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Gendering the Commodity Audience: Critical Media Research, Feminism, and Political Economy

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Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, media scholars sorted the field into the categories of "mainstream" versus "critical" research. These adjectives instantly communicated where one stood in terms of the root assumptions and valuations undergirding one's work – as well as which side you rooted for at the staged debates where administrative researchers like Elihu Katz or Wilbur Schramm debated some representative of the opposition – perhaps James Carey, or Herbert Schiller, or Stuart Hall (Meehan 1999; see Poole and Schiller 1981). At the time, the administrative paradigm so dominated the field that its practitioners often assumed it was the only way to do research, rejecting other approaches as subjective, unsystematic, and impractical – as "armchair theorizing" little better than wishful thinking. Thus George Gerbner underplayed the intellectual hostility associated with the paradigmatic debates when he titled his special 1983 issue of the *Journal of Communication* "Ferment in the Field." Glancing back, I am struck by the "mainstream" paradigm's ability to unify its opposition – to place Carey, Schiller, and Hall on the same side. But I am also struck by the absence of feminist work in that benchmark publication, despite the *Journal*'s openness to feminist work under Gerbner's editorship (e.g., Busby 1975; Cantor 1977, 1979; Lemon 1977; Poe 1976; Streicher 1974) as well as the tremendous outpouring of feminist research across media studies in the 1970s generally (e.g., Arnold 1976; Brabant 1976; Holly 1979; Janus 1978; Marzoff, Rush, and Stern 1974–5; Morris 1973; Ogan and Weaver 1978–9; St. John 1978; Tuchman et al. 1978).

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One decade later, in two issues of the same journal, Michael Gurevitch and Mark Levy published essays addressing "the future of the field," which were republished under the title *Defining Media Studies: Reflections on the Future of the Field* (1994). The book organized its forty-eight contributions into seven categories (disciplinarity, new directions, influencing public policy, audiences and institutions, critical research, history of the field, and academic curriculum and legitimacy). Administrative research dominated the volume and critical scholarship was sprinkled across four of the categories. In the critical category, two essays focused on political economy (Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko 1994; Schiller 1994); the other two on cultural studies (Grossberg 1994; McChesney 1994). Overall, only one essay offered a feminist perspective. H. Leslie Steeves's "Creating Imagined Communities: Development Communication and the Challenge of Feminism" (1994) in the public policy category. Yet, in describing the collection, Gurevitch and Levy state:

> The paradigmatic debate (or "dialogue") that dominated communication scholarship in the '70s and early '80s has been replaced by new and different intellectual nudgings, by the injection into communication scholarship of *recently emergent perspectives such as feminism,* post-modernism, and neofunctionalism. (1994, 7, emphasis mine)

As a political economist, trained during the period leading up to "Ferment," and as a coauthor of an essay in *Defining,* I find this all rather disturbing, yet oddly unsurprising.

That contradictory reaction motivates this essay. As a political economist, I have focused my research mainly on the internal structures of media-based corporations – which shape the form and content of cultural commodities (e.g., Meehan 1991) – and the external relationships between such corporations – which also shape cultural commodities and which construct media markets (e.g., Meehan 1990). Working at this level of abstraction generally has meant treating large-scale, impersonal institutions as agents with little reference to the actions, struggles, or alliances of human beings. Much of the feminist scholarship in communications takes a less abstracted point of entry: women working in the industries (Martin 1991); women's use of mediated artifacts (Radway 1984; Steeves et al. 1988); the fictional men and women offered as role models by the media (Byars 1991; Byars and Dell 1992); or some combination of these concerns (Andersen 1995; Stabile 1995).

Connections between feminist lines of research and institutional lines of research may not be readily apparent. The conditions of people's work and leisure, and the artifacts that they employ in each sphere, may seem fairly remote from the impact of transindustrial conglomeration on blockbuster films or the structure of markets in the broadcasting industry. Yet political economists and feminist scholars understand that patriarchy and capitalism have been historically intertwined in the United States from the nation's founding. This suggests that important connections between patriarchy and capitalism can be discovered by scholars who synthesize feminist and political-economic approaches to media research. It also suggests that our research heritages can be taken as one starting point from which to articulate that synthesis.

To test this, I return to a defining moment in political economy – the Blindspot Debate over the commodity audience, which raged in print in the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* (Smythe 1977, 1978; Murdock 1978; Livant 1979) and in person (Smythe, Murdock, Garnham) at the 1978 conference of the International Association for Mass Communication Research in Poland. After summarizing the Blindspot Debate, I then return to my own analysis of the commodity audience in national television. I review that work to tease out the dynamics of patriarchy and capitalism that undergird the markets for commodity ratings and commodity audiences. This particular intersection of feminism and political economy suggests that much can be gained by such revisionist exercises, which, in concert with new syntheses and new approaches to research, may generate an intellectual rapprochement between feminism and political economy in media studies.

What Do the Media Make?

This seemingly innocent question drove the Blindspot Debate. Having posed the question, Smythe (1977) suggested that most critical researchers of the period would respond thus: the media were consciousness industries that made texts (films, television shows, etc.) embodying the dominant ideology, which was absorbed by the average audience member as naturalized, common sense. Hence, media were best studied by decoding texts to uncover the ideology that produced consciousness. Smythe dismissed this as a blindspot of Western Marxism, caused by academic Marxists' overriding concern with ideology and their rejection of both political economy and political action. Smythe next posed his own, then-startling, answer: the media manufactured only one commodity – audiences. By this, Smythe meant that all media assembled, packaged, and sold audiences to advertisers. Content was secondary – a free lunch at best. Media industries were neither dream factories nor consciousness industries: they were hunter-gatherers of the audience.

These bold claims generated considerable debate, with Murdock (1978) taking the lead. Murdock offered a series of differentiations to scale back Smythe's claims. For Murdock, media earning revenues from advertisers were clearly different from media earning revenues directly from audience members. This separated movie studios, book publishers, and recording labels from television networks, newspapers, and magazines. Only advertiser-supported media produced commodity audiences but, for Murdock, even those media could not be reduced to transactions between corporations. He argued that any media artifact operated at two levels: economic and cultural. While the economic level was of greatest interest to media companies, it was less relevant to audiences being processed for sale. The images, ideas, visions, narratives, characters, and performances embodied in the media artifact, and the people comprising the audiences for such artifacts, also needed study. Murdock called for research recognizing the economic and cultural dimensions of commercial media.

Smythe responded by critiquing Murdock and reasserting his central claims. Over the years, other scholars engaged these issues, shifting the focus and testing the claims of the original debate (D'Acci 1994; Jhally 1982; Livant 1982; McCormack

1983; Meehan 1984; Wasko et al. 1993). The phrases "audience commodity" and "commodity audience" entered the critical lexicon. That such a commodity existed and played a crucial role in advertiser-supported media generally became axiomatic in political-economic research on media. Further, as advertising ("product placement") increasingly shaped content in movies and books, the demarcation between advertiser-supported and audience-supported media artifacts thinned. However, for scholars working on reception or representation, the significance of the audience commodity in their decoding of texts or reconstruction of readers' reactions was little appreciated, as pointed out by such critical cultural scholars as Stabile (1995) or Budd, Entman, and Steinem (1990).

Case Study: Broadcasting and Ratings

As Smythe's notion of the audience commodity became established, it also became a focus for research. In my case, that meant exploring the audience commodity in the U.S. system of national broadcasting. My research focused on the corporations that oligopolized network broadcasting (RCA's NBC and CBS in radio; RCA's NBC, CBS, and ABC in television) and in the market where those networks sold and advertisers bought the audience commodity. These transactions were highly routinized. The employees who made the deals relied entirely on the ratings book, which specified the number of people in the audience and described them in rough demographic categories. These employees were not executives; they were relatively low-paid and generally female. Yet their labor put together the basic transactions from which networks earned revenues.

These crucial transactions were routinized through dependence on the ratings. This suggested a structural dependence between the market for the audience commodity and the market for ratings. From 1929 to the present, advertisers and networks had typically purchased ratings from a single provider. The buyers' apparent willingness to allow a monopoly suggested that the dynamics in this market deserved closer inspection. Rather than rehearse my research into the history of the ratings industry and the rating market's structuration, I will focus on the results of that research. Four elements that emerged from it are relevant for this discussion.

The first element was shared demand: advertisers and networks demanded measurements of bona fide consumers. Bona fide consumers had the disposable income, access, and desire to loyally purchase brand names and to habitually make impulse purchases. This consumerist caste expanded and contracted in response to capitalism's boom-and-bust cycle. To accommodate the shared demand for consumers, the ratings monopolist selected methods that discriminated against mere listeners or viewers. For example, during the Great Depression, the C. E. Hooper Company used telephone interviews to measure the commodity audience; in the 1975–80 recession, the A. C. Nielsen Company (ACN) based its sample on cable households. In both cases, the measurement method ensured that the sampled households had the funds, desire, and location that allowed them to subscribe to nonessential services. This clearly differentiated the methods and reports of such ratings "research" from social-scientific studies of audience behavior. In ratings, unified demand for the consumerist caste shaped measurement practices.

The second element was the connection between demand and price, which revealed a discontinuity between advertisers' and networks' interests in the size of the commodity audience. The larger the number of bona fide consumers viewing, the higher the price charged by networks. Conversely, the smaller the number, the lower the price. This discontinuity allowed the ratings monopolist to play networks against advertisers, and corporations to form alliances across industries. During the early 1960s, NBC tried to restructure the market by persuading advertisers to shift demand from "how many viewers overall" to "how many viewers between 18 and 34." ABC joined in the campaign and the two networks persuaded advertisers that 18- to 34-year-olds were better consumers. By 1963, ACN was shifting its sample to emphasize the new demographic; the networks followed by replacing "old favorites" like *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Petticoat Junction* with "youth-oriented" and "socially relevant" programs like *Mod Squad* and *Storefront Lawyers.* Similarly, in the early 1970s, cable channels used this discontinuity to insert themselves into the relationships among advertisers and networks, and to persuade ACN to measure cable audiences. Discontinuity in demand, then, was used by "players" to renegotiate relationships and restructure the market, thereby changing how the commodity audience was defined and measured.

The third element to emerge was the cybernetic nature of the commodity audience (Mosco, 1996). The commodity audience was knowable only through the ratings that measured it and those ratings were the outcome of corporate rivalries, alliances, and manipulations.

This led to the fourth and last element: television's commodity audience had nothing to do with the people who watched television.[1]

These four claims emerged from my institutional analysis of the long-term, impersonal relationships between corporations constituting the markets for commodity ratings and commodity audiences. Building on these claims, I then organized "television" into three markets. The market for commodity ratings served as the fundamental market that set the parameters within which the market for the commodity audience and the market for programming worked.

Three of the Markets Constituting Broadcast Television

The ratings monopolist balanced continuities and discontinuities in demand through its selection of measurement practices. The monopolist responded to continuities in demand by targeting the bona fide consumers demanded by advertisers and broadcasters; unless demanded, the rest of the viewership was unimportant. Discontinuities meant that either the ratings monopolist or blocs of buyers could attempt restructuration of the marker for commodity ratings; the monopolist's methods and its definition of the commodity audience responded to shifts in market structuration and participants' power.[2] Given its monopoly position and the pricing conflict that separated advertisers and networks, the ratings monopolist exercised some agency in selecting its methods, thereby controlling costs of production. All of these economic concerns shaped the ratings reports and ensured that they were commodities – not research.

Based on the ratings commodity, advertisers and networks set to work low-paid, female employees relying on ratings to conduct the transactions in which networks sell their portions of the commodity audience to advertisers. This market and the routinization of its transactions depended entirely on the power relations embodied in the market for commodity ratings. Ratings became the proverbial floor upon which this market rested. And, although ratings were widely dismissed as misleading or inadequate in the trade press, they were treated as absolute truths in this market.

Upon that market was erected yet another structure: the market for programs in which networks, their internal production units, and independent producers negotiated over programs. Decisions here relied on track record, that is, on previous success in the ratings. A proven track record meant either that the production unit's previous series had earned high ratings or that elements of the proposed show had been featured in last year's top-rated programs. Elements included the proposed stars, type of cast, typical plot, genre, and "twist" in the genre's formula.[3] Networks assumed that past success was a predictor of future success – always defining success in terms of the ratings. The ratings, then, shaped decisions about contracts for new series and employment, about casting and plots, about routine and innovative representations.

With track record as the main prognosticator of success, no network would accept – and no producer would propose – a series without a track record.[4] But even the best prognostications go wrong. Historically, most new series are canceled due to poor ratings. Indeed, a tenth of a rating point can mean the difference between retention and cancellation. Thus, commodity ratings set the limits of broadcast programming in the present and the future.

Engendering Markets

For broadcasting, then, Smythe was both correct and incorrect. His analysis revealed that the main product manufactured by networks and sold to advertisers was the commodity audience. But his belief that the ratings monopolist exercised no agency misled him. The political economy of ratings, as summarized above, demonstrated the key role played by the market for commodity ratings and traced the structural forces that constructed ratings as truly *manufactured* commodities whose content depended on changing power relations within that market.

Returning to the main concern of this essay, I now ask: what does a feminist perspective illuminate about these ungendered markets and the ungendered corporations operating within them? My answer is twofold: taking a feminist perspective reveals that societal divisions of labor based on gender, plus prejudicial assumptions about gender, played a significant role in defining and differentiating the commodity audience. To see this, let us return to industrial concerns about the demographics of the commodity audience.

Although age grade became a central concern in the 1960s, the demographic category of gender was an industrial concern for the rating monopolist, advertisers, and broadcasters from at least 1929. Indeed, the female commodity audience had a special place in network schedules: in the daytime, doing housework, listening to talk shows and episodic serials. Both forms of programming were geared toward advertising, whether indirectly using product placements in the script or directly as commercial interruptions. Episodic serials were called soap operas as much for their content as their ownership: soap manufacturers produced the shows and contracted for broadcast time on NBC or CBS to run them. The ratings monopolist[5] treated female audiences as the normal, naturally occurring listenership for daytime programming. During the Great Depression, there was no interest in households without telephones, women who worked outside the home, or men who did not. This carried over into the 1960s and was reflected in Nielsen reports on daytime viewership by women, which carried such titles as *Where the Girls Are*.

Opposite daytime and its female commodity audience was "prime time" and its highly prized male commodity audience. However, prime time was not "where the boys were" but rather where *the* audience was. Networks that couldn't draw *the* audience counterprogrammed for niche audiences, meaning women, or women and children, or African Americans, or Hispanic Americans, or some combination thereof.[6] This subtle shift in language gendered the commodity audience as male and assumed its descent line to be European. Thus the commodity audience was differentiated into the valuable and desired audience of white men produced by the network that won the ratings contest versus the niche audiences begrudgingly produced by networks that lost the ratings contest. As *the* audience, the white male commodity audience had a "higher quality" for which advertisers willingly paid.

The industrial definition of "higher quality" shifted when NBC and ABC succeeded in joining age to gender as the crucial markers of *the* audience. That commodity audience narrowed to the white men aged 18 to 34 within the ACN sample. As cable channels squirmed their way into the mix, cable subscription was added to the industrial definition of *the* audience, yet again narrowing the commodity audience, this time to white male cable subscribers 18 to 34.

With two further modifications in this industrial definition, ACN adjusted its ratings to take into account social status and women's employment outside the home. The long recessionary cycle that spanned 1975–89 coincided with second-wave feminism. Through the same period, the Reagan and Bush administrations' monetarist policies effectively transferred wealth from the general population to the elite, promoted the exportation of heavy industrial operations, discouraged wage increases for workers of middle or lower social status, and encouraged companies to replace employees with temporary contractees (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). Among other things, these synergistic policies brought more women generally, and more college-educated women specifically, into the documented workforce. In such two-income households may be seen one effect of second-wave feminism: these women generally retained some control over their earnings.

In any case, ACN expanded its demographic categories to include "working women" as well as the terms "upscale" and "downscale" to identify the social status attached to occupation and income. For advertisers, upscale white male cable subscribers aged 18 to 34 watching television during prime time became the most valued and demanded commodity audience. Daytime remained women's time, although upscale women 18 to 34 and upscale working women 18 to 34 using video-cassette recorders to tape programs were more highly valued than mere housewives. Among the new niche audiences for prime time, the category of upscale white working women aged 18 to 34 and subscribing to cable had sufficient attraction for advertisers that networks designed programs blending elements of soap operas into action–adventure programs.[7]

This periodic narrowing of *the* audience demonstrates the difference between the commodity audience and the people who actually watch television. It also suggests that noneconomic assumptions undergird beliefs about what sorts of people *ought* to be *the* audience and that those assumptions follow familiar patterns of discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, social status, sexual orientation, and age. Given limitations of space, I will discuss only the assumptions about gender.

Such institutionalized sexism might be dismissed as pragmatic given certain assumptions about gender and money: most of the workforce was male; men earned more than women; thus more men had more to spend than women regardless of women's occupations. Advertisers wanted spenders, so networks and cable channels had to target men to meet advertisers' demand for spenders.

According to these assumptions, the three markets operated rationally by discriminating against women. The market for commodity ratings necessarily placed greater value on measurements of males than on measurements of females. The market for the commodity audience rationally preferred buying the male commodity audience in prime time and treated the female commodity audience as a special niche with limited and time-specific appeal. When some of that latter commodity audience gained and controlled income, they become a very special niche – one that could be attracted through the manipulation of subtexts in male-oriented programming. That left the market for prime-time programming gearing production for the male commodity audience, but with female-friendly elements to attract the subniche of upscale women. Television was largely in the business of men – counting them, characterizing them, selling them, and programming for them. As long as "society" defined men as the proverbial breadwinners, that social reality governed the decisions of advertisers, networks, and the ratings monopolist.

Of course, that argument could be countered on its own stereotypical grounds: a sexist society may have defined men as breadwinners, but it also defined women as spenders. In the patriarchal division of domestic labor, woman's work included shopping for the household's general needs, for her own needs, and for the man's needs. The idealized version of that division of labor sent men outside the home to work for wages and women to spend those wages by shopping. Through their shopping, women assembled the materials necessary for men to rest and recuperate. If advertisers wanted to reach spenders, then they needed to target that category of people socially designated as spenders: women. Could advertisers have been blinded by sexism?

That question, posed ironically, has played out concretely in the history of two cable channels: ESPN and Lifetime. ESPN was launched in 1979 as a twenty-four-hour sports channel. It quickly gained acceptance from advertisers and cable operators. Now 80 percent owned by the Walt Disney Company, ESPN has added three more sports channels (ESPN-2, ESPN Classic, and ESPN News) and a chain of restaurant/entertainment complexes called ESPNZone. While ESPN attracts mostly male viewers, it has not been categorized as a narrowcaster – that is, a channel serving a niche audience with highly defined and delimited tastes (Disney 1998).

In contrast, since its launch in 1984, Lifetime has consistently been treated as a narrowcaster reaching a small niche audience – women. As part of ABC's and Hearst's joint ventures in cable (A&E, Lifetime), the channel enjoyed success in terms of inclusion on cable systems but struggled to attract advertisers (Byars and Meehan 1994). Eventually, Lifetime reorganized its prime time schedule in an attempt to attract upscale heterosexual couples.[8] That seemed to turn the trick for Lifetime, which now carries extensive advertising for everything from aspirin to cars.

With Disney's acquisition of ABC, Lifetime seemed poised to launch a second channel targeting women in their teens and twenties, but nothing came of it.[9] Although Disney's 1998 annual report extolled the transformation of ESPN from cable channel into franchise, no similar plans seem to be on the horizon for Lifetime (Disney 1998). While audience gender is not the only variable differentiating the corporate histories of these two channels, this sketch suggests that being a "channel for men who love sports" places a company in a position significantly different from being "television for women."

Feminism and Political Economy

When reanalyzed from a feminist perspective, my case study of broadcast ratings yielded an unexpected finding: a structural contradiction between patriarchy and capitalism embodied in a fundamental market in the television industry, and effecting the structure of two derivative markets. The structure of the market for commodity ratings assumed that men controlled both wages and spending, making them *the* audience. But the market structure ignored similarly patriarchal assumptions about the domestic division of labor that assigned the household's shopping to women. While men as breadwinners and women as shoppers fits into the patriarchal division of labor that was idealized in the 1950s, the fact remains that women have always worked in this country. Not only have women been allotted a considerable share of the caretaking and household purchasing, but women have sought and secured paid work.

Paralleling the social status of men's blue-collar occupations have been women's pink-collar jobs: grocery clerk, secretary, domestic worker, telephone operator, nurse, farm worker, court reporter, teacher, etc. These occupations typically offered lower wages than those paid for blue-collar jobs, regardless of the levels of skill – suggesting that the patriarchal devaluation of women was echoed in capitalism's wage structure. For the market in commodity audiences, that would make male earners a better buy, but only if they adhered to a nonpatriarchal division of domestic labor. With a patriarchal division, an audience of female shoppers was the better buy. Because this contradiction was not articulated in the demand for commodity ratings, the ratings monopolist had no reason to investigate or to resolve it.

One might expect that contradiction to emerge and be resolved in the 1980s as political-economic changes forced more women into the workplace and into white-collar occupations. As women achieved greater – though not perfect – economic equality, they would seem likely candidates for inclusion in *the* audience. Yet, despite the ratings monopolist's adoption of categories to sort viewers by occupational status, women remained marginalized as niches. Males remained the object of the rating firm's art, with upscale males the most prized trophies.

This makes little economic sense. In capitalism, money is supposed to be the great leveler. Arbitrary social distinctions that unfairly oppress individuals are supposed to evaporate when people enter the market for goods and services as consumers, or when they offer themselves as labor. The logic of profit should drive advertisers to demand shoppers regardless of the gender, social status, race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., of the particular people buying the bars of soap, rolls of toilet paper, or cans of beans. Why, then, do such distinctions persist in the markets for commodity ratings and commodity audiences – in markets where companies essentially trade in people?

A feminist political economy allows us to answer that question in terms of both gender and social status. The overvaluing of a male audience reflects the sexism of patriarchy as surely as the overvaluing of an upscale audience reflects the classism of capitalism. Each practice is rooted in the illogic of prejudice, that is, in the ideologies naturalizing the oppression of women and of working people.[10] Those ideologies shape corporate decisions such that corporations structure markets as instruments of oppression and not as liberatory spaces. Indeed, restructuring markets to foster the liberation of women and working people would actually undermine the interests of individual capitalists and of capitalism, which profit from disparities in income and oppressive social relations. From this perspective, television is structured to discriminate against anyone outside the commodity audience of white, 18- to 34-year-old, heterosexual, English-speaking, upscale men. This recognition is crucial to scholarly work on television. Whatever amenities or pleasures television offers to viewers outside *the* commodity audience, television is an instrument of oppression.

Notes

1 Because Smythe assumed that the audience commodity and the viewership were identical, I use commodity audience to differentiate the manufactured audience from the viewership.
2 Other possibilities may exist; these are the two that I have identified.
3 "Twists" are minor innovations in plot, character, props, setting, etc., that are used to differentiate among series building on similar track records. Twists and track record are

typically balanced. For example, the more recent series *Nash Bridges* was derived from *Miami Vice*. Both starred Don Johnson; both were crime dramas about an ensemble of undercover police officers who wore stylish outfits, talked tough, raced about in luxury cars, and were frequently lectured by a senior officer. In *Miami Vice*, the authority figure was the unit's enigmatic captain; in *Nash Bridges*, an internal affairs officer investigating the unit. Here the twist is gender: the investigator was cast as a stylishly dressed woman who also served as Bridges's love interest. Where officers in *Miami Vice* experienced considerable moral ambiguity, *Nash Bridges* maintained a clear division between cops and robbers. Where *Miami Vice* specialized in a brooding, enigmatic atmosphere, *Nash Bridges* struck an upbeat note through the use of bright lighting for indoor scenes. Where Johnson's character and his partner drove through Miami at night, Nash and his partner raced around an eternally sunny San Francisco. On *Miami Vice*, Johnson's character lacked stable and fulfilling relationships outside his work. On *Nash Bridges*, Johnson's character had good relationships at work and at home: he easily led his unit, had established a personal friendship with his investigator, acted as a loving and protective father to his daughter, and seemed to be a dutiful, if skeptical, son to his father.

4 This has encouraged producers "pitching" innovative shows in terms of old shows; the best-known example, perhaps, being Gene Roddenberry's attempt to persuade network executives that a science fiction drama targeting adults should be thought of as a Western: *Star Trek* was really *Wagon Train* set in outer space.

5 The American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Association of National Advertisers owned the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting, which provided ratings only to those AAAA and ANA members that subscribed to the service. CAB conducted telephone surveys with a long list of questions asking respondents to recount every fifteen minutes of radio listening done the day prior to contact. Unsurprisingly, CAB reported low ratings. The C. E. Hooper Company capitalized on the networks' discontent while offering advertisers and agencies results from telephone surveys that asked for a report of current listening and of listening during the previous fifteen minutes. Greater accuracy combined with a lower cost from expanding the buyer base worked: CEH monopolized broadcast ratings throughout the "golden age" of radio. ACN achieved monopolistic control over network radio and television in the 1950s. It maintains its monopoly over television ratings to the present day and has extended operations into web site ratings.

6 Little if any interest has been expressed in Native Americans or viewers descended from immigrants from Asia or the Pacific Rim.

7 For example, in *Miami Vice*, the melodrama centered on whether Johnson's character would recover from the death of his previous partner, form a bond with his current partner, and sort out his love life. In *Nash Bridges*, the melodrama focuses on the continuing story of one man's family. Johnson's character must deal with the romance between his daughter and one of his subordinates, maintain his relationship with his father, and transform the woman investigating his operations from antagonist to friend and, perhaps, lover.

8 Personal interview with Judy Girard, head of programming, Lifetime, New York, 1995.

9 Personal interview with Douglas McCormack, Chief Executive Officer, Lifetime, New York, 1995.

10 Although the particular dynamics shift as demographic categories shift, I believe that the basic analysis holds for people of color, speakers of languages other than English, people younger or older than the valued age grade, gay men, lesbians, etc. One would look for dynamics rooted in colonialism, ageism, heterosexism, etc., and trace the connections to patriarchy and/or capitalism.