

Editorial:

Media and Culture

Aliaa Dakroury

Saint Paul University, Canada

Media and culture are interconnected; levels of understanding various cultures influence media contents, meanwhile media platforms and contents impact cultural and day-to-day practices. Culture encompasses norms, beliefs, behaviours, values, traditions, languages, myths, ways of life, and so forth. Through the media, groups can create and represent cultural identities. Media narratives and discourses are created within different forms of texts and images that are complexly related to the cultural perceptions and practices of both those who produce and consume them. Encoding and decoding is involved in this process where encoding is done by producers of the messages, while decoding is conducted by the audience. These social phenomena are susceptible to struggle and change.

The refereed papers in this issue of the *Global Media Journal -- Canadian Edition* discuss the relationship between media and culture in different geographical contexts (Canada, China, Mexico, the Arab world, and the United States) in relation to issues of communication research, diasporic media, empowerment, gender, health, patterns of media consumption, and political economy.

The media play an influential role in the day-to-day cultural practices of individuals including their health-related decisions. The media not only help in providing knowledge about health, but also support in empowering wellness. With application on the Canadian culture and a pioneering medium, Heather McIntosh studies how women's health knowledge and empowerment are influenced by media texts presented in Canada's longest running women's magazine, *Chatelaine*. Her paper, titled "Communicating Empowerment through Education: Learning about Women's Health in *Chatelaine*", highlights how women's health and body are integral in the contemporary Canadian public sphere in relation to power and sexuality. It demonstrates a significant development and growth in the magazine's content regarding the volume, sophistication, and diversification of discussions on women's bodies and wellness that greatly contribute to enhancing health knowledge as well as women's bodily empowerment and autonomy.

Moreover, media screens have become essential elements in public and private daily-life practices in societies and cultures. Abel A. Grijalva Verdugo and Rosario Olivia Izaguirre Fierro discuss the effects of the Internet, social networking sites, and television on university students

and their interactions in such a complex media environment. Their paper, titled “Media Consumption Patterns and Communicative Competence of University Students”, analyzes media consumption patterns and perceptions of Mexican university students to certain stimuli emitted by such screens. It provides interpretations on how audiences use such media platforms and the dynamic interaction among users’ consumption patterns and the media contents.

However, the media face severe challenges when communicating messages among different cultures. Diasporic media have played a fundamental role in overcoming problems that result from such cultural differences. The paper titled “U.S.-based Chinese Diasporic Media and “Social Myth”: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis”, by Sheng Zou, examines diasporic media and the notion of “social myth”. It looks into the U.S.-based Chinese diasporic media’s “re-coding” of news events, demonstrating how they actively mediate between the ethnic minority and centres of power in mainstream society.

In fact, culture has critical impacts on media research. Mohammad Ayish and Harris Breslow review mainstream models of mass communication research in the Arab world, in their paper titled “The Need for Interdisciplinary Research of the Arab Mass Media”. They discuss Arab mass communication research within several categories of research areas. Their paper focuses on three particular research areas of Arab media usage: the political economy of flow, the rapidly increasing mobility of subjects, and the changing nature of the production of identity. The authors discuss how identity is influenced by economic, social, cultural, and other factors, highlighting that the political economic apparatus of flow has rearticulated the relationships amongst these factors.

In relation to the theme “media and culture”, this journal issue provides reviews of recent, relevant, and important books. The book reviews section starts with a review article, “The Dialectics of Empowerment and Exploitation of Using Social Media”, by Baha Abu-Shaqra, which reviews the three books: *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism* (2014), *Reverse Engineering Social Media: Software, Culture, and Political Economy in New Media Capitalism* (2014), and *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (2012). The section also includes three individual book reviews. Salah Basalamah reviews *Mission Invisible: Race, Religion, and News at the Dawn of the 9/11 Era* (2014), Carrie Buchanan reviews *To the Cloud: Big Data in a Turbulent World* (2014), and Felix Odartey-Wellington reviews *Re-Imagining the Other: Culture, Media, and Western-Muslim Intersections* (2014).

About the Editor

Aliaa Dakroury is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Communication, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. Dr. Dakroury has previously taught at the University of Ottawa’s Department of Communication and Carleton University’s departments of Communication, Sociology, and Law. She is the Managing Editor of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, and serves on the editorial boards of several academic journals and as an organizing committee member for various international conferences. Dr. Dakroury is the author of *Communication and Human Rights* (2009) and co-editor of *The Right to Communicate: Historical Hopes, Global Debates and Future Premises* (2009) and *Basics in Communication*

and Media Studies (2012). Dr. Dakroury is the winner of both the 2011 *Ontario Leading Women Building Communities Award* and the 2005 *Van Horne Award* of the Canadian Communication Association. Her research interests concentrate on communication history, culture, human rights, the right to communicate, media representations, globalization, Diaspora, and information and communication technologies.

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