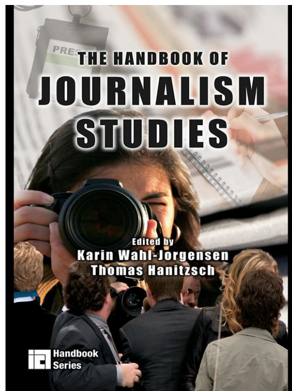
This article was downloaded by: *10.3.97.143*
On: 01 Dec 2023
Access details: *subscription number*
Publisher: *Routledge*
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Handbook of Journalism Studies

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Thomas Hanitzsch

Journalism and Popular Culture

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203877685.ch22
John Hartley
Published online on: 28 Nov 2008

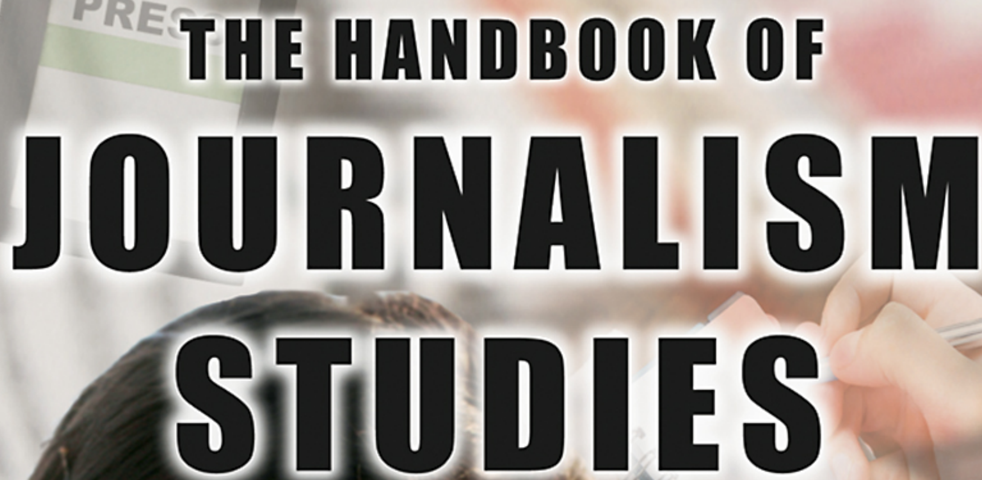
How to cite :- John Hartley. 28 Nov 2008, *Journalism and Popular Culture from:* The Handbook of Journalism Studies Routledge
Accessed on: 01 Dec 2023
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.



Edited by
Karin Wahl-Jorgensen
Thomas Hanitzsch

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

First published 2009
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's
collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk."

© 2009 Taylor & Francis

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark Notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
The handbook of journalism studies / [edited] by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch.
p. cm. — (ICA handbook series)
Includes index.
1. Journalism. I. Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. II. Hanitzsch, Thomas, 1969-
PN4724.H36 2008
070.4—dc22
2008024854

ISBN 0-203-87768-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10 HB: 0-8058-6342-7
ISBN10 PB: 0-8058-6343-5
ISBN10 EB: 1-4106-1806-4

ISBN13 HB: 978-0-8058-6342-0
ISBN13 PB: 978-0-8058-6343-7
ISBN13 EB: 978-1-4106-1806-1

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

22

Journalism and Popular Culture

John Hartley

INTRODUCTION: POPULAR CULTURE AND JOURNALISM STUDIES

This chapter identifies popular culture as the true origin of modern journalism, taking "origin" to refer both to empirical historical beginnings, in revolutionary France and industrializing Britain, and also to theoretical first principles, where popular culture is the subject (source) of journalism, not its object (destination). Therefore, I argue, the relations between journalism and popular culture, and between journalism studies and cultural studies, are best studied historically. Within such histories can be discerned the working through of two contrasting underlying models of communication and determination. In one the consumers of news are an effect of media; in the other they are a source of meaning. One model leads to a representative, expert journalism; the other to emancipationist self-representation (see Table 22.1). Both are present throughout the history of modern media, although during the long reigns of the press barons and broadcast monopolies the top-down version has predominated. This predominance is currently in crisis; my argument is that scholarly attention to the historical relations between journalism and popular culture can help to explain what is at stake in that crisis.

There are two methodological lessons that may be drawn from this history. First, journalism as such is not the fundamental point of difference. The practice of journalism has evolved through both the expert and the emancipationist traditions. Second, the "popular culture" model, based as it is on the underlying notion of an "active audience," has received an immense boost in recent times, owing to the growth of user-led innovation, consumer-generated content, self-made media, DIY culture, citizen-journalism, the blogosphere and peer-to-peer social networks.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF JOURNALISM AS SOCIETY-WIDE COMMUNICATION

Historically, journalism is a creature of the popular classes that were thrown together and massively expanded by urbanization, industrialization and the intellectual ferment of Enlightenment and Revolutionary Europe (from the 1790s to the 1830s). It is true that newspapers and therefore journalists predate this period. The first *Intelligencers* and *Mercuries* dated from the seventeenth century; *The Times* (the first proper daily paper) from the eighteenth. However, the early press had neither the technical means nor the political desire to create what remains journalism's most important "product," namely a national *reading public*; the "republic of letters" as Tom Paine called it, that extended to the popular classes.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

TABLE 22.1
Two Paradigms for the Study of Journalism

Journalism studies	*Cultural studies*
Object(-ive)	Subject(-ive)
Supply side	Demand side
Popular culture as effect	Popular culture as cause
Producer-provider perspective	Consumer-agent perspective
Representative	Self-representation
Professional Expertise	Popular Emancipation

The empirical origin of modern, mass-mediated journalism is to be found in the Parisian revolutionary press and even more importantly in the so-called "pauper press" in Britain that fought for popular emancipation and democratization over the ensuing fifty years. The public was not a product of the "respectable" press that served existing status-groups (the *ancien regime* and the "gentry"). These latter may have been technical innovators and influential on the opinions and policies of the already-enfranchised classes (perhaps only three percent of men and no women during much of the nineteenth century). But they were not the champions (indeed they were among the opponents) of the fraught and contested development of *mass communication* among the popular classes on a national scale. The circulation of even the most successful stamped (officially authorized) papers like *The Times* remained in the low thousands while that of the unstamped "pauper press" regularly spiked to the hundreds of thousands, from the incendiary works of early popular agitators like Tom Paine and William Cobbett, to the radical-popular press of the industrial revolution (e.g., the *Republican, Poor Man's Guardian*, *Northern Star*) and on to the first commercial-popular newspapers with circulations in the millions—all of which came from radical origins (e.g., *Lloyd's Weekly News*, *Reynold's News*, *News of the World*) (Conboy, 2002; Hartley 1992, 1996).

THE POPULAR EXTENSION OF THE READING PUBLIC

As for theoretical first principles, these gradually clarified in the flux of practice. Modern journalism and the mass reading public were unplanned outcomes of efforts directed to other ends. It was only after their scale and adaptability had been demonstrated that their general importance to a complex open system like modernity could be discerned. But to establish a reading public that could be taken to be coterminous with "the nation," or with "society" in all its populous unenfranchised multifariousness, was not a straightforward process. Nor did it go uncontested. Inventing, extending and stabilizing the "mass" reading public took longer than a generation. Nor was it achieved by the press alone. The pulpit took printed form too, and so did fictional entertainment. But *journalism* could not have developed without the pauper press, and the "reading public"—*the* public of modernity—could not have developed without journalism.

From the point of view of production and distribution, establishing "the public" required technology, capital, industrious enterprise both collaborative and competitive, a network of agents for newsgathering and vending, a creative imagination, "popular address" (discursive and rhetorical populism), fast distribution (railways), and a willingness to persevere in the face of official suppression and frequent incarceration. From the point of view of the readership, it required

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

non-instrumental literacy, sufficient disposable income, and a desire to keep up with events as they unfolded, resulting in the habit of re-consumption. This could only occur when "consumers" liked what they read and wanted to be part of the movement or community "hailed" by their paper, believed they had a personal stake in the outcomes for which it campaigned, and were willing to be represented by their own "organ of enlightenment" in the competitive contestations of opinion in "the public sphere." In this sense the pecuniary nexus that laid the foundation for the commercialization of the press (i.e., myriad individual artisans and their families, exchanging a penny for an unstamped paper) was also a "vote" by each of them for the political program espoused within its pages. They had no other vote.

Here, then, over a fifty-year period (1790s to 1840s), was the beginning of that peculiarity of modernity; the marketization of democratic representation. The market came into play only after a two-way connection had been firmly established. In other words, the representation came first. Representation was also two-way. The paper *represented to* the readership their co-subjectivity with a "class action" cause or movement; and the paper was *representative of* its readership (the larger the better) in the political arena. Purchasers received not only a regular dose of information and entertainment, but also access to a "global" textual system and resources for autodidactic political and social education. The vendors received not only myriad pennies but also ongoing confirmation that they were leading a campaign, not simply exploiting a market.

And thus, out of this combination of economic enterprise, political emancipation, personal hazard, and via a laborious process of contested construction, journalism won a place as an essential mechanism of modern societies. Its importance remains not so much as an industry or economic sector but as a general enabling "social technology," that is just as important as (say) the law and the financial system. It is the *textual system* of modernity (Hartley, 1996). It has only achieved this condition because it actually does, or at least it is taken to, reach the whole population of a given ethno-territorial polity, creating for the first time on a mass scale what is now called the "collective intelligence" of social networks. In short, modern journalism is embedded within, representative of, and speaking both for and to, *popular culture*. It was in place by the "year of revolutions," 1848.

This was a new invention on an unprecedented scale, an "imagined community" of nevertheless real co-subjects, attending together in the here and now to the same events or issues, and occasionally capable of concerted action too. It reached across demographic boundaries of class, gender, age-group, region and ethnicity, to forge a national public for modern industrialized countries. Popular culture provided a new, secular means of public communication for changing societies. Instead of binding "the people" to authority and tradition, as had the only hitherto "mass medium," i.e., the pulpit, it focused public attention on contemporary life and future possibilities. It took the quotidian measure of competitive political, economic and personal development ("scandal"). It brought to everyone's attention the specialist knowledge distributed across a highly differentiated complex social system ("muckraking"). Equally it was a vehicle for various interests, associations and ideologies to contend for popular support, taking the oratorical traditions of the pulpit into the service of politics ("rabble-rousing").

TRUTH AND TEXTUALITY (A SHORT HISTORY OF "TRUTHINESS")

Popular culture is often taken to be a domain of leisure entertainment and fictional narrative, while journalism is often taken to be a part of the democratic process. The lesson of history is that these are not conflicting attributes, but part of the same generative process, the same *realist* textual system. Popular journalism predated popular democracy by decades. The agitation for

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

popular emancipation required masses of potentially activist readers, and in order to attract and retain them the pauper press had to learn the tricks of textuality, or what US television comedian Stephen Colbert—reminding us of the central role of the comic satirist in the politics of truth (and the truth of politics)—has called "truthiness."

The radical papers pioneered the union of entertainment and emancipation, narrative and nationhood, realism and representation. They sought to propagate commanding truths in the form of compelling stories. They spoke directly to the experience and in the language of those whom they wanted to represent; drawing together and encapsulating the identities and aspirations of myriad individuals in an imagined commonality of which the paper itself was the voice. They did not baulk at using fiction as a means to this end, as well as fact, and indeed the line between the two was not clear. For instance a personalized account of the privations of a family, a worker, or a region, often in the form of a letter, might stand in for a sociological truth, whether the featured family or correspondent actually existed or not. Conversely, imagined human frailties were clothed in the garb of truth, with petty criminals, pretty girls and attractive victims in an incessant parade across the page as personifications of imaginary fears and desires.

The *most* popular journalism remained that which tapped into human conflict (i.e., drama): "true crimes" and scandalous disclosure (news); ferocity, exploit, and arrested development (sport); marriageability and its vicissitudes (human interest). In fact and fiction alike, "truthiness"—the *impression* of truth in the mind and emotion of consumers—shifted from medieval revelation to modern competition, and journalism's special contribution to this shift was to fuse truth with violence (Hartley, 1999; Hartley, 2008b, p. 28). Furthermore, these longstanding elements of popular narrative were newly combined with the great fantasies of the modern imagination—narratives of progress and equality, of both competitive individualism and class consciousness; of the power of knowledge, and of the emergence of the ordinary as a positive social value. And let it not be forgotten that straightforward fiction—thrillers, romances and crime stories—was a staple of journalism and remained prominent even in the daily press at least until the arrival of television. The "story magazine" survives still in *The People's Friend*, founded in 1869 and published by D.C. Thomson (see: www.jbwb.co.uk/pfguidelines.htm).

Popular culture was the nutrient of democratic action; it succeeded in (and by) combining the rationalist, secular progressivism of the Enlightenment with the emotionalist, narrative "sensationalism" borrowed from the popular dramatic and musical traditions. It gave both individual agency and systematic shape to "the public." Democracy was precipitated out of popular journalism rather than a being a precondition for it, and the admixture was saturated with potent concentrations of fiction, fun and faith, as well as realism, righteousness and reason. Catalyzed by simple, well-told stories, this incendiary mixture of journalism and popular culture generated much more political energy than either "rational" journalism or "emotional" popular culture taken alone, and it was capable occasionally of causing a truly explosive reaction.

"THE POPULAR": RADICAL VS. COMMERCIAL

The *study* of the relationship between journalism and popular culture, and the *conduct* of that relationship in everyday life and enterprise, have both pivoted about the question of what is at stake in the word "popular" (Dahlgren, 1992, pp. 5–6). Early cultural studies theorists including Raymond Williams (1976), Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson, in different ways, were interested in the relationship between popular culture and class. The main problem here was a conflict between "popular culture" construed as a "whole way of life," a life literally *made by* the working class for and by itself, the classic statement of which is Thompson (1963), and "popular culture"

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

construed as pleasures and entertainments laid on for the enjoyment of working class people by commercial enterprises, the classic critique of which is Hoggart (1957). Out of the former came the labor movement, trade-unionism and other collective mechanisms for self-representation (popular culture as subject). Out of the latter came commercial media including the press, television, cinema, magazines and the like (popular culture as object).

Journalism occurred on both sides of this conflict: it could be "radical popular" or "commercial popular" (Hartley, 1992, pp. 177–181), and the two types could co-exist, although the commercial popular press did not take off until the second half of the nineteenth century, after a popular reading public had been established by the pauper press. Indeed, it may be argued that commercial popularity systematically supplanted the radical popular (Conboy, 2002, pp. 80–86). Increasingly the commercialization of the entire media sector tended to exclude all but a few radical popular voices, in favor of commercial properties owned by "press barons" whose own political views were more likely to be reactionary than revolutionary.

The "radical popular" retracted to a committed readership that was eventually far from "popular" in number, while the "commercial popular" remained dominant numerically but treated the populace as a mass market, the object of campaigns both political and commercial. Not surprisingly, observers from the radical side of politics continuously criticized these developments, berating the commercial popular media for "dumbing down" as well as "demagoguery." They objected to the fact that "popular" journalism had stopped speaking *for* or even *as* "the people," and instead spoke *to* them, seeking to manipulate their behavior rather than to represent their voice. Thus, by the time the serious academic study of *popular culture* began in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, there was felt to be a need to understand how "radical" communicative action by oppositional classes, which themselves were proliferating beyond the industrial proletariat to include identity groups based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation and the like, might survive and even prosper in an era of commercial media.

The answer to this problem took two forms; one practical and the other theoretical. In practice, radical communicative action abandoned the field of formal journalism almost entirely, emerging instead within the "whole way of life" associated with counter-cultural alternatives, especially those associated with music and subcultures, from flower power to the hippies; from blues to punk. In the era of identity politics and the "politics of the personal," self-representation was carried on largely through the entertainment aspect of popular culture, by musicians and artists who combined commercial success, entrepreneurial acumen and an image of freedom. Successive singers—Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Jimmy Hendrix (Gilroy, 2006), John Lennon, Bob Geldof, Bono—seemed to speak on behalf of a global, anti-war, pro-ecology "constituency" that saw mainstream journalism as part of the problem, not as their representative voice. Lennon in particular was willing to use his mass-mediated fame to put items on the political agenda that were entirely consonant with the "radical popular" media of a previous century—opposition to state control, advocacy of peace, and pursuit of an alternative lifestyle, all conducted through popular media, in which journalism was simultaneously an adversary, a foil, and an ally (see www.theusversusjohnlennon.com/).

Accompanying such efforts, entirely new forms of journalism arose in the spaces between music, counterculture, politics and identity, including what was called the New Journalism, and exemplified in the "underground" press and "alternative" magazines, such as *Oz, Ink, Rolling Stone, Spare Rib* among many others; continuing through the punk period via fanzines like *Sniffin' Glue*; and into the era of DIY culture and digital media. These models of self-representation and in-group distribution left the mainstream media looking distinctly flat-footed: a rich vein of journalism which is simply invisible in journalism studies, in J-school curricula, or in discussions of the "democratic process" and "professional journalism."

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

Meanwhile, the theoretical attempt at a "solution" to the conflict between radical communicative action and commercial media was the Marxist concept of the "national popular" (Gramsci, 1971; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), which substituted "nation" for "class" and "popular" for "proletariat" in an attempt to identify the "alliance" needed to win power by constitutional rather than revolutionary means (Forgacs, 1993). Many countries in Europe and Latin America, for example, built "national popular front" parties or alliances to pursue that goal. Such political efforts influenced the study of journalism. Researchers sought to identify what the prospects were for building a "radical popular" media in the context of "commercial popular" media dominance (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978). Since the diffusion of cultural studies into the academic mainstream following its internationalization in the 1980s, this specifically political agenda for popular journalism studies has also dissipated somewhat, although vestiges of the "class war in language" approach survive in many studies of the "capitalist" press and media (for an interesting reworking of this trope see Lewis, 2005). At the same time, interest in the radical possibilities offered through music and other forms of countercultural consciousness has remained a central concern of cultural studies.

However, the basic proposition, that *popular journalism is a creation of popular culture*, just as the labor movement is, has been almost entirely forgotten in journalism studies. J-schools have tended to focus on journalism as an occupation, one moreover linked to the formal political process and the specialist needs of business, not to the myriad-voiced expression of popular aspiration. Indeed, the most recent commentators judge that "bottom-up" journalism is literally unthinkable. Martin Conboy (2007, p. 2), for instance, introducing a special issue of *Journalism Studies* on "Popular Journalism," admits defeat:

> In our contemporary capitalist consumer culture, it is hard to envisage much in the way of journalism which is produced entirely by ordinary people and consumed by sufficient numbers of them to maintain regular production as journalism given the institutional and financial demands of the genre.

Such a view clearly requires the restriction of what is meant by "journalism" to its highly capitalized "industrial" form (i.e., "the press"; or "the media"). It does not admit *as journalism* the self-representations characteristic of Web 2.0 applications, including e-zines, the blogosphere, citizen journalism and "collaborative" online news production. Here it is at odds with those analysts who see journalism not as an industry but in terms of its ability to "help enable, extend, and enhance public discovery, discussion and deliberation of the news" (Bruns, 2005, p. 317)—a function that can be performed by anyone and indeed everyone (Hartley, 2008a), despite professional misgivings about the "cult of the amateur" (Keen, 2007).

TABLOIDIZATION AND CELEBRITY

Within the converse "cult of the expert," as it were, the excision of "bottom-up" popular and countercultural journalism from the equation leaves only "commercial popular" forms. Here the chief problem associated with popularity is what has come to be called *tabloidization* (Hargreaves, 2003; Lumby, 1999; Turner, 2005; Bird, 2003; Langer, 1998) and *celebrity culture* (Ponce de Leon, 2002; Turner, 2004; Rojek, 2004). The nature of the "problem of the popular" changes from a debate about *representation* ("by" or "for" the people?) to a debate about *reason*. Popular culture has come to be associated with emotion, irrationalism, affect, sensation, and embodied experience. As mentioned above in relation to the nineteenth-century pauper press, journalism was first popularized with the aid of these dangerous allies, which were harnessed in the cause

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

of popular emancipation. But as time wore on, and as popular sovereignty became routine and the popular press commercial, the use of sensation in the service of truth began to jar the modern sensibility.

As a child of the Enlightenment with strong investment in the liberal values of reason, truth, science, progress and realism, journalism has had a tough time coming to terms with the corporeal basis of knowledge. Despite the empirical fact that no journalistic enterprise has ever succeeded in separating reason and emotion, information and entertainment, the real and the imagined, the facts and the story, nevertheless the idea persists that journalism *should not* deal with the "naughty bits." Reason fends of its opposite number with revealing squeamishness (Lumby, 1999); a combination of lust and loathing (not excluding self-loathing), which divides the profession of journalism itself.

But the problem remains as it was in the beginning, when the pauper press attracted readers with rapes, murders and pugilism in order to hold them for radical reform. How do you get uncommitted ordinary people (voters, citizens, consumers, audiences) to take an interest in things they do not know or care about? How can you impart information to the public if they do not pay attention to you? How can you confine journalism to the doings of one elite (the politico-business decision-makers) while scorning those of another (celebrity-entertainment role models). Why fetishize facts when journalism deals in stories? Why is it acceptable to write about Monica Lewinsky's encounter with cigars, or Camilla Parker-Bowles' with tampons, on the grounds that these raise constitutional issues, but to declare "a vacancy at the Paris Hilton" (Sconce, 2007) in relation to popular celebrities, on the grounds that citizens *ought not* to be interested in, or told about, the sex life (or the *Simple Life*, or the prison life) of the rich and famous (Lumby, 1999, p. 65)? Why lament a generation that does not vote while lambasting the same group for its devotion to peer-to-peer social networking and self-expression through entertainment? Trying to hold a middle line in this environment is more difficult than it may seem, despite the very obvious fact that any form of communication must appeal to those addressed in order for them to attend to it (Lanham, 2006); and despite the less obvious one that even the most "low-brow" entertainment may carry important information, teach some truth, and engage with real experience. For instance, Liz Nice (2007, p. 132), former editor of *Bliss*, writes:

> Teenage magazines are not big on social and political debate so may not encourage their readers […] to do something about social problems and start campaigns. But editors insist that they do empower them to deal with peer pressure, teenage pregnancy, bullying and drugs. And through continuing interactivity, via text messaging, letters pages, e-mail and the magazine's website, they offer readers a forum which helps editors to understand them better and give them a voice.

Such sentiments are not confined to editors of consumer magazines. Ian Hargreaves, former deputy editor of the *Financial Times*, editor of the *Independent* and the *New Statesman*, and director of news and current affairs at the BBC, put the same case in his book *Journalism: Truth or Dare* (2003, pp. 134–135):

> It is a difficult line to tread between appealing to the audience's natural point of interest and emotional pressure points, without trivializing events. It cannot be denied that there is plenty of bad tabloid journalism […] But there is also brilliant tabloid journalism, in newspapers, magazines, television and radio, that brings issues alive and broadens popular engagement.

Indeed, Rupert Murdoch himself has claimed that his most famous tabloid title is in fact a *radical* newspaper: "The *Sun* stands for opportunities for working people and for change in this society. It's a real catalyst for change, it's a very radical paper" (Murdoch cited in Snoddy, 1992).

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

The problem of the popular returns unchanged; except that now the "radical popular" is conflated with the "commercial popular" (Allan, 1999).

CITIZENSHIP AND SELF-REPRESENTATION

The current research environment is one of furious convergence among many different and previously contending positions on the problem of the popular. Despite their disciplinary, ideological, professional and geographical diversity, a common focus has emerged, centered on the idea of cultural citizenship. The question that was once posed at the level of class is now posed at the level of the individual consumer-citizen: What are the prospects for informed, embodied self-representation (Bird, 2003; Hermes, 2005; Bruns, 2005; Rennie, 2006)?

The very idea would have horrified the pioneers of "commercial popular" journalism, for whom the salient fact about individual bodies was that there were multitudinously too many of them; and that if left to their own devices they would destroy knowledge rather than share and expand it (Bagehot, 1867). This tension between democratization and dumbing down still infuses the study of journalism (Rushbridger, 2000). A question for future research, then, is how do divergent but overlapping energies—for instance globalization, economic growth and competition, Internet affordances, the commercialization of culture, and the agency of myriad individuals located in diverse contexts—enable or inhibit popular self-representation?

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Popular culture has featured in journalism studies largely as an "other," associated not with freedom, truth, power and organized news-making, but with entertainment, consumerism, persuasion and personal identity. As a result, especially in English-speaking countries, the research field of journalism studies is frequently at loggerheads with cultural studies (Windschuttle, 1998; Zelizer, 2004). This methodological stand off is debilitating to a proper understanding of the relationship between the two fields. The gap that is now evident between journalism (studies) and popular culture (studies) is real, but it is also a link. They are linked because they are at opposite ends of the same information supply chain; at one end the "writer" (producer) and at the other the "reader" (consumer). Journalism studies in the US, UK and other countries like Australia have tended to focus on the occupation of the news reporter, often with scant regard for the readership (beyond an interest in its scale). Cultural studies, conversely, has had more to say about the cultural form of journalism, investigated from the point of view of the reader or audience, giving no special status to journalists themselves. The often strained relations between those who study them may be "referred pain"—an expression of a real but indirectly experienced conflict of interest between producers and consumers of news in modern societies.

MODEL 1: THE VALUE CHAIN (OBJECTIVE, SUPPLY-SIDE JOURNALISM)

Journalism (the modern occupation) is at one end of the supply chain while popular culture (the modern experience) is at the other:

Journalist → News → Public

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

That linear chain is superimposed on another one; a commonsensical model of communication:

The apparent homology of these two models (as in Table 22.2) seems almost naturally to explain the relative position of journalists and their readers at opposite ends of a "value chain of meaning" (Hartley, 2008b, p. 28; Porter, 1985):

This "value chain" model, through which journalism is both practiced and studied, seems also to show causal sequence: A causes B; B affects C, therefore C is an effect of A (where → = direction of causation):

The doctrine of causation by agents further up the communication/value chain generates the familiar "media effects" model. Despite criticism of it in cultural and media studies (e.g., Gauntlett, 1998, 2005), "media effects" thinking continues to exert force in both academic (e.g. political economy) and journalistic accounts of journalism. It implies that journalists are congregated at the powerful producer end of the value/causal chain, while popular culture is massed down at the consumer end, a behavioral effect of corporate processes which have their explanation, and their pleasures and powers, elsewhere.

Finally, all of these linked sequences express an underlying presumption (shared by Marxists and liberals alike) about causation in contemporary society:

The mainstream tradition of university-based journalism studies has been dedicated to the producer/publisher/provider, or supply side. Cultural studies is dedicated to the consumer/audience/user, or demand side. Both phenomena (journalism and popular culture) can be studied without reference to the other, because each is associated with a different version of the "chain" metaphor. Nevertheless the two chains are versions of a homologous relationship within the same overall system. Table 22.2 sums up what is at stake, which becomes clear when the terms introduced so far are read "vertically" as well as horizontally.

This homology among different commonsensical models of communicative relationship demonstrates two things. First, the three-link structure of the model is extremely robust, embedded in common sense as a kind of retained resource of intellectual capital, a generally available means to make unreflecting sense of modern experience. In this respect the model itself is a component of popular culture; it has the reassuring appeal of "truthiness." And second, it is a serviceable model in practice. It works.

End of story? Not quite. The "effects" model cannot help but cast consumers—and therefore

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

TABLE 22.2
Supply-Side Journalism and the Value-Chain Model of Communication

Model	*Supply side*		*'Medium'*		*Demand side*
	Economy	→	**Politics**	→	**Culture**
Value chain	Producer/originator	→	Commodity/ distribution	→	Consumer
Communication	Sender (agent)	→	Message	→	Receiver (behavior)
Public affairs	Government ('makes')	→	Decisions ('that affect')	→	Citizen ('voters')
Journalism (form)	Writer/news-gatherer	→	Copy/script	→	Reader/audience
Journalism (occupation)	**Journalist**	→	News	→	Public
Commerce	Firm	→	Entertainment	→	**Popular culture** (experience)
Power	Cause	→	'Media'	→	Effect

by homology audiences, readers and citizens—in a poor light; as behavioral "effects" of media, dumbed-down dupes and distracted dopes, manipulated or worse by firms or state agencies. Small wonder that journalists, understood as those employed in newsrooms at the causal end of the information supply chain, literally "in the know," do not want to be associated with them, even "in theory." Instead of fraternizing with the punters, journalism research has focused on "professional" practice, construing news-consumers as behavioral effects of journalistic causes. Tellingly, this is the journalistic culture that Prasun Sonwalkar (2005) dubs "banal journalism," predicated on a deeply assimilated "us-them" binary.

Even as this way of modeling communication took hold in empirical social science, James Halloran (1981, p. 22) warned of the inherent danger of such a turn:

> It is now suggested that research…should be shifted away from such questions as "the right to communicate" to "more concrete problems." But what are these "concrete problems"? They are the same as, or similar to, the safe, "value-free" micro-questions of the old-time positivists who served the system so well, whether or not they intended or understood this. All this represents a definite and not very well disguised attempt to put the clock back to the days when the function of research was to serve the system as it was—to make it more efficient rather than to question it or suggest alternatives.

While positivist accounts of "the system as it was" continued to gain strength in journalism studies despite Halloran's worries (e.g., Donsbach, 2004, 2007; Löffelholz & Weaver, 2008), the pioneers of cultural studies were also interested in "concrete problems," but saw them in terms of political rights not supply-chain efficiencies, and analyzed them from a perspective grounded in the humanities not the social sciences. They approached both journalism and the study of popular culture from a true "alternative": the point of view of the "consumer."

MODEL 2: SELF-REPRESENTATION (SUBJECTIVE, DEMAND-SIDE JOURNALISM)

From this perspective, neither audiences nor popular culture are the end-point of a chain; they are the source of productive labor, of action (especially collective political action) and of language

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

and culture. Early cultural studies was an amalgam of (Leavisite) literary history and (leftist or Marxist) emancipationist politics, brought together in 1950s New Left activism in Britain through such figures as Richard Hoggart (1957, 1967), Raymond Williams (1968) and Stuart Hall (UWI, n.d.). From this perspective, consumers were "ordinary people," and cross-demographic communication was not a three-link chain but an antagonism between opposed structural positions. Thus, the study of news media was part of a larger project in cultural politics (see Lee, 2003; Hartley, 2003; Gibson, 2007).

In this schema, ordinary people were—among other things—a "reading public" (Webb, 1955); a social network constructed historically, held together by cultural affinities, and grown to popular scale during more than a century of industrialization, the growth of the press, mass literacy, and both democratic and class politics ("struggle"). A reading public is a deliberative agent of knowledge, not a behavioral effect of media. It is the locus of "cultural citizenship"; the place where "we" engage with textual systems to "reflect on, and reform, identities that are embedded in communities" (Hermes, 2005, p. 10).

JOURNALISM IN CULTURAL STUDIES: YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR VALUE CHAINS

Where the cultural-studies pioneers were interested in journalism, it was to understand its role in a "system of representation," and to show that such a system was determined by economic forces and political power. Raymond Williams wrote about the need for "a recognition of the social reality of man in all his activities, and of the consequent struggle for the direction of this reality by and for ordinary men and women" (Williams, 1968, p. 16). We can now recognize that "recognition" as the project of cultural studies. By 1968 Williams was ready to name the "struggle for the direction of this reality": he called it "socialism."

Thus cultural experience was seen as the ground upon which both class consciousness (socialism) and ideology (e.g., consumerism) were propagated. Later, Stuart Hall (1981, p. 239) made very clear why he thought popular culture was worthy of study:

> [Popular culture] is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or loss in the struggle. It is the area of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured [...] it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why "popular culture" matters. Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don't give a damn about it.

Popular culture was an arena of struggle, and to the extent that power was concentrated in the hands of the owners and managers of the means of production and their hired experts, including journalists, such a circumstance called for change, not passive consent, so that "ordinary men and women" might gain power over the "direction of this reality" by their own collective efforts, guided by analysis from intellectuals working in the tradition of the rational left.

Among the issues that had divided those working in that tradition was whether to focus organized popular action on the economic sphere (the worker) via the labor movement and revolutionary parties, or on the political sphere (the voter) via reformist social-democratic parties and representative government. Cultural studies posed a third alternative: if change was not secured by direct struggle in the economic and political spheres, then perhaps attention needed to turn to the cultural sphere (the audience, consumer). Was there something about the experience of culture that impeded (or might encourage) popular (or "national-popular") political and economic

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

TABLE 22.3
Cultural Studies as the Continuation of Class Struggle By Other Means

Sphere (determination):	Economy →	Politics →	**Culture + Society (Williams)**
Site (of struggle):	Factory	Parliament/government	**Home + Neighborhood (Hoggart)**
Representation:	Labor movement	Labor Party	**Media + Ideology (Hall)**
Leadership	Revolutionaries	Reformists	**Intellectuals (New Left/CCCS)**
Subjectivity	**Worker**	**Voter**	**Audience + Consumer**

action? This was the founding question of cultural studies, which turned out to be as much a challenge to existing dispositions of knowledge as it was to extra-mural action (Lee, 2000, 2003; Wallerstein, 2001, 2004, pp. 18–22). Quite a few analysts feared, and still do, that in this context journalists were part of the problem, not the solution. Table 22.3 shows why. The entry for "media + ideology" in Table 22.3 may appear to be an odd-one-out; conceptually different from the other terms in the field. Where the class-based organizations of the labor movement were seen as "bottom-up" agencies of self-representation for working people (e.g., Thompson, 1963), the media were seen as "top-down" and invasive, speaking to and for "ordinary people" while actually representing the interests of the "power bloc." One of the important innovations of early cultural studies was its interest in how the media ought to be understood both as a system of representation and as a means of popular expression. This work was initiated by Richard Hoggart (1957, 1967), and taken up by Raymond Williams (1974), but it was most fully elaborated by Stuart Hall (often working with colleagues), who had built up over thirty media-related publications by the time the capstone *Policing the Crisis* was published in 1978 (UWI, n.d.). As cultural studies turned from the "worker" (economics) and "voter" (politics) to the "consumer"' (culture) in order to investigate how modern subjectivity was formed, attention was inevitably drawn to the media, both the "radical popular" press of self-representation and the "commercial popular" press of expansive capitalist culture. Was the latter responsible for helping or hindering the process of self-representation by modern subjects?

To answer this question, cultural studies turned to a different model of determination, the Marxist concept of base and superstructure, within which both politics and culture appear as effects (in the last instance) of causal determinations generated in the economic sphere. In such a structure, the media are not simply a system of representation but more to the point an ideological system; they cannot help but express "ruling ideas" no matter how popular they are. It was within this model of determination that Stuart Hall proposed the "Encoding/Decoding" model (1973), to "answer back" to the naturalistic three-part value-chain/communication model inherited from common sense (see Table 22.4).

TABLE 22.4
Journalism as an Ideological System of Representation

Economy (**base**)	[Politics + Culture] (**superstructure**)
Determination	Ideology
Encoding	Decoding (Hall)
Objective	Subjective

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

CONCLUSION

The seemingly inexorable tendency in current "professional" journalism studies towards a top-down functionalist account of journalism as public communication, where journalists provide communication *to* the public, is not simply a choice between otherwise neutral models or paradigms. Historically, it errs by putting the cart before the horse, which ought to be recognized if only to honor those whose struggle *against* the social leadership of their day produced the means for today's practitioners to grasp professional autonomy and social leadership for themselves. But more importantly, putting the cart before the horse is an error of theoretical principle. It reverses the true *flow of causation*. The flow of causation in journalism is not *from* a professional provider *to* popular culture, but the other way round. Popular culture is the cause, the subject, the agent, the origin, of journalism, no matter how professionalized, industrialized and bureaucratized the latter may become.

This is what journalism studies neglects to its cost. It has fetishized the producer-provider (individual journalist and proprietor or firm); it ignores the agency of the consumer, except as a "micro" or individualized behavioral *effect* of causation by professional-industrial expertise. It has no concept of a "macro" textual system, which is shared among a large-scale social network of attention-paying co-subjects, and which forms the condition of possibility (the "demand") for journalism to be practiced at all.

The importance of this blind-spot in journalism studies and among journalists is that as a result they have diminished means to explain what happens when shifts occur in the reading public and evolution occurs in the textual system. For example, *systemic* changes are under way at the present time, in the shift from "read-only" participation in public affairs and popular representation to a "read-and-write" mode of socially networked mass digital literacy in which information, news, and representation are self-made but simultaneously socially scaled. This is where popular culture is currently most energetically concentrated, around Myspace, Facebook, YouTube, the Wikipedia. Here also is where enterprise, capital investment and marketization have followed, just as was the case with the initial invention of the mass reading public in the nineteenth century. A model of journalism that focuses unduly on the professional provider, and sees self-propagating social networks as somehow irrelevant to that calling, will have little understanding of (and less sympathy with) this emergent social technology. As a result, journalism is being reformed from the outside, without the help of journalism studies, because in the end the social functionality of public communication belongs to the public, not to an autonomous caste of self-appointed representatives in the pay of corporate monopolies, no matter how "popular" their work may seem for the time being. The relationship between journalism and popular culture is in flux, again, so it is important to understand the direction of causation. That is why it is necessary to analyze journalism from the perspective of popular culture, which may be taken as its subject, not its object.

REFERENCES

Allan, S. (1999). *News culture*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.

Bagehot, W. (1867). *The English constitution* (1872 rev. ed.). Retrieved July 19, 2008, from http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4351

Bird, S. E. (2003). *The audience in everyday life: Living in a media world*. New York: Routledge.

Bruns, A. (2005). *Gatewatching: Collaborative online news production*. New York: Peter Lang.

Conboy, M. (2002). *The press and popular culture*. London: Sage.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

Conboy, M. (2007). Permeation and profusion: Popular journalism in the new millennium. *Journalism Studies*, *8*(1), 1–12.

Dahlgren, P. (1992). Introduction. In P. Dahlgren & C. Sparks (Eds.), *Journalism and popular culture* (pp. 1–23). London: Sage.

Donsbach, W. (2004). Psychology of news decisions: Factors behind journalists' professional behavior. *Journalism, 5*(2), 131–157.

Donsbach, W. (October 2007). *What Professional Journalists Should Know About Communication Research*. Keynote address to "Harmonious Society, Civil Society and the Media", conference held by the Communications University of China and the International Communication Association, Beijing, China.

Forgacs, D. (1993). National-popular: genealogy of a concept. In S. During (Ed.), *The cultural studies reader* (pp. 210–219). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1984)

Gauntlett, D. (1998). Ten things wrong with the "effects model." In R. Dickinson, R. Harindranath, & O. Linné (Eds.), *Approaches to audiences—A reader*. London: Arnold. Retrieved July 19, 2008, from http://www.theory.org.uk/david/effects.htm

Gauntlett, D. (2005). *Moving experiences, 2nd edition: Media effects and beyond.* London: John Libbey.

Gibson, M. (2007). *Culture and power: A history of cultural studies.* Oxford: Berg.

Gilroy, P. (2006). *Bold as love? On the moral economy of blackness in the 21st century*. W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures, Harvard University. Retrieved July 19, 2008, from http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2006/10.12/09-gilroy.html

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks.* London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1973). *Encoding and decoding in the media discourse*. Stencilled Paper no.7, Birmingham: CCCS.

Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–40). London: RKP.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state and law & order.* London: Macmillan.

Halloran, J. D. (1981). The context of mass communication research. In E. McAnany, J. Schnitman, & N. Janus (Eds.), *Communication and social. structure* (pp. 21–57). New York: Praeger.

Hargreaves, I. (2003). *Journalism: Truth or dare.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hartley, J. (1992). *The politics of pictures: The creation of the public in the age of popular media.* London: Routledge.

Hartley, J. (1996). *Popular reality: Journalism, modernity, popular culture.* London: Arnold.

Hartley, J. (1999). Why is it scholarship when someone wants to kill you? Truth as violence. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *13*(2), 227–236.

Hartley, J. (2003). *A short history of cultural studies.* London: Sage.

Hartley, J. (2008a). Journalism as a human right: The cultural approach to journalism. In M. Löffelholz & D. Weaver (Eds.), *Global journalism research: Theories, methods, findings, future* (pp. 39–51). Oxford: Blackwell.

Hartley, J. (2008b). *Television truths: Forms of knowledge in popular culture.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Hermes, J. (2005). *Re-reading popular culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hoggart, R. (1957). *The uses of literacy.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Hoggart, R. ed. (1967). *Your Sunday paper.* London: University of London Press.

Keen, A. (2007). *The cult of the amateur: How today's Internet is killing our culture*. New York: Doubleday.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and social strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics.* London: Verso.

Langer, J. (1998). *Tabloid television: Popular journalism and the "other news."* London: Routledge.

Lanham, R. A. (2006). *The economics of attention: Style and substance in the age of information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, R. E. (2000). The structures of knowledge and the future of the social sciences: Two postulates, two propositions and a closing remark. *Journal of World Systems Research, 6*(3), 786–787.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 16:23 01 Dec 2023; For: 9780203877685, chapter22, 10.4324/9780203877685.ch22

Lee, R. E. (2003). *Life and times of cultural studies: The politics and transformation of the structures of knowledge.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Lewis, J. (2005). *Language wars: The role of media and culture in global terror and political violence*. London: Pluto Books.
Löffelholz, M., & Weaver, D. H. (Eds.). (2008). *Global journalism research: Theories, methods, findings, future*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Lumby, C. (1999). *Gotcha! Life in a tabloid world.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Nice, L. (2007). Tabloidization and the teen market: Are teenage magazines dumberer than ever? *Journalism Studies*, *8*(1), 117–136.
Ponce de Leon, C. L. (2002). *Self-exposure: Human interest journalism and the emergence of celebrity in America 1890–1940).* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Porter, M. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York: The Free Press.
Rennie, E. (2006). *Community media: A global introduction.* Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
Rojek, C. (2004). *Celebrity.* London: Reaktion Books.
Rushbridger, A. (2000). Versions of seriousness. *Guardian Unlimited.* Retrieved July 19, 2008, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/dumb/story/0,7369,391891,00.html
Sconce, J. (2007). A vacancy at the Paris Hilton. In J. Gray, C. Sandvoss & C. L. Harrington (Eds.), *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world* (pp. 328–343). New York: New York University Press.
Snoddy, R. (1992). *The good, the bad and the unacceptable: The hard news about the British press*. London: Faber & Faber.
Sonwalkar, P. (2005). Banal journalism: The centrality of the "us-them" binary in news discourse. In S. Allan (Ed.), *Journalism: Critical issues* (pp. 261–73). Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.
Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The making of the English working class.* London: Victor Gollancz.
Turner, G. (2004). *Understanding celebrity*. London: Sage.
Turner, G. (2005). *Ending the affair: The decline of current affairs in Australia.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
UWI (n.d.). *Stuart Hall, publications and papers*. University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica: Library. Retrieved July 19, 2008, from http://www.mona.uwi.edu/library/stuart_hall.html.
Wallerstein, I. (2001). *Unthinking social science: The limits of nineteenth-century paradigms* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Wallerstein, I. (2004). *The uncertainties of knowledge.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Webb, R. K. (1955). *The British working class reader 1790–1848.* London: George Allen & Unwin.
Williams, R. (Ed.). (1968). *May Day manifesto.* Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Special.
Williams, R. (1974). *Television: Technology and cultural form.* London: Fontana.
Williams, R. (1976). *Keywords*. London: Fontana.
Windschuttle, K. (1998). Journalism versus cultural studies. *Australian Studies in Journalism*, *7*, 3–31.
Zelizer, B. (2004). When facts, truth, and reality are god-terms: On journalism's uneasy place in cultural studies. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *1*(1), 100–119.