have adopted McLuhan as the patron saint of the digital age (Wolf, 1996). McLuhan's phrases such as the "global village" and the "medium is the message" provide support for those commentators who view McLuhan as the oracle of the digital era. During the past decade, more than a dozen new books and countless articles have been published focusing on McLuhan, including Levinson's (1999) *Digital McLuhan*, Gordon's (1997) biography *Marshall McLuhan*, and Theall's (2001) *The Virtual Marshall McLuhan*. The media ecology movement spearheaded by scholars at New York University and Fordham University has celebrated McLuhan as one of the major thinkers of the 20th century.

As a result of these developments, the moment is ripe to revisit Marshall McLuhan and to reassess his legacy. By way of self-disclosure, this author must admit that he has not been an uncritical admirer of McLuhan. Although a member of the media ecology movement, he has not displayed the boosterism of McLuhan that is characteristic of that organization. McLuhan's aphoristic way of speaking, his elliptical style of writing, and his heavy reliance on "probes" hurts the ability to understand his ideas. However, McLuhan's staying power is real, and the source of this power deserves to be examined.

To comment on McLuhan, his ideas, and his critics requires a book-length publication. Instead, space limitations warrant that remarks be restricted to a few central ideas. Thus, this brief article is divided into two sections. The first part looks at McLuhan as a public intellectual. It mixes Richard Posner's interpretation of a public intellectual with biographical materials about McLuhan. The second part focuses on McLuhan's overarching thesis about the development of mass media, and his paradoxical views on broadcasting: He mistrusted television's influence while he saw television as the ideal exemplar of his notion of a cool medium.

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## McLuhan as a Public Intellectual

In 2001, Posner published *Public Intellectuals: A Study in Decline*. It was the first systematic, book-length study of modern intellectuals who are academics but who respond to "market forces" in their nonacademic role as commentators on society. Posner defined a "public intellectual" by using a multitiered definition. For Posner, public intellectuals were "academics writing outside their field" or "writing for a general audience" (p. 1). Posner contended that because the modern university places such a great emphasis on specialization, heavily favoring depth versus breadth of knowledge, few academics are now trained, or inclined, to play the role of public intellectuals. To Posner, this narrow training and socialization process in the United States explains "why so many of the most distinguished academic public intellectuals active in the second half of the twentieth century were foreigners—individuals such as Raymond Aron, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Friedrich Hayek, Leo Strauss, and Amartya Sen" (pp. 4–5).

Using Posner's terminology, McLuhan was a public intellectual whose legacy was twofold: (a) his emphasis that mass communication has altered our perception of 20th-century life, and (b) his belief that the content of communication is dictated by its form. As Czitrom (1982) explained, "McLuhan's efforts instilled an urgent awareness of the media environment as a basic force in shaping the modern sensibility" (p. 165).

McLuhan invariably has been depicted as an academic rebel who did not follow an orthodox outlook or doctrine in his writings. Although correct, such a characterization tends to obscure two biographical points. First, McLuhan followed a very traditional career path. Born in 1911, he received his B.A. from the University of Manitoba in 1932, his M.A. from Cambridge University in 1939, and a Ph.D in English from Cambridge University in 1943. He was trained in English as a "Joyce scholar" and a student of modernism. Between 1946 and 1979, he taught at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto. His book, *The Mechanical Bride* (McLuhan, 1951) was an attempt to apply the methods of New Criticism to the tensions between modern media and popular culture.

Second, McLuhan's entrance into public life was abrupt. Until 1961, McLuhan was unknown except to his students at the University of Toronto and a small circle of academics who either followed his abstruse articles in small-circulation journals or had a personal relationship with him. This group included Harry Skornia of the University of Illinois, Neil Postman of New York University, and James Carey, then at the University of Illinois. However, with the publication of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964/1994), McLuhan became one of the hottest academic properties around.

Interestingly, the broadcast community played an important role in McLuhan's rise to prominence. During the late 1950s, McLuhan was introduced to academic professionals in communication through the intervention of Skornia, who asked McLuhan to be the keynote speaker at the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) convention in 1958 (Marchand, 1998). It was through the sponsorship of the



NAEB that McLuhan received a grant under the National Defense Educational Act to develop a syllabus for 11th graders in media awareness. That document was published in 1960 under the title of "Report on Project in Understanding New Media" (Marchand, 1998). Although the report was too advanced for high school students, it served as the springboard for McLuhan's (1964/1994) book *Understanding Media*.

Yet, by the early 1970s, McLuhan was dismissed as passé. His star had been in orbit for a little more than a decade. All of his books published after 1964 were cowritten ventures. His best theoretical and popular works, his historical writings, and his prophecies appear to be products of the 1960s. It was a short but interesting ride. Wrote Rogers (1994), "During his lifetime McLuhan did more than any other individual to interest the general public in communication study" (p. 489).

His death in 1980 meant the task of interpreting McLuhan for the digital age fell to his admirers. McLuhan's work preceded the CD-ROM, the personal computer, MTV, and the information superhighway. Most of his admirers (e.g., Lapham, 1994; Levinson, 1999) argued that McLuhan was prescient in anticipating the role of communications in society. Yet, there continues to be a persistent belief that McLuhan was a "populist sage," "the cracker barrel Socrates" (Marchand, 1998, pp. 7–8), or that the celebrity persona that McLuhan created was "something like a Renaissance fool, punning and blustering along in a rollicking intellectual slapstick" (Czitrom, 1982, p. 165).

McLuhan relished his role as a public intellectual, and he was a relentless seeker of publicity. His desire to be a celebrity made others feel uneasy about him and led academics to treat his work with suspicion. However, Rogers (1994) was correct: No single individual brought more attention to the field of communication as a discipline than McLuhan. McLuhan made "the history of the mass media central to the history of civilization at large" (Carey, 1972, p. 305). It was a perspective that other scholars had pioneered, namely Innis, but McLuhan publicized it and made it a part of intellectual and social discourse in society.

Whether people perceived McLuhan as a charlatan or an oracle, it was he who set forth the notions of a global village and the medium is the message, and who predicted an upheaval in society based on changes in communication technology. That upheaval has occurred. The period between 1965 and 2005 has witnessed innovation after innovation in the field of communication. Just as the period from 1765 to 1800 is known as the age of industrialization, it is likely that the period between 1965 and 2020 will be known as the age of communication. The communication revolution has been uprooting and transformative (e.g., cell phones, cable television, hypertext, personal computers, and several hybrid information technologies).

When questions are asked about the history of these changes, Marshall McLuhan's name is likely to be discussed. If he was not the scholar and sage of these developments, he was the foremost press agent for the concepts that (a) society is fundamentally based on its system of communication, and (b) the communication system creates a foundation for the type of sensory perceptions existing within a particular era. By pushing communication to center stage, McLuhan provided a paradigm shift for others to utilize in analyzing and explaining the information revolution that accompanied the unfolding age of communication.

## McLuhan's Central Ideas

McLuhan's basic thesis is best understood alongside the work of his colleague and fellow Canadian Harold Adams Innis. Innis (1950, 1951) argued that social change is dictated by communication technology. Innis believed that new media arise to reach larger audiences and strive to do so with greater speed; moreover, these new media compete with older forms of communication for hegemony in society. At any given time, one form of mass communication is dominant in society. Innis saw media progressing through different stages—oral, print, and electronic—and each new evolution in technology affected the social structure.

For Innis, print communication leads away from the communal aspects of oral culture and it fosters nationalism, individualism, and scientific authority. In the *Bias of Communication* (Innis, 1951), he emphasized that an oral civilization is time-sensitive and bolsters a religious authority whereas a print civilization is space-centered and allows for the development of empire and bureaucracy. In this interpretation, radio and television are space-oriented media, and they have the ability to create new forms of associations across spatial divides.

McLuhan accepts the basic thesis that Innis propounded, but McLuhan's work emphasized different concepts and outcomes. Carey (1972) noted that McLuhan took the language of sociolinguistics from Sapir-Whorf and applied it to mass communication; for example, the grammar of television, sensory ratios between hearing (oral) and seeing (print), as well as commentary on the power of smell and touch. McLuhan believed that media tend to encourage an overreliance of one sense (e.g., sight over hearing). As a result, for McLuhan a specific medium of communication offers a person a particular way of knowing and understanding the world heavily influenced by that particular mode of communication.

One of the major themes within McLuhan's work is his treatment of media as extensions of the human body. McLuhan's adaptation of Innis's work emphasized the media as extensions of an individual's capabilities and attributes. Just as clothing is an extension of the skin, the ax is an extension of the hand, and the car is an extension of the foot, the media are an extension of the mind. These media create perceptual environments, and these environments influence what kind of facts are privileged as important, and what type of stimuli are ignored or overlooked. One of McLuhan's most astute insights is that "content serves as a distraction from awareness of how the medium is molding consciousness" (Morrison, 2005, p. 13).

McLuhan's writings are filled with dualisms: oral versus literate, content versus form, time versus space, preliterate versus postliterate, and literate versus electronic. Perhaps the most controversial of these dualisms is the distinction between a hot and cool medium. A *hot medium* is one that provides a single definition of a situation and a high amount of data, which requires little effort by the audience to fill in the information. On the other hand, a *cool medium* requires the listener or viewer to draw inferences to complete the information. Cool media, therefore, require active mental participation. Radio and newspapers were hot media, whereas television and the tele-

phone were cool media, forcing their users to draw inferences. Declared McLuhan (1964/1994), "Hot media do not leave so much to be filled or completed by the audience" (p. 23).

McLuhan has been closely associated in the public's mind with the medium of television. However, McLuhan's thoughts on the medium were more complex than the commonplace image of him as a simple-minded promoter of television.

McLuhan had five key ideas on television. First, McLuhan saw television as the dominant medium of the times. Television became a filter for many of his observations on the conflict between one medium and another, allowing him to update the earlier examples of conflict between oral and print cultures. Indeed, television had gained remarkable legitimacy during its coverage of the 1960 presidential debates, and the Kennedy assassination in November 1963 and its penetration rate into U.S. homes had surprised intellectuals and policymakers.

Second, McLuhan was able to contrast the oral style of television against the hot style of a print culture. For him, television was the ultimate exemplar of a cool medium. It required participation by the audience to follow the sequence of action. Its images were multisensory, and the interpretation of television programs was endlessly open. These images were discontinuous and nonlinear, giving television the features of a mosaic (McLuhan, 1964/1994). Television creates what McLuhan called the "ear-view mirror," because "the eye never receives a complete picture from the screen, just as the ear never receives a word in isolation from a stream of speech" (Gordon, 1997, p. 210).

Third, McLuhan contended that television bolstered the "need for in-depth empathy and participation" (Gordon, 1997, p. 194) especially among the young, who were visibly frustrated by print media. For McLuhan, television encouraged a shift from the detachment of print media to the constant involvement and engagement that television stimulated.

Fourth, McLuhan saw television as an audile-tactile medium rather than a visual one. This was a counterintuitive concept. For McLuhan, an individual decodes the 525 lines per second of a rapidly changing image on a television screen, and the eye acts as if it were a hand touching the image and re-creating its central features. It is as if one were creating a piece of sculpture. In a print medium, the eye and brain work together to create information; in television, the eye works with the brain and hand in reassembling the dots from the cathode ray gun into a meaningful image.

Fifth, McLuhan saw television as a unifying medium. It reverses the process of fragmentation and specialization that the print media fosters. It bolsters a seamless web of experience and engenders a global village, re-creating the five senses of preliterate and preprint culture. The auditory and tactile sense are thus reawakened and reintegrated into social life.

Meanwhile, McLuhan was mistrustful of television's content. He was worried about the numbing effect of television programming. Because of its state of perpetual flux resulting from 525 lines of information per second, television deprives the audience of closure. It creates high sensory demands on people who might expect closure

or a fixed image, and it was a poor tool for conducting the kind of pedagogical exercises that an individual would expect from a print medium. On a personal note, McLuhan warned his son Eric to keep his granddaughter Emily away from too much television: "Try not to have Emily exposed to hours and hours of TV. It is a vile drug which permeates the nervous system, especially in the young" (Gordon, 1997, p. 212).

McLuhan also devoted attention to the impact of radio, although he continued to highlight the fundamental differences between television and radio. McLuhan (1964/1994) depicted radio as creating the speed-up of information with the invention of wireless communication. Radio "contracts the world to village dimensions size and creates insatiable village tastes for gossip, rumor, and personal malice" (p. 306). Unlike television, radio does not have a homogenizing effect. Instead, it tends to reawaken tribal memories and to give voice to small, linguistic groups. Thus, radio is a decentralizing and pluralistic medium. Interestingly, radio was initially a form of group communication with various individuals gathered around a receiver creating a communal experience. However, as it matured, radio allowed individuals to retreat into private space and enjoy the program and subculture of their choice. Thus, the inherent bias of radio is that it appeals to particularistic values and tends to create subgroups in society.

### **Strengths and Limitations of McLuhan**

Even in a brief survey of McLuhan's ideas, it is important to identify the strengths and limitations of his thought. Such a survey may help to account for his controversial stature in the field.

There are three strengths of McLuhan's work that should be mentioned. First, the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web in the 1990s made McLuhan's notion of a global village an instant reality. McLuhan had been ahead of his time in discussing communication in terms of information processing. For instance, in a 1959 address to the American Association of Higher Education, he declared: "The movement of information round-the-clock and round-the-globe is now a matter of instantaneous configuration" (McLuhan, 2003, p. 5). McLuhan's use of metaphors and literary allusions has allowed his prose to outlive the topicality of the day, giving it a visionary force. Thus, although McLuhan offers no sustained vision of a society guided by computers, servers, and protocols, his work resonates with the evolving digital culture. His ideas, for instance, on the electronic media reversing producer-consumer relationships aptly apply to the multiple user and value-added effect of the computer revolution.

Second, McLuhan was ahead of his time in discussing sensory ratios. He depicted media as having a different influence on the eye, ear, brain, and central nervous system. Indeed, modern neuroscience is moving in the direction that McLuhan recommended. Thus, McLuhan's writings provide an intriguing backdrop for recent experimental works on the effects of the media.

Third, television has continued to be the dominant medium of our era, even in the millennial decade. In the long run, TV may lose some of its luster as programming becomes Web based and the computer becomes an important vehicle for transmitting signals—the growing trend of webcasting. However, as discussions of television's role in society continue, McLuhan's theories will be mentioned.

At the same time, there are some major limitations in McLuhan's approach. Four limitations are emphasized here. First, McLuhan was weak on the effects of media on social organizations (Carey, 1972; Czitrom, 1982). Second, McLuhan's distinction between hot and cool media, although provocative, was applied haphazardly so that it does not provide a sound basis for making meaningful distinctions. It is a novel idea, but in retrospect, it seems superficial and inconsistent. Third, McLuhan's thought tended to legitimize the status quo in advertising and broadcasting. He desired to ingratiate himself to business leaders, and he wanted to arouse corporations "into realizing the relevance of what he and his group were doing" (Gordon, 1997, p. 194). Consequently, his work tended to minimize criticisms of corporate activities that were exploitative or intellectually vapid. As Czitrom (1982) wrote, "McLuhan's glorification of television slid very easily into an apology for the corporate interests that controlled the medium" (p. 182).

The fourth and final limitation is an important feature: McLuhan's claims went far beyond the evidence that he provided for his various assertions. Support for his contentions has to be culled carefully from McLuhan's work because the author tended to write in an elliptical style. There is a stream-of-consciousness style of writing to McLuhan's work that is interesting but distinctly offputting. It is not an argumentative or scholarly approach to discourse. In fact, the evidence for his contentions is neither self-evident nor presented in a logical fashion.

## Conclusion

McLuhan's role in the communication revolution is still ambiguous. McLuhan alerted people to the diverse effects of media, and he asked probing questions about how media transformations result in changes in the nature of society. His discussion of the evolution of communication from oral to print to electronic is challenging, and his willingness to look at the impact of technological innovations such as the telegraph, light bulb, and typewriter has encouraged scholars to revisit topics that were once thoughtlessly passed over. Part of McLuhan's recent popularity comes because he placed a strong emphasis on the role of communication technology in transforming society. Especially in an era of massive technological change, McLuhan's writings seem prophetic.

At the same time, part of McLuhan's popularity comes from the very ambiguity of his statements—his conceptual elusiveness and his widespread use of metaphors—and the fact that later generations of commentators may interpret his comments in a variety of ways. McLuhan was both ahead of his time and ignorant of

emerging technologies. He did not anticipate the interactive nature of the digital revolution or predict the World Wide Web and the Internet. He did not foresee the 24/7 world that the digital revolution would create, although such an environment could be broadly explained through McLuhan's writings.

However, McLuhan is more than an oddity from the 1960s. McLuhan's legacy will be that of a provocative thinker, a popularizer of other people's ideas, and a public intellectual who was willing to engage in a wide-ranging dialogue about the role of media in society. He made the field of communication more well known, and his ideas anticipated the professional convergence of journalism, broadcasting, and speech into one field now called communication. Overall, he was an engaging public intellectual who left a body of work that, 40 years after its publication, is still worth examining. The work is of a mixed quality, but the controversies that McLuhan inspired have lived on longer than his detractors ever imagined.

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CREATING IMAGES  
AND THE  
PSYCHOLOGY OF  
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# CREATING IMAGES AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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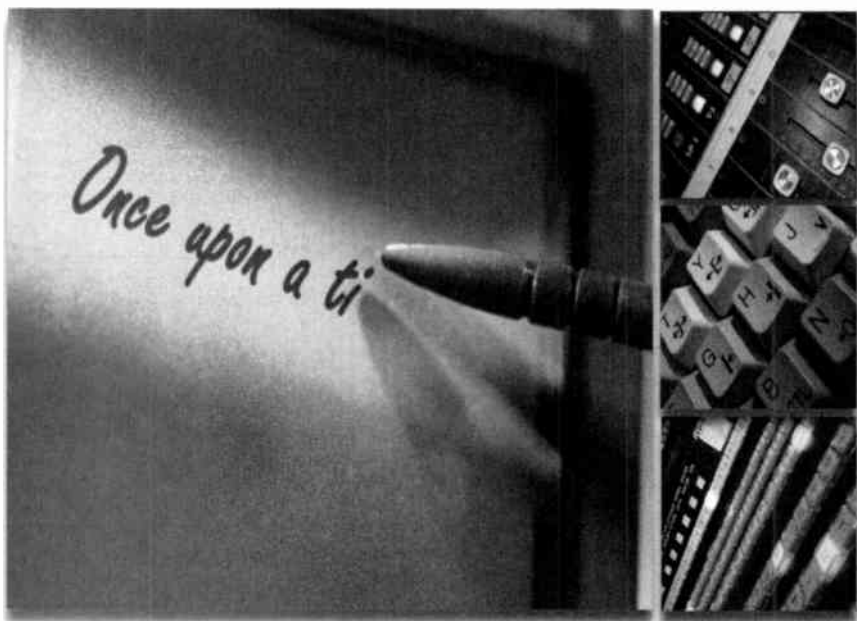
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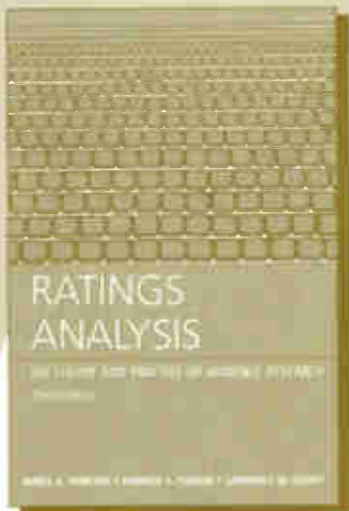
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