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Normative Issues for News as Cultural Celebration

Although communications research has rapidly expanded its storehouse of models and data over the last two decades, the significance of these new resources for media ethics remains unrealized. This paper draws out some of the ethical implications from the emerging insight that media, even news media, provide audiences with opportunities to celebrate themselves, their culture, and human heritage.

My essay engages in three tasks: a delineation of what it means to view news as cultural celebration, an assessment of whether standard approaches to media ethics seem applicable to this notion of news, and a drafting of the normative issues at stake in this version of the journalistic enterprise.

News as Cultural Celebration

The notion that a "mass communication" does more than just transfer bits of information from sender to receiver can be traced back at least to Lasswell's three social functions of the media: (a) surveillance of the environment to disclose threats against community values, (b) convocation of activities and groups in society to make a response, and (c) transmission of the social inheritance (Lasswell, 1960, pp. 114-115; Janowitz, 1968-1969, p. 648).

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Application of this notion to news emerged slowly and with negative connotations in the 1970s as critics began to study television news. Weaver (1972) argued, for example, that television reports focus on a representative segment of an unfolding event through a dramatized and personalized form of presentation. Newscasters allegedly choose both segment and form in order to generate audience interest, rather than to insure that politically essential facts get to viewers. Election coverage, for example, used a horse-race theme and frame to make audiences more attentive to campaigns.

Sperry (1976) categorized news as a ritualized, narrative response to the persistent concern of audiences about threats to their safety. In her view, the presentational form most attractive to viewers pits any novel and threatening disruption against an easily recognizable hero figure who eventually returns the world to serenity. Newscasters structure stories in this form to maintain audience flow.

Dahlgren (1982) argued that those journalistic "ways of seeing" which get continuously promoted operate as agencies of "ongoing socialization." In network coverage about Third World nations, he discovered the recurring, mythic characterization of them as unstable, primitive, and prone to violence—a characterization which reinforced a hegemonic "way of seeing" reality for middle class Americans. Gitlin (1980) discovered a somewhat comparable hegemonic framing of antiwar groups in America during the Vietnam conflict. According to his analysis, mainstream institutions and their representatives were inadvertently depicted by news as the most legitimate mediators of cultural and social conflict.

None of these critics categorizes news framing as an act of conscious bias or manipulation. But each implies that such a procedure is defective and requires remedy. Curiously, the critics disagree about what has caused the defect or how it should be remedied. Weaver and Sperry see "audience maintenance" as the major explanatory factor, while Dahlgren and Gitlin point to "hegemony."

Although Hartley (1982, pp. 81-86) also considered news as a structuring of social meaning from raw experience, he viewed the framing process as inherent in language itself and not simply the result of a specific economics, ideology, or defect. News, in this view, celebrates the cultural consensus at the core of the symbol system that any human group embraces as its own. News narratives proceed from the basic dramatic conflict between "us" and "them," where "us" is the culture/nation/public/viewer/family/news reader/news institution, and "them" is striker/foreign dictator/foreign power/the weather/fate/bureaucracy/accessed voice, etc." (Hartley, p. 116).

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1982, pp. 10-11) saw this dramatic structuring and replaying of events as a universal form of social cohesion and transformation

employed whenever some breach or threat has occurred in the normal working of a society. Turner did not include news in his list of contemporary performative genres that operate as specialized, secular counterparts to primitive rites of passage, although Knight and Dean (1982) see parallels between rites of social cohesion and "ritual" news. Nonetheless, the contemporary breaches that threaten order and evoke Turner's notion of social drama provide much of the grist for today's journalistic mill.

Borrowing from Turner, one might say that news seems to "generate narratives from the brute facts" in order "to lay hold of the factors making for integration in a given situation" (Turner, p. 76). Since the fluidity of modern life leads any breach to appear simultaneously destructive and constructive, news today (like earlier rituals and legal procedures) operates as a "declaration of form against indeterminacy" (Moore, 1978, p. 48; Turner, p. 77). It rearticulates through dramatic narrative "opposing values and goals in a meaningful structure, the plot of which makes cultural sense" (Turner, pp. 86-87) and celebrates the consensus it applies to the values and actors at odds in the original event (Turner, p. 75).

For Carey (1975), the notion of news "as sharing, participation, association, fellowship, and the possession of a common faith" represents the insight of a legitimate, Western understanding of communication that has been overlooked in American research. News, according to this view, constructs "an artificial though nonetheless real symbolic order which operates not to provide information but confirmation" (pp. 6-7). Instead of describing the world, it "portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it" (p. 9).

Goethals (1981) maintained that network news operates as a form of cultural celebration even when newscasters aim merely at informing citizens through the objective presentation of data (pp. 130-131). She ascribes this function to the fact that news has become a daily, secular ritual—reenacting events thought to be crucial for the community, renewing the citizen's faith in a center of values, and confirming his/her place in the larger symbolic order (pp. 8-10).

"Uses and gratifications" research could probably also help substantiate the celebratory theory of news. Graber (1984), for example, suggested that people turn to news for more than information. Some use news "to have material for small talk with others, to occupy their empty time, or to gain a sense of security and social adequacy" (p. 107). Other motivations for media participation include the pleasurable feeling it's supposed to provide, the way it passes the time, and the escape it permits from the ordinary cares of the day (Bower, 1973, p. 62). All these motives seem to entail getting out of one's secondary world and entering the primary world

(Phelan, 1980, pp. 28-46).

Certain findings from content analysis studies might also help substantiate the notion of news as cultural celebration. Consider the survey by Gans of 1967, 1971, and 1975 coverage by CBS, NBC, *Newsweek*, and *Time*. He found that most stories surveyed focused on questions of order and leadership and reinforced the "American" values of responsible capitalism, altruistic democracy, small-town pastoralism, individualism, ethnocentrism, and moderation (Gans, 1979, pp. 3-69). The coverage of the Women's Movement and SDS discussed by Tuchman (1974, pp. 1-39; 1978, pp. 133-155; 1978) and Gitlin (1980, pp. 252-282) in terms of hegemony could also point to the validity of a celebratory understanding of news.

Given audience and content findings such as these, the celebratory model of news probably deserves more serious attention than, in Carey's view, American scholarship has given it. When Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm reduce all theories of the press to two, for example, they are not distinguishing between models of information transfer and those of community celebration. By classifying news as either authoritarian or libertarian, they manifest instead their unabashed celebration of what they call "our" press (i.e., that journalistic system found in the United States) and distinguish it from the authoritarian press of Communist societies, Nazi Germany, dictatorships, and feudal monarchies (Siebert et al. 1956, pp. 1-6).

The authors of *Four Theories of the Press* seem to overlook their own premise that differences among press systems are explained in terms of distinctive "social and political structures," and unique cultural assumptions about "the nature of man, the nature of society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and the nature of knowledge and truth" (p. 2). Instead Siebert et al. classify the differences as philosophical or intellectual (rather than as celebrations of lived experience). They then carry on the rest of their discussion in terms of the analytical (i.e., intellectual) polarities between 'individualism and authoritarianism,' between 'freedom from and freedom for.'

If one takes seriously their assumption that the diversity of cultures explains diversity among press systems, then it becomes difficult to reduce distinctive news systems to an amount less than the number of cultural heritages found in the world. When one adopts such a cultural approach, does it imply an equal diversity among ethical understandings of the journalistic process? And what can be said about the norms of responsible news currently being observed?

The Application of Traditional Journalistic Principles to an Ethics of News as Cultural Celebration

During recent decades, Western journalists have acknowledged *objectivity*, *truth*, *freedom*, and *social responsibility* as key principles for any media ethics (e.g.,

Merrill & Barney, 1975). When they are discussed as maxims to be followed, these norms often are framed in an information-transfer understanding of news.

Objectivity, for example, quite often is characterized as "the use of certain procedures" to gather and structure "facts" in a detached, unbiased, impersonal manner" (Tuchman, 1972). According to this principle, journalists should function as clear pipes that facilitate efficient flow of observable data (Skornia, 1965, p. 54). Instead of celebrating the events of the day in a qualitative fashion, they observe this principle most conscientiously when they neutralize their own "wants, tastes, and moral or religious beliefs" (Gerald, 1963, pp. 153-155).

According to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the principle of truth is supposed to mandate an accurate representation of facts in context (Rubin, 1978, p. 58). And freedom is affirmed by journalists like Walter Cronkite because it ensures "the vital free flow of new ideas that are absolutely essential to a vital press" (1973, p. 72). For the Hutchins Commission, the notion of social responsibility was cast in informational roles to: provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, project the positions of all groups in society to one another, clarify community goals and values, and reach every member of society. (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, pp. 20-21).

When defined as they have been above, one might say that these principles combine to construct a full-fledged ethics of information-transfer in the Aristotelian tradition. Objectivity prescribes *formal* techniques for the production of information. Truth deals with the relationship between the report and the *material* from real life that it is supposed to mirror. Freedom is enjoyed by all reporters, who served as *efficient* purveyors of the facts. And social responsibility highlights the *final* goal of the enterprise: a well-informed public.

But how applicable are the "traditional" principles of journalistic responsibility to an understanding of news as cultural celebration? When observed, do these norms ensure a "better" journalistic enterprise?

Although the debate over the "New International Information Order" has not reached a consensual answer to such questions, it highlights the dissension about the desirability of norms like freedom and objectivity. For advocates of "First World" journalistic styles, the four traditional standards of media responsibility would probably serve as meta-principles in any journalistic enterprise no matter where it takes place. According to critics of that position, these standards allegedly favor a news process that inculcates First-World values and interprets events in Western terms.

From the perspective of this paper, one obstacle to a satisfactory resolution of the debate is the failure of both sides to consider news as a form of cultural celebration wherever it is practiced and to investigate whether certain universal

maxims ought to accompany any practice of news. Instead, Western advocates assume that an information-transfer model represents the only thinkable and civilized definition of the news process. For their part, upholders of the New International Information Order wish only to legitimate as norms of journalistic responsibility those totally integral to and condoned by the culture in which they are being practiced. Any statement that challenges either assumption often leads to a contentious and incendiary response from its proponent.

Neither assumption seems ultimately tenable. On the one side, a good case can be made that the information transfer model supported by the norms of truth, freedom, objectivity, and social responsibility represents a thoroughly American (i.e., United States) celebration of its national experience. Should one be surprised, for example, that metaphors from commercial marketplace, industrial assembly line, or computer interaction have dominated American discussions of media responsibility?

Each traditional norm of news responsibility in the United States also enjoys rich connections with portions of American culture. For example, the determined search of journalists for unimpeachable reality parallels the optimistic quest of early religious settlers in America for the *Irae* Kingdom of God on earth. And where but in the spirit of American Revolution and territorial expansion did the notion of negative *freedom* (freedom from) get institutionalized? Journalistic fascination with *objectivity* apparently accompanied the rise of science and technology as legitimate expressions of turn-of-the-century American culture (Schudson, 1978). The institutionalization of objectivity in the 1920s and of social responsibility after World War II emerge from an American version of Hobbesian *realpolitik*—one that remained confident about the ideal of an informed citizenry even as it took pragmatic and "scientific" precautions to deal with the self-interest operating everywhere.

But if norms of journalistic responsibility find strong resonance with a distinctive cultural background, do they lose credibility and ethical weight across cultures? Do ethical questions, in other words, stop at the border as some advocates of the New International Information Order would have political questions do? Can principles of media ethics be established that transcend national and cultural barriers but affirm the importance of a cultural understanding of news? Such questions need to be resolved before serious ethical inquiry from a cultural or an international perspective can begin.

In *Media Ethics*, Christians et al. (1983) propose the "Potter Box" to establish the steps involved in any systematic ethical decision: definition of the situation, examination of the implicit values, discovery of the underlying ethical principles, and an establishment of the loyalties to others held by the decision maker (pp.

1-8). When they demonstrate how the complete process works, it becomes clear that proper moral reasoning can lead to quite different outcomes. In one case, for example, it resulted in the publication of the names of fire victims; in the other case it justified the deletion of those names from the same story.

What makes contrary outcomes equally exemplary of responsible moral reasoning? The approach in *Media Ethics* provides the tests of empirical sensitivity to the situation, values, principles, and loyalties at stake and of internal coherence among these four elements. In both cases, cultural preferences shared by the parties involved in the communication lead to choices favoring different goods widely held within the community. "social situations initiate the process and the choice of cultural loyalties forces one toward a final decision" (Christians et al., p. 19).

Although this ethical text is more circuit than most in its delineation and application of universal maxims from Western systems of moral philosophy (pp. 9-17), cultural factors ultimately shape the ethical choice:

The line of decision making that we follow, then, has its meaning in the social context... Considered judgments, in this view, do not derive directly from normative principles, but are woven into a set of obligations one assumes toward certain segments of society. In this schema, debate over institutional questions is fundamental and ethical thinking is not completed until social implications have been designated (p. 19).

The authors of *Media Ethics* would appear to maintain that the moral reasoning process appropriately stops at a cultural or societal border even though the ethical principles included in the reasoning process (i.e., steps in Potter Box) do not. Consequently, the principles and systematic maxims of great ethical traditions can transcend cultural barriers even as they must be brought into alignment with a coherent view of the cultural situation, values, and loyalties of the choice at hand.

Moreover, it would seem that principles of journalistic responsibility can fall short in providing guidance for proper action—especially when a coherent resolution of an ethical question maximizes one such principle at the expense of some other. In the case of Watergate, for example, adherence to the principle of objective reporting resulted in network news reports which seemed unable to get close to the truth about the scandal and which did little to equip or encourage viewers to participate responsibly in its resolution (Capo, 1983; Robinson, 1976, pp. 99, 109).

The traditional American principles of responsible news, in other words, do not help clarify or resolve the issue of a journalistic ethics grounded in the

definition of news as cultural celebration. Nor does sole adherence to them insure a journalistic decision which can be called morally responsible according to the reasoning found in *Media Ethics*. Nonetheless, these principles can carry relevance for moral deliberations in any society and are grounded in maxims that transcend cultural boundaries.

Media Ethics was written with neither a cultural definition of news nor cross-cultural case studies of moral reasoning in mind. But its structure and assumptions invite employment of the Potter Box to evaluate the moral reasoning employed by journalists from other cultures. It also encourages further theoretical consideration of whether and how any universal of ethical conduct can be uniformly applied to choices being made within the varied journalistic systems known to the world today. The final section undertakes the latter enterprise in a preliminary fashion.

Proposed Ethical Criteria for a Cultural Approach to News

The preceding sections have offered a cultural approach to news and explored how the accepted standards of responsible journalism in America might be applied to it. According to this approach, news constructs social meaning from the raw experience of the day in a way that celebrates the cultural consensus at the core of the symbol system of the news participants.

Although proponents of this version of news have increased, ethical discussion has not yet addressed the issues it raises. Standards of freedom, objectivity, etc., appear tailored to evaluate news as a process of information transfer, rather than one of cultural celebration. Moreover, these standards seem especially suited to an American rendition of modern experience—one which non-Western countries are rejecting, allegedly in order to preserve their separate cultural integrities.

It might be possible to characterize the impasse among the New International Information Order debates as simply a matter of competing definitions of news or of a struggle by some smaller nations against a powerful and infiltrating cultural dominator. But ethically speaking, something deeper seems at stake. Can a cultural approach to news recognize the existence and importance of ethical standards that would operate across cultural boundaries? If so, what would they look like? How would they operate in the determination of morally responsible decisions for journalists?

Although they do not address these questions directly, the authors of *Media Ethics* make allowances for the presence of transcendent principles that get applied differently depending on the empirical and cultural situation in which one finds oneself. Use of the Potter Box establishes the systematic and internally coherent process of ethical decision. But the determination of which principles

might carry the most weight across decisions or cultural contexts does not get resolved by the authors. Readers can choose from among maxims found at the core of five different philosophical systems in Western thought: Aristotle's Golden Mean, Kant's Categorical Imperative, Mill's Principle of Utility, Rawls's Veil of Ignorance, and the Judeo-Christian "Person as Ends" (pp. 9-17).

Instead of selecting a maxim listed, this section proposes the thought of Alfred North Whitehead in *Adventures of Ideas* as a source for relevant answers to the earlier ethical questions, drawing on the pioneer work of Lois Gehr Livezey (1983). Three aspects of Whitehead's approach recommend it for consideration. In the first place, Whitehead maintains that two maxims underlie every moral code: "the generality of harmony" and "the importance of the individual" society (Whitehead, 1933, p. 292). At its core, his ethics apparently recognizes an ongoing normative tension between cultural integrity and societal harmony. Presumably, standards developed from this philosophy will take into account cultural relevance and universal (transcultural) application.

Whitehead's receptivity to newness and change stands as another important feature: "In the present age, the element of novelty which life affords is too prominent to be omitted from our calculations" (pp. 94-95). For him, all thought developed prior to the twentieth century "is warped by the vicious assumption that each generation will substantially live amid the conditions governing the lives of its fathers.... We are living in the first period of human history for which this assumption is false" (pp. 92-93). In the spirit of twentieth-century realism, Whitehead adopted the physics that ushered in the electromagnetic and nuclear eras and a process metaphor that makes change a constitutive part of actuality. His philosophy speaks to a world as it is now experienced, especially the one now being interconnected and modernized through communications technology.

Finally, Whitehead repudiates the idea that the universe should aim at one ultimate good (Livezey, p. 236). "Each society has its own type of perfection" (Whitehead, p. 291). Consequently, his ultimate ethical principle of "civilization" refers to a human order in which various perfections are embodied or advocated, presumably including the visions and actualizations of good generated by divergent cultures. His thought, in other words, grapples with the problem of the one and the many—the key ethical problem facing a satisfactory normative discussion of news in this inquiry. His philosophical system attempts to preserve the integrity and ultimate importance of both.

This notion of "civilization" offers a good entry into a discussion of his moral analysis. In *Adventures of Ideas*, the term operates as the receptacle of all normative action, without requiring exclusivity: "The boundaries of a civilization are indefinite, whether we are speaking of geography or of time, or of essential

character" (p. 8).

As Part I of that book demonstrates, civilization is best understood as the historical working out of social change through interactions among the forces "of consciously formulated ideals," of "compulsion" or "violence," and of tradition. One force seems future-oriented and purposive ("articulated beliefs issuing from aspirations, and issuing in aspirations"): Another brings the sheer exigencies of the present to bear: "Steam and Barbarians, each in their own age, were the senseless agencies driving their respective civilizations away from inherited modes of order." Both shape and are in turn shaped by the inheritance of the past for the sake of a 'still-being-formed' civilization (pp. 5-6).

Delineation of the interaction among these forces in modern communication establishes a context for consideration of normative issues involved in the cultural understanding of news. Gradual application over the last few centuries of the agencies of technology to human communication ("graphics revolution"), for example, has driven agrarian cultures steeped in the Western classical tradition away from their inherited modes of order—a Whiteheadian version of the central arguments of Daniel Boorstin (1978). These same agencies, in concert with the liberal ideals and liberating aspirations of democracy, now invade other tradition-based cultures.

Meanwhile in Western industrial societies, technology has transformed itself from its original character as a Renaissance celebration of reason-bearing humanity. It now threatens to become "technique"—a sheer exigency reorganizing all aspects of earlier human experience in its likeness (Ellul, 1967). More concretely, electronic systems of news gathering and transmission operating under agencies and aims like unfettered freedom, national security, technological progress, and/or realizable profit cannot but help reshape the images of person, event, setting, and purpose passed down from earlier generations. Massive change in the understanding and celebration of individual and transnational societies is undoubtedly underway through the operation of modern media, even though American standards of communication ethics still concentrate on the information transfer issues and seem to overlook cultural matters.

Those concerned about the quality of responsible cultural communication under such circumstances must select and implement a suitable ethical strategy. At least four possibilities seem feasible in a Whiteheadian schema: (1) preservation of the values from the threatened cultural inheritance (advocates of the New International Information Order); (2) diligent application of the values that undergird the technology which has now evolved into an inevitable "fact of life" (advocates of press freedom, marketplace of ideas, and objectivity); (3) introduction of a transformative value system to actualize a yet unrealized vision and order

for humanity; and (4) adaptation and integration of values from the other three strategies in a way that enhances both "the one and the many" principles at the core of human experience.

Based on discussions offered earlier in this essay, it would seem that *Four Theories of the Press* represents a normative position firmly rooted in the second ethical strategy (Siebert et al.). *Media Ethics*, on the other hand, seems open to the possibility that sound moral reasoning about responsible communication can emerge from any of the first three ethical strategies—as long as the reasoning remains consistent and coherent within the strategy (Christians et al.). For Whitehead, only the fourth strategy seems acceptable. This approach would endorse the ultimate worth of a consistently argued moral position only if it enhanced the condition of civilization, the ultimate receptacle and goal for ethical worth. In *Adventures of Ideas*, the qualities of *art, beauty, truth, adventure, and peace* provide the terms for evaluating the worth of any effort to enhance civilization (Whitehead, p. 274).

Whitehead's criterion of art seems most applicable to normative considerations in modern communications. Aiming at "truthful beauty," art "has to do with perfections attainable by purposeful adaptation of appearance (to reality)" (Whitehead, pp. 267-268). According to Livezey, art contributes to Whitehead's notion of civilization by illuminating the importance of the individual, expressing fundamental truths about our humanity and world, enabling transformation, and evoking "into the experience of its members Appearances dominated by the harmonies of forceful, enduring things" (Livezey, pp. 299-302; Whitehead, p. 282).

For an enterprise like news, the art criterion shapes the factual data of an event (the appearance) into an actualization of reality (as tested and known through the lived experience or history of the community engaging in the news process). 'Artful news,' it would seem, functions as a celebration of (a) the unique community in which the combination of appearance and reality is being shared and (b) the fundamental harmonies that endure beyond the community but are present in it. It can transform idiosyncratic or apparently chaotic facts into enduring meanings that evoke a community into being and/or affirm some permanent truth.

It is important to note that the same data or appearances can be artfully combined with different "realities" and thereby celebrate different communities, harmonies, or truths. In May 1973, for example, coverage of unexplained revelations about Watergate and presidential silence about them (to preserve the integrity of the judicial process) meant for some networks that the American system of government was faltering. In August 1974, amidst continued unexplainable aspects of Watergate, the president maintained silence (through resignation)—data which some networks presented as the American constitu-

tional system at work.

Similarly in the fall of 1978, American networks took the increase in Western dress, movie theaters, and banks in Iran to signify the celebration of freedom, responsible capitalism, and democratic principles. One can imagine that not all cultural groups in Iran (or the United States) would have artfully employed that data in a similar celebratory way.

Although Whitehead's notion of art establishes his approach as open to a cultural understanding of news, it does not ensure that the community celebrated is making any morally efficacious contribution to civilization. Only when the artful communication achieves both truth and beauty might it also contribute to the enhancement of civilization.

Even though the task of art parallels the concern of morality (perfections), the two are not the same. Both focus on the value an action has for itself, others, and the whole. But art generates this evaluational intensity for the enjoyment of the communicators during the immediate present (cultural celebration). Morality emphasizes the intensity to be felt in the public world for the relevant future (responsibility to civilization) (Livezey, pp. 302-307).

This distinction must not be overlooked in ethical studies of communicated messages. The fact that content analysis, for example, uncovers the presence of artfully presented and intensely felt "goods" or "bads" in a news report would not in itself establish the ultimate moral worth of the communication. From Whitehead's perspective, a similar withholding of ethical judgment would apply even if a Potter Box analysis revealed a coherent, proper, and well-expressed combination of admirable loyalties, "good" values, etc.

The criteria of beauty and truth both require that the communication manifest proper relationships. "Beauty is the internal conformation of the various items of experience with each other, for the production of maximum effectiveness" (Whitehead, p. 265). It seems concerned with the achievement of an intense, complex, and unified interrelationship of all the components in the communication. Truth, on the other hand, seeks the conformation of appearance to reality. When Truth is absent (i.e., the loss of one conforming relationship), Beauty lacks some of its intensity or massiveness. When Beauty is absent, the Truth becomes trivial and incapable of evoking enduring harmonies (Whitehead, p. 267). Art seeks the best combination of both in the communication at hand.

From the perspective of news as cultural celebration, the principle of beauty would call for a presentation and structuring of the facts to bring out the best in a culture's experience of appearances. Truth, for its part, must aim at a full correspondence between appearances and full reality. In today's world, that reality cannot help but include insights about the uniqueness of the culture enjoyed by

Concluding Remarks

This essay has attempted to raise some of the ethical questions and possible answers that face studies of communication as a celebration of culture, rather than as a transfer of information. After elaborating what it meant by a cultural definition of news, the essay considered the contribution of some current American approaches to media ethics to the cultural approach. In its final section, the essay attempted to introduce some criteria for ethical evaluation of communication as a cultural enterprise.

The ultimate worth and comprehensiveness of these criteria would have to stand the tests of successful empirical application (history), truthful and harmonious relevance to the present, and an attractive lure to the ideals of culture and civilization in the future. For now, they are discussed to encourage constructors of media ethics to adventure into new territories of thought and enhance the current state of public thought about responsible communication.

the participants and about the larger confluence of cultures and public actions that Whitehead locates in civilization.

The two sides of this search for truth introduce Whitehead's final criteria of adventure and peace. At the core of adventure is the conviction that process, or becoming, represents a key metaphysical principle of reality (pp. 274-276): "The foundation of...all understanding of human life—is that no static maintenance of perfection is possible. This axiom is rooted in the nature of things. Advance or Decadence are the only choices offered to mankind" (p. 274). From the perspective of adventure, therefore, neither the autocratic imposition of national or regional mandates about news coverage nor the operational requirements of transnational media systems become acceptable norms for news. Cultural celebration means something different than cultural preservation or domination. It assumes that cultures live and prosper through adventure, the search for new perfections in the belief that the future is relevant to the vitality of civilization.

If adventure seeks new perfections in the future, peace represents the gift of a state of social perfection or harmony in the present (p. 291). As the ultimate justification of the human venture, peace constitutes the intuition of permanence. Without it, the journalistic chronicle of disruption, disorder, and perishing represents an exercise in stoic fatalism and futility. In the case of a cultural approach to news, this criterion calls for a sense of contemporaneous, harmonious relations to bind the present with the past and future. Of course, the other four criteria would also have to be pursued to ensure a morally responsible communication.

Application of the three criteria of an aiming at truthful beauty in news coverage would be sufficient to begin an ethical consideration of news as cultural celebration. Such an approach would not depend on the information transfer model of news nor on traditional standards of responsible journalism which in their current formulation may have limited relevance.

But the inclusion of adventure and peace establish an importance to news and to cultural celebration which gets beyond the labels of propaganda, limited truth, parochialism, or hegemony that now often accompany analyses of coverage. These two Whiteheadian criteria ensure communication that involves the participants in self-transcendence (and, therefore, self-critique). The spirit of adventure helps shape for the culture an "awareness of unrealized possibilities and a heightened anticipation of the relevant future," thereby extending its temporal boundaries beyond the present. The gift of peace provides "a heightened awareness of being one among many and, a heightened appreciation of that 'Harmony of Harmonies.'" Thus, adventure and peace "establish the claim of the public or *common world* to be included among the principles of civilization" and to serve as a lure for self-transcendence (Livezey, pp. 335-336).

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Those Scribbling Women: A Cultural Study of Mid-Nineteenth Century Popular American Romances by Women

During the mid-nineteenth century, when the American literary market was dominated by domestic romance novels written largely by and for women (Baym, 1978), Nathaniel Hawthorne unleashed his now oft-quoted invective against this "d....d [sic] mob of scribbling women" authors. Hawthorne's devaluation was triggered by the immense popularity of Maria Cummins' *The Lamplighter* (1854/1902) which sold 40,000 copies within two months and had exceeded 120,000 copies before the 1902 edition and was second in immediate popularity only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and to Hawthorne's own *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).¹ Although initially directed toward Cummins and perhaps partially a result of literary highmindedness, Hawthorne's dismissal of this popular women's fiction has persisted to this day, with women's fiction of the period rarely finding its way onto reading lists in American university English departments (Russ, 1983). Regardless of its current literary status, however, the fact remains that a significant body of mass-mediated discourse has largely escaped qualitative cultural analysis. The purpose of this study, then, is to locate mid-nineteenth century feminine

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