MEDIA, SOCIETY, CULTURE AND YOU

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AN INTRODUCTORY MASS COMMUNICATION TEXT

MARK POEPSEL

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Media, Society, Culture and You

Bronze bust of John Dewey sculpted by Jacob Epstein, 1927. Photo by user known as Cliff, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"**Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication.**" — John Dewey in *Democracy and Education*, 1916

The purpose of this chapter is to define media, society and culture broadly. Additionally, the term "communication" is defined in its many forms. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with communication theory in more detail. Digital culture is covered in depth in Chapter 2. We will discuss media literacy and media studies in Chapter 3, but we have to learn to walk before we run, as the saying goes.

The Role of Mass Media in Society

More than one hundred years ago, John Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education* that society is not only supported by various forms of communication but also enveloped in communication. Dewey reiterated what philosophers and scholars had noted for centuries: small groups, larger communities and vast institutions — all the things that make up a **society** — function in relation to how communication flows within and between groups.

There are different forms of communication. At the broadest level, **communication** is an exchange of meaning between people using symbols. The most common symbols we use are verbal and written words, but there are also many forms of nonverbal communication such as American Sign Language. What sign language, verbal communication and written communication have in common is the use of abstract symbols to convey meaning. Whether you say "thank you" in face-to-face communication, send someone a card with the words "thank you" written on it, or use nonverbal cues to express thanks, the meaning is the same.

A boy smiles as he stands next to a Christmas tree.

Interpersonal communication generally refers to the exchange of meaning between two or more people on a personal, often one-on-one, level. Interpersonal communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Most often, it happens in face-to-face settings. It differs from **mass communication**, which involves sharing meaning through symbolic messages to a wide audience from one source to many receivers. Sometimes, particularly in **computer-mediated communication**, messages conveyed using computers, it can be difficult to tell the difference between interpersonal communication and mass communication because individuals can send messages intended only for other individuals that might quickly reach large numbers of people. Social media platforms are often structured in ways that allow interpersonal messages to "go viral" and become mass messages whether the original sender intended to address a mass audience or not.

It is not the type of message that determines interpersonal or mass communication. It is the way the message is distributed and the relationships between sender and receiver(s). This text will continue to grapple with the overlap of interpersonal communication and mass communication structures on networked communication platforms, but first, another form of communication commonly studied in academic settings should be introduced.

Organizational communication is the symbolic exchange of messages carrying specific meaning for members belonging to formal organizations. In practical terms, it is the internal communication that helps governments, businesses, schools and hospitals to run.

People working together in organizations get usually things done by communicating directly with one another or in small groups. Organizations cannot function without communication. Organizational communication effectiveness can influence the success or failure of businesses and other social institutions. Thus, communication does not merely happen within organizations; it is an essential part of the way they are structured. Organizational communication is a separate field of study, introduced well in this YouTube video.

Successful communication, whether intended for personal use, for use within an organization, or for a wide audience, can help people to understand each other and to get things done.

If good organizational communication is necessary for groups to function with a formal purpose, mass communication is essential for societies to function. Societies are made up of formal organizations of various sizes. Usually, the larger the group, the more complex its communication structures.

Communication structure refers to a combination of information and communication technologies (ICTs), guidelines for using those technologies, and professional workers dedicated to managing

information and messages. In the mass communication field, communication structures are more than computers and transmission networks. The guidelines for using networks to create and distribute messages for mass consumption are a matter of corporate policy as well as law.

It has been noted that a society is made up of small groups, larger communities, and vast institutions. A more complete definition of the term comes from the field of sociology. A **society** is a very large group of people organized into institutions held together over time through formalized relationships. Nations, for example, are made up of formal institutions organized by law. Governments of different size, economic institutions, educational institutions and others all come together to form a society.

By comparison, **culture** — the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of groups large and small — is not necessarily formalized. Culture is necessary for enjoying and making sense of the human experience, but there are few formalized rules governing culture.

Mass communication influences both society and culture. Different societies have different media systems, and the way they are set up by law influences how the society works. Different forms of communication, including messages in the mass media, give shape and structure to society. Additionally, mass media outlets can spread cultural knowledge and artistic works around the globe. People exercise cultural preferences when it comes to consuming media, but mass media corporations often decide which stories to tell and which to promote, particularly when it comes to forms of mass media that are costly to produce such as major motion pictures, major video game releases and global news products.

More than any other, the field of mass communication transmits culture. At the same time, it helps institutional society try to understand itself and whether its structures are working.

The Mass Media Dynamic

The mass media system is an institution itself. What sets it apart is its potential to influence the thinking of massive numbers of individuals. In fact, the ideas exchanged in organizational communication and interpersonal communication are often established, reinforced or negated by messages in the mass media. This is what it means for societies "to exist in transmission, in communication." Different types of communication influence each other.

But the mass media are also shaped and influenced by social groups and institutions. This is the nature of the mass media dynamic.

Individuals and groups in society influence what mass media organizations produce through their creativity on the input side and their consumption habits on the output side. It is not accurate to say that society exists within the mass media or under mass media "control." Social structures are too powerful for mass media to completely govern how they operate. But neither is it accurate to say that the mass media are contained within societies. Many mass media products transcend social structures to influence multiple societies, and even in societies that heavily censor their mass media the news of

scandals and corruption can get out. The mass media and society are bound together and shape each other.

Almost everything you read, see and hear is framed within a mass media context; however, mere familiarity is no guarantee of success. Products in the mass media that fail to resonate with audiences do not last long, even if they seem in tune with current tastes and trends.

The Mass Communication Origin Story

In his book, John notes how, in the early 20th century, the mass media were beginning to connect large institutions in new ways. The production of mass media messages accelerated with the development of the telegraph and the popular newspaper. The spread of telegraph technology that began in the mid-1800s continued through the early 1900s to network the globe with a nearly instantaneous information transmission system. Much of the growth of newspapers occurred as a result of improvements in telegraph technology.

Thus, a primary function of the global mass communication system is to save time. People have a need to understand what is going on in the world, and they desire entertainment. Global electronic telecommunication networks collapse space by transmitting messages in much less time than the older, physical delivery systems.

The television station's webpage at KOMU, a local affiliate owned and operated by the University of Missouri-Columbia, is constantly on display in the newsroom.

The dynamic between society and mass media that is so prevalent today developed throughout the 20th century. Starting near the end of the 1800s, communication flows began to move at electronic speeds. More people knew *about* more things than ever before, but scholars are quick to point out that communication is not synonymous with understanding.

Dewey wanted to focus on educating people so that they could live and work well in societies heavily shaped by global telecommunication networks. For him, education was the meaning of life and the global information and communication system needed to be molded into an educational tool. Many of us still hold out hope for Dewey's educational goals, but as ICTs have advanced over the past century or two, it has become clear that the mere existence of global mass communication networks does not ensure that societies will learn to coexist and thrive.

This can be difficult for people to acknowledge. Shortly after the widespread dissemination of the telegraph, the radio, broadcast television and public internet access, some form of communication utopia was imagined or even expected. The telegraph collapsed space. Radio enabled instantaneous mass communication. Television brought live images from one side of the globe to the other for even larger mass audiences, and internet access gave individuals the power to be information senders, not

just receivers. At each step hope and imagination flourished, but social and cultural clashes persisted. Communication systems can be used as weapons. The evolution of mass communication tools is the story of increased capacity to do the same good and evil things people have always done in societies and between them.

Looking beyond technological utopianism — the idea that new technologies (particularly ICTs) will lead to greater social understanding and better conditions for the global population — we are left with a tedious but massively meaningful project. We must find ways to coexist with other societies even as we are constantly aware of our differences and of possible threats that may have existed before but now are much easier to see.

Perhaps if we are to make the best of our digital global communication network, it would help to track the evolution of different forms of mass communication. This text very briefly touched on the continuum from telegraph to widespread internet adoption, but the first mass medium was ink on paper.

The First Mass Medium

The first global medium, besides the spoken word, was neither the internet nor the telegraph. In fact, it was not a mass medium at all. It was paper. Via trade routes, messages in the form of letters moved around the world in a matter of weeks or months. It was global communication, but it was slow.

The development of a global telegraph network made it possible for messages to spread in minutes. When the telegraph was wed to mass-consumed newspapers, the world saw the rise of *fast, global, mass* communication that had the power to potentially influence large groups of people at once.

Books transmitted messages widely and inspired literacy, but they did not establish a channel for consistent, timely communication meant for mass audiences. After the Gutenberg printing press was developed around 1440, the Gutenberg Bible was slowly mass produced and disseminated around the Western world. It opened up access to sacred texts that had been bound up for centuries by large institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, and its dissemination helped fuel the Protestant Reformation. Still, it was an outlier. Most other books, even those that were mass produced from around the 1500s to the 1800s were not disseminated as widely as the Gutenberg Bible. They were simply too expensive.

Nevertheless, mass literacy slowly paved the way for mass newspaper readership to emerge in the 20th century. After the telegraph was invented and developed for wide-scale use and after the cost of printing newspapers dropped, publishers could share news from around the globe with mass audiences. The newspaper, specifically the penny press, was the first mass medium.


THE PENNY PAPER.

LAST EDITION

The front page of the Cincinnati Penny Paper from Monday, May 16, 1881. From: George Edward Stevens' article "From Penny Paper to Post and Times-Star: Mr. Scripps' First Link" in the Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin No. 27, 1969, public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

What distinguished the **penny press** was affordability. These papers were published in tabloid format, which used small-sized pages and was cheaper to produce. Penny papers were written for and read by working class audiences starting in about the 1830s. They covered all manner of current events. Soon, major institutions such as political parties and unions developed their own papers to cover the topics that suited their agendas and to promote the cultural values that they held dear.

Mass Media Growth and Consolidation

As mass production of all sorts of manufactured goods grew during the 20th century, so did advertising budgets and the concept of brands. Brand advertising became fuel for the mass media, and as profitability rose, newspapers were bought up and organized into chains throughout the 20th century. Many newspapers grew their audience as they merged.

Partisan papers gave way to a brand of news that strived for objectivity. The profit motive mostly drove the change. To attract a mass audience, newspapers had to represent various points of view. This pushed some of the most opinionated citizens, particularly strong advocates for workers, to the fringes of mass discourse. Some advocates developed alternative media offerings. Others went mostly unheard or plied their craft directly in politics.

At the same, throughout much of the 20th century, the journalism workforce became more professionalized. Professional **norms**, that is the written and unwritten rules guiding behavior decided on by people in a given field, evolved. Many full-time, paid professional journalists stressed and continue to stress the need to remain detached from the people they cover so that journalists can maintain the practice and appearance of objectivity. Journalists emphasized objectivity in order to remain autonomous and to be perceived as truthful. The norm of objective reporting still strongly influences news coverage in newspapers as well as on most mainstream radio and television news networks.

That being said, the practice of maintaining objectivity is being called into question in our current hyper-partisan political media environment. Other strategies for demonstrating truthfulness require journalists to be transparent about how they do their work, about who owns their media outlets, and about what investments and personal views they may have. Chapter 9 covers news norms and their evolution in greater detail.

At the heart of the ethical discussion for professional journalists is a sort of battle between the need to be autonomous to cover news accurately with minimal bias and the need to be socially responsible.

Social responsibility in the study of journalism ethics is a specific concept referring to the need for media organizations to be responsible for the possible repercussions of the news they produce. The debate goes on even as more and more platforms for mass communication are developed.

Beyond advancements in ink-on-paper newspapers (including the development of color offset printing), technological developments have contributed to the diversification of mass media products. Photography evolved throughout the 20th century as did motion picture film, radio and television technology. Other mass media presented challenges and competition for newspapers. Still, newspapers were quite a profitable business. They grew to their greatest readership levels in the middle-to-late 20th century, and their value was at its high point around the turn of the 21st century. Then came the internet.

Stewing in our Own Juices

With the rise of global computer networks, particularly high-speed broadband and mobile communication technologies, individuals gained the ability to publish their own work and to comment on mass media messages more easily than ever before. If mass communication in the 20th century was best characterized as a one-to-many system where publishers and broadcasters reached waiting audiences, the mass media made possible by digital information networks in the twenty-first have taken on a many-to-many format.

For example, YouTube has millions of producers who themselves are also consumers. None of the social media giants such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Qzone and Weibo (in China), Twitter, Reddit or Pinterest is primarily known for producing content. Instead, they provide platforms for users to submit their own content and to share what mass media news and entertainment companies produce. The result is that the process of deciding what people should be interested in is much more decentralized in the digital network mass media environment than it was in the days of an analog one-to-many mass media system.

The process of making meaning in society — that is, the process of telling many smaller stories that add up to a narrative shared by mass audiences — is now much more collaborative than it was in the 20th century because more people are consuming news in networked platforms than through the channels managed by **gatekeepers**. A mass media gatekeeper is someone, professional or not, who decides what information to share with mass audiences and what information to leave out.

Fiction or non-fiction, every story leaves something out, and the same is true for shows made up of several stories, such as news broadcasts and heavily edited reality television. Gatekeepers select what mass audiences see, and then edit or disregard the rest. The power of gatekeepers may be diminished in networks where people can decide for themselves what topics they care most about, but there is still an important gatekeeping function in the mass media since much of what is ultimately shared on social media platforms originates in the offices and studios of major media corporations.

On social media platforms, media consumers have the ability to add their input and criticism, and this

is an important function for users. Not only do we have a say as audience members in the content we would like to see, read and hear, but we also have an important role to play in society as voting citizens holding their elected officials accountable.

If social media platforms were only filled with mass media content, individual user comments, and their own homegrown content, digitally networked communication would be complex enough, but there are other forces at work. Rogue individuals, hacker networks and **botnets —** computers programmed to create false social media accounts, websites and other digital properties **—** can contribute content alongside messages produced by professionals and legitimate online community members. False presences on social media channels can amplify hate and misinformation and can stoke animosity between groups in a hyper-partisan media age.

Around the world, societies have democratized mass communication, but in many ways, agreeing on a shared narrative or even a shared list of facts is more difficult than ever. Users create **filter bubbles** for themselves where they mostly hear the voices and information that they want to hear. This has the potential to create opposing worldviews where users with different viewpoints not only have differing opinions, but they also have in mind completely different sets of facts creating different images about what is happening in the world and how society should operate.

When users feel the need to defend their filtered worldviews, it is quite harmful to society.

De-massification

The infiltration of bots on common platforms is one issue challenging people working in good faith to produce accurate and entertaining content and to make meaning in the mass media. De-massification is another. Professionals working on mass-market media products now must fight to hold onto mass audiences. **De-massification** signifies the breakdown of mass media audiences. As the amount of information being produced and the number of channels on which news and other content can be disseminated grows exponentially, ready-made audiences are in decline.

In the future, it is anticipated that audiences, or fan bases, must be built rather than tapped into. One path to growing audiences in digital networks is to take an extreme point of view. Producers of news and entertainment information on the right and left of the political spectrum often rail against mainstream media as they promote points of view which are more or less biased. This kind of polarization along with the tendency of social media platforms to allow and even encourage people to organize along political lines likely contributes to de-massification as people organize into factions.

The future of some mass communication channels as regular providers of shared meaning for very large audiences is in question. That said, claims that any specific medium is "dead" are overblown. For example, newspaper readership, advertising revenue and employment numbers have been declining for about 25 years, but as of 2018, there are still more than 30 million newspaper subscribers. Mass audiences are shrinking and shifting, but they can still be developed.

Convergence

As mass audiences are breaking up and voices from the fringe are garnering outsized influence, the various types of media (audio, video, text, animation and the industries they are tied to) have come together on global computer and mobile network platforms in a process called **convergence**.

It is as though all media content is being tossed into a huge stew, one that surrounds and composes societies and cultures, and within this stew of information, people are re-organizing themselves according to the cultural and social concerns they hold most dear.

A somewhat unappetizing stew. Photo by Jason Cartwright, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

According to one hypothesis, in a society dominated by digital communication networks, people gather around the information they recognize and want to believe because making sense of the vast amount of information now available is impossible.

This text covers several mass media channels including social media, film, radio, television, music recording and podcasting, digital gaming, news, advertising, public relations and propaganda because these are still viable industries even as the content they produce appears more and more often on converged media platforms.

What we see emerging in networked spaces is a single mass media channel with a spectrum of possible text, photo, audio, video, graphic and game elements; however, the sites of professional production still mostly identify as one particular industry (such as radio and recorded music, film, television, cable television, advertising, PR, digital advertising or social media). Some of these are "legacy" media that have existed as analog industries prior to convergence, while others originated in digital media environments.

For the foreseeable future, we should expect legacy media producers to continue to hold formidable power as elements of larger media conglomerates, which acquired many media companies as a result of industry deregulation. We should also expect audiences to continue to fragment and digital media start-ups trying to build audiences out of fragmented communities to be common even if they are difficult to sustain.

What this means for social structures and for cultural production is disruption, limited perhaps by legacy media traditions and corporate power.

Melding Theories

The world of mass media has witnessed the convergence of media content on digital platforms, the ability of individuals to engage in one-to-many communication as though they were major broadcasters, and the emergence of structures that allow for many-to-many communication. These

developments force us to rethink how separate interpersonal, organizational and mass communication truly are.

From a theoretical standpoint, these are well-established approaches to thinking about communication, but in practice, certain messages might fit into multiple categories. For example, a YouTube video made for a few friends might reach millions if it goes viral. Is it interpersonal communication, mass communication or both? Viral videos and memes spread to vast numbers of people but might start out as in-jokes between internet friends or trolls. The message's original meaning is often lost in this process. In a networked society, it can be difficult to differentiate between interpersonal and mass communication. For our purposes, it will be helpful to consider the message creator's intent.

As a user, it is essential to realize the possibility that interpersonal messages may be shared widely. As professionals, it also helps to realize that you cannot force a messge to go viral, although most social media platforms now engage in various kinds of paid promotion where brands and influential users can pay to have their content spread more widely more quickly.

Two women discuss a record album selection in a music shop in Amora, Portugal. Photo by Pedro Ribeiro Simões, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

We must also understand that advertisers treat digital communication platforms much the same way whether they appear to users to be interpersonal or mass media environments. Users can be targeted down to the individual on either type of platform, and advertisers (with the help of platform creators), can access mass audiences, even when users are intending only to participate on a platform for purposes of interpersonal communication.

Scholars are still working to define how these platforms mix aspects of interpersonal and mass communication. Here is one takeaway: If you are not paying to use a platform like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (Google), Instagram or Snapchat, *you* are the product. It is your attention that is being sold to advertisers.

The Big Picture

Society functions when the mass media work well, and we tend not to think about the technologies or the professionals who make it all possible. Interpersonal communication can function with or without a massive technological apparatus. It is more convenient, though, to be able to text each another. When interpersonal communication breaks down, we have problems in our relationships. When organizational communication breaks down, it creates problems for groups and companies. But when mass communication breaks down, society breaks down.

Cultural Production

There is another way of looking at the mass media that needs to be mentioned after looking in some depth at the structural changes going on in and around the field of mass communication. Mass media channels are also huge engines of cultural production. That is, they make the entertainment that helps us define who we are as large and small groups of people. To quote from *Dead Poets Society*: "We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race, and the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." If you replace "reading and writing poetry" with "creating culture," you get a sense of the importance of cultural production. We can define culture as a collection of our knowledge, beliefs and practices. In practice, culture it how we express ourselves and enjoy life's experiences.

In media, there are three main types of cultural works, those associated with "high" culture, popular culture and folk culture. (Some scholars discuss "low" culture, but it is argued here that "low culture" is just another way of describing the low end of pop culture.)

High culture is arguably the best cultural material a society has to offer. Economic class often comes into play in defining what is "high culture" and what is not.

Pop culture is the vast array of cultural products that appeal to the masses.

Folk culture refers to cultural products borne out of everyday life identifiable because they usually have practical uses as well as artistic value. It is often associated with prehistoric cultures, but that is because the folk culture, pop culture and high culture of prehistoric peoples were often one and the same. Their best art may also have been an everyday object like a bowl or a basket or a doll or a mask. Don't confuse prehistoric art with modern folk art.

Modern folk art has the specific quality of trying to capture what is both beautiful *and useful* in everyday life.

Folk music tends to rely on "traditional" sounds and instruments. Topically, it focuses on the value of everyday existence. Folk music is often built around narratives that carry morals much the same way fairy tales do. Fairy tales are probably the best example of folk literature.

So much of the interpretation and the value of cultural production is culturally relative. This means that an object or work's value is determined by perceptions of people in different cultural groups.

In modern society, mass media often drive our perceptions. It is important to recognize that different cultures have different moral values and to acknowledge that some practices should be universally abhorred and stopped, even if they are partially or wholly accepted in other cultures.

The relationship between culture and mass media is complex; it is difficult to distinguish modern culture from how it appears in the various mass media. Culture in the developed world is spread

through mass media channels. Just as society forms and is formed in part by messages in the mass media, so it goes with culture. Cultural products and their popularity can influence which media channels people prefer. Conversely, changes in media and ICTs can lead to changes in how we produce culture.

When we discuss digital culture in the next chapter, we will continue to break down different levels of culture and the relationship between cultural forms and mass communication in the networked communication age. To begin to understand the mass media, their role in society and how they shape culture and are shaped by cultural preferences, it helps to think about how the mass media may influence you.

2

Digital Culture and Social Media

Lighted brushed-steel Google logo sign attached to a marble wall. Image by Google, public domain. Source: Flickr.

"**The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had.**" **—** Eric Schmidt, former executive chairman of Alphabet Inc.

Origin in Anarchy

Until the end of 2017, Eric Schmidt was the executive chairman of Alphabet Inc. Alphabet emerged out of Google to become a large holding company that would manage Google and several related properties including YouTube and Calico (a biotech company). Schmidt has a Ph.D. in computer science from Berkeley. He serves on advisory boards for Khan Academy, an education company with strong ties to YouTube, and *The Economist*, a global news magazine with both digital and print products. Schmidt's résumé suggests he is intellectually outstanding and that he cares about technology, education and the mass media. If one of the biggest brains of our time, and the former leader of one of the few corporations with direct influence on the way the internet is shaped, describes the internet as "anarchy," it's a good indication that things are in flux in the digital world.

Of course, we should analyze critically any statements coming from someone whose primary purpose it is to maximize profits for their company. At the time he made these statements, Schmidt was running Google. The loyalties of executive-level leaders presumably rest with the corporation that signs their checks and provides their stock options. Google has an interest in making you feel that the internet is a confusing place since their search engine is one solution to the confusion. (However, if you rely on autocomplete, Google's suggestions may not only be confusing; they may even be morally reprehensible.)

Still, Schmidt's characterization of the internet as a place of anarchy is accurate. And as we seek to define digital culture and to discuss the cultural relevance of social media in this chapter, we must recognize that there is no grand plan. The only constant in digital culture is change, which may sound cliché, but the underlying ICT structures shift so often that it can be difficult for cultural trends to take hold.

Chapter 1 of this text defined society and culture in the context of the field of mass communication. It covered the distinction between interpersonal communication, organizational communication and mass communication, and then it delved deeper into concepts relating to mass communication. The purpose of the first chapter was to start a discussion about how evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) can influence the mass media and contribute to social and cultural change in the process.

A Brief Overview

If you are anticipating a roadmap of neat, organized plans for how the evolution of culture on digital platforms will unfurl, you're gonna have a bad time. Instead, this chapter offers a brief, lively discussion of how we define digital culture and what we might expect from it as it emerges in online spaces, mobile apps and platforms.

Additionally, this chapter includes a breakdown of the roles social media platforms may play in influencing culture.

If you acknowledge that cultures have always been in flux, then perhaps the concept of a digital culture emerging online amidst anarchy will look less like disruption and more like evolution (Spoiler Alert: Reveals the plot of The Last Jedi). However you classify it, the cultural impact of the merger of the mass media and digital networks is vast, and that is the topic of this chapter.

This chapter begins with a definition of "digital culture" that comes from the media studies portion of mass communication literature. **Media studies** refers to the broad category of academic inquiry analyzing and critiquing the mass media, its products, possible effects of messages and campaigns, and even media history. Chapter 2 then continues with a deeper discussion of identity in the digital age and covers privacy and surveillance as well as the praxis of digital culture as defined by scholars. The term "praxis" here refers to how a theory plays out in actual practice.

This chapter also identifies different levels of culture (a concept borrowed from anthropology) as they relate to cultural products reaching audiences through digital mass communication channels. In other words, we ultimately answer this question: If we take existing theory for describing the *levels* of culture and apply it to digital culture, what are some immediately recognizable traits?

Finally, social media are defined from a scholarly point of view with particular attention given to the cultural potential of digitally networked social platforms.

Digital Culture Defined

Scholars argue whether we can understand what the spread of digital networks will mean for relatively well-established cultures in the tangible world, or predict with any certainty how cultures will evolve on digital platforms. There are two basic schools of thought. The first argues that existing cultures might find themselves essentially recreated in digital form as more and more life experiences, from the exciting to the mundane, play out in digital spaces. The second school of thought posits that the dominant digital culture emerging now is a separate culture unto itself.

It seems likely that neither version of these imagined forms of digital culture will dominate; instead, we will likely see a combination of the two. Parts of existing culture will appear online as they do in the physical world and parts of digital culture will seem completely new, previously unfathomable because they could not or would not appear in the tangible world.

Commuters on the Washington DC Metro use their mobile phones beneath an ad stating, "It Begins with Bonjour." Photo by Craig Moe, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

Before we delve in with prognostications about where digital culture is headed, let us first define our terms. **Digital culture** refers to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of people interacting on digital networks that may recreate tangible-world cultures or create new strains of cultural thought and practice native to digital networks.

For example, an online fandom and a real-world fan club are both made up of people who are geographically separated but share a common interest. If a fan club were to "go online," networked communication platforms might make the experience better than it was in the physical world. Before the advent of the internet, most fan clubs produced a newsletter, offered connections with pen pals, and provided early opportunities to buy tickets and merchandise. Online, fans can create deeper relationships with one another. They can connect and communicate on official channels or make their own unofficial groups where they need not communicate through a central authority or gatekeeper. Fan and star interactions can be direct, one-on-one interactions on multiple social media channels. There may be an official, organized fan group, but many other avenues can appear on relatively open platforms with few rules.

The cultural product at the core of a fandom might still be a "legacy media" product. **Legacy media** are any media platforms that existed prior to the development of massive digital networks. Yes, there are people who are "Instagram famous" or "YouTube" famous, but the biggest stars in our cultural world still have many ties to legacy media. Musicians, film stars and comic book heroes come to mind. What other types of "legacy media" stars have huge online fandoms?

Online fandoms may simultaneously expect less centralized authority over the fan experience and more direct access to their heroes. They often expect to see transparency during the creative process, such as Instagram or Twitter posts with "secret" messages for longtime followers or behind-the-scenes videos as albums and movies are made. Fandoms might demand to hear key information first or to have special access via social media.

Similar things could be said of fan clubs in the age of snail mail. Essential elements of the culture of fandom — gaining access to artists and finding friends in a community — have not changed as much in kind as they have in degree.

Is this an example of the transition of an existing cultural form (the fan club) to digital environments,

or is online fandom something truly different from a snail mail fan club? This is a good question to debate in the classroom.

It is worth noting that there are also niche fandoms that probably would not exist without the aid of digital networks. With virtually unlimited communication space, there is room for incredibly rarified fan groups to form on platforms such as Tumblr, and they are not always socially positive communities. In many cases of hyper-specific fandoms, it is difficult to argue that these cultures existed in the physical world and simply "moved online." Being digitally networked is what makes it possible to find people with particularly narrow shared interests, for better and for worse.

Digital Dynamic

Even with the presence of niche online groups, digital culture cannot currently be separated from the influence of physical-world cultures. We can say two things about the relationship between online and physical-world cultures at this time. First, the growth of interaction on digital networks influences "traditional" cultures. Second, longstanding cultural traditions are influencing digital culture as it takes shape. The ethics and norms established in the physical world shape our views about behavior and values in digital networks. The term **norm** refers to a behavioral standard. Mutual influences of what is considered "normal" in online behavior and well established physical world norms are emerging in a dynamic fashion. Sometimes they clash.

One example is online dating. Dating in real life (IRL) is changing as more and more people use dating apps and websites. Previously, dating was limited to the people you were likely to meet. You could meet friends of friends. You could meet people at school, at parties, at bars or on blind dates. Your options were limited geographically and by how outgoing you were, how much time you wanted to spend looking, and who you trusted to set you up. The personal ads in newspapers were often considered sad places for losers. Using a mass medium to find your true love was often considered a risky last resort.

When online dating first became available, it was often compared to posting and perusing digital personal ads. This was a cultural perception based on previous experiences, behavior and expectations from a pre-Internet culture.

Lindsay Blackwell, My Super Pseudo-Scientific Online Dating Experiment™. Image by James Bastow, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

Over the course of approximately ten years (1998-2008), what once was considered odd, creepy or desperate in many parts of the Western world came to be considered commonplace. Apps and sites like OkCupid, Tinder, Match.com and eHarmony have millions of users. Culturally, many of us have accepted this new digital form of dating. It's not for everyone, but online dating does not carry the stigma it once did.

Even Tinder, which has a reputation as a "hook-up" app, maintains popularity and cultural significance as it is referenced often on other media platforms.

Whatever it may be in a given culture, sexual morality still exists, even if new technologies make hooking up easier and new capabilities challenge old norms of what dating should be.

This is the dynamic at the heart of this chapter. Digital technology can influence knowledge, beliefs and especially practices around dating. This can, in turn, shape the way people think about dating in general, not just in digital environments. The "old" cultural norms and morals can still be applied to judge those who use digital apps for casual hookups, but the new culture can push back, so to speak, and change how people think about dating even if they never use dating apps themselves.

We have discussed how the digital culture and physical world culture dynamic functions, but we have not yet defined digital culture. For that, we must look to scholars who have spent years trying to pinpoint what emergent digital culture seems to be.

Individualization, Post-nationalism, and Globalization

We turn to Mark Deuze, a scholar from the University of Amsterdam, for a complete definition. He seeks to provide a preliminary definition of "digital culture" in his 2006 article, "Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture."

In his analysis of academic literature, Deuze finds that scholars often make assumptions when trying to explain how digital culture works. The main he identifies is the idea that culture moves to digital networks more or less intact. There was, a decade ago, a lack of explanation about what happens to culture in digital environments.

How much might culture change when certain practices move online? How often can existing cultural beliefs and expectations be transferred intact? Deuze does not think digital culture is merely a recreation of physical world culture in online spaces, but he does not have a good answer for what has been emerging. He analyzes independent media sites, blogs and radical online media outlets to see what these new forms of communication demonstrate about digital culture.

That these forms are not meant to represent all culture but rather a cultural vanguard. They are (or were) the tip of the spear of newly evolving digital cultures. These sites are often progressive politically, so this is not as much a prediction of what will happen with all digital culture as it is a discussion of what is possible. Deuze maintains that the real practice of digital culture is "an expression of individualization, post-nationalism, and globalization."

Individualization

Deuze finds individualization in blogs most frequently written by one person and focused on a specific topic or small geographical region. **Individualism**, as it is used here, refers not only to an individual's ability to act as their own publisher online but also to a social condition in which individuals are free from government control. It means that even in authoritarian nations such as North Korea, Russia,

China and Iran that try to control the behavior of their citizens, individuals may seek freedom of expression on the internet, although it comes at a greater risk.

Beyond Deuze's observations, evidence of individualism online comes from partisan news sites such as The Drudge Report and HuffPost. Both are named for individual founders. They are digital mass media outlets that started largely as personal points of view.

The importance of individualized expression on social media is clear. We appear as individuals on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Tumblr. This increases our reach. Each of us can potentially connect with every other individual on a given social media platform, but these platforms also raise questions about surveillance and privacy.

Digital Individualism vs. Privacy

Eric Schmidt once said about online privacy and Google, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place." While this might make sense in a free society, there are many places in the world — North Korea for example — where government surveillance can utilize corporate invasions of privacy to crack down on dissent and severely limit freedom.

Suppose someone living in North Korea would like to use a social media channel such as Twitter to connect with like-minded people without government officials finding out. Should Twitter protect those users? What if a state threatens legal action or violence against Twitter employees? Would social media channels give up their users?

There is a difference between government surveillance (that is, state-sanctioned data gathering and analysis on massive scales) and corporate data aggregation for targeted marketing purposes. Usually, by accepting the Terms and Conditions of apps and web services, you opt in to having your data stored, crunched and analyzed by corporations. Legally, you are responsible for that decision. Technically, the data gathering platform is not supposed to identify you as an individual, but so-called "safe harbor" laws can be ineffectual.

Should Google protect your searches and refuse to divulge information about your habits to governments, even if they share that data with other companies for marketing purposes? Should Google give you a way to hide your online activity? Is there a way for the liberty-loving Southeast Asian to have his privacy protected while still enabling Western governments to watch out for terrorists? These questions relate to larger issues of freedom and individualism in digital culture.

Throughout its history, the United States of America has taken pride in its First Amendment and the rest of the Bill of Rights as guarantees of liberty. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, many Americans accepted new levels of scrutiny, particularly in digital environments. Support for strong leaders increased until very recently. Concerns about the global rise of authoritarianism have people questioning government surveillance and corporate surveillance as they may limit our ability to engage as individuals in digital culture.

Eric Schmidt's statement implies that privacy in digital networks is limited. This sentiment is echoed by Mark Zuckerberg, who has suggested that privacy is dead. What this means is that physical world behavior is expected to adapt to the demands of digital culture because the capabilities of digital culture also carry with them unique risks that we are not necessarily adapted to deal with.

Our experience with the anarchy of online mass communication platforms is quite limited. As we learn what government surveillance and corporate invasions of privacy are capable of, it may continue to deeply affect our physical world behavior.

Many would agree with the sentiment, "If you do nothing wrong, you have nothing to worry about," but even advocates for a more open digital society want their privacy. Zuckerberg bought several properties around his house to keep his physical location secure. Eric Schmidt does not want people to know where he lives. He generally does not invite the public into his private life, and, one might assume, does not want people to examine why his former wife said she felt like a "piece of luggage" when married to him. Such information about Schmidt's personal life is easy to find online and could be used against him, but should we care? Does it matter in the broader cultural sense?

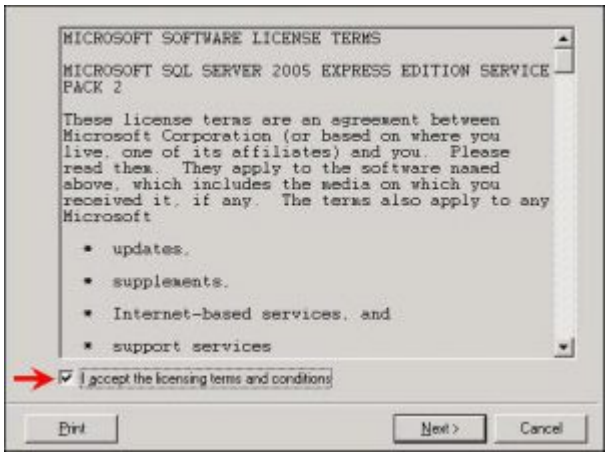
This text argues that privacy does matter. The vast majority of us are not using digital platforms to break laws or to interact in negative ways with others and yet we still have aspects of ourselves that we would like to remain private. Has a parent or guardian ever snooped on your Facebook account or followed your Instagram? We have incredible freedoms and amazing digital communication capabilities as individuals living our lives in the new digital culture. It comes with a price we have yet to grasp.

Terms and Conditions

The film *Terms and Conditions May Apply* details the ways our private information, such as our emails and texts, can easily be related to our public information on social networks.

The filmmakers note that the knowledge and hardware needed to snoop on people are bought and sold all over the world and are often unregulated.

Are we becoming more open because of the ways social media function? Is there anything wrong with that? Are we surrendering our privacy in ways that cannot be undone?



An old-school screen capture of Microsoft's Terms and Conditions by Klariti Template Shop, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

One of the major cultural challenges of the network society will be to deal with people in power who would like to use our information against us as a means of control. It has already happened in some of the countries where the Arab Spring revolutions took place (Egypt, for one).

You never know what you might need to protest in the future, but we're beginning to see tools deployed to pre-empt protest and other acts of dissent. What this means for our efforts to define digital culture is that digital culture can free us as individuals, but it can also imprison us.

We can use the internet and smartphones to help us to get questions answered and to draw attention to ourselves in good ways. We can coordinate with others for fundraisers and to have parties. Digital communication networks are amazingly sophisticated tools that can help us connect as individuals to form groups to celebrate all sorts of interests, political and otherwise.

On the other hand, if individuals believe they have no privacy, digital networks could become virtual wastelands where innovative collaboration is hindered and where corporate commercial speech and government surveillance dominate.

Capitalism depends on risk-taking, and if you kill risk-taking online, you have hindered the entrepreneurialism that the network society offers. We scholars will study for decades to come how individual behavior changes and how relationships morph in a digital culture that discourages behavior we want to keep private while simultaneously encouraging levels of sharing that border on exhibitionism. How can we maintain privacy and gain attention, which is so often the currency of the open Internet? This is an interesting dilemma that arises in an individualistic digital culture.

Post-nationalism

Post-nationalism is another aspect of digital culture that Deuze notes in his article. It may seem unrelated to our previous discussion of individualism and privacy in digital culture, but in fact, it is an analysis of the ways individuals represent themselves online.

Most simply, "**post-nationalism**" in digital culture means that one's country appears to matter less as an influence on behavior and values online than it does in the tangible world, perhaps because we can be free of our national identities when engaging in digital networks with people from around the globe.

This does not mean that we should expect to see an end to nationalism in the tangible world. Quite the opposite seems to be true: As post-nationalism appears in digital spaces, nationalism is on the rise in

global politics. It might seem odd that people drop their nationalism online but demand it in physical spaces, but if you look at the way culture is expressed online, it is clear that for many people their nationality has little to do with their online identities.

For example, your country may be important to you, but it may not be one of the ways you define yourself in social media environments. You can love America without talking about it all of the time on Facebook or Twitter. Remember as well that national boundaries may be felt more readily in the daily lives of Africans, Asians, Europeans and others living in nations that are geographically smaller, more tightly packed and culturally distinct. In digital spaces, these cultural differences can evaporate.

Although war and immigration are highly influential on the current cultural climate in the physical world, the perception of evaporating culture in networked spaces may help drive the sense that physical world cultures are being threatened.

Recent political developments, however, make it somewhat more difficult to think of digital culture as post-nationalistic given the rise of online nationalism — particularly white nationalism in Europe and the United States. White nationalism is a brand of nationalism related to white supremacy, but it is an identity connected to the nation-state nonetheless. A nationalist's primary *modus operandi* in digital culture may not reflect what nation states ultimately become in the 21st century, but rather what they wish it were. Even so, there is evidence that some factions will use digital spaces to promote a return to nationalism.

Does this mean that post-nationalism in digital culture is a false notion conceived in the early 2000s that has no bearing on culture today? Perhaps, but it is more likely that we are seeing a backlash against the rise of a global post-nationalist space online.

Globalization

Digital culture, Deuze posits, reflects a globalized or globalizing world. Behaviors, interests, and relationships cross international boundaries. The economic structure of digital networks, including the mass media system, is global. For example, multinational conglomerate corporations tend to dominate the media industry, not just in the United States but around the world. Books, academic articles and simple infographics show that most mass media companies fall under the ownership of large corporate firms. It is not accurate to say this represents *all* media or that "the media" are being controlled, but it is accurate to say a significant level of influence can be attributed to a handful of media corporations in most developed parts of the world.

Mass media consumers should be aware of the environment in which media products are produced, but this is not to say that the globalization of mass media is always a negative thing. When it comes to culture, globalization has its supporters. Here is a site in English about K-pop music. The music comes from Korea, but the fanbase is spread worldwide, and the site can reach a global audience only because of the global nature of digital networks. It works only because computer servers are connected by wires all over the globe to make this bit of culture, like many others, available to the entire globe.

There exists a global point of view in both the physical world and in digital culture which is open to all kinds of cultural production as long as it is interesting, funny and shows great talent. There are videos that go viral globally, although it is not always clear why. (If we had the formula, we'd include it here.) All we can say at this time is that you can reach the world with any online message and, for whatever reason, some things are globally likable and "shareable."

A Place Called Gangnam

Humanity's recently developed ability to develop a globalized point of view and to establish a common digital culture is the reason you have heard (and likely tired) of "Gangnam Style." Ironically, PSY, who performs the song, is kind of an anti-pop star within Korea. The song makes fun of the country's higher class, a conspicuously wealthy subculture from a place called the Gangnam District. But PSY is a global success. He is popular, many argue, because he is quite funny and because he is *not* the prototypical K-pop hero. He comes from a particular national cultural tradition, but he also transcends it by being absurd. Thus, as a distinctly individual performer, he personifies a type of post-nationalism and the globalization of digital culture.

Individualism, post-nationalism and globalization go a long way toward defining the emergent "digital culture." For more information, consult Deuze's original article.

Digital Culture in Practice

Deuze makes one more observation not about *what digital culture is* but rather *how it works*. Deuze argues that the production of digital culture will be carried out through participation, remediation and bricolage.

Participation means that every individual will have the ability to contribute to online media. Professionals and amateurs will work together much more often than they did on "legacy media" products and projects.

Because people do not want to work for free, they will not flock to an online platform simply because it has been opened up for contributions. If anyone could build a Facebook, there would be hundreds or even thousands of competing platforms. As it stands, there are perhaps ten major social media platforms worldwide, if "major" means they are home to more than 200 million members.

It is also clear from social networking sites, Reddit, and similar social news sharing sites that people will contribute to a platform even if it is not necessarily well-policed or easy to use. In digital culture, it helps to be the first to be big. Success breeds success in an economy based on attention, and what dominates tends to be emotional issues, as satirized here.

Consistency also seems to help, but what matters most is the ability to consistently draw an audience. Think of a person trying to become a YouTube influencer. They must publish interesting content regularly for months or even years before they develop a following that they might be able to sell to

advertisers. Once the YouTube star does begin to peddle products, they run the risk of alienating a portion of their audience.

Participation is an essential part of digital culture. It can be easy and fun to do it for free. If you want to make a career out of it, it takes professional-level commitment, and the resulting content often favors what is popular and emotionally gripping rather than what is informative or socially beneficial.

Remediation means that old media are made new again in digital spaces. Television becomes YouTube. Radio becomes podcasting, Spotify and Pandora. Newspapers become … online newspapers! The new media take elements of the old media and repurpose them, while "legacy" media firms copycat digital media trends, buy out media startups, or try to forge new paths at significant expense.

In the practice of digital culture, media are remade in digital environments in a process that combines the appealing parts of existing forms of media with additional functionalities made possible by new ICTs and digital networking capabilities. The author's own research argues that attempts by legacy media organizations to create new businesses online face many institutional hurdles. Remediation is constantly happening, but that does not mean existing media companies can determine how to monetize the practice in a sustainable way. We should expect considerable remediation innovation to come from startup companies and individual tech entrepreneurs with few ties to legacy media.

A good example of remediation is taking classic movies or video games and showing them to young people to record their reactions for YouTube. Reaction videos of all kinds take media products people are familiar with and show them to the unfamiliar so that viewers can judge their reactions. This new media product repurposes old content with an added element designed to pique our interest; however, remediation does not always add much value.

Bricolage is a French term not easy to translate literally to English. A translation offering deep context might be: Do it yourself by combining elements found elsewhere. Much of digital culture is an amalgamation of existing content and new cultural work being done at home by people with amateur skills and affordable but capable tools, such as smartphones and tablet computers. Even basic tools are quite powerful. Smartphones come with front- and back-facing cameras as well as HD-quality video. The computing power of a smartphone is more powerful than a mainframe computer was 70 years ago. Independent producers have video and audio editing software options and can create professional looking, popular media products on their own with little formal training.

Professionalism

What is formal training for, then? It prepares you to transition from making professional looking and sounding media products once in a while to consistently making professional quality media. Formal training prepares you to think strategically about where industries are going so that you know not only how to make mass media products but where to place them and how to use and possibly develop your own communication platforms.

Formal training includes an education in history and ethics. Amateur producers are skilled at chasing trends and gaining popularity, but they often ride cultural waves that last from a few months to a couple of years. Planning for multiple media shifts and seeing digital cultural trends as or before they emerge requires an education in more than the tools and tricks of the trade.

Deuze in Sum

Deuze's analysis suggests that barriers between professionals and amateurs are breaking down. Old media are made new again in digital culture, through a process of making digital media collages, so to speak. (The word "bricolage" is related to "collage.")

Thus, in practice, digital culture is democratizing (though not fully democratic, of course). Amateurs can create media products that challenge the popularity of cultural production made by corporate conglomerates valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. What emerges in terms of popularity, though, is not necessarily high in quality or accuracy. Quality and accuracy are the hallmarks of professional communication (although not all professionals behave as they should).

Levels of Culture in Digital Media

Let's take a step back and look at the definition of culture again. In the first chapter, this text defined **culture** as being made up of the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group of people. We need to tweak that definition a little. It is more accurate to say that the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a massive group of people at a certain time and place defines **common culture.**

Three levels of culture exist in anthropology literature, and they apply to the ways culture is expressed in the mass media. The three levels of culture are personal culture, group culture and common culture (similar to pop culture).

Any kind of culture, whether it is personal, group or common culture, relies on shared knowledge. There must be shared experiences and shared stories about those experiences for us to have a common culture. If we did not have shared experiences, cultural references would not make sense. Thus common culture can be arrived at when individuals and groups tell the same stories, or when mass media reach mass audiences with the same messages at the same (or about the same) time.

The more people who know about a song, film, work of art or event with cultural significance, and the more information that they know about it, the more likely it is that event will become part of the common culture. The mass media influence common culture, although it is not correct to say that they directly shape it. There are many other institutional influences on common culture such as governments, churches, families and educational systems.

In fact, messages in the mass media may not be as influential now as they were in the mid-20th century when millions of people watched the same TV shows each week at the same time and read the same major metropolitan daily newspapers and national magazines. Demassification has affected the ways common culture is established and fed.

The mass media influence may have less power to influence common culture directly, but it is still relevant. Think about any major global news event of the past few months. When an event is big enough that it is shared across all media platforms, especially cable television, broadcast television and social media channels, it can form a piece of common culture. If several events occur or if an event has a broad enough global impact, it can enter the global **collective memory**, the shared cultural memory of a group of people.

Group culture is what we used to refer to as a "subculture." It is the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a subset of people considered to be part of a larger culture. Group culture is distinct in some ways from the shared, broader common culture. Group culture might center on religious beliefs and practices, ethnic norms and interests, or food, music and other forms of material production. Groups can be as large as all Chinese-Americans and as small as the remaining St. Louis NFL fan culture.

You have a say in defining your **personal culture —** the knowledge, beliefs and practices held most dear to the individual. You may find yourself identifying with many group cultures or taking most of your interests from the dominant common culture. Do you take your cultural cues about what to think about and talk about from television, social media or small group cultures with which you identify? This much is your prerogative. You can choose your personal culture. It is based both on what you believe in and what cultural products you consume.

America, 'Merica, Los Estados Unidos, Etc.

There is a common culture in America, but there is no single, dominant, common culture across global digital networks. There may be a tendency for people to believe that the group cultures they interact with most often online constitute the "real" digital culture, but as yet there is no clear consensus about what our shared digital culture is or even if we will develop one.

Algorithms in search engines and social media platforms determine much of what we find when we search the internet and what we see when we look at news and information feeds from our friends. Do algorithms constitute common culture? They may shape it, and they may be influenced by user preferences, but they are not always designed for truth, accuracy or information literacy. They are most often designed to give consumers whatever makes them consume more of what the platform wants them to consume. Google usually wants you to spend money with its advertisers. Facebook wants your time and your data so it can sell your information to third party advertisers.

What shapes digital culture is often in a "black box": It is the proprietary information of very large corporations, and the public may or may not have access to the code. Even if we did have it, it would be difficult to explain exactly how algorithms work. There are times when the corporations that deploy algorithms seem surprised by how they function in the hands of massive numbers of users.

Major events that cut across algorithms and show up on almost everyone's news feed and in almost everyone's search results are still likely to have an impact on common culture. Major events are likely

to shape personal, group, and common culture if they are significant enough. What kind of cultural impact does a given event have? It depends.

The impact of a school shooting near Miami might be felt differently in Florida than in California because of proximity and because the gun laws in each state are quite different. In other words, something can enter the common culture but still be perceived quite differently by individual members of the public.

Norms

By now you should understand that the cultural impact of messages in the mass media at each level — personal, group and common culture — is related to the shared knowledge that existed before the event.

Events are often going to be perceived differently by people identifying with different small group cultures within a larger common culture. Events will usually be interpreted differently by individuals within a small group culture, depending on an individual's beliefs about and personal experiences with the issue at hand.

A person's response to current events as they appear in the mass media is also related to the existence and strength of shared beliefs about the way they think things *ought* to be. We call those beliefs **cultural norms.**

Graffiti explaining the role of women in Egypt's revolution. Image by Gigi Ibrahim, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

There is no single, agreed-upon set of norms that everyone in a given group culture adheres to. If you have lived your whole life as part of the dominant culture, and you do not recognize the existence and struggle of various cultural groups, it can be difficult to recognize reactions in digital media spaces that do not relate much to what you see in your physical world. Conversely, if you have grown up being oppressed as part of a small group, you may find it hard to understand how others identifying with the dominant portion of a common culture can miss the cruelty present in some cultural norms they don't think twice about.

Exposure to other groups' cultures in a network society can bring about both greater understanding and greater anxiety. This is something that will be worked out, for better or for worse, over the next several decades as digital culture evolves. Figuring out how groups with different cultural interests, norms, and values can get along while being constantly exposed to one another's views in the free-for-all of network society is the challenge of emergent digital culture.

One response is to run to echo chambers, to partisan spaces that feel safe for certain group cultures and

for our personal cultural beliefs and priorities, but this practice can only deepen the divide between cultural groups.

In the early years of working to establish a common culture in the network society, we have managed to inundate ourselves with information from all manner of cultural groups and to isolate ourselves from views that contradict our own group cultural norms. This is anarchy. This is culture without a strong social structure to hold it together.

The question facing mass communication scholars that members of our common culture also face is whether the institutions of the physical world can or should try to control how digital culture is shaped. You have the power to decide if digital culture should be regulated and how. This may be the most important civic responsibility you have, but it is also a matter of cultural power.

Social Media and Social Capital

What do you think it means for society that networked communication platforms can make anybody a mass communicator? One answer is that there is great potential for social change because society, as Dewey said in Chapter 1, is not just transmitted by communication, it exists in it.

That means every individual with a computer or a smartphone has the potential to disseminate messages that influence broader society. Think of the Arab Spring revolutions of 2010-2012. Think of #Ferguson protests in the summer and fall of 2014. Think of the way candidate Donald Trump bypassed mass media outlets to reach voters and to set a separate news agenda in 2015 and 2016. Individuals and small groups are now able to coordinate and to lead social movements using networked communication technologies.

Facebook's Facebook Page by "Christopher," CCBY. Source: Flikr.

You have probably heard the term "social movement." In a sense, a social movement is a change in society brought on by communication. What is different about the world of networked communication is how interpersonal messages and message campaigns can shift in an instant to being mass messages or massive campaigns. This makes digital networks battlegrounds because networked public communication platforms are centers of power now more than ever.

Just as they can influence and even disrupt social structures, individuals and small groups can shape culture using social media channels. This makes our communication system as ripe for abuse by outside forces as it is for use by legitimate citizens. Governments, corporations and rogue dictators all have an interest in learning our secrets, and they could potentially hold them against us.

We cannot underestimate how important this is will be in the mass communication field. Individual,

group and broader social secrets — including consumer behavior, political behavior and even personal thoughts and interests — are easier to discern and possibly manipulate than ever before because of the vast amounts of data collected about us from our social media and other internet habits. This can have a profound effect on our behavior and on our society, and we are not prepared as a society to defend ourselves against attacks.

Before you get discouraged about digital culture and privacy, and before you get inundated with all of the possibilities and implications of digital culture, consider Clay Shirky's Ted talk, "How social media can make history."

Shirky outlines the power of social connectivity and applies the concept of **social capital**. The basic definition of social capital is the potential to get help, not just financial assistance, from the people around you when needed. Social media platforms can be great places to build social capital. Thus, they have the potential to be constructive or disruptive. It depends on how you use them. Watch the video for a complete definition.

Interpersonal communication, organizational communication and mass communication are separate areas of academic interest, as stated in the first chapter, but our ability as consumers and as producers to alternate from one to the other is as powerful as it has ever been. Being connected to each other almost at all times by digital networks creates the capacity for relatively quick mass social action. People are beginning to use this power to pull society in different directions. Large numbers of people can be organized and we could see social shifts and rifts develop more quickly than they can be put back together. It will be up to individual users and groups of users to decide how to respond to such social and cultural changes.

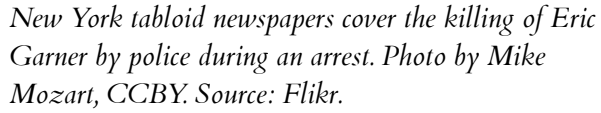
Participatory Media

A major shaper of culture and society is the news media. There will be separate sections on the evolution of news in later chapters, but in the context of digital culture, it bears noting that the role of news media within broader media landscapes is also shifting.

Apart from the ability of social movements and cultural movements to arise and take shape on social media platforms, there is also the potential for public opinion to be influenced quickly and deeply when mass media outlets operated in the same digital networks as influential individuals and groups.

You may contribute to news information by volunteering. One of the biggest stories to gain national attention in 2014 that was filmed and posted by a **citizen journalist** was the story of **Eric Garner,** who was seen being put into a chokehold by NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo. Reports said that Garner had asthma and that he died of a heart attack. Here the term "citizen journalist" refers to a person

who is not a paid professional but who delivers news to audiences nonetheless.



New York tabloid newspapers cover the killing of Eric Garner by police during an arrest. Photo by Mike Mozart, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

It is doubtful that the story would have received national attention had it not been for the video bystander Taisha Allen took with her mobile phone. When she shared that video, and it went viral on social media channels, she made the mass media story possible.

Allen probably had several reasons for sharing the video of Garner, and she was probably aware of the potential social and cultural impact of the video. You do not have to be a media literacy expert to know that such a video would receive broad attention and generate controversy. Allen chose to share the video because she thought people needed to see what had happened.

Further solidifying the cultural significance of the video, within days of the story breaking, Spike Lee had re-cut a scene from his groundbreaking film *Do the Right Thing* where the character Radio Raheem is choked to death by an NYPD officer. He interspersed his original film clip with bystander video of Eric Garner's death. This almost instant connection between a post made by a citizen using social media and a bit of modern classic film speaks to the rising power and cultural influence of amateur media. Individuals can affect major producers in a mutual effort to shape social norms and structures as well as cultural influences.

We should expect more and more professionals to make these kinds of connections with amateurs and bystanders in the future. Mashups of professionally made mass media messages and citizen-generated messages are likely to proliferate. Can you think of video footage from individuals present during major news events that shaped the news and public opinion?

The events in Ferguson, Missouri followed a similar path as the Eric Garner story: Social media accounts of the killing of Michael Brown were shared virally almost immediately after the incident. Social media activity on YouTube, Twitter and other channels helped shape the way events unfolded. This drove the way the story was covered in the national media in the early reporting, but backlash inevitably followed.

Much of the work done by citizen journalists will be controversial. Media professionals working in news and other fields will have to use discernment in deciding which views to share because in a sense sharing is promoting, even if one disagrees with the sentiment of the tweet, video, or post.

No piece of media that is meaningful on a cultural level is going to be captured and disseminated with universal agreement about its importance or its meaning, but for society to function and for culture to serve its purposes we need to agree in a general sense on what's real and what is not. The real danger in the rise of the power of individuals and small groups in digital culture is that they can pull larger groups away from looking for fact-based discourse.

3

Media Literacy and Media Studies Research

bell hooks at a speaking engagement, from hooks' own Flickr page. Public domain.

"Understanding knowledge as an essential element of love is vital because we are bombarded daily with messages that tell us love is about mystery, about that which cannot be known. We see movies in which people are represented as being in love who never talk with one another, who fall into bed without ever discussing their bodies, their sexual needs, their likes and dislikes. Indeed, the message is received from the mass media is that knowledge makes love less compelling; that it is ignorance that gives love its erotic and transgressive edge. These messages are brought to us by profiteering producers who have no clue about the art of loving, who substitute their mystified visions because they do not really know how to genuinely portray loving interaction." — bell hooks from her book *All About Love: New Visions*

The Academic Approach to Studying the Mass Media

If you have been reading the chapters of this text in order, by this point you will be aware of the powerful role the mass media play in society, but you may not yet question whether society benefits from this arrangement. In general, the mass media could do a better job of representing all sorts of groups and group cultures. The mass media could also represent abstract concepts like love, trust and greed in more meaningful ways. This is not to say that the mass media have failed in this regard, but there is much room for improvement.

As active audience members, as hybrid producer-users or "produsers" (to use a term coined by Axel Bruns), you must not only be selective but also critical of what you consume. Whether you become

media professionals or not, it will ultimately be your job as media consumers to remake the mass media in ways that better represent the depth of human experience.

Whether your interest is a religion, a fandom, or an abstract concept like love (one of the greatest of abstractions), you have the power to participate in the media production redefining how others understand it.

No, this is not a book about love. Yes, love and related concepts are commodified in the mass media; however, the disruption that has echoed in political spheres and often in the ways family and cultural group members speak to one another about politics also opens up space for critical thinking. That is, the same disruption described in Chapter 2 that allows for social upheaval also allows for a time of reflection and critical thinking about how society and its media function.

This chapter gives you some tools developed by mass communication scholars to develop your critical eye when viewing messages as products in the mass media. If massive numbers of "produsers" can reshape the media landscape, we have to re-think the role of mass media professionals. Assisting people in the process of meaning-making — that is, making mass media *with* audiences instead of *for* them, and aiding them in their own communication efforts — could open up a new purpose and new industries for those who are mentally prepared and daring enough to take the lead.

This chapter defines "media literacy" and touches on some key mass communication theories that are absolutely *not* meant to be left to molder in the digital cloud where this text"book" lives. Take these theories out, apply them and see how they work. Find out how useful they can be and what their limitations are.

This text presents an image of entire societies and cultures swimming in a sea of media. Consider these concepts your first set of snorkel and swim-fins.

Media Literacy Defined

Media literacy is a term describing media consumers' understanding of how mass media work. It includes knowing where different types of information can be found, how best to evaluate information, who owns the major mass media platforms, how messages are produced, and how they are framed to suit various interests.

In a global society that gets most of its information through digital networks, it is incredibly important to know how and by whom media messages are made so that as consumers we can discern how the mass media are being used to shape our opinions. We can reply to or comment on messages in the mass media, or we can demand a seat at the table when messages are being constructed. This is the nature of participatory media outlined in the previous chapter. Being media literate gives us the tools to participate well and with purpose.

It is important to consider your role in contributing directly to mass media content. Your contributions to cultural trends and social change in the mass media can sometimes happen without

your knowledge. If you post regularly to Facebook or other social media platforms, your data are being aggregated, and that information is used by advertisers, researchers, and news services to find out what you like and what you *are like*, as well as to create ads and political messages tailored just for you.

You are more than your preferences and the media you consume. You are encouraged to play an active role in shaping your digital identity beyond the one that has already been created for you.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is media literacy put into action. Besides contributing to the creation of meaning by making your own mass media messages (perhaps in collaboration with professionals), you can ask who owns major mass media corporations. Scholars have found that more than half of the mass media channels available to mass audiences in America are owned by only five corporations or firms.

My own research, conducted with two research partners in graduate school, has shown that just by making people aware of the nature of media ownership, you can encourage them to be skeptical of mass media content.

This text has already established that mass communication is what makes society in the physical world work. Information, often in the form of messages in the mass media, permeates institutional interactions and passes between all of us in our homes and schools and businesses. The information conveyed in the mass media gets interpreted in organizational, group and interpersonal communication contexts. These systems influence each other, but mass media messages tend to envelop and permeate other forms of communication. Thus, if you learn to be skeptical of the information you receive in the mass media, you learn how to critique the whole global social system.

Critique this Book

Reading closely, you will have undoubtedly found value judgments in this text already. You may be inclined to assign political values to this text in our hyper-partisan cultural environment. You are welcome to do this. You are encouraged to do this. You must think critically about the cultural values expressed not only in this text but also in your other textbooks and in the history and literature you read.

But you also must think critically about your preferred media outlets. Where do they get their information from? Who owns them? No single revelation about the mass media will tell you everything you need to know. You have to begin to see nuance and to think for yourself what aspects of the mass media matter most to you, what things you think should change, how you might change them, and what you can live with.

It is part of the responsibility of citizens now to critique messages that come to us via mass media, as well as messages from leaders who bypass mass media gatekeepers and fact checkers. It is also a sound career strategy for those who go into the mass communication field to learn to be able to critique messages, messengers and owners in the corporate mass media field of work and play. To know where the mass media industry is headed, you must be able to think critically about where it comes from.

Much of the rest of this book breaks down different mass media channels and looks briefly at the history of how each came to be, what and whom each channel serves, and how convergence in a digitally networked society might affect the future of each medium. This text also returns several times to "big picture" questions about the dynamic relationship between media and society as seen from the perspective of the various mass communication channels and platforms.

The Dichotomy Between the Media and the "Real World"

For nearly the dozenth time in this text already, your author has referenced a "dynamic." The mass media reflect our social norms and expectations and, dynamically, they shape our norms and expectations.

To the extent they are shaped by mass media, our perceptions of reality are very much artificial — but not entirely so. How artificial is too artificial? Different individuals and different cultures differ in the amount of nonsense they can tolerate.

The real challenge to us as young media professionals and scholars is to try to determine what is artificial in the vast array of messages delivered to us at all times by the mass media. One of the best ways to do this is to get off of social media platforms and talk to people in person. We should also dig a bit into the information we consume and ask, "How do they know?" Whenever a message comes to us from a mass media outlet or from a friend's social media post, the media literate individual seeks to know what underlies each claim.

The question is not whether you believe it. The question is: On what grounds is a message in the mass media or in social media believable?

Now that people are constantly using technology and even wearing it, it is becoming more difficult to separate messages mediated by professionals, who pledge ethically to adhere to disseminating factual information (such as most journalists), from poorly-supported, opinion-only content or outright misinformation, which may be spread far and wide by friends and family.

We are living in a media age where we may not trust our own family members' social media posts. Things they think are important might not only be unimportant to us, they might be distasteful or even wrong. There are real-world consequences to sharing misinformation on social media platforms. Question the sources' sources. Talk to people in tangible spaces apart from social media platforms, and you can learn to see what is supported by fact in the physical world and its digital networks.

The Bad Dynamic

Your media choices matter. In the network society, when mass media content is ubiquitous on mobile phones and is often projected into public spaces, it can be difficult to differentiate between your independent preferences and the opinions you are encouraged to carry by advertisers who constantly bombard you.

Without human interaction outside of the deluge of electronic information, it can be nearly impossible

to figure out for yourself if what you like is a response to the quality of the media content or if you are responding to carefully targeted marketing campaigns.

Raahil Djhruva reached out gently across the generational divide and helped a community member learn how to use Skype so he could communicate with his daughter. Dhruva, a junior at Queens University of Charlotte from London, England, called the experience "an emotional moment." Media literacy is also about teaching people how to use information and communication technologies to reach out to one another. Photo by Knight Foundation, Knight-Crane Convergence Lab, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

The system of checks and balances in which you can compare your real life experiences to what you see and hear in the mass media may break down. A pessimistic view is that we may enter a constant state of depression on a social level because we are cognitively incapable of comprehending all of the information presented to us and we lack ways of taking regular "reality checks."

Feelings of isolation and inadequacy coupled with cognitive overload create the potential for a host of social issues. Additionally, the images we see in ads and the perfected versions of themselves people present on social media usually do not reflect applied critical thinking.

The "bad dynamic" that comes into play is one where glossy identities are carefully constructed and protected while our real identities rapidly disintegrate. We may establish a society where many people have identity issues, and those issues are constantly worsening. It may seem at times as though we are headed for a massive collective mental breakdown.

What good is media literacy? Thinking critically about the mass media and content spread on social media helps us critique constructed images and accept our own shortcomings. If we look for ways to relate to one another besides our overlapping common culture interests, we may find deeper connections are possible. We can share imperfections and tackle doubts, but only if we acknowledge them in our media world first.

What follows are a set of mass communication theories arrived at through the analysis of facts and data by thousands of scholars over the course of nearly 100 years. As an academic field, mass communication is young, but there are several theories, or guiding abstractions, that can help us to see how our society is structured and what roles the mass media play in society at all levels.

Critical Media Theory

There are many critical theorists among mass communication scholars. They work to develop better analytical theories that teach us how to analyze messages in media systems and the mass media and help us to discuss with clarity what is beneficial and what is harmful to society.

Academic work is about digging deep. Scholars will often analyze one medium at one period in time to explain how certain groups or ideologies are depicted.

Marxist critical theory questions the hierarchical organization of society — who controls the means of production and whether that control benefits society or only small groups of people. Every society has and needs leaders, and one of the most important functions of society is to manage a functioning economy. At question in Marxist critical thought is how the rules of each economy, including the global economy, are set up. Do they benefit most people? Do they allow for merit to be rewarded? Do they create a system of fair competition? Are they set up for collaboration and mutual benefit?

Most scholars who apply critical theoretical models would hesitate to call themselves Marxists. Marx was both a scholar and a revolutionary, a term which academics rarely self-apply. Most Marxist critical thinkers suggest changes that society could make to be more inclusive and fair for a greater number of people, but what is fair will always be debated. There is no single line of Marxist thought. There is a small number who demand complete change in the global economic system, and there are thousands of critical theorists calling for more narrow or specific changes based on their observations in their areas of expertise — not just mass media analysis but all kinds of social analysis.

Historically, Marxist thought has been employed by dictators, often using mass media channels, to take power and often to wield it in horrendous ways. Marxist thought also guides the reasoning of some mainstream economists who help manage social democracies, which historically garner more good will than dictatorships. Scholars working with the critical theoretical point of view often note broad ways for society to improve as well as practical solutions that might help (although getting leaders to listen is another matter). Making cogent arguments and convincing people to hear them are very different things.

That said, ideas about questioning hierarchies and asking for whom social systems really work are still central to modern critical theory. This is what Marxist critique in media studies is all about: looking at symbols and underlying messages in all forms of media and discerning what purposes they serve, and asking whether they represent exploitation, corruption or any other social ill often found in closed hierarchies.

Symbolic Interactionism

Another critical theoretical perspective is **symbolic interactionism**. The general idea comes from George Herbert Mead and suggests that people assign symbolic meaning to all sorts of phenomena around them. Our behavior is guided and influenced by our perceptions of reality and the symbols around us.

Mass media extend *and* limit our senses. When our senses are extended, we can become overwhelmed by the amount of information coming in, so we look for symbols, and we categorize ideas according to those symbols to make the messages easier to understand.

We sometimes apply the symbols ourselves, but in many (or even most) cases, the people editing

messages in the mass media purposefully use symbols as a shorthand way of communicating. Not everyone understands every symbol or perceives them the same way. Symbols have a cultural context, but this is not much of a limiting factor in American society where there is a vast shared common culture and targeted marketing can tailor which images to deliver to which individuals.

You are encouraged to think critically about the symbols you see and ask whether they are meant to manipulate you. We will not stop using symbols in communication; however, if you ask, "Why am I being shown this symbol at this time," you can take a practical step in critically analyzing media.

An example would probably help.

When asked to come up with an advertising campaign, college students often select a familiar category of beverage: energy drinks. RedBull uses the symbol of wings to show that an energy drink can pick you up and help you to move more quickly through your work. You can fly where you had stumbled. But that is not the only reason associate wings with Red Bull. Wings are a symbol of angels, saviors, and other powerful beings. If an individual has reservations about consuming something that may be unhealthy, moral symbolism and images of power are designed to subconscious guilt or misgivings.

It is up to you to critique images in the mass media as you see fit, but you should develop the skill and practice applying it.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda setting is one of the most simple mass communication theories to understand, and it is one of the most widely cited.

It argues that the mass media tell us what to think about. In other words, the mass media help people to set their own agendas.

The idea is not that mass media companies come up with a specific agenda and then preach it to the masses; rather, mass media outlets learn what people are interested in and find similar topics based on what has been learned in the past. Then, the messages that appear in the mass media tell audiences what topics they should care about and how to prioritize them.

This is a dynamic process, and there is no evidence of a singular media agenda. All one needs to do is to flip through cable television news channels to see vastly different points of view presented to mass audiences at all times.

Instead, agenda setting highlights certain topics and stories and those topics become the public's agenda based not only on what appears in the mass media but what people accept, care about and share more widely.

Messages in the mass media may or may not succeed in directing us how or what to think, but with great success, they tell us what we should be thinking and talking *about*.

The examples are easy to find. Many mass media outlets talked more about Ebola during October of 2014 rather than the midterm elections. People came to discuss Ebola more often than the elections despite the fact that the election might have a more direct effect on them than Ebola ever would. The assumption may be that professionals in the mass media are pushing an agenda about a scary world, but in most instances, they are promoting news they know people care about based on previous responses to similar topics.

For an agenda to be set, messages have to appear in the mass media, and they have to be accepted by massive numbers of audience members. The acceptance of messages in the mass media is known as **salience**. Here is how agenda setting theory works: Various mass media outlets have agendas for coverage that they develop. It may take years for a film company to develop a brand. News organizations change their coverage agenda several times a day. An agenda is just a list of issues a media outlet wants to discuss and a prioritization of those issues.

Research has shown thousands of times that those agendas are passed on to audiences. This is tested by surveying people about what issues they think are important and comparing that list to the issues that had been in the news and entertainment media in the weeks before taking the survey. The topics and the relative levels of priority are often (but not always) passed along.

Agenda setting still works even as the processes of de-massification continues, but the influence of mass media outlets may be diminishing. The theory is based on the assumption that there are mass audiences all consuming similar messages, but mass audiences are diminishing. That said, the messages people share on social media between one another often originate in mass media channels.

Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping theory describes a practice where a person acts as a filter, deciding what information will be disseminated for public consumption via the mass media. A good example is an editor in a news organization looking at many stories from a newswire.

Newswires put out hundreds of stories per day. The same newspapers that publish wire stories from other areas may contribute stories to the newswire if something interesting to a broader audience should occur. Only a handful of wire stories make it into a TV news broadcast, onto a newspaper's website or into the paper itself.

In television news, producers act as primary gatekeepers. Only a dozen or so national and international news stories make it into the average big city daily newspaper, where the task falls to an editor. The person with the job of selecting and editing wire stories for a news organization has to decide which news stories are noteworthy to the local audience. The practice started in the 19th century with the marriage of the telegraph to the newspaper, and it continues as text, images, video and information graphics are shared through digital networks.

Why online gatekeepers rarely succeed by Lars K. Jensen, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

The way gatekeeping works has changed significantly over the past two centuries. Now, we often think of gatekeepers guarding a gate with no fences because on the internet anyone can post almost anything. Mass media news outlets are no longer people's only major source of news and information about the world. Social media platforms carry both messages produced by both mass media outlets and individuals free to share almost whatever they like online. Of course, sharing something online does not guarantee it will be popular. There are plenty of YouTube videos with very few views.

And where there are mass audiences, there is still plenty of gatekeeping going on. Humans do much of the work planning what goes into major newspapers and network news broadcasts as well as entertainment products for that matter.

On social media platforms and in search engine content, however, the task is increasingly managed by algorithms — sets of procedures or rules for computers to follow.

In the future, we expect to see fewer human gatekeepers and more gatekeeping work done by recommendation engines and the like. You are unaware of the full extent of Netflix's available content because you only see what your preferences suggest you should see. The same is true for Google searches and advertisements pulled from databases filled with vastly different ads designed to target different individuals at precisely the right time.

There is also a new theory to be aware of that concerns the flip-side of gatekeeping. "Gatewatching" describes people who consume all sorts of news and other information and who stay current with new information as it arrives. It is as though they are watching professionally produced media messages come out of the gate and then almost immediately these media consumers post links to Reddit, Twitter, Facebook or other social linking sites and social media platforms.

Gatewatching is when someone takes a message already published, by professionals or amateurs (but more often by professionals working for mass media outlets), and shares it for others to see. It is not uncommon on Reddit to see stories from the national and international media ranked alongside funny

cat videos and random thoughts people had in the shower. On the one hand, putting the power of gatewatching in the hands of users is a way for people to set agendas for one another. On the other hand, information-as-popularity-contest can promote biased views and can shut out not just what is politically unpopular but what people consider to be boring, which severely narrows the scope of discussion.

Try to consume mass media *or* social media for a day without seeing or hearing about pop music stars, Kardashians, major sports figures or odd news from far-flung places. It is a challenge, even if you tailor your social media experience to avoid trending topics.

Framing Theory

Framing is a basic mass communication theory with widespread implications. It suggests that the way a news organization (or an entertainment producer, for that matter) frames a story is purposeful and meaningful and can influence how people think about the topic. A **news frame** refers to the way a story is presented including which sources and facts are selected as well as the tone the story or message takes.

An example is the period leading up to a war. If the United States has plans to go to war, it can be framed as a risky proposition, a patriotic endeavor or a morally righteous thing to do.

For any major news story, there are usually a few dominant frames that emerge. The author of this text was a television reporter at the time of the buildup to the Iraq war, and our station framed the issue as a matter of patriotism. There were patriots and there were protestors. Our station built a "Wall of Heroes" to display photos of marines, soldiers, airmen and sailors killed in action. While any given story about the buildup to the Iraq war might have been objective, the decision to build a display wall framed our coverage in a certain way. The display remained on view for approximately 18 months. The station then stopped keeping track in that highly visible, demonstrably patriotic way, even though the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq continued for 15 more years on a reduced scale.

Whether you agree or disagree with the idea of remembering those who died in Iraq through local television news broadcast tributes, the point is that stories are framed by *how* they are covered. It matters what sources are selected for news stories and which sources are left out. It matters which terms are used and how prevalent they are. Framing analyses delve into news content to identify various themes and to show which ones receive preferential treatment.

Surveys of news and entertainment media consumers will reflect which frames were most salient; that is, not only which stories but also which frames stay in the minds of audience members.

Limited Effects Paradigm

A paradigm is a collection of theories from the social sciences, which are themselves collections of facts supporting an abstract idea meant to explain the phenomena of human behavior. A theory is supported by empirical facts. It's not the same as when your buddy shotguns three beers and says "You know…I

have a *theory*." Social scientific theories are meant to be big ideas that help predict behavior or the results of certain behaviors.

In the field of mass communication, the limited effects paradigm is so-called because there are different kinds of theory relating to different media that all show the same thing: It is a complicated task to tie one set of messages to massive shifts in human behavior. Even small shifts in behavior like deciding to purchase one smartphone over another are only partially influenced by messages in the mass media. There are simply too many other factors influencing behavior to say that a certain set of mass media messages *caused* behaviors across a mass audience.

Influence is another matter. The mass media work in tandem with other social stimuli to influence all sorts of behavior. If there were no influence, there would be no reason for mass media advertising or government propaganda. It is because they work that both are a constant presence in the global mass media environment. At question is how much influence certain messages can have and under what conditions is the influence stronger or weaker.

The limited effects paradigm started as a response to theories such as the hypodermic needle theory. After Germany lost World War I, mass communication was just starting to emerge as its own discipline. One of the first theories American scholars of mass communication had was that propaganda infects a population like a needle injecting a viable virus into the body.

Scholars thought that propaganda turned Germany into an imperialistic, nationalistic country (that is, Nazi Germany), but propaganda never works that easily. When the Nazi Party unified the country between World War I and World War II, a large portion of the population, welcomed the shift in social policy, despite the accompanying racism and violence. It did not take as much convincing for many Germans, as many in the aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust would like to think. Using many kinds of authority, the Nazis committed atrocities. Mass communication enabled it, but the theory that propaganda could, more or less by itself, *create* that kind of situation has not held true. There were social weaknesses and social structures in place that paved the way for the Nazis, who could not have risen to power by media influence alone.

This does not mean that the mass media have no effects. It would not make sense to argue that communication permeates society and then to suggest that it has little to no effect on people. What the limited effects paradigm suggests instead is that information does not sway people as often as it is assimilated into existing patterns of thought. And those patterns of thought are shaped by all sorts of social forces, not just mass media campaigns. To reiterate, other social forces at play include religion, family, education, economic status, health, crime and incarceration.

Changing people's minds is difficult. Motivating behavior is difficult, and there are many variables guiding human behavior. Thus, the core concept is that the mass media have **limited effects** on society. Small effects are measured in mass communication studies all the time, and influencing thoughts is generally understood to be easier than influencing behavior.

Limited Capacity Processing Model

The Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing (LC4MP), which we'll call the **Limited Capacity Model** for short, is a theory that states that our cognitive abilities are limited, so we are unable to process all of the information that we see, hear and read.

Since we cannot perceive and understand everything, parts of our brain act as filters that either disregard information, very rapidly process it according to our long-held assumptions, or force us to pay attention to it. We can force ourselves to pay attention to information as well, but it is difficult (which you might notice while reading textbooks).

The theory goes deeper than this and explains *how* we process information when we do attend to it. The three stages are encoding, storage and retrieval.

Encoding is when you voluntarily or involuntarily pay attention to a message and its underlying symbols.

Once attention is paid, a message can be **stored**, or, recorded in our memories. Not all messages are easily **retrieved**, or, recalled when we wish to remember them.

Some are retrievable only in part, or they may be altered in the storage and retrieval process. There are voluntary and involuntary types of encoding, and what we store and how we store it has a lot to do with what is already in our minds. It is generally easier to store something when it connects to familiar thoughts.

All of this amounts to a quantitative approach to studying memory in the context of mass media messages. It does not presume effects.

In fact, since a message has to be encoded, stored and retrieved before it can influence behavior, the limited capacity model is *part of* what explains the limited effects model.

Even if we had all the useful information in the world, our brains could not store and use it all. Thus, even the best advertisements, political campaigns and in-depth news documentaries are up against the limits of our minds.

Keep this in mind as you think critically about the messages you see and share.

4

Film and Bricolage

A Bull Durham tobacco billboard in Durham, North Carolina. Photo by James Willamor, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"Walt Whitman once said, 'I see great things in baseball. It's our game, the American game. It will repair our losses and be a blessing to us.' You could look it up." — Annie Savoy, played by Susan Sarandon, from the film *Bull Durham*

More than Merely Movies

The LA Times did look up the reference quoted at the end of the film *Bull Durham* and found that Whitman's sentiments were represented more or less accurately. What appears in the film is a distillation of a longer paraphrase—made by Horace L. Traubel, a noted Whitman biographer—of a statement Whitman probably did make. The line in *Bull Durham* captures the essence of the quote, even if it is a paraphrase of a paraphrase. This is often what great films do. They take what is available in reality and distill it down so viewers can understand it the first time. When you make a copy of a copy, things get blurry, more difficult to decipher. Films often do the exact opposite with elements of culture. They reduce present reality and essential past experiences into distilled **intertextual** products—mediated messages that combine various types of text into one.

A movie combines moving pictures (video, film or animation), sound, graphics, special effects and, of course, written text, which is most often spoken as dialogue. It can be delivered as a disembodied voice speaking over video in what is called a **voice-over**, or text can appear in graphic form as actual text on screen. Each element from video to sound to graphics and special effects is considered a text. The various texts are sewn together in a multi-layered story.

Movies are popular because of the stories they tell and the way they tell them. The most popular films have a compelling narrative, fantastic special effects, great cinematography, supportive, realistic sound effects and often a great score. Compiling and combining texts for mass audiences in major motion pictures is incredibly difficult to do well, but with digital technology, many millions of people can create intertextual stories on their own.

Professional video editing software includes row upon row of visual and aural elements stacked to create an intertextual presentation. Image by Lauren Caulfield, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

Whether you are a YouTube producer or enjoy making Instagram stories every day, you can be an intertextual storyteller with tools readily available on the mass market. The "readily available" part calls to mind the concept of **bricolage**, which in intertextual storytelling means taking the images, sounds and words readily available to you, along with the recording and editing tools that are also available, and making stories intended for others to appreciate.

This chapter covers the film industry and bricolage together to emphasize that all mediated messages, whether they are an individual's latest Instagram production or a major motion picture studio's latest multimillion-dollar gamble, are exercises in bricolage.

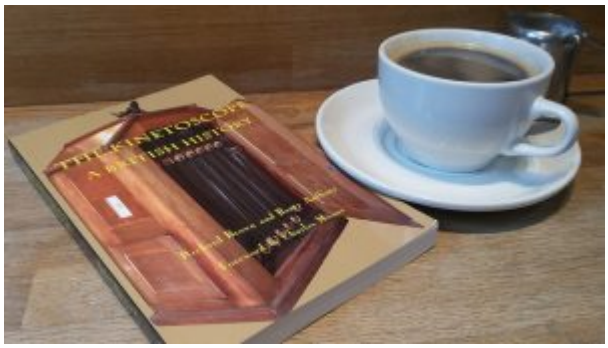
This chapter first discusses film as an industry and as a modern mass media platform. It goes on to examine the potential cultural influence of filmmaking and the implications of this potential for filmmakers. The chapter unpacks the concept of bricolage in the context of filmmaking. Finally, this chapter considers the role of passion in crafting messages for mass media audiences.

Filmmakers are some of the most passionate, creative people in the mass media industry. They balance knowledge and skill in managing many types of media production. At their best, they are enthusiastic about storytelling and about professionally mastering many aspects of the art form. At their worst, filmmakers (including producers, directors and others in the industry) are controlling manipulators who apply their efforts recklessly and for personal gain. There is a reason some of the worst outrages leading to the Me Too movement happened in the film industry. It is an industry where powerful people, usually men, have for too long used their power to do awful things without repercussions. This issue will be addressed before the chapter's conclusion.

A Brief History of Film

This section draws heavily from a text called *Movie-Made America* by Robert Sklar who points out that popular films in America were the first *modern* mass medium. Since this text considers the penny press the first mass medium, it will be necessary to clarify. The penny press arose around the end of the First Industrial Revolution. By the 1830s, many people in newly-developing nations had left the agrarian life and moved to cities to work for wages in some form of manufacturing. The penny press was identified as their mass medium because large numbers of people consumed the same newspapers at an affordable cost. They shared collective narratives about what was happening in the world that editors considered important. (Readers were privy to the agenda-setting function of the mass media; however, the penny press was often a regional mass medium. Different city, different paper.)

Fifty years later, the Second Industrial Revolution progressed with advancements in the textile, steel, automotive and war industries, which continued through World War I and World War II. Sklar argues this industrialization made the film industry viable. After working 10- or 12-hour days to keep up with demand and to make enough money to survive and perhaps thrive, people were looking for quick, easy and relatively affordable entertainment. Motion pictures shown on big screens in theaters built for sizable audiences fit the bill.



A text on the kinetoscope sits alongside a cup of tea. Note how the film winds its way through the kinetoscope. It was viewed through a viewfinder at top. Photo by Luke McKernan, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

What made filmmaking a mass media industry was the ability to show the same film to large audiences again and again. Films also presented a new way of telling stories. Early filmmakers experimented with the art form and actively sought to make their work different from anything that had come before. In art and culture, a purposeful break from the past is one way of defining **modernity**. Thus, film was the first modern mass medium. The very first movie parlors, however, were not capable of projecting film.

Early Moviegoing

According to Sklar, when the film industry arose at the turn of the 20th century, films were first exhibited as short motion pictures viewed in kinetoscopes. In the image of the kinetoscope shown in this chapter on a book's cover, you can see an open cabinet. Inside the cabinet is a long, winding film. To watch a movie, you would lean over the top of the closed cabinet and peer into the viewfinder. It cost a nickel. Most often, immigrants and working-class people frequented **nickelodeons**, which is what the parlors and theaters housing kinetoscopes were called. In the United States, film brought American culture to immigrants and immigrant culture to other Americans in an exchange that helped foster social change.

The Developing Movie Industry

Nickelodeons were not profitable enough to sustain the industry in the long term. Recognizing that showing films was more profitable when movies were projected for many viewers at the same time, filmmakers rushed to create films that looked best in that format. When film was taken out of the box and projected on large screens, it opened up the medium to become the mass market industry it is today. From the perspective of theater owners, it was better to show one film from one protected projection machine to an audience of paying customers than to have people fill up a parlor and wait in line to climb on top of the equipment one at a time. As film became a mass medium, concerns over content and the medium's potential to influence public opinion grew.

Movie Ratings

In the 20th century, producers quickly learned that motion pictures could be the most powerful

propaganda tool in the world. By bringing modern messages to mass audiences, films were (and still are) able to shape public opinion through culture. Their reach extends beyond influencing trends: Films are massively popular emotional and educational cultural products that can influence the shape and direction of social structures.

Early on, messages in the medium were not subject to government or church approval, which concerned the leaders of these institutions. The battle for control over the industry has never stopped. The current rating system used in the United States is a voluntary system. That is, the government does not censor films. The industry regulates and censors itself through the maintenance of a movie ratings system, which is not without controversy.

Because films can have massive economic, cultural and social impacts, it should always be expected that powerful groups will try to exert their influence over this medium.

Movies and Culture

There are dozens of journals that examine the relationships between film and culture. Films influence popular culture, group culture and just about everyone's personal culture. If your professor or instructor were to name an abstract emotion, a major industry or a popular sport, you could probably think of a film that deals with that aspect of culture or society. Think about gender norms, religious sensibilities, economic inequality, gay rights, militarism, environmentalism, family values, popular history, patriotism, cultural violence, liberty, race, global technology, artificial intelligence or sheep farming. There is a movie for almost every group culture. Social issues often drive filmmakers, but they may also pursue stories about popular issues to attract the broadest possible audience. Filmmakers often balance the desire to highlight the social and cultural issues they care about with the need to make money in a global cultural industry.

Filmmaking Practice

The American film industry employs more than 2 million people, according to the Motion Picture Association of America. Filmmakers and studios are protected by the First Amendment to discuss almost any topic they choose. The marketplace is often a more limiting factor than other forms of social or cultural influence. Many great stories are not made into films because it is too costly to produce a major motion picture to risk box-office losses. It is the right of the film studio to pursue profits, but many filmmakers consider their work a vocation or calling. The driving artistic and economic forces often compete wherever movies are made.

Green screens are used in film production to allow for the use of computer-generated backgrounds. Photo by Mark Sebastian. Source: Flickr.

Filmmakers today gain experience by making commercials, music videos, television shows, independent movies and even web series posted directly online. Young filmmakers rarely work with actual film. It is far more expensive to shoot film than video. The most common format at the time this book is being revised is SD (secure digital) media. The file type and codec depends on the camera. Many filmmakers shoot video on DSLR cameras and enjoy the ability to switch lenses for different conditions or effects. This type of media can store large files, and in the future SD storage may increase as high as 128 terabytes per card. As video quality increases, so does the need for greater storage capacity. Video formats such as 4K and 8K are known as ultra high definition. They enable filmmakers to capture and show incredibly detailed images.

Successful filmmakers not only have to know the tools of the trade, but they must also be good at networking. Films may cost up to a billion dollars to make and to promote. Filmmakers must demonstrate they can work well with others before a studio will take such a large chance on their talent. Because so much social and cultural influence and financial risk rest on a few flagship films each year, the controls are generally only given to proven filmmakers. To truly represent the voices of women, minorities, immigrants and other cultural groups in our society, there need to be pathways in the industry to producing, directing and promoting major films. For example, even before news broke about the many women who have been sexually assaulted in the industry, Hollywood had drawn mass attention for problems with industry sexism. Perhaps for the industry to be a better place for women personally, it needs to be a better place professionally. For this reason, there must be a variety of industry entry points if Hollywood is truly going to offer diverse points of view told from diverse groups of people. An **entry point** is a position in an industry that an individual can use to gain the experience needed to move up the career ladder. All of the technical skill in the world is of little use if there are not pathways to powerful positions.

Storytelling

Filmmaking tools and practical career preparations give options and opportunities to professionals, but they do not make films better by themselves. In other words, a technically skilled filmmaker might still fail because the industry is about storytelling. You might like a film with great special effects more than you like one without any, but the development of a new special effects technology does not make every film that employs it a good one. You can probably think of a bad movie with relatively good special effects (Spoiler alert: Lots of Michael Bay). Likewise, there are great classic films with almost no special effects. The tools are only as good as the people wielding them.

As suggested, films can play an important social and cultural role. They can communicate political

agendas and can push issues to the forefront of media attention. Filmmakers and studies, on the other hand, may also go out of their way *not* to make political statements. Whether a film communicates directly or more subtly, the most successful films combine great technical skill with a combination of trusted and innovative storytelling techniques.

A key goal of movie marketing is to make people anticipate a film so much that they feel they have to see it on the opening weekend for fear of missing out. For people who do not often go to movies, one key indicator they use to judge a film's success is its rank at the box office. It takes the support of both regular movie fans and those who only see a few films a year for a movie to be a true blockbuster. The best and most successful films combine great technical prowess with innovative but approachable storytelling. The best filmmakers have to be able to get professional work out of hundreds or even thousands of people working on a single project. They must be able to manage actors, special effects crew members, film crews and marketing professionals, to name a few. Filmmakers must also have a sense of the interplay between texts. The best storytelling is multifaceted and emotional but sufficiently connected to reality to be relatable.

Bricolage

Every motion picture that succeeds at being **intertextual —** that is, every film that combines a variety of types of text into a tapestry for audiences with a good story behind it — is a matter of bricolage. The term "bricolage" is related to the French word for "tinkering" and calls to mind the word "collage." Most readers of this text will have made several collages in school with the idea being to create art or to depict a concept using available materials rather than drawing or painting something from scratch using a single medium. Bricolage refers to a do-it-yourself tinkering process where you make something new out of other things.

You might argue that new films are made with new technology, not existing film clips or video files. You might also point out that special effects, 3D projection, and IMAX technology are not cheap, and the materials to make modern blockbusters are not going to be found simply lying around. You would be correct if movies were only storage media they are shot on, the computers they are edited in, and the 3D glasses you wear in the theater. But in reality, every film is made with limited resources using the existing tools and the talent available at the time. Every film is, to some extent, a pastiche, a reference to the films that came before. Bricolage is about taking the tools, materials and talents available to you, tinkering with them and making something different that has its own meaning. It is like a college student making dinner from leftovers. Turkey and Swiss cheese with pancakes for bread? Why not? Throw some chili on it. Wash it down with a light beer. Bricolage.

Some bricolage is better than others. Major motion picture filmmakers do a kind of bricolage. They simply have more expensive tools. Often, it is said, films are written three times. First, the script is written. Then the film is shot and brought to life by the director, actors, film crews and effects crews. Finally, a film is rewritten in editing. This notion that films are written as scripts, revised in the shooting process and written a third time in the editing booth comes from this video summarizing

how the original Star Wars was saved in editing. Filmmaking is a collaborative, **iterative** process, which means it may take many people many tries to create a successful story.

The Limits of Passion

Some students will be impressed by Quentin Tarantino's assertion, "I didn't go to film school. I went to films." It is tempting to think that all you need to know about filmmaking can be learned by watching films. That is certainly the start of developing a passion that can drive a career, but there is a case to be made for a formal education.

More than a passion project, backstage making "Ascendant" by Tim Brennan, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

College is where you learn how to think strategically. You learn how to work with other professionals-in-training. Working through college for four years or more, you gain stability and personal connections. You may not all end up as filmmakers or mass media professionals, but the critical thinking and problem-solving skills you learn from a liberal arts background prepare you to evaluate sources of information. You learn how to ask where people selling you a story got *their* information. If you learn how to learn, how to analyze media critically and how to make your own work as professional as possible, you will be prepared for shifts in the industry that might otherwise sap your passion.

Passion is like a pit bull. It can be a friend, companion and protector — something to rely on when times are tough. Passion that is mistreated, ignored, or that knows only about the darker, more violent side of life, can get out of its owner's control. There is no specific, perfect formula for cultivating your passion. Choose one and apply it in every college course you possibly can. If your education works for you, your passion can be tamed and it will always with you.

Before he was known as a screenwriter and before he had directed anything, Quentin Tarantino was doing more than just watching movies. He worked with people who made films. His work at a production company enabled him to get his script for *True Romance* to film director Tony Scott. Without his production company experience, no one would have cared that he knew everything there was to know about kung fu movies and westerns. He would have been a very knowledgeable video store clerk in a world where video stores were about to die.

So Wrong for so Long

When Uma Thurman talked about Harvey Weinstein's attempts to sexually assault her, she told a story dozens of other women shared about Weinstein's abusive, criminal behavior. The prevalence of sexual assault in Hollywood was a driving force behind the global Me Too movement of women as well as men sharing stories of sexual assault and abuse. Abusive behavior, mostly on the part of men in the workplace, has been tolerated in Hollywood and in other corporate and institutional cultures for far

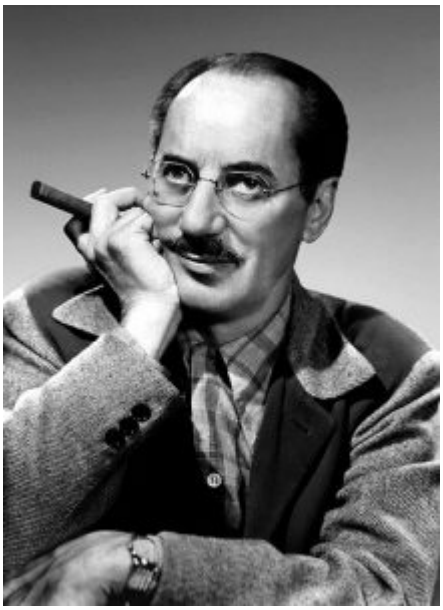
too long. Sometimes it was even joked about. Most often, it was allowed to be part of the business of entertainment.

In a better future for film and other forms of media making, sexual assault would not be tolerated, and people of all genders and backgrounds would support each other against those who abuse their power to reinforce their dominance and for sexual gratification. Laws did not do enough to protect women from predators, but speaking out has started to make a difference in a culture that has tolerated harassment, abuse and rape. For the film industry to truly be one of free expression and thoughtful cultural and social meaning-making, it cannot be a place where more than half of society is objectified and dehumanized regularly.

Uma Thurman also noted in her opinion article about Harvey Weinstein that she was objectified to the point that Quentin Tarantino pushed her to risk her life when shooting a car chase scene. Her story was about sexual objectification and assault but also about the way men, in particular, devalue women in many aspects of life. If Hollywood can change, its stories change too and the social and cultural impacts of that movement would be felt like waves emanating from this time for future generations.

5

Television through Time



Groucho Marx portrait, from user Insomnia Cured Here, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book." — Groucho Marx

Television Revolution

When you talk to a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent about life at home before television, they will probably tell you that they listened to the radio and read books, magazines and newspapers. They may also mention spending time together telling old stories and listening to music on a record player.

It is no wonder that when television was first becoming America's medium of choice in the 1940s and '50s, plenty of thoughtful people questioned the influence it could have on society. Television's least-common-denominator sensibility concerned many, and some thought the entire entertainment industry was trying to turn the country Communist. Concerns about propaganda abounded. The previous chapter briefly covered the powerful cultural impact films can have. Of concern during the Cold War was that television would take that same power into people's homes on a platform that was constantly updated and sometimes broadcast live. Just as with film, the battle for control over the influence of television has existed as long as it has been a mass medium. It is difficult to underestimate television's cultural impact.

Besides those who saw television as a threat to spread Communism throughout the West, there were others who were not so radically against television but who preferred to talk about the importance of reading instead. They saw television not as a tool of the intellectual, global left but as anti-intellectual. You will still encounter people who voice with pride — and often an air of superiority — that they do not own a television. They imply that everyone else may be rotting their brains, but not their family. Condescension about the television and its content dates back to the dawn of the medium. Groucho Marx, depicted above, was an early film and TV star, and even he joked about the lack of quality programming. Of course, television isn't all bad. At every stage of the medium's development, there have been thoughtful, intelligent shows and there has been **dreck** — that is, waste or trash that serves to fill time but not to inform meaningfully.

This chapter discusses the nature of television content as the medium evolved throughout the second half of the 20th century. It then briefly discusses the role of the television industry in society by examining the ways we watch TV and its possible impacts on our health. Finally, this chapter covers the medium's influence on popular culture and explores how the 2000s and 2010s may have brought about the golden age of television while simultaneously opening up pathways for audience collaboration and shared cultural influence in what is perhaps the most culturally influential medium in human history.

Television Content in the 20th Century

This is a not dichotomy between the good old days of quality mass-market television and the modern garbage made to fill airtime on hundreds of digital channels. Rather, there has always been a dichotomy between informative programming and shows made purely for entertainment and distraction. As with all dichotomies, the boundary between the two is blurred.

Not every show on the low end of the intellectual spectrum is dreck. Even intellectually stimulating programs have moments of pandering. Television content generally strives to be popular and profitable first, entertaining second, and informational third, if at all. Consider some of the top-rated shows of each decade in the 20th century after television became popular. There were informative, educational programs and there was silly and mundane fare in each decade. The 1940s saw the debut of *Meet the Press*, a news discussion show that is still on the air, as well as *Howdy Doody*, a children's puppet show that set the tone for future children's programming but lacked some of the educational elements that came with *Sesame Street* and similar shows. In the '50s, the masterful journalist Edward R. Murrow led a journalistic team of titans with *See it Now*, a classic news documentary show. But he also hosted *Person to Person*, a celebrity profile show that bordered on tabloid TV. In the 1960s, Murrow made *Harvest of Shame*, a revolutionary television documentary about the oppression of farm workers. In the same decade, *Mister Ed* featured a talking horse that cracked jokes through a barn door. Producers persuaded the horse, a gelding named Bamboo Harvester, to "talk" by putting peanut butter on his teeth. At issue is not the existence of silly shows but their relative popularity. For every major in-depth documentary about poverty in America or some other heady topic, there were at least a dozen sitcom series that portrayed a peaceful, suburban, consumption-driven life even as American society underwent cultural and social upheaval.

An antique television displays an episode of The Munsters, a 1960s sitcom. Image by Michel Curi, CCBY. Source: Flikr

In the 1970s, the sitcom *M*A*S*H* gained great critical acclaim. It showed that a television show could entertain and inform. It satirized the Vietnam War through comedy, although it technically was a depiction of the Korean conflict. The show discussed war propaganda, PTSD, the honor of service and camaraderie in battle. It ran for 11 years, longer than the Korean and Vietnam Wars put together. *M*A*S*H* can be compared to another classic '70s sitcom, *Three's Company*, a farcical show about three single people living together as roommates in post-60s sexual revolution Santa Monica, California. Both shows depicted social and cultural change, and both aired successfully for decades in reruns, but *M*A*S*H* represents television in rare form, both entertaining and poignant.

In the 1980s, *Hill Street Blues* was a serious, police drama that demonstrated the difficulty of fighting crime in an unnamed modern American city by tackling deep subjects and showcasing a gritty production style. In contrast, *Married…with Children* was a purposefully shallow show designed to offend by depicting a grotesque caricature of an American family. *Hill Street Blues* ran for seven seasons. *Married…with Children* ran for 11. In the 1990s, *Homicide: Life on the Street* depicted grit, violence and crime fighting in Baltimore in the vein of *Hill Street Blues*. *Homicide* was based on a non-fiction book titled *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* by David Simon. Simon went on to create *The Wire*, one of the top-rated television shows of all time that also depicted crime and crime fighting in Baltimore. While *Homicide* was popular, *Friends* dominated American pop culture and had a global influence. *Friends* showed an imaginary version of New York where six twenty-somethings, some of whom had no discernible employment, could afford spacious apartments and daily lattes. This is not to take issue with shows that paint a rosy picture of life. Instead, the point is that popular television content is made to entertain, not inform. The most entertaining and popular shows of the 20th century were not poorly made, nor were they necessarily detrimental to society as mainstays of the culture. They were, however, usually void of thoughtful social content. Television, the most popular mass medium in the world, often serves to distract.

Television and Society

The shallow nature of some of the most popular television content in the 20th century raises a broader question about mass-media content in capitalist society. Can we expect a media system based on profit-making to focus on serious issues? Perhaps we should not expect the majority of television content to be informative or to treat social issues with nuance. After all, in the chapter on film, it was noted that hard working people attended movies in part because they craved instant gratification and movies were affordable. In the early days of television, the television set was expensive, but the content was free and delivered over the airwaves from broadcast towers to antennas. To make money in

this media environment, producers considered popularity first. Advertisers supported the medium and cared above all else how many "eyeballs" they could reach.

Scholars will often suggest that a "balanced" television diet is best. In other words, we should not expect for-profit television producers to forego revenues to deliver mostly informational content. Rather it is on us as consumers to seek out quality programming and limit our "guilty pleasures" when viewing TV. Ratings suggest most people are just fine watching shallow television, and many will binge-watch TV for days. As consumers, we will probably have more success holding ourselves to better consumption standards than we will have trying to hold producers to more positive social standards. In a crowded marketplace of broadcast, cable, satellite and streaming television, quality content stands out.

Industry Shifts

Cable television started as a way to reach rural consumers and grew, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, into a nationwide service delivering paid content. It presented more options and a trustworthy wired connection — but at a cost. As cable networks consolidated into monopolies, costs went up and service quality often declined. Still, most Americans continue to consume broadcast and cable television. Market penetration of some form of television service, including over-the-air TV, stands at almost 96% according to Nielsen, the television ratings specialists.

According to industry estimates, pay television services (such as cable and satellite TV) are now in fewer than 80 percent of U.S. homes as people begin to "cut the cord." Broadband internet service now reaches more than 80 percent of homes, suggesting that it is displacing paid television service. American cable consumers may be comfortable transitioning to broadband because so much television content is now available online. Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, HBO GO and other broadband-based streaming services deliver television content with high production value. YouTube, Vimeo, Twitch and other streaming services deliver niche video content. Certain platforms for television delivery may be in decline, but consumption of video content remains strong.

Television's impact on society is debated by scholars. Long-term studies have associated higher rates of television viewing with lower rates of high school completion. Watching television has been shown to make attention spans shorter. Media studies scholars do not agree on whether television "cultivates" a sense that the world is a violent, scary place, even when crime rates are low. Findings for that hypothesis seem to depend on how each study is carried out and how data analyses are structured. Alternatively, educational television can have a positive impact as an intervention for children in poverty. Too much television has the potential to affect us negatively. Doctors often recommend limiting screen time, particularly for children. The way we consume television has changed a great deal since the medium was introduced.

Appointment Viewing versus Binge-watching

Appointment viewing refers to the phenomenon of people watching television shows at the same time each week or each day. When most people watched television broadcast over the air or on cable,

they generally had two options. They could watch the show live as it aired, or, once the VCR was invented, they could record programs to watch later. A major concern during the mid-20th century when appointment viewing was most popular was that people might not watch serial narratives on television because they would have to wait a week between episodes. If they missed an episode or two, they could feel lost and stop watching the show.

Thus, appointment viewing and episodic TV went hand in hand for a majority of shows during the 20th century. **Episodic** television shows usually featured a different story with each episode. Soap operas, however, were **serialized**. They told an ongoing story with several threads, and each episode picked up where the last one left off, but they aired almost every weekday, and the stories were not known for being complicated.

An image of a cartoon mouse crated by Keith Haring photographed by Alexandre Dulan, CCBY. Source: Flikr

The logic against making serial television dominated the 1980s and 1990s, but in the 2000s dramatic shows such as *The Sopranos, The Wire, Breaking Bad, MadMen, Deadwood, Dexter, Boardwalk Empire, Six Feet Under, Lost, 24*, *Homeland, Game of Thrones, Westworld, Stranger Things*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* became increasingly popular. DVRs (digital video recorders) and streaming services contributed to the popularity of these dramas and to the habit of **binge-watching** — consuming several hours of video content in a single viewing or in a very limited time frame.

The upside is that many shows now present intricate plots with long-building character arcs. Many former filmmakers, screenwriters and actors now prefer to do television rather than film because television allows for more intricate storytelling. Not everything in popular television needs to have the potential to reach a global audience interested in action, superheroes and sexy, simplistic love stories. While it is true that many independent films pursue visual storytelling as an art form, such releases are limited. In many ways, television (including shows broadcast on streaming services) now leads the way in attempting to make cultural and social impacts. Of course, instant gratification television still exists. So-called "reality television" is still popular, as are game shows and myriad live sporting events, but it can still be argued that the highest form of the visual storytelling art may now be seen on the small screen.

Television and Health

Streamable television content may be as socially relevant as ever, but it encourages binge-watching, which can contribute to health problems. The content itself might not harm your health, but binge-watching and general overconsumption lead to unhealthy sedentary lifestyles. Researchers have found links between increased television viewing and obesity, smoking rates, and generally low fitness levels. Netflix, Amazon and Hulu are engaged in a fierce competition to create the most binge-worthy

content, which means that binge-watching is not going away any time soon. Again, mitigation of the social impact of television will fall on the consumer's shoulders.

Socially, television is an incredibly powerful medium. Most media studies scholars agree that it has the potential to enable shared social understanding. Televised images of atrocities helped encourage the Civil Rights Movement and the end of the Vietnam War. Educational and informational programming is required of broadcasters, and many consumers find valuable shows amidst the information glut; however, the future of television might be darker than the present age of quality and variety.

As television content moves online and streaming services become more popular, there is a massive corporate push to give internet service providers (ISPs) the kind of control over content that cable television providers have had in the past. The end of net neutrality could make streaming services more expensive, and though it is not likely to happen rapidly, internet access could be divided into tiers of websites and web services with ISPs charging more for the most popular sites. If the most binge-worthy, least intellectually valuable content becomes the affordable option for most people, the social impact of the new internet-television regime could be negative for generations to come.

Television and Culture

The cultural impact of television could be implied from the discussion of content through the decades. Regular television viewers make connections with storylines and characters. We can consume an eclectic mix of video content or focus only on the genre that interests us most. There are hundreds of digital channels and seemingly endless amounts of streaming content available at all time. The question is not whether there is something interesting to watch but what type of content interests us the most. There is more to the medium than the dramas and distractions of the 20th century. There is no single television culture emerging in the 21st century since mass audiences have an incredible variety of choices; however, for children of the 20th century, there are many shows that millions of people hold in common. Thus, we are transitioning from a time of a shared "TV culture" to a time of various digital content cultures.

A viewer uses an iPad while viewing the television version of "Hannibal."

For children of the 20th century, television is so ingrained in our culture there are shared references to shows that have not aired for 20 years, and there have even been shows *about watching* TV. Specifically, the HBO show *Dream On* depicted a grown man who recalled old television shows when his short attention span sent him off into daydreams. Popular television shows in 20th-century American culture were so familiar to mass audiences that there are still common tropes from as many as 50 years ago that most viewers would recognize. The image of the dull husband and his feisty wife echoes through the decades from *The*

Honeymooners through *The Simpsons*, *King of Queens* and *Family Guy*. The crime procedural has been so popular for so long, it often seems as though an entire generation of TV stars have made at least one appearance on *Law & Order*. Other tropes are noted in "The Simpsons 138th Episode Spectacular," another example of television culture referencing itself.

We now use all manner of devices to connect to television content. Over-the-air television is gaining in popular support as people cut the cable cord. Streaming services, as stated, are beginning to dominate the landscape. Smartphones and tablets offer ways of consuming streaming television as well as amateur video programs as well as the opportunity for a **second screen experience,** which refers to watching something on television and interacting with the show or with fans of the show on social media and other Web platforms. The convergence of media platforms opens up new ways of engaging with video content and the people who produce it.

The cultural implications of participatory or **collaborative television** — the phenomenon in which content producers work with the audience to produce, alter or enhance content, including to decide the outcomes of televised competitions — are not yet known. It is expected, however, that the practice will continue to grow. Audiences often enjoy having a say in the direction or the outcome of a program. Digital platforms measure audience engagement as something they can market to advertisers, which encourages the practice. This also puts some responsibility on the part of consumers to positively influence the content they help shape.

As television and broadband internet services merge, it is worth noting that the prediction of the union of television and computers is as old as the personal computer. Internet-ready televisions might have become more popular than add-on streaming devices such as Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Roku, or Google Chromecast, but television manufacturers hesitated to add full internet functionality for fear of viruses. Also, consumer demand for connected TVs was not strong enough for manufacturers to offer built-in technology. For the consumer, it matters little whether the television connects directly to the internet or whether a relatively inexpensive add-on is needed. In whatever manner you connect to converged digital video content — that is, the media products formerly known as television — you have access to perhaps the most influential cultural tool in history.

6

Music Recording, "Sharing" and the Information Economy

Napster logo graffiti illustration by user bixentro, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"I definitely wanted to earn my freedom. But the primary motivation wasn't making money, but making an impact." — Sean Parker, Napster co-founder, Spotify board member and former Facebook president

The Recording Industry as Harbinger of Digital Disruption

By reputation, the recording industry is rife with schmucks and cheats, gangsters and goons. It is also one of the most important cultural industries of all time. Popular music reflects and shapes our culture, provides a soundtrack for our lives and loves, and builds the emotional framework for our best and worst moments. Some music producers have a reputation for being unscrupulous and for caring more about making money than making music. Mob involvement in the industry is well-documented. This is not to say that the industry is completely corrupt; it is true, however, that corruption is an ongoing problem.

Still, most of us have a favorite genre of music and at least a dozen favorite artists. It is rare that you will love a film but hate the soundtrack. It is more rare, perhaps, to find a person who cannot tell you which songs were popular when they were in high school and what kind of music they would like at their wedding reception. For a speed run through the history of popular recorded music, check out this video. The link goes to a YouTube presentation tracking the "Evolution of Popular Music by Year." The list of performers can be found in this blog post, which notes the gender balance in pop music over the years, as well as a few other brief highlights.

This chapter about recorded music focuses mostly on the changing industry. But as you consider the industry from an academic perspective, don't lose sight of your relationship with music. What you enjoy is an expression of yourself and of your personal culture. Preserving the emotional impact of music should concern us all, even if we are more or less enthusiastic about preserving the old order of the recording industry and the interests of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

Recording Industry History

The RIAA built a reputation for suing individual users of file sharing sites for making songs protected under copyright available to other users. A discussion about recorded music in the digital age quickly becomes a discussion about copyright. The RIAA is a trade organization. It was formed to protect record labels and their products. It fought file "sharing" — the free digital distribution of music files, most often in MP3 format — with limited success in the early 2000s. By suing consumers for making music files available online, the Association cracked down on digital music piracy somewhat, but it also angered a generation of music consumers. Around the same time that the RIAA became known for suing users for sharing music, it was sued for alleged antitrust violations related to downloading services the industry had launched. Specifically, record labels were accused of artificially inflating the prices of music downloads on services they had established. Since the U.S. Supreme Court decided to let the case proceed in 2011, it appears from an exhaustive web search that the case is still pending. Music distributors lost a separate $143 million case that found they illegally inflated the price of CDs in the late 1990s. The RIAA is both a staunch protector of artists' copyright-protected material and a monopolistic trade group.

A Detour Through Disney to Discuss Copyright

View the video below for a unique take on what copyright is and how it currently functions. The film does not argue that the illegal downloading and sharing of music files is fair use, but it does suggest that intellectual property copyright protections might be designed to protect corporate profits over creative endeavors.

Screenshot from "A Fair(y) Use Tale," a YouTube video discussion of the concept of fair use.

There will always be a battle between creators, who value the disruption of previous regimes in favor of developing new products on new platforms that remediate previous works, and original producers, who want to preserve the right to earn money from their creative works. As a reminder, remediation is taking existing media content and concepts and using them in new media platforms. It may include mashups of existing content, sampling, stacking and compiling. Remediation works with many forms of media, but much of the content that cutting-edge creative producers want to use is still under copyright. At issue is under what circumstances is remediation considered fair use of material under copyright and under what circumstances does remediation violate copyright. This text does not offer a simple answer. Please note, however, that this text itself is presented on an open platform with a CCBY copyright license. The author was not paid for creating this text, but if others can rework parts of it into profitable products, that is allowed. This ensures that this text will always be available for all to use, repurpose, build on or subtract from. The author works in a nonprofit academic setting, and the incentive is to earn tenure by publishing this

and other works. This form of publishing under a Creative Commons license is growing in popularity, but it cannot be expected of those working in for-profit media industries.

At the root of copyright law is whether a new work hurts the market value of the original work (assuming the original is not yet in the public domain). This question is sometimes settled on a case-by-case basis. Before students as would-be disruptors begin to think the system is unfair, they must remember that their own products will be protected by copyright. Weak copyright law makes it easy for works to be altered slightly and republished with little or no gain going to the creator. Aspiring mass communication professionals often find themselves tied in conceptual knots over how to think about copyright law. A few suggestions: Obey it without letting it stop you from producing works you love. Work around violations and assume your digital work will be open to disruption and copying the moment it is made public.

The film *Downloaded* directed by Alex Winter (Ted of Bill & Ted fame) documents the battle between the founders of Napster and the RIAA in the first major intellectual property battle of the digital age. The entire recording industry was shaken up by young college students who identified as hackers. The RIAA won the battle against Napster but lost the war against digital music sharing and the formation of digital music platforms. Apple's iTunes legitimized digital music sharing. Spotify and Pandora created legal means for people to consume mass amounts of digital content for free. For a fee, you can usually access most of the music you want, and you can create playlists from massive music databases that put pre-digital download music collections to shame.

A large record collection documented by Will Folsom, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

On the other hand, there has been something of a backlash against digital music downloading as a new generation of audiophiles discover the LP record as a means of owning physical copies of the music they love. Records can be owned and cherished, but they are also cumbersome. Digital music is ubiquitous but the sound quality is often lacking, and maintaining a digital library takes effort and often an investment in cloud storage. One way or another, if you want to hold onto recorded music for your own personal use, you are probably going to have to pay. Even if you use YouTube as your own personal music collection, when you search for a specific song you will often pay with your attention by watching pre-roll ads.

The recording industry and many artists would argue that *of course* music should not be available for free. It costs time and effort to create popular professional music. On the other hand, the recording industry is notorious for not paying artists. Much of the money to be made in professional music comes from live performances and merchandise sales. An option for artists is to release their music for free and use it to garner attention and bring people into live shows where they can sell apparel, artistic LPs and CD box sets to "true" fans for a greater percentage of the profit.

As consumers, you should be aware of where your money goes when you pay for music and who benefits from the attention you pay to advertisers when you do not pay for music. The popularity of Pandora and Spotify helped drive radio broadcasting conglomerates to act more like streaming services. The iHeartRadio app, for example, is a paid app that gives you a digital connection to a host of radio stations. It takes something that was free — over-the-air radio — and makes it a paid service, albeit with added features and convenience.

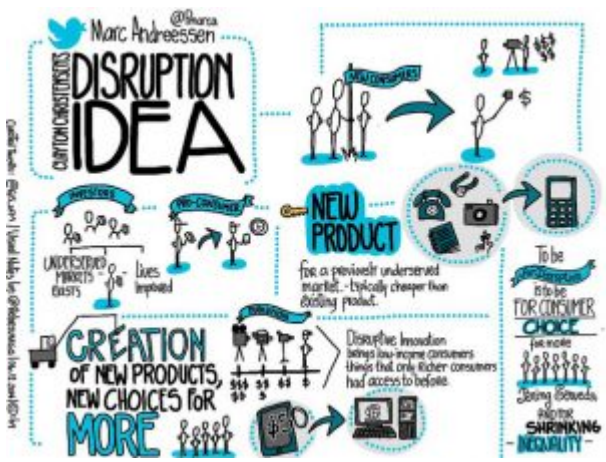
The broadcast industry will be discussed more in the next chapter. For now, it is enough to understand that in the history of broadcasting in the United States, there is a long tradition of production and distribution companies either directly collaborating or being one and the same. The people who made radio also made recorded music or had close relationships with those who did, and they could determine what music and other programming went over the air. This is different from agenda setting where messages in the mass media can set the bulk of the public's political agenda. This is a matter of keeping messages *off* the air that are considered too disruptive or radical. In some countries, the airwaves are directly regulated by the government. In the U.S., closely watched monopolies give the appearance that the government is not censoring music, but in essence, the monopolies do it for them. Before there were Napster "pirates," there was pirate radio. The freedom for an individual to play the songs they want to play when they want to play them over the airwaves for public consumption has not existed since the very early days of radio. Consider this the next time you build and share a Spotify playlist (or, if you're old school, make a mixtape).

Music monopolies existed with government support and were justified as being necessary, particularly during times of war when leaders wanted to keep tight control over messages. When political will built up in support of splitting mass media monopolies in favor of protecting the intent of the First Amendment, antitrust laws were used; however, if history shows anything it is that powerful people in media seek to consolidate their power. In other words, we should expect music broadcasters to attempt to form monopolies, even as existing radio broadcasting conglomerates such as iHeart Radio face hard times.

Music, Culture and Lessons of Disruption

The film "Downloaded" is more than just a history of Napster. It briefly traces the transition of the media field from an industrial manufacturing production model to a digital service model. The next few sections of this chapter explore this evolution.

The implications of this shift are difficult to explain in a few passages, but some important details are the social nature of Napster; the rhetoric of "sharing"; the age and sophistication of the innovators in the Napster versus RIAA case; and the response from industry bosses, artists and the public.



A summary of Marc Andreessen's conceptualization of disruption by Rebeca Zuñiga, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

The recording industry is one of the first media industries to undergo this dramatic change in their primary focus from producing tangible goods to producing digital media and trying to profit from it at similar levels. It was difficult for the established corporate interests — especially the record labels, record executives and the RIAA — to switch from the industrial production of CDs and other materials to the production of digital music for download and streaming.

The transition was disruptive for the creators of Napster too, who took years to recover after losing to the RIAA in the epic lawsuit covered in the *Downloaded* film.

The recording industry was not by any means the last industry to be challenged by digital technology. It is necessary to very briefly trace the history that undergirds this discussion for readers to understand what is meant by "manufacturing model" and "digital service model."

Industrial Production and Media

As referenced in Chapter 4, the industrial manufacturing boom in America and the mass media revolution took place at about the same time.

Before the manufacturing boom of the early 1900s came the early Industrial Revolution. It took approximately half a century to take shape, beginning in the late 1700s and continuing through the early 1800s.

Steam power became viable in the mid-1800s. Electrical power was used in manufacturing in the late 1800s, which further accelerated the revolution. Electricity production and its application increased immensely throughout the 1900s.

The Industrial Revolution was largely made possible by a shift to capitalism. It was often a matter of rapid and dangerous development, but at times, manufacturing growth progressed more steadily. A lack of regulation under capitalism has helped manufacturing to grow quickly in some parts of the world, but unregulated manufacturing takes a toll on people and the environment.

Average incomes increased greatly during the Industrial Revolution, but so did wealth disparity.

One thing media professionals should note is that averages do not always mean much to the average person. If average gains for a group include a small group of very high numbers and a large group of low numbers (a long tail, so to speak), average gains are not really felt by the average person.

At any rate, economies built on manufacturing grew rapidly. Between World War I and the end of World War II in the United States, manufacturing grew incredibly quickly and successfully. Radio's first major use was not to broadcast music and news but to coordinate ship movements in WWI. After WWI in 1919, the United States helped facilitate the development of the Radio Corporation of America to take control of the industry away from Guglielmo Marconi's corporation. Marconi, who played a major role in the development of radio broadcast technology, went on to support fascism in Italy. RCA in the USA had a government-protected monopoly, but it must be noted that control over broadcast technologies is about more than commercial interests.

Strategic military interests also depend on advancing communication technologies. Government entities and private corporations are always locked in a dance of control over emerging and developing ICTs. Entrepreneurs can get caught up in the dance or, perhaps worse, be left without a partner and without access.

The Modern Era started with the end of World War II in about 1946. Modern communication technologies from recorded sound to the telephone, radio and television continued to develop in part as military technologies, but the products of recorded music and later on of videotapes were manufactured goods. Prices could be set in a monopolistic environment by the respective industries because owning the music or the movie required someone to purchase a physical copy.

Before the digital revolution, there was a transition to the service economy.

Manufacturing vs. Service

The mindset of the mid-to-late 20th century was one where manufacturing mattered most. In 1960, for example, the split between manufacturing and service jobs in the US was about 40 percent manufacturing and 60 percent service.

This means that 40 percent of the jobs were ones where people made and sold goods. The service economy had more people in it, but manufacturing jobs paid better and provided a base of consumers for the service *and* manufacturing economies to build on.

As of 2010, the split was about 15-85. That is, only 15 percent of U.S. jobs are currently in manufacturing. The other 85 percent are in the service sector. The globalization of labor and communication has made this possible. Specifically, large multinational corporations can now coordinate multiple levels of manufacturing in many places at once. Communication aids this process. So does the ability to transport materials and finished goods cheaply using oil-based fuels.

The downside of having access to cheap goods is that wages are stagnant in the US. Without good-paying jobs, there is not as much money in the *consumer* economy as there was. This explains why personal debt is at an all-time high.

With the loss of manufacturing jobs, states do not have the same income tax base that they used to, so

they often drastically cut support for colleges and other services. This is part of the reason why college costs more than it used to. The transition to the service economy played a significant role.

Is this text suggesting that you push for a return to manufacturing and give up on the service economy? No. In fact, the service economy as it developed in the late 20th century may be coming to an end.

In the United States, the manufacturing model of media production still holds much power in the recorded music, newspaper, magazine and book industries. It would be foolish to ignore that power, but it would be more foolish to tell you to prepare for those modes of production when your working world may be two evolutions beyond the manufacturing age.

From the Service Economy to the Information Economy

Although it is difficult for people accustomed to a manufacturing economy, the transition to the service economy makes sense in the network society. What is perhaps most difficult to comprehend is that even major service industry sectors are being disrupted by digital technologies.

As a society, we have shifted our focus from making and selling goods to providing services. The service industry includes computers and technology writ large; the health industry; tangible trades such as plumbing and carpentry; the restaurant, tourism and hospitality industries; as well as for-profit education.

Of major concern now is that our society and economy are not yet fully adjusted to a focus on the service economy even as it is being disrupted by digital technologies and the information economy.

This is the point of studying the recording industry at this stage. It was doubly disrupted, if you will. It did not just shift from a focus on providing manufactured CDs to a focus on services. If this had been the case, it might have looked like a renewed focus on live performances and music curation in the form of niche radio broadcasts and even personal music advising. Instead, it is as though the industry skipped a step from the transition to the service economy and shifted directly to the **information economy**. The information economy is one where manufacturing and services still exist, but they are dependent upon information and communication technologies for strategic planning capabilities, managing transactions, the moving and storage of currency, and, ultimately, for the ability to automate as many tasks as possible. If a task is information-oriented or is simple enough to be broken down into a few automated steps (such as driving a taxi — I mean an Uber), it probably will be.

What will be left for workers? Consider the recording industry. Live performances can make money. The production and sale of merchandise (often specialized or limited in nature) can turn a profit. You can do a complex task with tangible goods or you can learn to manage the systems that automate digital work. In other words, if you can master not only mediated message production but also platform maintenance, you might have a job with growth potential.

You can find work in fields that marry manufacturing to the information economy or that merge the service and information economies well. This is your choice for a job with a future. High school and college guidance counselors may or may not articulate this clearly, but this is what industries that have already been disrupted by the information economy have to teach us.

Get a Jobby-Job

What are some examples of the marriage of the service economy and information economy in the mass media field? Spotify has already been mentioned. Facebook does not produce content. It provides a service where all sorts of content produced elsewhere can be shared.

Facebook is the Napster of news. It often goes unnoticed, though, because news content on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms stand alongside all other types of messages, professionally mediated or not.

The point is that it pays to be a platform rather than a content producer. The experience with the information economy that we have in the mass communication field suggests that the best bets for developing, getting, and holding jobs in the network society is to work in fields providing services of convenience and personalized attention.

Open versus closed economies courtesy of opensource.com, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

Today, people expect personalized products, or better yet, the ability to personalize products or experiences for themselves. If you go to work in a media company, you will likely spend much time looking for a happy medium in which people feel personally attended to but your company does not have to make a new product for every consumer.

Reddit is a good example of a customizable platform that interests individuals and all kinds of social groups. That said, even successful online communication platforms struggle with growth and profitability. A company's financial success is necessary to pay good wages to a large number of employees; this, in turn, provides for a successful middle class, bolsters the consumer economy, and supports the service, manufacturing and information economies.

7

Radio Broadcasting, Podcasting and "Superbug Media"

An iPhone playing the last episode of Season 1 of the Serial Podcast, hosted by Sarah Koenig. Photo by Casey Fiesler, CCBY. Source: Flickr. The photo was taken to accompany a blog post.

"We thought we were doing this little experiment, and it became this huge thing." — Sarah Koenig, host and co-producer of the *Serial* podcast

Podcasting Echoes the rise of Broadcasting

The *Serial* podcast is a true crime drama that calls into question the efforts of Adnan Syed's defense attorney as well as several elements of the case against him. Syed was convicted of murdering his former girlfriend Hae Min Lee in January 1999. The podcast analyzes, among other things, the use of a questionable timeline and questionable witnesses by prosecutors as well as the failure of Syed's defense attorney to use a witness who could have provided him with an alibi. As of 2018, Syed expects to get a new trial, but listeners are split on whether Syed is guilty. Among other issues, the podcast questions whether Syed's alibi would hold up in court. The story was released in serial fashion (that is, one piece at a time), in the autumn of 2014. Listeners were enthralled. This podcast more than any other helped establish the platform, and advertisers learned that podcasting could be a viable mass medium.

The ability to engage with murder mystery stories is not new. Serial dramas have appeared since the early days of mass book publishing, but basing a podcast around a real-life murder adds an element of voyeurism that makes some question the podcast's social impact. The reporting was journalistically sound, but what happens when online audiences dissect real tragedies? Such podcasts are potentially dehumanizing for the story's subjects even as they show the platform's potential. The social and cultural reach of podcasts now rivals that of radio. It is a broad reach indeed.

This chapter discusses the history of radio broadcasting including its potential as a tool of propaganda, the relationship between radio and the music industry, the social reach of broadcasting, as well as the rise of podcasting. Finally, persevering podcasts have something to teach us about how to make successful digital products and brands.

Radio's Reach

Radio is more than the music or "talk" you are stuck listening to because your auxiliary cable

shorted out. It is a means of transferring great numbers of messages, most of which are created and disseminated by professionals, to large audiences. Radio does more than entertain and inform mass audiences. It enables other industries (such as shipping and delivery services) to work efficiently. The technology serves police and other first responders, as well as various military functions. This is not to mention the cultural aspect. Pop music on the radio was for almost a century the soundtrack of American life. Across the world, people make a tradition of gathering around their radios to experience the World Cup, particularly in areas without reliable satellite television or broadband internet service. Historically, radio was the most reliable medium to experience global events. Listen to this update from the 1986 World Cup in Mexico and imagine what it might have been like to experience the game from half a world away. The power of radio broadcasting is to connect people instantly across vast spaces. As a broadcast medium, it helped shape modern society and culture. Radio brought huge audiences together to listen to the same programs at the same time and made it possible to sell airtime, which would not exist without the medium. In other words, radio created what is now an $18 billion advertising industry out of thin air.

Radio Propaganda

Radio created a market where there had been none, but there is a downside to the reach of broadcasting. Radio's mass appeal and quick adoption in the developed world made it possible to influence the public opinion of whole populations at once. One of the most disturbing uses of radio was to spread Nazi propaganda before and during World War II. With the technology, the Nazis could reach across national boundaries and try to gain sympathy in German-speaking communities across Europe. The Nazis also made it illegal to listen to broadcasts from other countries, particularly Great Britain. Broadcast technology has the power to influence and mobilize masses of people, but it is important to reiterate the limited effects paradigm (covered in Chapter 3). Several cultural and social forces have to be at play for messages in the mass media to help mobilize people to commit genocide. While radio can be used as a propaganda machine, people still have to believe the propaganda. Mass media broadcasting is a tool. It can be used for good or ill, and the conditions and proclivities of the audience affect the level of influence the broadcast media can exert.

Broadcast Technology

Radio waves can transmit sound and speech. Radio communications have helped direct ships and armies and win world wars. Broadcast radio intended for mass audiences created a need for information that was not present before. With radio, news can be instantaneous. People heard about developments in World War II as they were happening, which was not possible only decades earlier during World War I. Some thought this would bring an end to war because people would be too close to the pain and devastation of large-scale conflict to have the stomach for it. This proved to be an insufficient deterrent.

The view from below of a radio transmission tower by "Serendipiddy," CCBY. Source: Flikr.

World-altering promises are made with the introduction of almost every new mass medium. Similar things were promised with the dawn of television and the spread of home internet access. James W. Carey calls the notion that communication technologies will bring about peace and understanding the "rhetoric of the electrical sublime." New communication technologies do not lead to social utopias. They are both beneficial and disruptive.

The technology of radio followed the development of the telegraph. The world was already connected. Telegrams communicated complex messages in series of dots and dashes, but by working wirelessly, radio seemed more like magic. In recent generations, the spread of wi-fi internet access and wireless electrical charging give some sense of what it felt like to experience wireless radio for the first time. With the development of small, cheap batteries, the transistor radio brought rock-and-roll wherever the audience wanted to go. Radio made the instantaneous transmission of mass messages portable.

In the early days, though, radio receivers were prohibitively expensive and large. They were pieces of furniture that, for the most part, only wealthy early adopters could afford. David Sarnoff, who led the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and later NBC, was one of the first to envision commercial broadcasting. He was instrumental in the development of commercial radio receiver production. It was necessary to generate demand first. In the early days of radio, broadcasters tried all sorts of things to make use of this new medium. Plays, opera performances and live music performances were broadcast.

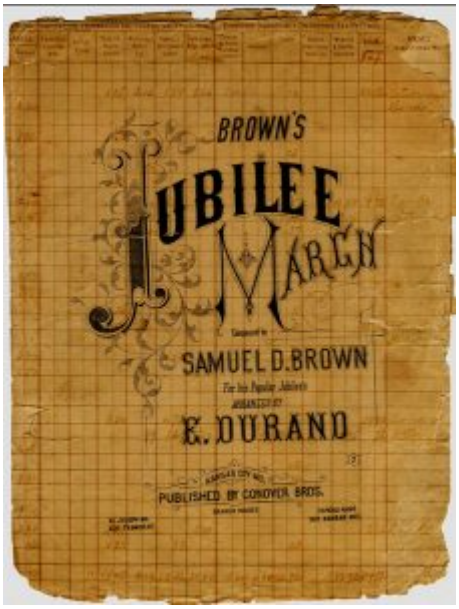
As radio receivers became household items and radio broadcasts became more reliable, radio broadcasters (the large ones in particular) demanded better industry regulation. In the United States, regulation favored commercial outfits over public broadcasting. In other countries like the United Kingdom and France, regulations gave the government more control and responsibility for reaching audiences. To this day, public broadcasting is still more popular and influential in Western Europe than in the United States. Listen to this BBC Radio documentary about the Beatles to get a taste of British public radio. In the U.S., Regulation of the airwaves by the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) and later the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) helped settle who would broadcast on which channels, but the most powerful broadcast towers in the world are of little use if people do not tune in.

According to Vinylmint (also linked above in reference to David Sarnoff), the marriage of recorded music and radio came after radio had become a popular medium for delivering live music and the Great Depression had killed the value of many record companies. Three developments helped to establish the ratio as a popular, immediate, in-home mass medium: the development and promotion

of affordable radio receivers, the popularization of radio through broadcasting live music and radio dramas, and the marriage of the recording and radio broadcast industries.

Broadcasting's Influence on Recorded Music

In the early 20th century, sheet music was more popular than recorded music. When sheet music was shared widely, certain songs gained popular status. This is what defined pop music from the 17th through the 19th centuries. The radio was invented around the turn of the 20th century with contributions by Guglielmo Marconi and Nikola Tesla, among others. Then, in the 1940s and 1950s, pop music as we know it was born. Much of pop music in America was first performed by black artists and was then appropriated by white artists. Blues, jazz and rock-and-roll music all originated in black American culture. There is a long history in pop music of artists from a dominant social group taking someone else's cultural expression and profiting from it.



An illustration of sheet music originally published in 1885 replacing a racist image with a more nondescript title page by "Playing with brushes," CCBY. Source: Flikr.

Different types of music have qualified as pop music throughout the 20th century. Jazz, rock-and-roll, psychedelic rock, R & B, disco, glam rock, metal, grunge, rap, electronic dance music and other forms too numerous to categorize have all qualified as "pop" and have often competed with one another for dominance. Changing technologies drove changing tastes. The addition of the electric guitar, synthesizer and computerized sampling are just a few key developments of the 20th century. Radio broadcasting brought technological advancements in sound into homes, and the recording industry relied on radio to promote sales so that people could own the music that was most meaningful to them. The disruption that altered the recording industry is covered in Chapter 6. Podcasting did not disrupt radio broadcasting. In fact, podcasting in some ways revives radio traditions, such as the successful radio personality, the for-profit news and talk show, and shows with a deep appreciation for niche music. In the late 2010s, the most profitable content on broadcast radio is conservative talk radio. It is bombastic and often mean-spirited, but it is popular among a relatively powerful sector of society: older, white men. Podcasting opens up avenues for all manner of expression. The audience for a podcast selected at random may be small, but in the aggregate, there are millions of listeners, and this platform for audio communication is growing with young audiences just reaching the age where they have some disposable income.

Podcasting

The term is derived from blending "iPod" and "broadcasting," although Apple no longer manufactures the iPod and most podcasts are not broadcast over the airwaves. Because alternative terms such as "mobile audio blogging" do not exactly roll off the tongue, "podcasting" remains in popular use. Podcasting can be traced to the popularity of blogging in the early 2000s. Bloggers wrote about niche

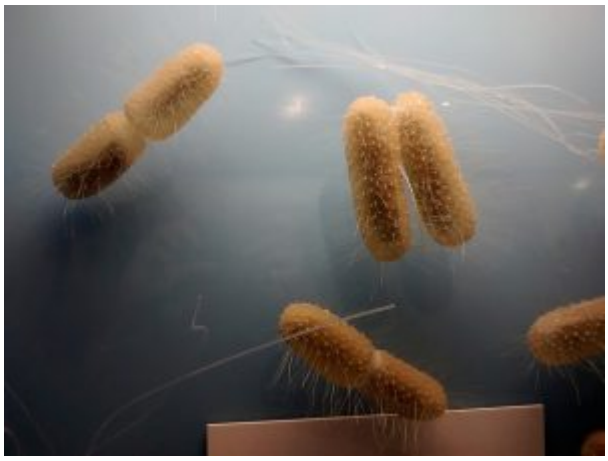
topics, and some of them developed sizable followings. Podcasting is in some ways a natural extension of this form of direct communication with organically cultivated groups. It caught on with wider audiences in 2004 as broadband internet penetration increased rapidly and as more and more people owned iPods or iPhones capable of storing and playing back several episodes at a time. Expectations for podcasting as an industry rose and fell for about a decade until 2014. This article in Wired notes two important occurrences that year. First, the *Serial* podcast demonstrated podcasting's ability to reach beyond niche audiences to become a truly national media phenomenon. Second, Apple created a separate iPhone app dedicated to downloading and listening to podcasts, which help boost the prominence of the entire field.

This podcasting setup includes a simple audio mixer, recorder and a computer for recording Skype interviews.

Many of the top podcasts are National Public Radio shows rebroadcast or repackaged in podcast form, but several successful shows originated as podcasts. This list of some of the top podcast episodes of all time draws from a wide variety of topics, including health, money, mindfulness and communication. Like magazines, cable television and niche news sites of the past, podcasts often develop in niche environments. Only a tiny percentage reach mass popularity. Here is one of 2018's top podcasts about the state of the War on Terrorism. You can find it online as part of a visual presentation, on iTunes or via other podcast apps. The methods of accessing podcasts vary widely. Even novice smartphone users can find podcasts through popular apps. Podcasts rise to popularity by word of mouth or by reaching enough critical mass that they are referenced in other media platforms. We often learn about live music based on which bands are popular locally and regionally. Instead of being organized geographically, podcasting is often organized by topic. Comedians, talk show hosts, academics and other experts, scientists, engineers, philosophers, writers, musicians and many others have podcasts serving various functions. Their podcasts may or may not be promoting other products, services or digital media properties. They may be fiction or non-fiction. What links the vast majority of podcasts is they begin as passion projects. They are cheap to produce and free to download, and they grow niche audiences before, sometimes, making it big. Podcast advertising will soon be a $500 million industry. Observations on what helps a podcast thrive can teach us the keys to success that we expect will translate to a variety of emerging digital media platforms.

"Superbug" Media

Podcasting as a medium seems to have stumbled on a sort of "superbug" model of mass media production and audience building. Think about bacteria and our unending desire to kill them with anti-bacterial soaps, wipes and hand sanitizers. Only the strongest, antibiotic-resistant bacteria survive attempts at eradication. Successful podcasts function similarly. Those that survive the media free-for-all often build mass audiences rather than tapping into them on legacy media platforms.



Bacteria by Peter Handke of a microscopic image, public domain. Source: Flikr.

Superbug media products are the opposite of viral media. A virus develops and spreads via a host, and if it does not spread to another host relatively quickly, it dies. Either the host system kills it, it kills the host, or it leaves the host and dies. Generally speaking, viruses do not work in symbiosis with their hosts. We can vaccinate ourselves against viruses, and this happens with viral media messages too. If we view a new video on social media with some of the elements of viral videos we have seen before, we may ignore it. We inoculate ourselves against things that waste our time. Novelty is part of the joy of viral content. Thus, copycat content has a difficult time spreading. This makes audience-building on digital platforms difficult. You cannot reliably produce viral content. Exponentially more media products are created than go viral, no matter how hard the creator tries.

The "superbug" process is different. Bacteria can often survive without a host. They can lie dormant for years with very little to sustain them and then return to devastate populations. In the human body, there are about as many bacteria cells as there are human cells. Some bacteria are not only beneficial but also necessary. Bacteria can be localized, while viruses tend to attack an entire system. The media equivalent of successful superbug bacteria is a podcast that grows inside a niche population, sometimes rising and falling in popularity before reaching a mass audience who then looks into the back catalog to see what the podcast is all about. What follows is a summary of the nascent theory of "superbug media." For now, it is a list of characteristics that will be explicated to conclude this chapter. This is not a media studies theory arrived at through extensive peer review. These concepts are meant to describe phenomena that appear to be happening all around us. Over time, the author hopes to publish more about this topic and begin to test these concepts as a cohesive theory built on empirical facts. That said, here is the working definition: **Superbug media products** are those that survive and thrive in highly competitive environments with limited initial access to traditional media resources. They are persistent, adaptive, independent, niche and symbiotic.

- **Persistent**
  Media creators should expect to be producing a podcast or other form of a superbug media product for a year before it becomes recognized. Audiences expect good, consistent, free content as a starting point when selecting which media products to adopt and support. To have a chance at long-term survival, a potential "superbug" media product should be published at least weekly. A mix of regular themes combined with fresh guests, topics, and additional media content appears to work best. Another feature of persistent "superbug" media is that they fend off challengers. You never really know how many people are researching a certain area or producing podcasts or apps in a particular field until you try to produce your own. Often, there are many market players you were not aware of. Some may operate in "regions" of the network society or intellectual community. It is your job to know

the field and to know the competition from the outset when you are striving to create a "superbug" media product, such as a podcast, a web application, a smartphone app, a niche advertising agency, a PR firm or a news agency. Whatever it is that you make, your brand needs to be ready to fend off both existing and up-and-coming competitors.

- **Adaptive**
  Successful podcasts and other "superbug" media products adapt to new environments. They may start out as audio podcasts but later become video posts because the content demands it. They may begin with interviews or content displays from people in the producers' close circle and then expand to bigger names and better content as the development of the media brand progresses.

- **Independent**
  Potential "superbug" media products often begin as independent productions from makers with personal passion. That is, they start out almost entirely as products of culture and only later, with time, success and reinvestment, do they begin to resemble institutional productions that are designed for long-term survival and capable of helping their producers and owners to thrive. Some "superbug" products, brands, and even platforms might emerge from existing institutional production houses or even major corporate conglomerate media companies, but they must be given the freedom to adapt if they are to last long. This raises a question: What defines success for a superbug? There are, perhaps, three tiers of success. The first is when a "superbug" project breaks even and no longer *costs* more to produce than it makes. The second is when it earns enough money to reasonably support one person for a year, which is a major milestone. The third tier is when the project earns enough money to warrant hiring a number of people and occupying some space in the physical world. What has been described here might also be thought of as the process through which a cultural product becomes part of an institution.

- **Niche**
  Growing mass audiences is different from reaching ready audiences in "legacy" broadcast settings. It helps to begin by focusing on a niche audience with the potential for mass appeal. The choice of topic is a personal one; however, what differentiates future commercial efforts from passion projects is the consideration given to market potential. Consider the topic of strategic landscaping planning: A podcast or app dealing with the issues faced when trying to manage a common household yard might grow to reach millions, whereas a podcast about formal French gardens will probably start in a niche and stay there. Neither media product is broad, general interest news, but one fits a more narrowly-defined niche. If it is your goal to produce something for your cultural passion, you can work in whatever niche interests you; for something to qualify as having "superbug" media potential, there must be plenty of room to grow.

- **Symbiotic**
  For many "superbug" media products to ultimately reach success, they will need to join with other independently produced brands or allow themselves to be swallowed and possibly rebranded under the umbrella of a large conglomerated media company. Symbiosis comes

> when the small, upstart media product and the larger "host" corporation help one another to grow. Often, a large media company will have money to invest in updated equipment and marketing, but for every Beyoncé, there is a Destiny's Child. The process of entering into a symbiotic relationship changes both the host and the "superbug." This might be unappealing from the aspect of pure cultural production, but on the other hand, it is often helpful and necessary from the institutional point of view. Again, creators are free to produce their passion project online, but the descriptive theoretical definition of "superbug" media is that it survives and goes on to thrive in a hostile environment.

An easy way to remember this material is that it takes PAINS to build an audience on a digital platform. Cultural production is at the heart of much of what we do in the mass media, but institutional demands are never far behind for those who want to create successful products or for those who may not want to make their own "superbug" media outlets but who are looking for good places to work.

The final lesson of this chapter is this: Regardless of whether you plan to start your own media product or create a "superbug" of your own, when looking for work in the mass communication field, you owe it to yourself to look for companies that are capable of producing products and brands that can survive in this environment. At your internships and your first jobs, ask yourself if the company seems like it could produce a "superbug" if it had to. If the answer is "no," you may need to look somewhere else for an enterprise that can create a media product with that rare mix of cultural meaning, social impact and financial success.

8

Digital Gaming

The phrase from the infamous meme appears at an orchestral performance of video game music. Photo by Stephen Elson, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"All your base are belong to us." — CATS, villain from the Sega Genesis game Zero Wing

Digital Games are Stories Users Co-Create

When the "All your base" meme spread across the internet in late 2000 and early 2001, YouTube had not been invented yet. Web videos were slow to play when they played at all, and photoshopped images designed to create jokes or memes were relatively new. But something about the meme's use of music, mashed-up photoshopped images and familiar real-world objects resonated with a generation of young adults who grew up with Japanese video games that sometimes had odd translations when they were reproduced for the American market. Users realized that the internet, a medium that functions as a convergence of all other media platforms, was capable of making us laugh and feel nostalgic. It was capable of transmitting culture.

Zero Wing, the video game at the heart of the meme, was a popular arcade game that was "ported" to (that is, recoded for) the Sega Genesis video game system in 1991. It was not the most popular arcade or SEGA game by any means, and yet something about the "All Your Base" meme was familiar to kids who grew up playing early home systems. The graphics were familiar. The orange background flashes were commonplace, as was the look of the cyborg villain. The hastily-translated Japanese-to-English text was not unusual for games of that era. If you had grown up in the 1980s and 1990s, it felt like part of your childhood had come back. Only this time there was an electronic music soundtrack and a collection of photoshopped images. Millions got the reference in what was one of the first internet memes to gain mainstream media attention.

Digital Gaming as Digital Culture

The meme's intent may have been to make us laugh at the old games we thought were cool when we were kids. We laughed at how much 8-bit and 16-bit graphics had enthralled us. We remembered how the gameplay had excited us and we felt nostalgia for the 8-bit or "chiptune" music. (If you

want, you can make your own chiptune music here.) Video game culture was a leap for children who grew up watching television. It gave players control over the actions of characters on TV. It engaged us in intertextuality, and the quality improved as the immersion increased. The environments, tasks, graphics and music evolved. Game creators pulled users into the story. The text itself did not always have to make sense: You could still understand the story because you were part of the game. Now there are digital games that allow us to enter digital space and interact with digital cultural to make our own cultural productions. We can remake games within games. Relatively affordable access and open platforms enable users to represent in the digital world almost every aspect of life in the tangible world.

Narratives and Platforms

Video games — including arcade games, console games (often with online multiplayer modes), mobile games for smartphones, online-only games including MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) and open environment games like Minecraft — all have narratives to follow and widely varying levels of production value. They rival films as the most immersive medium in mass communication, and they can be much more personal. Both films and video games have high production values and immersing narratives, but video games allow consumers to play as an avatar and interact with the story to change the plot and the environment (within limitations). Video games now make more than double what movies make globally at the box office. Children who grow up with popular games today might not have much reason to be nostalgic 10-20 years from now because many popular games (such as Minecraft) are platforms that might remain accessible as they evolve.

A Mario-Minecraft mashup depicted in an image titled: "video game champion win" by "Torley," CCBY. Source: Flikr.

If you want to learn how to reach individuals with a mass-marketed product, look to video games for guidance. By building in gaming options, character customization, extra levels and maps, collaborative online gaming and, in the case of Minecraft, broad swathes of digital space where users can explore their creativity, the same games can create differentiated, personal experiences for millions of people. Mobile games built on GPS technology such as Ingress and Pokémon GO from Niantic are a hybrid of shared and individuated experiences. Pokémon trainers can see and catch the same Pokémon in the wild. They can collaborate to fight Pokémon in raids, but some rare variants are distributed randomly, which can give players an incentive to trade with one another and engage in the game's social aspects. Video games have cracked the code of how to be both a mass media product and a personalized experience.

The most successful mass communicators in the future will not only create products filled with messages for mass audiences. They will also create platforms and worlds where users can interact with each other and the communication environment, not unlike the world depicted in *Ready Player One*. The closest precedent for this might be when science fiction writers create universes with

distinctive planets, atmospheres, topographies, sights, sounds, and even cultural norms and rules (as in the *Star Trek* universe, for example). "Choose Your Own" adventure books gave readers a chance to experience a level of choice in literature. Text-based games such as the Zork series gave computer users a similar experience. What we see now is an immersive graphical space with sights and sounds to match the imaginations of video game designers and developers. When a game is built to be its own creative digital **platform** or space where content can be created and shared, it becomes a space where much of the creative effort falls to the user. This can be viewed both as an opportunity and a responsibility.

Games and Behavior

Most of us who play video games enjoy a certain level of control. Video games are different from most forms of mass entertainment. Films, popular television shows, books and other works of creative fiction (besides the choose-your-own variety) tell you who the characters are, where they are located and what their capabilities and limitations are. In video games, you control your avatar. In role-playing games (RPGs) such as Dragon Age, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, and Divinity, players' choices directly and deeply influence the narrative. Because these games offer a wide array of narrative paths, your choices create a varied gaming experience. While it is true that your choices in RPGs are always drawn from a finite set of options, the results of your in-game behavior give you a measure of power.

A man holds up a Nintendo Power Glove, a unique controller for the 80s console game. Photo by Mike Mozart, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

There are game worlds where cultural norms within the game are quite close to those most people experience in the physical world. There are other games where most of your actions, even negative ones, are without consequences. It is *not* clear that consequence-free video games create a real-world culture where people do not care about ethics or values. Time and time again research has shown that violent video games have no direct correlation with violent behavior in the physical world. Games like the Grand Theft Auto series are usually considered an escape rather than an example of how to live. Additionally, many social science and health studies suggest that we do not take cues from violent video games and practice those same behaviors in our real lives. Some studies show correlations between gameplay and short-term thoughts of violence, but this type of research only addresses temporary changes in mood. Direct impacts on long-term behavior from specific video games do not appear frequently enough in sample populations of gamers to suggest that games *cause* violent or other antisocial behaviors.

Then again, the long-term social influence of deeply immersive, violent games may not be fully

understood. Many researchers who work with **cultivation theory** think there is a long-term social effect of this type of media content and behavior, even if limited experiments, surveys and other research tools have failed to capture it. Following a researcher named George Gerbner, cultivation theory scholars often suggest that changing perceptions can change cultural values over time and that those changes can lead to long-term behavioral changes. The concern is that society over time has changed to become more accepting of anti-social behaviors. Historians might argue, but there are scholars who contend that based on our mass media environment we might expect, perhaps, to reap what we sow.

Behavioral Theory

Developed by Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory looks on its face like a "monkey-see-monkey-do" theory, but it goes deeper than suggesting we imitate the behaviors we see in the mass media. Bandura posits that our behavior *creates an environment* that then helps determine group and individual behavior. In other words, Social Learning Theory seems to support the big picture concepts behind cultivation theory. Bandura's argument is that the social environment shapes actual behavior and that messages in the mass media over time create the environment; however, the argument is not that media influence *must* shape behavior. Media influences often moderate or influence other behaviors that were already occurring.

Following Social Learning Theory, we can imagine a dynamic where behavior shapes our social environment and, at the same time, our environment provides limits for acceptable behavior. The mass media dynamic is part of this bigger dynamic of social influence. If the idea of this dynamic is difficult to grasp, try thinking about a sports team. A team shapes each individual player's behavior to some degree, but the players as individuals, pairs, and other groups-within-groups also influence the team, its mood, and the outcome of contests. Team influence and the environment of the group can set limits on individual behavior, but individuals are always free to excel or fail.

What does that leave us with? How do we reconcile the concepts of limited media effects with these ideas about how mass media — including many video games — shape the social environment? We have to place media effects in the broader context of the social sciences. In the study of social behavior, many factors including parents, friends, school, church, our neighborhoods, income level, opportunity and romantic relationships may influence our behavior, but they do not *have to*. It is not likely you will ever pin down a single cause for a certain behavior or set of behavioral trends. Instead, consider that there are many complex and sometimes chaotic social influences rather than causes. If you stop looking for causes, you can begin to look at which influences are stronger than others and how different social influences might act together to influence people. You might also consider your media environment and your own behavior as objects under your control and try to take responsibility for your consumption, your behavior and the relationship between the two.

Video Game Narratives

Besides social influences, video games make a cultural impact as well. One way that culture is influenced by video games is through the narratives they tell. All sorts of video games create stories.

Whether you are playing as a plumber trying to save a princess, building a world out of blocks with little backstory, or going on an epic quest in a realm where distinctive characters have their own motivations, there are commonalities between good video games and the narratives of classic literature and film. In narrative storytelling, there are elements such as setting, characters, plot and themes that combine to make meaning for readers, viewers or users. Video games deserve credit for crafting narratives often as intricate, emotionally gripping and revealing as other forms of creative production.

A video game journalist tries out the latest title in an image called "Video Game Journalist," by "Shane K," CCBY. Source: Flikr.

Here are some questions to ask about a given video game narrative: How much control does the design of the game exert over the player and the gameplay? Are you a single character or part of a team? What is your mobility within the game, and is that a feature of gameplay?

Game design sets the stage. The narrative is the story. The two work together, and, depending on your interests, one may interest you more than the other. If you view a video game with a critical eye, you can appreciate worlds, characters and plot twists and the effort that goes into game design. If you view a game primarily as a player would, you might only see it at face value as boring, fun, immersive, and so forth. You can use almost all of the terms you use to describe great films and novels to describe contemporary video games.

Often, game design is where technological genius comes into play. The way a game environment is built matters almost as much as what you do in a game; however, we have all seen a special effects movie that was *only* a special effects movie. If the story falls flat, we will probably not recommend the film to our friends. Conversely, video games that start with compelling stories but have poorly executed design and functionality may be almost unplayable. The best works create compelling worlds *and* stories.

9

Newspapers and Digital News

Mahatma Gandhi. Image by Vinoth Chandar, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"In the very first month of *Indian Opinion*, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice." — Mahatma Gandhi from his book *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 1982

Threats to Ethical Journalism are Threats to Democracy

Since the website Newspaper Death Watch was founded in early 2007, at least 15 metropolitan daily newspapers have kicked the ink bucket. The "death watch" site focuses on **metropolitan daily newspapers —** those that cover large cities or a few geographically connected smaller cities. Since small-town newspapers come and go more often and typically do not set the news agenda for hundreds of thousands of people, they are not tracked by the site. Nevertheless, any time a newspaper stops publishing it removes a vital community resource.

When people lament the decline of newspapers, it is not only the ink on paper they worry about. The loss of news-gathering staff and editors hurts democracy because our political system is built on the assumption that citizens need information to make informed decisions, to vote and to communicate with elected officials. In the United States, the professional news media are under attack by politicians, particularly those on the extreme right. As the song goes, "You don't know what you've got 'til it's

gone." Mistrust of the free press leads to the destruction of free speech and the erosion of personal liberty.

Journalists gather information at a pre-planned news event by Esther Vargas, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

In the book *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write of the clampdown on the media in Soviet-influenced Poland in 1981. The Polish government declared martial law and stopped the free broadcast of news, replacing it with state-controlled media. When the state media shows came on, people protested by walking their dogs to city parks and discussing current events. They also used video cameras to create their own documentaries. They used journalism made by regular people, known as **citizen journalism**, to express their desire for freedom and to stay informed. Kovach and Rosenstiel argue that the Polish people used journalism to support democratic liberty.

It should not have to come to this in America. Free speech and the norms of professional journalists are worthy of popular protection. We live in a digital media environment awash with information. Only a portion of the messages on social media come from professional news organizations that work to reinforce their stories with balanced fact-seeking and fact-checking. Preserving carefully reported, factual news is in the interest of the republic. The **slow journalism** movement seeks to protect accuracy and care in journalism. Consider learning more about this form of news: It is both a professional movement within the mass communication field and a social movement.

News Norms

As was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, **news norms** are the standards that guide professional journalists. The term "norm" refers to a behavior that rational people agree is (or should be) considered normal in society. Journalists are open about their information sources. When they do not disclose the name of a source, they explain as much about the person as they can and they explain why they are not able to say more. Journalists have two major truth strategies that they employ: **objectivity and transparency**. The objectivity norm refers to efforts to keep individual biases out of the published news and to consider the information presented by sources with an open mind during the information gathering process. No one is completely objective, and no news outlet is, either. Note the difference, however, between opinion content and news content coming from news organizations.

Newspapers will often publish opinions, and this is within the norms of journalism so long as it is labeled as such and it presents a fact-based opinion. Differentiating between opinion content and news content can be difficult for audience members. It is the responsibility of news organizations to explain what they are doing. This is the transparency news norm put into action. Demonstrating **transparency** in information gathering and publishing requires showing audiences how the news is made. In some cases, it even means inviting audience members to join in the process

of reporting professional news stories. Transparency goes beyond presenting two or more extreme points of view on a news topic and calling it fair. Instead, journalists explain the epistemology of news, or how they know what they know. The evolution of news norms is in part a response to the challenges audience members face in trying to figure out whom to trust.

Evolving Ethics

Another norm in newspapers and digital journalism that is rapidly changing is the absolute separation of news and advertising. It used to be called the separation of "church and state" in news: Keeping advertising influence apart from news judgment was as essential to the practice as was the actual separation of church and state in American governance. To retain an objective point of view when covering a community, journalists often tried to ignore news organization revenues and their sources. Now, as news organizations become smaller, journalists often have to be aware of advertisers' identities and their interests in particular audiences. Journalists have to care about the business.

A man glances over his newspaper and his glasses by Nicolas Alejandro, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

It goes against codes of ethics to publish news information in direct support of an advertiser, but journalists are increasingly paying attention to what stories and topics are popular. Reactions to this development vary widely. To some, this is the death of ethics in the industry. To others, the idea that advertising and journalism were ever completely separate is a joke. Advertisers, at least in local news environments, are community businesses. They are stakeholders just as other readers are. They should be included as sources of information and opinion. At issue is how much power local businesses should wield, when they should be able to wield it, and whether anyone is harmed when they do. The calculus should perhaps be different for national news organizations who are swayed by huge multinational firms when journalists pay too much attention to the wishes of advertisers.

The concern under this new ethical line of thinking for local journalism is that now advertisers will hold even more sway than they did in the past because revenues are down and news organizations are looking somewhat desperately to sustain the work. Journalists have to work to build audiences without falling into sensationalism and without allowing advertiser influence on news content. It is a daily battle, but it will likely be essential for news organizations moving forward. Appealing to audiences, however, does not mean choosing partisan favorites and feeding audiences what they want. This is a recipe for allowing bad faith into professional news content.

Cable News, Bias and Polarization

The rise of partisan cable news channels has helped to create **echo chambers** where news consumers can find and then primarily rely on information that confirms their biases. Social media algorithms

also feed echo chambers by showing us more content from people we already agree with. These algorithms tend to serve us content resembling what we have already enjoyed in the past, thereby creating a **filter bubble**. All in all, this makes it a challenge for us to consider other points of view. Combined, echo chambers and filter bubbles in a partisan information environment can create separate realities depending on the politics of groups being served.

The hyper-partisan, divided media landscape creates a problem for news organizations striving to be objective. No matter how they report the news, the facts they present may seem to run contrary to the misinformation or highly-opinionated information people are used to seeing on their social media feeds. This is not to equate misinformation with opinion content. The two are not equivalent. Deeply-held opinions can still be based on facts. Misinformation is dangerous because it is presented in bad faith. That is, the people presenting the information know it is not true and present it regardless. This is several steps beyond having an opinion. This is lying. It happens in echo chambers and sometimes bleeds into otherwise objective news outlets disguised as an equal side of a partisan argument.

A reporter with 2M TV prepares to speak with Maj. Gen. David R. Hogg, U.S. Army Africa commander, at the Marrakech Security Forum in Marrakech, Morocco, by Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Davis, U.S. Army, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

What is lost when news consumers fail to think critically about the news and opinion information presented to them is not only the prestige of the newspaper and digital news industry but also the shared narrative. People used to disagree with different opinions being presented in the news, but they generally agreed that what they saw on the news was actually happening. Audiences could disagree on prioritization of information and they could take issue with the frames applied to the news without questioning whether anything and everything was "fake." Now there is a tendency to trust what is emotionally appealing rather than what is rationally argued or factually accurate. The problem with this should immediately be obvious to anyone following 21st-century American news and politics. People are swayed by passion and opinion, and it is incredibly easy to feel informed by consuming massive amounts of information from social media streams even if those streams are filtered to appeal to our emotions.

People are often overwhelmed when trying to rationally comprehend constant flows of emotional information. The challenge for news consumers is to build and select the best filters. We must take an active role in filtering our own information rather than allowing social media and search engine algorithms to reassure us constantly. It has always been a citizen's responsibility to be informed. It has never been easier to find information. It has also never been more difficult to navigate information flows, to borrow a concept from noted sociologist Manuel Castells. The idea that we live in an environment of information flows is meant to differentiate our information environment from previous ones where the spread of information was not both instantaneous and massive. Before the

global spread of the publicly available high-speed internet access and near constant access to mobile data we had to seek out information. Now, it envelops us. Instead of pulling information into our lives like water onto dry land, we are up to our necks in information and few of us are strong swimmers.

The Importance of Journalism

The good news is that teaching people to be media literate can do something to mitigate this situation. This may be an essential role of journalists in the future. The challenge for contributing to an informed society is no longer to bring people new information but rather to help people to navigate information flows. If the task previously was to source and carry potable water for people, the job of journalists in the future may be to help people navigate oceans of saltwater themselves until we can find fresh water together.

Newspapers and their digital counterparts do not seem poised to do this work alone. The loss of jobs in the past 20 years has been devastating. Local television news outlets are often trusted more than national news outlets. If nothing else, audiences can see that the people delivering our news live in the same community, root for the same sports teams and are subject to the same weather and traffic. Generally speaking, though, local television stations do not employ nearly the number of reporters that newspapers did when they were strong.

Yanjun Zhao, Patrick Howe, Paul Fontaine, Lisa Lynch, Juliette De Maeyer, Claudia Silva, and Alex Avila at speak at the 2014 ISOJ on the UT-Austin campus, Apr. 4, 2014 by Gabriel Cristóver Pérez of the Knight Center, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

The bread and butter for local television news is breaking news and events coverage. Reporting consistently on in-depth issues takes resources and will require a shift in focus for most local television news outfits. Investigative journalism in television newsrooms is on the rise, but having an I-team is not the same as having a half dozen reporters covering City Hall, the statehouse, the local education scene and the business community. Local general assignment television reporters often get *their* news from newspapers. Television reporters then look to update a story beyond what was published in the newspaper. The term for this is **intermedia agenda setting**, and it has been seen at the national level as well as the local level. For television stations to capitalize on the trust audiences have and help them navigate the information environment, the industry will have to evolve quickly.

Digital news organizations will also try to pick up the slack. In the 21st century, we have seen the rise of news organizations originating on the Web or as mobile apps. The challenge for BuzzFeed, Vox and other online news operations is to be taken seriously and to maintain strong enough revenues to stay afloat. The digital media environment is notorious for being good for Google and Facebook and bad for everyone else. We continue to examine alternate revenue sources besides advertising. Students

interested in being well informed are encouraged to subscribe to the digital versions of their local trusted news outlets.

The Future of Digital News

The future of newspapers and digital news organizations, including the future of broadcast news (as it will be the next to be affected by digital convergence), may be to have news outlets splitting themselves into two-headed monsters. They must keep up with breaking news and be where audiences are in the network society to serve as guides in the sea of information, and they must also be socially responsible community members serving as a check on power by doing original in-depth reporting.

Tools such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Adobe Analytics, and others help newsrooms track how they are reaching audiences. The threat is that these tools will direct newsrooms rather than the news information itself being each organization's compass. As a vast industry, journalism can serve with a renewed sense of purpose if it orients itself to guide rather than lecture media consumers. People eventually learn when they have been lied to, and we have the ability to create a record of who told the truth and who did not. In order to hold people's attention, we need to perform the services they need most.

10

Advertising, Public Relations and Propaganda

Don Draper seeing a ghost. Photo illustration by Bill Strain, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

"What you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons." — Don Draper, fictional advertising executive from the AMC series *Mad Men*

Think Critically about Where Persuasion Becomes Propaganda

Advertising is a relatively straightforward process, right? Companies develop brands and specific products they want to sell. They need to make consumers aware of their brands, products and those products' features, so they develop creative campaigns to promote them and often pay ad agencies to do the creative work and place the ads in front of mass audiences. The basic definition of **advertising** is a message or group of messages designed with three intentions: to raise awareness in the population about brands, products and services; to encourage consumers to make purchases; and, ultimately, to inspire people to advocate for their favorite brands. A **brand advocate** is someone who is so supportive of a product or service that they publicly encourage others to buy it. There are paid brand advocates, of course, but in a networked communication environment, even unpaid individuals with modest followings can become **influencers —** people who promote products on their social media streams. Consumers who have been so successfully persuaded to purchase and enjoy a product that they try to persuade others to buy it too extend the reach of advertising potentially exponentially.

A **company** is a business entity that produces several types of product, whereas a **brand** is a term used to label a specific product or a limited family of products. It is important to differentiate between the two. For example, PepsiCo owns the Pepsi brand but also Frito Lay, Gatorade and Quaker, among others. Under the Pepsi brand, there are several products such as Diet Pepsi, Pepsi Wild Cherry and many other variations around the world. Advertising most often focuses on brands and products rather than the companies and large corporations that own them.

As this chapter progresses, it defines the core concept of advertising in more depth. Then, it discusses the history of advertising. It defines two general strategies or approaches known as "above-the-line" and "below-the-line" advertising before examining in detail the "advertising funnel," or "purchase

funnel." A few other basic theories are introduced. There are sections on content marketing and other forms of persuasion. The big picture of marketing is briefly addressed before the chapter concludes with sections on public relations and propaganda.

Advertising Defined

On one level, advertising is a simple concept. Mass media professionals craft messages to help sell products by raising awareness and pushing people to make actual purchase decisions, but in the network society and the age of targeted marketing, the ability to reach individual consumers who fit precise sets of characteristics is incredible. More is expected of advertisers than to put interesting messages in front of the "right people" based on general demographics. Brands may advertise during certain TV shows or publications to reach a particular type of media consumer. This more traditional form of mass media advertising is still a multibillion-dollar industry, but with data-driven targeting capabilities, brands can reach people based not only on general demographic characteristics but on specific behaviors as well. The combination of detailed demographic information, search and digital media usage behaviors and physical world behaviors (such as whether someone has entered a Walmart or Macy's in the past week) makes advertising in the information age more powerful, sometimes more meaningful and often more ethically questionable than in the past. The level of targeting that is possible is incredible and would have been unimaginable 20 years ago. Advertising has always been about tapping into consumers' existing needs or about creating a need and inserting a product to fill it. Now, there is a greater ability than ever to identify and create a need not only for interested members of a mass audience but also for specific individuals in real time based on their online and physical world behavior.

The History of Advertising

Before delving into a discussion about the future of advertising, it might help to survey the history of the field. Advertising in the modern sense emerged between the mid-19th and early-20th centuries. At the same time that the concept of brands was developing, mass-media platforms such as daily newspapers and radio broadcasts grew their audiences and spread their influence geographically. Corporations, conveniently, grew large enough to have massive budgets to spend on advertising. The promotion of products dates back thousands of years, but the modern advertising explosion tracks explosive growth in industrial manufacturing from roughly the mid-1800s through the entire 20th century.

STARK TREES BEAR
The Experience of Others is a good thing to go by, if it is actual, not manufactured, which is so often dealt out to confiding planters by "paper nurseries."
A Test of Good Trees.
Cheap (?) Trees.
Stark Trees stand the winters
Stark Trees or None.
Stark Trees Are Known the World Over—7000 Miles.
7000 Miles.
A Journey of 12,000 Miles.
Stark Trees in the North.
Burbank's Five Greatest Creations

Early newspaper ad for Stark Trees from the Boston Public Library Collection, public domain. Source: Flikr.

HubSpot has a deck of 472 slides that presents a narrative about the history of advertising. Some highlights are referenced here. One key point made in this visual history is that non-branded newspaper ads would often outnumber branded ads in the early days of the newspaper industry. As uniformity in mass-produced goods became the norm and brand differentiation became possible, so did the need to communicate it.

Ayer & Son is credited with being the first ad agency to work on commission. In other words, it is known as the first modern ad agency. It was founded in Philadephia in 1869. Today there are about 500,000 ad agencies in the world of all shapes and sizes. They employ ever-evolving techniques to try to stay ahead of information weary consumers.

Categorizing Advertising Methods

From the mid-20th century on, advertisers conceptualized their work by breaking it down into one of two strategic categories: "above-the-line" and "below-the-line" methods. Put simply, "above the line" (ATL) refers to methods of advertising that target mass audiences on mass media platforms with messages usually designed from a one-to-many point of view. Often, "above the line" implies that the ad or **ad campaign** — a series of related ads meant to work in tandem — appears on legacy media platforms. (Recall that "legacy media" has been defined previously in this text to refer to platforms in existence before the transition to digital.) ATL campaigns most often include television, radio and print ads as well as sponsorships. A **sponsorship** is when a company pays to support an event or a mass media production in exchange for having its brand promoted alongside the activity or content. The organizing concept for ATL advertising, as the term is used today, is that the ads target a mass audience primarily on "legacy" media platforms.

Billboards clutter the roadway in Leakey, Texas. Photo by Marc St. Gil, public domain work of the EPA. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

"Below the line" (BTL) advertising refers to more one-on-one marketing approaches which can include targeted social media campaigns, direct mail marketing, point-of-sale ads, coupons and deals, and email and telemarketing appeals. This is not an exhaustive list of ATL or BTL methods, but these examples demonstrate that ATL has more in common with the concept of mass communication introduced in earlier chapters, and BTL has more in common with interpersonal communication, also as previously discussed. This is not to say that BTL

messages are crafted one at a time for individual consumers. Rather, the tone, style and method of dissemination of BTL advertising are more personal.

In the 20th century, the term ATL advertising was associated with ad agency work (mostly mass media campaign ads), whereas BTL advertising referred to pamphlets, point-of-sale marketing and other relatively "small" tasks that ad agencies typically did not handle. Now, there are ad agencies of all sizes, and even very large agencies might do BTL marketing. Online advertising and social media marketing have made it possible to target people with personal messages but still purchase the ads on a massive scale. Thus, advertising can be **massively individuated —** that is, produced for mass audiences but having the appearance of personalized messages — much like social media content. The profit in BTL marketing comes from reaching large audiences with tailored messages at specific times in relation to their previous purchasing and shopping behaviors. So much data exists on individual users and on the behavior of similar people who have made similar purchases that advertisers can try to target people at precisely the right moment to influence their purchase decisions.

ATL and BTL advertising can work hand in hand. Think of a summer soft drink promotion advertised on television and on the radio (ATL) that is also backed up with neighborhood-specific billboards and hyper-targeted Twitter messages with surprise prizes given out (BTL). BTL messages still reach large numbers of people, but they are by definition more tailored than ATL ads. An individual ad in a BTL context may not cost as much as a massive ad buy facilitated by an agency that primarily does ATL advertising; however, BTL advertising can still be costly for advertisers and profitable for ad agencies in the aggregate. For example, an ad agency that does not typically manage multimillion-dollar television ad buys might still put together hundreds of thousands of dollars in targeted social media ads. Rather than displaying one commercial for several months, the BTL social media campaign might be made up of dozens of targeted videos, tweets, influencer posts and online ads. Often software algorithms are used to decide who sees which targeted ad and when.

The Advertising Funnel and Other Key Concepts

At its heart, advertising is a matter of raising *awareness*, creating a deeper *interest* in a product, and encouraging consumers to *desire* to make a purchase and ultimately to take *action*. Professional communicators tailor messages in relation to the advertising funnel or **purchase funnel**, as shown in the image on the left. Brands, either on their own or with the help of advertising agencies, target audiences in different ways at specific points along the funnel to reach their strategic goals. For example, if an unknown brand launches a new product, people need to be made aware of both the brand and product. The brand may need to establish itself with an awareness campaign. If Nike introduces a new Air Jordan, the branding is easily handled. The top of the funnel areas of awareness and interest will not need as much focus as the decision and action areas, the "down funnel" aspects of a campaign for a well-known and well-loved brand.

Simple graphic representation of the purchase funnel. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Another way to think of this is as a pathway a potential customer makes, also known as the **consumer journey**. First, the consumer needs to be made aware of the brand and its products. Then, they might take an interest in a particular product as they learn more about its features. They need to move from being interested to desiring a product if they are going to make the purchase. Ultimately, from the advertiser's point of view, the goal is not only to move the consumer to purchase the product but also to inspire them to advocate for the brand. This is not conceptually complicated. The idea is to move people in straightforward steps toward desired behaviors; however, there are complex processes of cognition and persuasion that underlie consumer decisions.

Consumer behavior is about as unpredictable as other forms of human behavior. There are also ethical concerns. If a product or service proves to be harmful, advertisers and public relations professionals have to decide if and when they will stop marketing the brand. Advertising is challenging enough when products do not raise ethical dilemmas. Promoting harmful products can be damaging socially, professionally and personally. Thus, the world of consumer advertising in the mass media is more complex than the funnel makes it seem, although it is an essential strategic model in the industry. There are two other advertising concepts or theories that this text aims to introduce: the basic rule of seven and the third-person effect.

The Rule of Seven

The advertising **rule of seven** is a rule of thumb, or what social scientists call a heuristic, which suggests that people need to see an advertisement seven times before they act on it. Even then, there is no guarantee that seeing something seven times will *compel* a person to buy a certain product, vote for a particular politician or take any other consumer action. Instead, the point is that consistent messaging is a base requirement for advertising to work.

The number 7 painted above goods entrance to old Carlton United Brewery, Victoria Street, Melbourne, Australia. Photo by Chris Samuel, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

The purchase decision is ultimately a personal one. You can create the conditions and increase the probability of a product being bought, but it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to predict behaviors

based on messaging. Even the most successful advertising and propaganda campaigns only constitute one area of influence on behavior. As previously stated in this text, social institutions such as your family, friends, church and workplace can influence your behavior in tandem with or contrary to what you see and hear in the mass media.

The Third-Person Effect

There is a theory in the study of mass communication called the third-person effect that says we tend to think advertising is effective but we believe that it does not affect *us*. Note here that social science theories are based on many observable facts. This is not a flight of fancy. Rather, this is a tested theory demonstrated in multiple studies. Here is how the third-person effect works with regard to advertising: You might think upon seeing a clever advertisement, "Sure, that ad probably got someone *else* to buy the product, but it doesn't influence *me*. I'm a savvy shopper. I don't just go out and buy whatever ads tell me to buy. I'm not Homer Simpson looking at billboards."

And yet we do know that advertising works at least to influence behavior. It has measurable effects on attitudes, that is, what people think about brands. Advertising influences brand and product awareness in individuals and in groups. We can say with a degree of certainty that some people are directly influenced by some ads some of the time, and we can say that many people are *indirectly* influenced by ads almost all of the time. For example, you may not drink Coke Zero, but you probably know what it is, and you may know that it is now called Coke Zero Sugar after a name change in 2017. Whether you understand the logic behind the name change or you actually buy the soft drink is another question. Campaigns to make consumers *aware* of new brands and products have a track record of widespread but still limited success.

Now here is what's interesting about the third-person effect. Knowing that advertising can influence people's awareness and purchase decisions, we tend to develop a sort of **double delusion** where we think other people are probably affected more than they are, and we think we are influenced less than we are. Sometimes we even base our behavior on what we think other people will do after receiving a message in the mass media. It works like this: We hear a message that a winter storm is coming, and we worry that other people will be easily influenced by that news. That *worry* and not the original message may influence our behavior. The author of the original study noted that if there is news of a possible shortage, people sometimes buy up that item at grocery stores. This has happened as recently as 2008. Rice futures went up and up out of fear that people were stockpiling rice. So, what did people do? They stockpiled rice. Costco and Sam's Club even put limits on the number of large bags of rice people could purchase.

How does the bread and milk effect work? Following the third-person effect theory, an individual hears about a storm coming to the East Coast of the United States. He thinks that *other people* are going to feel the need to go out and buy up all of the bread and milk, so, aware of the threat and concerned about *their* behavior, he goes out and buys bread and milk. Now the concern has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. People are, in fact, buying up the bread and milk. The question is whether they are buying it up because they are unduly influenced by messages in the mass media, or they

are responding out of fear of how other people will behave. You can imagine other people foolishly thinking a winter storm is going to be worse than it is and you can think to yourself you had better buy the bread and milk before those fools, but to them, you have become the fool.

Three-person horse graffiti. Photo by Seth de L'Isle, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

The third-person effect is also a major issue in race relations and partisan politics. We often presume that we *know* how individuals from other groups will think because we have seen messages in the media and we presume to know how the "other" will respond. The third-person effect is based on three presumptions. First, we assume that other people have seen the messages we have. Then, we presume that they will be influenced by those messages. Finally, we presume that they will behave in certain ways because of the message and because of our preconceptions about different groups. For the theory to work, it does not matter if the "other" is Democrats, Republicans, frat bros, Mexican people, snobby professors or slacker college students. Our assumptions can be completely wrong and we may still find ourselves acting in ways to pre-empt or counteract the imagined behavior of the imagined "other." There are different degrees of the third-person effect. Researchers have found it is probably strongest in situations where groups have little understanding of one another and where the messages and perceived outcomes are thought to be negative (note the section on Perloff). This is not to overstate the third-person effect. Like other theories related to persuasion in the mass media the behavioral influences it identifies have to contend with other social forces to influence behavior. Still, it is one of the most interesting theories in the field of mass communication, and it can explain why people race out to buy a certain product when they perceive it to be scarce. We do not want anyone to beat us to the bread and milk.

Content Marketing

Content marketing refers to a common practice where brands produce their own content, or hire someone else to produce it, and then market that information as an alternative to advertising. It still moves people along the purchase funnel, but there is usually added value in this type of content. If an advertisement for a mattress describes its features and price, a blog funded by the mattress brand might compare the pros and cons of many different mattresses, perhaps with a bias for the brand. It isn't always pretty. Content produced for a brand should ethically be labeled as sponsored, but it is not always done. In cases when consumers have discovered that trusted sources were content marketers rather than independent reviewers, the revelations have created public relations problems for the brands. Content marketing done ethically offers financial transparency while providing valuable information and an emotional connection to the product for consumers. It can take the form of blog posts or entire blogs. Such marketing is usually optimized for search engines, which is to say the posts are written to attract search engine attention as well as outside links, which also alerts search

engines that this content is valuable. Done well, branded content can be seen as more authentic than advertising content, and it can be cheaper to produce and disseminate. It is difficult to do well, of course.

The most common types of content created in this context besides blog content are social media profiles and posts, sponsored content in social media spaces and even viral video and meme chasing. Brands might have their own social media profiles, or they might support social media influencers to promote their products in a sponsored way. Brands might also use their influencer teams or their own internal marketing teams to follow viral social media trends and to create memes. In a sense, content marketing allows a brand to create a more human profile in digital spaces. In this manner, brands can engage with potential and repeat customers. Brands can foster relationships and encourage brand advocacy among people not being paid to promote their products. Many brands use this form of marketing to engage consumers on a deep level and to offer information and emotion that might not be present in other forms of advertising.

Marketing Disambiguated

The more you study the bigger picture of **marketing —** which includes advertising strategies and other research efforts meant to guide advertising strategies as part of larger sales and production strategies—the more you recognize how focused advertising is. It may seem that advertising is the biggest, most important element of the mass communication industry because its revenues fuel other types of mass media production, but advertising is only one piece of the marketing puzzle. **Marketing's four P's —** often described as product, price, place and promotion (or position) **—** encompass much more than making messages to support brands and products. Marketing professionals worry about all four and consider advertising as just one part of the promotion category. Advertising professionals will often argue that the best branding helps define and redefine the product over time so that the product only exists in consumers' minds as advertising has described it, but marketing gets into the business of deciding what products to make, how to promote them, whom to market them to and when to stop making them.

HubSpot, the advertising company that provided the quick history of advertising early on in this chapter also gets credit for helping to popularize **inbound marketing**. The idea of inbound marketing is that you bring people in to learn about your product using content marketing and then you can make sales to them in the context of a relationship where they found you rather than vice versa. In a sense, inbound marketing turns advertising upside down by building spaces and inviting consumers *in* to find what they are already looking for rather than trying to create a need *out* of the glut of information in digital communication networks. Inbound marketing is advertising's answer to de-massification. It involves developing consistent messages and content of uses that are so compelling people will come to the brand to experience them. It is the audience-building aspect of advertising. It relates in many ways to the superbug media concept from previous chapters, and it is growing in popularity as people and companies develop new and better ways of avoiding advertising.

An established method of inbound marketing is to write a blog or develop a podcast that attracts

audiences who come for information and who stay for the delicious products. To fully understand the power of inbound marketing, ask yourself if you have ever become a brand advocate. Have you ever sung the praises of your new smartphone or told people they had to try a new restaurant? If you have advocated for a brand and sent people looking for it online, you have probably become part of someone's inbound marketing strategy. In many ways, marketing (particularly content marketing) bridges the concepts of advertising and public relations because it includes content production similar to advertising and it establishes relationships with consumers, which is the ultimate purpose of PR.

Public Relations

The history of the public relations field is often misunderstood. Many think of public relations as organized manipulation made up of corporate, political and even non-profit propaganda. It is often thought of as deception, but this is not always the case. In a society fueled by networked communications, it is becoming less important to ask what messages people receive and more important to ask what messages they seek out, according to Greg Jarboe, author of a brief history of PR. Jarboe worked for a PR firm with offices in San Francisco and Boston, two of the most well-established technology markets in the country. He argues that PR is more about creating a sense of understanding between consumers and brands and that this might be done just as well by the brand in digital spaces just as it is via other mass media channels controlled by other corporate entities. Historically, PR depended on other media platforms such as TV, newspapers and magazines to promote its content. Content marketing means this is no longer the case. Mass media platforms may still be needed to reach mass audiences outside of a brand's collection of fans and followers, but much goodwill can be generated by maintaining a proactive, positive and professional digital presence.

While it is true that PR often tries to put a good face on companies with all manner of reputations and harmful business practices, it also serves charities, governmental services and small local businesses. Not every institutional organization can have a huge PR budget, but the practices can be taught to just about any small business owner.

The History of PR and Propaganda

At the core of PR is a simple model developed by Harold Lasswell in the 1940s. Developing an effective PR model was an important war effort during World War II when it was essential to develop theories for how propaganda worked to determine what the Nazis were doing and, if possible, how their propaganda could be stopped. Lasswell's model asked five simple questions: *who* (Sender) sent *what* (Message) through which *channel* (Channel) to which *audience* (Receiver) and with what *effect.* This was a way of breaking down mass influence beyond advertising. In a sense, governmental propaganda is PR, but the client is a country. The **S-M-C-R model** (often attributed in that particular configuration to Berlo) is the most efficient model for understanding how to break down and analyze messages in the mass media.

"Communication" by Jonny Hughes, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

Professionals and academics examine and manipulate all four components to isolate which changes correlate with which behavioral effects. S-M-C-R assumes that the sender comes first and the receiver comes last. There is a time element that must be established in researching the effects of mass-mediated messages, but the point is that this simple model of propaganda became the basis for all sorts of media effects studies. Propaganda and PR messaging does not work immediately to bring about drastic changes in behavior. Behavioral phenomena, particularly *changes in behavior,* are driven by many variables, as we have discussed several times; however, if you want to begin to look at an advertising campaign, film or news documentary to examine its effects, this is the model to start with.

Noise must be accounted for, and in an age dominated by the digital information glut, the opportunity for immediate feedback and engagement must also be considered. Receivers almost immediately become senders in a network. Thus, the S-M-C-R model will often include measures looking at how much noise gets into the system and looking at what happens when receivers immediately start their own S-M-C-R processes. Wherever a message originates, even if it is as simple as clicking "Share" on Facebook, the S-M-C-R model starts again.

More Concepts in PR

For most of the 20th century, the shorthand definition of PR was that it was like advertising only instead of paying a media outlet to run a message, you sent the message out to journalists and other **gatekeepers** (see Chapter 9) in the hopes that they would share the information as news. Now, PR has to work in a digital media system where news reporters and editors are not the major gatekeepers deciding what information will be made public. PR professionals now need to think about search algorithms, search engine optimization, social media trends, social media platform algorithms, social media influencers and social link sharing sites such as Reddit. Publicity on these channels can be worth tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. PR often measures its worth in **earned media —** the amount of free air time on TV or space in major newspapers and magazines that is earned by getting other mass media channels to tell your product's stories without having to pay for ad space

An example of earned media is when Apple released a new iPhone, and news organizations provided coverage of the lines that wrapped around city blocks as people waited for the latest gadget. For years, Apple earned millions of dollars in earned media by keeping new features a secret and then releasing new iPhones with considerable hype. Free marketing time and space in digital and print publications can help push a brand from being a leader to being legendary. Global PR is a $14 billion industry.

PR can take the form of an event, a product placement, or a skillfully crafted message delivered during

a crisis. It is much less about promoting specific brands and more about promoting and maintaining the image of a brand, company or large corporation. Recall that advertising tends to focus on brands and products. PR can focus on the company and the **corporate narrative**, the story of how the company came to exist and how it represents certain values and ideals — at least in theory.

Sometimes it helps us to understand an element of mass media if we discuss when it all goes wrong. When British Petroleum (BP) had an oil gusher erupt in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, 11 people died, and more than three million barrels of oil leaked into the gulf. It took almost three months to cap the oil gusher. The CEO of BP, Anthony Bryan "Tony" Hayward, lost his job because he made a major PR blunder when he said he just wanted his "life back." Eleven people were dead. The fishing and tourism industries of Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Texas, ravaged by hurricanes just years before, were being threatened again. This time, though, Mother Nature was not to blame. It was BP, a multinational corporation that up to that point had been working to create a more environmentally friendly image. It took BP years to come back from that disaster, and it was made worse because of poor crisis communications. PR is about promoting good relationships with your consumers, your employees and the communities where your products are made. It is about earning "free" news and social media coverage, but perhaps most importantly it is about managing crises so that people are not given a reason *not* to buy your products.

Crisis Management

The best way to build good PR is to carefully maintain a good reputation over time and to avoid behaviors as an individual, company or corporation that might harm others. The best prevention against bad PR is to follow your industry's and your own ethical codes at all times, whatever they are. Even if you do this, you might face a PR crisis. For example, a politician might decide to target your brand regardless of whether your business practices are ethical. All the more reason to maintain good longstanding relationships with your consumers.

"War on the bullshit!" graffiti in London. Photo by Duncan Hull, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

The first rule of crisis communications is to plan ahead by anticipating the kinds of problems your company might have. Chemical companies should prepare for chemical spills. Sports teams will probably not prepare for environmental disasters, but they may have to prepare for the social media scandals that players sometimes land themselves in. If there is a disaster, the advice is to "be truthful and transparent," to not say too much and to correct any exaggerations that emerge in the news media and on social media, within reason. Engaging in social media arguments is almost never productive for a brand, unless you have Wendy's level of Twitter clapback. A major goal of PR efforts during a crisis is to try to make people forget there ever was a crisis.

Journalists often have the opposite interest because reporting on conflict is interesting. Helping people to survive is one of the primary functions of journalism. This explains why negative news gets so much more attention than positive news. No one dies when people do their jobs salting the roads and drivers maneuver safely in snowstorms. When people crash, that, sadly, is news. Journalists know that people care about safety perhaps more than any other issue, so they focus on safety concerns during times of crisis. At these times, PR and journalism can be at odds, but truth and transparency are still advisable to the PR professional. You do not legally have to tell journalists everything that has happened (depending on the circumstances and whether your institution is funded by taxpayers), but if journalists discover a negative impact that you failed to disclose, they will wonder what else you are hiding, and they may give your critics and detractors extra consideration and attention.

PR professionals work to manage story framing. (Recall that framing was defined in Chapter 9.) PR pros often work with journalists to cover negative stories with clarity and honesty rather than trying to hide the facts about a crisis. Finally, in PR there is the need to learn from mistakes and to analyze a company or corporation's crisis responses. As difficult as it might be to go back and discuss where communication failed, it is essential. Reflection is a critical step in learning and corporations are like any other social institution. They need to learn to survive and to thrive.

PR Wars

Besides the conflict during crisis situations between journalists and PR professionals, there are PR battles that go on between competing brands and between non-profits, corporations and government officials all the time. Lobbyists make demands on politicians but also push agendas on mass media and social media platforms. In an age of digital communication, it is cheap and easy to develop detailed, professional messages employing a variety of media types that PR pros can try to spread around the world instantaneously. You should be aware as an information consumer that there are ongoing battles for your allegiance. Corporations engage in PR combat all the time, though they often try to work undetected. This is not to claim conspiracy or to frighten readers. It is simply a matter of fact that PR efforts are ongoing and that attacks within these battles do not always take the form of headlines. They may come in the form of messages from Twitter bots, **botnets,** collections of fake social media profiles run by software or blogs, or email spam.

You can influence other people by what you read and share, and you are encouraged once again to be aware of where your news sources get *their* information. Read and think before you share. It has become easy for individuals and fake accounts to publish information into the world's information glut. Twitter and Instagram followers and Facebook friends can easily be bought. Major political influence is now wielded by fake accounts working to drum up anger and to promote misinformation to sway public opinion. Individual information consumers must take responsibility for their own consumption and for what they spread. Your media health is as important as your sexual health. Protect yourself and those you share information with.

What you need to be able to do is to consider a source, consider how it is presenting its message, and consider the source's sources. Media literacy is about what enters your mind: what stays in (that is,

what is **salient**) and what goes out. We are all publishers now. Media, society, and culture will always influence you to some degree, but they are also yours to try to control. Mass audiences may be in decline but entities who know how to build mass networks of users and how to successfully, if not always ethically, use their information are only starting to show their power.

Glossary

Ad campaign
a series of related ads meant to work in tandem.

Advertising
a message or group of messages designed with three intentions: to raise awareness in the population about brands, products and services; to encourage consumers to make purchases; and to inspire people to advocate for their favorite brands.

Appointment viewing
watching a show as it airs live at the same time every week or every day. This refers largely to a time before DVRs or VCRs when you had to catch a show live in order to see it. Appointment viewing is largely a thing of the past; however, the popularity of major shows and the frequency of live events are bringing back appointment viewing in limited ways. For example, people will view live sporting events as they happen, and people will try to watch new *Game of Thrones* episodes as soon as they air.

Binge-watching
consuming several hours of video content in a single viewing or in a very limited time frame.

Botnets
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 10.
computers programmed to create false social media accounts, websites and other digital properties.

Brand
a term used to label a specific product or a limited family of products.

Brand advocate
someone who is so supportive of a product or service that they publicly encourage others to buy it.

Bricolage
appears in Ch. 2 and Ch. 4
in the context of the praxis of digital culture, it means to "do it yourself," or to make a creative work on any media platform of your choosing using available tools and content. From the French and related to another French word, "collage."

Citizen journalist
appears in Ch. 2 and Ch. 9
a person who is not a paid professional but who delivers news to audiences nonetheless.

Collaborative television
a media phenomenon in which content producers work with the audience to produce, alter or enhance content, including to decide the outcomes of televised competitions.

Collective memory
the shared cultural memory of a group of people.

Common culture
the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a massive group of people at a certain time and place.

Communication
an exchange of meaning between people using symbols, which can include spoken, written or signed words as well as other nonverbal forms such as shared images and sounds.

Communication structure
a combination of information and communication technologies (ICTs), guidelines for using those technologies, and professional workers dedicated to managing information and messages.

Company
a business entity that produces several types of product.

Computer-mediated communication
messages conveyed using computers.

Consumer Journey
see "Purchase funnel"

Content marketing
a common practice where brands produce their own content, or hire someone else to produce it, and then market that information as an alternative to advertising.

Convergence
the process by which various types or formats of media (audio, video, text, animation and so forth) and the industries they are tied to merge on global computer and mobile network platforms.

Corporate narrative
the story of how the company came to exist and how it represents certain values and ideals — at least, this is how such stories are framed from a marketing point of view. Many corporate narratives are based only partly in fact.

Cultivation theory
a mass communication theory, which some argue is more of a hypothesis. It states that media effects build up over time and that through TV, video games and online media, the United States (and perhaps other cultures) is becoming a culture centered on violence that has devalued sex and succumbed to

hyper-consumerism. This is a contested theory. There is evidence of cultivation, but its mechanisms and its importance in the context of other social influences such as family, friends, churches and other institutional influences besides the mass media are not well developed from a theoretical standpoint.

Cultural norms
shared beliefs about the way things *ought* to be.

Culture
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2
the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group of people.

De-massification
the breakdown of mass media audiences. As the amount of information being produced and the number of channels and platforms on which news and other content can be disseminated grows exponentially, massive ready-made audiences are in decline.

Digital culture
the knowledge, beliefs and practices of people interacting on digital networks that may recreate tangible-world cultures or create new strains of cultural thought and practice native to digital networks.

Double delusion
this delusion is at the core of the third-person effect theory, wherein we think other people are probably affected more by advertising and other mass media content than they are, and we think we are influenced less than we are.

Dreck
trash.

Earned media
the amount of free air time on TV or space in major newspapers and magazines that is earned by getting other mass media channels to tell your product's stories without having to pay for ad space.

Echo chamber
a space in a communication platform, or a whole platform, where like-minded people congregate to speak only or mostly to one another.

Encoding
voluntarily or involuntarily paying attention to a message and its underlying symbols.

Entry point
a position in an industry that an individual can use to gain the experience needed to move up the career ladder.

Episodic media
a type of storytelling often used in radio and television in which shows usually feature a different story with each episode.

Filter bubble
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 9
a space or a set of habits using mass media and social media preferences where the user hears or sees almost exclusively the voices and information that they want to hear.

Folk culture
the cultural products borne out of everyday life with practical uses or purposes.

Gatekeeper
appears in Ch. 1, Ch. 3 and Ch. 10
as the concept relates to the study of mass communication, a gatekeeper is someone, professional or not, who decides what information to share with mass audiences and what information to leave out.

Gatewatching
when someone takes a message already published by professionals or amateurs and shares it for others to see.

Group culture
the phenomenon formerly referred to as a "subculture." It is the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a subset of people considered to be part of a larger culture. Group culture is distinct in some ways from the shared, broader common culture. Group culture might center on religious beliefs and practices, ethnic norms and interests, or food, music and other forms of material production.

High culture
arguably the best cultural material a society has to offer. Economic class often comes into play in defining what is "high culture" and what is not.

Inbound marketing
inviting customers into social media spaces or to view messages on other platforms so that the potential customer can experience your brand-related content in your territory, rather than going out and demanding their attention with more traditional forms of advertising.

Individualism
(as used here) refers not only to an individual's ability to act as their own publisher online but also to a social condition in which individuals are free from government control.

Influencers
people who promote products on their social media streams.

Information economy
an economic system where manufacturing and services still exist, but they are dependent upon information and communication technologies for strategic planning capabilities, transaction management, moving and storage of currency and the ability to automate tasks.

Intermedia agenda setting
related to the broader theory of agenda setting, it is the idea that many journalists, particularly in broadcast journalism, rely on other news media to set the agenda for them, which they then pass along to their audiences. In digitally networked communications, it has been noted that newspapers and their digital counterparts still generate much of the original reporting that then is spread through broadcast journalism and social media the world over.

Interpersonal communication
the exchange of meaning between two or more people on a personal, often one-on-one, level. Interpersonal communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Most often, it happens in face-to-face settings.

Intertextual media
mediated messages that combine various types of text into one. Texts are broadly defined here to include video, audio, animated, graphic and other forms of textual information.

Legacy media
media platforms that existed before the development of massive digital networks.

Limited capacity model
a theory that states that our cognitive abilities are limited, so we are unable to process all of the information that we see, hear and read.

Limited effects
a paradigm, which is to say a collection of mass communication theories based on thousands of empirical studies. All of these studies found in one way or another that the direct effects of messages or message campaigns on mass society are limited. This is not to say that the mass media are inconsequential, only that to directly influence the behavior of massive numbers of people via message campaigns is difficult in part because there are so many other social and cultural factors influencing behavior.

Marketing
a branch of the field of economics and also a practice which includes developing advertising strategies and other research efforts meant to guide advertising strategies as part of larger sales and production strategies. Put simply, it is the entire process of strategizing to sell a product.

Marketing's four P's
produce, price, place and promotion.

Mass communication
involves sharing meaning through symbolic messages to a broad audience from one source to many receivers.

Mass-mediated messages
usually professionally selected and produced messages on topics meant for widespread dissemination.

Massively individuated
content produced for mass audiences but having the appearance of personalized messages.

Media literacy
a term describing media consumers' understanding of how mass media work. Being media literate means knowing where different types of information can be found, who owns various mass media channels and products, how messages are produced and how they are framed to suit various interests.

Media studies
the broad category of academic inquiry analyzing and critiquing the mass media, its products, possible effects of messages and campaigns, and media history.

Metropolitan daily newspapers
newspapers that cover large cities or a few geographically connected smaller cities.

Modernity
in reference to art and other forms of cultural production, a purposeful break from the past.

News frame
the way a story is presented including which sources and facts are selected as well as the tone the story or message takes.

News norm
see "Norm"

Nickelodeon
a parlor or theater housing kinetoscopes, which were early machines used for viewing motion pictures. So named because kinetoscopes usually cost a nickel to play. Nickel + odeon, which itself is a classical term (Greek and Roman) for a building dedicated to singing or poetry productions.

Norm
appears in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2, as well as Ch. 9 as "news norms"
a behavioral standard. Professional norms are the written and unwritten rules guiding behavior decided on, and often contested by, people in a given field.

Objectivity

in news, this is a professional norm or normative practice that refers to efforts to keep individual biases out of the published news and to consider the information presented by sources with an open mind during the information gathering process. No one is completely objective, and no news outlet is, either; however, the guiding principle is to attempt to take personal and institutional biases out of news reporting.

Organizational communication
the symbolic exchange of messages carrying specific meaning for members belonging to formal organizations. In practical terms, it is the internal communication that helps governments, businesses, schools and hospitals to run.

Participation
in the context of the praxis of digital culture, a term indicating that everyone with access to the internet has the ability to contribute to new media products and platforms. Contributions could come in the form of text, photos, videos, audio clips, graphics or memes.

Penny press
the first mass medium. They were tabloid-style newspapers written for and read by working-class audiences. The small-sized pages were cheaper to produce and relatively easy to distribute.

Personal culture
the knowledge, beliefs and practices held most dear to an individual.

Platform
a digital space where creation may happen. For example, Facebook is a platform where people can communicate with friends, share content and see ads purchased on behalf of Russian intelligence officials. Facebook produces almost none of its own content. Instead, it brings people together to share the content they find and create. Reddit is a platform where news and image links are shared and voted on. It is a sort of platform popularity contest. In digital gaming, a digital platform is a space where people can create their own worlds or their own gaming experiences (Minecraft is a good example of this kind of digital space).

Pop culture
the vast array of cultural products that appeal to the masses.

Post-nationalism
in the context of a discussion of digital culture refers to the way one's country appears to matter less as an influence on behavior and values online than it does in the tangible world, perhaps because we can be free of our national identities when engaging in digital networks with people from around the globe. Note that the rise of online nationalism calls into question the validity of the argument that digital culture is post-nationalistic.

Purchase funnel

a conceptual model depicting different stages at which audiences can be reached with advertising messages. It progresses from the very broad Awareness phase through garnering Interest and creating the Desire for a product before finishing with Action, or closing the deal.

Remediation
old media products, concepts and practices presented in new ways on new platforms as new information and communication technologies (ICTs) make it possible.

Retrieved
according to the Limited Capacity Processing Model, the term used when ideas communicated to us are recalled when we wish to remember them.

Rule of seven
a rule of thumb, or what social scientists call a heuristic, in the advertising field that suggests that people need to see an advertisement seven times before they act on it.

S-M-C-R model of communication
a basic communication model indicating that all messages begin with a Sender, are conceived of as individual Messages, travel along a Channel and reach a Receiver. Models built on S-M-C-R also account for noise, which can confuse message transmission, and it must be noted in a networked communication environment it is quite easy for receivers to become senders instantaneously by clicking "share" or performing similar actions.

Salience
the acceptance of messages in the mass media as being true or, at least, worth remembering.

Second screen experience
consuming media on one platform (usually television) while interacting with the show, the show's producers or other fans on a second media platform such as social media or a voting website, in the case of contest shows such as *American Idol* or D*ancing with the Stars.*

Serialized media
a way of organizing stories in which an ongoing narrative with several threads is told in a series of episodes. Each episode, more or less, picks up where the last one left off. This form dates back to the serial publication of novels in the 19th century, but it has also been used in radio, television and podcasting.

Slow journalism
a movement in the field of journalism that aims to protect accuracy and care in journalism by prioritizing fact-finding above covering breaking news with speed and perhaps recklessness.

Social capital

the potential to get help, not limited to financial assistance, from the people in your social networks, in the tangible world and online, when needed.

Social responsibility
in the study of journalism ethics, social responsibility is a specific concept referring to the need for media organizations to be responsible for the possible repercussions of the news they produce.

Society
a very large group of people held together over time through formalized relationships. Relationships can be economic, legal, political, or some combination of these. Society may be viewed as a hierarchy where individuals come together in small groups which then join or form bonds to create larger, more formalized groups called institutions. A large enough collection of institutions can be said to form a society.

Sponsorship
when a company pays to support an event or a mass media production in exchange for having its brand promoted alongside the activity or content.

Stored
according to the Limited Capacity Processing Model, the term used when ideas communicated to us are recorded in our memories.

Superbug media products
podcasts, web series, independent news websites and other digital media products that survive and thrive in highly competitive environments with limited initial access to traditional media resources.

Symbolic interactionism
a communication theory stating that people assign symbolic meaning to phenomena around them. It suggests our behavior is guided and influenced by our perceptions of reality interpreted through symbols.

Transparency
as a normative news practice, it refers to showing audiences how the news is made. In some cases, it may even mean inviting audience members to join in the process of reporting professional news stories. Journalists who prioritize transparency over objectivity will strive to demonstrate to audiences how they know what they know rather than merely presenting two or three extreme points of view on a news topic and calling the news fair and balanced.

Voice-over
voiced information edited to accompany video such that the audio overrides the sound of the original video. Voice-overs can complement the video but do not necessarily reference it directly. As an editing technique, using voice-over is common in entertainment and video news production.

Accessibility Assessment

A note from the Rebus Community

We are working to create a new, collaborative model for publishing open textbooks. Critical to our success in reaching this goal is to ensure that all books produced using that model meet the needs of all students who will one day use them. To us, open means inclusive, so for a book to be open, it must also be accessible.

As a result, we are working with accessibility experts and others in the OER community to develop best practices for creating accessible open textbooks, and are building those practices into the Rebus model of publishing. By doing this, we hope to ensure that all books produced using the Rebus Community are accessible by default, and require an absolute minimum of remediation or adaptation to meet any individual student's needs.

While we work on developing guidelines and implementing support for authoring accessible content, we are making a good faith effort to ensure that books produced with our support meet accessibility standards wherever possible, and to highlight areas where we know there is work to do. It is our hope that by being transparent on our current books, we can begin the process of making sure accessibility is top of mind for all authors, adopters, students and contributors of all kinds on all our open textbook projects.

Below is a short assessment of eight key areas that have been assessed during the production process. The checklist has been drawn from the BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit. While a checklist such as this is just one part of a holistic approach to accessibility, it is one way to begin our work on embedded good accessibility practices in the books we support.

Wherever possible, we have identified ways in which anyone may contribute their expertise to improve the accessibility of this text.

We also welcome any feedback from students, instructors or others who encounter the book and identify an issue that needs resolving. This book is an ongoing project and will be updated as needed. If you would like to submit a correction or suggestion, please do so using the Rebus Community Accessibility Suggestions form.

Webbook Checklist

Area of focus	Requirements	Pass?
Organizing Content	Contents is organized under headings and subheadings	Yes
	Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g. Heading 1, heading 2, etc.)	Yes
Images	Images that convey information include Alternative Text (alt-text) descriptions of the image's content or function	Yes
	Graphs, Charts, and Maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image	Yes
	Images do not rely on colour to convey information	Yes
	Images that are purely decorative contain empty alternative text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information)	Yes
Tables	Tables include row and column headers	n/a
	Table includes title or caption	n/a
	Table does not have merged or split cells	n/a
	Table has adequate cell padding	n/a
Weblinks	The weblink is meaningful in context, does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more"	Yes
	Weblinks do not open new windows or tabs	Yes
	If weblink must open in a new window, a textual reference is included in the link information	n/a
Embedded Multimedia	A transcript has been made available for a multimedia resource that includes audio narration or instruction*	n/a
	Captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content are included in the multimedia resource that includes audio synchronized with a video presentation	n/a
	Audio descriptions of contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc) are included in the multimedia resource	n/a
Formulas	Formulas have been created using MathML	n/a
	Formulas are images with alternative text descriptions, if MathML is not an option	n/a
Font Size	Font size is 12 point or higher for body text	Yes
	Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes	Yes
	Font size can be zoomed to 200%	Yes

*Transcript includes:

- Speaker's name
- All speech content
- Relevant descriptions of speech

- Descriptions of relevant non-speech audio
- Headings and subheadings

Review Statement

Media, Society, Culture and You was produced with support from the Rebus Community, a non-profit organisation building a new, collaborative model for publishing open textbooks.

Critical to the success of this approach is including mechanisms to ensure that open textbooks produced with Rebus are high quality, and meet the needs of all students around the world who will one day use them. Rebus books undergo both peer review from faculty subject matter experts and beta testing in classrooms, where student and instructor feedback is collected.

This book was peer reviewed by six subject experts. Each chapter received a single-blind peer review from one reviewer, based on their area of expertise. Some reviewers reviewed more than one chapter. Reviewers included a mix of academics (professors and adjuncts), professionals (in higher education, with former expertise in academia), and institutional staff (deans and librarians).

Reviews were structured around considerations of the intended audience of the book, and examined the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and relevance of content. Reviews were also focused on relevance longevity, clarity, consistency, organization structure flow, grammatical errors, and cultural relevance. Changes suggested by the reviewers were incorporated on a chapter-by-chapter basis. The average number of amendments and edits was 30 per chapter. Dr. Poepsel submitted a document tracking how each edit was made to Rebus.

Part of Rebus' mission is to build vibrant, sustainable communities around the open textbooks it helps to publish. All our books are licensed CC BY, most are peer reviewed, and all can easily be adapted to better fit course needs. Each book, including *Media, Society, Culture and You*, is freely and easily accessible in a range of formats including web, ebook, PDF, and editable formats.

To encourage wider adoption and ensure the book's discoverability, Rebus lists each resource in repositories such as MERLOT (Multimedia Education Resource for Learning and Online Teaching), Open Textbook Library, BCcampus Library, and OER Commons, and shares the news about the book's availability within its community of academic librarians, faculty, administrators and OER advocates. To get a sense of the impact of Rebus supported open textbooks, consider *Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, the first book Rebus released in a related field (Journalism and Mass Communication). The book was released in August 2017 and has been adopted by 26 instructors since.

We are aiming for similar results once we begin promoting *Media, Society, Culture and You* later in 2018.

Among the key tenets we build into the open textbooks supported by Rebus Community are the 5Rs of open content, first developed by open education advocate David Wiley. Because these books are licensed CC BY, that means the book comes with inherent freedoms:

- Other faculty can not only adopt the book, but also adapt it (with attribution) – revising, remixing, and redistributing the work to meet their personalized classroom needs.
- These faculty can use parts of the book, or write new additions, which they can send back to the original creators if they would like. They can translate it into other languages, enabling international usage.
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- Students can interact with, comment on, annotate and leave feedback for the book using Hypothes.is, a web-based annotation tool, and in so doing, enable continuous iteration and conversation around the resource.

These freedoms are built into *Media, Society, Culture and You*, which enables the text to have an impact not just in Dr. Poepsel's classroom, but in classrooms nationally and around the world.

Dr. Poepsel and the team at Rebus would like to thank the review team for the time, care and commitment they contributed to the project. We recognize that peer reviewing is a generous act of service on their part. This book would not be the robust, valuable resource that it is were it not for their feedback and input.