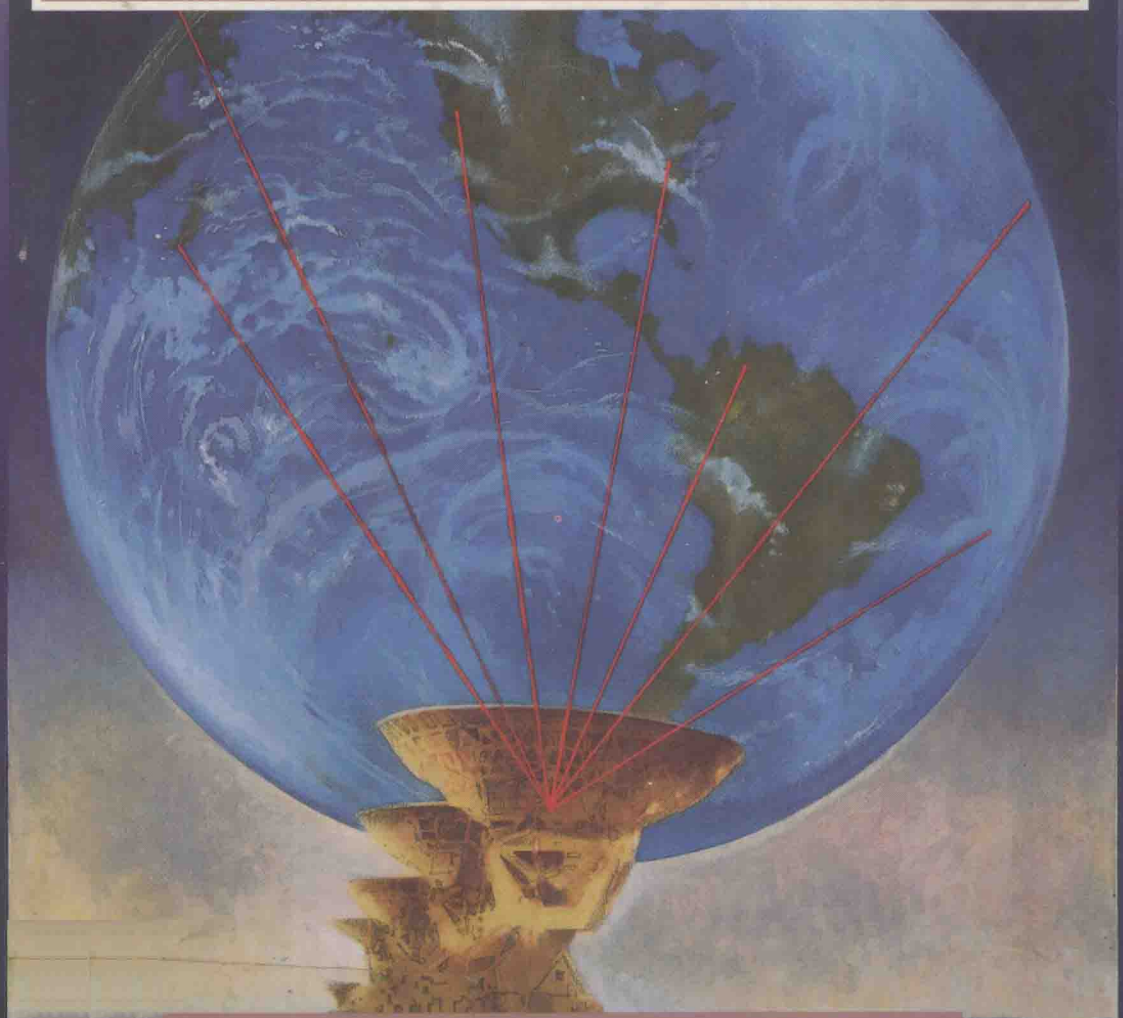
THE INTERPLAY OF INFLUENCE

THIRD EDITION

NEWS, ADVERTISING, POLITICS, AND THE MASS MEDIA



KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON • KARLYN KOHRS CAMPBELL

The Interplay of Influence
News, Advertising, Politics, and the Mass Media

THIRD EDITION

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Preface

In the mid-1970s, when we first began thinking about writing this book, the mass media looked and sounded the way they had for decades. There were three networks offering news. Live news was national, not international. If we wanted to watch the news or a favorite program, we had to adjust our schedules to the times they were aired. There were no VCRs. No way to zip through ads existed either. The NAB was a powerful self-regulator of the broadcast industry. The Fairness Doctrine was alive and well.

What we thought other books about the mass media had missed was a sense of the ways in which news, advertising, and politics interact, hence the title *Interplay of Influence.* We also concluded that a rhetorical perspective on this interaction would help readers to fathom and respond to the realities that the news, advertising, and politics shaped and presented.

A decade and a half later, new technology, changed regulation, and a proliferation of broadcast channels have made the interactions among news, advertising, and politics more complex and increased the subtlety of the persuasive strategies used by politicians, advertisers, and journalists. But the principles governing these interactions have changed very little.

Accordingly, this third edition is a chronicle of how things have changed and how they have remained the same. Simulcasts and Simulsats, VCRs and Camcorders, multiple channels and multipolar international politics, the demise of the Fairness Doctrine, and the retrenchment of the NAB are among the topics that were not on the horizon in the mid-70s but that are central to the mass media today. But now, as then, industries engage in self-regulation to forestall external regulation, the need to reach a purchasing audience drives commercial broadcasting and newspaper publishing, and newscasters prize drama, conflict, and novelty.

We thank our colleagues whose adoptions of *Interplay* have made this third edition possible and whose hard-headed critiques have improved its content. Our

increased emphasis on technology and politics in this edition reflects their advice. We also thank those at the University of Minnesota and the University of Pennsylvania whose good will and intelligence encourage and stimulate us. We thank the following reviewers for their helpful suggestions—Jane Banks, Syracuse University; Gina Daddario, State University of New York at Cortland; Kathryn Ingle, University of Virginia; and James L. Rogers, University of North Texas. Finally, we thank Robert and Paul with whom we carry on an endless interplay of influence.

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Contents

CHAPTER 5

Ratings and Revenues: The Audience in Mass Media Social Systems 125

CHAPTER 6

What Is Advertising? 157

CHAPTER 11

News and Advertising in the Political Campaign 263

CHAPTER 1

The Mass Media: An Introduction

Many Americans wake up to the sounds of music and news on a clock radio, wash and dress to the "Today" show or "Good Morning America," breakfast with the morning paper, commute to the patter of a favorite disc jockey, dine with the evening news, relax with prime-time television, and doze to the strains of music on the clock radio. Americans, on the average, have their television sets on more than seven hours each day and listen to radios more than eighteen hours each week, report reading some part of a daily newspaper four days a week, and about fifteen books each year. The mass media are undeniably a central part of life in the United States.

This book is about the influence of the mass media, specifically television, radio, and newspapers. Many books on this subject already exist, but this book considers not only how the media influence all of us, but how the media are, in turn, influenced by others—individuals, groups, government agencies, politicians, and other mass media. We hope to show that media persuasion works two ways: the media persuade us, but we and others can and do influence the media. This book is neither a history of nor an attack on media; it is a study of the communication and persuasion that take place through them.

Our perspective is rhetorical, focusing on how news, advertising, and political uses of the mass media shape conceptions of reality and influence attitudes and behaviors. We examine how consumer choices, individual and group protest, and regulatory mechanisms influence the mass media. As students of rhetoric, we know that any choice has an influence; whatever decisions newspeople, advertisers, or programmers make, the result will be a world view shaped by those decisions.

We are not, then, looking for evidence that media personnel make choices—that is an inevitable part of using symbols. Rather, we examine patterns of choice. The decisions of newspeople, advertisers, and programmers are significant, as they fall into systematic patterns that consistently present a particular view of

How Much Americans Say They Watch

According to a Gallup survey made in August 1990, 97 percent of Americans watch television on an average weekday. The typical American admits to watching 4.1 hours a day during the week, and 3.5 hours a day on the weekend; 17 percent watch more than 6 hours a day. The better educated and those with higher incomes claim to use television less frequently, yet television viewing is reported as 3.1 hours in households with more than $50,000 a year in income and 3.4 hours in college-educated households. The average U.S. household has 2.25 television sets (less than a third have only one set, and 14 percent have four or more sets). Sixty-two percent have cable. Almost 60 percent have a VCR.[a]

[a]George Gallup Jr., and Frank Newport, "TV's Stale Aftertaste," *Star Tribune*, 7 October 1990, p. 7 F.

Rhetoric

The faculty of discovering, in any given case, the available means of persuasion.
Aristotle

That art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end.
George Campbell

The use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.
Kenneth Burke

Rhetoric Is Unavoidable

Even if a given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a *deflection* of reality.[b]

[b]Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 45.

"reality." We hope to make explicit the assumptions underlying their choices. A rhetorical perspective is controversial in regard to news because we are used to thinking of the news as "objective," as a report of what occurs. But a rhetorical perspective is natural and common for political and product advertising and for analyzing politicians' efforts to influence the public by manipulating news coverage; these efforts are obviously and intentionally persuasive.

Because of our rhetorical perspective, we focus our attention on mass media messages that are most significant in terms of audience beliefs and attitudes: news, editorials and commentary, and advertising. Because these messages are all

Participation/Identification

To *participate* is to take part, to join in, or to share with others. To participate is to be actively involved. Participation refers to the active role of the audience in creating meaning and sharing experience. When participation occurs, source and audience jointly create the message.

To *identify* is to associate or affiliate yourself closely with a person or group or with their values. In this process you see yourself as like someone else, imagine yourself in another's position, or empathize with others' problems and rejoice in their successes.

part of political mass communication, this book ends with a discussion of news and advertising in political campaigns. The primary news channels in our society are television and newspapers, so most of our illustrations will be drawn from them. We pay particular attention to television, now the most pervasive and influential mass medium.

The ideas developed here are based on three fundamental assumptions. First, we assume that all communication is reciprocal, jointly created by the source and the audience. No one can commit an act of communication alone. It is an *inter*act (inter = between) or a *trans*act (trans = through, across) that comes into being because the participants cooperate in creating meaning and sharing experience. For this reason, participation and identification are key concepts in our analysis.

Second, we assume that each mass medium has unique resources for communication and influence because of the characteristic ways in which we receive, perceive, and interact with it. Each is a special kind of channel with distinctive capacities for inducing our participation. As a result, we contrast the communicative potentials of the various media.

Third, we assume that the nature and impact of mass-mediated messages cannot be separated from the economic and political system in which the mass media function. The mass media reflect certain cultural values and assumptions precisely because mass media outlets are large corporations supported by advertising and constrained by governmental and internal regulation and public pressure. For this reason, we explore the commercial bases of the mass media and detail the forms of regulation and the influences bearing on them.

This book is organized to examine news, advertising, and political communication, in that order. In each instance, we examine the media, first as persuaders who influence their audiences, then as entities influenced and regulated by citizens, groups, and government. In the case of the news, we look first at what news is, then examine its influence, and finally look at how the news media are influenced.

We then look at the ratings and revenues in all of the mass media before exploring the nature and types of commercial messages. We study the ways in

which advertising persuades as well as the ways in which advertisers can be influenced. The final sections on political communication synthesize material from news and advertising, as both are involved in political communication.

However, continuing our earlier format, we look first at how people are influenced politically through and by the media and then at how the media are, in turn, influenced by politicians and their supporters. We hope that these chapters will provide an understanding of how mass media influence and are, in turn, influenced.

The mass media are so familiar, so much a part of our everyday lives, that we all feel we know and understand them. But it is precisely because they are so familiar that we need to study them. Familiarity, for example, may blind us to the distinct kind of communication that takes place through the mass media, and especially to the processes by which they influence us.

One important distinction between mass communication and other forms of communication in the United States is their commercial basis: *the primary function of the mass media is to attract and hold a large audience for advertisers.* They also inform and entertain, of course; but informing and entertaining are only means to the end of providing a mass audience for advertisers.

Let us look in more detail at some of the ways in which mass communication is unique.

Distinctive Characteristics of Mass Communication

Mass communication is affected by its context—the industrial, affluent, mass society—and mass communication differs in important ways from other forms of communication. It differs not only because it is commercial, but also in terms of its audience, its messages, and its sources.[1]

The Audience

The audience for mass communication is *large*; it is a mass audience. This means that the audience is made up of so many people that it would be impossible for them to meet and interact face to face. The members of the audience are also *anonymous*; that is, audience members know others are watching, listening, or reading, but they do not know just who the others are. Note that the mass audience is thus the opposite of a *group*, which is defined as a small number of people who can meet and talk face to face, who come to know each other, and who develop attachments to each other. Finally, the mass audience is *heterogeneous*; it is made up of all sorts of people. The mass audience is so varied because nearly everyone has access to the media—you can read or watch or listen whether you are old or young, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, in a city or on a farm.

There are television sets in 98 percent of U.S. households, radios in over 99 percent, and most Americans can afford a newspaper, a magazine, or a paper-

1. The distinctions outlined here are those described by Charles Wright in *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*, 3rd ed. (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 6–9.