# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES
## SHAPING THE ARGUMENTS

# 13


AP Images/David Goldman

**Mass media effects research focuses on the relationship between the mass media and social movements, such as the campaign against gun violence. On June 20, 2015, marchers demonstrate in front of the Daughters of the Confederacy Building in memory of nine victims who died in a shooting at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C.**



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## What's Ahead?

- Early Mass Media Studies Assess Impact
- Scholars Look for Patterns
- How TV Affects Children's Behavior
- Do the Mass Media Cause Violence?
- National Political Campaigns Depend on Mass Media
- Cost of Political Advertising Skyrockets
- Voters and Campaigns Use the Internet and Social Media
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- Mass Media Face Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues
- How to Analyze Media Effects

"Younger voters tend to be not just consumers of news and current events but conduits as well—sending out e-mailed links and videos to friends and their social networks."

—BRIAN STELTER, POLITICAL ANALYST, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

***Researchers at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine have identified a new psychiatric*** condition they have dubbed "celebrity worship syndrome." This affliction is an unhealthy interest in the rich and famous. People who admire celebrities often want to be just like them, even though some celebrities set examples that aren't very positive. Celebrity worship is just one example of the effect of mass media on our lives.

Today, scholars understand that the media have different effects on different types of people with differing results, and generalizations about the media's effects are easy to make but difficult to prove. "We do not fully understand at present what the media system is doing to individual behavior, much less to American culture," according to media scholars William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm. "The media cannot simply be seen as stenciling images on a blank mind. That is too superficial a view of the communication process."

## Early Mass Media Studies Assess Impact

The concept that the media have different effects on different types of people is relatively new. Early media observers were certain that a one-to-one relationship existed between what people read, heard and saw and what people did with that information. They also believed that the effects were the same for everyone.

The magic bullet theory, discussed later in the chapter (see "The Payne Fund Studies," p. 257) and sometimes called the hypodermic needle theory, alleged that ideas from the media were in direct causal relation to behavior. The theory held that the media could inject ideas into people the way liquids are injected through a needle. This early distrust of the media still pervades many people's thinking today, although the theory has been disproved.

Mass media research, like other social science research, is based on a continuum of thought, with each new study advancing slightly the knowledge from the studies that have come before. This is what has happened to the magic bullet theory. Eventually, the beliefs that audiences absorbed media messages uncritically and that all people reacted the same to each message were proven untrue. Research disclosed that analyzing media effects is a very complex task.

Some media research had been done before television use became widespread in the mid-1950s, but TV prompted scholars to take a closer look at media's effects. Two scholars made particularly provocative assertions about how the media influence people's lives: David M. Potter and Marshall McLuhan.

David Potter, a historian, arrived at just the right moment—when the public and the scholarly community were anxiously trying to analyze media's effects on society. In his book *People of Plenty*, published in 1954, Potter first articulated the idea that American society is a consumer society driven primarily by advertising and the images advertising promotes.

Potter asserted that American advertising is rooted in American abundance: "Advertising is not badly needed in an economy of scarcity, because total demand is usually equal to or in excess of total supply, and every producer can normally sell as much as he produces. . . . It is when potential supply outstrips demand—that is,

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Fotosearch/Getty Images

In *People of Plenty*, David Potter first identified the idea that America is a consumer society driven primarily by marketing and the images advertising promotes, such as the modern family portrayed in this ad, a 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air for her and a Chevrolet Corvette for him. The cars are shown parked in front of a modern ranch-style house with a two-car garage, a luxury at the time.

when abundance prevails—that advertising begins to fulfill a really essential economic function."

Potter also warned about the dangers of advertising: "Advertising has in its dynamics no motivation to seek the improvement of the individual or to impart qualities of social usefulness. . . . It has no social goals and no social responsibility for what it does with its influence." Potter's perspective was important in shaping the critical view of modern advertising. *People of Plenty* is still in print today.

## Scholars Look for Patterns

Like Potter, Canadian author and educator Marshall McLuhan arrived at just the right moment. In the 1960s, McLuhan piqued the public's interest with his phrase "The medium is the message," which he later parodied in the title of his book *The Medium Is the Massage*. One of his conclusions was that the widespread use of television was a landmark in the history of the world, "retribalizing" society and creating a "global village" of people who use media to communicate.

McLuhan suggested that electronic media messages are inherently different from print messages—to watch information on TV is different from reading the same information in a newspaper. McLuhan never offered systematic proof for his ideas, and some people criticized him as a charlatan, but his concepts still are debated widely.

Scholars who analyze the media today look for patterns in media effects, predictable results and statistical evidence to document how the media affect us. Precisely because the media are ubiquitous, studies of their effects on American society are far from conclusive. In this chapter, you will learn about some of the major studies and some of the recent assertions about the role that the media play in our lives.

Mass media research today includes mass media effects research and mass media content analysis. ***Mass media effects research*** tries to analyze how people use the information they receive from the media—whether political advertising changes people's voting behavior, for example. ***Mass media content analysis*** examines what is presented by the media—how many children's programs portray violent behavior, for example. Sometimes these two types of analysis (effects research and content analysis) are combined in an attempt to evaluate the effect of a specific type of content on a specific audience.

### The Payne Fund Studies

The prestigious Payne Fund sponsored the first major study of media in 1929. It contained 12 reports on media effects. One of these studies concentrated on the effects of movies on children. In his interviews, researcher Herbert Blumer simply asked teenagers what they remembered about the movies they had seen as children. Using this unsystematic approach, he reported that the teenagers had been greatly influenced by the movies because they *said* they had been greatly influenced.

Blumer's conclusion and other conclusions of the Payne Fund studies about the media's direct, one-to-one effect on people were accepted without question, mainly because these were the first major studies of

**Mass Media Effects Research** An attempt to analyze how people use the information they receive from the media.

**Mass Media Content Analysis** An attempt to analyze how mass media programming influences behavior.

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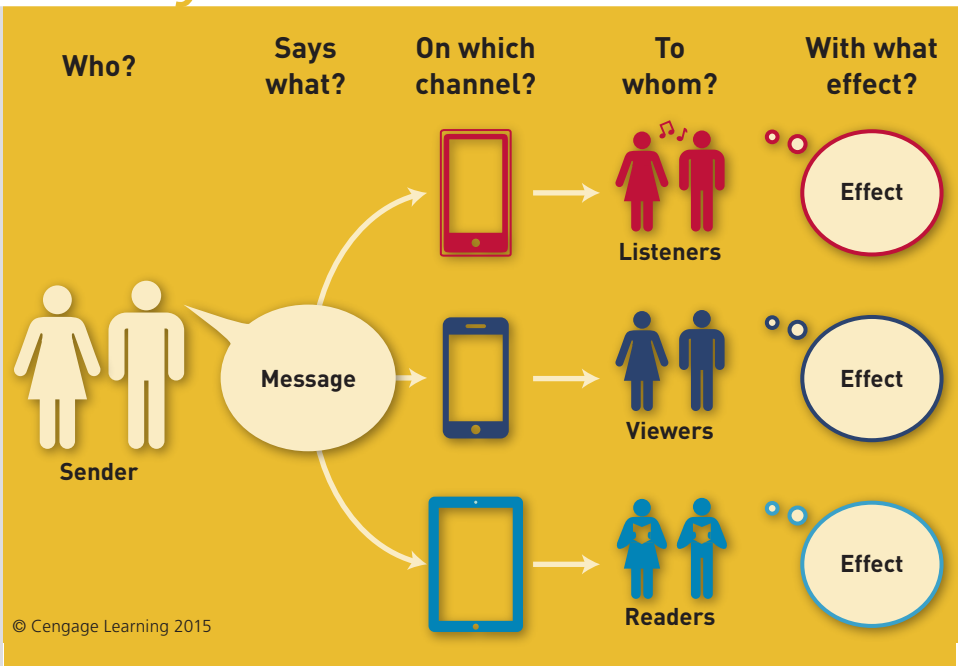
IMPACT *Society*

ILLUSTRATION 13.1

**Lasswell's Model Asks Five Questions**

The Lasswell model analyzes the communication process by asking five questions: Who? Says what? On which channel? To whom? With what effect?




media effects, and the results were widely reported. The Payne Fund studies were the source of the ***magic bullet theory***, the belief that media messages directly and measurably affect people's behavior.

The Payne Fund studies also contributed ammunition for the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association production code, adopted in 1930, which regulated movie content.

## The Cantril Study

The Martians who landed in New Jersey in the Mercury Theatre "War of the Worlds" broadcast of October 30, 1939 (see **Chapter 6,** "'The War of the Worlds' Challenges Radio's Credibility," p. 109), sparked the next major study of media effects, conducted by Hadley Cantril at Princeton University. The results of the Cantril study contradicted the findings of the Payne Fund studies and disputed the magic bullet theory.

Cantril wanted to find out why certain people believed the Mercury Theatre broadcast and others did not. After interviewing 135 people, Cantril concluded that high critical-thinking ability was the key. Better-educated people were much more likely to decide the broadcast was a fake. This finding might seem to be self-evident today, but the importance of the Cantril study is that it differentiated among listeners: People with different personality characteristics interpreted the broadcast differently.

## The Lasswell Model

In 1948, political scientist Harold D. Lasswell designed a model to describe the process of communication that is still used today. Lasswell said the communication process could be analyzed by answering the five questions shown in **Illustration 13.1**.

Lasswell said you could analyze the process of communication by determining who the sender is and what the sender says. Next, you must identify which channel—or method—of communication the sender used. Then you must examine the audience and define the effect on that audience. Because Lasswell described the communication process so succinctly, most communications research still focuses on his five original questions.

## *How TV Affects Children's Behavior*

The 1950s were a time of adjustment to the new medium of television, which at first was a novelty and then became a necessity. Since 1960, four of the major studies of the effects of television have focused on children.

**Magic Bullet Theory** The assertion that media messages directly and measurably affect people's behavior.

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## Television in the Lives of Children

Published in 1961, by Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* was the first major study of the effects of television on children. Researchers interviewed 6,000 children and 1,500 parents, as well as teachers and school officials.

Schramm and his associates reported that children were exposed to television more than to any other mass medium. On average, 5-year-old children watched television two hours every weekday. TV viewing time reached three hours by the time these children were 8 years old. In a finding that often was subsequently cited, Schramm said that from the ages of 3 to 16, children spent more time in front of the television set than they spent in school.

Children used television for fantasy, diversion and instruction, Schramm said. Children who had troubled relationships with their parents and children who were classified as aggressive were more likely to turn to television for fantasy, but Schramm could find no serious problems related to television viewing. Schramm also found, in support of Cantril, that different children showed different effects.

## Television and Social Behavior

*Television and Social Behavior*, a study of the effects of television, was funded by $1 million appropriated by Congress in 1969, after the violent decade of the 1960s. The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which sponsored the study, appointed a distinguished panel of social scientists to undertake the research.

The study's major findings, published in six volumes in 1971, concerned the effects of television violence on children. A content analysis of one week of prime-time programming, conducted by George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania, reported that eight out of ten prime-time shows contained violence.

*Television and Social Behavior* did not make a direct connection between TV programming and violent behavior, however. The report said there was a "tentative" indication that television viewing caused aggressive behavior. According to the study, TV violence affected only *some* children who were already classified as aggressive children and *only* in some environments.

Even though the report avoided a direct statement about violent behavior in children as a result of television viewing, the U.S. surgeon general called for immediate action against violence on television. The television industry dismissed the results as inconclusive.

## The Early Window

Several studies since 1971 have suggested that television violence causes aggression among children. In their 1988 book *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth*, psychologists Robert M. Liebert and Joyce Sprafkin urged caution in drawing broad conclusions about the subject:

> Studies using various methods have supported the proposition that TV violence can induce aggressive and/or antisocial behavior in children. Whether the effect will hold only for the most susceptible individuals (e.g., boys from disadvantaged homes) or whether it will hold for a wider range of youngsters obviously depends in part upon the measure being used. . . . The occurrence of serious violent or criminal acts results from several forces at once. Researchers have said that TV violence is *a* cause of aggressiveness, not that it is *the* cause of aggressiveness. There is no one, single cause of any social behavior.

Still, criticism of television's effects on children's behavior persists, especially the effects of advertising.

## Television Advertising to Children

The effects of advertising on adults have been analyzed widely, but in 1979 the advertising of children's products became an object of serious government attention with the Federal Trade Commission's release of the 340-page report *Television Advertising to Children*. The report, based on a two-year study, was designed to document the dangers of advertising sugar-based products to children, but embedded in the report was some provocative information about children's advertising.

Children are an especially vulnerable audience, said the FTC. The report concluded:

1. The average child sees 20,000 commercials a year, or about 3 hours of TV advertising a week.
2. Many children regard advertising as just another form of programming and do not distinguish between programs and ads.
3. Televised advertising for any product to children who do not understand the intent of the commercial is unfair and deceptive.

The report called for a ban on advertising to very young children, a ban on sugared products in advertising directed to children younger than age 12, and a requirement for counter-ads with dental and nutritional information to balance ads for sugared products.

The FTC report and subsequent research about children's advertising suggest that younger children pay more attention to television advertising than older children. But by sixth grade, children adopt what has been called a "global distrust" of advertising.

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Alberto E. Rodriguez/Getty Images

Children are an especially vulnerable mass media audience because they tend to pay more attention to the TV ads that surround the programs. On June 2, 2015, the Disney Channel launched the second season of *Girl Meets World*, with advertising aimed at a young audience.

## Linking TV to School Performance

There have been many studies about children and television, such as the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) report. In 1981, a California study suggested a link between television viewing and poor school performance.

The California Assessment Program (CAP), which tests academic achievement, included a new question: "On a typical weekday, about how many hours do you watch TV?" The students were given a choice ranging from 0 to 6 or more hours. An analysis of the answers to that question from more than 10,000 sixth graders was matched with the children's scores on the achievement test.

The results suggested a consistent relationship between viewing time and achievement. Students who said they watched a lot of television scored lower in reading, writing and mathematics than students who didn't watch any television. The average scores for students who said they viewed six or more hours of television a day were six to eight points lower than for those children who said they watched less than a half-hour of television a day.

In 2010, new research further attempted to define whether children are poor students because they watch a lot of television or whether children who watch a lot of television are poor students for other reasons. Canadian researchers released a study in the May 2010 issue of the journal *Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* that linked a decline in classroom engagement with early television viewing. The study, *Prospective Associations Between Early Childhood Television Exposure and Academic, Psychosocial, and Physical Well-being by Middle Childhood,* followed the TV viewing habits of 1,314 toddlers until they entered fourth grade.

From their analysis of the data, the researchers concluded that children who watched a lot of TV in their early years were less likely to perform well when they reached the fourth grade. The researchers noted that there were "long term risks associated with higher levels of [TV] exposure."

In 2011, a study conducted by Common Sense Media, a San Francisco nonprofit group, reported that children younger than 8 years old spend more time using media than ever, and more than half of these children have access to a mobile device like a smartphone or a tablet. Still, according to the study, TV accounts for the largest amount of screen time.

"The report also documents for the first time an emerging 'app gap' in which affluent children are likely to use mobile educational games while those in low-income families are the most likely to have televisions in their rooms," reported *The New York Times*.

This new aspect of the effects of the digital divide (see **Chapter 9**)—the difference in media access between disadvantaged families and the rest of the nation—merits further study.

## *Do the Mass Media Cause Violence?*

The search for a possible direct link between violent behavior and violence in the mass media has existed for more than 30 years. The first major modern study, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*, published in 1982 by the National Institute for Mental Health, compiled information from 2,500 individual studies of television. According to NIMH, three findings of these 2,500 studies, taken together, were that:

1. A direct correlation exists between televised violence and aggressive behavior, yet there is no way to predict who will be affected and why.
2. Heavy television viewers are more fearful, less trusting and more apprehensive than light viewers.
3. Children who watch what the report called "pro social" programs (programs that are socially constructive, such as *Sesame Street* and *SpongeBob*) are more likely to act responsibly.

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Most of the latest studies of the mass media's role have continued to reinforce the concept that different people in different environments react to mass media differently.

In 1994, cable operators and network broadcasters agreed to use an independent monitor to review programming for violent content. The agreement came after Congress held hearings on the subject in 1993 and threatened to introduce regulations to curb violence if the industry didn't police itself. The agreement also called for the development of violence ratings for TV programming and endorsed a v-chip—*v* for "violence"—technology that would be built into a television set to allow parents to block programs rated as violent.

The monitoring is qualitative rather than quantitative, which means the programs are examined for content, not just for incidents of violence. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 established a television ratings code for TV content, which standardized the labels.

Then in 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 against a California law that would have restricted the sale and rental of violent video games to minors. After the decision, the Entertainment Software Association, which represents video and computer game makers, voluntarily created a ratings system.

The court ruling and industry ratings systems continue the tradition of media self-regulation in the U.S. That is, the video game, broadcast, recording and movie media industries have responded—often reluctantly—to congressional pressure to restrict access to media content by monitoring themselves rather than invite government content regulation.

Chris Ferguson, a professor at Texas A&M International, says that recent research about the effects of videogame violence has been "quite inconsistent." In a 2012 article for the *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, Ferguson and his co-authors looked at 165 video game players over three years and reported that they could not directly link young people who played violent video games to youth aggression or dating violence. The researchers said that "depression, antisocial personality traits, exposure to family violence and peer influences" were the best way to predict aggression-related behavior.

Other researchers argue that, while it is impossible to directly link gun violence to video games, there could still be some connection. Professor Brad Bushman, of The Ohio State University, in dissenting comments to the 2011 U.S. Supreme Court decision, noted that the connection between violent video games and gun violence "shouldn't be dismissed as a trivial cause either."


David McNew/Getty Images

The relationship between violence portrayed in video games and violent behavior in American society continues to spark debate. On June 15, 2015, Ubisoft Quebec Creative Director Marc-Alexas Cole announces the release of the company's latest version of *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* at the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

## National Political Campaigns Depend on Mass Media

The mass media have transformed politics in ways that could never have been imagined when President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced what were called Fireside Chats in 1933. Roosevelt was the first president to use the media effectively to stimulate public support.

The newest technology introduced during FDR's era—radio—gave him immediate access to a national audience. Roosevelt's media skill became an essential element in promoting his economic programs. Today, politics and the media seem irreversibly dependent on each other, one of the legacies of Roosevelt's presidency.

### The Fireside Chats

In March 1933, just after he was inaugurated, FDR looked for a way to avoid a financial panic after he announced that he was closing the nation's banks. For a week, the country cooled off while Congress scrambled for a solution. On the Sunday night eight days after his inauguration, Roosevelt used radio to calm the nation's anxiety before the banks began to reopen on Monday. FDR went down to the basement of the White House to give his first Fireside Chat. There was a fireplace in the basement, but no fire was burning. The president could not find his script, so he borrowed a mimeographed copy from a reporter.

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In his first address to the nation as president, FDR gave a banking lesson to his audience of 60 million people: "I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking. . . . First of all, let me state the simple fact that when you deposit money in a bank, the bank does not put the money into a safe deposit vault. It invests your money in many different forms." When he finished, he turned to people in the room and asked, "Was I all right?" America had its first media president, an elected leader talking directly to the people through the media.

Roosevelt's chats are cited as a legendary example of mass media politics, yet he gave only 8 Fireside Chats in his first term of office. His other meetings with the press also enhanced his reputation for press access: In 13 years in office, he held more than 900 press conferences.

## The People's Choice

The first major study of the influence of mass media on politics was *The People's Choice*, undertaken precisely because FDR seemed to be such a good media politician. This comprehensive examination of voter behavior in the 1940 presidential election was quite systematic.

Researchers Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet followed 3,000 people in rural Erie County, Ohio, from May to November 1940 to determine what influenced the way these people voted for president. The researchers tracked how people's minds changed over the 6-month period and then attempted to determine why. (It is important to remember this study was undertaken before television.)

Radio had become the prevailing medium for political advertising beginning in 1932, when the two parties spent more money for radio time than for any other campaign item. What effect, the researchers wanted to know, did the media have on people's choosing one candidate over another? The results were provocative.

Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found that only 8 percent of the voters in the study were actually *converted* by the media. The majority of voters (53 percent) were *reinforced* in their beliefs by the media, and 14 percent were *activated* to vote. Mixed effects or no effects were shown by the remaining 25 percent of the people.

Lazarsfeld said opinion leaders, who got their information from the media, shared this information with their friends. The study concluded that instead of changing people's beliefs, the media primarily activate people to vote and reinforce already held opinions. *The People's Choice* also made the following findings:

- Family and friends have more effect on people's decisions than the media.


CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images

In 1932, Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues studied people's voting habits to attempt to document the media's effect on their decisions. In 1942, Lazarsfeld (right) worked with Dr. Frank Stanton (left, future president of the CBS network) on an audience analysis machine. Viewers pressed a button on the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer when they saw a program they liked, and the machine printed out the results. The machine never gained widespread use.

- The media have different effects on different people, reinforcing Cantril's findings.
- A major source of information about candidates is other people.

The finding that opinion leaders often provide and shape information for the general population was a bonus—the researchers hadn't set out specifically to learn this. This transmission of information and ideas from mass media to opinion leaders and then to friends and acquaintances is called the ***two-step flow*** of communication.

## The Unseeing Eye

In 1976, a second study of the media and presidential elections, called *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections*, revealed findings that paralleled those of *The People's Choice*.

With a grant from the National Science Foundation, Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure supervised interviews with 2,707 people from early September to just before Election Day in the November 1972 race between George McGovern and Richard Nixon. The study did not discuss political media events, but it did analyze television campaign news and political advertising.

**Two-Step Flow** The transmission of information and ideas from mass media to opinion leaders and then to friends.

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The researchers concluded that although political advertising influenced 16 percent of the people they interviewed, only 7 percent were manipulated by political ads. The researchers defined people who were *influenced* as those who decided to vote for a candidate based mostly on what they knew and only slightly on what the ads told them. The 7 percent of the people in the survey who were *manipulated*, according to Patterson and McClure, were people who cited political advertising as a major factor in their choices. Patterson and McClure concluded that political advertising on TV has little effect on most people:

> By projecting their political biases . . . people see in candidates' commercials pretty much what they want to see. Ads sponsored by the candidate who shares their politics get a good response. They like what he has to say. And they like him. Ads sponsored by the opposing candidate are viewed negatively. They object to what he says. And they object to him.

Even though political ads affect a minority of people, it is important to remember that in some elections the difference of a few percentage points can decide the outcome. Political advertising is designed to sway these swing voters. This is why political advertising continues to play such an important campaign role.

## Election Campaigns on Television

So far, no convincing systematic evidence has shown that the mass media change the voting behavior of *large* groups of people. Yet, since John F. Kennedy debated Richard Nixon during the 1960 presidential campaign, many people deeply feel that the media—television in particular—have changed elections and electoral politics.

The series of debates between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960 were the first televised debates of presidential candidates in American history. Kennedy's performance in the debates often is credited for his narrow victory in the election. In his book *Presidents and the Press*, media scholar Joseph C. Spear wrote:

> As the panel began asking questions, Nixon tended to go on the defensive, answering Kennedy point by point and ignoring his huge audience beyond the camera.
>
> Kennedy, by contrast, appeared rested, calm, informed, cocksure. Whatever the question, he aimed his answer at the millions of Americans viewing the program in their living rooms.
>
> It was an unmitigated disaster for Nixon. In the second, third and fourth debates, he managed to recover somewhat from his initial poor performance, but it was too late. Surveys showed that an overwhelming percentage of the television audience had judged Kennedy the victor.

AP Photos

The series of TV debates in 1960 between Senator John F. Kennedy (left) and Vice President Richard Nixon (right) were the first widely televised debates of presidential candidates. Kennedy's debate performance often is credited for his narrow victory in the election. The two are shown shaking hands at their fourth and final debate on October 21, 1960.

One legacy of Kennedy's television victory was that national political campaigns came to depend almost entirely on TV to promote presidential candidates, and televised presidential debates became a staple of every presidential election.

Television is a very efficient way to reach large numbers of people quickly, but campaigning on television also distances the candidates from direct public contact. Instead of meeting the public in person to promote and debate issues, candidates can isolate themselves from public scrutiny by using television ads to portray their views.

## *Cost of Political Advertising Skyrockets*

Television advertising also is very expensive. The cost of national and statewide campaigns—especially since the year 2000—has skyrocketed. Presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and senatorial candidates typically devote 40 to 60 percent of their campaign budgets to advertising.

Many candidates run in metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, where the media markets are much larger than their districts. Television advertising in large markets reaches a bigger audience than the candidates need, so they also use direct mail and the Internet. But a candidate running for Congress in Des Moines, Iowa, might use

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mainly local television ads because the entire district is included in the local TV station's coverage area. Historian James David Barber describes the public's role in politics:

> Particularly since television has brought national politics within arm's length of nearly every American, the great majority probably has at least some experience of the quadrennial passing parade. But millions vote their old memories and habits and interests, interpreting new perceptions that strike their senses to coincide with their prejudices and impulses.
>
> At the other end of the participation spectrum are those compulsive readers of *The New York Times* who delve into every twitch and turn of the contest. Floating in between are large numbers of Americans who pick up on the election's major events and personalities, following with mild but open interest the dominant developments.
>
> Insofar as the campaign makes a difference, it is this great central chunk of The People who swing the choice. They respond to what they see and hear. They are interested but not obsessed. They edit out the minor blips of change and wait for the campaign to gather force around a critical concern. They reach their conclusions on the basis of a widely shared common experience. It is through that middling throng of the population that the pulse of politics beats most powerfully, synchronizing to its insistent rhythm the varied vibrations of discrete events.

The rising cost of running for public office can exclude people without the means to raise huge sums of money. Since 1972, when political campaigns first began widespread use of television advertising, presidential campaign expenditures have skyrocketed from less than $2 *million* in 1972 to $6 *billion* in 2012. (See **Illustration 13.2,** "TV Political Campaign Spending in Presidential Elections, 1972–2012," p. 265.) Most of this money went to pay for TV and Internet advertising.


Dave Carpenter/Cartoon Stock

Today the mass media are an essential part of American politics, changing the behavior of politicians as well as the electorate, which raises important questions about the role of the nation's mass media in governance and the conduct of elections.

## Voters and Campaigns Use the Internet and Social Media

The year 2004 was the first presidential election year when the Internet began to play a role in national politics, as citizen blogs became an outlet for political debate, and bloggers covered the presidential campaigns along with members of the established press corps.

*The New York Times* noted in 2004, "Democrats and Republicans are sharply increasing their use of e-mail, interactive Web sites, candidate and party blogs and text messaging to raise money, organize get-out-the-vote efforts and assemble crowds for rallies. The Internet, they say, appears to be far more efficient, and less costly, than the traditional tools of politics, notably door knocking and telephone banks."

The Pew Research Center reported that 75 million Americans used the Internet for political news during the 2004 presidential election. "The effect of the Internet on politics will be every bit as transformational as television was," Republican national chairman Ken Mehlman told *The Times*. "If you want to get your message out, the old way of paying someone to make a TV ad is insufficient: You need your message out through the Internet, through e-mail, through talk radio."

Political consultants also experimented with political podcasts that featured daily downloaded messages from candidates and viral marketing videos supporting the candidates. Supporters passed along the video messages through e-mail to their friends—an online chain of free Internet political messaging that reached young voters more directly than traditional advertising.

By 2008, the Internet had become a central force in national politics. "The 2008 race for the White House fundamentally upended the way presidential campaigns are fought in the United States," wrote Adam Nagourney of *The New York Times*. "It has rewritten the rules on how to reach voters, raise money, organize supporters, manage the news media, track and mold public opinion, and wage—and withstand—political attacks, including many carried by blogs that did not exist four years ago."

According to Mark McKinnon, a senior adviser to President George W. Bush's 2000 and 2004 campaigns,

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IMPACT

# Money

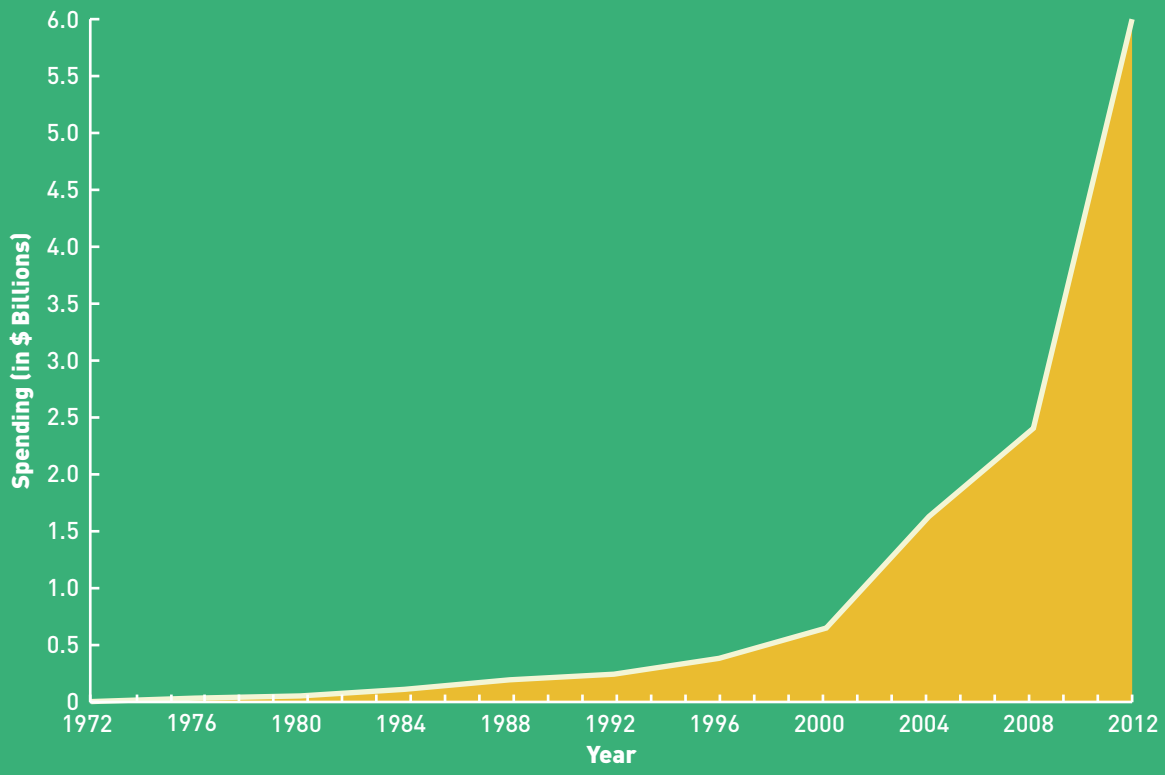


ILLUSTRATION 13.2

**TV Political Campaign Spending in Presidential Elections, 1972–2012**

The amount of money presidential candidates spend on advertising has soared since 1972. Of the $6 billion collected by all the candidates in the 2012 presidential campaign, a majority of the money went to pay for TV and Internet advertising.

Center for Responsive Politics and opensecrets.org.

the year 2008 was when "campaigns leveraged the Internet in ways never imagined. The year we went to warp speed. The year the paradigm got turned upside down and truly became bottom up instead of top down." The Obama campaign especially used the Internet and social media, such as YouTube, as well as cell-phone text messaging. The Internet connection also helped the campaign raise record amounts of money.

Also in 2008, many younger voters sought alternative sources of information about the campaigns such as *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart, and they shared blogs, video clips and online discussions through Facebook and YouTube, social media sites that were not a large factor in the 2004 election.

"According to interviews and recent surveys, younger voters tend to be not just consumers of news and current events but conduits as well—sending out e-mailed links and videos to friends and their social networks. And in turn, they rely on friends and online connections for news to come to them," reported political writer Brian Stelter. "In essence, they are replacing the professional filter—reading *The Washington Post*, clicking on CNN.com—with a social one.

"Young people also identify online discussions with friends and videos as important sources of election information," wrote Stelter. "The habits suggest that younger readers find themselves going straight to the source, bypassing the context and analysis that seasoned journalists provide."

However, even though Internet political marketing may reach large groups of people quickly and efficiently, there is no clear understanding yet of how—or

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Steve Starr/Corbis News/Corbis

During the 2012 election, most political campaigns used the Internet to spread their messages, but they still relied on TV for the majority of their advertising. Students at the University of Denver watch the first 2012 presidential debate on an outside TV screen, two blocks away from where the actual debate took place on campus. The debate drew 67.2 million TV viewers.

if—Internet political messages can be used to change people's minds. In the 2012 election, most political campaigns used the Internet to spread their messages, but they still relied on television for the majority of their advertising, and expenditures on Internet advertising remained very small.

The total amount spent by presidential candidates for the 2012 elections reached $6 billion, more than twice what the candidates spent in 2008. "Advertising veterans say the stakes are too high to experiment with a medium that, despite its ability to monitor the browsing habits of consumers, might not be effective," reported the *Los Angeles Times*. So, political campaigns are still spending more money on the controlled messages that TV advertising provides rather than the uncontrolled environment of the Internet. However, in the 2012 election, 47 percent of voters said they turned to the Internet for campaign news. (See **Illustration 13.3**, "Number of Voters Who Follow Political Figures on Social Media Increasing," and **Illustration 13.4**, "Voters Follow Political Figures on Social Media to Stay Current, Connected and Informed," p. 267.)

## *Mass Media Reflect Social Values*

Because media research is a continuing process, new ideas will emerge in the next decade from today's ideas and studies. Several provocative recent analyses have extended the boundaries of media research.

### Silencing Opposing Viewpoints

Political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann has asserted that because journalists in all media tend to concentrate on the same major news stories, the audience is assailed on many sides by similar information. Together, the media present the consensus; journalists reflect the prevailing climate of opinion.

As this consensus spreads, people with divergent views, says Noelle-Neumann, may be less likely to voice disagreement with the prevailing point of view. Thus, because of a "***spiral of silence***," the media gain more influence because opponents of the consensus tend to remain silent. The implication for future research will be to ask whether the media neutralize dissent and create a pattern of social and cultural conformity.

### Losing a Sense of Place

In his book *No Sense of Place*, published in 1985, Joshua Meyrowitz provided new insight into television's possible effects on society. In the past, says Meyrowitz:

> Parents did not know what their children knew, and children did not know what their parents knew they knew. Similarly, a person of one sex could never be certain of what a member of the other sex knew. . . . Television undermines such behavioral distinctions because it encompasses children and adults, men and women and all other social groups in a single informational sphere or environment. Not only does it provide similar information to everyone, but, even more significant, it provides it publicly and often simultaneously.

This sharing of information, says Meyrowitz, means that subjects that rarely were discussed between men and women, for instance, or between children and adults, have become part of the public dialogue.

A second result of television viewing is the blurred distinction between childhood and adulthood, says Meyrowitz. When print dominated the society as a medium, children's access to adult information was limited. The only way to learn about "adult" concepts was to read about them, so

**Spiral of Silence** The belief that people with divergent views may be reluctant to challenge the consensus of opinion offered by the media.

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IMPACT

# Convergence

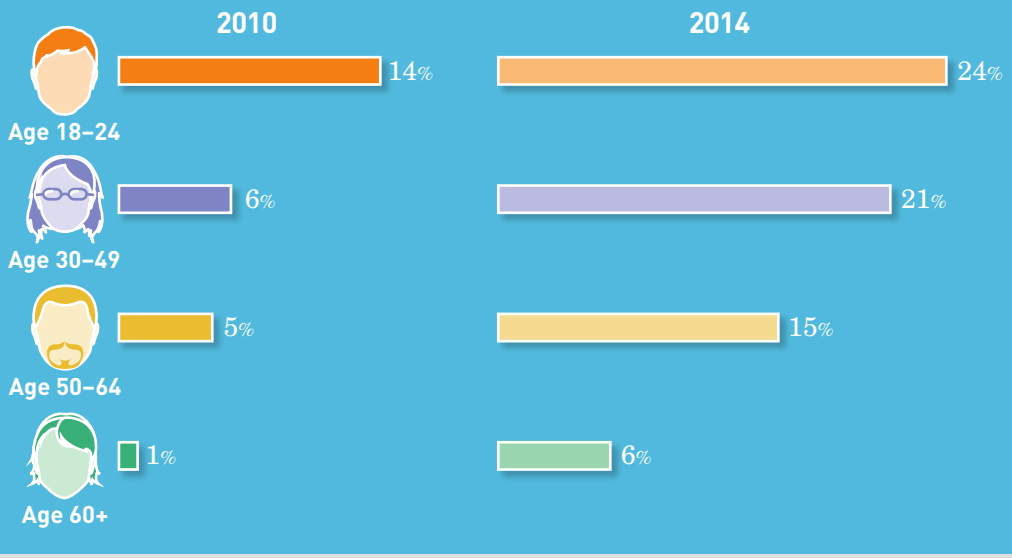


ILLUSTRATION 13.3

**Number of Voters Who Follow Political Figures on Social Media Is Increasing**

A survey conducted in 2014 by The Pew Research Center revealed a large increase in the number of voters—especially 30- to 49-year-olds and 50- to 64-year-olds—who follow public figures on social media.

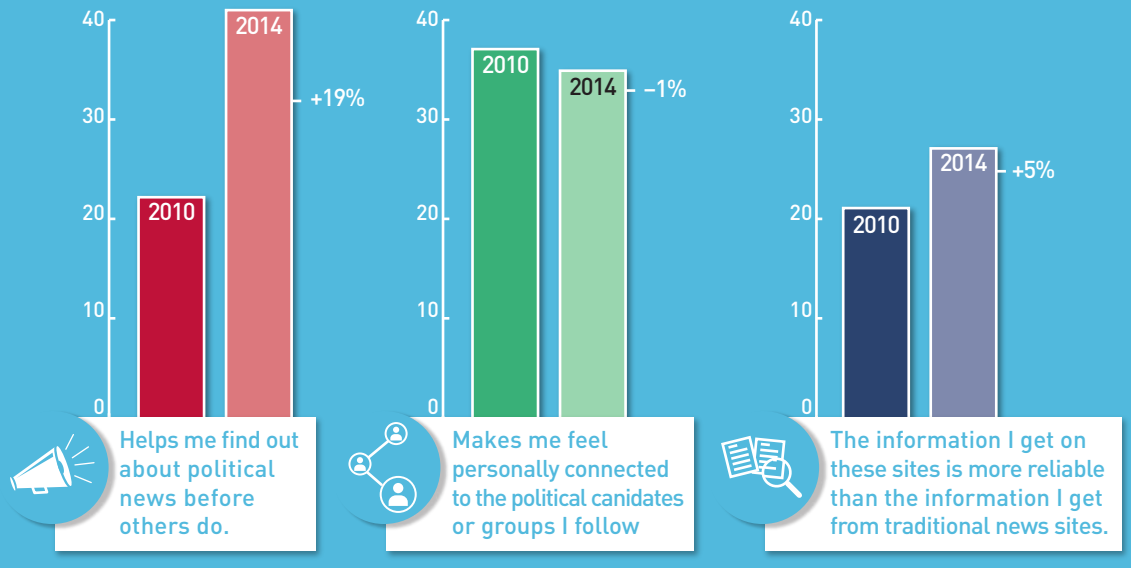


ILLUSTRATION 13.4

**Voters Follow Political Figures on Social Media to Stay Current, Connected and Informed**

The main reason people follow public figures on social media is to stay current and learn about political news before others, but social media also make people feel more connected and informed about politics.

Pew Research Center, "Cell Phones, Social Media and Campaign 2014," October 11, 2014. http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/11/03/

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typically children were not exposed to adult ideas or problems, and taboo topics remained hidden from children.

In a video world, however, any topic that can be portrayed in pictures on television challenges the boundaries that print places around information. This, says Meyrowitz, causes an early loss of the naïveté of childhood:

> Television removes barriers that once divided people of different ages and reading abilities into different social situations. The widespread use of television is equivalent to a broad social decision to allow young children to be present at wars and funerals, courtships and seductions, criminal plots and cocktail parties. . . . Television thrusts children into a complex adult world, and it provides the impetus for children to ask the meanings of actions and words they would not yet have heard or read about without television.

Meyrowitz concedes that movies offered similar information to children before television, but he says that the pervasiveness of television today makes its effects more widespread.

Complicating recent mass media effect studies is the massive increase in the variety and number of available media sources.

### Stereotyping

Journalists often use shorthand labels to characterize ethnic and other groups. As early as 1922, in his book *Public Opinion*, political journalist Walter Lippmann first identified the tendency of journalists to generalize about other people based on fixed ideas:

> When we speak of the mind of a group of people, of the French mind, the militarist mind . . . we are liable to serious confusion unless we agree to separate the instinctive equipment from the stereotypes, the patterns, the formulae which play so decisive a part in building up the mental world to which the native character is adapted and responds. . . . Failure to make this distinction accounts for oceans of loose talk about collective minds, national souls and race psychology.

The image of women portrayed by the media has been the subject of a significant number of contemporary studies. Media researchers who study the stereotyping of women point to past and current media portrayals showing very few women in professional roles or as strong, major characters. (See **Impact/Profile**: "Barbie Can Be a Computer Engineer . . . but Only with the Help of a Man," p. 269.)

The media's overall portrayal of women in mass culture is slowly improving, but in her book *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*, Tania Modleski says that the portrayal in popular fiction of women in submissive roles goes back to 1740, with the British novel *Pamela*, which was published in America by Benjamin Franklin in 1744. Modleski analyzed the historical content of gothic novels, Harlequin romances and soap operas:

> In Harlequin Romances, the need of women to find meaning and pleasure in activities that are not wholly male-centered such as work or artistic creation is generally scoffed at.
>
> Soap operas also undercut, though in subtler fashion, the idea that a woman might obtain satisfaction from these activities [work or artistic creation]. . . . Indeed, patriarchal myths and institutions are . . . wholeheartedly embraced, although the anxieties and tensions they give rise to may be said to provoke the need for the texts in the first place.

The implication of Modleski's research is that women who read romance novels will believe they should act like the women in the novels they read. A stereotype that has existed since 1740 still shows up in today's mass media, often in advertising campaigns directed at women.

## *Mass Media Slow to Reflect Ethnic Diversity*

Beginning in the year 2000, the U.S. census allowed Americans to use more than one racial category to describe themselves, and the categories have been changed to reflect America's changing face. In the past, people were forced to choose one category from among the following: Black, White, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, or "Other—specify in writing."

In the 2010 census, 9 million people chose more than one race, a change of about 32 percent since 2000. People who identify with more than one group also were able to check more than one description—African American and American Indian, for example. All government forms are required to use the new categories.

This new census method allows people to identify themselves to the government and shows the evolving social landscape of the U.S. population. Yet the American media have been very slow to acknowledge the nation's rapidly changing population.

Specific media outlets, such as African American and Latino newspapers, magazines and Internet sites, cater to specific audiences. But the mainstream media, especially daily newspapers and the TV networks, traditionally have represented the interests of the mainstream culture. Historically, scores of media studies have documented stereotypical representation and a lack of representation of people of color in all areas of the culture, even though the potential audience for ethnic media is very large.

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IMPACT Profile

## Barbie Can Be a Computer Engineer . . . but Only with the Help of a Man

### *I'll need Steven and Brian's help to turn this into a real game!'* laughs computer programmer Barbie in her new book

*By Aisha Gani*

Breaking away from her pink heels, pink ball gown and oversized pink hairbrush, Barbie—the fashion doll manufactured by Mattel—now has a range of gender-stereotype-breaking books. In the "I can be" series, we learn that Barbie can be president, a sports star and a computer engineer . . . except in the latter case she needs the help of a man.

Pamela Ribon, a writer at Walt Disney animation studios, this week pointed out the sexism on her blog when she picked up the *Barbie: I Can Be a Computer Engineer* children's book, published by Random House US.

In a book intended to inspire young girls, Barbie the programmer, who wears a pink heart-shaped USB drive around her neck, needs help to reboot her computer. And one passage from the book reveals that this computer engineer cannot even code:

*At breakfast one morning, Barbie is already hard at work on her laptop.*

*"What are you doing, Barbie?" asks Skipper.*

*"I'm designing a game that shows kids how computers work," explains Barbie. "You can make a robot puppy do cute tricks by matching up colored blocks!"*

*"Your robot puppy is so sweet," says Skipper. "Can I play your game?"*

*"I'm only creating the design ideas," Barbie says, laughing. "I'll need Steven and Brian's help to turn it into a real game!"*

The reviews on Amazon, the online shopping site, have not been complimentary.


Bloomberg/Getty Images

Although the mass media's stereotyping of women has improved in recent years, in 2015 Random House issued a new series of "I Can Be" books showing Barbie in nontraditional roles. Still, the book's text suggested that Barbie was incapable of doing the job without a man's help, furthering a gender stereotype.

Aisha Gani, "Barbie can be a computer engineer . . . but only with the help of a man," theguardian.com, November 19, 2014.

Media scholar Carolyn Martindale, for example, in a content analysis of *The New York Times* from 1934 to 1994, found that most nonwhite groups were visible "only in glimpses." According to Martindale, "The mainstream press in the U.S. has presented minorities as outside, rather than a part of, American society."

After examining 374 episodes of 96 prime-time series on ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, WB and UPN, the Center for Media and Public Affairs for the National Council of La Raza concluded that only 2 percent of prime-time characters during the 1994–1995 season were Latinos, and most of the roles played by those characters were minor. The study, *Don't Blink: Hispanics in Television Entertainment*, also revealed that although Latino characters were portrayed more positively than they had been in the past, they were most likely to be shown as poor or working class. (See **Impact/Society**: "Hollywood Still Stereotypes Native Americans," p.270.)

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IMPACT

# Society

## Hollywood Still Stereotypes Native Americans

*By Esther J. Cepeda*

It's hard to get upset at Adam Sandler for inanity, recklessness or disrespect. He's never promised anything more than to be a jester for our amusement, a few hours at a time.

This is why it's almost beside the point to mention Sandler in a discussion about whether his upcoming Netflix film, *The Ridiculous Six*, stands as a turning point for the portrayal of American Indians in Hollywood.

The film, which Netflix describes as "a broad satire of Western movies and the stereotypes they popularized, featuring a diverse cast that is not only part of—but in on—the joke," had bits in it so repulsive, such as crude and vulgar "Indian" names, as well as disgusting uses of Native-themed props, that several American Indian actors quit the production.

According to the Associated Press, nine Native American actors and a Native American consultant walked off the set last week after producers told the group to leave if they felt offended because there would be no script changes.

It's difficult to explain how hard this must have been for these actors. They walked away from the job's pay and risk being blacklisted in Hollywood.

Plus, these actors had to have known they were going to get it from all sides. And so they have.

Actor Bonifacio Gurule told an Albuquerque TV station that the majority of Native Americans stayed and that those who exited should "lighten up. . . . It's a comedy, not a documentary."

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly was bashed after issuing a statement that said, in part, "Our Native American culture and tradition is no joking matter. I applaud these Navajo actors for their courage and conviction to walk off the set in protest. . . . Native people have dealt with negative stereotypes on film for too long."

Vera Anderson/WireImage

In April 2015, nine Native American actors walked off the set of an Adam Sandler movie being produced by Netflix to protest the negative stereotypes portrayed in the film. Actor Bonifacio Gurule dismissed the criticism and said the actors should "lighten up. It's a comedy."

Which brings us to the question of whether this small insurrection was a game-changer, or whether hurtful portrayals of Native Americans will continue to be the norm in Hollywood.

So far, *Rolling Stone* reports, a producer promised the cast that a disclaimer at the end of the movie would reiterate that Sandler's movie is not an accurate portrayal of Native American culture.

Understatement of the year.

The truth is that the 500-nation Native American culture is richly diverse—with different customs and beliefs—and will never be accurately portrayed in the media until American Indians are integral parts of the production and creative teams that tell stories about individuals, not a monolithic people.

There will probably always be ridiculous portrayals, but for some, this felt like a precedent.

Maybe this will make filmmakers think twice next time. Or maybe inspire more Native American actors to start creating and promoting their own content.

This would be a start.

Excerpted from Esther J. Cepeda, "Hollywood Still Stereotypes Native Americans," *Washington Post* as published on sfgate.com, April 30, 2015.

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Based on a comprehensive analysis of the nation's newspapers, a 56-page *News Watch* report issued at a convention of the nation's African American, Asian, Latino and Native American journalists concluded that "the mainstream media's coverage of people of color is riddled with old stereotypes, offensive terminology, biased reporting and a myopic interpretation of American society."

To counteract stereotyping, the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University (which sponsored the study) offered the following Tips for Journalists:

- Apply consistent guidelines when identifying people of race. Are the terms considered offensive? Ask individual sources how they wish to be identified.
- Only refer to people's ethnic or racial background when it is relevant.
- When deciding whether to mention someone's race, ask yourself: Is ethnic/racial identification needed? Is it important to the context of the story?
- Consult a supervisor if you are unsure of the offensiveness or relevance of a racial or ethnic term.
- Use sensitivity when describing rites and cultural events. Avoid inappropriate comparisons. For example, Kwanzaa is not "African American Christmas."
- Be specific when using ethnic or racial identification of individuals. Referring to someone as Filipino American is preferred to calling that person Asian. The latter term is better applied to a group.

The issue of accurate reflection by mass media of a diverse society invites analysis as the face of America grows more complex every day.

## Mass Media Face Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues

In 1993, newspapers confronted an editorial dilemma when cartoonist Lynn Johnston, who draws the very popular syndicated strip *For Better or For Worse*, decided to reveal that Lawrence, one of the teenagers in the comic strip, was gay. Most newspapers published the strip, but 19 newspapers canceled their contracts for the comic, which was carried by Universal Press Syndicate of Kansas City.

One newspaper editor who refused to carry the strip explained, "We are a conservative newspaper in a conservative town." Another editor said he "felt the sequence condoned homosexuality 'almost to the point of advocacy.'" Responding to criticism that, by revealing Lawrence's sexual preference, she was advocating homosexuality, Johnston said, "You know, that's like advocating left-handedness. Gayness is simply something that exists. My strip is a reality strip, real situations, real crises, real people." One newspaper executive at a paper that carried the strip wrote, "It seems to me that what we're talking about here isn't the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality. It is about tolerance."

An understanding of the media portrayals of Americans' diverse lifestyles on television grabbed attention in 1997, when the program *Ellen* portrayed two women exchanging a romantic kiss. (Although promoted as the nation's first female television kiss, the first televised romantic lesbian relationship actually had been portrayed on the TV program *L.A. Law* in 1991.)

Same-sex relationship issues remained primarily a subject for the nation's lesbian and gay newspapers and magazines, although in 1996, *The New Yorker* ran a controversial cover that portrayed two men kissing on a Manhattan sidewalk. Bringing the issue to a mainstream audience, as the *Ellen* television program did, presented a dilemma for the TV networks because, when notified beforehand


Marc Stamas/Getty Images

In 2012, Marvel Comics announced that its first openly gay hero, Northstar, would marry his longtime boyfriend, Kyle. Northstar had revealed that he is gay in 1992, one of the first comic characters to do so. A poster showing Kyle and Northstar decorates a commemorative gay marriage ceremony on June 20, 2012, in New York City.

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about the content of the program, some local TV stations refused to show the episode. The reluctance of mainstream television to portray alternative relationships was as much a reflection of the networks trying to protect their economic interests as it was a reflection of the nation's social values.

By 2003, society's strong reactions to the portrayals of gay people on television seemed to have subsided when Bravo introduced its series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. The title itself would have been shocking just a few years earlier, but audiences seemed ready for programming that featured gay men offering advice about fashion, home decor, cuisine and culture. Television programming traditionally has been slow to adapt to changing social standards, trailing the culture's ability to accommodate its evolving diversity.


Liza Donnelly The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

*"I don't see liking trucks as a boy thing. I see it as a liking-trucks thing."*

More than ten years after the comic strip *For Better or Worse* revealed that one of its characters was gay, veteran cartoonist Dan Piraro confronted the issue of gay parenting. A Piraro cartoon drawn in 2005 appeared in newspapers in two different versions. One version showed a doctor outside a surgery room talking to a man, saying, "Your husband is in the recovery room. You could go back and see him if you like, but our government-sanctioned bigotry forbids it."

Piraro's editor at King Features Syndicate, saying he had received complaints about Piraro's liberal bias, asked Piraro to draw a second version with the doctor talking to a man and saying, "She's going to be just fine—she's quite a fighter. The anesthesiologist has a black eye and I think she may have cracked my ribs."

Different papers chose which version to run, but some subscribers noticed the difference. "Not wishing to lose my voice entirely, I thought it was wise to send in a replacement caption for the same picture," Piraro said.

In 2012, Marvel Comics announced a wedding for its first openly gay hero, Northstar, and his longtime boyfriend, Kyle. In 1992, Northstar had become one of the first comic characters to reveal that he is gay. "The Marvel Universe has always reflected the world outside your window, so we strike to make sure our characters, relationships and stories are grounded in that reality," said Axel Alonso, Marvel's editor-in-chief.

## How to Analyze Media Effects

Scholars once thought the effects of media were easy to measure, as a direct relationship between mass media messages and the effects of those messages. Contemporary scholars now know that the relationship between mass media and their audiences is complex.

Communications scholar Neil Postman poses some questions to ask about mass media's relationship to political and social issues:

- What are the main psychic effects of each [media] form?
- What is the main relation between information and reason?
- What redefinitions of important cultural meanings do new sources, speeds, contexts and forms of information require?
- How do different forms of information persuade?
- Is a newspaper's "public" different from television's "public"?
- How do different information forms dictate the type of content that is expressed?

These questions should be discussed, says Postman, because "no medium is excessively dangerous if its users understand what its dangers are. . . . This is an instance in which the asking of the questions is sufficient. To ask is to break the spell."

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# REVIEW, ANALYZE, INVESTIGATE

## CHAPTER 13

### Early Mass Media Studies Assess Impact

- Media scholars look for patterns in the effects of media rather than for anecdotal evidence.
- David Potter, in *People of Plenty*, described the United States as a consumer society driven by advertising.

### Scholars Look for Patterns

- Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan introduced the term *global village* to describe the way media bring people together through shared experience.
- The magic bullet theory, developed in the 1929 Payne Fund studies, asserted that media content has a direct causal relationship to behavior and that mass media affects everyone in the same way.
- Challenging the magic bullet theory, Hadley Cantril found that better-educated people listening to "The War of the Worlds" were much more likely to detect that the radio broadcast was fiction. Today, scholars believe the media have different effects on different people.
- In 1948, political scientist Harold D. Lasswell described the process of analyzing communication as answering five questions: Who? Says what? On which channel? To whom? With what effect?

### How TV Affects Children's Behavior

- In 1961, Wilbur Schramm and his associates revealed that children used TV for fantasy, diversion and instruction. Aggressive children were more likely to turn to TV for fantasy, said Schramm, but he could find no serious problems related to TV viewing.
- The 1971 report to Congress, *Television and Social Behavior*, made a faint causal connection between TV violence and children's violent behavior, but the report said that only some children were affected, and these children already had been classified as aggressive.
- Several recent studies have suggested that TV violence causes aggression among children. Researchers caution, however, that TV violence is not *the* cause of aggressiveness, but only *a* cause of aggressiveness.
- The Federal Trade Commission report *Television Advertising to Children* said that children see 20,000 commercials a year and that younger children are much more likely to pay attention to TV advertising than older ones.
- A study by the California Assessment Program of children's TV viewing habits seems to support the idea that children who watch a lot of TV do not perform as well in school as children who watch less television.
- A 2011 study by Common Sense Media reports that children younger than 8 years of age spend more time than ever using media, and more than half of these children have access to a mobile device.

### Do the Mass Media Cause Violence?

- The summary study by the National Institute of Mental Health in 1982 asserted that a direct connection exists between televised violence and aggressive behavior, but there is no way to predict who will be affected and why.
- Most of the latest studies of the media's role have continued to reinforce the concept that different people in different environments react to the media differently.
- In 1994, cable operators and network broadcasters agreed to use an independent monitor to review programming for violent content.
- The agreement called for the development of violence ratings for TV programming and endorsed a v-chip—*v* for "violence"—technology that eventually was required for all television sets to allow parents to block programs rated as violent.
- The Telecommunications Act of 1996 established a television ratings code for content.
- The Entertainment Software Association, which represents video and computer game makers, also has voluntarily created a ratings system.
- In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against a California law that would have restricted the sale and rental of violent video games to minors.
- These ratings systems continue a tradition of media self-regulation.

### National Political Campaigns Depend on Mass Media

- Media politics began in 1933 with President Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats. John F. Kennedy broadened the tradition when he and Richard Nixon appeared in the nation's first televised debate of presidential candidates, in 1960.
- The first major study of politics and the media, *The People's Choice*, concluded that only 8 percent of the voters in the study were actually converted by media coverage of the 1940 campaign.
- The 1976 study *The Unseeing Eye* revealed that only 7 percent of the people in the study were manipulated by TV ads. The researchers concluded that political advertising has little effect on most people.

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- Television is a very efficient way to reach large numbers of people quickly, but campaigning through television also distances the candidates from direct public contact.

### Cost of Political Advertising Skyrockets

- The rising cost of national political campaigns is directly connected to the expense of television advertising.
- Opinion leaders shape political views, a transmission of ideas that is called the *two-step flow* of communication.
- TV political advertising affects only a small percentage of people, but just a few percentage points decide many elections.
- Political spending by presidential candidates in 2012 totaled $6 billion.
- In most political contests, television advertising accounts for more than half of campaign spending, which means healthy earnings for local TV stations.

### Voters and Campaigns Use the Internet and Social Media

- The 2004 presidential election was the first election where the Internet began to play a role in national politics.
- During the 2004 presidential election, 75 million people used the Internet to find political news.
- Candidates use Web sites, e-mail, blogs, podcasts and social-networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and YouTube to reach the public.
- By 2008, the Internet had become a central force in national politics, although there is no clear understanding yet of how—or if—the Internet affects voters' decisions.

### Mass Media Reflect Social Values

- Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann has asserted that due to what she calls a "spiral of silence" supporting the consensus point of view, the media have more influence because opponents of the consensus tend to remain silent.
- Joshua Meyrowitz says that television viewing blurs the distinction between childhood and adulthood.
- Walter Lippmann first identified the tendency of journalists to generalize about groups of people and create stereotypes.
- Scholar Tania Modleski says the media's inaccurate portrayals of women are not new but began in 1740 with the publication of *Pamela*, the nation's first published novel.
- In 2014, Random House published a series of "I Can Be" books meant to show the character Barbie as a professional woman, yet the books continued to promote stereotypes.

### Mass Media Slow to Reflect Ethnic Diversity

- In the 2010 census, 9 million people identified themselves as a member of more than one race.
- The mainstream media, especially daily newspapers and the TV networks, have traditionally represented the interests of the mainstream culture.
- A study of *The New York Times* from 1934 to 1994 found that most nonwhite groups were visible "only in glimpses."
- A study by the National Council of La Raza concluded that only 2 percent of prime-time characters during the 1994–1995 TV season were Latinos, and most of the roles played by those characters were minor.
- In 2015, nine Native American actors walked off the set of an Adam Sandler movie, produced by Netflix, because they said the film promoted negative stereotypes.
- To avoid ethnic stereotyping, journalists should refer to people's ethnic or racial background only when it is relevant, use sensitivity when describing rites and cultural events and be specific when identifying someone's race or ethnicity, asking the person how he or she would like to be identified.

### Mass Media Face Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues

- The lesbian character on the TV program *Ellen* and the gay character Lawrence in the cartoon strip *For Better or For Worse* focused attention on media portrayals of gender issues in the 1990s.
- By 2003, the strong reactions to the portrayals of gay people on television seemed to have subsided when Fox Television introduced its series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy.*
- The experience of the cartoonist Dan Piraro in 2005 is a reminder that same-sex issues still are sensitive topics for media. At the insistence of his editor, Piraro provided two captions for the same cartoon, one that reflected a male-female couple and one that showed a male-male married couple.
- In 2012, Marvel Comics announced a wedding for its first openly gay hero, Northstar, and his longtime boyfriend, Kyle.

### How to Analyze Media Effects

- The relationship between media and their audiences is complex.
- Communications scholar Neil Postman says that scholars should continue to analyze the media's effects so people will not just accept what they see without question.

## Key Terms

These terms are defined in the margins throughout this chapter and appear in alphabetical order with definitions in the Glossary, which begins on page 361.

Magic Bullet Theory *258*

Mass Media Content Analysis *257*

Mass Media Effects Research *257*

Spiral of Silence *266*

Two-Step Flow *262*

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## Critical Questions

1. How did each of the following people contribute to media effects research?
   - **a.** David M. Potter
   - **b.** Marshall McLuhan
   - **c.** Harold D. Lasswell
   - **d.** George Gerbner
2. Describe three studies involving children and TV and discuss the results. Why are children often the subject of media effects research?
3. Discuss your understanding of the role that American mass media play in political campaigns today. Include a discussion of how today's voters use mass media to follow public affairs issues.
4. List and describe the effects of the Internet on American politics.
5. How fairly do you believe women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and other ethnic groups are portrayed in American mass media today? How fairly do you believe gay, lesbian and transgender issues are represented in today's mass media? Give three specific examples.

## Working the Web

This list includes sites mentioned in the chapter and others to give you greater insight into social and political media issues research.

### Benton Foundation

*benton.org*

William Benton, publisher of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and a U.S. senator, established the Benton Foundation "to ensure that media and telecommunications serve the public interest and enhance our democracy." The foundation site offers a weekly roundup of news headlines from across the country and a Daily Digital Blog on current communications policy issues, as well as a listing of the issues the foundation monitors.

### Center on Media and Child Health (CMCH)

*cmch.tv*

Dedicated to "understanding and responding to the effects of media on the physical, mental and social health of children through research, production and education," the center is located at Children's Hospital Boston. The CMCH Database of Research catalogs current research on the relationship of media exposure to health-risk behaviors. Site visitors can access a number of child health care resources for parents, including Ask the Mediatrician—questions from parents about child health care and the media that are answered by CMCH founder, pediatrician Michael Rich; the Clinician Toolkit, the center's e-newsletter; a database of the center's research; issue briefs and tip sheets for parents.

### C-SPAN

*c-span.org*

Started in 1979 by the cable industry as a public affairs cable network, C-SPAN (Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network) is available to over 100 million American households. C-SPAN's three channels and FM radio programming on WCSP in Washington, D.C., offer a wide array of around-the-clock commercial-free television and radio public affairs programming featuring all branches of the U.S. federal government. C-SPAN programming includes live committee and floor sessions of the U.S. Congress and government agency hearings mixed in with live sessions from the Canadian, Australian and British parliaments as well as live speeches and regular interview programs about current national political issues. The C-SPAN Web site offers additional archived programming of past-aired shows and podcasts that are available to stream or download.

### Joan Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy (Harvard University)

*shorensteincenter.org*

The center "analyzes the power of media, in all its forms, and its impact on public policy and politics." The research center is based at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Site users can access "must read" articles about media and politics and download documents, including books written by center faculty, staff and associates; newsletters from the center; and a variety of reports, papers and case studies. The center offers fellowships, internships and scholarships for students.

### MediaSmarts

*mediasmarts.ca*

Established in 1994 by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission as part of a television violence initiative, MediaSmarts is the online site maintained by Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy. MediaSmarts promotes media and technology education for families, parents and children by producing online programs and resources through partnerships with other Canadian and international organizations. The site offers a Digital and Media Literacy section, including information on body image,

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gender representation, cyberbullying and cybersecurity. There also are links to teacher resources and a blog covering a wide variety of topics such as alcohol marketing, cell phones and texting, media literacy, digital health and digital citizenry.

### Media Effects Research Lab (MERL) at Penn State University

*http://comm.psu.edu/research/centers/medialab*

This research facility is housed in the College of Communications at Penn State University. MERL conducts experiments in two subject areas: (a) Traditional Media—the effects of television entertainment and video games; and (b) New Media—the effects of online media and communications technology. Educator resources as well as research abstracts and publications are available at the site on a wide variety of subjects, including Facebook sharing, Web site engagement and the psychology of "click here."

### Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) at Howard University

*library.howard.edu/MSRC*

MSRC is one of the largest and oldest repositories for "documentation of the history and culture of people of African descent in Africa, the Americas and other parts of the world." This site includes a link to the archives of the center's electronic journal (HUArchivesNet). Additional links to the Library Division and the Manuscript Division offer brief descriptions and samples of the center's holdings.

### National Journal

*nationaljournal.com*

National Journal Group offers nonpartisan publications "for people who have a professional interest in politics, policy and government." Web site users can access online content from *National Journal Magazine*, *National Journal Daily*, *National Journal Hotline,* and *The Almanac of American Politics* as well as links to Atlantic Media publications, including *The Atlantic*, *Citylab*, *Wire*, *Government Executive* and *Quartz.*

### National Press Club

*press.org*

Known as the "place where news happens," the National Press Club is a private organization for more than 3,500 journalism and communication professionals. More than 250,000 people attend more than 2,000 events annually at the Press Club facility in Washington, D.C., including the prestigious Washington Correspondents Dinner. The National Press Club Institute provides training, classes, panel discussions and professional development activities for media professionals. Visitors to the site can access resources on freedom of the press, photos, video and podcasts from events held at the Press Club.

### Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University

*nieman.harvard.edu*

With a stated mission to "promote and elevate the standards of journalism," the foundation has been in operation since 1938, offering academic fellowships to more than 1,400 journalists from 100 countries to spend 12 weeks teaching at Harvard University. Resources at the site include Nieman Lab (focused on the future of news and innovation), *Nieman Reports* (which explores contemporary journalism's challenges) and Nieman Storyboard (which offers examples of narrative journalism).

### University of Iowa Department of Communication Studies: Political Communication and Campaigns

*clas.uiowa.edu/commstudies/political-communication-campaigns*

This resource site provides links to articles and Web sites related to politics and political advertising from political media consulting firms.

### Washington Center for Politics and Journalism

*wcpj.org*

The center is a nonprofit organization that offers seminars and classes to train future political reporters about politics from the perspective of political practitioners and political reporters. Students from 50 participating universities throughout the U.S. are nominated to study at the center. Students chosen for a Politics and Journalism Semester class are assigned to a major Washington news bureau, working full-time. The center's Web site has a complete listing of donors, links to political journalism publications (such as politico.com) and streaming video of speakers and courses taught at the center from the most recent class term.


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MindTap® Log on to MindTap for *Media/Impact* to access a variety of additional material—including learning objectives, chapter readings with highlighting and note-taking, **Impact/Action Videos**, activities, and comprehension quizzes—that will guide you through this chapter.

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# LAW AND REGULATION

## REFORMING THE RULES

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The Washington Post/Getty Images

The U.S. Constitution establishes the right of free expression. Reporting on court actions is an important part of the press' public responsibility. On May 15, 2014, advocates for Internet neutrality demonstrate in front of the Federal Communications Commission building in Washington, D.C.



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