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ALL AROUND THE WORLD SAME SONG:  
BLACKNESS, RACISM, AND POPULAR CULTURE IN CHINA  

ROBIN R. MEANS COLEMAN

This autoethnographic account of the author’s trip across mainland China explores the role popular culture plays in informing racial understandings and intercultural exchanges between two families, one African American and one White American, as well as between Chinese encountered along the journey. Specifically, this autoethnography works to expose moments when popular culture—music, music videos, dance, style, travel brochures, advertisements, film, and broadcast media — prompts cultural misunderstandings and fuels racial stereotypes. This study seeks to complicate extant scholarship on racial representations by considering how such popular culture forms translate in transnational contexts. It is argued here that the global circulation of raced discourses (re)produce complex, hierarchical notions of power and cultural worth.

Keywords: autoethnography, blackness, China, whiteness

“There is no racism in China because there are no Black people.” —A Chengdu University Student quoted in the Shanghai Star, April 17, 2003

Mainland China, February 2007

My husband, RC, and I enter a crowded food and sundries market on the rural outskirts of Xi’an. We are entranced by what to us, as urban-dwelling African Americans, is the unfamiliar spectacle of the place—from an elderly man with a small, razor-sharp knife

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quickly and methodically cutting the throats of live chickens to sell them under his bloodsplattered, blue plastic tarp, to a female adolescent hawking herbal remedies infused with ground “dragon bones.” However, on this day, it is neither the conditions under which chickens are slaughtered, nor the purported remnants of flying dragons that are on exhibition; today, as it has been for much of our stay in China, it is we who are on display. Our entrance into the market is greeted with shouting, pointing, and staring. “What are they saying?” I ask our guide Ting. She hesitates, self-censoring her response. Ting opts to plead ignorance, even as several dozen people begin to press in around us very clearly yelling something, something that is not in my Chinese-English dictionary or part of my limited Mandarin vocabulary.

A few dozen women walk behind me, and then reach around to my face to run their fingers quickly across my cheek or to give a quick pull of the tips of my long dreads. After this first, daring wave of curious women examine my Black body, more, and more, and more women rush up, reaching out in the hopes of doing the same—touching and pulling. Absolutely no one touches RC. For whatever reason RC is spared (gender discrimination perhaps?) from this moment of objectification, I feel as though he is the lucky one. Ready to bolt from this claustrophobic place, RC and I look for a way out of the market’s labyrinth. Finally, Ting shoos the women off, putting a stop to the drama. She explains to us that the women are not sure our skin is really our skin. Ting has given up on feigning incomprehension, and she now seems willing to talk about what we are experiencing. But I am unclear as to what she is trying to convey, so I tread carefully: “Do they think I’m dirty?” To this, Ting responds emphatically, “No, no! They think it is like a powder, for girls’ faces. They are seeing…checking the color underneath.” I am still confused about what, exactly, Ting is telling me they are checking for. “Where do they see people with powdered makeup covering their skin?” I ask. And now I have confused Ting with my question. She seeks her own clarification, “Where?” So I try to rephrase, working to bridge our language gap: “Would they have seen someone around here with make-up on her face, but that make-up is covering…covering up what?” Ting’s face moves from confusion to a smile evidencing understanding. She explains, “Yes, covering a different color skin. But not here [gesturing around the market]. But, all around, on TV.”

All around, indeed. With Ting barring any other opportunities for such close encounters by the curious, RC and I are able to take in our own unfettered look about the market. Directly before us, there is fodder for cultural misunderstanding in the form of Black Man (formerly, “Darkie”) toothpaste being sold in a stall. The brand name of Hong Kong’s Hazel & Hawley Chemical Company’s “Darkie” toothpaste was only changed after the company was acquired by Colgate in 1985. The Darkie brand’s Al Jolson-inspired logo, a grinning caricature in blackface and wearing a top hat, was as offensive as its name. After buying the company, Colgate [slightly] altered the logo and changed the product’s name to “Darlie,” but only after U.S. civil rights groups protested. However, the Cantonese name - Haak Yah
Nga Gou or “Black Man Toothpaste” remains for Asian marketing (Kolpakov, V., 2006).¹ [See Figure 1].

In other cities such as Shanghai and Chongqing, RC and I spot posters adorning the storefronts of hip music and video stores, hailing the arrival of The Bubble Sisters’ third CD, “Vol. 3-Dramatic Episode” which was released in China on February 9, 2007. The Korean quartet’s stage act, writes the Korea Herald, includes painting themselves black, donning afros, sticking their lips out in caricature and dancing in pajamas [….]. The girls jump around, pulling faces and wearing grotesquely distorted “rubber-lips” makeup that harks back to the White Minstrel comedy acts dominant in 1830’s America, bringing up unsavory issues like slavery, exploitation, racism - issues the West has spent a century trying to bury. To make matters worse, the girls sing about being ugly and not satisfying their true love, creating an unfortunate juxtaposition (Hodges, M., 2003). [See Figure 2].

Ting and I are now close to fully understanding each other, “So, you see people with make-up on to change their skin color on TV? Do you mean on CCTV?” “Yes,” Ting explains, “our people put on make-up to look like you. On singing contests for prizes.”

As RC and I make our way across mainland China—Shanghai, Wuhan, Yishang, along the Yangtze River, Wushan, Fengdu, Chongqing, Xi’an, and Beijing, questions emerge for me about cross-cultural, racial understandings. What meanings do the Chinese bring to, and take away from, their encounters with African Americans? What are the sources of cultural (mis)understanding between the Chinese and African Americans? What role does the transnationalization of popular culture forms such as television, advertising, music and music videos, Internet-circulated discourse, and film play in these understandings? Is cross-cultural (mis)understanding between the Chinese and African Americans markedly different from White Americans’ understanding of African Americans? And, in what ways do African Americans (mis)understand Chinese and White Americans?

Here, I draw upon instances of close cross-cultural encounters to highlight the role popular culture plays in interpersonal interactions in China between RC and I, as African Americans, and a family of White Americans, and between some Chinese we meet. To be sure, none of us represent ideal types. Nonetheless, our interactions work as examples to assist in an interrogation of our responses to each other. Unlike recent scholarship that has focused on concerns of the appropriation of (Black) Western culture by some central
Asians (e.g., de Kloet, 2005; Wang, 2007: 35-68), this article explores the meanings assigned to Black, White, American, Chinese, and Asian cultures, in the context of central Asia, by attending to the circulation of popular culture. The goal here is to reveal how popular culture informs how we take, as Crang (1997: 360) posits, “part in the world” rather than popular culture simply “reflecting it.”

I choose to pursue these queries through the methodological lens of autoethnography. Autoethnography, write Ellis and Bochner (2000: 745), is “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self […]” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 746). In autoethnography, with the researcher as subject, it is the researcher’s activities that are under investigation. That researcher as subject “ask[s] their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 746). Thus, autoethnography describes a writing practice that is emotional, self-conscious, and first person. In autoethnographies, the personal-cultural-social is brought to bear for reflexive interrogation. It “confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders” (Tierney, 1998: 66).

To begin to answer my questions, I keep a field log of my and RC’s experiences and interactions with some of China’s citizens, as well as with the other foreign travelers, we meet up with during our travels. The field log includes detailed observational and analytical notes, as well as photographs, and other documents. These data reveal a complex array of racial decodings that relate to cross-cultural (mis)understanding which work to either facilitate and/or impede race relations. For example, data evidence themes of ethnocentrism, in which the Chinese are viewed as excessively raced. There are themes of racial symbolic annihilation, in which African Americans represent a cultural lack with their usefulness residing only in their potential to entertain. And, there are themes of what I would call an “embodied Other” where the raced body is seen as an object that houses stereotypes and myths.

ETHNOCENTRISM FROM IOWA TO CHINA

During the tourist “low season” — December through March when the weather ranges across China from cool to brutally frigid—the country’s approximately 22 million annual international visitors diminishes to a trickle. Massive chartered buses are replaced with Toyota minivans or mid-sized Buick sedans to transport the few foreign tourists to China’s many cultural highlights. Challenges arise, however, if a low season trip (such as ours)
All Around the World the Same Song Means Coleman

coincides with the Chinese New Year/Spring Festival, a two-week celebration that sees China’s major urban areas emptied of its populace as millions of migrant workers return home, often to remote farming villages several days by train away from the cities. With these two February events conspiring, the low season and the arrival of the New Year (the year of the pig), an ostensibly unusual turn of events for logistical expediency by our excursion coordinators put RC and I in the company of the Benson family for parts of our trip. The three Bensons—Brian, Delores, and Paul—hail from Iowa, are White, and all are in their late 60s. Somehow, the Beijing landmark tours RC and I pre-arranged through our travel agency become their itinerary too. As best we can tell, their travel agent worked with a Chinese tour brokerage firm—one that our agency used as well. Their agent likely said, “Don’t worry, we’ll see that you have a good time,” while failing to ask the Bensons about their tastes or for their input into the design of their own travel plan. This is but one of many things that make the Bensons very unhappy in China.

Introducing the Bensons

Brian and Delores are husband and wife, with four adult children at home in Iowa. The Benson family represents several generations of grain and cattle farmers. Today, the Benson clan primarily produce corn to be converted into ethanol fuel. According to 2000 U.S. census data, Iowa farmers earn an average income of $41,000. The Benson family farm is not the largest in their area – those would be owned by corporations – but Brian confides that they continue to “do all right. Not the best. But not nearly as bad as some.” He should know their competition well, as their specific community is a small farming village with a population of approximately 230 people representing around 60 families, with some of those 60 interrelated through marriage. According to Delores, their town was 100% White; however, that distinction changed recently with the arrival of a pair of Latino men who are employed as cooks in a local restaurant. On seeing their numbers reduced to 99.13% White with less than 1%, approximately .87%, reporting as non-Black Hispanic, Delores divulges to us over dinner one evening, “They are starting to move in; even where we live” and that “It has become a big issue.”

Brian and Delores confide to RC and I that they would not even be in China were it not for Brian’s brother Paul, who has financed the entire trip for the trio—“Who’s gonna turn down a free trip!” Brian chuckles. Paul is the self-described “cosmopolitan” of the family. He attended a regional university in Iowa where he completed training as a dentist. Over the years, Paul has accumulated thousands of frequent flyer miles, which, as a widower and not wanting to travel alone, he uses to treat himself and his brother and sister-in-law to trips. Paul crowed about the three days he spent in Macau, or “the Orient” as he called it, three years ago. Paul chose a return visit to China on his travel agent’s recommendation since he
had convinced him he had “not really seen China” during his earlier 72 hour trip to a Macau casino.

Indeed, by comparison, Paul does seem more “cosmopolitan” than Brian and Delores. Paul is embarrassed when his brother and sister-in-law unabashedly proclaim their profound dislike of museums while, too, complaining loudly about how are forced to suffer through lectures by docents. Likewise, this Benson family conversation at a museum gift shop leaves Paul noticeably mortified:

Brian calling out to Delores and Paul: “Hey, you guys should buy from that little oriental gal over here. You can ‘Jew’ her down.”

Delores: “That little oriental gal there?” [To Paul]: “I picked up four of those Terra Cotta soldiers for the kids, I didn’t think to ‘Jew’ them.”

Paul [shooting a furtive glance in my and RC’s direction]: “Shhhh! You’re talking a little loud.”

All three Bensons insist on being presented with the English names of our various tour guides. Jia, our Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City lecturer, bristles at this demand — to provide an English name, because his Chinese name is easy to pronounce. Barely containing his contempt for the Bensons, who refuse to even say his name, Jia growls at all of us, “Some disregard Mao today, but he was a great man who fought the Western imperialists!” Jia then seethes to our group, “Just call me Mark!” And the Benson’s do. RC and I are especially hurt that Jia has lumped us in with the Benson’s bad behaviors. When they act out or insult, in our judgment, they soil us too. As a result, at times, we as a tour group appear comically ridiculous as each of us refuses to yield on our ideological entrenchments:

Robin: “Jia, what is that over there?”

Paul: “I’m sorry Mark, we didn’t hear you back here. What did you say that was?”

While this incident could have easily allowed RC and I to position ourselves as self-righteously enlightened, it worked to do the opposite. We came away feeling burdened. We took it upon ourselves to act as an intermediary between the Bensons and Jia, perhaps with the goal of evidencing to them both the “goodness” of African Americans. In Jia’s presence, we felt the double-consciousness of being both Black, but also of being potentially viewed as the “ugly American.” As such, we took the approach of trying to earn his favor, and to recast Blackness as positive, by behaving as a sensitive cultural brokers.

By contrast, what the Bensons are making plain through their rhetoric and behavior is not only an ethnocentrism — evaluating Chinese cultures as deficient in comparison to their own, and based upon a very limited experiential base — but they are also making obvious their judgment of the Chinese by reacting to what Prashad (2001: 127) calls a myth of an
“excess of culture.” Discussing their experiences in Iowa, the Bensons present a form of American Whiteness that views Latinos as fraudulent citizens who are lacking because they seemingly have little to contribute to the Benson’s tight-knit community. The Latino men are seen as “takers”—moving in and taking over, thereby consuming without offering anything useful in return. By contrast, where Latinos represent lack to the Bensons, the Chinese represent excess. They are too “little” and too markedly “oriental,” and their language too difficult. Later the Bensons would deem Asian food too “different” to even try to consume, and the Chinese customs too peculiar. For example, Brian refuses to eat when he is supplied with chopsticks; instead he turns boisterous, demanding from restaurant food servers a “U.S. of A., fork”. That the Bensons are on the Chineses’ turf is irrelevant, making their reaction to Chinese culture little different than Whites’ first encounters with Asians in 18th century America. According to Prashad, Whites during this time had a view of themselves as virtuous, but “when the first Asians arrived in the Americas, the White patriarchs found their presence foul […] they came to be seen as fundamentally alien [and] as oozing cultural sloth mainly through their language, food, and hair” (Prashad, 2001: 127). This view of Asianness means that it can never shed its “Other”. In the Bensons’ view, the Chinese have to find ways to adapt their culture to Western ideals, such as adopting Westernized names and cutlery; but the Chinese, even in China, should not expect accommodations in the reverse.

BET: Black Entertainment Tourists

In 2005, CBC News reported how then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s race was ridiculed by some of China’s educated elite on the Chinese website Sine.com. Some wrote that Rice was, “a black devil,” “a black pig,” “a black whore” and “a black female dog.” While others offered: “You’re not even as good as a black devil, a real waste of a life,” “her brain is blacker than her skin,” “the ugliest woman in the world,” and “she looks like an orangutan, and talks rubbish; send us a beautiful woman next time” (Chao, S.Y., 2005).

In spite of these select racist opinions, I hold out hope for signs of personal syncretism between us and some Chinese. Literature and popular imagery embed in my imagination a connection with the Chinese built around political solidarity. I recite to myself a line from W.E.B. DuBois’ poem “I Sing China: ‘Hail, dark brethren of mine’” (Mullen B. & Watson C., 2005: vii). I allow myself to adopt a naïve, uncomplicated view of a Black and Yellow diaspora formed out of our variously Othered existences; as DuBois described, “we are all—we the Despised and Oppressed—the “niggers” of England and America” (Prashad, V., 2000: 173). Likewise, I recall Richard Wright, who at the 1955 Bandung Conference noted calls for an Asian-African/Yellow-Black alliance with guarded optimism, but did not dispute our common opponent:
Who had thought of organizing such a meeting? And what had these nations in common? Nothing, it seemed to me, but what their past relationship to the Western world had made them feel. This meeting of the rejected was in itself a kind of judgment upon the Western world! (Wright, R., 1995: 12).

Indeed, I suspend my disbelief about racial disharmony in ways I would never do so at home in the States. Discriminatory moments in China get a “pass” from me in large part because the presence of the Bensons serve as a distraction. Theirs is what RC and I call undifferentiated, “one size fits all” bigotry. In short, I come to conclude that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. I engage China with the belief that it can offer me whatever it is I believe I am lacking on the racial solidarity front at home. There is some legitimate reason to believe that China can provide such solidarity. Vice Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, Wang Guangya’s remarks at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism leaves me optimistic about our same-mindedness:

Colonialism, foreign invasion, slave trade and Apartheid are all typical manifestations of racism, which inflicted untold sufferings on the countries and people across Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Asia, innocent people were trampled underfoot by colonialists and foreign invaders. From the Pacific to the Indian Ocean and from South East Asia to Middle East, none of the cradles of ancient human civilization was spared by the wreckage and destruction. In Africa, the colonialists treaded on every inch of the land under their iron heels, and slave trade was the darkest page written in human history with the blood and tears of countless African sons and daughters. […] Our forefathers left an old maxim with us, “all men are brothers within the Four Seas.” Though we hail from different parts of the world and vary in race and color, we have similar genomes, and our ideal in pursuit of equality, happiness and peace is the same. (Guangya, W., 2001)

Though we are all “brothers within the Four Seas,” in China RC is regarded as a “brotha” as defined by and seen in media. RC came to understand that popular culture had, in the a priori, tainted for some in China understandings of Black masculinity and its worth.

**Blackness According to “Barbershop”**

We are just 72 hours from New Year’s Eve in China: it is the national holiday. RC and I are excited that we will soon be in Beijing celebrating with over 10 million people. For now, however, we are in Xi’an with Qin (no Bensons on this leg of the trip), a local guide who has spent much of the day leading RC and I on tours of neighborhoods. Qin chats RC up about men’s fashions, about RC’s lack of “bling-bling,” and about the national excitement around the coming Olympics in Beijing. We all get along so splendidly that, though his duties as a hired guide for the day are complete, Qin invites us to dinner at his favorite neighborhood restaurant. Watching Qin and RC hang out and laugh together is the
embodiment of the equality, happiness, and peace Vice Foreign Minister Guangya talked about, and which I had hoped we would experience.

The restaurant Qin has taken us to is really a massive banquet room, and it even has a large stage for people to climb up on for impromptu karaoke performances and dancing. The place is packed with city workers being treated to a holiday feast by their companies’ bosses. The employees, lubricated by truly enormous quantities of Chongqing beer, engage in lots of singing, joking, and loud talk. Our meal finished, Qin, RC, and I wind our way past tables crowded with festive diners and move toward the elevator. Unfortunately, the elevator does not come fast enough—not before an inebriated celebrant grabs a digital camera and leaps from his table. The man rushes over to RC and gleefully snaps the flash directly in his face. Then the reveler goes much too far. First in Chinese, then slowly, crudely translating into English, he punctuates each word with hysterical laughter and looks back at his tablemates to see if they are watching—they are. The man attempts to hand RC a coin while telling him, “Get my coat.” If there is any doubt that we are mistaken about any part of the man’s cruelty, Qin’s gasps of horror and his leap into the finally available elevator in an effort to flee the whole scene reveal otherwise. In a controlled, yet scolding voice, RC says directly to the drunk, “You should be ashamed of yourself.” It is a purely lucky but brilliant choice of words. Qin tells us later that “losing of face” is one of the worst situations a Chinese person might find oneself in. Because RC has kept steady composure, RC “wins” by being the most respectable. Indeed, in being subjected to RC’s measured admonishment the man is instantly sobered and immediately embarrassed. He apologizes profusely, interestingly, not to RC, but to Qin. Later, RC and I would ponder this man’s ability to speak directly to RC when RC was seen as the Black buffoon stereotype. When RC presented himself as real, human, and humane, and therefore outside of media’s imagistic constraints, the man could no longer communicate with RC.

Those who have gathered at the elevator for a closer look at the action now join us for the ride down. They pepper RC with questions, or rely on Qin to interpret, “Where are you from? Do you speak Chinese? Are you a sports star? A rapper?” RC is often presumed to be an athlete or a rapper, even as his age, weight, and style of dress do not prove to be a signifier for either line of work. Perhaps in some of the Chinesees’ minds, Black male wealth stereotypically comes from two principle sources of what I call the “Black entertainment economy”—sports or music. Though neither the Bensons’ presence, nor that of other White tourists such as those we run into from Australia, raise an eyebrow, we as Black Americans seem to be judged as out of place. It is often assumed that we are in China for some other specific job-related purpose, such as to promote a concert tour or in connection with a sports-marketing event. While walking us back to our hotel, Qin makes sense of our reception in China.

Qin: “So, RC, you are not a rapper, huh? Are you a policeman or something?”
RC: “A policeman? Wow, no. What makes you ask that?”
Qin: “It’s how you handled that man. You were very firm, very calm.”
RC: “Qin, we’ve got to know. Everywhere, we’ve been kinda the center of attention. People taking our pictures...We are kinda getting more attention than most foreigners. Is there an understanding of Black...?”
Qin [suddenly interrupting]: “Like Barbershop!”
RC: “What???”
Qin: “Blue. Like Ice Cube. Like “Barbershop.” [Plainly] Um hmm. But you were different with that man in the restaurant. He didn’t expect you to be like that.”
Robin: “Wait! You mean to tell me that what he knows about Black folks is from movies like “Barbershop!”?”
Qin: [Rather matter of fact] “It’s very popular here.”
Robin: “Oh Lord!” [I proceed to rant] “That man in the restaurant ... when RC didn’t act like a servant or grin then people didn’t know what to make of him!”
Qin: “Um, well, yeah.”
Robin: “Look. You don’t want us foreigners learning about China only through the movies do you?”

And then Qin offers a measure of confirmation for Park, et. al’s (2006: 160) assertion that the naturalization of racial differences through comedic stereotyping discourages critical engagement with racial discourse. Qin puts forth, “Yeah, but Blacks are very good with, you know, funny comedy.”

Touring Yellow and Black Bodies

RC and I do not want to engage China as tourists in China; rather, we want to be good travelers. The difference is crucial. Vardalos (2003: 2) writes,

The motivations of the tourist are commonly assumed to be self-gratification, hedonism, and escape, while the motivations of the traveler are presented as spiritual rejuvenation, education, and concern about the world and its inhabitants. The tourist’s character is viewed as cautious, oblivious to inauthenticity, and unmindful of others, but the traveler’s character is presented as adventurous, intelligent, independent, and conscientious.

RC and I are what McKercher, Wong, and Lau (2006: 650) would call the “Tour-taker.” A tour-taker, they write, “buys multiple sightseeing, cultural or special interest tours during the visit. [They] describe themselves as being curious about the local culture and interested in developing a deeper understanding […] purchasing a tour provides them with an opportunity to gain a more authentic, back of the house understanding.” Toward this end of “tour-taker,” we arrange for a series of tours, sometimes several excursions per city, per day. The Bensons, by Vardalos’ definition, are tourists.
The Bensons take photos of that which speaks to their oft-proclaimed theme of “look how poor they are.” Paul snaps a photo of what the Chinese call “bom bom” men — rural farmers that come into the cities to make extra money by toting heavy packages, balanced on a rod of bamboo. On one occasion, Delores kneels down close to the ground to capture a close-up photo of a severely handicapped, blind woman lying in the street. Delores chooses not to leave a coin behind in the woman’s donation cup.

In my view, the Bensons were promised a particular story about China largely through media—tour brochures, textbooks, movies, and fiction literature, and they worked to capture that story through their camera lens. John Urry, in his seminal book _The Tourist Gaze_ (2002: 129), explains:

> What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photography images, which have already been seen in tour company brochures or on TV programmes. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen before they set off.

Our own picture taking focuses on objects—the Great Wall; the Terra Cotta soldiers; mountains, rivers, and boats; a school for the arts in Beijing where actress Gong Li trained; a music school in Shanghai for children learning stringed instruments; towering statues of Buddha all across China; and signs marking the last 75 meters the Yangtze River has to rise before it will completely flood out millions of people to make way for a hydroelectric power station and dam. The photos that I take are to support my pedagogy in my “China Theme Year” course I will teach when I return home. In part, I hope the images I bring back will dispel myths about China as a land of mystical kung-fu fighters and sacrificing geishas. One main “theme” of mine is the globalization of consumerism and commercialism. Neon advertisements for Kentucky Fried Chicken, TDK, Wynn, Casio, Nikon, and Nestle intrigue me. I capture a snapshot of a provocative department store window display for “Tony Wear,” which juxtaposes Chinese men in “before” poses with White men in “after” poses under the tag line, “New life style for you.” RC and I fail to notice that we have taken very few photos of actual people until friends looking at our photos upon our return home point out this fact.

With this being the low season, tourist attractions are not being overrun by foreigners. Rather, many Chinese are using the holiday to visit national landmarks with their families. At different landmark sites, groups of Chinese gather around our guides, smiling approvingly when they are able to detect that a fellow countryperson is displaying an impressive command of the English Language. One of our guides reports the he finds this phenomenon humorous since many of his admirers do not speak English themselves, and have no real idea what is being said. After pride is shown toward the guides, RC and I brace ourselves for what we know is coming next as it happens in location after location:
hundreds, if not thousands, of personal cameras turn away from China’s most precious artifacts to capture our image. RC, weary from enduring near constant attention, laments, “I wonder how much of their vacation stories are going to be devoted to us and not to these places?”

By the time we join up with the Bensons, these incidents of being gazed upon are routine for us. But, as it turns out the Bensons have some of the very same questions about Blackness that the Chinese have posed.

They, too, wonder what our proximity to the “Black entertainment economy” is, and are similarly poised to snap our photos, but only if we are people of some popular entertainment importance or notoriety. “No, I don’t rap, if that is what you are asking,” I respond, when questioned if I am “a rapper performer, or some sort.” “But you listen to it,” asks Paul accusingly. The Bensons’ cameras are lowered. Delores asks what I have done to my hair. I don’t suffer Black hair questions well. I choose to ignore her. Undeterred, Delores next questions my age, remarking how my smooth skin in contrast to the grey in my hair belies any guess. By now I have grown annoyed with Delores. And still, I resist the temptation to mischievously provide her with a new stereotype for this one: “Black don’t crack.” When, under heavy questioning, I finally reveal that I am a professor (of media studies), Paul shows surprise and begins to ponder the information for a moment when, “flash,” he stuns me by snapping my photo. In his digital camera I appear after pictures of a Terra Cotta soldier and of a Starbucks in the Forbidden City. I’ll never know which he finds more amazing.

I, too, wonder what stories will accompany the images of our Black bodies taken by the Bensons and the Chinese. This concern of embodiment is what Crang (1997) describes as looking upon objects (e.g., bodies) as cultural products without knowing or controlling how that looking will be taken up and used. I also fret over what stories will be attached to the images of the Yellow bodies taken by the Bensons. As far as I can tell, no one—neither us nor the Chinese—have shown much of an interest in capturing the Benson’s White bodies.

It may be argued that global media has turned seemingly “exotic” bodies into the familiar; therefore, today, the “body tourist” can be more purposeful in the images that they seek. Such body tourists are not seeking out photo opportunities that have been “set up.” For example, during a trip RC and I once took to Jamaica, we saw a lavishly costumed elderly man invite tourists to take his photo for $10. Rather, body tourists are now purposefully striving to capture candid moments of purported authenticity with little recognition of how their photos may work to supplement (problematic) media representations. As Buzinde et. al (2006: 708) advance, the images we consume before embarking on a new experience often offer an interpretation of the culture that reaffirms stereotypes, and ultimately embeds “myths and expectations that affect how certain groups of people, whether locals or tourists, are perceived.” As such, when the raced body becomes the voyage the tourist embarks on, the body becomes the spectacle upon which a particular ideology is inscribed.
CONCLUSION

Autoethnography works to situate encounters and events into contexts of deeper meaning and understanding. It is an endeavor that is “located between the interiority of autobiography and the exteriority of cultural analysis,” and can, at times seem “heroic” to some while “ludicrous” to others (Tedlock, 2000: 455). Indeed, revealing the presumptions and prejudices the three groups displayed during this trip may to some be laudable, and to others nonsensical. Autoethnography boasts a goal of focusing its readers’ attention upon the ethnographic encounter while demanding that readers consider “the complex personal and political dimensions involved in crossing cultural boundaries” (Tedlock, 2000: 466), as well as writing and reporting about such boundaries. As such, regardless of reception, it is my hope that this autoethnography works to encourage debate regarding how researchers can counter criticisms that race has been studied “somewhat blithely” and devoid of experiential and social context (Morris, 2007: 409). Additionally, readers of this study should be aware that detailed analyses of individual cultural specificity remains elusive in research (Hughes and Heuman, 2006: 34). This work also encourages readers to engage with (and in) comparative cultural research that extends beyond binaries such as African American and White American encounters. Certainly, cultural crossings do not happen in a vacuum, rather, as evidenced here and as asserted by Kim, racialization trajectories of groups are “profoundly interrelated” and “mutually constitute of one another” (1999: 106).

If this autoethnography is any indication, our world seems woefully ill equipped to make sense of the complexities of relationships that come with increasing global, cross-cultural interaction. The Bensons viewed themselves as superior to the Chinese and to African Americans (and, for that matter, Hispanics and Jews). Theirs was a sense of power based on myths of white skin privilege. They are not “raced;” the rest of us are. Though they were visiting the “middle kingdom,” it was the “U.S. of A.” and the English language, which were thought to be central and dominant. Hence, as Dyer (1988: 44) concludes, “white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular,” that is, except better. By engaging China only in ways that work to reaffirm their superiority, the Bensons returned to Iowa without the kinds of alternate visions of their own and others’ culture that come with travel. In leaving China resolute in their dissatisfaction with “Orientals,” the Bensons seem guilty of textbook Edward Said’ist orientalism: “[…] The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony […] There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (1979: 2, 5, 7).

More pointedly, the relationships and degrees of hegemony RC and I are trying to sort through is more complex than Occident vs. Orient. Rather, it is that of a “racial triangle”—Black, White, and Asian—which, too, displays a varied hierarchy of power and privilege. In our unique experience in China, one that should not be construed as universal,
RC and I discovered that we as African Americans possessed no “cultural currency” (Alexander, 2003: 106). Even if we could lay claim to membership in the Black entertainment economy (actually, as a Black woman it was viewed as unlikely I was the entertainer, rather I simply was accompanying RC who was thought to be either a rapper/athlete), such an identity still worked to mark Blackness—its forms of cultural practice, knowledge, history, vernaculars, and modes of social interaction—is at best intriguing, but it does not necessarily increase Blackness’ hierarchical value. The work of scholars such as Bow (2007) complicates this notion of hierarchy by reminding me of the role (skin) colorism plays and how it informs identity investments. While I took to China fantasies of DuBois/Wright/Guangya-inspired political hybridity, I failed to consider, as Bow would have me to, that some Asians do not construct themselves as “partly colored,” rather they see value in being “almost White” (Bow, 2007: 3). Certainly, there were hints of this phenomenon to be seen in the Tony Wear window display, as well as in advertisements featuring models and products presenting a White European standard of beauty.

Finally, in sorting through the trajectories of race in this Black, Chinese, and White encounter, this autoethnography works to prompt others to interrogate and critique my own flaws. First, I problematically conflated U.S. Chinese history in America as non-White and Other (e.g., the Chinese in Mississippi during Reconstruction) with how mainland Chinese view themselves in China as well as on the global stage. Seeking relationships of solidarity need not be predicated on a group’s identifying as marginalized or experiencing marginalization. The coalition seen between activist groups such as the Black Panther Party, the Red Guard, and the Brown Berets in the 1970s U.S. is as much about location as it is about their own internally constructed racial situatedness. Second, on an emotional level, RC and I (perhaps as this study too prominently reveals) often felt that we were Black objects, placed in a position of being acted upon. We were studied, gazed upon, and pigeonholed. But as visitors to China, outsiders really, we felt powerless to flex our muscles too much. This research should encourage readers to theorize strategies for (re)claiming agency for all parties involved in cross-cultural encounters.

As for my mounting concern regarding what popular culture may be communicating about American Blackness, sociologist Herman Gray (2005: 187) is troubled by the preoccupation, by the “investment, overinvestment really, on the part of African American cultural producers, media activists, and scholars in representation as the productive site of cultural politics.” Gray is talking directly to me, as I am one of those scholars with “preoccupations with positive and negative representations” (Gray, 2005: 187). Gray argues, in part, that such a preoccupation is excessively local and one should not get entirely caught up with worrying about judging gazes. Touche’ Gray. However, evolving and shifting configurations of diaspora, nation-state, identity, and power, not to the exclusion of a globalization of Westernness, Whiteness, and Western White ideologies, are all changing
as cultural imagery goes global. My charge here is a simple one: there needs to be continued exploration, at a micro level, into the diasporic racial triangle of Asian, Black, and White. It would be productive for such an exploration to focus on how these groups view and relate to one another, as well as how these relationships are predicated on a knowing informed, in part by, popular culture. As communication and transportation technologies make the world more intimate, the translocalization of global racisms (embedding local racisms into global communications) and cultural misunderstandings becomes increasingly problematic.

In 1999, at the MIT “Media in Transition: An International Conference,” Ingrid Volkmer offered that,

[... ] growing density and complexity of communication are the sign of a growing “world community.” To understand the new global sphere, its autonomy, independency and its “mediation” will support the transition into a world community in the 21st century.

Indeed, understanding the complexity is what we need. However, understanding isn’t easy. The difficulty of carrying out such cross-cultural communication is revealed through our trip. We felt superior to the Bensons given our perception of their bigotry. The Bensons felt superior to us and to the Chinese based on what they believed was each of our subordinate racial status. The Chinese felt superior to us and seemingly indifferent to White tourists. And along the way RC and I encountered much north (Beijing) versus south (Shanghai) posturing, with southerners saying they were more stylish than northerners, and northerners saying the southerners were not too bright. What — a — mess!

As an urban-dwelling Black woman, scholar and “tour-taker,” my unique experiential, philosophical, and educational positions influenced my readings of the Bensons and the Chinese with whom I interacted. Somehow, I thought these identities would help me to sort out impressive solutions to race relations dilemmas. In fact, there is no happy ending. When we returned home from our trip, all hell had broken loose in the U.S., and my email inbox was full of messages from friends and colleagues with the subject line “have you heard about this?” or “Blacks and Chinese.” While RC and I were away, Kenneth Eng, a (now fired) reporter for _Asian Weekly News_ had penned a column entitled, “Why I Hate Blacks.”

All around the world same song.

ENDNOTES

1. Note: Kolpakov is a local (Michigan) medical researcher-practitioner.
3. “The Bensons” are a pseudonym. In addition to changing this family’s name, all important identifying facts have been altered to ensure anonymity.
4. This data has been drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census. However, the exact location in which they reside has been altered, and the exact population numbers have been rounded, in an effort to protect the anonymity of the “Bensons.”


6. The concept “entertainment economy” comes from Michael Wolf’s (2003) book, The Entertainment Economy: How Mega-Media Forces are Transforming our Lives, published by Three Rivers Press. Wolf describes such an economy as one preoccupied with a battle for celebrity and attention, and as one in which popular entertainment forms are the fastest-growing segments in the economy. According to Wolf, U.S. produced entertainment forms (e.g., mass media, concerts, sporting events) and strategies used to commodify these forms is being replicated throughout the world. I extended Wolf’s concept to Blackness to reveal how entertainment and marketing merge and become culturally defining since Black economic and social success is often displayed through entertainment forms. For example, Shaquille O’Neal success is defined through his participation in entertainment—he is an athlete, a film, reality television, and television commercial star, and a rapper. Relatedly, the Black entertainment economy works to explain how Blacks get their disposable income. While in China, no one questioned how the Bensons’ could afford such a costly trip. However, many people wondered where RC and I got the funds for such travel. Award-winning journalist Cora Daniels in her book, Ghetto Nation (2007: 7), published by Doubleday writes of similar travel experiences born out of presumption that her husband (note the exclusion of Black women) is part of the Black entertainment economy: “When my husband and I travel abroad, whether it be to South America, Europe, or the Caribbean, at some point during the trip he will be asked, nicely, respectfully, and will no ill intent, if he is a rapper. How else would a young Black man have cash to spend? […] Even in Morocco they called my husband Puff Daddy and wanted to buy his “hip-hop” sunglasses right off his face” […]..

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THE MEDIA LOGIC OF MEDIA WORK

MARK DEUZE

Culture creation is quickly becoming the core industrial (and individual) activity in the globally emerging cultural economy. This process gets amplified through the increasing conglomeration of media corporations, as well as the widespread diffusion of information and communication technologies. This paper combines insights from research on (professional and amateur) media production from disciplines as varied as institutional sociology, organizational psychology, cultural economy, management, media studies and economic geography to present a review of trends, developments and values co-determining media work. The concept of media logic is used as a mapping tool, articulating contemporary institutional, technological, organizational, and cultural trends as they co-determine media work. This hermeneutic analysis identifies principal components of work styles in the media production industries across disciplines and genres, including journalism, advertising, film and television, and digital game development.

Keywords: media production, media industries, media work, labor, creative industries, cultural industries, production of culture

On April 4, 2006 U.S. comic artist Dave Coverly published a cartoon in his widely distributed “Speed Bump” series on media work. In the image, a concerned parent listens to a college counsellor, who dispenses the following advice: “Your son is smart and curious and has no attention span whatsoever … I’d say he had a bright future in the media.” Indeed, what does it take to work in the media production industries? This is not a question without consequence. Media production as a form of culture creation is quickly becoming the core industrial (and individual) activity in the globally emerging cultural economy. This process gets amplified through the increasing conglomeration of media corporations, as well as the widespread diffusion of information and communication technologies. Furthermore,
as several observers have noted (see for example Lash & Urry 1994; Sennett 1998; Caves 2000), other industries consider the organization of labor and the management of creativity in the media a pioneering example and to some extent best-case scenario for things to come. In this paper I map the field of media production studies with an emphasis on labor and work, focusing on the blend of work and lifestyle conditions and strategies of professionals in the media industries: their “workstyles,” where life has become a way of working and a way of being at work. The purpose is to build theory on media work that is generalizable across professional media production industries, as well as applicable to analyses of emerging practices throughout the creative industries (Hartley, 2005; Deuze, 2007).

WORKSTYLES IN THE MEDIAPOLIS

Change and insecurity, whether real or perceived, are part of most if not all people’s workstyles (Gorz 1999). Beck (2000) points at the fundamentally ambivalent prospects of the “brave new world of work” as marked by uncertainty, paradox and risk. The risk of finding and keeping a job has become a strictly individual risk, as most governments and employers in the world today are retreating from collectively negotiated labor and welfare regulations, instead focusing on keeping a core of experienced employees and outsourcing, off-shoring or sub-contracting work. Contemporary workstyles in especially the media industries are best understood in a context where, as Ursell (2000: 805) writes, the size of permanent staffs quickly diminishes, casualization of the labor force increases, entry to the labor market is more difficult and less well rewarded or supported, average earnings have dropped, and working terms and conditions continue to deteriorate. In such a new capitalist setting letting go of control, history, and tradition are advertized as new necessary survival skills (Sennett 2006).

The media, in whatever shape or size, amplify and accelerate these trends – even more so because nowadays people are not just using media in a digital age; we are living in media. Research on the way people use (new) media is scattered and diverse, yet is unified in its conclusion: we use more media all the time, spending more if not most of our time immersed in some kind of media, our exposure to media is concurrent, and an increasing portion of people’s media diet shifts towards production rather than consumption (Bucy & Newhagen 2003; Livingstone 2003; Jenkins 2006). In overdeveloped wired, always-on societies such as most European countries, North America, and isolated yet interconnected nodes elsewhere, the lifeworld of a majority of the population gets expression and meaning almost exclusively through media. This does not necessarily mean we spend more time every day with media, as people’s media diet tends to be relatively stable at roughly two-thirds of people’s waking moments in most developed countries (Papper et al. 2004; Garnham 2005). It does suggest, however, that these media have not only become digital and networked, but more importantly so also pervasive and ubiquitous: they cannot be switched off, are
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everywhere, and have become unavoidable. Our contemporary world is what Silverstone (2007) regards as a “mediapolis”: a completely mediated public space where media underpin and overarch the experiences of everyday life. In the constant remix of time spent on work, life, and play in and through media the differences between these spheres of activity get lost.

This paper aims to map the field of media-making that is sensitized to two related phenomena that are to some extent exemplary of the contemporary human condition in Silverstone’s mediapolis: first, a notion of media work as a set of behaviors, strategies and tactics, norms and values that co-determine with technology the outcome of the production of culture within and across media industries (such as journalism, advertising, television and film, digital games). Second, an appreciation of media work as a range of activities and social arrangements that a growing number of people – and the majority of teenagers – enact in the context of contemporary digital culture (Deuze 2006), that is: using media as media producers rather than or next to media consumers. This in effect creates a white space for theorizing the findings and results of media production analyses across all ranges of people’s interaction with and through media, rather than excluding anyone but the salaried employees of commercial and public media organizations in society.

MEDIA LOGIC

The average media worker operates in a complex environment, somewhere between the splendid isolation of one’s individual creative endeavors and a constantly changing transnational context of ties, relationships, demands, and pressures of colleagues, consumers, employers, and clients. Such an acknowledgment of the field of media production industries must be the point of entry to discuss the infrastructure, trends and developments affecting individual practitioners in (and outside of) media companies. The creative process of work in the media industries is a fascinating object of study, as the production of culture is in itself a cultural process. This means that neither the individual, nor the company completely controls the production of culture – elements of social structure (the organization of work, the parameters set by time, budget and space, media ownership, and so on) and the norms, values, and ways of doing things of the professionals involved mutually influence each other. Indeed, cultural and economic determinants of media work are not necessarily different, but rather can be seen as what McFall calls “constituent material practice” (2004, p.18): the combination of specific technical and organizational arrangements as these influence and are shaped by the generally idiosyncratic habits of individual media practitioners. An emphasis on the individualistic and idiosyncratic nature of media workers suggests that contemporary trends such as workforce casualization, technological and cultural convergence, and flexible productivity not only mean different things to different people, but are also differently articulated in the context of specific media
products, genres, and organizations because of the ways in which departments, teams and individuals work together (Deuze 2007).

Media work takes place both within and outside of institutions, by both professionals and amateurs (including so-called “citizen media”), both within and across particular media. In order to adequately describe and analyze the various ways in which professionals are affected by and give meaning to such a complex environment of cultural production, one needs a holistic, integrated perspective on the nature of media work. In this context I use the concept of “media logic” as introduced by David Altheide and Richard Snow (1979 and 1991), and developed further by Peter Dahlgren, where he refers to media logic as “the particular institutionally structured features of a medium, the ensemble of technical and organizational attributes which impact on what gets represented in the medium and how it gets done. In other words, media logic points to specific forms and processes that organize the work done within a particular medium. Yet, media logic also indicates the cultural competence and frames of perception of audiences/users, which in turn reinforces how production within the medium takes place” (1996, p.63).

Media logic is an useful tool to overcome what may be the most crucial problem in my discussion of what it is like to work in the media: the notion, that what a journalist does is guided by distinctly different ideas and factors of influence than what informs the work of a game developer, television producer, or advertising creative – and vice versa. One thing these professions have in common is the fact that journalism, advertising, broadcasting, film, and game development are all examples of the production of culture. This does not mean that a news report on CNN and a Nike ad produced for the soccer World Cup are equally important or valuable in informing and thus sustaining people’s sense of community; it does mean that I wish to move beyond such normative concerns about the distinctions between different kinds of media content to focus on what people actually do when they work in the media, and how they give meaning to their actions and beliefs. In turn I presuppose that this process of giving and articulating meaning has consequences for the way media are made.

MEDIA PRODUCERS AND WORK

On the one hand, one could argue that the workers in the cultural industries are a distinct professional group, a social system that contributes to the functional differentiation of society and can (or should) be studied as such. This would for example mean we look at the management practices of media firms (Picard 2003), the business models and strategies particular to cultural industries (Lampel et al. 2005), and the intricacies of managing specific media companies (Cottle 2003) or the media production system (Louw 2001; Hesmondhalgh 2002 and 2006) as a whole. Most of this exemplary work draws explicit boundaries around its object of study, often assuming clear-cut distinctions between different media...
professional fields. This may not be particularly helpful if we want to make sense of what making media in fact means to the individual people involved – and thus of the problems and solutions people in overdeveloped capitalist democracies increasingly face. The spillover effect between people’s acts of media consumption and production observed in contemporary media rituals for example suggests that the various ways in which media professionals negotiate and make sense of their work on an individual level are increasingly becoming part of the lives of media users everywhere.

MEDIA WORK AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Media organizations can best be understood as a collection of public service and for-profit companies (or a combination thereof) dealing with the industrial production and circulation of culture. In terms of media work, this “culture” refers not only to the production of spoken and written words, audio, still or moving images, but also (and increasingly) to providing platforms for people to produce and exchange their own content. In contemporary definitions of what the work within these industries involves in terms of how the people involved make sense of what they do, four concepts are crucial: content, connectivity, creativity, and commerce (Figure I). Media industries produce content, yes, but also invest in platforms for connectivity – where fans and audiences provide the free labor necessary for the digital game to clear its bugs and to extend its shelf-life through the outsourcing of level editing and modification, for the news item to become part of the conversation a society has with itself through discussion forums and blog posts, for the advertisement to be endlessly forwarded and its product user-recommended, and for the television show to create and sustain its own brand community. Media work is culture creation, yes, but tends to take place within a distinctly commercial context. The constant interactions and negotiations between creativity, connectivity, content, and commerce can be considered to be the building blocks of all decisions made that define the workstyles in media production.

In economic terms, the media serve a dual product market: media are sold as newspapers, magazines, movies, CDs, and so on to audiences, while at the same time the attention of that audience – expressed as ratings, circulation figures, unique site visitors, etcetera - is sold to advertisers. This is a fascinating area of tension within the industry, as the wants and needs of audiences, creators, and advertisers may not always be the same, and in the current digital and networked media ecosystem the roles played by advertising creatives, media producers, and content consumers are increasingly intertwined. Although each field, genre or discipline in the media has its own peculiarities and distinctiveness, the trends towards business integration, technological convergence, and the mutually reinforcing developments of localization and globalization have made working experiences the media industries increasingly similar. It thus becomes possible to discuss “the” media according
to a couple of key distinctive trends and features. Hesmondhalgh (2002, p.12) includes as the core cultural industries: advertising and marketing, radio and television (broadcasting), film, internet (including Web design, portal providers), music (record labels, press and promotion, publishing), print and electronic publishing (including books, magazines, and newspapers), video and computer games. All of these industries interact and interconnect with each other in complex ways, sometimes as competitors (for audience attention, investors, and for skilled creative and technical labor), sometimes as albeit temporary collaborators.

The cultural geography of the media is organized as a range of informal networks of collaboration, expertise and influence. “These networks extend in two dimensions, horizontally, through peer-to-peer relationships with organizations and individuals, and vertically, through supply chain relationships which contribute to different phases of cultural production and distribution” (Bilton 2007, p.46). Bilton emphasizes the informal, collaborative and intangible nature of the creative process. A second crucial contextual aspect of media work for the negotiation of commerce, connectivity, content and creativity is the largely project-based nature of production. The organization of work in projects with a limited lifespan occurs both within certain companies – as in temporary teams assembled for particular clients in an advertising or integrated marketing communications firm – as well as between companies, and between companies and individual cultural entrepreneurs (Grabher 2002).

**INDIVIDUALIZATION OF MEDIA WORK**

For the purposes of the goals outlined for this paper, I consider the theoretical explanations of media work primarily from the perspective of individual “culture creators” (Bauman 2005, p.55). The validity of this perspective does not only refer to the growing numbers of freelancers, part-timers, flexworkers, “atypical” (IFJ 2006), “nonstandard” (Kalleberg 2000), or otherwise contingent employees in the media – even though this group of people by all accounts are rapidly becoming a dominant force in the media labor market (Baines 1999; Ursell 2000; Gall 2000; Baumann 2002; Grabher 2002; Blair, Culkin & Randle 2003; Cottle 2003; Platman 2005). Even those currently employed fulltime by large and small media firms alike are affected by the shift towards the individual for the responsibility and accountability of the organization of work, as they must also balance the competing demands of creativity versus commerce, of producing content versus exploring opportunities for connectivity, and of translating the accelerated demands of a competitive, technology-driven and liquefied work environment into meaningful actions, values and ideas that combined would constitute one’s professional identity as media worker.

Lazzarato (1997) suggests that creativity and productivity in postindustrial societies reside in the dialectic between the forms of life and values they produce, and in the activities
of subjects that constitute them. In doing so, Lazzarato points towards a key consideration for a nuanced understanding of the role of the individual in today’s media industries: the crucial importance of agency for individuals facing a vast array of influences, pressures, pleasures and constraints. Are the attitudes, behaviors and choices of an individual simply a product of socialization into the existing order of things, or can her goals, ideas and actions be considered to be more or less independent of the way things work in existing companies or organizations? To argue, as Giddens (1984) does, that all human social activities are recursive – simply put: whatever people do in a certain way produces routines, rules and norms that in turn inspire people to do things in a certain way – seems a fruitful way out of the binary opposition. Even though socialization research has been conducted in different media institutions with similar results, it seems to fit rather awkwardly with the current dogma of flexible production, increasing precariousness of employment arrangements, a globally emerging digital culture where consumers co-create with consumers (Jenkins 2006), and an almost complete shift of responsibility and accountability from employer to individual employee (Beck 2000, p.53ff; Jenkins 2006; Sennett 2006) as a key asset of contemporary managerial practices in particularly the media industries.

Du Gay (1996) notes how in the field of cultural production managers and employers increasingly stress the importance of “enterprise” as an individual rather than organizational or firm-based attribute. Shifting the notion of enterprise – with its connotations of efficiency, productivity, empowerment and autonomy – from the company to the individual employee, it becomes part of the professional identity of each and every worker, however contingently employed or not. This shift can be seen as a deliberate managerial attempt to regulate professional identity as a form of organizational control, with the intent “to reconstitute workers as more adaptable, flexible, and willing to move between activities and assignments and to take responsibility for their own actions and their successes and failures” (Storey et al. 2005, p.1036). A shift towards an individualization of labor counters the historical trend towards socialization and salarization, instead favoring more fluid and flexible notions of work – ushered in through rapid developments in technologies of communication, a decentralization of management practices and the fragmentation of markets. This does not mean that newcomers in the media are not asked anymore to adapt themselves to existing ways of doing things, nor that professionals are not expecting regular salaries for their work. It does suggest that socialization today is quite different from the industrial master-apprentice model, where the aspiring practitioner would dutifully observe and copy an existing consensual creative process.

Considering the highly individualized, informally networked and contingent context of media work, we may have to rethink the notion of the “organization” as the operational framework for analyzing what work and employment are like in the media. In this context one has to bear in mind Beck’s warning against - and I paraphrase - a “zombie media sociology”: one that would exclusively locate research questions and interpretations of
findings within the confines of existing modern social, economical and political institutions such as the church (or mosque, temple), the family, firms and corporations, the nation-state. Beck and other social theorists such as Giddens suggest that these have become zombie (or “shell”) institutions: “living dead categories, which blind the social sciences to the rapidly changing realities inside the […] containers, and outside as well” (2002, p.24). In recent years, the emphasis in organization science indeed seems to have gradually shifted from explaining the behavior of organizations as entities in and of themselves towards considering organizations as open systems of interdependent activities linking shifting coalitions of participants in interorganizational networks (Baker & Faulkner 2005). On the one hand, such an open approach enables us to look at organizations as loosely integrated units of individuals working together temporarily – which seems to fit the realities of the contemporary character of media work - while on the other hand it allows for the equally necessary acknowledgement that still much of the work in the media gets done within the context of larger social structures such as hierarchical and bureaucratic institutions. Although much of the work in the media takes place within the walls of media organizations, using the organization as an operational definition of the context of media work would miss the lived realities of contemporary work-styles: media work takes place on an individual level, often within the context of a team, a group or department of a larger organization – which teams or groups increasingly are not necessarily located in the same building, city, or country. Considering the contemporary trends of increasing casualization of work and the globalization of markets for cultural and symbolic goods, a coherent conceptualization of media work has to look outside of the historical boundaries of the organization to adequately address the working lives of its professionals.

THE WORKSTYLES OF MEDIA PRODUCERS

Applying media logic as a mapping tool for contemporary media work means I examine the [1] institutional, [2] technological, [3] organizational and [4] cultural features of what it is like to work in the media. In doing so, I do not assume that the key issues affecting (and indeed: explaining) the work of media professionals are particular to any specific industry. Please note: this does not mean that neither the different media nor the work that media workers do is becoming similar or the same, as for example Tunstall (2001) has argued. It does suggest, however, that what generally contextualizes media professions in the digital age is an increasing complexity and ongoing liquefaction of the boundaries between different fields, disciplines, practices and categories that used to define what media work was. Ultimately, this approach may be a useful way to consider the work and employment of particular individuals or groups of media producers as part of (and tied into) a broader media ecosystem, as operating in a wider context of social, economical and technological
forces, as well as a range of professions that have their own ways of dealing with such influences.

Technologies. Before discussing the different features of the institutional, organizational and cultural determinants of media work, I would like to single out the omnipresent role of technologies, as particularly expressed in new media (hardware and software). Throughout all accounts of the structure, management, and work in the media the prominent role of technology stands out. The media production industries are among the key accelerators of the development and innovation of new information and communication technologies. In the daily work environment and practices in the media, technology plays a crucial part in the creative process. A significant concern regarding this trend is the standardization of work practices implied by an omnipresence of technologies. In order to facilitate technological convergence and the corresponding managerial expectation of a synergy between different practices and processes, media companies increasingly rely on content management systems (CMS), which are often Web-based sophisticated software packages including automated series of tools and code that enable digital content management. Such systems are generally acquired on the commercial market, further developed using open source applications and finally customized in-house. As different media formats – audio, moving and still images, text - become increasingly standardized regarding their translation to the digital, the exchange and repurposing, windowing, or shoveling of multimedia content becomes more manageable. Yet this lowering of the threshold for technological convergence can at the same time considered to be problematic for media practitioners, who like to see themselves as creative workers, not as ‘slaves’ to the relatively limited range of options offered by preprogrammed templates, shells, and formats offered by technologies like CMS.

Although different technologies are used in different contexts throughout the different areas of the creative industries, today media professionals are first and foremost expected to come to terms with technological convergence in their work. Technological convergence refers to the coming together of audio, video, telecommunication and data onto a common platform, enabled by the digitization of all these formerly separate technologies. The crucial nature of information and communication technologies in the creative process of media work gets supercharged in a converged environment, where multiple technologies are integrated. As these technologies are increasingly networked and thus can accessed both from home and the office, the boundary between those kinds of places begins to lose significance. Convergence in media work thus relates to two intertwined processes: the convergence of place – as in the workplace and the home office - and the convergence of technology – as in the digital, networked hardware and software available to set the parameters of creative endeavors, and to further the means for managerial control over media work. Such control takes place through workflow standardization (as in the case of film and TV with software packages such as “Movie Magic,” or in advertising through
networked holding firm-wide intranets), workplace surveillance, and decentralization of work through for example telework, and the outsourcing of specific segments (assets, or “deliverables”) of a project to external agents. As such, convergence directly affects four key aspects of mass media industries: the content of communication, the relationships between media producers and consumers, the structure of firms, and ultimately how communication professionals do their work.

The introduction of all kinds of content management systems, company intranets, and desktop publishing software in newsrooms, advertising agencies, film and television (post-) production houses tend to mean two different, but important things for the professionals involved: it speeds up the creative process, and it creates a sense of having to do and learn more on top of one’s existing competences, skills, and talent. New technologies force people to learn new skills and unlearn old ones, while the work process accelerates at the same time. Technologies are also developed and implemented differently across different organizations or even parts of a single organization, leading to a constant reshuffling of adaptation processes and experiences. It is in the combination of equipment, hardware and software, the incorporation of these artifacts into one’s everyday workstyle, and the new ways of doing and organizing work that follows out of these activities that the role of new technologies in media work becomes apparent. Technology is indeed central to media work, but its role is neither unproblematic nor inevitable.

Institutions. Although the definition of the media as an industry is a matter of ongoing academic debate, for the purposes of this paper it is important to note the traditional emphasis on media production industries as the more or less exclusive domain of firms, companies and corporations. As noted earlier such exclusive location is highly problematic in the contemporary context of atypical media work. Such media work can be seen as a particular (and popular) set of professional values and practices within a wider context of cultural production, which would include theater, painting, philosophy, architecture, and other examples of a contemporary culture industry (Steinert 2003). Hesmondhalgh (2002) advocates a much broader view of media as part of the plural cultural industries, suggesting how cultural production has become more, rather than less complex, diverse and contested than one would perhaps expect in the course of the 20th century era of mass media. Part of this complexity and ambivalence of cultural production as it pertains to media industries is the fact, that much of the work is done by individuals, or by teams and groups of people that generally only temporarily bundle their talents and skills for a specific project – such as a film, a video game, or one season of a television show.

Since the late 1990s policymakers, industry observers and scholars from around the world have sought to reconcile the emergence of increasingly individual and small-scale, project-based or collaborative notions of cultural production – be it for commercial or other purposes – with traditional notions of media work as it takes place within the cultural
industries. This process culminated in the concept of creative industries, introduced by the Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) of the British Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1998. The CITF defines creative industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. This includes advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio.”

The creative industries concept has been taken up as a new way to look at media production, focusing on the combination or coming together of creativity and commerce in cultural work. The creative process in this context not only refers to the development and production of goods and services – it also refers to the ways in which consumers make their choices for certain products and increasingly become part of the production process. An intellectual as well as practical shift towards creative industries affects traditional notions about the status, security, and function of jobs, as the creative work that takes place both within and outside of the cultural industries becomes even more contingent on global market conditions and producer-consumer relationships. The concept thus presumes that any and all people involved in creative work see themselves and their talent, skills, and ideas in commercial terms too – which can be a hard sell for the self-perception of professionals in media industries, who tend to cherish creative autonomy and peer review rather than market appeal or sales statistics as most important indicators of the quality of their work.

The media as a set of industrial employers is not just home to six or seven huge global mega corporations (Bagdikian 2000), but also to hundreds of thousands small business enterprises, varying from organizations as individuals to companies and networks of talent. A diagrammatic overview of organizations and businesses in the media industries therefore reveals an “hourglass effect” in the distribution of employment, with people working in either a relatively small number of large companies, or in the growing multitude of small firms – with few employed at the few medium-sized businesses in-between (Hackett et al. 2000). Histories of media firms and their operations shows how both types of media work need each other – the one perhaps for the outsourcing of specialized activities, the other at times for acting as powerful sponsors or clients. The field of mass media operating on a global scale clearly privileges the international conglomerate. On the other hand, vertical integration (such as the AOL/Time Warner merger of 2000) and media deconcentration (as for example the dismantling of Vivendi Universal in 2003) go hand in hand, indicating the dynamic, disruptive and at times chaotic nature of the creative process in the context of large and small companies alike.

As social theories about the network society suggest, the networked form of enterprise is quite typical for media work – especially considering the ongoing outsourcing, off shoring and subcontracting of (specialized and flexible) parts of the creative pipeline across the
planet. Media production across professions (and especially in film, television, and videogame development, but increasingly in advertising and journalism as well) takes place within global production networks (GPN) that combine concentrated dispersion with systemic integration. This means that work and employment in the media is both organized through the production networks of transnational corporations, as well as in specific local or regional territories, potentially stimulating – and also: exploiting - global and local value creation and development at the same time (Coe et al. 2004). The analysis of work and employment in media production cannot do justice to its object without taking into consideration how these global production networks (GPN) are played out on an everyday basis. Furthermore, the work of GPN scholars in fields such as motion pictures (Coe & Johns 2004) and digital games (Johns 2006) shows how these translocal processes do not just play into the hand of powerful global corporations, but at specific times and instances – which are exploited by media workers and cultural policymakers alike - in fact favors the talented individual, the free agent, or the smaller (and often more agile) enterprise.

Organizations. As the production of culture becomes contingent on a strategically coupled global network of (large and small) companies and talent, the responsibility for preparing, finding, and keeping employment not only shifts the individual, she also is integrated in a new international division of predominantly flexible, contingent cultural labor (Miller & Leger 2001). The media have a tendency to cluster in specific (urban) areas, within which regions an ongoing exchange of labor, talent and skills takes place between people and organizations (Scott 2000). Newcomers, recent graduates, and other hopefuls flock to these areas, further contributing to an at times rollercoaster atmosphere. However, the migration patterns of international division of cultural labor tend to be mostly regional or virtual, rather than global. People tend to remain firmly in place as their talent migrates to fulfill part of the production pipeline: a location for a film shoot, a particular asset of a digital game, the marketing and customer relationship management services of a news organization. Locational agglomeration and the global networked form of enterprise can thus be seen to reinforce each other, adding to the contingency of media work, while the professionals in these industries are more connected and at the same time in direct competition than ever before.

In the context of the new international division of cultural labor and the outsourcing-driven character of GPN the increased precariousness and contingency of work in the creative industries is certainly cause for concern. Yet, as the work of Blair (2003) for example shows, media workers and their organizations develop all kinds of tactics and strategies to counter the precarity embedded in their work styles, especially by informally self-organizing into groups or teams that tend to move from project to project together for a certain period of time. These so-called semi-permanent work groups (SPWG) benefit both employer and employee, as the first can outsource the hiring and firing of team members to
those in charge of specific aspects of the production process (such as team leads in game development, magazine editors, or assistant directors in film and television), whereas employees can secure future employment through their (largely informal) personal networks. These SPWGs are not without power, as the creative talent of their—again: often informal—leaders can be an essential element in the production process, which allows them to make certain demands. SPWGs are not just teams of individuals; its definition must be extended to include local or global networks of firms and companies, as well as temporary lineups of the interests of consumers and producers in specific user-producer communities (such as in the case of citizen journalism projects) or contexts (as in discussion forums related to television shows or computer games).

The management and organization of media work moves in generally unpredictable and often chaotic cycles, where according to Grabher (2002 and 2004) teams move back and forth between heterarchical and standardized work forms, streamlined and flexible production processes, as well as between bureaucratic and dynamic modes of organization. The main paradox and key source of tension in the organization of media work lies between on the one hand quite rigidly structured hierarchical firms—as common job titles such as “editor-in-chief” (journalism), “team lead” (game development) or “art director” (advertising) indicate—and on the other hand a rather chaotic, conflict-ridden, deliberately emotional creative process (Ehrlich 1995; Nixon 2006). The work in media organizations thus tends to be rather formally structured yet informally arranged, where especially newcomers generally are expected to adapt themselves to largely unwritten rules, as well as to what Douglas Coupland famously defined as organizational power mist: “[t]he tendency of hierarchies in office environments to be diffuse and preclude crisp articulation” (1991, p.25). Not only does this process take place both within and between different firms and individuals at times located in different regions or countries all over the world, but also the roles these various players have in the production of culture are extremely diverse and complex. Some are permanently employed, others only parachute in for a couple of weeks to work on a certain aspect of the project; several people move in an out of projects all the time, others get hired away by aggressive competitors looking for a particular skill or talent, and many if not most media workers swim in a pool of underutilized talent (Hesmondhalgh 2002). The project-based nature of media work thus functions primarily on a heterarchical basis, where people constantly adapt to changing (yet semi-permanent) work teams, clients and sponsors. All these actors together form what can best be described as symbiotic, mutually reinforcing and recombinant ecologies.

Media work tends to take place in the offices and on the work floors of specific institutions: production houses, development studios, and corporate structures. However, much of this work is contingent, freelance, and temporary. In an April 2006 survey on the changing nature of work in the media in 38 countries, the International Labour Organization for example signaled the rapid rise of such so-called “atypical” work relations. People are
constantly moving in and out of large and small media institutions, continuously reconstituting the team dynamic and (thus) the creative process. Furthermore, under conditions of convergence culture, people across and within different institutions as well as media producers as professionals or amateurs are increasingly (expected to be) working together, collaborating and co-creating. This process, amplified by new media technologies, only accelerates the flow of people, processes and ideas through these organizations. In this emerging context media firms can perhaps best be understood as what Hallett and Ventresca (2006) call “inhabited” institutions. Regardless of industry or discipline, media institutions “are not inert containers of meaning; rather they are ‘inhabited’ by people and their doings” (ibid p.215). What determines the outcomes of media work in inhabited institutions, then, are everyday interaction rituals and formal organizational structures coupled with the ongoing construction and negotiating of meaning by the individuals (and groups) involved.

Culture. Within a context of ongoing global conglomeration in the media industries and a parallel emergence of an increasingly participatory media culture, Jenkins (2006) articulates a “convergence culture” as the default contemporary setting for media work. From a top-down perspective in media firms, culture creation increasingly begets convergent properties, as professionals are expected to market or repurpose their content across different media (cross media), or to stretch their messages in non-linear ways using distinct platforms—thus encouraging consumers to move from medium to medium and compile their own version of the story (transmedia). Convergence culture works bottom-up through intensifying producer-consumer relationships, interactive storytelling and a shift towards connectivity (next to content). Media organizations thus brace themselves for inter- and interinstitutional collaborations and cross-media production, while cautiously courting the consumer in her role as co-creator or, as Terranova (2000) suggests: free laborer. In this context it is interesting to note how many media workers directly involved with two-way interactivity and a more empowered role for the consumer express reluctance and at times hostility towards exploring ways to share control over the storytelling experience with members of the audience. The reason for this, argue Kim and Sawhney (2002), is that interactive media are catalysts for a power shift away from traditional telecommunications firms. Media companies are thus given to integrate convergence culture into their historically familiar (and economically validated) protocols, forcing workers to renegotiate their professional identity with what Jay Rosen in the case of journalism has aptly termed “The People Formerly Known As The Audience” (TPFKATA).

In the day to day process of media work one’s individual professional identity primarily gets meaning through what Nixon calls a “cult of creativity” partly bound up with a narcissism of minor differences (2006, p.91). The key to standing out and cultivating one’s image and professional identity in media work is not so much being original, nor does it mean getting known as someone who has unique insight into what will work in today’s
fragmented media market. As Nixon argues, a significant part of the production process in the work of media professionals centers on drawing attention of competitor-colleagues upon completion of the project. In doing so, media work often boils down to emphasizing and cultivating what are generally only small differences between what one group of professionals does, and what another team generates. “In important ways, however, the rubric of creativity represented a way of dramatizing the desires and insecurities generated by needing to mark out these differences in order to succeed in an intensely competitive world of work” (ibid p.103). Time again, the analyses of media workers in the different disciplines shows how their primary concern – for a variety of reasons – tends not to be the customer, nor the client: it is peer review, reputation and recognition. It turns out that this individual and group-level tactic is not only a way to take responsibility for one’s own professional identity, but also serves as both an economic and artistic survival tool in an otherwise complex and unpredictable rollercoaster industry.

Considering the undeniable importance of informal networks, a crucial question remains on how aspiring as well as seasoned practitioners manage and give meaning to their professional identity in the process. On a final note, two key strategies stand out, both having to do with authenticity. Being authentic, original, talented and unique is an essential ingredient of media work. Authenticity is a problematic category, however, as there exists a “dynamic tension between authenticity seen as an individual’s creative voice – that is, their ability to resolve problems in unique and distinctive ways [...] - and claims to authenticity that are carefully crafted to create a persona of an artist with a view to attracting the attention of customers, critics, gatekeepers and other artists” (Jones et al. 2005, pp.893-4). Manufacturing authenticity is not necessarily something one can do or control – it is as much a performance as it can be a claim made by or for someone (Peterson 2005). This underscores the elements of networking, socializing, and often quite powerful social bonds that determine the work-styles of media professionals in tight-knit, clustered communities of practice. It is, in other words, not only about being good at something – it is also about carefully cultivating that image of being good. The management of this image works in two, not entirely distinct yet vitally important domains: economic and artistic. In commercial terms, one needs to be perceived to provide investors, directors, editors and other stakeholders with work that would (contribute to) generating revenue, while the media worker also benefits from a creative image of being seen among her peers as someone with an unique or otherwise special talent.

**DISCUSSION**

Using these elements as the trends, developments and values informing the meaning of the various factors of influence in the model of media work as proposed here, it is possible to identify some new or possibly improved nuances to contemporary studies of media
production. A few concrete recommendations stand out. First, media work-studies should be careful to use the institution – such as a particular newspaper, game studio, or advertising agency as the dominant framework of analysis. Using the organization or firm as the single unit of analysis may obscure the ecological dynamism of production networks and work groups. Second, contemporary media work is enacted by (professional and amateur) producers as well as consumers in their symbiotic identities as originators, aggregators, modders, distributors, and editors of the messages of the media. In a convergence culture, media work stretches across users and producers, as it also does across media. Thus, thirdly, media production analyses should actively consider the cross media and transmedia components of the creative process, as it becomes increasingly difficult to separate out different trajectories of culture creation within distinct media. Ultimately, a contemporary media sociology studies must take into account the fact that what generally drives professional media makers – reputation, peer review, acknowledgement – also seems to drive the amateurs on websites like YouTube, Ohmynews, and Blogger or Livejournal. Just as only a few people ever make it to the professional ranks of autonomous, credited, and successful media storytellers, we see how only a small minority of participants to such interactive and social online networks can be considered to be active creators of content. Yet all are participating under what could be called the conditions of fandom: “where creative production, feedback, and critical reflection are the products and name recognition, attention and feedback are the currency.”

The media logic of work and employment in the media production industries offers two key advantages when dealing with these issues: first, it enables one to map explanatory frameworks across rather than within media professions or disciplines, and second, it allows us to look at the concrete implications of the changing organization of the global cultural economy which arguably affect its professional practitioners first, and the rest of us later.

The last remaining issue regarding the study, analysis, and understanding of media work that I would like to address briefly here, relates to the dominant framing of media production studies in the academic literature. It seems quite common for the foremost authors in the field – such as Mark Banks, Susan Christopherson, Simon Cottle, Gernot Grabher, David Hesmondhalgh, Catherine McKercher, Vincent Mosco, Andy Pratt, Andrew Ross, Ned Rossiter, Allen Scott, and Jeremy Tunstall – to be theoretically located (or to locate themselves) quite squarely in one of two camps, with generally pragmatic or even relativistic approaches on the one hand, and critical (neo-)Marxist perspectives dominating the other half of the coin. Of course, this typology too easy and simplistic. However, it is striking that authors without an explicit normative perspective often tend to be discarded as people who describe and map the field of media work without aiming to “expose” the corporate exploitation of struggling artists. The same crude argument goes the other way, and generally gets expressed by more or less deliberately ignoring the more critical or cultural studies informed literature. Indeed, overall there seems to be an unfortunate yet distinct
divide between a rather self-referential and internally coherent Commonwealth-inspired literature, a (relatively small) American literature, as well as a dispersed set of works across disciplines generally quite distanced from the particular theories and methods of media and communication research – such as organizational anthropology, cultural sociology, and economic geography.

I realize that the main point in this piece has been to articulate an at times bewildering complexity in understanding media work, and to advocate an awareness of the multiple and often contradictory directions the evidence can take us when studying media work. Considering the rapid growth of studies in the field and the increasing global prominence of creative industries and the cultural economy, I would emphasize that such a call for a more hermeneutic rather than hermetic theorizing in contemporary media sociology is not only warranted, but essential.

ENDNOTES


2. I borrowed the term “workstyle” from several professional agencies in the field of management and human resources, see for example the site of a British professional coaching agency called The Results Agency (at URL: http://www.theresultsagency.co.uk), Dutch agency Bureau Eveleens (URL: http://www.workstyle.nl), German workstyle-management consultancy D@ccord 4u (http://www.daccord4u.de/dienstleistungen_workstyle.htm), and Australian coaching agency MerryMentality (URL: http://www.merrymentality.com.au/workstyle.html).


REFERENCES


THE ROUTINE AT THE DAILY ROUTINE: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN AN AGE OF MEDIA TRANSFORMATION

JOHN HATCHER

This qualitative study of a daily newspaper seeks to understand how the identity of journalists influences the work they do, and how these individual characteristics manifest themselves when exposed to the social and institutional forces of the newsroom. A four-month study of one U.S. newspaper suggests many factors may inhibit real change in news routines.

The newspaper may be likened to a ship on which the captain sets the course, but seamen handle the wheel and at any moment may head the vessel several degrees off course…In the same way, the reporter has some latitude in selecting his operations, and by so doing may work against the publisher’s policy. (Breed, 1952, p. 173).

On a long wall in the newsroom of The Daily Routine are pictures of the men and women who work to publish the newspaper each day. They are grouped in neatly ordered rows, clustered under headlines listing their departments. They are editors, reporters, photographers, page designers and graphic artists. When the managing editor of The Routine looks at these pictures, he sees a team, united in its effort to produce a dynamic newspaper. However, he also sees individuals. What’s more, he wants the individuality of journalists to influence how they do their jobs. Men and women. Parents with teenagers. Twenty-somethings fresh from college. Minorities. Upper class. Middle class. Religious and agnostic. Democrats and Republicans. The differences in the news staff reflect the

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differences in the community, the editor says. Further, a newsroom that looks like its
community will create a newspaper that speaks to its community in a harmonious
relationship between journalists, their work, and the community.

Decades of research have suggested that influences such as news routines, ownership
and broader cultural influences erase differences that individual journalists might bring to
their work (Breed, 1952; Gans, 1972; Tuchman, 1973, 1978; Paletz & Entman, 1981; Dreier,
1983; Entman, 1989; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This study revisits these questions in an
era when news organizations struggle to find ways to make themselves relevant in a
changing world:

As newspapers struggle to increase readership, they do so competing against alternative
sources of media, such as citizen-driven news products – that appear to be less rigid in
structure and more dynamic in their content (Schaffer, 2005; Rosen, 2006).

In an increasingly diverse society, some scholars are convinced the only way newsrooms
can be effective is to become equally diverse in both their staffs and the content produced
(Campbell, 1995; Heider, 2000).

It’s never been more important to understand what constrains individuality in news
work. Traditional news organizations are struggling to find ways to remain relevant to their
readers (Ahrens, 2005). Organizations such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors
argue that one way to reach a broader audience is to hire journalists who represent a greater
diversity of backgrounds, interests and orientations (Dedman & Doig, 2004). At the same
time, surveys of working journalists find, first, that journalists feel less autonomy in their
work and, second, that more journalists are largely dissatisfied with their work and thinking
of leaving the industry (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How much do individual journalists feel they influence the daily routines of one
newspaper? The research questions guiding this inquiry ask:

- How much autonomy do individuals have and what other influences affect the news
gathering process?
- When do journalists feel they have control? When do they not?
- Do individual characteristics influence news content? Does identity matter?
- Do diverse newsrooms create diverse newspapers?
- Does individual difference matter more at certain stages of the newsgathering process
  (e.g. reporting, editing, management)?
- Does individual difference matter more in positions of leadership?
The Routine at The Daily Routine

THEORY

This study is informed by a rich body of literature that has long puzzled over the disparity between the importance industry practitioners give to the individuality of the working journalist and the factors that have been found to constrain this power. In some ways, the individual matters in news work. Peiser (2000) finds journalists give priority to issues that are important to them personally. Women, for example, are more likely to give importance to social and humanitarian issues. The result, Peiser predicts, should be differences in the way journalists make news decisions. However, there has been a significant decline in the autonomy journalists see themselves as having in their work (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Overall, surveys find a decline in their freedom to select stories and to choose the elements of a news article. Some of the reasons for this decreasing perception of autonomy include editorial control, time and space limitations and inadequate staffing. Increasing corporate ownership is also thought to play a role. The sense of individual autonomy does not appear to be uniform. Liebler (1994) finds male and female journalists have roughly the same perception of their own power in a newsroom, but minority journalists perceive themselves as having slightly less autonomy.

The assumption behind recent industry efforts to increase the diversity of news organizations in the United States appears to be that the individual can make a difference in the news product. Organizations like the Maynard Institute, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Freedom Forum have taken the lead in challenging the newspaper industry to create newsrooms that resemble the diversity of the communities they cover. To track and evaluate these efforts, the public can now look at any daily newspaper in the nation and compare the diversity of its newsroom staff with the diversity of its community (Dedman & Doig, 2004). Such an inspection finds that the push for diversity has witnessed some improvement since the 1970s when minority journalists comprised just 5 percent of the workforce in America’s newsrooms (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes & Wilhoit, 2002). Even so, minority journalists comprise just 12 percent of all staffs in U.S. newsrooms, while accounting for 31 percent of the population (Dedman, 2002).

Increasing diversity is only part of the solution, and many scholars have found that newsrooms can be effective in their coverage if these trends are coupled with a desire within the newsroom to be diverse and inclusive (Pease, Smith & Subervi, 2001). Other studies have shown that it can be financially profitable for a newspaper to increase its coverage of diversity (Gross, Curtain & Cameron, 2001).

The ideal image of the media in a democracy is one of an autonomous press that offers a detailed analysis of important issues that are used by an engaged citizenry to keep government accountable (Entman, 1989). A newspaper is idealized as a marketplace of ideas where all sides are heard from and all groups equally represented. By and large, Entman argues, media produce a product that is satisfying to no one. A journalist may yearn for work...
that attempts to “illuminate the powerful,” (p. 125) but falls short due to a desire to be objective, accountable and profitable. Entman believes these news practices are highly resistant to change, primarily because of the limits of audience interest and the journalist’s close relationship with political elite.

Other research suggests who individuals are may not matter. In their look at the spectrum of influences on news content, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) outline a range of factors beyond those of the individual that may stifle the tastes and preferences of the individual reporter. Shoemaker, Eichholz, and Wrigley (2001) argue that the routinized forces of the newsgathering process hold greater influence on how news stories are selected and framed. Further impeding a journalist’s autonomy is the charge to seek out and report on events that fit under the title of “news.” “The problem for journalists is that although they usually have a reasonable sense of what is not news, they are less certain what exactly and invariably news is” (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 16).

Breed (1952) finds news decisions are shaped by societal and community influences, newsroom routines and the policies set by publishers. Reporters learn to adhere to these pressures, which limit and define the decisions they make in newsgathering. Breed likens the power of the individual reporter to the seaman steering a ship at sea. The publisher has set a course and destination, and a reporter has some freedom to veer slightly from this course, but only within limits. Too much deviation will be noticed quickly. Breed finds that the freedom of a reporter varies by the kind of story and at different steps in the reporting and writing process. Overall, though, he argues that journalists rarely question policies established by publishers.

Reporters, Fishman finds, work in a “bureaucratically constructed universe,” (1980, p. 134). This universe defines what is and isn’t news. Fishman sees reporters making decisions about news that are in keeping with the orientations of the sources they routinely encounter as part of their beats. They tend to ignore events and voices that are disruptive to the “agencies’ idealizations of what is going on and what should be going on” (p. 134). Bureaucracies become “fountains of information” (p. 143) that offer up information that is verifiable in a “scheduled, predictable way” (p. 143). Journalists are constrained by an economic set of restrictions: deadlines, story quotas, and reliance on prescheduled and preformulated events.

For journalists, issues of social identity could affect the way they see the news events they report on. It is human nature to evaluate, sort and categorize others with respect to ones own social identity in a process known as self categorization (Turner, 1985). In a non-conscious manner, Tsui and Gutek (1999) observe, individuals will assume differences in an individual’s knowledge, skills and perspectives based on these same demographic characteristics. The result of this phenomenon can be outright prejudice or hatred for an out-group. However, a more subtle form of discrimination or bias may emerge in which
“positive emotions such as admiration, sympathy and trust are reserved for the in-group and withheld from out-groups” (Brewer and Brown, 1998, p. 575).

On the face of it, the American journalist, and specifically the reporter, holds a great deal of power (Entman & Paletz, 1981). Reporters choose the stories they write, the sources that speak in their stories, the things sources are permitted to say, and the amount of information those stories will include. As such, it would seem, a reporter’s personal “background, experiences and attitudes, may direct them to stories which their newspapers are not organized to gather and would not otherwise publish” (p. 14). However, Entman and Paletz argue that the American journalist is motivated to produce work that is pleasing to both employers and colleagues. Their backgrounds and attitudes come from a white, male, middle-class background that tends to reject “extreme ideological positions” (p. 14), and their desire for career success and acceptance among their peers, tends to squelch their desire to act autonomously.

In summary, each news organization has its own culture. It’s in part influenced by societal factors already outlined, but it’s also influenced by professional norms and the tradition of the newsroom routines (Tuchman, 1973; 1978). Many scholars (Gans, 1972; Tuchman, 1973, 1978; Fishman, 1980) have already observed how the routines of newsgathering constrain the ability of a journalist to act completely motivated by individual motivations. News organizations rely largely on government-generated news, sources that have immediately verifiable information (Tuchman, 1978) and on news events that are preplanned and predictable (Fishman, 1980). As such, journalists who desire to pursue news that is drastically removed from these institutionalized formulas may find themselves deviating from the practices of acceptable newsroom behavior.

**METHOD**

A qualitative case study approach was taken to ask whether individual differences manifest themselves in the routine of one daily newspaper. A four-month analysis resulted in the collection of in-depth interviews, on-site observations, field notes, news stories and other documents related to the newspaper’s mission and perceived audience. The project was guided by a series of research questions that explore the freedom the individual has to operate as they do their jobs as reporters and editors in a newsroom.

The journalists themselves are not the focus of this project – this is not an evaluation of the performance of one newspaper. The attempt is to understand how these journalists interact with coworkers, policymakers, managers and the public in the process of newsgathering. This approach borrows heavily from a style of research called institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography, as defined by the originator of the term, Dorothy Smith (2002), is “conceived of as arising in people’s activities (what they do, say, write and so on) in particular local settings at particular times” (p. 21). The research focused on how
daily activities and routines revealed the structures and meanings created within the newsroom environment.

The identities of the newspaper and of the journalists participating in this project have been kept confidential. The newspaper is a daily newspaper that was chosen because it is, in many ways, characteristic of urban newspapers across the United States. The newspaper is group-owned, has a circulation size between 100,000 and 200,000. It is considered by the American Society of Newspaper Editors rankings of diversity to be part of one of the top newspaper groups in the nation when it comes to hiring minority journalists.

This style of research is intentionally dynamic and flexible. The inquiry was permitted to evolve and deviate during the course of research. Informants were chosen as research evolved; interviews were open-ended (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). As Smith (1999, p. 310) notes: “Each informant provides a partial view; the work of institutional ethnography is to put together an integrated view based on these otherwise truncated accounts…” A total of 11 reporters and editors were interviewed using a semi-structured technique; variation was sought in age, gender, ethnicity and newsroom position. Each interview relied on an interview guide that focused discussion on the issues of social identity, newsroom autonomy, newsgathering routines and diversity. Interviews attempted to be conversations rather than interrogations, as outlined by Kvale (1996). All interviews were recorded and transcripts were created and analyzed.

In addition to interviews, the researcher visited the newsroom as an observer at different times. These visits were designed to observe editors and reporters in the daily practice of their work. Notes were taken while observing and extensive field notes were written after the visit.

Textual analysis was conducted of a variety of documents collected during this two-month period. Newspapers produced during this time were analyzed. In-house documents such as story budgets and notes from newsroom managers were analyzed. Journalists interviewed were asked to submit stories representing the type of work they feel is important.

The greatest advantage of case study research is that it allows a variety of data to be analyzed, increasing the likelihood of results being “convincing and accurate” (Yin, 1994, p. 92). Analysis took place both during and after data collection. Memos were written routinely exploring emerging themes; transcripts and documents were also analyzed once data collection was complete using a variety of techniques including the creation of charts and visual maps and by way of textual analysis (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Results were reported in a narrative format with a goal toward producing work that would be of interest and value to journalists as well as scholars (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).
The Routine at The Daily Routine

FINDINGS

Analysis of The Daily Routine finds unanimity in the view of the importance of individuality of journalists. Journalists say that, to be effective, the individual must matter. Journalists must be independent thinkers, free to explore and discover the world. At the same time, the findings confirm what scholars of newsrooms before have noted: That an individual’s autonomy competes against myriad obstacles, filters and barriers. The factors that shape news decisions are complex and, in many ways, appear to go unnoticed. The findings look first at the results of in-depth interviews and then at observations of newsroom routines.

In-depth Interviews

The newspaper’s senior managing editor oversees the paper’s daily operations, though he answers to an executive editor and a publisher. Like many journalists at the Routine, he isn’t from the community his newspaper serves. For the first 10 years of his journalism career, he moved from newspaper to newspaper, working his way up the editing ranks until he came to The Daily Routine 20 years ago. Like all of the top editors at the newspaper, he is white, though he doesn’t talk about race as one of the ways he identifies himself.

I grew up on a farm in Nebraska where, you know, you don’t go home until the hay is in the barn sort of work ethic is important. I grew up on a farm where in many ways we were very isolated, but that also meant that the arrival of the daily newspaper every day was really an important event… So that, that helped shape my thinking as well as my own parents’ value of reading and education and work and all of those things. So those are probably formative experiences, and in my life whether it’s the value of reading and writing and truth and fact as well as the value of work and the value of how you treat people and sort of that golden rule of respect. So I would try to bring that with how I work with the people here as well how I would want our staff to treat our readership as well.

Most of the journalists interviewed defined themselves in a similar way. Almost all of them see class as the main way of identifying themselves. Few of them think of race or ethnicity when asked open-ended questions about how they identify themselves. Many of them said their families instilled in them a sense of the importance of having a strong work ethic. Many of them came from rural communities in the Midwest, where they were raised in homogenous, white communities. None of the journalists interviewed for this project was originally from the community where The Daily Routine publishes.

Q: Thinking about your parents, when you look at their identity and their background, do you see issues such as your race or your class or any of those kind of things or even your
ethnic heritage. Do you think that any of those factor into how either your parents or you have come to see yourselves?

A: I think class, definitely. My parents have pretty different class backgrounds. For example, my mother, was I believe the first person in her family to go to college and graduate. And my father on the other hand is third generation advanced degree. And, you know, obviously education plays a factor in where you fall in the, I guess, socio-economic spectrum. So, yeah, that’s definitely… race, not as much… not really as much.

One reporter who grew up in an urban neighborhood in a city very much like the city where The Daily Routine is based had a different view of her background.

Because I went to a poor urban high school… so I was conscious, always conscious of the difference between urban and suburban schools so that’s why it was always interesting to me. And then, the more I found out about education in (this) state and the school district the more interested I got in it.

Exceptions in how these journalists identify themselves were confined to people who saw their social class as being different from their peers.

It’s funny you ask that question because… I think I probably will have a different background than a lot of people here. I grew up in very, very rural (name of area)... but my father was actually, my father that raised me, was actually a tenant farmer. So, we moved from location to location, always pretty much generally in (region of state). We were constantly on the move. I went to 13 different school districts. So, it was very poor, very rural, um, not a lot of luxuries at all.

A frustration of this project was that few minority journalists were interviewed. The one black journalist interviewed is originally from Africa. Her perspective about issues of race as they related to her identity and her job were apparent. Of all of the journalists interviewed, she was the one who volunteered information about how issues of race played out both in the newsroom and in the communities the newspaper covered. She was also aware that this perspective made her quite different from her peers.

When asked about race and diversity issues, several mentioned that in the past, the newspaper had brought in experts to do diversity training. No one spoke highly of these events, suggesting they consisted of psychologists who tried to get everyone to admit that they secretly held racist tendencies and hidden biases.

Journalists saw other aspects of their identity influencing their jobs. Because one reporter came from a lower-income setting, he said, he was aware that he sometimes looked at people with money in a negative light. He wondered if part of this came from his time in college when he had to work to pay tuition while others didn’t worry so much about finances.
It was always frustrating to me, OK, why do these people have everything and these people have nothing? And how does this come to be? What process is it? That was, I guess, the basic and I guess I realize that more now that I’ve gotten older. I realize that was motivating me in a lot of ways. But I had a prejudice against rich people that I had to get over.

Another reporter whose family was poor growing up said she tried not to let this perspective get in the way of her knowing what was news.

Q: Do you see kind of your roots, your background whatever you want to call it, playing a part in how you see the world and how you make decisions about what’s news and what isn’t.
A: You mean like sympathizing with the underdog?
Q: I don’t know. Do you see that as part of it?
A: I think that. I like to think I can make a distinction between sympathizing with the underdog and what’s actually news for the underdog.

Both of these reporters spoke to an awareness that their perspectives may be different from the majority opinion. When this reporter talked about evaluating news she said she knew she should not align herself with people who shared her background. Another reporter said he had to keep his own perspective in check. Neither said these motivations were the result of pressure from anyone above them. In fact, one story he wrote that exposed the grandiose lifestyle of local elite was supported and encouraged by the newspaper.

How journalists perceive their role. The reporter whose primary duty is to cover the police and public safety said she lives for the front-page story. She starts her day at the city’s police station looking for items hiding inside the routine police reports. She calls them “quirky stories.” They are the items that may not be big news stories, but will capture the attention of editors at the newspaper, who she knows delight in the “off beat” stories. She’s also proud of the contacts she has on police departments around town that will mean she gets a call when something big happens.

The newspaper’s education reporter, in contrast, sometimes feels like she’s part public servant and part journalist. Her job involves covering the school district that serves the city’s poorest communities. As a child, she attended urban schools herself, so she feels a connection to them and to cities.

Well, I love cities and I’m really interested in the whole urban, urban... I don’t know... quandary. How do you educate kids with really high needs in a system that’s set up for failure from the get go, you know? Funding-wise and every other way. It’s just like an impossible, impossible equation. And it’s real interesting... I said this a lot of times to myself and probably to people. I consider myself almost like a civil servant only I don’t work for the government. I’m just like a, almost like a cop or a social worker.
These contrasting perceptions suggest great variation in what motivates journalists to do their work. One is motivated by the excitement of finding a news story first and having the front-page scoop. Journalists who talked about these kind of motivations also spoke of a sense of importance they feel when they are working on news stories that involve interacting with famous and important people. They also have a keen awareness of the kinds of stories their editors favor, and the kinds of stories that will have a good chance of appearing on the front page of the paper.

The romance of it. The idea of being on the cutting edge of history, being in the middle of the mix. You’re not a decision maker and I don’t know that I ever have any particular desire to be a decision maker, but I always wanted to be involved in it in some way… It was just a thrill. And the idea that I would play a role. I always had the idea that what I, what newspapers, what journalists do is important… that people make decisions based on that information.

On the other end of this scale are motivations expressed by a desire to make a difference. Journalists who gravitate toward this end of the spectrum often talked of wanting to look for larger issues facing ordinary people. They, too, seemed motivated by their stories running in a prominent place in the newspaper. Here is one reporter talking about a story she wrote that fit this description.

I think because of the feedback that we got from parents and from kids. That it mattered and that they read and saved (the story) because they thought it might help them at some point or because it would help them at that point in time. And I mean, that’s really what you’re striving for in some ways…to create a reaction that. Not create a reaction. That’s not the right word, but just to um, to do something that somehow helps people. Or that gets people to look at something in a different way.

And I mean I guess that was something unexpected with journalism but that I grew to really hope for and like. Like if somebody said to me, “What you wrote, I never really thought of it that way” or “I wouldn’t have put it that way that’s interesting” or “That’s bad” or, you know, just getting that kind of feedback.

Each end of this scale has curious characteristics. Journalists motivated by competitive, news-oriented motivations do not talk about a connection or orientation toward the community at large or the readers of the newspaper. Their conversations tend to gravitate toward thinking about the thrill of discovering something new and interesting. This contrasts with journalists motivated toward public service.

*Journalists measure their autonomy.* One editor said that he earned his autonomy by proving he could produce what the editors wanted with little oversight. He began working
at the paper at an outlying bureau and said he proved himself capable of doing the job with little need for oversight or guidance by editors…

... because I would deliver. I would... I always had stories. I always was working on something. And they knew that if they just set me free, that they could always count on a good enterprise story for Sunday at least one, two, three stories a day for the daily paper. They just didn’t have to worry about it.

He thinks that’s why he had so much freedom as a reporter. Other journalists, he said, didn’t enjoy the same kind of freedom. They were the ones editors would have to give assignments to; they were the ones editors would have to make sure were making the right decisions.

Most reporters at The Daily Routine said they felt their jobs give them autonomy, though there’s a mixed perception of where and how it’s enjoyed. Many rate autonomy by what freedom they don’t have. Several reporters who value their skill as writers, not just reporters, echoed these words: “Not a lot (of autonomy). It’s hard to quantify. I felt more stifled than I felt creative.” Most rated autonomy as one of the most coveted aspects of their job, and were frustrated when they didn’t feel it was great enough.

…and to have that freedom and putting yourself in (the reporting). There is definitely a frustration, a frustration of letting personality show through. And I think this is newspapers, I think, one of their big problems. It’s very anonymous.

Reporters appeared keenly aware of the limits of their autonomy. One reporter says he feels the greatest sense of freedom in that he knows his beat more intimately than his editors, and, he also knows what stories his editors would like him to write.

Well, the best, real power that I have is I know all the 10 million things that go on my beat and the initial sorting of what they even know about is by me. So, there are certainly things going on that I keep to myself because I know that... I just think there are better ways to spend my time.

A senior managing editor said a sense of independence encourages journalists to draw on their individual perspectives to explore the issues in a community that can’t been seen by the editors who work primarily in the newsroom…

…it would be a sad newspaper — and not very interesting — if everybody was in lock step with me and my way of thinking. We want people who think diverse in diverse ways.

From the top editor to the newest reporter, there is a sense that the news reporter should feel empowered and independent. But the boundaries of this freedom – its limits – cannot
be truly understood without looking at how all of these individuals interact in the pursuit of news.

Observing Routines

Reporters at *The Daily Routine* arrive at their downtown office by passing under an automated arm at the entrance to their attended parking lot. It is the first of many barriers they’ll go through on their way to their desks. They enter their massive office building on the edge of the city’s bustling business district through a rear entrance marked for employees only. They wear photo identification cards around their necks, and hold them up for guards at the security checkpoint before they head upstairs to the newsroom. Visitors to the newspaper can expect to confront even more security. They must check in at a front security desk where they will present a photo identification. Their personal information will be recorded in a log. They’ll be issued a nametag and won’t be allowed to enter until their escort arrives.

Once in the newsroom, a reporter sits down at her desk to begin a routine that has been practiced at this newspaper since it began publishing more than 100 years ago. At least one issue for every day of every month of every year. And while many things have changed — one journalist remarked that the newsroom looks like an accounting firm as much as a newsroom these days with its uniformed cubicles and row upon row of employees sitting at their computer screens — the practices of the newsroom seem to follow the routines scholars have noticed for decades (Breed, 1952; Tuchman, 1973; Fishman, 1980).

A reporter’s job is defined by a beat. A beat assignment can mean covering a particular government entity — such as city hall or the police — or the beat can be a particular community. When journalists at *The Daily Routine* talk about the typical routines of their work, they describe a strategy of talking to a small group of sources they know and interact with on a regular basis. From the sports writer to the school reporter, journalists seem to stick to communicating with a small, familiar group of people.

When journalists do go out of the office, it is usually with purpose. A former education reporter, covering several schools in the outlying suburbs, said she planned her days around the meetings and other events her schools had planned for the week. These events would dictate both her schedule.

Time wise, it was a very strange job because I had a lot of evening responsibilities. But in order to reach any of my sources I needed to be around during the day. So, I would sometimes work a lot of split shifts where I’d go in at 10 or whatever and make calls and try to get some interviews done and try to get some writing done and take a break — go home do something else for a couple of hours — and then go back out to cover a school board meeting or some sort of event.
One reporter who used to work at *The Daily Routine* knew that the best way to find interesting stories was to get out into the community. But as he talked about doing this, he also expressed a sense of anxiety about doing it, saying he would have to sometimes “force himself” to get up from his desk and go out and talk to people.

One editor who covered the urban communities as a reporter said she would make it part of her routine to visit key spots around the community. At these places, she would talk with community leaders she had built relationships with and look over bulletin boards to see what events the paper should pay attention to. She said an urban neighborhood had to be covered differently because the residents don’t have the resources to send out press releases and do the other things to get the attention of the media.

Transient work histories. Many of the journalists at *The Daily Routine* have been with the newspaper for more than 20 years. Yet, for the most part, their careers have never been stationary. They describe jumping from beat to beat in no predictable fashion. Some would become editors for a time, only to return back to work as a reporter again. At times these moves seemed prompted by requests from newsroom managers who often shuffled the staff around experimenting with new initiatives; other times the moves seemed brought on by the journalists’ desire for variety.

In general, this constant movement allows for no real attachment or connection to a particular issue or cause, nor a connection to a particular community. Of all the journalists interviewed, only one seems resistant to this transient pattern: The urban school reporter has been on the same beat for 10 years and said she has no intention of leaving it.

This reporter was unique in those interviewed in this newsroom for several reasons. One, she sees herself serving a public service kind of a role. Two, there is a strong relationship between her own personal identity and background and the beat she covers. Three, she expresses contentment with her current beat that is not found in her fellow journalists. This is not to say that the other journalists are unhappy – rather, that part of what keeps them content is the constant variety.

Gauging performance. Most reporters seem keenly aware of what the editors they work for — both directly and indirectly — expect from them. Most of this knowledge comes not from a set of rules or directives or from direct communication, but from the way news stories are treated. Rarely do reporters communicate with editors above their direct supervisor, but they often have stories returned to them with questions from editors above their supervisor. After a while they begin to learn the preferences of different editors based on these interactions.

A challenge for reporters is anticipating what the latest initiative is from the paper. Most reporters say the newspaper goes through cycles in which it is looking for one particular kind of news story. Often these initiatives are not explicitly published or communicated, but
inferred by the way news stories travel through the process of reporting, editing and publishing.

A measure for reporters of how close their reporting is to meeting the latest desires of the newsroom is how quickly it moves through this process. If a story moves quickly through the layers of editors and onto the front page of the newspaper, the reporter assumes she has correctly anticipated the kind of story editors are looking for, the kinds of sources editors want to hear from, and the kind of information editors want from those sources. When stories are held up, or returned with questions or even not published, it’s a cue to reporters that their work is not in congruence with their newspaper.

Send it to (the editor) and so, you know, never heard anything back. He sounded encouraging when I told him about it. But I never heard back. And that’s the type of thing. Now I should go shake his limbs or whatever. That has happened a couple of times and that, I find the most frustrating thing where I think a newspaper should lend itself to voices from every part of the newsroom.

*An editors’ routine.* Everyone knows the routine at the long conference table. The senior editor gives a brief opening statement and then editors in the room take their turns presenting the news stories they have available for the next day’s newspaper. Some editors sit at the main conference table; others sit in the chairs lining the outside wall. It is a group comprised mostly of men, most wearing ties and dress shirts. There are no minorities in the group. There is little discussion as they go through the list of stories, finalizing ideas that began taking shape hours earlier.

Each editor has a copy of the story budget for the day. It lists all the stories available in a long menu-like fashion. Each story is represented by a brief two or three word description, a sentence summarizing the story, an estimated length of the story in inches and whether or not the story includes any photographs or graphics. Some stories have “A1 pitch” next to them, meaning they have been identified as stories that could run on the front page of the next day’s paper. On this day, some of those stories include a ceremony for a high school student killed in a car crash, a story about campaign spending in a local political race, a story about a regional developer who may be selling off some of his shopping malls, along with national stories including coverage of the World Series.

The entire ritual takes almost exactly 30 minutes. When it is done, the senior editor speaks: “Here are the stories I like. Tell me what you think.” For the most part, there is little debate or discussion. The senior editor has suggested an interest in the mall developer story. One editor asks how relevant that issue is to people’s lives. The senior editor begins to list all of the ways this developer has been involved in projects, including the chamber of commerce. “His fingers are in the community in so many ways,” the senior editor says.

Reporters at *The Daily Routine* measure their days and weeks by the events that drive their search for news. Editors at the newspaper, likewise, measure their own work routines...
by moving from one meeting to the next over the course of a day. From the moment they walk in the door, editors are evaluating and assessing the available news of the day, in preparation for the meetings and ongoing dialogue during which they seem to come to a consensus about the most important stories of the day. At 10 a.m., there is the first meeting of the day to take inventory of what news event seems to hold the most promise, and to revisit the decisions made the day before. At noon they hold a “standup meeting” in the middle of the newsroom in which they make some early decisions about what stories may hold the most promise. The 4 p.m. meeting is more formal. Editors review the decisions made earlier in the day and finalize details. Often, there is one last meeting around 6 p.m. to review the news one last time.

So much of what these editors do revolves around dialogue. They talk in their meetings, and then when the meetings are over, they talk about other story ideas. Often, in these conversations, they draw on their own lives and experiences. One editor has noticed that the leaves are still on the trees and wonders if it is late in the year to have fall foliage. Another editor talks about what the weather is going to be like for Halloween, prompting one editor to recall a great news story that ran last year, which had an excellent opening sentence.

Summary of results

In summary, the challenge for journalists at *The Daily Routine* appears formidable. It requires a balance between being a dynamic, surprising newspaper that values individual creativity and the need to produce a commodity — the newspaper. To survive a relentless, unending demand, a newspaper cannot be completely dynamic. Instead, it is formatted, compartmentalized, and planned. News events become stories on a budget that have a value based on criteria known by the news staff. They become items that are measured, evaluated and packaged as a combination of headlines, text and photographs that complete the already formatted, ordered and compartmentalized newspaper.

Conclusion

Editors and reporters at *The Daily Routine* believe journalists must be independent and free from restraints as they do their jobs, but social and organizational routines continue to constrain what happens in a newsroom. At a time when newspapers are in the throws of upheaval and transition, this study of one daily newspaper suggests that larger, social situations and the stated and unstated routines of the news organization create boundaries that narrow the ways individuals may bring their identities to their work. *The Daily Routine* was found to operate under a set of norms, understandings – agreements – on what is valued in the news selection process. This agreement comes through an ongoing dialogue that is built based on traditions, institutional knowledge, individual identity (especially of those in
charge), and an understanding of how competing media and national media value similar news events. Included in creating this meaning can be strong relationships with sources—particularly public officials and key sources with whom journalists have close relationships.

The following factors seem to be most important in understanding how the individual freedom of journalists is constrained:

“Getting it.” There is no rulebook or manual that dictates so many of the decisions made in the newsroom. But there appears to be an understanding regarding what is expected of journalists at every step in the newsgathering process. These rules are passed along through discussion about potential news events, through decisions about which events journalists will cover and how those events will be interpreted. Journalists seem to have a strong sense of whether their fellow reporters “get it” when referring to the decisions that are in keeping with the view of the news organization. They say some reporters tend to “miss” stories that should have written, while others will “overplay” some stories the newspaper will not see as being of value.

Expressing identity. Journalists who sense their identity and background have a strong, shared congruence with their peers and newsroom managers appear comfortable using this identity as an inspiration for their work. Those who see their identity as being different seem to keep this identity in check and are cautious not to let it influence their work. This situation shows the huge challenge facing diversity initiatives constructed on the assumption that a newsroom with variation in background, class, ethnicity and other measures of difference will result in variations in news content. Of course, if some of these groups feel they must stifle their difference, then diversity could result in little difference in content.

Orientation of journalists. Analysis suggests there are many motivations for doing journalism even in one newsroom. Some seem motivated by a competitive vision of success that is satisfied by front-page news stories and feeling that both coworkers and sources are pleased with their work. Others seem more motivated by a desire to serve larger public good that appears to be more motivated toward the larger community or citizenry.

Demand for news. Surviving the daily pressures of putting a paper together, there is, curiously, little room for “surprises,” in a business built on surprises. There must be a kind of standard by which news is judged that is congruent from reporter to editor. This is constantly being revised and redefined through discussion and dialogue, and the result seems to be the “typification” of news observed by Tuchman (1973).

Limiting the sources of news. Surviving the daily struggle to decide what is news and what isn’t news, journalists create a shared understanding of what stories should be written
about. This, by default, allows them to stop looking in other places for news as confirmed in previous findings by Fishman (1980). Journalists must cover certain meetings, traditions and newsworthy events often defined by beats. These events consume their work routines, leaving little room to consider sources of news that are not part of the beat structure.

While this project is limited in that it explores one daily newspaper for a short time, its validity is supported in that it confirms and updates some of the classic studies in the field of media sociology including the work of Breed (1952) and Tuchman (1973; 1978). This confirmation seems to be the importance of the study. The Internet, citizen media and a general reshaping of the news industry have all sounded the alarm that news organizations are going to have to make drastic transformations if they are to remain relevant and profitable. In spite of this recognition, these findings suggest, little has changed in the practices and routines of U.S. newsrooms over half a century of research. As Reese and Ballinger (2001) note: “The questions asked in the early newsmaking research of the 1950s are just as important today as they were then: How does it work—and in whose interest?” (p. 654). Social structure and organizational routines remain daunting barriers to the kind of dramatic reinventing that will need to take place to effect real change. While journalists appear keenly aware of – and even open to – the idea of transformation, they also seem unaware of how long-established organizational and social situations inhibit this change.

Future research could delve more deeply into understanding the relationship between the social identities and organizational roles of journalists and how they influence the news decisions journalists make. Survey work exploring these findings on a broader and, perhaps, cross-cultural scale could further understanding of whether institutional norms observed in this study are being challenged in any way by the changing climate of media.

ENDNOTES

1. The name of this newspaper and the journalists involved in this project are confidential, based on an agreement with the newspaper. Pseudonyms are used for both.

REFERENCES


TA K I N G I T T O T H E S T R E E T S: 
U. S. N E W S P A P E R D I S C O U R S E S 
O N I R A Q W A R P R O T E S T S

A M A N I I S M A I L , M E R V A T Y O U S S E F A N D D A N B E R K O W I T Z

D uring times of war, the media sphere quickly and regularly draws attention to a socially constructed vision of public opinion. News media influence public opinion (Mutz & Soss, 1997) but also support government positions during wartime through a so-called “rally effect.” Rarely do the media actually contest the legitimacy of war waged by government so that news frames tend to portray war protests as anti-patriotic threats to the social order, standing as marginal to national consensus. This study investigates how three U.S. newspapers’ news and opinion pages – sites where public opinion and ideology are negotiated – reflected rallies and protests about the Iraq War. News, editorials, and letters to the editor were examined through a qualitative textual analysis from the top newspapers in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Atlanta. Above all, this study points out the role of community character in constructing a media discourse that negotiates between public opinion and localized ideology. This role appears to be a particularly critical one during times of crisis, with public opinion surrounding the Iraq War serving as a prime example for studying this phenomenon.

K eyw ords: Iraq War, news, opinion, protest, community

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Effect” (McLeod et al., 1994). Rarely do the media actually contest the legitimacy of war waged by government (Eilders & Luter, 2000), so that news frames tend to portray war protests as anti-patriotic threats to the social order, standing as marginal to national consensus (Reese & Buckalew, 1995).

Ideally, news media serve as a vital forum for a multitude of voices within society, whether from the mainstream or from dissident ideology. In “the idealized democratic society,” the media should serve “as a watchdog on elected officials to make sure they are doing their job” (Boaz, 2005, p. 349). Media are meant to be “tools for citizens both to debate with one another and to express discontent to the ruling elite” (Boaz, 2005, p. 349).

The emergence of pro- and anti-war sentiments follows from the controversial nature of war, with the current Iraq War standing out as a particularly controversial campaign. The war’s U.S. death toll has already surpassed 4,000 (Cable News Network, 2008). Media representation of wartime public opinion becomes pertinent to maintenance of the social order by presenting certain perspectives as “universal, natural and coterminous with ‘reality’ itself” (Hall, 1982, p. 65) while simultaneously marginalizing others. In the Iraq War’s case, arguably “the media might have had a direct impact on [people’s] support for the war” (Willnat et al., 2006, p. 547, emphasis added).

This study investigates how three U.S. newspapers’ news and opinion pages – sites where public opinion and ideology are negotiated – reflected rallies and protests about the Iraq War. News, editorials, and letters to the editor were examined through a qualitative textual analysis from the top newspapers in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Atlanta.

The study begins with a discussion of how newwork interfaces with news of protest during wartime, how the nature of community shapes the nature of that news coverage, and how local newspapers serve as mediators of community conflict. From that foundation, we present a textual analysis of news and opinion pages about public protests and rallies for the Iraq War, framing the outcome as a negotiation between local newspapers, public opinion and community ideology.

A Conceptual Framework for Protest News

To understand and analyze the nature of protest news, we draw on four areas of literature. First, we consider the sociology of news, which considers how news comes to be. Next, we address the ideological nature of news, which leads to the concepts of “protest paradigm” and “rally paradigm.” Finally, we consider how the news media act as mediators of community conflict. Taken together, we suggest that protest news aids a community in understanding itself during times when its power structure is challenged, but at the same time, protest news serves to reinforce the very power structure that is being challenged.

News workers manufacture news as a product of the cultural system in which they operate. They consult with a “reservoir of stored cultural meanings and patterns of
discourse” (Schudson, 1995, p. 14). Reporters, as actors in their societies, structure and produce stories that the communities and cultures in which they operate could understand (Berkowitz & TurKeu, 1999). In reporting conflict, news media often not only relay events but, further, represent core values of the culture in which they are produced (Berkowitz & Eko, 2007).

Reporters work under a number of deadline and economic constraints; as a result news organizations adopt certain work routines that help facilitate doing the work and meeting deadlines (Tuchman, 1973). Reporters gather and assemble parts that are important for the production of a story and meeting a deadline. As a cultural product, news facilitates cultural ceremony. It ritualizes the reporting of breaches in social order into a set of “phases” bringing the breach to a closure and an arrival at social stability as it acts as a mediator in community conflicts. News media maintain cultures in time (Ettema, 1990; Fishman, 1982). The media play a role in the maintenance of the social fabric.

During times of national conflict when a society feels threatened from the outside, the media normally tend to take a more critical approach in covering elite conflict, supporting the status quo when faced with challenges from outside the power structure (McLeod & Detenber, 1999). The employment of this “protest paradigm” to report on protest groups demonstrates how news workers routinize and ritualize the social drama (protests) to maintain social control and order.

Journalists follow certain routines in news production as a way to accomplish their task efficiently on time, whether they cover an expected or an unexpected event. When faced with a non-routine event, they tend to adopt the same strategy. Reporters routinize the unexpected to fit a “story type” that they already know how to report. And because journalists belong to the same community that shares meanings, they rely on a compiled “mental catalogue” to typify the event at hand (Berkowitz, 1992, p. 363). They pull out story themes and know how the events would unfold and how the story should go.

The protest paradigm is an excellent example of how reporters use their mental catalogues to tell a story about a breach in society and report the restoration of normalcy. Stories that report protests usually use a narrative structure, rely on official sources, use official definitions, and/or invoke public opinion (McLeod & Detenber, 1999). The use of this narrative structure facilitates the typification of the story: it becomes a story about deviants challenging social order, disturbing the peace, and breaking the law. Stories favor the police and officials in the amount and the nature of coverage and assure the audience that the system will ultimately restore normalcy (Vincent et al., 1989).

Journalists use a little of both story-telling and chronicling, as myth provides a familiar story plot, a frame, to explaining events (Lule, 2001). Protesters are deviants who challenge and threaten social order and peace. Chronicling, on the other hand, fills in the gaps, assures the audience of the restoration of normalcy, and at the same time, sets the standards for this
normalcy (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). News tends to function as an agency, which allows ideological manipulation and domination (Vincent et al., 1989).

Within the protest paradigm, stories tend to focus on the performance of the protesters and on violence rather than the issues they protest to bring attention to. This also gives room for the narrative structure and saves reporters both effort and time, as they can quote an official rather than pursuing a more in-depth approach to discussing the issues. Furthermore, stories depict protesters as a deviant minority (McLeod and Detenber, 1999), “isolated from the ‘general public’” (McLeod & Hertog, 1992, p. 273). Thus, the protest paradigm does a double duty: it provides journalists with the parts necessary to produce a story, and at the same time it supports the mainstream ideology and the status quo by marginalizing and delegitimizing the ideologically deviant and reporting the restoration of normalcy. And although the protest paradigm produces culturally correct stories, it also produces skewed stories containing minimal critical information.

This outcome occurs partly because journalists do not simply reflect reality in the society in which they report. Rather, they reflect the constructed reality (Hackett, 1984; Molotch & Lester, 1974). News informs us about what we do not experience firsthand. It renders what we would consider remote happenings observable and meaningful (Molotch & Lester, 1974). Indeed, the culture of the society produces the news in an “active labor of making things mean” (Hall, 1982, p. 64). The protest paradigm helps journalists reflect the constructed reality in society and helps the reader make sense of protest news.

As a cultural product that reifies cultural values, news constructs and reconstructs the ideology of the dominant power base. As social institutions, the news media facilitate an ongoing social dialogue, maintaining the social status quo (Berkowitz, 1997). The mass media act as distributors of ideology (Gitlin, 1980), which Foss (1996) defines as “a pattern or set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values, or interpretations of the world by which a culture or group operates” (p. 291). She explains that interpretations may reflect the set of values any one culture embraces. While constructing a symbolic world that signifies priorities and certifies legitimacy and importance (Schudson, 1995), the news media also influence public opinion (Mutz & Soss, 1997). They give “guidance” to the public on how to think about an issue and how to react to it using ritual to mediate social drama, and editorials sometimes reject the action taken and suggest the appropriate action (Ettema, 1990, p. 475).

In times of war – major external conflict – public opinion tends to gravitate toward cohesion and to mobilize support behind the objectives set by the powerful in the system (McLeod et al., 1994). Public opinion tends to rally around the flag. Even in wars where the public did not eventually support the war (the Korean and Vietnam wars), literature indicates that these wars initially caused the public to rally around the flag but the support decreased as war casualties increased. As crisis catalyzes public opinion, it also highlights the role the media play as a mediator for information that feeds the rally effect (McLeod et
Media have been known to marginalize groups that lie outside the political mainstream (e.g. Zandberg & Neiger, 2005).

Thinking of the protest paradigm in light of the media role as “guard dog” (Donohue et al., 1995) helps further understand the nature of news reporting protests and demonstrations. The guard dog role of the media guarantees that the media do not scrutinize the power structure; rather, they scrutinize individuals within the power structure. The guard dog sleeps in case of consensus in the community. But when groups become well-organized and lobby behind a proposal or when a split happens within the powerful group, they become a threat to the power structure and end the state of consensus and hence receive the attention of the guard dog. Still, the media will not scrutinize the established power structure. They will report deviance on the individual level; they resort to the protest paradigm as a means to guard the house against the threat.

In times of national conflict, the guard dog media will present the conflict from the perspective of the government. But they will also provide a stage for the conception of public opinion on the micro-descriptive level and on the macro-conceptual level. On the micro level, news characterizes public opinion using 1) statements about it, 2) description of violations of social norms, 3) community laws, and 4) bystanders as a metaphor for public opinion (McLeod & Hertog, 1992). Reporters use general statements to describe protesters (an isolated minority) from the perspective of the “public” (dominant majority) and quote bystanders as a way to confirm the idea that they reflect what the public thinks.

On the macro-level, and looking at public opinion as social consensus, “representation of public opinion may be seen as mechanisms of social control” (McLeod & Hertog, 1992, p. 262). News about public opinion reinforces what the society accepts and what it does not accept (McLeod & Hertog, 1992); it sets social boundaries. It has been suggested that “U.S. press coverage in the days leading up to [the Iraq] war portrayed protest as unpatriotic and the arguments against war as irrelevant, when it spoke of these phenomena at all” (Boaz, 2005, p. 349).

Although the literature about protest news often refers to a rally-around-the-flag effect that responds to protests during high threat times, we suggest that this effect might be more effectively positioned as a counter-paradigm: the rally paradigm that treats supporters of government decisions gently and positively, even though it still focuses on protesters’ actions rather than their ideas. Thus we might consider looking at a rally paradigm, where certain characteristics shape the reporting of news about groups who support the actions of the government in times of conflict. Like the protest paradigm and because of the same news work processes that create the protest paradigm, the rally paradigm also supports a society’s status quo, as it adopts the same mechanisms to facilitate sense-making out of apparent chaos.

To this point, we have suggested that news workers rely on routinized work processes when covering protest news, much as they do for their everyday news reporting. By doing
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so, the emphasis shifts to actions over messages. Coverage of rallies produces much the same outcome. In either case, the media’s role in guiding and mediating a community’s conflicts falls short of real meaning-making. This discussion leads to four research questions in our study of protest news from three major U.S. cities (Atlanta, Minneapolis, and Seattle):

RQ1: What were the general contours of the news and opinion pages’ coverage of pro-and anti-war discourse in the three newspapers?
RQ2: How did the rally and protest paradigms appear within this discourse?
RQ3: In what ways was ideology embedded in this protest news?
RQ4: How does the specific nature of a community mediate the effect of rally and protest paradigms?

METHOD

We chose to examine the Seattle Times, the Atlanta Journal, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune because we expected that their protest discourse would exhibit varying ideological positions in correspondence with the varying political nature of their respective communities. One would expect Seattle of the West Coast, for instance, to adopt a more liberal stance than its midwestern (Minneapolis) and southern (Atlanta) counterparts. Additionally, the geographic diversity of our selection was deliberate to avoid a possible overlap in coverage that could result if the communities were too proximate to one another.

We used the Lexis-Nexis database to search for items on protests related to the 2003 Iraq War. For each newspaper, we searched the “full text” for: “protest” or “rally” w/sentence “war.” That said, we acknowledge that our choice of search terms is only one of several possible constructions to retrieve data that would serve our study’s purposes. However, we arrived at this particular set of terms after various attempts to construct a search that would best fulfill our objectives. We found it to yield items of utility and relevance more than any other search we tried.

Our time frame was composed of about two weeks before the war started (March 20) and two weeks after, i.e. March 4, 2003 through April 4, 2003. We deemed this to be a sufficient period for investigating protest discourse because war-related sentiment and activity would predictably be highly intense in the days most closely surrounding the war, thus yielding plenty of relevant data. The total number of news and opinion items we examined for each newspaper is given in the analysis section.

Since we are interested in protest discourse across news and opinion pages, news, letters to the editor, and editorials constituted the types of items for analysis. Of all the results that our searches yielded, we only examined those items that (a) both directly related to the war and related stances and (b) involved, explicitly or implicitly, members of the newspaper community. So, for example, a pro-war rally in Tennessee in which Seattle residents participated would be relevant, whereas an article depicting worldwide anti-war protests with no mention of any of our three communities would be discarded.
In conducting our textual analysis, we drew on an ethnographic approach to studying media texts, including “extended immersion in the research setting, interaction among members of the research team throughout the project, emergent research design based on theory, and inductive ways of developing findings and conclusions” (Berkowitz & Nossek, 2001, p. 45). In other words, we consulted as a team on our individual findings on a regular basis to contextualize each team member’s analysis both as a separate entity and as juxtaposed against the other members’ analyses, too. Ultimately, this interactive feedback procedure helped us visualize individual findings in light of the bigger picture, which proved useful in carving out conclusions about the study as a whole.

**ANALYSIS: THE PROTEST AND RALLY PARADIGMS IN ACTION**

This section presents a city-by-city discussion of the news items, letters, and editorials that were analyzed. The discussion for each city is organized according to our four research questions, with an integration of these findings provided at the end of this section. We have chosen to introduce the two cities with the greatest contrasts first – Seattle and Atlanta – and then turn to a discussion of the newspaper texts from Minneapolis, a city with contrasts to the other two.

**Protest in Seattle: A Genteel Local Hobby**

Seattle has long held a reputation as a progressive, liberal city. Well known for high-tech industries and coffee houses, this city of approximately 500,000 people is part of a metropolitan area of more than 3 million. Its adjoining communities house the aviation and the military, creating a community of multi-faceted identities. Seattle also is known across the U.S. and beyond as the city where protests against the World Trade Organization turned unruly in 1999 (Barone & Cohen, 2004).

The first research question asked about the general contours of pro- and anti-war discourse. Four editorials, 104 letters, and 27 news items were examined from *The Seattle Times*, a daily newspaper with circulation of approximately 225,000 copies. These items cast Seattle as almost completely “pro-peace,” a term differing from anti-war. Seattle residents often were self-congratulatory on their acceptance of this pro-peace stance, portraying themselves as friendly, peaceful, and mature in their protests. One news article explained that “…only in Seattle can you have a march where people even wait at the crosswalks” (Sorensen, 2003b). Published letters were nearly all pro-peace, even anti-Bush, in the days leading up to the start of the war. Although some coverage discussed actions of protesters, much of the content focused on issues and attitudes. Letters to the editor were especially strong in their discussion of issue positions. Students from the public schools were quietly applauded for their participation in walk-outs and rallies, as well as information tables in the
schools countering the work of military recruiters: “‘Find out why the military is hazardous to your health,’ a handmade sign at their table promises as students stream by…” (Eskenazi, 2003).

As the war loomed closer, discourse began to shift. The favorable stories and letters about the pro-peace movement shifted their sentiments. Before the war, rallies were the terrain not of rally-'round-the-flag, pro-war advocates, but of the pro-peace movement. As the war began, turf changed and the voice of pro-Bush, pro-troops residents temporarily began to dominate letters to the editor as well as news content, a transition that was noted explicitly: “Demonstrators waving American flags and pumping placards that say ‘No Saddam/Let’s Roll’ recently took to streets just half a mile away from where anti-war protesters have gathered for the past three months” (Thompson, 2003b). This reversal was short-lived, save repeated clashes in readers’ letters that cast protesters as “anti-troops,” while the group recently assuming the label “anti-war” explained that they still supported the troops, but not the president’s actions.

Ironically, as coverage shifted, pro-peace activists regained their positive identity, such as in a news item about a family that enjoyed protesting together: “As a family, they’ve demonstrated, waved placards on the sidewalk, formed peace groups at school” (Ramirez, 2003). Police became the villains instead, “where growing phalanxes of police on foot, bicycles and horseback boxed them [the protesters] in and refused to let them leave” (Sorensen & Perry, 2003). Although some of the news coverage focused on actions – albeit of the police – letters during this time focused on issues, especially on the nature of patriotism and protest. Surprisingly, an editorial appeared in the newspaper explaining how letters were selected, a process some readers claimed was biased, but which the editorial page editor attributed to “A population base weighted in predominantly liberal Seattle” (Vesely, 2003):

The issue for us has been whether we seek an artificial balance in letters printed or run them in proportion to the numbers received. We’ve always chosen to run them in a rough proportion, recognizing that the community is rarely in balance on any issue, let alone one that reaches so directly into our hearts and lives as war.

Unlike most cities, protesting was portrayed as a local hobby, a theme that was developed by items such as a feature story on “a little old lady in an orange vest” (Sorensen, 2003a) who helped protests remain peaceful because she was “not to be messed with.” As for “Silly Hall” – as a columnist dubbed the seat of local government (Balter, 2003) – the city council’s wisdom was questioned about how far it would go to be politically correct during protests, doing “everything short of reading bedtime stories and tucking them in at night.”

In all, the contours of newspaper content followed a general course of supporting pro-peace/anti-war activities, with a few brief disruptions as the war began. Protesters were
generally discussed in positive ways by the paper’s writers, and as thoughtful, well-reasoned
individuals (as compared to Bush supporters) in their letters and interview comments.

The second research question asked how the protest and rally paradigms appeared in this
discourse. The simplest answer is, not in conventional ways. If the protest paradigm is
supposed to label protesters as social deviants, that was not done here. Although actions of
protesters were visible throughout news coverage, their thoughts and ideas appeared even
more prominently. They were, for the most part, bastions of reason in the community,
people who expressed their views about the war in a thoughtful way. Their actions were
exemplary. As for the rally paradigm, its appearance was convoluted. Rather than being
portrayed as stalwarts of the community, ralliers ended up as the outsiders, much as
protesters have been in past wartime situations.

The third research question asked about ideology embedded in protest news. This is a
challenging question, because Seattle ideology did not appear to be the same as national
ideology. Nor was it simply oppositional to the status quo, because the community’s
activists tended to go beyond that point and reflect other perspectives on the war than might
have been expected. Nonetheless, one way that ideology appeared in news stories was
through the choice of news sources. Veterans played a key role in rally news, especially
those of the more “popular” wars such as Korea and the Gulf War. Vietnam veterans, in
contrast, were used to symbolize the fallacy of the war, much as their own war had been
portrayed that way. Another kind of ideological source use was drawing on international
students to reflect a global perspective, placing their roles as outside observers who likely
subscribed to a different worldview. Criticism of police actions was another ideological
device, albeit one that would be counter-ideological in the bigger picture of dominant
ideology. This would not be the norm in many other communities, but in liberal Seattle,
these enforcers of the establishment and the status quo were ideologically deviant through
the ways that they mistreated protesters. Another expression of localized ideology appeared
from depicting protesters as religious, family-oriented, thoughtful, and peaceful, or even
keepers of the dominant ideology turning sides, such as a positive news item written about
a war protest by area lawyers (Thompson, 2003a). In some cases, comparison of Seattle with
other West Coast cities helped to exemplify this unusual status, as a columnist illustrated:

San Francisco: 3,013 people arrested, 46 intersections shut down, numerous police-car
windows smashed, a vomit-in to demonstrate that war makes people sick. Portland: bridges
closed, 165 arrested. Seattle: a few streets blocked, 44 arrested, feathers ruffled. (Balter,
2003)

In all, the ideological dimensions of this content brought the newspaper into the role of
community mediator. In news items, stories were cast to negotiate varying sentiments yet
normalize protest as valid activity. In columns, despite the satirical nature, protesters and
government leaders alike appeared as positive exemplars. In letters, where the real face-to-
face debate took place, the Seattle Times provided a forum for residents on both sides of the war issue to have their voices be heard. At the same time, by striving toward a balance in the proportions of the letters received (and possibly by its selection decisions), the newspaper was able to highlight the zone in which community sentiments lay. This observation also addresses the fourth research question, about how the specific nature of a community mediates the news of rally and protest news. Throughout all the content that was reviewed, the character of Seattle came through, presenting protest in a unique light, relatively far from that expected by either paradigm of protest news coverage.

Atlanta: Back to the Traditional Protest Paradigm

Considered the “center of the South,” Atlanta is a Republican city (Barone & Cohen, 2004, p. 449) of about 400,000 people (U.S. Census, 2000). With businesses growing bigger, Atlantans tend to support Republicans but might also support conservative Democrats (Barone & Cohen, 2004).

Six editorials, 68 letters, and 26 news items were examined from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, a daily newspaper with a circulation of 450,000 Monday through Saturday and 650,000 on Sunday (Thomson Dialog, 2003). A main general contour defining the Atlanta Journal’s construction of the pro- and anti-war news discourse is the diversity of community facets that voiced their stances on the war. Members of colleges and schools, religious institutions, businesses, and troops in Iraq were featured. One article covered students of the same high school holding a sit-in to protest the war and others wearing “Bomb Saddam” and “Send the Hippeis” T-shirts to school in support of war (Wagstaff, 2003). Another reported that the leader of the National Council of Churches said he would launch a hunger strike to protest the war (Blake & White, 2003), while a third described efforts by families and churches to reach out for troops’ families, such as starting support groups and making “patriotic pins” with photos of President Bush surrounded by red, white, and blue ribbons in solidarity with troops (Ellis & Brunks, 2003).

Although pro-war rallies made the news, they were not as prominent as anti-war demonstrations and protests, which shed light on protestors’ activities that deviate from social norms or expressions that carry an inherent element of drama and sensationalism. This played out across both news and opinion pages, although more pronounced in news discourse. One story reporting a Washington, D.C. march in which Georgia college students participated reported that D.C. police said “20 or more protesters rushed the guarded entrance of the World Bank headquarters and made it inside, where six were arrested for unlawful entry and others escaped by smashing a window” (Jones, 2003). The same story likened protestors to Vietnam’s anti-war activists of the 1960s, describing their clothing as “a bit outside of the mainstream.” Further, “Some wore ripped corduroy pants and faded T-shirts. Girls in checkered-print skirts and tank tops twirled in the crowd.” Another story
reported on yet another college student-led anti-war demonstration, described as the “largest protest of the day,” as follows:

They held signs, waved flags and urged passers-by to honk their horns in support. Each toot of the horn was met by huge cheers. The boisterous crowd banged drums and buckets, providing a marching-band beat to chants of “no blood for oil” and “no war, no way, No Fascist U.S.A.” (Tofig & Seymour, 2003)

One letter even expressed disapproval of a restaurant staff dumping French wine in a local river in protest, saying this “not only sends a very bad message to the public, but it is also illegal without a state permit” (Bethea, 2003), while another called protestors’ displays “disgusting” (Waterfill, 2003).

Even when protest spectacles were absent, the normalcy of the event or people involved was highlighted, underlining defiance of the typical protest scenario. One story described a veteran married couple who wear “glasses and sensible shoes” to the rallies as “not your typical war protesters” (Brett, 2003a), while another called most marches that day “orderly” (Jones, 2003). Conversely, reporting pro-war rallies generally reflected a more mellow manifestation of sentiment than anti-war counterparts. A rally at the Centennial Olympic Park cast participants in a patriotic light: “Thousands of flag-waving, Bush-backing, troop-loving patriots came from all around metro Atlanta on Saturday to cheer for their country at Centennial Olympic Park” (Brett, 2003b). Contrarily, the local “peace movement” was said to employ “screaming slogans like ‘Support Our Troops, Bring Them Home’” (Seymour, 2003).

Interestingly, both letters to the editor and editorials – more so than news – acted as a forum for debating issues that go beyond the drama of protesting either way. Some letters voiced concern that protests could be distracting security forces from defending the country against terrorists (e.g. Nidy, 2003), while others urged support and “utmost respect” for troops regardless of the moral judgment on war (Koshkin, 2003). The anti-war camp, on the other hand, often refuted allegations of anti-patriotism, saying that opposing the war does not necessarily equate with anti-patriotism: “Do you not believe that one can be pro-America and be against a war? I am one of the most patriotic people you will meet. I flew my flag long before it was fashionable” (Braunschweig, 2003). Another drew parallels with the Spanish-American war that was “fueled by a jingoistic press” and “established America as an imperialist power,” arguing that the war on Iraq is conducive to breeding more bin Laden-like people (Sartor, 2003).

Each camp was keen on not only pointing fingers at the opposite camp, but the Journal itself occasionally came under fire for its own coverage of war and related sentiment. For instance, one letter expressed that the paper’s headline, “Baghdad Burns,” distorts the precision of U.S. military targets and questioned, “Why not change the name of the paper to the Al-Jazeera-Constitution?” (Strange, 2003). In the anti-war realm, some letters argued...
that the paper prioritized pro-war rallies over anti-war demonstrations, even claiming that “the media in this country (including the \textit{AJC}) have given President Bush and company free rein without a hint of criticism. This is an outrage and an evasion of journalistic responsibility” (Hurt, 2003). Some editorials adopted an upfront pro-war stance, expressing that U.N. support is not needed because its interests are not identical to those of the U.S. (Wooten, 2003) or arguing that protests further embolden the enemy and that freedom of expression comes with responsibility (Garlock, 2003). Others, however, expressed frustration with how the war was pressuring dissenters to remain silent (Head, 2003) or documented the harassment of protesters nationwide, calling the pro-war stance illustrative of a “wave of hardline pseudo-patriotism” (Tucker, 2003).

Generally speaking, war-related protests in the Journal were communicated such that the concept and act of disagreeing with the war emerged as contrary to social orthodoxy. This was a pattern evident both before and after the war started, and enhanced by the relative normalcy with which pro-war stances were delivered.

To answer the second research question, it becomes evident that the protest and rally paradigms were manifest in a largely typical manner, despite the contrast being more salient in news discourse. Indeed, there was a clear emphasis in news stories on the material aspects of the protest scene, with appearance, physical activity, and symbols of their dissident ideology as outstanding components of the relevant protest rhetoric. Even opinion pages, which ultimately provided a more opportune venue for discussing issues behind the visual drama, carried themes of anti-patriotism and national security as forces of demonizing protest acts. Conversely, the relatively minimal pro-war rally coverage coupled with its “softer” treatment by the Journal worked to depict pro-war sentiment as natural and expected, usually defended under the banner of patriotism and/or an absolutistic approach to align oneself with the homeland. Having opinion pages adopt a more even-handed approach to handling both sides of the spectrum may speak to the paper’s attempt at “toning down” the features from which the protest/rally dichotomy emerges. It does not underscore, though, its presence in the newspaper’s primary facet – news.

The third research question inquired about how ideology was embedded in protest news. In large measure, the \textit{Journal} embodied various takes on the war yet tended to do so in a fashion amiable enough to the war-waging power structure so as not to explicitly defy the traditional protest and rally paradigms. In fact, one article specifically mentioned the “rally effect” to explain the increased public approval for President Bush’s performance after the war started:

\begin{quote}
Bush’s job approval rating was 71 percent, representing a jump of 13 percent from the previous weekend, according to Gallup. This is an expected “rally effect” increase that usually accompanies U.S. involvement in war or a situation in which Americans are in harm’s way on foreign shores, Gallup adds. (Bessonette, 2003)
\end{quote}
Our fourth research question asked how the specific nature of a community mediates the effect on the news of the rally and protest paradigms. The generally conservative nature of Atlanta might help explain how and why these anti-war protests stood out as deviant. Conversely, the mainstream, pro-war preferences of the Atlantan community were mirrored in a normalized, naturalized manner in their mainstream newspaper.

**Protest in Minneapolis: Somewhere in Between**

Minneapolis, with a population of 382,618 (US Census, 2000) is the largest city in Minnesota, which is the center of the three-party politics and is considered a swing state. While George W. Bush lost Minnesota by 48%-46% in 2000, Republicans won governorship in 2002. As part of a metropolitan area of 2,642,053 people, Minneapolis is considered the finance and transportation center of the Upper Midwest (City of Minneapolis, 2002).

The first question addressed the contours of protest coverage. Thirty-four news items, 57 letters to the editor, and one editorial were examined from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, one of the top 20 largest newspapers in the nation with a daily circulation of 405,459 and a Sunday circulation of 669,290 (About Star Tribune, 2003). The *Tribune* mostly favored the pro-peace movement to the point that a pro-war reader accused it of criticizing those who “support the efforts to liberate Iraq” (Capello, 2003). It mainly referred to protesters as “pro-peace” or “peace people” (Grow, 2003b) and went further to call protests “war for peace” (Grow, 2003c). Coverage depicted protesters of this war, unlike previous wars, as mature people coming from various walks of life. Protest emerged as a family activity where protesters brought their toddlers along. It also distinguished first-time form old-time or regular protesters, conveying that protests engaged a wide range of people including war veterans (Furst, 2003a).

News coverage did not focus on pro- and anti-war camps arguments as much as the way the community negotiated these different viewpoints. This became evident in stories that reported junior high students’ planned walk-outs and in the one editorial examined. The walk-outs catalyzed debate in the school community about how to negotiate students’ desire for political participation by protesting against the war. The *Tribune* mainly depicted the change in junior high and commended it, reporting how they took turns in speaking and demonstrated in-depth knowledge about the issues surrounding the war. “Unlike most older protesters, they kept their remarks brief… They’re [the kids] informed. What happened to junior high?” (Grow, 2003a). The editorial, on the other hand, reflected the alienation that the generation that protested the Vietnam War feels as “liberal has become a dirty word” and questioning the war entails the risk of “being branded unpatriotic, un-American, a pessimist, a crybaby” (Berg, 2003).
The negotiation was also reflected in readers’ letters as they discussed issues through an exchange about the meaning of patriotism especially before the war started. Pro-war people seemed to prefer voicing their opinion through letters rather than actual rallying. While news reported pro-peace demonstrations, letters from pro-war readers mainly cast their disapproval through defining patriotism in terms of supporting the government: “‘Standing up for my government means standing up for my country’” (Perterson, 2003) and trusting the president: “Bush can see with crystal clarity that sometimes honest men must deal with a monster when others are unwilling…Thank goodness for George W. Bush” (Moses, 2003). They also viewed pro-peace protesters as “anti-American” and argued for war as a preemptive action to prevent another 9/11. In fact, one letter explained: “Sometimes patriotism means leaving one’s personal feelings at the door for the good of our country” (Salchow, 2003). Conversely, pro-peace readers tried to explain that protesting is a vital part of practicing democracy and does not conflict with patriotism: “The American experience is defined by the freedom to express differing points of view” (Gronquist, 2003). Some people tried to occupy an in-between position, neither supporting nor opposing the war, but ended up supporting it since it seemed like the patriotic thing to do: “No clear-thinking person would deny the value of a vigorous debate on matters as important as war and its implications. In the end…we are ‘Washington’ and it’s time to get behind the people who are about to do our heavy lifting” (Wolfe, 2003).

When the war started, the coverage slightly shifted toward reporting the actions of the pro-peace demonstrators and the issues of the pro-war camp, which became visible as it organized rallies. Yet in Minneapolis, police and protesters still maintained a “cordial” (Furst, 2003c) relationship characterized by cooperation. They engaged in an almost scripted ritual in which each has a distinct role. For instance, one protester decided to “go ahead and get arrested anyway” (Furst, 2003c) and another thanked the police “‘for their professionalism and the gentle way they handled us [the protesters].’” A police officer explained: “‘We both kind of respect each other and we’ve never had problems’” (Furst, 2003d).

The second question addressed the appearance of the protest and rally paradigms in the paper. Perhaps because the relationship between the police and the protesters was not confrontational the protest and the rally paradigms did not appear distinctively until the war began. When the war started and protesters blocked entrances to the courthouse in downtown Minneapolis, the protest paradigm emerged slightly and briefly as the story started by describing the actions of “civil disobedience,” reporting the number of people arrested and how the police dealt with the protesters and restored normalcy.

The protest paradigm was also manifested in reports that gave voice to the protesters, yet hinted that they have time to protest since they are either unemployed or have non-demanding jobs. Yet another brief appearance of the rally paradigm came through the comments of military families who “have nothing but contempt for those who were noisily
protesting the war....” (von Sternberg, 2003a), and through pro-war ralliers who waved signs denouncing anti-war protesters: “You shut the hell up – we will protect America” and called protesters “‘the enemy because they’re not anti-war – they’re anti Bush’” (von Sternberg, 2003b). The Tribune engaged in the rally paradigm as it reported counter demonstrations after the war started and invited readers to send the paper information about support groups for military families (von Sternberg & Walsh, 2003) After the war began, the protest and rally paradigms seemed to engage in a dialogue that reflected the ongoing debate in the community about the camp one should support.

The third question addressed the ways in which ideology was embedded in protest news. This community featured many pro-peace protests although polls showed that the majority of Minnesotans supported the war. This could explain why news mediated both stances on the war and tried to make sense of the ongoing debate between the two camps especially that the pro-war supporters became more confrontational after the war had begun and engaged in counter rallies, while war veterans were visible in both pro- and anti-war camps. The Tribune conducted and published an opinion poll that showed that a 58 percent majority supports the war. It also carried the comment of a political scientist who explained that public opinion “is following a pattern familiar from past wars” (Black, 2003). Furthermore, the Tribune ran a story that reported that many Americans “are torn by competing emotions about the war with Iraq, especially now that U.S. troops are in the line of fire” (Lerner, 2003).

Another ideological facet emerged through giving voice to bystanders who thought that pro-peace protesters who advocated supporting the troops by bringing them home “‘are being unpatriotic.”’ They worried that the “‘troops will see this [the march] and they’ll think it’s terrible’” (Furst, 2003b). They constructed their support of the war in a patriotic frame that excluded members of the anti-war camp and deemed them unpatriotic.

Community ideology was reflected in reactions to the governor’s proposal that protesters should pay restitution. While letters from readers reflected the debate that took place in the community, the paper took a clear rejecting stance: “Charging for arrest? Good luck, governor.” The story sarcastically described the proposal as “outside-the-box and likely outside-the-constitution” and a “pay-per-arrest plan.” While the story reported the proposal’s illegality, it also reminded the governor and readers of the marginality of the protesters. It transcribed a phone call of a “career protester” with his mother who orders him not to use curse words when talking to her about why he does not have a job. The “career protester” exclaims: “‘What word? Job?’” The story concludes: “Sometimes, our governor doesn’t seem to see the complexities” (Grow, 2003c). The Tribune performed the guard dog role and barked at the governor because his proposal threatened the valued freedom of speech.

This leads to the fourth research question, which addresses the nature of community as mediator of the protest and rally paradigms. The Tribune functioned as a community
mediator. Like the interfaith vigils and prayers, which served as a middle ground for the undecided and those who negotiate conflicting feelings, the paper acted as a venue for negotiating the ideas of both camps. Yet, unlike with candlelight vigils, it stepped in when it felt that the governor’s proposal would threaten the unanimous right of free speech in the community.

**Integrating Findings from the Three Analyses**

These three analyses of news and opinion pieces from Seattle, Atlanta and Minneapolis have each shown a different flavor, yet they also point toward larger integrated findings that inform our research questions. The first research question asked about the general contours of this discourse. Overall, the protest and rally paradigms did not surface in their usual forms before the war began. Before the war, news texts focused mostly on issues and letters remained in the background. After the war started, though, the rally paradigm emerged briefly. Letters grew around the start of the war as well, with much of the heated debate taking place there instead of news items.

The second research question asked more specifically about the nature of the protest and rally paradigms. Ideally, the protest paradigm should focus on the negative actions of protesters, while the rally paradigm should focus on the positive attributes of ralliers. The actual newspaper discourse, however, was not that clear-cut, with community character shaping the tone and emphasis. Both of these paradigms appeared most closely to their expected shapes during the time closest to the start of the war.

The third research question asked how ideology was embedded in the discourse. Generally, localized ideology was reflected rather than a single national ideology. One journalistic characteristic was the choice of news sources who expressed specific views. Veterans of the Gulf War and other recent veterans provided rally-flavored comment, while Vietnam veterans and non-veterans appeared with a more protest-oriented tone. Police held somewhat ideologically ambiguous positions, sometimes as guard dogs of local ideology, but other times as the “bad guys” of the story.

The fourth question asked how the community and the newspaper mediated the discourse. Clearly, the character of the community shaped coverage as well as the letters that were published. By publishing these items, the three newspapers served as community mediators to keep the story on course. This community character is something different than the structural pluralism that has sometimes been used to understand the community-newspaper interface, and based in a relatively homogeneous locale. This role of local mediator catalyzed the papers to shift slightly between the rally and protest paradigms as the war started.
CONCLUSIONS

Expressing public opinion through voices of various ages, professions, and ideological stances speaks to how the newspapers we studied embraced the notion of community representation in media discourse. Across all three newspapers, a vast array of news sources was evident. That the protest and rally paradigms appeared differently across time and across communities highlights the media’s role as a cross-community mediator.

It is especially interesting that the protest paradigm appeared in its traditional form in the more-conservative Atlanta, while becoming convoluted in the liberal city of Seattle. This finding highlights how anti-war protest represents a kind of deviance whose acceptability varies with the political leanings of a given community. For the cases of Seattle and Minneapolis, telling the news (and publishing the letters) of protest and rally in a relatively unorthodox manner became sufficiently sensational and attractive to community residents, creating a media discourse with which the audience could resonate ideologically. Likewise, the rally paradigm thrived more within the Atlanta community’s conservatism. In that case, it made more ideological sense for that newspaper to align with the official sphere regarding the war. Thus, the Atlanta media discourse was both a product and feature of its community, normalizing the pro-war position while simultaneously questioning – even criticizing – the anti-war counterpart.

Although hard news is conventionally expected to carry richer, more informative substance on the day’s issues, this study found letters to the editor to be the main news discourse element to fulfill this function. This finding raises questions about how an emotionally charged event or issue corresponds with its manifestation in news and opinion pages. Other aspects of community and public opinion could also be at work, with the guard dog role of a newspaper mediating and sorting out contrasts with a community’s preferred meanings.

Above all, this study points out the role of community character in constructing a media discourse that negotiates between public opinion and localized ideology. This role appears to be a particularly critical one during times of crisis, with public opinion surrounding the Iraq War serving as a prime example for studying this phenomenon. If protest discourse bears a correlation to community character, then traditional press functions such as those of government watchdog and public informant would also likely vary across communities. Viewed this way, the impact of community in mediating pivotal discourse becomes particularly consequential. Future studies could explore these ideas further by developing the media-community interface into a grander and more systematic scheme. The qualitative approach we took here was valuable for sensing the role of community character that might not emerge so effectively from a quantitative structural analysis. Quantitative work, however, might become useful for developing a set of community character indicators for a broader study of media discourse about war protest.
Considering the implications of the present study raises concerns about how news media are performing their long-prescribed roles of informing their readers. This study has demonstrated the constructed reality of a local community, but ironically, the community itself becomes one such tool in constructing this reality.

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Untangling Spirals of Silence in a Presidential Election

Leo W. Jeffres, Kimberly Neuendorf, Cheryl Campanella Bracken and David J. Atkin

Noelle-Neumann’s theory about the “spiral of silence” renewed interest in public opinion research when it was introduced in Germany more than 30 years ago. According to the theory—which has enjoyed mixed support—people use the media and personal experience to perceive those opinions that are gaining and those that are losing ground. When people believe that their opinions are in the majority or becoming more popular, they express their convictions openly, outside of their family and circle of friends. If they think their opinions are in the minority, or losing favor, they feel less certain of their position and are less likely to discuss their opinion except with friends. This study builds on the notion that there are multiple spirals of silence, examining potential spirals based on partisanship and gender in a presidential election. In particular, the researchers apply the spiral of silence in an election context, where there is ample media coverage about the topics and issues that are the subject of strong opinions and where there is a greater likelihood that people would encounter their expression in public settings. Results from a regional probability sample indicate that those showing the greatest interest in issues and those closest to their candidates are most likely to express opinions to those with whom they are most likely to disagree, i.e., confrontation rather than silence. One might explain these findings in the context of “multiple spirals of confrontation” rather than “multiple spirals of silence.” Implications of study findings are discussed.

Keywords: spiral of silence, opinions, presidential election,

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Noelle-Neumann’s theory about the “spiral of silence” renewed interest in public opinion research when it was introduced in Germany more than 30 years ago. According to the theory, people use the media and personal experience to perceive those opinions that are gaining and those that are losing ground. When people believe that their opinions are in the majority or becoming more popular, they express their convictions openly, outside of their family and circle of friends. If they think their opinions are in the minority, or losing favor, they feel less certain of their position and are less likely to discuss their opinion except with friends (see Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1977, 1984, 1989, 1991; Lang, 1986).

Evidence in support of the theory has been mixed, however, varying with the context and topic of opinion under study.

For instance, looking at how people expressed their opinions about the verdict of the O.J. Simpson trial, Jeffres, Neuendorf and Atkin (1999) found evidence of racial differences and suggested that there is not one but many potential spirals of silence, based on such identifying attributes as group membership. But more research is needed about people’s assessments of the climate of opinion and what it is about the context that inhibits the expression of unpopular opinions. This study builds on the notion that there are multiple spirals of silence, examining potential spirals based on partisanship and gender in a presidential election. In particular, the researchers apply the spiral of silence in an election context, where there is ample media coverage about the topics and issues that are the subject of strong opinions and where there is a greater likelihood that people would encounter their expression in public settings.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The spiral of silence has been studied in a variety of contexts and countries, using diverse issues and topics of public opinion. Scholars also have tested major assumptions operating as part of the theory (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997; Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Scheufele & Moy, 2000; Stevenson & Gonzenbach, 1990) and discussed its significance for democratic processes (Entman, 2004; Moscovici, 1991; Sparrow & de Chernatony, 1995; also see Simpson, 1996). Since public opinion evolves through interpersonal communication and activities that occur in public settings, it’s important to examine that context.

The pressure to conform, or one’s willingness to speak out, is central to the spiral of silence (Scherer, 1991; Tichenor, 1988). Noelle-Neumann (1984) defines public opinion as “views one can safely express in public.” The conformity hypothesis and the theory in general are dependent upon conditions under which people will speak about controversial issues. Salmon and Kline (1984) note that people in the real world almost always have some support for their position, which would reduce the pressures to conform (also see Gonzenbach, 1992). Price and Allen (1990, p. 373) conclude from their examination of the
literature that “research findings from recent American studies do not seem to support the claim that a widespread fear of isolation contributes to the silencing of minorities.”

When people find themselves in a public setting where opinions are expressed, the spiral of silence theory seems to assume that the “other” initiates the discussion and first expresses one’s opinion, placing “self” in the position of responding with an opinion of his or her own. That often is the case, but certainly not always. Sometimes a topic is raised but positions are not clearly stated at the outset. In this situation, one either must generalize from media reports and personal experience that the “other” person holds the majority or minority opinion. The accuracy of one’s estimate of the general “climate of opinion” also has been questioned. Communication research suggests that people use cues to identify another’s positions on various issues and the likelihood that they will agree or disagree. Among the most important cues would be those associated with unambiguous ascriptive factors (e.g., race, gender), cues associated with achievement (e.g., income and education, which may be ascertained from dress or speech), or affiliation with some group (e.g., membership in a political party or organization, or affiliation with some religion); the last of these three may require verbal cues more than the others. Rather than study the spiral of silence by asking our subjects and respondents to declare whether they would express themselves to an “undifferentiated” other, the present study focuses on multiple contexts.

Researchers studying the third person effect have looked at the relationship between “self” and “other,” finding that people who are more dissimilar or socially distant are believed to be affected by the media more than we are; in a parallel fashion, some research has found the spiral of silence to operate when the “other” person is more distant, suggesting that people assume those like us hold the same opinions while those different from us probably hold contrary opinions. Thus, we would expect people to gauge the “climate of opinion” not on the basis of some generalized media reports but on the basis of group cues or individual characteristics that one believes are associated with the opinion issue likely to be expressed. In this scenario, one would find an individual’s behavior manifesting multiple spirals of silence, which vary across different situations.

Involvement has been found to be a significant factor when the spiral of silence operates. In Salmon and Neuwirth’s (1990) test of an elaborated version of Noelle-Neumann’s model of the spiral of silence, involvement and knowledge directly influenced expression of opinions. Similarly, Shamir (1997) found perceptions of the climate of opinion were related to overt expression of opinion in Israel, but the impact was not consistent and political involvement was most important. Clearly, people who hold a mild or no interest in a particular issue are less likely to bother expressing an opinion in a conversation, one way or the other. There is little at stake. However, if someone is intensely interested or highly involved with the issue, we would expect that to act as a motivating force. The importance of involvement may not have a “linear” relationship with enactment of the spiral of silence. At a moderate level of involvement and interest, we might expect sufficient motivation for
involvement but sufficient inhibition of expression because of the social cues stemming
from the situation. At a high level, involvement and interest may motivate the individual to
overcome such inhibitions and express contrary views despite social sanctions.

Although the spiral of silence has generally been applied to the expression of opinions
about public issues in general, election campaigns also have been provided an important
context for examining the theory. Glynn and McLeod (1984) found support for the
hypothesis that those who see their position as gaining support will be more likely to discuss
that position than those who see their position as losing support in a study of the 1980
presidential elections. There also was partial support for individuals seeing support for a
candidate more likely expressing a preference for that candidate. In an experiment,
Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994) found that revealing information about poll results led
evoters to develop more positive views of a candidate but did not affect voting intention.
Turner and Sparrow (1997) discuss the significance of the spiral of silence for political
parties interpreting pollsters’ predictions in British elections.

HYPOTHESES

To examine multiple spirals of silence where individuals would use group cues, we
chose gender and partisan affiliation. For the former, the controversial issue of abortion was
chosen for examining the spiral of silence. Although men and women are not far apart in
their opinions about abortion,\(^{10}\) we might expect differences in the perceived “right” of the
opposite gender to express or hold views on this touchy issue. For party affiliation, four
issues being examined in the ongoing presidential campaign were selected—cutting taxes,
social security and Medicare policies, environmental policies, and education policies.\(^{11}\) Since
people may not agree with “their” gender or political party on an issue, we would expect the
spiral of silence to operate only when they agreed. Thus, the following expectations are
hypothesized based on the spiral of silence perspective:

H1a. Men who believe they agree with other men on abortion will be less likely to express
their opinion in a context where they encounter a woman favoring strong pro-choice views.

H1b. Women who believe they agree with other women on abortion will be less likely to
express their opinion in a context where they encounter a man expressing strong anti-choice
views.

H2a. Democrats who believe they agree with other Democrats on each of the issues (cutting
taxes, social security and Medicare policies, environmental policies, education policies) will
be less likely to express their opinion in a context where they encounter a Republican
expressing Republican policies.
H2b. Republicans who believe they agree with other Republicans on each of the issues (cutting taxes, social security and Medicare policies, environmental policies, education policies) will be less likely to express their opinion in a context where they encounter a Democrat expressing Democrat policies.

Since involvement and interest are believed to be motivating factors for expressing one’s opinion, we hypothesize the following. In addition to the importance of an issue, the strength of one’s partisan affiliation should operate in a similar fashion since the issues are tied to party identification:

H3. The greater the perceived importance of an issue, the stronger the spiral of silence expressed in Hypotheses 1 and 2.

H4. The stronger one’s partisan identification, the stronger the spiral of silence expressed in Hypotheses 2a and 2b.

The discussion above suggests that involvement at the highest levels might be a motivating agent, contrary to the spiral of silence; thus, it’s useful to examine the relationship to see whether it occurs at moderate levels of involvement, but not at the highest levels.

**METHODS**

Two surveys were conducted in the two and a half weeks leading up to the 2000 presidential election. One survey was conducted in a metropolitan area of the Midwest, with interviews of 505 adults using a computer-aided telephone-interviewing (CATI) system. The second was a national survey of 2,172 respondents conducted over the Internet by a commercial research firm that sends requests to a diverse set of potential respondents, who logged onto the survey site to participate. The interview schedule for the telephone survey and the Internet instrument followed parallel forms, with no differences in wording other than those created by the unique nature of the formats. Thus, the Internet interview included some matrices to display items that were administered serially in the telephone survey.

Importance of Issues was operationalized with the following instructions: “Now, I’m going to list several items and I’d like you to tell me how important each one is in helping you decide for whom to vote in the presidential race, using a 0-10 scale, where 0 is totally unimportant, 10 is extremely important and 5 is neutral. You may give any number between 0 and 10.” Respondents were asked about the importance of cutting taxes first, followed by items tapping the importance of environmental policies, educational policies of the candidates, social security and medicare policies of the candidates, the candidates’ stand on abortion, and the candidates’ stand on gun control.
Partisan Affiliation was operationalized with the following: “Which of the following categories best describes your partisan affiliation? Strong Democrat, lean towards Democrats, Independent, lean towards Republicans, strong Republican.” On the list of responses not read but also coded was “other party.”

Partisan Agreement on Issues was operationalized with a series of statements similar to the following: “How much would you say you agree with other [Democrats/Republicans] on the issue of cutting taxes? Using a 0 to 10 scale where 10 means you totally agree with other [Democrats/Republicans] and 0 means you totally disagree, how much would you say you agree with [Democrats/Republicans] on this issue?” Items obtained agreement on each of the following four issues: cutting taxes, environmental policies, educational policies of the candidates, social security and medicare policies of the candidates. Since these items were tailored for Democrats and for Republicans, independents and those affiliated with other parties or no party skipped this section.

Gender Agreement on Issue was operationalized in a similar fashion, beginning with the following statement: “As you may have heard, there appear to be differences in how the majority of men and women view some issues today. As a [man/woman] how much do you agree on the issues? First, how much would you say you agree with other [men/women] on abortion? Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means you totally disagree with most other [men/women] and 10 means you totally agree with most other [men/women], how much would you say you agree with other [men/women] on this issue?”

Expressing Partisan Opinions in Public Settings was operationalized with the following introduction: “People often strike up a conversation with someone while sitting in a waiting room or some other public setting. Suppose you were in such a situation and knew that the other person was a die-hard [Republican/Democrat]. If that person started talking strongly about how much he supported [Bush’s tax cut and economic policies/Gore’s tax cut and economic policies], how willing would you be to enter the conversation and express your views? Not willing at all, slightly willing, very willing, willing and eager to express my views.” Next, respondents were asked “What if the same person started talking about the candidates’ environmental policies. How willing would you be to express your views on that topic?” Third, respondents were asked “How willing would you be to express your views about social security and medicare if the [die-hard Republican/die-hard Democrat] started giving his views on that subject?” Fourth, respondents were asked, “How willing would you be to give your views about education in this situation?” Although no information about partisan agreement on issues was obtained for respondents who were independents or had other party affiliations, they were asked a set of four items in which they were to encounter another person who was a “die-hard Republican or Democrat.”

Expressing Gender Opinions in Public Settings was operationalized in a similar fashion with the following statement: “Suppose you were in a waiting room and a [woman/man with strong pro/anti-choice views] struck up a conversation. How likely would you be to join the
conversation and express your views? not willing at all, slightly willing, very willing, willing and eager to express my views.”

In addition to the operationalization of concepts in the spiral of silence, the study measured a host of other variables for other purposes. These variables also were used in a secondary search for predictors of people’s likelihood they would speak out and express their opinions in public settings:

**Social Categories** — These included gender (coded male=1, female=2), the number of people in a respondent’s household, age, household income (ranging from 1=$10,000 or less to 8=more than $100,000), level of education (from 1=completed grade school or less to 6=advanced college degree), ethnicity (“What is your ethnic or racial background?”), and marital status (“What is your marital status? Are you married, divorced, widowed, separated, or never been married?”).

**Political Factors** — These included a measure that asked respondents the following: “do you belong to any neighborhood or community organizations, including block clubs, social groups, religious groups, business groups or ethnic groups?” If they said yes, they were asked “What are they?” The raw number was coded as a measure of community organizational ties. Political philosophy was measured by asking respondents which of several categories “best describes your political philosophy” (1=strong conservative, lean towards conservative, 3=middle of the road, lean towards liberal, 5=strong liberal). Political knowledge was based on an index reflecting the number of correct answers to five items (1) Can you tell me where Kosovo is located?; 2) Which of the presidential or vice presidential candidates is the son of a former U.S. Senator?; 3) The Nobel Peace Prize this year was won by a political leader from which of the following countries — Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Spain, Australia or Chile?; 4) Who is running for the U.S. Senate in New York against Hillary Clinton — Rudolph Giuliani, George E. Pataki, Rick Lazio, Fiorello LaGuardia or John Faso?; 5) Which of the presidential candidates supports school vouchers?). Closeness to candidates on each of the issues was tapped using a scale where “0 means you’re closest to Bush, 10 means you’re closest to Gore and 5 means you’re neutral or equally close to each candidate. You may give any number between 0 and 10.” An index across the four major issues (cutting taxes, the environment, Social Security and Medicare, and education) also was computed.

**Media Exposure** — The traditional measures of media exposure were included using the following: “How many hours of television did you watch yesterday?” “How often do you usually watch the news on television?” “How many hours did you listen to the radio yesterday?” “How many days last week did you read a newspaper?” “How many different magazines do you read regularly?” “In the past six months, how many books have you read?” “In the past month, how many borrowed or rented videos have you watched?” “In the past month, how many times have you gone out to see a movie in a theater?” In addition, respondents were asked if they had ever gone on the Internet and, if so, how often they did...
so at work (0=never to 7=several times a day) or at home (same scale); the two scales were combined for a measure of Internet use. Those who had never gone on the Internet were coded as 0. In addition, respondents were asked how often they “visit media websites, such as one of the TV networks, a newspaper or radio site.” Respondents also were asked how often they visit chat rooms (0=never before to 6=every day).

Political Communication — Several measures of political communication were used, including both interpersonal and mass communication. Respondents were asked “how closely would you say you follow the campaign in the media — very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, not at all?” Respondents were told, “As you probably have noticed, there are more political commercials on television as we get closer to the election. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means you’ve seen almost no political ads on TV and 10 means you’ve seen many political commercials what number tells how much you’ve been exposed to political commercials? You may give any number between 0 and 10.” Respondents were asked if they had watched each of the debates on television and the number was summed up for a measure of debates exposure. Respondents also were asked if they had visited any of the websites covering politics of the candidates during the presidential campaign. Three items tapped the strength of one’s interpersonal political communication network; respondents were asked how often they “talk about politics and current events” in their family, with their closest friends, and with people at work — almost never, seldom, very frequently or all the time. Responses were summed across the three for a 3-12 scale. Respondents were asked to use a 0-10 scale where 0 means one completely disagrees, 5 is neutral and 10 means one completely agrees to tell how much they agreed with the following statements: “I enjoy talking about the campaign with family and friends” and “Most of my friends have the same political views as I do.”

Analysis and Results

The first hypothesis said that men who believe they agree with other men on abortion will be less likely to express their opinion in a context where they encounter a woman favoring strong pro-choice views. A companion hypothesis predicted the same thing for women. Because such significant numbers of men and women said they were neutral by selecting 5 on a 0-10 scale, we coded that as separate from the responses indicating disagreement (0-4) or agreement (6-10) with other men or women on the issue. As Table 1 shows, in both the metropolitan and Internet surveys, men who said they agree with other men on abortion were more likely to express their views to a woman with strong pro-choice views compared to those who were either neutral, or thought they disagreed with other men. A slightly different pattern is found for women, where those who said they agreed and disagreed with other women were more likely to say they would express their view to a man with strong anti-choice views on abortion, compared to those who were neutral. Again, the
The second set of hypotheses predicted that Democrats who believe they agree with other Democrats on each of the issues (cutting taxes, social security and Medicare policies, environmental policies, education policies) would be less likely to express their opinion in a context where they encounter a Republican expressing Republican policies. A similar set of hypotheses predicted the same for Republicans. Because there was much consensus among partisans on the issues, neutrals (5) were coded with numbers indicating disagreement (0-4). Results are found in Table 2, where we see an almost perfect pattern contradicting the spiral of silence outlined in Hypothesis 2 in both the metropolitan and national Internet surveys. Democrats who believe they agree with their partisans on issues are more likely to express their views when they encounter a Republican displaying his or her party’s views on the issue. The same results obtain for Republicans, where those in agreement with their fellow GOP partisans are more likely to express their views when they encounter a Democrat holding the opposite views. In the case of abortion, there is room for ambiguity, i.e., men and women may not see much consensus on the issue within gender, but in the election media coverage articulated party positions on the issues selected for the study, so such an interpretation is less tenable. It would appear that agreement acts as a motivating factor, stimulating partisans to argue their party’s positions when given the chance.
Table 2
Testing Spirals of Silence Based on Party Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Likelihood to express opinion to other party in public setting:</th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (N)</td>
<td>Mean (N)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Democrats</td>
<td>2.24 (237)</td>
<td>2.21 (781)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.36 (153)</td>
<td>2.26 (598)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>1.89 (74)</td>
<td>2.05 (176)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=3.22, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>t=2.56, p&lt;.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security &amp; Medicare policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Democrats</td>
<td>2.49 (237)</td>
<td>2.41 (779)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.61 (191)</td>
<td>2.48 (638)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.07 (41)</td>
<td>2.09 (134)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=3.05, p&lt;.01</td>
<td>t=4.00, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Democrats</td>
<td>2.18 (239)</td>
<td>2.26 (780)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.34 (180)</td>
<td>2.39 (596)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>1.70 (53)</td>
<td>1.82 (177)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=4.32, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>t=6.82, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Democrats</td>
<td>2.60 (267)</td>
<td>2.57 (781)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.70 (185)</td>
<td>2.66 (635)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Democrats</td>
<td>2.26 (50)</td>
<td>2.19 (138)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=2.70, p&lt;.01</td>
<td>t=4.98, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Republicans</td>
<td>2.45 (112)</td>
<td>2.31 (740)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.55 (80)</td>
<td>2.40 (587)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.18 (28)</td>
<td>1.97 (147)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=1.74, p&lt;.08</td>
<td>t=4.52, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security &amp; Medicare policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Republicans</td>
<td>2.51 (113)</td>
<td>2.45 (737)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.66 (82)</td>
<td>2.55 (566)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.15 (26)</td>
<td>2.10 (165)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=2.27, p&lt;.03</td>
<td>t=4.96, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Republicans</td>
<td>2.28 (111)</td>
<td>2.23 (740)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.44 (62)</td>
<td>2.39 (473)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.09 (47)</td>
<td>1.95 (263)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=2.08, p&lt;.04</td>
<td>t=5.64, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Republicans</td>
<td>2.65 (113)</td>
<td>2.58 (738)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.79 (84)</td>
<td>2.65 (565)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree with other Republicans</td>
<td>2.28 (25)</td>
<td>2.37 (169)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t=2.24, p&lt;.03</td>
<td>t=3.17, p&lt;.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For each of the four issues, respondents were asked “How much do you agree with [Republicans/Democrats] on [cutting taxes, environmental policies, social security and Medicare policies or education policies]. Positive responses, those from 6 to 10, were coded as agreeing with members of one’s party, while responses 0 to 4 and the neutral point, 5, were coded as not agreeing with one’s party. The neutral point was included with the negative responses because the overwhelming percentage of respondents agreed with their party.
Further comparisons were undertaken between Republicans and Democrats with independents and those naming other party affiliations on expression of opinions when encountering other partisans. In the case of independents and others, the situation was described so that respondents encountered a die-hard Republican or Democrat supporting policies of Gore or Bush. As Table 3 shows, independents are the least likely to express their opinions, with Democrats second most likely and Republicans most likely of all to express their views in a potentially-conflicting situation. With one exception, the pattern is consistent across both surveys. The exception is found for the environment, where Republicans were more vocal in the metro survey, while Democrats were more vocal in the national Internet survey.

Tables 4 through 10 include regression analyses reflecting a search for predictors of respondents’ likelihood they would speak out, or express opinions to others.

Tables 4a and 4b outline how Democrats who share their party’s views and have stronger community ties are more likely to speak out across the four issues. Community ties is a predictor in six of eight regressions and at least one of the two measures of agreement with fellow partisans is a predictor in five of eight regressions. The significance of social category measures varies, although education and gender are significant in the metro survey and gender and white ethnicity are predictors twice in the Internet survey. For the former, women and the more highly educated are more likely to speak out; for the Internet survey, minorities are more likely to speak out. Media exposure variables drop out in the Metro survey but several figure prominently in the Internet survey, where the larger sample size allows us to detect smaller relationships. For the Internet survey, watching TV news, visiting media websites and visiting chatrooms are positive predictors of expressing opinions on all four issues, and going out to see movies is a predictor for three issues (taxes, environment and education but not Social Security). For both the Metro and Internet surveys, the political communication variables are the most powerful. Thus, mere media exposure does not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Party Affiliation and Expression of Opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metropolitan Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents/Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents/Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Influencing Democrats’ Expression of Opinion to Republicans</td>
<td>Metro Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep. Variable: likelihood Democrats will talk to Republicans about tax cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political factors, community ties</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation: ( R^2 = .63, R^2 = .40, F = 6.5, p &lt; .001, N = 216 ) ( R^2 = .59, R^2 = .35, F = 15.3, p &lt; .001, N = 757 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political philosophy</td>
<td>.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of community orgs.</td>
<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree with Democrats on taxes</td>
<td>.15/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoy talking about politics</td>
<td>.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political communication network</td>
<td>.38***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends share politics</td>
<td>.10/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep. Variable: likelihood Democrats will talk to Republicans about environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political factors, community ties</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation: ( R^2 = .66, R^2 = .43, F = 7.6, p &lt; .001, N = 218 ) ( R^2 = .63, R^2 = .39, F = 18.2, p &lt; .001, N = 757 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. in household</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>importance of environment</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closer to candidate on environment</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level of political knowledge</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watched debates</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political communication network</td>
<td>.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends share politics</td>
<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. books read</td>
<td>.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. movies seen</td>
<td>.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freq. visit media websites</td>
<td>.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freq. visit chat rooms</td>
<td>.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow campaign</td>
<td>.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visit political websites</td>
<td>-.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political communication network</td>
<td>.29***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
stimulate expression but watching the debates and following the campaign in the media do. Even more powerful, as expected, is being involved in a strong political communication
network. Thus, those who often talk about politics with family, friends and coworkers also are more likely to express their opinions when they encounter a stranger from another party.

Tables 5a and 5b\textsuperscript{13} present the same regressions for Republicans in the two surveys. Because the Metro survey is predominantly Democratic, the sample size here lacks sufficient power for detecting relationships. Results indicate that men are more likely to express their opinions in six of the eight regressions, and strong community organizational ties is a positive predictor for all four topics in the Internet survey. A pattern detected for Democrats also is found here — agreement with fellow partisans is a positive predictor in five of the eight instances. In the Internet survey, several of the same media exposure variables that were significant predictors of Democrats expressing opinions emerge as significant predictors here — watching TV news, visiting chat rooms, and going out to see movies. And, again, political communication variables explain the most variance. Republicans in stronger interpersonal political communication networks also are more likely to express their opinions, as are those who follow the campaign in the media.

Regressions for independents and those belonging to minor parties are outlined in Tables 6a and 6b\textsuperscript{14} where we find that men are more likely to speak out on taxes and the environment. In general, media exposure is less important and the model produces a unique set of predictors. Book reading is a positive predictor for all of the four topics in the Internet sample, and visiting chat rooms is a predictor three times. The strength of political communication variables is confirmed a third time. Thus, being in a strong interpersonal political communication network is a positive predictor across all topics in both surveys. In addition, following the campaign in the media and visiting political websites are predictors of expressing opinions about one or more topics.

Measures of expression across the four issues (cutting taxes, the environment, Social Security, and education) were combined for an average tendency to speak out for each respondent. Tables 7a and 7b\textsuperscript{15} give results for each of the three groups. Results indicate that gender is a consistent predictor in both the Metro and Internet survey for Republicans (men are more likely to speak out) but the other measures of social categories appear as significant predictors in only one regression. Involvement in community organizations is a positive predictor for Democrats, Republicans and independents/others in the Internet survey and for Democrats in the Metro survey. The pattern of significant predictors among political factors (agreement with one’s party), media exposure, and political communication repeats the earlier analyses. Media exposure does not appear to predict expression in the metro survey but watching TV news and going out to see movies “stimulates” Democrats and Republicans to expression opinions in the Internet survey. Visiting chat rooms is a significant predictor for all three groups in the Internet survey. Involvement in a strong interpersonal political communication network is a significant predictor for all three groups in both the Metro and Internet survey, and following the campaign in the media is a significant predictor for all three — Republicans, Democrats, and Independents/Others — in the Internet survey.
Table 5a
Factors Influencing Republicans’ Expression of Opinion to Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.  F</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep. Variable: likelihood Republicans will talk to Democrats about taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>p&lt;.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political factors, community ties</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>p&lt;.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.68, R²=.46, F=4.9, p&lt;.001, N=103</td>
<td>R=.67, R²=.45, F=19.8, p&lt;.001, N=694</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. standardized betas for each step; Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td>-.25***</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political philosophy</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political knowledge</td>
<td>.20#</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of magazines read</td>
<td>.17#</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to political TV ads</td>
<td>.16#</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy talking about politics</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication network</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dep. Variable: likelihood Republicans will talk to Democrats about environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.  F</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>p&lt;.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political factors, community ties</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>p&lt;.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Communication</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.51, R²=.26, F=2.1, p&lt;.02, N=103</td>
<td>R=.61, R²=.37, F=13.9, p&lt;.001, N=696</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. standardized betas for each step; Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with Republicans on env.</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impt. candidate exp.,background</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of magazines read</td>
<td>.19#</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to candidate on env.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freq. watch TV news</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freq. visit chat rooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy talking about politics</td>
<td></td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit political websites</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication network</td>
<td></td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5b
Factors Influencing Republicans’ Expression of Opinion to Democrats (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Communication</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.44, R²=.19, F=1.4, n.s., N=101</td>
<td>R=.63, R²=.40, F=15.8, p&lt;.001, N=694</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step; Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- white ethnicity: -.19#
- gender: -.15***
- age: .13***
- no. of community organizations: .17***
- agree with Republicans on soc.sec.: .12**
- closer to candidate on soc. security: -.17***
- importance of social security: .13***
- hours watch TV yesterday: .09*
- freq. watch TV news: .12***
- freq. visit chat rooms: .13***
- enjoy talking about politics: .19***
- follow campaign: .14***
- freq. visit political websites: -.08*
- political communication network: .27***

### Dep. Variable: likelihood Republicans will talk to Democrats about education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Communication</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.49, R²=.24, F=1.8, p&lt;.05, N=103</td>
<td>R=.60, R²=.36, F=13.1, p&lt;.001, N=696.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step; Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- importance of education: .23*
- gender: -.12**
- no. in household: .12**
- no. of community organizations: .20***
- agree with Republicans on educ.: .09*
- closer to candidate on education: -.11**
- importance of education: .12***
- hours watched TV yesterday: .11**
- no. movies seen: .09*
- freq. visit chat rooms: .08*
- enjoy talking about politics: .14***
- follow campaign in media: .09*
- visit political websites: -.12**
- political communication network: .29***
### Table 6a
Factors Influencing Independents/Others’ Expression of Opinion to Partisan Republicans or Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.58,R²=.34,F=5.6,p&lt;.001,N=133</td>
<td>R=.58,R²=.33,F=14.1,p&lt;.001,N=609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- gender: -19*
- age: -.15/#
- no. mags read regularly: .15/
- watch debates: .15#
- political communication network: .31***

- visit media websites: .11**
- no. books read: .09*
- enjoy talking about politics: .17***
- follow campaign in media: .11*
- political communication network: .37***

### Dep. Variable: likelihood Independents will talk to partisan Republicans-Democrats about environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.53,R²=.28,F=4.4,p&lt;.001,N=133</td>
<td>R=.52,R²=.27,F=10.2,p&lt;.001,N=611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- gender: -.21*
- political communication network: .30***
- no. of community organizations: .12**
- importance of environment: .16***
- importance of character, values: .08*
- freq. visit chat rooms: .10**
- no. books read: .14***
- visit political websites on campaign: .10*
- political communication network: .34***
Table 6b  
Factors Influencing Independents/Others’ Expression of Opinion to Partisan Republicans or Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>p&lt;.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.45,R^2=.20,F=2.8,p&lt;.01,N=133</td>
<td>R=.52,R^2=.27,F=10.3,p&lt;.001,N=610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:
1 closer to candidate on issue .19*  
2 age .11*  
3 political communication network .31*  
4 no. of community organizations .10**  
5 importance of social security .16***  
6 importance of character, values .12**  
7 freq. visit chat rooms .10**  
8 no. books read .14***  
9 enjoy talking about politics .16***  
10 political communication network .28***

Dep. Variable: likelihood Independents will talk to partisan Republicans-Democrats about education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>p&lt;.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation:</td>
<td>R=.47,R^2=.22,F=3.2,p&lt;.001,N=132</td>
<td>R=.52,R^2=.27,F=10.4,p&lt;.001,N=610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. standardized betas for each step--Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:
3 gender -.15#  
4 importance of education .18*  
5 political philosophy .13**  
6 closer to candidate on education .17#  
7 no. of community organizations .18***  
8 importance of education .12**  
9 importance of character, values .10*  
10 closer to candidate on education -.10*  
11 freq. visit chat rooms .08*  
12 no. books read .15*  
13 enjoy talking about politics .09*  
14 political communication network .28***
### Table 7a
Factors Influencing Average Expression of Opinion about Issues by Democrats and Republicans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social categories</strong></td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pol. factors, community ties</strong></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media use</strong></td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political communication</strong></td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Equation:</strong> R=.64, R²=.41, F=10.2, p&lt;.001, N=207</td>
<td>R=.61, R²=.37, F=17.8, p&lt;.001, N=745</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. Standardized betas for each step—Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- education: .20**
- white ethnicity: -.10**
- no. community organizations: .16**
- no. community organizations: .17***
- enjoy talking about politics: .13#
- avg. importance of issues: .14***
- avg. agreement with Democrats: .09*
- freq. watch TV news: .16***
- no. books read: .07*
- no. movies seen: .10**
- freq. visit chat rooms: .12***
- freq. visit media websites: .10**
- enjoy talking about politics: .13***
- freq. visit political websites: -.09**
- follow campaign in media: .11*
- political communication network: .32***

---

### Dep. Variable: average likelihood Republicans will express opinions to partisan Democrats across 4 issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R Sq.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;.001</th>
<th>R Sq.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;.001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social categories</strong></td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>p&lt;.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pol. factors, community ties</strong></td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media use</strong></td>
<td>(no variables entered)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political communication</strong></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>p&lt;.002</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Equation:</strong> R=.45, R²=.20, F=3.9, p&lt;.002, N=98</td>
<td>R=.67, R²=.45, F=20.1, p&lt;.001, N=692</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. Standardized betas for each step—Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- gender: -.19#
- gender: -.17***
- avg. agreement with Republicans: .23*
- no. in household: .10**
- no. community organizations: .19***
- avg. closeness to candidates: -.13**
- avg. importance of issues: .09*
- avg. agreement with Republicans: .14***
- freq. watch TV news: .10**
- hours watched TV yesterday: .12**
- no. movies watched in last month: .10*
- freq. visit chat rooms: .10*
- enjoy talking about politics: .20***
- freq. visit political websites: -.10**
- follow campaign in media: .13**
- political communication network: .32***
All respondents — Democrats, Republicans and Independents/Others — were included in overall regressions shown in Table 8 and Table 9. The dependent variable is likelihood one would express an opinion to partisan Republicans-Democrats across 4 issues, but the entire sample is included. In addition, for one set of regressions only those measures correlated with the dependent variables were included; for the other regressions, all predictors were included. Results from testing the model suggest that education is a positive predictor for expressing one’s opinion in the Metro survey, while gender is a predictor in the Internet survey (men speak out more than women on the four issues/topics). Those in larger households are more likely to express their views in the Internet survey, and minorities are more likely to express their views in both surveys. Respondents who share their party’s views and those closest to their candidates are more likely to speak out. The more important the issues, the more likely respondents are to express their views in the Internet survey. Media exposure drops out as a predictor in the Metro survey but both measures of TV viewing, reading books, watching movies, visiting media websites, and visiting chat rooms are positive predictors of opinion expression in the Internet survey. Again political communication variables are the strongest predictors in both surveys. A strong interpersonal political communication network is a predictor in both studies, while watching the debates is a positive predictor in the metro survey and visiting political websites a negative predictor in the Internet survey.

---

### Table 7b
Factors Influencing Average Expression of Opinion about Issues by Independents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq Change</td>
<td>F Change</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>R Sq Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use (no variables entered)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Equation: R=.57, R²=.33,F=6.6,p&lt;.001,N=119</td>
<td>R=.57, R²=.32,F=13.8,p&lt;.001,N=606</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. Standardized betas for each step—Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:

- gender -.20*
- no. in household .10*
- black ethnicity (black =1,others=0) .16#
- no. of community organizations .16***
- avg. closeness to candidates .19*
- avg. importance of issues .09*
- political communication network .36***
- no. books read in past 6 months .15*
- freq. visit chat rooms .10*
- enjoy talking about politics .14***
- follow campaign in media .10*
- political communication network .36***
Table 10 presents regressions predicting expression of opinions about abortion to the opposite gender for the Metro and Internet surveys. Results from both surveys suggest that women who see the issue as most important are most likely to speak out. The same result is found for men in the Internet survey, but not the metro survey. Again, the strongest predictor variable is involvement in a strong interpersonal political communication network.

The third hypothesis predicted that the perceived importance of an issue would affect the predicted spiral of silence expected in the first two hypotheses. However, as reported above, results disconfirmed those hypotheses and were in the opposite direction for men, while women who both agreed and disagreed with other women were more likely to express their views on abortion to men. Nonetheless, we examined the potential influence of
perceived importance of an issue to see if it has an impact on the relationships between
perceived gender agreement on abortion and expressing views to the opposite gender but
saw no significant changes. In the metro survey, for men, importance of abortion was not
correlated with whether men agreed with other men on the issue (metro survey r=.07, n.s.)
or likelihood one would express views to women ( metro survey r=.08, n.s.); thus, the partial
correlation controlling for importance had no impact on the relationship between like gender
agreement and expressing views with opposite gender. For women, the importance of
abortion was correlated with both perceived gender agreement (metro survey r=.14, p<.03)
and expressing views with opposite gender (metro survey r=.20, p<.001); controlling for

Table 9
Factors Influencing Expression of Opinions to Others Across Issues for all Respondents
(All Variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro Survey</th>
<th>National Internet Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R Sq.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social categories</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. factors, community ties</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political communication</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sig. Standardized betas for each step—Metro survey on left, Internet survey on right below:
- education .19***
- household income -.11#
- average agreement with own party -.14**
- no. of community organizations .19***
- no. debates watched .12*
- political communication network .46***
- gender -.09***
- number in household .09***
- political knowledge .07***
- average importance of 4 issues .11***
- average agreement with own party .09***
- hours watched TV yesterday .05*
- frequency watch TV news .11***
- no. books read in past 6 months .09***
- no. movies seen in past month .05*
- frequency visit media websites .08***
- frequency visit chat rooms .10***
- enjoy talking about politics .15***
- follow campaign in media .11***
- visit political websites -.08***
- political communication network .35***

* Independents and those belonging to other parties were not asked this question; they were assigned a 0. Thus, Democrats and Republicans who disagreed with their party to the maximum would have the same score as independents and those belonging to minor parties.
 abortion issue importance did not alter the bivariate correlation beyond its insignificant level. In the national Internet survey, the importance of the abortion issue was correlated with perceived gender agreement and expressing views with the opposite gender for both
men and women; controlling for issue significance reduced the correlation between perceived gender agreement and expressing views to opposite gender for men (national sample $r=0.08$, $p<0.04$; partial $r=0.06$, n.s.), but the same control had no impact on the insignificant finding for women (national sample $r=0.02$, partial $r=-0.02$). Thus, the third hypothesis is rejected.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that strength of partisan identification would affect the predicted spiral of silence expected in the first two hypotheses. In the metro survey, strength of party identification was correlated with average perceived party agreement across four issues for both Republicans ($r=0.48$, $p<0.001$) and for Democrats ($r=0.27$, $p<0.001$). This provides some support for Hypothesis 4. When strength of party identification was held constant, the relationship dropped below significance for the Republicans (partial $r=0.15$, n.s., $n=111$), but it remained significant for Democrats (partial $r=0.27$, $p<0.001$, $n=224$). Strength of party identification also failed to have an impact in the national survey, but perceived agreement with fellow partisans was correlated with expressing views to the opposite partisans for both Democrats ($r=0.17$, $p<0.001$) and Republicans ($r=0.23$, $p<0.001$).

**DISCUSSION**

The present study applies Noelle-Neumann’s (1974) spiral of silence theory in an election context, working from the assumption that individuals use social cues to locate other people’s opinion on issues. In the studies reported here, those cues were assigned rather than left to chance, following earlier work (see, e.g., Jeffres, Neuendorf & Atkin, 1999; Lin & Salwen, 1997). In actual public contexts, people rely not only on visual factors such as race, age and gender, but also comments about the pertinent topic that give clues about where the other person stands on issues. News media almost always report results of polls in terms of social categories.

Amidst the confluence of these mass and interpersonal communication sources, it’s useful to focus on the different motivations for speaking out or keeping quiet, and the social contexts in which people live. This study addressed one such important context, a presidential election. Results showed that those showing the greatest interest in issues and those closest to their candidates are most likely to express opinions to those with whom they are most likely to disagree, i.e., confrontation rather than silence. One might explain these findings in the context of “multiple spirals of confrontation” rather than “multiple spirals of silence.” In particular, the election under study was very close and neither Republicans nor Democrats thought their “side” was losing; in other words, the climate of opinion may have been seen as a “draw” rather than a winning or losing situation. In this case, the spiral of silence would not operate.

This anomalous finding might also be a function of cultural factors which differ from those in classical European contexts (e.g., Fuchs et al., 1982). Noelle-Neumann’s pioneering
work on “the spiral of silence” identified fear of social disapproval as the key motivator for expressing personal opinions in public. Although subsequent research has produced only scattered support across different societies and contexts, her theory identified key variables and stimulated long overdue investigation of this phenomenon in multi-cultural societies such as the U.S.

American society may be considered multicultural in both macro and micro senses. That is, many ethnic/racial/religious groups share the same space but individuals are likely to hold multiple cultural and social identities. Research shows that ethnics vary by context in expressing their ethnic identity and heritage (Eschback & Gomez, 1998; Lysne & Levy, 1997). Subervi-Velez (1984) calls this notion of a fluid identity “situational ethnicity.” One could argue that everyone’s a minority in the U.S. today. Thus, each individual is privy to the nuances of in-group and out-group dynamics, having experienced both powerless and powerful positions (even if it’s only the “power of victimization”). Every individual is capable of filling the role of spokesperson for a minority viewpoint, and face both rewards and punishments as potential outcomes of their actions. Rewards often might be intrinsic, such as feeling good for “sticking up” for others, or being praised by a group for one’s brave actions. Rewards might be more extrinsic, such as appearing on the evening news or the “Ricki Lake Show.” Punishments might include social ostracism, or a barrier to career movement.

The U.S. “climate for expressing opinions” today contains few, if any, taboos (e.g., Entman, 2004). Almost every topic is grist for conversation and mass media “let it all hang out.” One might argue that media, particularly television, encourage or sanction expression of the most extreme, or outrageous opinions. It is the extremists who often garner the most attention, or a spot on afternoon talk shows (e.g., Patterson & Donsbach, 1996). Although American society is devoid of communication taboos, an exception might be found in contexts where there is intense public interest, when media attention is maximized, when there is intense interpersonal communication about the topic, and when publics are polarized; an example of this would be a “politically-correct” topic with deep differences (see Jeffres et al., 1999; Salwen et al., 1994).

The variable most strongly related to speaking out on any individual issue or collectively is the strength of one’s political communication network. Thus, those who talk about politics at home, with friends and at work are more likely to express their opinion to strangers in a public context. This also is common sense — those who don’t talk about political issues with friends are less likely to also express their opinions to strangers. Essentially, we may have both trait and state influences on people’s willingness to express opinions in public.

On balance, study results reinforce the utility of “spirals” of communication as an explanatory framework that can unify the largely disparate domains of mass and interpersonal communication research. Scholars are discovering that the type of spiral originally identified is only one of several. The process of spiraling thus represents a
promising avenue for later work; that is what factors lead to “spiraling up” (a spiral of confrontation) and what factors lead to “spiraling down” (the spiral of silence)? Future research into “upward spirals” might consider the individual’s interest in the issue, perceived cohesiveness of the group holding similar views, group size, perceived efficacy of the individual’s expression of opinion (e.g., individual and group goals such as influencing someone’s voting decision), and perceived rewards derived from expressing one’s opinion. Later studies should vary the conditions under which opinions are expressed, in order to tease out the relative influence of these and other factors.

ENDNOTES

1. The conformity hypothesis is based on the work of Asch (1953), who found that subjects confronted with a unanimous majority expressing incorrect evaluations about the length of three lines in an experiment conformed about one third of the time to the incorrect majority judgment. Asch and others (Allen, 1965, 1975) found that anything less than a unanimous majority opinion significantly reduced conformity and increased one’s willingness to dissent.

2. For example, in Hong Kong, Willnat (1995) found respondents in two surveys more willing to voice their political opinions publicly when they perceived the majority opinion to be on their side or when they perceived a trend in support of their own viewpoint concerning Hong Kong’s political future before 1997. However, while Matera and Salwen (1989) found some support for the spiral of silence — respondents who favored Radio Marti in Miami and also perceived it was the majority opinion were more willing to express their opinions publicly — other evidence was contrary — those who did not favor Radio Marti and thought the public agreed were least willing to express their opinions publicly. Gonzenbach, King and Jablonski (1999) also found contrary evidence — in certain situations individuals who feel their position is beginning to lose public support may feel compelled to voice their opinions in a study focusing on whether homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military.

3. These include the Persian Gulf War (Eveland, McLeod & Signorielli, 1995; Gonzenbach, 1992; Entman, 2004), public issues in Germany (Fuchs, Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1992), American opinions about homosexuals in the military (Gonzenbach, King & Jablonski, 1999), opinions about whether the U.S. should declare English as the official language (Lin & Salwen, 1997), opinions about the president (Katz & Baldassare, 1994), development of the French Revolution (Wilke, 1989), and other situations where people make choices to express themselves (Granovetter & Soong, 1988; Pan & McLeod, 1991; Park, 1998; Taylor, 1982; Allen, O’Loughlin, Jasperson & Sullivan, 1994).

4. Noelle-Neumann (1974) found some support for hypotheses based on the theory in surveys conducted in 1972 and 1974 in West Germany. Subsequently, the theory has generated research around the world to test her propositions. Perry and Gonzenbach (2000) found some evidence that perceived opinion can silence “public display expression.” Stevenson and Gonzenbach (1990) found support for the spiral of silence hypothesis in a study on AIDS; those who view their position as gaining strength were more willing to speak out about children with AIDS attending public school.
5. Noelle-Neumann suggests that the source of conformity is fear of isolation, but some others suggest that positive social attraction may have more influence on opinions and speaking out than fear of isolation (Glynn & McLeod, 1984; Salmon & Kline, 1984). Also, informational forces also may drive conformity (Gonzenbach, 1992; Price & Allen, 1990). Allen (1991, pp. 246-247) criticizes Noelle-Neumann’s location of the fear of isolation in the nature of human beings (needing to be popular, respected) and says that, for de Tocqueville, “a necessary condition for social isolation is a political order in which political isolation is considerable.”

6. Gonzenbach conducted an experiment using a real, emotional issue about which there is “no objectively correct answer” (President George Bush’s involvement in the Iran Contra affair) and about which subjects knew there was no unanimity. Subjects watched a segment from a network news broadcast about a TV confrontation between George Bush and Dan Rather, followed by one of three versions of the actual interview. Subjects were asked to indicate how supportive they were of the information presented in the news report and interview, with results indicated on the monitor showing the interview. Results were manipulated to indicate support for Bush or Rather, and subjects were told they would be randomly called on to stand before the group to defend their opinion of Bush and Rather’s positions, with their individual evaluation displayed on the monitor for the others to see, producing a threat of impending scrutiny, which the spiral of silence says is necessary to trigger conformity. Results provided partial support for the hypothesis that a person would conform to the majority opinion congruent with the news report. However, perceptions of opinion did not affect opinion when the majority opinion was incongruent with the news report. Thus, subjects did not conform when the perceived majority opinion was incongruent with the news report. Social categories and individual psychological traits also were related to conformity.

7. Glynn and McLeod (1985) argue that it is an error to assume that fear of isolation is a motivating force and we should measure and empirically test its role. Results of research are hard to explain by reference to fear of isolation by a minority. Those holding minority opinions often seem more willing to express their opinions; see Glynn and McLeod (1985), Salmon and Neuwirth (1990), and Salmon and Rucinski (1988). Baldassare and Katz (1996) argue that attitude strength, indicated by greater political interests, extreme political views and more attention to elections, is significant in predicting whether people will express their political views. Arguing that one’s interest in politics and level of self-efficacy affect one’s willingness to speak out, Lasorsa’s (1991) survey results found there are conditions under which people “buck the spiral” to express opinions. Other recent evidence suggests that people’s social and demographic characteristics, the nature of the issue, the issue’s salience to individuals, and the positive attraction to social groups are more important determinants of willingness to express an opinion than a general fear of social isolation; see Lin and Salwen (1997), Price and Allen (1990), Salmon and Kline (1985), Salmon and Neuwirth (1990), and Salmon and Rucinski (1988).

8. The mass media play a crucial role in creating the information environment. Noelle-Neumann’s model also requires examining how people monitor the information environment and search for evidence that their personal opinion is shared by a majority of citizens. Rimmer and Howard (1990) hypothesized that the level of media use would predict one’s perceptions of the climate of opinion and congruency behaviors, i.e., high levels of communication would be correlated with more accurate estimates of the climate of opinion. Their survey in southern Indiana focused on PCBs as an environmental hazard, finding no relationship between media use and the ability to accurately estimate the real majority position on the PCB issue. They also found no support for the hypothesis that higher media use would lead to more correct perceptions that one was in the majority or minority on the issue.
They found support for the hypothesis that greater media use and higher issue salience would be positively related to opinion expression compared to those with lower media use. In a path model supporting the spiral of silence perspective, Neuwirth (2000) found that media exposure and attention were associated with knowledge during a changeover of presidents in Mexico.

9. How accurate are people’s perceptions of the climate of opinion? Price and Allen (1990, p. 375) note that people’s estimates are quite good in the case of elections because of extensive news coverage and poll data (Glynn & McLeod, 1984), but this is not necessarily true for other issues (Tichenor & Wackman, 1973). Noelle-Neumann contended that the media present a consonant portrayal of the climate of opinion, a prevailing attitude, but this has been challenged when applied to the U.S., e.g., Glynn and McLeod (1985) found little support for the contention that the media presented a consistent bias in any direction on estimating outcomes of the 1980 U.S. presidential race. Kennamer (1990) notes that Noelle-Neumann’s theory is largely silent on the degree to which people are accurate in their opinion sampling and estimates of others’ opinions. “Unless there is considerable evidence to the contrary, one’s assessments of the climate of opinion may not provide strong disconfirmation of one’s own position and, therefore, may not threaten one into the fearful silence Noelle-Neumann hypothesizes. Even if one does perceive that in some larger universe opinion is hostile, the knowledge that others in one’s immediate surroundings or reference groups are supportive may provide the psychological strength to continue expressing one’s opinions” (Kennamer, 1990, p. 396).

10. According to a national poll reported by ABC News, 58% of men and 52% of women say abortion should be illegal to end an unwanted pregnancy. Some 58% of men and 61% of women support legal abortion in all or most cases. The poll is reported on the network’s website: www.abcnnews.com

11. These issues were among those mentioned as the most important ones for deciding presidential votes in a survey conducted in July, 2000, by the Washington Post, the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University. They also were identified as “extremely” or “very important” in Gallup polls conducted in July or August of 2000; education was cited as extremely or very important by 91% in August, 2000; taxes, 77% in July; environment, 71% in July; Social Security, 82% in July; and abortion, 56% in August. The data are available at the polling organization’s website: www.gallup.com/Election2000/issues.

12. The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Metro Survey in Tables 4a and 4b: 1) Social categories — education level, gender (1=male, 2=female), number in household; 2) Political factors, community ties — no. of community orgs. belong to, political philosophy (high=liberal), political knowledge, importance of issue (0-10), agree with Democrats on issue (0-10), closer to candidates on issue (0-10, 0=Bush, 10=Gore), importance of candidates’ experience and background (0-10); 3) Media use — hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, frequency visit media websites, Internet use (home+work); 4) Political communication — friends share political views (0-10), political communication network, follow campaign in media (0-10), watched debates (across all 4 debates), enjoy talking about politics (0-10).

The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Internet Survey in Tables 4a and 4b: 1) Social categories — gender, no. in household, white ethnicity (white=1; others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — no. of community orgs. belong to, political philosophy (high=liberal), level of political knowledge, agree with Democrats on education (0-10), closer to candidates on education (0-10, 0=Bush, 10=Gore), importance of education (0-10); 3) Media use — no. hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, frequency read newspaper, no. magazines read regularly, no. books read in past 6 months, no. videos watched in past month, no. movies seen in past month,
frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media websites; 4) Political communication — enjoy talking about politics, friends share political views, exposure to political advertising, frequency visit political websites for campaign, exposure to debates, follow campaign in media, political communication network.

13. The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Metro survey in Tables 5a and 5b: 1) Social categories — gender (high=female), white ethnicity (white=1; others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — political philosophy (high=liberal), level of political knowledge, importance of issue, importance of candidates’ experience and background, agree with Republicans on issue, close to candidate on issue (0-10, 0=Bush,10=Gore); 3) Media use — no. magazines read regularly, frequency watch TV news, 4) Political Communication — exposure to TV political advertising (0-10), political communication network, watched debates, enjoy talking about politics (0-10), followed campaign in media (0-10). The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Internet survey in Tables 5a and 5b: 1) Social categories — gender, number in household, age; 2) Political factors, community ties — number of community organizations belong to, political philosophy, political knowledge, agree with Republicans on taxes, closer to candidate on taxes (0-10, 0=Bush,10=Gore), importance of taxes, importance of character and values; 3) Media use—hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch news on TV, number of days read newspaper last week, number of magazines read regularly, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of movies seen in theater in past month, number of hours listened to radio yesterday, level of Internet use, frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media websites; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics (0-10), perceived exposure to political TV commercials, frequency visit political websites, friends share political views, watched debates (0-4), political communication network, follow campaign (0-10).

14. The following variables were entered in stepwise regressions for the Metro survey in Tables 6a and 6b: 1) Social categories—age, gender; 2) Political factors—importance of issue, closer to candidate on issue (0-10, 0=Bush,10=Gore); 3) Media use—no. magazines read regularly, Internet use (home+work), frequency visit chatrooms; 4) Political Communication—enjoy talking about politics, follow campaign in media, watched debates, political communication network. The following variables were entered in stepwise regressions for the Internet survey in Tables 6a and 6b: 1) Social categories—age, gender, number in household, white ethnicity (white=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties—political philosophy, no. of community organizations belong to, importance of issue, importance of character and values, closer to candidate on issue (0-10, 0=Bush,10=Gore); 3) Media use—frequency watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of hours listened to radio yesterday, frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media web sites; 4) Political Communication—enjoy talking about politics, frequency visit political websites, number debates watched, follow campaign (0-10), political communication network.

15. The following variables were entered in stepwise regressions for the Metro survey in Tables 7a and 7b: Democrats—1) Social Categories — education; 2) Political factors, community ties — political philosophy (low=conservative, high=liberal), number of community organizations belong to, average importance of four issues (taxes, environment, social security, education), average closeness to candidates across four issues, agreement with Democrats on four issues; 3) Media Use — frequency watch TV news, frequency visit media websites; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics (0-10), follow campaign in media, number of debates watched, friends have same politics, political communication network; Republicans—1) Social Categories — gender (1=male,
2) Political factors, community ties — average importance of four issues, average closeness to candidates on the four issues, average agreement with Republicans on the four issues; 3) Media Use — no variables entered; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, political communication network; Independents — 1) Social Categories — gender, black ethnicity (black=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — average importance of four issues, average closeness to candidates on four issues; 3) Media Use — no variables entered; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, follow campaign in media, number of debates watched, political communication network. The following variables were entered in stepwise regressions for the Internet survey in Tables 7a and 7b: Democrats—1) Social Categories—gender (1=male, 2=female), number in household, white ethnicity (white=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties—number of community organizations to which belong, political philosophy (low=conservative, high=liberal), average closeness to candidates across the four issues (low=closest to Bush, high=closest to Gore), average importance of issues across 4 issues (taxes, environment, social security, education), average agreement with own party across the 4 issues, political knowledge scale (number correct); 3) Media Use—number of hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of movies seen in past month, number of days read newspaper last week, frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media websites, level of Internet use at home and work; 4) Political Communication—enjoy talking about politics, frequency visit political websites, follow campaign in media, number of debates watched, political communication network (frequency talk about politics with family, friends, coworkers); Republicans—1) Social Categories—gender (1=male, 2=female), number in household, age; 2) Political factors, community ties—number of community organizations to which belong, political philosophy (low=conservative, high=liberal), average closeness to candidates across the four issues (low=closest to Bush, high=closest to Gore), average importance of the four issues; 3) Media Use—number of hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of days read newspaper last week, number of movies seen in past month, hours listened to radio yesterday, frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media websites, level of Internet use at home and work; 4) Political Communication—enjoy talking about politics, frequency visit political websites, number of debates watched, follow campaign in media, level of exposure to political commercials on TV, friends share politics, political communication network (frequency talk about politics with family, friends, coworkers); Independents—1) Social Categories—gender (1=male, 2=female), number in household, age, white ethnicity (1=white, 0=others); 2) Political factors, community ties—number of community organizations to which belong, political philosophy (low=conservative, high=liberal), average closeness to candidates across the four issues (low=closest to Bush, high=closest to Gore), average importance of the four issues; 3) Media Use— frequen ty watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, number of books read in past six months, number of videos watched in past month, number of hours listened to radio yesterday, frequency visit chat rooms, frequency visit media websites; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, frequency visit political websites, number of debates watched, follow campaign in media, political communication network (frequency talk about politics with family, friends, coworkers).

16. The following variables were correlated with the dependent measure and included in the first regression for the Metro survey in Table 8: 1) Social Categories — education level, black ethnicity (black=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — political knowledge scale, average closeness to candidates on the four issues (0-40, with lower scores closest to Bush, high scores closest
to Gore), average agreement with one’s party on the four issues (0-40, higher scores=greater agreement); 3) Media Use — frequency watch TV news, number of magazines read regularly, Internet use at home and work, frequency visit media websites; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, friends share political views, exposure to political ads on TV, follow campaign in the media, number of debates watched, visited political websites for campaign, political communication network. The following variables were correlated with the dependent measure and included in the first regression for the Internet survey in Table 8: 1) Social Categories — gender (1=male, 2=female), number in household, white ethnicity (white=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — no. of community organizations belong to, level of political knowledge (0-5), average importance of the four issues (0-40), average agreement with own party across the four issues (0-40); 3) Media Use — hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, hours listened to the radio yesterday, no. of days read newspaper last week, no. of magazines read regularly, no. of books read in past six months, no. of videos watched in past month, no. of movies seen in a theater in past month, frequency use Internet at home and work, frequency visit media websites, frequency visit chat rooms; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, friends share political views, follow campaign in media, exposure to political ads on TV, frequency visit political websites, no. of debates watched, political communication network.

17. Independents and those belonging to other parties were not asked this question; they were assigned a 0. Thus, Democrats and Republicans who disagreed with their party to the maximum would have the same score as independents and those belonging to minor parties. Note: All of the predictor variables were included in the Metro and Internet survey for the second equation in Table 9: 1) Social Categories — gender (1=male, 2=female), age, no. in household, household income, level of education, white ethnicity (white=1, others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — no. of community groups belong to, political philosophy (low=conservative, independent=midpoint, high=liberal), political knowledge (0-5), average importance of four issues — cutting taxes, environment, Social Security, education (0-40), average closeness to candidates on the four issues (0-40, with lower scores closest to Bush, high scores closest to Gore), average agreement with own party (0-40); 3) Media Use — hours watched TV yesterday, frequency watch TV news, hours listened to radio yesterday, no. of days read a newspaper last week, no. of magazines read regularly, no. of books read in past 6 months, no. of videos watched in past month, no. of movies seen in a theater in past month, frequency use Internet at home and work, frequency visit media websites, frequency visit chat rooms; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics, friends share political views, follow campaign in media, perceived exposure to political ads on TV, frequency visit political websites, no. of debates watched, political communication network (3-12, frequency talk about politics across three contexts — in family, with closest friends, with people at work).

18. The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Metro survey in Table 10: 1) Social Categories — education, household income, white ethnicity (white=1; others=0), black ethnicity (black=1; others=0); 2) Political factors, community ties — importance of abortion (0-10), closer to candidate on abortion issue (0-10, 0=Bush,10=Gore), agree with gender on issue (0-10), party identification (low=Democrat, high=Republican), strength of partisanship (indep.=0, weak Dem. or Rep.=1, strong Dem. or Rep.=2); 3) Media Use — frequency read newspaper, time spent listening to radio yesterday, time spent watching TV yesterday, time spent watching TV yesterday; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics (0-10) and political communication network. The following variables were entered in stepwise regression for the Internet survey in Table 10: 1) Social Categories — age; 2) Political factors, community ties — number of community organizations belong to, importance of abortion issue, closer to candidate on abortion issue (0=closest to Bush, 10=closest to Gore), party identification
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(low=Democrat, high=Republican), strength of partisanship (0=indep. and other; 1= lean towards Republican or Democrat, 2=strong Republican or Democrat), political philosophy (low=conservative, high=liberal), agree with gender on abortion issue (0-10); 3) Media Use — frequency watch TV news, no. of videos watched in past month, Internet use, frequency visit media websites, frequency visit chat rooms; 4) Political Communication — enjoy talking about politics (0-10), perceived exposure to political TV commercials (0-10), frequency visit political websites for campaign, watched debates (0-4), friends share political views (0-10), follow campaign in media (low=closely, high=not at all), political communication network (how often talk about politics in family, with close friends, at work).

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TELEVISION OMNIVORES? SNOB AND SLOB
TASTE FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMS
IN THE NETHERLANDS IN 2000

RUBEN P. KONIG, HANS C. REBERS, AND HENK WESTERIK

In the seventies, Bourdieu argued that people demarcate societal boundaries through a lifestyle that exhibits their cultural taste. Elites consume highbrow cultural products and the lower social strata consume lowbrow cultural products. In the nineties, Bourdieu’s theory was amended by the introduction of the concepts of cultural omnivores and univores. Omnivores consume a wide variety of highbrow and lowbrow cultural products, whereas the lower social strata only consume lowbrow cultural products. Our research extends the application of these ideas to the field of television program taste, using data from a survey among a stratified probability sample of the adult Dutch population (n=825). Through correspondence analysis and hierarchical regression analysis, we showed that people from higher status groups and with larger amounts of cultural capital watch less lowbrow television genres than implied by the theory on cultural omnivores. Our findings support Bourdieu’s original theory on the distinctive force of taste expressions. As a consequence, we deem that the widely used typologies of gratifications sought and obtained that are used in communication science may be extended with the concept of ‘distinction’.

Keywords: lifestyle, taste, distinction, cultural omnivores, television, education, occupational status

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According to Bourdieu (1979/1984), status groups in society can be discerned by their taste; “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (p. 6). High status groups display ‘legitimate taste’; they listen to classical music, appreciate the fine arts, go to the Guggenheim museum, and watch films by foreign movie directors. They consume complex works of art that require a high amount of cultural knowledge and intellectual prowess to be understood and appreciated. In contrast, low status groups display ‘popular taste’; they attend to popular music and popularized art forms. They hardly ever set foot in a museum, dance to the bass drums of today’s popular artists, and go to see Hollywood movies. They consume much less complex works of art. In between, middle status groups display ‘middlebrow taste’.

In other words, different status groups exhibit different lifestyles, which convey the social boundaries in society. According to Bourdieu (1979/1984), these differences in lifestyle are acquired through socialization by the family and at school. Here, people acquire cultural capital, that is, the codes and conventions that are required to understand and appreciate more complex works of art; “a beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason” (p. 2). Thus, as people acquire more cultural capital they become increasingly able to display a refined taste.

So, according to Bourdieu (1979/1984) members of elite groups usually acquire much cultural capital through their socialization, thereby becoming able to display a refined highbrow taste. Further, during the course of their life, they mingle with other members of elite groups. In such situations they actually display an elitist refined taste to show their status group affiliation. Thus, they are not only able to display a refined highbrow taste, but are also willing to do so. The result is a distinct relationship between social status and cultural capital on the one hand, and the cultural lifestyle people exhibit on the other. Lowbrow taste is found among people with low social status and little cultural capital, whereas highbrow taste is found among the elites with much cultural capital.

However, Peterson and Simkus (1992; Peterson, 1992) have shown that, in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, Bourdieu’s (1979/1984) notions had to be differentiated with respect to tastes for music. According to their research, low status groups did indeed listen to a limited set of lowbrow musical genres, but high status groups did not confine themselves to highbrow musical genres. They consumed a wide variety of musical genres, ranging from lowbrow to highbrow music. They appeared to be cultural omnivores who derived their status from their ability to display the appropriate taste for every social situation they found themselves in, whereas members of low status groups displayed an unvarying taste in every situation. The latter appeared to be cultural univores. Thus, Peterson and Simkus amended Bourdieu’s (1979/1984) theory on how social status groups distinguish themselves from each other. Simplified, Bourdieu’s reasoning boils down to distinction according to the quality of the genres attended to, whereas Peterson and Simkus’ amendment suggests distinction by the quantity of genres attended to. In essence though,
omnivorousness is just another form of distinction; a very interesting and relatively new one, that is.

Since Peterson and Simkus’ (1992; Peterson, 1992) research, cultural omnivores have been found in other cultures as well. López Sintas and García Álvares (2002; using data from 1994) have shown the existence of cultural omnivores in Spain, and Van Eijck (2001; using data from 1987) has shown their existence in The Netherlands. In both countries, however, the ‘legitimate’ taste of the high status groups did not disappear altogether. Part of the elites still exhibited a highbrow taste, whereas another part of the elites showed themselves to be cultural omnivores. This corroborates with Peterson and Kern’s (1996) conclusion that the shift from “snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation” (p. 900) was still in progress in the United States in 1992, as it probably is today.

Research on cultural omnivorousness and univorousness mainly focuses on tastes in music (Bryson, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001), and to a lesser extent on other cultural activities such as reading (Van Eijck & Van Rees, 2000; Van Rees, Vermunt & Verboord, 1999), media use (Van Rees & Van Eijck, 2003), and outdoor cultural activities (López Sintas & García Álvares, 2002). Since television is a strong contestant for people’s free time (Huysmans, De Haan & Van den Broek, 2004; Van Rees & Van Eijck, 2003), we deemed it relevant to extend the knowledge about the field of snobs and slobs, or omnivores and univores, to television viewing behavior. In their publications, students of cultural omnivorousness suggest — mostly implicitly — that omnivorousness is not confined to musical tastes, but should be found with respect to all vehicles of culture. Television can be considered such a vehicle, and people’s taste for television programs is as much part of their cultural lifestyle as is their taste for music. Peterson and Simkus’ (1992) amendment to Bourdieu’s (1979/1984) theory on the distinctive force of people’s lifestyles with respect to expressions of musical taste should also apply to other expressions of taste, including their watching or avoiding certain television program genres.

Our attempt to find taste patterns in television viewing, however, is not just another description of people’s lifestyles, now concerning television; albeit a useful challenge to existing research on omnivorousness. Television is an interesting case in point. Dutch people spend far more time on watching television than on going out to participate in cultural activities or reading books, even though cultural participation is on the rise for the more popular art forms like rock and pop concerts and musicals (cf. Huysmans et al., 2004; Huysmans, Van den Broek & De Haan, 2005). So, going to the opera may be an important aspect of one’s lifestyle, but it is not more than an occasional token of one’s cultural prowess in comparison to the lived through cultural participation of watching television every night and talking about the programs during the day; another token one’s cultural lifestyle. And what is more, because of television and other media, people do not have to leave their homes...
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to participate in cultural activities. The Dutch public broadcasting system is compelled to broadcast cultural programs for at least 25% of the time (Huysmans et al., 2005).

In the past, researchers have hardly paid attention to omnivorousness regarding television program types. One of the few exceptions is a study carried out by Van Eijck and Van Rees (2000). They were able to discern omnivores from univores with respect to the opposition between entertainment and information programs. And indeed, the omnivores were highly educated. In their study, however, they studied omnivorous (and univorous) readers’ tastes in television genres using fairly crude categories of television program types, and they did not study television genre omnivorousness in itself. They studied the relationship of television genre preferences with reading omnivorousness. In the present study, we attempted to assess the difference, or absence of difference in television omnivorousness between different status groups more directly. We wanted to investigate whether or not the higher social strata consumed a wider range of television program types for their television use than the lower social strata. In case the higher social strata proved not to be omnivores, we also wanted to find out whether or not the higher social strata watch more complex, highbrow genres than the lower strata. In short, we made Peterson and Simkus compete with Bourdieu.

**METHOD**

**Data**

For our study we used data from a national Dutch survey on *Media use in the Netherlands 2000* (Konig et al., 2005). In the winter and early spring of 2000, a stratified probability sample of the Dutch population aged between 18 and 75 years old (*n* = 825; cooperation rate 43.2%) was interviewed face-to-face, using a computer assisted standardized questionnaire (CAPI). Comparisons with census data (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2000) revealed that our sample is representative of the Dutch population regarding gender. Married and middle-aged people were somewhat over-represented given their proportions in the population, but since we are investigating relationships and will not try to estimate population frequencies, we deem this deviation from representativeness unproblematic. For more details on sample, questionnaire, and other aspects of the survey please see Konig et al. (2005).

**Measures**

To be able to distinguish people who consumed a wide variety of television program types from people who consumed a less wide variety of genres, we measured how often respondents watched thirteen different genres. Respondents were asked how often they
watched sports programs; quiz and game shows; soap operas and other daily serials; current affairs programs; political programs; talk shows about everyday problems; talk shows about societal problems; health and medical programs; cultural programs, such as arts and cabaret programs; music programs; movies; news; and documentaries. If respondents indicated they did not know what certain program types entailed, they were supplied with a standard list of examples of that program type. We asked respondents to choose between the following answers: never, sometimes, regularly, often, and almost always. Since the difference between omnivorousseness and univorousness boils down to how many programs people avoid when watching television (cf. Bryson, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001), we dichotomized these answers into never, and sometimes to almost always.

To be able to let Peterson and Simkus compete with Bourdieu we also had to be able to judge the complexity of the television program types in our analysis. Therefore, independent from our survey data, we assessed the complexity of the above-mentioned genres using a panel of twelve experts from the Department of Communication at the Radboud University Nijmegen. These experts were provided with the following definition of complexity; the cultural knowledge and intellectual powers that are needed to understand and appreciate a television program genre. Thereupon, the experts were asked to rank the program types according to their complexity, with the most complex program type at rank 1 and the least complex at rank 13. The mean Spearman rank correlation between the rankings of the experts was .75, the intraclass correlation coefficient was .97, and the corresponding Cronbach’s alpha was .97, all of which indicates a pretty strong agreement among the experts.1 Results are presented in Table 1.

In our survey, social status was measured as the status of respondent’s present or former occupation. An open-ended question was used to establish the respondent’s present occupation, and if they did not have a job at that moment, they were asked what their former occupation had been. The answers of the respondents were coded using Ganzeboom’s et al. (1992) International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI), which scores occupations according to their social prestige. We recoded these scores into four categories: low status (ISEI < 40), lower middle status (40 - 49), upper middle status (50-61), and high status (> 61).

Cultural capital was measured as the highest formal education (completed or attending at that moment). The categories were: elementary school or less, lower vocational school, lower secondary school, secondary vocational school, O levels, A levels, college, and university.

**ANALYSIS**

We used correspondence analysis (Gifi, 1990; Greenacre, 2007; Israëls, 1987) to assess what television programs were watched or avoided by people with different levels of
occupational status and education. With this type of research problem two analytical strategies are appropriate; composite correspondence analysis with no supplementary variables, or multiple correspondence analysis of occupational status and education with the television programs as supplementary variables (Greenacre & Pardo, 2006, p. 199). We chose the first strategy, because using composite correspondence analysis, one can create an overview of many bivariate cross tables in one graphical representation.
We created a composite table using occupational status and education as column variables, and with television program types as row variables. Due to list wise deletion of missing data, this composite table contained the data of 734 (89%) respondents. A correspondence analysis solution was computed using the procedure ANACOR (SPSS, 1990). Canonical normalization – option A3 as discussed by Israëls (1987, pp. 72-75) – was used to compute the scores of the row and column categories on the dimensions.

To determine the number of informative dimensions, we plotted the proportion of explained inertia by each dimension against the number of that dimension in a screen plot. This resulted in Figure 1, which shows a clear bend in the line between the second and third dimension. Therefore, we chose to use two dimensions. These two dimensions reproduce 83.7 per cent of the total inertia.

Figure 1. Proportions of Explained Inertia by Ten Dimensions
Figure 2. Correspondence Analysis of Television Program Genre Preferences of People with Different Levels of Education and Occupational Status ($N = 734$)

Legend:
Occupational status: low = low status; lower middle = lower middle status; upper middle = upper middle status; high = high status.
Education: e1 = elementary school or less; e2 = lower vocational school; e3 = lower secondary school; e4 = secondary vocational school; e5 = O levels; e6 = A levels; e7 = college; e8 = university.
Television program type: sports+/− = sports programs; quiz+/− = quiz and game shows; soap+/− = soap operas and other daily serials; current+/− = current affairs programs; polit+/− = political programs; everyday+/− = talkshows about everyday problems; societal+/− = talkshows about societal problems; health+/− = health and medical programs; cultural+/− = cultural programs; music+/− = music programs; movies+/− = movies; news+/− = news; docu+/− = documentaries.
The two-dimensional solution of our correspondence analysis is depicted in Figure 2. In this figure, television programs types are depicted as small diamonds. Watching a television program type is indicated with a plus-sign (+), and avoiding a program type is indicated using a minus-sign (-). Categories of occupational status and education are depicted as relatively large squares. The labels of all categories are explained in the legend that accompanies the figure.

There are no statistics in correspondence analysis that can indicate statistical significance of results. Therefore, we performed χ² contingency tests (p ≤ 0.05) to test whether or not occupational status and education are statistically independent of watching some television program types. This appeared to be the case for program types that have light gray labels in Figure 2 (sports and music programs, news, and talk shows about societal problems). Programs with dark gray labels (movies and documentaries) are only statistically independent of occupational status, and not of education.

Angles are the key to the interpretation of Figure 2. To find out if respondents in a category of occupational status or education are either over- or under-represented in the audience of a specific television program category, or vice versa, one must imagine a line from both categories to the origin (depicted as a gray cross). If these lines constitute an acute angle, the respondents are over-represented in the combination of the two categories. More acute angles are depictions of stronger over-representations. If lines constitute an obtuse angle, respondents are under-represented in the combination of the two categories. More obtuse angles are depictions of stronger under-representations. Right angles indicate absence of over- and under-representations.

The lengths of lines from the origin to the categories also indicate the strength of the over- and under-representations; longer lines represent stronger over- and under-representations. Therefore, categories close to the origin are much less interesting than categories further away. Exceptions to this rule are program types with strongly skewed frequency distributions. Categories with relatively low cell counts tend to be located relatively close to the perimeter of the figure. With strongly skewed distributions, however, this does not necessarily imply a strong relationship. For example, there are only 6 people in our sample who avoid news. Their over-representation among lower and lower middle status groups and among people with lower secondary school, secondary vocational school, and O levels, however, is not significant. The possible existence of such exceptions is the reason why we performed the χ² contingency tests discussed above.

To facilitate discussion about over- and under-representations of respondents in combinations of categories, we drew areas in the shape of rounded wedges. Since the program types in these wedges are plotted roughly in the same direction from the origin, we will simultaneously discuss their relationships with respondents’ occupational class and education.
After correspondence analysis, we also used hierarchical regression analysis to determine if the number of television program genres that people watch is related to their education and occupational status. We included age in the analysis, because younger generations in the Netherlands tend to be higher educated than older generations (Vogels, 2005). Including age prevents us from finding an age effect, masked as an effect of education. For similar reasons we included the average time a person watches television; people with a higher education tend to watch less television (Huysmans et al., 2004). The results are presented in Table 2.

### RESULTS

The first thing that catches the eye in Figure 2, is that the categories of both occupational status and education are located in a typical horse shoe formation. People with low status and lower middle status are at the left end of the status horse shoe, while the upper middle status group is in the middle of the horse shoe, and the high status people are at the other end. A similar pattern can be observed for education. People with elementary school or less and lower vocational school are at the left end of the education horse shoe. Conversely, people who have completed lower secondary school, secondary vocational school, and O levels are at the middle of the horse shoe, and on the right end, A level,

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<td>Occupational status</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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* $p < .05$
college, and university can be found. The education horse shoe is somewhat wider than the status horse shoe. This indicates that, on average, the relationship between education and what people watch and avoid is somewhat stronger than the relationship of occupational status with their television lifestyle.

The second conspicuous aspect of Figure 2 is that there are a number of program genres that are watched by such a varied audience that these genres do not distinguish the status and educational strata from each other (gray labels). Watching talk shows about societal problems, music, sports, and news programs appears not to be over-, nor under-represented in any of the social categories under scrutiny. For example, everybody reports watching news and two thirds of all social categories watch sports. Watching movies and documentaries is only related to educational achievement and not to occupational status.

Below we will first discuss what different status groups watch and avoid on television. After that, we will turn to television lifestyles of different educational levels.

Television programs in the upper left and lower left rounded wedges in Figure 2 are at acute angles with low and lower middle status. This means that people with a low or lower middle occupational status tend to avoid current affairs programs, cultural programs, and political programs. It also indicates that they tend to watch talk shows about everyday problems, soap operas and other daily serials, quiz and game shows, as well as health and medical programs.

Upper middle status people are inclined to watch political and cultural programs (lower right wedge) and not to avoid current affairs programs (obtuse angle with upper left wedge). They tend, however, to avoid talk shows about everyday problems (lower half of upper right wedge).

People with a high status are likely to avoid health and medical programs, quiz and game shows, soap operas and other daily serials, and talk shows about everyday problems (upper right wedge). They are somewhat inclined to watch political and cultural programs (lower right wedge).

Regarding education, people with elementary school or less (e1), and people with lower vocational school (e2), are prone to avoid documentaries, current affairs programs, cultural programs, political programs (upper left wedge), and movies (upper middle wedge). They are likely to watch talk shows about everyday problems (upper half of lower left wedge).

The people who have completed lower secondary school (e3), secondary vocational school (e4), or O levels (e5) are apt to watch soap operas and other daily serials, quiz and game shows, and health and medical programs (lower half of lower left wedge). They are not disposed to avoid movies (upper middle wedge).

People with A levels (e6), college (e7), or university degrees (e8) are inclined to avoid health and medical programs, quiz and game shows, soap operas and other daily serials, and talk shows about everyday problems (upper right wedge). They are given to watch political
and cultural programs (lower right wedge), and they have a slight tendency not to avoid current affairs programs and documentaries (upper left wedge).

Finally, when combining results from the estimation of the programs’ complexity (see Table 1) with the correspondence analysis shown in Figure 2, one can see that people with a relatively low occupational status or education are prone to avoid programs with relatively high complexity (political programs to documentaries in Table 1). People with a relatively high occupational class or education are likely to avoid programs with relatively low complexity (health and medical programs to music programs in Table 1).

Now that we know who watches or avoids what types of television programs, we address omnivorousness in itself. Table 2 shows the regression of the number of genres people view on their education and occupational status, as well as their age and the time they spend on television. Only age and time spent on television appear to be related to the number of genres somebody views on television. Thus, neither education, nor occupational status is related to the number of genres a person watches. Therefore we conclude that, as to television program genres in relation to education and occupational status, it is impossible to discern omnivores from univores. The thesis of cultural omnivorousness does not seem to apply to television viewing in the Netherlands at the turn of the century.

**DISCUSSION**

We conclude that all status groups as well as all educational layers in Dutch society watch limited sets of program types – sets that are of roughly comparable size. Thus, they all show a similar degree of television omnivorousness or – depending on where you draw the line – television univorousness. Some program types are popular among all, but that does not make some status groups or educational layers more omnivorous than others. The difference between lifestyles of the social strata is not a difference in the quantity of program types they watch, but rather a difference in the quality of the programs that they watch. Elites are prone to watch more complex program types and lower strata tend to watch less complex program types. In this respect, elites can still be said to have snob taste, as opposed to the slob taste of people with lower status and less cultural capital – which is a conclusion that fits well with Bourdieu’s (1979/1984) original theory.

Thus, with respect to television in the Netherlands, there seems to be no reason yet to amend Bourdieu’s seminal work on *Distinction*. Peterson and Simkus’ (1992) amendment of Bourdieu’s theory does not seem to apply to the Dutch situation concerning television tastes. Although their amendment may apply to musical and other cultural tastes, it does not imply cultural omnivorousness in general.

Some might object to our study and its theoretical framework because of the private character of watching television. Indeed, Western people usually watch television within the confines of their nuclear family (Lull, 1988). Therefore watching or avoiding particular
television programs could be regarded as a private activity that does not exhibit one’s societal status. However, this would also hold true for reading, for which omnivorosity has been shown by Van Rees et al. (1999). After all, people talk about what they read (Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999), and people talk about what they saw on television (Lull, 1980). In other words, people make sure that others can infer their status from their reading and from their television viewing. So, the activity of watching television itself may be private and hardly visible outside the family home, but through conversation people can get a fairly accurate idea of what other people watch and avoid.

Closely related is a possible critique that our results might have been influenced by social desirability. After all, our data stem from face-to-face interviews. However, if respondents were indeed prone to give answers that they thought were socially desirable, they would have done exactly what they do on a daily basis when they exhibit their social status through discussing their lifestyle. Thus, social desirability seems to be no impediment for research on social distinction.

And, indeed, there are a few reasons for further research on this topic. First, our data are eight years old, by now. Changes might have occurred since 2000. However, that does not necessarily render our conclusions invalid. The transition of the elites from snobs to omni-vores as it was describes by Peterson and Simkus (1992; Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996), López Sintas and García Álvares (2002), and Van Eijck (2001), was described by these authors with data from the 1980’s and early 1990’s. The process must have started much earlier, and is probably still in progress (cf. Peterson & Kern, 1992). Thus, the fact that in 2000 television viewing still is unaffected, makes it probable that it never will be.

Second, the results from Dutch research on omnivorosity (e.g. Van Eijck, 2001), thus far, are comparable to results from other Western societies such as the United States and Spain (e.g., Peterson & Simkus, 1992; López Sintas & García Álvares, 2002). Therefore, we deem it probable that our results apply to more societies than the Netherlands alone. It would be interesting to investigate through future research whether this is true.

Third, since new media such as the Internet and computer games claim more and more attention from media users, it would be interesting to investigate the phenomenon of cultural omnivorosity for these new media too. Do the elites play other games and do they use the Internet differently, or do they play more different kinds of games and do they have more diverse usage for the Internet than the lower social strata? Research on questions like that may deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of cultural omnivorosity, whether with respect to television viewing, or any other form of cultural lifestyle.

Our present study has at least two different implications for the field of communication. First, watching certain television programs may function as a token of one’s (aspired) social position. Thus uses and gratifications scholars might endeavor to find out if distinction may serve as a gratification sought or obtained with respect to television use. Second, higher amounts of cultural capital unlatch more complex television genres. In other words, both a
need to behave in accordance with one’s social status, and deployment of one’s cultural capital may be considered to be contingent conditions for media attendance.

ENDNOTES

1. After transforming the original scores to normal scores on the basis of their rank, the intraclass correlation coefficient can be computed as a measure of agreement between the experts (McGraw & Wong, 1996).

REFERENCES


