MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

11th International LAB Meeting - Spring Session 2008

European Ph.D. on
Social Representations and Communication
At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society

"Identity and Social Representations:
Cultural and Mythical Dimensions"

From 26th April - 4th May 2008
http://www.europhd.eu/html/_onda02/07/13.00.00.00.shtml

Scientific Material

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

International Lab Meeting Series 2005-2008

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A TV IN EVERY HOME:
TELEVISION "EFFECTS"

In the early days of television people were proud of their television set and placed it in the living room to entertain guests. They considered it a wonderful and entertaining new addition to their homes and even felt gratitude for it. But by 1958 television viewing was no longer novel. Television use had settled into a routine. Market researchers Ira Glick and Sidney Levy described the change as a shift from excitement and widespread acceptance to uneasiness, dissatisfaction, denial and criticism. By the late 1950s it was not considered appropriate among college educated people to admit that one watched television much. They no longer turned on television when visitors came. Instead they placed the television where it could be viewed privately, by children or the family without company, in the recreation room or in the parent's bedroom.[1]

From that time the negative characterizations of television would persist for decades as conventional wisdoms. Culture critics, communication researchers and viewers asked whether television was a good thing and what was it doing to viewers. This chapter will examine how the discourse on television defined cultural capital and reinforced class distinctions. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu used the term cultural capital to refer to the possession of cultural knowledge, abilities and tastes that allowed one to claim higher status in a social hierarchy, distinguishing higher from lower classes by their tastes. The discourse on television demonstrates that one's attitudes toward and use of television have been a common basis for such distinctions.[2]

CULTURAL CRITICS

The wide-eyed utopian optimism in the early to mid 1920s about radio was not duplicated for television in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While early viewers were excited by this new medium, even in the early 1950s television columnists were often harsh critics. There were two major categories of criticism: television viewing's alleged displacement of more valuable activities, and the negative impact of television programs, aesthetically, socially or morally, upon viewers. The first category was buttressed by the belief in the early years that people could not combine television viewing with other activities. Television was blamed for destroying conversation, interfering with children's homework, eating and sleep, distracting wives from preparing dinner; and wrecking the radio industry and running neighborhood movie theaters out of business.[3]

On the matter of content, arts and entertainment critics quickly labeled the programming "low brow". The New York Times television columnist, Jack Gould likened it to "a cut-rate nickelodeon". Arts critic Gilbert Seldes, who had championed the "popular arts" in the 1920s and 1930s, described early programming as "rather bad vaudeville…unimaginative and tasteless" Saturday Review editor Norman Cousins condemned television as "such an invasion of good taste as no other communications medium has known."[4]

The New Yorker television columnist Philip Hamburger regularly skewered the "best" programs. He disparaged Milton Berle as, "doing nothing that is not being done in a third-rate night clubs and second-class summer hotels." The humor of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis on the Berle show "consisted of behaving like delinquent children". This was the show that network executives boasted brought the best of vaudeville into every home! In another column he condemned what was promoted as great television drama, calling it

crass melodrama with saintly heroes and "unmitigated swine" for villains. He was appalled by the butchering of *A Comedy of Errors* to fit a one-hour format, described a satire as so bad he could not figure out what was being satirized, and criticized the poor camerawork of a third drama. He did approve of coverage of the San Francisco conference that laid the foundation of the United Nations.[5]

Commercialism was blamed for reducing programming to the lowest common denominator. They revived arguments from the turn of the century when theater critics blamed the woeful state of American drama on the rise of the Syndicate turning theater into big business. They blamed broadcasters for "selling their souls" to advertisers and placing business above aesthetics. Others blamed the more anonymous marketplace, and recommended providing better programming outside the discipline of the market, through public television of some sort, much as earlier advocates of the Little Theater movement had advocated various means of subsidy to free drama theaters from the market.[6]

Broadcasters and advertisers countered critics with what they promoted as quality programming. As it had done in the 1920s with radio, NBC justified its nation-wide dominance in television by claiming to "elevate tastes" and "make us all into intellectuals". ABC announced in Spring, 1949 that it would broadcast the Metropolitan Opera each Saturday afternoon that Fall. But most often they selected an art better suited to a visual medium, drama. The "tasteful" television programming tended to be legitimate drama anthologies sponsored by large corporations as institutional advertising: Ford Theater (1949-57), United States Steel Hour (1953-63), General Electric Theater (1953-62), Dupont Cavalcade of America (1954-57), and Armstrong Circle Theater (1950-63) They commissioned legitimate plays from respected playwrights. Three of the programs

were created by the advertising agency, Batten Barton, Durstine and Osborn, which had a history of such high culture associations in its advertising campaigns.[7] These programs were introduced with voices and music that cast them as serious, almost sacred, television, as contributions to culture and education that warranted careful and thoughtful attention. Broadcasters and sponsors used the shows to promote themselves as supporters of culture and good corporate citizens. At the same time they offered viewers a chance to enhance their cultural capital by watching.

But concerns about the low brow tastes of television prevailed over industry promotion efforts. Rather than subside, the criticism seemed to increase and peaked in the late 1950s. The quiz show scandal in the Fall, 1959 stripped away the public relations image of good will, of concern with the public interest, and of honesty that the networks had constructed, making their protestations of offering what America wanted and needed seem a hollow lie.

Aesthetic criticism continued to be harsh. In 1960-61 Harper's magazine published several articles on the quality of high brow programs such as operas, legitimate drama, and current event documentaries. After surveying programs aired during the 1959-1960 season, critic Martin Mayer concluded that most public affairs programs "contained moments that were little less than infuriating," and that the dramas were "artistically lightweight semi-documentaries". These comments were matched or exceeded by other prominent writers about the same time. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., historian and adviser to President Kennedy, said "From its inception television has been in a downward spiral as an artistic medium". Thomas Griffith of Time worried we had

sold our souls "for a mess of pottage"; television producer David Suskind described programming as "oceans of junk". [8]

The dour picture of television was part of a larger disdain for mass culture that reached high tide in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Television was the prime example of this debased culture.[9] Unique among household objects, television was demonized as powerful, dangerous and low brow. In the words of literature professor Cecilia Tichi the choice was between "puerility versus maturity, low culture versus high, entertainment versus intellectual engagement, frivolity versus seriousness, contamination versus purity, robotry versus critical imagination, sickness versus health." The low-brow argument frequently charged television with undermining the good habit of reading. Reading, and by extension literacy, conferred positive cultural capital. The issue of literacy made television not only low brow, but a danger to children.[10]

WORRIES ABOUT CHILDREN

Much criticism of television was expressed in terms of its dangers to children. Expressing concerns in these terms moved them beyond mere cultural snobbery to a ground where many people would begin to question the value of television, making the cultural de-valuation of television widespread. Around 1950 numerous articles appeared in magazines about the effects of television on children and giving advice about television in rearing children. Most of these were concerned about television's displacement of other activities, rather than the content of programs. Early articles in fact tended to describe television programs as positive, just requiring some ground rules like limiting how much time children could spend watching. They agreed with the industry

promotion that television "widens horizons" of children. Even the Christian Science Monitor expressed confidence that television stations would do the right thing and provide good programming for children. In Parents' Magazine Dorothy McFadden, president of Junior Programs Inc., promoted the industry, saying television was an asset to children and that television officials welcomed good ideas and programs for children.[11] Writers were much more inclined to be concerned about the amount of time children spent in front of television sets, reducing the time spent in more constructive activities that were active, social, educational and physically healthy.

A few "hysterical" articles appeared, written mostly by child professionals, educators, recreational specialists. But the tone of many of the advice articles in women's magazines was to calm and reassure mothers that television simply needed to be handled properly. They proposed rules for its use so that it did not displace homework, eating and sleeping, and that it even be used as a reward or incentive for children to finish their chores. An article in Library Journal dismissed the fears of television viewing endangering the practice of reading, by reprinting an article from 1924 expressing such a fear about radio, with the implicit conclusion that of course this doomsday prediction did not come true, and neither will dire predictions about television. In Harper's a housewife chronicled her children's first total absorption with television followed in short order by disenchantment and boredom with it.[12]

By the mid-1950s the balance of concern had shifted from television use to television content. In contrast to the advice articles of 1950 an article in Parents Magazine in December, 1954 marshaled the expertise of "eighteen prominent authorities [for a] guide to help regulate your child's TV viewing". The bulk of advice was directed

to concerns about the effects of crime shows, westerns, and adult programs, causing emotional upset, anxiety, juvenile delinquency, even "bad taste".[13]

Unlike the 1930s when broadcasters did little to dispute what critics said about programs, the television industry in the 1940s and 1950s went on the offensive. Broadcasters answered the criticisms with "science", financing audience research in the days before plentiful federal funding, and publicizing the results beyond the research community. CBS funded major academic research projects: the 1948 Riley study, the first influential study on children and television; the classic summary of effects research by Joseph Klapper, Effects of Mass Communication, revision of his 1949 dissertation at the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research (Klapper himself worked for G.E., major television manufacturer and program sponsor); and an influential national 1960 survey by Gary Steiner also funded through the Bureau. Many surveys had market research origins: the ten-year Videotown study by Cunningham and Walsh advertising agency; Leo Bogart's 1955 review of survey research sponsored by McCann Erickson; and Ira Glick and Levy's synthesis of the results of dozens of surveys they conducted for Campbell-Ewald advertising agency from 1957-61.[14]

Manufacturers' response to television criticism was to claim television was educational, bringing the "best of the world" into people's homes. A Dumont ad showed a young girl at Christmas watching a television with her teddy bears. On the screen is a fairy godmother talking to the child, describing the television as "an Enchanted Mirror...Through it, skilled musicians will play for you and learned men will speak to you. This Enchanted Mirror will bring to you much pleasure and deeper understanding, so that you may live your life in wisdom and happiness."[15]

They overstepped the bounds, however in 1950 when the American Television Dealers and Manufacturers Association placed full-page ads in newspapers and on radio across the country, suggesting children without a television were outcasts. Ad copy described a boy who came home early to his parent's surprise because all the other children were talking about television and he was left out because his family had not bought one. The ad then quoted a psychologist as saying "children need home television for their morals as they need sunshine and fresh air for their health". A magazine ad in the same campaign claimed children without TV felt ashamed not knowing about the television shows other children talked about and humiliated to have to "beg" to watch the neighbor's television.[16]

The campaign triggered an immediate widespread reaction from Eleanor Roosevelt, the Family Service Association of America, and the National Assembly of the United Council of Church Women. Middle-class parents sent letters to the editors of magazines and newspapers who printed the ads. Newspapers received a wave of phone calls denouncing the ads, greater response than to any other ad according to Editor and Publisher. The ATDM canceled the negative ads -- claiming they had planned to anyway as part of a two-phase campaign -- and substituted some more positive ads, which still focused on the value of TV for children. [17]

The reactions were so widespread that book publishers took advantage of it to promote their books. Harper Brothers placed an ad for children's books which poked fun at the ATDM ads.[18] The publishing industry itself promoted attacks on television as a threat to reading and, by extension, education. At the same time, the industry carefully followed surveys that indicated reading was, or was not displaced by television.

The low valuation of television was set in place. Its use must be guarded. Anyone who did not use it selectively for themselves or their children were labeled as wanting.

NEGATIVE CULTURAL CAPITAL

By the late-1950s critical attitudes toward television had sedimented into American culture, a measure of whether one was educated or ignorant. Magazines published fewer positive treatments about its novelty and pleasures. People described TV programs as lower quality, less imaginative, and more repetitive. Reflecting this devaluation was a trend in interior decorating to make television's presence more discrete, no longer making it the centerpiece of the living room. Ads for high end TVs featured doors to hide the screen when not in use.[19]

These attitudes constructed television as a "reverse status symbol", a term coined by Time magazine.[20] Watching television became an admission of low brow taste. Family television viewing patterns thus became a measure of cultural capital. Heavy viewing, indiscriminate viewing, leaving the television on even when not attending, providing little or no parental control of children's viewing and using television as a baby sitter, were all associated with being lower class. All of these constituted a syndrome of "passive viewing". To avoid tainting one's cultural capital with television, a person had to demonstrate characteristics of an "active" viewer by placing the television in a room not used for entertaining guest, or discretely hiding the television behind cabinet doors; selectively using television only for informational and culturally uplifting programs; and limiting children's use in time and program selection for educational value. The preferred

middle-class style was juxtaposed to detrimental working-class/ lower-class viewing patterns.

The attitudes were capture in a satire in the Saturday Evening Post, titled "Oh, mass man! Oh lumpen lug! Why do you watch TV?" The writer confessed his attraction to television viewing and grumbled, "why do I have to dissemble and explain and justify and tell out right lies" about his watching television too much. When he bought his first TV his friends needled him with "sell out!", "cop out!" and threw him a "middle brow party", bringing old copies of Readers Digest. The whole tone of the satire was the guilt shared with his readers that watching television was a lower form of pleasure in which they all secretly indulged.[21]

Audience research and the construction of cultural capital

Television audience research was itself driven by these criticisms and attempted to provide "scientific evidence" to decide the case on television. This was especially true of studies published in book form rather than in obscure academic journals. Even as these studies contradicted the more extreme claims about television, they confirmed the definition of television as a cultural problem to be contained rather than as a cultural asset. Market researcher Leo Bogart organized his survey of 1950s research around popular concerns about television, and bluntly stated the class prejudice of the discourse, that "better educated and wealthier persons, with their greater resources, are best able to take television in their stride". Psychologists Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, authors of one of the most influential studies of television and children, organized their conclusions in terms of answers to popular claims and questions about television

and children, and initiated a veritable industry of research on the effects of television violence.[22]

Researchers affirmed the relationship between social class and patterns of television use. They helped to define upper-middle-class patterns as normal and working-class patterns as deficient. One of the first and most systematic elaborations of class-differentiated viewing patterns was market researchers Ira Glick and Sidney Levy's report of surveys they conducted from 1957 to 1961 for various advertisers. From these they constructed three types of viewer orientations to television, Embrace, Accommodation and Protest, which they associated with working-class, lower-middle-class and upper-middle-class families, respectively.[23]

Working class Embracers were the stereotypic TV fans. These were heavy viewers; they watched television in "large blocks of time". Watching was integrated into their daily routine; something they did at specific times of every day. Their choice of program was secondary to watching at certain hours. Referring specifically to working-class families Glick and Levy said "Television for these people functions as a readily available companion and activity -- a thing to do -- in a world in which there are not too many alternatives."[24]

Glick and Levy described Embracers as "people with few inner resources that would lead them to cultivate other 'outside' interests" who expect immediate gratification and want programs which are "obvious", "not too complicated or involved" and not make them "work at watching". In this category they grouped children, the "homebound elderly" and the working class. They further stated that the stereotype "fits the working-class viewer more than others, as less motivated to act in an energetic, censoring or

selective fashion". Such descriptions contributed to the larger discourse which used television use as an indicator of status.

Opposite to Embracers were upper-middle-class, college-educated Protesters, the writers and readers of those critical articles about TV. Protesters objected to television's detrimental effects on child rearing, to its low aesthetic standards, and to the waste of its potential for social good. They watched fewer hours and confined use to self-improving, educational and informational and cultural uplift goals. They restricted use for themselves and their children, and expressed guilt about overstepping these principles. They excluded it from the living room and placed it where it will be less conspicuous. Glick and Levy specifically describe the upper-middle-class attitude as more "active and self-directing [while] selection, discrimination and planning are the keynotes of their viewing". They looked for "worthwhile" programs, and had "little room left for self-indulgence". Glick and Levy attribute to them praiseworthy goals by the standards of the dominant culture, i.e. goals that represent high cultural capital, but also depict them as a bit puritanical and stiff.

Glick and Levy wrote disapprovingly of elitist television critics, such as John Crosby (Life), John Fischer (Harper's), Marya Mannes (McCall's, Vogue, Glamour, New York Times), Paul Molloy (Chicago Sun Times, Time), and Frederick Wertham (author of Seduction of the Innocent, a harsh critic of comic books), who would have epitomized these Protesters. Glick and Levy's tone and conclusions favored instead a reasonable "accommodation" rather than "protest" or a too obvious "embrace".

They described Accomodators as an "attempt to balance" the oppositions of the other two types. Accommodators made an active decision to watch. Television was not

simply part of the daily routine. Watching varied from day to day depending on what programs they decided to watch and what other activities they chose to do instead. They planned and selected like Protesters, but watched for enjoyment as well as self-improvement, giving entertainment greater ground. Also like the Protester, what he did watch he watched intently. Accomodators were thus characterized as a "reasonable" compromise between the indiscriminate indulgence of the working class and the overly critical and puritanical upper middle class.

"Children are Watching": Class Patterns of Child-Rearing

These class distinctions extended to children's viewing as well. A series of influential studies of child viewers from the late 1950s to the late 1970s distinguished between good and bad parenting in controlling children's television use.[25] In this work, the lower class or less educated are repeatedly identified as inadequate parents as measured by their lax attitudes toward television. Leo Bogart's summary of 1950s research concluded that parents of below average income were overwhelmingly favorable toward television; while middle class parents were concerned about loss of other activities to television and about television content. Bogart believed they were better equipped to handle the problems.[26] Professor Gary Steiner noted parents with grade school education were more likely to mention TV's "baby sitting" function positively, and criticized this as relegating the young to the television set "in the service of their own freedom".[27]

Psychologists Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker opened their book with a cautionary statement that what television does to a child depends upon the child

and by extension the parents, i.e. it was a problem of parenting. They concluded with a guide to parents, listing "danger signals" which might indicate an undesirable influence of television. "Every time a parent finds himself using television as a baby sitter, he could well examine his practice and whether it is really necessary".[28]

Social researcher Robert Bower's 1970 follow-up to Steiner's study contrasted more to less educated parents, noting they were "quite divergent". More educated parents monitored their children's television use more carefully. "The child with less-educated parents is more apt to be actually encouraged to watch in order to keep him occupied." Bower stated that more educated parents regulated the amount and content of viewing and did not use television as a baby sitter, and went on to state approvingly that such a parent acted responsibly, being "more willing to take action against whatever potential dangers he sees for his children in watching too much or the wrong kinds of programs". Bower criticized less educated parents for giving children too much autonomy in choosing their programs.[29]

In a widely cited article, Elliot Medrich coined the term "constant television households" in which parents are less likely to regulate their children's viewing, don't question the message, and TV dominates the children's out of school lives. About half of the lowest income and education were "constant" households and 20% of the highest income and education were. Medrich contrasted "constant television" to "parentally controlled television" and concludes the latter occurred primarily in middle class families, again affirming television use as a measure of class superiority.[30]

Study after study from the late 1950s through the 1970s constructed a discourse that distinguished between the negligent lower-status parent who did not monitor TV use,

and the responsible higher-status parent who did. By the 1980s the ideas had so melted into general consciousness that researchers moved on to other issues, but the ideas had become part of standard advice of doctors and other sources of child-rearing guidance. In 1976 the American Medical Association decided to publish a booklet for physicians to distribute to patients "emphasizing parental responsibly for children's viewing". In 1982 the AMA reaffirmed their 1976 "action program" to advise patients on children's use of television. In 1995 the American Academy of Pediatrics encouraged physicians to tell parents to carefully monitor children's use of television. In 1996 the AMA distributed a new booklet to 60,000 physicians to advise parents to control children's viewing.[31]

The logic underlying the negative valuation of television viewing however was based upon questionable assumptions. Common to all the literature on children and television, scholarly and popular, past and present, are the assumptions that television is detrimental if over-used (displacement) or mis-used (dangerous content). These assumptions were rarely applied so consistently to other children's toys or activities. Concerns about doing too much of other activities, e.g. like sports or sleep, presumed a pathology of the child, not of the activity. Even heavy use of the telephone has been seen as a trait of adolescents rather than the phone. Television, by contrast, was constructed as an ever-present menace which might ensnare any child and which parents must guard against, regardless of their child's own personality.[32] In this context, discussions of parental control of this "beast" were all the more loaded with significance. Yet the assumptions linking heavy or indiscriminate use, passivity and control by television are at best questionable.

THE PASSIVE VIEWER AND INATTTENTIVE AUDIENCES

Underlying the concerns about television use has been an image of viewers as passively succumbing to this "plug-in drug".[33] The drug metaphor for television was based upon a presumption that the television addict had lost control and was passively consuming. If television was conceived as all-powerful, then viewers necessarily became powerless, i.e. passive, if not careful in its use. Passivity caused capabilities to wither in adults and to fail to develop in children. The passive viewer was susceptible to whatever television offered. If content was low brow the viewer became low brow. If demagogic, the viewer fell into line.

Passivity was the focus of public concern and the question around which research was formulated. Regardless of the stance of the particular researcher, public issues and research questions have been couched in terms of the issue of the passive viewer.[34] Public criticism has focused primarily on the quantity of television use, with public debate castigating as self-indulgent, working-class viewers who turn the television on for many hours. The main criticism of heavy viewing was the assumption that it was indiscriminate and that the viewer would be susceptible to whatever messages conveyed by programs. Researchers assumed a correlation between amount of viewing and susceptibility. Hidden in this is a prejudice that heavy viewers, who tend to be working class, are dumb, naive, gullible and thus susceptible.

The presumed connection between heavy indiscriminate viewing and susceptibility hinges on the amount of attention viewers actually give to the program. However, researchers from a variety of theoretical camps have found that heavy viewers often give <u>less</u> attention to program content. Working-class families, who were typically

identified as heavy users of television, at the same time were not intensive viewers. They did not devote complete attention to the program. Rather, their pattern was typically to leave the television on regardless of the program and regardless whether they were still watching. Interruptions were not prohibited and were not an occasion to turn off the television. Instead, they attended to other matters and returned to viewing when they were done. Such viewing patterns meant they were not likely to choose shows that required continuous attention. An obvious, but un-noted alternative conclusion is that such people are less susceptible to television.

By contrast, middle-class "selective" viewers who are more discriminating in what to watch, give such programs their fullest attention and thus could be most susceptible. One could easily claim that selective viewers are duped by the cultural hegemony represented by the programs they select. Yet the predominant interpretation condemns "constant television" and praises selective viewing. Underlying this is a deeper assumption that what the middle class choose to watch is good and what the working class chooses is detrimental.[35]

The negative evaluation of passivity then is implicated in the question of attention. Concern about effects, in fact, hinges on the question of attention. Inattention has been a long standing complaint about entertainment audiences. Before the twentieth century, the upper class had a reputation for inattention. Working-class audiences also combined talking and watching in cheap theaters and later nickelodeons. Radio quickly became background while women did their housework. With television, however, for the first time inattention was turned into a negative. Working-class viewers were labeled as inattentive, leaving television on even while not watching. This was interpreted as a sign

of their irresponsible use of television, an indicator that they were not selective in the programs they tuned in and did not properly limit their children's television use. The appropriate use was to select a beneficial program and then to sit and watch attentively.

Engaging in a collateral activity while watching soon became a standard practice of viewing, as it had with radio, despite the initial beliefs that one could not do so with television. A study in 1955 reported that two thirds of those with a television on during the day were doing something else simultaneously, most times housework. During the evening (6-10 pm) half were doing something else as well. In 1970, researchers for the Surgeon General's report on television videotaped 20 families in their homes while their televisions were on. They found that family members spent 24-45% of the time not watching while the television was on. People engaged in many collateral activities while watching, including doing homework, reading, sorting wash, preparing meals, setting table, dressing and undressing, exercising, playing cards and board games and conversing.[36]

RESISTANCE IN THE ERA OF CONFORMITY

Passive viewing is not what working-class community studies of the 1950s and 1960s reported. Ethnographers observed working-class viewers actively reconstructing media messages, classic examples of what later would be called cultural resistance. Sociologists Herbert Gans, Bennett Berger, and Alan Blum described working-class men in the late 1950s interacting with and interpreting programs within their own sub-cultural values.[37] Bennett Berger interviewed working-class suburbanites in 1957. The men rejected "middle class" shows with high ratings, such as *Perry Como*, *Ed Sullivan*, and

Steve Allen, even *I Love Lucy*. This was consistent with Berger's general conclusion that, in their move to the suburbs, working-class people did not adopt middle-class values and lifestyle. Their favorite drama series were *Cheyenne*, *Sergeant Bilko* and *Meet McGraw*.[38]

Herbert Gans observed working-class families in 1957-58 in the West End of Boston and in 1958-59 in a Levitt development in Willingboro Township, New Jersey. In both communities he found early examples of "constant television". Television was used as background. It was kept on when company came, with people turning to it during pauses in the conversation or when something 'important seems to be happening'. The urban villagers of Boston's West End sustained an us/them distinction between their Italian working-class subculture and the dominant middle-class American culture. Gans said they "accept themes that mirror their own values, and reject others as illustrating the immorality and dishonesty of the outside world". He described the men in particular as using TV to "justify both the peer group society and its rejection of the outside world." Among the men he observed a combative attitude toward television. One of Gans informants said "We heckle TV just like we used to heckle the freaks at the circus when we were kids". They watched commercials attentively but bombarded them with sarcasm. They vocally rejected statements that contradicted their own beliefs. If a show was not entertaining they entertained themselves by making fun of the show. They disliked Sergeant Friday of *Dragnet* because of his hostility to working-class characters and preferred instead *Meet McGraw* because he was friendly to working class types. Similarly they favored portrayals of men as powerful and rejected portrayals of men as weak or dumb, such as Ralph Kramden, Chester Riley, the working-class husbands in

situation comedies of the time. In Levittown, Gans also found that mass media were "filtered through a variety of personal predispositions so that not many messages reach the receiver intact". (Gans' language here is prescient of cultural studies.) He observed here the same skepticism about advertising claims and readiness to point out flaws in plots.[39]

Alan Blum found black working-class men "...carry on a continuous joking dialogue with the television..", which he interpreted as indicating an underlying hostility to the white performers on TV, similar to the "us-them" attitude Gans found among working-class Italian-Americans.[40] Such "talking back" to the TV was not unusual. In taping families watching television in their homes, Bechtel and his associates found it a sufficiently common practice to require a distinct category.[41]

Surveys of audience reactions to *All in the Family* in the 1970s suggests a similar phenomenon.[42] Viewers with prejudices similar to Archie Bunker tended to see him in a positive light, even winning arguments with his college-educated son- in-law, Mike. Given the correlation between class and scores on measures of prejudice, this audience was probably working class. One can see here the identification with the working-class father and rejection of the upwardly mobile son, much as Gans described working-class viewers rejecting the educated man who displays his education.

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[1]Ira Glick and Sidney Levy, Living with Television (Chicago: Aldine, 1962), 26-36 on sentiments toward first sets 1957 to 1961. Leo Bogart, The Age of Television third edition (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), 96 cited a survey in 1954 with 85% of sets in living rooms. In 1970 the main sets were in family rooms, others in bedrooms. See Robert Bower, Television and the Public (Holt Rinehart and Winston 1973), 145; also

Margaret Andreason, "Evolution in the family's use of television: normative data from industry and academe" in Bryant, Television and the American Family (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), 31.

[2] on cultural capital see Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans. Richard Nice, (Harvard University Press, 1984), 48.

[3] Mary Hornaday, "End of conversation?" Christian Science Monitor Magazine March 19, 1949, 5. Hornaday and others called such claims extravagant and exaggerated.

[4] Jack Gould, "The low state of TV" New York Times October 19, 1952, p. X-13; Gilbert Seldes The Great Audience (NY: Viking Press, 1950), 173, 178, 182; Norman Cousins, "The time trap" Saturday Review December 24, 1949, 20; see also Philip Gufstafson, "Nickelodeon days of television" Nation's Business July, 1947, 37, 73; John Tebbel, "TV and Radio" New American Mercury February 1951, 235-38; Calder Willingham, "Television: giant in the living room", American Mercury February 1952, 114-119. On Seldes see Michael Kammen, The Lively Arts.

[5]Philip Hamburger, "Television" The New Yorker, October 29, 1949, 91; November 5, 1949 126; December 17, 1949 77-79; November 26, 1949, 111-12; See Matthew Murray, "NBC program clearance policies during the 1950s: nationalizing trends and regional resistance" The Velvet Light Trap no. 33 (Spring, 1994) on network executives' boasts.

[6]John Crosby, "Seven deadly sins of the air" Life November 6, 1950 147-8+; Seldes, Great Audience, 181-82; John Fischer, "TV and its critics" Harpers 1959, 12-16; John Tebbell, "TV and Radio" New American Mercury February 1951, 235-38.

[7]Matthew Murray, "NBC Program Clearance policies during the 1950s: national trends and regional resistance" Velvet Light Trap No.33 Spring, 1994, 38; Hornaday, "End of

conversation?" Christian Science Monitor Magazine March 19, 1949, 5; William Bird, "The drama of enterprise' comes to television" Research Seminar Paper No. 4, Hagley Museum & Library, January 1993; Brooks and Marsh, The Complete Directory of Prime Time Network TV Shows; on BBDO see Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940 (University of California Press, 1985), Creating the Corporate Soul: the Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business (University of California Press, 1998) and William Leach, Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture (NY: Pantheon,). As in the 1920s, many people resented being "uplifted" by New York executives. They complained to local affiliated stations, especially about indecency on television. See Murray.

[8]John Fischer "New hope for television" Harper's January, 1960, 12, 14, 19-21; Martin Mayer, "Boris for the millions" Harper's June 1961, 22, 24-27; Martin Mayer, "How Good is TV at its best?" Harpers August, 1960, 89 and September, 1960, 88; Schlesinger quote in Norman Jacobs, ed., Culture for the Millions? (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 148; Griffith and Suskind quoted in Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, Television in the Lives of Our Children (Stanford University Press, 1961), 3.

[9]See Bernard Rosenberg and David M. White, eds., Mass Culture: The popular Arts in America (The Free Press,1957); "Mass Culture and Mass Media: Special Issue" Daedalus, 89 (Spring, 1960), republished as Norman Jacobs , Culture for the Millions? After this time, criticisms of television became the conventional wisdom, with occasional individual restatements, such as Marie Winn, The Plug in Drug, 1977, rather than a chorus of intellectual hysteria.

[10]Cecilia Tichi, Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture (Oxford University Press, 1991) 186-87 on quote, chpt 8 on reading vs TV debate

[11]John Harmon, "Television and the leisure time activities of children" Education October, 1950, 127; Henrietta Battle, "Television and your child" Parents Magazine November, 1949, 58; Josette Frank, "Is television good or bad for children?" Woman's Home Companion November 1950 50-51; Bianca Bradbury, "Is television Mama's friend or foe?" Good Housekeeping November 1950, 58, 263; Harry Kenney, "Children are watching" Christina Science Monitor Magazine April 9, 1949, 5; "Television comes to our children" Parents' Magazine January, 1949, 26-27, 73-75

[12]Walter Brahm, "They proclaim calamity" Library Journal 76 August 1951, 1186-1187; Joan Whitbread and Vivian Cadden, "The real menace of TV" Harper's October 1954, 81-83

[13]Robert Goldenson, "Television and our children" Parents Magazine December 1954, 36-37, 76, 78-81.

[14]See prefaces and acknowledgments of the various reports. During the 1960s academic research produced thousands of studies, overshadowing broadcaster-sponsored output. Most major studies by this time were funded by the federal government.

[15] Ad in NMAH, Warshaw Collection, box 1, folder 2

[16]"Television makers ad campaign revised as protest mount over snob appeal" Printers Ink November 24, 1950, 105, 107, 114, 141

[17]Margaret Midas "Without TV" American Quarterly 3:2 (Summer, 1951), 152-166; "Television makers' ad campaign revised" Printers' Ink November 24, 1950, 106; "Ad says children need TV" Editor and Publisher November 25, 1950, 5

[18]"Book publishers, movie moguls launch anti-TV campaign" Printers Ink December 15, 1950, 83

[19]Lynn Spigel, Make Room for TV (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 49.

[20]The audience" Time November 8, 1968, 98.

[21]Wallace Markfield, "Oh, mass man! Oh, lumpen lug! Why do you watch TV?" Saturday Evening Post November 30, 1968, 28-29, 72

[22]Bogart 108; Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, Television in the Lives of Our Children (Stanford University Press, 1961), according to Schramm, inspired hundreds of later studies as well as the Surgeon General's $2 million research program. The book was based upon a series of studies of adolescents mostly in cities of the western US conducted between 1958 and 1960. It was funded by the National Educational Television and Radio Center, the forerunner of NET, funded by the Ford Foundation. Everett Rogers A History of Communication Study (Free Press, 1994) 471on its influence.

[23] Glick and Levy, Living with Television, Part two.

[24]Glick and Levy, 63

[25] The influential work of Steven Chaffee, Jack MacLeod and associates [e.g. "Parental influences on adolescent media use" American Behavioral Scientist 14:4 (1971) 323-340] contrasts two styles, concept-oriented vs socio-oriented that clearly match class differences described by sociologists [e.g. Melvin Kohn, "Social class and parent-child relationships" American Journal of Sociology 68 (January, 1963) 471-480]. However, they do not explicitly mention class. A less well know study, Robert Blood, "Social class

and family control of television viewing" Merrill-Palmer Quarterly 7(3) July, 1961, 205-222, is explicit in favoring middle-class over working-class styles.

[26]Leo Bogart, The Age of Television 267, 270

[27]Gary Steiner, The People Look at Television (Knopf, 1963) 87-89

[28]Schramm, et.al., Television in the Lives of Our Children 181-183

[29]Robert Bower Television and the Public (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1973), 173.

[30]Elliott Medrich, "Constant television: a background to daily life" Journal of Communication 29:3 (Summer 1979) 171-176

[31]"Television violence" AMA Proceedings, 1976, 80; "TV violence" AMA Proceedings, 1982, 278; American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Communications, "Children, adolescents and television" Pediatrics 96 (1995), 786-787; Physician Guide to Media Violence, (Chicago: AMA 1996)

[32]This presumed pathogenic nature of television has been extended in recent years to other television-related activities of video games and computers. Researchers have sometimes contradicted the conventional belief, arguing that the problem inheres in the child (and their parents) rather than in television. See e.g. Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 181.

[33]On passivity and the drug metaphor see Spigel, 62; Tichi, 105- 110; Robin Smith, :Television addiction" in Jennings Bryant And Dolf Zillmann, eds., Persepctives on Media Effects (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986) 109-128; Douglas Davis, The Five Myths of Television Power (Simon and Schuster, 1993) chpt. 4. Katz claimed the history of communications research oscillates between emphases on passive or active

audiences. See Elihu Katz, "On conceptualizing media effects" Studies in Communication 1(1980) 119-141.

[34]Joseph Klapper claimed the concern about passivity was a popular one, expressed by media critics and child rearing professionals such as Bruno Bettelheim, not by communications researchers, and that the concern was much more pronounced with the arrival of television. See Joseph Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication Free Press, 1960, 235,239, 241, 246, 248; Bruno Bettleheim The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age (The Free Press, 1960) 49-50. Other researchers, who substituted their own "what do people do with television" for the effects question "what does television do to people", criticized the effect approach for inherently assuming a passive audience. See e.g. Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler Michael Gurevitch "Utilization of mass communication by the individual" in Uses of Mass Communication, 1974, 21.

[35]Examples are the roundly condemned TV talk shows. In a rare exception, Sonia Livingstone and Peter Hunt reconsidered whether the talk show may in fact have some beneficial functions for its viewers, creating a new public space for political debate. See Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate (London: Routledge 1994)

[36]"Housewives Skip Picture on TV Sets", Editor and Publisher May 28, 1955,14; Robert Bechtel, Clark Achelpohl and Roger Akers, "Correlates between observed behavior and questionnaire responses on television viewing" Television and Social Behavior, Vol. IV: Television in Day-to-Day Life (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1972), 294, 297; also Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Television and the Quality of Life: How Viewing Shapes Everyday Experience (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1990)

[37]Gans noted sharp differences between men and women in viewing preferences. The women preferred programs which Berger characterized as "middle class", suggesting that working class women were not "resistant". Since these researchers gave little attention to gender - Gans' one observation being the exception - it is difficult to say how women responded. Recent studies of working class women viewers of soaps indicate distinctly female forms of resistant viewing. See Passive Strawman chapter

[38]Bennett Berger, Working Class Suburb: A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia, (University of California Press, 1960), 74-75

[39]The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (NY: Free Press 1962), 187-196; The Levittowners 190-193. On portrayals of class and gender see Richard Butsch "Class and gender in four decades of television situation comedies" Critical Studies in Mass Communication 9 (December, 1992) 387-399. On the "emasculated man" and television during the 1950s see Spigel, 60-65; "What Happened to Men" TV Guide & letter to editor

[40]"Lower class Negro television spectators: pseudo-jovial skepticism" in Arthur Shostak and Adeline Gomberg, eds., Blue Collar World: Studies of the American Worker (Prentice Hall, 1964), 431

[41]Robert Bechtel, Clark Achelpohl, and Roger Akers, "Correlates between observed behavior and questionnaire responses on television viewing" Television and Social Behavior vol IV, D.C.: US Dept of HEW, 1972, 297. This talking back is an oppositional form of para-social interaction, whereas Horton and Wohl conceived it as a conforming response, accepting the authority of the television figure. Robert Horton and Wohl, 1954

[42]Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974; Brigham & Giesbrecht; Surlin & Tate