

A photograph of a man from behind, wearing a dark blue collared shirt, reading a newspaper. The newspaper has a headline that reads "« J'en... »". The background is blurred, showing other people in a public space.

# MEDIA AND PUBLIC SPHERES

*Edited by Richard Butsch*



## Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	ix
1 Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres? <i>Richard Butsch</i>	1
2 Can the Mass Media Deliberate?: Insights from Print Media and Political Talk Shows <i>Hartmut Wessler and Tanjev Schultz</i>	15
3 Connection or Disconnection?: Tracking the Mediated Public Sphere in Everyday Life <i>Nick Couldry, Sonia Livingstone and Tim Markham</i>	28
4 The Local Public Sphere as a Networked Space <i>Lewis A. Friedland and Christopher C. Long, with Yong Jun Shin and Nakho Kim</i>	43
5 Public Sphere and Publicness: Sport Audiences and Political Discourse <i>Cornel Sandvoss</i>	58
6 A Necessary Profession for the Modern Age?: Nineteenth Century News, Journalism and the Public Sphere <i>Henrik Örnebring</i>	71
7 'They Just Make Sense': Tabloid Newspapers as an Alternative Public Sphere <i>Sofia Johansson</i>	83
8 Rethinking Public Service Broadcasting: The Historical Limits to Publicness <i>Michael Bailey</i>	96
9 Digital Radio and the Diminution of the Public Sphere <i>Stephen Lax</i>	109
10 On Becoming the Media: Low Power FM and the Alternative Public Sphere <i>J. Zach Schiller</i>	122
11 Representing the Public of the Cinema's Public Sphere <i>Shawn Shimpach</i>	136

viii *Contents*

12	The Psychedelic Public and Its Problems: Rock Music Festivals and Civil Society in the Sixties Counterculture <i>Michael J. Kramer</i>	149
13	Popular Culture and the Public Sphere: Currents of Feeling and Social Control in Talk Shows and Reality TV <i>Peter Lunt and Mervi Pantti</i>	162
14	The Revolution Will Be Televised: Free Speech TV, Democratic Communication and the Public Sphere <i>Todd Fraley</i>	175
15	Lost in Space: Television's Missing Publics <i>Virginia Nightingale</i>	185
16	From Public Sphere to Civic Culture: Young Citizen's Internet Use <i>Peter Dahlgren and Tobias Olsson</i>	198
17	Blurring Boundaries in a 'Cyber-Greater China': Are Internet Bulletin Boards Constructing the Public Sphere in China? <i>Yan Wu</i>	210
	<i>References</i>	223
	<i>Index</i>	247

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x *Notes on the Contributors*

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xii *Notes on the Contributors*

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# 1

## Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres?

*Richard Butsch*

Through the twentieth century, in scholarship and in public debate there have been recurring worries about the impact of mass media upon civic practice. Instead of enabling a public sphere, as print had done in the late eighteenth century, some argue that the new mass media of the twentieth threatened to subvert the public sphere and democracy. Movies, radio and television became large and concentrated industries or government agencies that reached millions of people. They had great propaganda potential to truncate the range ideas in the public sphere and restrict debate.

The success of World War One print propaganda stirred debate among intellectuals. George Creel who had been in charge of US wartime propaganda, published a book boasting about how effective it was on Americans. While some 'realists' such as Walter Lippmann, argued that propaganda was necessary to channel the choices of the masses, many others, including John Dewey and many ordinary Americans, who were the target of the propaganda, were disturbed (Gary 1999, 3). These concerns grew in the 1930s as democracies succumbed to fascism in Europe. New theories of mass culture and mass society explained the vulnerability of modern democracies and the power of radio and film as tools for propaganda (Swingewood 1977, 10ff; Sproule, 1987; Lacey 1996). Central to such theory was the use of media for propaganda to bind the population to the fascist state.

Post-war political theorists continued this work, and began to question whether publics and even democracy could survive in the heightened mass media environment. By the 1950s, right, left and liberal critics all feared that mass mediated culture was overwhelming the common man's ability to play his part in democracy, although they differed on what that part was (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Rosenberg and White, 1957; Jacobs, 1959; Kornblum, 1959;



## 2 Media and Public Spheres

Giner 1976). Television bore the brunt of this criticism, but everything from comic books to kitsch took a beating from these critics. It was in this era that Jurgen Habermas began his habilitation thesis on publicity and public sphere and the part played by mass communication.

These concerns were supplanted by the upheavals of the civil rights protests in the US, then by Vietnam and the student movements in North America and Europe. The concerns resurfaced only in the 1990s, when there was increasing concern about the 'dumbing down' of public discourse, about the concentration of media ownership and the formation of international media conglomerates, and when that German thesis was translated into English.

Public sphere is, of course, the term used for *Offentlichkeit* in the English translation of Jurgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991). Published three decades after the original, the translation spawned a voluminous literature in English on this subject. Habermas' theory of the bourgeois public sphere is part of the tradition of Enlightenment liberal political philosophy. It addresses questions about what makes democracy work. Its primary focus is the origins of a bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth century social institutions and political philosophy, from which Habermas draws a normative model of the public sphere. Recent scholarship responding to Habermas is similarly rooted in the scholarly discourse on political theory and political philosophy, leavened with history.

There is a second tradition, of publics, rooted in social rather than political concepts and theory, framed in terms of different issues and questions, but also placing mass media at the center of the idea of publics. Unlike the liberal tradition of public sphere that focuses on deliberation, this tradition considers what actions follow from deliberation. This approach originated with French theorist, Gabriel Tarde, who contrasted publics to crowds in late nineteenth century theory of crowd psychology (Tarde, 1969). About the same time as Tarde wrote, American sociologist Robert Park completed a German dissertation on the same subject, contrasting crowd and public (Park 1972). Tarde and Park wrote at a time when the principle mass medium was the daily metropolitan newspaper, and both considered it central to the functioning of a public. Returning to the US, Park founded the sociological field of collective behavior that included the study of crowds, publics and other collective gatherings. Crowds were masses in action, and the tradition would turn increasingly to talk about masses – and mass media audiences – in contrast to publics, with the advent of radio (Cantril, 1935, 1940). The linking of publics to crowds emphasized a social rather than political approach, contrasting a constructive role in society for publics to the supposed destructive role of crowds. Related to this tradition is the American debate about publics between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey in the 1920s (Gary, 1999). Lippmann considered the mass incapable of performing its role as a 'true' public and in need of guidance through propaganda, i.e. mass media messages, by an educated elite. (Lippmann, 1925). Dewey, on the other hand, conceived publics

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres?* 3

as the natural emergence of community efforts to solve shared problems, with solutions then institutionalized in government (Dewey 1927, 112–13, 149).

Both traditions of the concepts of publics and public sphere include media as a necessary element for public deliberation. But the media presumed in those traditions were subsidiary to the public sphere. By contrast, given the growth in media variety, size and convergence in the late twentieth century, media have become the primary focus and force for today's public sphere. We now find ourselves in a time of intense debate: What media provide what kind of public spheres? Scholars still disagree about the impact of existing media institutions on the public sphere, as well as about the ideal structure of the public sphere. The recent work on public sphere has generated numerous criticisms and multiple versions of the concepts of public and public sphere. Issues of the media and public sphere revolve around the central axis of whether media enable or undermine a healthy public sphere with widespread participation. Debates about the good or bad impact of media institutions parallel past splits between political economic and cultural studies approaches to media institutions and culture (Clarke, 1990), and between mass culture critics and those who downplayed the effects of media. But what role media play and how effectively they do is still the subject of much discussion and few answers. The debates have produced fewer answers and no consensus on what is a public sphere, or whether or in what form it exists. It has generated relative less empirical investigation into actually existing public spheres.

It is the purpose of this book to explore these questions empirically. These collected chapters present case studies, surveys and interviews, as well as reviews of previous research on media ranging from newspapers to the internet, to ask what kind of public spheres do these media sustain. In the process, the studies suggest a range of inductive definitions of public sphere. The hope is that these inductive definitions will open up further questions and examinations about the nature and the possibility of public spheres in our mediated world.

A systematic examination of the concepts and literature concerning media and the public sphere would require a lengthy book. There are several schema of criticism available in recent literature (Calhoun, 1992; Dahlgren, 1995; Weintraub and Kumar, 1997; Curran, 2000; Hill and Montag, 2000; Crossley and Roberts, 2004; Livingstone 2005; McKee, 2005). Therefore to introduce these chapters, I will confine myself to two works, one on public sphere, the other on media, in order to set the stage for the relevant issues raised in them.

**Habermas: liberal political theory and the public sphere**

The Western idea of citizens participating in their governance through public discussion originates in ancient Greece and Rome (Weintraub, 1997). Its modern revival was incorporated in liberal political theory of the eighteenth century that addressed the relations between the state and its citizens in a

#### 4 Media and Public Spheres

democracy. Jurgen Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991), in this tradition, is an historical exploration of the development in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe of public institutional space between the state and the private world of the family. As Habermas interpreted the history, mercantile capitalism required a public space where information could be freely exchanged. This would become, according to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere, where not only information about business, but about culture and politics might also be freely discussed. (1991, 14–26) From this historical analysis, Habermas extracts the characteristics of the public sphere that work to advance a democratic state. Within evolving bourgeois public sphere institutions, such as the coffee house, salon and the press, he finds conversation among equals whose private interests and inequality are temporarily suspended, which in turn allows for rational discussion and debate on questions of state policy and action.

Habermas then assesses modern mass media as a public sphere environment. In this he seems to shift to the social theory tradition of publics, reflecting the mass culture critique of his Frankfurt School mentors, Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, a critique of twentieth century mass-produced and mediated culture as ideological domination rather than as public sphere (Jay, 1973). The large scale media of monopoly capitalism transforms what had been a political public sphere into a medium for commodity consumption. Bread and circuses replaces the forum. A healthy public sphere requires small scale media not motivated by commercial interests. (Habermas 181–88)

Commercialization is the result of economic self-interest taking precedent over the collective interest. As media require greater capital investment and as larger and more economically powerful and oligopolistic organizations supplant smaller competitive organizations, power supplants equality and reason as the identifying characteristics of this new mediated public sphere that becomes representational rather than political. Consequently, Habermas refers to the re-feudalization of the public sphere, returning to its function as a place for public display rather than of public discourse and debate.

#### **Criticism of Habermas: Bourgeois vs alternative public spheres**

The characteristics of the public sphere have been the subject of debate and controversy: there is no equality; reason is not the necessary foundation; twentieth-century mass media have not destroyed the public sphere. The principle criticism of Habermas has been focused on his historical public sphere (before modern mass media) and this bourgeois public sphere's exclusivity (Negt and Kluge, 1972; Calhoun, 1992). Such critics introduced the ideas of alternative and multiple public spheres.

One of the most influential criticisms after the publication of the *Structural Transformation* in English, was by philosopher Nancy Fraser who noted the absence of subordinate groups, including women and lower classes in these

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres? 5*

bourgeois public sphere institutions (Fraser in Calhoun, 1992). Fraser disputes four assumptions of Habermas which she identifies: that it is possible 'to bracket status differentials and to deliberate as if they were social equals'; that a single public sphere is preferable to multiple spheres; that private interests must be excluded from the public sphere; and that the public sphere must be clearly separated from the state (117–18). Fraser's contention is that the public sphere did not exist, in the form Habermas claims, in the eighteenth century any more than in the twentieth.

Fraser's response to these assumptions is, first, that bracketing does not work, inequalities continue to operate through cultural hierarchies of everyday habits, for example as described by Bourdieu (1984). Rational deliberation and debate are bourgeois individualistic social practices; other classes are less at home in these practices, putting them at a disadvantage in such situation. In effect, a formal presumption that inequality is bracketed merely masks the actual operation of inequality within the public sphere and gives the impression of universality where it does not exist.

Second, given the weakness of the bracketing assumption, Fraser argues that in a stratified society, 'arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics . . . come closest to the ideal' (122). In this context, Fraser introduces the concepts of alternative publics and 'subaltern counterpublics' (123, 125). The terms evoke Raymond Williams' concepts of alternative and oppositional cultures that were woven into cultural studies in the conception of resistance to cultural hegemony. (Williams, 1977; Hall and Jefferson, 1976) What does it mean for spheres to be alternative? Like Williams' alternative cultures, it implicitly defines each sphere as an identity-based, homogeneous group, rather than a diverse deliberative body (Warner, 2002). Identity (and contestation) also utilize emotion. These all diverge from Habermas' normative rational public sphere.

The idea of multiple spheres raises the issue of the relation among them. Sociologist Graham Murdoch and historian Geoff Eley independently formulate an ideal in which these alternatives are 'staging areas' where different interests prepare their case/voice for presentation in an overarching public sphere (Murdoch in Skovmand and Schroder, 1992; Eley in Calhoun 1992). Pertaining to the relationship, Fraser disagrees with Habermas' third assumption that deliberation in a public sphere is to seek and advance the common good. Fraser contends that in a stratified society there is limited shared interest and common good. Stratified societies are zero sum societies in which what is good for one group is bad for another. The purpose of deliberation is futile (129, 131).

Consequently, Fraser accepts the idea of competition of interests among publics. In defining their relation to each other as 'contestation' Fraser reintroduces power as a factor. Fraser abandons the method of deliberation that Habermas considered essential and adopts Eley's and Murdoch's proposal of an overarching 'structured setting' in which differences between unequal publics are resolved through contest or other means, but not necessarily deliberation.

## 6 Media and Public Spheres

As soon as we accept contestation, power and interests as legitimate in the public sphere, crowd actions intended to register opinion with the state, fall into the purview of the public sphere. Suggesting this, Eley makes a stronger assertion, that the relation between publics 'was always constituted by conflict' (Eley, Calhoun, 1992, 306). More recently, Hill and Montag criticize Habermas for opposing reason to force and speech to action (2000, 6). Like Fraser, Murdoch and Eley, they argue for an expanded conception of public sphere, inclusive of force and action as well as reason and speech.

This redefinition opens entirely new vistas for the concept of public sphere, to collective actions based upon solidarity more than individualism, including social movements, union actions, and civil disobedience. The scholarly literature on crowds and social movements then becomes a resource for exploring these enlarged definitions of publics and public sphere. At the very least, such proposals introduce whole new possible forms of public sphere, beyond reasoned deliberation. It also opens it to emotion in public discourse, a motivator to participation and a concomitant of group solidarity and contestation, and to a reconsideration of the very dichotomy of reason versus emotion.

Eley fits his conception of the public sphere to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, was achieved not through overt ideas and propaganda, but through the 'whole lived experience' (Williams 1977), thus through persuasion rather than suppression, and it is never complete but always challenged and in process. It is in Eley's public sphere that the lived experience, both persuasion and contestation occur. But balancing Eley's emphasis on the contested nature of hegemony is Williams' idea of incorporation. In that respect, inclusiveness, when not resolving the inequalities Fraser addressed concerning the first assumption, can simply be a veiled form of incorporation. Again the extension of the concept of public sphere raises additional issues for rethinking the public sphere.

Fourth and last, Fraser rejects the idea that public spheres should be free from the state, characterizing it as a *laissez-faire* policy and arguing that, to the contrary, some form of state regulation is necessary to avoid one interest consistently prevailing over others and short-circuiting democracy (133). In the eighteenth century, the center of power was the state, compared to which private organizations (businesses) were small. The need for separation was a need to insulate the public sphere from state control. Today, two centers of power stand on either side of the public sphere, the state and corporations. Either can threaten the public sphere. State owned and operated media run the risk of reducing it to a representative public sphere serving the state rather than the people. Alternatively, corporate-owned media run the risk of serving the interest of private corporations over the people. Both distancing the state from public media and regulating private media then become important to the continued health of the public sphere. This raises concerns about

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres? 7*

the relations among the state, private economy and the public sphere that are more complicated than simply a hands-off policy (Curran 2000).

**Twentieth century mediated public spheres**

Having discussed versions of the concepts of publics and public sphere before the rise of pervasive mass media, we now come to the core issue of the book, the significance of mediation. Traditional liberal political theory claims three positive functions for media in a democracy: to act as watchdog over the state as an independent fourth estate; to act as an agency of information and debate for citizens to participate in their democracy; and to act as the voice of the people to the state (Curran in Curran and Gurevitch, 2000, 121, 127, 129). In such theory, media are cast as allies of citizens in their role of supervising democratic government through public opinion.

The theory is rooted in an eighteenth century reality in which communication media (the printing press, handwritten notes and the human body) were accessible to many citizens. Hand-operated printing presses were relatively inexpensive and not greatly different in influence than the voices of other citizens (Lee 1937, 167). Likewise, the eighteenth century public sphere encompassed a rather small, exclusive and intimate population engaged in face-to-face interaction and handwritten letters (Darnton, 2000). Today, large populations make media necessary to the public sphere. Media also are different, owned by corporate conglomerates, and pervasive in our everyday lives, available or intruding wherever we may go.

These changed conditions raise entirely different issues: how can media serve the public sphere when also powerfully pulled to serve the state or profit. Perhaps more fundamental today than issues of rational deliberation or inclusion, is this question of how to position and control the means of communication *for* the public sphere. How do we contend with corporate mass media's potential to dominate the public sphere with its own voice or that of the state, drowning out all others. Alternately, how do we utilize new media technologies and niches, such as the internet, low power radio, or public access cable tv, to create alternative mediated public spheres.

To understand today's mediated public sphere, Peter Dahlgren (1995) suggests examining four dimensions: media institutions, media representation, general social structure, and face-to-face interaction. With the advent of broadcasting, states took responsibility for establishing media institutions to serve the public sphere. European governments established semi-independent public media, funded by or through the state. Government funding or control, of course, creates the possibility of media used for propaganda and paternalism rather than public service. In the US, commercial media were regulated by the state. Since the 1980s, ideological forces advocating the market over public service, and new technologies, particularly transnational satellite

## 8 *Media and Public Spheres*

broadcasting, have led to considerable growth of commercial media that is large and wealthy enough to compete with public media. Deregulation has accelerated this by promoting global economic concentration of media corporations (Curran 2000, 121–2).

Commercial media present different problems for a public sphere. Their first master is the drive for profit, which conceives media in relationship to consumers in a market rather than to citizens in a public sphere. It provides what sells rather than what informs and enables public discussion, often two different and competing types of programming, squeezing out the public sphere.

This problem is exacerbated by the growth in size and power of mass media, constituting a formidable political force in a public sphere. Today's giant media corporations now present similar dangers as the state in controlling the public sphere for their own interests. The sheer scale of modern media corporations overwhelms the relatively minute institutions of the public sphere, as a skyscraper enshadows a small public park.

Consequently, the issue today is less whether subordinate groups of citizens have a voice in the public sphere, and more whether any citizens have a voice and whether the public sphere is simply 're-feudalized', as Habermas characterized it, into a representative public sphere, because the fundamental institution of the public sphere, media, has been captured by the state and/or commercial corporations.

The potential of such domination is to reshape media representation, Dahlgren's second dimension, in two senses of the term. As the principal source of information for citizens, state law and regulation of media have focused on ensuring a wide range of opinions to be expressed in the public sphere. Both the principle of a free press and limitations on private media ownership have had this purpose. Also, the balance between media presentation of entertainment or information is important for reducing the quality of information and the value given to civic participation. Critics equate entertainment with appeals to pleasure and emotion, and contrast it to information equated with rational deliberation.

As media grow in scale and centrality in the public sphere, the degree to which media representation displaces active participation of citizens in the public sphere becomes an issue. Representatives, such as journalists, political figures, academic experts and even ordinary citizens, stand in for citizens to speak and debate in the media, with citizens reduced to passive audience observers. Media simply provide information and surrogate debate, which citizens then use as *individuals* to vote. Does this eliminate the interactive and collective dimensions of the public sphere, reducing public opinion to polling statistics and vote counts?

Dahlgren's third dimension, social structure, concerns the scale and structure of the public sphere and its congruence with political and other institutions. This addresses several of the concerns mentioned above: the idea of

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres?* 9

multiple public spheres and their relation, such as the relation between alternative media and the dominant media outlets. It also addresses the newer matter of media globalization.

Dahlgren's fourth dimension concerns face-to-face interaction, or assembly. The questions above about media representation creating a passive subject position, become more important as media audiences are dispersed and as places for public assembly and discourse, such as Parisian cafés or English coffee house, disappear from the social landscape. These institutions of communal sociability are the basis for the social tradition of the concept of public in Tarde (1969) and Park (1972). It is the concern about the decline in public assembly that concerned mass society theorists and recently Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2001).

We might think of Dahlgren's dimensions as stages in the process of the public sphere. Media are the institutional infra-structure for modern public sphere, they produce media representations, the information and models of deliberation necessary to a public sphere. Finally, public places enable citizens to assemble and engage in discussion about public issues. It is collective citizen participation that is the realization of the public sphere and of democracy. To assess the efficacy of any public sphere, we need to know how much do people do this and who is included. The other dimensions are means to this end. We need to know how well they enable the latter.

Dahlgren frames these four dimensions in terms of civic culture, a set of values, public trust, identity, knowledge and practices that form the cultural substratum for this citizen participation (see Chapter 16 in this volume). The four dimensions can sustain or undermine this culture, which in turn sustains adherence to the rules of an egalitarian deliberative public sphere that itself feeds back upon the culture and the four dimensions.

### **The chapters and their issues**

The overall impression of the chapters in this book confirms the criticisms that few public spheres meet the standards of Habermas. But there are many public spheres of varying sorts and qualities. If we relax the criteria of reasoned deliberation among equals for a common good, and we accept the presence of multiple public spheres, then we find public spheres of all sorts in many places, included, abetted or unrestrained by today's pervading media. We have tended to ask whether there is or is not a public sphere; but perhaps we should instead acknowledge, through a broader definition, the existence of an on-going institutional public sphere, but one which varies in attributes, so that it's what we do with that space that we need to understand and evaluate. What these chapters offer is a nuanced understanding of a variety of actual, existing public spheres, the varying degrees to which they work effectively, and the dilemmas and difficulties that people encounter as they participate in these public spheres.



## 10 *Media and Public Spheres*

The question then becomes, are these public spheres enough to make a difference? Readers will disagree, some seeing the glass half empty, others half full. That is not a satisfying and conclusive answer, but it is closer to the messiness of the real world. This may reflect what Sonia Livingstone says, that media audiences,

sustain a modest and often ambivalent level of critical interpretation, drawing upon – and thereby reproducing – a somewhat ill-specified, at times, inchoate or even contradictory sense of identity or belonging which motivates them toward but does not enable the kind of collective and direct action expected of a public. (Livingstone, 2005, 31)

Livingstone proposes an intermediate concept of civic culture, such as Dahlgren's formulation, between audiences and publics (32). How much then does participation in mediated popular culture constitute sufficient political significance to qualify as a public? And how much is it too 'watered down' to be of significance politically?

The chapters are roughly arranged in a sequence that begins with examinations of cross-media issues, such as the criterion of rational deliberation, people's experience of the mediated public sphere generally, the intersection of media and community as foundations of public sphere, and proceeds to studies of specific media, from the press to movies, radio, recorded music, television and the internet. The general issues reappear in various combinations in these media specific studies.

We begin with an examination of Habermas' criterion of rational deliberation. Hartmut Wessler and Tanjev Schultz examine news media as a model representing deliberative debate to the public. Critics have argued that news, especially broadcast news, in recent years has been degraded by commercialism into emotion-based entertainment. After laying out an argument for the importance of deliberation, Wessler and Schultz review research on German newspapers and television news talk shows to assess its presence today. They conclude that in these news genre, journalists, academic experts and public intellectuals more than others practice deliberation in the spirit of a model public sphere.

But does such a model rub off on the audience? Nick Couldry, Sonia Livingstone and Tim Markham ask another baseline question: How much do people attend to deliberative media and engage in rational deliberation about public issues? Ultimately this is the outcome we wish to know about: do citizens participate in the public sphere, however well or poorly it is institutionalized? To explore this question, they interviewed Britons of differing classes. Most people attend to media presentation of public issues and talk about them with others, but they do so using different media and genres. Contrary to stereotypes, the less educated are engaged with public issues and discuss what they read. Even working class women who express reservations

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres?* 11

about their understanding of public issues still have something to say. They mention the barriers of literacy and self-confidence that make them reluctant to read or to talk about public issues, and read tabloids to reduce these barriers and present the option of an alternative public sphere.

Lewis Friedland and Christopher Long, with Yong Jun Shin and ho, Kim Nak look at the intersection of the institutions of media and the public sphere in a local community, using John Dewey's concept of the public based in the American social tradition. Dewey understood publics not in terms of discourse among strangers, but as based upon social networks rooted in physical communities, including informal groups, voluntary associations, businesses and other organizations. This allows them to develop an understanding of publics as a form of action rather than as a form of discourse or identity. In effect they continue beyond where Habermas leaves off with the concept of publics as discourse, by tracing them into the sphere of action. In their case study, two opposed publics contest local school referenda, with traditional media allied with one, and the internet effectively used by the other.

Cornel Sandvoss takes an ethnographic approach to assess ordinary peoples' engagement in the public sphere, by extending the public sphere into seemingly un-political discourse of the everyday, as suggested by Couldry, Livingstone and Markham. He interviews football (soccer) fans and observes their on-line discussions, finding politics embedded in sport discourse. While media have taught us to expect fierce team loyalties and even 'hooliganism', Sandvoss also hears them debate the nationalism and localism posed by team loyalty, as well as issues of race, class and gender. A search for a pure political public sphere would miss much of what is political in everyday conversation and thus may qualify in some senses as a public sphere.

Henrik Ornebring addresses the institutionalization of a particular kind of media representation incompatible with a deliberative public sphere, the news. Habermas argued that commercialization of the newspaper in the nineteenth century undermined the public sphere by turning the press from a political institution into a business, and replacing information with entertainment. Ornebring goes beyond this analysis, presenting a complex argument that the form of news itself as a narrative of facts, and the practices of journalism as creating informed citizens, are actually inimicable to a deliberative public sphere. Critiques of commercialism that contrast rational informative media to sensational entertainment media miss this deeper problem.

Fact based news is considered raw material to rational deliberation and is contrasted to sensational entertainment media. Sofia Johansson interviewed readers of British tabloid newspapers, to test the widespread assumption that these sensationalist newspapers undercut the public sphere. She asked if tabloids work as an alternative public sphere for subordinate groups, speaking to them in a language of their own. Her interviews reveal that readers accepted the predominant criticism of tabloids and claimed limited interest in public affairs news. Nevertheless, they did express a desire to know what's

## 12 *Media and Public Spheres*

going on and considered the papers accessible, stimulating talk about news in the everyday. Moreover, the newspapers fostered a sense of common identity among fellow readers and with their preferred newspaper, a basis for an alternative public sphere.

Shawn Shimpach explores how representations of the audience shaped the public sphere of the movie theater. Building on Warner's identity based public sphere, Shimpach examines how Progressive descriptions of nickelodeon audiences effectively represented the audience to itself. In combination with the rise of narrative film and reforms of theaters, this transformed the vocal nickelodeon counter public audience into a disciplined public sphere defined by middle class decorum. Shimpach's approach raises questions about the cultural construction of the public sphere, about the relation between reform, cultural uplift and public sphere, and about the multiple meanings of media and representation in the public sphere.

Michael Kramer looks back at the inspiration for the term counterpublic, the counterculture of the late 1960s and whether it constituted a public mediated by rock music. Focusing on a particular rock tour of 1970, Kramer uses quotes of people of the time to examine the contradiction in that era's rock music culture as both a commercial enterprise and an expression of the countercultural public. In this peculiar combination the counterculture also blended cultural and political publics. Blending Habermas' and Dewey's concepts, Kramer frames this public as one based in a strong sense of community that was characteristic of the era, and uses it to explore the problems of a public in a mass culture.

Michael Bailey examines the history of the early BBC. Publicly funded media have been justified on the ground that they are a public good, too important to leave to the vagaries of the market. But what if, instead of the media providing a public sphere, they operate as technologies of governmentality, to use Foucault's term? Bailey argues that, rather than creating an inclusive public sphere to allow a diversity of voices, BBC adopted a cultural uplift policy to educate the public and to counter the supposed degenerative effects of mass culture. Bailey explores the recurring tensions between two camps with more or less faith in the masses' capability for public sphere participation, the pessimist advocating media as an educator and guide, optimists seeing media as enabling their participation in the public sphere.

Stephen Lax explains the implications of new digital radio technology and policy in the UK. Smaller local stations, more community oriented and thus more suited to a public sphere are being displaced by larger 'quasi-national' stations. The expansion of the number of stations made possible by digital technology has not resulted in greater diversity of 'voices', but rather the concentration of radio station ownership in the hands of a few large broadcast organizations that deliver national programming with little local content, a refeudalization resulting in a diminution of the public sphere. Lax argues that a combination of market forces and government policy favorable to commercial

*Introduction: How Are Media Public Spheres?* 13

broadcasting and deregulation have undercut the possible benefits of digital radio for the public sphere. The study indicates the importance of insulating the public sphere from both commercial and government distortion.

J. Zach Schiller studied a low power US radio station as an alternative public sphere. This gives us a glimpse of a mediated public sphere beyond the concentrated media that Habermas and others see as the downfall of the public sphere, one closer to the localized printing presses of the eighteenth century. Providing richer insights, debates about policy and programming between two factions within the radio station, consciousness-raisers and inclusivists, reveal many complications. Within this alternative public sphere are all the issues of the Habermasian public sphere: inequality, exclusion, who controls the medium and for whose interest. The case also explores implications of an alternative public sphere that is homogenous and based on identity compared to one that is diverse and focused on political deliberation; these options also parallel the definition of the station as part of a public sphere or a social movement, raising questions about the relation between these two phenomena.

Peter Lunt and Mervi Pantti address the question whether emotion-based popular culture can be a public sphere, through their study of sensationalist television talk shows and reality TV shows. Their analysis explores dichotomies implicated in this question, between reason and emotion, deliberation and identity, inclusion and exclusion, free expression and script, spectacle and rationalization, entertainment and civic duty. For example, these shows are exceptional in their inclusion of ordinary people in the mass mediated public sphere. In addition, their study raises other interesting questions: is it the voices of these people or that of the producer and the network that come through in this dialog? Is it a counter-public or a corporate representational public sphere.

Virginia Nightingale examines the implications for the public sphere of the transformation of television from a stand-alone medium to its convergence with several new digital video media, including internet and mobile phones. Broadcast television through its concentration and national audiences created public spheres through imagined communities. It was funded or regulated as a public good to serve this national community. Convergence of media such as tv, internet and mobile phone, has resulted in strategies to develop new markets and new audiences. Two recent marketing strategies, enhanced tv and branded tv have replaced free tv with pay tv and produced 'brand-based affiliations', positioning viewers even more as consumers and less as citizens than broadcast television had.

Todd Fraley documents an example of a counter public medium compatible with Fraser's and Eley's ideas of contesting counter public spheres. Fraley describes the goals, policy and programming of an American satellite and public access cable television network, Free Speech TV, that provides an alternative mediated public sphere to progressive groups and social movements. This case study demonstrates the implications of redrawing conceptual boundaries so that contestation and social movements are included as part of the

14 *Media and Public Spheres*

public sphere, and raises the question of where such practices lay what is their relation to the public sphere if excluded from the concept. Finally, the study raises the question of the relationship of this counter media to mainstream media and to the larger population. Is it isolated, is this counterpublic still marginalized even with its own media outlet, or somehow integrated into the overarching public sphere?

Peter Dalgren and Tobias Olsson's study of Swedish internet use explores what Dahlgren has called civic culture, the values, trust, affiliative feeling and identity as a citizen that motivate, and the knowledge and practices that enable people to participate in a public sphere. Most particularly, they examine the role of internet institutions in sustaining this civic culture as well as constituting a public sphere. They interviewed young Swedish activists who use the internet as a resource to build and sustain the elements of civic culture. From the internet, these activists develop knowledge of their society and the activities of their allies and opponents. They engage in public sphere practices of discussion and debate, and coordinate their activities. The youth choose the internet as their public sphere medium because they distrust the traditional mass media as biased. By contrast, they trust their peers with whom they interact and other sources of information on the internet.

There has been much theory about the internet's promise, based upon its technological capabilities, particularly its open access, making an egalitarian and inclusive public sphere a reality, and moreover one that extends beyond national borders. Yan Wu examines the consequences of this in rapidly changing China. Here the traditional media are tightly controlled and function as a representational rather than deliberative public sphere. Wu examines how Chinese globally use Chinese internet bulletin boards as a public sphere to discuss political issues within China, countering government control of other media.