VIGNETTE 1

The Art Institute of Chicago in the Spring of 2007 (February 17–May 12, 2007) showcased an exhibition entitled, *Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant Garde*. Organized in conjunction and collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, as well as the Musée D’Orsay and Réunion des Musées Nationaux both of Paris, the exhibition brought together works by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, Pierre Bonnard, Aristide Maillol, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Edouard Vuillard. The group of artists ranged from the Spanish to the Dutch though most were French. The subjects of the paintings came from all walks of life, especially given the Impressionist, post-Impressionist, and the Fauve’s tendency to represent the everyday and, until then, those considered too lowly to be the subjects of paintings. The collection of paintings, given the vicissitudes of art and war, as well as of circulation of art in global markets, came from a range of private and museum collections in the United States, Canada, and Europe, including a significant number of the Gauguins loaned by the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. In sum, this was a transnational enterprise exhibiting a collection of art originally produced by a transnational group of artists whose works now circulate in transnational circuits.

What is missing, of course, are any female artists. However, not missing are the not so subtle ethical issues that relate to the production, collection, and exhibition of art. Paris in the 1890s was, as we suspect the art world continues to be, a very conservative, tight community of elite understanding about what is art and who is an artist. New schools of art as well as new artists had then, as they still have, a difficult time breaking into the circles of circulation and exhibition. It took a visionary such as Ambroise Vollard to bring to light, as it were, the works of many artists who are now enshrined at the core of our cultural heritage as cosmopolitan citizens of the Western World. The thought of Picasso literally throwing himself at Vollard so he would exhibit his work rattles one’s senses. The ethical issues about whose work Vollard chose and, as important then as it is now, especially for a starving artist, the level of financial commitment and remuneration remain at the forefront of whose art survives and endures.

As it turns out, Vollard became a very rich man by showcasing the work of previously unknown artists. Some artists did not mind. Cézanne, for example, was independently wealthy

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What Can We Get Away With?

*The Ethics of Art and Entertainment in the Neoliberal World*

Angharad N. Valdivia
so he appreciated any opportunity for his artwork to circulate. Gauguin, on the other hand, was living hand to mouth and greatly resented it that Vollard grew richer through the sale of his works while Gauguin was barely able to pay his bills. Gauguin’s effort to shield himself from Vollard’s uncanny ability to buy low and sell high proved to be mostly futile as no matter to whom he left his paintings, they mostly eventually ended up with Vollard who profited from all of them. We can also speculate that at least Gauguin had a troubled relationship with Vollard, which was better than none at all. How many other artists did not manage even that type of access and we have, as a result, not heard about them? Certainly, few had the opportunity that Matisse had to secure another exhibition patron and be able to later refuse Vollard’s offers.

I begin with this example of Vollard and the Parisian art scene at the turn of last century (1890s–1920s) to underscore the continuities about issues of circulation and exhibition of art and other entertainment media despite much ahistorical assertion that all of these are new issues. Artists and other cultural producers then and now face complex ethical and economic issues that are transnational and complex. The thin line between agency and structure faced Van Gogh as much as it faces Eminem, Britney Spears, Marianne Pearl, Don Imus, Mira Nair, and Ai Weiwei to name but a few contemporary entertainment figures that cross media, nations, and genres. Issues of representation as they overlap with ethical issues endure. Granted, there was not a huge public outcry when Gauguin used Tahitian natives as the backdrop and foreground of his most famous works of art, such as the canonical “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” (1897), but the use and representation of “others” remain at the core of ethical discussions today. Otherwise shock jock Don Imus’s remarks about the Rutgers’ girls’ basketball team would not have caused the outbreak it did, resulting in Imus’s firing and the bleeding of usage of the “n” word into critiques of hip hop, rap, talk radio in general, and who gets to use which words to refer to each other.

VIGNETTE 2

On April 4, 2007 in his *Imus in the Morning* radio show on the CBS radio network, speaking about the then ongoing women’s basketball season, Don Imus referred to the Cinderella Rutgers team as “nappy-headed hos.” The ensuing debate and ramifications of that statement led to Imus’s firing a week later. Tellingly of how far we have veered from ethical sensibilities, Imus’s lawyers sued CBS not because his freedom of speech had been violated but rather for the fact that CBS had not used the delay button, which implicitly meant that they knew that his comment was going on the air. The controversy led to a wide ranging discussion of issues of race, gender and class—since his comment succinctly highlighted these three vectors of difference. This discussion contributed to the debate about misogyny in rap and hip hop music; who gets to use the n-word or any racial in-group specific slang as popular culture makes ethnic cross-dressing a desirable and marketable strategy of youth identity; and where is the line of good taste when so much of entertainment seems to revel in the flaunting of previous codes of sensitivity and politeness? A *Time* magazine article entitled “Who Can Say What?” (Poniewozik, 2007) included the following in its exploration of recent challenging contributors to the ethics of contemporary entertainment: Sacha Baron Cohen of *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, Quentin Tarrantino, *South Park*, Ann Coulter, Michael Richards (the comedian who racially assaulted his heckler), Chris Rock, Rosie O’Donnell, Mel Gibson, Ludacris, Ted Danson, Jimmy the Greek, and many others. The list above includes comedians, political pundits, sports commentators, talk show hostesses, television shows, movie actors and
directors—in sum, a range of those appearing in entertainment media today. All of them crossed that illusory line of ethics, art, and entertainment with a range of ramifications from none at all to delivering apologies and experiencing temporary loss of employment. The repercussions were few and temporary.

The ongoing discussion continues to skirt issues of ethics, while Imus’s lawyers focused on network culpability (the network was at fault for not pushing the red button), network executives and pundits turn to the issue of intent—did Imus “intend” to hurt people? Thus Sean Ross of radio research firm Edison Media Research asks:

Are you saying you can’t entertain without saying racial slurs or talking about assaulting prominent women? I would hope that these people see themselves as having more to say … But the bigger issue is, I don’t know what anyone who makes any of these comments means. I don’t think it’s because it’s a deeply held opinion and they say they’re doing it as comics to be provocative, which is maybe even worse.

(quoted in Kaufman, 2007)

Once the issue becomes one of intent and provocation, much of the coverage centers around issues of “shock jocks” whose provocative style garners high ratings and profits for radio and television networks. Although some pundits suggested Imus could just move over to satellite networks like Sirius and avoid Federal Communication Commission rules and any ethical issues altogether, less than a year after the scandal, Imus was back on the air with a New York City ABC affiliate.

VIGNETTE 3

Another historically enduring concern in media studies has been that of children and youth. Millions of dollars and of journal article pages have been devoted to the area of children and the media. We treat this as an ethical concern because we implicitly assume that we must simultaneously protect our children and invest in them all that is good because they will become the adults of tomorrow. If we cannot ethically bring up our young, how can we expect to have an ethical society? Children and youth, as I read years ago in an airport sign, are “part of our present but 100 percent of our future.” Drawing on decades of studies wherein both advertisers and the media industry have sought to downplay the strong effects model, a research team composed of the foremost scholars in the field of children and the media (Anderson et al., 2003) found that “research on violent television and films, video games, and music reveals unequivocal evidence that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts” (p. 81). This project updated previous research on two fronts: first it provided stronger evidence of short and long term effects; second, it included a wider range of media than just television—especially music and video games.

Violence, however, is not the only ethical issue arising out of entertainment media and our children. Other issues include overexposure to commercialization, poor eating habits, and, recently foregrounded in Hollywood films, the glamorization of smoking, which speaks to the ethics of product placement in mainstream media (Galician, 2004; Wenner, 2004). In an article on health, Kluger (2007), drawing on research published in the *Lancet* and *Pediatrics* medical journals, connects the recent popularity of onscreen smoking in Hollywood movies to the recruitment of a new generation of smokers. Not only do recent studies suggest that exposure to these movies increases the likelihood of smoking but also that those from nonsmoking homes are more affected. The glamorous representation of smoking sanitizes what those from smoking
households experience negatively at the level of smell and vision (stuff like stinky clothes, dirty ashtrays). Health experts and children advocates worry about the ethical implications of glamorizing smoking for children who have no exposure to its negative side effects. However, they have to battle against an industry that both downplays effects and that is far more responsive to the profit motive than to ethical issues. An unusual admission of guilt brought on by the diagnosis of throat cancer was displayed when screenwriter Joe Eszterhaus wrote an op-ed piece in the New York Times about how he had contributed to the promotion of cigarette smoking to young audiences and how he wished he could take it back (Watson, 2004). More often health and children advocates are relegated to talks with Hollywood executives, the same people who strike lucrative tie-in deals with tobacco companies—Thank You for Smoking (2005), for instance, was a satirical treatment of this Hollywood–tobacco industry collaboration.

VIGNETTE 4

Former professional football players’ brain injuries resulting from concussions and the resulting backlash from the NFL provide us with yet another example of “What Can We Get Away With? The Ethics of Art and Entertainment in the Neoliberal World”. Following the airing of the documentary and publication of the book by the same name, A League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion’s Crisis, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy [CTE] is more broadly recognized as a life-threatening issue that afflicts many former players and documents their claims for mental and physical health coverage. The NFL’s denial abetted by their dismissal of scientific evidence and their efforts to fund their own scientists illustrates the value of major league sports as a televised entertainment and profit generating component of mass media that delegates human safety to the back burner. Similarly, The Hunting Ground (2015) documentary partly links major universities’ underreporting of sexual assault on campuses to the brand of a university, which includes its major sports team as a source of revenue. No longer are education and the safety of students paramount. These vignettes take us full circle to the Parisian art scene in that the study of the ethics of art and entertainment must be considered in a global context where the profit motive is so strong as to nearly trump all other concerns.

ETHICS OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ART WITHIN MEDIA STUDIES

The ethics of art and entertainment in the contemporary world generates many issues. Carroll (2000) documents the philosophical interest in the connections between ethics and aesthetics dating back to Plato and continuing into the eighteenth century. However, due to a variety of reasons beyond the scope of this chapter, having to do with tensions between utilitarian and Kantian philosophy, until recently there has been a two-century neglect of the connections. Contemporary ethicists treat art and entertainment media as the same category. For example in his exhaustive overview of recent research in art and ethical criticism, Carroll (2000) includes examples of Hollywood (In and Out) and European film, including the infamous Nazi-era Triumph of the Will by Leni Riefensthal, opera, literature (Shakespeare, Jane Austin, Herman Melville), paintings, and so forth. At a point in the essay he asks:

There are so many kinds of art which mandate so many different kinds of audience responses. What if any significance do the Sex Pistols, the Egyptian pyramids, and Rembrandt’s Girl Sleeping have in common? Why imagine there is a global criterion applicable to all arts? (p. 358).
This quote suggests that from an ethicist’s perspective, approaches to art and entertainment are similar if not inseparable, and I use it for many reasons. First it points to the important issue of reception. Second it covers a wide range of artistic forms, across time, space, and media. Third it points to the difficulty of developing one standard. Fourth, it acknowledges the “global,” even if in a generic sense.

Within communication and media Christians (2000, 2004, 2005, 2019) and Christians and Nordenstreng (2004) underscore the historical, theoretical, and philosophical importance of ethics and media studies (see Christians, 2005). Issues of truth, voice, authenticity, appropriation, and representation are principles to strive for, even if they are routinely violated in a world that is mostly ruled by a capitalist transnational system that claims amorality but borders on and crosses into immorality. Christians (2004) suggests that the study of media ethics is a rather new undertaking, with its news component predating more recent entertainment and art focus. Yet the study of ethics overlaps with older traditions within the field of media studies. We care about ethics because we hope that “media can contribute to high quality social dialogue” (Christians, 2000, p. 182). Can truth telling, for instance, be a moral standard that we should expect from media professionals? Christians (2000) foregrounds this value: “Truth telling is the ethical framework that fundamentally reorders the media’s professional culture and enables them to enrich social dialogue rather than undermine it” (p. 182).

Truth telling is inextricably linked to professional codes of objectivity for those producing, for example, television entertainment, who still have to abide by professional guidelines (Katan and Straniero-Sergio, 2001). We need to remember, however, that these guidelines may vary on a country-by-country basis, and even on a region-by-region basis, especially if the country is large or fragmented. For instance, the First Amendment is not a global law but rather part of the U.S. Constitution. Asserting its primacy across the globe smacks of imperialist ethics—somewhat of a contradiction in terms.

While there are still educators and politicians who strive to draw the thin line between art and entertainment, blurring of these lines is evident in aesthetic theory (see Carroll, 2000) and in media and cultural studies. Scholars and new media genres challenge the traditional separation between information/education and entertainment/leisure. In particular, hybrid genres of “infotainment” such as some forms of talk shows, entertainment news, and the inclusion of celebrity culture in most U.S. news venues in CNN, which makes it look more like E! than a news channel, should prompt us to reconsider the tenets of liberal philosophy that undergird so much of media production and ethics.

The fact that Comedy Central, a U.S. cable network, has a Pulitzer Prize winning news show, the Daily Show, should tip us off that people are processing and consuming news differently from before. Granting a show in a comedy network more attention and legitimacy than traditional venues such as the prestige press and news networks—for the Pulitzer Prize is about the hallowed standards of journalism—suggests a production, audience, and critics’ shift in valuation. Whereas information was deemed to be the core of liberal philosophy’s privileging of the educational and democratic components of the media, the latter, entertainment/leisure, were, until quite recently the discarded and derided material that we now know as popular culture. However as many cultural studies scholars have noted (see Giles and Middleton, 1999; Japp et al., 2005; Storey, 2003), art and entertainment not only educate us all but are nearly impossible to separate from news and information as they are all material produced within culture. As such they circulate understandings that shape and are shaped by culture. This cultural turn has spurred media ethics scholars (e.g., Good and Dillon, 2002; Katan and Straniero-Sergio, 2001; Smoot Egan, 2004; Watson, 2004) to pursue arts and entertainment as a primary focus. In fact, dating
back to the 1980s scholars sought to connect the literature and research on the visual to that of
ethics (Gross et al., 1989).

The global dimension of art and entertainment, though treated by some as a new thing, 
actually has concerned philosophers for centuries and, more recently, media theorists since the 
eighties. Thus *Communication Ethics and Global Change* (Cooper, 1989) explored, on a coun-
try-by-country basis, ethical issues of the media. That national focus, though still important, is 
lately being complemented by a transnational approach that takes hybridity, at the level of genre 
and of population, as central. For example, in an essay about Italian television and hybrid genres 
Katan and Straniero-Sergio (2001) remind us that there is cultural variability to measures of 
sincerity.

Unsurprisingly measures of good taste and of sexual explicitness also vary cross-culturally. 
For example, German over-the-air television broadcasts frontal nudity after 10 p.m. while U.S. 
television has a much more internally contradictory approach to matters of sexuality and nudity. 
On the other hand, the level of violence in U.S. television seems to be unchecked whereas in 
other countries there are stricter guidelines for this type of content. Similarly there is a wide 
range of tolerance for representations of gender in general and women in particular throughout 
the globe. Nonetheless, as media circulates globally and populations experience forced or vol-
untary mobility, some form of transnational professional ethics seem to be in order. Although 
art and entertainment circulate globally, not all global players are equally empowered, and thus 
ethical components must take power differentials into account.

The study of the ethics of art and entertainment also implicitly overlaps with the dominant 
social scientific paradigm of the “effects” tradition within U. S. communication and media stud-
ies. Ethics is to the humanist as effects is to the scientific approach. In fact, one might say that 
the implicit ethical concern drives the effects tradition. Why would we care about children and 
youth and the media were it not for a normative concern? Why would community standards be 
of importance if negative effects, in the sense of anti-social and disruptive implications, were 
not part of the picture? The inclusion of children and youth, moreover, reinforces the move from 
a focus on news and information to entertainment and art. Even education is moving from a 
straightforward delivery of information to a more entertaining delivery that might attract a longer 
attention span and bigger, or at least, more desirable target audiences. For instance, the Tate 
Modern in London employs interactive audiovisual pads for children to navigate the extensive 
collection and unusual building. Nearly all major museums, such as the Chicago Art Institute, 
the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Prado in Madrid, and the already mentioned 
Tate Modern make efforts to connect the art to youth’s contemporary digital hi-tech sensibilities.

Why is it, then, that media and art are combined to provide a suitable and entertaining 
option for children? To be sure, children travel with parents and this strategy brings in a bigger 
total of visitors. However, another reason is the normative belief that art makes us all better 
citizens, a still strong Arnoldian vestige. Maybe an art literate child will be a more tolerant, 
creative, cosmopolitan adult? Ethical issues function in concert with that of implicit effects. For 
instance, violence, consumerism, and smoking effects implicitly evoke ethics. Ethics and effects 
are intertwined and mutually inform each other. In a cultural climate wherein scientific evidence 
is the most authoritative, both government and industry demand at least strong correlations and 
contributing factors before policy measures can be considered.

Another major area of media studies that predates and greatly overlaps with the study of the 
ethics of art and entertainment is the political economy of communications, a normative theory 
that examines power in media (McQuail, 2005; Mosco, 2014). As Christians (2004) begins in 
his essay “Ethical and Normative Perspectives,” media ethics are about “recognizing the power
of mass communications in today’s global world” (p. 19). Issues of power in a transnational context are of major concern to scholars of political economy. We cannot discuss anything in the contemporary world, and certainly not media and entertainment, without attention paid to the global political economy of media industries (Herman and McChesney, 1997; Mosco, 2004, 2014; Schiller, 2007). Again, as with effects, the concern with concentrated ownership and control of the media across the globe implicitly references the potential that the profit motive will trump any moral or ethical sensibilities. Although Marx called capitalism an “amoral” system, many currently would argue that it is downright immoral. Globalization, a form of speedy and widespread global interconnectivity accompanied by concentrations of ownership and control, has immense ethical implications for the global North and South. New technologies may use new modalities of delivery but are subsumed under corporate structures. The most powerful contemporary Diaspora is transnational capital. In fact, just as with radio and television, the same networks/conglomerates appear prominently with new media, though with some newcomers. In the 1970s the United States appeared as a nearly undisputed hegemony on global communications, in hardware and software. By 2007 Jeremy Tunstall revised the title of his book The Media Are American (1977) to The Media Were American (2008). In thirty years despite the rise of other global participants, the United States remains a major player in global communications (Morley, 2006). In many markets, the United States remains a prominent if not dominant presence in terms of media, software, and genres. Synergy and convergence in terms of ownership and media delivery mean that art and other forms of entertainment are likely to be circulated, distributed, and exhibited by the same conglomerate. Hollywood product placements are influenced by these synergies though the most successful participant and arguably the creator of synergy is Disney.

Issues of synergy, conglomerates, and transnational media concentration focus our attention on the footloose capital that characterizes the contemporary neoliberal era and has no patience with ethics. When ethics interferes with productivity and profit, mobility can always be the answer. Whereas Don Imus has to respond within a national space, albeit temporarily, transnational corporations have the luxury of exploring other countries in the case of ethical violations ranging from content to poor treatment of workers and endangering the environment. As a result, art and entertainment ethics have to be globally considered although ethical issues are usually approached on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if we consider the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as one of the backbones of ethical approaches in media content, then we have to realize this is a national issue. However, the fact that media, entertainment, and art are now usually transnationally produced and distributed, makes many U.S.-based media issues global ones. That the U.S. is exporting capitalism goes without saying. Yet exportation includes some degree of glocalization—that is, the acknowledgment that products have to be somewhat tailored to a local situation. Yet as Herbert Schiller (1989) encouraged us to ask long ago, what else are we exporting? Is it a way of life beyond just media genres and particular products? Are we exporting anorexia, for example? Or bad eating habits? Smoking and violence? Contributing to the growing existence of violent adults? Lest we assume a media-centric approach, the issue of contributing to an eco-system rather than causing an effect remains at the core of ethical research in the media.

Given the contemporary global situation wherein neoliberalism, with its drive for privatization and commoditization go nearly unchecked, art and entertainment as profitable components of a globally produced and circulating media circuit of culture have to be analyzed in terms of ethics and be subject to some form of ethical standards. The problem, of course, lies in the tension for some form of global ethical standard, or protonorm, and the need to pay attention to cultural differences and sensibilities. We certainly would not advocate deploying, yet again, another
imperialistically conceived standard yet we must be able to voice, as global citizens, some ethical concerns that will value the sanctity of life and the environment. Christians and Nordenstreng (2004) suggest:

Instead, universal ethical principles are the most appropriate framework, and the cross-cultural axis around which these principles revolve is the sacredness of human life. Embedded in the protonorm of human sacredness are such ethical principles as human dignity, truthtelling, and nonmaleficence. These principles are citizen ethics rather than professional ethics (p. 3).

In an effort to develop a protonorm with global sensitivity and agreement, the participants in the above project sought to bring the issue of ethics and media to something all could agree with: human sacredness. As an ethical standard, if human sacredness is violated, no matter what the cultural context, a line has been crossed and all of us as members of a global community ought to censure it and work toward its correction and disappearance. As well, the move from professional to citizen ethics broadens the scope to not just media producers but to all of us who are enveloped in a media world as citizens striving for democracy. Similarly Cornell West, the philosopher, advocates love and hope as forms of ethical engagement in contemporary life (McPhail, 2002), extending issues of the ethics of art and entertainment to reception. In fact many of the essays in Japp et al. (2005) are “grounded in the assumption that humans construct meaning in and through symbol systems and that these constructions are imbued with ethical implications and rhetorical potential” (p. 8).

Extending art and entertainment ethics to the audience, and more inclusively, to the citizenry, brings up questions of enfranchisement, especially along the lines of difference. One difference already mentioned, that of age, resonates with media scholars as we, all of us implicitly adult, are guardians of youth. Other components of difference such as transnational experience are also included in approaches that seek to develop ethics for global change or establish a proto-norm. Still the two most often mentioned categories of difference, gender and race, remain to be discussed.

As Ella Shohat (1991) notes, race is always present in media, whether explicitly, at an “epidermal” level, or implicitly. Contemporary scholars of race and gender historicize this remark and document its persistence. The vignettes at the beginning of this chapter illustrate this point. First, the art collector’s world was mostly a white one representing whiteness. The ethical implications of Gauguin’s representations of natives in relation to nature and to the implicit superiority of the European subject were explored after his death (Dorra, 2007). Nonetheless his paintings speak to race, voice, and representation, which demand an ethical engagement with issues of the ethics of art and entertainment (hooks, 1994, 1995; Valdivia, 2002). Who represents whom and for what purposes, guides contemporary ethics of art and entertainment. How are narratives of racial difference, deployed to curtail social justice, included in art and entertainment?

In the Don Imus controversy, issues of race and representation are explicitly and immediately apparent. Yet it took nearly a week for the CBS radio network to take a stance on the comment and less than a year for Imus to secure a gainful contract with ABC after this scandal! Imus’s remarks represented a largely working class group of mostly African-American basketball players within narratives of race that code African-American women as sexually deviant and permanent members of the underclass “hos” as well as unable to conform to Eurocentric ideals of beauty—“nappy headed.” The reaction from many different constituencies was immediate in its ethical critique. What does a comment like this tell girls/women in general and African-American girls/women in particular? Was the fact that the team was composed of high achieving college students not relevant to the residual coding of all women of color as underclass? What was the
racial implication being made in relation to other women’s basketball teams composed mostly of white players? Was this any different than former Penn State women’s basketball coach Renee Portland’s public remarks that her team harbored no lesbians? Who was the implicit listener of the show and shock radio? What does it tell us that such shows are highly rated and that their hosts make millions of dollars a year to spew exactly such comments? Did the FCC and community standards have a responsibility to ban such remarks? Some advertisers did not wait—American Express, Staples, and Procter & Gamble pulled out. Imus responded:

This phrase that I use, it originated in the black community. That didn’t give me a right to use it, but that’s where it originated. Who calls who that and why? We need to know that. I need to know that (Poniewozik, 2007, p. 35).

In a multicultural world in which many previously marginalized, oppressed, or unacknowledged populations are beginning to gain a voice and representation in relation to the ethics of art and entertainment, these questions have no easy answers. In fact these very same gaffes have happened to many other public figures, with differential effects. The immediate link to the frequent use of this word as well as many others in rap, hip hop, and the comedy of Chris Rock, for example, was inevitable. Feminists, white and black, weighed in on the misogyny of music and comedy. If anything can be said of the Imus case, it opened up a discussion that many did not want to enter as it highlighted the huge profits to be made from racist and sexist programming. The question that seems to guide these shock jocks is not what is ethical but what can we get away with?

Children and youth smoking as a media issue implicitly takes up issues of race and gender. Much of the children and the media literature implicitly recruits us to approve of the normalization of white middle-class childhood with class and race difference usually coding in for deviance. Unstated in the concern for the stronger effects upon children who do not live in smoking families is that these are white middle-class children we are talking about. We are implicitly assuming that smoking is more prevalent in racialized and working-class families. Hollywood never stopped representing smoking, but until recently it was used as a code for precisely working- or underclass, deviant, or people of color. A recent change in representation is that the epitome of beauty, heterosexuality, and white femininity, Scarlett Johansson, is now the one smoking. This is troubling because this can potentially recruit “our” children, the children of the implicit reader of Time magazine, in its entire People-like splendor. More recent legalization of marihuana products is sure to recycle this moral panic about children and drugs. Scholars such as Tiffany Bowden have begun to research racialized approaches to the coverage of cannabis in the media.

Smoking violates the protonorm, the sanctity of human life, because it has been scientifically proven to cause cancer. It also affects us all through second hand smoke. The effects are material as well as biological. Not only does the body deteriorate, but the costs to U.S. taxpayers and the economy, in terms of massive health care expenditures and lost hours of work, are huge. There are ethical issues with the glamorized representation of smoking for it encourages behavior that threatens the sanctity of life. Similarly the pleasure some get from major league and college football as a sport has to be weighed against the toll it takes on the football players for their lifetime, which might be shortened due to repetitive injury such as CTE, and on female college students who may have been sexually assaulted by some star players. Tensions between ethical considerations and the profit motive pervade all of the vignettes. While shameless marketing of cigarettes to children is largely frowned upon, the prevalent use of product placement in Hollywood film (Galician, 2004; Wenner, 2004) is a way around the ethics of entertainment. The complicit avoidance of mainstream media to picture celebrities smoking, dating back to Jackie-O who died of cancer, to present-day starlets such as Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan, speaks of an effort to
shield special people from the stigma of smoking than our population from its glamorization. The equally shameless effort of the NFL to try to refute scientific evidence of long term effects of repeated concussions was an attempt to shield a multi-billion dollar business from controversy and accountability as is the University of Florida’s reticence to charge a major football player for sexual assault lest it hinder his Heisman Trophy chances and, more importantly, the university’s ability to cash in on sports revenues.

CONCLUSION

I have charted a path of considering art and entertainment as forms of popular culture that have been a concern to philosophers and more recently media scholars and the general public. After a brief two-century break, the ethics of art and entertainment have returned to the attention of philosophers. Yet as Christians and Carroll note, contemporary discussions might deal with newer technologies but they echo issues dating back to Plato. Using vignettes as a device to discuss ethical issues in art and entertainment, we can see that issues of appropriation, transnational flows, race and gender, and the profit motive are long-standing and enduring. That race and gender are discussed more contemporarily does not mean that the issues were not present in Plato’s or Volard’s time. In an accelerated global concentration of ownership and control of the media, major ramifications for ethics arise. At a national level, the drive for profit trumps ethical principles in all but the most extreme cases. Don Imus still has a very successful career. As with previous shock jock controversies, he is better paid than before.

At a transnational level, our ability to export mass quantities of entertainment and the synergistic capabilities to circulate art in tandem with other forms of entertainment potentially means that we are exporting our ethics. The effort to come up with a universal agreement about a set of ethics of entertainment has resulted in human sacredness as a protonorm. That remains a guiding form at the level of principle. Yet at the level of practice what seems to be most operative is the range of things that a person or corporation can get away with. Ethical guidelines are just that—guidelines. It remains up to all of us as global citizens to strive for a more just and ethical media. Thus Christians and Nordenstreng’s (2004) change from professionalism to ethics both universalizes and democratizes the practice and enforcement of ethics.

NOTES

1. I single out the United States because the dominant paradigm speaks to the endurance of positivism within the U.S. academy. Communication and media studies globally do not necessarily deploy the same paradigms, or at least the same dominant paradigms.
2. From an anecdotal perspective, the Tate Modern electronic pad was a total hit with my then seven and 22-year-olds. My mother and I could not figure out how to use it!

REFERENCES


18. WHAT CAN WE GET AWAY WITH?


