Human beings have always lived in a world of communication, but we live in a world of media communication, where we can travel great distances and across centuries, all in the comfort of our own living rooms. We can "see" what is happening across the globe or out in space or even in unfamiliar neighborhoods of our own cities. We can recreate the Civil War or picture life after a nuclear holocaust. We can vicariously experience enormous suffering and great joy. And we can hear the sounds of other cultures and sense how different peoples experience the world. We may discover that others in the world live very differently from us. We can learn that not everyone lives in the world of media communication and that not everyone who does lives in the same way.

The media have become an inseparable part of people’s lives, of their sense of who they are and of their sense of history. The media provide an ever larger part of the imagery and soundtrack of people’s memories. Some of our most powerful, most intensely emotional, and most important moments are intricately bound up with the media: the 1963 Kennedy assassination and funeral, urban riots from 1965 to the present, the Watergate hearings in 1973 and 1974, the 1986 Challenger disaster, the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the 1995 O. J. Simpson trial and bombing in Oklahoma City, Princess Diana’s funeral in 1997, the Columbine High School shootings in 1999, the Millennium celebrations, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the second Iraq War of 2003.
From a less subjective point of view, the media seem to dominate and demand more and more of people's attention. For the media seem increasingly to have become the news. More and more political issues and debates revolve around the media themselves: There have been numerous cover stories about rap music and violence, about pornography (in cyberspace and on television), about the role of the media in elections, about staging the news, about new telecommunications laws and deregulation, and about new technologies.

If we live in a world of media, it is still important to remember that we do not live in a media world. The media bring the world to us and help to shape that world, but there is still a reality outside of the media. It is becoming harder all the time to tell the real world from the media world, but it is essential to know the difference if diverse peoples and nations are to live together in peace. This book is about the ways in which the world and the media make each other, about mediamaking.

Whereas the world has a kind of durability and reality that resists the media's ability to remake it, the media have a kind of ephemeral quality that make them hard to hold on to. Most stories are fleeting and short lived, and they go out of date all too quickly. But some stories live on in popular memory. Nevertheless, we must choose examples if we are to study this relationship between the world and the media. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, provide a recent illustration of the complexity and the power of the media in contemporary life as well as of many of the problems the contemporary media pose.

In the early morning hours of September 11, 2001, groups of hijackers took control of four different planes, two departing from Boston heading to Los Angeles, one from Newark going to San Francisco, and one from Washington's Dulles Airport en route to Los Angeles. At 8:45 a.m., American Airlines flight 11 slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City. Alerted that there had been some sort of collision involving a plane and the WTC, many television stations trained their cameras on the burning building. When United Airlines flight 175 hit the south tower of the WTC at 9:06 a.m., the collision was carried live on national TV.

A third flight, American Airlines flight 77, was flown into the side of the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., at 9:40 a.m. Aboard the fourth flight, United Airlines flight 93, the hijackers instructed the passengers to call their loved ones from their cell phones or the airplane phones in the seats in order to say goodbye. With these calls, the
passengers were made aware of the fate of the other hijacked planes and realized what was happening to them. A group of passengers decided to fight back against the hijackers. At 10:37 a.m., the plane hit the ground in a rural area outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and all were killed.

Not only were these events an unprecedented tragedy, and a tragedy covered extensively by the media, but also several of the key events occurred on live television: the second plane hitting the WTC and the subsequent collapse of both towers. The major networks broadcast uninterrupted coverage, commercial free, for three days. Television, as it had during past crises, was the primary source of news, images, and information about these events for the majority of the U.S. population (J. Carey, 2002). In addition to this, the media coverage that day revealed the extent to which the mass media have globalized. Live broadcasts from Cable News Network (CNN) went to all the CNN outlets worldwide. Local media outlets from Brazil to Singapore would show a live feed from CNN rather than their own news, especially in the hours soon after the events took place. Live images from U.S. broadcasters were taped and rebroadcast on television globally. Besides the simple fact of this being a cataclysmic event, the WTC employed citizens from a great number of different countries.

But the events of September 11 were also a time when a new medium—the World Wide Web—came into its own as a disseminator of news and information. Initial reports described the Internet as a failure during the crisis because news Web sites were quickly overwhelmed and users found their Internet connections unreasonably slow as networks were overloaded (Rappaport, 2002). But the Internet quickly recovered, and by afternoon the Web established itself as a significant source of news and information. An estimated 40% of Internet households visited Web sites dedicated to news (up from 12% prior to the attacks). Media researcher Paul Rappaport (2002) draws this conclusion:

The Internet emerged from September 11 as a mainstream channel for obtaining news. The events of September 11 empowered users to become active participants in the organization, collection and dissemination of news. It appears that these efforts were long lasting. After September 11, a larger percentage of Internet households continued to rely on Internet news sites when compared to pre-September 11 levels. (p. 256)
One and a half years later, when the United States went to war with Iraq, the Pew Internet and American Life poll showed that “77% of online Americans turned to the Internet in connection with the war” (Rainie, Fox, & Fallows, 2003, p. 2).

After the events of September 11, the Internet also became a site of alternative news, of information not provided by the established news outlets. Individuals’ personal narratives about their experiences that day (including personal photographs and video) were posted to a myriad of Web sites, and innumerable discussion sites appeared where debate over the events, the responsibility for them, and appropriate courses of action raged. The Internet also provided opportunity for a number of alternative theories as to the nature of the attacks to be posed and discussed.

And the Internet was put to more personal uses during the crisis, when e-mails and instant messages were used to contact loved ones in New York and Washington, D.C., once the phone lines became overloaded. The Web also became a site of personal memorials for the victims of the attacks, and acted as a place for counseling and solace for the survivors.

There are a number of ways in which the events of September 11 can be used to springboard a discussion of the mass media today. These have been just a few. Others include the representation of Muslims and those of Middle Eastern descent in the media, the question of civil liberties in the wake of the passage of the Patriot Act, the effect of the WTC images on the audience, and so on. We will return to the example of September 11 throughout the book as different perspectives on the mass media are presented.

The event becomes entwined with the media representations of the event. Though this was an event witnessed first-hand by possibly millions of New Yorkers, for the rest of the country and the world the event is inseparable from its images. Everyone knows that there is a difference between the media coverage and the actual events, we know that thousands of people lost their lives that morning, yet there is no way to imagine or comprehend the attack except through media images. As time has passed, it has become even more difficult to separate the events from the media’s images; even people who were there have had to negotiate with the representations and images that have bombarded them ever since.

The example of the events of September 11 illustrate what we mean by saying that human beings live in a world of media but not in
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a media world. Communication has always been a crucial aspect of human life, but in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the Western industrial democracies, the media have become so intertwined with every aspect of our reality that the line between the two, media and reality, has become blurred and even porous. To try to isolate the media from other parts of our lives—as if we could talk about media and politics, media and culture, media and society, media and economics, or media and audiences—even for the purpose of study is an oversimplification. For the media are already implicated in these other realms: The media are already involved in making them what they are, even as these other realms are involved in shaping the media.

Consequently, this book is based on a different model of the place and power of the media in contemporary life: the model of mediamaking. This term is intentionally ambiguous. It implies that the media are themselves being made while they are simultaneously making something else. Above all, it suggests that we must see the media and all of the relationships that the media are involved in as active relationships, producing the world at the same time that the world is producing the media. This means that the media cannot be studied apart from the active relationships in which they are always involved: We cannot study the media apart from the context of their economic, political, historical, and cultural relationships. Studying the media is not an additive process, as if we can first understand the media and then add their effects on politics and economics. But at the same time, we cannot study some real political or economic events and then hope to understand the role of the media in representing them. To repeat ourselves, the media are constantly being made by the very same relationships that they themselves are making. If this sounds circular and somewhat confusing, think about the relationships in your own life. Virtually by definition, relationships are matters of reciprocal influence.

Making is the primary activity of media: making money, making everyday life, making meaning, making identities, making reality, making behavior, making history. And it is in these various activities of making that the media themselves are made, that we can speak of the media as making media. Making, then, points to the fact that the world of human life is a world of practices. Practices are the various forms of human activity that transform some aspect of human reality. Practices are activities that change the world, such as political practices, economic practices, intellectual practices, social practices, sexual practices,
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and so on. We must always be aware of the complexity of the media in relation to human practices as we attempt to understand the contributions that the media make, both positive and negative, to the very form and substance of contemporary social existence.

In this chapter, we will discuss the dimensions of the concept of media and its relation to the idea of mediation. Then, we will present the two dominant models of communication that have influenced the study of media. What each model presents is a way of analyzing the media that uncovers media's power to effect or control.

MEDIA AND MEDIATION

Defining and Distinguishing the Media

Everyone is familiar with the term media; people see it and use it all the time. But what do they mean? Many people use the term media to refer to television, yet the term cannot be limited in this way, although television is certainly one of the most important media of our times. (Note also that medium is singular and media, plural: television is a medium; the media are . . . ) Some people assume that the media are simply technologies that can be described in terms of the hardware of production, transmission, and reception. Although technology is obviously crucial to contemporary communications media, they cannot be understood simply as hardware, as if they existed independently of the concepts people have of them, the uses people make of them, and the social relations that produce them and that are organized around them every day.

Let's begin by outlining how the media can be described and differentiated. There are many ways of categorizing media, precisely because they are complex and multidimensional structures or formations.

We can categorize the media according to the geography or type of social relationships they are designed to construct or used to support: Interpersonal media are primarily used for point-to-point, person-to-person, communication; mass media are primarily used for communication from a single point to a large number of points, or from a single source to an audience that includes many people. Whereas interpersonal media usually give the communicator a good deal of control over the audience, mass media allow the communicator little power to
select and little likelihood of knowing much about the audience. Whereas interpersonal media enable the sending and receiving of messages from both ends, mass media tend to separate the sender and receiver. Interpersonal media include the telephone and the telegraph. Mass media include newspapers, magazines, books, radio, broadcast, satellite and cable television, film, records, and tapes. There is a third category, network media, which can be used as either interpersonal or mass media; even more important, they can also be used to create a new geography of social relations, connecting many points to many points, all of which can be both senders and receivers. Examples of network media are teleconferencing, the postal service, fax, e-mail, the World Wide Web, and new hybrid cellular telephones connected to the Internet. These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, we often think of the telephone as an interpersonal medium, but at the turn of the last century, it was also used as a mass medium, broadcasting news and even opera performances into the home.

We can categorize the media according to a number of different modalities. One modality is the channel used in communicating: print (books), electronic (television), chemical (film). Another modality is the sense experience on which particular media operate: visual (books), aural (radio), tactile (Braille), mixed (television). Economic modalities are important, as well: directly purchased media (books, records, magazines, and tapes), media that can be delivered to an audience without direct cost (network television or radio), media that charge for general access (cable television, Internet providers), and media that charge for the right to view specific content (pay television, films).

We can categorize media by the institutions that produce and disseminate them. For example, we distinguish network television from local independent television stations from cable systems. We also distinguish between media produced by corporations (like television networks and film studios), those produced independently (known as grassroots or alternative media), and those produced for personal use (like home videos). We can distinguish different technological manifestations, especially of what appears to be the same communication technology: Think of the difference between a family television, the large television in a sports bar, and the Diamond Vision screen behind the stage at a concert arena. But there are also different uses of a technology: The same television set can be used to watch broadcast or cable television (in other words, receive a TV signal), to watch a prerecorded
videotape or digital video disc (DVD), to play a videogame, or to surf the Internet (with WebTV and its counterparts).

We can also distinguish different forms of media content, which often cut across the media technologies themselves, as when we talk about entertainment or fictional programming, news or journalistic content, and advertising content. We can make finer distinctions among these, as when we separate soap operas from situation comedy shows from Westerns and action adventure fare, all located within the category of television entertainment.

Two other distinctions are worth making in the effort to locate and define a useful concept of communications media. First, we can distinguish communications media from other kinds of information technologies that are also involved in processes of communication. These include patents, copyrights, photocopying, and non-Internet computer programs. Second, we can distinguish media from culture. In fact, one of the most common misuses of the term media equates it with popular culture. People tend to confuse television as a medium of communication with the entertainment content that defines the vast bulk of its programming. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the new technologies of communication have quickly evolved into the major sources of popular culture, and most of the major forms of popular culture are not only distributed by but have often emerged in one or more of the mass media.

This confusion and conflation has resulted in a persistent and common form of criticism of the media: that each new media technology threatens other, more traditional, forms of popular culture. (See Box 1.1, "Sousa on the Menace of the Phonograph.")

BOX 1.1

Sousa on the Menace of the Phonograph

Every new media technology is greeted with alarmist rhetoric. Often, the most extravagant and dire consequences are predicted as the inevitable result of the introduction of the technology. In the early part of the twentieth century, the phonograph was widely disseminated, and the recorded music industry grew rapidly. Here is what John Philip Sousa (1906), perhaps the greatest American composer of marching songs
Sweeping across the country with the speed of a transient fashion in slang or Panama hats, political war cries or popular novels, now comes the mechanical device to sing for us a song or play for us a piano, in substitute for human skill, intelligence and the soul. Only by harking back to the day of the roller skate or the bicycle craze, when sports of admitted utility ran to extravagance and virtual madness, can we find a parallel to the way in which these ingenious instruments have invaded every community in the land. And if we turn from this comparison in pure mechanics to another which may fairly claim a similar proportion of music in its soul, we may observe the English sparrow, which, introduced and welcomed in all innocence, lost no time in multiplying itself to the dignity of a pest, to the destruction of numberless native song birds, and the invariable regret of those who did not stop to think in time. On a matter upon which I feel so deeply, and which I consider so far-reaching, I am quite willing to be reckoned an alarmist, admittedly swayed in part by personal interest, as well as by the impending harm to American musical art. I foresee a marked deterioration in American music and musical taste, an interruption in the musical development of the country, and a host of other injuries to music in its artistic manifestations, by virtue—or rather by vise—of the multiplication of the various music-reproducing machines. . . . When a mother can turn on the phonograph with the same ease that she applied to the electric light, will she croon her baby to slumber with sweet lullabies, or will the infant be put to sleep by machinery? Children are naturally imitative, and if, in their infancy, they hear only phonographs, will they not sing, if they sing at all, in imitation and finally become simply human phonographs—without soul or expression? Congregational singing will suffer also, which, though crude at times, at least improves the respiration of many a weary sinner and softens the voices of those who live amid tumult and noise. The host of mechanical reproducing machines, in their mad desire to supply music for all occasions, are offering to supplant the illustrator in the classroom, the dance orchestra, the home and public singers and players, and so on. Evidently they believe no field too large for their incursions, no claim too extravagant. But the further they can justify these claims, the more noxious the whole system becomes.

Likewise, even fans of a new form of popular culture, especially when it is made available through new media, often themselves assume that the new form is inferior to the older forms it is replacing. Criticism of new forms of popular culture may turn into criticism of the media that carry them. Parents fret that electronic games keep their children away from better activities, such as reading or
exercising. It is true that the media have become the primary space for new forms of leisure activities and popular culture. The twentieth century saw a transformation in older forms of culture as well as a redefinition of leisure and leisure activities. (See Box 1.2, “Leisure in ‘Middletown.’”)

**BOX 1.2**

**Leisure in “Middletown”**

One of the classic studies of American social life is Robert and Helen Lynd’s (1929) *Middletown*, the study of an American small town in the 1920s. The Lynds examined the changes that modernity brought to Middletown between the 1890s and 1920s, looking at such activities as making a living, making a home, training the young, using leisure, and engaging in religious practices and community activities.

Of particular interest to us is their examination of how the automobile and movies—both new technologies in the early 1920s—changed how Americans spent their leisure. The automobile was important for spreading the idea of vacation when families could travel relatively cheaply away from home. Moreover, and for the first time, ordinary Americans could go for a ride on any day of the week. Thus the automobile helped make “leisure time enjoyment a regularly expected part of every day and week rather than an occasional event” (p. 260):

Like the automobile, the motion picture is more to Middletown than simply a new way of doing an old thing; it has added new dimensions to the city’s leisure. To be sure, the spectacle-watching habit was strong upon Middletown in the 1890s. Whenever they had a chance people turned out to a “show,” but chances were relatively fewer. Fourteen times during January, 1890, for instance, the Opera House was opened for performances ranging from Uncle Tom’s Cabin to The Black Crook, before the paper announced that “there will not be any more attractions at the Opera House for nearly two weeks.” . . . Today nine motion picture theaters operate from 1 to 11 p.m. seven days a week summer and winter; . . . twenty-two different programs with a total of over 300 performances are available to Middletown every week in the year. . . . About two and three-fourths times the city’s entire population attended the nine motion picture theaters during the month of July, 1923, the “valley” month of the year, and four and one-half times the total population in the “peak” month of December. (p. 263)
Understanding the media requires acknowledging and accounting for the complexity of the media. Every medium comprises and is shaped by technologies, social relationships (institutions), and cultural forms. Each of these ways of thinking about the media is important, for each contributes something unique to how we understand the media and their relationship to society and social reality. These three aspects of the media are central to our discussions throughout the book.

Technologies

When we think about media, the first thing that comes to mind is the various technologies of communication. *Technology is the physical means of producing, reproducing, and distributing goods, services, materials, and cultural products.* In the case of communication, technology includes the physical media and techniques, the technical practices and machinery, by which we communicate. Communication technologies are expanding and proliferating at an increasingly rapid rate. It wasn’t until 1954 that television was in the majority of American households; by 1960, seven of eight families had TV sets. Stereos were non-existent. There were no cassette tapes, no videos, no cable television, no satellites, no personal computers or personal data assistants, no video games, no cellular phones. Today, even as we write, new technologies are being announced all the time. We anxiously await the arrival of wearable computers, the continued miniaturization of devices, and, someday, teleportation devices. Imagine how our understanding of an event like the attacks of September 11, 2001, might change if the cellular telephones with the capability to capture and send digital still images and video that are now widely available had been commonplace then. What new images, perspectives, and stories could have been told?

Institutions

Technologies are not an independent part of society. Technologies are often created within, shaped by, and controlled by institutions involved in their production and use. *An institution is any large-scale entity, embodying a range of social relationships and social functions, created by humans to perform an essential function for a society.* An institution, then, is a specific social organization where particular decisions
are made and can be carried out. For example, organized religion, the military, the school system, and the government or state can be seen as institutions. Their functions and relative power vary over time. The institution of contemporary mass media comprises industries (such as the television industry) and organizations (such as the National Broadcasting Company [NBC]) that use professionals—people who are trained in and paid for specific skills to produce and distribute media products to a market or audience. In addition, other organizations, such as government regulatory agencies and universities, may also play a role in the complex institutional existence of the media.

More specifically, the relationship between communication technologies and institutions has varied over time as well: In Western Europe through the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic church controlled the technologies of writing and manuscript production. Only the church was allowed to teach writing, and only the church had the resources to control the labor (of monks and priests) necessary for the arduous reproduction of manuscripts. Because of this, the church was able to control what was written and, hence, disseminated. When Johannes Gutenberg, with the backing of his banker, Johann Fust, coupled the printing press with movable type (individual letters of type that could be moved around and reused) in the fifteenth century, he challenged the power of one institution, the church. But the printing press was created within and became part of other institutions—medieval institutions such as guilds and later modern commercial institutions such as banks and mass media industries. And these, in their turn, controlled how the technology was used and what sorts of things could be written, printed, and distributed.

We could also discuss the long history of government regulation of communication and its technologies, from the licensing of printing presses to the licensing of broadcast stations today. Communication technologies are also developed within specific institutions. For example, there was great corporate interest in the development of radio and television in the United States, and great government interest in the development of those same technologies as a public service in the United Kingdom. Governments and corporate institutions also develop and decide the standards and norms for a technology: on what frequencies a broadcast technology can transmit, or how many scan lines will be in a television screen.
Many organizations in contemporary American society produce and distribute things; often, these items are meant to be sold and purchased to make a profit for their owners. Media organizations are no exception (although in some cases and in some other societies, media products are distributed freely). Yet media organizations produce something less tangible than the typical products of business. Rather than producing things (cars, toasters, coffee mugs), media organizations produce cultural forms; that is, formats, structures, ways of telling stories. By cultural form, we mean how the products of media technologies and organizations are structured; how their languages and meanings are structured into codes (see Chapter 5). For example, a typical product of television is the half-hour situation comedy or sitcom, such as an episode of *Will and Grace*. The cultural form of that product is how it tells its stories, a consistent plot structure, ways of presenting and resolving issues, or other genre conventions. It can also be a consistent look or image (a living room with a couch) or use of language (short, one-line quips rather than long, elaborate discourse). Though the idea of cultural form has much in common with the idea of genre, they are not the same thing. A newspaper is a particular cultural form, but it is not in and of itself a genre (though there are genres of newspapers). In many cases, especially when they are first introduced, new media technologies simply borrow cultural forms from older technologies. Early films look a lot like theatrical plays, early television copies the serial form of much radio programming, and so on. Cultural forms are an essential part of how the media make meaning. And cultural forms can be structured and influenced by institutions. For example, the fact that commercials appear every 10–15 minutes on American television, as opposed to every hour—or not at all—in other systems, is a decision of the broadcast companies and occasionally is federally regulated. Cultural forms are also structured and influenced by technologies. For example, you can display a more complex and detailed image on a large cinema screen, but that complexity and detail gets lost on the much smaller screen of a television.

What holds the three aspects of media—technology, institutions, and cultural forms—together, and what provides the unity of the concept of media, is the idea of mediation, to which we now turn.
Mediation

The meaning of the complex term *mediation* has changed over the centuries, but there are consistent themes to these meanings. Rather than giving one definition of mediation, we will give you four of them, because there are four different ways that the term gets used, and all of them are relevant to the study of communication.

According to *Webster’s New World Dictionary, Third Collegiate Edition*, a medium is "something intermediate... a middle state... an intervening thing through which a force acts or an effect is produced." A very old and commonsensical sense of the term is "to occupy a middle position or intermediary," as in interceding between adversaries in an attempt to reconcile a dispute. We still talk about mediating labor disputes between business and workers. Similarly, in Christian doctrine, mediation describes the role of Christ interceding between God and humans. So, the first definition of mediation is *interceding or coming between*.

A second sense of mediation contrasts the mediated with the immediate or the real: for example, when we contrast the media world with the real world, or when we think that there is a difference between objective knowledge and that which has been mediated through the interests of some party. This sense implies that *that which has been mediated has been biased or shaped by the mediator* and can be contrasted with immediate, objective information.

The third sense of mediation is a more modern sense that combines these two meanings. *Mediation is the space between the individual subject and reality.* That space is a space of experience, interpretation, and meaning. In other words, this definition of mediation implies that our notion of reality is always shaped by these things (experience, interpretation, and meaning), which come between one’s self and reality.

Finally, there is a fourth sense of the term mediation that refers to a formal relationship that connects previously unconnected activities or people: for example, the relationship between the producer and the consumer of some message. In this sense, mediation refers to *how messages are transmitted from one person to another*.

The notion of communication is complex because it embodies all four of these senses of the term *mediation*: reconciliation or intercession, the difference between reality and an image or interpretation of reality, the space of interpretation between the subject and reality, and the
connection that creates the circuit of the communication of meaning. This complexity helps to explain the apparently contradictory effects of communication in society, but it also helps us understand why it is so difficult to arrive at a singular understanding of the process of communication. These different notions of mediation underlie the dominant models through which communication usually has been theorized.

TWO MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Any attempt to describe, explain, and understand the media must presuppose something about the nature of the process of communication, for it is assumed that this process defines the essential function or nature of the media. This task is made more difficult because communication is something that we take for granted all of the time. Yet the things that are most familiar are frequently the most difficult to notice, to say nothing of appreciate and comprehend, for we "know" them so comfortably and tacitly. The word communication comes from the Latin term for common. The question is, What is it that is made or held in common through the process of communication?

Communication is not only taken for granted in our society; it is often seen as a magical solution for many if not all of our problems. Some people assert that undesirable situations can be significantly improved through more effective communication. People write books claiming the key to success is better communication skills. People may act as if all of our problems were merely "problems of communication" and not real differences of opinion and values, skill and desire, resources and power. But improved communication may not be enough to relieve the racial tension in our society or, for that matter, to end a war. It may not even be enough to guarantee success in a career, a relationship, or life.

There are two different answers to the question of what constitutes the commonality implicit in communication. These have given rise to two fundamentally different perspectives on the process and practice of communication. The first perspective is grounded in the idea of transportation, in which some thing—a message or meaning—is transported from one place or person to another. Based on the image of transportation, scholars have developed a transmission model of communication. This model relies more on the fourth definition of
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mediation discussed above, the circuit of communication and meaning. The second perspective depends on the idea of the production of a common culture through which the concept of communication is closely tied to notions of community and communion. Communication, like communion, is a process by which a particular community is bound together. This common culture surrounds everyone and everything in its commonality; it is the groundwork upon which both community and every specific act of communication are built. Based on the assumption that a common culture is the basic context of communication, scholars have developed a cultural model of communication. These two models have played a central role in the development of the discipline of communication studies.

The Transmission Model

Modernization is closely tied not only to industrialization, but also to the development of new technologies that facilitated the movement of goods, people, and information. In the eighteenth century, modernization was crucially dependent on the development of modes of transportation, such as all-weather roads and canals. In the nineteenth century, modernization included the advent of the railroad, the telegraph, the elevator, and the telephone.

Among the earliest attempts to develop a theory of communication in the twentieth century, the most successful reproduced the commonsense assumption that communication looks exactly like transportation; that is, that communication is the process of moving messages from a sender through a medium to a receiver. The analogy to transportation is straightforward. In transportation, something—wheat, for example—is moved from a source to a receiver by a certain agency or medium—for example, a train. In communication, a message—a certain sentence or meaning, for example—is moved from a source to a receiver by a certain agency or medium—for example, a linguistic code carried through a telephone. In fact, as media scholar James W. Carey (1989) puts it, "In the nineteenth century ... the movement of goods or people and the movement of information were seen as essentially identical processes and both were described by the common noun 'communication'" (p. 15). By the time the discipline of communication had been established in American universities in the early twentieth century, this transmission model had become the dominant
model among communication theorists. Here is a typical diagram of this view of communication:

Source → Message → Receiver

The transmission model of communication is based on the interpersonal context, in which the major concern is the fidelity of communicating—that is, the accuracy with which the message is transported from one person to another in a linear trajectory—although the model may allow for feedback loops. This model assumes that all communication operates like interpersonal communication. At its simplest level, whether you are talking on the telephone or watching television, your first concern as a receiver of communication is whether what you are receiving is actually the same as (i.e., reproduces) the message that has been sent. The model implies that the major challenge of the process of communication is to successfully transmit the content of a message as if from the mind of one person to that of another—the exact thought and meaning in the mind of the sender is what can, should, and will be placed in the mind of the receiver. This sharing of meaning is called understanding or intersubjectivity.

The transmission model was the basis of Harold Lasswell’s (1948) famous description of the study of mass communication. Lasswell, who wrote about mass media in the first half of the twentieth century, described the study of communication as a series of questions: Who says What to Whom through what Channel and with what Effect? Indeed, almost all of the scientific research in the field of mass communication is built upon this model. Drawing upon research methodologies in sociology, psychology, and social psychology, researchers have studied each of Lasswell’s questions. Researchers have studied the “who” in studies of communicators—the people and organizations that produce media messages and control what gets transmitted. They have studied the “what” in systematic analyses of media content. And they have studied the “to whom” and “with what effect” in the voluminous research on the effects of media on audiences (see Chapter 10).

For example, the school shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 renewed debates about the effects of violence in the media on youth. For the most part, these debates relied on the transmission model of communication. They argue about who (the source—Marilyn Manson or the makers of video games) says what (the message of the
songs or the violence represented in the games) through what channel (compact discs [CDs] and videogames) to whom (the receiver—impressionable youth) to what effect (the murder of 13 people and the deaths of the two shooters). This model assumes that these effects are relatively direct between source and receiver, and so people search for the source or sources of the violent behavior. We can also see this model at work in discussions of propaganda and even education (where it describes a particular model of lecturing: teacher → information → student).

The Cultural Model

The transmission model is the more prevalent model of communication in society today. The cultural model is less well known, so we will spend more time outlining it. The cultural model of communication draws a very close connection between the processes of social communication and the production of a common culture. The notion of culture is one of the most complex yet powerful concepts in modern thinking. Raymond Williams, a British literary critic and communication theorist, has traced the changing meanings of this term.

According to Williams (1958), the oldest use of the term culture already combined two different senses: On the one hand, culture involved notions of honor and worship; on the other hand, it described the agricultural process of cultivation, “the tending of natural growth.” By the nineteenth century, these two meanings were extended to human development, and culture came to take on new meanings. Now the term described the process of “cultivating” particular abilities, sensibilities, and habits in human society (such as when we think of a “cultured person”). It described a particular form of human association and existence (for example, in notions of “folk culture” and “images of the organic or natural community”). Increasingly, the notion of culture was used to describe a particular set of highly valued activities and the “creative practices” that produce them—culture as the set of artistic and intellectual activities and products. For example, one of the most famous definitions of culture was offered by the nineteenth-century English literary critic and state education bureaucrat Matthew Arnold (1869/1960): “The best that has been thought and said.” Finally, in its most recent form, culture becomes synonymous with the whole way of life of a society or people; thus we might talk about the culture of
the Middle East or of Iraqis or of African Americans or even of the dominant American culture.

Williams suggests that even as this last anthropological notion of culture becomes prevalent in contemporary language, the earlier meanings of culture remain active in our commonsense uses of the term. He explains that the reason culture became such an ambiguous and important term in our modern lexicon may have been that it offered a way of both describing and judging the changes that have radically altered the nature of social life since the seventeenth century. These changes, commonly referred to under the general term of modernization or progress, were so sweeping that they challenged any attempt to describe them or to judge them. The theory of culture is based on the attempt to describe the pervasive changes captured in notions of modernization and, at the same time, to identify some criterion against which these changes could be measured.

Williams notes,

Culture was not a response to the new methods of production, the new Industry alone. It was concerned, beyond these, with the new kinds of personal and social relationships: again, both as a recognition of practical separation and as an emphasis of alternatives. (p. xvi)

In his words, "The idea of culture is a general reaction to a general and major change in the condition of our common life. Its basic element is its effort at total qualitative assessment" (p. 295).

Williams makes an important addition to this history of the concept of culture. He argues that what connects the notions of a whole way of life and a privileged set of activities is a set of processes that can properly be called cultural and that are, above all else, ordinary. These processes are ordinary in the sense that they are routinely performed by everyone in their daily lives; they are the processes of language and meaning production, of sense making and interpretation, of communication. It is above all the ordinariness of communication that defines culture as art and that unites the various elements of a whole way of life. For Williams, the dilemma of modern life is not that there is a struggle between the creative (art) and the uncreative (popular culture), but that there is no way for the vast majority of the population to enter into more public and social processes of communication. To transform the culture of the society according to every individual's
experience requires that people be able to use language and the media of communication to both speak within and transcend the already existing common or shared culture. This process is what Williams calls "the long revolution."

Individuals continually attempt to give meaning to their experiences. Interpretations are usually provided for them by the shared languages (verbal, literary, visual) of their culture. But people have to constantly struggle to find ways to interpret experiences that appear to have no place within the existing culture. They create such interpretations, Williams suggests, through their attempts to communicate their experience. Thus communication is a constant process of balancing the possibilities of the culture (social languages, shared experiences, and meanings) with the needs of individuality. If culture remained totally within the already constructed social language, everyone would understand everything, but there could be nothing new in the world. If culture were limited to the innovative realm of the individual, then shared understanding would be impossible. Culture as communication is the process of producing new shared meaning out of the interaction of historically given shared meanings and individually created meanings.

At the same time, for Williams, culture is the set of activities in which this process of producing new shared meanings is carried in the various forms of art and media communication. Making the leap from culture as art and literature to culture as film and television is a simple one. Today's media have certainly augmented older forms of art and have become the dominant means by which culture is created and shared.

The cultural model of communication sees communication as the construction of a shared space or map of meaning within which people coexist. Rather than a linear model, which first isolates the message and then sends it from one place or person to another, the cultural model emphasizes the fact that people already exist within a world of shared meaning that they take for granted. Without this common reality, communication would be impossible, and, in fact, the vast majority of our communication merely serves to ritualistically reproduce that system of shared meanings within which we live.

A number of writers have followed media scholar James W. Carey's (1989) ritual view of communication and suggested that one can look at media presentations as "rituals" to illustrate the ways in which the media function as a cultural forum. When we think of rituals, we think of ceremonies and religious events—a graduation, the
swearing in of naturalized citizens, a wedding, a Holy Communion. Rituals are formal but emotional public events, endlessly repeated, with special meanings for their present participants and equally important meanings for the wider society that has established them. A ritual serves to remind the society’s members of cornerstone beliefs for that society. The ritual’s repetition serves as a marker, both of the importance of those beliefs and of their durability. A cultural model of communication extends this notion of ritual to encompass all of the repetitive practices of communication, such as saying grace before dinner, answering the phone, or greeting a friend.

This system of shared meaning represents the world for us; it gives us a common picture of reality. This concept is often described as ideology. But picture is perhaps not the most accurate description of this process, for we live within these pictures of reality. Map may be a better term, although even that is too abstract and distant from the way in which, in this model, communication defines and determines our experience of the world. But communication as culture can never be limited to ritual, to the reaffirmation of what a community shares, for it must also allow for and even institutionalize the possibility of creativity, growth, and change.

In fact, the cultural model of communication lies within a broader set of theories of the social construction of reality. Such theories start out with the observation that human beings lack the instinctual relationship to reality that enables other species of animals to make sense of and respond to the world. Culture is for humans the compensatory medium of information without which we would be condemned to live in a chaotic reality. Without culture, reality would be available to us only as what William James called a “booming buzzing confusion”; with culture, reality becomes ordered and manageable. Culture exists, then, in a kind of space of mediation, the space between humans as incomplete animals and reality, the space of communication as the production of meaning. This is the third definition of mediation, from our earlier discussion. Human experience is defined in part by the contribution of the specific human culture that binds together a particular community or society. Human beings live in a meaningful world, which they have produced through their own culture. Culture is the medium in which human beings externalize (objectify) and internalize (subjectify) their meaningful experiences of the world. (Chapter 5 will consider these issues in greater detail.)

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Contrasting the Two Models

Consider the relation of the media to the attacks of September 11, 2001, again. Using a transmission model, the analyst understands news coverage primarily in terms of the information that is sent from the media to the audience, or from the government to the media to the audience. Researchers might study the relationships between the various organizations involved in producing various messages: They might look at how the messages are constructed and what correlations there are between features of the message and the audience's response to them; they might try to figure out how audience members process the messages, and what individual audience members do with them. But the transmission model cannot deal with the enormous amount of misinformation and redundancy in the coverage, or with the relationship between news and entertainment.

Using a cultural model, an analyst would ask very different questions and offer very different descriptions of those events. The analyst might begin by pointing out that the language and images (in other words, the cultural forms) used in the news are already understood by the audience; thus the attacks can be incorporated into already existing frames of reference. Some audience members reported that watching the coverage, even live as it happened, was like watching a movie. The live photos of actual events matched the cultural form of the disaster picture and seemed to follow the codes of contemporary special-effects sequences in popular film. Cultural forms give the audience a way of understanding these events—in this case, it was a way of understanding that was at odds with the seriousness of the events (this was not a film; thousands of people lost their lives). Two communication researchers have even argued that the cultural form of the media coverage itself (constant, uninterrupted television coverage; repetition of key images or videotape; the continual speculation as to who was responsible) was sufficiently similar to other media events of this type as to constitute a particular genre, the disaster marathon. This cultural form itself, they argue, greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the terrorists' goal; in other words, the form of the coverage enhanced the terrorists' message (Blondheim & Liebes, 2002).

Similarly, an analyst using the cultural model might offer a different account of people constantly viewing the war coverage on television. Rather than assuming that people are seeking information about the
attack, we might assume that television viewing in this crisis serves to create and reinforce our sense that we are part of a community that is sharing this highly emotional and dramatic event (as evidenced by the great increase in the display of flags and other patriotic signs soon after the events). More viewers watched the news in groups than usual (J. Carey, 2002). This is indeed a media event, through which we ritualistically share the experience of being part of the American community. In this ritual watching of television, we find a way of coping with the anxieties and fears of a people at war. In this regard, we can compare this event to other instances of national grieving or celebration in front of the television set, as when the Challenger space shuttle exploded after liftoff in 1986, when O. J. Simpson was tried for murder in 1995, or when the Millennium was celebrated.

A cultural model of communication might also begin by recognizing the enormous power of language, culture, and rituals, focusing its attention on the ways in which the coverage reaffirms the shared systems of meaning and values that define American culture. In this light, we can view the presentation of Osama bin Laden as an evil threat not only to peace but to the fundamental values of liberty, justice, and the American way. The coverage of the war on terror continuously reaffirms our own sense of our moral and technological superiority.

The model would also recognize that the very language used to describe the events of September 11, 2001, structures both our interpretation of those events and the possible responses to that event. For example, the events were labeled as an attack, which is an act of war, and the United States’ response was made within that framework: A war on terrorism was launched, al-Qaida prisoners were considered prisoners of war and treated according to the rules of war. Conceivably, these events could have been labeled as crimes (theft, kidnapping, and mass murder) and the perpetrators criminals (rather than militants or soldiers). Our response to crimes involves a quite different procedure and different laws than war does.

Cultural reaffirmation is a constant element of our relationship to the media. In light of the cultural view, we can understand most of popular culture in terms of its constant affirmation and reproduction of already taken-for-granted meanings and values in American society: the importance of the family, belief in the power of the individual, the value of competition.
There are a number of ways to distinguish between the two models. Many people assume that research carried on under the auspices of the transmission model is always quantitative, based on statistic analyses applied to data gathered through either experimental or survey research methods, whereas research within the cultural model is predominantly qualitative, based on either the researcher interacting with the people he or she is studying in natural settings (ethnography) or the interpretation of texts. However, this distinction is by no means absolute, and there can be qualitative work within a transmission model and quantitative work within a cultural model. The sociologist Edward Shils once made a similar distinction by suggesting that the transmission model had lots of answers, but the questions were usually so specific as to be uninteresting, whereas the cultural model had lots of interesting and important questions, but they were so difficult that no answers were possible. Underlining Shils's distinction is the fact that the transmission model develops by generating and accumulating specific answers from specific case studies, whereas research within the cultural model develops more as the result of theoretical argument. Rather than accumulating and averaging across specific results, cultural research develops increasingly sophisticated concepts to deal with its growing recognition of the complexity of the processes of media communication. In this book, we are concerned less with the specific findings of research than with the conceptual and theoretical tools that enable scholars and critics to understand the media in all their complexity.

The two models also have different relationships and responses to the idea of context. As we have already said, it is impossible to separate communication from its context, to isolate its forms and effects from its relations with other forms and institutions of practices. Researchers committed to the transmission model nevertheless make a choice to isolate specific aspects of the media and also to isolate the media from the various elements of the context. By focusing on particular relationships between elements of the media and other similarly isolated aspects of the context of social reality, such as a particular political campaign or a particular economic trend or aspect of the audience's identity or response, researchers hope to address very important questions about the influence or effect of the media on local events and circumstances, such as the effect of certain kinds of war reporting on public opinion about the war. Choosing the transmission model allows
Researchers to study the impact of the media on individual members of society and the psychology of media impact on various subgroups in the audience according to the rules and methods of quantitatively defined science.

On the other hand, choosing the cultural model, because it highlights the context of media activity, allows the researchers to address questions about the ways in which particular media practices reinforce or challenge existing social trends and tendencies. Researchers do not use the cultural model to describe the immediate impact of a media product or message. Rather, because it places a particular media product or message in its context, this model will be used to identify the way in which such messages fit into larger structures of influence and effects. For example, a cultural study of war coverage would be likely to focus on the enduring images of militarism, moral purity, and belief in the power of technology to solve human problems. Some researchers are trying to find ways to reincorporate a commitment to context within the transmission model, and those committed to a cultural model often must limit the complexity of the context that can be taken into account.

Although many scholars assume that the transmission and cultural models of communication contradict each other—that they have to choose one model or the other—we strongly disagree. We believe that each model has something important to say about the complexities of communication in the contemporary world; the usefulness of each model depends on our particular questions about communication. Thus we prefer to think of the two models as complementary perspectives. However, we must not forget that even when the two models appear to be addressing similar questions, there are likely to be significant differences: what each means by “effects,” how messages are identified, how the relations between messages and effects are described and “measured,” the kinds of evidence used to establish such a relationship. Although the two models of communication suggest very different understandings of the process, it is necessary for us to hold both models of communication in mind constantly. The decision about which model is more relevant and useful in a situation depends upon the situation and our questions.

The relationship between these two models will become clearer as we proceed with this book, for we will draw upon the research and writing of both traditions of communication studies as we attempt to
explain the power of communication in contemporary society. What unites these two models is that both help us gain a better understanding of the power of media communication.

MEDIA AND POWER

Identifying the relationships between media and power is pivotal to understanding contemporary society. The media have the power to engage and entertain, to create and destroy, to open spaces and to close them. Recognizing the context of the media reminds us that their power depends on their relations with other practices and institutions and that, consequently, they do not wield their powers alone but share them with these other practices and institutions. The notion of power operates at two levels: (1) capacity or determination, and (2) control.

Power as Effect

First, in its broadest sense, power refers to the ability to produce effects, to make a difference in the world. In this sense, every practice has a certain amount and type of power. For instance, television has the power to reorganize how we spend our time, whereas a magazine is less likely to reorganize our time. Television also has an impact on the spatial arrangements of our homes; one of the problems facing anyone who wants to purchase a new large-screen TV set is to find a room in the house big enough to accommodate this device. Magazines are unlikely to have the power to shape the spaces within which we live. In addition, every medium, from printed books to electronic networking, has significantly reshaped people’s experience of time and their sense of history.

This view of power as the ability to produce changes or effects in the world is closely connected to the notion of determination. In its most common usage, determination is thought of as causality. For example, some people believe that the statistical relationship between education level and income level demonstrates a causal relationship: Higher education level necessarily brings about higher income. In this sense, education determines income. To use another example, many people have argued that exposure to pornography causes viewers to exhibit specific, demeaning attitudes toward women. Some people have even argued
that pornography is responsible for its users' violent behavior toward women. If that is the case, pornography can be said to determine attitudes and even behaviors toward women.

Another sense of determination follows from the more contextual vision of social life that we have advocated here. In this view, the relationship of any practice to its effects cannot be isolated and identified, because it depends on the entire context. What a specific practice or set of practices can do is limit and shape the outcomes; we then say the effects are over-determined. Consider some examples: In this view, pornography cannot be isolated from a wider range of other media representations that portray women as objects to be used by men (think, for example, of many ads in such popular magazines as *Maxim* or *Vogue*). But the effects of even this broad range of media portrayals cannot be identified outside of the context of social relationships and other aspects of our culture that help to define, shape, and limit the construction of sexual identities and differences. These social relationships not only qualify the impact of pornography, they also help to explain its production: It is not surprising that pornography is a major product of a sexist society. That is why we can speak of the overdetermination of pornography's effects.

Let's consider again the relationship of education and economic success. How is this relationship overdetermined? Consider that access to education is itself dependent on many other factors, including social class, race, gender, and family income. Furthermore, the very meaning of education is constantly being challenged and rethought. Some ask whether life experience should earn credit in school or college; others debate whether the point of college is vocational training or general intellectual advancement. Similarly, current discussions around the question of multicultural curricula in colleges raise a number of crucial questions: Does becoming well educated mean learning about European-derived culture only, or should students be exposed to the broad range of cultures, ethnicities, and histories in the world? To the extent that education level is related to a whole host of other social factors in one's life that mediate its relationship to income level, that relationship is overdetermined.

**Power as Control: Consensus and Conflict**

There is a second meaning of the notion of power: *control* over people and resources. In this sense, power can be understood as producing,
and then operating through or exploiting, social differences in the world. To begin to understand how media have power, we need a theory of how social differences are produced and of their importance in society. Some theories of society, commonly referred to as consensus models, emphasize the unity and harmony within society and the ability of different peoples to get along together. Typically, Americans think of their nation as a "melting pot" in which different groups come together in a common identity: We are all Americans.

One of the most influential examples of a consensus model of society in media theory is the work of John Dewey, the eminent philosopher, educational theorist, and communication critic of the first half of the twentieth century. Dewey (1925) offered a sophisticated cultural model of communication based on the idea that communication is the process through which different groups in the society come to understand and accept each other despite their differences. Communication is the means through which a nation forges a common identity, a common purpose, and a common resolve.

Dewey felt that the new media of communications were not meeting the challenge presented by the complex problems facing America at the turn of the twentieth century: vast immigration from eastern and southern Europe, shifts of population from rural to urban areas, and increasing economic interdependence among the different regions of the country. These historical changes in American life meant that different groups in the society were unable to understand each other and to act together toward a common goal. Dewey thought the mass media of the day (including newspapers, magazines, films, and later radio) were failing to fulfill their essential purpose of creating a common language that would result in a sense of national community with which people could understand each other and which would enable people to act together. This enormous faith in the power of communication and its ability to create new forms of unity out of the chaos produced by historical change explains Dewey's belief that "of all things communication is the most wonderful" (1939, p. 385). Although Dewey was writing in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, his argument has a modern parallel: Throughout the 1990s the Internet was often seen as providing an opportunity to bring people together and to bring back a dimension of community that was seen to be missing in American life.

However, other theories of society, commonly referred to as conflict models, emphasize the conflicts and inequalities within social life and
the difficulties different groups have in living together. These critical theories of society emphasize the fact that the various resources of a society are unequally distributed according to various structures of social difference. Every society has resources that are highly valued: force, money, meanings, morals, identities, political position, emotions, pleasures, and so on. Some of these are more highly valued than others. Each of them enables those who possess and can use the valued item to have certain powers or capacities to make a difference (the first sense of power described earlier) in the world. The case of money is quite clear: Money can produce more money—when you know how to use it—and it can enable its possessor to purchase many other things as well. But as the old Beatles' song goes, "Money can't buy me love." On the other hand, we might not think of emotions as a resource of value until we think about the way in which people use emotion to control other people or the fact that people need emotional bonds to remain healthy. By the same token, the power to influence meanings—a topic we explore in detail in Chapter 6—is the power to define questions or the power to define what others view as important and how they think about them. It is the power to define what others take as common sense. This is power, indeed.

These resources are not equally distributed across all members of the society. Different groups have more or less access to resources and a differing ability to use them. Moreover, such groups are not randomly defined; the distribution of resources is organized hierarchically according to systems of social differences. Every society identifies a variety of features that differentiate groups, but only some features are considered relevant to the distribution of resources. For example, in American society, we certainly distinguish blond-haired, blue-eyed people from brown-haired, brown-eyed people. However, no one justifies segregation in schools according to such differences. On the other hand, we do organize the distribution of resources differentially by social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual identity, age, and differential abilities. And this is what critical scholars mean by a system of social differences.

For example, feminism is a theory of society that emphasizes the unequal distribution of resources by gender and sexuality: It describes a society that subordinates women and privileges men, and it labels this society as patriarchal. Although almost every society in human history has been patriarchal, feminism argues that it is important to identify the
particular forms of inequality that characterize contemporary society. Women, for instance, tend to make less money than men and often they are expected to work in the home, without pay; women tend to be subject to verbal and physical violence by men; women tend to have less access to political power (in the United States, there has never been a woman elected president or vice president); women are often viewed and represented solely as sexual objects; and women are thought of in our society as being more emotional and less rational than men. You might think of many other ways in which women are subordinated to men in our society. Feminism is a theory of society that attempts to identify and challenge the subordination of women in these systems of difference. A feminist theory of communication examines the ways in which media communication contributes to these relations of inequality between men and women.

Other conflict theories of society look at the subordination of racial and ethnic groups relative to the White majority; of the working class relative to the wealthier elites; of children and the aged relative to young and middle-aged adults; of homosexuals relative to heterosexuals; of various religious minorities relative to the Protestant majority of America; and of the physically handicapped relative to the physically able.

In recent years, many of these subordinate groups in society have challenged their subordination—including their portrayals in and access to the mass media. Increasingly, questions of culture and media communication have been central in such struggles. These struggles are transforming the political and cultural life of the United States and the rest of the world. And they have had a profound impact on the study of media, for they have placed questions of power as control at the center of the discipline.

It is difficult to choose between consensus and conflict models of society. Media theorists who favor a conflict model of society generally view the more consensus-oriented alternative as defending the status quo, the current way of life and all of its inequalities. On the other hand, media theorists who stress the consensus model of society tend to defend their vision by appealing to the liberal faith that society is continuously progressing and that the lives of all people within society will improve in the future as they have in the past. Moreover, they argue that conflict theorists give too much importance to the problems of power and overlook progress and harmony in human life.
In this book, we use both models of society—the consensus and conflict models—because we believe both theories of society describe important aspects of the media's role in making American society and people's lives. As we have said, the media do play an important part in making the structured inequalities of different groups in the society. But, although we recognize that the media contribute to these relations of subordination, we also believe that the media have positive and beneficial effects in society. And we believe, like Dewey, that media help to make us a community. Many contemporary struggles have been addressed by the media in a variety of ways. Media have a vital role to play in transforming society and in producing a more equitable social structure.

Somewhere between the pessimism of the conflict model and the optimism of the consensus model, we have to find the space for an appreciation of both the positive and negative sides of the media's role in American society. To become a critic of media is to walk a thin line between these two alternatives. The danger of pessimism is that you begin to think that people are so vulnerable to the media's messages that every exposure to entertainment subordinates them further. However, the danger of optimism is to ignore the ways in which real people suffer as a consequence of the power of the media.

One final note: There is no correlation between social theories and communication models. Or, to put it differently, there is no necessary relation between one's view of society and the model of communication one supports. Scholars who use a cultural model can hold to either a critical or a consensual model of society, as can those who use a transmission model. The questions facing communication scholars are too complex to reduce the field of possibilities before we have even begun.

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PART II: MAKING SENSE OF THE MEDIA

5. Meaning

The Meaning of Meaning
   Where Is Meaning?
   What Is Meaning?

Semiotics and the Meaning of Meaning
   Codes and Meaning
   Meaning and Difference
   Signs and Meaning
   Semiotic View of Meaning

Meaning and Competence

Conclusion

Suggested Readings

6. The Interpretation of Meaning

The Nature of Interpretation
   What Is the Text to Be Interpreted?
   Why Have We Turned to This Text?
   How Does a Text Communicate?

Interpretation and the Author

Techniques of Interpretation
   Narrative Analysis
      Story
      Discourse
      Time
   Genre Theory
   Semiotics
      Semiotic Analysis
      Content Analysis
      The Analysis of Visual Texts

Conclusion

Suggested Readings

7. Ideology

Ideology, Reality, and Representation

Reality and Theories of Ideology