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## Grassroots, participatory communication in Africa

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction . . . . .	3
A. the vision of the independence movements . . . . .	3
B. How does a new structure of communication come about? . . . . .	4
C. Introduction to a review of 10 major lines of research on grassroots, participatory communication in Africa . . . . .	5
2. A comprehensive theory of grassroots, participatory communication . . . . .	5
3. The continued vitality of indigenous communication in Africa . . . . .	9
4. The classification of the variety of instruments of traditional media . . . . .	11
5. Popular art as grassroots, participatory communication in Africa . . . . .	12
6. The demise of the “extension model” of development communication . . . . .	13
7. Community-Based Natural Resource Management . . . . .	16
8. Community communication for survival in poverty . . . . .	18
9. The movement for participatory local government in Africa . . . . .	19
10. Evaluating the communication processes in community-based services . . . . .	22
11. Group communication for personal and social empowerment . . . . .	22
Afterword . . . . .	25
References . . . . .	26
Book Reviews . . . . .	27

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# Grassroots, participatory communication in Africa: 10 Major Lines of Research

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## 1. Introduction

This review essay by the former editor of *COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS*, Robert A. White, S.J., comes from his new enterprise, *African Communication Research* (Vol. 1. No. 1, May 2008), published by St. Augustine University of Tanzania, where Fr. White currently teaches. We draw the material reprinted here (with his permission) from his introduction to the first issue and from his review essay on grassroots, participatory communication in Africa. —Ed.

For many involved with communication research in Africa, the study of grassroots, participatory communication may seem quite marginal to the central issues of our field. However, as the review article makes clear, this question touches the heart of the problem of communication in Africa. The focus of this research is not only how people in local communities communicate among themselves to solve local problems but rather how people at the grassroots level can articulate their views, needs, and interests up to the district, regional, and national level.

There is a huge communication gap between the modernized elite sector and the vast majority who live in peasant farming, the informal economy, or on the verge of survival. If the modernized sector has a wealth of newspapers, magazines, and better broadcasting, little of this wealth of information reaches the grassroots. The agricultural extension services and health education services have offices in the regional and district towns, but little of this information gets to people in local communities and even less is actually brought into the rhythm of their lives. The people live largely through their local, indigenous knowledge and forms of communication. How is the information of the technical sector to become part of the knowledge of the people?

Nowhere is this gap more evident than in the realm of politics. The people at the grassroots generally know little of what their political leaders are doing and make few demands on them. Political leaders, for their part, generally see their election as an opportunity for personal enrichment or to help their clientelistic following, through legal or illegal means. Few see their election as a mandate of accountability to their electors. How do we close this gap so that the people at the grassroots in Africa become truly “citizens” influencing the decisions of their nations?

There are no easy solutions. The basic structure of communication is still the top-down control system of the colonial period. The colonial masters certainly did not invite the people to tell them what to do and they did not encourage the people to communicate too much among themselves. The system of district and regional commissioners established in the colonial period is still the dominant structure for creating “silence” and “non-communication” at the grassroots—as is made clear by the wealth of research on local government in Africa summarized briefly in the review article.

### *A. The vision of the independence movements*

All of the leaders of independence were aware that for real independence the basic structure of communication had to be changed. None were more clear about this than Julius Nyerere:

Growth must come out of our roots, not through the grafting on to those roots of something which is alien to our society. We shall draw sustenance from universal human ideas and from the practical experience of other peoples; but we start from a full acceptance of our Africanness and a belief that in our own past there is much which is useful for our future.

Curiously, what many independence leaders did was quite the opposite. To carry out their vision, they chose to use the colonial broadcasting and press system, the colonial transport system, the colonial system of agricultural extension and marketing control boards, the colonial educational system, and, above all, the colonial state apparatus.

They may not have been able to imagine alternatives because they were in a hurry. Also, part of the problem may have been that they were heavily influenced by the then dominant linear model of communication: source, message, channel, receiver, effects-with-feedback to know whether the message had been imposed or not. (Interestingly, this is still the dominant model of communication taught in communication schools in African universities.) They tended to think that they could leave in place the structure and only change the content. They did not fully realize, perhaps, *that the structure is the message*.

Many of the founders of communication research in Africa—Paul Ansah, Frank Ugboajah, Isaac Obeng-Quaidoo, Francis Kasoma, to mention but a few—have seen clearly that the problem of communication in Africa is in the structure. Much of the research on grassroots, participatory communication in Africa goes back to their insights. Ansu-Kyeremeh (1997) argues for nothing less than a complete transformation of this structure. He contends that the present centrifugal structure—communication flowing from the center to the periphery—must be replaced with a centripetal structure—communication flowing from the grassroots to the center. The review article suggests that Ansu-Kyeremeh's views could form the basis for a more general theory of grassroots, participatory communication.

#### *B. How does a new structure of communication come about?*

Out of the crisis of the independence visions in the 1980s and 1990s there has gradually emerged a new discussion about what the structure of communications in Africa could possibly be. . . . A first and central theme running through virtually all of the current research is the validity of the local knowledge, the traditional forms of organization, and the indigenous modes of communication for effective communication in Africa. This is a complete reversal of the conceptions of the modernization and state-centered models of development.

A second theme is that the most effective 'research' and experimentation are not to be found in the 'established centers' such as Western-oriented universities, but in the constant trial and experimentation

that is generally carried on in local communities. It is effective because it is done with the people's awareness of their local farming or health systems, the local ecology and history, and the local cultural values. . . .

A third theme is that the most effective structure of communication in Africa, with roots in African culture, is dialogical—the ongoing conversation, palaver, and interchange of all actors involved in the process. As Tarawalie (2008) notes, the most sustainable communication for development is an ongoing discussion centering on the questions of the local people but involving those in agricultural or other technical services, representatives of the university-based research centers, political leaders, religious leaders, and all other stakeholders. . . .

[A] fourth theme [is] that the structure of communication is focused on the issues and questions raised inside African countries, not expecting that the best ideas will come from the outside global communication. The very successful Nigerian film industry has been created almost entirely from indigenous capital, independent of the financial structures linked with the Breton Woods institutions, and with little reference to international canons of what film should be.

A fifth theme is the belief that the source of the vitality and creativity of African culture in all aspects—literary, dramatic, scientific, religious—is to be found, not among educated elites, but in the popular, 'intermediate,' classes. Karin Barber's fascinating study, briefly summarized in the review below, shows how Yoruba popular drama has been created in the context of the intermediate classes and has become one of the sources of the television and film institutions in Nigeria.

Other themes that are often highlighted include the communalistic nature of African communication and importance of media that are close to the local community communication, as Wilson (2008) brings out. Authority gains its legitimacy not by being 'over' the community but insofar as it listens to the community and articulates and coordinates what the community wants to say and do. Mongula (2008) brings out strongly the difficulty of introducing a new structure of communication in the context of the highly concentrated power structure that derives from the colonial and modernization model but that, above all, is so closely monitored and guided by the global political-economic system. His conclusion that new movements proposing a new structure of communication will do best by negotiating from a position of power with the existing power structure represents still another important theme. . . .

### *C. Introduction to a review of 10 major lines of research on grassroots, participatory communication in Africa*

A major criticism of research in this area is that it is scattered, superficial, and with little significant capacity to explain the social, economic, and political problems of Africa. In response, this article begins with a rather extensive review of Ansu-Kyeremeh's (1997) formulation of a more *general coherent theory* of the role of grassroots, participatory communication in Africa. Not everyone will agree with his choice of the four basic dynamics—fostering the centripetal rather than centrifugal processes of national communication, communalization, indigenization, and the *sankofa* or renaissance of traditional communication. Nevertheless, his work remains an important theoretical landmark.

A second line of research is concerned with the *continued vitality and importance of indigenous communication* in African cultures. Riley (2005) and Mugambi (2005) are good examples of the role of women in developing traditional song, dance, drama, and storytelling in contemporary contexts.

Wilson's (1987) study of the *use of traditional instruments* in community communication is now something of a classic template of the research in this area.

A fourth important area of research is the study of the way popular arts at the grassroots level—drama, music, and ritual—“articulate up” the local cultures into national cultures. Barber analyzes how the Yoruba traveling drama groups in Nigeria formulated a world view and values that are now important in the Nollywood video film industry.

The fifth area is the enormous mass of research on the validity of *local knowledge, local experientia-*

*tion, and local information exchange networks* in the areas of agricultural extension, health, education, and many other aspects of African life.

The research issues regarding *community-based natural resource conservation community* forestry, wildlife conservation, community preservation of fishing stocks, etc. are introduced well in Fabricius and Koch's collection (2004) of research reports.

Communication for *survival in the face of extreme poverty* and the communication foundations for the informal economy, the livelihood of 60–70% of Africans, is a seventh important line of research.

The moves for better governance in Africa have given a priority to strengthening *local government and decentralization of administration*, but the weakness of communication and media at the local level is a major problem. Some areas for research on communication for local government are advanced as priorities.

A ninth line of research, evaluation of *local community administration of educational, health, and other services* in Africa, is briefly touched on.

Finally, what many would consider the typical research on grassroots, participatory communication—research on communication for personal and social empowerment—is particularly well summarized by Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993). They evaluate the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the methods of *farmer participatory research, rapid rural appraisal and participatory rural appraisal, participatory action research, DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action)*—widely promoted in Africa—and *theater for development*.

None of these lines of research is uniquely African, but an attempt has been made to highlight the emphases in the African context.

## **2. A comprehensive theory of grassroots, participatory communication**

Ansu-Kyeremeh's publications are a useful starting point because he provides a broad theoretical framework for the analysis of grassroots participatory communication in Africa. In this he is building on Ugboajah's concept of oral, community-based media (1985), the more recent research of Wilson (1987, 1997, 2005, 2007) at the University of Uyo in Nigeria, and considerable study of traditional communication institutions in other parts of Africa. In Ansu-Kyeremeh's view, grassroots, participatory communi-

cation is not a matter of a few participatory dynamics in community action but a fundamental remaking of the dysfunctional structure of communication imposed on Africa during the colonial occupation. His perspectives are part of the wave of rethinking that is taking place in agricultural extension, political communication, educational methods, and virtually all areas of African life.

A central premise in Ansu-Kyeremeh's thinking is that the stagnation in African economies, the lack of

vibrant indigenous cultural development, very little theoretical creativity, and the continual political dysfunction is due to the lack of building on the indigenous institutional roots of African societies. He envisages four major dynamics in the revitalization of African growth: (1) recognition of and reinforcement of the efforts to move from a centrifugal model of development in which innovations are formulated and emanate from a center of control to a centripetal model in which the innovations are initiated at the grassroots level and are the material out of which nationhood is constructed; (2) communalization, the recognition that the social action of African people at the regional and national level must be based on the traditional organization and forms of communication for decision making and action in the local communities; (3) indigenization, adapting all supposedly improved forms of education, agriculture, and other technologies to the core African values, motivations, and forms of communication so that these innovations do not supplant but reinforce existing African institutions; and (4) opening a space of freedom for and encouraging what Ansu-Kyeremeh calls *sankofa* or renaissance of local forms of communication and community rituals. The various publications of Ansu-Kyeremeh incorporate research showing the process and significance for development of different aspects of these four dynamics. Indeed, what Ansu-Kyeremeh proposes has become the dominant paradigm in virtually all writing about development in Africa, even if what is actually taught in universities and what is practiced in governments is far from this. Cultural lag is always with us.

#### *A. Moving from a centrifugal to a centripetal model of development*

In Ansu-Kyeremeh's view, at the core of the revitalization of African institutions, especially the communication process, is "the imperative need for a structural transformation of the socio-political organization of centrifugalism" (1997, p. 107). The term "centrifugal" indicates an action which begins in the center and flows out through a hierarchical structure to the periphery. The centrifugal structure of communication in Africa was installed with the imperial conquests of Africa as a means of political control, economic extraction, and cultural domination of the European nations. The colonial control system attempted to incorporate local community decision making into the centralized structure of action through indirect rule, and set in motion a process of cultural hegemony through the schools. This control system drew in information from

the periphery through the reporting system of the district and regional offices; reformulated this in terms of the codes, language, and ideology of the colonial government; and retransmitted this as the only valid, effective knowledge through the technical extension systems, incipient press and broadcasting, and other forms of official pronouncement. Politically, this system implies no accountability to the native people, an inherent characteristic of a centrifugal model. The model of communication is the familiar linear concept which begins with source intentions and seeks the best channel for its message to impose effects on receivers and uses feedback to adapt the message until the source gets the desired effects.

After independence, the dependence on the imperial powers continued. The centrifugal system of knowledge and communication was reinforced by the modernization and strong centralized government planning once the bureaucratic elites prepared by colonial governments got control of the state apparatus (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1997, pp. 92-94).

#### *B. The weakness of the centrifugal communication process*

Ansu-Kyeremeh's interest in a centripetal communication model began with his studies of the existing systems of the Ghana government's adult education and extension efforts and the analysis of why these were so ineffective. He found that the health, agriculture, or youth extension officers who visited the area thought that the informal networks were mostly just frivolous entertainment and idle talk, not worthwhile working with. The preferred communication method was the set lecture method with time for questions. The villagers were often puzzled by these lectures because they seemed so unrelated to their real questions, interests, and possibilities. There was little purpose asking questions or posing problems because the answer was always the same: the government has set productivity goals and the villagers had to fall in line. In fact, the agents were often not really that concerned whether the villagers did or did not comply because the agents felt that the villagers were incorrigibly traditional and uninterested in progress, but the agents had fulfilled their mission by presenting the official line of the government. The primary motivation was always technological efficiency, never moral behavior that would bring honor and respect in the community. There were few stories, no poetic songs, and absolutely no proverbs.

Many of the villagers were hesitant about speaking out or voicing problems because they knew that

these extension agents were representatives of a control system and that they came to impose predetermined goals that had been fixed in the national planning office. According to Ansu-Kyeremeh, there is a long tradition in villages of keeping silent before these representatives of the central government because they are often suspected of being spies gathering information that might later be used against the villagers (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1997, p. 40). In any event, these representatives were not taken too seriously because they almost never came through with their promises and would be replaced with still another wave of NGOs, projects, and programs, often with quite different, even contradictory, objectives, in the not distant future.

### *C. The logic of the centripetal structure of communication and social action*

Centripetal is defined as action which is initiated at the periphery and moves toward the center. The centripetal model implies a genuine democratization in which the “central government derives its power from the villages, not vice versa, as is the case now” (1997, p. 107). Action starts with the initiatives of the people in grassroots communities to solve their everyday problems of economic survival through the traditional forms of social organization, communication, and decision making. This became evident to Ansu-Kyeremeh and to many others during the 1980s and 1990s when there was a massive reduction of government and other services during the period of structural adjustment. There was growing awareness that up to 70 or 80% of the people in most African countries are fending for themselves, with little or no assistance from the government or other NGOs, in the “informal economy” outside of the formal financial and marketing system. Ansu-Kyeremeh became increasingly aware that people were carrying forward their cooperative survival tactics largely through the traditional forms of organization, communication, and decision making which existed before the imposition of the colonial centrifugal structure. The people could survive because they were bringing into play their indigenous knowledge and incorporating from the modernization influences what “worked” within their traditional forms of economy.

The evidence of the importance of traditional organization and communication in the lives of the people led Ansu-Kyeremeh to carry out a detailed study of the intra-village communication among the Bono people of central western Ghana. He discovered that the ordinary villager was a member of a great many formal and informal groups for virtually every

life function. The effectiveness of group action was due to the fact that every villager, young and old, had the opportunity to voice his or her opinion about every cooperative action in the village. This meant that everyone was drawn into the discussion, planning, and motivation to carry projects to a successful conclusion. Group decisions were further ratified by traditional village leaders whose main function was to ‘listen’ to what people wanted to do and to give those intentions the stamp of authority. This constituted what Ansu-Kyeremeh described as “centripetal communication,” beginning from the people and articulated up into community action. The enthusiasm of the people for these participatory projects, in his view, contrasted sharply with the listless disinterest for projects initiated by extension agents representing the “centrifugal communication” coming from central government.

Ansu-Kyeremeh also discovered the remnants of a broader pre-colonial regional political system of the Bono people that coordinated the decisions of the villages in effective regional action. “Communication and information which flow within centripetal indigenous political systems worked so well in the past that the British colonial administrators described it as ‘a democratic government to a degree of which there is not any modern parallel in Europe’” (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005, p. 184, citing Maxwell, 1928, p. 34). The visible elements of this traditional centripetal system of communication were largely dismantled by the British colonial control structure in spite of their expressed admiration. Nevertheless, Ansu-Kyeremeh believes that the traditions of cooperative group action at the local level and the articulations of initiatives from the village to the district and regional level remain alive and can be revitalized if the people are given the freedom and support to develop them. This is brought out in Tarawalie (2008).

### *D. Communalization*

The emphasis on the village or neighborhood as the most important and effective site of communication derives from the observation that African life tends to be very socially interactive, probably more so than in other cultures of the world. The obligation in Africa to support the family, clan, or village over individual aspirations is well known. The socialization and personal identity of Africans are said to be much more linked to intimate social groupings. One waits to see what the community, especially the authority in the community, wants before making a personal option. Many African philosophers see communalism as a central African

value, and many communication scholars argue that Africans see good communication not in terms of the effects it can have on an individual or as a means to express one's personal identity, but in terms of the capacity to build bonds of solidarity and the integration of the individual into the group (Ugboajah, 1985; Moemeka, 1997, 1998; Faniran, 2008).

Ansu-Kyeremeh thinks that the model of mass communication, the transmission from one point to individuals alone, must be "communalized." Typically, people in Africa watch television or home video in groups and they talk about media in groups. The news may come to an individual and then the individual spreads the news within the community through oral networks. Ansu-Kyeremeh is thinking of the dense infrastructure of groups in the typical African village or neighborhood. Groups for him are traditional aspects of village social structure, the family, age groups, and cooperative action groups that people are socialized into. The rites of passage are successive stages of group integration, and the emotional high points of life are not individual success but the rituals of village celebration with music, dance, and group singing. Communication in this context is largely singing, dancing, speaking with rhetorical effect, the rhythmic cadence of words and proverbs, and storytelling. All communication should build on this network of oral communication.

Ansu-Kyeremeh (1997, p. 105) believes strongly that development efforts should not try to introduce new structures of communication but build on the existing patterns of communication in communities, especially the ongoing systems of interaction and personal relationships. All educational efforts should be based on a study of the existing communication channels in a community. It is this communal communication which is the strong basis of the centripetal structure of communication in Africa.

#### *E. Indigenization of communication*

For Ansu-Kyeremeh indigenization means that the norm of all good communication is what is considered good communication in African cultures. For example, good communication is not just the expression of personal opinion, but what builds solidarity in a group. Communication in African contexts has much more of a ritual respect for the persons involved, especially for those who have been endowed with authority or who are considered elders.

Morrison (2005), in her chapter in Ansu-Kyeremeh's edited collection, has a particularly good description of the cultural characteristics of African

communication. Her characterizations may be more typical of Burkina-Faso, but she would argue that they are the communication culture found to some degree throughout Africa. Words in the African context have power and have a kind of sacred sense about them. She stresses that good communication in Africa is performative, that is, it projects a mood and atmosphere in a group, and she cites the view that all Africans learn to perform with some degree of proficiency (Stone, 1986). To be part of a community is to know about singing, dance, drama, story telling, good rhetorical speaking, the effective use of proverbs. All communication is expected to teach, to communicate community values, and to honor people in the group. The art of "palaver," rhythmic discussion, is highly prized.

In this view, African styles of communication are not just incidental, but incorporate fundamental cultural values. To lose these styles would mean ceasing to be African and losing something very valuable in the panorama of cultural diversity in the world.

Mediated communication in Africa should adapt to this. Indigenization is not Africanization. To Africanize communication is not simply to incorporate Western communication styles into African contexts as, for example, when Africans took over the positions in colonial or newly independent states. Nor is indigenization a form of hybridization in the sense of somehow adapting African styles of communication to the Western mass media forms.

#### *F. "Sankofa" or promoting a renaissance of African communication*

A vision and policy of *sankofa*, that is, policy which enables the indigenous African forms of communication to develop in a holistic way is at the heart of Ansu-Kyeremeh's proposal of indigenization (1997, pp. 77-80).

Although he is somewhat defensive and a bit despairing that this might be possible, in fact this is now becoming the dominant paradigm for communication, at least in areas which touch upon rural development such as agriculture, health, and, interestingly, tourism.

The central premise is that forms of indigenous communication which are briefly described above are, in various ways, alive and active in the culture, in the personalities of the major actors in communities. The premise is that the people, especially in rural communities, know these forms of communication as "local knowledge" and feel more competent in this than in the use of new technologies.

It is important that development actions open a space of freedom and encouragement to allow the people to choose the forms of organization and communication that they prefer. Tarawalie, in an article on blending (2008), states that when the FAO People's Participation Programme (PPP) allowed the people the freedom to choose the kind of organizations they felt most competent in, most chose the traditional forms of organization, type of projects, and communication. What is most significant is that these were the most successful and sustainable programs because the people felt they understood what was to be done and that they truly owned them as their own.

A further important point is that the truly indigenous is never a static institution but is continually evolving and incorporating new elements. As Ansu-Kyeremeh stresses, the indigenous which has roots in the traditional must be the norm, but that is seldom a question if the people have the choice. There is a striking pride in regional, tribal, and African identity in the leadership in grassroots communities. As Uwah (2008) points out, when the young people were given the possibility to organize festivals of more traditional communication in Eastern Nigeria, they enthusiastically took this up. In Zambia, the income-generating projects of the PPP used the traditional, indigenous forms of organization and communication, but the people recognized some of the deficiencies of this and asked outside advisors to help them formalize certain safeguards to improve them. The important thing is that this was

done through a process of participatory discussion and planning and the decision to ask for outside help came from the people themselves. The opening of a space for free discussion enabled the local people to become more conscious of their own cultural heritage and the people never lost control of the process.

One of the greatest obstacles is that the universities of Africa, on the whole, do not understand the importance of indigenous communication and have little expertise in this. The university planning commission in Nigeria has apparently established traditional communication as one aspect which should be taught, but this is not present in many countries. Most graduates in communication have virtually no introduction and no idea of the nature and importance of indigenous communication and its role in the process of national development.

Finally, there has to be a conscious and consistent public policy of *sankofa*. This rejuvenation of indigenous African cultural practices may be popular practice, but the centrifugal central control system is extremely strong in most African countries. It may not be wise to establish certain practices as "indigenous" and then impose these on the people. That was one of the mistakes of the "ujamaa" policy in Tanzania. The government and other agencies must open a space of freedom for the local people to decide what they want to do in a given locality and encourage a participatory process of discussion and decision making.

### 3. The continued vitality of indigenous communication in Africa

Rather than dying out there is considerable evidence that traditional indigenous communication may be growing in importance, especially in development programs that are seeking more participation and commitment. Riley (2005) describes how a health campaign in Ghana incorporated ritual, singing, dance, and "forum drama" to gain the commitment of women to vaccination and other health practices. As we have noted above, drama, singing, and dance are not "shows" for the public, but are expected to be participated in by all present. Meetings typically began with a sacred ritual, like a prayer, to invoke the divinity but also the ancestors to give this lesson a moral dimension and link these activities to the obligation to continue

the values of this community. Meetings and instructions that dealt with issues that could have some resistance such as family planning which depend on the husbands' cooperation were often carried out as dramas inviting audience participation. Putting issues such as family planning in a dramatic format lowered thresholds of resistance, encouraged all to explore these possibilities, and invited alternative views.

Creating a self-understanding and a social understanding of the central role of women's identity in development is important (Rosander, 1997), and research on the role of traditional media in creating this identity is an area of much needed research (Mlama, 1994).

### *A. Creating a space for women's identity in the African nation*

Mugambi's (2005) study of women's organizations in villages of Uganda used an interesting methodology to reveal the changing culture and world view of rural women. The women's groups quite spontaneously used the indigenous forms of singing, dance, and drama as a central form of communication. Given the participatory nature of these media and the traditional freedom to improvise the content and formats with one's own ideas, these media enabled the women to rethink their roles in their families and communities. The study followed the evolution of the songs, drama, and dances created by the women of the Buganda region in their women's club activities and shows how they are a medium that allows a great deal of participatory creativity for social change.

The women's clubs were originally organized in the late 1950s and 1960s to provide an opportunity for women to gain literacy skills. This was a response to the gender inequalities caused by the preference of education of boys in the British colonial system. This is but another example of how the colonial centrifugal sociopolitical structure created concentration of social power, in this case, reinforcing the gender hierarchies. In various ways, however, the women's clubs opened a space of freedom for the women to take initiatives to affirm their own role in the domestic space of the home and then in the community and nation. It is one more example of the centripetal expansion of the indigenous culture from the grassroots when the opportunity is offered.

The women's clubs were another case of opening a space of freedom for a subordinate group because the women had to obtain permission from their husbands to attend meetings. Some men would not give permission because they feared it would be a threat to the traditionally ascribed male authority in the household. Most men, however, saw it as a harmless way to allow wives to become more skilled homemakers and improve the homemaking capacities of the women. In fact, the clubs focused on child nutrition, food preparation, gardening skills, and home improvement and, while pleasing to the husbands, also increased the power of the women in the domestic space.

The gathering of women in the villages for work together was part of traditional village life and continued their traditional indigenous singing during work as part of their club activities. Women had always used their gatherings to introduce variations in the songs or

dances and now in the clubs there was a quite strong development of singing themes. Soon, the creation of new songs, dances, and drama became a focus of club activities in itself and competitions of singing, dancing, drama became part of the festivals and fairs in which the different clubs presented their innovations in their home improvement practices. The style of singing maintained indigenous traditions, and the texts of song and drama worked with many of the traditional themes and myths of the Buganda people.

In her report of one of these festivals Mugambi notes the relation between the new confidence that the women gained in the improved homemaking practices, the increased power in the domestic space, the changing consciousness of the women regarding themselves, and the changing texts of the songs. Many of the songs and dramas presented in the festival were a reworking of traditional Buganda myths that provide explanations of the roles and relative power of men and women.

Many of the songs celebrated the new income-generating activities that the women's organization had encouraged and the fact that this income gave the women greater power over decisions in favor of children's education and other aspects of family welfare. "It is women's labor and creativity that brings health and development to the household," was the chorus of one of the songs. One of the main interests of the women in the clubs was entry into the informal economy to supplement the weak and failing incomes of husbands. The informal economy, which has little support from the centrally controlled official economy, emerges largely from the indigenous traditional knowledge and capacities. As in the case of these Ugandan women, a significant part of the informal economy of African nations is due to the ingenuity of women.

Many of the texts of the songs and the dramas revealed the awareness of the expansion of the women's indigenous knowledge and creativity out onto the national stage. One song, entitled "We the mothers of the nation," celebrated, as the basis of the development of the nation, their work in agriculture, in energy-saving ovens, in the use of traditional medical practices, and in the introduction of an ideal homestead. An important point in the songs was the insistence that women's domestic work and gardening with the hoe, generally considered demeaning in contemporary African culture, was just as important and dignified as any work in the nation. The women were particularly proud of the fact that they had done all of this with very little help from any government or NGO agencies.

#### 4. The classification of the variety of instruments of traditional media

The instruments used in traditional, indigenous media of communication in Africa—drums, horns, woodblocks, bells, and gongs—are of great communication and cultural significance because each instrument has a quite highly developed language of its own. These are part of the normal communication in villages, but are also a part of the communication in many other contexts of public gatherings in Africa. For those who have grown up in a particular African culture, the sound of a particular kind of drum, played in a particular way is a language signaling the meaning of the occasion and setting off a train of connotations and emotional resonances.

Wilson's research (1987, 2005) on the traditional media has become something of a model of classification putting order in our understanding of the immensely diverse use of these kind of instruments. This kind of classification may be the stock-in-trade of folklore and popular culture researchers, but Wilson has brought this into the field of communication research. His research is most pertinent for Nigeria and southeast Nigeria in particular, but the way he sets up the classification is valuable for research on traditional, indigenous media throughout Africa.

The classification entails the following:

(1) Identification of the various kinds of instruments used. His classification includes

- *Idiophonic*: self-sounding instruments—drums, metal gongs, woodblocks, wooden drum, bells, and rattles.
- *Aerophonic*: sound produced by the vibration of a column of air—ivory horns, wooden flutes, and the deer horn.
- *Membrophone*: the vibrations from leather stretched over an empty space and beaten by hand or stick.
- *Symbolographic* writing: cryptic representation on an absorbing surface.
- *Demonstrative* communication: Music, storytelling, rhetoric, use of proverbs, etc.
- *Iconographic* communication: Objects such as the kola nut, floral arrangements, and palm fronds.

- *Visual*: especially color symbolisms and color combinations.
- *Institutional*: that is, the symbolic connotations of chieftaincy, secret societies, shrines, masks, and masquerades, but also rites of passage such as name giving and marriage.
- *Extra-mundane*: that is, sensitivity to the communication not visible to others. In the African context this is a major form of communication, and guides important events in personal and public life.

(2) A description of how the medium (sound, pictorial, etc.) is made from the instrument.

(3) The occasions on which it is used and the purpose for which it is used. For example, in the case of drums, among the Ibibio people, the *obodom* is used to call specific individuals or the whole community to the chief's home.

(4) The code language of the instrument. For example, the language of the *obodom ubong* is based on the tonal patterns of the local language and is understood by those who have grown up in that culture. In some cases, the language is designed to be understood by only an initiated few.

(5) The social connotation. The *obodom ubong* (royal drum) is used on the occasion of the installation of tribal and clan kings, royal celebrations, and the death of kings.

(6) The symbolic connotation. Among the Ibibio people, the frequent use of the *obodom* in moments of emergency has given it the symbolic connotation of grave danger.

All of these media are present especially in more ritual contexts and in contexts where the communicators want to link those present with more traditional memories. In rural communities, where there is a stronger continuity with the history of the locality and where there the modern media may not be accessible because of the poverty of the people, the traditional media are of greater importance.

## 5. Popular art as grassroots, participatory communication in Africa

Ansu-Kyeremeh's conception of grassroots communication is based more on the material conditions of rural communities, subsistence agriculture, and the socio-structures of traditional pre-colonial society. Another dimension of indigenous communication is the popular culture of the huge urban conglomerates such as Lagos, Kinshasa, and Nairobi and the now increasingly urbanized rural areas. This is the world where the informal economy defines the material conditions of cultural production and life is more sharply divided between work and leisure. The leisure time communication is very much structured around the popular arts of Africa: home video, television, and radio with genres of entertainment that have their roots in the popular theater, local music, and popular novels of the recent past. This popular communication is framed in the cultural memory of the many local language regions of Africa: Yoruba, Akan, Swahili, Zulu, to mention but a tiny fraction.

Barber's (2000) studies of Yoruba popular culture are particularly interesting from the perspective of her research methodology. She reveals something of the "centripetal process" in tracing the evolution of Yoruba popular theater from the popular entertainment of Yoruba villages and the under classes of colonial Lagos, to the Nigerian post-independence era when more than 100 little theater troupes traveled from village to village in Yoruba land, to the transformation of live theater into television and home video. One begins to get an idea of how the regional and national cultures of Africa are emerging from the poor and marginal peoples. In Barber's analysis the popular arts of the Yoruba evolved out of the values and aspirations of people struggling in the informal economy of the densely populated southwest of Nigeria—poor traders, servants of the middle classes, artisans, taxi drivers—some still linked to agricultural villages and others attracted to the towns by Nigeria's petro-Naira boom. The actors in the theater troupes were often just as jobless and poor as their audiences and the leaders of troupes such as the Oyin Adejobi group she studies in detail were people who thrived on the whistling, shouting audiences in village squares and tumbledown halls of small Yoruba towns.

Barber's analysis opens to view the same tensions between the power of Westernized elites of Africa and

what she calls the "intermediate sectors" of poor but upwardly aspiring Nigerians. The intellectual avant-garde in universities on the whole "despised the popular theater for its vulgarity and lack of social or political 'radicalism.'" Though modern, this (popular) theater had little in common with the 'art' theater of the universities which was usually scripted and in English" (Barber, 2000, p. 3). The popular theater was more defined by what it was not: not like modern European literature, not like the treasured, ancient traditional heritage, not the conscientization and development theater spearheaded by a university-based intelligentsia and much described by scholars in Europe and America. It received virtually no official recognition and was never lionized as was the economically successful home video industry—even though it clearly developed the tastes of the public for the now enormously successful home video boom.

"This theater was oriented toward the ethos of school, church, progress, and literacy and was dedicated to the transmission of 'lessons'" (Barber, 2000, p. 3). The typical hero was the poor boy, simple and sincere, who was successful through honest hard work and a lucky "destiny." The dialogue was a weaving together of traditional proverbs that the young, mostly male audience knew from their elders. There was much gentle lampooning of the Westernizing clerks who liked to sprinkle English words in their dialogue, showed fastidious cleanliness, continually criticized Yoruba rowdiness, and dreamed of going to university. Villains were often the flamboyant, arrogant rich who beat women, neglected parents, and mistreated the elders. In the end the basic aspiration of the heroes is achieving the security of steady income and honor in life.

The popular theater that flourished between the 1960s and the late 1980s (when the new video technology made home video production easy and profitable) was essentially an oral form. The troupe leader would get an idea, describe it to the producer who in turn described it to the actors to work out in rehearsals. If the audience was responsive a two-hour drama might easily go beyond three hours with actors heaping up the boisterous action. The early plays were really sung operettas, revealing the origins in choirs of the colonial era. Actors drew out the artistic beauty and expressive potential of

the Yoruba language with a spate of rapid-fire back-and-forth repartee that could last 20 minutes. Some of the ideas came from popular novels of the time, some from traditional folklore stories, some from stories handed down in their families, some from real life experiences that had a sharp and appropriate lesson for the audiences. The evil of marital intrigues was interwoven in most plots, but was certainly titillating to audiences.

Almost all of the plays drew heavily on Yoruba mythology, folklore, and life at the kingly courts of the many royal families. Spirits abounded, and heroes often got magical powers in the sacred forests. What Barber brings out particularly well is the role of Yoruba popular theater in articulating the aspirations and values of the emerging “intermediate class” which today makes up the great majority of Africans and reflects back to them their cultural identity. There is much of the methodology of E. P. Thompson (1963) and Richard Hoggart (1957) which was the foundation of

British cultural studies. What Thompson and Hoggart showed was that the popular literature that elites in Britain condemned as “bad taste” enabled the British working class to affirm the validity of their cultural identity as an important part of the nation. There are also great similarities with the methodology of Martin-Barbero (1993) who analyzed how the *telenovela* of Latin America is articulating the culture of the “intermediate classes” of that continent and enabling them to affirm their importance in the national culture. It is an art form which resonated with the feelings of the people and gave them a sense of empowerment.

Likewise, in Nigeria the plays of the traveling theater groups became in the 1980s the immensely popular television programs and then the basis of the video film industry.

The “intermediate classes” could now feel that they are part of the Nigerian nation.

## 6. The demise of the “extension model” of development communication

In no part of the field of development communication has the switch to the grassroots, participatory paradigm been more radical and complete than in the thinking about how to communicate improved technology to farmers (Scoones & Thompson, 1994). The extension model, that is, the system of “extending” new technology from the research plots of agricultural universities out to farmers through district extension agents, was the unquestioned prototype of development communication in the foundational era of development studies. The theory of diffusion of innovations of Everett Rogers and the Shannon-Weaver model of communication seemed to provide a strong theoretical foundation. The extension model apparently had proved its effectiveness in the striking rises in agricultural production in Europe and America. The regional agricultural research institutes applying the principles of genetics to local seed varieties were producing the green revolution with the miracle rice, wheat, maize, and all other major food staples.

The extension model was an integral part of the modernization paradigm which hoped to raise productivity in developing countries by rapid transfer of technology from the First to the Third worlds. In most of the new nations in Africa in the 1960s the vast majori-

ty of productive workers were peasant farmers, and improving agricultural productivity was central to efforts toward capitalization and paying the bill of modernization. What the extension model did not take into consideration was that colonial governments had not developed the basic institutions to provide the credit and other supports to peasant agriculture nor had they developed the communication and transportation system to market the products of peasant farmers. Moreover the logic of the post-colonial political institutions favored the bureaucratic governing elite and did not respond to the needs of the rural areas. Agricultural productivity has fallen steadily in many African countries, and most African countries have become net importers of food consumption needs.

Even if African peasant farmers would have had good prices and good marketing facilities to motivate them to increase production—which they did not—the extension model as a communication system was faulty. The extension system depended largely on visits of professionally trained (and professionally paid!) agronomists to individual innovative farmers. The extension system was originally designed in the United States to serve larger commercial farmers. The peasant farmer of Africa is important for national food production, but an

agricultural technical service for semi-subsistence peasant farming requires quite a different approach. Africa would never have enough trained agronomists to reach the millions of small farmers and would never have the funds to pay professional extension agents. Unfortunately, the administrators of the extension system rarely learned to work with groups of small farmers, and governments have been slow to encourage the autonomous organization of peasant farmers.

The classical model of extending the technical knowledge of the research centers and agricultural universities might be applicable to larger commercial farmers, but not to the small semi-subsistence cultivators who are the basis of agricultural production in Africa. Many African countries began the development process after independence with the belief that the increased production of the small farmer would generate a major part of the capital for national development. Instead, the failure to increase the productivity of the small-farmer sector remains the root of poverty and a huge wealth divide that increasingly afflicts most African countries. The “farmer-first” school of thought argues that in Africa, with some notable exceptions, the fault lies mainly with the governing elite: the present systems of agricultural universities, government development planners, the agricultural extension bureaucracies, and the schools of communication in African universities.

The fundamental problem is the communication model used. Most of the agricultural development programs began in the national planning offices which would develop goals of increased agricultural production and the introduction of new crop varieties. These goals were passed to the agricultural extension bureaucracies, and these bureaucracies would pass down orders to extension agents to persuade farmers to meet the government’s goals. This was the classic centrifugal model of communication that Ansu-Kyeremeh refers to. The effects model of communication assumed that peasant farmers were passive and attached to traditional ways, an innovative vacuum, and that farmers had to be persuaded to accept the technological package of new seed varieties along with fertilizers and other expensive inputs. There was relatively little understanding of how complex semi-subsistence farming systems are and how many risk factors have to be considered in the introduction of the smallest modification. The knowledge and preferences of the farmers themselves were rarely considered. Needless to say, these production campaigns were almost always a failure. Usually, the farmers

were blamed for their resistance to new ideas, their inability to adapt their production systems, or simply their laziness in new production methods.

By the 1980s the accumulated research—largely by cultural anthropologists who studied the culture of semi subsistence cultivators—showed that small farmers in Africa are continually analyzing the factors of better production and are continually seeking information on how to improve production. A number of experimental projects with subsistence agriculture showed that by building on peasant farmers’ existing knowledge and on the existing ways of introducing improved practices, agricultural production could be improved significantly. Out of this new perspective there has emerged a new model of communication. By the early 1990s a new paradigm of participatory communication for rural development had become widely accepted, at least by the leading thinkers in the field. *The Farmer First* (Chambers, Pacey, & Thrupp, 1989) and *Beyond Farmer First* (Soones & Thompson, 1994) books in the 1990s became almost canonical texts for development communication. It is worth sketching briefly the major dimensions of this new paradigm to pose the question: has this area of research progressed much in the last 10 years?

#### *A. Building on the local knowledge of farmers*

The basic dimension of the farmer-first model is that the communication process must begin with the search for information by the farmers themselves. In fact, in the effort to survive, rural cultivators are always experimenting and searching for ways to increase productivity. Outside advisors need to be attentive to the initiatives of farmers themselves who know what their farming systems are capable of producing with the soils, climate, marketing possibilities, and other factors they are aware of. The starting point of any attempt to provide outside technical advice or application of the controlled research must be the questions and problems posed by the farmers. In virtually all of the published reports of programs with some success in introducing more productive farming methods, the method was a problem-solving approach, building on what the farmers were already doing and exploring with the farmers the various avenues of solutions. The solutions almost always involved a gradual rethinking of the whole farming system, and the farmers themselves worked out the solutions. In some cases, where farmers were fatalistic about finding solutions, the extension agent or, more often, a paraprofessional farmer-leader, might serve as a “catalyst” discussion animator leading the

group toward a definition of the problem and a more systematic search for a solution. Part of the role of the catalyst was to raise the hope that there are solutions to the problems they are facing and know how to go through the process of finding solutions.

### *B. Communication among organized groups of small farmers*

A second dimension of the communication model is that the most important flow of information is the horizontal exchange of ideas among farmers themselves. Usually there are already community organizations and networks of informal information exchange, but there is also a great deal of internal conflict and differences in power. Virtually all of the successful programs included some training in conflict resolution, participatory decision making, and accountability to the local people. The preferred method of communication in the groups is not the lecture by a professional representative, but a discussion among the members led by a local leader or outside catalyst with some skills in group animation in which members define their problems, exchange the information they have available, and come to some consensus on what information they think would be most useful for them at this moment.

Some of the greatest obstacles to this kind of open, trusting information exchange in African rural communities are the patron-client dependency relations. Local political, religious, ethnic, or economic leaders build their following by setting rural people against each other and presenting themselves as the people who can obtain solutions for them. With many adult males migrating for work, there may not be stable leadership. Yet residents do want solutions and they respond to outside catalysts who are able to introduce a sense of mutual respect and civil discussion. In these situations the desire to find some kind of solution usually leads to informal interaction and building ad hoc interdependence. Leadership that is ready to work to attain concrete goals more easily gains the consensus support of the people involved. Later this can develop into more formal organizations. The witness of groups that have improved their life situation through cooperation is a strong motive. Communication which leads away from a focus on power-seeking, self-interests, and bureaucratic status—all features of the centrifugal communication structure that has its origins in the colonial, modernization and centralized state institutions—helps to forge information exchange around practical solutions.

### *C. Trained paraprofessionals and leadership living in the communities*

The extension system tended to build a dependency on outside technological bureaucracies and the belief that outside information was superior. This downgraded the creativity and initiative of local people and devalued indigenous knowledge. The farmer-first communication paradigm seeks to strengthen local organization, local information exchange, and local creativity and initiative. The indigenous analysis of problems is much more likely to take into consideration the memory of the peculiar local soil or climate circumstances, what has or has not worked, the fine-tuning of local vocabulary and meanings, who is a particularly trustworthy repository of local knowledge, and what is much more likely to be holistic, that is, to fit well with every aspect of the local rhythm of life. The provision of information is done through the local leadership structure either by persons elected by the group who get the instruction necessary from professional agronomists or through local leaders residing in the community who have received some training and can act as resident paraprofessionals. The peasant leaders or paraprofessionals often have greater knowledge of local conditions and risks than outside professionals and are better able to communicate with the local farmers. Working through local leadership not only multiplies the effectiveness of the few professionally trained personnel, but leaves the process of innovation to the initiatives of the local communities.

### *D. On-the-farm experimentation*

A fourth dimension is the development of the informal experimentation and testing of new methods that many farmers do on their own in Africa into a more systematic testing of new practices in the conditions of the local community before these are widely introduced among the local farmers. Often a seed variety or a particular soil preparation method that may do well in the conditions of the experimental grounds of the agricultural universities does not do so well in the local communities. Local farmers should test their own adaptations of recommend practices to adapt these to conditions in their local community. This information is then articulated up to professional extension agents through local leaders and paraprofessionals. Thus, the agricultural research process incorporates the farmers as the principle protagonists.

### *E. Radio and print media coordinated with farmer questions*

A fifth dimension of the communication process is a much more active use of radio and other media not as an extension of the lecture method but as an inter-communicator among farmers' groups. Radio has the advantage of being immediately present to listeners and of being inexpensive to broadcast and receive. Radio broadcasts are very flexible to produce and with new mobile technologies can broadcast directly from the farmers' groups. The basis of programming is not a set of lectures decided by outside specialists who may not be aware of what is actually going on at the moment in the farmers' production groups. Rather the communication must start with the questions and problems of the farmers or other groups in the audience and respond to these. If the programs are dealing with agricultural production, they must follow the production cycle and deal with the typical problems and questions that are presented at that moment in the production cycle. An important role of the radio station is marketing news, availability of resources, new government legislation that may be important for them, and any other information which affects the entrepreneurial decisions of small farmers. Much of the programming becomes an exchange among farmers' groups regarding innovations, how they are dealing with particular problems, and the successes they have had. One of the most important functions is to provide an open forum to discuss common problems of marketing, lack of farm-to-market roads, the lack of agro-industry processing, government policy, and other issues that can involve all and raise the consciousness of all.

### *F. Extension services as co-researchers and links with major research centers*

The communication role of the professional extension agent continues to be important but is changed. The extension agent must become more than an information transfer agent from the agricultural research centers to the farmers and more than just a catalyst in the action of the farmer groups. The profes-

sional agronomist has more systematic training in analyzing the causes and solutions to the problems the farmers are facing. The professional agronomist becomes a co-researcher with the farm groups. The professional agronomist also plays an important role in training paraprofessionals and in organizing training courses for the leaders of the farmers' groups. The professional agronomist also brings the agricultural research centers more directly into contact with problems and ongoing experimentation in the farmer group.

### *G. Developing farmer-controlled NGOs that negotiate with marketing and resource agencies*

Still another dimension of communication is the linking together of local groups at the district, regional, and national levels. Most of the major problems of small farmers such as marketing, credit, agro-industry processing, an ongoing commitment, national price-support policy, farm-to-market transport, finding international markets, and many similar problems can only be solved at a broader regional and national level. The problem is that farmers have not had any voice in how these problems are solved. There are no accountability procedures on the part of government. Policies are established for farmers in the interests of the governing elites with continual disastrous results for the farmer producers. The participatory structure enables farmers to voice in their local groups how they think these problems can be solved and then through elected representatives articulate their views up to the regional and national level. This is a structure that makes possible the centripetal process of communication that Ansu-Kyeremeh speaks of.

### *H. Recognition of the central role of women in agricultural production*

Much of the smaller semi-subsistence, peasant farming that provides the domestic consumption needs is carried out by women. In the new model of farmer control, women are accorded a central role in training, experimentation, and direction of farm organizations (Bryceson, 1995; Verma, 2001).

## **7. Community-Based Natural Resource Management**

The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) movement is one case of more decentralized, local participatory governance

that is gaining political and institutionalized acceptance in Africa. Although there has been considerable discussion of environmental planning at the policy

level in Africa (Salih & Tedla, 1999; Keeley & Scoones, 2003) and some discussion of the ethics of environment (Msafiri, 2007), another important area of analysis is how this is being carried out at the grassroots level. The colonial view of the indigenous people as ignorant poachers gradually disappeared with the awareness that local communities have traditional knowledge and a spirituality of protecting the ecological harmony of their homelands. Independence governments found that they did not have the personnel or funds to maintain close supervision. Many local groups began movements to recover their land and resources, and the spread of common property theory legitimated the claims of these movements. The development of tourism and the conservation of wildlife proved to be a source of livelihood for local people. Political leaders gained support by concessions to local leadership.

The local community management of forestry use, wildlife conservation, and maintenance of the delicate biodiversity of ecological systems generally proved more efficient and successful than the centralized state management. The perennial conflicts among local people seeking livelihoods from forests or wildlife, expanding commercial farming, game hunters and tourist interests, and domineering government officials have subsided once management rights are ceded to locally elected leadership. The worldwide movements to protect ecological balance and interdependent biodiversity included the rights of local communities as part of their demands, and most African countries became signatories to conventions and treaties that protected CBNRM. International tourism was as much attracted by meeting local people and their explanation of the meaning of their habitat for them as was the contact with the beauty of the African natural world. Many NGOs found a role in helping traditional leadership learn new management skills. In short, the decentralization of natural resource management to local communities seems to be a case of win-win for all interested parties.

In fact, the problems with CBNRM lie in the area of communication. Most communities remain very poor because they do not have the skills or support to develop the economic potential of the natural resources. It would be necessary to form communication linkages among communities to get the invest-

ment, markets, and training needed for serious economic development. The most successful community management is carried out by smaller units in which there is face-to-face interaction and full consensus on decisions, especially distribution of financial benefits, with full accountability of leadership to the people in the community. Most of the conflict and breakdown of management was caused by continued connection of government officials or private entrepreneurs with a privileged sector of the community. There needs to be much more training of outside government and NGO officials in how to be a catalyst and promoter of participatory local action in a way that does not instrumentalize local management organizations for state purposes but increases the autonomy and complete self-governing capacity of local groups.

The most valuable asset of the community is the traditional knowledge of wildlife and other resources, but this needs to be conveyed to the young of the community by ritualistic performative communication and the integration of broader knowledge of conservation by youth and women's organizations. In general, the rationalistic deliberation over economic and technical issues is not the typical African mode of deliberation. Community is built through drama, dance, choral singing, traditional rhetoric, and colorful display in connection with the contemporary institutions of education, the school, the local churches, and community improvement.

In Africa everybody comes back to the home village and reintegrates the urban with the local at the times of ritual celebration of marriages, funerals, or other rites of passage. The singers at these celebrations are skilled in linking the old and the new. The case of the women's organizations in Uganda illustrates how traditional singing, drama, proverbs, and poetry can use world views to deal with contemporary and new issues. Community radio has also been successful in some parts of Africa in setting in motion a communication and debate process that integrates traditional knowledge with new knowledge to deal with contemporary problems and lack of community consensus. Performative communication in storytelling, drama, dance, and rituals emphasizes that every community has its own unique history, its own problem-solving resources, and its unique way of dealing with local issues.

## 8. Community communication for survival in poverty

Still another important line of research on grass-roots participatory communication (Fraser Taylor & Mackenzie, 1992) began in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the crisis of rural poverty that followed structural adjustment programs, historic droughts and creeping desertification, and increasing population pressures in many African countries. In the 1970s, many African governments, with the burst of development efforts following independence, had raised the expectations of rural communities with assistance in building schools, dispensaries, roads, and other assistance.

By the 1980s, however, the governments were far overextended and could not continue earlier development efforts, especially in rural areas. With the increase of government bureaucracies and the demands of the political patronage systems, public expenditure was increasingly directed toward an urban middle class. The government agricultural marketing systems were very inefficient, but rural people found markets and some monetary income in the growing regional and district towns. There was increasing education in rural areas and a growing rural leadership of somewhat better off peasant farmers, small businesses, teachers, and government employees. From the late 1980s on, young university educated graduates, who could not or would not work in government, formed NGOs to help the rural poor and many donor agencies preferred to work with these NGOs.

Left to themselves many rural communities began to activate traditional communal practices of working together, but with many new ideas of community development and community organization that were spreading in rural areas. The studies of organized community development efforts, collected by Fraser Taylor and Mackenzie (1992), document the growing presence of local organizations. A major motivation is to continue the process of improving health and education and get access to simple modern appliances such as transistor radios. Village leaders often lead the way in building schools and dispensaries with volunteer work and some contributions of the communities. During periods of drought, communities dig wells and build small dams.

Small saving and loan associations are helpful in paying school fees, getting medicines, or buying bat-

teries for radios and electric torches or other simple appliances. Groups of peasant farmers buy old lorries to transport their produce to local markets. Women form communal gardening projects to raise and sell fruit and vegetables in the markets or on the streets. Women also work together to produce some income in brewing local beer, milling maize and millet flour, tailoring, creating local crafts (making baskets, pots, and other household items), or maintaining small retail stores. The traditional burial societies continue to multiply. Young men use local blacksmith skills to make hoes, knives, charcoal stoves, buckets, and cooking utensils. Men are involved in cooperative livestock and charcoal production and sales. Churches are moving from a clergy focus to a lay-directed group focus not only for religious prayer and reading but for community action. Tree planting, water harvesting, and other resource conservation projects are often communal efforts.

These organizations imply a process of communication for problem solving. Accompanying these community self-help organizations are many movements of group and community communication applying consciousness-raising discussion methods inspired by Paulo Freire. Virtually every African country has agencies promoting popular theater as a way to foster community organizations, although this tends to be stronger in southern Africa. Most NGOs include training in participatory communication in their work with rural communities. Many of the churches have programs of training in participatory communication. In rural communities and in many African countries, churches are also establishing local educational radio stations that are attempting to support community organizations.

The question which Fraser Taylor and Mackenzie (1992) and others pose is whether these local level organizations really represent the foundation of the kind of centripetal communication that Ansu-Kyeremeh would propose. All current studies suggest that the key to success of this process is the realization of information and communication goals by all the actors involved, a win-win communication process:

- The energy for upward communication comes from the initiatives of the people in the communities who get the information they need and

can create sufficient communication to help all in the community to see how they will benefit from the action.

- All stakeholders in the process—paraprofessional representatives of outside organizations, better-educated localites, or even professionally educated people residing in the community—must continually encourage the community to see that the local problems are solvable. They must also stimulate community discussion or be ready to feed in new ideas from their communication with a world of ideas.
- The development of local community “survival organizations” involves district, regional, and national level networking and coordinating bodies led by people elected by local organizations and responsive to the local organizations. This pyramid of representatives are both horizontal communication linkages with the network of local organizations and vertical linkages to negotiate with national elites the resources for local communities. It is of crucial importance, however, that the major cultural, political, and economic communication of these representatives is with the local people they represent and not with the national elites they are attempting to persuade to support the local people they represent.
- Very important are permanent beneficent organizations at the regional level—professional associa-

tions, churches, local foundations, etc.—providing communication training, sustaining a broadcasting and print communication for local communities getting support from national or international organizations, and translating local culture into a populist culture that makes local culture and knowledge the foundation of a national culture.

- It involves government policy which forces its service bureaucracies out of the enclosure of their own internal communication (internal power struggles, etc.) and makes responsive communication exchange with the initiatives and requests of local organizations a priority.
- Finally, it is important to have a process of dialogue between people’s organizational networks and national governing elites and other major power holders which argues that allowing people’s organizations to realize their goals is not a threat to their power. Rather, this dialogue argues that a pluralistic power structure (Gramsci’s concept of hegemony) which negotiates the mutual benefits on all issues is for the benefit of all. A pluralistic power structure is ready to continually admit new social actors and continually reformulate conceptions of prestige, preferred cultural identity, and communicative symbols for the benefit of all. The national media are of crucial importance in forming a pluralistic, continually changing national cultural identity.

## 9. The movement for participatory local government in Africa

A particularly important effort toward a more participatory, centripetal process of social action in Africa is the movement for strong local government (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004). The appeal for decentralized governance is a central aspect of the world wide response to the problems of the centralized state governance all over the post-colonial world and is included by many political scientists in what Huntington has called “the third wave of democracy.” In this perspective, the first wave is constituted by the 18th century movements in America, France, Latin America, and other parts of the world to establish democratic constitutional governance; the second wave, by the independence of the former colonies after World War II; and the third wave, by the movements particularly

characteristic of Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s that brought multiparty regimes, freedom of the press, a more central role for the civil society, the downsizing of central government, and a host of other political change including decentralization of governance.

Since 1990, African governments have introduced three general types decentralization (Tordoff, 2002):

- **Decentration**, keeping control of all decisions in the central government but moving some administrative authority out to appointed bodies such as regional and district commissioners (Kenya and Cote d’Ivoire are cited as examples).
- **Devolution**, allowing local areas to elect officials or representatives in local governing councils (political control) but often keeping control of

resources for local administration in the hands of central government (Uganda, Zambia, and South Africa).

- **Decentralization**, giving local bodies varying degrees of political elective and accountability control and the administrative resources to carry out local collective decisions (Chad and Botswana).

Olowu and Wunsch (2004) point out that the desire and pressure for more local autonomy has always been present in African communities. In the early colonial period imperial governments were primarily interested in conquest and tight control and either brought local authority under their control through indirect rule or through the public security system of district and regional commissioners. After World War II the British colonial office, in part to reduce its own administrative expenses, introduced elected local councils with at least advisory responsibilities in education, health, rural roads and water supply, and agricultural extension, with local tax support and with grants from the central government. Cooperatives and rural leadership training were also encouraged. Many of the independence leaders came out of this local government structure, but, ironically, these leaders moved to establish a strong centralized power structure and central planning command process which brought all local communities into dependence on the decisions of the leaders of the dominant political party.

There were many pressures on African states to decentralize and devolve administrative services and political decisions to the local level: the increasing local demands with rising educational and awareness levels, the isolation of the central government from the district and regional offices because of problems of communication and transportation, the lack of funds and administrative capacity of central governments to respond to local needs, and pressure from donors to stop the enormous growth of political appointees in central government bureaucracies (Pasteur, 1999). The structural adjustment reforms made decentralization a condition for IMF and World Bank funding, largely to reduce the cost of central government, but most leaders have paid only lip service to these conditions. In some cases, as in Uganda, Yoweri Museveni built support for his movement against Milton Obote by granting greater autonomy and participatory decision making to local communities that were suffering from the exploitation of local chiefs and other local political leaders. In Uganda, for example, the various levels of local gov-

ernment have responsibility for services such as education, health, and especially local security, and a large percentage of local tax revenue is reserved for the local governments.

With the economic and political crises of the late 1980s, insightful African political leaders began to see that national development had to come from the grassroots initiatives of the people and that the major role of government is to encourage and assist those initiatives. Julius Nyerere admitted in an interview published in 1984 in *Third World Quarterly*,

There are certain things I would not do if I were to start again. One of them is the abolition of local governments and the other was the disbanding of cooperatives. We were impatient and ignorant. . . . We had these two useful instruments of participation and we got rid of them. . . . These were two major mistakes. (Nyerere, 1984, p. 828, cited in Olowu & Wunsch, 2004, p. 34)

The development of responsible local government has made little progress in Africa except where there has been an almost complete collapse of central government services as in the case of Chad. The dominant political parties maintain tight control of local administrative units to reward local political leaders with jobs and funding and to prevent significant political opposition. Local government is mostly a facade to respond to local ethnic and regional demands or donor agency pressures. The decision-making power of local government remains very limited. For example, in Ghana, local communities can elect representatives to a district council, but the funding and effective permissions are given exclusively to the district commissioner from the central government. African political leaders are extremely reluctant to give up their resources of jobs and funds for their patronage systems and local leaders want to continue their exclusive access to oil and mineral incomes or support of international donors through central governments.

The major problem, however, is the lack of local communication infrastructure to voice needs and make local governments accountable (Clayton, 1998). Increasingly, the national media operating in the national metropolitan city are making central governance more accountable through investigative reporting and continuous reporting on the efficiency of government response to problems. But this kind of media pressure generally does not exist at the district and regional level.

### *A. The problem of government without communication*

The detailed evaluations in the work of Olowu and Wunsch (2004) describing how local government is functioning in various African countries show that the problem is precisely a lack of communication infrastructure at the local level.

(1) Many African countries, such as the Ugandan case described in some detail, have conceded significant functions of local services to local communities and at the district (sub-county level) but, because there is so little discussion of village community problems at the village level, community representatives come to district level decision-making with little knowledge of what the communities want or need. Community organizations are precisely a communication structure, but because community organizations are so weak with little management ability, they do little to facilitate articulation of community needs among local families and clans. Representatives tend to represent only their own immediate clan or group of friends. These representatives do not really have the mandate from the local community and, in the end, get little for the local community and do little to solve the local problems. The tendency to represent only their own immediate clan and to bring them resources causes much conflict in the community and makes community communication even more difficult.

(2) Many African countries are making “poverty reduction,” especially in rural areas, a major priority. Funds are being channeled out to poorer rural areas or to urban slums. The district-level government is the representative of the ministries in those areas and the resources are channeled to district-level administration. But because of the lack of communication at the district level, people in the villages often do not know about these resources or only those who have close political connections with the district get the information and these are not really in contact with the community as a whole. Usually, the use of resources to improve health or education facilities requires a certain level of community mobilization, but without good communication, the resources available from the central government are not used at all or are used badly. The use of these funds requires a certain level of supervision and accountability, but with weak communication in the community and weak contacts between the district offices and communities, the resources are often wasted, projects are never completed, and district level officers have little knowledge of what is going on.

(3) The national press in some African countries has been relatively effective. In some African countries community radio has succeeded in opening a space for wide discussion of community problems, such as the irresponsibility of local teachers, the lack of proper hygiene and health measures in market areas, or the lack of response to malarial epidemics. Unfortunately, many African governments do not give the support necessary for effective community radio or even block this. Because of this there is little articulation of problems at the district and regional level and little demand for accountability of district and regional offices (Stren, 1989, pp. 123-129).

(4) The major line of communication of local government in Africa is between the sectors in the district offices and their central ministerial offices in the national capital. In Uganda, which has a more developed structure of decentralization of government, there are village councils, councils at the level of what is called parish and at the subcounty level, and councils at the district level. The subcounty has local taxing powers, but almost no money is levied. The plans are worked out in central offices and the proposals that might come up in the various councils are not taken into consideration. More important, there is virtually no publicity given to the plans and budget allowances coming down from the central ministerial offices. In fact, district offices and their councils are generous in funding their own direct and indirect needs: salaries, sitting allowances, vehicles, etc. are provided for (Wunsch & Ottemoeller, 2004). Little funding is left over for educational, health, and other needs in the villages and wards, and there is no communication forum to discuss this.

(5) Citizens at the district and regional level are represented in the national assembly and some countries, such as Nigeria, have representatives at the state-level assembly. The vast majority of Africans have little knowledge of what their representatives in parliaments and in local and regional councils are doing, and given the lack of local media in Africa it is not possible for them to know.

The answer to most of these problems of information and accountability is to strengthen local media and to introduce a dimension of community service into all local media (Dwivedi, 2002). In the best models of community radio, for example, there is report of discussions and meetings in the local communities in the broadcasting area. There is a constant flow of information and discussion of issues in the community model of local media.

## 10. Evaluating the communication processes in community-based services

In the face of the inability of central governments in Africa to provide basic education, health facilities, and other services in local communities, the communities themselves have made efforts to set up and manage these services on their own. Significantly, community initiatives are most often found among the poorest, least educated, and least politically integrated sectors in Africa. The book, *Community Schools in Africa* (Glassman, Naidoo, & Wood, 2007), provides an overview of the successes and problems of these locally controlled services in various countries of Africa, with a good insight into the communication research issues involved.

The community schools, like other similar services, are managed by a local leadership council, selected with some form of participatory election. The major resource for local and national development is the desire of the people for the services and the willingness to assume collective responsibility for this. The major communication problem is the accountability of this leadership to the people of the community both in the representation of the interests of all and making known to the people what the leadership is doing so that the community can control this in some way (Mushi, 2001). The leadership often is not accustomed to promoting wide participation, especially where taboos excluding women, youth, and other marginal groups

are influential. It is easy for leadership to favor their own families, friends, and political alliances, with resulting bitter conflict.

In the best of cases the growth of community-based management of local services has been supported by leadership training programs such as that of DELTA (described below). From a communication perspective, the objective is to strengthen the existing traditional horizontal communication linkages that exist through lineage and marriage, cooperative action in agriculture and other forms of informal economy, and the kind of informal interaction that Ansu-Kyeremeh and others describe above. These horizontal linkages not only build solidarity and trust in the local community, but bring together communities for the exchange of ideas on planning and problem solving at the district and regional level. If there exist bonds of trust and easy communication, then accountability to the people flows naturally

A second objective is to strengthen the vertical relationships of communities with resource agencies that can help local schools or health facilities and with authorities that can provide legitimation of local decisions. When conflicts develop at the local level, there is a trusting and legalized relationship with authorities that can quickly resolve local conflicts and mismanagement.

## 11. Group communication for personal and social empowerment

A line of research of great importance for grassroots, participatory communication is the study of group communication for social transformation or, more commonly, for personal and social empowerment. It is clear that a participatory structure of communication can never hope to develop unless there is a basic redistribution of socio-political-economic power. The empowerment tradition argues that this redistribution of power must begin with new bonds of solidarity, common vision, and determination among the people themselves. This usually begins as a social movement that gives up the hope of solving problems

by appealing to the powerful through hierarchical bureaucratic and clientelistic communication structures and seeks a solution by building horizontal bonds of communication among themselves. The group communication for empowerment tradition seeks to facilitate the formation of popular movements by an education in communication for people's solidarity. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist, is often referred to as the foundational theorist for this "education for freedom and empowerment." Freire explained the passivity and dependence of the poor and marginal as a result of a communication relation

with elites that instilled in lower-status people the self-perception as socially, politically, and culturally incompetent and that therefore they needed to depend on the elites for guidance. To maintain this vertical dependency, elites do all they can to prevent horizontal intercommunication among the powerless. A typical example of this was the attempt of the apartheid regime in South Africa to forbid all meetings among blacks. This dependency relationship is to be broken by opening a space of freedom for the poor and powerless to discover, in interpersonal discussion among themselves, the solutions to their problem in their own local knowledge and analytic capacities.

A major purpose of dialogical communication is to enable participants, who have a superficial attitude of dependency as a tactic of survival in a power structure, to get in contact with their own sense of critical perception deep in their personalities and raise this to the level of conscious affirmation and public contribution. By this education in dialogical communication and mutual respect, participants grow in solidarity and capacity to form their own organizations to carry out their collective decisions. This is also a school of democratic deliberation because it asks participants in the discussions to give reasons for their proposals in terms of the common good of the group and to ask for reasons from others. It is a school in democratic leadership because discussions are guided by animators who do not impose their views but whose main objective is to enable everyone to make their contribution to the group action, all to listen to each other and move toward a course of action that the group feels is its solution.

This approach to group communication for personal, social, economic, and political empowerment is radically different from the “group dynamics” forms of group communication developed especially as part of organizational communication and industrial sociology. While group communication for empowerment has as its primary objective to gain independence from organizational power, group dynamics is a method of devolving organizational goals to the level of small group to enable organizational members to internalize and adhere to organizational goals. Group communication for empowerment aims at exactly the opposite: to gain independence from the organizational, bureaucratic occupation of the life space and to develop people-controlled initiatives from the grassroots.

What group communication for empowerment does is to build on the traditional forms of communication in the culture, but add to this (a) a problem-solving

focus, (b) a more reasoned deliberative process, (c) the skill of dialogue and research which now is no longer the monopoly of the modernizing elites, (d) moving discussion toward decision-making and organized action. What this attempts to do is to introduce the lower-status groups to the same skills that make elites powerful, but now to use these skills for the common good rather than for exploitation.

Although Freire has had great influence throughout the world, Africa has its own tradition of group communication for freedom, expressed especially in popular theater and other typically African forms of participatory group communication such as dance, singing, and communitarian rituals. In fact, different forms of group communication for empowering grassroots social movements have emerged in myriad contexts over the last 200 years in reaction to the power relations of capitalism, colonialism, and postcolonialism and, ironically, in response to dictatorial communism.

In the African context group communication for empowerment has been more typical of efforts toward agricultural and rural development. Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993) is valuable because it brings together in comparative framework five or six of these approaches which are also quite common in Africa: farmer participatory research (FPR), rapid rural appraisal (RRA), participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory action research (PAR), Development Education and Leadership Teams in action (DELTA)—a uniquely African approach—and theater for development, which, as we noted, is highly developed in Africa.

#### *A. Participatory research*

One of the most striking forms of popular empowerment is to make the poor and marginal the major protagonists of technical research in agriculture, health education, and other key areas of their lives. Technical research has always been thought of as something that is done by an intellectual, theoretical elite, at the top of the power elite in modern society, operating in the isolated conditions of the laboratory that allow scientists to separate out experimental factors from the concrete conditions. Participatory research argues that the most important aspect of technical control, whether it be a matter of agriculture, health, or education, is the combination of a technical improvement with the immensely complex concrete life conditions of the people. It is assumed that only the poor can change their life situation and that the poor

and powerless are constantly incorporating aspects of modern technology in terms of their existence in the informal economy. The local knowledge of the poor and marginal regarding their life situation is the framework for continually introducing improvements in their life, given the meager resources they have.

Participatory research introduces the usual group communication for empowerment methods of dialogical discussion led by a skilled group animator. The process not only enables each member to bring to the level of conscious appropriation his or her existing knowledge of agriculture, health, or other problem areas but also enables the group to bring together the best knowledge of all of them to formulate a common project. In this case the group may have an experimental agricultural plot in the village or, in the case of health, a group discussing how best to deal with HIV/AIDS in their lives and in the village. Most often, in these more technical issues the group animator is often a paraprofessional in agriculture or health who is a native of the community. The paraprofessional has some training and is often in contact with extension agents and even the centers of regional and national research to obtain more information when the local group has formulated the question and defined the need for information in terms of their research. It is ideal when groups of this kind can form a network of information exchange, served by radio or other media with a more educational orientation, and the groups can become a self-governing NGO to negotiate from a position of some power with government ministries and other service agencies. Thus the discussing, researching group is at the center of a dialogue of a team of village leaders, paraprofessionals, and professionals in the particular problem area and a much larger information-flow system (Chambers, 1993). The combined knowledge gives local people many more choices of information for solving local problems (Rhoades, 1983, 1990).

This is an empowering process because it introduces to the poor and the marginal the culture of research and sets them on the long, slow process of improving agriculture, health, or other areas of life. They are equipped with the ability to continually incorporate new ideas into their ongoing local research process.

### *B. Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research*

Rural development agencies have long done general, comprehensive assessment as a basis for exten-

sion activities and annual budgets, of the state of the quality of life in rural communities touching all aspects from soil conservation, agricultural productivity, and marketing to health and community organizations. Although this kind of general evaluation was always done with the help of the local farmers and their leaders, the local people rarely analyzed the data or used the data for their own planning. With the application of the principles of group and community communication for empowerment, rapid rural appraisal evolved in the 1980s into Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The difference is that now people of rural communities, not the agencies, define what information is to be sought and retain control of the information gathered as a basis of projects and activities that the village or district will introduce.

Whereas farmer or health participatory research tends to focus on one problem solving process, PRA is a method that enables a community or district to take stock of every aspect of the quality of community life. This can be a powerful tool because it provides evidence for obtaining government or other resources for comprehensive development of the community or district. Where PRA has been introduced, the local population assumes much more responsibility for projects and does more long-term planning.

The introduction of relatively inexpensive, easy to use video cameras has, in the view of many, revolutionized PRA because it eliminates the need for written records and presents the state of the community much more dramatically and rhetorically (White, 2003). Whereas written records tended to become the property of rural elites, the video provided much more public and widely diffused information about the community. What people were thinking was not lost in the translation into summary statistics, but could be heard directly and then discussed publicly.

PRA is often accused of becoming a superficial method of gathering superficial data without addressing the deeper problems of social power. The use of the data assumes the presence of strong community organizations and strong participatory institutions. Many would say that Participatory Action Research is much more effective in mobilizing the community in dealing with local power elites.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) becomes particularly important in situations where the rural and urban poor are considered culturally degraded and inherently inferior and this perception of inferiority is used as a weapon against the poor and leads the poor to

think of themselves as inferior. Group communication for empowerment becomes a context for affirmation of the value of the folk culture, the folk forms of theater and poetry, the validation of the popular culture as the authentic national culture in contrast to the tendency of the elites to imitate Western culture. PAR becomes the basis of a cultural revitalization movement and the basis for a major socio-political movement to build a base of power and alliances to significant social change (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991).

### *C. DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action)*

DELTA can lay claim to being the purest adaptation of the Freirian method and the most widely diffused use of the Freirian method in Africa. DELTA was developed in the 1970s in Kenya by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, and their four volume *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* (1995) is one of the most widely used manuals for rural community development in Africa. DELTA has operated in virtually all countries of Africa and recently held a continental congress in Nigeria.

DELTA seeks to build solidarity and trust among grassroots organizations and enable these organizations to form district, regional, and national networks.

## **Afterword**

The importance of Robert White's review, "Grassroots, participatory communication in Africa: 10 major lines of research," is twofold. It is one of the first attempts to bring together communication research initiatives concerning development and social change in Africa. And it has been done by someone who has had a lifetime of experience in such research summaries. It may be evident to many that White was the founder and early editor of this journal, but few may be aware that he also worked in rural sociology and communication research in Latin America for years before arriving in London to found Trends. He has always maintained his interest in communication for social change, especially in rural areas. In Tanzania he has brought this large experience to bear in his teaching and is beginning another editorial work to bring together communication research to share with an African and a global audience.

DELTA places a great deal of emphasis on leadership training, management of people's organizations, capacity of the poor for social analysis, and human rights.

### *D. Theater for Development*

Socio-drama and theater are widely used as a much more actively involving means of group communication for empowerment, partly because in Africa it always involves singing, dance, and ritual (Mavro, 1991). Drama tends to have a far greater emotional and imaginative impact than group discussion (Mda, 1993). Audiences enjoy this also and members of the audience actively join in the drama. The kind of group animation that DELTA or Participatory Action Research promotes is often too cerebral for the less-educated rural people. Theater is particularly effective in dramatizing the oppressive nature and cruelty of power relations. People see much more clearly how humanly destructive are the forms of authoritarian government and leadership in many parts of Africa. University departments of drama throughout Africa have actively promoted this. In some cases drama becomes a regular and welcome activity of youth clubs in rural areas of Africa. In many countries of Africa there are major centers for promoting and training rural development workers in forms of theater for development.

Another important consideration is that Africa is beginning to emerge as a continent with great promise amid enduring problems. White is experienced enough to recognize that the sophisticated technologies of the Internet and satellites will not solve the problems facing the rural poor any time soon—or at all. His summary makes an important point that communication that will help solve problems is people communicating with each other and organizing themselves in solidarity with those who share common ground and common problems.

This is a beginning that should be welcomed by those who see communication research as making a difference in people's lives. It is a blueprint that others can add to and critique, but one that can help in the construction of a new future for communication research and an empowered people.

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## Book Reviews

**Carlsson, Ulla.** (Ed.). *Regulation, Awareness, Empowerment: Young People and Harmful Media Content in the Digital Age*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth, and Media, 2006. ISBN 91-89471-39-3 (pb.) Available as free PDF download in the publications section at [www.nordicom.gu.se](http://www.nordicom.gu.se).

This book is another in the excellent series from Nordicom, this one being produced at the request of UNESCO. Asked to prepare a publication on "Efforts and Innovative Approaches to Reduce Violence in Electronic and Digital Media," this book is Nordicom's response

As we know, modern information technology has changed the media landscape in recent years and media products are available to us through an ever increasing number of platforms. Despite the fact that we still have a divide between the information rich and the information poor, even in the developing world there is more access to these platforms. The book has particular concerns in looking at depictions of violence, but Ulla Carlsson (p. 9) points out that violence is only part of the problem here: pornography; excessive marketing; stereotypes and depictions of young people, women, and minorities that are disrespectful; the possibilities

offered for spreading messages of hate; as well as the opportunities offered for risky behavior (one thinks here of the possibilities of young people being “groomed” by the unprincipled through chat rooms and so on). As Carlsson writes, “Violence is no longer an adequate heading today, terms like ‘harmful media content’ or ‘harm and offense in media content’ are more in keeping with the situation” (p. 9). It is from these starting points that the book begins. Its title, Carlsson believes, shows that whenever there is discussion on the prevention of harm to minors and a reduction in harmful media content, then media and information literacy must be considered. The articles that the book contains—which come from scholars from many countries—are intended to stimulate debate and to inspire new approaches to policy and research in the areas covered. The chapters use examples of activities, projects, and resources from many parts of the world—many of which, through the possibilities offered by the Internet, are available to all of us.

Where digital media are easily available, we are told that young people would rather use the Internet, the computer, and the computer game than watch traditional television (much of which is becoming available through the Internet also, p. 11). Carlsson’s own contribution (pp. 11-18) considers the governance of harm and offense in media content, stressing the need for media and information literacy. Sonia Livingstone and Andrea Millwood Hargrave (pp. 21-48) ask whether there is any actual harm to children or whether there is a moral panic around media influence. They point to the difference between what may be harmful and what is, in fact, illegal: obscenity, child abuse images, incitement to racial hatred, and so on (p. 21). Their conclusions are drawn from empirical research on media effects. They also summarize their findings from research literature that has been published elsewhere, and they point to lacunae in this research (for instance, little has been done on possible harm from radio programs or from music—much of the research in this area relates to analysis of lyrics, rather than the actual harm that these may do). The problems and deficits relating to different forms of media are outlined here. They conclude that there is a need to distinguish between harm and offense, which are so often bracketed together; and that there is a limit to the evidence base. Some of the definitions of harm that they consider are changed attitudes or beliefs affecting the individual or society; changed behavior, particularly a perceived increase in a propensity to the harm of others or to the self; and emotional responses

that affect the self or others. They suggest that more research has been undertaken into the first two of these than into the last. They suggest that a risk-based approach may be a good way to consider media effects and that findings should be considered on a case by case basis. Media effects should also be considered in context to the social problems and conclusions drawn from data with which they connect, wherever this is possible. They do, however, highlight that there have been studies that have shown no effects from media and note that researchers are increasingly attempting to identify mediating factors, such as personality, age, gender, ethnicity, parental influence, cognitive developmental stage, and the conditions in which media are viewed. The article asks which groups are more vulnerable and whether there is evidence that media content is offensive. They then put forward possible research agendas and methodological improvements.

Wolfgang Schulz and Thorssten Held consider the co-regulatory approaches for the protection of minors in the European Union, offering examples from the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany in some detail and, more briefly, look at what is happening in Austria, Italy, and Slovenia. Beyond the Union, they consider the Australian example. In their conclusions, they point to the differences and similarities between the examples they consider. Bu Wei (pp. 67-81) writes about issues on child protection in Chinese media, where this topic is gaining increasing attention, but Bu points to the need for further research in this area. Amongst the useful things in this chapter are the statistics it contains about the Chinese media industry. This article results from a study, sponsored by UNICEF China that explores Chinese society’s awareness of the need for child protection issues; the nature and causes of and the solutions to the problems that vulnerable children experience. This research also analyses whether or not the issues have been addressed by the media and by society. Bu outlines the findings and results of the study.

Divina Frau-Meigs (pp. 83-99), who works in Paris, considers regulation, self-regulation, and education by the media and attempts to debunk some of the myths that have arisen and to reconsider working paradigms. She highlights the wide media landscape within which young people in Europe form their tastes, preferences, and references. She looks particularly here at the young French. While the French have a strong sense of a national culture, despite a large immigrant community, Frau-Meigs notes that they are

also subject to “massive imports” from the United States. Her findings show that there has been a partial erosion of “emotional and cognitive references that can be associated with the socialization process due to media culture” (p. 83). This “cultural scrambling” (p. 83) has led to what she describes as “an ill-mastered acculturation process.” Professor Frau-Meigs notes that while France has a policy of “the family hour” and a “watershed,” and parental warnings or advisories, these are out of step with the family patterns that exist in French society. Children tend to be more proficient in the use of new technology than parents and parents tend to use filtering devices to monitor electricity and phone bills rather than using them to filter media content. There is also controversy over the definition of violence and pornography. Further, there are myths in education. Media education has, she says (p. 89) fluctuated from time to time and seems to take up three different stances, perspectives being taken either from protectionist, participatory, or cultural viewpoints. These perspectives may actually be incompatible. The school system follows its republican mission, legitimizing its historical roles of transmission and integration, and it discounts the media’s encroachments into the educational process. As far as the protection of children is concerned, this system acts as a buffer between the child and the outside world. She states that the system is efficient in identifying abusive parents and in following up with psychological help. It also seeks to increase young people’s autonomy to assist them in preparing for their future life. Yet, she adds that there is considerable violence within the school system (about 80,000 aggressions in 2001-02), although this is seen to be confined to about 100 schools in impoverished areas. Frau-Meigs suggests that containing media literacy to schools is beyond the scope of the school system and that other adult mediators must be brought into the equation—some programs in this area already exist. At the end of the article, recommendations for the future are put forward. These aim to reach a balance between sustainable development and media environmental protection.

Juliet Schor (pp. 101-121) considers the commercialization of childhood and whether children can be protected from this commercialization. A significant debate began to arise in 2004 in the United States about the ethics and effects of marketing to children, perhaps particularly because of the increased number of obese youngsters, of mental and emotional disorders, includ-

ing eating disorders and depression. She reports that more and more young Americans are being prescribed drugs to attempt to address these problems. In the meantime, there are ever-increasing numbers of ads, some of which are exploitative. While food advertising for children is effective, much of it is for junk food (p. 108) and Schor reports that alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful products continue to be marketed to children. Children are, she says, more likely to smoke, drink, and use drugs if exposed to ads or programming that depict these substances. She also considers the effects on academic achievement. The industry has, she relates, been vigilant in fending off regulation and control and has turned to self-regulation and voluntary ratings where child protection is deemed necessary, but it is difficult to get “powerful anti-ad messaging” onto the airwaves. While she points to attempts at legislation and at the alliance between religious and social conservatives, she makes little or no reference to the responsibility of the parent in all this—perhaps because, as Frau-Meigs suggests, we no longer live in a world with traditional family groupings.

Vitor Reia-Baptista, who works at the Centre for Research in Communication Sciences at the University of the Algarve, Portugal, considers the narrative structures that are used by these new media and notes that we must consider them from different cultural, pedagogical, and mediatic contexts (p. 124), but this chapter uses examples of the new communication environments of media exposure in Southern Portugal. He shows that there is little difference between these types of exposure and those of other new European social and cultural environments. He considers the Internet, email, and chat rooms and notes that the Internet redefines the notion that is perceived as that of mass media, transmission from “an emission centre to a plurality of . . . individuals” to one where the original mass media can be incorporated, but the individual can produce his or her own content. The Internet is, in fact an “open work” in the sense of Eco’s *Semiotica e la filosofia di linguaggio*. Reia-Baptista notes that traditional means of literary criticism may be unsuitable for criticism of Internet content and while Propp’s notions in *The Morphology of the Folk Tale* may sometimes be apt for such analysis and criticism, this is not always so. He considers, therefore, the notion of Internet as the equivalent of social information and metaphor. Reia-Baptista notes that while the Internet facilitates information research, the databases and Internet content that allow access to such information are all but useless unless the

“reader” is already able to utilize such content. He consequently considers the global project in which CIC-COM is involved, suggesting a number of database sources that might be used both by the project and by other researchers. He then reflects on the Internet as absent structure—again referring to the work of Eco—and its filmic and pedagogical functions.

Carlsson has a further chapter on violence and pornography in the media and public views on the influences that media violence and pornography exert on young people. A well researched article, it reflects on dialogue between authorities, media companies, and the public which aimed to establish consensus on basic principles at national, international, and regional levels. It considers the measures that the public are prepared to accept in order to reduce the negative impacts of media violence and pornography, taking into account the EU’s legal frameworks and Swedish regulation. Her conclusion asks how media and pornography in particular define notions of the male and female and to what extent this sustains a social order in which women are subordinate. Unsurprisingly, more women than men and more older respondents than younger ones feel media do exert a negative influence through portrayals of violence and pornography.

The book’s second section asks what media and information literacy are, in relation to EU regulation and the new media landscape. It has sections that deliberate on media literacy for children, young people and parents; one that adds media educators to that list; a section on children’s and young people’s own media production; and media literacy for media professionals. It ends with a section on Internet literacy. Suggestions for ways forward and of sites that can be accessed for information and assistance are also found here.

This book would be a useful addition to the book shelf of anyone teaching media literacy, or to anyone studying media literacy. It is particularly interesting in that it is written from a European viewpoint, even if with some chapters from non-European writers. The bibliographies would also be helpful.

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**Eilers, Franz-Josef, SVD.** (Ed.). *Interreligious Dialogue as Communication*. (Volume 6 in the FABC-OSC Book Series). Manila: Logos (Divine Word) Publications, Inc., 2005. ISBN: 971-510-187-9 [For

ordering information, see <http://www.logospublications.com/>]

This book is the result of a meeting, organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Councils (FABC) and, more specifically, from the Bishops’s Institute for Social Communication, in November, 2004. Eilers, the editor, is the Executive Secretary of this organization.

In the Roman Catholic Church interreligious dialogue has become a particular concern since the Vatican’s *Nostra Aetate* (Our Age) of 1965. This teaching document has been taken up with greater or lesser success by various Church organizations. As Eilers points out (p. 7) FABC had interreligious dialogue, together with dialogue with the poor and with the various cultures, in the forefront of its thoughts from its very inception. FABC, after all, works in a region where, with the exception of the Philippines, Christianity is a minority religion. As early as their first message in 1970, the FABC said, “We are more than ever convinced that the dialogue with our fellow Asians whose commitment is to other faiths is increasingly important.” And they pledged themselves to an open, sincere, and continuing dialogue in the resolutions that followed in the document. There must always be a dichotomy, however, between Christianity’s desire to evangelize and the need to talk to and work with those of other religions. The conference took place in Bali and 30 bishops and 40 specialists attended it.

The conference theme was approached through four sections: an overview and insight into interreligious dialogue from the Vatican and FABC (it was, after all, a conference from a Catholic Bishops’ Council); discussion of interreligious dialogue experiences in various Asian countries; the discussion of modern means of technology that are used in such dialogue; and, lastly, an attempt to understand the communication of other Asian religions. Eilers notes that the invited Muslim participant could not attend, and one wonders why he or she was not asked to contribute a paper to the book that resulted.

In addition to Eilers’ Introduction and a message from the Vatican’s Cardinal Secretary of State at the time, Cardinal Sodano, the book is divided into five sections. The first looks at the Church, FABC, and Interreligious dialogue, with papers that give the Vatican’s viewpoint (from Archbishop Fitzgerald, M.Afr., who was then the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue); from Willi Henkel, OMI, on the Directions that Vatican docu-

ments give for interreligious dialogue; from Bishop Renato Boccardo and Thaddeus Jones of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, on John Paul II's Journeys and Interreligious Dialogue; and then from Thomas Michel, S.J., on FABC's perspective on interreligious dialogue. This section covers, I suppose, the "official" viewpoint.

Section 2 considers the interreligious dialogue experiences from a communicative perspective and the list of names shows authors from a variety of countries. Section 3 covers modern means of technology and also research. Section 4 looks at social communication in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and the final section is the final statement of the conference. In fact, the book follows very much the steps listed as the conference themes.

The Final Statement is relatively short (pp. 186-190) and notes that among the 70 participants there were people from 21 countries—people who are bishops, theologians, media experts, and communication animators, who had "strengthened their resolve to create a 'culture of dialogue' in working for freedom, justice and peace in our societies through our work in communication" (p. 186). They further state that their model is always Jesus Christ—that Perfect Communicator of whom *Communio et Progressio* (1971) spoke, and notes that communication is the heart of the Church. Their theological foundation in interreligious dialogue is fostered by *Nostra Aetate* (1965) and they further state that the many conflicts and tensions in Asia make such dialogue even more urgent. There must surely be a conflict here, I would humbly suggest: to me (even as a Roman Catholic) there is still a slight sense that only our faith is the right one. It is our theology that is the basis of the thought here, our Savior who is the model.

In the "Orientation" section the participants state that Asia, the birthplace of many world religions, has a people who relentlessly seek for God and that communication in interreligious dialogue would be mutually enriching. They also say that, rooted in their own Christian faith and so knowing that they should love God and their neighbor, they must have an approach of openness and respect for believers of other faiths. The need for interreligious dialogue is constant due to change, and they must add to their knowledge of other faiths and be sensitive to other faiths' experiences. They underline their need to promote the Kingdom of God and to give it an Asian presence and also a need to spread justice, peace, and harmony through interreli-

gious dialogue, amongst other things, caring for the poor. Finally, in this section, they heighten the need for Church centers to encourage dialogue and training in order that the necessary skills are there to foster the values mentioned above.

The final section of their statement makes recommendations on formation of Catholics at all levels. They suggest that outreach to other faiths may be gained through reflecting the festivals and celebrations of those faiths in Catholic media and through greetings and participation. Leaders of religious groups should unite in showing their concerns in promoting human rights and addressing poverty, injustice, and violence. Bishops, they say, should be at the forefront in such dialogue in order to avoid division inside or outside the Church and communication centers which already exist should be open to interreligious dialogue that is more than local and goes beyond Church affiliations. Research centers on dialogue should be encouraged and communication education be directed towards interreligious dialogue. Above all, there should be more unity between confessions in the production of common communication initiatives, in developing greater ecumenical collaboration in study and activities and in the grassroots dialogue activities of women—prejudice, stereotyping, and misrepresentations should be avoided and polarizations be obviated.

All of this is positive in that it is being considered at all, but it struck me in the final statement how very Christian-centric it was. Although the names of the contributors may not (all) be Western, are all of them Christian? It would seem from the final statement that they may be. Nor, despite the need to consider the grassroots dialogue activities of women, do there seem to be any women involved in these papers. I realize, however, that this is a valuable start and hope that the process will continue, not just in Asia, in order that the people of faith can band together to understand commonality rather than difference.

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**Ekström Karin M. and Bridget Tufte.** *Children, Media, and Consumption.* (Nordicom Yearbook 2007). Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom, the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2007. ISBN 978-91-8947-51-1 (pb.). \$35.00, €27.00, SEK250. ([www.nordicom.gu.se](http://www.nordicom.gu.se))

The International clearing house of Nordicom based at the University of Göteborg has contributed in commendable ways to Media Education over the years. Starting in 1997, the project financed by UNESCO has called the attention of educators to the powerful impact media has on the lives of the growing generation. Among the many monographs prepared, this present one under review stands out for its emphasis on the rights of the child. The Clearinghouse brings to the notice of governments, policy planners, and civil society relevant information for relevant policy making, contributing to a constructive public debate and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence. Over the years the Clearinghouse has been informing researchers, policy makers, media professionals, voluntary organizations, teachers, students, and other interested individuals about research on children, young people, and media with special attention to media violence, research, and practices regarding media education and children and young people's participation in the media. It also evaluates various activities and research concerning children's and young people's media environment.

The present volume renames Media Education as consumer education.

The book begins with a foundational essay by David Buckingham, the key person in Media Education in Britain. The article looks at the way the new media like CD-ROMS, games, and websites have made themselves at home with the younger generation and the various marketing strategies these have taken to win the teenager and family audiences. An essay on computer games and children provides ample surveys and proves the terrific power of video games on children. Video-games have become a most exciting field as these contribute tremendously to community building at home, an area devastated by individual and personalized TV viewing earlier. It is pleasing to watch the entire family involved in computer games and even getting simulating physical exercises in the little space available in the drawing room.

There is a clear emphasis in the articles on the emergence of the new media as home-learning tools. The failure of many time tested educational tools available in the markets is being replaced by the Internet and other modern media. Other essays on Internet use and its impact on youngsters, like privacy, consumerist use, and so on are analyzed with much insight; these essays argue that there has to be some kind of parity between children's home use of the Internet for enter-

tainment and the school use for academic purposes. Mobile phones, SMS, and their enormous uses form another part of the study. Advertising is another area dealt with in detail. A number of articles speak of the contribution of brand advertising, with celebrity endorsements contributing to consumerism among unsuspecting youngsters. The study on how brand advertising influences children shows their impressionable nature, and how while growing up, they still seek role models. The media take advantage of these psychological weaknesses of the youngsters.

The last section has four papers analyzing how children foster consumer cultures at home by decorating their rooms with favorite stars, using various types of toys with a special one-upmanship spirit, and how they become fans of their favorite brands, stars, etc. already very early in their lives. The book not only studies the areas of consumption and media in relation to children but also manages to establish a relationship between consumption and media in general.

If the media concentrated once on teenagers, today they have extended their concentration to include *tweens* (8-12 years) because even these children have easy access to money from their parents and they are able to enjoy media to the maximum. Since children and young people are already consumers at an early age than previous generations this year book (2007) focuses on new types of marketing such as product placement, advertising on the Internet, mobile phones, and branding in the public and private sphere.

The book strongly advises that children and parents need to develop skills to become critical consumers when choosing and interpreting products, services, advertisements, and brands rather than seeing children and parents as either victimized or competent consumers. It is argued that the focus should be placed more on the development of a consumer literacy. All agents of social change being consumers and educators, producers, marketers, and advertising agents have a role in the development of consumer literacy. The book advocates a non-antagonistic discourse where they are seen as parts in a network of linkages and assemblages. Overall, there is a need to listen to the voice of the consumer, the child, and the parent, in order to understand what it means to be a consumer. And thus alone can a proper policy on these be formulated.

As in all the works of the Clearinghouse, the book focuses on the first world with more examples coming from the Scandinavian countries. Attempts could also be made to see how media affects consumers in devel-

oping countries. This book is definitely a much needed addition to one's shelf on Media Education.

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**Ferrell Lowe, Gregory and Jo Bardoel.** (Eds.). *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media*. Göteborg: Nordicom, 2007. Pp.259. ISBN 978-91-89471-54-2 (pb.), SEK280, €30.00.

This edited collection is the outcome of the RIPE@2006 conference held in Amsterdam and Hilversum, the Netherlands, focused on the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media.

RIPE is an acronym for Re-Visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise, an initiative that aims “to strengthen collaborative relations between media scholars and researchers focused on the public interest in electronic media and senior managers in public service broadcasting companies.” Each conference is “co-hosted by the national location's leading public service broadcaster and one of the nation's leading universities in the field of media research and teaching” (further information at [www.yle.fi/ripe](http://www.yle.fi/ripe)). In 2006 the event was organized jointly by the Dutch public broadcaster (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, NPO) and the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam.

The book will therefore appeal to scholars, researchers, and postgraduate students who have an interest in European public service broadcasting (PSB) systems and want to know more on how these media institutions are engaging in the transition to public service media (PSM) at the beginning of the 21st century.

Edited by two of the leading scholars in this field, Gregory Ferrell Lowe and Jo Bardoel, it includes contributors that have been writing at length about this topic in the last three decades, as well as three contributions from researchers in the early stages of their careers (doctoral candidates at the time of publication).

The book is composed of an introduction written by the editors, followed by six chapters that focus on the dynamics, complications, and challenges in policy development and strategy elaboration in the transition to PSM. In the second half, seven chapters are dedicated to programmatic and content-related matters, with a concluding chapter that discusses the conceptual roots of PSM and the ethos of PSB.

Bardoel and Ferrell Lowe start by presenting the core challenges for public broadcasters who, they argue, need to move to “demand-oriented approaches to service and content provision rather than the supply orientation characteristic of the past,” where they will need to secure “relations wherein audiences are partners rather than targets” (p. 9). Engaging first in a review of EU media policy and discussing the ongoing tensions between commerce and culture in PSB debates, they then highlight the lack of understanding of the social shaping of the technologies used by the sector because its view so far has been “constrained by economic and technological determinism” (p. 12).

The start of the first section, on PSM policies and strategies, is opened by Karol Jakubowicz who, in discussing PSB landscapes at the start of the 21st century outlines the strategies that might help the survival and future viability of PSM. Among other things, he includes the removal of ideological objections to PSM and the reaffirmation that the sector is based on “public sector involvement in meeting societal and individual communication needs”; the fact that it has to prove that PSM is still needed, despite the apparent “limitless” choice offered by commercial media; and the research of alternative funding solutions in the case of removal of broadcasting licence fees (p. 30).

Funding schemes, commercial service and arrangements promoting enclosure within and across media platforms are then the focus of Hallvard Moe's chapter that examines how, and to which extent, attitudes and regulation about funding have changed in the face of new media platforms. Based on the observation that “public broadcasting and media policy still *primarily* relate to national frameworks” (p. 52, emphasis in original), he discusses what the different strategies adopted by a sample of broadcasters imply for the legitimacy of PSM funding schemes.

The dilemmas emerging from an increasingly converging media landscape, and what regulation should be applied to PSM is where Andra Leurdjik points the attention, describing the challenges in the transition from “just” broadcasting to the provision and aggregation of “public value content for diverse and digital platforms” (p. 71). The compromises that led to the renewal of the BBC Charter in 2006, its possible future implications, and the wider possible repercussions for PSB at the European level, given also the significance of the British public broadcaster status outside the country's border, are then outlined by Steven Barnett. He warns how the “scale, scope, and influence

will be under more threat over the next 10 years than ever before” (p. 102) due also to the increasing pressures from the commercial sector and its claims of market distortion towards public broadcasters.

The transformation to PSM and the possibility to cater more effectively for a more diverse range of audiences, and their role in making this happen, are the object of the study of Richard van der Wurff, who suggests a model that should “identify where there is market failure and need for more merit good supply in society’s total best interests” (p. 116), based on the acknowledgement that “different media perform different functions for different audiences” (*ibid.*). The provision of entertainment programming and the importance of retaining this as part of the PSM mission, which is vividly examined by Teemu Palokangas, concludes the first part of the volume.

The second half, that focuses on the strategies and tactics adopted in the transition to PSM, begins with Yngvar Kjus’ insightful study of the “Ideals and Complications in Audience Participation for PSM,” which uses the case study of BBC’s program *Great Britons* to offer an example of “how traditional PSB envisions itself in the emerging multimedia environment and the ways to approach PSM in practice” (p. 136). Current affairs programming and its status in the broadcasters’ schedules have been seen often as sign of fitness for PSBs in any national context and McNair outlines the features of the British case by discussing the accusations of “dumbed down” programming and commercialization, the pressures related to the resources required to carry out extensive investigative work, and the challenges and opportunities posed by digital convergence. He ends on a positive note by stating that current affairs might be “expanded, democratized, and diversified in ways which we have not seen before . . . to enhance the civic role of public service television in the PSM future” (p. 164).

The study of the use of PSM by young audiences is obviously very important to plan the development of current and future digital platforms. The implications for PSM journalism and the results of a research carried out on a sample of young (15-25) people in the Netherlands form the core of Irene Costera Meijer’s contribution. Satire programming is also seen as very relevant to young audiences in the context of Denmark (author Hanne Brunn), where this genre “adds diversity to an entertainment profile otherwise dominated by quiz, game, and talk show formats” (p. 187).

PSB has been a fundamental player in the use of broadcasting for educational purposes and Mirko Lukács gives then a very useful historical account on this matter, including the possibilities that the transition to PSM could bring in this direction: “it dramatically opens opportunities for disclosing valuable content archives . . . multiplying content and access, and adding functionalities, as well as co-producing together with the public through user generated content” (p. 213).

The last contribution in this section, by Philip Savage, offers interesting inputs for discussion from a country outside the continent by analyzing the role of audience research in the context of Canadian Public Service Broadcasting. Among other issues, he underlines how in Canada “there has been relatively little investment in understanding audience beyond a narrow commercial model of media consumption” (p. 228).

Finally, an historical analysis of the concepts at the core of public service media is given by Slavko Splichal who reminds of the importance of the *public* component in PSM and how it should really be a *service of, by and for* the public, not only financed and controlled, but also produced by the public, in order to become a real “cornerstone of democracy” (p. 255).

This book, on the whole, offers a very valuable contribution to the discussion of the issues that surround public service broadcasting/media at this time of history in Europe. It is understandable that the British case and the BBC are given much space across the book, given its social and cultural relevance also outside the United Kingdom. However, a wider range of examples and the inclusion of perspectives from other parts of Europe would have been beneficial to offer a broader outlook instead of confining the debate mainly drawing from examples from the northern and western part of the continent.

Bibliographical references are listed at the end of each article. No subject index is included in this publication.

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**Fortunati, Leopoldina, James E. Katz, and Raimonda Riccini.** (Eds.). *Mediating the human body: Technology, communication, and fashion.* Manwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003. Pp. xix; 230. ISBN 0-8058-4481-3 (pb.) \$39.95.

In January 2001, the city of Milan hosted a conference to explore the effects of new communication technologies on human beings, specifically in the areas of fashion, art, communication, and technology. The essays in this volume represent some of the major issues discussed at the conference and provide theoretical, historical, and practical insights on the interplay of technology and the human body across a number of different disciplines. The book is unique for its relatively short essays (average length is a little less than eight pages) allowing for the inclusion of 23 essays (in addition to an introduction and conclusion by the editors). Many are written by Italian scholars who may have a particular interest in the symbiosis between technology, fashion, and body given Milan's identity as the fashion capital of the world.

The first of five sections of the volume is "The Body Between Science, Technology, and Art." Essays in this section provide synopses of the foundations of thought on the relationship of technology to the human body. For example, Maldonado focuses on prostheses, or electronic devices inserted into or otherwise augmenting the functioning of the body. The notion of prostheses in many forms undergirds how technology may be conceptualized in research on fashion, technology, and the body. Maldonado goes on to defend the human body, so to speak, suggesting that some resistance to technology is essential. Longo (p. 24) *defines homo technologicus*, or human beings embodying both technology and biology; he is "interested in the discontinuities" between the two rather than how the two are unifying. Strassoldo (p. 39) summarizes the image of the body in contemporary art tracing it from nudes to body art, particularly in the rather macabre work of the Marquis de Sade.

The second section is "Body Communicating Between Technology, Fashion, and Identity." In the first essay, Katz et al. (p. 75) lay out the findings of their study of information and communication technologies (specifically the mobile telephone) which include some tentative statements about how reactions to the use of mobile phones as style and fashion provide the impetus for more research. Lobet-Maris (p. 87) places a Motorola-Intra survey of Belgian mobile phone users in a sociological context, underscoring the potential for an increasingly disconnected condition among young users, or what she calls "mobile phone tribes." Oksman and Rautiainen use a media ethnographic approach to study young users of technology in Finland. They conclude, as one example, that children

may consider mobile technology in practical ways (as a device for sending receiving messages), personifying ways (a device that is living), or imaginative ways (projecting almost infantile meanings on a device they barely understand). Riccini characterizes women as the protagonists of everyday technologies. Strocchi (p. 133) sees that Universal Mobile Technological system (UMTS) as the culmination or "final step in a process of technological development." Such devices were still several years into the future at the time of the conference in 2001, but we can see now that they are not likely to be the final step.

The third section is titled "Dressing Technologies"; a review of a few essays shows its concentration on fashion. Pacifici and Girardi identify fashion as "a language that explains the adaptive and transformative modalities of human beings" as part of a class struggle between in- and out-groups (p. 139). Danese provides an overview of the developments of existing and new fibers combined with chemicals and new technologies in emerging hybrid textiles. Kaiser draws from Kierkegaard to argue that fashion exhibits cultural anxieties "that might otherwise go unspoken" (p. 155). She uses the premise to examine the ways children express themselves through their clothing.

Essays in the "The Body and Technologies for Health and Well-being" section underscore what the authors identify as the interconnectedness of many attributes including "the material and the cultural, the physiological and the anthropometric, and the medical and the psychological" (p. 9). Chiapponi identifies the role of the industrial designer as one who constructs "a system of plausible relations between the system of products to be designed and a corresponding system of needs" (p. 188). Frascara discusses, almost poetically, the automobile as a "third skin," drawing from statistics primarily from Canada to characterize the automobile as a "means of social communication," a message articulated through fantasies of an adoring lover, tantalizing scenery, the undeniable desirability of a high performance machine, and, of course, mud (pp. 196-197). Annalisa Dominoni, at the time Head of Research Programs at SpaceLab in Milan, lays out the objectives of a project sponsored in part by the Italian Space Agency. The project, to discover the effects of microgravity on the human body, results in her call for clothing that will improve the psychological and physical experience of space travelers while keeping in mind wear ability, aesthetics, and other areas without being too invasive, (i.e., wearable technology) (p. 204).

Gerundini and Castellani “present a review of the most common imaging methods used in radiology and nuclear medicine” (p. 209). Those areas include, among others, computed tomography, ultrasonography, magnetic resonance imaging, and nuclear medicine imaging.

The essays are not necessarily pro- or anti-technology; each is intended to provide some perspective, perhaps historical, theoretical, or practical, on the relationship between the developing parallel trajectories of our knowledge of the human body and technology. The book was published in 2003, so given the rapid development of communication technology, it is only a snapshot of technology at that time. The proliferation of mobile communication technologies such as global positioning devices, video phones, music storage devices, etc. simply could not have been addressed in this text, though its anticipation is certainly acknowledged. Also, the essays are primarily the publication of the proceedings of a conference in Milan. As a result, the volume is most useful as a part of a review of literature, or a jumping off point for contemporary studies in the relationship of technology to the human body. The volume has separate author and subject indexes.

—Pete Bicak  
Rockhurst University

**Hanks, Joyce M.** *The Reception of Jacques Ellul's Critique of Technology: An Annotated bibliography of writings on his life and thought (books, articles, reviews, symposia)*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007. Pp. iii; 546. ISBN 0-7734-5373-3 (hbk.) \$139.95, £84.95.

Joyce Main Hanks wrote in the *Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Politics* that Jacques Ellul, “lay theologian, sociologist, and professor . . . made political analysis a regular theme in his voluminous published works” (Domenico & Hanley, p. 187). Ellul’s ideas on technology, religion, and propaganda have had a profound influence on scholars from many disciplines—religious studies, theology, sociology, linguistics, history, and others. He was not one, however, to assemble his materials in a particularly orderly fashion. The breadth of his influence, while creating rich intellectual opportunities for scholars, also created the difficult challenge of assembling his own works and works about him into one volume. To do so requires an enormous commitment of a dedicated scholar. Joyce Main Hanks, to be sure, is an Ellul scholar. Her annotated

bibliography provides as complete a listing of works that one could expect to find on any one subject. One gets the feeling when gliding through the entries that if a work has been written by, about, or even mentions Jacques Ellul, Joyce Main Hanks has read it.

The bibliography, with annotations of varying length, is divided into three major sections: (1) Books, Articles and Interviews; (2) Dissertations; and (3) Reviews of Ellul’s books. The entries within these sections are organized chronologically and include an extremely wide range of perspectives on the work of Ellul. Each includes citations of many of the works one would expect to find, such as the forewords and responses to Ellul’s *The Technological Society* or *Propaganda*. In addition, though, Hanks’ purpose is to attempt to create a thorough review of commentary and other research on Ellul’s key ideas. A sampling of the thousands of entries exhibits the thoroughness of this volume. Hanks reviews a 1962 issue of *Technology and Culture* in which the lead paper was Ellul’s but, according to Hanks, “despite the impression given by this volume, Ellul did not deliver his paper in person” (p. 10). Another entry (p. 14) highlights an interview with Marshall McLuhan by Eli Bornstein in which McLuhan, writes Hanks, “refers favorably” to Ellul’s work on propaganda. The year 1994, the year of Ellul’s death, is especially significant listing numerous obituaries (starting on page 143). Hanks includes several works by Ellul’s only daughter Dominique, two of which coincided with the tenth anniversary of Ellul’s death (p. 206). One other example, chosen somewhat randomly for this review, also illustrates the helpfulness of this volume. Hanks writes that John E. Jalbert’s article on Ellul and technological determinism in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* “situates Habermas between Ellul and Joseph C. Pitt, on the issue of the autonomy of the Technique” (p. 172). Her level of detail is impeccable.

David W. Gill, president of the International Jacques Ellul society writes in the foreword of this volume that “[w]hat you hold in your hands is simply an extraordinary work” (p. i). Hanks, according to Gill, is considered “*the bibliographer*” [emphasis his] of Jacques Ellul. Indeed Hanks’ volume here lists a review of her own “comprehensive bibliography” of Ellul material that was reviewed by Gill himself in 1986 (p. 98). Hanks published updates to the bibliography for the years 1982–1985 (p. 129) and 1985–1993 (p. 165) which are cited in the volume reviewed here.

In 2000, Hanks published a bibliography of primary Ellul material (p. 187).

There is no way to know whether a bibliography is exhaustive, but this ambitious volume must certainly be close. Hanks cites chapters of dissertations, proceedings, videos, and all manner of scholarly works that addresses Ellul in some form. This book would be very useful to scholars in all fields, and any scholar working on Ellul or on the influence of technology, propaganda, or religion should consult this volume first. In addition to the three primary sections, Hanks also includes separate author and subject indexes. The author index is a robust 122 pages and the select subject index is 115 pages (comprising about half of the volume). Each provides a way to conduct a sort of cross-listing as part of one's search.

—Pete Bicak  
Rockhurst University

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Domenico, R. P., & Hanley, M. Y. (2006). *The encyclopedia of modern Christian politics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

**Knobel, Michele and Lankshear, Colin.** (Eds.). *A New Literacies Sampler*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Pp. 251. ISBN: 978-0-8204-9523-1. \$29.95.

Writing online provides us with the opportunity to “author the self,” to sustain a narrative of identity (Giddens 1991) and even to explore a number of different stories of the self, but these identities always are forged through our connection with others. (p. 192)

Those who have followed fields of visual literacy and media literacy will not be surprised that a new array of digital “texts” requires a new literacy movement. This volume provides a number of essays probing aspects of “new literacies” research.

Here's one author's definition:

. . . the more a literacy practice privileges participation over publishing, distributed expertise over centralized expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence, collaboration over individuated authorship, dispersion over scarcity, sharing over ownership, experimentation over “normalization,” innovation and evolution over stability and fixity, creative-innovative rule breaking over generic purity and policing, relationship over information broadcast, and so on, the more we should regard it as a “new” literacy. (p. 21)

Samples of all this covered in the volume's essays include: laptops in the classroom, popular student websites, video games, fan fiction, academic blogging, and online memes.

The opening essay, written by the volume's editors, discusses sampling techniques in this new field—research undertaken from a *sociocultural* perspective on literacy. The concluding essay by Cynthia Lewis provides a helpful overview of the other authors' research. Lewis notes that these literacies are “connected with *identities, patterns, and ways of being in the world* rather than solely with the acts of reading and writing” (p. 230).

Every essay has a helpful list of references on the particular topic. Many of these references are forthcoming so this is clearly a field of research under development. Two authors are cited repeatedly in these reference lists: James Paul Gee, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Kevin M. Leander, Associate Professor in Language, Literacy, and Culture at Vanderbilt University. Since both of these authors are represented in this volume I will explore their contributions more fully here.

Gee's essay is entitled “Pleasure, Learning, Video Games, and Life: The Projective Stance.” Here Gee argues “that good video games create what I call a ‘projective stance’—a double-sided stance towards the world (virtual or real) in terms of which we humans see the world simultaneously as a project imposed on us and as a site onto which we can actively project our desires, values, and goals” (pp. 95-96). He notes, “both language and games are semiotic systems for encoding experience in ways that ready human beings for actions they want or need to take” (p. 98). Gee analyzes several video games from this perspective.

Leander's analysis in the volume relates to the contest between the curriculum and the class schedule when every student has a laptop. (I recall visiting a private academy in Dallas—one attended by Melinda Gates as a young woman—where every incoming student is provided with a laptop. Bill Gates urged the administrator to visit other schools to study the impact, somewhat subversive, that follows such innovation.) Leander provides several “vignettes of practice” in the school he studied. Most of the conflict related to “the relationship between school space-time and space-time as practiced by youth on the Internet in their everyday lives.” Another concept he studies is open and closed information spaces. Faculty who are reading this sum-

mary can identify with this contest once laptops and cell phones appear in their classroom.

This leads to a very practical question: what lessons are contained in this volume for teaching and research?

Based on my own academic experience, it is very helpful to think of digital tools from the perspective of new forms of *literacy*. We are accustomed to textual analysis so this gives us new *texts* to study. It is also helpful to listen to these authors who are, after all, very enthusiastic about the potential of virtual learning. We can discover new ways of relating to students who spend so much time in this space and with these tools.

However, these essays prompt us to think even beyond what is happening to students—to think of ways the classroom and educational institutions themselves will need to be re-structured in a digital culture. Another large issue appears briefly in this volume: the project of the self, as explored by Anthony Giddens (1991) and Sherry Turkle (1984). Giddens reminds us of “the emergence of new mechanisms of self-identity which are shaped by—yet also shape—the institutions of modernity” (p. 2). He notes:

The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications. (p. 2)

—Frances Forde Plude  
Notre Dame College, Cleveland

## References

- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Turkle, S. (1984). *The second self: Computers and the human spirit*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

**Land, Mitchell and Bill Hornaday.** *Contemporary Ethics: A practical guide for students, scholars, and professionals*. Spokane, WA: Marquette Books, 2006. Pp. 448. ISBN 0-922993-42-4 (pb.) \$59.95.

This is a useful manual for students and professionals (as it is subtitled). The text draws on the many books published on media ethics and summarizes in a few articles the major concepts of libertarianism, utilitarianism, categorical imperative, communitarianism, etc., and then goes on to look at various current case

studies and analyzes each to fit in with these imperatives of ethical reasoning.

In the ethical sphere, the book is particularly focused on *utilitarianism* and *communitarianism*.

Utilitarianism is a theory based on the notion that any decision or action should be taken in terms of consequences that result in the largest possible balance of pleasure, and the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Communitarianism holds that normative properties (decisions and actions) should be integral to a sense of community, and community values in an equilibrium with active personhood. Clearly these two theories demand a maximum application of ethical perceptions. If teleology refers to the study of evidences of design in nature, in ethics it refers to moral systems that focus on the consequences of an action, also characterized as consequentialist moral systems. Thus, the morality of an action is determined by the consequences of that action.

The authors draw up a point of decision pyramid based on three panels: facts; principles and values; and stake-holders and loyalists. This of course has strong philosophical base. This is a new deductive model that ends with a detailed analysis based on both the utilitarian and communitarian ethical perspectives, which clearly asks “the greatest good for the greatest number” or “to balance a personal ethics with an appeal to community values.”

The authors look at some of the current cases that made a lot of noise in ethical circles.

The sections are divided into print and electronic news which deals with mostly local issues, terrorism and international reporting, where the death of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl at the hands of the terrorists makes an interesting study of ethical decision making. The use of graphic and Internet projections also makes useful contributions to understand the value of ethical decision making. Advertising and public relations give another area of contrasting ethical dimensions.

The book argues clearly that the communitarian and utilitarian perspectives with always the stake-holders in mind, contribute to a clear understanding on stands that one should take in ethical decision-making. In the case study of the killing of Daniel Pearl, captured by Al-Queda terrorists in Pakistan and made to read a propaganda ad and then shot on TV, raises the key question: Was it right to show this to the entire world? Looking at the event through the utilitarian and communitarian perspective, the authors show how both

these viewpoints are right in their arguments and sometimes how they can go wrong too. If the greatest good for the greatest number of people is the utilitarian model, showing the video is the right attitude, unmindful of Pearl's family (especially his pregnant wife back home) or the U.S. government's interests. Basing on the five utilitarian principles of stewardship, truth, liberty, justice, and humaneness, the authors argue the pros and cons of showing this video on American television. The authors also cite the stakeholders of this utilitarian reporting as the viewers (in terms of ratings), the American public (in terms of the importance of showing enemy tactics), defenders of the First Amendment (in terms of defending the media's right to cover stories), Daniel Pearl's family (in terms of reducing or exacerbating trauma), journalists (in terms of focusing on good taste), U.S. government officials (in terms of dealing with terrorists), and finally Al-Queda terrorists (in terms of firing them up for future actions and sending a message).

Looking at the same event from a communitarian perspective, the principles will change order as humaneness, stewardship, truth, justice, and liberty. The rigid ideal of the right to know the truth would lose out to tact and decency; in this case the need to remind the people graphically that the war on terrorism is a dreadful thing would lose out to the decency of not showing an execution. If it is humane not to show the video, then the Pearl family's concerns would prevail. The end does not justify the means if the means are improper. Communitarian values approach the issue totally differently from that of utilitarian values. First, the decision must be based on moral reasoning, and the most moral reasoning must prevail. In short, the journalists must decide whether the violence must be shown at all, because everything can be said without showing it. Second, journalists must contribute to the well being of the community by considering the members of the community. Pearl's pregnant wife is an important determinant here. The communitarian stakeholders in priority order are Daniel Pearl's family (in terms of reducing or exacerbating trauma of the victim's loved ones), U.S. government officials (in terms of dealing with terrorists), the American public (in terms of the importance of showing enemy tactics), journalists (in terms of good taste), defenders of the First Amendment (in terms of arguing that such values and principles are what the United States was founded on and what unites its people), and finally the viewers (in terms of ratings).

Eventually the conclusion to this discussion is that journalism must be a tool to report the truth and foster understanding, and not a tool for perpetuating propaganda (regarding Arab terrorist plans) and sensationalizing tragedy.

This is the kind of approach that is used throughout the book, to make it clearer to practicing journalists to be more careful in their approaches, especially dealing with delicate and sensitive issues. Several such current events are studied in depth to make the journalists' ethical options clear.

It is a book that is of great value to all journalists. Although the examples are all American, the book is useful to journalists all over the world as several cases treated are well known and similar cases are not uncommon in other countries.

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Gregorian University, Rome

**Pecora, Norma, Enyonam Osei-Hwere and Ulla Carlsson** (Eds.). *African Media, African Children*. (Nordicom Yearbook 2008). Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2008. Pp. 243. ISBN: 978-91-8947168-9 (pb.). SEK 240, €25.00.

This collection of papers stems from two recent meetings: one on the African Child at Ohio University that featured contributions from experts in media and children and youth; the second in South Africa where the fifth World Summit on Children, Youth, and the Media was held in 2007. The volume is most opportune as it provides relatively recent information about media development in Africa, and specifically about programs for children and youth in the continent. Firdoze Bulbulia states very clearly in the Introduction the proposal of media producers in Africa:

My philosophy, however, is that Africans must take charge of their destiny and their responsibility to improve the media environment of the African child. It is important for us as Africans to ensure that we decolonize Africa including its children's media. (p. 11)

In the first chapter, Enyonam Osei-Hwere and Norma Pecora clearly define both the rights of children that have been developed in many African countries, including access to quality education and media programming. The stark fact is, however, that most of children's programming comes from Hollywood and

is, in the best of cases, the majority of content they watch. What is the answer to this dilemma? There are several suggestions.

The first idea is that children are active audience members who bring their own lived reality to the encounter with Disney or the Discovery Channel. Francis Nyamnjoh argues within the globalized context of Africa that children still have something unique that does not seem to be at risk even though the author would prefer more African content. His chapter, however, remains abstract and even though he refers to his own research on the topic, we are not provided with results. On the other hand, Tewodros Workalemabu provides us with a study of Ethiopian youth that have been largely exposed to Disney films (as much of the world has been) and who finds in the characters of films like *The Lion King* identifications that are negotiated by the youth within the parameters of their own lives. The author concludes that “The complexity of meanings constructed by the children in their interaction with the global texts and images of Disney makes the task of adhering to or rejecting the penetration of global media messages to the local audience intricate” (p. 97). This leaves the reader as much up in the air as the author apparently is. The main observation the author cites from the youth is that they noted the production values in Disney and their absence in local programming.

Another suggestion about what can be done about the overwhelming global content presented to African children and youth is to improve the quality of local media production. Charles Owen speaks for South Africa in explaining how much is being done in program production, and, indeed, it is comparatively positive in focusing on issues like HIV/AIDS even for children and youth. In another chapter, Mimi Brazeau argues that radio as a medium is more likely to succeed in the short run because of cost and reach, and the list of projects demonstrates that all is not globalized on the continent. Several other authors argue that media and Internet education is a way forward for children in school, even to the extent of allowing them to do simple productions with video equipment. All of this is premised on the availability of larger budgets for both educational activities as well as production which, in light of the current economic downturn, does not seem likely. What is likely is a continued expansion of global media, as Frederick Nnoma-Addison, CEO of the Washington DC-based African Media-Image Project, outlines in his chapter. He is positive about the prospects and supports this positive

stance with a plan to help bring resources to Africa from industrialized countries. There is no guarantee, but he is an admitted optimist.

The final section of the book reviews the children and youth broadcasting in several countries including South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. As we have pointed out, South Africa is an exception in terms of size, budgets, advanced policies, and production. Still as Beatrice Boateng points out, there are problems here as well. Ghana, as described by Osei-Hwere, has a long history of broadcast media and has the honor of producing more local programs for children and youth than it imports (p. 187). Kenya and Zambia are not so fortunate and both suffer from a variety of problems that include budget and a strong political presence in media. Finally, Zimbabwe has a set of current political and economic problems that make the problems of youth media production pale by comparison.

The book has footnotes and up to date bibliography after each chapter but no index.

—Emile McAnany  
Santa Clara University

**Shepherd, David.** (Ed.). *Images of the Word: Hollywood's Bible and Beyond*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008. (Semeia Studies, No. 54). Pp. ix, 227. ISBN 978-90-04-15736-1 (hbk.) \$139.00, €89.00.

To the lengthy catalogue of books on film and religion, this book from the Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies adds a follow-up volume to an earlier Semeia collection of essays on biblical studies and film (Bach, 1996). All of the entries in the present collection edited by David Shepherd (except for a response from film critic Richard Blake) come from biblical scholars with an interest in film. The book, then, offers communication students and those trained in film studies a very different perspective on film, along with a set of methodologies, perhaps less well known to them.

To a communication scholar, the book seems unusual in its approach, not so much examining a film or a director or an actor as a content. Typically the biblical scholars examine a particular film with an eye both to the cinematic treatment and to the biblical text. In some ways the films serve the same function as a Rorschach test, allowing the images to correlate with meanings, to suggest further readings of the scriptures—the biblical scholars, after all, keep the source at the forefront of their examination. But their various

methods offer a number of hermeneutic tools that go beyond that. Reinhold Zwick suggests that films present “both the reception history of the Tanak and Christian Scriptures and the unfolding of the biblical texts’ potential to produce meaning” (p. 97). He further argues that “‘biblical studies’ often has a responsibility to explain such films, because unless the frequent intertextual connections with the Bible are spelled out clearly, they are often not perceived by film critics and regular viewers alike” (p. 97). Part of the biblical film critic’s job involves the standard biblical hermeneutic of explicating the context of the text.

Adele Reinhartz suggests a different role for the biblical scholar, one connecting contemporary life and historical research.

When it comes to telling Jesus’ story, filmmakers and scholars must work with the same source texts, which present a limited range of problems and also a limited range of solutions. Furthermore, both groups are affected in their thinking and their approach to their tasks by historical events and social trends. (p. 131)

Making the connection with the narratives of Jesus’ death, she asks how filmmakers do in “historical Jesus research,” noting that they must take “into account contemporary sensibilities and current academic conclusions about the ideological elements of the Gospel narratives” (p. 131). Here the work of the films compels a deeper understanding of first century attitudes and texts. In this we see the shadow of Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” hermeneutic of mutual illumination of each party’s horizon of understanding.

Jo-Ann Brant sees the biblical scholar’s task slightly differently: Instead of only revealing the construction of the thought world of the ancient text, the filmic portrayals call attention to the normal, taken-for-granted interpretation of everyday life. In commenting on the film *The Gospel of John* (Director, Philip Saville, 2003), she describes her work in this way:

My purpose in this essay has been to make evident to the untrained eye Philip Saville’s use of the camera to tell one story while the narrator of the Gospel of John tells another. . . . Although Saville’s *The Gospel of John* contains every word of the Good News Bible’s translation of the Gospel of John and does not add words, the film is not the book. Saville’s need to create settings and actions is analogous to the act of reading itself. A naïve reader may mistake his or her interpretation of a character’s tone of voice or

intent as encoded in the text. A prudent reader realizes that each reading is a performance to which the reader brings his or her own interpretation and imagination in order to fill in the action and setting suggested but not dictated by the words of the text. (p. 164)

Brant sees the film critic-biblical scholar’s role as instructing the viewer about the act of reading a biblical text.

Drawing on the literary theories of Deleuze and Borges, George Aichele suggests still another approach to film for the biblical scholar. Here the “translation” to film creates a simulacrum (p. 84), which can serve to bring out the meaning (or even add meaning) to the biblical text. Aichele notes that Borges maintains that “through a kind of inverted causality, later texts sometimes transform earlier ones.” He explains with a quotation from Borges, commenting on Kafka’s reading of figures from Zeno to Kierkegaard to Browning: “In each of these texts we find Kafka’s idiosyncrasies to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive this quality; in other words it would not exist (201)” (p. 88). Aichele then applies this method by showing how the movie *Local Hero* (Director, Bill Forsyth, 1983) opens up Qoheleth and Jonah from the Hebrew Bible.

Apart from these methodological considerations, the essays in *Images of the Word* examine a number of intersections between the Bible and the cinema. Shepherd, the volume’s editor, delves into film history to look at the various ways European and U.S. cinema presented the life of Moses, with efforts ranging from spectacle (presuming that the audience members already knew the story of Moses) to a retelling of the Exodus events. Erick Christianson applies the parallel method (showing how the biblical writers and the film directors used the same literary and interpretive devices, thus shining a present-day light on ancient texts) to the accounts in Judges 4–5 of the story of Jael’s slaying of Sisera. Here the narrative ambiguity found in film noir guides our understanding of a similarly ambiguous narrative in the Scriptures. Jan van Henten offers a similar parallel presentation of the Book of Revelation and *eXistenZ* (Director, David Cronenberg, 1999). By calling attention to the role of food in each, he finds subtle clarification of the sometimes obscure presentation in the Book of Revelation.

As already mentioned, Aichele presents a reading of the film, *Local Hero*, as a way into several biblical books; Reinhartz focuses not so much on a particular

film as on the character of the high priest Caiaphas. She points out how the Gospel texts and the multiple Jesus films in which he appears make use of historical scholarship or non-historical prejudice in their presentations. Zwick applies his hermeneutical approach to *Songs from the Second Floor* (Director, Roy Andersson, 1999), calling attention to aesthetics and the biblical imagery running through the film. As noted, Brant also calls attention to the aesthetics, particularly of the camera and its independent perspective in *The Gospel of John*.

Two other essays in the collection turn their attention to filmic traditions. Richard Walsh examines the character of Barrabas, whose brief appearance in the passion narratives has bloomed into novels and several films. Though he does not cite the insight of Borges discussed by Aichele, he finds similar enrichment of the Gospel character by the subsequent development of Barrabas in his multiple appearances in contemporary culture. Finally, Dwight Friesen takes the discussion out of the European-American ambit by showing how Christ appears in Indian cinema, providing a careful history of and reading of the Telugu-language film, *Karunamayudu* ["Man of Compassion"] (multiple directors, 1978). Friesen takes the reader to south India, to its independent (of Mumbai) film studios, and to the inculturation of the Gospel account through the use of various elements and motifs of Indian cinema.

In his response from the perspective of film studies, Blake calls attention to the developing sophistication of biblical scholarship vis-a-vis film. They have, he notes, moved far beyond a "homiletic" criticism—where films served to illustrate religious or theological points, or, worse, as material for a kind of symbol treasure hunt. Commending the methods employed in the essays here, Blake sees a process akin to the authentication of biblical texts, of the acknowledgment of "inspiration."

I wonder if "inspiration" in an analogous sense might be extended to other attempts of the human imagination to approach God through different media. Surely, when a great composer or artist approaches religious subject matter, we can speak of the work as being inspirational in some sense and consequently as an additional vehicle of God's self-revelation. . . . It is but a small step further to suggest that film is another venue for the ongoing project of God's self-disclosure and the human response in trying to reduce mystery to more comprehensible dimensions. As is the case in dealing with the gnostic Gospels, for example, serious scholars have to

understand the medium in all its complexity and then seek distinctions between truth and error, wisdom and nonsense. The same obligation rests heavily on film critics and scholars. (p. 199)

This collection offers the beginnings of that kind of sensitivity.

The volume has a bibliography and an incomplete filmography, but no index.

—Paul A. Soukup, S.J.  
Santa Clara University

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**Wessels, Bridgette.** *Inside the Digital Revolution: Policing and Changing Communication with the Public*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007. Pp. 210. ISBN 978-0-7546-7087-2 (hbk) £55.00 (£49.50 online); ISBN 978-0-7546-8530-2 (eBook).

The perceptive analysis of the political economy of media by scholars like Schiller (2007) and McChesney (2007) leaves one feeling uneasy; commercial lobbying has crowded out public interest in both our historical and rapidly-advancing communication technologies.

Thus, it is refreshingly hopeful to study this volume by Bridgette Wessels, Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Sheffield, UK, who was inspired by her mentor, Roger Silverstone. Her research is helpful to both top-level policy-makers and to ground-level administrators.

The author asks: "How is a public institution such as the police developing digital services for communicating with diverse publics in complex global cities?" She states: "This book explores the ways in which the MPS (Metropolitan Police Service), in collaboration with the London Borough of Newham (in the East End) and within a European consortium, developed digital technology to change communication with the public" (pp 1-2). She later adds: "The objective of this study was to explore the underlying *cultural* dynamics of changing communication with the public using digital technologies, not 'organizational' or 'community' dynamics as such" (*ibid.*, italics added). One could also add that London has one of the largest and most respected police services in the world.

In Chapter 3, "The Cultural Dynamics of Technological Change," the author gives readers an

excellent overview of “a conceptual framework for understanding how technology gains its material form and meaning through innovation processes shaped by social values, cultural sensibilities, and political agendas” (p. 27). This theoretical review of the literature provides a rich basis for the research study particulars.

The particulars are these:

- The project brought together partners from a London borough, a wider London telematics project, the European Union, individual European nations, and vendors.
- The study utilized surveys, focus groups, communication experts, and an ethnographer who lived for two years in a police station house, establishing a deep trust.
- The researcher studied many telecommunication strategic planning documents issued by various local and European commissions.
- A helpful Appendix details the local focus group structures, designed to define services *with* the community, not *for* the community.

The structures of the project team, the actors of the London site, and the global project relations are helpfully laid out in grids on pages 60-62. Interesting components include a concept of “discourse” allowing the researcher to hear a multiplicity of voices and a new view of “citizen” in contemporary society. (These latter two ideas were of importance in the United States as we elected a new President recently.)

Chapters include subjects such as changing communication with the public using digital technologies; early days of the project and the development of e-Services in the community; how digital services are constructed at the national, regional, and European levels; and analysis of the local people’s perceptions of services in London’s East End.

What are the challenges for the project (and, subsequently, for the reader)?

I have noticed that sometimes well-intentioned public policy officials come up with answers to questions people do not have. This project seriously attempted to avoid this error. Another challenge, when dealing with vendors (in this case, manufacturers of information kiosks), is to end up with products vendors want to develop and sell, rather than what users really need and prefer. Again, this research met this challenge. In fact, the project, after local input, emphasized regional police centers and intranets rather than being carried away by kiosks.

Access is a major issue in almost all communication policy arenas. This was especially important in a geographical area with ethnic diversity, many languages, and a higher-than-normal poverty and crime rate. These individuals, in many cases, were unaware of police services already available; dialogue was vital when considering the introduction of newer, digitized offerings. (It’s worth mentioning that the East End is now the site of much construction in preparation for the Summer Olympics in 2012.)

For the reader it is difficult to keep track of all the acronyms used (over 50); the author provides a list in the front of the book and one is constantly referring to the list to figure out what is being discussed. Also provided and helpful: a technical glossary; an explanatory list of pseudonyms used for project participants; a separate appendix of research methods and objectives; a very complete bibliography, and an index. Unfortunately, almost a dozen typographical errors were not corrected by the book’s editor, detracting a bit from its excellence.

Some years ago, when teaching for a semester in London, I met with European Union telecommunication ministers in each EU nation, to discuss collaboration as a strategic planning tool. With this background I can verify that Professor Wessels here makes an extraordinary contribution to planning for a digital age in Europe and on the ground in the specific area of community policing.

The author notes some recommendations: more attention to the cultural dimension of innovation; emphasis on user needs; focus on key actors and transformational space (workshops and pilot sites). She also cites the need for further research into “real” needs of users; how citizens react to information and communication technologies (ICT); issues of “quality of service”; how the concept of citizenship relates to the realities of citizens’ lives; and further exploration of paradoxes in the formation of new cultural forms.

Just as this author was mentored by Roger Silverstone, we must hope she will inspire others to build upon the riches of this excellent research study.

—Frances Forde Plude

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