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REDEFINING THE LIMITS TO THOUGHT WITHIN MEDIA CULTURE:
COLLECTIVE MEMORY, CYBERSPACE AND THE SUBVERSION OF MASS MEDIA

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by

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Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

Genesis 11:1

Dedicated to my parents
Audrey Jean Slade
George Leon Slade

My first and finest teachers.

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of a series of events which led me deep into the world of cyberspace and provided me with direct experience of the unique dynamics of a novel medium. In 1990 Professor Gregory Bloomquist encouraged me to use the Internet for my Master of Arts research in the field of early Judaism and Christianity. By joining the online e-mail conference, *Ioudaios*, I was able to access dozens of scholars from around the world. This greatly facilitated my research and convinced me of the power of the Internet as a scholarly communication tool. These were the 'pioneering days' of the 'Net.' Using an '8088' with a monochrome amber monitor, a 1200 baud modem, and a University of Ottawa Internet account I began to document electronic journals and newsletters for the Office of Scientific Publishing at the Association of Research Libraries (U.S.) between 1991 and 1993.¹ During the same time I created an experimental electronic publication called *CONTENTS* which published the 'grey literature' of the Religious Studies Department, University of Ottawa. Using the Internet publishing systems known as Gopher, mail servers, and FTP (File Transfer Protocol) I archived bibliographies, research papers, and complete dissertations produced by the students and professors of the

¹Michael Strangelove and Diane Kovacs. *Directory of Electronic Journals, Newsletters, and Academic Discussion Lists*, edited by Ann Okerson. (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 1991, 1992, 1993). In the first edition (1991) of the *Directory* I documented 110 electronic journals and newsletters available on the Internet. By 1998 the seventh edition documented over 3,400 serial titles, twice as many as were included in the sixth edition. An Association of Research Libraries press release notes that, "Summary analysis of the entries in this year's *Directory* indicate that, out of 1,465 titles categorized as electronic journals, 1,002 are peer-reviewed and 708 charge in some manner for access. In the 1996 edition, 47 journals were peer-reviewed and 168 were only available on a fee basis. Increasingly, traditional print publishers are making their titles available electronically. These exist both as e-versions of their paper products and as new electronic products that supplement or replace the print journal. Scientific journals constitute the greatest number of entries in the journals section, with 29%. Fourteen percent of the journal titles are categorized as arts and humanities journals, while 28% are social science titles." See arl.cni.org/scomm/edir/pr97.html located April 1998.

Department (the World Wide Web was still three years away). These two projects, the *Directory* and *CONTENTS*, led me to consider the possibility that cyberspace (the Internet) was evolving into a novel form of mass communication which would change the communication and learning process of individuals and institutions. I began to explore historical precedents of new modes of communication which would shed light on the social effect of this novel medium.

In early 1993 I began writing for the newsstand magazine, *Online Access*, (now sadly out of print) with a focus on the social and commercial possibilities of cyberspace. This led me to consider how the rise of electronic mass media systems provided the socializing infrastructure for modern capitalism. In 1994, with the publication of my self-published book, *How to Advertise on the Internet*, I developed an economic and social theory which explained cyberspace as the fragmentation of commercial monopolies and the democratization of mass communication.

This dissertation represents the refinement of my early speculations on the nature of cyberspace. By combining an economic and political notion of mass communication with an anthropological model of symbol systems and social reproduction I hope to shed light on how cyberspace represents a new form of social reproduction within media culture. In my earlier writing I have used the phrase "Electric Gaia" as a metaphor for the reorganization of media culture inherent within cyberspace.² Electric Gaia provides a metaphor for the rise of globalized feedback, collective memory, and a new form of social interconnectedness and accountability inherent within cyberspace. The following is one more tentative step towards describing the possibilities which millions of Internet users are creating through the realm of cyberspace.

²Michael Strangelove. "The Essential Internet: The Birth of Virtual Culture and Global Community," *Online Access*, October 1993. 28-30.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how cyberspace will impact upon mass media's socialization process within media culture. Mass media is defined as an élite-owned system which produces a limited number of symbols that socialize the audience according to the requirements of the economic system. The audience of mass media is described as located within media culture which is the location of media's symbol-flow. Cyberspace is defined as structurally-differentiated from mass media. Its distributed design has made it impossible for monopolistic ownership or state control to regulate completely the flow of symbols (communication and content production). Thus I conclude that cyberspace represents the democratization of symbol-flow (or the radicalization of free expression) within media culture.

Case studies of media texts and events demonstrate the structurally-differentiated symbol-flow of mass media and cyberspace, the former being highly-constrained by the economic system, the latter exhibiting a highly-unconstrained flow of symbols (with symbols equivalent to shared meaning and values). With these two different types of media systems, constrained and unconstrained symbol-flow, I then apply a model of symbol-flow as a form of cultural reproduction. Mary Douglas' theory of collective memory describes culture as the arena of shared implicit assumptions about humans and nature. These assumptions are embedded in symbols which act as a form of social meta-communication. The social order is communicated through the symbols which are in use within social interaction. Collective memory allows us to analyse mass media as a highly-controlled form of social reproduction (thus the success and power of its socialization process is explained). Collective memory also allows us to identify how cyberspace will impact upon the socialization process of mass media.

If the economic system is highly dependent upon mass media's constrained flow of symbols for its socialization effect (and it is), then unconstrained communication/symbol-flow within cyberspace represents the potential subversion of the dominant meanings and values which are reproduced through mass media. I argue that cyberspace potentially undermines the socialization process established through mass media. Collective memory provides a tool for examining the implications of a structurally-differentiated mode of communication (cyberspace) which has arisen within media culture in the late twentieth century.

Redefining the Limits to Thought Within Media Culture: Collective Memory, Cyberspace and the Subversion of Mass Media

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Introduction

In this dissertation I argue that cyberspace subverts (undermines) or contradicts the values of the current economic system. This argument is established through the use of an anthropological model of communication known as public, or collective, memory. Collective memory explains the reproduction of the social order through the communication of symbols which embody shared assumptions at the foundation of social order. Mass media provides a focus for examining the communication of symbols within contemporary society. I will argue that mass media exercises definitional control over social reality by reproducing implicit assumptions characteristic of the economic system. After establishing that this definitional control rests firmly in the hands of mass media and the élite I will then demonstrate that cyberspace undermines this control through its unconstrained flow of symbols. Case studies will establish the nature of mass media's definitional control and the nature of cyberspace's subversive symbol-flow. Collective memory will then serve as a conceptual basis from which one can explore how a new form of symbol-flow within media culture subverts the definitional control of mass media and thereby redefines the limits to thought within social worlds under the influence of the economic system. This description of mass media as a highly constrained symbol set will suggest that a highly unconstrained flow of symbols (cyberspace) undermines the assumptions reproduced through mass media. My work can thus be identified as a theory of cultural change. The nature of symbols will explain how a new form of communication, cyberspace, necessarily entails a new social order. This analysis will demonstrate that cyberspace is both an emerging form of mass media, and that in terms of ownership and structural characteristics, cyberspace is also a distinct form of mass media.

Methodology

Since 1985 I have studied aspects of social context and its impact upon the structure of thought and the formation of belief. After looking at how patron-client dynamics were embedded in the autobiography of Flavius Josephus (*Vita*) in my M.A. thesis (University of Ottawa) I turned my attention to the social formation and control of thought, values, beliefs, and emotions within contemporary society.

The broadest scope of this dissertation encompasses the communication and reproduction of culture. Here anthropologist Mary Douglas has provided my main methodological approach. Douglas' ethnography continues the Durkheimian project of defining the relationship between cosmology and social practice. I am interested in how symbols and implicit meanings communicate the shared social world. How does one symbol or shared value relate to other symbols and values? Is the 'web of meaning' tightly woven or highly fragmented within contemporary society? How do symbols within the social world communicate the shared world-view of a group? These are some of the questions which lie at the foundation of this project.

My research has focused upon how culture as a communicative process sets limits to individual freedom by establishing perceptual and affective bias which shapes the mind to the structure of the social world. Following Douglas I have outlined a model of collective memory which describes the communication of culture across the social world and also identifies the resistance to change within culture through pollution beliefs. Collective memory provides a metaphor for the production of symbolic systems at the local level and at the global level of contemporary society. Collective memory also provides a tool to explore the phenomenon of mass behaviour within the modern context. How is mass behaviour communicated and

maintained within an increasingly globalized world-system? What are the processes behind the social control of thought and what are the limits and possibilities of individual freedom? How do different symbol-sets (cosmologies) interact locally and globally? These questions I explore through cultural theory.

The processes of globalization have also been a focus of my study. Anthony Giddens' concept of reflexivity has provided me with means to relate global communication processes (politics, art, economics, education and so on) to local cultural practices. Reflexivity describes how individuals think about what they do and alter behaviour based upon new information from the social world. Both reflexivity and collective memory describe how symbol-sets and social interaction are dynamically connected without being seen as determined by, or reducible to, the other.

The focus of this study is the interaction between media and culture. A model of collective memory and reflexivity is applied to the phenomena of mass media and cyberspace. My focus is how mass media and cyberspace are implicated in the production of mass behaviour. Collective memory provides a communicative model of culture which usefully explains how global media systems are involved in the control of symbolic production.

Religion provides a focus for exploring how media systems affect the communication of religious symbols and values. My research in this area explores how Hindi religious symbols are spread throughout South Asia through the indigenous film industry. The impact of the economy of mass media upon American religious values is also explored. Sociologist Peter Beyer's observations on the impact of globalization upon religion provides a point of comparison for examining how globalized media systems affect religious systems.

My interest in mass media lies in its relationship to mass production and mass consumption, a system herein referred to as the economic system. Is mass media an essential ordering element of a globalized economic system? Economic theory and media theory suggest that this is the case. I identify the ordering process of mass media as the monopolization of symbol production and dissemination within contemporary society. This monopolization process and its consequent impact upon local culture I explain through the model of collective memory, which describes the relationship between cosmology and the social world. Do global media systems contribute to the homogenization of local cultures into a 'global village'? What is the context of a local culture's cosmology when it is situated within the economic system? How does the symbol-set(s) of mass media interact with the symbol-set(s) of local culture? What role does the perceptual and affective bias of local culture play at the interface to globalized symbols within mass media? These are the main questions I raise about mass media's participation in the social control of thought through the production of symbols and meanings.

If mass media reproduces the economic system through the monopolization of symbols within media culture, then how will cyberspace impact upon this reproduction process? I define cyberspace as the unconstrained flow of symbols, or the democratization of symbol production and dissemination within media culture. Is cyberspace a communicative process which threatens the monopolization of meaning within the economic system? These contrasting processes of monopolization and democratization of symbol-sets are explained through the dynamics of collective memory.

I describe mass media as a communicative process of the economic system which embraces all social structures such as education, family, state and so on. Collective memory

enables me to describe how legitimation and authority are dependent upon mass media's saturation of the symbol systems within the social world and its exclusion of alternative symbol-sets. To what extent does a new mode of communication (cyberspace) enable a new set of symbols to arise within the social world? Do cultures arise out of various modes of communication (such as oral culture dynamics providing one mode, electronic mass media providing another and cyberspace defining yet one more mode, and so on)? Is cyberspace seen as a threat because it embodies symbols which are excluded from the flow of symbols within the economic system? Do the symbols within cyberspace represent a threat to authority within contemporary society? These are my main research questions which explore the role of mass media and cyberspace within the processes of collective memory at the interface between global media systems and local culture. Religion, war, politics, drugs, Barbie, McDonald's, the Church of Scientology and the economic system are the subject of various case studies.

My hypothesis is that, in the present period of its development, 1997 to 1998, cyberspace subverts the symbol-flow of mass media. By cyberspace I mean the global interconnected network of computer networks commonly referred to as the Internet, but also embracing corporate and government networks, as well as all proprietary commercial computer networks, such as CompuServe and America Online, wherein these networks exchange electronic mail (e-mail) and access the World Wide Web (Web). Mass media I define as elite and government-owned media systems such as publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. Symbol-flow refers to the content -- texts, broadcasts, and images -- which is transmitted via media systems. Media systems are herein conceived of as symbol-producing systems.

I will argue my hypothesis by demonstrating that symbol-flow within cyberspace counteracts the transmission of the values implicit within the economic system which controls mass media and by demonstrating that cyberspace escapes the rule of law which normally protects the ownership of mass media's content. My methodology is based upon the application of a cultural model of communication, that is collective memory, to the structurally-differentiated characteristics of the two main symbol systems presently sharing the social communication space, that is mass media and cyberspace. I intend to apply an anthropological model of symbol-flow and social reproduction to mass media and cyberspace texts and unveil the contrasting values implicit within the texts of these two structurally-differentiated media systems. After defining collective memory (*Chapters One and Two*), I will describe how mass media functions as a definitional system which monopolizes the flow of symbols within the social worlds of the economic system and which is firmly in the control of elite wealthy owners. (*Chapter Three*). I then compile case studies by various authors to demonstrate that mass media reproduces the implicit values of the economic system. Five case studies will provide this demonstration, including environmental activism, religion in South Asian and American media, the Gulf War, and Watergate. In the fifth case study I will explore how a school textbook from Ontario, circa 1925, reproduces implicit assumptions which reflect the state's classification of the self (*Chapter Four*). Having demonstrated the nature of mass media's definitional control, I will then explore how events in cyberspace exemplify definitional subversion. In two case studies, one involving the Mattel Corporation's Barbie doll and one involving the McDonald's Corporation, I will demonstrate that symbol-flow within cyberspace subverts the values implicit within the economic system. In a third case study I will demonstrate that symbol-flow within cyberspace

can subvert the self-definition and economic foundation of a specific institution. I will take as an example the case of a religious system, the Church of Scientology (*Chapter Five*). These case studies provide the justification for my conclusion that the unconstrained symbol-flow of cyberspace represents emerging social orders otherwise constrained by the current economic system (*Chapter Six*).

The Argument

1. Symbols carry implicit assumptions that reproduce social reality (*Chapter 1*).
2. The classification system behind social reality is enforced through pollution beliefs (*Chapter 2*).
3. The flow of symbols within the present economic system is restricted by mass media systems (*Chapter 3*).
4. As a result of the monopolization of symbol-flow within media culture the economic system socializes mass behaviour to suit its needs (*Chapter 3*).
5. Monopolization of symbol-flow creates implicit assumptions which reproduce mass behaviour (*Chapter 3*).
6. Implicit assumptions of the economic system can be identified within local cultures by examining media texts (*Chapter 4*).
7. Cyberspace subverts the global flow of symbols. *Therefore:* the restricted symbol-set which socializes behaviour within the economic system will undergo fragmentation and democratization (*Chapter 5*).
8. Given that the limits to thought within media culture are established via the monopolization of symbol-flow, cyberspace changes the boundaries of the limits to thought (*Chapter 6*).
9. Collective memory suggests that such a change in symbol-flow will result in change in social reality (*Chapter 6*).

Marshall McLuhan described his study of media effects as the study of the “subliminal life of a whole population, since they go to great pains to hide these effects from themselves!”¹ Collective memory may provide a model of the ‘subliminal life’ of local cultures as they are influenced by the globalized dissemination of mass media symbols. Where McLuhan explored how electronic technology externalized and globalized the human subconscious,² I will explore how mass media globalizes the implicit assumptions and perceptual bias of the current economic system. By examining the anthropological implications of structurally-differentiated symbol-flow within contemporary media systems this dissertation brings a new perspective to communications study. Media theorist James W. Carey notes a “virtual absence” within mass communication research of “anything more than a rudimentary conception of symbolic processes.”³ This absence within the field will in some measure be filled by this experimental ethnography of the texts and values of individual and collective content-producers within the new media realm of cyberspace. The essence of my contribution can be described as an anthropology of mass communication which equates patterns of symbol-flow with patterns of social order, and then examines the implications of structural change within symbol-flow technologies (media systems).

The three case studies of cyberspace media events in *Chapter Five* represent a form of experimental ethnography which arises out of a present “crisis of representation” within

¹Quoted from a letter to Barbara Rowes (15 April 1976) in W. Terrence Gordon’s *Marshall McLuhan: Escape into Understanding*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1997), 316.

²*Ibid.*, 314.

³James W. Carey. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1992, originally published in 1989), 55.

anthropology.⁴ Anthropologists George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fisher describe the ‘crisis of representation’ within the field of ethnography as arising from “uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality.”⁵ Writing about cyberspace is like writing about the surface of a fast-moving river, things are changing within the subject but not so fast that another traveller will fail to recognize the same river from my travelogue. Unlike the distant cultures of many classic works in anthropology, the culture under investigation herein is accessible to any one of over forty million Internet users. Furthermore, as long as Barbie dolls, McDonald’s restaurants, and the Church of Scientology exist, these cultural symbols will be redefined by various groups within cyberspace. Thus experimental ethnography of cyberspace-based events, texts, and communities departs from the “unique research experience” which only the ethnographer “has practical access [to] in the academic community,” as described by Marcus and Fisher.⁶ This new level of accessibility to the subject may prove to be an important change in anthropological studies. Marcus and Fisher note that the ethnographer’s authority and the ethnographic text’s “pervasive sense of concrete reality” is ultimately derived from “the writer’s claim to represent a world as only one who has known it firsthand can.”⁷ As cyberspace is highly accessible within the academic community, experimental ethnography concerning this medium will stand independent of the authority of the ethnographer and his or her unique fieldwork experience.

⁴George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fisher. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 8.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 21.

⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

Writing culture within the realm of cyberspace will prove to be a collective venture, where multiple ethnographies confront each other and where the observed and the observer will find equal access to the same cultural phenomena. Cyberspace promises to bring a heightened degree of reflexivity within the writing of culture, among the subjects of ethnographies, and between academics. Thus as foundations of scholarly authority, a unique experience and a privileged text will no longer suffice. I suspect that cyberspace will gradually move the subject into the centre of a new form of academic dialogue, a dialogue that is both oral and print-based, mono- and multimedia, and where authority is more elusive. When faced with a social phenomenon such as the World Wide Web, one that is less than five years old at the time of this writing, one must, to borrow a phrase from Clifford Geertz, live “by the creed of “perhaps.””⁸

The three cyberspace case studies of *Chapter Five* were selected for analysis because they are international in scope; because they involve clearly articulated sides in a complex cultural debate over symbols and values; and because they are diachronic, with time lines going back to 1994, the first year of the World Wide Web, which marked the beginning of a fully multimedia cyberspace. The experimental ethnography was done through the use of the World Wide Web and various search engines such as AltaVista (www.altavista.digital.com) and Internet directories such as Yahoo (www.yahoo.com). AltaVista allows for complex searching of cyberspace material otherwise not easily located, while the Yahoo directory allows one to determine what information is readily available to novice users (for example, to see how easily one can access

⁸Clifford Geertz. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 163.

redefined and contested images of Mattel's Barbie doll, see the Yahoo subject area, "Recreation:Toys:Dolls:Barbie:Barbie As A Pop Icon: Distorted Barbie, The").

What Are Symbols?

Analysing media systems involves looking at the way different media systems influence the flow of symbols between individuals. Symbols, as I use the term herein, denote anything which has a degree of shared or contested meaning between two or more individuals. A Coke bottle, a crucifix, a car, words -- any object can serve as a symbol. Following upon Douglas' conception of a social system as *that which is constituted by a dominant pattern of symbols*, my concern here is focused on how two different media systems, mass media and cyberspace, influence individuals and their social systems. I am assuming that the flow of symbols, that is the content of mass media systems, is structurally constrained by the communication media system, and that different media systems such as mass media and cyberspace will result in a different impact on the pattern of symbols.

Douglas focuses upon the role of symbols in the constitution of culture and individuals. Her use of the term suggests strong parallels with Victor Turner's understanding of symbols as "social and cultural dynamic systems, shedding and gathering meaning over time and altering in form."⁹ Symbols involve more than thought or reason. Turner notes that they also produce "effects on the psychological states and behaviour of those exposed to them or obliged to use

⁹Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 22.

them for their communication.”¹⁰ I will argue that cyberspace may dramatically affect the present social systems as a result of its ability to mediate a wider range of symbols than is currently available through mass media systems. Both Douglas and Turner speak of symbols as ordering the universe.¹¹ Here I am concerned with how control over the flow of symbols within media systems, be it mass media or cyberspace, is essentially control over the possibilities of social reality.

Mary Douglas uses her grid/group theory and a typology of institutions (hierarchy, market, and sect) to look at how symbols and social order change. As my macro-level analysis is concerned with the operation of collective memory across the broad spectrum of cultures implicated in globalized mass media, the issue must necessarily remain at an equally broad level of abstraction. Therefore, this dissertation will not make use of Douglas’ grid/group theory or her institutional typologies.¹² The aspects of Douglas’ culture theory upon which I draw herein

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹For an investigation into the psychological and metaphysical meaning of symbols, see J.E. Cirlot’s *A Dictionary of Symbols*, second edition, translated by Jack Sage. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, republished 1984). Cirlot fails to account sufficiently for immediate social interaction as informing the meaning and interpretation of symbols.

¹²George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fisher criticize Douglas and Wildavsky’s typology of American society in their cross-cultural analysis of the environmental movement (*Risk and Culture*), “the argument reflects, on the part of Douglas, a distinctly British-style conservatism, originating in a society with a long tradition of culturally valued centralism.” Marcus and Fisher. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 149. That Douglas’ typologies and cultural types should exhibit a cultural bias perhaps is an inevitable problem of trying to describe the processes of cultural bias. At the very least, she confirms aspects of her own theories through her cultural bias. James A. Boon (“America: Fringe Benefits,” *Raritan*, Volume 2, Number 4, 1983, 97-121) also takes issue with Douglas’ grid/group analysis and notes that her typology tends to succumb to her own cultural bias.

are only those which are common to human discourse throughout the world (ritual, symbols, implicit meanings, pollution beliefs and public memory.)

What is the Current Economic System?

Herein the current economic system refers to the concentration of the ownership of production systems with ownership of mass media systems among the wealthy. This wealthy group herein is referred to as the élite. It should be kept in mind that though these production and media systems may in part be owned by thousands of shareholders, nonetheless, effective control and majority shareholdings remain in the hands of the élite. The economic system's universal value system is based on a common valuation of money. The majority of individuals participate within this system by exchanging labour (or time) for money. The economic system is thus a global system of exchange wherein individuals trade time for money in the pursuit of diverse goals and values. From an anthropological point of view, I assume that the economic system is a social order defined by mass media's symbol-flow. This system's cosmological realm can thus be said to be the symbol-set communicated through mass media. The historical roots of the current economic system can be traced to the close of the nineteenth century when capitalism added to its mode of production a mode of socialization. Social historian Stuart Ewen describes this transformation as a "retooling of worker-industry relations ... Such retooling was not to be in the area of redefining control over industry, but was directed more toward the arenas in which workers might commit themselves to the industrial process."¹³

¹³Stuart Ewen. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 14-15. By the early 1900's American

What Is Mass Behaviour?

The term mass behaviour herein denotes the collective patterns of consumption which are implied in the interconnected web of the economic system. Consumption encompasses both the symbolic goods of mass media and the consumer goods of the economic system. Mass behaviour therefore refers to the majority of consumption practices within the realm of the economic system as the result of definitional systems such as mass media and mass consumption. Thus, I characterize mass behaviour not from the perspective of consumer goods but from the standpoint of the interconnectedness of the world-system in which the consumer is involved. Within the centres of the economic system -- major urban areas -- an individual would have to walk naked through life to be disconnected from the systemic nature of objects within the social world. Media theorist Ien Ang sees “fundamental aspects of social formation and meaning production” as dominated by the forces of the economic system, forces which go hand in hand with the transnational dissemination of mass-mediated culture.¹⁴ According to Ang, mass behaviour arises out of the pervasive socializing forces of the global economic system.¹⁵ Mass behaviour becomes a metaphor for the entrapment of the consumer within systems which are increasingly globalized and encompass, directly or indirectly, the majority of the planet’s population. Thus, mass behaviour is not an issue of the quantity but of the *degree of implication* in the globalized

businessmen “looked to move beyond their nineteenth-century characterization as captains of industry toward a position in which they could control the entire social realm. They aspired to become captains of consciousness.” (*Ibid.*, 19).

¹⁴Ien Ang. *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 157.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

world-system. Here I wish to reverse sociologist C. Wright Mills' description of the individual as an "isolated atom" within mass media.¹⁶ Mass media ensures that every individual within the globalized economic system of the late twentieth century is connected to every other individual. This is entailed by the meaning of mass behaviour as used herein.

What Is Mass Media?

This dissertation presents mass media as a global system of symbolic production which must be conceptualized as part of a more complex system of globalized mass production and consumption herein referred to as the economic system. By definition, mass media encompasses the micro presses, communication empires, state-owned or -supported media systems, and community micro-broadcasting and publishing. I will argue that mass media is implicated in the production and control of the symbolic universe of our society. Mass media also implies a context comprised of all products of mass production and related advertising and public relations. It would be artificial to divorce the fashion industry or automobiles from the system of mass media when considered as a symbol-producing system. A business suit and tie, a tie-dye tee-shirt, or a Barbie doll are all connected to the production of symbolic meaning through media systems. Media theorist Herbert I. Schiller suggests that the cultural penetration of multinational corporate media systems "embraces all the socializing institutions" of societies on the receiving end.¹⁷ According to Schiller, media systems penetrate the host countries' corporate culture,

¹⁶C. Wright Mills. "Mass Media and Public Opinion." *Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963), 582.

¹⁷Herbert Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*. (New York: International Arts and Science Press, 1976), 8.

journalism and broadcasting schools, science, tourism, sports, (among other areas) and inject cultural material from the core area.¹⁸ This is similar to media theorist Denis McQuail's contention that the mass communication process is a power relationship. Those with higher social status have "greater access to and control over" mass communication which, as a system, favours dominant social values and the interests of the ruling classes.¹⁹ While recognizing the systemic nature of mass media the focus herein will rest primarily on the global flow of media products from transnational communications and entertainment corporations which are associated with the 'common-sense' definition of mass media.

According to Ien Ang's audience ethnography, media audiences do construct "their own meanings and thus their own local cultures and identities, even in the face of their virtually complete dependence" on the symbols distributed by the transnational media system.²⁰ Most of communication studies can be characterized as a cultural debate over just exactly to what degree do local cultures and communities exercise autonomy in meaning construction (conceived of variously as 'signing', 'reading', 'symbolizing', 'identity construction', and so forth). Ang makes her position within this debate clear enough when she notes that accelerated nationalization and globalization renders "no such thing possible as an independent cultural identity: every identity must define and position itself in relation to the cultural frames affirmed

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 5-23.

¹⁹Denis McQuail. *Communication*, Second edition, (New York: Longman, 1984), 196-197.

²⁰Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 143.

by the world-system.”²¹ The cultural construction of identity cannot be isolated from the web of global relations which saturate the local context.²²

Problems in theorizing the impact of mass media begin with the way it is defined as an isolated system. Herein mass media is characterized as an element which embraces all aspects of a cultural system, from private imagination to group meanings. The symbols disseminated through mass media influence the understanding of all other symbols within the cultural system. I propose to model mass media as a symbol system wherein all symbolic elements of meaning are, to varying degrees, implicated in the interpretation of all other symbols. This is to say that no one meaning or symbol stands alone, isolated and un-influenced by the world of surrounding symbols.²³ In this way we can speak of mass media as saturating the cosmology of media culture. Every meaning is implicated in the comprehension of every other meaning and the effects of the meanings produced by mass media are inescapable within the social world.

When a mass media system, such as television, is artificially isolated from the everyday world rich in symbols, then media theorists tend to lose the forest for the trees. The direct effect of television, for example, cannot be measured apart from the interconnection between symbols within all areas of media culture. This is why empirical attempts at connecting viewing habits with attitudes and behaviour have generally failed to demonstrate any significant *direct effects* of

²¹*Ibid.*, 145.

²²*Ibid.*, 146. Ang says this: “global media do affect, but cannot control local meanings.” (*Ibid.*, 151).

²³Here I agree with Cirlot’s concept of symbolism wherein “Nothing is independent, everything is in some way related to something else” and everything has meaning and significance. Cirlot. *A Dictionary of Symbols*, xxxvi.

mass communication, as McQuail has observed, “the proved direct effects seem not to match the intentions or expectations of mass communicators and investigators.”²⁴ What this dissertation will explore is the degree to which mass media is implicated in the processes of collective memory and the socialization of mass behaviour within the realm of the global economic system.²⁵

What Is the Mass Audience?

Media theorists James G. Webster and Patricia F. Phalen suggest that “Exposure to media defines the mass audience.”²⁶ This is an insufficient definition of the mass audience because it is limited to media exposure and thus fails to account for how mass media is systemically integrated into all socializing structures of the economic system (*Chapter Three*). Ang and Schiller’s description of the economic system as a global definitional system leads me to suggest that the mass audience is created through exposure to the socializing systems of media culture. An individual living within the realm of media culture could go through life without exposure to radio, television, books, newspapers, film, and magazines and yet still be socialized by the mass symbolic systems, such as banking, the workplace, education, fashion, consumer trends, and interaction with others. As mass media is only part of the global definitional system, exposure to

²⁴McQuail. *Communication*, 194.

²⁵For the origins and development of mass communication theory, see Wilbur Schramm’s *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America: A Personal Memoir*, edited by Steven H. Chaffee and Everett M. Rogers. (London: Sage, 1997).

²⁶James G. Webster and Patricia F. Phalen. *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 23.

mass media represents only a partial definition of the mass audience. The mass audience herein is defined by exposure to the global definitional system, as described in *Chapter Three*. Here I am shifting attention away from the paradigmatic examples of mass media -- radio and television -- and centering the discussion of the mass audience on global symbolic systems which collectively socialize behaviour across cultures. These global symbolic systems have been described by Schiller as the cultural penetration of all socializing systems by multinational corporations.²⁷ Whereas Webster and Phalen suggest that a “mass [audience] is unified by a common object of attention,” here I prefer to describe the mass as unified by being a common object of a global socializing system, exemplified by mass media but by no means exhaustively defined by media systems.²⁸ As a result of the increasing globalization of modern economic systems it is possible to foresee the day when all of earth’s inhabitants will constitute the mass audience.

What Is Cyberspace?

The architecture of cyberspace can be described as an open system, an interconnected network of computer networks which enables individual users to communicate directly with each other and to produce content in a manner which is largely unconstrained *when compared with mass media systems such as television and radio*. E-mail and the World Wide Web (Web) are the primary examples of this communication and content capability within cyberspace. There are restrictions on the individual’s communication and content production capabilities, restrictions

²⁷Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 8.

²⁸Webster and Phalen. *The Mass Audience*, 7.

such as national and international copyright law, libel laws, protection against sexual harassment, the phenomenon of self-censorship, and these restrictions tend to vary from nation to nation.

Nonetheless, cyberspace remains the only *global* media system with individual communication and content production capabilities which can be characterized as unconstrained by the production and ownership mechanisms of mass media.²⁹

²⁹My earlier thoughts on cyberspace's social and economic impact can be found in the following: Michael Strangelove, "Networked Resources for Religious Studies," *Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University*, Volume 20, 1992, 115; Strangelove, "Free-Nets: Community Computing Systems and the Rise of the Electronic Citizen," *Online Access*, Spring 1993, 46-47; Strangelove, "The Commercialization of the Internet: Catching the Ear of Ten Million Users," *Online Access*, July 1993, 6-9; Peter Hum, "Mr. Strangelove: How a Religious Scholar Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Internet," *Ottawa Citizen*, Monday, July 19, 1993, A1-A2; Strangelove, "At Play in the Fields of the Internet," *Online Access*, September 1993, 18-20; Thomas A Stewart, "Boom Time on the New Frontier," *Fortune Magazine*, September 27, 1993, 153-158; Strangelove, "The Essential Internet: The Birth of Virtual Culture and Global Community," *Online Access*, October 1993, 28-30; Strangelove, "Accessing God: Finding the Lord on the Internet," *Online Access*, November 1993, 42-44; Allan Earle, "Hacker Heaven," *Canadian Business*, December 1993, 63-65; Geoffrey Rowan, "Internet Baffles Business," *Globe and Mail*, Monday, January 24, 1994, B1-B2; Strangelove, "Government Online?: Not Really," *Online Access*, January/February 1994, 64-65; Strangelove, "Advertising on the Internet: Myths and Tips," *Online Access*, March 1994, 41-43; Strangelove, "Using the Internet for Marketing: A Publisher's Secrets," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, Volume 25, Number 4, July 1994, 203-211; Strangelove, "The Geography of Consciousness: Cyberspace and the Changing Landscape of the Self," *Scrawl*, Volume 3, Number 4, August 1994, 9-10; Strangelove, "A Plea for Tolerance," *Online Access*, September 1994, 38-40; Strangelove, "An Electronic End to Censorship," *Online Access*, November 1994, 34-35; Michael Crawford, "Around the World on a Shoestring," *Canadian Business*, December 1994, 84-88; Strangelove, "Advertising on the Internet: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers," *Edge: The Entrepreneur's Magazine*, Fourth Quarter 1994, 49-51; Mary J. Cronin, *Doing More Business on the Internet: How the Electronic Highway is Transforming American Companies*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994), 245-247; Strangelove and Aneurin Bosley, *How to Advertise on the Internet*, (Ottawa: Strangelove Press, 1994); John Greenwood, "Mr. Strangelove Fills His Net," *Financial Post Magazine*, January 1995, 44-49; Strangelove, "Desperately Seeking Susan in Cyberspace," *Online Access*, February 1995, 38-39; Strangelove, "Retail on the Internet: Don't Buy the Hype," *Online Access*, May 1995, 35-36; Strangelove, "The Walls Come Down," *Internet World*, May 1995, 40-44; Robin Hunt, "Unhidden Persuader," *Wired*, (UK edition) July/August 1995, 31; Strangelove, "Sergeant Internet," *Online Access*, October 1995, 34-35; Strangelove, "The Future of the Net," *Online Access*, November 1995, 35-36; Angela Kryhul,

This dissertation makes the assumption that cyberspace will remain an open and unconstrained system. This assumption is based on the technical design of the Internet, which is the paradigmatic manifestation of cyberspace, and was based upon the need to create a decentralized communication system.³⁰ Daily newspapers across the globe have carried stories throughout the 1990's which relate the difficulty in censoring and controlling content within cyberspace as a result of this fundamental design characteristic.³¹ The failure of the recent

"Open for Business: The Internet Makes the Mainstream," *Marketing*, (Maclean-Hunter), Volume 100, December 18-25, 1995, 11; Strangelove, "World-Wide Presence," *Credit Union Management*, January 1996, 36-39; Sara Curtis, "Labatt Places Product on Internet Soap," *Marketing Magazine*, May 27, 1996, 4; Patrick Brethour, "IBM Canada Unveils On-line Mall," *Globe and Mail*, Wednesday, June 12, 1996, B1; Patrick Orwen, "Merchants on the Net," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Monday November 18, 1996, B3; Joe Dysart, "Using Usenet," *Beyond Computing*, November/December 1996, 42-44; Strangelove, "Current and Future Trends in Network-Based Electronic Journals and Publishing," *The Evolving Virtual Library: Visions and Case Studies*, edited by Laverna M. Saunders. (Medford, New Jersey: Information Today, 1996), 135-145; Neil Randall, "Can You Make Money on the Net?" *Report on Business Magazine*, March 1997, 79-81; Mike Blanchfield, "Death Row Killer Tells All in Cyberspace," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Friday April 25, 1997, A5.

³⁰See Manuel Castells. *The Rise of the Network Society*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 345-358. On the origins of the Internet, also see Vinton G. Cerf, "The National Information Infrastructure," *The Internet Business Journal*, Volume One, Number One, June/July 1993, 5-9. In 1993 Cerf, widely referred to as the "grandfather of the Internet," claimed that the Net was "growing faster than any other telecommunications system ever built, including the telephone network" (*Ibid.*, 5).

³¹For an indication of how cyberspace is challenging current concepts of free speech, see Edward Felsenthal, "A Web of Intrigue: The Internet's Bad Boy Has His Day in Court," *The Wall Street Journal*, Wednesday, March 11, 1998, A1/A14. Journalist Felsenthal documents an Internet-based libel case which challenges legal issues surrounding free speech. Felsenthal refers to the Internet as giving individuals "instant access to millions of readers" (*Ibid.*, A1). While somewhat of an overstatement in regards to the Net's near-instantaneous communication speed, it is a sign of the Net's maturation as a mass media that the *Wall Street Journal* should claim (and rightly so) that cyberspace can easily reach an audience numbering in the millions. A large collection of online documents dealing with censorship and free speech can be found at the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Web site, www.eff.org.

attempt by the American government to restrict communication over the Internet (the Communications Decency Act, February 1996) provides another reason why the open and unconstrained character of cyberspace will not easily be changed. The significant grassroots political action against this congressional bill suggests that the technical architecture of cyberspace appears to be creating a new sense of the right to engage in a form of free speech otherwise not available to the public within mass media systems. One could speculate that the longer people experience the unconstrained nature of communication in cyberspace, the more this experience will be seen as an essential element of free speech. The American experience suggests that a change in the communicative capabilities of cyberspace will not simply be a matter of technical change or overwhelming commercial takeover, but will involve a large-scale political debate within the society in question.

What Is Media Culture?

Media culture is defined by the saturation of all cultural systems (such as family, education, government, and marketplace) with various forms of mass media systems. The phrase 'media culture' provides an apt description of the character of the current economic system. Media theorist Douglas Kellner uses the phrase 'media culture' to signify the degree to which media have colonized culture. Mass media systems are "the primary vehicle for the distribution

and dissemination of culture.”³² Kellner sees media as the site of social control.³³ Media culture provides a metaphor for local culture’s implication in the global economic system. The cosmology of local cultures is increasingly defined through the symbol production systems of globalized media culture. Media theorist Michèle Martin highlights the primary characteristic of media culture when she notes that within our modern societies “most of the socialization of individuals is done via the mass media.”³⁴ Media theorist Robert P. Snow provides a definition of ‘media culture’ which matches the way I make use of this phrase, “In light of the extensive use and influence of mass media, it is no exaggeration to say that we live presently in a media culture. It means that nearly every institution -- including religion, government, criminal justice, health care, education, and even the family -- is influenced by the mass communication process.”³⁵

What Is Religion?

This dissertation investigates structural differences in the way symbols flow through mass media systems and cyberspace. The model of symbol-flow which I develop will have direct relevance to the study of religion in a context of globalization and structural change within media

³²Douglas Kellner. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 35. Also see David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow. *Media Logic*, (London: Sage, 1979).

³³Kellner says this: “Media culture is also the site where battles are fought for the control of society” (Kellner. *Media Culture*, 35).

³⁴Michèle Martin. *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination and Opposition*, translated by Benoît Ouellette, (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 86.

³⁵Robert P. Snow. *Creating Media Culture*, (London: Sage, 1983), 9.

systems. Mary Douglas' cultural theory describes religion from the perspective of socially-shared assumptions which are embodied in symbols.

Douglas' anthropology provides an example of religious life as contextualized through shared assumptions about the meaning of symbols within the social world. The Pangolin Cult of the Lele provided Douglas with an exemplar for how assumptions about the meaning of the symbols operated as "unformulated categories through which they unconsciously organize their experience."³⁶ The religious life of the Lele arose out of shared interaction with the same symbols within the social world. The underlying assumptions about these shared symbols provide a "framework of metaphysical ideas" which ordered the social world and the Lele universe.³⁷ The role of symbols and assumptions in the religious life of the Lele is explored in *Chapter One*, "Implicit Meaning and Public Memory," (page 38).

Religion can usefully be described as a shared symbol-set which brings with it a shared set of assumptions about the nature of the universe. This is by no means intended as an exhaustive definition of religion. An emphasis on the communicative aspect of religion will serve to highlight how the structural distinction between mass media and cyberspace (*Chapter Three and Five*) will impact on the transmission of religious life as a shared symbol-set.

My definition of religion is similar to sociologist Peter Beyer's characterization of religion as, "sociologically speaking, a certain variety of communication."³⁸ According to Beyer,

³⁶Mary Douglas. *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*, (London: Routledge, 1975, reprinted 1991), 28.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Peter Beyer. *Religion and Globalization*, (London: Sage, 1994), 5.

religion makes use of sacred symbols, “ones which always point radically beyond themselves.”³⁹ My discussion of religion will rest upon the assumption that the social use of sacred symbols is subject to the same cultural processes which frame the communicative nature of mundane (or ‘secular’) symbols.⁴⁰ Collective memory will be seen to explain ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ symbols as subjected to the same cultural processes of shared assumptions. I will also suggest that sacred and mundane symbols are therefore equally subject to the structural differentiation between mass media and cyberspace. Religious symbols and religion do not hold a privileged position within the structural constraints and cultural processes of mass media and cyberspace. By this conclusion I do not intend to rule out the possibility of the operation of a transcendent reality upon the mundane social world. My concern here lies with fully recognizing what Beyer has called the “central religious paradox” which he identifies as “the fact that the transcendent can only be communicated in immanent terms ... communication on the basis of meaning is always immanent, even when the subject of communication is the transcendent.”⁴¹ If the communication of sacred symbols is thoroughly embedded within the immanent social world, then we can reasonably assume that these same sacred symbols are subject to the operation of collective memory within the social world. The possibility of the operation of the transcendent upon media systems will be set aside for inquiry at a much later time in my life (or after-life).

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰It should be kept in mind that herein I am not concerned with classifying religious symbol-sets. As with Beyer’s analysis in *Religion and Globalization*, I do not attempt to identify “what does and does not count as religion” within mass media and cyberspace (*Ibid.*, 6).

⁴¹*Ibid.*

Of Media and Religion

It is widely recognized that media impacts upon the construction of religious identity, personal or collective.⁴² Media theorist Robert A. White describes media studies and religious studies as “coming together to create a new understanding of the media as cultural negotiation.”⁴³ As within media studies, religion scholars are attempting to define the definitional power of media over their subject. Within religious studies reflection on media often recognizes the imbalance of power within media culture. Peter G. Horsfield, Dean of the United Church Theological Hall, Melbourne, Australia, describes the imbalance of definitional power within media culture as having a direct impact on social institutions such as churches. Churches are seen by Horsfield as tending “not to use the media to communicate their reality, but rather are placed by the media on the web of culture in different positions and for different purposes.”⁴⁴ This imbalance within the ‘web of culture’ reflects what social theorist John Ralston Saul

⁴²For overviews of studies on religion and media, see Lynn Schofield Clark and Stewart M. Hoover’s essay, “At the Intersection of Media, Culture, and Religion: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 15-36; and Judith M. Buddenbaum and Daniel A. Stout’s “Religion and Mass Media Use: A Review of the Mass Communication and Sociological Literature,” *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, edited by Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum, (London: Sage, 1996), 12-34. It has also been suggested that “religion has been a “blind spot” of media studies. Stewart M. Hoover. “Media and the Construction of the Religious Public Sphere,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 283. This dissertation will serve to shed some light on the relevance of media studies to the subject of religion.

⁴³Robert A. White. “Religion and Media in the Construction of Cultures,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 62.

⁴⁴Peter G. Horsfield. “Changes in Periods of Media Convergence,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 177.

describes as “a society [not only] dominated by corporatist structures, but by the received wisdom of a corporatist atmosphere: one in which the élites are interest-driven, whatever their jobs.”⁴⁵ As will be seen in *Chapter Three*, I argue that definitional power over social reality rests firmly in the hands of the élite and leaves little room for substantial ‘cultural negotiation.’

The study of how symbols flow throughout media culture has direct relevance to the study of religion. Alf Linderman’s research on the subject of religious television has noted the relevance which I argue:

as social and individual construction of meaning and thereby also the construction of basic value systems become the focus of media scholarship, the object of analysis acquires (functionally) religious dimensions. The study of how audiences understand and use the flow of messages in the mass media becomes, in part, a study of how people establish their general worldviews and ultimate values.⁴⁶

Herein I will highlight how religious life, as a shared symbolic system, is affected by mass media’s definitional control and cyberspace’s structural distinction within media culture. My work will add methodological support to Stewart M. Hoover’s observation that “contemporary religious practice is embedded in the institutions of the media ... and their cultural commodities.”⁴⁷ Collective memory will unveil the cultural processes behind the embedding of religious practice within media systems.

⁴⁵John Ralston Saul. *Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century*, (Toronto, Ontario: Penguin Books Canada, 1997), 488.

⁴⁶Alf Linderman. “Making Sense of Religious Television,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 263.

⁴⁷Stewart M. Hoover. “Media and the Construction of the Religious Public Sphere,” *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby. (London: Sage, 1997), 294. Media theorists David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow make a similar observation, “Today, media influences religion to the point where institutional strategies in religion are based on the forms of modern media.” *Media Logic*, 200.

In *Religion and Globalization*, Peter Beyer sought to answer the question, “What are the abstract possibilities in today’s world for religion ... to be a determinative force in social structures and processes beyond the restricted sphere of voluntary and individual belief and practice?”⁴⁸ This dissertation will serve to demonstrate that the ‘abstract possibilities’ for religion within globalized media culture are limited by the structural constraints of mass media and liberated by the unconditioned flow of symbols through cyberspace. The possibilities for religion’s potential as a ‘determinative force’ arise out of the changing nature of media culture which is redefining the very limits to thought.

⁴⁸Beyer. *Religion and Globalization*, 12.

Chapter One: Collective Memory and Definitional Control

Mary Douglas approaches the cultural formation of thought with a call for a “radical overhaul” of social anthropology’s traditional discourse.⁴⁹ She sees deeply entrenched methodological prejudices which assume that the individual is motivated by self-interest. This bias in the idea of the self is part of the Western conceptual apparatus which underwrites utilitarian philosophy, economic analysis, psychology and particularly cognitive psychology, political debate, theories of risk, and theories about credibility.⁵⁰ As a corrective to this bias Douglas proposes a cultural theory which “draws the social environment systematically into the picture of individual choices.”⁵¹

Douglas’ cultural theory began with *Purity and Danger* (1966), which vindicated “the so-called primitives from the charge of having a different logic or method of thinking from us ‘moderns.’”⁵² Douglas went on to examine how the threat of a community-wide pollution, such as AIDS, can be turned into a weapon used for mutual coercion.⁵³ With the publication of *Risk and Blame* (1992) Douglas’ cultural theory extended the dynamics of pre-modern social worlds

⁴⁹Mary Douglas. *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1992), x.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, xi.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*, 3.

⁵³Mary Douglas and Marcel Calvez. “The Self as Risk Taker: A Cultural Theory of Contagion in Relation to AIDS.” *The Sociological Review*, 38 (3): 445-66.

to all cultures and proposed that not just pollution beliefs but all cognition is politicized.⁵⁴ The following model of collective memory draws upon Douglas' writings from the early 1960's to the 1990's and incorporates many components of her cultural theory, including pollution beliefs, ritual, symbols, implicit meanings, and public memory. Together they represent the key elements of Douglas' sociology of knowledge -- an enterprise which she sees as a continuation and refinement of Durkheim's concern with the social control of thought almost exactly one century ago. While the issues remain as pressing as they were at the close of the nineteenth century, the methodological tools have been substantially refined since Durkheim first took issue with the dominant understanding of the self in his day.⁵⁵

Douglas' Theory of Public Memory

Douglas' work explores cultures ranging from the ancient Israelites to modern American environmental activists. Her cultural theory pursues a common theme -- the impact of symbols upon the social world. The physical body, pollution taboos, dietary laws, risk assessment and related cultural phenomena are explored and explained as examples of Douglas' most constant concern -- the social conditions of knowledge and the possibility of escaping the symbolic environment's influence upon our perception. Douglas sees her concern with the social constraints on knowledge as typical of this point in history.⁵⁶ Her theory of public memory will

⁵⁴Douglas. *Risk and Blame*, 8.

⁵⁵For a critique of Durkheim's theory of the origin of religion, see Edward Evans-Pritchard. *A History of Anthropological Thought*, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 153-169.

⁵⁶Mary Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, xvii. Douglas says this: "This is a generation deeply interested in the liberation of consciousness from control" (*Ibid.*).

be useful in exploring the possibilities and limits for the liberation of consciousness from the social control of the economic system as established through mass media systems.

The following chapter will describe how, according to Douglas, a shared system of knowledge is established. Public memory arises out of the mutual establishment of social classifications and analogies (for example, man is to woman as right is to left), which are seen by members of a group to reflect both nature and reason. A shared classification system provides a way to order the social world. Behind the classification system stands implicit assumptions about the nature of the universe. These assumptions enable social cohesion when members of the group agree that their social order reflects the 'natural' order of the universe. For example, right hand, male, and king are grouped together because they 'fit' with the perceived nature of nature. Out of shared implicit assumptions a group comes to share a perceptual bias which causes the world to be seen as a reflection of their social order. This perceptual bias limits the possibilities of thought within each culture. Symbols within a culture serve to represent the implicit assumptions at the foundation of the social order. The ritual use of symbols communicates the group's implicit assumptions throughout the social world and thereby reproduces the culture. This communication of implicit assumptions through symbols, and the result of a shared perceptual bias, is a process of cultural communication which Douglas refers to as *public memory*. Public memory describes how a system of society acts as a system of thought.

The Origins of Public Memory

In *How Institutions Think*, Douglas describes the process which initially establishes a system of knowledge such as public memory. Douglas builds upon Durkheim's theory of the collective foundation of knowledge.⁵⁷ Durkheim suggests, says Douglas, that the "elementary social bond" is formed only once an individual's mind becomes entrenched in a model of the surrounding social order.⁵⁸ While Durkheim suggested that society is the mind writ large, Douglas proposes to reverse the metaphor, "It is more in the spirit of Durkheim to reverse the direction and to think of the individual mind furnished as society writ small. The entrenching of an idea is a social process."⁵⁹ Here Douglas is concerned with how a cultural system becomes established. Douglas proposes to root the foundation of a cultural system -- a system of shared knowledge -- in legitimacy that "founds its rightness in reason and nature."⁶⁰

Whereas Durkheim wrote about the social group, Douglas prefers to use the term 'institution' to denote a cultural system of shared knowledge.⁶¹ For Douglas, an institution can be a family, a game, or a ceremony (for example) or any collectivity or group activity which appeals to a legitimating authority such as a father, doctor, judge, referee and so forth.⁶² Douglas

⁵⁷On Douglas' Durkheimian roots, and on Durkheim's own theory of collective knowledge, see *Appendix B: Durkheim's Conscience Collective*, page 288.

⁵⁸Mary Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 45.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 46

⁶²*Ibid.* As my analysis herein is concerned with the most encompassing macro-level of society, global media culture, the issue of what constitutes an institution or social group is, for

excludes from the idea of an institution purely instrumental or provisional practical arrangements which are recognized as instrumental or provisional by their members.⁶³ For Douglas, established institutions are defined by a claim to legitimacy “on their fit with the nature of the universe.”⁶⁴ It is the claim of natural fit with the nature of the universe which distinguishes a convention -- a rule to ensure coordination -- from an institution.⁶⁵

Douglas rejects the functionalist argument that a predisposition or drive for equilibrium is the force which is responsible for establishing an institution and prefers to see disorder as more probable than order.⁶⁶ If there is no drive towards equilibrium within social forces, then how does an incipient institution overcome the entropy of a chaotic universe and ever achieve continuity through time (social reproduction)? Douglas argues that the “stabilizing principle” is found in the naturalization of social classifications.

There needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere, so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement. When the analogy is applied back and forth from one set of social relations to another and from these back to nature, its recurring formal structure becomes easily recognized and endowed with self-validating truth.⁶⁷

my purposes, defined with reference to collective memory. A group, culture, or institution are social collectivities which, to a minimal and certainly unquantifiable degree, share a common set of in-use categories.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 48.

Douglas locates the stabilizing principle of culture in the development of classification systems. These classification systems arise out of social intercourse and are legitimated by analogy to the natural world. The legitimating principle which stabilizes a knowledge system -- its classification system -- is embedded in the processes of public memory.

Using the example of analogies rooted in left and right and male and female, Douglas describes how a social principle of classification is rooted in a physical analogy (nature). An analogy can equate right hand, male, and king and so create institutions which lock into the structure of the body. Douglas claims that analogies which confer natural status on social relations, such as left:right, male:female, lion:cub, father:son, serve to legitimate institutions by founding them in nature and reason, "Being naturalized, they are part of the order of the universe and so are ready to stand as the grounds of argument."⁶⁸ Douglas suggests that the assumptions behind these founding analogies have to be hidden.⁶⁹

The analogies used within institutions are cognitive devices which ground the institution in nature and reason and so ensure "that the institution's formal structure corresponds to formal structures in non-human realms."⁷⁰ Douglas claims that only institutions -- social groups -- define sameness.⁷¹ The set of analogies used by an institution arises out of shared social concerns.⁷² The very act of recognizing sameness arises out of the social intercourse within

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 55.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Ibid.*

institutions. The classification system of an institution harnesses the “moral energy” of its members and so becomes a “machine for thinking and decision making on their own behalf.”⁷³ Analogies of similarity reflect the dominate concerns of the social world.⁷⁴ These analogies provide the foundation for a culture’s classification system and are defended on the basis of a fit with nature and reason. Social groups ‘stabilize’ when analogies legitimate the fit between nature and the social world, by using “formal analogies that entrench an abstract structure of social conventions in an abstract structure imposed upon nature, institutions grow past the initial difficulties of collective action.”⁷⁵ Social interaction generates analogies. These analogies provide the foundation for a culture’s classification system. For Douglas, public memory is the storage system for the analogies and classifications which legitimate the social order.⁷⁶ Douglas suggests that each social system arises out of a “specific type of analogy from nature.”⁷⁷ Douglas cites the role of cattle in Nuer culture and the theory of evolutionary progress in nature as examples of “the power of a dominant naturalizing metaphor” which root analogies can supply.⁷⁸

⁷³*Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁴Douglas says this about the social roots of classification: “[classifications] owe their divisions much more to their capacity to model the interactions of the members of society than to a disinterested curiosity about the workings of nature” (*Ibid.*, 59).

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁶Douglas says this: “Public memory is the storage system for the social order. Thinking about it is as close as we can get to reflecting on the conditions of our own thought” (*Ibid.*, 70).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 80.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 90.

As Douglas locates the beginnings of a culture and its classification system in social interaction it is worth noting what aspect of social interaction is cited as responsible for the classification system. Her view of the social world is not static. Culture, for Douglas, is contested ground that is constantly subjected to the manoeuvres of individuals who are busy trying to persuade others to see the world as they see it,

Our social interaction consists very much in telling one another what right thinking is and passing blame on wrong thinking. This is indeed how we build the institutions, squeezing each other's ideas into a common shape so that we can prove rightness by sheer numbers of independent assent.⁷⁹

The classification system arises out of this ever-present cultural debate within a society. Public memory, for Douglas, is the process of consensus building which moulds individual thought so that it fits with the classification system authorized by institutions (social groups).⁸⁰ This is how Douglas describes the colonizing process of the mind by society.⁸¹ The institutionalization of the mind by the group's classification system leads Douglas to ask, "How can we possibly think of ourselves in society except by using the classifications established in our institutions?"⁸² I will return to the question of escape from institutionalized thought styles in *Chapter Six: Defining the Limits to Thought Within Media Culture*.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁰Douglas says this: "Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize" (*Ibid.*, 92).

⁸¹On the origins of humans as creators of a symbolic world, also see "The Emergence of the Symbolic World (Chapter Three)," in Walter Goldschmidt's *The Human Career: The Self in the Symbolic World*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁸²Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 99.

Implicit Meaning and Public Memory

In 1949 Mary Douglas conducted anthropological fieldwork among a village of the Lele.⁸³

The Lele inhabit the southern margin of the tropical forest of the Kasai District [Africa]. They grow maize, hunt, weave raffia, and draw palm wine. Of all their activities, hunting is the highest in their own esteem. It is not surprising that the richest vein of symbolism is derived from reflections on the animal world, on its relation to the human sphere, and on the relations between the different breeds of birds and beasts.⁸⁴

The Lele symbolism reflects their shared assumptions about the differences between human and animal worlds. The daily social intercourse of the Lele is seen by Douglas as a constant reiteration of this “basic distinction, the opposition between mankind and animal kind.”⁸⁵ The Lele social world is filled with complex rules governing who can eat what animals. In 1949, while living among the Lele, Douglas observed this ‘basic distinction’ between human and animal when she was struck by their extensive list of prohibited meats, “Most animals were forbidden to some or other category of persons.”⁸⁶ Within their social order dietary laws serve to

⁸³Mary Douglas’ Lele fieldwork is recorded in *The Lele of the Kasai*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); “The Lele of the Kasai,” In *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*, edited by D. Forde. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954, republished 1970), 1-26; “The Lele of the Congo,” In *The Church and the Nations*, edited by Adrian Hastings. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1959), 73-89.

⁸⁴Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 9-10.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁶Mary Douglas. “Rightness of Categories,” *How Classification Works: Nelson Goodman Among the Social Sciences*, edited by Mary Douglas and David Hull. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 260.

organize all their social categories. The following explores how animal symbolism was used among the Lele to “codify their society.”⁸⁷

The Lele universe is ordered by categories arising out of nature. The first category divides animals from humans on the basis of observed behaviour -- animals are foul in their behaviour whereas humans abide by the etiquette of their social world; “Humans are mannerly. They observe polite conventions in their dealings with each other and hide themselves when performing their natural functions. Animals satisfy their natural appetites uncontrolled.”⁸⁸ This basic category of human versus animal breaks down into a taxonomy based on the breeding habits of animals and their acceptance of “their own sphere in the natural order”⁸⁹ -- animals flee from hunters and avoid contact with humans.

The Lele animal taxonomy takes into account all exceptions to their basic categories, exceptions such as domestic animals or animals that attack humans. Out of the basic categories - human versus animal; barrenness versus fecundity; human sphere (village) versus animal sphere (forest) -- the Lele construct rules, in the form of pollution beliefs, and rituals which reproduce the Lele social world. But the conceptual framework created by Lele categories of the universe was not immediately obvious to Mary Douglas. Before Douglas arrived at an understanding of the Lele social world she would require a ‘cognitive map’ which explained how animals served as symbols for the organization of Lele social categories. Her discovery of the cosmological

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 29.

⁸⁹*Ibid.* The Lele do not apply the human experience of barrenness to animals.

ideas behind the Lele's perception of nature provides a vivid example of the interpretive power of categories maintained through public memory.

When Douglas first observed the ritual practices of the Lele, rituals largely concerned with who gets to eat what, she experienced considerable difficulty understanding the symbolic meaning which one would expect to find connecting a particular animal to a particular cultic practice, "In most cases one would be justified in assuming that no symbolism whatever is involved, and that the prohibitions concerning different animals are observed simply as diacritical badges of cult membership."⁹⁰ When Douglas questioned villagers as to why a particular animal was forbidden the responses simply repeated a description of the animal, "In reply to my queries, Lele would merely reiterate the characteristics of the animal in question, as if its oddity would be instantly appreciated by me and would provide sufficient answer to my question."⁹¹ For the Lele, description was explanation. The logic of the animal symbolism was so obvious to the Lele and so completely shared *among* the Lele that it was unthinkable to them that someone else would not understand what each animal and each animal part *meant*.

Douglas was ignorant of the implicit background of shared symbolized meaning and therefore was unable to perceive the social code within the animal taxonomy as related to her by the Lele. Gradually, Douglas was able to piece together the Lele framework of assumptions about animals and humans. In these assumptions she saw the operation of the Durkheimian *conscience collective* providing social cohesion among the Lele:

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 28.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 32.

These assumptions are so fundamental to Lele thought that one could almost describe them as unformulated categories through which they unconsciously organise their experience. They could never emerge in reply to direct questions because it was impossible for Lele to suppose that the questioner might take his standpoint on another set of assumptions. Only when I was able to appreciate the kind of implicit connections they made between one set of facts and another, did a framework of metaphysical ideas emerge.⁹²

The Lele carried with them implicit assumptions about the nature of humans and animals. These unspoken assumptions provided the categories which organized the social world. In a similar vein, Victor Turner says this about perception and social classifications: “As members of a society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture.”⁹³ How the implicit assumptions and animal symbols of the Lele provided the framework to their social world is exemplified in Douglas’ explanation of the Lele pangolin fertility cult.⁹⁴

The Implicit Meaning of the Pangolin

The pangolin, a variety of scaly ant-eater, does not fit easily into the Lele animal taxonomy, “They say: ‘In our forest there is an animal with the body and tail of a fish, covered in scales. It has four legs and it climbs in trees.’”⁹⁵ Douglas uses the underlying assumptions of the Lele (their categorization of humans and animals) to explain why “killing and eating pangolins,

⁹²*Ibid.*, 28.

⁹³Victor Turner. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 95.

⁹⁴For an overview of early theories of tribal religion, see Edward Evans-Pritchard. *Theories of Primitive Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

⁹⁵Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 33.

with proper ritual observances, are believed to bring animals in droves to the hunters' arrows and babies to women."⁹⁶ In the Lele cosmology, fish are related to fertility. The scaly nature of the pangolin unites it to the fertility symbolism of fish. The pangolin only produces one offspring at a time and thus does not share the fecundity of other animals. Thus the reproductive pattern of the pangolin mirrors human reproduction patterns. It also fails to flee from the hunter, once again distinguishing it from other animals. These anomalous characteristics of the pangolin render it into a strong symbol for the Lele Pangolin Cult which honours parents who give birth to children of both sexes. The implicit meaning of the pangolin as a fertility symbol arises out of the assumptions the Lele share concerning the nature of human and animal worlds. Without a shared understanding of the implicit assumptions within Lele culture Douglas was unable to divine why the pangolin should be the object of a fertility cult. The symbolics of the pangolin provides an example of how symbols embody unspoken cosmological categories which order the social world. How does a society such as the Lele maintain itself when their cultural assumptions are only communicated through rituals? Public memory, the storehouse of these shared assumptions, must have a means of continuity over time if social life is going to take on an ordered form. Within Douglas' cultural theory ritual serves as a communicative process. Through ritual the shared implicit assumptions surrounding symbols are communicated to group members.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 38.

Ritual Communication through Symbols

According to Douglas, ritual provides a medium through which symbols and their implicit meanings are communicated. In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), Mary Douglas describes how the ritual use of symbols exercises control over the thought-life of group members. Douglas' ritual theory follows in the tradition of Émile Durkheim, who identified ritual as symbolic of social processes.⁹⁷ Douglas follows up on Durkheim's observation that rituals serve to control experience.⁹⁸ Douglas explores how symbols and rituals create the framework of consciousness.⁹⁹

Douglas describes the individual as a "ritual animal."¹⁰⁰ Rituals draw selectively from a common stock of symbols¹⁰¹ and thereby control experience in the social world.¹⁰² The symbols which rituals select and interpret frame and control experience by communicating cultural themes and excluding alien ("intruding") themes.¹⁰³ For Douglas, ritual simultaneously creates and

⁹⁷Douglas. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 22.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁹Douglas' ritual theory continues the project of Durkheim's sociology of knowledge by relativising the framework of modernity and the scientific enterprise itself. See the *Preface* to *Implicit Meanings*, ix-xxi, for an account by Douglas of how Durkheim's sociology of knowledge "internalised unquestioningly the categories of nineteenth-century scientific debate" (xvi).

¹⁰⁰Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 62.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

maintains a particular culture through symbols that are thick with assumptions.¹⁰⁴ These assumptions, latent within the selected symbols, control experience when they are communicated through the symbolic action of ritual performance.¹⁰⁵ The ritual process is a process of cultural self-knowledge. Rituals give visible symbolic expression to the particular form of social relations and thereby “enable people to know their own society.”¹⁰⁶

During Douglas’ 1949 fieldwork a pangolin was killed and the entire Lele village was placed under a ban against sexual intercourse by a member of the Pangolin Cult.¹⁰⁷ For two weeks the ban continued. (The pangolin was obviously a strong symbol!) Fertility and a good hunt was a stake in the ritual observance. The entire village shared a credible view of the ban because they shared the same meaning about the pangolin and its ritual requirements. As a symbol the pangolin exercised control over the experience of the Lele because they shared the same set of assumptions about the nature of their universe. The ritual ban against intercourse, and the ritual eating of the pangolin by Cult members and initiates served to communicate the nature of reality and the order of the social world among the Lele.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 128. Of course, ritual is not *solely* responsible for creating and maintaining culture. Similarly, in *Chapter Three* I will argue that mass media and its symbol-set is not the only socializing force within the economic system.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 41.

The symbolism of the pangolin demonstrates how a group's theories about the nature of the universe are embedded in a particular pattern of society.¹⁰⁸ Cultic membership, dietary laws, and sexual behaviour are patterned after the Lele understanding of nature. The Lele system of thought is also the Lele system of society.¹⁰⁹ Symbols, such as the pangolin, and ritual behaviour involving symbols reflect the structure of thought and society.

Douglas describes how food reinforces the Lele social categories which arise out of their shared assumptions, "When dusk falls and the households prepare to eat, women and children go together, men group according to age. Particular animal foods will be served, which some are eating and others are refusing. Eating the right foods and abstaining from wrong ones publicly exemplifies the system of social categories."¹¹⁰ Symbols, such as food, communicate the structure of the social world and the shared assumptions behind a common structure of thought. For Douglas, the Lele animal symbolism serves to demonstrate the essence of ritual as "an attempt to create and maintain a particular culture, a particular set of assumptions by which experience is controlled."¹¹¹

According to Douglas, ritual reproduces culture through the selection and interpretation of a common set of symbols. The symbols used within rituals also communicate the structure of shared social forms, such as kinship, and the common categories, such as 'mother' and 'father,'

¹⁰⁸Douglas. "Rightness of Categories," 264. Douglas says this: "The Lele have entrenched their theories about the forest and its fauna by embedding them in a given pattern of society" (*Ibid.*).

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 264-265.

¹¹¹Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 128.

also embody shared values.¹¹² These processes of cultural communication contained within ritual are just as active within contemporary society as they are within tribal social worlds. Modern social action is saturated with symbols and rituals. Eating, mating, clothes, greetings, consumption, casual conversation, passing a stranger on the street -- all are symbol-laden ritual activities. According to Douglas, the difference between contemporary and tribal social worlds lies in the degree of fragmentation within the symbolic universe:

The real difference is that we do not bring forward from one context to the next the same set of ever more powerful symbols: our experience is fragmented. Our rituals create a lot of little sub-worlds, unrelated. Their rituals create one single, symbolically consistent universe.¹¹³

This issue of the fragmentation of a shared symbolic universe will prove central to my analysis of mass media (*Chapter Six*).

The Definitional Power of Symbols

In *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (1970), Mary Douglas examines how social structure is related to the dominant pattern of symbols within the social world. Douglas describes social systems as constraining filters on how individuals perceive the universe.¹¹⁴ A social system frames a “potential symbolic field” and the selection of symbols is a social process

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 69. Perhaps Douglas overstates the difference between contemporary and tribal social worlds -- as far as the degree of fragmentation is concerned. In *Chapter Three* I will suggest that mass media effectively establishes a ‘symbolically consistent universe’ within media culture.

¹¹⁴Douglas. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, (London: Cresset Press, 1970), 161.

that serves to “govern choices in behaviour”.¹¹⁵ The selected symbols of a particular social order represent the set of categories that are in use within the social world. This set of “in use” categories constitutes the social order’s unique cosmology.¹¹⁶

For Douglas, the symbolic order (or cosmology) is not merely an expression of the social order.¹¹⁷ The in-use symbols reproduce the social order which generated the symbols themselves. How do symbols exercise this control? Symbols exercise power over the social order by establishing shared categories of perception, categories which inevitably contain bias of one sort or another.¹¹⁸ This bias is continually reproduced in the social order through ritual forms of social interaction. This communicative process frames the possibilities of expression and explains “how our different cosmologies imprison us.”¹¹⁹ This is Douglas’ replication hypothesis.

In the previous sections I explored how the symbol of the pangolin represented categories of fertility and cult membership among the Lele of the Kasai. The ritual eating of the pangolin

¹¹⁵*Ibid.* In light of the role of symbols in cognition, Douglas suggests that “The whole history of ideas should be reviewed in the light of the power of social structures to generate symbols of their own” (*Ibid.*, 151).

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 144.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, xiv.

¹¹⁸Douglas says this: “The natural symbols of society create a bias with strong philosophical and political as well as religious aspects” (*Ibid.*). Natural symbols are symbols based on the body. It is clear within Douglas’ writing that other types of symbols, such as food or animals, also create a perceptual bias.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 156.

and all other food *re-presents* the social categories in use among the Lele *to* the Lele.¹²⁰ By observing the pollution rules surrounding food (who can eat what and when), the Lele confirm and reproduce their unique social world. Behind the symbol of the pangolin stands a set of assumptions about the nature of the universe. These shared assumptions generate social cohesion and credibility among the Lele. This power of symbols is derived from the shared assumptions by a group that uses a symbol such as the pangolin. The symbol embodies the social order. The symbol can be described as participating in definitional control over the social order when everyone shares the same set of assumptions. The eating of food serves to define gender, age, cult membership, and so on. The ritual killing of a particular animal can have consequences for all (or most) Lele adults -- sexual abstinence. As the (pagan) Lele all share the same set of assumptions about the nature of humans and the nature of the animal world, the symbol of the pangolin can be said to command their cohesive behaviour and engage their credibility regarding the authority of the Pangolin Cult and ritual sexual abstinence. The symbol itself does not have definitional power apart from the shared assumptions which surround the symbol.

Through the pangolin Douglas provides a paradigmatic example of what constitutes public memory. Public memory is the operation of shared assumptions which are embodied in symbols. Symbols represent the social order to the group and so reproduce the shared cultural world. Public memory is the process wherein symbols compel cohesive behaviour because the

¹²⁰Victor Turner also describes symbols as forces of social representation and reproduction. Symbols, for Turner, “instigate social action ... they may even be described as “forces”” (Turner. *The Forest of Symbols*, 36). Turner describes the role of the milk tree as a symbol in Ndembu society which serves to symbolize the “total system of interrelations between groups and persons that make up Ndembu society” (*Ibid.*, 21). The milk tree proves a parallel example of a symbol embodying the dominant principles and values of social organization.

assumptions represented in the symbol are seen by group members to be a credible representation of the order of the universe. The social world is organized by selecting one set of symbols and assumptions and, through purity/pollution rules, excluding any competing set of symbols and assumptions. (The role of pollution beliefs will be discussed in *Chapter Two*.) Public memory can thus be summarized as *the definitional control over social reality exercised by symbols and their implied assumptions*. The ‘content’ of public memory is the set of in-use symbols and the shared assumptions attached to them. The combination of shared symbols and assumptions has the effect of constraining the way a group perceives the universe and also governs their choices in behaviour. This is how public memory defines the limits to thought and behaviour.

Public memory provides a model for examining what Douglas calls the “social determinants of belief.”¹²¹ Cosmology, the symbols used by a group, serves to represent the set of categories which are in use within the social world.¹²² No aspect of social life -- religion, sexuality, science, the economy, the environment, and so on -- is free from the constraints of our cosmology, “Each social form and its accompanying style of thinking restricts individual thought and action, even when it most seems to celebrate the value of the individual as such.”¹²³ As will be argued in *Chapter Three: Mass Media and the Control of Symbolic Production*, the centre of ‘individualism’ and the ‘sovereign consumer’ -- the market economy and its media systems -- is a definitional centre. This definitional centre exercises considerable control over individual thought and action even while apparently providing the quintessential expression of liberty,

¹²¹Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 140.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 144.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 140.

individual choice, and life-style freedom. Public memory will reveal the nature of mass media's socializing power as definitional control over the social order. This is among the most fundamental of social powers because it allows those who wield it to manipulate the shape of realities inhabited by hundreds of millions, if not billions, of individuals. Media theorist David L. Altheide refers to this type of power as social power, "The capacity to define and sustain definitions of situations for self and others is the capacity to construct social reality."¹²⁴ It will be seen that the current economic system places severe institutionalized and systemic social determinants upon belief and action within media culture. Public memory will serve to explain the cultural process which enables this definitional control of the economic system.

Through witchcraft accusations Douglas provides another example of how a symbol can exercise definitional control over the social world. In *Natural Symbols* Douglas looks at social worlds in Central Africa where a dominant shared assumption is that the universe is dangerous and "threatened by sinister powers operated by fellow human beings."¹²⁵ Witchcraft accusations reflect the assumption of a threatened universe because the accusation focuses on "evil practice on a cosmic scale."¹²⁶ This idea of witchcraft should not be confused with our 'modern' notion of cats and broomsticks. In Central Africa the entire universe is at stake when witchcraft is involved. The witch is a complete perversion of nature and is associated, therefore, with the

¹²⁴David L. Altheide. *An Ecology of Communication: Cultural Formats of Control*, (Hawthorne, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), 213.

¹²⁵Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 112.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 113.

reverse of the natural order in normal human lives.¹²⁷ He or she works at night, can fly, be in two places at once and change shape.¹²⁸ The nature of a witch reflects assumptions about the nature of society:

the body politic tends to have a clear external boundary, and a confused internal state in which envy and favouritism flourish and continually confound the proper expectations of members. So the body of the witch, normal-seeming and apparently carrying the normal human limitations, is equipped with hidden and extraordinarily malevolent powers ... his inner self has escaped from social restraint.¹²⁹

The witch represents the condition of the shared social reality. The symbol of the witch is seen to govern choices in behaviour because a witchcraft accusation is a “righteous demand for conformity.”¹³⁰ An accusation is an “idiom of control, since it pins blame for misfortune on trouble-makers and deviants.”¹³¹ The witch symbol operates within a shared set of assumptions and thereby exercises definitional control over social reality. Witchcraft accusations help define who is part of the community and who is to be excluded.¹³²

Witchcraft accusations reinforce the classification of relationships. The witch symbol and the social action surrounding it provides a “means of clarifying and affirming social

¹²⁷*Ibid.*

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 114.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

¹³²Douglas says this: “In a community in which overt conflict cannot be contained, witchcraft fears are used to justify expulsion and fission. These are communities in which authority has very weak resources” (*Ibid.*).

definitions.”¹³³ The symbol of the witch in Central Africa provides an example of how social structure corresponds with the dominant pattern of symbols. This gives rise to a question about media culture that will need to be addressed. Is there a dominant pattern of symbols within mass media that corresponds to a pattern of symbols and shared assumptions within media culture? In *Chapter Four: Implicit Assumptions Within Mass Media*, I will explore instances of dominant symbol patterns within mass media which correspond to patterns of shared assumptions. This will reveal the definitional processes of public memory at work within media culture.

Implicit Assumptions and Credibility

Douglas describes the structure of social interaction as something which is communicated through implicit meanings, which she also refers to as “underlying assumptions” behind behaviour, ritual or otherwise.¹³⁴ The more a group of individuals share the same set of implicit assumptions, that much more so will shared symbols serve to communicate the structure of social interaction. Witchcraft accusations, for example, are only as effective as the idea of community is strong.¹³⁵ Without access to the implicit meanings and assumptions of a given culture the rationale behind everyday behaviour and highly ritualized behaviour will remain opaque to the outside observer. This was Douglas’ experience in her fieldwork with the Lele.

¹³³Mary Douglas. “Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic*,” *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, edited by Mary Douglas. (London: Tavistock, 1970), xxv.

¹³⁴Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 38.

¹³⁵Douglas. “Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic*,” xxv.

Douglas describes implicit meanings as a type of shared knowledge that is backgrounded within the social world. Implicit meanings within a culture are “regarded as too true to warrant further discussion.”¹³⁶ When widely shared throughout the social world, implicit meanings provide “the stable background on which more coherent meanings are based.”¹³⁷ Douglas sees a direct relationship between the background of assumptions created by implicit meanings and the clarity of communication within the social world. “When the background of assumptions upholds what is verbally explicit, meanings come across loud and clear. Through these implicit channels of meaning, human society is achieved, clarity and speed of clue-reading ensured.”¹³⁸ Background assumptions are the very framework of communication. Among the Lele, the ritualized killing and eating of a pangolin occurs within a context of underlying assumptions -- assumptions about the human world and the animal world. The rituals which involve a pangolin serve to communicate the order of the Lele universe because the Lele share the same set of assumptions about fish, fertility, scaliness, spirits, pregnant woman, and so on.

According to Douglas, implicit meanings and symbols are responsible for social reproduction -- the process of a society maintaining itself through time. An understanding of the role of implicit meanings in the processes of social reproduction will provide insight into the nature of mass media’s control over contemporary social worlds. Implicit meanings provide the foundation for credibility within the social world.

¹³⁶Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 3.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 4.

Douglas sees the basis of society as existing within a shared apprehension of “a general pattern of what is right and necessary in social relations.”¹³⁹ This shared apprehension generates each culture’s “favoured patternings of reality” arising out of the surrounding social experience. It is the shared assumptions communicated through public memory which limit the available choices within a cultural system and establish credibility within the social world.

The characteristics of a particular classification system, such as the Lele’s, create what Douglas calls the “social conditions for credibility.”¹⁴⁰ The ritual eating of the pangolin is seen as a credible activity across the entire Lele social world, “The junior Pangolin man announced on behalf of the initiates that the village was ‘tied’ (kanda), that is, that sexual intercourse was banned until after the eating of the pangolin and the shedding of animal blood in the hunt that should follow the feast.”¹⁴¹ No villager questions the legitimacy of the ritual ban. The shared understanding of this ritual activity and its credibility arises out of the Lele’s implicit assumptions about the nature of their universe.

Credibility results from a perceived match between the structure of nature and the structure of mind within any given cultural system.¹⁴² For Douglas, a culture’s classification system is credible because it ‘fits’ with shared interaction within the social world. There is no rightness to classifications which can exist apart from a shared social order or organization of social interaction.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* .

It would be easy to overstate the degree to which tribal or contemporary social worlds express credibility and legitimacy through a symbolically consistent classification of the world. Victor Turner notes that the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia are faced with conflicting sets of norms, “People who observe one set of norms find that this very observance makes them transgress equally valid rules belonging to another set.”¹⁴³ This is similar to the contemporary situation where one set of symbols and norms governs behaviour in one area of life, such as religion, and another set of norms and symbols define action elsewhere, such as in business.¹⁴⁴

Collective memory does not restrict credibility within the social order to the operation of just one set of symbols and norms. Often, the social world is comprised of multiple symbol-sets which express conflicting values and conflicting systems of legitimation. The cultural debate within society arises out of conflict *within* the realm of a symbol-set and *between* competing symbol-sets. A symbol-set can be described as providing the organizing principles which bring order to the social world. Turner notes that the Ndembu society expresses consistent organizational principles even though they live in a world of competing sets of norms and competing sets of rituals/symbols.¹⁴⁵ Competition and contradiction do not rule out order within the social world.

Public memory reproduces the social world through communicating the assumptions behind a cultural system’s social order and so prevents alternative realities (alternative

¹⁴³Turner. *The Forest of Symbols*, 4.

¹⁴⁴I recall a story about the wife of industrialist J.R. Rockefeller being asked how her husband could attend church and also be a multibillionaire business man. Mrs. Rockefeller replied, “My husband *never* mixes business with religion.”

¹⁴⁵Turner. *The Forest of Symbols*, 3-4.

classification systems) from overwhelming the social order. Thus Douglas does not see public memory as existing apart from the social system as a form of disembodied and transcendent collective unconscious, “My wish has always been to take seriously Durkheim’s idea that the properties of classification systems derive from and are indeed properties of the social system in which they are used.”¹⁴⁶ For Douglas, the individual’s perception is filtered through the logical properties of social forms and these properties are communicated through symbols in use within the social world.¹⁴⁷

Douglas’ epistemology can be summarized as follows; social experience generates principles of classification (i.e. what is clean/unclean, human/animal, kin/stranger, and so forth), these principles of classification reproduce a given social pattern, the social pattern serves to reinforce the principles of classification and so all forms of knowledge become dependent on the principles of classification embedded in the social world.¹⁴⁸ Thus, for Douglas, the processes surrounding public memory are the social foundation to thought -- thinking rests upon socially generated classification principles which set boundaries around the possibilities of thought and experience.¹⁴⁹ What we know about reality and how belief in this knowledge is sustained cannot

¹⁴⁶Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 296.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 245. Douglas says this: “Ultimately any forms of knowledge depend on principles of classification” (*Ibid.*).

¹⁴⁹In this regard Douglas’ cultural theory of collective memory is similar to Jürgen Habermas’ concept of a shared *lifeworld*. Habermas describes the lifeworld as both a context and resource which “offers a storehouse of unquestioned cultural givens.” Ingrained cultural background assumptions frame communication between individuals who thereby share a “formal concept of the world.” This lifeworld defines “legitimately ordered interactions” and creates the grounds for collective interpretation and action. See Jürgen Habermas. *Moral Consciousness*

be explained without reference to the communication of classification principles and implicit assumptions through the processes of public memory.¹⁵⁰ Public memory is not an object but is a process of knowing. Douglas thus describes all experience as being received in a structured form and argues that reality must be symbolically organized if interpretation and action are to take place within the social world.¹⁵¹

How Public Memory Changes

Since the social world is not static we should expect to see change reflected in public memory. Durkheim explained changes in the *conscience collective* as due to changes in the division of labour.¹⁵² Douglas also sees a culture's classification system as tied to the division of labour. A community's "self-knowledge and knowledge of the world" will change when the organization of work changes.¹⁵³ A new level of economic activity tempts people "out of their

and Communicative Action, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990, originally published in German as *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln*, 1983), 135-136.

¹⁵⁰For a brief overview of how classifications and assumptions form the core of a world-view (shared view of reality), see Mary Douglas, "World View and Core," written in reply to John Skorupski, "Pangolin Power," and "Our Philosopher Replies" in *Philosophical Disputes in the Social Sciences*, edited by S.C. Brown. (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), 151-194.

¹⁵¹Robert Wuthnow, James Davison Hunter, Albert Bergesen, and Edith Kurzweil. *Cultural Analysis: The Work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 82.

¹⁵²Émile Durkheim. *The Division of Labor in Society*, translated by W.D. Halls. (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

¹⁵³Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 102.

niches by new possibilities of exercising or evading control.”¹⁵⁴ This leads to new social groups which create new analogies which in turn make “new kinds of people.”¹⁵⁵ There is a clear flexibility in Douglas’ cultural theory which sees individuals as subjected to the classification systems of their social environment, but also allows for individuals to manipulate the classification system, or create new ones, to their own advantage. Douglas contrasts her position to the “normal sociological posture for thinking about institutions” which either ignores the role of the individual altogether or sees individuals as “threatened by, or controlled by institutions.”¹⁵⁶ In contrast to these sociological postures, Douglas proposes a cultural theory which allows for “individuals who are setting up and maintaining the institutions as part of a process of incorporating other individuals in their own life projects.”¹⁵⁷ This tension is resolved through the processes of change which occurs through the failure of pollution beliefs to protect the classification system and through the appearance of new economic activity within the social realm.¹⁵⁸ Douglas’ theory of public memory does account for social change as well as social reproduction. Following the agenda of classic sociology, both Douglas and Durkheim look to the division of labour as the source of change within public memory. Here I will explore changes in the mode of communication as a source of change within public memory. In *Chapter Five*:

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, x.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, x-xi.

¹⁵⁸In *Purity and Danger* Douglas details how pollution beliefs are “an intelligible concern to protect society from behaviour that will wreck it” (*Ibid.*, 4).

Cyberspace and the Subversion of Definitional Control, I will demonstrate that the change in the mode of communication which is found in the appearance of cyberspace has enabled new assumptions and new symbol-sets to flow through media culture. The effect of these symbol-sets will be described as the erosion of the credibility of the McDonald's Corporation, credibility which is sustained through mass media-generated assumptions. The existence of alternative symbols within cyberspace will also be described as an indication of the failure of pollution beliefs within media culture, which in turn suggests the initial stages of the development of a new social order.

Summary

Social intercourse generates categories which are used to organize the universe. These categories reflect assumptions about the nature of the universe and are expressed through symbols such as the pangolin. The symbols generated by the social world constitute the cosmology of a particular culture. The in-use set of symbols also reflects the perceptual bias of a social order. Symbols reproduce the social order through embodying the underlying categories and assumptions which organize the social world. Symbols and ritual for Douglas are the framework of consciousness. Collective (public) memory is a form of social meta-communication which transmits knowledge of the social world throughout the entire social system. For the purposes of my analysis of the symbolics of mass media the elements of her theory of public memory can be summarized as follows:

Symbols:

- Any word, thought, or object which embodies a degree of shared meaning between two or more people. The shared meaning which defines a thing as a symbol has a quality of analogy or representation. Symbols act as analogous referents, representations of a meaning or assumption which lies beyond the symbol itself. A Coke bottle does not simply refer to 'Coca-Cola' or 'drink' but acts as a representation of 'the real thing' and 'perfect harmony' -- a utopic state achieved through branded consumption.

Implicit meanings and assumptions:

- Douglas tends to be imprecise in her separation of the concepts of implicit meanings and implicit assumptions. As far as I can determine, the two are largely equivalent to each other. Implicit meanings can be said to operate as *assumptions* about the nature of the universe. The implicit meaning of the pangolin is fertility and a good hunt. In social action surrounding the pangolin-as-symbol, this classification of the universe is assumed by those perceiving the symbol. Therefore the symbol embodies the shared set of assumptions within the context of social action. The meaning of the pangolin symbol is *implied* through the assumptions which are reflected in social action around the ritual use of the symbol -- cult initiation, ban on sexuality, selective consumption, and conclusion of the ritual with sex and hunting. All actions reflect, but do not directly state, the implicit meaning of the pangolin -- more babies and a good hunt.

Ritual:

- Ritual has a very broad use for Douglas. Any social communication involves symbols. All use of symbols in social interaction and communication is ritual action. Douglas appears to equate all communication with ritual action. Aside from noting that public memory is a ritual process of communication, ritual, as a conceptual tool, remains largely outside the focus of this analysis. Here the focus is on symbols within modes of communication. At the level of abstraction which equates all communicative action as both symbolic and ritualized, the concept of ritual does little more than identify symbols-as-communication as a patterned social process. Communication will take on many ritual forms, but a typology of ritual forms is not the subject of this dissertation.

Perceptual Bias:

- When the universe is ordered through symbols and social interaction this ordering process creates a perceptual bias in those who share a classification system (a culture). The social order becomes a way of thinking, a perceptual bias, which entrenches mind and society in a feedback loop. This loop is re-ordered through the renegotiation of classifications. Negotiation arises as a response to the accumulation of anomalies in social life. Perceptual bias describes how, through collective memory, the structure of society operates as the structure of thought. The order of society thereby establishes the bias of individual perception.

Credibility:

- When a group shares the same set of assumptions about the nature of the universe, credibility acts as a measure of the 'fit' between action and implicit meaning. Only meanings and actions which match the classification system at the foundation of social order will be seen to be credible.

Public Memory:

- The focus of this model of public memory is on the way in which symbols embody the social order. A dominant configuration of symbols reflects a dominant social order. Public memory describes how symbols not only *reflect* social order, but also influence its reproduction by perpetuating a perceptual bias within social action. Public memory also describes the definitional control which symbols exercise over individual perception. Public memory thus describes the reproduction of implicit assumptions about the universe within the social world.

As symbols affect the ordering of perception, therefore control over the flow of symbols is tantamount to control over the order of social reality. It is this premise which provides the relevance of public memory as a theoretical tool for analysing symbol flow within structurally-differentiated modes of communication. Throughout the remainder of this work I have renamed 'public memory,' preferring to call it 'collective memory.' This is done to emphasize its all-embracing nature as it preconditions both mass behaviour patterns and the mode of thinking within the most private recesses of the mind. 'Collective' is also intended as a rhetorical device to emphasize the implications of this way of thinking about thinking within a society enamoured with a mythological sovereign consumer. Collective memory serves to dethrone, behead, and bury the royal treatment of the self.

Douglas' theory of collective memory raises a number of issues in this analysis of mass media and cyberspace as cultural systems. Her theory of the definitional power of symbols will shed light on media's social role. If structurally-differentiated media systems have different qualities of symbol-set cohesion and fragmentation, then this structural differentiation between types of media systems will influence the reproduction of the social order. This is a key perspective which a theory of collective memory brings to the analysis of media systems. Also, if, as Douglas' theory suggests, social structure corresponds to a dominant pattern of symbols, then the presence or absence of a dominant pattern of symbols within a media system will have implications for the nature of social reproduction within media culture. My analysis will reveal that the structure of mass media leads directly to a controlled, dominant symbol pattern while the structure of cyberspace disables the establishment of a similar dominant symbol-set. Collective memory then allows us to assess this structural differentiation as having implications for the

social order of media culture. But before addressing these issues, the following chapter will describe how pollution beliefs enable the reproduction of the implicit assumptions which collective memory communicates throughout a social order.

Chapter Two: The Role of Pollution Beliefs within Definitional Control

I have outlined how a shared social world arises out of the implicit assumptions and symbols which are communicated through the processes of collective (public) memory. Following Mary Douglas, I have arrived at a description of culture as a social bond based upon the construction of common categories.¹⁵⁹ For Douglas, culture is the “package of values” which arise out of the categories that organize interaction within a social group.¹⁶⁰ Collective memory provides a way to describe how culture is communicated and reproduced. Ritual and symbols transmit shared assumptions and perpetuate the cognitive and perceptual bias of the social world. Social cohesion and reproduction of the social order result from these processes of collective memory.

Douglas seeks to develop Durkheim’s basic observation -- that social cohesion depends on individuals sharing categories of thought.¹⁶¹ But a cultural system is not an iron cage. In this chapter I will explore how, according to Douglas, pollution beliefs are essential to the maintenance of the ‘package of values’ which constitute culture. This will provide a foundation for exploring how cyberspace can be described as a form of pollution within media culture. In

¹⁵⁹Douglas. *Risk and Blame*, 194. Douglas notes that at the end of the 1900's the idea of the shared construction of conceptual categories was rejected by many, and that to this day, “Many philosophers of science find it controversial, and others repugnant.” (*Ibid.*, 212). At the same time, Douglas found that within the field of anthropology the concept of shared conceptual categories is so widely recognized that “reviewing anthropologists castigate me for stating the obvious” (*Ibid.*, 194).

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁶¹Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 8.

Chapter Four the operation of pollution beliefs within media systems will be identified as an aspect of mass media's definitional control over the social order. Here pollution beliefs will provide a conceptual tool for examining the mass media event known as Watergate. Pollution beliefs will also serve to explain a cultural debate over narcotics as captured in a highschool textbook in use in Ontario *circa* 1925 (*Chapter Four*).

The Cultural Debate

Culture, for Douglas, is not an open-ended field of infinite possibilities because each culture is legitimated upon a "different logical base."¹⁶² Culture is constrained by a cognitive apparatus which "provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered. And above all, it [culture] has authority, since each [individual] is induced to assent because of the assent of others."¹⁶³ The 'logical base' which constrains action and thought within a culture is expressed through categories (for example, 'mother,' 'sister') which organize social action. But Douglas does not see culture as impervious to change.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶²Douglas. *Risk and Blame*, 136.

¹⁶³Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁴By recognizing that culture involves a process of struggle over the framework of reality, a struggle over the conceptual categories in use within the social world, Douglas avoids the "Myth of Cultural Integration," which sociologist Margaret S. Archer accuses Douglas of describing. (Margaret S. Archer. "Theory, Culture and Post-Industrial Society." *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 116.) Archer *only* cites one of Douglas' earliest works (*Purity and Danger*, 1966) as an example of theorizing culture as a "monistic integrated whole" (*Ibid.*). But the importance of the cultural debate as a central theme of Douglas' later writings suggests that Archer greatly misreads Douglas. Douglas would certainly agree with Archer's conclusion that "cultural contradictions within and between belief systems" are a critical aspect of social change (*Ibid.*, 117).

Douglas suggests that there may be a “misleading natural bias towards thinking that the norm is for collectivities to be viable” and prefers to start with the assumption that “collective action is difficult.”¹⁶⁵ The collective action that culture implies arises out of a set of choices which “construct conceptual categories” seen as appropriate to the context of social interaction.¹⁶⁶ But once a social group establishes its conceptual categories debate then arises over how to achieve shared goals. According to Douglas, the object of the debate within a group is “to legitimize the form of their society.”¹⁶⁷ For Douglas, a culture is a structured framework arising out of this debate which affirms some things while denying others.¹⁶⁸ Culture is the arena of public debate and “major debates are about control.”¹⁶⁹

Douglas’ cultural theory begins with the claim that culture is “a system of persons holding one another mutually accountable.”¹⁷⁰ Belief that something is dangerous is used within the debate to constrain the behaviour of group members. The idea of danger and pollution acts as

¹⁶⁵Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, 133. Elsewhere Douglas says this: “Cultural stability is short lived, homogeneity achieved with difficulty and always about to dissolve.” Mary Douglas. “Risk as a Forensic Resource,” *Daedalus*. Fall 1990, Volume 119, Number 4. 4. Similarly, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann note that “The legitimation of the institutional order is also faced with the ongoing necessity of keeping chaos at bay. All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos” *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967) 103.

¹⁶⁶Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, 133.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 285. Douglas also speaks of “common cognitive enterprises” as accountability systems in “Passive Voice Theories in Religious Sociology,” *In the Active Voice*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 1-15.

¹⁷⁰Douglas. “Risk as a Forensic Resource.” 10.

a rhetorical resource within the cultural debate.¹⁷¹ The debate itself is about cultural conformity and social reproduction: “The debate sways between pressures for emancipation from the old institutional constraints and pressures to sustain the institutions in which authority and solidarity reside.”¹⁷² In the ongoing cultural debate danger acts as a politicized form of social coercion. Within the debate danger is cited when a valued institution is threatened.¹⁷³ Witchcraft accusations are an example of pollution beliefs in action. They are a response to a perceived danger to the order of the universe and local loyalties.¹⁷⁴

Douglas uses the idea of pollution beliefs to explain how the social world is maintained, “complex pollution beliefs preserve the social categories” -- categories communicated through the processes of collective memory.¹⁷⁵ At stake in the cultural debate are the very categories of social life which collective memory reproduces. Pollution beliefs will prove useful in understanding how cyberspace is received within institutions and how its uncontrolled symbol-flow affects the classificatory powers of mass media (*Chapter Five*).

Douglas’ cultural theory examines social cohesion through three claims about culture: (1) cultures are precarious; they exist through time because each culture legitimates coercion to resist

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷⁴Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 111-114.

¹⁷⁵Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky. *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 46.

pressures to transform,¹⁷⁶ “authority is always fragile and power always held precariously;”¹⁷⁷ (2) pollution, danger and risk beliefs are used as bargaining weapons within the endless normative debate, and different types of culture will select different kinds of dangers;¹⁷⁸ and (3) the normative debate which arises at the founding of any culture or institution can collapse.¹⁷⁹ Since the object of the debate is “to legitimize the form of society,” the end of the debate brings with it the end of the social intercourse which constitutes the social world.¹⁸⁰ The precarious nature of culture, authority, and power; the politicized context of danger and risk perception (pollution beliefs); and the threat of cultural collapse I take from Douglas to describe the generalized context in which human communication takes place. All of these take shape according to the perceptual biases of any given culture.

When Douglas turned her attention to the social conditions affecting alcoholism, she observed that community authority, community rituals, and community solidarity are key points of reference.¹⁸¹ The community, the culture that we create out of social interaction, is a communication system which enables social cohesion but comes at the cost of mutual coercion.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 133. Douglas says this: “Each individual who enters a social relation is drawn at the same time into a debate about what the relation is and how it ought to be conducted” (*Ibid.*).

¹⁸¹Mary Douglas. “A Distinctive Anthropological Perspective,” *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, edited by Mary Douglas. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6.

Culture, as a communication system, carries the mechanism of coercion in the form of pollution, danger, and risk beliefs.¹⁸² In the following, I will explore how the processes of collective memory are not benign but are implicated directly in the legitimation of authority and power through the transmission of pollution, danger, and risk beliefs.

Pollution Beliefs and Definitional Control

Douglas describes pollution beliefs as emerging from the process of classifying and ordering experience.¹⁸³ These beliefs operate around the underlying assumptions communicated through symbols within the social world. Pollution beliefs are a form of socially-embedded authority. They maintain the underlying assumptions within a culture. Pollution beliefs enforce conformity to shared assumptions and categories by defining dangers and prescribing punishment.¹⁸⁴

Pollution beliefs do more than simply enforce conformity. They also provide the critical service of protecting the weakest part of a culture's framework. Wherever there is ambiguity within the shared classifications and categories underlying behaviour pollution beliefs arise to protect and preserve these fragile aspects of a culture's cosmology.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸²Douglas says this: "Victim blaming facilitates internal social control; outsider blaming enhances loyalty. Both ploys would serve an intention to prevent the community from being riven by dissention." Mary Douglas. *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 59.

¹⁸³Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 58.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 47-58.

Pollution beliefs protect the implicit assumptions behind shared social experience. In doing so they serve to reproduce the social world. But the power of social cohesion implicit in pollution beliefs is not absolute. Pollution beliefs are effective as a means of social reproduction only in so far as individuals are committed to the shared set of assumptions underlying society, “Their power to hold people to a code of behaviour is no more than the power of those people’s respect for that code. This, of course, sets limits to the scope for manipulating a social situation by citing danger beliefs.”¹⁸⁶ When implicit assumptions are shared widely across the social world, pollution beliefs prove to be highly effective in ordering behaviour and maintaining the cosmological categories which organize the social world. Douglas reaches the same conclusion in *Purity and Danger* when she notes that “symbols can only have effect so long as they command confidence.”¹⁸⁷

The relationship between pollution beliefs and the maintenance of the categories contained within collective memory is also argued by Durkheim. Sociologist Anthony Giddens interprets Durkheim as drawing a direct line between punishment (an outcome of pollution beliefs) and the *conscience collective*. Giddens outlines Durkheimian thought along the following lines: religious systems are the original source of penal law. Punishment is a manifestation of collective outrage when the shared moral code is broken. Penal law (law that

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁸⁷Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 69. Douglas makes a similar point about witchcraft accusations and community solidarity, “witchcraft beliefs are essentially a means of clarifying and affirming social definitions ... the witch-image is as effective as the idea of the community is strong.” Mary Douglas. “Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*,” xxv.

requires punishment) thus rests on sentiments that are widely shared.¹⁸⁸ It is these widely shared sentiments which “presupposes the existence of a strongly defined *conscience collective* ... The primary function of punishment, therefore, is to protect and reaffirm the *conscience collective* in the face of acts which question its sanctity.”¹⁸⁹ It is here that we come to the key dynamic of pollution beliefs. Pollution beliefs protect the implicit assumptions that are backgrounded within the social world.

Douglas makes a direct connection between pollution beliefs and a cultural system of shared values.¹⁹⁰ Although within anthropology pollution rules usually focus on prohibiting physical contact, Douglas sees the root of pollution behaviour in much broader terms.¹⁹¹ Pollution rules are an extension of the processes of classification. They are an extension of the perceptual process because they “impose order on experience” and generate social pressure to conform to the shared values and categories of the social world.¹⁹² Pollution behaviour thus involves more than an idea of dirt or physical restrictions but encompasses all shared values in the social world. For Douglas, pollution behaviour is ultimately defined as “the reaction to any event likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.”¹⁹³ Wherever social values and implicit assumptions are widely shared, pollution beliefs will be seen to operate. Pollution

¹⁸⁸Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, 74-76.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁹⁰Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 51.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 51.

beliefs therefore operate around the “areas of greatest systemisation” within the social order.¹⁹⁴

A highly defined social order will come with a large set of pollution rules. This was Douglas’ experience when she observed the Lele’s many rules surrounding eating meat.

¹⁹⁴Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 57.

Summary

This chapter briefly described Mary Douglas' cultural theory of pollution beliefs and social accountability. Pollution beliefs hold people accountable to the classifications which establish social order. When the social order is at stake pollution beliefs will arise to protect the credibility of authority which is based on a particular ordering of the universe. For authority to maintain its legitimacy it must ensure that the classification of nature at the foundation of its credibility is not rejected within the social world. Pollution beliefs operate as rhetorical devices within the ongoing cultural debate over the shape and direction of the social order. Pollution beliefs will carry moral force only if the categories and classifications in question are widely shared.¹⁹⁵

The danger beliefs which have been aroused by the recent appearance of cyberspace within media culture are indicative of a perceived threat to cherished categories within media culture. Cyberspace is one more technology that has been caught up in the ongoing cultural debate. Culture theory suggests that attitudes to cyberspace will reflect attitudes to various institutions such as the state, family, and marketplace. Aaron Wildavsky and Karl Dake's survey of risk perceptions associated with technology implies that the debate over cyberspace is a conflict over the future shape and values of society, "the great struggles over the perceived

¹⁹⁵This theory of pollution beliefs and the maintenance of shared conceptual categories is also reiterated in Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky's *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Douglas and Wildavsky base their analysis on a problematic classification of societies as expressing market individualism, hierarchy, and sectarianism. Given the difficulties of overlaying this typology on global media culture and global cyberspace-based communities, my analysis will simply use Douglas' more general observations about the role of pollution beliefs in protecting shared assumptions, as outlined above.

dangers of technology in our time are essentially about trust and distrust of societal institutions, that is, about cultural conflict.”¹⁹⁶ Cyberspace will be seen to undermine the authority sources of the economic system which rely on the structural constraints of monopolistic mass media. As far as the maintenance of the economic system’s implicit assumptions is concerned it will be seen that, metaphorically speaking, cyberspace is a form of pollution which threatens the arbitrary authority and credibility of institutions, such as the McDonald’s Corporation and the Church of Scientology (*Chapter Five*).

But how can pollution/danger beliefs operate within the economic system if we lack widely shared implicit meanings? Recall that pollution beliefs operate around the areas of greatest systemisation. Durkheim, Douglas, and Giddens all suggest that what distinguishes contemporary society from tribal cultures is a fragmented cosmology. Douglas goes so far as to suggest that “one of the greatest problems of our day is the lack of commitment to common symbols.”¹⁹⁷ As will be seen in the *Conclusion*, I will suggest just the opposite -- one of the greatest problems of our day is the mass commitment to symbols generated by the economic system via the mass media. It is on the matter of the supposed fragmentation of cosmology and experience within contemporary society that I will suggest we are actually closer to the unified symbolic whole of tribal culture than is generally believed.

The unified cosmology of tribal societies is, of course, not an entirely accurate description. Just as it was once mistakenly assumed that all tribal individuals are religious and

¹⁹⁶Aaron Wildavsky and Karl Dake. “Theories of Risk Perception: Who Fears What and Why?” *Daedalus*. Volume 19, Number 4. Fall, 1990. 56.

¹⁹⁷Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 1.

only contemporary individuals are secular, so it is also incorrect to assume that all tribal social worlds are symbolic wholes.¹⁹⁸ Douglas recognizes degrees of secularity within tribal society, as well as degrees of ambiguity across cultures.¹⁹⁹ Here it is important to bear in mind that this dissertation is not an attempt to define a scale of symbolic unity across tribal and contemporary cultures. I am more interested in the processes of communication which are shared across culture and throughout time -- the processes surrounding the definitional power of symbols. There is no communication without symbols and no social existence without the framing of a social world through implicit assumptions contained within collective memory.²⁰⁰ Consider Douglas'

¹⁹⁸See Stanley Diamond's essay, "The Uses of the Primitive," in *Primitive Views of the World*, edited by Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), v-xxiv, for an exploration of how the modern idea of primitive society is "a logical projection of civilized societies" with little to do with the actual state of the primitive (*Ibid.*, x). See also Stanley Diamond. *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1974); and Robert Redfield. *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953, reprinted 1971).

¹⁹⁹Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 52-53. Douglas' essay on jokes (*Implicit Meanings*, 90-114) details how tribal cultures can have an awareness of the arbitrary nature of their social world. Tribal and contemporary cultures both contain a high degree of critical self-awareness when it comes to the problem of "the relation of thought to experience which are, undeniably, a universal preoccupation of philosophy [primitive or modern]" (*Ibid.*, 111). Tribal culture is most decidedly not distinguished from contemporary societies by virtue of a supposed irrational naïvety towards the social construction of reality. Douglas, building upon the ethnography of Victor Turner, notes that ritual joking within African culture reveals, "the arbitrary, provisional nature of the very categories of thought, by lifting their pressure for a moment and suggesting other ways of structuring reality, the joke rite in the middle of the sacred moments of religion hints at unfathomable mysteries" (*Ibid.*, 110). Awareness of the arbitrary nature of social reality may be more fully articulated within contemporary societies, but it certainly is not unique to these social worlds.

²⁰⁰Douglas says this: "it is impossible to have social relations without symbolic acts." Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 62.

observation that “all communication depends on the use of symbols.”²⁰¹ Symbols, to be intelligible, require the pre-existence of shared implicit meanings.

High degrees of uniformity in consumption, uniformity in life goals, money as a universal symbol and measure of value, even uniformity of dress codes within the modern social world points to widely shared implicit meanings. Mass media, mass behaviour patterns, and the implicit assumptions communicated through media culture will serve to explain why cyberspace is greeted with ambiguity. Within the economic system there is a proliferation of tribes but these tribes all interact with the cosmology generated through media culture (*Chapter Three*).

²⁰¹Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 10.

Chapter Three: Mass Media and the Control of Symbolic Production

The cultural theory of Mary Douglas describes culture as a communication process. Collective memory provides a metaphor for describing culture-as-communication. Collective memory reinforces shared values through symbols which saturate the social world. Perceptual, cognitive, and affective bias is perpetuated within the social world through classifications and implicit assumptions which make the shared comprehension of symbols possible. Pollution beliefs, along with danger and risk perception, arise within the ongoing cultural debate whenever the classifications at the foundation of a culture or institution are threatened.

Collective memory describes how symbolic production and social reproduction is controlled within the social world. Does mass media participate in the control of symbolic production? Few, if any, media theorists would argue that mass media does not disseminate symbols which influence behaviour throughout globalized media culture. But to what extent does mass media exercise *control* over symbols and their meaning within local cultures? To answer this question I will explore how symbols within mass media are largely selected and controlled by the current economic system.

I will explore how mass media participates in the control of the symbolic universe of media culture and the reproduction of the economic system's values. It will be argued that the processes of collective memory also indicate that mass media systems cannot be thought of as benign. I will suggest that the dissemination of perceptual bias through media systems is inevitable and that the mode of mass media (its structural characteristics) provides the answer to the question "what bias is communicated?"

My focus on the symbolics of media culture is not intended to imply that mass media's only symbol-set is that of the dominant economic system. I will argue that the market economy provides the *dominant symbol-set* largely because mass media is a sub-system of the market economy and therefore operates in the best interests of the economic system and those who receive its first-fruits (and the largest slice of the pie) -- the élite. The monopolization of mass media by the élite ensures that any contradictory symbol-sets within media culture cannot match the audience share and definitional power of the privileged symbols of the economic system. The market economy provides a paradigmatic example of how mass media globalizes a privileged world-view within media culture. Just as the market economy has tied most of the world together in an integrated marketplace of goods, so has it also tied the world together into a single marketplace of ideas wherein some ideas have developed a dominant market share. On the globalization of the market economy Peter Beyer has observed that "Commodity production for a money economy has been a very powerful way of tying almost all areas of the world into a single communicative network."²⁰² This chapter explores how the 'single communicative network' of the globalized market economy ensures its ongoing reproduction through the socialization power of mass media's privileged symbol-set.

This chapter will describe how, within the realm of global media culture, all local cultures are already under the influence of the perceptual bias of the economic system. I will argue that this perceptual bias has been established through a process known as the 'management of the consumer' and first identified in the late 1700's by economist Adam Smith. The management of the consumer describes how corporations exert influence over the social world of individuals

²⁰²Beyer. *Religion and Globalization*, 48.

within media culture. I will suggest that this control over the social reality of consumers is due to the monopolization of media systems by the élite. As media ownership is monopolized, this allows for the monopolization of definitional control over media culture. This definitional control is further reinforced by the prevalence of a finite set of consumer goods within local cultures. Both the range of symbols within media and the symbolic nature of goods within the marketplace serve to limit the range of possibilities within local world-making. Having explained the nature of mass media's definitional control over media culture *Chapter Four* will then explore concrete examples of the economic system's perceptual bias impacting upon local cultures.

Local Worlds Versus Global Symbols

Collective memory ensures that any symbols and meanings transmitted via global media systems are interpreted at the local level. The local culture supplies the classification taxonomy which structures the perception of globalized symbols. Global symbols will always be confronted by local perceptual bias. Collective memory provides local social worlds with a cultural process which limits the potential homogenizing force of globalized media systems. This cultural process is the preservation of perceptual and affective bias within the local social world through pollution beliefs. Pollution beliefs arise out of the perception of a threat to the local classification taxonomy (world-view). A discussion of the definitional power of mass media needs to account for these constraining effects of collective memory.

The local social world acts as a hermeneutic filter through which global media culture is interpreted and applied. Anthropologist Philip Carl Salzman describes this hermeneutic filter of

local culture in similar terms; “the imaginative reworking of the cultural vision under the stimulus of the global electronic flow continues in one degree or another to draw creatively upon local symbolic resources and to acknowledge local conditions and circumstances.”²⁰³ The imaginative reproduction of local culture makes use of the global flow of symbols and indigenous symbolic resources. Collective memory suggests that the cultural process which combines global symbols and indigenous symbolic resources will involve implicit meanings. According to Douglas’ cultural theory, we could expect to see the symbols of mass media subjected to implicit meanings operating at a local level. This is how collective memory would constrain chaos from overwhelming local cultures which are faced with the symbols and meanings of global media systems. Cultural theory suggests that collective memory limits the definitional power of mass media mediated meanings by supplying the perceptual bias which saturates the local culture. But this is only half the picture. Local cultures do not stand isolated from the structures and processes of the global economic system. The analysis of mass media must account for how local cultures are thoroughly implicated in the globalized symbol systems of mass media and mass production.

²⁰³Philip Carl Salzman. “The Electronic Trojan Horse: Television in the Globalization of Paramodern Cultures,” *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Lourdes Arizpe. (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 214. See also Colleen Roach’s article, “Cultural Imperialism and Resistance in Media Theory and Literary Theory,” *Media, Culture and Society*, Volume 19, Number 1, January 1997, 47-66.

The Global Context of Local Knowledge

According to Mary Douglas, the processes of collective memory saturate the social world. Everyday social interaction is framed by shared implicit meanings. These implicit meanings provide the foundation for a shared understanding of symbols, whether words, animals, family relations, or quite literally all aspects of the perceived and imagined universe. Collective memory embraces all meanings across the social world by framing social interaction within shared implicit meanings. Can we speak of mass media as a parallel process which embraces meanings, symbol sets, and cosmologies across the social world through the technologically-assisted dissemination of implicit meanings? The following will explore how collective memory provides a model of communication which accounts for the audience's local culture and global context.

In *Reading Television* media theorists Fiske and Hartley note that television exploits the structures which the audience uses to “categorize, and so make sense of,” the surrounding world.²⁰⁴ Television messages are decoded by the audience according to culturally generated codes which constrain the perception of the individual viewer.²⁰⁵ Television symbolically reflects the values and relationships beneath the surface of society and presents us with our “collective selves.”²⁰⁶ All these functions of television sound very much like the processes of collective memory wherein rituals communicate the structure of the social world (our ‘collective self’), and the collective symbol systems (‘culturally generated codes’) constrain perception

²⁰⁴John Fiske and John Hartley. *Reading Television*, (London: Methuen, 1978), 166.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 85.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 17.

within a shared social world. Although they do not use collective memory as a model, Fiske and Hartley do insist that television “is dependent upon more general cultural processes” for its overall content and meaning.²⁰⁷ According to Fiske and Hartley, television’s meanings need to be contextualized within the global production and consumption world-system.²⁰⁸ Within this global context, television articulates the cultural consensus of the nature of reality and engages individual members in the culture’s dominant value system.²⁰⁹ Here again we find echoes of the processes of collective memory.

Although Fiske and Hartley’s analysis is often accused of placing too much weight upon individual autonomy, their analysis points to a key issue in mass media studies -- is meaning established within the medium itself or within the social world of the audience? Fiske and Hartley claim that the audiences’ “freedom to decode as they collectively choose is built into the medium’s structure, and built in such a way that it is influenced more by the collective meaning systems of the culture at large than by any explicit manipulation on the part of the producers.”²¹⁰ But this point of view underestimates the degree to which the ‘medium’s structure’ and the ‘collective meaning system of the culture at large’ have effectively limited the variety of symbols and possible realities which are available within media culture. This is the main point I wish to pursue in this chapter -- mass media and the economic system provide a controlled set of symbols (and therefore, a controlled presentation of possible realities) within media culture and thereby

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 193.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 191-192.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 88.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, 193.

overwhelm the individual's ability to reinvent culture. I will argue that the audience's 'freedom to decode' is limited by the constraints of thought and perception which are established by the economy's definitional system. Media theorist David Gauntlett touches upon this issue by noting that Fiske's claims about the audience's 'freedom to decode' fails to explain the readily observable patterns of mass culture which are clearly promoted through mass media,

Evidence certainly supports the view that audiences can and do make their own meanings, resist messages, and intelligently select and process their media diet. However, the world described in Fiske's prodigious output, in which audiences are infinitely capable of interpreting any bit of mass culture, of whatever 'intended' meaning, into a challenging and fulfilling text, is not convincingly matched to the one we live in. The idea that every viewer is wittily reinventing every bit of culture that they meet is an appealing one, but not really likely to be an accurate summary of experience.²¹¹

This is another way of saying that individual hermeneutic or world-making skills are no match for the pervasive structuring power of the global symbol producing system of mass media.

Media theorist Michèle Martin also describes this pervasive structuring power: "media industries are supported by powerful capitalist institutions and must therefore disseminate the dominant ideology that keeps these institutions in power."²¹²

The audience's 'freedom to decode' is limited by the constraints of local culture *and* global context. This limited indeterminacy is built into the local culture as well as the socializing medium of mass media. Simple observation of the mundane social world confirms that the collective meaning system of local cultures are saturated with the symbols of globalized mass

²¹¹David Gauntlett. *Video Critical: Children, the Environment and Media Power*, (Bedfordshire: John Libbey Media, 1996), 22.

²¹²Michèle Martin. *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination, and Opposition*, translated by Benoît Ouellette, (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 286.

production. Thus, there are few, if any, local cultures whose context is unaffected by the symbols of mass media. The point I wish to pursue herein is that the context of local cultures can be described as the globalized socialization system of the economic system. The collective meaning systems of cultures under the influence of the current economic system are saturated (or tend towards saturation) with the symbolic universe of mass media. This shared, globalized symbolic universe is disseminated by the coordination of mass media with mass production, and the coordination itself is assisted by the advertising and public relations industry.²¹³ This suggests that the context of local cultures is already structured through the symbolics of transnational markets and distribution systems in such a way that there remains no “pure” local context for mass media to be received in a state un-influenced by the symbolics of the economic system.

Collective memory describes local cultural processes of implicit meanings and perceptual bias. These processes of collective memory arise out of *local social interaction* and reflect and reproduce a local reality-framework. How then is it possible for the economic system to reproduce itself when local social interaction is the foundation of cultural construction? In the following I will outline how the monopolization of symbol production within media culture ensures socialization on a global scale which is necessary for the coordination of mass

²¹³Cultural theorist Armand Mattelart convincingly details how the globalization of capitalism’s economic and ideological infrastructure went hand-in-hand with the globalization of primarily American advertising, public relations, and management industries. See his *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture: The Ideological Apparatuses of Imperialism*, translated by Michael Chanan, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979). For an overview of the early globalizing and monopolizing strategies of news agencies, see Terhi Rantanen’s article “The Globalization of Electronic News in the 19th Century,” *Media, Culture and Society*, Volume 19, Number 4, October 1997, 605-620.

production and mass consumption and so ensures the reproduction of the economic system. The result of this monopolization of globalized symbol production will then be explored through case studies of mass media's definitional impact upon local cultures (*Chapter Four*).

Mass Media and the Management of Consumption

Collective memory provides a method of analysing cultural reproduction at the local level but the contemporary situation suggests that the context of local culture is entwined with global processes of production and consumption. Local cultural context within media culture is partially defined by these global processes of production and consumption. What is the nature of social control within the world-system of mass production and consumption?

Here I wish to pursue Schiller's observation that the key to social control is found in the "power to define reality and to set the social agenda for the community-at-large."²¹⁴ Schiller locates this definitional control in mass media systems.²¹⁵ Mass media acts as the system-sustaining process for the economic system by disseminating the social agenda behind mass consumption. Media theorist Walter J. Ong's comments on television's definitional role recognize the possibility of a connection between the economy and mass media, "television is in some very deep sense, and even essentially, a commercial medium ... It may even ultimately

²¹⁴Herbert I. Schiller. "Mind Management: Mass Media in the Advanced Industrial State." In *Mass Media and Society*, edited by Alan Wells. (Palo Alto, California: National Press Books, 1972), 285.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*

promote or reinforce commercial culture wherever it becomes prominent.”²¹⁶ But is the connection between ‘commercial culture’ and television deeper than simple promotion and reinforcement of values? Economist John Kenneth Galbraith’s suggestion that the industrial system would collapse without the promotion of consumer goods through advertising describes the necessary connection between mass media and the economic system.²¹⁷ Mass media provides the globe-spanning framework within which the management of consumption is realized. This management of consumption is directed by the commercial sector *and* the political sector. Schiller describes the U.S. government socialization program in *The Mind Managers* as the consolidation of the *status quo*: “Whenever significant social change has occurred or may occur around the world, American transmitters are busy disseminating doubt about new social forms and glorifying the acquisitive-consumerist system.”²¹⁸ Could it be that without the definitional processes of mass media the globalization of the mass production and mass consumption which characterizes the current economic system would falter? Exactly how far is the reach of mass media’s ‘definitional power’ within media culture?

Galbraith’s economic theory provides a way to conceptualize the relationship between mass media and mass consumption. Galbraith equates contemporary economic development

²¹⁶Walter J. Ong. *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 323. I will suggest that television is *not* essentially or inevitably a commercial medium in the section “Definitional Control and the Limits to Thought Within Media Culture” (page 214). Only the structure of ownership determines the degree to which media systems are commercial in nature.

²¹⁷John Kenneth Galbraith. *The New Industrial State*, (Boston: Houghton, 1967), 279-282.

²¹⁸Schiller. *The Mind Managers*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 47.

with strategies that replace contentment with desire for greater wealth. Galbraith cites an example of how California farmers and labour contractors encouraged Filipino workers to buy expensive clothes. The result provides a metaphor of the economic system, “The pressure of debt and the pressure on each to emulate the most extravagant quickly converted these happy and easy-going people into a modern and reliable work force.”²¹⁹ For Galbraith, the management of consumer demand through the creation of wants and beliefs is an essential element of the contemporary economy. The modern labour force is created and sustained as a direct result of advertising’s capability to create and direct desire.²²⁰

Galbraith provides an essential element in my model of mass media -- the management of the consumer through the creation of “mental conditioning” which matches consumption patterns to the supply of goods.²²¹ According to Galbraith, the industrial process requires that public behaviour be subjected to the influence of the marketplace through the advertising function of mass media. In *The Captive Public*, media theorist Benjamin Ginsberg makes a similar point about the formation of public opinion to the requirements of market forces within western regimes. Mass media systems, state agencies, mass education, and legal systems served to convert mass opinion from a “hostile, unpredictable, and often disruptive force” into a marketplace of ideas dominated by the values of the upper classes.²²²

²¹⁹Galbraith. *The New Industrial State*, 279.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, 281-282.

²²¹*Ibid.*, 330.

²²²Benjamin Ginsberg. *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 58. In a similar vein Raymond Williams says this: “a dominant class can to a large extent control the transmission and distribution of the whole common

Galbraith's motivational theory of economic systems maintained through the creation of desire and Ginsberg's claim that mass media disseminates the value system of the upper classes should not draw focus away from the common element which they both emphasize. Their suggestion that the marketplace is sustained through mass media is the common element I wish to draw upon. Motivational theories of consumer behaviour arising out of desire and competitive display are no longer a sufficient model of consumer behaviour.

Not all media theorists see an essential connection between the mass behaviour patterns required by global industrial processes and mass media. John Fiske argues the opposite -- that television is not an agent of homogenization but is an active agent which creates diversity and difference within the social world.²²³ Fiske prefers to see mass media products as elements useful for constructing meanings which are the basis of evasion, expropriation, and resistance in a metaphorical guerilla warfare against the culture industry.²²⁴ Fiske separates the political economy of mass media -- its advertising role -- from the cultural economy wherein the audience "rejects its role as commodity and becomes a producer, a producer of meanings and pleasures."²²⁵ But such a separation of the media sphere into an economic domain and a cultural domain overlooks the mass behaviour of audiences which can be seen in such patterns as the widespread

inheritance; such control, where it exists, needs to be noted as a fact about that class," *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 320.

²²³John Fiske. "Moments of Television: Neither the Text nor the Audience." In *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, edited by Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth. (London: Routledge, 1991), 73.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 75.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, 59.

adoption of fashion styles arising from mass media programs. The persistent and ever-present phenomenon of mass consumption patterns cannot be dismissed from the analysis of mass media audiences by dividing the social world into economic and cultural domains. To argue, as Fiske does in *Television Culture*, that the “power of audiences-as-producers [of meaning] in the cultural economy is considerable” fails to explain the television audiences’ mass behaviour patterns within media culture, patterns of consumption, lifestyle, and values, which are readily observable in urban areas across the globe.²²⁶ Both economic theory and cultural theory strongly suggest that there is more than a coincidental relationship between the marketplace of ideas and the marketplace of goods.

In the 1920's the consumer was thought to require extensive ‘engineering.’²²⁷ In the late 60's the consumer was seen in need of ‘management’ by the planning system of the industrial state.²²⁸ In the 80's the issue was addressed as the ‘manufacturing of consent.’²²⁹ All three analyses recognize the intimate connection between mass media and mass behaviour patterns. But to what extent is the audience of mass media engineered, managed, and manufactured? Collective memory suggests that a media culture which monopolizes the symbols in-use within the local social world will exclude other possible reality-frameworks. Can we speak of the

²²⁶John Fiske. *Television Culture*, 313.

²²⁷Edward L. Bernays. *Engineering Consent*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), and Edward L. Bernays. *Public Relations*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).

²²⁸Galbraith. *The New Industrial State*.

²²⁹Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

economic system as exercising a monopoly over the production of symbols within media culture?

Schiller provides some intriguing answers to this question

Schiller dismisses claims that the audience is an active audience which resists and transforms the messages of mass media. Schiller prefers to locate the control of representation and definition of symbols firmly in the domain of media and cultural industries.²³⁰ When class is ignored, social pluralism overemphasized, and individual subjectivity elevated, the result is media theories which “present little threat to the established order.”²³¹ Schiller’s description of the “corporate colonization of consciousness” provides another way to conceptualize the intimate relationship between mass media and mass consumption.²³² Transnational corporations have created a global social mechanism which overwhelms any significant element of indeterminacy within media culture. This social mechanism Schiller describes as the “global domination of information and media flows” which constrain social expression.²³³ Postmodern theorist Nelly Richard describes the corporate colonization process from the perspective of the Latin American ‘periphery’,

The superiority of the centre depends upon its being invested with sufficient authority to qualify it as a giver of meaning: its symbolic advantage relies upon its monopolizing discursive and communicative devices to transact signs, values and

²³⁰Herbert I. Schiller. *Culture Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 156.

²³¹*Ibid.*

²³²*Ibid.*, 110.

²³³*Ibid.*, 157.

powers, representing the area of the greatest condensation of signs, of the greatest circulatory and transactional density of current validated meaning.²³⁴

This is why mass media cannot be analysed by measuring the effect of just one television show or just one medium, such as newspapers. Mass media is part of a larger system which can be defined as a monopoly of ‘discursive and communicative devices’ which validate meaning within media culture. Mass media is only one part of corporate economic activity which involves cultural expression. Schiller suggests that within the U.S.A., there has been a “systematic envelopment of human consciousness by corporate speech” -- an envelopment that is extended increasingly outwards via transnational corporations.²³⁵ Schiller describes media systems as tending towards monopolization of public expression within media systems, which include arts, education, museums, law, cultural industries, sports, news, politics, tourism, and even language itself.²³⁶ The individual is not the only thing influenced by the ‘corporate colonization of consciousness.’ The nation-state’s autonomy has also been eroded by the enormous power of the multinational corporate system.²³⁷ Both the economist, Galbraith, and the media theorist, Schiller, confirm our depiction of the economic system as a global system which requires the symbolic production and definitional control capabilities of mass media.²³⁸

²³⁴Nelly Richard. “The Cultural Periphery and Postmodern Decentering: Latin America’s Reconversion of Borders,” translated by John Brotherton. *Rethinking Borders*, edited by John C. Welchman, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 82-83.

²³⁵Schiller. *Culture Inc.*, 45.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 123.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 145.

²³⁸This monopolization of the media sphere suggests that the fragmentation of “television audiencehood” which Ien Ang describes is a product of audience measurement theories and not a

In the late 1700's, the monopolization of meaning was described by economist Adam Smith as a product of commercial societies where “to think or to reason comes to be, like every other employment, a particular business, which is carried on by a very few people, who furnish the public with all the thought and reason possessed by the vast multitudes that labour.”²³⁹

Cultural theorist Raymond Williams suggests that Smith was describing a “special class of persons who from the 1820's were to be called ‘intellectuals’.”²⁴⁰ Williams describes this new division of labour or “specialization of function” as arising out of the emerging institution of commercial publishing.²⁴¹ The new industry of commercial publishing prompted Adam Smith to describe the thoughts of the ‘vast multitudes’ as a product which was prepared for the marketplace by the intellectuals.²⁴² The monopolization of the global definitional system is a way of defining the impact the economic system has on mass thought and behaviour patterns. Marshall McLuhan’s suggestion that the market economy presupposes “a long period of psychic

feature of the globalization of capitalist modernity. Descriptions of the “multifaceted, fragmented and diversified repertoire of practices and experiences” among the television audience must also account for the reproduction of mass behaviour patterns within modernity. Ien Ang. *Desperately Seeking the Audiences*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 170.

²³⁹From the draft of Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, in William Robert Scott’s *Adam Smith as Student and Professor*, (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1965), 344.

²⁴⁰Raymond Williams. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, 35.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*

²⁴²In *Propaganda*, Edward L. Bernays suggests that the development of propaganda during World War I “opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind” (27). But the ‘regimenting’ of the ‘public mind’ appears to have arisen alongside the growth of the market economy, at least according to Adam Smith. Collective memory suggests that the mind has always been structured by the social world. Only the techniques and technologies of socialization have changed over time.

transformation” points to this relationship between the marketplace of ideas and the marketplace of goods.²⁴³ Media theorist Jürgen Habermas has also noted that the economic system enables private owners of private property to wield a direct effect on the public through business advertising.²⁴⁴ The economic structure of mass media thus provides an indication of the impact a certain economy of global media systems will have upon local world-making.

The influence of the economy of mass media is a socializing dynamic which effectively reproduces the implicit assumptions of the economic system. Values associated with consumption and the pursuit of wealth, values such as private property, self-interest, the inherent goodness of wealth, and acquisition as a symbol of sacredness (blessing by God) are part of the content of mass media’s implied assumptions. Schiller describes how American mass media products promote these values of consumerism and delegitimate economic and social alternatives:

The values and assumptions common to *TV Guide*, *The National Geographic*, and Walt Disney Productions are identifiable in their contents and their formats. All are satisfied with existing social arrangements locally, nationally, and globally. They view consumerism -- the quest for material satisfactions as substitutes for all other human needs -- always with equanimity, sometimes with enthusiasm. Self-interest, acquisitiveness, and the goal of individual success, along with a belief in unchanging human nature, are promoted in their materials with unflinching regularity. The feasibility of social alternatives -- different ways of organizing human efforts -- is denied or, if considered at all, discounted.²⁴⁵

²⁴³Marshall McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 272.

²⁴⁴Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989. Originally published in German as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 1969), 189.

²⁴⁵Schiller. *The Mind Managers*, 102.

In a similar fashion Galbraith describes the effect of advertising as affirming “in the most powerful possible manner that happiness is the result of the possession and use of goods.”²⁴⁶

In *Chapter Four* I will demonstrate the existence of implicit assumptions in media discourse and audience reception within environmental, religious, political, military, and health care sectors of media culture. These implicit assumptions will be seen to conform to the values and requirements of the economic system.

Under the current economic system it appears that the monopolization of production systems and the monopolization of definitional control over mass culture have gone hand-in-hand. This parallel monopolization of production systems and definitional systems has also been described by Habermas as arising out of the need to ensure the “relative stability of markets and market shares.”²⁴⁷ Habermas suggests that as the oligopolistic restriction (monopolization) of markets intensified in the early 1900's this led to the necessity of scientifically-directed marketing for improved socialization of consumers.²⁴⁸ This in turn led to the transformation of the public sphere into a medium for advertisers and the public relations industry.²⁴⁹

What distinguishes the current period from the time of Adam Smith or Edward Bernays is the degree to which mass media (definitional information systems) plays a role in structuring

²⁴⁶John Kenneth Galbraith. *Economics and the Public Purpose*, (Scarborough, Ontario: The New American Library of Canada, 1973), 136. Galbraith also describes the economy's dominant value system in the following terms: “All forms of consumer persuasion affirm that the consumption of goods is the greatest source of pleasure, the highest measure of human achievement. They make consumption the foundation of human happiness” (*Ibid.*, 153).

²⁴⁷Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 189.

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*

economic and social processes. Schiller describes this new economic system of media culture in this way: "Capitalism is undergoing a structural transformation. An information component is being inserted into, when it is not replacing, the older industrial base, making the communication process a critical element in the overall system of production."²⁵⁰ From Adam Smith to John Kenneth Galbraith, from Edward Bernays to Herbert Schiller, there has been a constant lineage of economists and media theorists who postulate that media systems effectively engineer, manage, and manufacture consumer behaviour to suit the needs of the economy. James W. Carey poses the issue in the following terms, "Reality is, above all, a scarce resource ... The fundamental form of power is the power to define, allocate, and display this resource."²⁵¹ The next section explores how this relationship between the economic system and the socialization of consumer behaviour has been maintained through the monopolization of media systems.

²⁵⁰Herbert I. Schiller. "Critical Research in the Information Age," *Journal of Communication*, 33(3), 1983, 251.

²⁵¹Carey. *Communication as Culture*, 87.

The Monopolization of Global Symbol Systems

Globalized mass media suggests the existence of a globalized cosmology. This globalized cosmology arises out of the transnational symbolic production and distribution power of corporate and state media systems. Herbert Schiller's *Mass Communication and American Empire* traces the monopolization processes of mass media. Schiller characterizes the state of mass media in the late 1960's as having been seized by "the commanding interests in the market economy, to promote narrow national and international objectives while simultaneously making alternate paths seem either undesirable or preventing their existence from becoming known."²⁵² Mass media promotes the world-view of the market economy. Little has changed in this monopolizing characteristic of mass media in the thirty years which have passed since Schiller's observations.²⁵³ In *The Media Monopoly*, media theorist Ben H. Bagdikian concludes his analysis of media ownership on an all too familiar note:

The United States, along with other major democracies, is swiftly moving toward media control by a handful of gigantic multinational corporations. The trend is unmistakable. Leaders in the trend are quite candid: they predict that in a few years a half-dozen corporations will control most of the public information available to Americans.²⁵⁴

In the following I will describe how this transnational symbolic production and distribution system -- mass media -- exercises a monopoly over the flow of symbols within media culture.

²⁵²Herbert I. Schiller. *Mass Communication and American Empire*, (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1969), 29.

²⁵³On recent trends in media monopolization and globalization see: Anthony Smith. *The Age of Behemoths: The Globalization of Mass Media Firms*, (New York: Priority Press, 1991).

²⁵⁴Ben H. Bagdikian. *The Media Monopoly*, Second Edition, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 235.

The monopolization of symbols within mass media is not easily subjected to direct empirical analysis.²⁵⁵ But the monopolization of mass media ownership is much easier to establish. In *Manufacturing Consent*, media theorists Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky describe the monopolization of media ownership as a historical characteristic of modern media, “the limitation on ownership of media with any substantial outreach by the requisite large size of investment was applicable a century or more ago, and it has become increasingly effective over time.”²⁵⁶ Media criticism must begin and end with recognition of the fundamental and extreme imbalance of ownership over the global symbolic production system. According to Bagdikian, the monopolization of ownership within media systems is growing at a tremendous rate, “When I finished the earlier edition of this book, fifty corporations controlled most of the business in all the major media. When I finished this current edition, only five years later, that number had been reduced to twenty-nine.”²⁵⁷

I use the phrase ‘monopolization’ herein to characterize the essential exclusionary nature of mass media systems, which severely constrain audience input into the flow of symbols.

²⁵⁵For an overview of the issues surrounding empirical audience studies see Ien Ang’s article “Wanted: Audiences. On the Politics of Empirical Audience Studies,” in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, edited by Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth. (London: Routledge, 1991), 96-115.

²⁵⁶Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 4.

²⁵⁷Bagdikian. *The Media Monopoly*, ix. Herman and Chomsky suggest that Bagdikian understates the degree of media concentration by overlooking the integration of media into the market system. Large multinational corporations such as General Electric and Westinghouse own large media companies, such as RCA and NBC. *Manufacturing Consent*, 4-14. On issues surrounding the complexity of measuring media concentration and the impact of measurement strategies on pluralism in the market, see Petros Iosifides’ “Methods of Measuring Media Concentration,” *Media, Culture and Society*, Volume 19, Number 4, October 1997, 643-663.

Symbols within mass media flow from the owners of the media system to the audience.

Obviously, the social world of the audience is frequently the substance of mass media messages, but the audience remains very much a passive audience when compared to the production end of media systems. Simply stated, within mass media the audience does not write the stories, make the movies, select the agenda, or write the scripts. Content largely flows from specialized producers who are part of the structure of media systems. Media theorist Benjamin Ginsberg informs the monopolization process I am describing when he suggests that western media systems reduce the potential for diversity of opinions within the marketplace of ideas.²⁵⁸ Bagdikian suggests that mass media does not merely reduce the ‘potential for diversity of opinions’ but also actively denigrates public institutions while promoting the esteem of the private sector. He claims that this institutional bias of mass media toward corporate interest “does more than merely protect the corporate system. It robs the public of a chance to understand the real world.”²⁵⁹

When media culture embraces symbol producing systems encompassing all social structures (family, entertainment, politics, news, education, medicine, science and so forth) it then becomes possible to describe the monopolization of symbol flow within media culture by the various systems of the economy. Mass media is systemically integrated into the economy and thereby ensures that the socialization of individuals within media culture conforms to the requirements of the marketplace. Monopolization of ownership ensures that the management of

²⁵⁸Ginsberg. *The Captive Public*, 148.

²⁵⁹Bagdikian. *The Media Monopoly*, xvi.

the consumer (the socialization process) serves the goals of the market system. Herman and Chomsky describe this systemic integration of media systems into the market economy,

the dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces; and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests with other major corporations, banks, and government.²⁶⁰

Thus mass media is best conceptualized as an integral element of the market economy. Media theorist Robert E. Babe also describes mass media as an integral to the market economy, “the present economic system is to a large extent *defined by* the nexus of corporate commodity producers, mass media organizations, and advertisers/public relations/media relations firms and strategists.”²⁶¹ As the ownership of mass media is restricted by economic realities to large corporations and the wealthy élite we can speak of mass media as monopolizing the socialization processes of the economic system. Through restricted ownership of mass media systems, the wealthy monopolize the socialization system which ensures the reproduction of concentrated wealth in the hands of the élite.

This monopolization of media systems is also accompanied by concentration of media systems within the hands of increasingly smaller numbers of multinational corporations. In 1997 Westinghouse purchased 98 American radio stations for 1.6 billion U.S. dollars. This acquisition increased Westinghouse’s media portfolio to 178 radio stations along with the CBS television network, purchased in 1996 for 3.7 billion U.S. dollars. As a result of the U.S. Congress lifting

²⁶⁰Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 14.

²⁶¹Robert E. Babe. *Communication and the Transformation of Economics: Essays in Information, Public Policy, and Political Economy*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 110.

restrictions on radio station ownership Westinghouse, a major arms manufacturer, now has a substantial audience reach in many of America's fastest growing mid-sized cities.²⁶² Here we see the political sector and the private sector assisting the élite in managing the definitional control system.

Monopolization is not the complete exclusion of other symbol-sets but indicates the overwhelming domination and control of symbol production within media culture by the élite. David Gauntlett makes the important point that, even when material which contradicts the values of the economic system's hegemony (ideological saturation) are present within mass media, these limited cases of contradiction only serve to further manipulate the audience's willing participation in media culture.²⁶³ An example of the monopolization of symbol flow within the economic system can be found in the global music market. The popular music industry has created homogenized global music forms but these globalized forms only dominate the marketplace, they do not completely eliminate indigenous musical practice. Local musical practices are not completely displaced under the influence of the mass market but their expression and viability within the local marketplace becomes problematic.²⁶⁴ But monopolization of global media culture by corporate symbols does not automatically induce homogenization of local cultures into a uniform global village. The continuing survival of

²⁶²Mark Landler. "Westinghouse to Pay \$1.6 Billion for 98 Radio Stations: Industrial Conglomerate Transforms Itself into Media Powerhouse," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday September 20, 1997, B2.

²⁶³David Gauntlett. *Video Critical*, 32.

²⁶⁴Tony Mitchell. *Popular Culture and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), 263-265.

indigenous music may be an indication of collective memory ensuring that the bias of local culture is at work subverting the possible homogenization of mass culture.²⁶⁵

It should be kept in mind that mass media is only one of many socializing systems. In *The Anatomy of Power*, John Kenneth Galbraith examines how implicit socializing power within the economic system is distributed throughout social institutions such as religion, education, the family, the state, property, personality, and organized groups. Galbraith reminds his readers that implicit conditioning power exists throughout these contemporary social institutions,

It is tempting to think of most conditioning with its counterpart submission and associated exercise of power as something that is won by overt methods, as through the education system or the media. There is a strong tendency to attach primary importance to what can be seen or heard. However, all societies have a yet more comprehensive form of social conditioning. It is sufficiently subtle and pervasive that it is deemed a natural and integral part of life itself; there is no visible or specific effort that wins the requisite belief and submission.²⁶⁶

Yet the unique socializing power of mass media, as epitomized in television, rests in its ability to dominate leisure time and also bring together audiences in sizes regularly counted by the tens-of-millions and often reaching five hundred million and one billion, audiences which share the same event at the same time throughout the globe.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵The definitional power of the economic system is not absolute. As Galbraith has noted, "That the power to manage the individual consumer is imperfect must be emphasized." John Kenneth Galbraith. *Economics and the Public Purpose*, 134.

²⁶⁶John Kenneth Galbraith. *The Anatomy of Power*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 34.

²⁶⁷David Gauntlett has observed the abysmal failure of various television campaigns (anti-smoking, seat-belts, and so on) to generate any substantial effect. Such failure of isolated media campaigns stands as testimony to the overwhelming socialization system of the market economy. Also, the willingness of governments to spend on pro-social media campaigns but not direct their efforts to regulating industry -- the source of many of these problems, further testifies to the systemic nature of the economic system's control on social behaviour. David Gauntlett. *Moving*

Mass media monopolizes the symbols within media culture and largely excludes competing symbol-sets. But, according to Mary Douglas' cultural theory, for these symbols to become part of local culture they must be in-use within local social interaction. Mass consumption will be seen to provide this relationship between symbols and social interaction within collective memory.

Mass Consumption as Group Communication

A highly visible effect of mass media can be seen in the phenomenon of mass consumption. Mass consumption herein refers to regional, national and global patterns of consumption which includes food, housing, fashion, disposable consumer goods, and so forth, which are products, directly or indirectly, of the economic systems. Consumption provides a focal point for theorizing the relationship between mass media and social order. Mass media establishes the relationship between mass consumption and mass production. The following explores how Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood provide a communicative model of consumption in *The World of Goods*. Douglas and Isherwood's model of consumption enables us to connect consumption patterns with the world-making processes of collective memory and illuminate mass media's implication in this world-making process.

Douglas and Isherwood develop a cultural theory of consumption by proposing that goods are consumed not merely for subsistence and competitive display but also because they are

Experiences: Understanding Television's Influences and Effects, (London: John Libbey, 1995), 67-94.

needed to create visible and stable categories of culture.²⁶⁸ Goods and all material possessions act as symbols which carry social meanings. Goods do not merely *mean* something, they also *make* something. Goods create and maintain social relationships.²⁶⁹

Douglas speaks of consumption in terms of ritual process. The rituals of consumption (any consumption act which is in some manner shared by more than one person) move meaning out of private life into the public sphere. According to Douglas, consumption rituals are social processes which establish “visible public definitions.”²⁷⁰ Goods provide a visible symbolic medium for representing the “whole social process” just as cattle among the Nuer embody all their social relationships and the structure of Nuer society.²⁷¹ Anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s ethnography of the role cattle fill in the lives of the Nuer is an example of how goods are used because they are good to think with. Among the Nuer cattle mark the framework of all kinship relations and define all social processes. Evans-Pritchard describes cattle as providing

²⁶⁸Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 38.

²⁶⁹Douglas says the individual consumer “needs fellow-consumers not only to create the social universe around him but to assure himself a tolerable place in it.” Douglas. “Goods as a System of Communication.” In Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 25.

²⁷⁰Mary Douglas. “Why Do People Want Goods?” In *Understanding the Enterprise Culture: Themes in the Work of Mary Douglas*, edited by Shaun Hargreaves Heap and Angus Ross, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 25.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*, 22-25.

the social idiom for the Nuer who “tend to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle. Their social idiom is a bovine idiom.”²⁷²

Goods are used as a means to “construct an intelligible universe” according to the legitimating principles of the social world.²⁷³ Goods help construct the social world by creating patterns of discrimination, inclusion and exclusion.²⁷⁴ Douglas and Isherwood place consumption within the realm of collective memory by asserting that consumption activity is a joint production of a “universe of values” -- “Consumption uses goods to make firm and visible a particular set of judgements in the fluid processes of classifying persons and events.”²⁷⁵ Consumption here is described in terms which establish it well within the realm of symbols which convey shared meanings within the social world. Public meanings are both fixed and challenged through the meanings implicit within consumption activities.²⁷⁶

Among the Nuer or within media culture consuming goods provides for basic needs and also establishes consistent meanings across the social world.²⁷⁷ Douglas’ cultural theory describes goods as markers which assist in classifying categories within the social world.²⁷⁸

²⁷²E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940, reprinted 1950), 19.

²⁷³Douglas and Isherwood. *The World of Goods*, 43.

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 44.

²⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 45.

²⁷⁶Douglas and Isherwood say this: “Consumption is an active process in which all the social categories are being continually redefined” (*Ibid.*).

²⁷⁷Douglas. “Why Do People Want Goods?” 22.

²⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 25.

These social categories mark boundaries such as ‘us’ versus ‘them’, define relationships, localities, space and time, and amount to “moral judgements about everything: about what a man is, about what a woman is, how a man ought to treat his aged parents,” and so on.²⁷⁹ Goods are used as a “non-verbal communication medium” which individuals and collectivities use to make “visible and stable the categories of culture.”²⁸⁰ In this fashion Douglas describes consumption as thoroughly implicated in the ongoing cultural debate. Through consumption individuals seek out agreement on all social categories and the very shape of culture.²⁸¹ If everybody makes the same consumption choices, then social categories are affirmed and a culture is reproduced. If consumption choices move in a different direction, should individuals decide to consume less goods for the children or parents, for example, then the culture of the group changes as a result of the choices being made and the meaning defined by those choices.²⁸² Cultural theorist Grant McCracken also describes this use of goods for directing social change. A group which is dissatisfied with existing conventions “announces to a much more general public its dissatisfaction with existing conventions and indicates in the language of goods just which

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

alternate ideas and values it intends to champion.”²⁸³ In this way consumption choices provide markers, classification categories, which determine meanings.²⁸⁴

Through Douglas’ cultural theory we can see consumption as a means of limiting the indeterminacy of meaning. Consumption choices solve the problem of social life -- the problem of defining reality, making sense of things, pinning down meanings “so that they will stay still for a little while.”²⁸⁵ Consumption allows a group to reach agreement on the nature of reality and prevent the complete loss and fragmentation of shared meaning within the social world. In this way Douglas describes goods as a means to establish a shared information system.²⁸⁶ This understanding of goods as group communication will shed light on how Mattel’s Barbie Doll and McDonald’s restaurants are used by various groups in the context of cultural debates over the meaning of these consumer symbols and the values of the economic system (*Chapter Five*).

Arguably, the economic system effectively controls the range and set of goods to be consumed within media culture. Are mass consumption patterns the visible outcome of mass media’s ability to fix meanings within media culture? But local consumption rituals ultimately establish what these goods of global mass production symbolize. They symbolize the shared

²⁸³Grant McCracken. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 136.

²⁸⁴Douglas. “Why Do People Want Goods?” 25.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 24. For a similar treatment of food and money as symbolic systems which reproduce social classifications, see Douglas, “Money,” and “Food as a Communication System.” In Mary Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 34-124. On economic anthropology, see Mary Douglas, “The Exclusion of Economics.” In Mary Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 147-182.

values and meanings of the local culture. Yet it would be rash to dismiss the degree to which a consumer good such as a computer, a bottle of Coke, or a car carries with it trappings of the structure and processes of the economic system. Grant McCracken provides an important point about the transfer of meaning from the economic system to consumer goods. McCracken suggests that advertising serves to direct the consumer's attention to "the meaningful properties that are intended for transfer" through the consumer item.²⁸⁷ The global reach of advertising within the economic system ensures that goods arrive with a degree of pre-determined meaning. This meaning is then negotiated within the context of local use. How do we measure the relative strength of these meaning systems -- local culture versus the symbols and definitional information system of the economic system? Alan Warde, a sociologist of consumption and food, has commented on the persistence of mass consumption within the realm of food,

the power of mass rationalization should not be underemphasized when examining consumption practices. Despite evidence of niche consumption and of neo-tribal behaviours which set some groups of people apart from others on the basis of their tastes, fast food, cook-chill dishes, concentration on the retailing sector, and the proliferation of expert practical and technical advice provide constant forces towards standardization. Commodity culture retains its inbuilt tendencies to encourage mass markets.²⁸⁸

Each year during the Christmas season the western world goes through an annual rite of mass consumption. The persistence of this collective frenzy can be observed simply by standing on a street corner in any major urban area and noting the patterns in fashion, cosmetics, automobiles,

²⁸⁷Grant McCracken. *Culture and Consumption*, 79.

²⁸⁸Alan Warde. *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture*, (London: Sage, 1997), 204. Also see Mary Douglas. "Standard Social Uses of Food," *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, edited by Mary Douglas. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 1-39.

and personal accessories such as portable listening devices and cellular phones. Mass consumption patterns provide the most visible manifestation of shared meanings within the realm of media culture.

Collective memory enables us to theorize about how the symbolic logic of the economic system is communicated across local cultures through mass media and how this symbolic logic is reproduced within the social world through consumption rituals. Cultural theorist Jonathan Friedman describes the symbolic logic of consumption as a “consumption of identity, canalized by a negotiation between self-definition and the array of possibilities offered by the capitalist market.”²⁸⁹ The economic system can be described as a form of symbolic logic, or a symbol-set, within the consumer’s world by virtue of its control over the ‘array of possibilities’ presented through mass media. Here it needs to be emphasised that mass media simply presents the possible consumption choices and identity patterns. The economic system defines what is the array of possibilities. Galbraith notes a classic example of choice being determined by the economic system in the case of public and private transportation systems, “People go to work by automobile in the United States partly, no doubt, because of preference but partly because no alternatives exist. The use of public resources for alternative modes of travel has been powerfully discouraged by automotive interests.” Within the economic system, the concept of choice can be described as a legitimating myth.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹Jonathan Friedman. “Being in the World: Globalization and Localization.” In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone, (London: Sage, 1990), 314.

²⁹⁰Galbraith. *Economics and the Public Purpose*, 132.

This description of the reproduction of the economic system through the classification taxonomy of mass media and mass consumption finds a parallel in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of classification systems as objects or arenas of struggle. According to Bourdieu (and very much in agreement with Douglas), classification systems reproduce the differences which structure the established order *and* ensure that individual perception is shaped by the "imposition of mental structures" which match the order of the classification system.²⁹¹ Symbols within mass media are implicated in the representation of the economic system as a set of values.²⁹² If mass media is modelled as the official and legitimating classification system of the economic system then location within the social order is significantly dependent upon the nature of access to and representation within the classification system (or definitional system) of mass media.²⁹³ The

²⁹¹Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 480. See also Mary Douglas, "Good Taste: Review of Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction*." In Mary Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 125-134.

²⁹²It could be argued that the set of values and the symbol-set of the economic system operates within the consumer's world as a utopia. Stephen Brown and Pauline Maclaran's suggestion that marketing can be defined as "the production, distribution and consumption of utopias" provides an intriguing metaphor for the cosmology of the economy. Perhaps mass media is the presentation (marketing) of a consumer utopia. Stephen Brown and Pauline Maclaran. "The Future is Past: Marketing, Apocalypse and the Retreat from Utopia." In *Marketing Apocalypse: Eschatology, Escapology and the Illusion of the End*, edited by Stephen Brown, Jim Bell and David Carson, (London: Routledge, 1996), 274.

²⁹³Bourdieu says this: "A group's presence or absence in the official classification depends on its capacity to get itself recognized, to get itself noticed and admitted, and so win a place in the social order" (Bourdieu. *Distinction*, 480-481.). It is quite possible that inclusion within mass media production is not sufficient for a strategy of struggle within media culture. Ownership of the means of representation (media production and dissemination systems) is the only adequate route to power over representation within media culture. All other strategies -- ambiguity, resistance, opting out, and forth -- are rear-guard actions of the colonized mind within media culture. For a similar study on how the symbolic universe relates to social structure and social action, see Lise Boily, "On the Semiosis of Corporate Culture," *Semiotica*, 1993, 5-31.

combination of cultural theory and media theory suggests that both the structure of mass media and the processes of classification place substantial constraints on the individual's and the group's ability to create local culture in isolation from the values implicit in mass media symbols.²⁹⁴

The monopolization of meaning through the élite control of symbol dissemination co-exists with the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. This relationship between concentration of wealth and control of global definitional systems may prove to be what media culture most effectively reproduces. It should be noted that I do not exclude the economic system from processes of change. Within the world-system, power is constantly shifting, both in its nature and in its location. The most recent change in the patterns of power are occurring between nation-states and multinational corporations.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴James L. Baughman suggests that the American democratic process ensures that the American mass media does not succumb to a complete monopoly of control. Baughman makes the common assumption that diversity in media choice (content choice) will ensure that democracy will survive. This position assumes that the American democratic process is more than Chomsky's manufacturing of consent through media, an assumption that is certainly problematic. Also, more choice within mass media systems does not necessarily entail more symbol-sets alien to the economic system. My analysis suggests that structural change and not increased content diversity is the key issue. James L. Baughman. *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941*, Second Edition. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 248-249.

²⁹⁵Jeremy Rifkin. *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1995).

Summary

I have described the economic system as a global system which reproduces itself through the socialization power of mass media as a definitional system. This socialization of behaviour occurs through the monopolization of symbols within media culture. Global symbolic production serves to limit the indeterminacy of the economic system's meanings. This limited indeterminacy is achieved through the exclusion of competing symbol-sets within media culture. The monopolistic and globalized symbol-set of the economic system also impacts upon local cultures through the presence of the commodities of mass production. Collective memory explains the reproduction of the economy by revealing the role of in-use symbols as carriers of implicit meanings. Collective memory thus explains mass media as the privilege mediator of the implicit meanings necessary for the reproduction of the current economic system. Mass consumption provides a highly visible manifestation of this process.

Douglas' theory of collective memory equates a dominant pattern of symbols with a favoured pattern of social order. My analysis of the structure of mass media has described a symbol-producing system which socializes consumers existing within the realm of media culture.²⁹⁶ From both a social and a structural perspective, the economic system and mass media comprise a single system wherein the production facilities are owned by the élite. This current economic reality of mass media leads to the effective control of symbols within mass media, described above as the monopolization of symbol-flow within media culture. The monopolization of symbol-flow within media culture enables the economic system to promote

²⁹⁶Social areas exposed to the flow of media content comprise the 'realm of the media culture.'

values which ensure mass participation in the economic system's social order. This social order is expressed through the symbolics of mass consumption, which acts as a form of group communication.

Do media texts express a dominant symbolic pattern and does this pattern of symbols convey the meanings and values of the current economic system? The monopolization of mass media systems strongly implies that a monopolized symbolic system would communicate a favoured set of meanings in the interests of elite system-owners. The following chapter will examine five media texts and events and confirm that monopolized mass media transmits meanings which support the reproduction of the economic system while simultaneously excluding alternative flows of symbols and values. This dynamic will be found most clearly in the instances of the media presentation of the environmental problem, American armed aggression, American religious television programming, and American politics.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷As American television and film are exported throughout the global economic system these media forms provide the most direct insight into the 'fit' between globalizing tendencies within mass media and the economic system.

Chapter Four: Implicit Assumptions Within Mass Media

Media theorists widely recognize that mass media socializes individuals by creating internalized assumptions about the world.²⁹⁸ The previous chapter argued that mass media monopolizes global symbolic production for the purposes of programming consumer participation in the economic system. If the model of collective memory is to prove relevant I will need to establish the existence of implicit assumptions at work within media culture. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the creation of the economic system's implicit assumptions through mass media's control of the symbolic universe of media culture. These implicit assumptions behind participation in the dominant economic system are established within the audience through the constraints placed upon symbol-flow within media culture. The co-creation of a cultural framework takes place within the restricted context established by mass media. This chapter will unveil some of the implicit assumptions which define the context of media culture and restrict the world-making capabilities of the audience.

In *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, media ethnographer Marie Gillespie concludes that there exist "very real constraints" upon the freedom of media consumers' construction of their own identities.²⁹⁹ Gillespie's study of the politics of identity among British Asian youths describes how mass media provides symbols which are used for the construction of new identities as young people actively redefine their culture. But the scope of this redefinition

²⁹⁸For an overview of qualitative studies of media reception see Shaun Moores' *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption*, (London: Sage, 1993). It is questionable that most of the studies reviewed by Moores actually qualify as ethnographies.

²⁹⁹Marie Gillespie. *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 208.

of local culture is severely constrained by the surrounding context of the nation-state.³⁰⁰

Gillespie's analysis suggests that the collective reception and appropriation of symbols from mass media provides material for local cultural construction but that this symbolic material carries the values and meanings of a globalizing economic system. The media myth of 'America' becomes the "prime object of consumption."³⁰¹ This chapter will provide a variety of examples which demonstrate how the audience is constrained by the meanings of a globalized economic system.

Television provides a paradigmatic example of the creation of implicit assumptions within global media culture. Repeated exposure to a narrow selection of images creates a general world view for those participating in media culture.³⁰² This leads to a closed system of symbolic reproduction where individuals "predictably act as if the world portrayed by media were a reality, and this behavior in turn inadvertently pushes the society toward actualizing it, initiating a self-fulfilling prophecy on a gigantic scale."³⁰³ This suggests that a dominant symbol-set within mass media will serve to reveal the particular social order promoted within media culture. This is another way of describing how mass media establishes shared categories and assumptions among those participating in media culture. The dominant symbol-set of mass media will be seen to convey the meanings of the economic system.

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 208. Gillespie says this: "This study at least suggests that class politics and the nation-state continue to play an overriding role in structuring identities" (*Ibid.*).

³⁰¹*Ibid.*, 176.

³⁰²Ann Marie Seward Barry. *Visual Intelligence: Perception, Image, and Manipulation in Visual Communication*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 335.

³⁰³*Ibid.*, 336.

This chapter reviews events in media culture as well as analyses media texts which suggest the existence of implicit assumptions at work in media systems operating at the regional level. South Asia, Canada, and the United States provide examples of media's definitional power at work within local cultures. Five areas of influence will be examined: environmentally-friendly consumption, religion, war, politics, and drugs. It will be suggested that, within the audience, mass media generates assumptions which encourage behaviour that conforms to the requirements of the economic system. Mass media will be seen to promote the socialization of consumers who continue to consume without challenging systemic environmental degradation within industrial production systems. Media systems also encourage religious values which conform to the pursuit of wealth and participation in consumer society. Media control of symbol-flow will be shown to direct support for military aggression and reproduce cultural assumptions about the state's 'enemies.' Mass media will be seen to reflect pollution beliefs that arise out of the widely-shared categories of democracy and commerce within the U.S.A. The widespread negative reactions to the Nixon Administration during the Watergate scandal will provide an indication of a widely-held categorization of the social order which was threatened by illegal actions. Finally, a textbook in use in Ontario schools *circa* 1925 will provide an indication of how pollution beliefs and danger fears appear within definitional systems and how these media texts reflect challenged categories within the social order. When taken together these aspects of media culture will effectively demonstrate that mass media's primary function is the maintenance of implicit assumptions which ensure the reproduction of the economic system and the protection of elite interests.

The Environment and Mass Media

David Gauntlett's analysis of children and television provides an indication of how media directs the audience's assumptions about the environment. Media provides a narrow interpretation of the problem of the environment and leaves the audience largely unaware that the dominant personalized and individualistic approach to the problem is only partial and questionable.³⁰⁴ Television programmes about the environment rarely suggest a political solution or challenge consumer culture and its industrial base. The possibility that environmental degradation is systemically connected to the economic system is largely, if not entirely, excluded from media discourse.³⁰⁵ This is an example of mass media creating more or less implicit assumptions in the audience -- the environment will be saved through individual behaviour change -- an assumption which favours the economic system and its owners.

The sponsorship of media content through advertising is, of course, a major influence behind the creation of this assumption. Robert Babe cites a paradigmatic example of how advertising ensures that media content matches the assumptions of the economic system. Environmentalist David Suzuki's television program, *The Nature of Things*, lost the sponsorship of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, after the bank gave into pressure from its logging industry clients.³⁰⁶ Thus we can speak of the implicit assumptions of mass media being directed by the subsystem of advertising, which is thoroughly implicated in the global market economy.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴David Gauntlett. *Video Critical*, 149.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*

³⁰⁶Babe. *Communication and the Transformation of Economics*, 111.

³⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 111.

Both the media presentation of the issue and the socialization of behaviour, socialization generated through advertising and media programming, serve to create assumptions about the environment.³⁰⁸

It would be difficult to discount mass media's controlled presentation of the environment issue, control which arises out of the system's dependency on advertising revenue from business and industry. Nonetheless, it must be conceded that the media's presentation of the environmental problem can present a challenge to the values of the economic system. This occurs indirectly as a result of environmental pressure groups gaining increased legitimacy in the media.³⁰⁹ It can also occur directly, through the highly critical presentation of the issue as seen in Suzuki's *The Nature of Things*. Yet it requires considerable suspension of disbelief to propose (for example) that the General Electric Corporation, a major arms manufacturer, would allow one of its subsidiaries, such as the NBC television network, to engage in aggressive, continuous, and critical commentary against the international arms trade or current American military action. Indeed, just the opposite appears to be the case. General Electric (GE) uses its control over a mass media system to foster public and international support for actions by the American military which inevitably lead to profit for GE (see "War and Mass Media" page 136).

³⁰⁸Robert Babe says this about advertising and the perception of the environment: "Advertising promotes life-style, value systems, modes of perceiving, valuing and behaving that are fundamentally anti-environment and hence anti-life." *Communication and the Transformation of Economics*, 110-111. Also see Alison Anderson's *Media, Culture, and the Environment*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

³⁰⁹Alison Anderson. "Source-media Relations: The Production of the Environmental Agenda," *The Mass Media and Environmental Issues*, edited by Anders Hansen. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), 65.

Here it is worth reiterating David Gauntlett's conclusion regarding alternative media voices which contradict the best interests of the economic system,

mass media has the potential to dissipate political thought and action by the very means of appearing to involve it. To put it another way, mass media products may contribute to the maintenance of a relative hegemony not because oppositional forces are excluded from their content, but rather because some contentious elements *do* appear, generating the impression that mass entertainments such as television are more politically critical -- and that the activity of their consumption is more socially challenging -- than is actually the case.³¹⁰

My media model accounts for the existence of alternative symbol-sets, alternative voices, by stopping short of defining the monopolization of symbols within mass media as the *complete exclusion* of symbol-sets which contradict the economic system's reproduction. Complete exclusion is not the issue. The dominant share in the marketplace of ideas which is established through the economics of control and ownership is the heart of the matter. The existence of symbol-sets within mass media which are contrary to the values of the economic system does not contradict the socializing role of media systems within media culture. Indeed, Gauntlett's perspective on the matter suggests that alternative symbol-sets within mass media actually reinforce the definitional control of media systems. Mass media does portray aspects of any given cultural debate. Yet the limited representation of alien value systems actually reinforces the credibility of the media system. Thus mass media can be described as a definitional system which exercises control over the cultural debate within media culture. The economics of mass media ultimately ensure that definitional control is maintained firmly in the hands of the élite.

³¹⁰Gauntlett. *Video Critical*, 32.

Media theorist James Shanahan describes how media-endorsed strategies for environmentally-friendly action, which also happen to be politically-endorsed strategies, are intended to socialize a generation of green-consumers:

More and more companies are claiming to be friendly to the environment, and the symbolic environment has been flooded with blue and green images whose general message is that the environmentally friendly future is a corporate one. Oftentimes these messages seek to interpret environmentalism within the context of the current paradigm, preserving the general notion that consumption is a valid social goal.³¹¹

The concern among the audience for environmentally-friendly products is transformed by the media system into new consumer habits which deflect any challenge to the dominant economic paradigm.³¹²

The environmental issue provides an example of how some corporations appear to adopt the values of their customers within public relations campaigns without changing their actual operating procedures or values. In an effort to attract environmentally-concerned consumers, Nottingham branches of McDonald's in Great Britain advertised a recycling scheme. In 1994, in a British courtroom, Edward Oakley, Chief Purchasing Officer for McDonald's UK, admitted that the polystyrene packaging collected over the several years that McDonald's advertised their recycling program was simply dumped into landfills. Oakley defended the 'environmentally-friendly' action of McDonald's by explaining to the court, "I can see [the dumping of waste] to

³¹¹James Shanahan. "Television and the Cultivation of Environmental Concern: 1988-92," *The Mass Media and Environmental Issues*, edited by Anders Hansen. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), 195-196. On advertising's role in ensuring the reproduction of the social order within the economic system, see Armand Mattelart. *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture: The Ideological Apparatuses of Imperialism*, translated by Michael Chanan. (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), 237.

³¹²*Ibid.*

be a benefit, otherwise you will end up with lots of vast, empty gravel pits all over the country.”³¹³ As long as Ronald McDonald is encouraging us to recycle Big Mac wrappers, we should be concerned that corporate environmental destruction is being hidden behind a lot of make-up.

Religion and Mass Media

I have argued that the presentation of environmental issues within mass media creates implicit assumptions within the audience, assumptions which ensure the reproduction, and not the dismantling, of the global economic system. Does mass media also generate perceptual bias on religious matters? Peter Beyer’s analysis of the impact of globalization is highly suggestive of how global mass media will impact upon religion. Beyer argues that the globalization of society provides “fertile ground for the renewed public influence of religion.”³¹⁴ He describes two directions for the future of global religion -- conservative and liberal. The conservative direction of globalized religion reflects its tendency to seek control of the total social environment -- politics, family, education, the economy and so forth.³¹⁵ This is highly reminiscent of the totalizing social control that the marketplace seeks to exercise. The New Christian Right in the United States is one example of a religion that sought to extend its social influence through law

³¹³*McSpotlight*. “The Diary of a Stance,”
www.envirolink.org/mcspotlight/case/pretrial/squall_diary.html.

³¹⁴Beyer. *Religion and Globalization*, 71. Beyer defines religion as a ‘public influence’ when it is a “source of collective obligation, such that deviation from specific religious norms will bring in its wake negative consequences for adherents and non-adherents alike; and collective action in the name of these norms becomes legitimate” (*Ibid.*).

³¹⁵*Ibid.*, 92-93.

and politics.³¹⁶ The failure of the New Christian Right's attempt to extend its public influence through the entire American social system in the 1980's provides an exemplar of how religious content is limited in influence by the form or subsystem (or *medium*) in which it appears:

Even though religion in the United States is quite strong as a privatized system, religious leaders have difficulty translating that strength into public influence. And like other systemic experts, as soon as they step outside their sphere, they are judged by the criteria of other systems: in spite and because of being grounded in religion, Pat Robertson failed as a politician and creationism failed as science.³¹⁷

In the highly structurally-differentiated global society religious content must either conform to the 'criteria of other systems' or suffer the fate of being reduced to a largely private matter with little public influence.

If religion proceeds by entrenchment within legal and political systems (the conservative direction), then aspects of religious belief will be vulnerable to the influence of these subsystems of law and politics,

Religious laws, for instance, will in form look like any other law, and will be susceptible to interpretation, amendment, and repeal like any other law. And we can expect politicized religious issues to be treated like other issues: the stuff of expediency, compromise, brokerage, and the shifting sands of competing interest.³¹⁸

As religion becomes globalized it falls under the influence of global subsystems and the ongoing cultural debates within the global arena. The conservative direction of religion highlights the influence that global subsystems such as law and politics have on value systems such as religion. Beyer finds in the conservative religious direction an example of this impact of globalization,

³¹⁶*Ibid.*, 92.

³¹⁷*Ibid.*, 132.

³¹⁸*Ibid.*, 94.

“the conservative direction within global religion is reflective of the structures of global society and not just a reaction against these.”³¹⁹ When a value system engages global subsystems, such as law and politics, the values are influenced by the subsystems’ mode of operation.

The liberal direction within religion -- “an ecumenical one that looks to the global problems generated by a global, functionally differentiated society” -- suffers the same fate of conditioned influence from global subsystems.³²⁰ The Sandinista revolution provides an example of this conditioning and limitation upon religion’s public influence in a globalized arena.

Beyer cites the failure of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas as an example of how “globalized values and globalized structures” limited and conditioned the public influence of religious institutions in the aftermath of the successful overthrow of Somoza.³²¹ Once the revolutionary régime established itself as the new government of Nicaragua, religious and political action underwent “redifferentiation.”³²² After the revolution, popular church organizations lost

many of their activists as these joined secular Sandinista organizations or became otherwise heavily involved in government-sponsored programmes and activities ... the strength of the liberationist social movement organizations declined not only because the Nicaraguan hierarchy opposed them, but also because the church organizations were less effective places to be for the purposes of contributing to social change and political action.³²³

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, 93.

³²⁰*Ibid.*

³²¹*Ibid.*, 156.

³²²*Ibid.*

³²³*Ibid.*

Beyer concludes that the Latin American liberation theology movement is highly conditioned by globalized values, such as inclusion, progress, and equality, and globalized structures such as the capitalist economy and nation-states.³²⁴

Both the conservative and liberal direction of religion suffered the same fate. They came under the influence of the mode of legal and political systems which they engaged. This resulted in changes within their value-system and a loss of membership to organizations fully specialized in legal and political modes of operation. Beyer's analysis raises questions regarding how cultural content is influenced by the particularities of the medium in which it appears.

Beyer's analysis suggests that global religion will be influenced to a significant degree by institutional systems within global society, "To the degree that religious goods come to be cultural content within those systems [such as law or politics], they can be expected to take on the appropriate form."³²⁵ What I will now explore is the degree to which 'religious goods' as a 'cultural content' of mass media can be described as having taken on the 'appropriate form' within a system which is owned and operated by the élite for the purposes of the economic system (as argued in *Chapter Three*). Religion in the mass film industry of South Asia and televangelism in the United States will provide examples of how religious symbols and values are shaped by the economic mode of mass media.

³²⁴*Ibid.*, 156-157. Beyer says this: "Perhaps as a final illustration of this tendency, liberation theologians have themselves largely abandoned the quest for direct and effective public influence" (*Ibid.*, 157).

³²⁵*Ibid.*

Religion and Media in South Asia

In his survey of studies concerned with the impact of media on religious belief and practice in South Asia, anthropologist Lawrence A. Babb's observations correspond to mass media's economic structure and socializing impact as previously outlined in *Chapter Three*. Babb notes that mass media in South Asia have increased the geographical range of a limited number of key religious symbols.³²⁶ My model has characterized mass media as restricting the variety of symbols which flow through media culture. Babb has identified this effect in South Asia media systems as a process of standardization and homogenization of religious symbols within media culture.³²⁷ By limiting the variety of symbols through standardization, mass media in South Asia has increased the spatial and social mobility of a shared symbol-set. Babb describes the impact of standardized images as the spreading of a common cultural identity, "Standardized images transcend older cultural and social boundaries, making it possible for people to share social, national and spiritual identities in ways they never did before."³²⁸

As with media effects throughout the world, there exists a tension in South Asia media between diversity and uniformity. Babb notes that when "the economics are right" South Asia media will reflect and celebrate religious and cultural diversity.³²⁹ Nonetheless, standardization exists as a prevalent trend and the economy promotes diversity only to the extent that diversity

³²⁶Lawrence A. Babb. "Introduction," *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, edited by Lawrence A. Babb and Susan S. Wadley. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 16.

³²⁷*Ibid.*

³²⁸*Ibid.*, 16-17.

³²⁹*Ibid.*, 17.

generates profits. Here we see how the economics of mass media lead to a restricted range of symbols circulating within media culture in South Asia.

Anthropologist Steve Derné's study of religious themes and market forces within commercial Hindi films provides an example of how local cultural values are affected by a regional mass media system.³³⁰ Filmmakers use a standardized repertoire of mythological images which "have been proven to offend neither conservative Hindus nor government censors."³³¹ Derné suggests that while the Hindi film is not *yet* a "source of change in the actual content of religious stories," yet because the standardization of religious themes and images is new, *and* because the size and diversity of the audience is also a recent social phenomenon, therefore, the film industry "may contribute to spreading particular images across a wide range of groups and to subtly altering the field to which Indians bring religious concern."³³² Indian films do occasionally deviate slightly from social and religious orthodoxy but any serious cinematic departures from convention does encounter social protest, government censorship, and even direct intimidation of theatre owners.³³³

There are real limits to the presentation of religious and social themes within South Asian films. Government censorship and audience protest ensure that South Asian films conform to the

³³⁰Steve Derné. "Market Forces at Work: Religious Themes in Commercial Hindi Films," *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, edited by Lawrence A. Babb and Susan S. Wadley. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 191-216.

³³¹*Ibid.*, 191.

³³²*Ibid.*, 191-192. On the size of India's film industry, which produces between 700 and 900 films per year, Derné notes that, on an average day, "15 million Indians enjoy watching Indian films in the nation's 11,000 cinema halls" (*Ibid.*, 192).

³³³*Ibid.*, 196.

dominant cultural values in the region. An example of cinematic conformity to dominant values is found in the presentation of love marriages in films which continually portray “the commonsense understanding that love marriages inevitably fail.”³³⁴ Hindi marriages are arranged by families, not by individuals ‘marrying for love.’ Hindi films “continually remind viewers of the costs of marrying for love.”³³⁵ The indigenous mass media of South Asia reproduces the prevalent implicit assumptions about the nature of marriage. Collective memory describes this as the reproduction of a symbol-set which reflects and generates social cohesion (reproduction of the local kinship system).

Derné’s study confirms key elements of mass media’s definitional control. Derné notes that the cinematic mass media system is creating a standardized set of symbols (religious images and mythic themes).³³⁶ This standardization may create “an unprecedented homogeneity in the images that move diverse groups of Indians.”³³⁷ Collective memory would describe this process as mass media expanding the size of a group which shares the communicative effect of a shared set of symbols. Derné describes homogeneity in symbols and images as creating a “semi-secular national public culture” shared among diverse cultural groups.³³⁸ This is the expansion of cultural groups partaking in the same symbol-set. This is not to say that this process of collective memory eliminates regional cultural diversity.

³³⁴*Ibid.*, 209.

³³⁵*Ibid.*, 210.

³³⁶*Ibid.*, 203.

³³⁷*Ibid.*

³³⁸*Ibid.*, 203.

Standardization of mass media symbols within South Asia can be described as the geographical expansion of collective memory among a culturally diverse audience. The inclusion of religious symbols and themes within the structure of the Hindi film system, a system seen as degraded entertainment by the majority of the audience, may have an effect similar to the impact of globalization on religion as described (above) by Peter Beyer -- a secular system affects religious values. Derné concludes his study by suggesting that the secular context of the film medium may lead to changes in Indian religious values, "the presentation of religious images in a very secular, degraded context may prompt changes in Indian religion ... Will religion's status as a special realm suffer by being made ordinary in Hindi films?"³³⁹ Although only time will render an answer to Derné's questions, the probability that the form of the medium will alter the religious cultural content cannot be dismissed. The experience of American televangelism provides another example of the medium's tendency toward standardization for greater audience share. The following section describes how this adaptation of content to media form also defined the American experience of religious television.

³³⁹*Ibid.*, 212.

Religion and Media in America

The recently fallen-from-grace televangelist Jerry Falwell provides a poignant example of the trajectory of religion within American mass media. Although by no means completely representative of the religious use of media in the U.S.A., Falwell's theology suggests that religious television has a degree of 'fit' with the economic system. When questioned about his wealthy lifestyle Falwell replied, "material wealth is God's way of blessing people who put him first."³⁴⁰ A happy God leads to wealthy, happy Christians. American religious television does not merely reproduce values implicit in the economic system, it also adapts its content to the market forces of mass media economics.

Sociologist Steve Bruce notes that the drive for a larger audience share led televangelists Oral Roberts, Jim and Tammy Bakker, and Pat Robertson to focus on theological content with "the broadest possible appeal."³⁴¹ Media theorist Steward M. Hoover notes a similar effect of televangelism upon religious belief. The dogmatic and sectarian aspects of theology have been reformulated under the influence of American religious broadcasting.³⁴² The desire to reach a broader audience led to religious programming which focused less on fringe issues, such as liquor and gambling laws, and placed more emphasis on universal issues, such as family values.³⁴³ This is clearly in accord with Beyer's observations on the influence of global

³⁴⁰Peter G. Horsfield. *Religious Television: The American Experience*, (New York: Longman, 1984), 49.

³⁴¹Steve Bruce. *Pray TV: Televangelism in America*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 237.

³⁴²Steward M. Hoover. *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church*, (London: Sage, 1988), 229-235.

³⁴³*Ibid.*, 234.

structures upon local religion. By engaging the mass media, American religion has adopted a more universal set of values, values which appeal to the larger set of shared assumptions within the surrounding culture.³⁴⁴ A larger audience share appears to demand values that do not deviate too far from the implicit values of the surrounding social system.

Media theorist Peter G. Horsfield suggests that American religious programming adapted to and endorsed the “economic competitive basis of American broadcasting.”³⁴⁵ This adaptation to the economy of television took the form of adaptation in content to maintain or increase ratings.³⁴⁶ His comment on this oft-observed dynamic confirms both Beyer’s observations on how religious values adapt to global subsystems such as law and politics and my own argument that the economics of mass media place content at the service of the economic system. To this effect Horsfield notes that religious producers sacrificed their control over programming “when they made themselves dependent on their popularity with their television audience. This placed them in a situation where they were forced to blend into television culture in order to appeal to those for whom this culture was realistic.”³⁴⁷ Horsfield describes the impact of this adaptation to

³⁴⁴Horsfield provides an ironic confirmation of Beyer’s thesis regarding globalization and religion when he concludes that “religious uses of television may more effectively be achieved through secular programming than through religious programming” (Horsfield. *Religious Television*, 180). Horsfield suggests that the secular medium would be more effective in “status conferral and image creation” (*Ibid.*).

³⁴⁵Horsfield. *Religious Television*, 158.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*

the marketplace of ideas as a “normalizing of religious thought to that which corresponds to existing mass-media mythology and intent.”³⁴⁸

Horsfield notes a phenomenon within American religious television which corresponds to the impact of the film industry on religious symbols in South Asia (the standardization of symbols for broad market appeal). American religious television reduces the diversity of American religion to two dominant themes -- fundamentalism and evangelicalism.³⁴⁹ That these two religious themes, or value sets, should become the dominant themes in American media culture may be due to a degree of ‘fit’ between religious and commercial value systems within the American context. These religious cultures promote a “consumer orientation toward social issues and human relationships” which resonates with the surrounding commercial and advertising culture.³⁵⁰ This has led to the loss of any significant degree of distinction between the religious value-system and its surrounding cultural environment.³⁵¹ Thus Horsfield confirms that mass media generates symbols which reproduce the implicit assumptions of the economic system. This mirroring of the economy’s value-system in religious value-systems is also seen in sociologist Reginald W. Bibby’s analysis of values held by secular and religious Canadians. Bibby concludes that, with few exceptions and little variation, cultural values are more or less equally distributed throughout social groups within Canada:

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 158.

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 159.

³⁵¹*Ibid.*, 160.

Religious organizations stress values such as love and family life, honesty and hard work; so does everyone else. Religion teaches compassion and respect for other people, regardless of race or nationality; so does everyone else. As a result, when we probe the values of Canadians, we find virtually no differences between religious groups or between those who profess to be committed and those who do not.³⁵²

Both religion and mass media act as communicative processes which reproduce widely-shared implicit assumptions of the economic system that structure the social order.

Mass religious communication stresses and affirms the similarities “between the message and one’s existing lifestyle” and de-emphasises dissimilarities.³⁵³ The implicit assumptions at large in the surrounding culture, assumptions which reproduce the economic system, influence the content of religious programming. Religious programming once again confirms that under the economic system, which ultimately owns and controls mass media, the medium and the message are indistinguishable. Within the American cultural framework, Billy Graham confirms this unity of message and medium by providing religious programming’s finest symbolic representation of the unification of New World Protestantism, economic capitalism, and the social authoritarianism which runs throughout the American cultural fabric. Media theorist Michael R. Real’s analysis describes Graham as “the most powerful endorsement imaginable of the *status quo* by defining ultimate religious and moral issues as individual, private concerns.”³⁵⁴ Billy Graham provides a dominant symbolic representation within media culture of the most

³⁵²Reginald W. Bibby. *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*, (Toronto: Irwin, 1987), 166.

³⁵³Horsfield. *Religious Television*, 160.

³⁵⁴Michael R. Real. *Mass-Mediated Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 181.

commonly shared implicit assumptions surrounding religious practice and social order within America. This conclusion is suggested by virtue of his position within Gallup's annual poll of the most admired men in the world. For more than two decades Graham has been the only person consistently named by Americans as among the top five men of the world.³⁵⁵

The culture of the New Christian Right was clearly affected by the demands of the economic system when it engaged the mass media.³⁵⁶ Media use can lead to secularization of religious values.³⁵⁷ In a similar fashion, when conservative American Protestants engaged the political system in the 1980's, they came under direct influence of that system.³⁵⁸ This engagement of the political system led to "the abandonment of almost all of the distinctive platform that initially motivated them to get involved in politics."³⁵⁹ When religion engages a global system it results in dramatic change in religious values. This seems to be the lesson of the

³⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 154.

³⁵⁶Media theorist Quentin J. Schultze comes as close as you can get to stating the obvious about the correspondence between conservative American Christianity and American cultural assumptions when he observes that "Evangelicalism is greatly shaped by the current cultural and economic currents that influence U.S. society." Schultze. "Evangelicals' Uneasy Alliance With the Media," *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, edited by Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum. (London: Sage, 1996), 70. For an intriguing social history of American religious integration into the market economy see R. Laurence Moore's *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁵⁷Buddenbaum and Stout. "Religion and Mass Media Use," *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, edited by Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum. (London: Sage, 1996), 28.

³⁵⁸"The Religious Right was co-opted by the Political Right to promote its own conservative social agenda and power interests within the Republican Party and within national politics." Bobby C. Alexander. *Televangelism Reconsidered: Ritual in Search for Human Community*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994), 9.

³⁵⁹Bruce. *Pray TV*, 239.

New Christian Right and the Latin American liberation theology traditions. Whether 'right' or 'left', when a social institution engages global structures, that institution appears to undergo substantial accommodation to the values implicit within the globalized system.

In 1926 a pastor in Detroit, Reinhold Niebuhr, encountered the anti-union stance of the automobile industry. This led Niebuhr to study "the operations of power and learn why their efforts [the Social Gospel exponents] to extend Christian influence throughout America had served only those who wielded power."³⁶⁰ The economic system appears to have a long history of co-opting American religion to its own ends.

I have argued that mass media reproduces implicit assumptions within the audience which correspond to the requirements and values of the economic system. Mass media presents the solution to environmental degradation in individualistic non-politicized terms which ensure that no major challenge to modes and methods of production is forthcoming from the audience. Green consumers are successfully socialized through media systems so as to continue to participate in normative consumer paradigms. Religion within media also reproduces widely-shared cultural assumptions. The presentation of religion on American television sets reflects an adaptation to what could be considered the economy's most fundamental implicit assumption -- the pursuit of material wealth is good and leads to happiness. Mass media economics of audience share leads religious programmers to adapt their message for broader audience appeal. This is equivalent to generating symbols and assumptions which are widely shared within the collective memory. Just as mass media in South Asia reproduce the dominant cultural assumptions defining appropriate categories of wife, husband, and family (by rejecting love

³⁶⁰Moore. *Selling God*, 219.

marriages), so too does American religious television reproduce religious themes which share in the dominant assumptions of the economic system -- the blessing of material wealth and the holiness of consumption.³⁶¹

The political and economic interests of the élite owners of media systems ensure that what is said, as much as what is not said, within the definitional system serves to reproduce élite privilege and the economic *status quo* which supports the élite's maintenance of power. The presentation of environmental themes and religious themes confirm the reproduction of implicit assumptions which lie at the foundation of the social order. The following sections on military, political, and health care system discourses within mass media provide further indication of the relationship between mass media's definitional power and its representation of implicit assumptions which reproduce the economic system.

³⁶¹“Televangelists serve the same social function as non-religious television programs by confirming Americans' fundamental beliefs about themselves and their culture.” Quentin J. Schultze. *Televangelism and American Culture: The Business of Popular Religion*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1991), 137.

War and Mass Media

Drawing on the media analysis of Douglas Kellner, Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky, this section will explore how mass media limits the cultural debate, controls the flow of symbols, and works in support of elite interests in its presentation of armed conflict, here focused on the American-led aggression known as the Gulf War. Collective memory will be seen to describe the media presentation of war as a control of symbols which reproduces key implicit assumptions about American society and its 'enemies.' These assumptions are created through the propaganda effect of mass media, which Kellner, Herman and Chomsky describe as the media's uncritical use of government-produced information regarding its war machine.

In *Media Culture* Kellner argues that the Bush Administration carried out a highly successful disinformation campaign which served to legitimate the U.S. military deployment in Saudi Arabia on August 8, 1990.³⁶² This event in the history of media culture highlights how mass media reproduces the system-maintaining assumptions of American culture and its economic system. According to Kellner's analysis, the Bush Administration controlled and manipulated information sources used by the media.³⁶³ Early in the crisis, the U.S. government fabricated disinformation which falsely claimed that the Iraqis were mobilizing troops on the border of Saudi Arabia. The Administration then fed information to the *Washington Post* which claimed that negotiation with Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was impossible. The *Post* followed the lead of the Administration's disinformation and immediately began publishing editorials calling for Bush to bomb Baghdad. Kellner notes that the *Post* articles reflected a

³⁶²Douglas Kellner. *Media Culture*, 201.

³⁶³*Ibid.*

cultural stereotype of Arabs as “understanding only force and incapable of defending themselves and solving their own problems.”³⁶⁴

Here Douglas’ cultural theory suggests that perceptual bias is at work. The perceptual bias of the American attitude towards the Arab world runs so deep that a *Post* columnist who continually vilified the Iraqis was subsequently awarded a Pulitzer prize “for searching and prescient columns on events leading up to the Gulf War.”³⁶⁵ Perceptual bias is clearly at work when a spokesperson for racial stereotypes and Administration disinformation is honoured for truth and integrity in journalism. Herman and Chomsky note that while journalists can gain respectability by publishing information from standard government sources, those who are critical of élite interests “must be prepared to face a defamation apparatus against which there is little recourse.”³⁶⁶

Kellner’s analysis concludes that the media effectively shaped the public’s perception and legitimated the credibility of the government’s leadership.³⁶⁷ The disinformation campaign which moulded public perception worked in the following fashion:

high Bush Administration officials called in journalists who would serve as conduits for stories that Iraq refused to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait and that they had troops stationed on the borders of Saudi Arabia, threatening to invade the oil-rich kingdom. The Pentagon and the Bush Administration also

³⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 203.

³⁶⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶⁶Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 306.

³⁶⁷Kellner says this: “the Bush Administration and *Washington Post* disinformation and propaganda concerning the Iraqis’ readiness to invade Saudi Arabia worked effectively to shape media discourse and public perception of the crisis and to legitimate Bush’s sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia” (Kellner. *Media Culture*, 203).

released information at press conferences concerning the Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabia and unwillingness to negotiate, and these “official” pronouncements supplemented the unofficial briefings of reporters. In turn, editorial writers and commentators on TV networks took up these claims, which they used to bolster arguments concerning why it was necessary for the U.S. to send troops to Saudi Arabia. Hence, disinformation stories were planted and then reproduced and circulated, producing the effect desired.³⁶⁸

Kellner also notes that public perception was directed by the failure of major newspapers, news magazines, and television networks to criticize Bush’s military deployment and rejection of negotiation.³⁶⁹ The mainstream media failed to present alternative voices found in congress and on the street, and drew on an “extremely limited repertoire of voices ... thus freezing significant views out of public policy debates.”³⁷⁰ Here we see once again that mass media directs perception by limiting the number of symbols and meanings available to the mass audience.

The demonization of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis was presented within media discourse as a cosmic struggle between good and evil. In 1991 a Kuwaiti government group encouraged this demonization by financing a propaganda campaign, undertaken by the U.S. public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton. Hill & Knowlton fabricated Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, with the cooperation of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S., and furthered the manipulation of the American people into accepting the Gulf War.³⁷¹ Here we see public relations operating as the disguised presentation of private interest. This is exactly the strategy of the “engineering of

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 205-206.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

consent” as developed by Bernays in the 1920’s.³⁷² This series of events provides another example of the entrenchment of mass media in the élite’s systems of definitional control. The Hill & Knowlton public relations/disinformation campaign was carried out with the assistance of Craig Fuller, then president of Hill & Knowlton. Fuller was George Bush’s chief of staff before working for Hill & Knowlton.³⁷³ This manipulation of the American public by government interests coincides with Habermas’ observations on the industry of political marketing wherein advertising experts “neutral in respect to party politics” are employed to sell politics to the public in an “unpolitical way.”³⁷⁴ The demonization of Saddam Hussein resurfaced during a Gulf War crisis early in 1998. One former State Department officer, Jan Heininger, was quoted within the media as suggesting that the U.S. Administration was doing “an adequate job of painting Mr. Hussein as an “evil monster,”” and predicted that once the bombs start dropping, “Americans will rally around the flag.”³⁷⁵ During this crisis the Administration also engaged in a media campaign to convince Americans of their state’s moral superiority within the conflict.

The media presentation of the Gulf War provides another example of how mass media controls the flow of symbols within public discourse. Kellner argues that this control was exercised not merely in the name of government propaganda and Administration interests, but

³⁷²Bernays. *The Engineering of Consent*.

³⁷³Kellner. *Media Culture*, 207.

³⁷⁴Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 216.

³⁷⁵Julian Beltrame. “U.S. Fires up Support for War on Iraq: U.S. Defense Secretary Shows Grisly Photos of Alleged Gas Victims,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, Tuesday February 17, 1998, A2.

primarily in the interests of profits within the economic system.³⁷⁶ The ownership of media systems, such as the NBC network, by major weapons manufacturers, such as General Electric, suggests that large military contractors will stand to benefit from the media presentation of a successful war.³⁷⁷ Kellner describes how the media presented the war as a triumph of new military technology which ensured victory and a low body count:

The mainstream media projected the image of the war most desired by the Pentagon and the Bush Administration; i.e. that it was fighting an eminently clean and successful high-tech war. From the beginning, the bombing of Iraq was portrayed as efficient and humane, targeting only military facilities. Over and over, despite pictures from Iraq which revealed the contrary, the Pentagon and Bush Administration stressed the accuracy of their bombing strategies and the oft-repeated images of the precision bombs, with video cameras built into their heads, presented an image of such accurate bombing. Likewise, the frequent pictures of Patriot missiles apparently knocking out Iraqi Scud missiles created the impressions of a clean high-tech war.³⁷⁸

The media presentation of the war and the Administration's false claims of clean, accurate military technology combined to create a global showcase for U.S. weapons systems.³⁷⁹

Although the conclusion can only be inferred, it appears that the control of symbols within the media coverage of the Gulf War served to create positive assumptions in the audience about the

³⁷⁶Reaching a parallel conclusion, a study of mass media and racism found that racism within the media reflected the economic interests of the élite who own and control media systems. Racism within the British media represented dominant social assumptions while at the same time ensuring economic gain by the wealthy. Once again, the agenda of the media is set by the economic interests of the wealthy. See Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband. *Racism and the Mass Media: A Study of the Role of the Mass Media in the Formation of White Beliefs and Attitudes in Britain*, (London: Davis-Poynter, 1974).

³⁷⁷Kellner. *Media Culture*, 213.

³⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 212.

³⁷⁹Kellner notes that over 70 percent of the Pentagon's 'smart bombs' missed their targets (*Ibid.*).

nature of American-made weapons systems.³⁸⁰ It is quite possible that the primary audience targeted by GE's media system, NBC, was not the American public but a global clientèle closer to GE's bottom line -- those who buy GE-manufactured weapons systems.³⁸¹ On the vested interests of American mass media with state-sponsored acts of aggression, Herman and Chomsky likewise conclude that media, government, and the arms industry are a unified definitional system, "we may fairly say that the U.S. mass media, despite their righteous self-image as opponents of something called terrorism, serve in fact as loyal agents of terrorism."³⁸² The tendency for weapons firms and the U.S. Department of Defense to pursue a common purpose has been called "Bureaucratic Symbiosis" by economist John Kenneth Galbraith.³⁸³ Galbraith describes the decision-making process within this symbiosis as follows:

The initiating decision [to purchase weapons] is taken by the weapons firm and by the particular service for which the item is intended. The action is ratified by the President who, though not without power, is essentially a captive of the bureaucracy he heads. The Armed Services Committees of Congress, staffed with reliable sycophants of the weapons firms and the services, accept all but

³⁸⁰Kellner notes that the military had a high credibility rating among the American audience: "A *Times-Mirror* survey of January 31, 1991, revealed that 78 percent of the public believed that the military was basically telling the truth, not hiding anything embarrassing about its conduct of the war, and providing all of the information it prudently could" (*Ibid.*, 215).

³⁸¹Kellner's own analysis of the connection between the Gulf War and weapons sales notes that "GE produced parts of every major weapon system used in the war, so that file footage of U.S. weapons and the gushingly positive reports of their technological wonder were in effect free advertisements for products produced by GE/NBC -- indeed, desire to promote U.S. weapons for sale was one of the major purposes of the war in the first place" (*Ibid.*, 213).

³⁸²Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 142.

³⁸³Galbraith. *Economics and the Public Purpose*, 139.

automatically the decision so taken. The role of the rest of the Congress is minimal; that of the public is nil.³⁸⁴

Mass media acts as a public relations channel for the entire process and American armed aggression ensures a constant demand for new and improved weapons.

The success of mass media's ability to control the cultural debate surrounding war can be inferred from the lack of public outcry over the slaughter of Iraqi troops in the Gulf War. American-lead forces killed an estimated 100,000 Iraqi troops in 1991.³⁸⁵ Also, the Gulf War appears to have created the impression that the new guidance systems made by GE and other companies will reduce civilian deaths in future military aggression. The focus of media reports tends to rest on glorifying the technology of the weapons systems, and they are noticeably silent on the high risk of civilian deaths:

Dozens of the six-metre-long, cigar-shaped missiles, skimming above the desert floor at almost 1,000 kilometres an hour, will come out of the darkness and wind their way down Baghdad streets in search of targets programmed into their computers weeks ago ... Waves of British and U.S. fighters, armed with laser- or video-guided smart bombs, would strike sites in and around Baghdad.³⁸⁶

Media sources continue to understate the significant failure rate of these weapons systems which are intended for 'surgical strikes' within heavily populated areas.

The alignment of the Bush Administration with the interests of one of the largest sectors of the economic system -- arms manufacturers -- effectively combined government access to

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁸⁵ David Pugliese. "The Next Gulf War: How the Battle will be Fought," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday, February 14, 1998, B1.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

media with military control of media and corporate ownership of media systems.³⁸⁷ The combination of these media systems resulted in the creation of what Kellner calls a “warrior nation that turned many in the TV audience into fanatic supporters of the Bush Administration war policy.”³⁸⁸ The total media environment effectively mobilized support for the U.S. war policies. In so doing, the profit motivation of the economic system was served and American perceptual bias towards those outside their social order, the Arab world, was reinforced through the media discourse. Kellner analysed American films made during the 1970's and 1980's, such as *Navy Seals*, *Iron Eagle*, *The Delta Force*, *Death Before Dishonor*, *Black Sunday*, and *Nighthawks*, and concluded that “Arabs are serving as new villain stereotypes in Hollywood films and by the 1980's were the privileged target of Hollywood manicheanism.”³⁸⁹ Thus we find that the symbolics of Hollywood match the assumptions which direct public support of American foreign policy -- the enemy is evil, only understands the use of force, and should be civilized or destroyed.

The mass media presented a significant cultural bias, controlled the cultural debate over the direction of society, limited the presentation of alternative viewpoints, and served the interests of the economic system. The Gulf War provides confirmation of my model of mass

³⁸⁷Media theorist Tony Bennett also notes this connection between mass media and the interests of the political élite: “media may be said to collude with the major established parties in limiting the very way in which problems are defined and the horizons within which solutions may be sought” Tony Bennett. “Media, ‘Reality,’ Signification,” *Culture, Society and the Media*, edited by Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curra, and Janet Woollacott. (London, Methuen, 1982), 307.

³⁸⁸Kellner. *Media Culture*, 214.

³⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 86.

media as definitional control in the interests of the economic system and strongly suggests the reinforcement of implicit assumptions about those outside the American cultural arena. Any dissent within American society which contradicted the economic stake in armed aggression was effectively suppressed within the media system.³⁹⁰

The military agenda of the American government is achieved by disinformation and propaganda campaigns orchestrated in conjunction with the media systems of major weapons manufacturers. Other commercial media systems, such as Hollywood films, also project the implicit assumption of a 'good U.S.A.' and its 'evil' enemies. Kellner's analysis of Hollywood films such as *Rambo* and *Top Gun* argues that Hollywood cinema embodied Reaganite anti-communist and pro-military discourses:

The popularity of the film *Rambo* and the Stallone, Chuck Norris, and other "action-adventure" vehicles suggests that the Hollywood President and large segments of the country had assimilated a manichean worldview from Hollywood movies whereby "the enemy" is so evil and "we" are so good that only violence can eliminate threats to our well-being. Thus, Reagan's most "popular" acts were his invasion of Grenada and bombing of Libya -- precisely the sort of "action" celebrated in *Rambo*, *Top Gun*, *Iron Eagle*, and the other militarist epics of the Reagan era. Hollywood films therefore provided iconography which helped mobilize support for conservative and militarist political agendas.³⁹¹

American interventionist foreign policies find symbolic expression through conservative American films. The flow of symbols from Hollywood legitimizes the domination of ruling social groups and reinforces ideological boundaries between the U.S.A. (good/clean) and the state's enemies (evil/unclean). The result is a media culture saturated with symbols that mobilize

³⁹⁰Kellner notes that between August 8 and January 3, 1991, roughly one percent of American television coverage dealt with popular opposition to the actions of the U.S. military in the Gulf (*Ibid.*, 209).

³⁹¹*Ibid.*, 74.

consent for the actions of the political élite. These symbols embody implicit assumptions surrounding the categories of the state's nature and the nature of its enemies, "convincing Americans that military action is necessary means convincing them that Mr. Hussein is a demon who must be stopped."³⁹² Here we see the manipulation of the public sphere as described by Habermas in terms similar to the dynamics of collective memory. The public sphere is manipulated by political marketing which appeals to "unconscious inclinations" and results in predictable reactions among the audience.³⁹³

Herman and Chomsky's analysis of the media's role in the aftermath of the Vietnam war also uncovered an internalized cultural assumption -- the assumption that the American state cannot be morally wrong. The media retrospective on the Vietnam war failed to express what many Americans felt, that the war was an immoral crime. Within U.S. mass media systems,

principled objection to the war as "fundamentally wrong and immoral," or as outright criminal aggression -- a war crime -- is *inexpressible*. It is not part of the spectrum of discussion. The background for such a principles critique cannot be developed in the media, and the conclusions cannot be drawn. It is not present even to be refuted. Rather, the idea is unthinkable.³⁹⁴

While members of the audience did see the war as immoral, the media was incapable of presenting such a blatant contradiction to élite interests and state credibility. Prolonged fixation within media culture on the immorality of the state would probably lead to public action contrary to élite interests. Thus the media can project a doctrinal consensus, the morality and inherent goodness of the state, which stifles any opportunity for rethinking the social order among the

³⁹²Beltrame. "U.S. Fired up Support for War on Iraq," A1.

³⁹³Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 217.

³⁹⁴Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 252.

participants of media culture. The cultural debate is controlled by eliminating dissenting symbol-flow from the media system and, as a result, definitional control is maintained and the social order is reproduced. Dissent and protest *outside of the media system* is largely disempowered as a social force because such dissent is simply absent from the symbol-flow of media culture.

Politics and Mass Media

Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* confirms Kellner's conclusions regarding mass media's definitional control, presentation of cultural bias, and complicity with elite interests and economic motives. In this section the focus moves from war to politics in the American context. Herman and Chomsky's analysis describes the national media of America as presenting the "interests and concerns of the sellers, the buyers, and the governmental and private institutions" in a manner which supports the elite.³⁹⁵ The U.S. media permit and encourage debate, criticism, and dissent only as long as these voices remain faithful to what Herman and Chomsky identify as a "system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be internalized without awareness."³⁹⁶ Here we are entering the realm of collective memory -- internalized presuppositions and principles which order the social world. Where do these implicit assumptions about democracy appear in the American media?

Herman and Chomsky cite the intense media coverage of the Nixon Administration's illegal action against the Democratic party headquarters (Watergate) and the lack of significant

³⁹⁵Herman and Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*, 303.

³⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 302.

media coverage of illegal action by the FBI against the Socialist Workers party as examples of ‘internalized presuppositions and principles’ within the élite world-view. The illegal action against the Democratic party was a scandal in élite opinion because Nixon’s actions challenged “powerful domestic interests, solidly based in the business community” as embodied in the Democratic party.³⁹⁷ The Democratic party operated as a symbol of élite consensus about democracy and business and Nixon’s actions challenged this symbol and its implicit meaning of democracy and commerce. Whereas the Democratic party operated as a symbol which embodied a widely-shared connotation of democracy and business among diverse groups of élites, the Socialist Workers party acts among the élite as a symbol with quite different connotation.

The FBI’s illegal break-ins and other actions against the Socialist Workers party over the course of a decade did not represent a scandal even though it was “a violation of democratic principle far more extensive and serious than anything charged during the Watergate hearings.”³⁹⁸ Why did this illegal action fail to ignite indignation among the élite? Herman and Chomsky suggest it failed to enter the media as a grand scandal because the illegal actions of the FBI against a legal political party did not directly threaten élite interests and therefore it simply was not a worthy story.³⁹⁹ Implicit assumptions about what constitutes credible democratic representation (the Democratic party) and illegitimate representation (the Socialist Workers

³⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 299.

³⁹⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹⁹*Ibid.* The writers also suggest ongoing systemic action against alternative voices within American society, “these actions of the national political police were only one element of government programs extending over many administrations to deter independent political action, stir up violence in the ghettos, and undermine the popular movements that were beginning to engage sectors of the generally marginalized public in the arena of decision-making” (*Ibid.*).

party) directed the attention of media coverage and élite indignation.⁴⁰⁰ Nixon threatened a category close to the heart of the élite world-view, whereas the FBI threatened a category of democratic organization that lacks significant ties to power holders within American society. Watergate amounts to an arousal of pollution fears among the American élite who responded to the denigration of a worthy symbol, the Democratic party. These pollution beliefs reflected implicit assumptions regarding the sanctity of democracy and commerce among the élite.⁴⁰¹ A category was threatened, implicit assumptions shared by the élite were challenged, and society responded by punishing the offender.

One could speculate that widespread scandal over the FBI's actions against the Socialist Workers party would amount to the opposite dynamic -- a direct challenge to widely-shared assumptions and categories. The socialist party undoubtedly provides an ambiguous symbol -- a legitimate political party but one that challenges core values of American culture. If the FBI's actions against this ambiguous symbol were the target of sustained public outrage and negative

⁴⁰⁰Herman and Chomsky describe a similar dynamic at work in media coverage of elections in El Salvador and Guatemala ('good' client-states of the U.S.) and Nicaragua (an 'evil' socialist state), "Despite its superiority on every substantive count, the Nicaraguan election was found by the media to have been a sham and to have failed to legitimize" (*Ibid.*, 141). The authors conclude that "the U.S. mass media will *always* find a Third World election sponsored by their own government a "step toward democracy," and an election held in a country that their government is busily destabilizing "a farce and a sham" (*Ibid.*). This is an example of media reproducing the political categories which represent dominant cultural assumptions in America about the nature of democracy (the social order).

⁴⁰¹That the U.S. *commercial* media support the dominant cultural assumptions about the U.S. *political* system is an indication of the systemic integration of mass media into élite power systems; "The United States media emerged from, and reflect the assumptions of, American politics. The U.S. media do not merely 'fit' neatly into the U.S. political system, the U.S. media are an important, indeed essential, part of that system" Jeremy Tunstall. *The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World*, (London: Constable, 1977), 263.

media coverage, then this would amount to a re-valuation of a government symbol of control, a questioning of the democratic nature of the current government, and a reversal of the moral quality associated with the current government versus the Socialist Workers party in the minds of Americans. Thus, sustained pollution beliefs aroused to protect the credibility and legitimacy of the Socialist Workers party would call into question the credibility of its opposite symbol -- the current government. This scenario rests upon assumptions about the valuation of these symbols (although they are fairly safe assumptions), yet serves to highlight how widely-shared categories behind the Watergate scandal were the subject of pollution beliefs within media culture. The media event of Watergate reveals how pollution beliefs arise within media systems and reflect dominant symbols and categories, such as democracy and business, which uphold the elite maintenance of power. Symbols that do not represent widely shared categories, such as the Socialist Workers party, fail to arouse pollution beliefs within media culture when the symbol is attacked by credible authority (the FBI). This resonates with Mary Douglas' theory that pollution beliefs will only work effectively if there is a widespread consensus in the assumptions and categories which are threatened.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰²Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 63.

Drugs, Pollution, and Changing Categories in the Ontario Health Care System

Over fifty years ago the Ontario provincial government made use of one of contemporary society's most powerful definitional systems, public education, in an attempt to change the social classification of narcotics and create a new moral consensus. This section will briefly explore a text which unveils this attempt at citing pollution danger to socialize public support for a re-classification of objects (narcotics) in common use at the time. Pollution beliefs are part of the cultural filtering mechanism which structures shared perceptual bias and shared values, "our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications."⁴⁰³ This analysis is intended to clarify how classification, moral consensus, and pollution beliefs operate within modern media systems.

In 1925 the provincial Minister of Education authorized the publication of a textbook entitled *Ontario Public School Health Book*. The stated purposes of the *Health Book* were to "arouse a desire for proper living, to develop health habits, and to teach the pupils of our public schools some simple means for the prevention of disease."⁴⁰⁴ In *Chapter XIX: Habit Forming Drugs*, the narcotics opium, morphine, and cocaine are described as useful in relieving pain and producing sleep in moderate doses but "in larger doses produce stupor and unconsciousness."⁴⁰⁵ These narcotics are described as ingredients in patent medicines available at the time,

⁴⁰³Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36.

⁴⁰⁴Donald T. Fraser and George D. Porter. *Ontario Public School Health Book*, (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, 1925), I.

⁴⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 109.

Some patent medicines contain narcotics, and these may have been responsible for causing persons to become slaves of a drug. Those taking such medicines may acquire a taste for the drug, and ultimately the taste may become a craving. Some of the worthless catarrh remedies contain cocaine. Certain cough medicines, soothing syrups, and so-called consumption cures contain opium and morphine; and many advertised tonics and blood purifiers contain alcohol in large proportions. Fortunately the amount of narcotics in patent medicines is now reduced, and their sale is restricted by the Federal Department of Health. When ill we should consult our family doctor and avoid quackery and patent medicines.⁴⁰⁶

This text reveals a cultural debate between consumers and producers of narcotic ingredients found in patent medicines and the Federal Department of Health. At stake is the state of consciousness and the threat of individuals becoming “slaves of a drug.”⁴⁰⁷ A credible source of healing, the ‘family doctor’ is recommended in opposition to an illegitimate source of healing, ‘quackery and patent medicine.’ The text continues and describes what is at stake in the cultural debate, or contest, between these two healing systems,

Every one has a natural appetite for food and a natural thirst for water, but those who take any of these drugs soon develop an unnatural appetite or craving for them. In time the drug has to be taken in increasing doses to produce the required effects; and the person taking it becomes an addict or slave to it. Then his health suffers, his mind becomes affected, and his character and morals deteriorate. He is in complete bondage to the drug. That is why the unfortunate drug addict has been called a “dope fiend.” As said before, the drug habit is very hard to break, and the withdrawal of the drug in an attempt to break the habit often causes much misery and distress. But, as in the case of other bad habits, the cure is to cease altogether to use the drug.

We are told that the number of drug addicts in Canada has been increasing, therefore all good Canadians must guard against this evil. While boys and girls of school age are not likely to trifle with such drugs, yet it is well to be warned of their terrible dangers before it is too late.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

Through the lens of Douglas' cultural theory, this text has the appearance of a cultural debate over acceptable categories of consumable items and acceptable credible authorities.

The text expresses a danger belief and a fear of moral pollution from narcotics that are described as 'evil,' and their use is said to bring 'terrible dangers.' People affected by this form of pollution will suffer damage to their body ('health suffers'), their brain ('mind becomes affected'), their personality ('character'), and their moral state will 'deteriorate.' These four categories suggest that the entire being is at stake. With body, mind, character, and morals weakened the individual is transformed from being a 'good Canadian' to a 'slave' in 'complete bondage' to a growing evil which is transforming good Canadians into 'dope fiends.'

Here we find two categories of persons, 'Canadians' and 'dope fiends,' contrasted against two corresponding states-of-being, 'good' versus 'slaves' in 'complete bondage.' This taxonomy of individuals is matched by food which creates a natural appetite and food (drugs) which creates an unnatural appetite, and two corresponding types of authority, 'Federal Department of Health/family doctor' versus 'quackery and patent medicines.'

Douglas' cultural theory suggests that this text, as a cultural script, is embedded with a debate over legitimate authority sources. The contested authorities are sources of credibility within the local health care system. Some individuals use narcotics because they accept as credible the authority of 'quackery and patent medicines.' The legal classification of the food/drug is changing and the text reflects a severe moral consequence for those who, through evil drugs, become polluted by ingesting the re-classified items. This text portrays a struggle

within the social world that is cosmic in scale. Evil is present and growing. The very physical, mental, and psychological nature *and* moral being of *all* Canadians is at stake.⁴⁰⁹

By using the definitional system of public education, the Canadian state made use of its internal media system which may also have been its most inexpensive means of accessing the 'mass mind' of the Canadian public. The state used a mass media system (public education) to reinforce what constitutes a 'good Canadian.' Cultural theory describes this action as an expression of a pollution belief which arose in reaction to the feared destruction of a conceptual category -- 'good Canadians.' What remains striking is the complete transformation of being which is attributed to those who suffer pollution from the feared evil. Perhaps this suggests that key assumptions at the foundation of the social order are at stake in this cosmic battle between good and evil. The creation of an 'unnatural appetite, craving, stupor, unconsciousness and a state of bondage and enslavement' suggest that control of the self and consciousness are a strong concern. Order is preferred and the loss of self and self-will is feared. It appears that the implicit assumptions behind the text may surround the nature of what it is to be human. The natural and the unnatural, the good and the evil, are seen to be at work on the structure of the self. The state is engaged in a struggle over what constitutes legitimate selfhood and moral citizenship.

⁴⁰⁹Within the confines of this single text it is not possible to say *why* drug use is selected as a danger to the moral fabric of the nation. A clue to how this moral debate may be related to the needs of the economic system appeared in Mike Blanchfield's article, "The Case for Prison's LSD Tests," (*The Ottawa Citizen*, Sunday, March 1, 1998, A1). Blanchfield quotes psychologist Mark Evans' January 1964 article in the *Canadian Journal of Corrections*, wherein Evans describes drug addicts as an "enormous wastage of manpower in our own and other countries." In an effort to increase the amount of manpower available to the economic system Evans administered LSD to approximately 30 women confined at the Kingston Prison for Women in the early 1960's. From this one can infer that unauthorized drug use represents a threat to the economic system.

Over fifty years later, Canadian society is still embroiled in a cultural debate over substances which induce alternative states of consciousness. Now marijuana use provides a symbolic focal point for the debate. As with the *Health Book* of 1925, the debate concerns the medical classification of a widely-used drug; “A recent Ontario court ruling gave Terry Parker, a Toronto man with epilepsy, the constitutional right to grow and smoke marijuana. But the ruling was seen as a specific exemption for Mr. Parker, rather than a precedent applying to anyone, and the government is appealing the decision.”⁴¹⁰

That the debate still exists is an indication of a lack of social consensus over what constitutes a ‘good’ Canadian. Different sides in the debate both cite medical science as a credible authority for their version of reality. This demonstrates the persistence of disputed categories and contradictory sources of credibility within culture. It can also be seen that the state’s resources and access to mass media systems does not grant it complete definitional control over classification within the social order.

⁴¹⁰See Randy Boswell. “Marijuana ‘Buyers Club’ Launched: Six Ontario Outlets Planned for Users with Medical Need,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday, February 14, 1998, A3.

Summary

Mass media can be conceptualized as a global symbolic system which exercises a constraining monopoly over the cosmology of local cultures within the realm of media culture. The effect of this constraining monopoly has been identified in the area of environmentalism. Television presents an individualistic solution to the environmental problem and ensures that the audience's consumption patterns do not change in such a way as to become a threat to the economic system. This constraining monopoly is not absolute, as challenges to the economic system are seen in shows such as *The Nature of Things*. The degree of challenge presented by this show is implied in the withdrawal of the sponsorship of logging companies. This constraining monopoly over symbol-flow within mass media was also found in the U.S. media coverage of the Gulf War, coverage which grossly under-represented the degree of protest, political dissent, and economic criticism. The existence of such protest within media culture also demonstrates that the definitional control established via mass media is not absolute. Protest was represented within media culture but the economic system was not in danger of collapse. This constrained symbol-flow of mass media perpetuates a perceptual and affective bias upon the social world of media culture through processes parallel to those of collective memory. Implicit assumptions are reinforced through symbols communicated within media culture and perceptual bias is maintained through the exclusion of alternative possible realities as portrayed within mass media. By excluding alternative realities mass media reproduces dominant cultural assumptions.

The regional mass media of South Asia was seen to convey the region's dominant cultural assumptions regarding love marriages. A lack of evidence within the literature surveyed prevents me from drawing any conclusions regarding the economic assumptions within South

Asia indigenous media. Although the conclusion lies outside the boundary of my research, it is possible that the U.S. film industry has penetrated the South Asian (and global) market because of the shared common ground of a market economy and its attendant value system. The same line of conjecture would suggest that Hindi films fail to capture a large U.S. audience as they largely portray regional cultural values which remain alien to Americans. These conjectures require further research. What the South Asia media assumptions, as seen in the portrayal of love marriages, do suggest is that a regional mass media will have to adopt globalized values if it is to find a global audience.

Implicit assumptions which reflect religious *and* economic values were identified within American religious television. Here a high degree of 'fit' was seen to exist between the values of the economic system (the pursuit of wealth) and religious values within evangelical and fundamentalist televangelism. This is a clear instance of mass media reinforcing widely-shared implicit assumptions. The pressure upon religious content to conform to widely-held values also demonstrated how mass media can reproduce a culture's perceptual bias.

The values of South Asian films, U.S. religious television, along with the assumptions implicit in the demonization of the Iraqis during the Gulf War, and the analysis of Watergate as a manifestation of pollution beliefs within media culture all suggest that mass media functions as a technological manifestation of collective memory. Media reproduces widely-held cultural values and classifications. As media systems are owned by the élite they also effectively protect the interests of the élite. Thus mass media does not present an unbiased or unfiltered reflection of the symbolic content of a culture's collective memory. It is only a dominant symbolic system. It is not a comprehensive cosmology which fully represents all symbols and meanings at play

within the social order. This conclusion is implied through the failure of the U.S. media to represent fully the protest against the Gulf War. The one-sided portrayal of the environmental problem is another instance of mass media's partial representation of the shared contents of collective memory. It may be the case that mass media most fully represents the collective memory not of the entire population, but only of the élite. The cultural debate over drugs within Canada also demonstrates that the definitional power of media is not all-encompassing. Dissent does exist. A culture, after all, is defined by its debates and definitional contests.

In contrast to élite-owned mass media systems cyberspace exhibits structural characteristics as a decentralized and globalized communication system which, thus far in its history, has prevented the monopolization of its ownership and control over its content by the élite. As far as content and symbol-flow are concerned, there are no media moguls in cyberspace. The following chapter explores the implications of this structural differentiation in ownership and symbol-flow by examining three cyberspace media events and texts. These three case studies will demonstrate that élite control over content fails to extend into the media realm of cyberspace. It will be shown that the symbol-flow of cyberspace subverts the definitional control of two corporations, McDonald's and Mattel, and one religious organization, the Church of Scientology. In *Chapter Six* I will then argue that this subversion of meaning is paradigmatic of cyberspace's emerging impact upon the social order of media culture.

Chapter Five: Cyberspace and the Subversion of Definitional Control

In the previous chapter I asked how mass media participates in the control of the implicit assumptions held by audiences. Mass media saturates local cultures with the symbols and values of the economic system. Through the monopolization of symbol flow within media culture, mass media excludes other symbol systems and so colonizes the mind of the consumer at the local level. This model of global media culture defines mass media as an instrument of production and the consumer's mind as its most valued product. Here I agree with James Carey's formulation of the *mind* as an instrument of production and the *world* as its "most valued product."⁴¹ But when the individual mind is situated within the global context of mass media the mind's world-making capability is thoroughly colonized by the symbol-sets of the economic system. The individual's mind is more a product of society. Society is much less so a product of the individual mind.

The symbolic function of mass media can be described through the lens of collective memory. Mass media reproduces the symbols necessary for the reproduction of the economic system by globalizing its implicit assumptions of the economic system. Mass media's symbol-sets are limited in degree of diversity. There is a very finite number of regular shows, movies, repeat broadcasts, themes, and genres within a media system such as television. This limitation of representation arises out of the control exercised by the owners and producers of the system and by the structural characteristics of mass media systems which by-and-large only permit

⁴¹James W. Carey. "The Language of Technology: Talk, Text, and Template as Metaphors for Communication," *Communication and the Culture of Technology*, edited by Martin J. Medhurst, Alberto Gonzalez and Tarla Rai Peterson. (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 1990), 23.

symbols to flow in one direction -- from the production side to the audience/consumer side. Conrad Black provides an example of how the ruling class uses media ownership to promote their own point of view. Black describes his use of media ownership to this end in his book, *Conrad Black: A Life in Progress*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1993). The ruling class also have the ability to exercise control over mass media content without the benefit of direct ownership. Self-censorship and libel-chill (the threat of a lawsuit) are examples of how wealth and the wealthy can control information within media culture.⁴¹² In a similar vein, media theorist Anthony Smith notes that "The social ambitions and politics of the new media owners are vast and deeply personal. When asked why they want to own newspapers and networks, their answers usually have more to do with power than money."⁴¹³ The structure of ownership, the privileges of wealth, and the personal ambitions of media moguls are reasons why we can speak of the monopolization of symbols and exclusion of alternative reality-frameworks within mass media.

This chapter presents my hypothesis that cyberspace subverts the monopolization of symbol-flow and definitional control which characterizes mass media. Cyberspace's subversive nature will be established through three case studies involving the Mattel Corporation's Barbie doll, the McDonald's Corporation, and the Church of Scientology. In each case I will demonstrate that cyberspace's symbol-flow evades the rule of law. I will also describe how subversive symbols flow within the Internet and how these symbols contradict the values implicit

⁴¹²Rowland Lorimer and Jean McNulty. *Mass Communications in Canada*, 3rd Edition. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 262; and Michael Parenti. *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the News Media*, 2nd Edition. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 40.

⁴¹³Anthony Smith. *The Age of Behemoths: The Globalization of Mass Media Firms*, (New York: Priority Press, 1991), 44.

within corporate and religious systems. These case studies will establish that cyberspace permits a flow of symbols which is unconstrained by the direct control characteristic of mass media systems. The unconstrained flow of symbols and the evasion of the rule of law will also establish cyberspace as a structurally-differentiated mode of communication.

Everybody Wants To Be Barbie

Barbie made her début as a female symbol in 1957 after Ruth Handler designed a doll with a body based on "Bild Lili," a German doll which was marketed as a sex toy for men. "Lili" first appeared as a streetwalker in a German comic strip.⁴¹⁴ Earlier, in 1945, Ruth formed the Mattel corporation with her husband Elliot Handler. Ruth and Elliot hired Ernst Dichter, who was at that time director of the Institute for Motivational Research. Dr. Dichter approached marketing from a methodology informed by Sigmund Freud's theories. Dichter marketed the doll which Ruth had based on "Lili" and had named after her daughter, Barbie.⁴¹⁵ The Barbie doll grew up to become one of the more prominent and lucrative symbols of consumer culture and the American female. In 1996 the Mattel Corporation claimed revenues totalling 4.5 billion dollars U.S.⁴¹⁶ Barbie, along with her cars, clothes, pets, friends, including her constant companion, Ken, and all their accessories, earned revenues totalling 1.7 billion dollars U.S. in the

⁴¹⁴Maureen Dawd. "Barbie Pulls Teeth," *The New York Times*, August 6, 1997, Volume 146, 19.

⁴¹⁵On the history of Barbie and Mattel, see M.G. Lord. *Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*, (New York: William Morrow, 1979).

⁴¹⁶From the Mattel Corporation's web site, www.barbie.com, February 1998.

same year.⁴¹⁷ According to Mattel, 99 percent of all American girls between the ages of three and ten own at least one Barbie, with the average girl owning eight.⁴¹⁸

Within media culture there is an ongoing struggle between the Mattel Corporation and numerous groups of individuals over the representation of Barbie within a variety of media systems. Typical of this definitional struggle over the meaning of Barbie were the actions of the New York-based Barbie Liberation Organization. During Christmas 1993 this self-described “loose network of artists, parents, feminists, and anti-war activists” switched the voiceboxes of 300 “Talking Duke” G.I. Joe and “Teen Talk” Barbie dolls and then placed the tampered toys back on store shelves. This action made news headlines when over Christmas deep-voiced Barbies were heard to say “Dead men tell no lies,” while G.I. Joes openly worried in a female voice “Will we ever have enough clothes?”⁴¹⁹ In 1998 Mattel was engaged in legal battles over the use of the Barbie name and image in song recordings, magazines, and Web sites.⁴²⁰ The conflict over the use of Barbie’s image within Web sites provides an example of cyberspace’s subversion of the definitional control exercised by the élite through mass media systems. This subversion of definitional control is, for instance, the focus of a cultural debate between two

⁴¹⁷Denise Gellene. “Barbie Protesters Aren’t Playing Around,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1997, 1.

⁴¹⁸John Greenwald. “Barbie Boots Up: Mattel’s New Chief is Using an Old Playmate to Get Girls as Hooked on Computers as Boys Are,” *Time*, November 11, 1996, Volume 148, Number 22, 48. This number is probably inflated by Mattel but nonetheless reveals the ‘size’ of Barbie as a symbol.

⁴¹⁹*Alt.culture*. “Barbie Art,” undated online article, www.pathfinder.com/altculture/aentries/b/barbiexart.html located February 1998.

⁴²⁰This is not an exhaustive list of the media which were involved in the disputed representation of Barbie images.

groups within American society, artist Mark Napier and his supporters on the one side, and the Mattel Corporation on the other side. These two groups are engaged in a legal battle over the use of Barbie's image within Napier's visual art. The following will describe Napier's use of Barbie, Mattel's reaction, and detail how cyberspace enabled the subversion of Mattel's definitional control over Barbie.

In 1996 Mark Napier created a Web site called *The Distorted Barbie*,⁴²¹ which featured images of Barbie which were digitally reshaped to mimic media icons, such as Kate Moss and Dolly Parton, as well as distorted images titled 'Fat and Ugly Barbie,' and 'Possessed Barbie' (see pages 163-66). Napier gives the following explanation of Barbie's meaning and his artwork;

Barbie says a lot about the world. I can't think of any other icon that is more widely accepted as an image of femininity. Barbie is a defining force for both women and men, for the culture in general. We have chosen this image, voted for it with our dollars, promoted it unconsciously or consciously ... But I think it's about time this icon diversified a little. What about all those aspects of our society that are not represented by Barbie? Let's open up the closet doors and let out the repressed real-world Barbies; Barbie's extended family of disowned and inbred rejects; politically correct Barbies that celebrate the ignored and disenfranchised.⁴²²

⁴²¹Mark Napier. *The Distorted Barbie*, www.users.interport.net/~napier/barbie/barbie.html located February, 1998, also duplicated at www.ered.districto.com/usuarios/photog/barbie/dbmain.html located April 1998.

⁴²²Mark Napier. *The Distorted Barbie*, (prior to censorship) www.detrus.net/projects/barbie located February 1998. This text is from Napier's original *Distorted Barbie* Web site, prior to changes made after legal threats from Mattel.

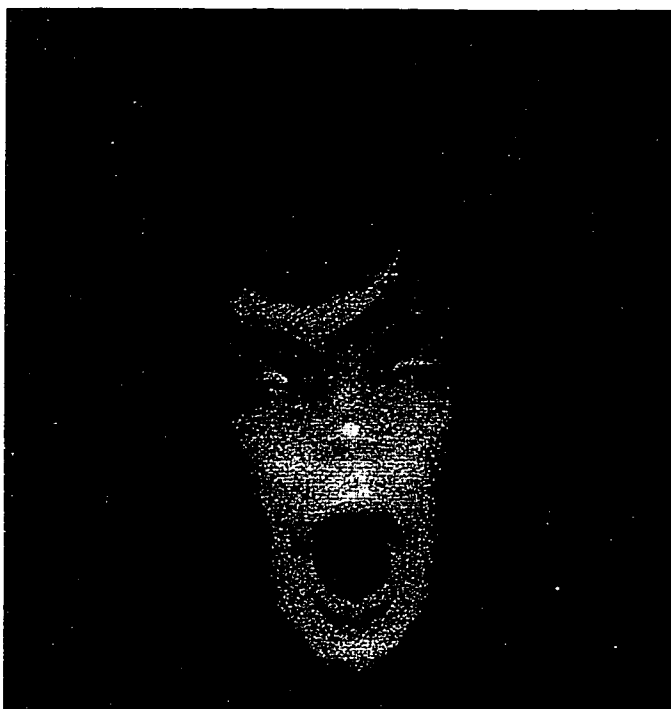


Figure #1

Possessed Barbie (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Mark Napier.

Image is the subject of a legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, October 10, 1997.

Located at www.detritus.net/projects/barbie March 1998

"Move over Chuckie. Here comes the Anti-Barbie. This Barbie teaches little girls how to say "I will not be ignored", and really mean it. With Possessed Barbie your daughter will learn the joys of voodoo, witchcraft, and Satanic worship. Created on June 6, 1996, she comes complete with chicken carcass, goat blood, upside-down crucifix and candles."*

*Commentary which accompanies the "Possessed Barbie" image by artist Mark Napier.



Figure #2

Kate Moss Barbie (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Mark Napier.

Image is the subject of a legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, October 10, 1997.

Located at www.detritus.net/projects/barbie March 1998.

"Named after the famous plant, Kate Moss is one of a growing group of women who make a career out of being anemic. It is a life of rigorous discipline. Each day, Kate wakes up to a breakfast consisting of a blueberry, a glass of air, and two ice cubes. She runs twenty miles, then begins her daily workout: two hours of frowning, scowling, pouting, and pursing, then two hours of slouching, hunching, and drooping, followed by an hour of looking pale and angst-ridden. "It's hard work" Ms. Moss said wearily in a recent interview. "I mean, try not smiling. Like, never. Not even a little bit. Yesterday I watched Seinfeld and it threw off my training schedule for three weeks."**"

*Commentary which accompanies the "Kate Moss Barbie" image by artist Mark Napier.

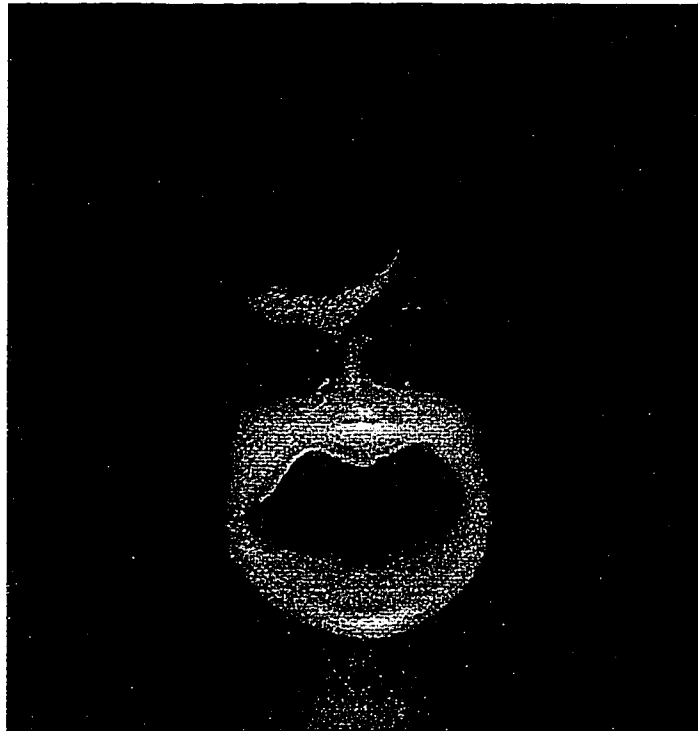


Figure #3

Fat and Ugly Barbie (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Mark Napier.

Image is the subject of a legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, October 10, 1997.

Located at www.detritus.net/projects/barbie March 1998.

“Late in her career Barbie meets hard times. Losing market share to the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Barbie stars in a Broadway musical, which closes halfway through the first act. After her seventh marriage to Ken falls apart, Barbie turns to alcohol, but is rejected by the Betty Ford Clinic. Aging, alone and financially ruined, she moves to Fort Lauderdale, takes a job as a taxi dispatcher, and nurses an addiction to extra dry martinis with chocolate olives. She is occasionally seen in cheap beachside motels with a Liberace impersonator.”*

*Commentary which accompanies the “Fat and Ugly Barbie” image by artist Mark Napier.

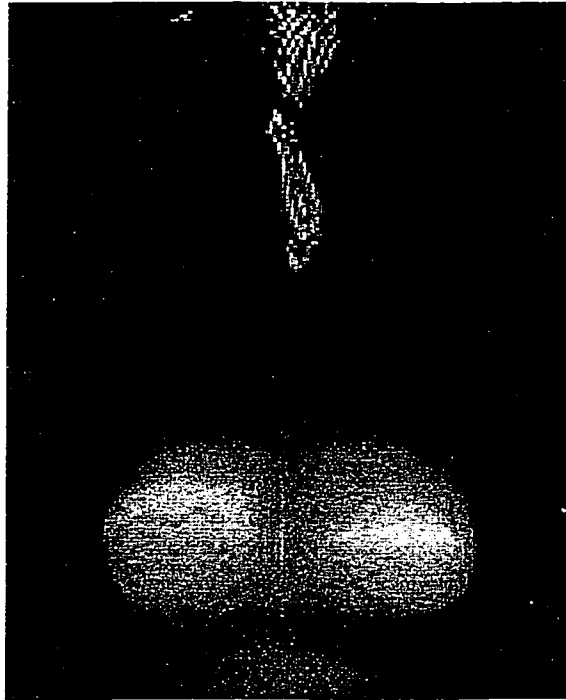


Figure #4

Dolly Parton Barbie (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Mark Napier.

Image is the subject of a legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, October 10, 1997.

Located at www.detritus.net/projects/barbie March 1998.

“Barbie, in an attempt to outdo Dolly Parton, goes in for one more plastic surgery. Unfortunately tissue must be taken from her head and shoulders to cover the 1.5 cubic liters of silicon. Commenting on her now inadequate cranial appendage, Barbie says confidently “No problem! Hee Haw, here I come!”.*”

*Commentary which accompanies the “Dolly Parton Barbie” image by artist Mark Napier.

On October 17, 1997 Napier received a letter from Mattel lawyers which claimed that Napier's Web site violated their trademark and copyright. Napier responded to the legal threat by changing all the Barbie images within his Web site. But before Napier changed his Web site, a number of individuals made duplicate copies of Napier's original Barbie images and created what was known as "The Distorted Barbie Meme." A 'meme' (also known as a 'free-floating meme') is a Web site that can be completely copied and reduplicated at any other location within the Web.

Months later, early in 1998, a group of artists copied Napier's original *Distorted Barbie* Web site to www.detritus.net -- a cyberspace site that houses endangered art works.⁴²³ Detritus.net made this mirror (copy) of Napier's Barbie artwork in response to "Mattel's incredible blatant censorship, and to the attempt to suppress cultural commentary and artist appropriation."⁴²⁴ Thus we see both individuals and groups responding to Mattel's attempt to exert definitional control over Barbie in cyberspace. This series of events in media culture provides an example of how the technical design of the Internet has inadvertently led to a structurally-differentiated mode of communication within cyberspace.

Within cyberspace information can migrate from one physical location to another at an always-increasing speed.⁴²⁵ An entire Web site, such as *The Distorted Barbie*, can be duplicated

⁴²³See *Detritus.net*, www.detritus.net/projects.

⁴²⁴*Ibid.*

⁴²⁵Between 1986 and 1996 the transmission capacity (amount of information flow) of the Internet has increased more than 10,000 times. *The Economist*, "The Economics of the Internet: Too Cheap to Meter?" October 19-25, 1996, 28. During the same period average transmission speed to households has increased from 1,200 bits per second to 33,600 bits per second.

on multiple sites throughout the Web within a matter of minutes. This is exactly what happened. Napier's supporters reproduced *The Distorted Barbie* and created a Web site called *The Distorted Barbie Meme* which provided Internet users with instructions for 'mirroring' (duplicating) the complete contents of Napier's original Barbie artwork.⁴²⁶ The "Meme Manifesto" explained the intention to subvert Mattel's 'cease and desist' legal action:

While Napier has decided not to fight the Mattel request as an individual, there's a much more effective technique we can use to drive Mattel lawyers crazy: turn the Distorted Barbie site into a free-travelling meme. Place copies of the site all over the net, then sit back and wait for Mattel to find them. When the company asks us to cease and desist, we will. But by that time, dozens more copies of the site will have sprung up elsewhere to take its place. The lawyers' bogus squirrel hunt will turn into an endless, crazy-making pursuit of a target that multiplies exponentially by digital mitosis. Eventually, they'll give up and realize that the Internet is not a very good place to try and squelch free expression.⁴²⁷

The use of Internet technology enables the multiplication of information throughout cyberspace faster than the legal system can respond to the flow of symbols. Barbie provides a beautiful demonstration of cyberspace's subversive capabilities. The flow of illegal Barbie images also provides an example of the structurally-differentiated mode of communication within cyberspace.

In November 1997 publisher Christian Crumlish wrote a chronicle of events surrounding the legal action by Mattel and the responses by members of the Internet community. Crumlish publishes an *e-zine* called *Enterzone* which is freely available on the Internet. E-zines, also

⁴²⁶Christian Crumlish. *Meme Manifesto*, www.ezone.org/xian/barbie/meme.html located February 1998. Other Web sites which hosts the *Barbie Meme* were found at kzsu.stanford.edu/~suprdave/meme.html; www.birdhouse.org/images/napier/barbie/mirror.htm (note missing "l" in ".html"); www.distrto.com/usuarios/photog/barbie located April 1998.

⁴²⁷*Ibid.*

known as *ezines*, are micro-press magazines published in a variety of media, including photocopy and print, and electronically within cyberspace. Crumlish's chronicle of events, titled "The Daily Barbie" describes how several supporters of Mark Napier's Barbie artwork reproduced the disputed pictures on various Web sites.⁴²⁸ Lee Reeves, a supporter who reproduced the disputed artwork on his own Web site, explained to Crumlish why he created copies of material which may prove to be illegal, "I fear that unless the Internet community stands together against censorship we may soon find watchful giants monitoring our every click."⁴²⁹ This sentiment is highly typical of Internet members involved in the dispute. Individuals see themselves engaged in a struggle with the Mattel Corporation over the definition of women's bodies, the values of consumer culture, and the nature of free speech.

The dispute over Barbie in cyberspace is a cultural debate over the meaning of a widely-shared symbol, the image of Barbie, and its intended meaning. Crumlish's comments on Mattel's lawsuits reveal a cultural debate over this symbol and also reveal that, among the contestants, the credibility of the legal system and the corporate monopoly on definitional control is at stake:

If Barbie were a person, we would not be libelling or slandering her, regardless of the fact that she'd no doubt be considered a public figure. As a trademark or copyright, as the intellectual property of a corporate entity, she enjoys better protection against legitimate criticism and inquiry than would a human being! ... I

⁴²⁸Crumlish. *The Daily Barbie*, www.ezone.org/xian/barbie dated November 1997, located February 1998.

⁴²⁹*Ibid.*. The phrase "monitoring our every click" is an Internet phrase which means that 'everything we look at on the Web will be subject to corporate approval.' Many individuals browse material on Web sites by using a computer mouse to 'click' on icons which then reveal further texts and images. Within Internet discourse the phrase "watchful giants monitoring our every click" is similar in meaning to the phrase "Big Brother is watching you."

really think in some ways that all this constitutional talk about intellectual property is b.s. when the real issue is political: women's bodies, what can and cannot be said about them in the public sphere.⁴³⁰

Mattel's Chief Executive, Jill E. Baraad, naturally maintains that definitional control over Barbie must remain firmly in the hands of the corporation, "What I do in my job, first and foremost, is protect Barbie."⁴³¹

The artist, Napier, sees himself caught up in a definitional struggle with Mattel over the meaning of Barbie as a symbol, "It is perhaps not surprising that my site has come under the scrutiny of Mattel. Their attack is grounded less in profit than on preserving a fiction of Barbie. Like any great symbol, her meaning must be preserved. If her meaning is distorted, she will cease to exist."⁴³² Napier has been painting images of Barbie since 1987. Perhaps it is not surprising that an artist should focus on a central cultural icon. Napier's own description of the meaning of Barbie reveals his awareness that the values of the economic system are at stake within this cultural debate:

This is about the sacred cows of western culture. The golden idols. Not symbols of religious power, they are symbols of buying power, profit and revenue streams. These are secular idols known in the corporate world simply as "cash cows." One such cow is called "Barbie." Idols of identity. Symbols representing the values and traditions of a consumeristic society ... Pick any icon. Barbie is a perfect subject for an inquiry into symbols. She is nearly ubiquitous, crosses international and religious borders. She is available to children and so is a part of their education and growth, and she is a product of the contemporary commercial

⁴³⁰*Ibid.*

⁴³¹Gellene. "Barbie Protesters Aren't Playing Around," 1. Baraad is the highest paid female executive in the U.S., earning over \$26 million U.S. in 1997.

⁴³²Mark Napier. *The Distorted Barbie*,
www.users.interport.net/~napier/barbie/barbie.html located February 1998.

image making industry, in some ways the same industry that produced the images of Ronald Reagan, Kate Moss, Nintendo and the Persian Gulf War.⁴³³

Here we are clearly in the domain of collective memory and a fierce cultural debate. At stake is Barbie's role in the socialization of young consumers' habits and desires.

Barbie plays a very specific role within the economic system and that role is the socialization of each new generation of consumers. The Mattel Corporation is acutely aware of Barbie's role as the great programmer of little consumers and profits handsomely from the plastic princess of capitalism. In 1996 Mattel and Avon joined forces to introduce a line of Barbie lip balms, perfumes, shampoos, conditioners, bubble bath, and hand creams.⁴³⁴ Their target market was girls age six to twelve in the United States, Canada, and various Latin American countries, with plans for expansion into Europe and Asia. Barbie's influence on consumers' buying patterns proved to be formidable. In 1996 Barbie generated an additional forty million dollars (U.S.) for Avon with expectations for increasing Avon's net sales by one hundred million annually.⁴³⁵ Mattel uses Barbie for much more than branding young girls' use of personal care products. During 1996 and 1997 Mattel launched a series of CD-ROM products and Barbies with little pink computers. Mattel knows that three million American Barbie owners have access to computers.⁴³⁶ Analysts within the computer industry are hoping that Barbie will lead female

⁴³³*Ibid.*

⁴³⁴Reuters News. "Avon and Mattel to Sell Barbie Products," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1997, Volume 146, D2.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*

⁴³⁶John Greenwald. "Barbie Boots Up: Mattel's New Chief Is Using an Old Playmate to Get Girls as Hooked on Computers as Boys Are," *Time*, November 11, 1996, Volume 148, Number 22, 48-50.

children to grow up into avid computer users and thus lead to a larger sales base.⁴³⁷ Mattel CEO Barde suggests that Barbie will help young girls gain better access to the job market, "Equal tools means equal opportunity."⁴³⁸ Given that the computer in the workplace is largely a sophisticated typewriter, socializing women for computer use may prove to be the equivalent of socializing women for entrance into the 'pink collar ghetto' of underwaged employment.

The Mattel Corporation exercises almost complete control over the representation of Barbie within mass media systems. This control is established through the legal system of international copyright and trademark law. Mattel is able to use the threat of lawsuits to control how its symbols are used. An example of this control is seen in Mattel's lawsuit against Barb and Dan Miller, publishers of *Miller's*, a magazine for Barbie collectors.⁴³⁹ Mattel wants editorial control over *Miller's* in the form of a licensing agreement and pre-publication review of the content.⁴⁴⁰ If the Millers refuse to cooperate with Mattel's demand for editorial control the consequences under the law will prove severe. A Mattel lawyer has been quoted in *Wired* magazine as saying, "We want the Millers' house."⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷*Ibid.*

⁴³⁸*Ibid.*, 50.

⁴³⁹See *Pink Anger Movement*, members.aol.com/pinkanger/index.html located February, 1998.

⁴⁴⁰*Time*, "Barbie's Bad Hair Day Has Collectors Seeing Pink," May 26, 1997, Volume 149, Number 21, 62.

⁴⁴¹Steve Silberman. "Mattel's Latest: Cease-and-Desist Barbie," *Wired*, Online Edition, www.wired.com article dated October 28, 1997, located February 1998.

Cyberspace-based content challenges the definitional control of corporations. My own research from January 1996 to April 1998 revealed dozens of redefined images of Barbie on multiple Web sites. These images included Barbie in bondage clothing, a semi-nude Barbie on a cross, a series of photographs titled "The Lesbian Barbie," featuring nude Barbie dolls, satirical images of Barbie such as "Pregnant Teen Barbie," "Bag Lady Barbie," "Drug Addict Barbie," and "Street Walker Barbie," and Barbie copulating with a male doll-of-colour.⁴⁴² Within cyberspace there also exists extensive Barbie satire in literary form.⁴⁴³ The existence of such satire and redefined Barbie images stands as a testimony of Mattel's inability to enforce comprehensive definitional control over representation of its symbols and their meaning within cyberspace.

It would be easy to overstate cyberspace's evasion of the rule of law in this study of Mattel's Barbie doll. During my research many of the redefined Barbie images *were* removed after the artists received cease-and-desist legal threats from Mattel's lawyers. Often the artists place a scanned copy of the legal threat and their own reply on the Web in place of the redefined Barbie image or satirical text. These letters usually dispute Mattel's claims about fair use of copyrighted property but recognize that the artist cannot afford an expensive legal battle. These issues can be seen in the following reply to Mattel's lawyers from Steven K. Smith.

Mr. Dunnegan

⁴⁴²See *Appendix C* for various Barbie images from the World Wide Web (page 301).

⁴⁴³For example, see Jim Thames' "Barbie for the Nineties," *Voo Doo Magazine: The MIT Journal of Humour*, www.mit.edu/activities/voodoo/is764/barbie.html located February 1998.

I received your letter dated October 10, 1997 requesting me to remove items from my Internet site that include your client's copyrighted material today October 16, 1997.

It is my opinion and I'm sure the opinion of most reasonable people who have visited the site that the page in question uses your client's copyrighted property in a purely satirical manner. As a parody, my site would be considered fair use of your client's copyrighted property. The site is neither obscene, disparaging or likely to cause confusion to Mattel's customers. I have had fans of your client's products state that they thought the site was clever, well thought out and very humorous.

You state that "There can be no dispute that this page unlawfully infringes Mattel's copyright". I disagree, it is my belief that my creation is protected free speech and that any court would also find in my favor.

However, I am not a stupid person. I realize that Mattel has much deeper pockets than I do and do not wish to be involved in a legal battle regardless the outcome. I have removed the page at your request.⁴⁴⁴

One such redefined Barbie image which was forced off the Web by Mattel lawyers is "Barbie on the Cross" by American artist Carol McCullough (see page 175). McCullough describes her art as a response to abuse and self censorship.

Censorship for me is a life-long issue. When I was a small child I was abused by a trusted adult and family friend: the minister of our church. I was threatened with death and damnation to hell if I dared to even think about the incident. It affected my life in profound ways which I am only now, 33 years later, beginning to understand. Because of this, *I censored myself and especially my artwork*. Now, as I have regained awareness of my past, I am able to remove the harsh internalized censor. I can now express my soul in my art, which is the highest form of beauty. Once I began this new journey of allowing my true beliefs, visions, horrors, pain, and ecstasy become externalized in the "real" world, I faced a new problem: censorship by others.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴Steven K. Smith. Letter to Mattel counsel, Mr. Dunnegan. www.caldelta.com/main/barbie.html located March 1998.

⁴⁴⁵Carol McCullough. "Censorship and My Artwork," www.maui.net/~mcculc/censored.html located March 1998. On viewing "Barbie on the Cross" in the Public Art Space in Madison, Wisconsin (1993), one individual said the following to the artist, "I have a rifle at home for people like you ... this is evil and you are evil" (*Ibid.*).



Figure #5

Barbie on the Cross (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Carol McCullough.

Removed from the Web under legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, 1997.

Image reappeared on the Web (1997) at www.wideawake.org/barbie.html without the permission of the artist or the Mattel Corporation, located April 1998.

Typical of the ‘virus effect’ that cyberspace has upon content, McCullough’s image, ‘Barbie on the Cross’ reappeared in Andy Savage’s Web site in defiance of Mattel’s censorship actions.⁴⁴⁶

Artists do not always respond to Mattel’s legal threats. Artist Ben Wade also received a cease-and-desist letter from Mattel on January 27, 1997 but the image, “Mistress Babs,” remained on the Web, along with Wade’s reply to the legal threat, “I like to make pretty pictures” (see image on page 177).

Barbie’s image and meaning is also contested within mass media. Popular songs such as “Barbie Girl” clearly challenge Mattel’s projection of Barbie as a ‘good’ girl. This song by the Swedish group, *Aqua*, was released in September 1997 and immediately generated a lawsuit from Mattel. Mattel did not like to hear ‘Barbie’ singing

I’m a Barbie girl - in a Barbie world -
Life in plastic - it’s fantastic.
You can brush my hair - undress me everywhere.

...
I’m a blond bimbo girl in a fantasy world,
Dress me up - make it tight - I’m your dolly.

...
Kiss me here, touch me there - hanky panky.

You can touch - you can play -
If you say - I’m always yours

...
Make me walk - make me talk -
Do whatever you please,
I can act like a star - I can beg on my knees.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶See Andy Savage. “Barbie Doll -- the Ultimate Fuck,” www.wideawake.org/barbie.html located April 1998.

⁴⁴⁷MCA Music Scandinavia. This song was played frequently over AM radio stations in North America. I was intrigued to discover that my seven-year-old niece, Lindsay Slade, could recite most of the lyrics to the song.

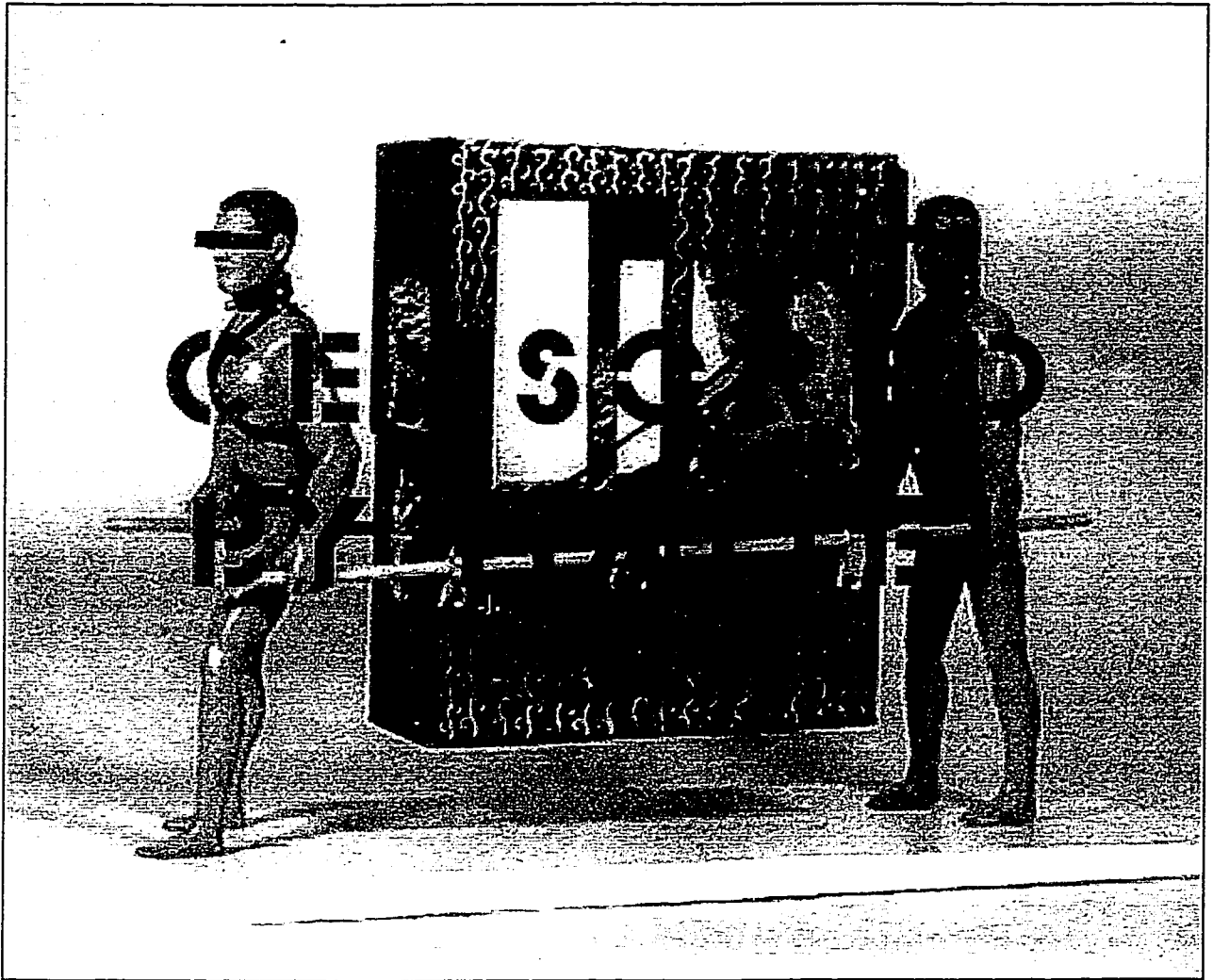


Figure #6

Mistress Babs: Queen of All She Surveys (1996).

Reproduced with permission of Benjamin Wade.

Image is the subject of a legal threat from the Mattel Corporation, January 27, 1997.

Located at www.nashville.net/~urchard/untitled/wade/bwad2.htm March 1998,

(note missing "1" in what would normally read ".html").

MCA solved this dispute with Mattel by placing a disclaimer on the *Aqua* recording. The disclaimer denied that the song referred to Mattel's Barbie. Here we see duelling corporate lawyers reach a compromise that protects their respective revenue stream and corporate ego.⁴⁴⁸ Even within the economic system contradictory meanings do occur.

While the assertion is beyond empirical proof, it appears that Mattel is more capable of enforcing its definitional control over Barbie within mass media systems such as magazines, recordings, and commercial products, whereas Mattel is experiencing difficulty in enforcing definitional control in cyberspace. When Mattel wins a lawsuit the disputed material is no longer distributed within mass media. But within cyberspace a successful lawsuit (or threat of legal action) does not always eliminate the disputed material. Sometimes contested material, such as Napier's Barbie artwork, simply migrates almost instantly to multiple locations on the Web. Whereas in mass media systems the contested use of Barbie is quickly suppressed, within cyberspace subversive Barbie symbols are a constant feature of the symbolic landscape.

Mattel is quickly able to suppress redefined images of Barbie within mass media systems because these systems are structurally isolated. It is rare for material which violates a copyright to migrate from one print publisher to another. But cyberspace is an integrated, networked environment where millions of different Web sites are connected to each other. In 1997 the number of computers connected to the Internet exceeded 16 million.⁴⁴⁹ This allows symbols to

⁴⁴⁸Also see Daniel Frankel. "MCA Countersues Barbie and Ken," November 11, 1997, e1.eonline.com/News/Items/0,1,2069,00.html located April 1998.

⁴⁴⁹Richard A. Cawley. "Internet, Lies, and Telephony," *Telecommunications Policy*, Volume 21, Number 6, 1997, 513. This number has been doubling annually since 1991. This number represents the number of hosts, which are computers with a specific Internet Protocol address. The actual number of connected computers and individuals far exceeds identifiable

flow throughout the global Web at near instantaneous speed. This is why I define cyberspace as a structurally-differentiated mode of communication. Cyberspace can be described as 'holographic.' Information and symbols *act* as if they are located not at any one place but at all places at the same time. This metaphor exemplifies why Mattel is incapable of suppressing every redefined image of Barbie in cyberspace.

Here it is important to remember that cultural debates occur within all media systems. Contradictory meanings and symbols flow throughout all of society. Thus we can anticipate that any cultural debate which occurs in cyberspace will also be represented in other areas of media culture such as print and television. Cyberspace and mass media are both part of media culture and therefore exhibit the same social phenomenon at work in the surrounding cultural context. This is exactly the case with Mattel and the image of Barbie. Nonetheless, *The Distorted Barbie* of cyberspace demonstrates that Internet members can reproduce disputed and illegal material faster than the legal system can respond to each case of reproduction.⁴⁵⁰

Within cyberspace the meaning and image of Barbie subverts the definitional control of the Mattel Corporation's mass media icon. Within mass media subverted Barbie symbols operate as isolated and occasional events. This is not the case with cyberspace's structurally-differentiated mode of communication. Within cyberspace subverted Barbie symbols are a constant feature and are readily accessible to even novice users of the Internet. While it is

hosts.

⁴⁵⁰For further information see the collection of articles at the Web site *Barbie Doll Collecting*, Thursday, April 16, 1998, barbie dolls.tqn.com/library/mvm/bl-mvm.htm (note the missing "l" on this ".htm"), and Ben Elgin, "Online Barbie Hunt Draws Criticism," November 26, 1997, www.2dnet.com/products/contents/articles/199711/np.mattel located April 1998.

impossible, perhaps, to quantify the degree to which cyberspace subverts the 'official' meaning of Barbie it is nonetheless reasonable to conclude that such subversion is characteristic of symbol flow within cyberspace; that such subversion represents values held among Internet members that contradict the values implicit within Mattel's interpretation of Barbie; and that Mattel's definitional control over Barbie is severely limited within the domain of cyberspace. Whereas in mass media definitional subversion is isolated and ephemeral, in cyberspace definitional subversion is a constant and widespread feature of the 'holographic' symbolic landscape. This structurally-differentiated mode of communication has substantially disempowered the control normally exercised through the legal system.

Mattel is not the only corporation faced with the impossibility of censoring cyberspace. After the academic publisher, Routledge, forced professors at Oxford University to remove a translation of work by Ludwig Wittgenstein from the Internet, Routledge editors found that the very same text continued to appear on other scholars' Web sites who were unaware of the copyright action.⁴⁵¹ This is an example of the 'virus effect' of cyberspace's mode of communication. Within cyberspace illegal symbols and texts spread from Web site to Web site, mailbox to mailbox, and infect the symbolic landscape with subversive meanings and taboo-ridden values.

⁴⁵¹Ross Kerber. "Copyright Battles on the Web: From Elvis To Wittgenstein," *Computers, Ethics, and Society*, Second Edition, edited by M. David Ermann, Mary B. Williams, and Michele S. Shauf. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 228. My research into the failure of copyright and trademark law in the Mattel versus Napier case indicates that *The Economist* magazine was altogether wrong when it informed business readers that the Internet makes it easier for corporations to enforce their copyrights. Exactly the opposite is the case in the Napier example. See *The Economist*, "Hands Off the Internet," July 5-11, 1997, 15.

Media theorists Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch make a bold point regarding the audience's response to mass media, "the study of mass communication as a social process without an adequately founded investigation of audience response is like a sexology that ignores the orgasm!"⁴⁵² In a dissertation that seeks to demonstrate the wired audience's ability to subvert the economic system's definitional control system, Barbie provides the orgasm. The wired audience exists in a state unconstrained by direct elite definitional control. Within the context of media culture, those who communicate through cyberspace, the wired audience, respond to the absence of definitional freedom in mass media by creating and disseminating their own preferred meanings within cyberspace.

Douglas claims that symbols based on the human body express different social experiences.⁴⁵³ If the social situation is replicated in symbolic forms, then Barbie's symbolic form, ranging from Mattel's Barbie as a cleaning, cooking, sexy toy, to various artists' Barbie as a prostitute, lesbian, drug addict, Christ-figure, and so forth, must represent widely-divergent social experiences. Barbie provides an example of how cyberspace's symbol-flow allows for the unconstrained representation of social experience whereas mass media's symbol-flow represents social experience as ordered and constrained by the definitional system of the elite. The corporate Barbie of Mattel expresses the preferred pattern of social relations within the economic system -- the patriarchal, gender-based division of labour, and dramatizes the acquisition of consumer goods. The wired audience replicates these meanings within Barbie enthusiasts' Web

⁴⁵²Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. "The Political Effects of Mass Communication," *Culture, Society and the Media*, edited by Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, and Janet Woollacott. (London: Methuen, 1982), 265.

⁴⁵³Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, vii.

sites, while simultaneously subverting Mattel's Barbie with a wide variety of alternative meanings -- drugs, sex, poverty, inter-race sex, and subverted religious meanings such as Barbie nude on a cross. Such alternative meanings do occur in a variety of symbolic forms throughout mass media as in the case of the *Aqua* song "Barbie Girl." The critical point here is that within cyberspace such meanings escape the censorship filter of the corporate definitional system. Barbie in mass media is carefully defined by Mattel and so conforms to Douglas' observation that highly controlled symbolic behaviour expresses all-embracing social constraints.⁴⁵⁴ Within mass media, and with few exceptions, Barbie expresses only those meanings deemed acceptable by her corporate parent, Mattel. Douglas also notes that highly uncontrolled symbolic behaviour, the type of symbolic behaviour readily observable throughout cyberspace, is less taboo-ridden.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed, in cyberspace Barbie's behaviour is barely constrained by taboos or her corporate parent.⁴⁵⁶

The contrasting symbol systems of mass media and cyberspace would be largely irrelevant if the symbolic order were merely an expression of the social order. However, the cultural theory of Douglas does not say that symbolic order is an expression of the social order. Hers is a replication hypothesis, and according to her hypothesis symbols carry the power to

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 99. Obviously, the economic system is not entirely "all-embracing" and thus value contradictions *do* occur even within mass media. I am not claiming that the economic system and mass media establish a totalitarian 'iron cage' of proscribed meanings.

⁴⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶Cyberspace's subversion of Mattel's Barbie doll appears to confirm Douglas' observation that the "scope of the body as a medium of expression is limited by controls exerted from the social system" (*Ibid.*). In mass media the social system exerts considerable control over the representation of Barbie's body. In cyberspace Barbie's body is seen to be liberated, at least in certain instances, from the social system's definitional controls.

control a social order through the implicit assumptions which they represent.⁴⁵⁷ The wired audience's subversion of Barbie is seen, therefore, as a reaction against the implicit assumptions of the economic system as embodied in mass media's constrained Barbie. A nude Barbie on a cross is a symbolic deconstruction of Mattel's plastic princess. Douglas describes this type of symbolic destruction of categories and their assumptions as a symbolic response to social life excessively structured by rules which would determine how individuals relate to each other.⁴⁵⁸ The corporate Barbie and females both exist within the economic system as highly determined in consumption patterns, acceptable roles, mating, and reproduction expectations.

Barbie is a consumer good which is the object of globalized mass consumption. According to Douglas, consumption practices are a form of group communication which creates and maintains social relationships.⁴⁵⁹ Barbie clearly provides a dominant symbol which is the focus of a cultural debate within media culture. Napier's redefined Barbies are a form of ritual consumption and communication which challenge the dominant visible public definitions of "female" and women's roles within the economic system. Within the Internet there are hundreds of Web sites which praise Barbie, reproduce her image, and relate stories of how Barbie enthusiasts love and identify with this symbol. The Web site "Living Vicariously Through Barbie," constructed by Barbie enthusiast hlelliot@mailbox.syr.edu, provides a typical hobbyist approach to the meaning of Barbie,

⁴⁵⁷*Ibid.*, xiv.

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴⁵⁹Douglas. "Goods as a System of Communication," 25.

Barbie was more than a doll to me. She was a way of living: the Ideal Woman. When I played with her, I could make her do and be ANYTHING I wanted. Never before or since have I found such an ideal method of living vicariously through anyone or anything. And I don't believe I am alone. I am certain that most people have, in fact, lived their dreams with Barbie as the role player. Boys and girls, men and women alike, know Barbie, and whether having played with her outright or secretly as a closer Barbie lover, they have somehow utilized her in their imagination.⁴⁶⁰

The Mattel Corporation has not made any effort to suppress these benign 'hobbyist' uses of their plastic princess (thus far). From the perspective of cultural theory, Barbie artists and Barbie enthusiasts are using Barbie to make public judgements about how women are to be classified within the economic system. Clearly, a female semi-nude figure on a cross stands at odds with the dominant valuation of women within the American economic and religious cultural ethos. As cattle provide a social idiom for some cultures, so Barbie provides the same role for others. Within consumer culture Barbie is 'good to think with' but the public representation of thoughts about Barbie is controlled through the legal power of the economic system. Barbie provides an example of public meanings being both fixed and challenged through the implicit meanings embedded within the consumption activities of various groups of Barbie users.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰"Living Vicariously Through Barbie," ziris.syr.edu/path/public_html/barbie/main.html last updated 05/02/95 (apparently), located February 1998.

⁴⁶¹Mattel's definitional struggle can also be seen in the death of Ken Handler, the son of Ruth Handler and the namesake of Barbie's companion, Ken doll. According to Ken Handler's nephew, Todd Segal, Ken was a closet homosexual who died of AIDS, "the family tried to hide the facts about his death ... They were very concerned about the impact it would have on the Ken doll." Beauregard Houston-Montgomery. "Ken: The Doll ... the Myth: Sexuality, Plastic, and AIDS," *Urban Desires*, Volume 1, Issue 2, January/February 1995, desires.com/1.2/sex/docs/ken.html located February 1998.

If subverted symbols within cyberspace represent the symbolic destruction of the values and assumptions of the economic system, if symbols exercise definitional power over the social order, and if cyberspace contains a wide range of symbols which contradict the assumptions of the economic system, then cyberspace must be a symbolic expression of alternative social orders. How does a new social order arise out of a new mode of communication when pollution beliefs and perceptual bias are at work in the maintenance of the economic system? I will return to this issue of equating new symbol-flow with a new social order in *Chapter Six: Redefining the Limits to Thought in Media Culture*. The following section explores another example of cyberspace as a structurally-differentiated mode of communication. Leaving Barbie laid bare in cyberspace I will now explore how Internet members worked together to remove the make-up from one of capitalism's favourite clowns.

McDonald's in Court and on the Web

Between October 1989 and September 1990 the McDonald's Corporation sent undercover private investigators to infiltrate the civil rights and environmental group London Greenpeace.⁴⁶² Based on the findings of these industrial spies McDonald's issued writs for libel

⁴⁶²London Greenpeace has been active since the early 1970's and predates the better-known Greenpeace International. The two organizations are unconnected. "The McLibel Trial Story," www.mcspotlight.org/case/trial/story.html located February 1998.

in 1990 against five members of London Greenpeace for responsibility in distributing a leaflet titled *What's Wrong with McDonald's?* The leaflet attacked "almost all aspects of the [McDonald's] corporation's business, accusing them of exploiting children with advertising, promoting an unhealthy diet, exploiting their staff and being responsible for environmental damage and ill treatment of animals."⁴⁶³ Three of the five formally apologized but two individuals, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, decided to represent themselves. This was the first time that anyone went to court against McDonald's in a libel trial. After the defendants produced 65 witness statements McDonald's responded by replacing its barrister with Richard Rampton Q.C., one of Britain's top libel lawyers whose reputed fee is claimed to exceed £2,000 per day. The entire legal team cost over £6,000 per day. Meanwhile, friends of the defendants established the McLibel Support Campaign to generate media exposure, support, and financial assistance.⁴⁶⁴ McDonald's legal action led to the longest and most expensive libel trial in Britain's history.⁴⁶⁵ *The Economist* magazine referred to the trial as "an expensive public relations disaster" back in 1995, more than one year before the trial came to an end.⁴⁶⁶ By the close of the trial on July 17, 1996 there were more than 40,000 pages of documentary evidence and 20,000 pages of transcript testimony.

⁴⁶³*Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴For an extensive overview of the McLibel trial, also see John Vidal's *McLibel: Burger Culture on Trial*, (New York: The New Press, 1997).

⁴⁶⁵*The Economist*, "Big Mac's Folly," July 1, 1995, 62. It is estimated that the trial cost McDonald's 16 million dollars in legal fees.

⁴⁶⁶*Ibid.*

When the trial came to an end Justice Bell ruled that Helen and Dave had libelled McDonald's, but as the two defendants had proven many of the allegations, they would only owe half of the £60,000 claimed damages. The judge did find that the defendants had proven "that McDonald's "exploit children" with their advertising, falsely advertise their food as nutritious, risk the health of their most regular, long term customers, are "culpably responsible" for cruelty to animals, are "strongly antipathetic" to unions and pay their workers low wages."⁴⁶⁷

Two days after the verdict Helen and Dave were once again leafleting outside McDonald's. McDonald's dropped their claim for damages and did not seek an injunction in what was probably a calculated public relations move. But the Corporation did remove Ed Rensi, along with his staff, as Chief Executive. Meanwhile, an estimated 400,000 leaflets were distributed outside of 500 of McDonald's 750 Great Britain stores.⁴⁶⁸ The court case failed to stop the flow of leaflets, created what may have been one of the greatest public relations disasters, further encouraged solidarity protests around the world, and arguably increased the readership of the leaflet far beyond the efforts of a few isolated protesters.

This trial, referred to as McLibel by the world press, provides an example of an intense cultural debate within media culture over the value's implicit within a central symbol of the economic system, the global chain of McDonald's restaurants. The following will explore the debate over the meaning of McDonald's as a symbol and reveal how cyberspace was and is used

⁴⁶⁷"The McLibel Trial Story," www.mcspotlight.org/case/trial/story.html located February 1998.

⁴⁶⁸*Ibid.*

to contest the values of the economic system in a manner simply not possible under the structural constraints of mass media.

The focus of this analysis is on the *McSpotlight* Web site which was launched on February 16, 1996. By February 1998 the *McSpotlight* Web site contained the entire 800-page judgement of Justice Roger Bell, the official summary of the verdict as read in court by Bell (45 pages), the entire official court transcripts (over 20,000 pages), the closing submissions from plaintiff and defendants, daily reports of the closing speeches, over 90 witness statements, company publications, scientific reports, newspaper articles, transcripts of television and radio interviews, internal company memos, a 53-minute video documentary, complete with sound, titled *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide*, copies of the original *What's Wrong With McDonald's* leaflet, ready for printing in over a dozen languages, and much more. The *McSpotlight* Web site was created by the *McInformation Network*, a team of sixty volunteers in twenty-two countries on four continents. The 21,000 files, approximately 120 megabytes of data, on the Netherlands master Web site is mirrored in Australian, New Zealand, Finland and the United States. As with the *Distorted Barbie* Web site it is also possible to duplicate this site anywhere on the World Wide Web free of charge. An estimated audience of seven million individuals had accessed the Web site by April 1997.⁴⁶⁹ Here *McSpotlight* provides another example of cyberspace as a structurally-differentiated mode of communication and demonstrates how cyberspace subverts corporate definitional control and evades the rule of law.

⁴⁶⁹Val Hennessy. "The Bun Fight that Won't Go Away," *Daily Mail*, April 26, 1997, 28.

The *McInformation Network* has attempted to provide full documentation of the libel trial from both sides of the dispute. The creators of the Web site give the following reasons for creating *McSpotlight*;

to support the heroic efforts of campaigners around the world attempting to expose the realities behind the glossy public images of multi-national corporations; to show McDonald's and the world that legal action and bullying by big business in an attempt to censor and silence critics (as in the McLibel trial) will not be accepted, and to show that such attempts can only fail now that the Internet provides an open and uncensored forum for the public; to demonstrate to other progressive campaigners that the Internet provides a new forum that need not rely on the attention of the traditional media -- which invariably fails to fully cover progressive campaigns. Ultimately however, we hope that people will question and challenge the entire system which puts profits before people, nature and the environment and organise now in order to seek better alternatives.⁴⁷⁰

Compared to the high costs of mass media systems, the *McSpotlight* Web site, arguably the most sophisticated, widely seen, and effective Web protest model, was created and is maintained by volunteers at very low cost with donations and fund-raising covering the hard costs of equipment and telephone line rental.⁴⁷¹

As with Barbie, McDonald's provides a central symbol of the values implicit within the economic system. Members of London Greenpeace target McDonald's because of its role in "symbolizing everything they considered wrong with the prevailing corporate mentality."⁴⁷²

Defendant Dave Morris described the McLibel trial as a "public investigation into the inner

⁴⁷⁰ *McSpotlight Frequently Asked Questions*, www.envirolink.org Version 3, June 1997, located February 1998.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

workings of a corporation which symbolizes a whole economic system."⁴⁷³ Within contemporary society, McDonald's provided the volunteers of the *McInformation Network* with a dominant symbolic representation of the values implicit within the economic system.⁴⁷⁴ The *Network* provides the following explanation of why McDonald's became the target of their collective, global protest:

McDonald's was 'singled out' because, despite an annual global advertising budget of around \$2 billion dollars, they have made every effort to stifle public criticism -- from campaigners to trade unions, disgruntled workers to customers, and from the media ... Another key reason that McDonald's has been singled out is that, because of the nature of the food industry, they come under criticism from many different campaigning groups -- nutritionists, environmentalists, trade unionists, animal welfare campaigners and so on. In this way, they symbolise a wide range of different injustices, abuses and exploitations that are prevalent in the modern world ... They have also pioneered many business practices that have been taken up by others, and have come to represent a symbol of the way that society is going -- 'McDonaldisation'.⁴⁷⁵

This interpretation of the symbolics of McDonald's naturally differs greatly from the Corporation's own self-definition.

McDonald's presents itself as a corporation with a community-loving conscience. Their corporate Web site explains how they support sick children, protect the environment, fund education, and promote health.⁴⁷⁶ The *McSpotlight* Web site disputes most of these claims. The Corporation which projects this set of values is a substantial economic force, serving more than

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ On McDonald's and the values of modern capitalism, see George Ritzer. *The McDonalization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Life*, (London: Pine Forge Press, 1996).

⁴⁷⁵ *McSpotlight Frequently Asked Questions*, www.mcspotlight.org.

⁴⁷⁶ McDonald's Web site, www.mcdonalds.com located February 1998.

38 million customers each day through 23,500 restaurants in 109 countries and generating 33.6 billion U.S. dollars in 1997 systemwide sales.⁴⁷⁷ The Corporation is the world's largest purchaser of beef. Throughout 1997 the Corporation added 2,110 restaurants, one every four hours, of which 85 percent were located outside the U.S.⁴⁷⁸

The self-definition of the Corporation is exactly the opposite of the definition of McDonald's as found in the *McSpotlight* Web site. The leaflet *What's Wrong with McDonald's?* describes the symbolic meaning of the Corporation in the following terms:

McDonald's spend over \$1.8 billion every year worldwide on advertising and promotions, trying to cultivate an image of being a 'caring' and 'green' company that is also a fun place to eat. But behind the smiling face of Ronald McDonald lies the reality -- McDonald's only interest is money, making profits from whoever and whatever they can, just like all multinational companies. McDonald's Annual Reports talk of 'Global Domination' -- they aim to open more and more stores across the globe -- but their continual worldwide expansion means more uniformity, less choice and the undermining of local communities ... McDonald's promote their food as 'nutritious', but the reality is that it is junk food -- high in fat, sugar and salt, and low in fibre and vitamins ... McDonald's have at last been forced to admit to using beef reared on ex-rainforest land, preventing its regeneration ... Every year McDonald's use thousands of tons of unnecessary packaging, most of which ends up littering our streets or polluting the land ... The menus of the burger chains are based on the torture and murder of millions of animals ... Together we can fight back against the institutions and the people in power who dominate our lives and our planet, and we can create a better society without exploitation.⁴⁷⁹

McDonald's, as with Barbie, plays a role in socializing the consumption patterns of young children. The Corporation's confidential *Operations Manual* describes the symbolic

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *McSpotlight* Web site, www.mcspotlight.org.

relationship between the meaning of the Corporation's symbol, Ronald McDonald, and children; "Ronald loves McDonald's and McDonald's food and so do children because they love Ronald. Remember, children exert a phenomenal influence when it comes to restaurant selection. This means you should do everything you can to appeal to children's love for Ronald and McDonald's."⁴⁸⁰

As with Mattel, the McDonald's Corporation has failed to control the meaning of its symbols within cyberspace. The *McSpotlight* Web site has been duplicated around the globe, the leaflet continues to be distributed through cyberspace, the Web site itself has become a minor media phenomenon, and it symbolizes the Internet community's ability to evade definitional control by the economic system. The Web site also provides a clear demonstration of cyberspace's structurally-differentiated nature. The Web site has been seen by millions of readers, making it a mass media system. It also exists apart from the economic constraints of traditional mass media systems. The site allows for the global dissemination of massive amounts of text at almost zero cost, which no other media system is structurally capable of doing. As in the case of *The Distorted Barbie* Web site, *McSpotlight* has also evaded the rule of law. The creators of the Web site foresee possible legal action against the site and provide the following explanation of why it will evade corporate censorship:

The nature of the Internet makes successful censorship very difficult. The McInformation Network has taken a number of steps to foil any attempt at shutting *McSpotlight* down. The server that hosts the master site is located in the Netherlands where it is believed pressure on the host will be greatly resisted. Duplicates of the entire site (mirrors) are located in a variety of different countries, including the U.S. If any one of those is shut down, other hosts have already pledged to provide replacement servers. *McSpotlight* provides a

⁴⁸⁰“The McLibel Trial Story,” www.mcspotlight.org/case/trial/story.html March 1998.

downloadable, compressed 'kit' of the site so that people can keep their own personal copy of the information. Any attempt to shut down McSpotlight would result in massive media attention and outrage by the Internet community and concerned people everywhere ... McDonald's, or any of the other companies exposed by McSpotlight, might be tempted to use legal action against individual volunteers of the McInformation Network. Even if their legal action was successful, it would not help them in their attempts to silence McSpotlight since no individual or group of individuals are central to the running of the site. Better still, the publicity for McSpotlight would be highly beneficial to our cause, and the bad publicity for the company involved would make such action highly foolish. There are many McInformation Network volunteers who would dearly love the opportunity to further expose the truth about McDonald's or other companies in court -- but we doubt that any company would be stupid enough to provide the chance.⁴⁸¹

Although the future remains unwritten, at present the *McSpotlight* Web site appears to be far beyond the reach of corporate definitional control.

Within the economic system religion plays a socializing role and also generates substantial revenues. The next case study of definitional subversion in cyberspace examines how the rule of law failed to protect the Church of Scientology's literary property from massive duplication within the Internet's Web.

The Church of Scientology: Sacred Texts Versus Sacred Values

The Church of Scientology was founded by the late science fiction novelist L. Ron Hubbard in 1952. Between 1994 and 1998 the Church has been involved in numerous lawsuits against Internet providers (companies that sell access to the Internet) and individual Internet

⁴⁸¹ *McSpotlight* Web site.

users.⁴⁸² Some Internet members see the Church's action as an attack against a core value of cyberspace -- freedom of speech. Internet member Ron Newman describes this cultural debate on his own Web site in the following terms, "The Church of Scientology is a religious cult which has unwisely decided to declare war against the Usenet and Internet communities. Since December of 1994, this Church and its followers have committed numerous acts that are hostile to the spirit of free speech on the Net."⁴⁸³ In 1994 secret and sacred writings of the church, known as the *Operating Thetan* texts, ended up on the Internet and remained in cyberspace despite extensive litigation on the church's behalf. This case reveals the same cyberspace media-effect as was seen with Barbie images on the Web. In both cases, disputed material moved through Web sites faster than the legal process which was at work attempting to suppress the content. An Associated Press news item describes the dispute between Internet members and the Church of Scientology as

the best example of the Internet as a self-regulating anarchy: When the church made ample use of the U.S. legal system to stop the illegal posting of its copyright materials, Internet users countered with hit-and-run online networks to spread information faster than the church could file suits.⁴⁸⁴

This third case study will once again demonstrate that the rule of law does not fully extend into cyberspace and that this unique medium is structurally-differentiated from traditional mass media systems.

⁴⁸²For an index of lawsuits see Ron Newman's Web site, *The Church of Scientology vs. The Net*, www2.thecia.net/users/rnewman/scientology/home.html. Usenet is an Internet technology which enables group communication via e-mail.

⁴⁸³*Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴Elizabeth Weise. "Cyberspace's Vietnam," *Associated Press*, July 21, 1996. Online at www2.thecia.net/users/rnewman/scientology/media/ap-7.21.96.

Late in 1994, Dennis Erlich, a former Scientology minister, copied 154 pages of copyrighted and secret church documents onto the Internet.⁴⁸⁵ This material included 65 pages of the *Operating Thetan* sacred text. The church charges parishioners deemed spiritually and ethically fit tens of thousands of dollars to see and study these sacred texts, and thereby “derives significant revenue” from their use.⁴⁸⁶ The following is an excerpt from these texts as found on the Web.

The head of the Galactic Federation ... solved overpopulation ... by mass implanting. He caused people to be brought to Teegeeack [Earth] and put an H-Bomb on the principal volcanos ... and then the Pacific area ones were taken in boxes to Hawaii and the Atlantic area ones to Las Palmas and there “packaged.” His name was Xenu. He used renegades. Various misleading data by means of circuits etc. was placed in the implants. When through with his crime loyal officers ... captured him after six years of battle and put him in an electronic mountain trap where he still is. “They” are gone. The place [Confederation] has since been a desert. The length and brutality of it all was such that this Confederation never recovered. The implant is calculated to kill ... anyone who attempts to solve it. This liability has been dispensed with by my tech development ... In December 1967 I knew someone had to take the plunge. I did and emerged very knocked out, but alive. Probably the only one ever to do so in 75,000,000 years. I have all the data now, but only that given here is needful. One’s body is a mass of individual thetans stuck to oneself or to the body...⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵The following account of events is based upon Alison Frankel’s “Making Law, Making Enemies,” *The American Lawyer*, March 1996, online at www2.thecia.net/users/rnewman/scientology/media/amlawyer-3.6.html located April 1998. Also see Wendy M. Grossman. “Alt.scientology.war,” *Wired*, Online edition, 3.12, www.wired.com/wired/3.12/features/alt.scientology.war.html; David G. Post. “New World War,” *Reason Online*, April 1996, www.reasonmag.com/9604/Fe.POST.text.html; Wendy M. Grossman. “Chapter 6: Copyright Terrorists,” *net.wars*, www.nyupress.nyu.edu/netwars; and Jim Lippard and Jeff Jacobsen. “Scientology v. The Internet: Free Speech and Copyright Infringement on the Information Super-Highway,” *Skeptic*, Volume 3, Number 3, 1995, 35-41, www.skeptic.com/03.3.jl-j-scientology.html.

⁴⁸⁶Frankel. “Making Law, Making Enemies.”

⁴⁸⁷*OT III Course, summary and comments*, www.xs4all.nl/~kspaink/fishman/ot3.html, located February 1998.

When this case went to U.S. federal court in San Jose in early 1995, lawyers argued that the survival of the church was at stake in the protection of their copyright, “The plan is to take those [secret] upper-level materials and expose them before their time and before people are ready, so as to ridicule and demean the Church of Scientology ... The intention [is] to wipe out the religion by strangling it financially and destroying its rights.”⁴⁸⁸

As with the McLibel incident, the church’s actions struck many Internet members as an attack on the core value of cyberspace -- freedom of speech. As one Internet activist, Ron Newman, explained, it was a battle of sacred property rights versus sacred speech rights, “A lot of us hold the Net to be sacred in the same way they hold the *Operating Thetan* materials to be sacred. To some of us, preserving the Net for free speech is more important than anything in the free world.”⁴⁸⁹ As a result of the church’s legal actions against Erlich and others, Internet members in numerous countries began posting copyrighted church documents in literally hundreds of Web sites and online discussion groups. In one instance Dutch Internet providers posted copyrighted church documents to one hundred different locations in a challenge to the church’s litigation activities.

In the San Jose trial, federal Judge Ronald Whyte ruled that Erlich had not made fair use of the copyrighted church materials. But it was too late, “Because the church’s tactics provoked such apparently widespread posting of *Operating Thetan* materials, the documents are in the

⁴⁸⁸Frankel. “Making Law, Making Enemies.”

⁴⁸⁹*Ibid.*

hands of an unknown number of netizens with a virulent animosity toward the church and ... a proven willingness to flout copyright laws.”⁴⁹⁰

The size and scope of cyberspace-based documentation regarding the Church of Scientology’s litigation activities against Internet users is quite remarkable. The *Yahoo* Internet directory (www.yahoo.com) maintains an incomplete index of these Web sites under the subject hierarchy *Society and Culture: Religion: Faiths and Practices: Scientology: Opposing Views: Scientology Copyright Controversy*. In April 1998 this index listed 11 Web sites containing substantial amounts of documentation from both sides of the dispute.⁴⁹¹

One of the more extensive anti-Scientology Web sites is maintained by David S. Touretzky, a Senior Research Scientist at the Computer Science Department and Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition, Carnegie Mellon University.⁴⁹² Touretzky describes the purpose of

⁴⁹⁰*Ibid.* One of the most extensive documentations of this and related litigation activity of the church against Internet members is maintained by David S. Touretzky at the Carnegie Mellon University Web site, www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/NOTS/index.html located February 1998. Also see Ron Newman’s Web site, *The Church of Scientology vs. The Net*, www2.thecia.net/users/rnewman/scientology/home.html; “Scientology on the Internet,” *FACTNet*, www.factnet.org/Scientology/scinternet.htm (note missing “1” on the “.htm”) located April 1998; and *Operation Clambake*, home.sol.no/~spirous/CoS/index2.html located April 1998.

⁴⁹¹Also see the Web document “The War between Scientology and the Internet” (author unknown) which describes the contents of various anti-Scientology Web sites, www.tiac.net/users/modemac/cos2.html located April 1998.

⁴⁹²See *The NOTS Scholars Home Page (Scientology)*, www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/NOTS and *Church of Scientology International v. Fishman and Geertz*, www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Fishman, both located April 1998.

his Web site as the promotion of the scholarly study of Scientology documents as both religious literature and historical texts.⁴⁹³

The Internet community's use of cyberspace to document the Church of Scientology's litigation activities and tactics provides a demonstration of how the social use of cyberspace is vastly different from the social use of mass media. Two examples will demonstrate the reflexive nature of the social use of cyberspace. On February 13, 1995 Scientology lawyers and Federal marshals entered the home of Dennis Erlich and seized his computer equipment and personal files. At that time Ronald Rashleigh-Berry made a video of the search and seizure. Now this video is available for viewing on the Web.⁴⁹⁴ Another Web site, *Scientology's Private Investigators* provides extensive information on and numerous photographs of the Church of Scientology's "lead private investigator" and other private investigators hired by the Church.⁴⁹⁵ While not necessarily insignificant in their effect, these two Web sites are examples of how cyberspace provides a tool for communicating information and events within media culture in a manner which is not possible through mass media systems. The average Internet user would not be able to use mass media systems to archive and disseminate this type of information at such low costs.

⁴⁹³*Ibid.* Touretzky is particularly interested in Scientology's view of the structure of the mind, how Scientology theology compares with belief in demonic possession and exorcism, and how Scientology expresses a health care system.

⁴⁹⁴See www.hotel.wineasy.se/xemu/video located April 1998.

⁴⁹⁵See *Scientology's Private Investigators*, www.primenet.com/~lippard/pis.html located April 1998.

What the anti-Scientology movement on the Internet reveals about the medium is its tremendous reflexivity, or the feedback which it enables through its archival capability. Photographs, movies, newspaper articles (including an entire special issue of *Time* magazine), legal documents, leaked Church documents, personal accounts, and entire books regarding Scientology and the Internet are available via the World Wide Web.⁴⁹⁶

The Church of Scientology directly addresses the attack by various Internet members on the status of its sacred texts as private property in the Church's publication, *Freedom Magazine*. A 1996 online issue states that the "Internet's promise is tempered by perils ... an unscrupulous few furnish it with a dark side: privacy invasions, lawlessness, intolerance and theft. They could ruin cyberspace for everybody."⁴⁹⁷ One Scientology writer complains that cyberspace provides "immunity from the legal and ethical constraints" which control content ownership within traditional (élite-owned) mass media systems.⁴⁹⁸ The author correctly observes that by massive duplication of privately-owned content within cyberspace, "pirates exploit such systems to get away with lawless conduct which they never could get away with outside the cyberworld ... There is a growing problem of pirates obtaining copyrighted works and then posting them on the Internet themselves, seeking to undermine the copyright protections and underhandedly "dump"

⁴⁹⁶See, for example, Richard Behar. "Scientology: The Cult of Greed," *Time*, May 6, 1991, online (probably illegally) at home.sol.no/~spirous/CofS/archive/time910605.html located April 1998.

⁴⁹⁷*Freedom Magazine*, Volume 27, Issue 4, 1996, www.freedommag.org/english/vol2704/index.htm (note missing "l" in ".html"), located April 1998.

⁴⁹⁸Aron C. Mason. "Hijackers on the Information Superhighway," *Freedom Magazine*, Volume 27, Number 4, 1996, www.freedommag.org/english/vol2704/hijack.htm (note missing "l" in ".html"), located April 1998.

the protected work into the public domain.”⁴⁹⁹ Thus it is clear that members of the Church are highly aware of the cultural debate in which the Church is entangled, and clearly favour the enforcement of existing laws as the Church faces the erosion of its own private property, its secret and sacred texts, within cyberspace. As an institution, the Church gives every indication that it is aware that cyberspace potentially undermines its mode of operation and its revenue stream, both of which are centered upon secret sacred texts and their status as private property.

Although these three cases are too small a sample from which to generalize safely, these case studies nonetheless point to an intriguing dynamic which may be emerging within the cyberspace community. In all three cases, the corporations attempted to protect their content/property rights under law and found that members of the Internet organized and fought to keep *and* further disseminate the disputed information on the Net. Barbie images, anti-McDonald’s tracts, and secret Scientology texts became more numerous in cyberspace and more prominent in media culture as a response to the values of one social system (mass media) being forced upon group members of another social system (cyberspace). A common assumption often seen in written literature is that cyberspace will eventually become a major extension of mass media and the marketplace. Yet cyberspace may prove to be the foundation of a social order hostile towards concepts fundamental to the economic system, such as the concept of private property. There is no necessity to the belief that cyberspace will eventually adopt the value system at work within the marketplace.

As with McDonald’s, the Church of Scientology used the rule of law in an attempt to exercise definitional control over how they are perceived. As a result of cyberspace’s

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

structurally-differentiated character, the church's appeal to law and property rights failed. As with the McLibel incident and the Napier Barbie art, the very attempt to exercise legal rights lead to a negative and organized response within the Internet. Once again, the attempt to control definitional information within the Internet lead directly to a confrontation and the massive duplication of the material. Both church and corporation attempted to apply values protected under the law, values reflected in property rights and protection from defamation, but found that these values are not necessarily representative of Internet member values or, at least, are superseded by a more widely-shared value within cyberspace -- unconstrained freedom of speech.

Summary

The Barbie, McDonald's, and Scientology case studies provide examples of how cyberspace is structurally-differentiated from state- and corporate-owned mass media systems and demonstrate that cyberspace's symbol-flow does subvert the definitional control of traditional mass media systems. The structural differentiation arises out of cyberspace's following characteristics:

1. Production Costs - It is possible for volunteers to operate a low-cost Web site, such as McLibel, which reaches millions of viewers. Within mass media systems such audience reach usually is only attained at substantial cost.
2. Rule of Law - Content within cyberspace often evades the rule of law in matters of copyright, trademark, and libel. This is due to the medium's highly distributed and highly interconnected nature. Symbols move throughout the medium faster than the legal process. The international nature of cyberspace also confronts a lack of harmonization within the legal system.⁵⁰⁰
3. Ownership - Whereas mass media systems are owned by a tiny minority of corporate conglomerates, no one individual or corporation owns the infrastructure of cyberspace. This is due to its distributed design which ensures that, if a majority of Internet hosts were destroyed,

⁵⁰⁰An example of the lack of global harmonization of laws which would control cyberspace-based content was seen during the 1993 Karla Homolka trial in Ontario, Canada. After a judge banned the publication of trial details in the Canadian press, Canadian Internet users simply accessed banned U.S. media reports via the Net, "The ban has made the Canadian judiciary an object of ridicule. The court has, in effect, created two groups of Canadians -- those who rely on the press and therefore don't get the whole story (the infopoor) and those who, through the Internet, get to read all of the news, including that which the government doesn't want them to see (the inforich)" Michael Strangelove. "An Electronic End to Censorship," 34.

communication would continue through the remaining hosts. As the system uses multiple computer operating systems and multiple transmission links (satellite, copper, and fibre), global competition has thus far prevented any majority ownership which could translate into content control within cyberspace.

Productions costs, the failure of law, and the distributed nature of ownership within cyberspace together characterize it as structurally-differentiated from mass media. This differentiation provides the foundation for cyberspace's subversion of definitional control which, from an anthropological perspective of world-making, is the key distinguishing characteristic of this novel medium.

Production costs, rule of law, and ownership all reinforce the monopolization of definitional control in the hands of the wealthy élite. The élite do not have recourse to these constraints within the realm of cyberspace and therefore can be said to lose definitional control among the wired audience. Redefined Barbies, anti-McDonald's tracts, and rogue Scientology sacred texts along with extensive negative discussion and commentary in all three areas, provide ample demonstration that money and law, two primary resources of the élite, fail to confront subverted meanings and symbol-flow within cyberspace. The first two of these case studies provide an example of a direct challenge to values embedded in the economic system, while the third confronts the economic foundation of a religious system while simultaneously ridiculing its sacred texts. These case studies provide an example of how the very young medium of cyberspace subverts the values implicit within the economic system. Values surrounding freedom of expression and property ownership appear to be the constant theme in these three cases of definitional subversion. The hypothesis that cyberspace subverts the definitional control

which the economic system exercises through mass media is amply demonstrated in these emerging dynamics and can be foreseen to grow in effect unless cyberspace undergoes a dramatic transformation in its distributed nature and democratized content production capabilities.

Cyberspace provides a stark contrast to the sealed, monopolistic definitional system of the global economy. Unlike mass media, cyberspace lacks tightly sealed boundaries. Although the wired individuals who use cyberspace are situated within media culture, nonetheless, we can see that the content and communications which flow within cyberspace are the representations of millions of individuals unfettered by *direct control* of the owners and producers of mass media. One could speculate that it is this new ability to *produce* content and *interact directly* with one another free from this limitation which makes cyberspace such a widespread phenomenon within media culture. *The Economist* magazine arrived at a similar conclusion when it suggested that the Internet's explosive growth rate, doubling in size every year since 1988, is because "it filled unmet needs."⁵⁰¹ Certainly, mass media systems deprive the audience of feedback and content production capabilities, capabilities which are the definitive characteristics of the Net.

Cyberspace can be defined as an un-bounded symbolic system which mediates an extreme multiplicity of symbol-sets. Whereas mass media can be thought of as embodying a dominant cosmology, the cosmology of the economic system, cyberspace mediates a potentially

⁵⁰¹*The Economist*, "The Internet," July 1, 1995, 3.

unlimited number of cosmologies. As a definitional information system cyberspace is the inverse of mass media.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰²For an overview of current studies in this area, see *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment*, edited by Lance Strate and Ronald Jacobson. (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1996).

Chapter Six: Redefining the Limits to Thought within Media Culture

I have argued that mass media enables the economic system to exercise substantial definitional control over the social order of media culture and that cyberspace subverts this definitional control through its largely unconstrained flow of symbols. In this final chapter I will explore how the structurally-differentiated symbol-flow within cyberspace can be described as redefining the limits to thought within media culture. The basis of my argument is straightforward: mass media constrained the flow of symbols within media culture and thus constrained the audience's world-making capabilities. Cyberspace's symbol-flow is substantially less constrained and therefore presents the individual and group's imaginative world-making with a wider range of symbols and social possibilities. Collective memory will serve to explain why a change in the available symbols, which here is seen to arise out of the structural change in symbol-flow, leads to change in the social order.

This chapter will address issues which arise out of cyberspace's structurally-differentiated mode of communication. By way of introduction I will examine the failure within much of media criticism to confront directly the gross imbalance of media ownership and suggest that this failure contributes to a widespread fallacy which claims that liberation from media effects will be found in better media pedagogy. I will then argue that cyberspace's structurally-differentiated characteristics establish it as a primary site of struggle over definitional control within media culture. In the section "How Cyberspace-Based Symbol-Sets Change the Social Order" (page 218) I will present Douglas' argument that the cohesiveness of the social order is dependent upon how constrained or unconstrained the symbolic system is. Douglas describes social change as

related to structural change in symbolic systems. I have argued that cyberspace is a structural change in the nature of symbol-flow within the symbolic system. This allows me to conclude that cyberspace's unconstrained flow of symbols necessarily entails change in the social order. To establish further the structural differentiation of cyberspace and its implied redefinition of the limits to thought I have argued that cyberspace subverts the rule of law. Artistically-redefined Barbies, the diffusion of multilingual anti-McDonald's leaflets, and the mass distribution of the Church of Scientology's private literary property all indicated that law fails to establish full control over content/property and related matters of ownership, such as trademark law, within cyberspace. This failure of law within cyberspace will be seen as indicative of the possibility of change within the social order of media culture.

Cyberspace contains contradictory social forces which also need to be addressed. Cyberspace as a mechanism for surveillance and as a propaganda and disinformation vehicle will be examined. I will argue that neither of these certain future (and present) uses of cyberspace diminish the probable social effects of unconstrained symbol-flow.

The concept of reflexivity (feedback) will also be explored. I will argue that mass media's controlled symbol-flow, which is equivalent to controlled feedback, limited the rate of change and ensured the reproduction of the economic system. Cyberspace will be described as increasing feedback and unpredictable change within contemporary society undergoing globalization.

Cyberspace is not the only instance of a structurally-differentiated mode of communication which leads to change in the social order. By way of exploring the possible implications of cyberspace's new mode of symbol-flow this chapter briefly explores points of

comparison between cyberspace and the structure of information-flow arising out of the invention of the Gutenberg press.

Finally, this chapter will explore how the experience of anthropologist Marie-Françoise Guédon among the Dene revealed a technology of collective memory which has structural characteristics similar to cyberspace's largely uncensored and unconstrained symbol-flow. I will explore how her description of a culturally distinct mode of communication and socialization may further explain how cyberspace heralds a redefinition of thought within media culture.

What this study emphasizes is the nature of the economic system's definitional power -- power which is realized through the symbolic system of mass media. Within my reading of media studies I have been struck by the often repeated formula that freedom from this definitional control is achieved through knowledge about the nature of media culture. Typical of this claim is Michael R. Real's conclusion that an understanding of media culture will allow the audience to "turn media culture to the benefit of ourselves and others" and gain more control over our lives.⁵⁰³ Yet, given the nature of the globe-spanning definitional power of the economic system, such a plea for the liberating capability of knowledge is somewhat unsatisfactory. Such pleas sound like a fish caught in a trawling net telling other fish that if they only understood the nature of the net a little better, then they would be free indeed. Calling for salvation through knowledge fits well within the enterprise of liberal democracy. Calling for a complete and radical equality in the ownership of the means to symbolic production is much less likely to find

⁵⁰³Michael R. Real. *Exploring Media Culture: A Guide*, (London: Sage, 1996), 278.

an audience within media culture (let alone a soap-box). A critical media theory needs to distinguish between individual hermeneutic strategies and collective strategies of ownership.⁵⁰⁴

Along with the plea for better media pedagogy as a cure for media's definitional control, an oft-seen curative is the suggestion that better regulation, public media policy, and increased public access will lead to a more democratic society and free the body politic from the excessive influence of the economic system. Klaus Jensen provides an example of media-salvation through improved regulation within the legislative system of democracy. Jensen suggests that "an institutionalized system of public access to the means of communication would be a constitutive element of a participatory political system."⁵⁰⁵ Yet public access is not public ownership. The former places the body politic under the whim of media owners while the latter makes the body politic the owner-operator of its definitional information system. Looking to improved public access to media systems assumes that media owners would allow their definitional system to be used against their immediate economic interest. Public access appears as a red herring intended to detract from the root cause and offer an almost utopic promise of a better democratic system while also implying an almost unprecedented act of social conscience and altruism within the economic system and its stake holders. Marx's voice still echoes down the history of modern capitalism -- ownership of the means to production is the heart of the matter.

⁵⁰⁴David Crowley suggests that Marshall McLuhan psychologized the effects of electronic media and thus diverted attention from "the problem of authority and its deeper constraints on social order." David Crowley. "Harold Innis and the Modern Perspective of Communications," *Culture, Communication and Dependency: The Tradition of H.A. Innis*, (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1981), 239. This lack of focus on power and social control within McLuhan's media theory may explain his popularity within contemporary culture, epitomized in his role as the 'patron saint' of *Wired* magazine, the masthead of capitalist technological determinism.

⁵⁰⁵Klaus Bruhn Jensen. *The Social Semiotics of Mass Communication*, 90.

In this study we have recognized that mass media, as a complex definitional system, embraces all the communication, information, and socialization systems of media culture. These definitional systems embrace not only media systems but symbolic systems such as mass production and consumption. Douglas' cultural theory enables us to model the economic system as a global definitional system wherein mass media and mass production are only the most visible aspects of this definitional system. As this global definitional system is implicated in all areas of contemporary society, media studies must fully recognize the encompassing context of media culture. Studies which isolate one subsystem of media culture, such as television, and then attempt empirical analysis of the impact of one isolated subsystem upon individual behaviour and values will in all probability overlook or underestimate the definitional impact of the economic system, as an integrated system, upon local culture and individual behaviour.⁵⁰⁶

An example of isolationist empirical analysis can be seen in Barrie Gunter and Jill McAleer's study *Children and Television*. Television viewing is assessed with little consideration of how behaviour has already been established by other definitional systems of the economic system. Television viewing is seen to render little variation in values and behaviour from the rest of society, but there is no substantial consideration of how the social worlds of media culture are already saturated with the economic system's symbols and meanings. In other words, the influence of one symbolic system (television) is divorced from the influence of all

⁵⁰⁶In *Visual Intelligence*, Ann Marie Seward Barry similarly notes that media criticism's focus is media's "cumulative impact on the individual and how it changes the way he or she sees the world" (335). Herein the question is "what is the cumulative impact of the global definitional system on the world-making capabilities of local cultures?" Collective memory provides a framework for such a question by identifying the role of symbol-sets in the world-making process.

other symbolic systems with little consideration for how the total context of media culture ensures the reproduction of mass behaviour. Gunter and McAleer's survey of television studies concludes by suggesting that parents should teach their children "management of viewing" and "critical television literacy" so that children will grow up to become "careful and sensible users of television who recognize its positive qualities and eschew its negative ones."⁵⁰⁷ Again we find the suggestion that critical media pedagogy will liberate the individual audience member from the definitional system of mass media. Marshall McLuhan, widely-cited as the high priest of media gurus, also succumbs to the prevalent assumption that knowledge brings salvation. McLuhan claims that knowledge will restrict the areas in which media shapes our behaviour.⁵⁰⁸

The possibility of autonomy from media socialization will be a factor of the systemic nature of media culture, and not merely the individual's hermeneutic skill. Here I am in agreement with David Morley's assessment of the relative levels of power between media systems and audience members: "The power of viewers to reinterpret meanings is hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralized media institutions to construct the texts which the viewer then interprets, and to imagine otherwise is simply foolish."⁵⁰⁹ When the context of the audience is defined as the totality of the definitional information system then the relative

⁵⁰⁷Barrie Gunter and Jill McAleer. *Children and Television*, Second edition, (London: Routledge, 1997), 222.

⁵⁰⁸McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 247.

⁵⁰⁹David Morley. "Populism, Revisionism and the 'New' Audience Research." *Cultural Studies and Communications*, edited by James Curran, David Morley and Valerie Walkerdine. (London: Arnold, 1996), 291. In a similar fashion Stewart A. Umpleby suggests that "none of the presently available channels of citizen feedback rivals the flow from the centers of power outward to the citizens via television and the press." "Is Greater Citizen Participation in Planning Possible and Desirable?" *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 4 (1972), 66.

level of power among the 'active' audience of media culture is seen in a new light. This issue appears to be the central issue within communication, media, and cultural studies -- what is the relative level of definitional power between the audience and media systems? Some theorists place the media system in the dominant hermeneutical position, such as David Morley (above). Others appear to favour the audience, as is seen in John Fiske's perspective, "Negotiating meanings within the television text is a discursive, and therefore social, process, and not an individualistic one, but it still allows the socially situated viewer an active, semi-controlling role in it."⁵¹⁰ If the mind of the socially-situated viewer is thoroughly colonized by the economic system then there is little room for deviation.

Given the degree of mass media's monopolization of definitional control it is difficult to agree with statements such as media theorist Joli Jensen's that "mass media serve us as scapegoats for modernity -- we blame them not only for what is wrong with modern life, but also for failing to save us."⁵¹¹ Media criticism must confront the reality of monopolistic ownership over the means of global definitional control (mass media) and address the severe imbalance in the power over social reality that this entails. Jensen comes dangerously close to absolving the owners of symbolic production from responsibility and placing blame on the disenfranchised within media culture. Jensen's conclusion that the "most appropriate stance toward media and modernity is, I believe, one of respectful participation"⁵¹² underestimates the degree to which

⁵¹⁰John Fiske. *Television Culture*, (London: Methuen, 1987), 82.

⁵¹¹Joli Jensen. *Redeeming Modernity: Contradictions in Media Criticism*, (London, Sage, 1990), 191.

⁵¹²*Ibid.*, 199.

individuals are victimized by media's overwhelming definitional control over their social reality. Imagine a slave coming through the underground railway to Canada's borders in the mid-1800's only to be turned back and told "the most appropriate stance toward slavery and the state is, we believe, one of respectful participation."

Perhaps the Christian apologist Malcolm Muggeridge was at the leading-edge of radical media criticism when, on the matter of television viewing, he commented that it is "a fallacy of our time that we can usefully participate in whatever exists ... If you want to know my absolutely candid opinion, I think the best thing to do is not to look at television, and to that end, I have, as has been said, disposed of my set."⁵¹³ Could it be that the clearest indication of the economic system's implicit assumptions operating within the local worlds of media culture is found in the *assumption* of television viewing among individuals? Non-participation in television viewing and non-ownership of a television are rare enough and may engender either a negative or heroic perception regarding those who opt out of this paradigmatic manifestation of media culture. A study of those who consciously opt out of television viewing and/or television ownership (beyond the limitation imposed by economic impoverishment) might reveal more about the implicit assumptions within media culture which surround participation in media systems.

⁵¹³Malcolm Muggeridge. *Christ and the Media*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1977), 82.

Definitional Control and the Limits to Thought within Media Culture

The limits to thought within media culture arise out of the structural characteristics of mass media. These structural characteristics are elite ownership (or state control) and a bounded, severely limited symbol-set. Elite ownership and a controlled symbol-flow limit thought within media culture because they contribute to the socialization of individuals within the economic system. To borrow and adapt words from Mary Douglas, media culture ensures that anything is not possible. The mode of ownership and the mode of symbol-flow are the structural areas of mass media which define the limits to thought. As a result of these structural characteristics, mass media effectively socializes large areas of human behaviour to suit the needs of the economic system. This suggests that either the nature of ownership or the nature of mass media's symbol-set must change if the limits to thought are to undergo radical change.

Commenting on the failure of the dominant economic paradigm's responsibility for the present ecosystem crisis Robert Babe notes that "the conclusion is inescapable that there needs to be a paradigm shift, a reconstruction of our world, first figuratively and then materially."⁵¹⁴ Babe is certainly correct in suggesting that our world must be reconstructed 'figuratively' first, before any material change takes place. New combinations of symbols and meanings, newly-imagined possibilities will certainly precede any material reconstruction of our social order. Since mass media serves as a primary socializing mechanism then a key step towards reconstructing the world must necessarily involve either changing the nature of mass media ownership or changing the nature of mass media's dominant symbol-set. Needless to say, the elite are unlikely to hand

⁵¹⁴Robert E. Babe. *Communication and the Transformation of Economics*, 107.

over mass media systems to the control of the masses anytime soon. Furthermore, as long as ownership of mass media is monopolized and systemically integrated into the economic system it is improbable that within such a system a dominant symbol-set would arise which subverts the socialization requirements of the economic system. This leads me to propose that the most probable path toward reconstructing the world will be found in the development of a new form of global symbolic production -- one that enables a highly unrestricted flow of symbol-sets between local cultures throughout the globe. Cyberspace may well present us with the early form of such a democratized global definitional system.

In *The Seduction of the Spirit*, theologian Harvey Cox echoes my conclusion regarding mass media. Cox suggests that control of mass media and the technical design both must change if communities are to experience self-direction: "We need to change *both* the way media are controlled *and* the technical composition of the means of "communication" themselves ... [what we need] are simple easy-to-use means whereby small communities, minority groups, neighborhood unions, and other groups can communicate effectively with one another."⁵¹⁵ Cyberspace is the closest we will come to this needed mode of communication for the foreseeable future.

I suggest that the unique structural characteristic of cyberspace establishes it as a primary site of conflict over definitional power within media culture.⁵¹⁶ Cyberspace is destined, perhaps,

⁵¹⁵Harvey Cox. *The Seduction of the Spirit: The Use and Misuse of People's Religion*, (New York: Touchstone, 1973), 313.

⁵¹⁶Immanuel Wallerstein has referred to the cultural debate within mass media as "the key ideological battleground." Immanuel Wallerstein. "Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the modern World-System." *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 39. See also Roy Boyne, "Culture as a World-

to become the site of contest over definitional control within the emerging global mass culture. Definitional control is established within contemporary society through the monopolistic and bounded system of mass media. Cyberspace enables the global dissemination of alternative symbol-sets and also facilitates the formation of communities (groups and institutions) wherein these alternative symbol-sets can be in-use within a shared social world. In *Visual Intelligence: Perception, Image, and Manipulation in Visual Communication*, Ann Marie Steward Barry concludes that the image society has of itself, and its “attendant value system,” is open to change when this image is “weak, ambiguous or fragmented.”⁵¹⁷ Here I am suggesting that cyberspace fragments the largely uniform image of society which mass media presents, and so destabilizes the reproduction of the economic system’s self-image and attendant value system. The perception of cyberspace as a risk or a danger within various groups and nations, when seen from the perspective of cultural theory, is a reaction to this threat to the classification systems at work within the various social worlds of media culture. Within a previously bounded media culture, cyberspace operates as a form of pollution.⁵¹⁸

System,” and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Culture is the World-System: A Reply to Boyne.” In *Global Culture*, 57-65.

⁵¹⁷Ann Marie Steward Barry. *Visual Intelligence*, 336.

⁵¹⁸Another aspect of the subversion of symbol-sets within media culture may surface in the transformation of individuality within modernity. Durkheim saw the individual as emerging from the increase in the division of labour. It may be just the opposite case -- that the economic system has led to the deterioration of the imaginative faculty of the individual. This deterioration may be the result of the bounded reality-framework of media culture which deprives the individual of awareness of human potentialities. Maurice Stein’s essay, “Anthropological Perspectives on the Modern Community,” suggests that the symbolic powers of tribal societies have been lost within Western thought patterns (in *Primitive Views of the World*, edited by Stanley Diamond. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 194-210). In media culture, is it possible that the community has lost direct control over its cosmology as a result of the

It should be kept in mind that I am not claiming that modern media is incapable of promoting local culture and preserving diversity within a global community. Kate Madden's study of the Canadian Inuit's use of television demonstrates that there is nothing inherent in the technology of media (television in this case) which ensures cultural imperialism,

[the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation] has managed to put together a news/current events show [*Qagik*] that espouses Inuit values. Its definition, organization, and structure promote the Inuit value of personal autonomy through sharing information in cooperative, non-combative, consensus-building ways. It does not copy American/South Canadian conventions.⁵¹⁹

Having described television's capacity for cultural sensitivity, Madden notes the key to what I call the 'economics of cultural determinism' within media systems. The Inuit's culturally specific use of a media system is entirely dependent upon the "largeness of the majority culture for support -- political and financial."⁵²⁰ Long-term economic dependency may limit the continuing existence of cultural autonomy within a media system. Of course, the more a regionally-based alternative media grows in size, that much more so will it become dependent upon the market economy and its socializing bias.⁵²¹ Due to the economics of mass media ownership it is unlikely

monopolization of the definitional system? Can we speak of the loss of definitional control as responsible for the erosion of the community? Further research here might reveal a connection between the erosion of community (mutual accountability) and the monopolization of the definitional system.

⁵¹⁹Kate Madden. "Video and Cultural Identity: The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation Experience," *Mass Media Effects Across Cultures*, edited by Felipe Korzeny and Stella Ting-Toomey. (London: Sage, 1992), 142.

⁵²⁰*Ibid.*, 147.

⁵²¹As long as mass media is a subsystem of the market economy, its content will conform to the demands of the economic system. This is the experience of American religious programming, "the source of the finances for religious programming plays a major part in shaping the nature of the program." Horsfield. *Religious Television*, 179.

that any local culture will be able to maintain its own media system apart from the influence of the market economy. Thus we can speak of mass media as being culturally determined, not by its technological structure, but by surrounding structures such as law, which serve to enshrine private property rights over community-ownership rights. The bias of the economy and its implicit value systems determine the bias of mass media systems. This is the root of cultural determinism within mass media systems.

How Cyberspace-Based Symbol-Sets Change the Social Order

Douglas describes consumption as a ritual process which reinforces or redefines values within the shared social world. Ritual is widely recognized as a form of cultural transmission.⁵²² But ritual is also a process through which may be introduced new forms of social behaviour and which may undermine or change existing classification systems. Douglas also describes consumption rituals as an arena for cultural change.⁵²³ When the wired consumer interfaces with cyberspace, are symbols and reality-frameworks being ritually ‘consumed’ which subvert the reality-framework of mass media? This is a key theoretical question which pinpoints the impact of cyberspace as a mode of communication upon the economy’s definitional system. Collective memory and the communicative processes of global mass media provide the framework for assessing the probable impact of a new type of symbol-flow upon the social order. What happens when a global leak springs forth within the bounded, monopolistic definitional system

⁵²²Richard Schechner. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 258.

⁵²³Schechner notes that Victor Turner also saw ritual as a creative and subversive process (*Ibid.*).

which reproduces the mass consumption behaviour and related forms of mass behaviour necessary to the economic system? Here I am pursuing a question posed by Jonathan Gershuny, “What distinguishes the technologies which have revolutionary social impacts from those which do not?”⁵²⁴ The social impact of cyberspace can be identified through the cultural processes of communication and world-making as embodied in a theory of collective memory.

I have argued that within cyberspace symbols such as redefined Barbies, anti-McDonald’s leaflets, and censored religious documents flow among the audience in a manner unconstrained by the élite and by the owners and producers of mass media. Cyberspace escapes élite control over the economy’s definitional system. But mass media is thoroughly embedded in the economic system. Content within mass media conforms to the economic system’s requirements. This conformity to the values implicit within the economic system was exposed in the subject areas of the environment, religion, war, politics, and the health care system. If mass media plays a significant, if not central, role in socializing individuals according to the requirements of the economic system, then *what impact will cyberspace have upon mass media’s reproduction of the economic system?* Collective memory suggests that, as mass media limits the free expression of thought, social change will follow from cyberspace’s unconstrained flow of symbols within media culture. Collective memory enables us to examine different modes of symbol flow as the foundation to different social orders. The mode of symbol flow within mass media is characterized by élite control over content. The mode of symbol flow within cyberspace is characterized by the absence of élite control over content. Mary Douglas’ culture theory strongly

⁵²⁴Jonathan Gershuny. “Postscript: Revolutionary Technologies and Technological Revolutions,” *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, edited by Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsh. (London: Routledge, 1994), 228.

suggests that a different cosmology (set of symbols) represents *and* reproduces a different social order. This is Douglas' replication hypothesis. How does the movement from a new set of symbols to a new social order take place? Douglas explains this type of social change as a structural change in the process of reality-creation.

Douglas concludes *Natural Symbols* by exploring the possibility of structural change in society which would lead to change in symbol flow and bring with it change in the social order. She suggests that we should consider the possibility of "the symbolic life being detached more and more from the task of relating an individual to his society and more and more freed for expressing his unique private concerns."⁵²⁵ I have argued that a primary role of mass media is the reproduction of values and assumptions implicit within the economic system. To use the words of Mary Douglas, mass media 'relates an individual to his society.' In cyberspace we find the realization of the possibility that the symbolic life could be detached from this socialization task of the economic system. Cyberspace actualizes the possibility of symbolic life being freed from this socializing task and 'freed for expressing unique private concerns.'

After raising the possibility of the symbolic life becoming a forum for expressing 'unique private concerns' Douglas urges readers to "compare systems making progressively less and less claim on their members to honour a common morality."⁵²⁶ Where social pressure to conform to a common set of values is weak, the "freer the symbolic system" will be, suggests Douglas.⁵²⁷ Mass media can be seen as a system which makes substantial and compelling claims on members

⁵²⁵Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 159.

⁵²⁶*Ibid.*

⁵²⁷*Ibid.*

of media culture, claims to honour the common set of values (morality) implicit within consumption patterns, the private ownership of property, democracy, and the pursuit of wealth. But cyberspace certainly represents a freer symbolic system than mass media. Within media culture cyberspace represents a symbolic system which makes the weakest claim on members to honour the common morality implicit within mass media's representation of the economic system. The rule of law has great difficulty enforcing a common morality (the legal code) within cyberspace. Subverted mass media icons and satire come close to forming the dominant symbol set of cyberspace.

Douglas notes that regardless of how strong the power of a symbolic medium is to coerce individual choices, such symbolic media "can be cracked whenever any part of it is breached."⁵²⁸ The economic system's symbolic medium which organizes the social order, mass media, has been 'breached' by the arrival of cyberspace. A new medium of expression has appeared within the centre of the economic system and thus heralds the possibility of redefined limits to thought within media culture.

⁵²⁸*Ibid.*, 164.

Cyberspace's Subversion of the Rule of Law Within Media Culture

The cultural debate over the meaning of Barbie, McDonald's, and Scientology provides an example of how definitional control is strengthened or weakened according to the structural characteristics of various media systems. The operation of law provides an opportunity to compare degrees of definitional control within mass media and cyberspace. It is quite probable that content within mass media systems is effectively controlled through the legal system. When a court rules that content in a film, magazine, movie, or song recording violates a corporation's trademark or copyright, these media forms then follow the rule of law. This corresponds to the relationship between private property and law, where law operates as a highly specialized system designed for the protection of private property.⁵²⁹

The rule of law does extend into cyberspace.⁵³⁰ Images of Barbie which violated Mattel's ownership of its private property were removed at the threat of a lawsuit. Yet occasionally these contested uses of Mattel's symbolic property did not disappear from cyberspace. The contested images, such as Napier's artwork, were copied to other Web sites owned by other individuals and so required a further series of legal threats from Mattel's lawyers. So while the rule of law does

⁵²⁹Neil Kleinman. "Don't Fence Me In: Copyright, Property, and Technology," *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment*, edited by Lance Strate, Ronald Jacobson, and Stephanie B. Gibson. (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1996), 59-82. Kleinman's focus is on English and American law.

⁵³⁰On the Canadian legal context of cyberspace, see Michel Racicot, Mark S. Stuart, Alec R. Szibbo and Pierre Trudel, *The Cyberspace is not a "No Law Land": A Study of the Issues of Liability for Content Circulating on the Internet*, (Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1997). Also see Brian D. Loader (ed.). *The Governance of Cyberspace: Politics, Technology and Global Restructuring*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

extend into cyberspace,⁵³¹ and while its influence on the content of Web sites can be seen, law sometimes fails to eliminate disputed material from the surrounding media environment of cyberspace. In isolated cases of individual Web sites, law rules over content, but within the totality of cyberspace law fails to establish complete control over private property. While the rule of law does operate in individual instances it nonetheless fails to operate upon cyberspace. Contested images and texts remain, migrating from Web site to Web site, and their disappearance from cyberspace is not indicative of law's impact upon cyberspace-based content.

Examples of illegal content which evades the rule of law can be found throughout cyberspace. Early in 1998 pirated (illegal) copies of a popular television cartoon series, *South Park*, could be found on dozens of Web sites.⁵³² The Web is also home to pirated song recordings. During this same period it was possible to locate illegal copies of entire compact disks from bands such as *Portishead*. It would not be an exaggeration to estimate that thousands of complete songs are illegally available over the Web at this time.

Within mass media systems owned by the state or the élite law effectively mediates disputes over property ownership. Access to mass media and access to the legal system is substantially determined by capital (money). These systems of media and law can be conceptualized as definitional systems under the control of the wealthy as money strongly

⁵³¹For an overview of 1996 American legal decisions in the area of cyberspace law, see Stuart Biegel, "Coming of Age: More Decisions about Cyberspace Were Reached in 1996 than Ever Before," *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, January 23, 1997, reprinted in *New Directions in Cyberspace Law*, www.gse.ucla.edu/iclp/jan97v.ii.html located February 1998.

⁵³²See Elizabeth Weise, "'Toon Spawns Devoted Net Sites,'" *The Ottawa Sun*, Monday, March 2, 1998, 34. In late February 1998, my own review of *South Park* sites indexed at www.yahoo.com (News and Media: Television: Shows: South Park) found 104 Web sites created by *South Park* fans, many of which contained pirated material and entire episodes.

dictates access. This correspondence between mass media and law loses its definitional control within cyberspace because of the technical (structural) characteristics of the Internet. On the issue of law and the unique structural character of the Internet (cyberspace) a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling is indicative of the unique nature of this new medium. On June 26, 1997, in the first Internet-related U.S. Supreme Court case, one which involved disputed provisions of the Communications Decency Act (*Reno vs. ACLU*), the Court recognized that the Internet is not the same as broadcast media such as television, "The Court determined that the World Wide Web is analogous to a library or a shopping mall, rejecting the government's argument that it could be viewed as more akin to a broadcast medium."⁵³³

The Internet is defined by its design of interconnected computers which create a globally distributed web of symbol flow. Law can only address each individual instance of contested property as an isolated case within this web of symbol flow. Returning to my metaphor of cyberspace as 'holographic,' law can only deal with individual, discrete instances of content-dispute, but cyberspace treats information in a collective and distributed manner. A symbol within cyberspace behaves as if it exists everywhere and nowhere -- at the same time. Thus the co-ordinates of time and place, referents critical to the operation of law, have no relevance in the media system of cyberspace. Law treats content only from within time and place co-ordinates

⁵³³See "Reno v. ACLU: U.S. Supreme Court Finds Disputed Provisions of Communications Decency Act Unconstitutional," *The UCLA Online Institute for Cyberspace Law and Policy*, www.gse.ucla.edu/iclp/reno.html located February 1998. Here we also see an anomaly within the social world, cyberspace, caught up in a cultural debate over what analogy (library versus television) is most appropriate for the new social phenomenon.

but cyberspace treats content as if time and place did not exist.⁵³⁴ Redefined Barbies, pirated episodes of *South Park*, illegal translations of Wittgenstein, and secret Scientology texts continually disappear and reappear throughout cyberspace and so subvert the legal system's control over symbolic property. While the rule of law extends to individual Web sites it does not extend into cyberspace, when considered as a media environment because, in the words of William Gibson, there is no 'there' there. Within this structurally-differentiated medium content changes location faster than the legal process.

One of the very distant social effects of cyberspace's subversion of the rule of law may be the redefinition of what constitutes private property. Social historian Elizabeth L. Eisenstein notes that by 1500, a few decades after Gutenberg's invention of the printing press:

legal fictions were already being devised to accommodate the patenting of inventions and assignments of literary property ... Competition over the right to publish a given text also introduced controversy over new issues involving monopoly and piracy. Printing forced a legal definition of what belonged in the public domain. A literary "common" became subject to "enclosure movements" and possessive individualism began to characterize the attitude of writers to their work.⁵³⁵

The modern legal fiction of intellectual property arose out of the advent of printing.⁵³⁶ This modern legal fiction may face dramatic redefinition in a prolonged era defined by cyberspace's

⁵³⁴On the problem of place and time in cyberspace law, see David R. Johnson and David G. Post. "The Rise of Law in Cyberspace," forthcoming in *Stanford Law Review*, 1996, prepublished at www.cli.org/X0025_LBFIN.html located February 1998.

⁵³⁵Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, reprinted 1993), 84.

⁵³⁶Kleinman. "Don't Fence Me In: Copyright, Property, and Technology," 60. Kleinman argues that the "current principles of copyright will not work in an electronic space of the kind we are creating" (*Ibid.*, 75).

new mode of communication. If a new mode of communication does indeed bring a dramatically new social order in its wake, then it is not unreasonable to anticipate changes in such fundamental concepts as property and private ownership as these legal fictions are merely cultural constructs.

Panopticons and Democratic Mass Media

Cyberspace as a social phenomenon contains contradictory social forces of increased freedom of expression (definitional subversion) and decreased personal privacy. While distorted Barbies, anti-McDonald's leaflets, pirated television shows, illegal philosophical works, and not-so-secret sacred Scientology texts testify to cyberspace's emerging social force of radicalized freedom of expression within media culture, nonetheless, there are dynamics operating in the opposite direction. Internet-based communication and Web-based content are extremely easy to monitor due to their digital nature. Anything encoded can be decoded, any stream of bits can be intercepted.

Media theorist Mark Poster proposes that the growth of databases has had a profound social effect, enabling governments and corporations to engage in extensive surveillance of private individuals.⁵³⁷ Yet Poster fails to account for cyberspace's quickly evolving role as a globalized super-database which monitors the behaviour of the élite. *McSpotlight* provides an indication of cyberspace's emerging social role as a panopticon which incorporates *everyone*, both prisoners and guards, as well as those beyond the prison walls in its all-seeing gaze. The

⁵³⁷Mark Poster. *The Second Media Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 78-94.

concept of the *panopticon* was developed by Jeremy Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century and recently resurrected by Michel Foucault.⁵³⁸ Bentham's panopticon was a proposed design for prisons which would allow guards to observe prisoners without being seen. Foucault notes that the French Revolution proposed a similar solution to the problem of justice:

The new aspect of the problem of justice, for the Revolution, was not so much to punish wrongdoers as to prevent even the possibility of wrongdoing, by immersing people in a field of total visibility where the opinion, observation and discourse of others would restrain them from harmful acts.⁵³⁹

Ironically, cyberspace may be a mode of communication that immerses both élites and masses in a 'field of total visibility.' Whereas mass media and other definitional systems created what Foucault called the "apparatuses of power" which allowed for the economic system's productive forces, we may be headed for an era where the élite are subjects of the masses' own panopticon -- cyberspace.⁵⁴⁰ Cyberspace could prove to be the perfect surveillance tool -- a panopticon of global proportions.

Cyberspace could also allow for globalized propaganda and disinformation on an entirely new scale. Media theorist James R. Beniger describes how cyberspace could easily lend itself to mass propaganda techniques, "mass communication to cyberspace might be based on large databases of the prior Net activity of each individual, driven by massive processing power, and even guided by artificial intelligence systems for persuasive behavior ... the possibilities for

⁵³⁸For the full English version, see Jeremy Bentham. *Panopticon*, Volume IV of the Bowring edition, (New York: Russel and Russel, 1971).

⁵³⁹Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 153.

⁵⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 158.

effective control of a large population via cyberspace appear unmatched by those of any other existing means.”⁵⁴¹ But such techniques and technology could work in both directions within two sides of a cultural debate. A highly interconnected community within cyberspace would be equally able to uncover and disable disinformation and mass propaganda campaigns. Cyberspace makes it easier for the public to monitor and communicate the behaviour of corporate and state ‘Big Brothers’ while at the same time making it easier for these ‘Big Brothers’ to watch over cyberspace-based discourse. The most we can do at the present is recognize these contradictory social dynamics as inherent in the medium. Which force will surface as the dominant social dynamic of cyberspace is impossible to predict. It is certain that these contradictory forces will find a wide variety of expression according to the cultural characteristics of various nations and according to the strength and weakness of relevant international legal and trade agreements. As in the case of the *McSpotlight* Web site there is an emerging subversion strategy which sees potentially illegal Web sites being located in nations, such as the Netherlands, with laws which favour freedom of expression. Any attempt to harmonize such laws across nations will in all probability meet with resistance by those who would defend a nation-state’s sovereignty. But this remains to be seen, particularly as revenue steams measured in multiple billions of dollars are at stake in the struggle over definitional control within media culture.

Cyberspace can be described as more democratic as it enables more people to be producers of content within a globalized media system than does mass media. Mass media systems restrict ownership of production ‘factories’ to the élite, while cyberspace has lowered

⁵⁴¹James R. Beniger. “Who Shall Control Cyberspace?” *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment*, edited by Lance Strate, Ronald Jacobson, and Stephanie B. Gibson. (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1996), 54.

this ownership-threshold to the middle and lower classes. This democratizing characteristic is not comprehensive. The poor are still largely excluded, literacy is required, a telecommunications infrastructure is required, and computer-literacy is required. Nonetheless, in comparison to the economics of mass media systems, cyberspace is radically democratic in nature. The fact that individual users do not own the telecommunication system which mediates cyberspace content is irrelevant, as this *does not exclude anyone from content production within cyberspace*. At present, competition in the global telecommunication infrastructure between wireless, copper, and fibre-based systems has ensured that monopolization of any one area of cyberspace's technical infrastructure has not lead to control over content.⁵⁴² As it is impossible to predict what economic forces will shape cyberspace's future, my argument is based on current conditions and prevailing social dynamics. It is hard to imagine an economic or political force strong enough to control the production of content on over 16 million 'factories' (Internet computers) distributed across the globe, without proposing a dystopic future of the darkest design.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴²Here I have to disagree with Denis McQuail's assessment of new electronic media's impact upon the mass audience. McQuail suggests that the most "plausible conclusion that can be reached at the present state of innovation is that there is a very considerable inertial force that limits fundamental change in audience formation and behavior in the face of all those forces for change and technological potential." He sees the interactivity of new electronic media as "a force for consolidation of the traditional audience." While this is certainly true when considering recent experiments in so-called 'interactive television' and other corporate media systems, McQuail nonetheless fails to account for the social effect of unconstrained symbol flow within cyberspace. Denis McQuail. *Audience Analysis*, (London: Sage, 1997), 146.

⁵⁴³Here I disagree with media theorist Michèle Martin's claim that "the more sophisticated mass media technology becomes, the less accessible it is to everyone, and therefore the less democratic" (Michèle Martin. *Communication and Mass Media: Culture, Domination, and Opposition*, 81). While this may be true of previous mass media technologies, it is only speculation to say that the Internet will become less and not more accessible as time goes by. We

When considering a dramatic reversal in the democratic nature of cyberspace's content-production capability it also must be kept in mind that this medium is 'home' to a community of individuals who are capable of collective political action. Any theory addressing a probable reversal in the wired audience's content-production capability must explain how community members of cyberspace would permit a massive sell-off of what many consider to be the birthright of cyberspace -- freedom of expression.⁵⁴⁴ The American government's failure to enact severe content restrictions upon American Internet users in 1996 and the American wired community's large-scale political response to their government's actions points to the emerging balance of power within the Internet community.⁵⁴⁵

Assessments of the future social effect of cyberspace tend either to dismiss it altogether or describe it in utopic and messianic terms. Generally, technology gurus proclaim cyberspace as the digital messiah while media scholars barely register its presence at all. J. Neil Weintraut provides an example of the more messianic rhetoric, "The transformation, technology, and

simply do not know what the economics and accessibility of cyberspace will look like twenty, fifty, or one hundred years from now.

⁵⁴⁴Media theorist Mark Giese claims that the Internet's intellectual freedom "stems from the legacy of the hacker ethic -- the free flow of information -- the major cultural tenet of the builders of the network" in his article "From ARPAnet to the Internet: A Cultural Clash and Its Implications in Framing the Debate on the Information Superhighway," *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment*, edited by Lance Strate, Ronald Jacobson, and Stephanie B. Gibson. (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1996), 132.

⁵⁴⁵See Paul Wallich. "Turf Wars in Cyberspace," *Scientific American*, Online edition, June 6; 1996, www.sciam.com/explorations/062496explorations.html located February 1998. In the U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding the 1996 Communications Decency Act, Federal District Judge Stewart Dalzell wrote, "It is no exaggeration to conclude that the Internet has achieved, and continues to achieve, the most participatory marketplace of mass speech that this country -- and indeed the world -- has yet seen ... Modern-day Luthers still post their theses, but to electronic bulletin boards rather than the door of the Wittenberg Schlosskirche" (*Ibid.*).

prosperity brought about by the Internet will be on a scale unmatched during our lifetime, yet the ultimate value of the Internet lies in its potential for it to better our society, culture, and indeed our world, both for us to benefit from in the immediate future, and for our children tomorrow.”⁵⁴⁶ Weintraut fails to take into account that there is also every reason to believe that a new mode of communication could trigger war.

Social historian Stephen Kern has made a compelling argument that the new technologies of telegraph and telephone forced an increase in the pace of diplomacy after the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914.⁵⁴⁷ The telegraph created a diplomatic crisis because this new technology made possible rapid communication and demands for brief time limits within exchanges of ultimata, exchanges which moved far too quickly for the pace of diplomacy in the old world’s social context, “communication technology imparted a breakneck speed to the usually slow pace of traditional diplomacy.”⁵⁴⁸ Kern’s account of the flurry of diplomatic exchanges during the July Crisis of 1914 strongly suggests that there are times in history when a new mode of communication does not ‘fit’ the social context and contributes to destabilizing and explosive confrontation between social institutions such as nation-states.

⁵⁴⁶J. Neil Weintraut. “Introduction,” in Robert H. Reid. *Architects of the Web: 1,000 Days that Built the Future of Business*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), xi.

⁵⁴⁷Stephen Kern. *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1928*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 259-286.

⁵⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 265.

Marshall McLuhan echoes this observation, “War is never anything less than accelerated technological change.”⁵⁴⁹

Cyberspace could prove to be equally destabilizing, although not through its immediacy, as television has already created an ‘as-it-happens’ home-theatre for war. Imagine the possibility of the following scenario. An organization skilled in destabilizing governments and geo-political regions, such as the CIA, anonymously places potentially explosive literature on numerous Internet computers. This literature affronts the religious sensibilities of nations accustomed to holy wars. The right text disseminated in cyberspace at a critical moment within a diplomatic crisis could trigger violence. If the text were related to a company’s financial earnings the same scenario could contribute to market collapse or reduce the stock value of a company targeted for an aggressive takeover. The temptation to use cyberspace for political or financial gain in such subversive fashion will undoubtedly prove overwhelming, particularly as the medium grows in audience share and is integrated into government and business information systems.

⁵⁴⁹Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (London: Routledge, 1964), 101.

Reflexivity within Mass Media and Cyberspace

Sociologist Anthony Giddens uses the term *institutional reflexivity* to describe a central feature of the present social world. Institutional reflexivity is the globalizing process of connectedness between action and consequences that has been created by the spread of modern institutions, such as science. Mundane daily decisions are connected to global outcomes and, in turn, global orders (such as the military or economy) impact upon individual decisions.⁵⁵⁰ Individuals, separated by space and time, are connected together in a global web of action and consequences brought about by the spread of modern institutions. This phenomenon is called institutional reflexivity. This form of reflexivity between the self and the other can be seen to operate throughout virtually all aspects of consumer society. For example, the purchase of Nike sneakers in Ottawa is connected to the quality of life for factory workers on the other side of the world. Within the economic sphere, institutional reflexivity explains why virtually every consumer item is, in one way or another, covered with the blood of the poor.

In 1994 Giddens reflected on one primary effect of reflexivity, “The more we try to colonize the future, the more it is likely to spring surprises on us.”⁵⁵¹ This cautionary note contrasts sharply to Edward L. Bernays’ optimism in *The Engineering of Consent* (1955) where he describes the public relations counsel as “proficient in applying scientific social theories and tested techniques in solving many of the problems of society.”⁵⁵² Bernays was a principal

⁵⁵⁰Anthony Giddens. “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, edited by Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 58-59.

⁵⁵¹*Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁵²Edward L. Bernays. *The Engineering of Consent*, 5.

founder of the public relations discipline. Caught up in the functionalism and behaviourism of the time, Bernays saw public relations as a key element in the engineering of a better social order. The social sciences, it was hoped, would provide a “limited predictability of conduct” and lead to a “smooth-running society.”⁵⁵³ Institutional reflexivity helps explain why a better society has yet to be engineered by the public relations industry or the scientific enterprise.

The globalized institutions of media culture are part of the connectedness of institutional reflexivity. Mass media creates reflexivity across vast tracts of space and time. Mass media is clearly a system which promotes institutional reflexivity. In the terms of reflexivity, mass media globalizes the web of action and consequences within the economic system. Mass media supports the connectedness of institutional structures such as the marketplace and politics. It is difficult to imagine an aspect of life within the realm of media culture that is not influenced to some degree by the symbols and meanings of mass media. Giddens recognizes the globalizing influence of “instantaneous global electronic communication,” though he does not apply the dynamic of reflexivity to cyberspace.⁵⁵⁴ Do changes in media systems lead to changes in the impact of reflexivity upon the social world?⁵⁵⁵ If there is a substantial change within the structure of media culture, a change such as the injection of cyberspace into the monopolized

⁵⁵³*Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁵⁴Giddens. “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” 96-97.

⁵⁵⁵The Gutenberg press provides one of history’s largest reflexively-induced changes brought about by the unintended consequences of a new mode of communication. The mass production of indulgences made possible by the new printing press appears to have led to Martin Luther’s protest at Wittenberg and the subsequent mass production of his pamphlets. I am indebted to Eisenstein’s comments on the consequences of the Gutenberg press and its impact upon the production of indulgences for this possible reflexively-induced series of actions. See Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 30.

symbol-flow of media culture, then what can be expected to occur as a result of the process of reflexivity?

It stands to reason that the economic system is strongly dependent on the structural characteristics of mass media. Since reflexivity is a mediation process it is thereby conditioned by the limitations and possibilities of media systems which saturate the modern social world. The structural characteristics of mass media -- monopolistic ownership and bounded symbol-flow -- must partially determine the structural conditions of reflexivity within media culture. Although mass media is partly responsible for globalizing institutional reflexivity, the mode of mass media (monopolistic and bounded) suggests that mass media actually restricts the full play of reflexivity within media culture.

We can speak of institutional reflexivity as being restricted within media culture because the symbol-set of mass media is itself limited. This is why mass media can promote reflexivity -- unpredictable changes in patterns of social reproduction -- while at the same time ensure that the economic system continues to be reproduced. The contradiction of reflexivity within the economic system is a controlled and limited contradiction because the finite symbol-set which is the subject of this reflexivity remains bounded within mass media.

Cyberspace implies a very different dynamic arising within institutional reflexivity. Cyberspace heralds a period in the history of media culture wherein the symbol-set that is reflexively mediated across the globe is no longer subjected to the monopolistic and bounded dynamics of mass media. Cyberspace thus represents the subversion of symbols and meanings at play within the institutional reflexivity of media culture. As the main outcome of institutional

reflexivity is, according to Giddens, unpredictable (and therefore, uncontrollable) change,⁵⁵⁶ we can see one social implication of this subversion or fragmentation of the economic system's cosmology -- accelerated, unpredictable change within the social world.

A recent example of cyberspace-induced reflexivity within media culture was seen in Ottawa's city council. The Nike Corporation and the Toronto Raptors (a basketball team) offered to pay for a new floor for a local gym.⁵⁵⁷ Within city council a debate arose over whether or not to accept Nike's part of the donation because of alleged unethical practices on the part of the sportswear manufacturer. An Internet Web site which urged a consumer boycott against Nike was cited within the debate. The cyberspace-induced reflexivity occurred within the chambers of city council as they debated the merits of Nike and referred to the anti-Nike Web site. This reflexivity also carried over into the local newspaper which noted that the Web site "quoted a CBS television report in the United States that Nike workers in Vietnam earn an average of 20 cents an hour."⁵⁵⁸ The fact that this debate will have no substantial impact upon Nike may only reflect the relatively early stage in the medium's growth. What is important here is the new flow of information within the social order of media culture. Information from mass media (CBS television) was copied onto a Web site, then picked up within the context of a local debate over ethical funding of city facilities, and simultaneously reinjected back into mass media through the local newspaper. Cyberspace is now part of an information feedback process within mass media.

⁵⁵⁶Anthony Giddens. "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," 96.

⁵⁵⁷Michael Prentice. "Nike Donation 'blood money,' Cannings Says," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday, March 7, 1998, E17.

⁵⁵⁸*Ibid.*

Perhaps this feedback process will lead to an expanded symbol-set within media culture. At the very least it is not unreasonable to propose that cyberspace-induced reflexivity will provide the audience of media culture with more symbolic material for the reflexive process and the co-creation of the social order.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead credits the findings of anthropology with establishing “the fact that innovations in technology and in the form of institutions inevitably bring about alterations in cultural character.”⁵⁵⁹ It is entirely possible that cyberspace will change the institutional and cultural character (the symbols and values) of media culture. The degree to which cyberspace’s structure differs from the structure of mass media systems may be a sound indication of the degree of change heralded by democratized symbolic production on a global scale. As symbol-sets lie at the foundation of social reality, any substantial change in the way symbols are controlled within media culture certainly heralds dramatic social impact. Mark Poster also describes the shift in the structure of global communications as the erosion of the élite’s definitional system:

Previously subjugated voices are more readily brought to one’s attention and previously private speech and practice of elites are available for all to see ... Elite control over information slips from its grasp as info-bits from dominated groups bleep through communication channels. While the global communication village is not at all a democracy, enough local knowledges do make their appearance to shatter the uncontested hegemony of male Western culture.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹Margaret Mead. *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), 48.

⁵⁶⁰Poster. *The Second Media Age*, 51.

To use a metaphor from the gay community, cyberspace is ‘outing’ the previously private behaviour of élites and corporations. Over time this new mode of communication is bound to place considerable strain on the credibility of élite authority systems.

Historical Comparisons Between Two Modes of Communication

In 1994 I described the Internet in the following terms:

The Internet is a new form of mass communication. Mass communication, while itself a relatively new phenomenon, has always involved controlled broadcasts to passive audiences. The mass audience has never had any significant input, or control, over the content of mass communication. With the Internet these characteristics of mass communication have forever changed. On the Net we find massive numbers of people broadcasting information to massive numbers of people. Whereas the introduction of the Gutenberg Press made mass communication possible for the very, very few who would ever own a printing press, the Internet has turned every owner of a computer, a modem, and a telephone line into a publisher, a radio station, and soon enough, a TV studio. This is the second Gutenberg revolution. This is the new economy of information.⁵⁶¹

As a structurally-differentiated mode of communication the Internet displays dynamics highly reminiscent of the Gutenberg press. We can speak of the Gutenberg press as a mode of

⁵⁶¹Canadian journalists Robert Chodos, Rae Murphy, and Eric Hamovitch suggest that “there are problems with this vision [the above quote] ... But we agree with Strangelove that the information highway has the potential to change people’s lives for the better only to the extent that it grows as a two-way medium.” Unfortunately the authors are not explicit in where they disagree. See *Lost in Cyberspace: Canada and the Information Revolution*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1997) 4. Now I would be less inclined to describe Internet communications as ‘broadcasting’ but it is probably only a matter of a few years or decades before computer processing power, modem speeds, and the Web’s ‘pipelines’ are large enough to emulate mass media’s broadcasting power. The authors have quoted Michael Strangelove and Aneurin Bosley, *How to Advertise on the Internet: An Introduction to Internet-Facilitated Marketing and Advertising*, (Ottawa: Strangelove Press, 1994), 208.

communication that was structurally-differentiated from the oral and scribal traditions which preceded its invention in a Mainz workshop in the 1450's by the German inventor Johann Gutenberg. Within twenty years the new printing press spread to approximately 16 cities in Europe. By January 1, 1501 there were over 250 centres of the printing trade scattered throughout the region.⁵⁶² One historian describes the result of this new technology in the following terms:

A man born in 1453, the year of the fall of Constantinople, could look back from his fiftieth year on a lifetime in which about eight million books had been printed, more perhaps than all the scribes of Europe had produced since Constantine founded his city in A.D. 333.⁵⁶³

A brief survey of the social effects of Gutenberg's new mode of communication in the 1500's may provide an indication of what we can anticipate if cyberspace continues to evade the rule of law and democratize content-production within media culture.

Elizabeth Eisenstein has documented how the shift "from the copyist's desk to the printer's workshop" in the reproduction of written materials "revolutionized all forms of learning."⁵⁶⁴ For our purposes it is important to note that this shift was tantamount to a dramatic structural change in the way symbols flowed through the Europe of the 1500's. The following

⁵⁶²Henri-Jean Martin. *The History and Power of Writing*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 227.

⁵⁶³Michael Clapham. "Printing," *A History of Technology*, Volume II, edited by E.J. Holmyard, A.R. Hall and Trevor Williams. (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 377. Eisenstein notes that while both the production by scribes and the printing press is impossible to determine accurately, nonetheless, "the fact remains that the initial increase in output [from the press] did strike contemporary observers as sufficiently remarkable to suggest supernatural intervention." Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

⁵⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 3.

briefly examines major points of comparison between the shift in symbol-flow in the 1500's and the current shift in symbol-flow taking place through cyberspace.

Eisenstein notes the following social effects of the printing press: the press created easier access to more literary works;⁵⁶⁵ increased cross-cultural and interdisciplinary interchange;⁵⁶⁶ contributed to new forms of personal celebrity;⁵⁶⁷ ended the era of the commentator and introduced a new era of intense cross-referencing;⁵⁶⁸ enabled readers to cover a wider range of material much faster than before;⁵⁶⁹ the press substantially deinstitutionalised learning, “that a remarkable amount of innovative work in both scholarly and scientific fields was done outside academic centers in the early modern era is often noted;”⁵⁷⁰ it created an avalanche of ‘how-to’ books;⁵⁷¹ created new forms of feedback;⁵⁷² lead to new political forms, “printers, by pursuing their own interests, contributed to loosening or severing links with Rome, to nationalist sentiment, and to dynastic consolidation;”⁵⁷³ moved power from guilds to “bureaucratic

⁵⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 116.

⁵⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁷¹*Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁷²*Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁷³*Ibid.*, 83.

officialdom;⁵⁷⁴ changed political discourse from oral to print-based forums;⁵⁷⁵ lead to “vicarious participation in more distant events;⁵⁷⁶ created new forms of group identity which competed with older localized loyalties;⁵⁷⁷ enhanced the mass following of leaders;⁵⁷⁸ increased “traditional tensions between court and country, crown and estates” through propaganda wars;⁵⁷⁹ the press standardized and multiplied images and enhanced individuality, “the drive for fame moved into high gear; the self-portrait acquired a new permanence, a heightened appreciation of individuality accompanied standardization,⁵⁸⁰ printing changed the nature and effect of religious dissent, “partly because religious dissent was implemented by print, it could leave a much more indelible and far-reaching impression than dissent had ever left before;⁵⁸¹ and finally, printing changed the very nature of change itself, “the communications shift transformed the nature of the causal nexus itself. It is of special historical significance because it produced fundamental alterations in prevailing patterns of continuity and change.”⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 275.

While the social effects of the printing press, as outlined above, took decades, and in many cases, centuries, to unfold, the very young medium of cyberspace shares many of the outlined effects. The growth of freely available electronic books and scholarly journals on the World Wide Web suggests that cyberspace has the potential to evolve into the preferred mode of academic communication. The communication capabilities of the Web also facilitate cross-cultural and interdisciplinary interchange by connecting scholars across vast distances and enabling interdisciplinary conversations via e-mail conferences. Personal Web pages and media focus on Internet gurus, activists, and hackers suggest that media culture is witnessing a new form of celebrity, complete with its own publications such as *Wired* magazine. The hypertext capability of Web pages encourages extensive cross-referencing ('linking') between Web sites and online documents. This also enables a wide range of material to be browsed at high speeds. One of the characteristics of Web-based literature is the profusion of 'how-to' literature, from the subversive 'how to make bombs, drugs, and so forth' to 'how-to' advice in all medical and hobby subjects and many professional subject areas. These factors could lead to further deinstitutionalising of the learning process. The Ottawa City Council debate over Nike's ethics and Web-site material points to the new form of feedback that cyberspace has introduced to media culture. The political activity of the American Internet community surrounding the 1996 Communications Decency Act (U.S.) demonstrates that cyberspace enables political action, although whether or not it will lead to a new mode of political organization remains to be seen. By democratizing access to information, or at least by facilitating information-sharing, cyberspace could potentially undermine bureaucratic monopolies on information. The widespread use of e-mail and Web sites for political discussion, satire, and commentary suggests

that we may be headed for a hybrid form of political discourse which is both oral *and* print-based within an electronic medium (particularly as bandwidth increases and e-mail discussions migrate to voice mail discussion and ‘soap-box’ commentary via the Internet). In 1996, after watching the sun set over the city of New York via a live, real-time camera hooked up to the Web I was struck by the Web’s shrinking of the ‘global village’ and the vicarious participation in distant events which cyberspace enabled through my modem and computer screen. It remains to be seen if Internet-based group identities will arise which will compete with other forms of identities. Similarly, cyberspace’s impact upon the mass following of leaders is largely unknown. *McSpotlight* foreshadows intense spy versus spy propaganda wars within cyberspace. The lack of content control mechanisms and the decentralized structure of the medium suggests that the standardization of images may not arise as a cyberspace-induced effect, although the global multiplication of diverse images may characterize the medium. Personal Web pages point to the heightened expression of individuality within media culture, whereas personal fame and individual expression in mass media has been the experience of very few individuals. The Scientology dispute and the extensive commentary on this religion which occurs on the Internet points to the medium’s ability to enable religious dissent.⁵⁸³

These characteristics of cyberspace are not entirely unique to the medium, nor are they equally distributed among the population but, when taken together, they strongly suggest a profound communications shift within media culture. Here it is important to note Eisenstein’s word of caution regarding the Gutenberg press’ still unfolding and unanticipated consequences, “Few, if any, of the changes we have outlined could have been predicted. Even with hindsight

⁵⁸³See the Usenet newsgroup (a form of online discussion group) *alt.religion.scientology*.

they are difficult to describe.”⁵⁸⁴ As with the Gutenberg press, the social effects of cyberspace can already be seen as unanticipated and contradictory. It is highly improbable that the designers of ARPANET, the Internet and cyberspace’s predecessor, had a clear vision of the social effects their new technology would engender. Today the wired future remains equally opaque.

Eisenstein’s claim that “printing changed the very nature of change itself” is intriguing, but my research stops short of making this claim for cyberspace.⁵⁸⁵ Whereas it is unclear that cyberspace is inducing change in the ‘very nature of change itself’ it arguably *is* inducing change in the way symbols flow through media culture. A change in symbol-flow probably only impacts upon the ‘direction’ and ‘speed’ of change. As to whether or not cyberspace is changing the nature of change, this question lies outside of the scope of my hypothesis and research.

Cyberspace as a ‘Common Pool of Knowledge’

By way of concluding this chapter the following section develops a comparison between collective memory, cyberspace, mass media, and the Dene socialization process as experienced by anthropologist Marie-Françoise Guédon. Between 1969 and 1972 Guédon conducted research in eastern Alaska among the Dene group known as the Tetlin.⁵⁸⁶ In the course of her fieldwork

⁵⁸⁴Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 277.

⁵⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 275.

⁵⁸⁶Marie-Françoise Guédon. “Dene Ways and the Ethnographer’s Culture,” *Being Changed: The Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience*, edited by David E. Young and Jean-Guy Goulet. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994), 39-70.

with the Dene Guédon encountered an experience very similar to that of Mary Douglas' while among the Lele. Guédon's work as an ethnographer began in earnest only after the Dene "made it very clear that I could not learn about Dene ways of life and language without myself growing into this learning."⁵⁸⁷ As a young, unmarried female, Guédon discovered that she was being treated by the people of Tetlin as if she were a child just past puberty.⁵⁸⁸ Before Guédon could learn the ways of the adult Dene she first had to undergo a socialization process which would teach her how to be a Dene woman. This socialization process consisted of stories, oral texts which "were relatively stable over time, in form and content, as long as one stayed within the same kin group."⁵⁸⁹ These stories were usually told to Guédon in response to the anthropologist's questions and the stories related by her instructors were geared to her level of understanding and the lesson she was supposed to learn.

As I grew up, the stories got more complete, the play on words, and the funny or sexually explicit details also increased together with the number of stories themselves. I was thus exposed to several versions of the "same" story, from the same instructors, at different points in time.⁵⁹⁰

In the same way that the stories and images of mass media socialize consumption practices, Guédon found that the Dene stories were a medium through which the Dene way of life was taught.⁵⁹¹ These stories conveyed the contents of the Dene collective memory and reproduced

⁵⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹*Ibid.*

Dene taboos, customs, traditions -- the Dene Ways which the anthropologist would identify as culture.

Whereas media culture localizes collective knowledge within media systems such as public education, film, television, books and so forth, the Dene localize their collective knowledge within specific landmarks or localities which give occasion for reciting a particular story. Guédon describes the “acquisition of intimate knowledge of the land” as a paramount factor in her own socialization process.⁵⁹²

It was while walking (and navigating) the territory that one reads and rereads one’s personal history and the history of the whole community, always different, always renewed, and yet in richer details than in any printed book ... the travellers, whether newcomers, children, or old-timers, shared an immense pool of the most precious knowledge concerning animals of course, but also concerning all the non-human powers of the land and the atmosphere ... My instructors did not seem to separate the stories from the landscape -- both were equally meaningful.⁵⁹³

For the Dene, the technology which embodied their collective memory was the land itself. For the consumer and audience member of media culture, the technology of collective memory is the mass media. The difference in technologies of collective memory leads to a critical difference in how the community shares in the contents of this memory. This technological difference between the Dene Ways and media culture will serve to highlight a key social dynamic of cyberspace.

The Dene mode of communication can be described as an oral technology of memory- and knowledge-sharing rooted in the land. The universal participation in story-telling ensures that the Dene’s body of knowledge, their collective memory, is maintained and reproduced

⁵⁹²*Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁵⁹³*Ibid.*, 46-47.

through time because knowledge is not confined to a few individuals.⁵⁹⁴ Everyone seeks knowledge and everyone is equally a source of knowledge, “Unilineal transmission from teacher to pupil is not typical of Dene learning ... the Dene have access to a pool of knowledge from which everyone draws according to needs.”⁵⁹⁵ In this way the Dene ensure that their common pool of knowledge is preserved and transmitted.⁵⁹⁶

The Dene collective memory, their common pool of knowledge, provides a metaphor for cyberspace as a new technology of collective memory within media culture. Cyberspace provides its users with equal access to a globalized pool of common knowledge. The intense cultural debate which has arisen in reaction to the growth of cyberspace is a direct result of the new level of access to knowledge Internet users now experience. In media culture under the control of mass media systems knowledge is rated according to its perceived harmfulness. State censorship within media systems and public education systems act to gear exposure to knowledge to the appropriate stage of socialization (typically measured by age). Cyberspace has given rise to intense danger and pollution fears within media culture because it lacks the institutionalized control mechanisms which normally dictate who gets exposed to what knowledge. Thus cyberspace represents a new mode of communication, or a new technology of

⁵⁹⁴Guédon cites magical songs as the only exception to the common body of knowledge. *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶Guédon notes that the Dene do not conceive of knowledge as isolated information, “divorced from its application and its natural and social environment.” For the Dene, knowledge is a relational process between the learner, the teacher, and the environment. *Ibid.*

collective memory, which does not fit with the socialization processes operative within media culture.

The Dene frame their common pool of knowledge with a notion of individual responsibility for one's thoughts. Among the Dene thoughts are assumed to shape reality. Thoughts are themselves a form of communication and therefore have consequences when heard and acted upon.⁵⁹⁷ This revelation came to Guédon only after more than 10 years of being socialized by the Dene. Guédon realized that among the Dene her very own thoughts mattered, "They mattered to the community, to the family, to the living things around us."⁵⁹⁸ One can surmise that it is this notion of responsibility to the community for one's thought, and therefore the individual quest for knowledge, that protects the integrity of the common pool of knowledge. Individual responsibility for one's thoughts make institutionalized control and censorship of knowledge unnecessary.

Cyberspace can be compared to the Dene's technology of collective memory. The Dene common pool of knowledge may be an indication of cyberspace's emerging social role. Cyberspace provides a globalized virtual landscape where millions of users leave their stories and draw from the stories of others. The intense pollution fears surrounding cyberspace are a reaction to the lack of a cohesive notion of responsibility among users and the failure of traditional means of knowledge control to regulate content within this virtual landscape. Mary Douglas' cultural theory confirms Marie-Françoise Guédon's observation that thoughts can powerfully affect the social order, for thoughts, when communicated, become shared meanings,

⁵⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 56.

symbols that participate in the co-creation of social reality. Under mass media the owners of the media systems bear the burden of responsibility for the symbols/meanings/thoughts which flow through media culture. Under cyberspace individuals will need to learn collective responsibility for the thoughts they are disseminating and the social order this new technology of collective memory is creating.

Summary

Thus far I have argued that mass media and cyberspace are structurally distinct symbol-producing systems which are differentiated by virtue of the degree of élite control over content. Within mass media the élite exercise considerable control over content due to their ownership of media systems and their privileged access to law as a controlling force. Within cyberspace the élite have failed to establish monopolistic ownership and the privilege of content control which such ownership normally entails. My analysis also indicates that law frequently fails to exercise substantial control over content within cyberspace.

Given the failure of media pedagogy to provide an adequate means of self-defense against mass media's definitional influence and colonization of the audience's mind, this chapter examined cyberspace's potential as a form of alternative world-making within media culture. As cyberspace has thus far evaded the definitional control of the élite (as exercised via ownership and law) I have suggested that its flow of alternative symbols and cosmologies potentially undermines mass media's role in the reproduction of the economic system. The largely uniform image of social reality which mass media portrays is fragmented within the realm of cyberspace. The effect of this fragmentation can be explained at the theoretical level through the processes of collective memory. The unconstrained flow of alternative symbols within cyberspace potentially undermines the legitimacy and credibility of the economic system's central values. From the perspective of Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, cyberspace provides for the massive accumulation of symbolic anomalies within media culture, anomalies which throw into

question the answers provided within the economic system's dominant social ordering of shared reality.⁵⁹⁹

The potential for cyberspace to provide the symbolic material for the creation of alternative social worlds coexists with the potential for this novel medium to be used as a form of surveillance and increased social control, as characterized by the metaphor of the panopticon. This surveillance capability is accessible to both the masses and the élite and thus cannot be said to negate the potential subversive capabilities of the medium. Reflexivity, as a form of feedback, provides an indication of how cyberspace may change the very nature of élite-owned mass media systems by virtue of these élite systems responding to symbol-flow within cyberspace. Cyberspace can be described as re-configuring media systems which pre-date its appearance, as these systems reflexively respond to the social use of cyberspace itself. The Gutenberg press provides an indication of how the introduction of a new mode of communication can impact upon the social order, but historical comparisons are of limited use as the social context of *then* versus *now* is so dramatically different direct parallels are difficult to draw. I conclude that cyberspace represents a new technology of collective memory (symbol-mediation) and that this new technology exhibits strong parallels to the form of collective memory found within the oral-based communication 'technology' of the Dene. In the *Conclusion* which follows I will reflect on the possibility of cyberspace redefining the limits to thought and thus reconfiguring the nature of media culture's social order.

⁵⁹⁹Thomas Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, reprinted 1970).

Conclusion: A New Medium, A New Message

I have attempted to model the definitional nature of mass media and cyberspace by examining these global systems from the perspective of a communicative theory of culture, as embodied in collective memory processes. A survey of the past forty years of media sociology by James Curran reveals a distinct lack of cultural theory in use within the analysis of mass communications.⁶⁰⁰ Given the fact that cultural theory, such as is seen in the work of Mary Douglas, has been gradually developing over this same period, it comes as no surprise that these two relatively new fields have not yet been fully integrated. This suggests that the next period of media studies will involve much more use of cultural theory and so develop a greater sophistication in describing the global audience's context as well as local cultural processes which frame the definitional systems of media culture.⁶⁰¹ The growing number of ethnographic media studies is perhaps the beginning of this new theoretical perspective.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰James Curran. "Rethinking Mass Communications." *Cultural Studies and Communication*, edited by James Curran, David Morley and Valerie Walkerdine. (London: Arnold, 1996), 119-165.

⁶⁰¹For a helpful survey of the past half century of media studies, and a debate over how to interpret the history of this field, see James Curran, "The New Revisionism in Mass Communications Research: A Reappraisal," (256-278); David Morley, "Populism, Revisionism and the 'New' Audience Research," (279-293); James Curran, "Media Dialogue: A Reply," (294-299); and David Morley, "Media Dialogue: Reading the Readings of the Readings ...," (300-305) in *Cultural Studies and Communications*, edited by James Curran, David Morley and Valerie Walkerdine.

⁶⁰²Anthropologist Philip Carl Salzman claims that there is a general lack of anthropological studies which focus on media systems. See Salzman, "The Electronic Trojan Horse," 197. This void is quickly being filled by current media ethnography.

Religion, Mass Media, and Cyberspace

Peter Beyer has asked what the globalization of communication implies for religion and for the task of religious leaders and organizations.⁶⁰³ Beyer suggests that the globalization of society “provides fertile ground for the renewed public influence of religion.”⁶⁰⁴ This analysis of the cultural communicative processes at work within mass media and cyberspace has provided an indication of the possibilities and limits to the public influence of religion within media culture.

My description of the definitional control of mass media suggests that religion will only have public influence through mass media under two conditions; through adaptation to the values of the economic system or through massive media ownership. If the values of a particular religion or religious group are synonymous with the values of the economic system, then these religious values will be represented within the monopolized and bounded cosmology of mass media. The history of American televangelism provides an example of how religious values will adapt to the values implicit within the economic system which controls mass media. By using mass media, religion tends toward the adoption of the values and assumptions implicit within the media system. If a religious group gains ownership of a sufficiently large global mass media system, then the group would gain access to a degree of definitional control within the globalization of society. As globalized media systems carry multi-billion dollar price tags it is thus unlikely that any one religion will gain renewed public influence simply through massively increased ownership of media systems.

⁶⁰³Peter F. Beyer. “Privatization and the Public Influence of Religion in Global Society,” *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 373-395.

⁶⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 373.

Cyberspace changes the dynamic of globalized public influence from a matter of ownership over the means of definitional control to a matter of degree and nature of participation within the global wired community. At this early stage in its history, it is impossible to measure the definitional impact that cyberspace exercises upon the audience within media culture. Nonetheless, one can imagine that if a globalized religion with millions of members engages cyberspace as a communication medium, then over time this would lead to a degree of public influence. While it is yet impossible to speculate on the degree of public influence that cyberspace will realize, whether for religions, corporations, or private individuals, it is certainly possible that cyberspace will continue to evolve into a social force within the global arena. The history of Scientology on the Internet suggests that the degree of public influence will not be solely a matter of the degree of participation. As with mass media, cyberspace appears to have a dominant value system, one focused on freedom of expression and communal ownership of property (content). If a religion enters into cyberspace and acts in opposition to the widely-shared value of free speech, then it appears highly probable that the religion will face an organized backlash against its presence within cyberspace. This was clearly the case with Scientology and the Internet community. It may be the case that, whereas mass media's value system is rooted in private property and law, cyberspace's value system is rooted in public property and the blatant disregard for laws governing content. Whether or not information itself wants to be free, cyberspace certainly encourages its liberation from the constraints of private ownership and law. The religion that gains the greatest public influence in the age of globalized communication systems may prove to be the one(s) that most closely emulates the dominant value system emerging within cyberspace. If these values prove to be communal ownership and

freedom of expression, then cyberspace may provide the grounds for a renewed global religion which directly confronts the values implicit within the economic system and proselytized through mass media.

The Subversion of the Economic System

I have argued that the economic system is a system of globalized definitional control which requires the monopolization of symbols within media culture. Mass media is one of these monopolizing systems which exercise definitional control at the level of local culture. One of the defining characteristics of cyberspace arises when it is compared to the structure or mode of mass media. Whereas mass media severely constrains the audience's ability to communicate *through* or produce content *within* mass media systems, cyberspace enables the wired audience both to communicate and to produce content in a manner largely unconstrained by the owners and producers of mass media systems. Cyberspace thus undermines the control of symbol-flow exercised by mass media.

I have described mass media as a process within media culture which creates the necessary conditions for the economic system. These necessary conditions are the 'management', 'engineering', and 'manufacturing' (use the metaphor of your choice!) of a mass public which engages in uniform behaviour patterns. These patterns are much broader than the everyday occurrence of consumption trends within the marketplace. Mass media is implicated in

every meaning, value, and belief which circulates within the social worlds of media culture.⁶⁰⁵

Mass media is here seen as the communicative process of the economic system.

Just as we can speak of the state as monopolizing the means to violence, so it is also possible to use the metaphor of the current economic system as that which arises out of the monopolization of the means of global communication. The monopolization is by no means total but is sufficient to ensure that production and consumption can be coordinated on a global scale. On a global level mass behaviour patterns can be described as saturated with the implicit meanings communicated through mass media. It is difficult to conceive of an individual who owns a car but is never affected by the marketplace of cars -- old cars, new cars, inexpensive or expensive cars, and so on. Every good is implicated in a value system which is substantially influenced by mass media's controlled symbol-flow.

Collective memory allows us to model how media systems with substantially differentiated structural characteristics, such as monopolistic and bounded (mass media) versus democratic and unbounded (cyberspace), impact upon the social control of thought and behaviour within a globalized cultural system. The control of the flow of symbols, which is also the control of meaning within the social world, is an issue of definitional control over the framework of shared social reality. Collective memory enables us to describe the implications of a mode of communication upon the mode of world-making.

⁶⁰⁵Marshall Sahlins likewise speaks of a dominant site of symbolic production within contemporary society, a site "which supplies the major idiom of other relations and activities. One can thus speak of a privileged institutional locus of the symbolic process, whence emanates a classificatory grid imposed upon the total culture" *Culture and Practical Reason*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 211.

Final Reflections on Media Culture

How do we resist the economic system's socialization process of definitional control? I have already criticized the resistance strategies of education (media pedagogy) as well as increased government regulation as failing to address directly the control which ultimately derives from elite ownership of mass media systems. A third possible strategy of resistance seeks to use the mass media for disseminating messages which attempt to subvert the symbols and undermine the values of the economic system. This third strategy is seen in the actions of the Adbuster organization's (www.adbusters.org) various attempts at buying advertising time on U.S. national television stations in 1997. One of these ads, entitled "Buy Nothing Day" and produced for television distribution, encourages consumers to stop consuming so much. The ad was rejected by the CBS and NBC television networks. Richard Gitter, vice-president of advertising standards at General Electric's NBC network, explained their refusal to sell air-time for the 30-second "Buy Nothing Day" advertisement in the following terms: "We don't want to take any advertising that's inimical to our legitimate business interests."⁶⁰⁶ The CBS network, owned by the corporate giant, Westinghouse Electric Corporation (which is also a major weapons manufacturer), also refused the "Buy Nothing Day" advertisement because it is, in their opinion, "in opposition to the current economic policy in the United States."⁶⁰⁷

Adbuster's general failure to purchase television air-time for advertisements which question the values of the economic system suggests that there are very real limitations to a

⁶⁰⁶Robert Berner. "A Holiday Greeting Networks Won't Air: Shoppers are "Pigs"," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 1997, A1.

⁶⁰⁷*Ibid.*

resistance strategy which attempts to use elite-owned mass media systems for 'anti-advertising' campaigns directed against the current economic system. Resistance enacted through the economic system's privately-owned definitional system will be limited by the same controlling forces which limited Adbuster's access to mass media. If it is to be effective, resistance cannot be based on using mass media to undermine the dominant messages of mass media. It would be like breaking into someone's house and asking to borrow their gun so you can redistribute their private property. Not only does this resistance strategy run up against some serious economic self-interest within mass media systems, it also enhances the legitimacy of mass media. Alternative content, such as cultural-resistance messages, would only serve to give the overall system of mass media an appearance of increased critical perspective, educational value, and legitimacy.

Increased or better education, regulation, or direct engagement and participation within mass media are highly flawed strategies of resistance to the economic system's pervasive definition control. Opting out is not an option, as the entire global context is, to one degree or another, connected through the economic system's processes, institutions, and definitional systems. I suspect that the structural change in symbol-flow, as heralded by cyberspace, brings with it the potential for new media resistance strategies. An inventory of current uses of the Internet for resisting the values and meanings of the economic system would shed light on the potential of cyberspace for cultural subversion or redefinition of collectively-shared reality-frameworks. I have examined three strategies of resistance, (1) moving and multiplying redefined symbols (content or images) through cyberspace (faster than the legal process, as seen with Barbie); (2) changing the status of privately-owned content, such as sacred texts, from the

status of private property to the status of 'public domain' community property by massive duplication and near-instantaneous redistribution within cyberspace via the World Wide Web and e-mail; and (3) using cyberspace to bring the resources needed to document and criticize a situation, organization, or institution, as seen in the case of the unethical practices of a multinational corporation, such as McDonald's. These three strategies of cultural resistance have had only minimal impact upon media culture. But it may only be a matter of time before a challenging message is nailed on some virtual Wittenberg door and, as a result, media culture accomodates a new symbol-set and a novel social order.

In light of the tremendous and all-encompassing socialization power of privately-owned definitional systems such as mass media, the issue of cultural or media resistance may prove to be one of the most urgent social issues of contemporary society. There are good reasons to believe that the past one hundred years of mass socialization through communication technologies such as printing, radio, film, and television only foreshadows a much darker future where definitional control is far more effective, as a result of the movement from analog communication technologies to digital technologies, and as a result of increased corporate influence in areas such as education, government, and public institutions. As the latter issue of the corporate takeover of the public sphere has been well-addressed by social theorists such as Herbert Schiller, Noam Chomsky, and John Ralston Saul, my comments will focus on the current changes in communication technology and their probable impact upon corporate defintional control.

Communication technologies are moving from analog systems to digital systems.⁶⁰⁸ This transformation will allow the owners of mass communication systems to gather highly-detailed information about the viewing habits and consumption patterns of both mass and micro audiences. It is unlikely that governments will enact serious impediments to this data-gathering process. It is easy to imagine that greater precision in modelling consumption and viewing patterns will lead to greater definitional control. While the details of this argument necessarily remain beyond the scope of this analysis, it is not unreasonable to argue that, in a highly-interconnected digital world, mechanisms of social control will prove to be far more effective than has been witnessed in this first century of electronic communication technology. At the very least, a hermeneutic of suspicion demands that we question and scrutinize the claims being made by high-tech gurus that the coming digital, interconnected world, epitomized in U.S. Vice-President Al Gore's 'Information Superhighway,' will substantially improve the quality of life and the effectiveness of democracy.

Media theorist Derrick De Kerckhove provides a current example of high-tech gurus that display a politically naïve model of business and technology. De Kerckhove claims that business "obeys laws that are consistent and universal ... business is a self-adjusting and self-balancing system of technology transfer. By and large, it seems to be good for us."⁶⁰⁹ De Kerckhove appears to continue Marshall McLuhan's psychologizing tendency when he claims that

⁶⁰⁸See Nicholas Negroponte. *Being Digital*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

⁶⁰⁹Derrick De Kerckhove. *The Skin of Culture: Investigating the New Electronic Reality*, (Toronto: Somerville House, 1995), 188.

“television talks primarily to the body, not to the mind.”⁶¹⁰ De Kerckhove coins the term “psychotechnology” to define television’s role as a “collective imagination .. a consensual, electronic teledemocracy.”⁶¹¹ Here we see again a lack of critical political awareness, for as my analysis has suggested, television can hardly be described as democratic or consensual. It is a tool which the élite use to control social reality. It is no more representative of the public mind than the *Globe and Mail* is. To lose sight of the political and economic imbalance in mass media systems is to abandon critical theory.

A digital media culture largely owned and operated by private commercial interest should be the subject of widespread alarm and concern among the ‘body politic’ but it is not. In place of this possible focus for public concern we find repeated attention paid by media to the possible dangers of a cyberspace which lies outside the control of government regulation and the influence of market forces such as privatization and monopolization. The economic self-interest of mass media is a sufficient explanation for the intense pollution and danger fears surrounding cyberspace which are represented in media discourse.⁶¹² In light of the present monopoly over socialization that is held by the economy’s definitional systems I find it difficult to agree with Mary Douglas’ claim that a major social problem of the present is the lack of commitment

⁶¹⁰*Ibid.*, 8.

⁶¹¹*Ibid.*, 5.

⁶¹²The root of the danger fears surrounding cyberspace is the challenge posed by cyberspace to the economic system’s control over a collective representation of social reality. Mary Douglas claims that “Hostility and a sense of threat are a sign that collective representations are at work” (Douglas. *Risk and Blame*. 160).

among the masses to a common set of symbols.⁶¹³ The consuming masses within the economic system give every appearance of being firmly entrenched within the symbols and values which dominate mass media. Lack of mass commitment to a common set of symbols is merely a symptom -- the actual problem is the lack of ownership and control *by the masses* over the mechanisms of mass socialization.

It would be a mistake to assume that the economic system's values and the monopolization of mass definitional systems, such as mass media, are forever destined to remain under the control of the élite. Media theorist Harold Innis has suggested that "monopolies of knowledge had developed and declined partly in relation to the medium of communication on which they were built."⁶¹⁴ Could it be possible that a monopolized economic system is fundamentally undermined by the de-monopolization of symbol-flow which is occurring within cyberspace?

Here I am suggesting that the economic system is facing a loss of monopoly over its legitimating cosmology. This loss of monopoly is similar to what happened to religious institutions' eroded monopoly within contemporary industrial societies. Sociologist Thomas Luckmann has described the character of religious institutions as being "radically transformed by the loss of monopoly in defining the sacred cosmos."⁶¹⁵ This loss of monopoly over symbol-flow (a shared cosmology) resulted in the failure of religious institutions to transmit what Luckmann

⁶¹³Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 1.

⁶¹⁴Harold Innis. *Empire and Communication*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 3.

⁶¹⁵Thomas Luckmann. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 107.

calls an “obligatory model of religion.”⁶¹⁶ I am suggesting that cyberspace represents the early stages of a similar loss of monopoly over a shared cosmos, in this case the economic system’s transmission of an almost-obligatory model of social order. The economy is a media-dependent system, it depends on mass media for the socialization of mass consumption. Cyberspace is fragmenting the controlled symbol-flow within media culture and this fragmentation represents the possible de-monopolization of the economic system’s legitimating and socializing cosmology. Religious institutions provide a historical parallel for the fragmentation of an obligatory and monopolized cosmology.

Early in the book of Genesis (11:1-9), right after the story of Noah and the flood, there appears a story, in anthropological terminology; a myth. This myth speaks of a time when the entire world shared the same language. Using what may have been a new technology, baked bricks, this people with one language, the descendants of Noah, decided to coordinate their actions and together build a city with a tower. They did this to make a name for themselves and to prevent themselves from being scattered over the face of the earth. One day a divine being, the Lord, visits to see what the descendants of Noah are up to. Seeing the city and its tower reaching up to the heavens, the Lord concludes that “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible.”⁶¹⁷ The idea of Noah’s descendants being able to achieve anything they plan to do proves to be too much for the Lord. So the Lord decides to confuse their language and create misunderstanding among the

⁶¹⁶*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷“Genesis,” *The Bible*, New International Version, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978), 64.

people. With this divine act that creates multiple languages, construction on the tower of Babel comes to a halt and the descendants of Noah migrate throughout the entire world.

From the perspective of contemporary society, this myth expresses a tremendous fear towards one of the more common visions of our collective future -- a global village where everyone is in one way or another connected to each other. To read the subtext of today's prevalent technological vision is to return to the dream of the tower of Babel. High-tech companies such as IBM and Microsoft use the theme of global connectedness in their advertising as a metaphor for the promise of their communications products. The promise of the idolized "Information Superhighway" is complete connectivity -- wherever you go you will still be connected to the homestead and the workplace. But this vision of the future is less than perfect.

The central historical dilemma of communication systems is their tendency to succumb to monopolization within the empires of the élite. While the original meaning of the tower of Babel has been lost in the mists of time, it is possible the myth of Genesis was telling a story about the problem of empire and communication. With a unified communication system such as a common language the myth suggests that nothing would be impossible to human beings while also implying that it is good for human organizations to have limits. Could it be that the prevalent metaphors of a high-tech communications society -- the Information Superhighway and the Global Village it creates -- are modern versions of this ancient myth -- the tower of Babel and one common language? While the corporate world is busy building its tower of Babel, an improved, globalized communication system which will create a fully-interconnected Global Village, the descendants of Noah are also at work in cyberspace creating a virtual landscape filled with thousands of languages and millions of stories. Thus the two forces at work in the

myth of Babel are still with us today -- the forces of monolithic communication systems and the diversity of human tongues and multiple tribes.

As the World Wide Web, the multimedia area of cyberspace, is still less than five years old, it is thus pure speculation to project the findings of my analysis into the future. The radicalized freedom of expression which now characterizes cyberspace faces market forces of privatization and monopolization, and these global forces are capitalized with billions of dollars in their war chests. These forces also have privileged access to government officials and public institutions. Much depends on whether or not the corporate takeover of the public sphere continues and how legal systems respond to acts of property redistribution and cultural appropriation within cyberspace. Edward L. Bernays, a pioneer in the use of public relations and propaganda techniques, suggested in 1928 that mass media creates "an invisible government which is the true ruling power" of America.⁶¹⁸ My analysis of mass media suggests that Bernays' initial observation of the role of mass media in organizing the habits and opinions of the masses was indeed correct. On this Noam Chomsky has had the final word, "The Pentagon is not going to give people as a gift a technique for free communication which undermines the major media; if it's going that way it will be because of struggle, like any other victory for freedom."⁶¹⁹

Mary Douglas draws a direct connection between our freedom to think and our communication systems when she suggests that the "free expression of our faculties is limited by

⁶¹⁸Edward L. Bernays. *Propaganda*, 9.

⁶¹⁹Rosie Cross and Chris Mountford. "Manufacturing Dissent An Interview with Noam Chomsky," *21C: The Magazine of the 21st Century*, Volume 2, 1995, 18.

the media of expression.”⁶²⁰ If control and ownership of a primary medium of expression such as mass media lie in the hands of a few, then it is highly probable that our free expression is also implicated in the control and ownership of mass definitional systems. Within media culture the social control of thought is achieved and globalized through the structural control of mass media. To an as yet unknown degree, cyberspace has redefined the limits of mass media’s definitional control. How this globalized leak within the definitional system changes the nature of media culture’s reality-framework will be determined by how the newly available symbol-sets of cyberspace are put to use within the social worlds of local cultures. The medium has changed and the message is unknown.

⁶²⁰Douglas. *Natural Symbols*. 156.

Appendix A: Issues in Culture Theory and Media Theory

Implicit or explicit within every analysis of mass media is a theory of culture -- an understanding of social interaction.⁶²¹ Cultural theory plays a critical role in evaluating media effects.⁶²² Within communication studies, a debate rages over mass media's impact upon individual and group (or mass) behaviour. The debate is not isolated from other issues but stands entwined with differing conceptions of culture.⁶²³ The debate over mass media's nature and impact tends to suffer from ill-defined conceptions of culture or worse, implicit assumptions

⁶²¹In *Living Room Wars*, media theorist Ien Ang notes that "one of the most significant trends in contemporary communication studies" is the interest in culture. Ang describes her approach to communication studies as 'reception analysis' which explores "the ways in which people actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them." Ang stresses the point that audience interpretations and uses of media texts and technologies are not merely an individual psychological process but are essentially a politicized cultural process. The focus of Ang's media theory is the communications industry conceived of in the broadest terms as the "transnational markets and transnational distribution systems" which provide the audience for diverse media products (film and television, press and publishing, music and idea). Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars*, 133-137.

⁶²²James W. Carey notes that a branch of communication studies which he refers to as the "effects tradition" suffered under utilitarianism as a model for human action. It should be clear that Carey's suggestion that we "abandon the effects tradition" does not mean that we no longer contemplate the effect of cyberspace and mass media from the perspective of cultural theory (nor does Carey suggest doing so). Words such as 'effect', 'structure', 'mass', 'order', and even 'culture' should not be abandoned in the name of the evacuation of theories from the rubble of the past. Carey. *Communication as Culture*, 93.

⁶²³For an example of the debate within anthropology over the cultural construction of reality, see "Human Worlds are Culturally Constructed," in *Key Debates in Anthropology*. (London: Routledge, 1996). 99-146. On communication and culture Raymond Williams says this: "Any real theory of communication is a theory of community," *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, 313.

about culture. One of the goals of this dissertation is to demonstrate how a model of culture, as embodied in collective memory, informs the analysis of mass media's impact upon the social world. To illustrate this point this section briefly explores how differing conceptions of culture create a contrasting analysis of mass media within media theorists Ien Ang's *Living Room Wars* and James W. Carey's *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. As will be seen, the heart of the issue is the extent of culture's role in imposing order upon a chaotic universe.

In *Living Room Wars* Ang finds fault with Carey's emphasis on "ritual order and common culture"⁶²⁴ which she finds in Carey's *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (1989, reprinted by Routledge in 1992). Ang suggests that Carey's model of communication "reproduces the assumption of capitalist modernity as a universal civilization."⁶²⁵ Carey appears to be guilty of the ultimate fallacy in the eyes of postmodern media theory -- the suggestion that a "common culture" continues to exist.⁶²⁶ Here Ang is referring to Carey's proposal that recasting the study of communication in terms of a ritual model would "give us a way in which to rebuild a model of and for communication of some restorative value in reshaping our common culture."⁶²⁷ Carey clearly assumes a common culture which can be restored and reshaped through better media theory and praxis. Ang replies to Carey's suggestion by questioning whether or not a common culture "can be created in the ever-expanding and extremely differentiated social reality

⁶²⁴Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 166.

⁶²⁵*Ibid.*

⁶²⁶*Ibid.*

⁶²⁷Carey. *Communication as Culture*, 34-35.

constructed by capitalist modernity.”⁶²⁸ The roots of Ang’s criticism are to be found in her understanding of contemporary reality which she describes as a “totalized yet fundamentally dispersed world-system of capitalist *postmodernity*.”⁶²⁹ According to Ang, capitalist postmodernity rules out the possibility of a common culture. It is unfortunate that neither Ang nor Carey are explicit in their understanding of what constitutes a ‘common culture’. Here I assume they intend a system of shared values and meanings. This dispute between Carey and Ang provides a poignant example of how theories of media are dependent upon theories of culture. Carey’s notion of culture rests upon dynamics of order and widely-shared commonalities, while Ang’s notion of culture emphasizes indeterminacy and chaos. Ang’s media theory provides an opportunity to briefly explore how poststructural theory, as embodied in Ang’s *Living Room Wars*, is not necessarily at odds with an understanding of order, structure, and mass or common meaning as found in Mary Douglas’ cultural theory.

Media Culture -- Modern or Postmodern?

Within communication studies the debate over mass media frequently focuses upon order versus chaos, shared meaning versus ambiguity, and similar opposing descriptions of the nature of the emerging social order. My model of mass media and culture attempts to include chaos, ambiguity, uncertainty, indeterminacy, *and* order, structure, clarity and constraint. A comparison of Ang’s description of postmodernity with Douglas’ theory of culture suggests that both

⁶²⁸Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 166.

⁶²⁹*Ibid.*, 168.

perspectives share much in common but differ in emphasis. This difference in emphasis can be seen surrounding Ang's discussion of chaos in the social world.

Ang describes communication as fundamentally problematic within contemporary culture, which she equates with postmodern culture. Failure to communicate is the norm within capitalist postmodernity where she locates "radical *indeterminacy* of meaning."⁶³⁰ Society for Ang is a chaotic system, "a complex kind of order... a system born out of the precarious structuration of chaos."⁶³¹

It is difficult to determine to exactly what extent Ang sees meaning as indeterminate across the social world. She clearly relates indeterminacy of meaning to the limits, or perhaps the end, of social order.⁶³² For Ang, society is a partially closed system with a partial establishing of order and a "partial fixing of meanings and identities."⁶³³ Ang defines *capitalist postmodernity* as a "systemic force" which "encourages social *disintegration*" through the injection of chaos which constantly lurks "behind any institution of order." But this definition of global culture as capitalist postmodernity fails to account for Douglas' anthropological perspective which sees chaos as a historical constant upon which any social group strives to impose order through the processes of classification.⁶³⁴ When considered as the potential for the

⁶³⁰*Ibid.*

⁶³¹*Ibid.*, 175.

⁶³²Ang says this: "The idea of indeterminacy of meaning ... does away with any notion of social order." *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶³³*Ibid.*, 173.

⁶³⁴Douglas. *How Institutions Think*.

dissolution of shared values and classifications, chaos may well be a constant feature of cultures throughout time. If this is so then capitalist modernity, *post* or otherwise, needs to be characterized by something more unique than the systemic possibility of social disintegration.

While I recognize that Douglas' cultural theory is rooted in the structural legacy of Durkheim I suggest that, nonetheless, Douglas' theorizing of culture and communication is not entirely incompatible with poststructural media theory such as Ang's. For Douglas, the social world is rife with ambiguity, collective action (and the collective meaning it implies) is highly problematic and unstable, the social world arises out of an un-ordered, chaotic universe, and whatever common meanings, categories, or values do exist are the subject of an ongoing cultural debate over the very order of society.⁶³⁵ In this analysis of mass media systems I have attempted to balance the indeterminacy of meaning, which at least partially describes the global context of the mass media audience, with Douglas' model of culture which insists upon shared implicit meanings underneath the structure of everyday social intercourse (*Chapter One*).

Ang describes capitalist postmodernity as promoting chaos and indeterminacy through the "fixing and unfixing of meanings and identities" which encourages the "dominant to feverishly step up both the intensity and range of their ordering practices."⁶³⁶ Her description of the 'dominant' and their 'ordering practices' suggests that mass media is implicated in the creation of a common set of values and meanings. Yet her suggestion that resistance within media culture should be replaced with uncertainty and ambiguity does not pay sufficient homage to the

⁶³⁵Douglas says this: "flux and disorder are more probable in social life than order." Douglas. "Culture and Collective Action," 48.

⁶³⁶Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 178.

definitional power of mass media within the context of everyday experience.⁶³⁷ I have argued that mass media's influence over the symbols in use within everyday life makes the issue of indeterminacy of meaning susceptible to overstating the extent of ambiguity within media culture. By elevating the role of chaos and indeterminacy Ang's poststructuralist media theory borders on losing its critical stance. Indeterminacy of meaning within mass media is constrained by the ordering processes of culture. Douglas' cultural theory provides a way to describe mass media's symbols as thoroughly framed by limited indeterminacy.

In his overview of evolving methods in audience studies David Morley outlines the various theoretical models of audience response to mass media.⁶³⁸ Morley identifies the heart of the matter when he suggests that a media model must strike a balance between interpreting media texts as having a strictly determined meaning which imposes itself on all of the audience, and interpreting media texts as completely open to any possible meanings.⁶³⁹ Cultural theory provides a method of arriving at this balance between structure and chaos. Cultural theory opens the context of media analysis beyond the limiting horizon of just one individual interacting with just one text. Morley proposes that, with regard to television viewing, the "appropriate mode of analysis" must move beyond the individual to include the family or household as the unit of consumption.⁶⁴⁰ Without rejecting this approach, the cultural theory used herein suggests that

⁶³⁷*Ibid.*, 179.

⁶³⁸David Morley. "Changing Paradigms in Audience Studies." In *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, edited by Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth. (London: Routledge, 1991), 16-43.

⁶³⁹*Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 36.

media consumption must also be framed within the unit of culture (group or institution) as it interfaces with other cultures within the global matrix of the transnational media sphere. The prevalence of mass behaviour patterns across the globe implies that global structures impact upon local behaviour and so limit indeterminacy within the social worlds of contemporary society.

Limited Indeterminacy

Ang's cultural theory describes a world of constantly changing meanings and identities which limit the impact of global media systems on local cultures. But does this adequately account for the reality of the global mass market? A critical media theory needs to strike a balance between indeterminacy and chaos as described through the lens of postmodern theorists and the solid, ugly nature of the legacy of contemporary society, which media theorist Herbert I. Schiller describes as the "international structure of cultural imperialism" (colonialism).⁶⁴¹ Schiller's *Communication and Cultural Domination* describes mass media as a technology of cultural domination. According to Schiller, communications technology is not neutral but carries with it the cultural perspective of the social order that produced it.⁶⁴² Ang makes a similar point about the structural bias of media systems which she refers to as the "very substantial Americaness" of global media systems.⁶⁴³ Schiller notes that corporate media systems do not

⁶⁴¹Schiller. *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 88.

⁶⁴²*Ibid.*, 89.

⁶⁴³Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 161. As with Schiller, Ang uses a global model which has a 'centre', 'semi-periphery' and a 'periphery'. She also matches Schiller's description of the cultural bias of mass media as expressed through its working principles, corporate culture and symbolic content. (*Ibid.*) For a discussion of the relationship of the centre to the periphery in

simply invade nations. Ruling groups in areas dominated by the world capitalist economy play a collaborative role.⁶⁴⁴ According to Schiller, the ruling sector at the center influences the shape of consciousness throughout the world system. Surely the global economic system provides the starkest evidence of limited indeterminacy of meaning within mass media through the pervasive patterns of behaviour made most visible by mass consumption.

Globalized mass consumption patterns suggest that there are limits to indeterminacy within the realm of mass media, but how do we arrive at a model of limited indeterminacy? Media theorist Philip Schlesinger criticizes both Ang's micro-level analysis by claiming it fails to account for how large cultural collectivities constitute local identities and at the same time criticizes Schiller for fatalism in the face of transnational corporations.⁶⁴⁵ Schlesinger claims that behind the current discourse on culture and communication there is a lack of any clearly articulated theory of how collective identity is constructed.⁶⁴⁶ This could be one of the reasons why mass media is subjected to such widely differing claims by media theorists. The contrast between various theoretical perspectives are as wide as the gulf between Schiller, on the one hand, claiming that transnational corporations have saturated the cultural space of nations

postmodern theory, see Nelly Richard, "The Cultural Periphery and Postmodern Decentering: Latin America's Reconversion of Borders," translated by John Brotherton. *Rethinking Borders*, edited by John C. Welchman. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.) 71-84.

⁶⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 17. One suspects that collaboration is a historical feature of relationships between empires and the élite of subjugated groups.

⁶⁴⁵Philip Schlesinger. *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities*. (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 137-151.

⁶⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 150. Schlesinger says this: "in communication research, collective identity functions as a residual category" (*Ibid.*).

throughout the globe,⁶⁴⁷ and media theorists Fiske and Hartley, on the other hand, claiming personal autonomy for the television viewer who “supplies the conditions, both semiotic and social, under which any specific message becomes meaningful.”⁶⁴⁸

With Ang claiming mass media as the realm of indeterminacy and ambiguity, Carey calling for media theory which restores a common culture, Fiske and Hartley elevating personal autonomy, and Schiller describing the saturation of local cultural space by transnational corporations we can see how the problem of culture as shared values and meanings is central to the current debate within communication studies. What is required here is a global model of culture which has utility for describing the globalized phenomenon of mass media. How can we assess the impact of globalized mass media upon collectivities throughout local cultures? Without implying that mass media is homogenizing world culture into a single cultural entity such as a global village,⁶⁴⁹ I suggest that the key is to be found in the nature of culture itself. Cultural theory provides a way to describe the limits to theorizing chaos and indeterminacy within the emerging world-system of mass media, mass production and mass consumption.

⁶⁴⁷Schiller. “Electronic Information Flows: New Basis for Global Domination?” *Television in Transition: Papers from the First International Television Studies Conference*, edited by P. Drummond and R. Paterson. (London: BFI, 1985) 18.

⁶⁴⁸Fiske and Hartley. *Reading Television*, 126.

⁶⁴⁹Ang. *Living Room Wars*, 163. Ien Ang refers to the concept of the ‘global village’ as the fantasy of “the universal culmination of capitalist modernity.”

Constraining Chaos and Limiting Indeterminacy

Douglas' theory of culture, as embodied in her model of collective memory, can provide the foundation for describing the limits to both local and individual meaning-making and global cultural homogenization within the realm of media culture. The key to these two poles of the economic system -- the global and the local -- is found in what Douglas calls the "central argument of cultural theory."⁶⁵⁰ The central argument is that although culture is a collective product it is nonetheless constrained.⁶⁵¹ Culture ensures that within the social world, anything does *not* go. There are limits to the transformation of a social world, limits which are embedded within cultural processes. Douglas sees collectivities as resisting pressure to transform as a result of the shared principles which legitimate collective action.⁶⁵² Here we come to the system-sustaining effects of collective memory. Collective memory is the communicative process which reproduces the legitimating principles that constitute a culture. Collective memory describes how collective action is constrained by shared principles which legitimate the structures of the social world (*Chapter One*).

As can be seen by the following definition of culture by media theorist Armand Mattelart, the model of culture proposed by Mary Douglas is not foreign to communication theorists, although her work is still largely unknown within this discipline (although Durkheim's contribution is often well recognized),

⁶⁵⁰Douglas. "Culture and Collective Action," 47.

⁶⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁶⁵²*Ibid.*

Culture is understood here as the collective memory that makes communication possible between members of a historically situated community, creating among its members a community of meaning ... allowing them to adapt to a natural environment ... and finally, giving them the ability to construct rational argument about the values implicit in the prevailing form of social relations.⁶⁵³

Herein I offer a refined model of how mass media participates in the control of the social order and how cyberspace threatens to undermine this control within media culture.

The Problem of Global Culture

This dissertation represents a current trend within anthropology of addressing cultural processes within global relationships. Eric R. Wolf stands among the growing number of anthropologists and cultural theorists who are exploring an anthropology that aims to understand the processes which bind societies and cultures within global relationships. Wolf claims that our conception of culture must account for the constant stream of new connections being forged between diverse and changing societies.⁶⁵⁴ The problem of culture within anthropology is increasingly focused upon theorizing interaction between cultures, societies, nations, and market places within an evolving global information and communication system.⁶⁵⁵ By applying a model of collective memory to the globalized phenomena of mass media and cyberspace I am

⁶⁵³Armand Mattelart. *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture*, translated by Susan Emanuel and James A. Cohen. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 241.

⁶⁵⁴Eric R. Wolf. "Global Perspectives in Anthropology: Problems and Prospects." In *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Lourdes Arizpe. (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 31-43.

⁶⁵⁵Lourdes Arizpe. "Scale and Interaction in Cultural Process: Towards an Anthropological Perspective of Global Change." In *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Lourdes Arizpe. (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996).

building a partial model of culture which has explanatory utility within globalized systems. My analysis of mass media is embedded thoroughly within the problem of conceptualizing global culture. Here a global culture is seen as an inevitable aspect of the “common social environment shared by all people on earth.”⁶⁵⁶ Collective memory describes a ‘common social environment’ and a global culture as inseparable as the concepts of ‘mind’ and ‘brain’.

Processes such as implicit meaning, symbols and pollution beliefs are described herein in sufficiently abstract, macro-level terms so as to provide a reasonable foundation for considering a related globalized phenomenon -- mass media. A communicative model of culture minimizes the opportunity for cultural bias to overwhelm a model of mass media’s role in symbolic production. An example of this dilemma of cultural bias in mass media theory can be seen in media theorist Denis McQuail’s model, which reduces the power relationship of mass communication to influence through persuasion.⁶⁵⁷ The problem with locating the primary social dynamic of mass media in the realm of influence and persuasion is the cultural specificity of these processes. An analysis of mass media and Japanese students by Alex S. Edelstein (*et al.*) suggests that the cultural context will differentiate information from influence.⁶⁵⁸ The relationship between information and persuasion will vary from culture to culture. A global model of mass media cannot be based upon social processes which may or may not be present

⁶⁵⁶Peter Beyer. *Religion and Globalization*, 7.

⁶⁵⁷McQuail. *Communication*, 196.

⁶⁵⁸Alex S. Edelstein, Youichi Ito and Hans Mathias Kepplinger. *Communication and Culture: A Comparative Approach*, (New York: Longman, 1989.) 206-207. Edelstein (*et al.*) says this: “A culture may or may not utilize mass media for both information and influence” (*Ibid.*, 207).

within local cultures. This does raise the issue of intent versus effect within mass media systems. It is conceivable that Western media corporations see themselves in the business of influence and are operating with an inadequate and biased model of the global world-order. But herein I am interested in modelling what constitutes globalized mass media systems and not what the system operators and owners *think* they are up to.

The Problem of Mass Culture

Collective memory implies that mass culture is a necessity, or at least unavoidable, when social interaction is extended via globalization beyond the boundaries of local social worlds. When I step off an airplane in Denmark or South Africa the grounds for social interaction have already been established through the globalization of collective memory. The globalization of collective memory is a way of describing the grounds for communication (implicit meanings, shared symbols and so forth) as existing to varying degrees throughout the realm of media culture. Globalization extends shared culture throughout the world-system. This way of viewing mass culture requires rethinking descriptions of mass culture as a “spreading ooze,” descriptions which contrast the products of mass culture as “debased” and “trivial” against the “originality and beauty of real life.”⁶⁵⁹ Cultural theorist Dwight Macdonald’s characterization of mass culture as a “collective monstrosity” wherein there are just “*too many people*” (Macdonald’s emphasis) debases the individual’s experience by both denigrating a globalized collectivity and

⁶⁵⁹Dwight Macdonald. “A Theory of Mass Culture,” *Culture and Mass Culture*, edited by Peter Davison, Rolf Meyersohn and Edward Shils. (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1978. Originally published in *Diogenes*, No. 3, 1953), 182-183.

by denying the possibility that a manufactured commodity can be an art form (which Andy Warhol certainly established).⁶⁶⁰

The problem of conceptualizing mass culture without resorting to denigrating the concept of the *mass* has its roots in the growth of industrial society. In *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, Raymond Williams describes how, with the rise of population in the industrial towns, the word *masses* became the new word for *mob*, and the “traditional characteristics of the mob were retained in its significance: gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit. The masses, on this evidence, formed the perpetual threat to culture. Mass thinking, mass-suggestion, mass-prejudice would threaten to swamp considered individual thinking and feeling.”⁶⁶¹ This historical root of the idea of *mass* may still be affecting our ability to conceptualize mass culture and mass communication in non-pejorative terms. Williams also notes another ideological problem associated with the idea of a mass society. If the masses include the working people, then a mass culture must come to terms with “the declared intention of the working people to alter society” and alter it in ways of which the élite may deeply disapprove.⁶⁶² A democratic conception of mass society will inevitably confront the inequality of a global definitional system which excludes the masses from full control and participation in the world-making process.

⁶⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 180. For a more balanced discussion of the evaluation of mass culture versus high culture, see Herbert J. Gans. “Popular Culture in America: Social Problem in a Mass Society or Social Asset in a Pluralist Society?” In *Culture and Mass Culture*, edited by Peter Davison, Rolf Meyersohn and Edward Shils. (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1978), 233-304.

⁶⁶¹Raymond Williams. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, 298.

⁶⁶²*Ibid.*, 299.

A global world requires mass culture if communication is to take place across cultures throughout the world.⁶⁶³ It is often noted that models of global society fail to take culture into account.⁶⁶⁴ Collective memory as a cultural communication process suggests that global mass culture is a necessary condition and corrects this oversight within theory. Collective memory will suggest that the globalization of symbols serves to convey the implicit meanings necessary for communication. Theorizing global culture as the globalization of the grounds for communication departs from the conception of global culture as a process of homogenization, harmonization, or supersession. Homogenization is not necessarily a feature of local culture and neither is it a necessary feature of globalized culture. Globalized mass culture embodies all the contradictions of the cultural debates which occur at the local level. There is no necessary relationship between the globalization of the grounds for culture -- which Douglas describes as the communicative processes of symbols -- and the construction of a singular global identity.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶³This sense of the globalization of collective memory contradicts Edward Shils' conclusion that "the realization of a common culture is an impossibility." Edward Shils. *The Constitution of Society*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 88. Shils' description of mass society as a closer integration of mass populations into the "central institutional and value systems of society" is similar to my discussion of the monopolization of global symbols by capitalist modernity (*Ibid.*, 71) in Chapter Three.

⁶⁶⁴Peter Worsley has commented on this oversight within political economy theory. Peter Worsley. "Models of the Modern World-System." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 92. See also Johann P. Arnason's "Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London, Sage, 1990), 225.

⁶⁶⁵Anthony D. Smith's analysis of global culture fails to understand that the "project of a global culture" is one and the same as the project of "global communications." You cannot have one without the other. Anthony D. Smith. "Towards a Global Culture?." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 180.

Apart from a complete dismantling of all connections between cultures across the globe the end of mass culture is impossible. Here it is important to understand that global mass culture does not equal the homogenization of local culture.⁶⁶⁶ Global mass culture herein only describes the minimal necessary conditions for communication between local cultures. In this regard my task herein partially fulfills Roland Robertson's call for a "minimal model of globalization."⁶⁶⁷ Here I have situated the entire world as the primary unit of analysis and examine mass media, cyberspace, local culture and global culture as aspects of the primary global unit. The focus of this analysis of the global unit or 'world-system' is the nature of definitional power over social reality which is realized through globe-spanning media systems.⁶⁶⁸ My analysis of a global

⁶⁶⁶This is also suggested by Arjun Appadurai's essay, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 307.

⁶⁶⁷Roland Robertson. "Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 25.

⁶⁶⁸My use of the phrase 'world-system' bears no relationship to Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, although Albert Bergesen's comment that the "fledgling world-system perspective" would benefit by placing the role of the collective, culture, and power "at the heart of the analysis" suggests that my work may be of use to world-systems theorists. See Albert Bergesen. "Turning World-System Theory on its Head." In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone. (London: Sage, 1990), 80. Wallerstein defines the world-system as an economic unit with a "single division of labour and multiple cultural systems." (Immanuel Wallerstein. "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 16, 1974, 5). Here I use the term 'world-system' to describe the globalization of cultural processes embodied in collective memory.

world, a world larger than any one local culture, suggests that mass culture is necessary for global transcultural communication.⁶⁶⁹

It is high time to think about mass communication, mass culture, and mass society in terms which do not presuppose that because of its size, the masses must, by nature, be revolting. Media theorist Valerie Walkerdine comments on the roots of this tendency to denigrate the mass, “The grand psychological meta-narratives endlessly describe the mass psyche and behaviour, to the point, as in [Fredric] Jameson, of mass pathologization. Schizophrenia has moved from the product of dysfunctional families, as in Laing, to a general psychological concomitant of the postmodern condition.”⁶⁷⁰ The widespread ambivalent reaction to Marshall McLuhan’s phrase, ‘global village,’ is further indication that a western culture wrapped firmly in the myth of the sovereign individual has a great deal of difficulty when confronted with theories about our collective nature.

Jensen Contra Jensen

Douglas’ theory of symbols and social reproduction shares a similar perspective with the semiotic theory of media theorist Klaus Bruhn Jensen. Jensen describes social semiotics as

⁶⁶⁹Sociologist John Scott notes that “it is unclear whether it is yet possible to talk of a transnational capitalist class at the global level,” yet suggests a global capitalist class may be on the horizon. John Scott. *Corporate Business and Capitalist Classes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 312-313. The globalization of collective memory would provide for the cultural analysis of the globalization of a capitalist class which, according to Scott, is able “to ensure its continuity over time through its monopolization of the educational system as well as its monopolization of wealth” (*Ibid.*, 20).

⁶⁷⁰Valerie Walkerdine. “Postmodernity, Subjectivity and the Media,” *Critical Social Psychology*, edited by Tomás Ibáñez and Lupicinio Iñiguez. (London: Sage 1997), 176.

theory which explains how consciousness, all human perception and cognition, are always mediated by signs.⁶⁷¹ The way in which Jensen describes signs largely matches Douglas' notion of symbols. According to Jensen, signs "mediate the interaction between humans and their natural as well as cultural environment ... Signs present potential courses of action."⁶⁷² As with the ongoing cultural debate over symbols and the assumptions attached to them, Jensen likewise describes the modern mass media audience as negotiating the relevance of signs for their social action.⁶⁷³ Mass-mediated signs provide the modern audience with "manuscripts for action," but the audience negotiates the meaning and relevance of these signs.⁶⁷⁴ Just as Douglas describes symbols as communicating the structure and meaning of the social world, Jensen describes semiosis (the mediation of meaning through signs) as a "continuous feedback mechanism addressing the meaning of social action."⁶⁷⁵ Both collective memory and semiosis are processes embedded in the social world which structure human perception and cognition, and inform the co-creation of the social world among individuals.

Jensen defines mass communication as a "technological, institutionalized form of reflexivity producing and circulating meaning in modern societies."⁶⁷⁶ Mass media are

⁶⁷¹Klaus Bruhn Jensen. *The Social Semiotics of Mass Communication*, (London: Sage, 1995), 11.

⁶⁷²*Ibid.*

⁶⁷³*Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 55.

“industrialized institutions-to-think-with.”⁶⁷⁷ Although Jensen’s social-semiotic theory of signs and his definition of mass media correspond to my description of symbols and mass media systems, I suggest that he is more wrong than right in his suggestion that “mass communication is hardly the factor determining their personal or social orientation and action.”⁶⁷⁸ Both my description of the extent of mass media’s definitional control (*Chapter Three*) and Jensen’s own observations about how “the available media set the conditions of cultural practice” place mass media at the centre of definitional control within media culture.

In Jensen’s semiotic terminology, media content functions as “signs which, in addressing audiences, generate interpretants that predispose audiences to act.”⁶⁷⁹ In *Chapter Three* I described how mass media restricts the flow of symbols (the equivalent of Jensen’s semiotic signs) and thereby ensures that the mass audience acts in a manner which reproduces the social conditions of the economic system. Jensen reaches a parallel conclusion when he states that mass media “contributes to the process of semiosis which sustains the everyday of individuals and reproduces the institutions of the social collective.”⁶⁸⁰

As with my own analysis, Jensen does in fact see mass media as a significant factor which determines personal and social orientation. Jensen provides two examples of the determinative power of mass media. Television news, according to Jensen’s analysis, is an

⁶⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 68-69.

“agent of *hegemony* which serves to reassert the limits of the political imagination.”⁶⁸¹ Television news limits the audience’s political imagination. This is an example of how media’s control over a finite set of symbols limits the world-making capability of the audience. Not merely just the presentation of the news, but the limited range of symbol-flow throughout television serves to “prestructure the meaning potential of television and hence the political and cultural agenda that viewers encounter.”⁶⁸² The limited variety of symbols within mass media serves to create the “structural limits to autonomy” within the audience of media culture.⁶⁸³ My analysis of the presentation of environmentally-friendly consumption, religious symbols, war, and politics suggests that media effectively reproduces the implicit meanings of the economic system. The mass behaviour of the audience reflects these implicit meanings and suggest substantial ‘structural limits to autonomy’ within media culture. Jensen’s analysis of the ‘structural limits to autonomy’ concludes by noting that mass media’s “configurations of meaning” sets the limits to social imagination “beyond which a substantial part of the audience may find it difficult to reflect.”⁶⁸⁴ Thus Jensen entirely confirms my own analysis while at the same time contradicting his reservations about the determinative definitional power of mass media.

The source of Jensen’s self-contradiction may lie in a flawed pursuit of primacy within the generation of meaning, “Methodologically speaking ... meaning can be traced as it flows from media to audiences and into various social contexts, even if, theoretically speaking, meaning

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 121-122.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

should be interpreted as flowing from social practices, publics, and institutions to the media.”⁶⁸⁵

But the media is both institution *and* social practice so this *from-to* discussion runs up against the same wall that any chicken and egg discussion of origins will face. The claim that meaning flows from the audience to mass media systems recognizes that the shared social world provides the context in which the subsystem of mass media exists, but dismisses the actual structural constraints placed upon meaning-flow within media culture through the technological and economic configuration of mass media systems. Jensen’s initial premise at the theoretical level of analysis is that “societies come before media as generators of meaning.”⁶⁸⁶ But this overlooks the reality of society and media’s *co-existence* within the same web of meaning. Such a distinction may arise out of the current tendency to describe the audience as holding most of the cards in the game of definitional control. Yet the context of the audience is thoroughly structured through the various definitional systems of the economic system. Definitional systems within media culture almost literally carry us from the cradle to the grave. It is difficult, therefore, to give the audience primacy in the generation of meaning when the mind is so thoroughly imprinted with the image and structure of society.

⁶⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 61.

Appendix B: Durkheim's *Conscience Collective*

Mary Douglas describes Durkheim's focus as the "general question of individual commitment to the social order."⁶⁸⁷ Durkheim answered the problem of social cohesion by explaining solidarity and collective action as arising out of shared classifications.⁶⁸⁸ For Durkheim, shared classifications were the content of the *conscience collective*.

According to Anthony Giddens, Durkheim used the phrase *conscience collective* as an organic metaphor for the socially evolved cultural inheritance which frames every individual's experience and is "neither the product nor the property of any specific individual."⁶⁸⁹ The Durkheimian *conscience collective* is a composite abstraction of the beliefs and sentiments which are shared by members of a particular society.⁶⁹⁰ It would be a mistake to interpret Durkheim's organic abstraction (the *conscience collective*) as if it were an object with a transcendent existence. Douglas denies that this was Durkheim's intention: "It would be easy to misunderstand Durkheim's language and fall into the trap of thinking that he really believed that society is a kind of separate intelligence, which determines the thoughts and actions of its

⁶⁸⁷Mary Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 93.

⁶⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹Anthony Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 67. On this term Giddens writes this: "I have followed the usual practice of leaving Durkheim's phrase *conscience collective* untranslated. There is a definite ambiguity in the term which overlaps with both the English words "consciousness" and "conscience" (*Ibid.*, 67, footnote 10). Here I will also follow this tradition.

⁶⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 75.

members as the mind does those of the body it is lodged in.”⁶⁹¹ The unitary religious systems found in simpler societies is an example of “the prime embodiment of the common beliefs and sentiments of the *conscience collective*.”⁶⁹²

Durkheim describes two basic types of social cohesion -- mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Within each type of society the *conscience collective* operates in a different fashion. The distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity reveals how Durkheim saw the *conscience collective* as a social fact.

According to Giddens’ interpretation of Durkheim, a society defined by mechanical solidarity “is dominated by the existence of a strongly formed set of sentiments and beliefs shared by all members of the community... there is little scope for differentiation between individuals: each individual is a microcosm of the whole.”⁶⁹³ Mechanical solidarity, according to Durkheim, describes “the collective type” of society which is characterized by “a more or less organised totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group.”⁶⁹⁴ Durkheim speaks of the *conscience collective* as completely enveloping the individual consciousness when mechanical solidarity provides the main force of societal cohesion.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹¹Mary Douglas. *Risk and Blame*, 159-160.

⁶⁹²Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, 75. For Durkheim, says Giddens, “the primary function of punishment ... is to protect and reaffirm the *conscience collective* in the face of acts which question its sanctity.” (*Ibid.*)

⁶⁹³*Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁹⁴Emile Durkheim. *The Division of Labour in Society*, 129.

⁶⁹⁵*Ibid.*

In contrast to mechanical solidarity stands organic solidarity -- a type of society Durkheim described as our own. According to Giddens, mechanical solidarity “presumes identity between individuals” but organic solidarity “presupposes not identity but *difference* between individuals in their beliefs and actions.”⁶⁹⁶ Societies characterised by organic solidarity establish social cohesion not through shared beliefs but through the interdependence created within the increasing division of labour.⁶⁹⁷ The expansion of the division of labour brings with it increasing individualism and this individualism necessarily progresses “at the expense of the strength of common beliefs and sentiments.”⁶⁹⁸ According to Durkheim, within contemporary societies the *conscience collective* “comes increasingly to be made up of highly generalised and indeterminate modes of thought and sentiment, which leave room open for an increasing multitude of individual differences.”⁶⁹⁹ The rise of individualism and the fragmentation of the *conscience collective* does not lead to social disorder. Durkheim sees the *conscience collective* becoming “strengthened and more precise” when it manifests the “cult of the individual” within contemporary societies.⁷⁰⁰ According to Giddens, the *conscience collective* of organic solidarity contains common beliefs and sentiments that “focus upon the worth and dignity of the individual rather than of the collectivity.”⁷⁰¹ A new moral order rising out of the division of labour cannot

⁶⁹⁶Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, 77.

⁶⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁹⁹Durkheim. *The Division of Labour*, 172.

⁷⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 172.

⁷⁰¹Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, 80.

sustain a “strongly defined *conscience collective*.”⁷⁰² According to Giddens, the main effect of the increasing division of labour “is towards the progressive emancipation of the individual from subordination to the *conscience collective*.”⁷⁰³ As the *conscience collective* loses its hold on the individual, moral ideals emerge “which stress the rights and dignity of the individual human being.”⁷⁰⁴ Durkheim suggests that as the *conscience collective* loses its hold upon the individual with the rise of modernity (through the division of labour), the state takes over this process of maintaining social cohesion. Giddens describes this role of the state within Durkheim’s theory:

According to Durkheim, there is an extremely significant consequence which flows from the existence of a democratic system, which is that the conduct of social life takes on a conscious and directed character. Many aspects of social life formerly ruled by unthinking custom or habit become the subject of intervention on the part of the state. The state is involved in economic life, and the administration of justice, in education, and even in the organisation of the arts and sciences.⁷⁰⁵

It is as if the bureaucratic apparatus of the state monopolises the creation and distribution of symbols which once were derived from the *conscience collective*. Where as Weber defines the state by virtue of the monopolization of force within its territory,⁷⁰⁶ Durkheim provides the basis for thinking about the economic system as defined by the monopolization of the *conscience collective* (this monopolization is described in *Chapter Three*). Initially I wrote that it was the *state* that is monopolizing the *conscience collective*, but there are too many indications that the

⁷⁰²*Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁰³*Ibid.*, 101.

⁷⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 156.

nation-state is losing control over media systems as a result of the globalization of multinational media firms and their parent corporations. Media theorists Armand Mattelart and Michèle Mattelart have commented on this oft-observed trend, “The nation-state finds it more difficult to master its own system of communication.”⁷⁰⁷

Social Cohesion and the *Conscience Collective*

Anthony Giddens describes Durkheim’s concept of the *conscience collective* as responsible for producing social cohesion by sustaining an embracing moral consensus within the simplest forms of society. When the division of labour increased the differences between individuals, social cohesion was moved out of the realm of moral consensus within the *conscience collective* and subsequently located in the realm of restitutive law. In the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity social conduct becomes controlled less by the moral consensus promoted through the *conscience collective* and falls under the influence of the restitutive law and its regulating effect. Giddens notes that, within Durkheim’s explanation of organic solidarity, the *conscience collective* continues to have an effect upon behaviour through the persistence of moral codes which were necessary for the fulfilment of contracts within the division of labour.⁷⁰⁸ According to Giddens, it is uncertain as to whether Durkheim saw the *conscience collective* disappearing with the displacement of mechanical by organic solidarity.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁷Armand Mattelart and Michèle Mattelart. *Rethinking Media Theory*, translated by James A. Cohen and Marina Urquidi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992. Originally published as *Penser les médias*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1986), 133.

⁷⁰⁸Anthony Giddens. *Durkheim*, 21-30.

⁷⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

In the final chapter of *Primitive Classification* Durkheim and Mauss suggest that, through the influence of scientific classification, the impact of the *conscience collective* is “progressively weakened, leaving more room for the reflective thought of individuals.”⁷¹⁰ At the same time they recognize that the “remote influences” of primitive classifications “have left behind them an effect which survives and is always present; it is the very cadre of all classifications.”⁷¹¹

The resolution of this issue of Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge -- the continued influence of the *conscience collective* within organic solidarity -- is not relevant to my model of collective memory as I am not using Durkheim’s evolutionary cognitive scheme. Here it is important to note that Mary Douglas does not use the model of mechanical/organic solidarity.

Douglas’ Correction of Durkheim’s *Conscience Collective*

Mary Douglas raises a key issue surrounding Durkheim’s theory of the *conscience collective* when she notes that “when the members of the Durkheim school talked of society they did not mean an indecomposable unity, as many their critics supposed.”⁷¹² Douglas denies that Durkheim’s theory described a static social system where categories are never negotiated.⁷¹³ Durkheim did have a theory of change which related changes in the organization of production to

⁷¹⁰Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. *Primitive Classification*, edited and translated by Rodney Needham. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 88. Why scientific classification should leave more room for ‘reflective thought’ is not clearly stated by the authors. This aspect of their argument may reflect their evolutionary cognitive scheme.

⁷¹¹*Ibid.*

⁷¹²Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, 161.

⁷¹³*Ibid.*

changes in the system of categories and beliefs.⁷¹⁴ Maurice Halbwachs' work on public memory is an example of how Durkheim's *conscience collective* is subject to changes in the social world.⁷¹⁵

Douglas does suggest that Durkheim's social theory was too rigid, "according to Durkheim's formulations, one might expect only a community of humans mechanically connected to one another by their unquestioning use of the same ideas."⁷¹⁶ This tension has its roots in Durkheim's differentiation between the operation of the *conscience collective* within mechanical solidarity and its operation within organic solidarity. Within tribal social worlds (mechanical solidarity) the *conscience collective* is assumed to suppress individual deviation from collective norms. According to Durkheim, only within organic solidarity does the *conscience collective* lose its all-encompassing role and allow the individual to emerge.

Douglas observes that Durkheim's theory was an "evolutionary model" but that it only has two stages, the "primitive stage" of mechanical solidarity and the "modern stage" of organic solidarity.⁷¹⁷ The 'primitive stage' of Durkheim's evolutionary model was based on shared classifications and the 'modern stage' was based on economic specialization and exchange. Douglas suggests that if the "evolutionary scaffolding" is removed from Durkheim's theory then

⁷¹⁴*Ibid.* Where Durkheim related the organization of production to the systemisation of social categories (*The Division of Labour*), my project here can be thought of as relating the organization of media systems to the systemisation of the collective memory.

⁷¹⁵Maurice Halbwachs. *The Collective Memory*, translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter. (New York: Harper Colophon, 1980). Originally published in French as *La mémoire collective*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950).

⁷¹⁶*Ibid.*, 162.

⁷¹⁷Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 96.

we are simply left with “two forms of commitment, one classificatory and one economic.”⁷¹⁸

Douglas notes that Durkheim did not limit the impact of classificatory commitment to tribal social worlds.⁷¹⁹ Shared classifications apply to societies with advanced division of labour within Durkheim’s theory.⁷²⁰

Durkheim and Mauss stand behind Douglas’ notion of shared classifications, although she avoids the evolutionary typology of social order which the authors of *Primitive Classification* asserted as inevitable in 1903. Douglas also reverses the causal relationship between symbolic classification and social organization as proposed by Durkheim and Mauss. Whereas Douglas insists time and again that social interaction provides the source for a culture’s classification system, Durkheim and Mauss locate the causal source of social organization in the system of symbolic classification.⁷²¹ They probably located the source of a culture’s classification system in the symbolic order because of their assertion that “the individual’s mind is incapable of classification.”⁷²² If the individual mind cannot classify then it must be society’s collective

⁷¹⁸*Ibid.*

⁷¹⁹*Ibid.*

⁷²⁰Douglas says this: “Even Durkheim did not believe that classificatory solidarity was uniquely associated with underdeveloped stages of the division of labour, for he devoted much attention to standardized ideas of right and wrong in modern society.” (*Ibid.*).

⁷²¹Durkheim and Mauss. *Primitive Classification*. See Needham’s “Introduction” for a critique of the logical errors of this work. Needham says this: “It is the cardinal achievement of Durkheim and Mauss’s essay, with all its imperfections, to have conceived the analytical notion of ‘classification’ in sociological inquiry.” (*Ibid.*, xxiv).

⁷²²*Ibid.*, xxviii.

representations which provide the principles of order. Douglas prefers to locate the source of classification in the institution (the social group).

Douglas also departs from the epistemology of Durkheim and Mauss on the issue of the dominant characteristic in classification, which, for the authors of *Primitive Classification*, is sentiment.

... for those who are called primitives, a species of things is not a simple object of knowledge but corresponds above all to a certain sentimental attitude ... Things are above all sacred or profane, pure or impure, friends or enemies, favourable or unfavourable; i.e. their most fundamental characteristics are only expressions of the way in which they affect social sensibility.⁷²³

Douglas proposes to root classification systems not in their emotive impact but in their fit with nature and reason.

The distinction which Durkheim drew in the operation of the *conscience collective* certainly reflects the general tendency, earlier this century, to draw too great a contrast between all things “primitive” and all things “modern”, in areas of reason, religious belief, and individual autonomy. Douglas cites Marcel Mauss’ work on the gift economy as an “enormous development beyond Durkheim’s ideas of solidarity based on collective representations.”⁷²⁴

Durkheim shared the common belief of his day in a gradual enriching and unfolding of the personality as collective representations loosened their grip. However Mauss manages to incorporate individuals acting in their own interests, even in the kinds of societies in which Durkheim had thought that there was no scope for individual self-interest ... He also discovered a mechanism by which individual interests combine to make a social system [the gift economy], without

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

engaging in market exchange. This is an enormous development beyond Durkheim's ideas of solidarity based on collective representations.⁷²⁵

Suffice it to say that Durkheim inherited a more rigid view of cosmological constraints upon the social world than we recognize today. My model of collective memory recognizes the limitations of Durkheim's epistemology and, following Douglas, incorporates a more dynamic, fluid theory of social reproduction. It should also be noted that, although the theory of collective memory has its roots in sociology's fascination with the difference between, and transition from, traditional to contemporary society, this is not my concern here. This dissertation recognizes the roots and context of the theory, but is not an attempt to contrast the operation of collective memory within tribal and contemporary social worlds.⁷²⁶ I am focused here on its operation strictly within the contemporary context.

Douglas' Inheritance of Durkheim's Sociology

Mary Douglas certainly stands as one of the main interpreters of Durkheim's sociology of knowledge. In this section I will outline how Douglas interprets Durkheim's insights concerning the social factors controlling thought. Douglas' model of public memory is a refinement of Durkheim's *conscience collective*.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁶ Douglas notes that Durkheim developed the idea of the *conscience collective* in the midst of an ongoing debate between nineteenth-century forms of utilitarianism and positivism, "the open enemy of French political philosophy was Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism" (*Ibid.*, 164). Douglas clearly sees a theory of collective memory as relevant to the present, "Today the same political debate is still engaged between the contemporary utilitarians and those who, like Durkheim, deplore the effects of unfettered individualism." (*Ibid.*, 160).

Douglas sees Durkheim as both challenging the theories of knowledge current in his time and also succumbing to the dominant ideas of his time. Durkheim's theory of social construction of knowledge was meant to "qualify or supplement Kant's subjective determinants of perception."⁷²⁷ Durkheim ran into considerable hostility when he suggested that the individual stands subordinate to the social world; "the very idea of a suprapersonal cognitive system stirs a deep sense of outrage."⁷²⁸ At the turn of the 1900's, Durkheim placed himself in the middle of a debate about the relation of the individual to the group. The spirit of the time, and perhaps even of today, could not stomach a diminishing of the individual's rational sovereignty. A century later Durkheim's intellectual program suffers from neglect. Durkheim's sociological epistemology ran into considerable opposition and has remained undeveloped to this day. By upgrading the role of society in organizing thought, he downgraded the role of the individual. For this he was attacked as a rationalist and a radical.⁷²⁹ Douglas speaks of her own negative reaction when she first read Durkheim, and of the resistance of fellow scholars to the Durkheimian program.⁷³⁰ Douglas sees "strong resistance made by many scholars to the very notion of social determinants of belief. They would rather think of beliefs floating free in an

⁷²⁷Mary Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, xv. Douglas writes that Durkheim "argued against Hume and Kant that the origin of classification is not either in nature nor in the subjective constraints of the mind, but in society." (*Ibid.*, 312).

⁷²⁸Mary Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, x.

⁷²⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

⁷³⁰Douglas says this: "When I first read Durkheim his sociological determinism affronted me" (*Ibid.*, 212).

autonomous vacuum ... [but] To ensure autonomy of mind we should first recognise the restrictions imposed by material existence.”⁷³¹

Douglas summarizes Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge as follows:

The shared symbolic universe and the classifications of nature embody the principles of authority and coordination. In such a system problems of legitimacy are solved because individuals carry the social order around inside their heads and project it out onto nature. However, an advanced division of labour destroys this harmony between morality, society, and the physical world and replaces it with solidarity dependent on the workings of the market. Durkheim did not think that solidarity based on sacred symbolism is possible for industrial society. In modern times sacredness has been transferred to the individual.⁷³²

Douglas’ life work, as embodied in her writings, represents a refinement of Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge. Her interest lies not with the division of labour but with the mediation processes surrounding shared symbolic systems and their ritual enactment. The majority of Douglas’ writings focus on how social structure embodies the symbolic universe. Where Durkheim stopped short of applying his epistemology to the pretensions of scientific truth, Douglas’ epistemology is far more inclusive, to the point where “all meanings are social meanings”⁷³³ and “all reality is social reality.”⁷³⁴ It is worth noting that Douglas does not find Durkheim’s distinction between primitive and modern symbolic worlds very convincing.

⁷³¹Douglas. *Natural Symbols*, 140.

⁷³²Douglas. *How Institutions Think*, 13.

⁷³³Douglas. *Implicit Meanings*, 8.

⁷³⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

Durkheim was caught in the spirit of the time when he elevated scientific truth above the social control of thought and when “he really believed that primitives are utterly different from us.”⁷³⁵

For him, primitive groups are organised by similarities; their members are committed to a common symbolic life. We by contrast are diversified individuals, united by exchange of specialised services. The contrast is a very interesting one, full of value, but it does not distinguish between primitives and moderns. It cuts across both categories.⁷³⁶

Durkheim was caught in the contemporary line of thinking which saw two types of thought; primitive versus rational. Belief in an evolutionary cognitive scheme enabled Durkheim to bracket scientific truth from the scrutiny of his epistemology. Douglas proposes to eliminate the evolutionary cognitive scheme which inevitably elevates modern over primitive social processes.

It is part of our culture to be forced to take aboard the idea that other cultures are rational in the same way as ours ... The refusal to privilege one bit of reality as more absolutely real, one kind of truth more true, one intellectual process more valid, allows the original comparative project dear to Durkheim to go forward at last.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, xviii.

Appendix C: Images of Barbie in Cyberspace

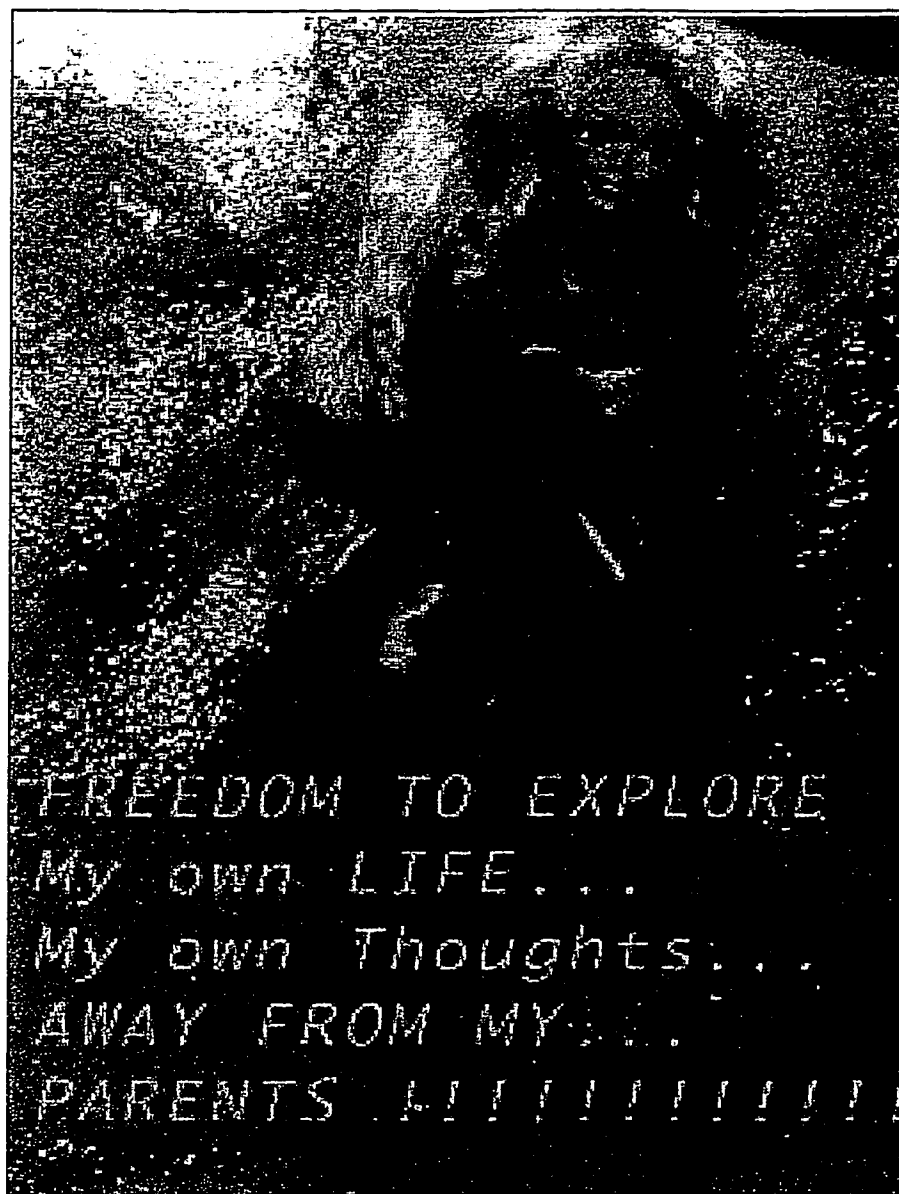


Figure #7

Barbie and Ken Politically Correct (1994).
Reproduced with permission of G. H. Hovagimyan.
Located at www.thing.net/~gh/artdirect March 1998.



Figure #8

Barbie and Ken Politically Correct (1994).

Reproduced with permission of G. H. Hovagimyan.

Located at www.thing.net/~gh/artdirect March 1998.



Figure #9

Possible title: Road Kill (199?).

Artist unknown.

Located at www.catalog.com/mrm/barbe/roadkill.jpg March 1998.

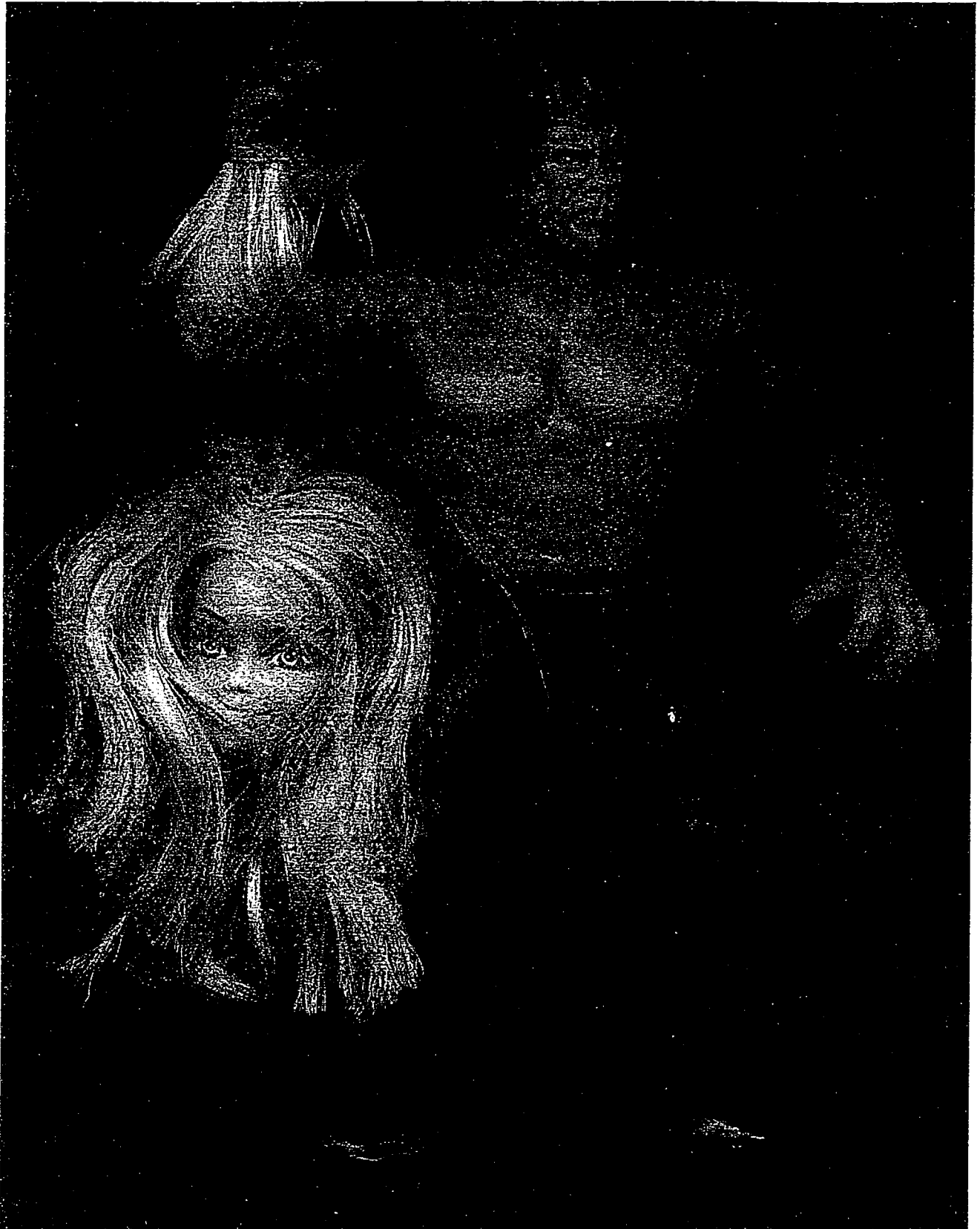


Figure #10 (previous page).
Love Conquers All (1996),
reproduced with permission of Michael Strangelove.
Located at www.strangelove.com April 1998.

This piece was created by myself early in 1996 (prior to turning my attention to Barbie in cyberspace). The head comes from a doll purchased at the Salvation Army Thrift Store and the Hulk doll was purchased at a garage sale. The total cost was under one dollar. Aneurin Bosley of Axiomatikos.Com scanned the image at 256 shades of grey and 150 dots per inch resolution and placed it on the Web at my request at www.strangelove.com. The doll stands on a can of Spam, not shown here.

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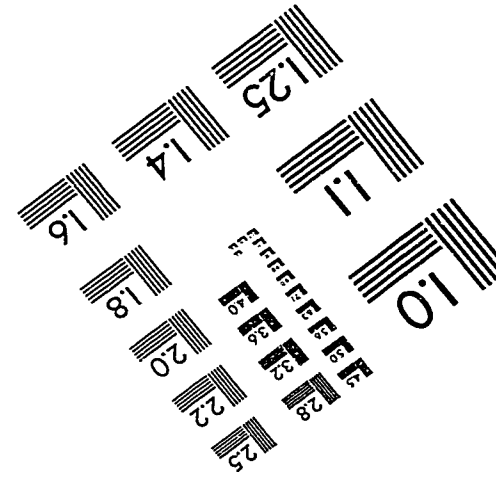
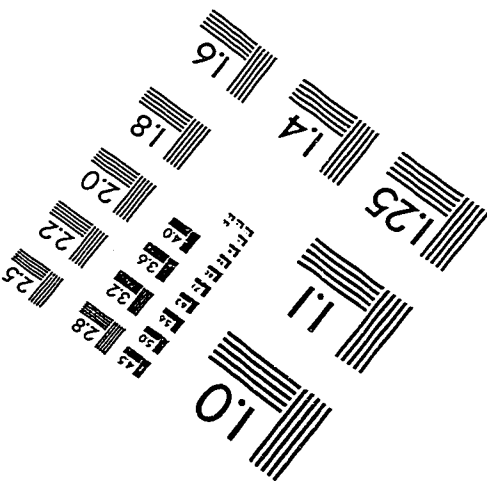
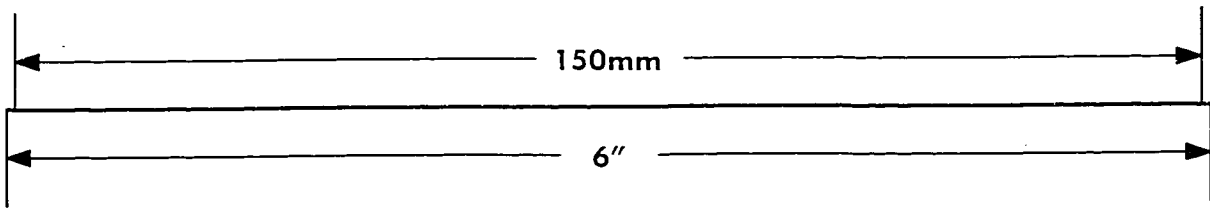
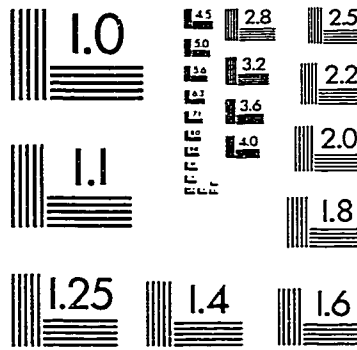
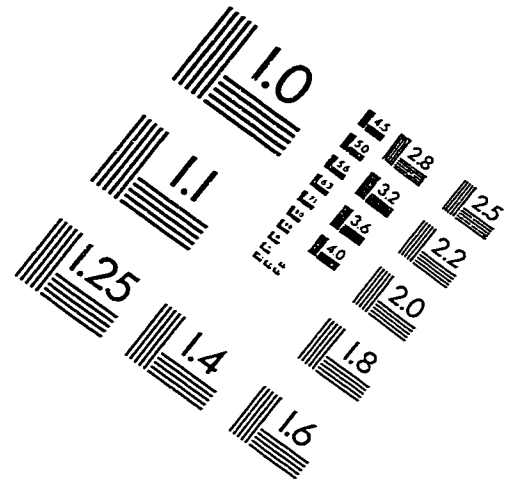
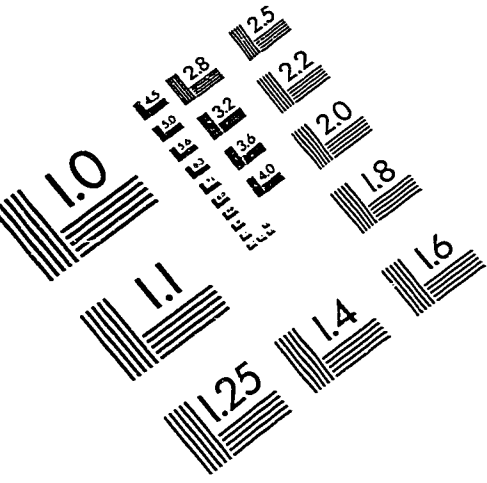
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