The background of the cover is a dark, muted green. Overlaid on this is a light-colored grid. A series of small, dark dots are arranged to form a line graph that trends upwards from left to right. The dots are more densely packed in some areas, creating a sense of movement and data.

A Handbook of Media and Communication Research

Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies

Edited by Klaus Bruhn Jensen

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methodologies

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Preface

This book covers the state of media and communication research – its development, present status, and future potential. It is addressed to students, researchers and media professionals seeking an in-depth treatment of the field.

In recent years, media studies have gone through a process of convergence between social sciences and humanities, quantitative and qualitative approaches. This book presents the diverse theoretical sources of current media studies and provides examples of different research techniques. It also outlines the profile of this academic field, as it relates to the rest of the academy and to contemporary society.

To serve as an accessible yet comprehensive handbook, the volume includes a number of features:

- *examples* of the main types of media *analysis*, including production research, textual analysis and audience studies;
- *reviews* and *comparisons* of the central traditions of theory and methodology;
- *resources* and extensive *references* for the planning of empirical research projects;
- *keywords* and *cross-references*;
- *abstracts*, as well as *figures and tables* summarizing the main points of each chapter.

In preparing the volume, I have had the privilege of cooperating with a number of competent and generous people. First of all, I am grateful to the contributors to the volume, who agreed to join me in the process of developing this reference work. Simultaneously, I have benefited from many discussions with, and suggestions from, colleagues at the University of Copenhagen and at the University of Oslo.

While drafting the text, I have drawn much inspiration as a member of two research programs: Global Media Cultures (1999 to 2001) at the University of Copenhagen (<http://global.media.ku.dk>) and DIWA (1999 to 2003) (Design and use of Interactive Web Applications – <http://www.diwa.dk>), a joint project of four Danish universities. Svein Østerud has been a continually constructive partner in debates on methodology for more than ten years. Special thanks are due to Peter Dahlgren and Søren Kjørup who both took the time to read and offer constructive criticisms on earlier drafts of several chapters.

My deepest thanks go to Ghita – my wife, my friend, and a real human being.

Klaus Bruhn Jensen
Copenhagen, April 2001

NOTE

Key concepts and discussions of key terms are indicated by a marginal note beside their first place of mention in the text.

The symbol ◀ in the text indicates a cross reference to the preceding text which can be found below.

The symbol ▶ at the foot of a column indicates the cross reference linked to its mention in the above column.

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Introduction

The state of convergence in media
and communication research

Klaus Bruhn Jensen

- a reassessment of the field with reference to the three concepts of *media*, *social structure*, and *human agency*
- a distinction between *media of three degrees*: speech, technologically reproduced communication, and computer-mediated communication
- a comparison of *culture* in the narrow sense of aesthetic works and in the broad sense of a whole way of life
- a definition of modern media as *institutions-to-think-with*
- a presentation of a *communication model* which integrates traditional transmission and ritual models
- *outline* of the handbook, its elements, and interrelations.

MEDIA, STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

At least since the self-consciously titled 'Ferment in the Field' issue of the *Journal of Communication* (1983), there has been a recognition within media and communication research that the diverse theoretical and methodological sources of the field, in the social sciences and in the humanities, hold a significant potential for consolidation through integration. Toward this end, one comprehensive conceptual framework is available in the work of Giddens (1984), even if its particular relevance for media remains to be developed (for assessments, see Bryant and Jary 1991; Held and Thompson 1989). His structuration theory is, first and foremost, a meta-theory which seeks to move both empirical and theoretical studies beyond certain entrenched dualisms from more than a century of social and cultural research, including subjectivist *or* objectivist, interpretive *or* causal, hermeneutic *or* materialist, micro- *or* macro-approaches to society and culture.

The key to Giddens' integrative move is the notion of a 'duality of structure,' which defines human agency and social structure each as an enabling condition of the other. Human agency, accordingly, is not the manifestation of any free will, as exercised by individuals or collectivities, nor is social structure a set of external constraints on their action. Instead, social subjects and social systems must be seen as continually reproducing and, to a degree, reforming each other, and they interact, not as abstract principles, but in concrete practices and contexts: 'structure exists . . . only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents' (Giddens 1984: 17). To exemplify, the press consists simultaneously of its structural properties – its economic, legal, technological, as well as cultural-conventional permanence – *and* of the myriad activities of journalists, advertisers, regulators, and audiences who both maintain and contest these properties. Like other social institutions, the press, and the media as

duality of
structure

such, are not only reinterpreted, but re-enacted on a daily basis.

reflexivity In order to explain how some measure of stability emerges from social flux, structuration theory places special emphasis on the concept of reflexivity. (For additional discussions of reflexivity and the meaning–action nexus, see Beck 1999: 109–132; Bourdieu 1977.) Giddens describes reflexivity as a general interpretive faculty that enables humans to ascribe meaning to their transactions with others, both in one’s most intimate relations and in encounters with institutions of political or religious authority. Importantly, this meaning may not be articulated in any explicit form, neither in discourse nor even in consciousness. “Reflexivity” should be understood not merely as “self-consciousness” but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life’ (Giddens 1984: 3).

The point is that reflexivity orients people and allows them to act, to go on, and that it would be possible for them, as a rule, to justify their actions if they were challenged. In most cases, however, people will simply go about their business, and will be able to coordinate it with that of others to a remarkable degree, by relying on shared, implicit assumptions, what Giddens terms their practical consciousness. This is in contrast to discursive consciousness, a focused form of intentionality, that can be mobilized in response to one’s own doubts or to alternatives advanced by others. (The third element of Giddens’ model of consciousness is the unconscious, which is largely comparable to its original Freudian version.) Listening to the radio, for instance, often serves the practical purpose of monitoring a morning routine until it is time for members of the household to leave for work or school, but a particular news item about public transport or road conditions may shift the listeners’ attention into a discursive key because this might require actions out of the ordinary.

The media play a special role, both as means of reflexivity and as sources of social structuration. Giddens recognizes this, in part, by one of his central distinctions between technologically mediated and non-mediated social interaction or, in his terminology, system inte-

gration and social integration. In contrast to social integration, which refers to local, face-to-face interaction, system integration is defined as ‘reciprocity between actors or collectivities across extended time–space, outside conditions of co-presence’ (Giddens 1984: 377). One outcome of such mediated interaction is a ‘dis-embedding’ of people from their traditional relations and environments, and a ‘re-embedding’ into different social formations. The reference is primarily to the modern era, which is characterized by the coordination of economic, political, and cultural activity across great distances and time differences, what Giddens calls ‘time–space distanciation,’[►] increasingly on a global and round-the-clock scale (see also Giddens 1990, 1991). While social integration is performed, above all, by oral communication, system integration has depended on shifting technologies and institutions of communication, from handwritten administrative and accounting systems to broadcasting and beyond.

Nevertheless, Giddens has paid surprisingly little attention to the media as a condition of modernity. ‘Signification,’ including its technologically mediated forms, is one of his three dimensions of social systems, the other two being domination, namely the exercise of power through political and economic institutions, and legitimation as exercised typically by legal institutions (Giddens 1984: 29). But the pervasive communicative aspects of each of these, and of practically any type of social action, have remained a blindspot in Giddens’ work (see Jensen 1995; Silverstone 1999; Thompson 1995).

A meta-theoretical framework that treats communication not as incidental, but as a necessary constituent of social life, is relevant not just to the media field, but to theories of society and culture as such. In order to move beyond the lingering dualism of ‘the duality of structure,’ it is helpful to introduce a third category of *medium*, on a par with agency and structure. In a historical and anthropological perspective, media include spoken and body language, scratch notes and government administrations,

► time–space distanciation, disembedding, and re-embedding – Chapter 11, p. 182

RESOURCE BOX 1.1 GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS AND JOURNALS

The following texts provide general resources and overviews for the field of media and communication research. The titles cover different traditions, as indicated, and include qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies.

Encyclopedia

- Barnouw 1989 – a multi-volume comprehensive reference work on most aspects of communication, including mediated and interpersonal forms
- Watson and Hill 1999 – a concise reference work.

Abstracts

- *Communication abstracts* – a listing with abstracts and keywords of current research.

Handbooks and textbooks

- McQuail 2000 – a solid introduction to positions in the field, with a relative emphasis on social-scientific traditions
- Berger and Chaffee 1987 – a somewhat dated, but still useful overview summarizing work defining communication studies as a 'science'
- Jensen and Jankowski 1991 – an overview delineating the contributions of qualitative research, both social-scientific and humanistic, to the media field
- Lindlof 1995 – a reference work emphasizing the interpretive legacy in social science and its relevance for qualitative empirical studies.

Journals

- *Journal of Communication* – since the mid-1970s a central journal in the field, accommodating both quantitative and qualitative, administrative and critical work
- *Communication Theory* – a more recent addition to the field, covering interpersonal communication as well, and with important theoretical contributions to the media field
- *Critical Studies in Media and Communication* and *Media, Culture and Society* – two representatives of a primarily critical as well as interpretive strand of media research
- *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* and *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* – two representatives primarily of the quantitative, American mainstream of media research
- *Screen* – one of the journals focusing on film (and television), which also includes contributions with implications for the wider field
- *New Media and Society* – one of several journals currently shaping the area of computer-mediated communication.

broadcasting and the Internet. Their common characteristic is that they serve to orient human agency as it enacts social structure, partly at the level of practical consciousness and everyday routines.

MEDIA OF THREE DEGREES

The growth of computer-supported communication has recently presented 'mass' media research with a need to reconsider its central

objects of study. Computers can integrate previous media technologies in a single meta-medium (Kay and Goldberg 1999 [1977]: 112); to a degree, computers can also simulate embodied, interpersonal communication. To indicate the scope of this handbook, it is useful to distinguish three prototypes of media:

1 *Media of the first degree.* The biologically based, socially formed resources that enable humans to articulate an understanding of

reality, for a particular purpose, and to engage with others in communication about it. The central example is verbal language, or speech, but additional ones include song and other musical expression, dance, drama, painting, and creative arts generally. Such media depend on the presence of the human body, and operate in local time–space, often relying on comparatively simple, mechanical techniques such as musical instruments and artistic and writing utensils as constitutive elements. (Handwriting presents a special case, which has supported complex historical communication systems. However, its comparatively inefficient forms of reproduction and distribution arguably made this a transitional cultural form (Meyrowitz 1994: 54).)

2 *Media of the second degree.* The technically reproduced or enhanced forms of representation and interaction which support communication across space and time, irrespective of the presence and number of participants (Benjamin 1977 [1936]). Early modern examples included the standardized reproduction of religious and political texts through the printing press (Eisenstein 1979). In radio talkshows, conversation took on new forms, just as acting styles were adapted to cinema and television. Thus, media technologies have performed a ‘re-embedding,’ both of the media of the first degree and of people in relation to distant others, issues, and arenas.◀

3 *Media of the third degree.* The digitally processed forms of representation and interaction which reproduce and recombine previous media on a single platform. The central current example is the networked personal computer.◀ This ‘interface’ is likely to change substantially as the technologies are adapted further to the human senses, and integrated into both common objects and social arrangements. In certain respects, humans are media; in certain respects, media can substitute the social roles of humans.

Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Discursive</i> consciousness• <i>Practical</i> consciousness• the <i>Unconscious</i>
Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Resources</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">– Allocative (Re: objects, goods, material phenomena)– Authoritative (Re: persons, actors)• <i>Rules</i> (Re: meaning and sanctioning of social conduct)
Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media of the <i>first</i> degree• Media of the <i>second</i> degree• Media of the <i>third</i> degree

Figure 1.1 Media in the structuration of society

Figure 1.1 brings media into a revised conceptual table of structuration theory. Whereas Giddens (1984: 374) has linked discursive consciousness with verbal expressions only, it remains important to examine how the full range of media relate to different levels of consciousness and forms of culture. Moreover, particularly in contemporary society, media are among the central social ‘resources’ in Giddens’ terms, just as they are vehicles of many of the ‘rules’ that inform social interaction. This handbook focuses on media of the second degree; reviews media of the third degree as a growing field of social activity and study; and includes discussion and references on media of the first degree, as they relate to the technological media. Each of these media types facilitates social structuration in specific ways, and they do so by participating in the production and circulation in society of meaning, which accumulates as culture.

THE DUALITY OF CULTURE

Like studies of society, research on culture has been divided by dualisms, with two dominant definitions criss-crossing the humanities and social sciences.◀ On the one hand, culture has

► history of media and communication – Chapter 12
► computer-mediated communication – Chapter 11, p. 182

► the concept of culture – Chapter 11, p. 172

culture as
aesthetic
representation

been conceived as representations of reality – texts and other artefacts – which express some privileged insight, often in an arena such as a museum that is separate in space and time from the rest of social life. This understanding of culture as entities of meaning and vehicles of tradition was captured in Matthew Arnold's definition (1869), 'the best which has been thought and said in the world.' On the other hand, culture has come to be understood as the totality of human expression, artefacts, and forms of interaction, what Raymond Williams (1975 [1958]: 18) summed up as 'a whole way of life.' The two definitions have been associated with a further set of dualisms, including a focus on either text *or* context, high *or* popular culture, a normative-critical *or* descriptive ideal of science, and the qualitative interpretation *or* quantitative measurement of culture.

culture as
social practice

A next step beyond dualism is to recognize a duality not only of social structure, but of culture as well. Culture is both product and process, and both aspects enter into social structuration at large. To begin, the duality of culture may be illustrated through concepts from the world of sports: time-out and time-in. In basketball and (American) football, for example, coaches can call for an interval to discuss strategy with their teams. While temporarily suspending the game, the time-out occurs within and addresses the total time-in of the game. By analogy, an institutionalized cultural activity such as media use partly suspends other activities, but still takes place within the everyday and with reference to families, parliaments, and other well-known institutions. In different respects, news, soap operas, and talkshows offer a cultural forum for collective reflexivity (Newcomb and Hirsch 1984).

time-out
culture

Time-out culture places reality on an explicit agenda, as an object of reflexivity, and provides an occasion for contemplating oneself in a social or existential perspective, perhaps suggesting new avenues for agency. In this regard, mediated communication joins other cultural forms, from religious rituals to fine arts. Time-in culture is continuous with, constitutive of, and orients everyday life, thus regenerating social structure. As such, it supplies the often

time-in
culture

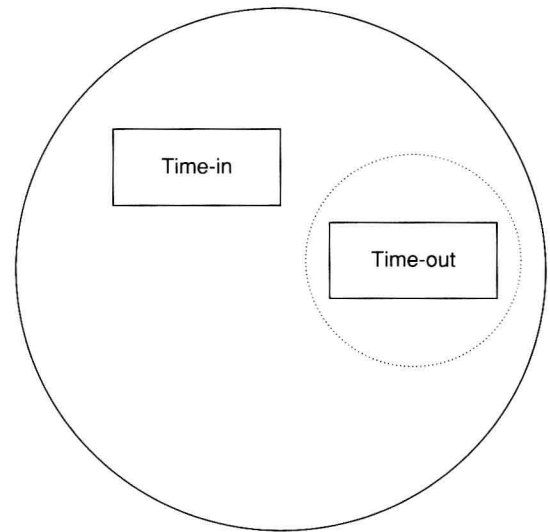


Figure 1.2 Time-in culture and time-out culture

implicit premises and procedures of social interaction. Time-out culture prefigures social action; time-in culture configures social action.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the embedding of time-out within time-in culture and the permeable boundary between the two. Extending Giddens' (1984) terminology, one might say that various cultural practices enable their participants to commute between practical and discursive consciousness. Importantly, time-in culture and time-out culture are *not* separate activities or discourses, but simultaneous and complementary aspects of, for instance, media use. Going to the cinema can be an occasion to reflect on moral dilemmas in either marriage or business, not only in a generalized fictional universe, but equally in one's own life. Compared to reflexivity in psychotherapy, by which one may move from discursive and practical consciousness toward the unconscious, everybody thus moves back and forth between practical and discursive consciousness many times a day. While this recurring movement at the level of individual consciousness resembles the interchange between time-out and time-in culture at a systemic level, it is important to examine in detail how the two processes are intertwined under shifting historical circumstances. In

social systems, reflexivity is commonly delegated to institutions of religion, science, and communication. In modern social systems, the practices of reflexivity are increasingly technologically mediated.

INSTITUTIONS-TO-THINK-WITH

The modern media are understood in this handbook, most basically, as technologies that enable reflexivity on a social scale, as they produce and circulate meaning in society. Beyond this meta-theoretical framework, one of the most applicable substantive theories of the media field has been provided in Jürgen Habermas' (1989 [1962]) early historical work, which is compatible with Giddens' systematic approach, despite differences of opinion and emphasis (e.g., Giddens 1984: 31).

Habermas' (1989 [1962]) main conclusion was that the social system of industrial capitalist democracies may be described as a set of interconnected, but relatively autonomous 'spheres' (Figure 1.3). The figure notes, to the right, the role of state agencies in providing a stable economic and legal frame for social life. To the left, industrial and other private enterprise or business unfolds in what is termed the social sphere, while the intimate sphere is the domain of family life. The mediating element of the system is the public sphere, comprising the major political and cultural institutions as well as the press as Fourth Estate.

Whereas, historically, the public sphere had a proactive function in asserting the economic and political rights of the individual, it can be said, more generally, to negotiate the terms of cooperation between social agents and the state. Most importantly, the public sphere is premised on the ideal of rational, democratic communication about the ends and means of social life. While Habermas emphasized the liberating, utopian potential of the public sphere, even while deploring its contemporary decline (see also Sennett 1974), later studies have continued to debate the status of the model as a historical, systematic, or normative theory of communication (see Calhoun 1992; Mortensen 1977; Negt and Kluge 1993 [1972]).

In this context, the model serves two pur-

poses. First, it locates media on a conceptual map with the central institutions of contemporary society. Although Habermas (1989 [1962]) departed from early newspapers and literary clubs in Europe, the public sphere may be seen to include media of the first, second, as well as third degrees. What is commonly at issue, in both theoretical and normative approaches to media, is the nature of the interrelations between the spheres, especially their relative autonomy and the forces regulating conflicting interests. Evidently, the current media are governed as much by an economic logic as by a spirit of democratic dialogue, just as, in earlier periods, religious institutions and patrons of the arts set the conditions for cultural production. This handbook covers different theories of, and empirical findings about, the place of media in relation to the other spheres.

Second, the public sphere model offers an illustrative case of how the duality of structure, and of culture, operates. Rather than being a neutral organizational plan or an instance of 'false consciousness,' the model refers simultaneously to a *structure* of social institutions and to social *agents'* imagined relation to these institutions. In imagining this configuration, social agents reproduce, or contest, the institutional structure. Like the body (Johnson 1987), society is thus present in the human mind as a predisposition to act in particular ways. Because the public sphere model appears to inform the very organization of daily events, it is likely reproduced as common sense, as hegemony (Gramsci 1971) – 'a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives' (Williams 1977: 110). Nevertheless, the public sphere institutions have introduced a potential for time-out reflexivity, as performed by individuals as well as collectivities.

To sum up, the modern technological media as social institutions are embedded in, but enable reflexivity about, the time-in of everyday life. They are institutions-to-think-with. The terminology derives from Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991 [1962]), who spoke of objects-to-think-with within anthropology (see also Douglas 1987). Especially animals, that can be

the public
sphere

objects-to-
think-with

Society		State	
Private sphere		Public sphere	
	<i>Intimate sphere</i>	<i>Cultural public sphere</i>	The (agencies of the) state ensure(s) the material infrastructure, overall economic stability, law enforcement, and regulation of conflicts by economic, coercive, legal, and ideological means
<i>Object</i>	Religion, sexuality, emotion, friendship, etc.	Preaching, art, literature, music, etc.	
<i>Institution</i>	Family	Organizations, clubs	
	<i>Social sphere</i>	<i>Political public sphere</i>	
<i>Object</i>	Private economic activity, production and sale/purchase of commodities, including labor	'Politics' and 'the economy', including social issues	
<i>Institution</i>	Private enterprises and stores	Parliamentary organs, representing political parties, and the press	

Figure 1.3 A model of social spheres
 Source: Adapted from Habermas 1989 [1962]; Mortensen 1977

eaten, become means of classifying and hence mastering reality. It is not so much that they are 'good to eat,' but that they are 'good to think (with)' (Lévi-Strauss 1991 [1962]: 89). In a different culture, the same object may mean something else, or may not be considered good to think with.

Compared to other objects-to-think-with, media technologies have material and structural features that designate them as specific cultural resources, the key feature being the 'programmability' also of pre-computer media. Unlike other artefacts, they serve as flexible, programmable vehicles of meaning in different cultures and historical periods. (In addition, media may function like other objects-to-think-with when, for example, a painting becomes a national symbol or a film genre is taken as symptomatic of cultural decline.) The most common way to link concretely the domain of media and com-

munication research to wider cultural and social processes has probably been through models (McQuail and Windahl 1993; Meyrowitz 1993), being at once means of theoretical conceptualization and empirical operationalization.

THREE MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

In a 1975 benchmark article, James Carey (1989: 15) pinpointed the two communication models which arguably have been premises of most previous media research. (Several side- and substreams are documented in later chapters.) On the one hand, communication is the transmission of entities of meaning from a sender to a receiver via some contact. This model has typically informed social-scientific approaches to the field, and was given its classic formulation in Lasswell's (1966 [1948])

transmission
model