2ND EDITION

MEDIA
CULTURE
AND
SOCIETY

PAUL HODKINSON

an introduction

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Hodkinson is a sociologist whose work is focused upon youth cultures, online communications, contemporary fatherhood and the relationships between media and cultural identities. He is author of *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* and *Media, Culture and Society*. He is also co-editor of *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes* (with Wolfgang Deike) and *Ageing and Youth Cultures* (with Andy Bennett). He has published a wide range of journal articles and book chapters across the range of his interests.

His most recent research projects have focused on ageing and youth cultures, experiences of targeted harassment among subcultural participants and fathers who are primary or equal carers for young children. He is based in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey where he teaches and supervises on media, music and youth cultures.

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps more than ever before, media and communication are at the centre of everyday lives. At work, at home, in public spaces or while travelling from one location to another, we are rarely far away from mediated sounds, images or words, whether in the form of television, websites, magazines, mobile apps, newspapers, music or social media. On our own and in the company of others, media entertain us, enable connections with friends and communities, provide interpretations of the world around us and offer resources for the forging of identities and imaginations. And their importance to everyday lives and routines suggests that media also must have the most significant implications for the nature and character of the broader culture and society that surround us. We live, it may be argued, in a media culture, a media society. This book provides an introduction to the relationships between media and the broader social and cultural world in which they operate.

MEDIA, CULTURE, SOCIETY

It is worth remembering that *media* is the plural of the term *medium*, which refers, essentially, to the means through which content is communicated between an origin and a destination. It could be argued that the human body acts as the first and most fundamental medium in this respect, transferring thoughts, ideas and emotions into speech or gestures audible or visible to others. Yet our concern here is with the use of artificial forms of media to enhance and extend our communicative capacity beyond the capabilities of our own bodies, transforming the range of expression open to us and mediating what we say over longer distances or to greater numbers of people, for example. At one extreme, such media may enable each of us to interact with friends or acquaintances without the need to be in the same room, city or even country, while on the other, they may enable a relatively small number of professional media producers to transmit large volumes of content to audiences of millions. Such producers, along with the technologies they utilise and content they distribute, are often collectively referred to as 'the media' and this certainly has become an acceptable use of the term. It remains important, however, to understand media as plural and diverse. Although contemporary large-scale 'mass media' figure heavily in our discussions, we'll focus on a broad range of different types and scales of communication involving a plethora of organisations, communities and individuals. This is of particular importance in the context of a digital media age in which the interrelationships between traditional forms of mass media and a range of more interactive forms of communication have become pivotal.

Two connected senses of the word *culture* are of importance to our discussions in this book, both of which are identified in the influential writings of Raymond Williams (1988; 1989) on the subject. First, culture is sometimes used in a specific sense to refer to the worlds of creative expression or, as Williams puts it, 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (1988: 90). Traditionally this sense of the term was reserved for elite or 'high' forms of literature, music, art and theatre, but increasingly its use also encapsulates the larger realm of so-called *popular culture*, including pop music and popular fiction or drama, for example. As Williams puts it, 'culture is ordinary' (1989: 3). At certain points, we'll use the term culture in this more restricted sense, including as a means to refer to mediated forms and practices of expression.