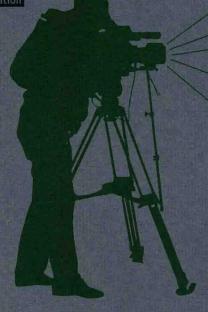
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(美) ALISON ALEXANDER JARICE HANSON 编

# TAKING SIDES立

辩证思维训练

场

## 传媒与社会篇

CLASHING VIEWS IN
MASS, MEDIA, AND SOCIET



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### 传媒与社会篇

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CLASHING VIEWS IN

MASS MEDIA AND SOCIETY



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Twelfth Edition

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### 英语思辨, 攻错他山

#### 朱绩崧

学界奉为圭臬的《牛津英语大词典》(*The Oxford English Dictionary*)在 side (n.)<sup>1</sup>条目的18.a.义项里,把18.b.所收词组"to take a (or one's) side, take sides. Also to hold side (with one)"里的side解释为[t]he position or interests of one person, party, etc., in contrast to that of an opposing one,个人立场相反、党派利益对立之意,了然无疑。

惜我愚钝,近年才明白,take sides不仅仅是英语词典里的一个词组,甚至可说是英国议会制度的根本;而议会制度,实在是英国对人类文明进步最大的贡献之一:通过take sides,把思辨,而非独断专行,尊奉为国事决策那不可撼动的核心机制。我们不会忘记,电影《铁娘子》(The Iron Lady)里梅里尔·斯特里普(Meryl Streep)新学一口英国腔就来西敏寺宫滔滔激辩的场景,那不是骂街,虽然嘘声迭起,那是两股思想在龙争虎斗,最终推进历史。

谈到西方好争论、善思辨的传统,古希腊已臻化境,垂范千古。但这并不意 味着我国真如某些评论家所言,为定于一尊的儒学所戕害,使得读书人唯服从传 承是务,从不挑战权威。

《古文观止》读到最后几卷,便会看到编注者吴楚材、吴调侯叔侄鼓励读者对古时定论大胆质疑的用心。如建文忠臣方孝孺的名篇《豫让论》,标新立异,一反古说,直指春秋时代为主雪仇的刺客豫让"不能扶危于未乱,而捐躯于既败者",不配"国士"之誉。

甚至,在我们历史课本一向蔑之为"埋头故纸"、"皓首穷经"的乾嘉学派里,多数学者的考据也都具有很高的思辨性。从王念孙的《读书杂志》、刘宝楠的《论语正义》,到戴震"由字义以明经义"的治学方法和段玉裁《东原先生年谱》所载的戴氏札记——"仆生平著述最大者为《孟子字义疏证》一书,此正人心之要。今人无论正邪,尽以意见误名之曰理,而祸斯民,故《疏证》不得不作"——从文本到现实,立场鲜明,无不指向对真理的上下求索。

读书为求真。这句话,是儿时由老师灌输给我的,我不曾怀疑过。可也正是老师告诉我"乾嘉学派在历史上的作用是反动的"、"高考答题时,如遇到岳飞,不能勾选为民族英雄,他打的仗是人民内部矛盾"等等当年不容我怀疑辩驳的"事实"。

往事固不可追,令我大失所望的却是"寓教于乐"、"反对应试教育"了不知凡几年,中小学生竟在变本加厉地背记历史、语文的"标准答案",到了易只字则为错的地步。有人甚至把中小学生语文水平的普遍降低归咎于英语课太多,视母语、外语修习为零和博弈,全然不去审视、拷问、批判当下严重阻碍思辨与创造的文科教育体制本身。试问这样的教育,又如何能培养出活泼泼的人来?如何能引导他们求真?

求真,真真何其不易也。有时,权威发声,莫敢深究。有时,缺乏条件,无从寻觅。信息爆炸、思路开阔的今天,更多情况下是众说纷纭,莫衷一是,乃至有时在"是"与"非"这两者之间,都不知何从矣。

而相对综合型、重意合(parataxis)的汉语,英语是分析型语言,重形合(hypotaxis),语法规则更明确,对指代、性数格一致等形式要求更高,且有强烈的时态观。不能不说,这在很大程度上避免了汉语常见的因文害意:把一些站不住脚的歪理,用华丽辞藻一包装,就算是"美文佳构"了。(这方面,韩愈的个别名作,如为名教张目的《原道》,可算反面教材,远逊柳宗元的《驳复仇议》。后者的论理,简朴而流畅,本质上与今天英美法院经典判词如出一辙,堪称我国古代taking sides的典范。)加之英美学者好辩的传统在当代通过课堂教育、学术论文等形式得以强化,思辨的局面委实优于我国。

我素为古罗马倾倒,曾读国人编著的几种罗马史,又看了英国剑桥大学克里斯托弗·凯利(Christopher Kelly)教授写的《罗马帝国简史》(The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction),后者末章呈现的学者思辨生动别致,过目难忘,非我国传统重介绍"史实"的史书可比: 20世纪初,英国历史学家、律师、自由党政治家詹姆斯·布赖斯(James Bryce)认为罗马帝国与大英帝国非常相似,都能维持高水平的内部和平与秩序,民人深谙工程技术,勇猛活跃,不畏困苦;牛津古代史教授弗朗西斯·哈弗菲尔德(Francis Haverfield)进一步说明,罗马帝国的成功,在于把行省居民同化为一个秩序井然、富有凝聚力的文明;曾奉职印度的英国古典学会会长埃弗林·巴林(Evelyn Baring)持不同看法,在"同化"问题上,大英帝国与罗马帝国有不可弥合的区别,单论印度语言、宗教、种族的多样性,就和罗马人征服的任何地区不同;哈弗菲尔德不同意巴林,认为英国之所以有印度问题,是因为征服印度时,印度已经发展成发达社会,文明形态稳固;牛津的古代史专家、考古学家D. G. 霍加斯(D. G. Hogarth)也反对巴林,认为罗马帝国有三个阶段,即"尚未同化"、"有意同化"、"积极同化",大英帝国对印度犹处"尚未同化"的第一阶段。

把学者taking sides过程中的各种观点陈列出来,供读者思辨,是我国各阶段教材的短板。同时,也应注意,为提高我国学生的思辨水平以及英语能力,taking sides的内容不宜学科专业化程度过高(上述关于罗马帝国与大英帝国的争辩即有此虞),还是具有一定社会影响力、为民众熟知的话题更宜为组织教材的出发点。

美国著名的Taking Sides丛书,其宗旨正在于满足成长中的思考者兼英语学习者的需要。这套书系,诞生于20世纪80年代,迄今出版52种专题分册,多数一版再版,其中传媒凡12版,经济、环境达15版,社会、教育更已有17版之多。畅销程度,不劳赘言。

从题材看,外研社首批择取的七册分别覆盖了社会、教育、经济、环境、科技、大众传媒与全球性问题,无一不是当下公众话题的焦点。但呈现的手法却很"单一",即先提出问题,再摆出正反双方最典型、最具说服力的论证,最后引导读者作进一步的阅读与思考:

问: 计算机对学生成长是否有副作用?

正:有。学校对电脑技术的迷信与滥用,导致学生心智发育与创造力受损。

反:无。如对电脑善加利用,能促进教学革新,从而使学生获益。

后记:"学校"或许正在由"地点"转变为"概念",随着计算机 技术的进步,许多教育手段都不必在课堂实施,但随之而来有 许多新问题,需要探讨。多媒体能让学生与更多的信息产生互 动,但往往也减少了学生与学生、学生与所在环境之间的互 动。相关研究请见……(扩展阅读涉及三十余处学术资源)

(《教育篇》第10话题)

目录并不冗长,但当读者学完全书,必会惊喜地发现,自己在这一领域的知识结构已搭建得初具规模。摆在面前的问题往往庞大空疏,报章常见,迄无公断。从这个角度思考,有这样的道理可知;从那个方面切入,有那样的结论可得。读者的任务,就是跟着两派的思路各走一遍,最终判定哪派有理。当然,结果也可能是两派皆不尽善,或者需要修正调和之后才能获得正解。但无论如何,这一过程本身,实在是智力上的一次奥德修斯式的旅行(an intellectual odyssey)。

之所以要用荷马史诗的隐喻,是因为读Taking Sides与看街边吵架或中学生议论文最根本的差别,就是需要调用的思想、学术资源极多。以《社会篇》第8话题为例,菲利普·迪瓦恩(Philip E. Devine)在得出"酷刑不可保留"的结论之前,将自由主义政治学、康德学说、功利主义、自然法等——引出,要言不烦。对迪瓦恩这位哲学学者而言,这些理论或许早已熟烂于胸。但对一般读者而言,为了确证作者没有断章取义,至少得就上述内容再读通几本导论、简介之类的书。顺便一提,酷刑当否的问题,我在近年畅销的一部法律通俗读物《法治》(The Rule of Law)论恐怖主义的一章中,也曾读到评论。作者、已故英国前首席大法官汤姆·宾厄姆(Tom Bingham)反对向恐怖主义犯罪嫌疑人施以酷刑的理由本质上与孔子的"己所不欲,勿施于人"无异,认为这是对法治原则的破坏。与迪瓦恩相较,其说直指人心,唯于学理微缺然。

事实上, Taking Sides书系所选文章, 无论篇幅修短, 莫不观点鲜明, 针锋相对, 而每一方都有强大的理据支撑, 乍看难以撼动。由此, 我们也不得不感叹, 人类文明在今天呈现出的多样性, 自有其道理, 无论是同一文明内还是不同文明间发生的碰撞冲突, 其背后都有复杂的理性动因, 绝非皂白可以分明, 需要我们全面观察, 深度分析, 最终选定立场。

我出身英文系,工作后常应媒体之邀,写些时事评论。落笔之前,现已养成习惯,会去新浪微博、知乎、Quora等网站,浏览各方的理性评论,在争议极大的问题上,熟悉*Taking Sides*封面上印的那两个词:Clashing Views(对立观点)。这是我在"后大学"时期补上的一堂课。

回想本科求学时,这方面所受教育几乎为零。教育的重点是背同义词、反义词

与词形变化。文章,读通便好,却读不透,因为读通之后,总觉所言有理,不会想着去倾听"不同的声音"。这个弊端,到写毕业论文时曝露无疑:说明文还凑合,议论文就写不好了。名虽论文,连核心的论点都渺不可寻。这几年,本专业内,我还常常看到号称博士论文的研究综述,或者连文献回顾都没有的论文。

为了矫正这一通病,不少学校从编教材上下功夫,课文引入争议性话题,意在以此激发学生的critical thinking——"批判性思维"遂成高校英语教师培训班极为青睐的广告亮点。可惜,在我有限的学术视野内,能一变风气的作品,尚阙如焉。我看到过浅尝辄止者,其内一篇课文,取自美国某小报,讲一对夫妻人工受孕后离婚,胚胎留在医院冰箱里,不知如何处置,遂对簿公堂。最终,作者只是提出问题,没能向学生指出解决的途径。如果有至少两种具备一定思想深度与差异性的观点呈现在教材里,附上扩展研读的书目、提要,教育的效果定会面目一新,我们也会真正地开始在语言教育中培养思想者,而不只是机械的记忆者、复制者。这一任务,如前所示,Taking Sides完全胜任。

我乐于推荐该书系作精读教材的另一项理由在于语言质量。就量而言,目前的精读课(Intensive Reading),阅读量普遍过低,一两千词的文章,一读就是十天半月,课程设计者不明白唯有大数量与短时间的结合,方成就intensive之效。与此相比,以本书系一卷之量,读一学期,日均1500词左右,恰到好处。以质而论,本书系符合我的外语习得理念:中高阶学生,应以非虚构作品(non-fiction)为"主食"。例如,本书系中有大量美国国会证言(congressional testimony),思维严谨,语言地道,学习西方法律、外交以及高等翻译等专业的学生如能熟读成诵,其英语学习的眼界势必更上层楼。从实用的角度看,有理、有力、有节的明快文风才是日常工作、生活所需,是语言的"常态";文学作品中因作者意图而创造出的丰富表达,只是语言的"变态"。由常人变,初地坚固,发展空间亦大。反是,恐事倍功半。

至于"泛读",也有一个基于*Taking Sides*的策略可行:各个话题牵涉到的著作,一学期可读上三五本。如读《环境篇》,可辅读雷切尔·卡森(Rachel Carson)的《寂静的春天》(*Silent Spring*);读《科技与社会篇》,可辅读阿道司·赫胥黎(Aldous Huxley)的《美丽新世界》(*Brave New World*)。此时,不妨多些文学作品,加深对"精读"义理的体悟思辨,可全"文以载道"之功。

此外,Taking Sides对如今各高校流行的英语辩论也有直接的指导作用,无论其辩题还是论据,都可在模拟阶段直接取用。我更相信,认真研读过本书系的学生,其论文一定不会沦为简介、综述,不会抄袭维基、百度,因为他们掌握了论文写作的核心技术:如何灵巧运用事实与逻辑来作严肃的学术之论,而非执着于印象、习惯、偏见的意气之争。

总之,希望Taking Sides书系的引进,能综合我国英语学生的语言习得与思维训练,既提升交流的效率,更开启求真的法门,在乱云飞渡的当今时代,帮助读者迅速达成思想之质与辞藻之文的兼美共谐。



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### Issue 1. Do Media Cause Individuals to Develop Negative Body Images? 1

- YES: Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs, from "What Kinds of Subjects and Objects? Gender, Consumer Culture, and Convergence," in *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness* (New York University Press, 2009)
- NO: Michael P. Levine and Sarah K. Murnen, from "Everybody Knows That Mass Media Are/Are Not [pick one] a Cause of Eating Disorders': A Critical Review of Evidence for a Causal Link Between Media, Negative Body Image, and Disordered Eating in Females," Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology (2009)

Shari Dworkin and Faye Wachs discuss the results of their content analysis of health magazine ads and find that the ads tell men and women that a healthy body is attainable if they buy the products and pamper themselves. Fat becomes something to be feared, and grooming practices and fashion are "sold" as imperatives for both men and women. Michael Levine and Sarah Murnen also investigate magazine ads, but find the assumption that media cause eating disorders to be too limited. Instead, they cite a wide range of social, behavioral, and cultural issues over time to understand the complex conditions under which girls begin to adopt negative body issues that result in eating disorders.

#### Issue 2. Do Video Games Encourage Violent Behavior? 29

- YES: Craig A. Anderson, from "FAQs on Violent Video Games and Other Media Violence," www.education.com
- NO: Henry Jenkins, from "Reality Bytes: Eight Myths About Video Games Debunked," www.pbs.org/kcts/videogamerevolution/impact/myths.html

Craig A. Anderson is an expert on the effect of violence in television and film. Based on extensive research, he holds the position that video games prompt young people toward even more aggression and violence than do other media content. Henry Jenkins tackles a broad array of misconceptions about the place and impact of video games on society. He argues that the primary audience is not children, that violence is not increasing in society, and that concerns about isolation, desensitization, and violence are overblown.

#### Is Advertising Good for Society? Issue 3.

- YES: John E. Calfee, from "How Advertising Informs to Our Benefit," Consumers' Research (April 1998)
- Dinyar Godrej, from "How the Ad Industry Pins Us Down," New NO: Internationalist (September 2006)

John Calfee takes the position that advertising is very useful to people and that the information that advertising imparts helps consumers make better decisions. He maintains that the benefits of advertising far outweigh the negative criticisms. Dinyar Godrej makes the claim that advertising doesn't really tell us anything new about products, but instead, it acts upon our emotions to create anxiety if we don't buy products. The result, then, is a culture in which we consume more than we need to, and still feel bad about ourselves. This type of consumer culture then permeates our lifestyles.

#### Issue 4. Does Fake News Mislead the Public? 74

- YES: Julia R. Fox, Glory Koloen, and Volkan Sahin, from "No Joke: A Comparison of Substance in The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and Broadcast Network Television Coverage of the 2004 Presidential Election Campaign," Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media (June 2007)
- Barry A. Hollander, from "Late-Night Learning: Do NO: Entertainment Programs Increase Political Campaign Knowledge for Young Viewers?" Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media (December 2005)

The study by Fox et al. examined political coverage of the first presidential debate and the political convention on The Daily Show and on network nightly newscasts. The study found the network coverage to be more hype than substance, and The Daily Show to be more humor than substance. The amount of substantive information between the two newscasts was about the same for both the story and for the entire half-hour program. Barry Hollander examined learning from comedy and late-night programs. National survey data were used to examine whether exposure to comedy and late-night programs actually informs viewers, focusing on recall and recognition. Some support is found for the prediction that the consumption of such programs is more associated with recognition of information than with actual recall.

#### Issue 5. Does Online Communication Compromise the Rights of an Individual When Information Is "Anonymous"? 110

- YES: Neil Swidey, from "Inside the Mind of the Anonymous Online Poster," Boston.com (June 20, 2010)
- NO: Ian Lloyd, from "Privacy, Anonymity and the Internet," Electronic Journal of Comparative Law (vol. 13, no. 1, March 2009)

Neil Swidey addresses the issue of anonymous online posters who register their opinions on the Boston Globe Web site, www.Boston. com. He discusses how some abusive and vitriolic postings sometimes have to be eliminated by site moderators, and how important it is to some people to have access to posting their opinions online. Unlike traditional newspapers, where comments to the editor contain a reader's name and address, the anonymous poster sometimes becomes so offensive that the nature and value of online commentary are called into question. In examining the legal relationship between privacy and anonymity, lan Lloyd provides both a legal approach toward protecting privacy and anonymity, and provides examples of how everyday behavior challenges our expectations of anonymity and privacy when data collections violate a person's reasonable expectation of privacy. He writes that although the legal approach toward more online communication attempts to protect personal rights, good intentions often backfire, and life in the digital age comes with some possible breaches of trust.

### Issue 6. Do Copyright Laws Protect Ownership of Intellectual Property? 135

- YES: Siva Vaidhyanathan, from "Copyright Jungle," Columbia Journalism Review (September/October 2006)
- NO: **Stephanie** C. **Ardito**, from "MySpace and YouTube Meet the Copyright Cops," *Searcher* (May 2007)

In this selection, Siva Vaidhyanathan discusses how applications of copyright to music, film, publishing, and software companies all result in a complex system of trying to protect original ownership of intellectual property. The author gives several examples, including Google's efforts to digitize entire libraries, but reminds us that copyright also gives owners the right to say no. Stephanie Ardito examines how social networking sites have created problems for protecting copyright, because laws and enforcement of copyright law are so difficult. She believes big media companies and social networking sites will ultimately give up trying to enforce copyright, because it is too expensive and time consuming.

#### Issue 7. Should Newspapers Shut Down Their Presses? 163

- YES: Clay Shirky, from "Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable," www.shirky.com/weblog/2009/03/newspapers-and-thinking-the-unthinkable/
- NO: Paul Farhi, from "A Bright Future for Newspapers," American Journalism Review (June/July 2005)

Clay Shirky argues that the old economies of newspapers are destroyed in the digital age. This is a revolution similar to that which occurred with the invention of the printing press. No one knows what the future will hold, but we can only hope that journalism is not lost with the demise of newspapers. All news media are facing challenges in these difficult economic times. Paul Farhi, a Washington Post staff writer, argues that newspapers have unique competitive advantages that should assure that the worst case won't happen.

#### Issue 8. Are Youth Indifferent to News and Politics? 184

YES: David T. Z. Mindich, from "Journalism and Citizenship: Making the Connection," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 2008)

NO: Pew Internet & American Life Project, from *The Internet and Civic Engagement* (September 2009), www.pewinternet.org

Author and professor David T. Z. Mindich addresses the sobering facts of why youth do not follow the news. He links this with low voter turnout, a widening knowledge gap between younger and older citizens, and a lack of trust in news media. The author of *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*, Mindich explores the essential link between news and information and being an informed and engaged citizen. The Pew Internet & American Life Project released *The Internet and Civic Engagement* in 2009. This report examined whether the Internet could change long-established patterns of civic and political involvement. Based on a sample of more than 2,000 adults, the project found that new forms of civic engagement based on the Internet, blogs, and social media have the potential to alter long-standing patterns of information and engagement of younger voters.

### Issue 9. Are Online Services Responsible for an Increase in Bullying and Harassment? 203

- YES: Penny A. Leisring, from "Stalking Made Easy: How Information and Communication Technologies Are Influencing the Way People Monitor and Harass One Another," in Sharon Kleinman, ed., *The Culture of Efficiency* (Peter Lang, 2009)
- NO: Amanda Lenhart, from "Cyberbullying and Online Teens," Pew Internet & American Life Project (June 27, 2007)

Penny Leisring discusses negative effects of using online technology to cyberstalk or harass someone. Use of social networking, e-mail, GPS systems, cell phone spamming, and caller ID all can be used to create a threatening or hostile environment for those people who use them for antisocial purposes. The author also addresses the situations that lend themselves most often to these undesirable uses of communication technology, such as in the break-up of romantic relationships, abusive relationships, or just plain hostile behaviors and interactions. Amanda Lenhart reports the findings of a Pew Internet & American Life Project that investigated the likelihood of teen harassment and cyberbullying and finds that the most likely candidates to experience online abuse are girls between the ages of 15 and 17, though the reported statistics for all teens of both genders are disturbing. However, Amanda Lenhart reports that, still, more teens report being bullied offline than online.

## Issue 10. Are People Better Informed in the Information Society? 223

- YES: Linda A. Jackson, Alexander von Eye, Frank A. Biocca, Gretchen Barbatsis, Yong Zhao, and Hiram E. Fitzgerald, from "Does Home Internet Use Influence the Academic Performance of Low-Income Children?" *Developmental Psychology* (vol. 42, no. 3, 2006)
- NO: Mark Bauerlein, from The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Tarcher/Penguin, 2008)

Linda Jackson et al. conducted a 16-month survey of Internet use by youth age 10–18 in low-income homes. They found that youth who used the Internet more had higher scores on standardized tests of reading achievement and higher GPAs. This work supports the optimism surrounding the Internet as a tool to level the educational playing field. Mark Bauerlein finds the hopes for better-educated youth in the digital age to be an empty promise. Youth spend much of their leisure time in front of computer and television screens, but the information age has failed to produce a well-informed, thoughtful public. Instead we have a nation of know-nothings who don't read, follow politics, or vote—and who can't compete internationally.

Internet References 251 Contributors to This Volume 254 This topic guide suggests how the selections in this book relate to the subjects covered in your course. You may want to use the topics listed on these pages to search the Web more easily. They are arranged to reflect the issues of this Taking Sides reader. You can link to these sites by going to www. mhhe.com/cls. All the articles that relate to each topic are listed below the bold-faced term.

#### Advertising

3. Is Advertising Good for Society?

#### Body Image

 Do Media Cause Individuals to Develop Negative Body Images?

#### Cultural Images

 Do Media Cause Individuals to Develop Negative Body Images?

#### Cyberbullying

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Do Copyright Laws Protect Ownership of Intellectual Property?

#### First Amendment

Does Online Communication Compromise the Rights of an Individual When Information Is "Anonymous"?

#### Information Age

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#### Internet

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#### Journalism

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- 7. Should Newspapers Shut Down Their Presses?
- 8. Are Youth Indifferent to News and Politics?

#### Media Law

- 5. Does Online Communication Compromise the Rights of an Individual When Information Is "Anonymous"?
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#### Media Businesses

- 3. Is Advertising Good for Society?
- 7. Should Newspapers Shut Down Their Presses?

#### **Politics**

- 4. Does Fake News Mislead the Public?
- 8. Are Youth Indifferent to News and Politics?

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#### Newspapers

7. Should Newspapers Shut Down Their Presses?

#### **Privacy**

Does Online Communication Compromise the Rights of an Individual When Information Is "Anonymous"?

#### Representations in Media

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#### **Video Games**

2. Do Video Games Encourage Violent Behavior?

#### Violence

2. Do Video Games Encourage Violent Behavior?



# Ways of Thinking about Mass Media and Society

Alison Alexander and Jarice Hanson

Media are everywhere in the industrialized world today. It is likely that anyone reading this book has access to more forms of media than their grandparents could have ever dreamed of. Many readers are probably adept at multitasking—a term unheard of when this book series began in 1987. Many readers are probably adept at using so many technologies that deliver content over the Internet or cell phones that it almost seems strange to think that broadcast TV, cable TV, film, radio, newspapers, books and magazines, and the recording industry all once were thought of as different forms of media, all delivered in different ways, and all with different economic structures. The convergence of these media over wired and wireless distribution forms now presents us with words, sounds, and images that often blur former distinctions among media forms and industries.

Media are also often scapegoats for the problems of society. Sometimes the relationship of social issues and media seems too obvious *not* to have some connection. For example, violence in the media may be a reflection of society, or, as some critics claim, violence in the media makes it seem that violence in society is the norm. But in reality, one important reason that the media are so often blamed for social problems is that the media are so pervasive. Their very ubiquity gives them the status that makes them seem more influential than they actually are. If one were to look at the statistics on violence in the United States, it would be possible to see that there are fewer violent acts today than in recent history—but the presence of this violence in the media, through reportage or fictional representation, makes it appear more prevalent.

There are many approaches to investigating the relationships that are suggested by media and society. From an organizational perspective, the producers of media must find content and distribution forms that will be profitable, and therefore, they have a unique outlook on the audience as consumers. From the perspective of the creative artist, the profit motive may be important, but the exploration of the unique communicative power of