Journalism and Feminist Cultural Studies: Retrieving the Missing Citizen Lost in the Female Audience

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This article explores the relations between journalism and feminist cultural studies to underscore the crucial importance of studying forms of popular knowledge that claim to foster citizenship among audiences. The article begins by examining the history of feminist cultural studies scholars’ sustained interest in feminine genres of popular culture rather than journalism. Crossing over to the other side, I then outline some of the reasons for journalism’s early resistance to cultural studies and trace new developments that suggest the growing acceptance of cultural studies within the institutional apparatus of journalism. As a case study, news magazines’ representations of globalization illustrate the distinct ways in which journalism employs discourses of gender to produce hegemonic ideas of modernity, prosperity, and achievement for global reading publics. Finally, the article points to new directions for international audience research in the arena of globalization, gender, and journalism.

Two years ago, a graduate student who was interested in conducting an ethnographic study of women’s responses to local crime news reports on sexual assault approached me for advice on courses she could take in the areas of gender and qualitative methodologies at Indiana University, the institution where I teach. When I suggested a cultural studies course in the English department on semiotics and feminist textual criticism, she seemed taken aback and surprised. The student then clarified her reaction to my suggestion. She thought her research interests in gender and journalism could not be accommodated in a cultural studies curriculum because cultural studies scholars only analyzed popular culture—Oprah, Star Trek, Buffy, The Vampire Slayer; and comic strips—not journalistic media like the New York Times, Time magazine, or CNN. In another incident, a colleague in a hu-
manities department introduced me to an interdisciplinary audience at a conference panel as a faculty member who “worked in the journalism school, but was also interested in feminist cultural studies.” The representations of cultural studies that emerge from these two scenarios—as a field that is synonymous with the study of popular culture and disconnected from journalism—have resurfaced with alarming regularity in a number of informal and institutional settings in my life.

Tackling precisely the question of the weak and uneasy relation between journalism and cultural studies in a recent article, Zelizer (2004) wrote that cultural studies’ indifference to mainstream journalism can be traced to three sources of tension. The first source of conflict lies in journalism’s foundational affiliation with enlightenment concepts of knowledge, reason, and liberation whereas cultural studies has a commitment to critiquing the limits of such a Euro-centric vision of modernity. Second, cultural studies’ superficial treatment of journalism as a coherent and stable pro-establishment institution of power conceals the contradictory and turbulent practices of authority and legitimacy that unfold within the corporate structure of news media. Finally, the dissonance between journalism’s avowed devotion to objectivity and facts and cultural studies’ allegiance to subjectivity and constructivism has hindered a productive examination of news as a cultural product that strives to “yoke popular and official, private and public, lay and professional, dishonest and truthful, [and] biased and balanced influences” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 111). Zelizer mapped the different trajectories of cultural studies scholarship on journalism in the United States and United Kingdom and noted that despite the early interest in journalism, since the 1980s, major texts in cultural studies have ignored or underplayed the analysis of news. At the end of her article, she argued that cultural studies could consolidate its maturation as a field by “repositioning journalism at the forefront of inquiry” (p. 114).

The purpose of this article is not to rehearse the contents of Zelizer’s (2004) article to explain the widespread exclusion of journalism from cultural studies but to endorse and build on her arguments further by considering new and related aspects of the divergences between the two fields. My article explores the ways in which attention to journalism allows feminist cultural studies to engage directly with issues of gender, citizenship, and political voice in addition to those of sexuality and consumer/popular culture. The following related questions guide this article’s inquiry: How and why has feminist cultural studies marginalized the analysis of journalism? What are the recent developments in the academic field of journalism in the United States that indicate a growing acceptance of cultural studies? What implications do these developments have for the study of gender and journalism? How can the study of news texts and audiences enrich the contributions of feminist cultural studies to interdisciplinary scholarship on globalization?

The concept of media intertextuality—the discursive intersections and cross-pollinations between and among multiple media genres—lies at the heart of my discussion of journalism as popular communication in this article. I argue that
scholars have to examine the different conditions of production and consumption that separate the spectrum of media technologies and media genres but also reject simultaneously binary distinctions between fiction/reality, popular culture/journalism, or tabloid news/mainstream news. Citing intertextuality as an inescapable quality of our media saturated lives, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995) described public culture as a “shifting array of texts and experiences, which constitute evolving contexts for one another” (p. 13). Public modernity in many parts of the world, as these anthropologists argued, is an interlocular field of representations that is “structured so that each site or setting for the socializing and regulating of the public gaze is to some degree affected by the experiences of other public sites” (p. 12). Hence, this article’s call for a sustained examination of the gendered contours of journalism in cultural studies does not intend to diminish the study of popular culture; rather, the task that lies ahead is to study news as an authoritative representational channel for the “real” even as we deconstruct the symbiotic relations between fantasy and reality.

LEGITIMIZING THE POPULAR: FEMINIST CULTURAL STUDIES AND WOMEN’S MEDIA GENRES

In the early history of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, several well-known scholars including Stuart Hall, John Hartley, Charlotte Brundson, David Morley, Stanley Cohen, and John Fiske wrote book-length analyses of journalism and used journalistic representations to illustrate the key theoretical terms of cultural studies (Zelizer, 2004). In contrast, the decade of the 1980s, however, marked the steady decline of interest in journalism as a worthy topic of study. Coincidentally, the late 1970s and early 1980s were also milestone years in the growth of feminist cultural studies. To a large extent, when feminist academics entered British cultural studies with the firm resolve to legitimize the “feminine,” one strategy they adopted to achieve their goal was to challenge the centrality of journalism and its association with privileged masculine forms of address. As Long (1991) noted in her historical analysis of feminism and cultural studies, early feminists who wanted to investigate women’s preferences for popular culture had to question the valorization of news and public affairs programs. Writing about feminist cultural studies in his pioneering essay “What is cultural studies anyway?” in Social Text, Johnson (1986) discussed the movement from news to entertainment that accompanied feminists’ arrival in the field:

Feminism has uncovered the unacknowledged premises of “left” intellectual work and the masculine interests that held them in place. It has produced new objects of study and forced a rethink of old ones. In media studies, for example, it has shifted attention from the masculine genre of news and current affairs to the importance of
light entertainment. It has aided a more general turn from older kinds of ideology critique to approaches that center on subjectivity, popularity, and pleasure. (Johnson, 1986, p. 40)

Similarly, Hall (1992) praised the contributions of feminist research on popular culture: “For cultural studies, in addition to many other theoretical projects, the intervention of feminism was specific and decisive. It was ruptural...as a thief in the night might, it broke in, interrupted, made an unseemly noise, seized the time, and crapped on the table” (Hall, 1992, p. 282).

Schwichtenberg and Davis (1989) argued that British and American feminist cultural studies research in the early 1980s paved the way for examining previously neglected issues such as female subjectivity and female sexuality. Leading feminist scholars—McRobbie (1982), Brundson (1981), Hobson (1982), Modleski (1982), and Radway (1984)—situated their studies of women’s magazines, soap operas, and pulp fiction within the larger contexts of class formation, women’s public and private labor, fantasy and pleasure, and leisure practices in the postindustrial age. Even a cursory examination of university course titles and syllabi, publishers’ catalogs, library databases, and conference programs in media and communication studies in the United States during the late 1990s shows that feminist research on popular culture has proliferated and gained institutional approval. Furthermore, the very same informal analysis also shows that popular television dominates the landscape of feminist cultural studies research on leisure and entertainment.

The boom in feminist work on girls and women’s popular culture genres, historically among the most degraded forms of mass culture, serves as an exemplary case for cultural studies’ insistence on giving “low culture” its overdue recognition in academia. Cultural studies’ political affiliation with the popular evolved out of a rejection of two schools of thought—on the left, the Frankfurt School’s doctrinaire version of Marxism, and on the right, conservative critics’ elitist brand of civilized traditions (Zelizer, 2000). Cultural studies’ vision of the popular sought to challenge vulgar Marxism’s concern for the passive and duped masses and Euro-American upper classes’ disdain for working-class culture. Hall’s (1980) often-cited revisionist approach to popular culture as a complex site for the simultaneous expression of power and resistance has thus become the basis for a steady stream of research on subcultures and fandom. By the mid-1990s, many texts thus began to claim that cultural studies did not distinguish between highbrow culture and lowbrow “trash.” Mukerji and Schudson’s (1991) text Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies, a standard reader in the field, argued that popular culture, much like high culture, is a valuable discursive resource for scholars to understand power and class hierarchy in the past and the present. In the first edition of an undergraduate textbook, Kellner (1995) wrote that
one of the key features of cultural studies is its avowed goal to subvert distinctions between high and low culture. The project of cultural studies, as Kellner wrote, is to avoid cutting the field into high and low or popular against elite: “…cultural studies allows us to examine the whole range of culture without prior prejudices towards one or other text, institution or practice” (p. 3). Shifting the objects of study from canonic literature, classical music, and avant-garde films of the humanities to everyday media culture, feminist audience studies scholars with an orientation toward anthropology and sociology began to stress the need for research on women’s interpretations of lowbrow popular literature and television.

Feminist cultural studies critics’ move to challenge British cultural studies’ early preoccupation with news and thus legitimize women’s low culture has had unexpected implications for the study of gender in other realms of culture. One casualty of the rush toward low culture to rectify the dominant focus on high culture has been the amorphous mediated zone of middlebrow culture. Political talk shows, newspapers, news and educational magazines, cable news, biographies, and nonfiction—genres that are neither high nor low culture—have not garnered adequate attention from cultural studies scholars. Radway’s (1997) ethnographic research on the Book-of-the Month Club is one example of feminist cultural studies work on middlebrow leisure practices; however, journalism continues to be a significant area of neglect. Zelizer (2004) cited the absence of news from a long list of general texts including the “fattest cultural studies anthologies” (p. 109) to illustrate the disappearance of journalism from cultural studies in the 1980s. Similarly, the widely used undergraduate cultural studies text on gender and media in the United States—the thick Sage book Gender, Race, and Class in the Media (Dines & Humez, 1995)—does not include much material on gender or race in relation to journalism. At the senior undergraduate or graduate level, Carter, Branston, and Allan’s (1998) edited book News, Gender, and Power is one among the very few full-length cultural studies texts to focus entirely on gender and journalism texts, audiences, and producers.

The National Geographic magazine serves as a good case study to consider the absence of feminist media research on gender and middlebrow media culture. Anthropologists Lutz and Collins (1993) were much ahead of media scholars when they chose to study gender, race, and colonial discourse in the National Geographic, a cultural artifact that “straddles simultaneously the worlds of academia, art, and popular imagination” (p. 4). Photojournalists view the National Geographic as one of the most credible publications in the field of international and wildlife journalism, and hundreds of journalism and media studies undergraduates aspire to work for the magazine; however, the magazine received little sustained attention until the early 1990s. Lutz and Collins noted that media scholars’ lack of interest in the National Geographic has its antecedents in the high and low culture debate:
The special cultural niche occupied by the *Geographic* is indexed by the degree to which the magazine has been ignored by academics and other writers on the subject of photography, mass media, or culture in general. The silence is striking. Histories of photography or even of photojournalism in America typically fail to mention it. Analysts of popular culture have tended to study material lowest on the cultural hierarchy of objects whereas traditional sociology of culture has focused on high culture (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 8).

Lutz and Collins’ (1993) commentary on the *National Geographic* can be extended to reflect on the absence of critical feminist research on representations of gender, race, and ethnicity in print and broadcast journalism.

**CULTURAL STUDIES WITHIN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION EDUCATION**

If feminist cultural studies scholars have been slow in incorporating journalism, the academic disciplines of journalism and mass communication have been equally reluctant to accept cultural studies approaches in the classroom and in research. Although a comprehensive history of the tense relation between journalism’s educational apparatus and cultural studies is not within the scope of this article, examining two sources of disagreement sheds some light on the ambivalent relations between the two fields.

One visible source of tension with underlying philosophical differences can be traced to the use of language. Historically, research in journalism has favored quantitative approaches with survey research and content analyses dominating studies of journalists, audiences, and news content. In such quantitative research, writing serves as an instrument to facilitate the presentation and interpretation of numbers rather than to build a strong or persuasive argument. Furthermore, the pedagogy of journalism education and training, which seeks to align itself with the editorial needs of the journalism profession, promotes clear and jargon-free writing as an essential tool to produce transparent and accurate representations of “real” events. The terse writing style in quantitative journalism research coupled with the news writing style taught in journalism classrooms—direct and accessible writing for a general audience—offer a contrast to the more theoretical, analytical, and dense writing style of cultural studies. Theoretical terms that are taught as fundamental concepts in cultural studies—ideology, hegemony, interpellation, agency, or subjectivity—can appear to be obfuscating and turf policing barriers to those outside the field. Conflicts over language and writing styles are closely linked to the different missions of traditional journalism education and cultural studies (Switzer & Ryan, 2002). Cultural studies critics interrogate relentlessly the institutional and economic pressures on capitalist media production. Although
journalism education does include critical thinking and debates on professional ethics, the primary goal of training is to prepare students to enter the profession.

A second source of tension relates to the highly interdisciplinary and fluctuating knowledge base of cultural studies vis-à-vis the more stable and narrower base of theories and methodologies in traditional journalism research. Cultural studies practitioners studying the media draw constantly from a range of emerging theories and debates in the social science and humanities—anthropology, sociology, education, English, history, and film criticism (to name a few). The interdisciplinary character of cultural studies can present a challenge for journalism teachers and researchers who are not immersed in this climate of teaching and research. As Switzer and Ryan (2002) pointed out, cultural studies scholars’ reliance on a “vast interdisciplinary archive” (p. 215) can result in the perception that they are outsiders who cannot participate in the project of building expert knowledge on journalism.

In the arena of research, differences in disciplinary approaches can also lead to different methodological preferences and orientations. Drawing from the humanities and anthropology, cultural studies scholars publishing textual analyses and ethnographic audience studies do not devote as much attention to establishing the scientific legitimacy of methodology as scholars in journalism, including those conducting qualitative research, typically do in their publications. Cultural studies researchers studying media culture privilege the elaboration of theory and analysis over methodological explanations. For example, in the feminist cultural studies book *Speaking of Abortion: Television and Authority in Women’s Lives* (Press & Cole, 1999), the authors located the entire methodology section in the Appendix. Similarly, articles in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, a leading academic journal for cultural studies research, do not routinely include lengthy methodology sections. Taking a different approach, articles in the flagship academic journal in the field of journalism education, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, consistently include an entire section on methodology that is separate from the introduction.

Despite these tensions, recent developments indicate the growing acceptance of cultural studies in the field of journalism and mass communication. In 1999, the Qualitative Studies division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the largest national academic organization for journalism educators, changed its name to the Critical and Cultural Studies division, based on votes exercised by members of the division. The broad and rather nondescript label of Qualitative Studies for a single division in this organization was not surprising because quantitative approaches dominated the production of research in AEJMC during previous decades. Explaining the name change, the president of the division argued that the new name, Critical and Cultural Studies, represented more accurately the teaching and research philosophies and interests of the members:
OUR NAME CHANGE reflects what we are about and what we do as a group in a better way than our old name ever did. Many people thought our division was a group about a research method. Yet you know as well as I, that we are a group whose research is influenced by more than methodology. We are a group who is influenced by literary studies, sociology, history, linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, political economy, philosophy/ethics, and so on … our work does more than reflect what it is we find, it also critiques and challenges what is there and tries to achieve professional and social change. (Garner, 1999, p. 2)

To consolidate further its support for cultural studies, the division also decided to endorse officially the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, a journal that has consistently published research that brings together journalism and cultural studies. Conference paper submissions to the Critical and Cultural Studies division of AEJMC since the name change in 1999 have continued to increase. These developments within AEJMC have had positive implications for feminist cultural studies teachers and scholars working on issues of gender and journalism. Over the years, feminist faculty and graduate students have been active in the leadership of the division, and feminist cultural studies research on journalism and photojournalism has won honor and recognition frequently through top faculty and student paper awards. More recently, Linda Steiner, a long-time member of the Critical and Cultural Studies division and a feminist scholar whose work bridges journalism and cultural studies, was elected to serve as editor of *Critical Studies in Media Communication*.

Institutionally, schools and departments of journalism and mass communication in the United States have slowly begun to recognize the need for cultural studies perspectives in teaching and research. Switzer and Ryan (2002) explored the acceptance of critical cultural scholarship among administrators and faculty belonging to the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication through a mail survey of 100 journalism and mass communication programs followed up by e-mail surveys and analysis of Web pages. The authors report that cultural studies scholars should “find some comfort” (p. 221) in their research because survey results show that the wider population of administrators and faculty working in various areas of teaching and research appreciate the value of cultural studies.

For example, critical cultural faculty members and their program administrators agree that scholars in the university as a whole are open to critical-cultural perspectives; that journalism and mass communication faculties encourage critical-cultural perspectives; that critical-cultural perspectives can lead to better research; that programs should ensure critical-cultural perspectives are reflected in teaching and research; and that critical-cultural perspectives can help unify disparate communication sub-specialties. (Switzer & Ryan, 2002, p. 221)
In addition, journalism faculty and administrators agree that cultural studies would help enhance the critical thinking and analytical skills of students, thus enabling them to be better media practitioners and political citizens. Reporting some of the more discouraging results, Switzer and Ryan (2002) noted that a significant number of their respondents found their students to be less receptive to cultural studies and over a third of the programs they surveyed did not employ critical-cultural faculty. Finally, the authors recommended several strategies for cultural studies scholars to mitigate the obstacles against their acceptance in journalism and mass communication education—demystify interdisciplinary theories and methodologies, explain how critical perspectives can improve students’ analytical skills and give them knowledge of their future professions, and interrogate the evolution of journalism research into a modernist behavioral science. Feminist cultural studies scholars can also take encouragement from the results of Switzer and Ryan’s broad national survey and their discussion of cultural studies’ contributions to helping students become sensitized to the voices that the media might exclude. For example, some programs in journalism and mass communication have been willing to incorporate cultural studies approaches in courses on race, gender, and media.

Moving Switzer and Ryan’s (2002) work onto a bigger stage beyond the curriculum, how can feminist cultural studies scholars with an interest in journalism intervene in interdisciplinary conversations on globalization, consumerism, and citizenship? The next section examines how journalistic representations of globalization and journalism that emerge out of global flows in migration and media culture are two cultural sites that offer an array of interesting questions for future research in media studies.

Scholars, journalists, and bureaucrats have classified globalization as one of the most sweeping economic and cultural phenomena of the last two decades. Globalization has sparked vigorous theoretical debate in cultural and postcolonial studies (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Cultural studies researchers have analyzed the spread of various global commodities around the world including television programs, films, Barbie dolls, and popular music; however, scholars allied with media studies have not rushed to examine journalistic representations of globalization or the impact of seemingly objective news analyses of globalization on readers and policy makers. As feminist cultural studies scholars have shown in the realm of advertising’s visual images, specific representations of femininity, masculinity, and race have been integral to making commodity culture intelligible and desirable to global audiences.
What are the grand representations of gender in popular journalistic narratives that attempt to make sense of globalization? For example, the National Geographic’s August 1999 Millennium issue carried a cover story on global culture (Zwingle & McNally, 1999). Using women’s bodies to map the transformational power of globalization, the cover showed an older, middle-aged Indian woman dressed in a red silk sari on the left side and a young Indian woman dressed in a black catsuit on the right side. The words “Global Culture” are imprinted in bright yellow on the bottom of the cover. The older woman’s stocky body, gentle smile, and passive posture signify the inert quality of Indian tradition whereas the younger woman’s trim body, confident stare, and aggressive posture symbolize the vitality of global modernity. Globalization, as the National Geographic cover showed, helps Indian women shed their “native” burdens and become modern Western citizens. Similarly, Newsweek magazine’s cover photograph announcing a story on globalization in Europe displayed a smiling, young white woman sitting on a large throne—this slim and attractive woman appears confident, empowered, and happy (Power, 2001). Reinforcing the optimistic tone of this visual image, the cover page’s headline noted that globalization may be a disorderly and chaotic process, but it ultimately promises new opportunities and rewards for young entrepreneurs. The dominant narrative of globalization in the National Geographic and Newsweek claims that globalization is a harmonious and beneficial process for middle-class women; this narrative suppresses the problems and negative consequences of globalization for poor and working-class women in many regions of the world.

In recent years, feminist cultural studies scholars in the United States have conducted textual analysis of journalism’s words and images to explore the social construction of race, class, and gender in print and television news (Grewal, 2003; Meyers, 2004; Parry-Giles, 2000; Roushazamir, 2004; Sultze, 2003; Vargas, 2000; Winfield & Friedman, 2003). The methodological and analytical insights of these studies can be used to advance our understanding of how global news media choose to represent globalization. What are the gendered contours of globalization’s dramatic visual representations in news, educational, and business magazines in different parts of the world? Despite the veneer of objectivity, how do such vivid photojournalistic images of globalization borrow semiotic techniques from advertising and popular culture? Do journalistic narratives that claim to be comprehensive analyses of globalization include discussion of global production, gender, and labor? How are the news media representing the actions of protest groups when they express opposition to globalization? Feminist cultural studies scholars with an interest in globalization can thus study journalistic images and texts in middlebrow media to understand the ways in which women’s interests are being represented for powerful and elite audiences—middle-class readers, politicians, and bureaucrats.

Even more important, how are audiences interpreting journalism’s representational practices of gender, race, and class in stories on globalization? Zelizer (2004) wrote that the mutual distrust between cultural studies and journalism has
led to the reification of news as a neutral channel of information rather than a set of symbolic practices and rituals:

The centrality of ‘facts’ and a migration toward positivistic knowledge as a way of tamping a fundamental self-doubt about the profession became obstructions to cultural studies’ interest in the journalistic world, and journalism’s claims to the real—invoking objectivity, balance, accuracy—muted the capacity of many cultural studies scholars to consider the nuances of journalistic practice. (Zelizer, 2004, pp. 112–113)

One of these important nuances to consider in the future direction of audience studies is journalism’s key role in facilitating an understanding of globalization among multiple constituencies in the United States and abroad. Indicating the scarcity of research on news audiences, Gillespie’s (1995) work among South Asian families in Southall, West London, stands out as one among a few audience ethnographies that focuses on how consumption of television news alongside low-brow popular culture (i.e., soaps, films, and gossip) contributes to identity formation among new global immigrants in Britain.

Globalization has led to transformations in the mediated landscape of journalism in many locations across the world, transformations that have profound implications for scholars interested in audience research and popular communication. Within the United States, the arrival of immigrants from Asia and Africa has led to the creation of alternative ethnic news media that cater to the specific interests of their multicultural readers. Acting as cultural brokers and translators, these niche publications contain news on homelands, religion, food and cuisine, immigration procedures, cultural events, and racism. How are immigrant audiences—men and women—using alternative news publications in their everyday lives? How are immigrant mothers, who bear the unequal burden of passing on traditional culture to their children, relying on ethnic news media to sustain religious practices and customs within their families? In what ways are these publications helping their male and female readers grasp the concept of global citizenship? In the realm of mainstream news, cultural studies scholars can also explore how audiences are interpreting news narratives that seek to convey globalization’s impact on the culture and the economy of the United States and other nations. What are readers of the Wall Street Journal, a canonic publication for the business and political elite of the world, learning about the politics of the global economy’s gendered patterns of labor and production? How do readers use journalism’s brand of popular knowledge about globalization to make ethical decisions in their everyday lives?

For feminist scholars working in the arena of international communication, studying non-Western audiences’ responses to the burgeoning industry of middle-brow culture offers avenues to investigate formations of gender, class, and citizenship in new locations. Although many books and articles are available on media audiences in the West, the process of describing and analyzing media structures,
texts, and audience reception in Latin America, Asia, and Africa is still in its early stages. Commenting on the powerful discourses of nostalgia and closure in the First World, which promote audience research as an enterprise of the past that has outlived its potential, Juluri (1998) wrote, “As someone entering the field in the mid-1990s, I wonder what it means that the high moment of audience studies seems to have passed, perhaps to travel, like old American sitcoms, to the rest of the world” (p. 86). Juluri argued that First World critics who suggest that we abandon or limit audience research for new academic pursuits fail to recognize the absence of research on non-Western audiences. After the arrival of globalization, audiences in India, for instance, have access to global and local television news channels, English-language and vernacular newspapers and news magazines, and popular films that borrow their plots from journalism’s scripts of reality. How are Indian audiences responding to new intertextual sources of journalism’s middlebrow media culture? The recent production of lifestyle print journalism for young urban Indian readers marks one visible shift in Indian newspapers that are trying to accommodate television’s popularity, the rapid growth in consumer culture, and the increasing purchasing power of multinational workers. How is lifestyle journalism, with its gendered images of youthful consumerism, crafting hybrid global consumer-citizen subjectivities for a new generation of Indian readers?

The discussion of globalization in this article reveals the fertile opportunities that a critical inquiry into the production and consumption of journalism can offer to audience research in the arena of popular communication. Challenging binary constructions of journalism/popular culture, reality/fiction, and middlebrow/lowbrow media, our future study of global audiences’ viewing and reading practices could consider the different ways in which news, one of the oldest “reality” shows, is shaping the discursive and material contours of our gender, class, ethnic, and national identities.

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REFERENCES


