Movable Type is a Media Studies journal that displays outstanding work, researched and recorded by the undergraduate students at the University of Virginia.
"My endeavor to compile a diverse cache of information, however trivial, has led me to the boundless realm of media. Though my time on Jeopardy may never come, I am certain that the question ‘What is Media?’ will continue to fascinate me with its innumerable answers. I still have much to learn, but some categories are becoming easier to tackle: I’ll take ‘Famous Film Detectives’ for 400, Alex.”

Blythe Young
Editor
Media Studies, Religious Studies
Fourth Year

"I am passionate about discovering how to use the media resources that exist to highlight truth, which requires us not to run away from media, but to use it as a starting point for cultivating action. The creativity and artistry of the media is certainly worth exploring and participating in, but it must be understood for what it is - a shadow of the living."

Lisa Myers
Vice Editor
Media Studies, American Studies
Third Year

"The study of media is one of the most interesting, relevant, and enjoyable academic fields offered at the University. It has allowed me to combine my outside knowledge of disciplines like psychology, English, film, gender studies, and cultural studies with the facts I learn inside the classroom."

Mirenda Gwin
Outreach
Media Studies
Third Year

"From understanding the role of gender in film and television, to the study of public policy, to theorizing how media texts are read around the globe, media studies opens up so many avenues of research and inquiry that everyone has an opportunity to be involved and to carve out their own space and place."

Assistant Professor
Christopher Ali
Faculty Advisor
Media Studies Department
Connectivity is at the core of our new media environment. Here we explore what this looks like on a global scale and how the progression of globalization is changing the way we look at the world from the local spaces we inhabit.
Experience that creates “a concern for the common good, connection with neighbors and friends, [and] a sense of place”2. Note that this stands as the definition that I refer to when employing the term ‘local’ in proceeding arguments. Journalists must execute greater sensitivity when presenting locally aimed content because readers possess a level of insider knowledge and territorially familiar, both physically and emotionally. To feed its hunger for information and belonging, the community of Richmond, Virginia predominantly (and affectionately) turns to the longstanding local newspaper, the Richmond Times Dispatch. The following research intends to discern how staff reporters at the Times interpret their objective and subjective roles in shaping the sentiment of the Richmond community as a local entity. Understanding the perceived influence of local news writers remains an important task in discerning the give-and-take relationships that media makers have with the communities they serve. The idea of the local remains increasingly relevant as globalization melts the confines of time and place and overwhelms the possibility for knowing and social interaction. With such expansion, the local becomes more urgent yet nostalgic, a familiar raft to cling to in the sea of global technology. Globalism has brought with it a reiteration of the comfort and sense of place to be found in the local. In order to assess the intentions of local media makers as community shapers, I performed a small case study to interview multiple staff writers at the Richmond Times Dispatch. After assessing their responses, I came to the conclusion that local media makers intend to situate content within the geographically and experientially familiar context of Richmond, aiming to do so as objective facilitators rather than subjective contributors to or conductors of community conversation and identity establishment.

Literature Review and Background:

The Richmond Times Dispatch has been Central Virginia’s newspaper of record for over 150 years. Each issue rightfully boasts that the Times reaches 657,000 readers online and in print. Predominant readership is located within the Greater Richmond area (Richmond city and surrounding counties), though distribution spans across the state. The Times currently has a newsroom staff of approximately twenty-five, after having cut twenty-eight newsroom employees in April 2009 following the economic recession. The Times operates in Richmond, Virginia but is owned on a broader scale by Media General. Its mission statement reads, “We will serve our customers as the leading provider of high quality news, commentary, information, and entertainment in Central Virginia (information obtained from reader interviews). Research on the subject of local journalistic roles and intentions can be divided very roughly into two camps. The first constitutes a belief in soft determinism, in which the media select and frame information in the context of shared experience to engender a positive sense of community. Authors McCombs and Funk label this phenomena as the “stakeholder hypothesis,” which theorizes that, “local media coverage will positively reinforce the predominant strengths of a community” to build a community identity based on collective merits’. A second rudimentary category of discussion offers a community-driven perspective in which the power to shape local identity comes from the activity of citizens, with media appearing only as an after-the-fact reflection of already established community attachment. In this sense, citizens find identity reflected in information that derives from within their community, their home, and their place rather than from within a news office. In their study on the correlation of reader satisfaction and local newspaper content, Elizabeth and Gary Hansen discovered that an increase in the overall portion of locally created and locally aimed content in community newspapers led to a 15% increase in overall reader satisfaction and a 10% increase in reader trust of newspapers. This information indicates that readers confidently establish community identity and expect newspapers to merely reiterate that identity rather than define it. Media scholars Lindsey Hoffman and William Evely denote these two camps of thought in their work on assessing causality between media use and community attachment. Constituents of the former camp argue for what they title a “community integration hypothesis,” which simply states that, “local news media use can produce community integration…where community newspaper readership produces greater levels of integration by helping the individual orient to the community through the establishment and maintenance of local traditions…local news emphasize values and interest on which there is a high level of consensus”5. In this sense, the role of defining the local is awarded to the media. The contending viewpoint is one of community attachment first, media second. They present the “community to media” theory, stating, “by virtue of belonging to community volunteer organizations, members are more likely to follow local news and actions of government particularly if it affects the group…community attachment encourages local media

Essay by Kate Colver
Second Year Arts Administration Major

Introduction:

Community and Communication

Information is imperative in order for individuals to act interdependently and form a community. Understanding one’s place within a public web of events and sentiments requires identity placement within the broader physical and social context of place. As authors Elizabeth and Gary Hansen note, “Community and communication are, almost by definition, intrinsically linked”1. Media makers play an influential role in the flow of events by providing an informational framework encompassing the events within the community ecosystem. Journalists serve as the gatekeepers of information, deciding what information to present and how to present it to its captive audience. Such responsibility requires great consideration when it comes to framing information to be presented to a body of people known affectionately and colloquially as the locals. Labeling one’s audience as the locals of a geographic area denotes particular social and emotional attachment. The local as an identity or label plants its primary characteristic in the physical proximity of a community, but also draws meaning from shared

The Insider’s Local:

Investigating the role of local media in shaping community identity at the Richmond Times Dispatch
This notion implies that the role of defining the local belongs to the community rather than the media.

These two views assess which party plays the role of shaping the local, yet neither theory is complete in its exclusivity. In the words of media scholar J. Staman, “Few truisms are as firmly established in mass communications—communities are necessary to newspapers and newspapers are necessary to communities.” Particularly in the local news realm, the two entities of media and populace are mutually interdependent. The relationship between consumers and producers is symbiotic: citizens look for their community to be defined in the news, and the news looks to the community to provide that definition. The consumers of local media are also the persons who produce the activity on which local news reports, finding relevance in that experience. The producers or writers of local media are also, in some sense, the consumers as well, finding themselves as much at the mercy of local policy, education systems, highways, activity, and even weather in the particular area in which they report.

“The consumers of local media are also the person who produce the activity on which local news reports, finding relevance in that experience.”

Hansen and Hansen employ the words of Jack Knight when stating, “…newspeople need to inform the community and to ‘hustle the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests’”. Yet reporters are no less situated within the “condition” of a community than their readers, and in a sense are simultaneously the actors and the enactors, just as media consumers are simultaneously the users and providers of local content. John Pauly and Melissa Eckert argue that local journalism’s self-imposed task is not only to account events in a sterile sense, but also to capture “the magic” that is unique to a community. Pauly and Eckert contend that the authentic experience of shaping the collective memory or the future direction of the Richmond community (for specific questions see Appendix). This method serves as the most effective insight into the perceived role of media makers in developing the local for Richmond specifically because these interviews, quite simply, manifest the thoughts of media makers directly and authentically. In directing questions towards media makers’ perceived “shaping” role, I sought to understand how reporters understand their influential capacity, given the immediate and involved nature of local news given physical proximity.

This necessitation that reporters understand the community from an insiders perspective indicates the demand that community understanding be reflected in content. Past research in the field has attempted to discern to whom readers of local newspapers attribute the role of defining local identity and creating community cohesion in this identity. In conducting my research, I predicted that local media makers, in an attempt to preserve the journalistic standard of unbiased objectivity, would take responsibility for the presentation of information but not the interpretation of information to define some sense of the local.

**Research Questions:**

Do newspaper reporters feel that they define “the local”?

Is the local still relevant in a globalized world? Is defining the local a necessary reaction to preserving identity in a globalized world?

Do local newspapers share a level of trust with the community based on familiar context that national newspapers cannot offer?

How are local media providers distinguished by their participation in the community that they document?

**Methods:**

To address these research questions, I employed one primary tactic of investigation beyond academic literature research. In discerning how local media makers perceive their role as shapers of community and builders of the local image, I spoke directly with news writers at the Richmond Times Dispatch in a series of interviews. Interviews were conducted with four staff writers and the managing editor in an attempt to hear directly how they feel they address readers with an experiential and emotional interest vested in the Greater Richmond community. Questions addressed reporters’ content framing considerations, their impression of trust towards their news in the community, the label by which they frame their audience (as “Richmonders,” “Virginians,” “Americans,” or “global citizens”), and any impressions they have of how the Times Dispatch shapes the collective memory or the future direction of the Richmond community (for specific questions see Appendix). This method serves as the most effective insight into the perceived role of media makers in developing the local for Richmond specifically because these interviews, quite simply, manifest the thoughts of media makers directly and authentically. In directing questions towards media makers’ perceived “shaping” role, I sought to understand how reporters understand their influential capacity, given the immediate and involved nature of local news given physical proximity.

It is important to note that the mean length of employment at the Times between reporters was thirty-three years. This fact arouses concern that positive personal sentiments may be a reflection of loyalty towards the Times Dispatch and the Richmond community more generally since working in Richmond for thirty-three years also denotes living and existing in Richmond for at least that many years as well. However, this fact also speaks to the community attachment developed through residence in an area that is inherently and arguably unique to local rather than national news. The information obtained reflects the work of a small and rudimentary case study of a local newspaper and cannot necessarily speak with relevance to all local newspapers. However, Richmond as a city offers an average population size and demographic distribution compared to the representation of other mid-sized cities in the nation, with the Times Dispatch experiencing similar internal constructs as is typical to the local news realm as a whole (larger ownership by a media conglomerate, affected by recent economic downturn, etc.). As such, I believe that this research provides, if nothing more, a relevant jumping off point for further research on the placement of local media makers within their communities. The information can be circumscribed to ultimately speak to my larger argument that local media makers intend to situate content within the geographically and experientially familiar context of Richmond, aiming to do so as objective facilitators rather than subjective contributors to or conduits of community conversation and identity establishment.

**Findings:**

Responses regarding perceived roles can be digested into two large thematic ideas: the tasks of niche recognition and objective facilitation. A “niche” can be defined as a comfortable position within a defined community. The role of niche recognition speaks to the notion of understanding the Times Dispatch as it is situated within a physical proximity which engenders shared familiarity of experience and therefore trust of news as it translates from the writers to the readers. Interviewee responses repeatedly indicated the Times’ duty to address area-centric events that would not receive coverage in national newspapers, understanding the coverage’s relevance to the daily encounters that readers experience given their physical situation within the area in which news is happening. Features editor Cindy Creasy noted, “people who pick up a paper can get national news elsewhere, but not local news.” This regard for proximity was echoed by reporter Randy Hallman and political columnist Jeff Schapiro, who respectively stated, “Our unique product is an in-depth, well reported local scene… it’s what a newspaper of our size is all about: the community we serve.” “The interest is what is going on at the
sentiment depending on where readers take the information, but we present it all the good and the bad. Our role is not to mold something specific in the news pages, but to report on what is happening. In our reporting, the readers end up making something perhaps, but it is not a mission of the paper.” Randy Hallman articulated that they “are not so much pushing people forward in some direction, but rather keeping their eyes open so that they aren’t walking blindly.” Interviewees were not native to the power which information has for guiding sentiment; however, they noted information itself to be a level playing field, leaving readers and only readers with the task of interpreting information and developing a community conscience based off of that interpretation. Each understood the newspaper’s role of providing fuel for the fire of community conversation and recognized personal vested interest in the information as community members themselves. Managing editor Paige Mudd commented, “As people who live here, do business here, and have families here, we understand the importance to readers of these experiences because they affect us [reporters] too.” While reporters noted the special needs and regards of their niche audiences, they removed themselves from any role of scripting or establishing the uniquely “Richmond” community that citizens create from the news content that they return to every day as readers.

Conclusion:
The local continues to stand within the place of global borderless expansion as a symbol of identity and belonging. Proximity and context provide a breeding ground for a familiar community sentiment that holds a power unrivaled by national or global identities because it is one in which persons ascribing to the local can take direct credit its establishment and lived practice. From the aforementioned research I can conclude that both readers and reporters value the shared experience associated with living within a shared physical space. Space remains a key determinant of the local because it inherently bonds persons as neighbors and witnesses to the same events and the same conversations that stem from these events. Reporters at the Richmond Times Dispatch indicated a strong implication that the local, whatever the community defines it to be, is still relevant in a global society because it offers a place of familiarity and trust. Findings suggest that newspaper reporters place themselves as confronters of the community as it is a literal, physical collection of people, but not as it is more subjectively and ideologically a consensual identity or system of beliefs. In other words, findings indicate that reporters align themselves more with the community to media approach rather than the community integration hypothesis.

The information collected throughout this research process has provided invaluable insight into the minds of local media makers, however, much is still left to speculation. Keeping in mind that the mean length of employment at the Times Dispatch for each reporter interviewed was thirty-three years, one must question just how removed from the Richmond local these reporters are. Lived experience is arguably the only way to fully understand the community to which one intends to feed information, yet lived experience brings with it a vested interest in the community which could bleed into reporters’ selection and presentation of content in a subjective rather than objective manner. Additionally, reporters proposed a high level of trust among readers and a continued demand for content that feeds their readers as they exist within the specifically Richmond (rather than state or national) context of events. Some may argue that this claim of trust and demand is merely the voice of someone viewing local to global relationship through rose-colored glasses. With such loyalty to their practice, these reporters could be overly optimistic about the importance weighted towards the Richmond Times Dispatch within the Richmond community. This speculation leads logically into the hypothesis that given their utter familiarity and temporal attachment to the community on which they report, local journalists perceive their news as more necessary and influential than do their readers. Despite their being room for further speculation surrounding my research, the narratives of the interviewed reporters certainly provides insight into understanding where local media makers place themselves in the scheme of creating and executing the nostalgic, enticing, and comforting concept that is the local.
Globalization involves more than just the spread of ideas from one place to another. The study of how these ideas are integrated or rejected impacts how nationalism, identity, and origin are understood.

“Think Global, Act Local” is an international marketing principle that has penetrated the business world. The strategy encourages entrepreneurs to visit the local marketplace of their business in order to understand their specific customers while maintaining freedom to extend their business to make a global impact. Companies are learning to dream big while remaining relevant.

“Holy mackerel, the world is becoming flat. Several technological and political forces have converged, and that has produced a global, web-enabled playing field that allows for multiple forms of collaboration without regard to geography or distance – or soon, even language.”

Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (2005)
“Practices and consequences of consumption result in the diminishing of the local and the spread of a single globalized space of and for consumption which is then presented to the homogenized consumer identity, created and reinforced in every recurring visit.”

This transition from spaces of consumption to spaces for consumption provides a loss of place, and is exchanged for standardized consumer spaces. The environments themselves reflect desirable lifestyles that consumers are inclined to literally buy into in order to take part in an imagined community that exists through consumption. This demand of participation is through the form of consistent purchasing, but principles of marketing that have transformed spaces where consumption occurs into spaces purposely created for consumption.

This is consumption not only of resources but also and especially of false ideas of security, identity, and community. The globalization issue revolves around the methods of commercialization spreading to other nations and in additional spheres of life, whether or not those spheres are appropriate spaces for consumption. In addition, consumers are promised satisfaction of their hunger for food, community, class, and lifestyle by false promises that ultimately fail to satisfy these longings, which leads to heightened desires and demands for fulfillment. What makes these spaces so successful then, is their ability to instantly gratify those needs, but fail to satisfy them long term, thus leading consumers to return and continuously purchase as loyal customers through a convoluted conception of justification. Steven Miles summarizes the issue at hand by stating “the experiential nature of consumption through shopping may be fundamentally altering our relationship with the city insomuch as the city becomes ‘famed’ by the consumer ethic.” The local spheres of the city are altered into standardized, globalized formats that are ruled by these commercial principles.

The principles of marketing that have transformed spaces where consumption do not end there. The environments themselves reflect desirable lifestyles that consumers are inclined to literally buy into in order to take part in an imagined community that exists through consumption. This transition from spaces of consumption to spaces for consumption provides a loss of place, and is exchanged for standardized consumer spaces. The environments themselves reflect desirable lifestyles that consumers are inclined to literally buy into in order to take part in an imagined community that exists through consumption. This demand of participation is through the form of consistent purchasing, but principles of marketing that have transformed spaces where consumption occurs into spaces purposely created for consumption.

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the real, because of this, I included the question of "hyperreal consumption has developed". My research also answers the question of "how McDonaldization and Disneyfication have impacted the global consumer. George Ritzer and Alan Bryman both discuss McDonaldization and Disneyfication respectively, each expressing how the principles of these corporations are actively "dominating" more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world". My last two questions stem from ideas about the adopted identity of individuals, marked by participation of consumption. How does consumption affect identity or citizenship, and who is served? These questions are a hinge for the concept of how consumption occurs involve particular structures, as well as access to free wireless internet, and a safe atmosphere complete with a soothing soundtrack playing the background. By offering a multi-dimensional environment, the structure of the space speaks to guests, telling them to sit back and prop their feet up, and maybe even take off their jackets. Leading individuals to feel relaxed within the space ultimately entices them to trust in the environment and stay longer. This has to be the longer they choose to stay, the more they will consume. Even decisions to include a café and a bathroom prevent customers from exiting the store; everything they possibly need is offered to them.

Secondly, the exclusivity factor of the building itself gives off a message. A direct analysis of placement in respect to the desired community constructed by the space: Individuals are outsiders until they enter the store, and the setting exudes a specific personality and community through its products, spaces, and architectural facts. To further this division, these spaces are often set up as "spectacular" because, as Bryman states, they "provide an experience that gives the impression of being different and even a sense of the dramatic while being in a location which encourages the consumer to "engage in other types of consumption" other than the just purchasing". The question implanted in the customer's mind, then, is how to maintain the "spectacular" outside of the building in order to legitimize themselves as an authentic member of the exclusive community residing behind the front doors. The Aquatics and Fitness Center presents this through their membership requirements, front counter, and entry gate. Those with an identification card or monthly fee members card are required to present it at the desk in order to enter the sacred space of the workout center. Those without granted access are left only to stare past the counter or through the glass into the gym and watch the ideologically motivated consumption. Individuals earn the "citizen" by their ability to participate, typically in politics through activities such as voting which acts to identify people as members of a national community. In the commercialized spaces presented to American citizens, the consumer is asked to "buy obsessively, believing that [they] are still playing". Within the space of the bars and Barnes and Noble café, customers have the power to decide, but they also abandon their power to reject the "artificially created desires" that are thrust upon them through a process of selection on sale. The need to justify a purchase also puts consumers in the position of an audience member watching the performance of the lifestyle within that domestic space of the restaurant, fitness award, or stadium. The only way to become an active citizen in a community, whether that is a community of artists, academics, or high-brow individuals, is required to perform through virtual consumption. The identity of citizen can evidently be bought as lifestyles are purchased through "buyable experiences".
of consumer spaces because there must be someone watching and someone performing at all times for the money exchange to materialize. In television commercials, viewersically cast on the outside; however, the athletes in a 2013 Dick’s Sporting Goods advertisement, target the amateur athlete at home who only has to add equipment to his or her already existing “mind [and] body” in order to become “untouchable”18. By labeling the customer as an athlete, the company enrolls themselves as a coach who will lead you, the consumer, to become a skilled performer through the equipment offered within the store.

In 1825, French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin used a phrase in his book, The Psychology of Taste, which translates to “tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are”19. This phrase, suggesting people become what they consume, gains a new dimension through the principles of marketing and consumption of space. In this instance, what individuals eat or consume are the spaces that are codified to present particular identities, often performed, but occasionally authentic. The visual performance is particularly captivating living in New York City, Barnes and Noble offers a children’s story time to pull together children in the Charlottesville community, and Panera Bread hires real workers to appear on their television advertisements, stressing the hands-on role of producing bread each morning for their beloved customers20. While these are valiant, they are not only performing the identity of student, academic, avid reader, or curious author for self-legitimization, but also displaying that performance to pedestrians outside the store. The consumer becomes the identity that the store is selling. Similarly, the fitness center has formatted the machines to face one another, and windows overlooking the pool lead visitors sprinting on the treadmill to gaze at the swimmers below. Windows at the Center also create a space for legitimacy, connecting the indoor track to the weight room and allowing individuals to enter a cycle of seeing and being seen as they desire credibility and room and allowing individuals to enter a cycle of consumption.

In commercialized spaces, consumers subject themselves first to the role of spectator and then to the role of performer as they respond to the environment’s call through acts of consumption. Each of us, confronted with increased spheres of commercialized spaces throughout our weekly routines, has become a commodity as well. The consumption of space allows people to become what they consume, initially conforming to the spaces around them, but, through visual and structured elements, adopt an identity through the ideologies, cultures, and habits symbolically provided by food, goods, and services they consume. The commodification of the consumer points directly to the disappearance of the local, in favor of the global. Numerous efforts have gone into making the commercialized appear local. The Coach brand uses models who tell their own stories about living in New York City, Barnes and Noble offers a children’s story time to pull together children in the Charlottesville community, and Panera Bread hires real workers to appear on their television advertisements, stressing the hands-on role of producing bread each morning for their beloved customers30. While these are valiant, they are not only performing the identity of student, academic, avid reader, or curious author for self-legitimization, but also displaying that performance to pedestrians outside the store. The consumer becomes the identity that the store is selling. Similarly, the fitness center has formatted the machines to face one another, and windows overlooking the pool lead visitors sprinting on the treadmill to gaze at the swimmers below. Windows at the Center also create a space for legitimacy, connecting the indoor track to the weight room and allowing individuals to enter a cycle of seeing and being seen as they desire credibility and room and allowing individuals to enter a cycle of consumption.

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1. Miles evaluates the impact of this manifestation on a grander scale. The city of Shanghai is “devoid of community or place” because the “realities of commercialism have overwhelmed, even vulgarized, Shanghai”. Evolving from this method is a “new kind of ideology in which the propaganda tools of consumerism place a veneer over the realities,” which, for Shanghai, may be dictatorship. While the façade of local may be less severe than this city’s political turmoil, the disappearance of place exchanged for spaces for consumption diminishes individuals’ authentic self as well, and results in blurred lines, not only between what spaces are meant for consumption, but also of individuals’ own roles as consumers and producers. After researching the consumption of space through variation and close analysis, it is evident that space affects us through the visual gaze and construction of the visitor through an identity as the desirous spectator. The press articles share a highly skeptical approach on many advertising campaigns, proclaiming global companies as genius yet suspiciously powerful. Hyperreal consumption occurs by drawing consumers into a space that develops a story through products tied to an act of performance, first displayed by the structured space or workers and then performed by other consumers after they have made purchases and identified themselves loyalty with the brand. “The combination of McDonaldization and Disneyization play a major role in furthering the principles of business and carrying them into global spheres, which ultimately leads to global standardization. In addition, advertising and marketing create an image and the purchase of goods is the ticket into gaining that imagined lifestyle. Finally, the role one embodies as citizen-consumer means that identity and membership within a space is based upon the active consumption that occurs there: participation is equated to citizenship, therefore purchasing is equated to consumership. With McDonaldization and Disneyization spreading globally, individuals gain the consumership of the commodified world, overloaded with information and devoid of personal or genuine place. Further research would evaluate what the sense of place and space for consumption means in terms of the digital age which neglects place entirely and rebuilds a community solely online. The consequences of this movement are currently being established as the 2010-2020 generation is born into a world where the entire social and economic experience is seemingly available online.

“...“Ideology is the meaning made necessary by the conditions of society while helping to perpetuate those conditions. We feel a need to belong, to have a social ‘place’; it can be hard to find. Instead we may be given an imaginary one.”—Judith Williamson, Devoting-Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising (1975)

“People consume not simply to satisfy their biological and other modest needs but in response to artificially created desires in order to perpetuate the accumulation of capital for private profit, in other words, to ensure that the capitalist global system goes on forever.”—Leslie Skidmore, Globalization, Capitalism and its Discontents (2000)
The world of new media offers students the ability to reflect and analyze our cultural environment in an interdisciplinary manner. These pieces display the breadth of study that media formats like film and television offer.
The Persuasive Power of Music

Essay by Susannah Saunders
Fourth year
Music Major,
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In thinking about the production of documentary films, the aspects that often come to mind are camera angle, voice, and the general visual aesthetics used to make a point. However, a subtler, yet no less important, element exists in the world of documentaries, but it is often placed in the margins. This element is music, and its selection in the production of documentaries is arguably just as important as the more regularly discussed aspects of documentary production. In fact, documentary scholar John Corner claims, “Perhaps the richest and most intriguing aural aspect of documentary production. It is its selection in the production of documentaries, its prominence in the documentary world because of the importance on the selection of a musical track for film.” Certainly any documentary benefit from an appropriate soundtrack? In his work, Directing the Documentary, Michael Rabiger suggests that music can enhance any kind of documentary film because it can “highlight an emotional change when, for instance, an aspiring football player learns he can join the team, or when somebody newly homeless lies down for the first night in a doorway.”

Research in psychology has offered results offering psychophysiological evidence that music in films actually produces physical responses. In a study conducted by Julian Thayer of New York University and Robert Levenson of Indiana University, sixty male college students were split into three different conditions. All three groups viewed a short informational film about industrial safety, explaining the proper measures to take around dangerous equipment. The film also showed some of the consequences of carelessness around such equipment by incorporating some graphic examples, such as one where a man severs his finger using one of the machines. The first group was in the control condition. They viewed the film with no accompanying music. The second group was in what the experimenters labeled the “decrease condition,” because they hypothesized that stress levels in participants would be lower in this situation. This group viewed the film backed with what they called “documentary music.” This music was meant to be neutral and it featured major seventh chords, structures generally associated with pleasant feelings. The third group was in place in what they labeled the “increase condition,” because their hypothesis was that the stress levels of these participants would be increase in this situation. They viewed the film accompanied by what was called “terror music.” This soundtrack featured diminished seventh chords and “harsh timbres,” musical structures that tend to invoke stress or negative feelings because they lack the clarity and resolution of major seventh chords. The experimenters measured the participants’ psychophysiological responses while watching the film using electromagnetic equipment that recorded responses including heart rate and pulse through electrodes attached to the subjects. As the psychologists hypothesized, the results indicated that the soundtracks accompanying the films both increased and decreased the electrophysiological responses in their respective film conditions. These results provide support for the idea that musical scores can add a sense of stressfulness in film. How do these results relate to documentaries? Since documentarians are trying to influence viewers and make arguments, it seems that the knowledge that music physically affects us would cause them to place high importance on the selection of a musical track for their images. Why then, do so many documentaries place music in the margins? Can any documentary benefit from an appropriate soundtrack? In his work, Directing the Documentary, Michael Rabiger suggests that music can enhance any kind of documentary film because it can “highlight an emotional change when, for instance, an aspiring football player learns he can join the team, or when somebody newly homeless lies down for the first night in a doorway.”

Certainly any documentarian would want to pull on our emotions to make their points, right? I would argue that the answer to this question is not always ‘yes’. The answer depends on the mode of the documentary and the nature of how the filmmaker constructs his or her argument. Music must be used in alignment with the argument, purpose, and mode of the film. If music is not carefully chosen, it can actually detract from the film’s argument. Corner points out that music has been placed in the margins in the documentary world because of the prominence of journalistic and observational formats. He argues that filmmakers should not feel so inhibited in using music in these modes and that the use of music in different ways could actually assist in conveying an argument. While this is possible, I think it is important to be cautious here. Experimenting with a fiction-like soundtrack, for example, in a journalistic, expository documentary could detract from the believability of the film. Documentary scholar Bill Nichols defines an expository documentary as one that “assembles fragments of the historical world into a more rhetorical frame than an aesthetic or a poetic one.” This type of aesthetic in many documentaries...is that provided by music.” Certainly people recognize that music plays a crucial role in fiction films. Most people could easily hum the theme of the Harry Potter or Indiana Jones movies, for example. Music defines fiction film in assisting the narrative by connecting the scenes and tapping into our emotions by the way it is paired with the images. In many ways, its use in documentary film is not so different. Similar to its role in fiction, music can set a mood and invoke emotion in documentary film. The difference, however, lies in the viewers’ relationship to a documentary film as opposed to theirs with a fiction film. The viewers’ involvement with a documentary is different than the involvement with fiction because we are “witnesses to the implicit revelation of more general truths.” In viewing a documentary, the viewers are not meant to transcend into a fictional world. Instead, the viewers are supposed to receive some sort of message or argument. While, like its role in fiction film, music can set a mood and invoke emotion, it also has the ability to assist in asserting the perspective of the documentary. Because of this, music should be carefully chosen and placed in documentary films so that it aligns with the argument, purpose and mode of the film. Music must be used in alignment with the argument, purpose, and mode of the film. If music is not carefully chosen, it can actually detract from the film’s argument. Corner points out that music has been placed in the margins in the documentary world because of the prominence of journalistic and observational formats. He argues that filmmakers should not feel so inhibited in using music in these modes and that the use of music in different ways could actually assist in conveying an argument. While this is possible, I think it is important to be cautious here. Experimenting with a fiction-like soundtrack, for example, in a journalistic, expository documentary could detract from the believability of the film. Documentary scholar Bill Nichols defines an expository documentary as one that “assembles fragments of the historical world into a more rhetorical frame than an aesthetic or a poetic one.” This type of
film features voice-of-God narration and relies heavily on the legitimacy of ideas presented by authority figures to convey an argument. The 1960 documentary "Harvest of Shame" serves as an example of an expository documentary with highly journalistic conventions. It offers the argument that the government should take action to improve working conditions in the fields with their parents every day. We also learn the unfortunate truth that this family can only afford to have milk once a week, a fact that all of their labor does not lead to an income that supports their well-being. The scene is informative but also emotional as it shows the actual people who are affected by the conditions. An evocative musical soundtrack could be seen as helping the filmmaker create an emotional connection with the viewer. However, the mode of the film and the ways in which it presents its argument must be considered. Corner might suggest that a soundtrack could add something to the scene. Furthermore, the psychological impact of adding music to a scene such as this may help support the argument or may be included in a neutral sense? Does it assist the argument or is it just there in a neutral sense? Take, for example, one of the classroom scenes where a teacher plays Simon and Garfunkel’s “The Borders of Our Lives” for her students through a tape recorder as part of a poetry exercise. The camera zooms in on the tape player, clearly revealing the source of the music to the viewers. I would argue that the music itself is designed to support the emotional reaction in the viewers, but it is also inducing a subtler physical one that makes viewers feel on edge. In this way, the music assists in bringing the audience into a fictional world. That sense of fiction helps to help convey the film’s memories of witnesses, just like fictional reenactments are constructions and are therefore not always the whole truth. As a viewer, the feeling that you are viewing something fictional most likely makes you question the reality of what you are seeing. Does it help to legitimize an argument or viewpoint? If this is the case, an added soundtrack would automatically help to set a dark mood for the film. This is very similar to the 1988 film, The Thin Blue Line, a prominent musical soundtrack contributes to the film’s reflexive perspective and heightens the mood. Corner points out that in dramatic films and documentaries, music is often used to “musical scores,” in order to support their attempt at offering some of the narrative development and emotional intensities associated with fiction. This is the case with the score in The Thin Blue Line, which is helpful in drawing the audience in with its highly stylized and dramatic conventions, which make it seem similar to a fiction film. In this case, the most obvious convention of fiction is the soundtrack, an engaging and emotional element, in this case, the music. The music adds and narrows the narrative, building up at suspenseful scenes and using minor tones to set a dark mood for the film. This is very similar to the use of music in a fiction film, so when the audience experiences it here, they are likely to believe that the film is a fictional murder mystery of sorts. The scene of the murder in question, where a police officer pulls up behind the suspects’ car, approaches the vehicle and then shot to death is shown multiple times in different versions. Each version represents a different vehicle and is then shot to death is shown multiple times in different versions. Each version represents the source of the music to the viewer. As we have seen, music is a scarcely discussed element, critical in documentary films. Even in the earliest forms of documentary, music or the lack thereof could make a remarkable difference in the interpretation of the film’s perspective. In fact, the addition of music can change the mood of a scene or more, and offer extreme and sometimes entirely different, experience than exists without it. Robert Flaherty’s 1929 silent film Nanook of the North, considered one of the first documentary films, is an example of this. The only means of conveying a story or mood was through the use of title slides and title slides that were used to transform the title slides give the viewer context around which to base the images. Watching silently, the viewer can create his or her own mood for the film. A silent version of Eskimo life unfolds, with title slides suggesting a romance, adventure, and even a sense of adventure. In this case, an air of stillness associated with the Eskimos in some scenes, an effect that Flaherty might not have intended to offer. In watching a silent version of this film, the viewer sees all of the same scenes with music or without an added soundtrack, however, the way they experience it and the conclusions they draw might be entirely different. A study of the film reveals that many of Flaherty’s scenes were indeed staged in a way that romanticizes the life of
the Eskimos. These families did not actually live so simply at this time, relying on primitive tools and means of acquiring food and lacking all forms of knowledge as though he is some sort of character, maybe even to laugh at the Eskimo’s supposed lack of stupidity, associated with the Eskimo’s reaction to the gramophone. A slide tells the viewer that when inspecting something unfamiliar. A staccato string section plays out a cheerful, bouncy tune that can certainly aid and enhance our understanding of documentary film. With the rise of musical soundtracks in the right mood introduced at a scene change, or at a moment of climax, will point the visuals most tellingly… Even in the most undramatic and unemotional documentary, music carefully chosen and used selectively can point the film and add greatly to the impact. As the examples discussed suggest, there is certainly truth to this statement. The use of music in documentary films greatly impacts the message that they convey. While scholars such as J. Corner suggest a more imaginative approach to the use of music in films, it is important to very carefully imagine music selection”. While musical creativity can certainly aid and enhance our understanding of documentary films, if used poorly, it can do the opposite. Critics and psychologists alike have noted the impact that music has on human reactions to film. Seeing the role of musical soundtracks in the films discussed also points to its impact. While musical themes from fictional films stick with us forever and transport us to their fictional worlds, music in documentaries can be just as powerful, transporting ideas and arguments into our world. Music’s alignment with the argument, purpose and mode of the documentary film is a crucial element in understanding. Upon its debut in the summer of 2013, the Netflix original series Orange is the New Black was received with high praise from viewers and critics alike. While credit is due to the high quality of storytelling on the part of the writers, actors, and directors, the show also gained a lot of positive attention for its focus on diversity in a female-centric cast. The show’s approach to representation of diversity and storytelling reflects calls for changing how the public sphere is understood today. Exciting but imperfect, even the show’s limitations provide a conscious meta-commentary on the limitations of public representations of diversity. Ultimately, the pluralistic and consciously flawed Orange is the New Black contributes to the conversation of diversity on the public screen, while also contributing strongly to the conversation of pluralistic, expanded, inclusive evolutions of the public sphere. In order to understand Orange is the New Black in terms of a conversation on redefining and reevaluating the notion of the public sphere, it is necessary to evaluate aspects of this conversation in contrast to the Habermasian ideal of the “liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere.” In her response to this model, Nancy Fraser summarizes Habermas’ sense of the public sphere that “designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and hence an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction,” pointing out Habermas’ focus and appraisal of “rational-critical public debate,” his emphasis on conversation and deliberation in order to reach consensus. With the rise of contemporary media in the form of mass communication, and thus a collapse of public and private as television allows the public to invade the private home, Habermas sees a reaffeudalization of the public sphere: “Radio, film, and television by degrees reduce to a minimum the distance that a reader is forced to maintain toward the printed letter—a distance that required the privacy of the appropriation as much as it made possible the publicity of a rational-critical exchange about what had been read” Rather than the public sphere debating with and “about itself,” The discussion seems to have been carefully cultivated and there seems to be no barrier to its proliferation. “Today the conversation itself is administered.” The focus on rationality and critical thinking is lost and instead becomes a focus on “consumption” and “critical debate disappears behind the veil of internal decisions concerning the selection and presentation of the material.”
Furthermore, such a collapse and refusal of the public sphere by the unpropertied masses leading to the establishment of state and society which removed from the public sphere its former basis without supplying a new one. Thus Habermas seems to mourn the integration that founds contemporary mass media, the integration of the masses as well as the integration of different ways of thinking beyond the conversation-based rational-critical debate of the bourgeois public sphere.

In response to the idealized definition of a general public sphere, critiques of Habermas’ work propose redefining the public sphere in contemporary society in order to include difference and pluralism, as opposed to a generalized, united idea of the public sphere based in exclusion. Nancy Fraser, in calling for the development of a new, post-bourgeois model of the public sphere93 contends that “although in stratified societies, like our current American society in which hierarchies exist in the realms of sex, gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc., ‘the ideal of the public sphere’ is not fully realizable, it is more closely approximated by arrangements that permit contestation among a plurality of competing publics than by a single comprehensive public space.”

Habermas sees the effects of an integration of the masses, revivings of his own communicative ethics imagine plurality and inclusion as means of achieving a more equalized and successful public sphere. Habermas’ theory of a public dominated and refusaled by mass media is also revisited and revised. Conversations concerning the television medium and its contribution to changing understandings of the public sphere reflect calls for inclusion and a valuation of different modes of discussion and thinking about the public sphere “idealized rational-critical discourse.” DeLuca and Peeples introduce the notion of “the public screen” in addition to the general public sphere. The public screen is favorite because it is a concept that takes technology seriously. It recognizes that most, and the most important, public discussions take place via ‘screens’—television, computer, and the front page of newspapers. Further, it is possible to adopt the term ‘public sphere’ and all it entails, a term invested to orality and print, for the current screen age. A new term thus takes seriously the work of media theorists, while the new technologies introduce new forms of social organization and new modes of perception.

Such “new modes of perception” proposed by DeLuca and Peeples reflect the emphasis on pluralism expressed by Fraser, Young, and Benhabib. DeLuca and Peeples introduce the idea that television and screens offer communication in the form of “dissemination.” The public screen is an accounting that starts from the premise of dissemination, of broadcasting. Communication as characterized by the space of echo chambers and the endless scattering of “emissions without the guarantee of productive exchanges,” a consequence also warned by Fraser, Young, and Benhabib in the attempt to understand the specified and differentiated other. DeLuca and Peeples suggest that the dissemination of the public screen offers a model of communication that is more democratic, open, public, equitable, receiver-oriented, and in tune with humanity’s multiplicity of communicative uses, thus imaginizes the public screen as an important and necessary counterpart to the conversation of the public sphere in contemporary society.

Rather than preventing deliberation and conversation, the television medium and public screen then seem to provide the possibility for cultural understanding and discussion. DeLuca and Peeples include in the television medium “sitcoms and other television fare” as a “cultural forum” on race, class, feminism, and sexual identity that “acted” on the stage of participatory democracy, thus providing a model of cultural diversity and public discourse that is more democratic, open, public, equitable, and receiver-oriented.

Thus understanding difference requires presence and visibility. As the television medium has become ubiquitous, we see how participation in a larger public space today requires having a visual presence via the public screen, including the television as well as the computer screen largely dominated by the Internet. In all these cases, the television is central to the modern public sphere, providing a space for cultural debate and providing a model for participatory democracy and public discourse.

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and plurality, contributing to a more equitable and expanded public sphere. Thus, the inclusion of certain voices into the television medium, including from a multicultural perspective, involves the inclusion of significant voices from a public discussion and understanding of American culture. Having looked at how the television medium acts as a major player in the evolution of an understanding of public sphere as potentially more inclusive and based on difference, I will now shift the focus to how on _Orange is the New Black_ has contributed to such discussions of plurality or participation and representation. While the show certainly makes strong political statements about diversity and the U.S.'s current prison system, this paper will not focus on the exact statements being made, but rather on how the general approach to presenting diversity in the show contributes calls for plurality and inclusion. 

Smith is praised and expresses appreciation simply for her race, class, her education, her background. _Orange is the New Black_ is still subservive for the fact that, while most television shows about prison usually take place in male prisons and focus on violence, the reality remains that such a setting continues to present women of color in positions of lower class and associated with criminality. Other critiques have been shut out and have only been able to break stereotypes, saying the show is diverse in the shallowest, most tolerant ways. In attempting to branch out and learn about the variety of characters, the show is forced to overlook some, for example a single Asian inmate who briefly appears, relegated such characters to types. While these are valid concerns and limitations to the presentation of diversity seen in _Orange in the New Black_, the manner in which the show uses difference to create conflict and further the plot demonstrates validity in its contribution to a cultural forum and larger public discussions on race, class, gender, sexuality and the prison system in the U.S. The pilot episode observes a self-imposed racial segregation in the prison, which Piper initially reacts to in shock, supposedly coming from a world that ignores racial conflict. Such a presentation not only presents a very real depiction of race in female prisons, but also embraces and confronts very real questions of how racism insistently persists in today's supposedly post-racial America. The show's willingness and openness to such conversation are strongly affirmed by the reality that "When intergroup interactions are presented on television, they are generally portrayed as neutral or positive, especially on children's programs." This is an important statement, but it is also important to note the kind of universality.
being portrayed on the show. The idea of universal seems to coincide with Benhabib’s revising of an understanding of universality as acknowledging both the general human dignity and respect by acknowledging characters’ specificity and individuality, particularly through cultural expression. Leyva comments on questions of realism and universality in the show’s depictions of diversity.1 “I think the writers aren’t focusing on telling stereotypes, they’re telling stories, real stories that can happen to anyone regardless of race.”2 Leyva’s comments demonstrate the show’s power in telling universal, human stories about characters that aren’t usually seen as universal. Returning to Graves assertion of the importance of including diversity in order to teach empathy, the show’s inclusion of diverse backgrounds and identities: “We remain trapped like American culture in its historical reality, with a dream and the rhetoric of peace and with a bitter experience that denies them.”3 Yet Kohan’s consciousness of television media’s limits in terms of representation and whose stories get told by whom do not simply demonstrate a writer operating within the limits of the system, but rather of a media producer using the medium to expose the medium’s own limits: “...there’s admirable gutsiness to the show’s willingness to acknowledge that built-in imbalance’s part of the reality.”4 The show’s own entrapment within Piper’s central storyline relates to Newcomb and Hirsch’s observation on how “one of the primary functions of the popular culture, the television forum, is to make children believe in the effectiveness of this [American] pluralism,”5 so that even as the show achieves a pseudo-pluralistic form of storytelling it acknowledges the limits of such an attempt, and thus of American pluralism on the whole. This self-reflexivity, a writer’s own story, “I can’t change levels of reflectivity, that is, they can introduce metaconsiderations about the very conditions and constraints under which such dialogue takes place and evaluate their fairness.”6 By acknowledging and acting upon its own story, it seems that Orange is the New Black is doing just that. Beyond the storytelling aspects of the show, Orange is the New Black’s commercial success also raises questions about the industry’s motives for depicting diversity on the public screen. The company’s own youth and desire to make an impact in the television industry has allowed for a certain amount of freedom. Netflix’s chief content officer, Ted Sarandos, has been vocal about “his disinterest in playing by the industry’s rules.”7 Jenji Kohan has also been somewhat critical of the show’s willingness to trust the project: “That is every showrunner’s dream, to just ‘go to series’ and have that faith put in your work. They paid full freight.”8 She also has expressed her excitement at being “new frontier” of Internet based television. Such language is backed by statements from Netflix’s officials. Cindy Holland, Netflix’s VP of content, is quoted saying “We’re very excited about their vision, not ours” and that the very format on online streaming allows more freedom for writers: “You can write differently knowing that in all likelihood the next episode is going to be viewed right away.”9 Such openness and apparent risk-taking poses Netflix as “the first deep-pocketed platform for original content to emerge since the cable TV renaissance of the late 1990s.”10 it also potentially poses Netflix as an example of how Internet based telvison may provide more diverse content contributing to understandings and appreciation of difference on the public screen. On the one hand, Netflix’s success with Orange is the New Black may demonstrate an example of the company’s success in its potential to make more changes in social structure and organization, and to shifts in attitude and value.”11 And (significantly, “to technological shifts,”) meeting a public demand for increased diversity and quality of content reflecting more diverse backgrounds to better reflect society. Laverne Cox comments on the reaction to the show’s cast: “…I think that the wonderful lessons that Orange is the New Black is teaching us is that it shows our industry—the entertainment industry—the television cultural forum, to view difference in order to learn, understand, or relate. The flipside of the show’s emphasis on diversity are the consumerist motives behind it. While Sarandos and Holland express the company’s approach as, “there’s a bigger business in customer satisfaction than managing business satisfaction,” there can be no denying that the use of diversity, while perhaps a risk, has dealt beneficial results to the company. Netflix has seen recent growth that its executives contribute largely to the success of its content.”12 Diversity and difference in Orange is the New Black then becomes a mode of advertising, of “drawing viewers willing and able to pay for a subscription.” Netflix has found success in its own right itself that supports this idea of using diversity to draw viewership. The show’s title sequence does not focus on Piper, but presents a montage of various faces interpersed with images of the prison itself. We see close ups of mouths and eyes, the parts of the faces that demonstrate the most emotion, that quickly flip like a color wheel, emphasizing the variety of color, make up, and identity. We see smiles, tears, looks of concern.13 The title sequence from the outset presents the show as one based on diversity, prioritizing difference and emotions. Certainly such a portrayal relates to Young and Benhabib’s insistence on the validity of affectivity and feeling: yet presenting these values in such a way has potentially exclusionary affects. In discussing the show Ugly Betty’s commercial success, Hector Amaya observes that “it became the corporate tactic to tackle ratings, signaling a moment in our political culture where the social space often referred to as the public sphere becomes, under this definition of diversity and these conditions of citizenship, newly occupied by a series of racial protocols without giving up its structural privileges,” and to “sideline[14] the argument that to have a just society, the majority must substantially learn about the other.” Based on Orange is the New Black and other examples, Netflix’s tactics of using the show’s diversity as a selling point, Amaya’s observations may serve as warnings to overly optimistic appreciation for Orange is the New Black’s portrayal of universality and diversity. While the presentation of diversity on Orange is the New Black has its limitations and deserves serious consideration, it can be said to significantly reflect and contribute to the conversation around inclusiveness and plurality in the public sphere via the evolving public screen. Such criticism in themselves contribute to the larger cultural forum, for the public screen does not just include the browser open on Netflix’s website, but the multiple blogs, social media, and journalism available via the Internet. The conversations generated around Orange is the New Black in itself demonstrates various levels of plurality and discussions, including contests with society’s disapproval of mass media and demonstrating change and lively debate in a changing public sphere.
The Insider’s Local

[Endnotes]
4 Hansen 102
5 Hoffman 178
6 Hoffman 179
7 Hansen 99
8 Hansen 103
10 Pauly 516

(Bibliography)

Blurred Lines of Consumption

[Endnotes]
6 Hansen 102
7 Hoffman 178
8 Hoffman 179
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