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The Norman Lear
CENTERTAINMENT
Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society



THE TYRANNY OF 18 TO 49

The holy grail for mass media is the 18 to 49 age group. Entertainment programmers, marketers and advertisers covet that demographic. It has a huge impact on what we see and hear. Is this power based on myth or reality? Could the 18 to 49 audience and its dollars be too influential? The Lear Center hosted a free-wheeling half-day conference on the topic, featuring leading thinkers, activists and prominent players in the television and advertising world, as part of its Creativity, Commerce & Culture project.

Participants

Durk Barnhill, SVP, McCann-Erickson Worldwide

Neal Gabler, author, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* and Lear Center senior fellow

Martin Kaplan, associate dean, USC Annenberg School and director, The Norman Lear Center

David Klein, publisher, *Ad Age*

Ann Reed, executive council member, American Association of Retired Persons

Steven Sohmer, former EVP of marketing, advertising and promotion, ABC

The Norman Lear Center

Founded in January 2000, the Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce and society. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its fellows, conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.

Creativity, Commerce & Culture

When art is created for commercial purposes, who owns it? Once it's in the hands of consumers, what rights do they have to change it? Headed by Lear Center senior fellows David Bollier and Laurie Racine, Creativity, Commerce & Culture explores the new digital environment and the impact of intellectual property rights on innovation and creativity.





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PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES



Durk Barnhill

Durk Barnhill has over fifteen years experience developing and implementing marketing and advertising strategies for some of the best brands in the world. He is currently SVP group managing director at McCann-Erickson Los Angeles, where he runs all marketing activities for Nestlé USA.

Prior to that, Barnhill was a marketing consultant at Personica, where he developed positioning, marketing strategies, sales presentations and an identity system for the introduction of a new product platform. Until August of 2001 Barnhill was the general manager of Saatchi & Saatchi San Francisco, where he provided day-to-day leadership, including strategic integrated marketing guidance and senior client responsibility for all clients. Barnhill was also responsible for strategic leadership of all new business activities and the office profitability commitments to headquarters in New York.

Prior to joining Saatchi & Saatchi San Francisco, Barnhill was a VP management supervisor at Fallon Advertising in Minneapolis, where he was responsible for all strategic, production and media aspects of the \$150 million Miller Lite account. Before that, Barnhill was a VP account supervisor at Campbell Mithun Esty, leading integrated marketing campaigns for US WEST, General Mills and Healthy Choice. Barnhill started his career at Lowe & Partners Advertising Agency in New York. There he worked on several packaged goods clients such as Coca-Cola Foods, Johnson & Johnson, and Columbo frozen yogurt. Barnhill has a BA in English literature from Trinity College. He lives in San Francisco with his wife and three children.



Neal Gabler

Neal Gabler, senior fellow at the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, is an author, cultural historian and film critic. His first book, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and the Theatre Library Association Award. His second book, *Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity* was named non-fiction book of the year by *Time* magazine. His most recent book is *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, and he is currently at work on a biography of Walt Disney.

Gabler has contributed to numerous publications including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Esquire*, *New York Magazine*, *Vogue*, *American Heritage*, *The New Republic*, *Us* and *Playboy*. He has appeared on many television programs including *The Today Show*, *The CBS Morning News*, *The News Hour*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Charlie Rose* and *Good Morning America*. Gabler also hosted *Sneak Previews* for PBS.

Gabler held fellowships from the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center and the Guggenheim Foundation. He served as the chief non-fiction judge of the National Book Awards and judged the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prizes. Gabler has taught at the University of Michigan and at Pennsylvania State University, and graduated summa cum laude from the University of Michigan. He holds advanced degrees in film and American culture.



Martin Kaplan

Martin Kaplan, director of The Norman Lear Center, is associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication. He graduated from Harvard College *summa cum laude* in molecular biology, where he was president of the *Harvard Lampoon* and of the Signet Society, and on the editorial boards of the *Harvard Crimson* and *Harvard Advocate*. As a Marshall Scholar, he received a First in English from Cambridge University in England. As a Danforth Fellow, he received a Ph.D. in modern thought and literature from Stanford University.

He was a program officer at the Aspen Institute; executive assistant to U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest L. Boyer; chief speechwriter to Vice President Walter F. Mondale; deputy op-ed editor and columnist for the *Washington Star*; visiting scholar at the Brookings Institution and a regular commentator on NPR's *All Things Considered* and *CBS Morning News*. In the Mondale presidential campaign he was in charge of policy, speechwriting, issues and research. Recruited after the 1984 election by Jeffrey Katzenberg and Michael Eisner, he worked at Disney for twelve years, both as a studio vice president in live-action feature films, and as a writer-producer under exclusive contract.

Kaplan has credits on *The Distinguished Gentleman*, starring Eddie Murphy, which he wrote and executive produced; *Noises Off*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich, which he adapted for the screen, and *Max Q*, produced by Jerry Bruckheimer for ABC.

He is editor of *The Harvard Lampoon Centennial Celebration*; co-author (with Ernest L. Boyer) of *Educating for Survival*; and editor of *The Monday Morning Imagination* and *What Is An Educated Person?* Articles by him have appeared in publications including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The American Scholar*, *The Woodrow Wilson Quarterly* and *The New Republic*. At USC he has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in Media & Politics; Campaign Communication; and Entertainment, Communication & Society.



David Klein

David Klein is vice president, publishing and editorial director of The Ad Age Group, whose weekly *Advertising Age* newspaper is the industry leader in covering advertising, marketing and media news. He had been associate publisher and group editor since 1998 after a two-year stint as editor of *Advertising Age*. As publishing and editorial director, Klein has overall responsibility for the print, Internet and database publishing enterprises of the group, including print publications, Web sites and daily e-mail news feeds. He also serves as publishing director for *BtoB Magazine* and *Television Week Magazine*.

Before joining The Ad Age Group, Klein was editor of *Information Week*, and before that founding editor-in-chief of *Interactive Age*, the first trade magazine dedicated to covering Web commerce and media. He began his career in business publishing at Crain Communications Inc.'s *Electronic Media*, moving from news editor in 1984 to editor in 1992.

Prior to that, Klein spent eight years working as a reporter, editor and TV columnist for daily newspapers, first at the *Tallahassee Democrat* and then at the *Cincinnati Post* before moving into high-tech and business publishing. He is a graduate of the University of Florida and lives in the Chicago suburbs with his wife, Ellen, and their three children.



Ann Reed

Ann Reed is the associate vice president of public affairs for California State University, Sacramento. In that role she oversees media relations, publications, visitor relations and several specialty units. She is an active member of AARP, serving on the statewide Executive Council with advisory responsibility for strategic and volunteer communications.

Prior to her affiliation with the University, Reed worked for a decade with the California Community Colleges – both in a district and later as vice chancellor for communications and public affairs at the state level, with responsibility for strategic communications for 106 community colleges. She led several statewide marketing campaigns for which she won awards.

Reed has served on numerous community boards including the Community Services Planning Council, the Girl Scouts and her statewide alumni organization. She has also been an active speaker in the community and with the National Speakers Association, most often on *Confronting the Issues: Hot Seat Training for Experts* and *Giving Bad News: Getting Good Results*.

Reed worked for three years for Executive Media, preparing corporate officers to testify before the legislature, the media or stakeholders. She is experienced in message development, presentation methods and the delivery of bad news. She began her career in communications at the *Sacramento Bee* where for sixteen years she covered several beats, including science and education.



Steven Sohmer

Steve Sohmer is an accomplished network executive, producer and author. As an executive, he was the vice president of advertising at CBS; executive vice president of NBC Entertainment; president of Columbia Pictures; president of marketing for PAX TV; and executive vice president for marketing at ABC TV.

Sohmer produced *Bloodknot*, *Favorite Son*, *Mancuso FBI* and *Tom Clancy's Op Center* for NBC. He also produced the *Primetime Emmy Awards* for FOX and *Twice in a Lifetime* for PAX.

Sohmer's books include *The Way It Was* (short stories); *Favorite Son* (novel); *Patriots* (novel); and *Shakespeare's Mystery Play* (academic book). His articles include "What Cicero Said in Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' 1.2;" "Midnight in 'Macbeth,'" and "Shakespeare's Apology to Cobham in 'Henry V'" in *Notes & Queries*. He authored "The Double-Time Crux in 'Othello' Solved" and "The Time Cruxes in 'Romeo and Juliet' Solved" in *English Literary Renaissance*. Sohmer wrote "MV: the Venetian Calendar in 'Merchant of Venice,'" published in *Shakespeare Yearbook*, and edited *Luther's Lives*, a scholarly book.

Sohmer attended Yale, Harvard and Columbia, and has an MA from Boston University and an M.Studies and D.Phil. from Oxford University. He was a fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford and a research associate at UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

THE TYRANNY OF 18 to 49: AMERICAN CULTURE HELD HOSTAGE

Neal Gabler

Senior Fellow, The Norman Lear Center



Lear Center senior fellow Neal Gabler opened the conference.

As a documentary filmmaker of my acquaintance tells it, he had recently been shooting a movie on an “aeronautical archeologist” for one of the cable networks. The archeologist, actually a kind of detective, would go to old airplane crash sites trying to determine what had caused the accident. In one case, a crash that had occurred back in the 1940s, several of the passengers had survived and were still alive some five decades later to be interviewed for the program. There was only one problem. The cable executive overseeing the film didn’t like these aged victims because he thought that the young audience to whom he was programming would tune them out. “Couldn’t you find some *younger* victims?” the executive asked my friend.

Tales like these abound in television – stories of how *Gilmore Girls*, which placed 121st out of 158 programs last season, nevertheless could charge three-quarters of the fee for a thirty-second ad that *Law and Order: SUV*, which had three times the audience of *Gilmore Girls*, charged for its thirty-second ads because *Gilmore’s* audience was younger than *Law and Order’s*¹; or how ABC was ready to dump its legendary late-night news program *Nightline* for David Letterman largely because Letterman’s audience was marginally younger, though not larger, than *Nightline’s*, thus allowing ABC to charge more for ads; or how the networks began

¹ Jonathan Dee, “The Myth of ‘18 to 34,’” *The New York Times Magazine*, October 13, 2002, p. 58.

It is no secret that it is a young person's world and the rest of us are just living in it.



Aging producers, writers, agents and even aging stars are increasingly marginalized because it is thought they can neither take the pulse nor race the pulse of the young.

packing their schedules with so-called reality shows in part because these attracted more young viewers than conventional programming.

It is of course no secret to any sentient being that it is a young person's world and the rest of us are just living in it. For decades now, television has appealed almost exclusively to what it considers a young audience, but so do most other media. Rock and roll, pop and hip-hop dominate the recording business – 48% of all CDs sold in 2001.² The teenage blockbuster has become the foundation of the American motion picture industry. Newspapers have had to renovate themselves, shortening articles and emphasizing graphics, because executives say young people won't read them otherwise. The most competitive titles in magazines are the so-called "laddie" publications aimed at young male readers. Book publishers hunt for young writers and subjects with youth appeal. Even CNN *Headline News*, hardly a youth destination, felt compelled to add windows and zippers to the screen reportedly as an enticement to younger viewers accustomed to sensory bombardment.

While the culture has been fixated on youth, it has also been hiring the young to service its constituents, creating a self-perpetuating system. Aging producers, aging writers, aging agents, even aging stars are increasingly marginalized because it is thought they can neither take the pulse nor race the pulse of the young. Aging talent complains that it cannot even find representation, much less work. A 30-something writer who faked being 18 to land

² "RIAA Releases 2001 Consumer Profile," www.edatabasecentral.com/news.02_9006.htm

Anyone over 49 is tossed onto the trash heap of history, all eighty million of them.



These people have been steadily disenfranchised by a ruthless, self-serving, myopic and ignorant dictator. That dictator is the 18-49 demographic cohort.

a job on the TV series *Felicity* was summarily fired when her real age was discovered, and a number of writer friends have told me that forty is practically a death sentence in the television business. All of which leads to an inescapable and frightening conclusion: We live in a culture of the young, for the young and by the young, and anyone over 49 – the demographic breakpoint of old age for most television advertisers – is tossed onto the trash heap of history, all eighty million of them.³ In effect, these people, just under one-third of the American population, have been steadily disenfranchised by a ruthless, self-serving, myopic and ignorant dictator. That dictator is the 18 to 49 demographic cohort, and it is the single most important factor in determining what we see, hear and read.

At first blush, this may seem a rather wide demographic swath to constitute an oligarchy of age. It is so large, in fact – roughly 120 million people in 2001⁴ – that it almost seems as if those who target it willfully intend to exclude older Americans as an act of revenge. Common sense would suggest that it is too large a group to be meaningful as any statistical category; 49 year-olds, after all, have very little in common with 18 year-olds. There is nothing about this group that binds it in terms of income or discretionary spending or region or religion or values or any of the categories that demographers now dub as “psychographic,” meaning psychological characteristics. The only thing they seem to have in common is that they are older than those under 18 and younger than those over 49.

³ “National Population Estimates,” July 1, 2001, U.S. Census Bureau, eire.census.gov/popest/data/national/tables/asro/US-EST2001-ASRO-o1.php

⁴ *Ibid.*

Common sense would also suggest that the fixation on such a large and disparate group is almost entirely arbitrary. Why not 15 to 25? Or 35 to 45? Or 25 to 50? Or people with blue eyes? What special magic do 18 to 49 year-olds possess? Indeed, some advertisers and programmers have filleted the 18 to 49 cohort, concentrating instead on the meaty 18 to 34 subset, though there is nothing about this smaller group that is any more uniform or statistically coherent than the larger one, ranging as it does from high schoolers to young parents. It simply makes no sense to market to this group as a group.

And yet when advertisers and programmers say that they are targeting 18 to 49 year-olds, they obviously believe, or at least promote the idea, that there is something unique about them, some quintessence that people 50 and over do not have. Otherwise how can you target them and why should you target them? Since, as we have established, common sense dictates there is absolutely nothing significant that 120 million Americans could possibly share, save the country in which they live, those who revere 18 to 49 year-olds must create a fiction about them – a fiction that dissolves the differences and imposes a commonality. That fiction is that these folks share the same taste. Without overstating the case too much, it assumes they like the same kinds of TV shows, the same kinds of music, the same kinds of movies, the same kinds of magazines – one size fits all. On the evidence of our popular culture, it assumes as well that they are not fundamentally serious or particularly intelligent, that they need to be stimulated constantly or they will lose interest, that they are sex-obsessed and voyeuristic and that they have no interest whatsoever in anything that and anyone who isn't young. While this

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generalization is patently absurd, it is an absurdity that dominates the contemporary cultural landscape. It is not 18 to 49 year-olds who really tyrannize America. It is the *fiction* developed around them by advertisers and programmers that tyrannizes.

Of course, no advertising or television executive will come clean and admit that the 18 to 49 year-old cohort share nothing. Instead advertisers adduce two reasons why this group is coveted. The first is that people within these age parameters are more impressionable than older consumers, more susceptible to advertising pitches and less loyal to brands, meaning that they are more likely to switch after watching an ad. A corollary is that if you catch these consumers while they are young – though it is hard to see how people over 40 exactly qualify – and in the process of forming those loyalties, you will have them for life. “They are considered early adapters of consumer brands,” Bill Cella, executive vice president of broadcast and programming for McCann-Erickson Worldwide told *Adweek*. “If you get [this demo] at an early age they can become loyal brand users.”⁵ Therefore advertisers who target this group say they are really visionaries, looking a generation ahead, though in an economy where most businessmen rarely look beyond the next quarter, much less the next decade, this is a hard argument to swallow.

The second reason advertisers and programmers give is that people between the ages of 18 and 49 watch television less frequently than people who are older. This makes them harder to reach via television and therefore a scarcer commodity than those

⁵ Teresa Howard, “Opposites Attract,” *Adweek*, May 10, 1999, p. 10.

baby boomer couch potatoes. Advertisers are willing to pay more for commercials on the programs that do reach them, a kind of youth premium, which clearly gives the programmers the incentive to provide those shows the 18 to 49 year-olds seem to enjoy.

On the face of it, and putting aside for the moment the lunacy of thinking that there is actually a kind of programming that will appeal to the entire cohort, these explanations sound reasonable enough, even though, once again, it is hard to imagine that one can usefully generalize about something as vague as brand loyalty or even viewing frequency in so large and diverse a group. Still, if a viewer is more likely to respond to your ads and is not easy to reach, one can see why advertisers would want to target him rather than an older viewer who is readily accessible.

There are, however, two problems with this analysis – both of which directly contradict the desirability of the 18 to 49 demographic. The first problem is logical. Let us assume that younger consumers are, indeed, less brand loyal than older consumers and that in inundating them with ads you are able to win lifelong converts. The flaw in the argument is that if these consumers are not already brand loyal, presumably due to their youth, they are also not likely to be brand loyal to your product either. The next ad they see might be just as likely to change their buying habits as your own ad did. This isn't particularly cost effective. So what advertisers really want is not a young, gullible consumer who goes with the advertising flow. What they really want is a consumer who has reached the point where brand loyalty kicks in. In short, they want an older consumer, one who has forsworn product hopping. Youth fails the test.

As for the scarcity argument, let us assume that the most desirable consumer is the one you are least likely to reach. Why then stop at the 18 to 49? Surely, there are consumers who are much more scarce than they are. As *New Yorker* economic columnist James Surowiecki wrote, "[B]y this logic, advertisers ought to pay top dollar to reach shepherders in Uzbekistan."⁶ (In fact, teenagers

⁶ James Surowiecki, "Ageism in Advertising," *The New Yorker*, April 1, 2002, p. 40.

watch less TV than anyone, but they have yet to become the cynosure for programmers.)

Furthermore, if the older consumers/TV watchers are regarded as already hooked and thus ad friendly (never mind that they are supposed to be less influenced by ads), then isn't there the danger that broadcasters will drive them away in the devotion to younger viewers, making *them* more scarce? Theoretically, this would lead to networks providing programs for the young, attracting them, losing the older audience in the process and then having to program to them, which would drive off the young and...well, you get the idea. "In effect, the worse TV nets perform at getting large audiences," John Polich, a professor of communications at Fordham University, has written, "the more they emphasize segments. The more they emphasize audience segments, the more they lose audience."⁷ The irony is that the obsession with 18 to 49 year-olds puts television in the business of ignoring and even attempting to drive away its most devoted viewers, which is certainly a peculiar practice for anyone, but especially for a broadcast executive, to be in. It puts the network in the service of the very people who don't want to watch it and antagonistic to the very people who do.

In their defense, advertisers and broadcasters insist that by designing programs and advertisements for the younger demographic, they also manage to reach a portion of the older demographic precisely because the latter watches more television and obviously doesn't just hit the "off" button when a youth-oriented show comes on, whereas a company that advertises on one of the higher-rated programs among adults aged 50 and older is unlikely to reach a comparable percentage of younger viewers because those potential viewers are unlikely to be watching.⁸ One might call this the "sucker" argument. It assumes that older viewers don't really care what they watch and that they can be induced to watch anything. It is, to be frank, hard to tell if this is true or not, since Nielsen doesn't make this

⁷ John Polich, "Mass Appeal," *Adweek*, May 31, 1999, pp. 36 and 38.

⁸ Horst Stipp, "Why Youth Rules: A Network Response," *American Demographics*, May 1995, p. 30.

information publicly available and since any decline in viewing can be attributed to a number of factors, not least of which are the alternatives to broadcast television of videos, DVDs and cable. But by doing a bit of extrapolation, it does appear that the over-50s' *rate* of viewing has decreased significantly as broadcasters have neglected them. Network affiliate ratings in prime-time generally have been declining for twenty-five years – from a 44.8 rating in the 1984-85 television season to 31.7 in the 1998-99 season and from a share of 74% of television sets in use to 54% over the same period. Since the over-50s constitute a sizable segment of the television audience, it is only logical that their viewing should be declining in at least the same proportion and probably greater.⁹ Indeed, even programs that *are* targeted to older consumers seem to have been effected by the spillover of the networks' having ignored those consumers overall. Over the last twenty years, the ratings for the nightly network news broadcasts, for example, broadcasts that skew very heavily toward older viewers, have fallen precipitously – by almost half.¹⁰

The second problem with the analysis is not faulty logic; it is faulty statistics. Despite the conventional wisdom about older consumers, study after study shows that consumers over fifty are no more brand loyal or unwilling to try new products than younger consumers are. It is simply another fabrication. One study conducted by Nielsen Marketing Research in 1993 showed that, on average, 67% of female heads of household aged 18 to 34 claimed to be willing to sample new brands as opposed to 70% for females in the 35 to 64 year-old group.¹¹ A 1996 study by Information Resources also found that older women were more likely to change brands than younger ones, and an earlier study by J.D. Power and Associates found the same to be true of older men buying replacement cars.¹² Another study in 1997 by Nielsen, comparing baby boomers to 20-somethings, concluded that the former

⁹ Nielsen Media Research, *2000 Report on Television: The First Fifty Years*, (NY: Nielsen Media Research, 2001), p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21.

¹¹ Elizabeth Jensen, "Chasing the Youth Audience," *Brill's Content*, March 1999, p. 88.

¹² Surowiecki; Jensen.

sampled just as many brands of soda, beer and candy as the latter.¹³ Yet another study, this one by the ProMatura Group, found that 78% of Americans between 56 and 90 years old are “likely” or “very likely” to try new products.¹⁴ And a study conducted just last year by the Roper Organization for AARP determined that young consumers and consumers over 45 are remarkably similar when it comes to things like the reasons they choose brands, the research they do on brands and, most importantly, their willingness to try new brands – 70% of those over 45. Virtually identical percentages of under-45s and over-45s agreed with the statement, “In today’s marketplace, it doesn’t pay to be loyal to one brand,” and half of the over 45s said that they are “always looking for better products.” The summary: “[W]ith the exception of only a few [product] categories, the majority of forty-five-plus Americans are not loyal to any one brand.”¹⁵

As for the frequency of television viewing, if the statistics are accurate – and Nielsen is notoriously untrustworthy when it comes to older viewers – it is undeniable that older Americans do watch more television than younger ones and that television viewing, as measured in hours per week, generally increases with age, though it is difficult to determine exactly how much more television older Americans watch since Nielsen lumps all viewers 55 years and older together and since the frequency is probably skewed by stay-at-homes at the upper end of that range.¹⁶ (By contrast, the percentages of people who watch *some* television each week are remarkably consistent over age groups.)¹⁷ Still, these figures thrust us right back into the paradox discussed earlier. If younger viewers are not watching television, and according to Nielsen they spend fewer than nine hours each week in primetime, why bother advertising to them? More, why bother tailoring programming, virtually *all* the

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Frank Ahrens, “In TV’s Numbers Game, Youth Trumps Ratings,” *Washington Post*, March 13, 2002, p. A1.

¹⁵ Press Release: “The Truth About Brand Loyalty: Executive Summary,” AARP, May 7, 2002 www.aarp.org/press/statements/2002/st050702brdloyal.html

¹⁶ Nielsen Media Research, *2000 Report on Television: The First 50 Years*, p. 15.

¹⁷ “Survey of Television Watching, Spring, 2000,” Mediamark Research Inc., www.mediamark.com

Television seems a very poor way to reach 18 to 49 year-olds. They don't watch it. They don't seem to like it, even when it is designed for them.



Advertisers would be better advised to use other media—radio, magazines, newspapers, billboards, T-shirts, the Internet. Then the hard to reach 18 to 49 year-olds would no longer be so hard to reach.

network programming, to the fictional advertising/broadcasting psychographic construction of them? The statistics seem to militate against it. Or put another way, television seems a very poor way to reach 18 to 49 year-olds. They don't watch it. They don't seem to like it, even when it is expressly designed for what advertisers and programmers think they want.

What this suggests is that rather than try to lure so-called young people to television, advertisers would be better advised to use other media – radio, magazines, newspapers, stand alone ads, billboards, T-shirts, the Internet. If one did hit these, then presumably one would reach those 18 to 49 year-olds, assuming that they hadn't all pulled a Ted Kaczynski and left civilization entirely. But if an advertiser were to do this – and obviously many if not most of them do – then the 120 million or so hard-to-reach 18 to 49 year-olds would no longer be so hard to reach. The material statistic would be how many in the age group are exposed to any ads, the point being that television advertising does not exist within a vacuum. It is one component in a vast complex of media, and when one considers advertising within that broader context, the issue of scarcity disappears. Advertisers can reach allegedly young viewers without commandeering an entire medium to do so, especially since there are so many of them to reach. It should be like shooting fish in a barrel.

Yet even if one accepts the argument that these so-called young people are playing hard to get, the only reason to get them is that they are worth getting, which is to say that they have money and the willingness to spend it. Conversely, the reason to spurn older viewers is that they have less money and less willingness to

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Money is money. A dollar doesn't differentiate between young and old, so advertisers should be targeting the people with the most money to spend. Americans over 50 control 55% of the discretionary income in America.

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spend it. After all, money is money. A dollar doesn't differentiate between young and old, so advertisers should be targeting the people with the most money to spend, again assuming that they want to spend it. But here is where the appeal to youth and the rejection of those over fifty seems especially capricious. Americans over 50 years of age control 55% of the discretionary income in America.¹⁸ By contrast, the share of aggregate spending of Generation X, ages 25 to 34, was only 17.7%. The share of those geriatrics over 55 was 27.5%.¹⁹ In fact, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Americans between the ages of 45 and 54 spent \$46,100 per household in 2000, while those under 25 spent \$22,543.²⁰ More, 45 to 55 year-olds had the highest household incomes and spent more on consumer goods than any other demographic cohort.²¹ Of American households with incomes of more than \$100,000, 61% are headed by baby boomers. And this should make the broadcasters and advertisers who fixate on scarcity salivate: Households with incomes greater than \$60,000 watch considerably less television than those earning below that amount.²²

Of course, advertisers would argue that they are banking on the future and that younger consumers are a kind of investment. But once again the statistics refute this. 38% of Americans are now over 49, but that percentage will swell to 47% within twenty

¹⁸ Tobi Elkin, "Enlightened Age," *Adweek*, May 10, 1999, p. 20.

¹⁹ "Changes in Aggregate Spending byAge: 1990-2000," *American Demographics*, April 2002, p. 37.

²⁰ Ahrens

²¹ Peter Francese, "Big Spenders," *American Demographics*, September 2001, pp. 30-31.

²² Nielsen Media Research, p. 15.

years.²³ And while their numbers increase, so does their spending. Through the 1990s, Baby Boomers, aged 35 to 54, increased their share of America's aggregate spending by 6.7%, while Generation Xs' share actually fell a whopping 18.7%.²⁴ More, the average annual expenditure of 25 to 34 year-olds during the decade of the 1990s increased 38.5% while the annual expenditures of 55 year-olds increased 34.4%, indicating that older consumers were hardly tightening their belts. In fact, in absolute per capita numbers, the older consumers spent more than the younger ones – \$39,340 to \$38,945.²⁵ In sum, older consumers are growing at a faster rate than younger ones, have more money to spend than younger ones, actually spend more of that money than younger ones and are increasing their spending at roughly the same rate as younger consumers. And yet they remain the lepers of television advertising. By one estimate, 55% of the \$8 billion spent in 2001 for television's "upfront" advertising – i.e., time purchased before the season – was directed at the 18 to 49 cohort with most of the rest directed to viewers under 18 and only a tiny remainder to viewers up to 54.²⁶

As both a moral and an economic defense to their youth fixation, advertisers and broadcasters would no doubt say that older viewers have other television options, especially in cable, which skews older than broadcasting now, and that those viewers are hardly being ignored. Advertisers have even confessed that for them to obsess exclusively on young viewers is counterproductive. As Peter Chrisanthopoulos, president for broadcast and programming in the United States at Ogilvy & Mather, told the *New York Times* in 1999, "For those of us representing advertisers, it's good if a network has a focus, a mission, and tried to fulfill its goals

²³ Hillary Chura, "Ripe Old Age: Time's Running Out for Myth That Keeps Marketers Eyeballing the Still-Coveted 18-49 Demographic," *Advertising Age*, May 13, 2002, p. 16.

²⁴ "Changes in Aggregate Spending by Age: 1990-2000."

²⁵ "Changes in Consumer Spending by Age: 1990-2000," *American Demographics*, April 2002, p. 39.

²⁶ Chura

by focusing on the audience it desires. The youth focus is good as long as they all don't do it."²⁷

But the fact is that they *are* all doing it, even the cable networks that are supposed to be pluralistic and niche-oriented – the smart bombs of television. In truth, they only serve older viewers begrudgingly. Last year, The History Channel, which attracts an older audience, began an internal search for younger historians so that the network could begin to appeal to a younger audience. This season, Court TV, which also appeals to an older audience, crowed that its median age had fallen from 50 to 48, and it trumpeted its audience retention rates through commercial breaks for the audience, surprise!, aged 18 to 49, even though a full half of its viewers were outside that group.²⁸ American Movie Classics, where I was once employed as a host, had an audience that was appreciably older than the target 18 to 49 demographic, understandably since the network specializes in showing old films. But in 2002, the network decided to change from one that was subscriber-supported to one that was advertiser-supported and made the concomitant decision to change its demographics to attract advertisers. The new target viewer, I was told, was the 33 year-old. Given the nature of its programming, this made almost no sense – in the event, the network, now redubbed simply “amc,” kept losing what younger viewers it did have once the new policy was inaugurated – but it did raise an important question: If the only aim of television is to attract young viewers, then why even have a network of movie classics or historical programs or public affairs reports that appeal to older viewers? Why not just have a network of the Miller Lite “Catfight Girls” 24/7?

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If the only aim of television is to attract young viewers, then why even have a network of movie classics or historical programs or public affairs reports that appeal to older viewers? Why not just have a network of the Miller Lite “Catfight Girls” 24/7?
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²⁷ Stuart Elliot, “Networks Deliver Smorgasbord to Fill Order for Young Viewers,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1999, p. C17.

²⁸ Cynopsis, March 25 & 26, 2003, www.cynopsis.com

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Overseas, where populations are aging more rapidly and where there is a greater appreciation for maturity, companies like Prada, Gucci, Armani, L'Oreal and Harley-Davidson actively target older consumers.

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Despite the overwhelming evidence arguing against the focus on youth, few advertising or television executives in America challenge the conventional wisdom. (Overseas, where populations are aging more rapidly and where there has always been a greater appreciation for the virtues of maturity, it seems to be a different matter; according to a recent piece in *Newsweek*, companies like Prada, Gucci, Armani, L'Oreal and even Harley-Davidson, whose average customer is 52, are all actively targeting older consumers now.)²⁹ Here the youth fetish is so ingrained among advertisers that it isn't likely to change soon. As the novelist Johnathan Dee put it in an essay in *The New York Times Magazine* decrying the fixation on the even narrower 18 to 34 cohort, advertising "changes course with all the agility of an oil tanker."³⁰ Nevertheless there are a few powerful voices of dissent. Jon Mandel, the co-managing director and chief negotiating officer of the Medicam division of Grey Advertising, which buys some \$4 billion worth of media time for its clients, has long insisted that the obsession with the 18 to 49 cohort was foolish and self-defeating given the tremendous growth of the older market.³¹ And he goes further. He believes that the kinds of products older consumers buy drive better, which is to say pricier, advertising. As Mandel describes it, the main product categories being pitched to the 18 to 49 year-olds are "package goods" – soap, soda, chips. Not only are these relatively low-rent, they have also, according to Mandel, declined in sales 6% over the last three years. Meanwhile, one of the fastest growing categories in commercial time is pharmaceuticals, which in the course of four

²⁹ Stefan Theil, "Marketing to the Elder Set," *Newsweek*, September 16, 2002, p. 34.

³⁰ Dee, p. 61.

³¹ "Talk of the Nation," National Public Radio, March 4, 2002.

years has soared from near zero in advertising buys to \$1.4 billion.³² (Baby boomers also spend \$30 billion a year on anti-aging products.)³³ The largest single product category on television in terms of advertising dollars spent is the automobile, and the largest group of new auto purchasers is Americans 55 to 64 – this despite the emphasis that auto companies themselves place on the younger demographic. Similarly, the prime buyers of trucks are 44 to 55 year-olds.³⁴

While Mandel has been making the argument for an older demographic on the advertising side, there is also an apostate on the television side: David Poltrack, the executive vice president of research and planning at CBS. “The old categories are increasingly irrelevant,” Poltrack told *The New Yorker’s* James Surowiecki, “but we keep using them,” warning that older consumers could be neglected only at the networks’ peril. But instead of being regarded as a prophet of the coming demographic future, Poltrack has been ignored at best and ridiculed at worst. After all, he is the chief apologist for CBS, the network that skews oldest in the broadcast universe.

That very point, however, is of the utmost relevance in attempting to understand the networks’ odd fascination with 18 to 49 year-olds. Long before any network thought in terms of age cohorts, CBS was the undisputed king of the ratings hill. For fifteen straight years, from the 1955-1956 season through the 1969-1970 season, CBS led in primetime ratings, and after losing by one-tenth of a rating point in the 1970-1971 season, it reeled off another five straight years of dominance.³⁵

CBS’s ratings hold was impregnable, but only if one measured the whole audience. It was the genius of Leonard Goldenson, the head of ABC, which routinely finished in third place well behind CBS and NBC, to change the rules. Unable to compete in the big sweepstakes, Goldenson created a smaller one that he could win.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Michael Weiss, “Chasing Youth,” *American Demographics*, October 2002, p. 35.

³⁴ Nielsen Media Research, p. 61; Ahrens.

³⁵ Nielsen Media Research, pp. eighteen-19.

ABC, he told advertisers, was getting younger viewers than CBS and NBC, which meant that advertisers with products appealing to that segment would be wise to buy time on ABC. This was akin to a football team saying it had lost the game, but it had gained more yards than the winner or posted more first downs or that it had better looking fans. Given the general attraction to youth, especially among advertisers who loved the association, the network had managed to make itself seem successful despite its consistent third-place finishes. It was all smoke and mirrors.

ABC didn't achieve this single-handedly. It was abetted in its hoax by two other factors. The first was that by focusing on audience segments rather than on the whole audience every network could claim a ratings victory, depending on how the demographic pie was sliced. This became particularly important (and apparent) when Fox entered broadcast television without a prayer of beating the Big Three but with a bead on even younger viewers than ABC had touted. When WB and UPN were launched, targeting even younger viewers than Fox, the youth movement swept away common sense altogether, and CBS, which continues to win the overall ratings race as often as not, was rendered an antique. No one, except CBS, ever talks in terms of overall ratings anymore. The only numbers that matter are 18 to 49 or 18 to 34.

This is only possible, though, because of the second factor. In 1987, Nielsen Media Research, which computes the ratings, introduced a new system of measurement called the "people meter." This shifted the basis of gauging a program's popularity from the number of *households* watching that particular program to the number of *people* watching it. Not incidentally, this meant that Nielsen was now able to stratify that audience into demographic layers. The new measurement served the purposes of the networks, each of which could stake their claim to being victorious in one of those strata without having to win the whole thing, and of the advertisers who, by one account, would pay less for the

commercials because those commercials were reaching a smaller segment of the populace.³⁶ Everybody won, except CBS and the older viewers.

What this does not explain, however, is why *every* medium fetishizes youth – not just the advertiser-supported ones that are trying to sell to the youth market. The movies and the recording industry, for example, target youth almost as eagerly as television, even though the sheer numbers of older consumers and their discretionary spending would seem to make them a desirable audience. Movie executives would say that young people go to the movies more often than older ones, so it is only sensible that the industry would serve them with the kinds of films it makes. (This is certainly more logical than the television executives' argument that youth must be served because it *doesn't* watch TV.) Americans aged 12 to 29 accounted for just over 30% of the population but 50% of movie admissions in 2002.³⁷ Film executives might add that younger viewers are less discerning than older ones, that they are more likely to respond to predictable formulas, which is why the industry has become so heavily invested in special effects and action films. It is much more difficult to make the kinds of films that older audiences enjoy, especially since those patrons are less likely to go to "the movies" indiscriminately than younger viewers are. As Amy Pascal, Columbia Pictures chairman, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "It's easier to make brand-name movies than good ones."³⁸

But this doesn't factor in the self-fulfilling prophecy aspect. As with television, if movies are not made for an older sensibility, older audiences are less likely to go to them, meaning, in turn, that fewer movies will be made for them, and so on. The movies have been traveling along this Mobius strip at least since the late 1950s when audiences generally dropped off and those who remained were basically children and teenagers who rendezvoused at the theater on weekends. The problem with this approach is that Americans 50 and over constitute a third of the population

³⁶ Polich

³⁷ "U.S. Movie Attendance: Admissions," MPA Worldwide Market Research, p. 6.

³⁸ Patrick Goldstein, "A Graying, Growing Audience," *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 2002, p. F-1.

but only 17% of movie admissions in 2002, which means that there is clearly a lost opportunity for the film industry.

Despite the general neglect shown them, though, older viewers have been steadfast, in part, no doubt, because the film industry has been gradually wising up and recognizing them through boutique studios like Miramax, Fox Searchlight, Sony Classics, Artisan and Focus that produce more adult-oriented pictures. While moviegoers between the ages of 21 and 39 constituted between 36% and 41% of all admissions over the past five years, older moviegoers 40 and up constituted between 29% and 36% – not a dramatic difference.³⁹ From age 30 on, the percentage of Americans who qualify as “frequent” moviegoers – those who see at least one movie a month – is also remarkably constant, hovering at just about 30%.⁴⁰ More important, the older audience is actually growing. According to *Variety*, in the decade between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of moviegoers between the ages of 50 and 59 doubled from 5% to 10%, while the proportion of moviegoers between 16 and 20, that prime teen demographic, actually declined from 20% to 17%.⁴¹ By the same token, over the last five years the percentage of moviegoers between 12 and 24 has been level, but the baby boomer contingent actually rose slightly – 1.5% – in 2002, because, one can only assume, there was more for them to see.⁴² It may not be much, but it is something.

The situation may be even more dramatic in the recording industry, which has been losing buyers in droves. Though music is usually regarded as a young person’s domain, especially since rock, hip-hop and pop account for over 60% of CD purchases, the proportion of purchases by consumers between the ages of 15 and 30 has fallen from just over 48% in 1992 to just over 36% in 2001. In fact, the percentages have fallen in every age cohort from 10 years old through 39 years old with the greatest decrease in teens between the ages of 15 and 19. Over the same period, though, the percentage of purchasers 45 and older has nearly doubled – from

³⁹ “U.S. Movie Attendance: Admissions,” p. 6.

⁴⁰ “U.S. Movie Attendance: Frequency,” *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Peter Bart, “Decline of the Zeitgeist,” *Variety*, September 16-22, 2002.

⁴² “U.S. Movie Attendance: Movie-Goers,” p. 5.

The deep dark secret of our popular culture is that the tyranny of the young may be less an issue of economics than of psychology.



The one thing that everyone who controls the popular culture has in common is that they are in the business of, and in thrall to, images, including their self-images. And the most important image to promote is that of youth.

12.2% in 1992 to 23.7% in 2001 – so that they now match the 15 to 25 five year-olds.⁴³ Teen-oriented artists may get the attention, the radio play and a good chunk of the advertising budget but not apparently the aggregate sales.

All of which raises the \$64,000 question: If, as all the data suggest, older consumers are so appealing, why do we live in a culture in which youth dictates? One could answer that television executives and advertisers have hoodwinked us, and one wouldn't be entirely wrong. They have used demographics as a kind of pseudo-science – the marketing equivalent of alchemy. But that really begs the question. The deep dark secret of our popular culture is that the tyranny of the so-called young may be less an issue of economics than of psychology. One thing that advertisers, advertising, television, movie and recording executives, publishers, editors and everyone else who controls the popular culture have in common is that they all are, more or less, in the business of, and in thrall to, images, including their self-images. And, not surprisingly, the most important image to promote is that of youth – its purported vigor, sexiness, excitement, edginess, even its ironic detachment. “Being associated with youth is a positive because people like to envision themselves as young, virile, active,” one advertising executive has said.⁴⁴ Another added, “For a lot of brands we work with, it's sexier to advertise to the younger consumers who are trendier, much more fashion-forward, very social and very in the public eye.”⁴⁵ “Everybody's looking for young

⁴³ RIAA

⁴⁴ Stacy Lynn Koerner, VP for broadcast TV research at TN Media, quoted in Elliott.

⁴⁵ Melissa Pordy, senior VP, director of print, Zenith Media, quoted in Chura.

eyeballs," Jamie Kellner the president of AOL/Warner Brothers television, told *The New York Times*.⁴⁶

What should complicate the issue is that the line of demarcation between youth and age isn't as clear as it used to be. People over 50 look younger, act younger, generally feel younger and think younger than previous generations of mature Americans did, and they spend a good deal of money to make it so. They are not exactly geriatrics anymore. As Richard Kinder, president of SLG Advertising, put it, "60 year-olds don't think like they did in the last generation. 60 year-olds in the last generation wore plaid pants."⁴⁷

Still, the stigma of age dies hard. Some executives, particularly mid-level executives, come to this naturally because they are young themselves. In one survey, the average age of advertisers' representatives was 31 years old, the average age of agency representatives 28.⁴⁸ A similar study in England found similar results. The largest number of advertising employees were under 30 with less than 20% over 40 and a meager 6% over 50.⁴⁹ These kids seem to shrink the world to their own horizons. When a sample of young advertisers and advertising executives was asked the median age of American adults, 20% said 35.5, and half said 39. The correct answer in 1995, at the time of the survey, was 41.3 and rising rapidly.

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 naturally because they are
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⁴⁶ Elliott

⁴⁷ Chura

⁴⁸ Vicki Thomas and David Wolfe, "Why Won't Television Grow Up?" *American Demographics*, May 1995, p. 26.

⁴⁹ Dominic Mills, "Grey-beards Have a Place in Youth Game," *Telegraph*, December 12, 2002 www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml

But most of the real decision-makers are not kids. They are seasoned veterans, virtually all of whom are outside the prime demographic cohort.



Associating with the young is like professional Botox.

One might excuse these young foot soldiers for assuming that everyone is or should be in their image. But in advertising, television, film, recording, and book and magazine publishing most of the real decision-makers are not kids. They are seasoned veterans, virtually all of whom are outside the prime demographic cohort – people like Paramount head of production Sherry Lansing (59), Sony Pictures Chief Executive Officer John Calley (73), Universal chairman Ron Meyer (58), Miramax head Harvey Weinstein (51), CBS network president Les Moonves (54), Sony Music CEO Andrew Lack (55), Dreamworks’ partners David Geffen (60), Jeffrey Katzenberg (53) and Steven Spielberg (57). So why are they selling youth? Like almost everyone in their demographic cohort, but even more so given the pressures of the entertainment business, they are fighting to be relevant – fighting not to be old. It is no wonder, then, that the entire popular culture is bowing to the young. Identifying with and serving the young may be the best way for the rulers of that culture to demonstrate their own youthfulness. “There’s no strong economic reason for Madison Avenue’s fascination with the young audience,” David Poltrack of CBS has said, missing what may be a far more powerful reason – namely that associating with the young is like professional botox.⁵⁰

If true – and no one in entertainment will ever admit it – what this means is that the entire culture is tyrannized by a fiction of youth because those who command the culture are themselves tyrannized by their creation of this idealized cohort. In effect, we are beholden to their insecurities. They would have to be dragged

⁵⁰ Elliott

kicking and screaming to recognize and satisfy the older viewers, listeners and readers, which is why it isn't likely to happen soon, no matter how much economic sense it makes. For people who fancy themselves as young and in the vanguard, the adjustment would be too traumatic. The rest of us have seen the future and it is older. On Madison Avenue and in Hollywood, there may be no more terrifying thought.

And so the tyranny continues.

The entire culture is tyrannized by a fiction of youth because those who command the culture are themselves tyrannized by their creation of this idealized cohort.



The rest of us have seen the future and it is older. On Madison Avenue and in Hollywood, there may be no more terrifying thought.

As the boomer generation ages, it finds itself no longer loved by the advertisers and marketers who once lavished them with attention.



If they're feeling like King Lear—wandering on the edges of popular culture complaining about thankless youth—who can blame them?

(Mis) Calculating the Ideal Audience

Introduction

Johanna Blakley

Lear Center Assistant Director

It must be galling. Despite the fact that the 55 and over crowd watches television in droves, advertisers and programmers have no interest in luring them. Or to put it more accurately, because the older crowd already watches TV in droves, programmers know they don't have to bother appeasing them.

The recent flurry of media attention to the dominance of the 18 to 49 demographic is telling. As the baby boomer generation ages, it finds itself no longer loved by the advertisers and marketers who once lavished them with attention. No doubt getting the cold shoulder from commercial culture is painful to a generation weaned on it. The boomers were the architects of our youth-obsessed popular culture, but they have received no mercy from it. If they're feeling a bit like King Lear now – wandering out on the edges of popular culture, complaining about thankless youth and serpent's teeth – who can blame them?

It wasn't surprising that *60 Minutes*, a favorite of the "over the hill" crowd, recently aired a report critical of television's obsession with 18 to 49. Why is TV focused on this "key demo," they ask? Because Madison Avenue is! Except for those lucky subscription cable networks, almost every corner of the TV universe is beholden to its

advertisers and its Nielsen numbers. Most agree that the system isn't perfect, but most people making their money from it are leery about rocking the boat. The science may be fuzzy, but the truth may be worse.

In the past, upgrades to Nielsen technology have produced smaller market share for the networks, which never goes over well with network brass. Promising new Interactive TV technology, which would allow advertisers to track exactly how many viewers are attracted to their products, has proven a terrifying specter to network executives who aren't sure advertisers will be happy with the results. And advertising executives who have built careers catering to the obscure psychographics of the 18 to 49 cohort may not be interested in reinventing that wheel.

Lear Center researcher Patrick Reed investigates the evolution of the 18 to 49 demographic and provides clear insight into the situation facing television executives and audiences today. Reed reveals the miscalculations sustaining the television/advertising/marketing nexus in this country, and some of the unsavory effects it has had on American audiences, particularly the 25% who do not have cable.

Reed's work provides a foundation for a series of timely research projects that could benefit the industry and its audiences. Giant leaps have been made in demographic research technology, but implementation is slow due to the difficulty of standardization and resistance from various sectors of the advertising and programming industries. But soon enough, the television industry, and all industries dependent upon advertising, will find themselves in a new landscape, one far less forgiving about the fuzzy science they currently use to cajole advertisers into paying big bucks for increasingly small audiences.

For much of its history, the television industry thrived by providing a broad, heterogeneous audience to its clients.



Today, however, networks have isolated a particular demographic audience as the primary programming focus, one that advertisers are willing to pay dearly for.

(Mis) Calculating the Ideal Audience

By Patrick Reed⁵¹ for the Norman Lear Center

18 to 49: The Estimated Undefinable

Open any textbook that explains the business of broadcast television and one distinction is made immediately clear: television's revenues are based primarily on its ability to provide audiences to advertisers. Ever since television's inception, when entire programs were sponsored by individual companies, the standard of a television program's success has largely been measured by the amount of regular, loyal viewers it attracts – viewers that can, in turn, be "sold" to advertisers as potential consumers of their products. Broadcast television's reliance on advertising revenues distinguishes it from other media such as magazines, recorded music and motion pictures, which receive a percentage of operating income from subscribers or direct purchasers. For much of its history the television industry thrived by providing a broad, heterogeneous audience to its clients, one that theoretically spanned the entire United States and was all-inclusive. While the demographic characteristics of audiences – personal indicators such as age, gender, racial/ethnic background, and income – were taken into account by network executives as they developed programming, television's unique advantages gave it a ubiquitous, instantaneous grasp that other media simply could not match. It made perfect business sense, therefore, for owners to attempt to attain the largest viewing audience possible – for only they could boast that an advertiser's

⁵¹ Patrick Reed is a freelance writer/researcher working in Lexington, Kentucky. He has an MA in popular culture and a BA in telecommunications. Reed has also worked on other Lear Center projects, including its book, *Artists, Technology & the Ownership of Creative Content* and *Ready to Share*, which explores intellectual property in the fashion industry.

The intended audience conspicuously excludes substantial segments of the American viewing audience due to its age, race and income.



A survey of developments in the TV industry suggests that the broadcast networks reorganized their programming around drawing 18 to 49 year-olds so they could compete with an increasingly broad panoply of entertainment offerings.

commercial could potentially be seen by tens of millions of people, across the country, in primetime.

As it stands today, however, television's reliance on demographic statistics to set advertising rates is unprecedented. In an effort to remain commercially viable, the broadcast networks have isolated a particular demographic audience as the primary programming focus, one that advertisers are willing to pay dearly for. This intended audience is broad enough to include people who became eligible to vote during the Vietnam War as well as those who reached voting age a year ago, yet it conspicuously excludes substantial segments of the American viewing audience due to their purported demographic deficiencies of age, race and income. These neglected populations constitute some of the most habitual and loyal television viewers, yet their interests are superseded by those of an idealized demographic audience that fuels economic activity but has little basis in reality. Never mind the cultural incongruity: with over fifty billion dollars spent on advertising each year, the 18 to 49 demographic figures are absolutely crucial to American television today.⁵²

How did this particular demographic come to dominate so much of the current decision-making? A survey of developments within the television industry suggests that the broadcast networks reorganized the majority of their programming around drawing 18 to 49 numbers in order to compete with an increasingly broad panoply of entertainment offerings. Over the last twenty years, the traditional business model of American television has been transformed by a series of technological innovations. The growth of cable television in the 1980s, along with increased VCR usage, provided television viewers with a variety of

⁵² Figure is for 2000: \$52,365,000 total for both cable and broadcast. Taken from Christopher Sterling and John Michael Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of*

entertainment options that were previously unavailable, and within the confines of the broadcast spectrum, upstart networks such as Fox, WB, and UPN broke the stranglehold the "Big Three" networks held over the industry for four decades. More recent developments such as the increased channel capacity offered by digital cable and the initial market emergence of digital video recorders (DVRs) promise to place even more pressure on broadcasters, and cable networks as well, to provide content captivating enough to attract and capture the ever-more-elusive audience.

Thus, the networks' reliance on using a thirty-one year spanning, cross-generational demographic to lure advertising dollars can be viewed as a defense mechanism, a concession made in order to compete with cable and other entertainment options as network television faces an uncertain future. Yet the 18 to 49 demographic itself is inherently unknowable, an arbitrary measure created to keep score in a game that is fast becoming obsolete. Comparing this range to the most recent U.S. census figures equates to a population of somewhere between 125 and 130 million people.⁵³ What exactly do those who comprise this demographic have in common? Once audience fragmentation becomes widely accepted by the advertising and marketing industries, and it becomes apparent that there is no true common linkage between the disparate groups who comprise this demographic, it follows that the concept of broadcasting itself – in a commercial sense, at least – will creep ever more close to obsolescence.

American Broadcasting, 3rd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002): 842. Source: McCann-Erickson.

⁵³ Estimate derived from "United States Census Bureau: Census 2000 Demographic Profiles," Census Bureau Home Page, File: censtats.census.gov/data/US/01000.pdf, available online: censtats.gov/pub/Profiles.shtml. (Sep. 2002), Table DP-1, subtracting the population numbers of ages 55 and above, and half of the

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The networks' reliance on a thirty-one-year-spanning-cross-generational demographic to lure advertising dollars can be viewed as a defense mechanism, a concession made to compete as network television faces an uncertain future.

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Television has long been criticized for its limited, formulaic programming, for its unwillingness to challenge, expand or enliven the boundaries of popular culture.



What happens when so much of American television becomes fixated on a singular illusion, seeking to captivate a target audience that, by any tangible definition, does not exist?

Still, the question persists: why 18 to 49? Why not some other vast, vague demographic? Acknowledging that, on some extremely general, common-sense level people within this age span tend to spend more money on consumer goods than those outside of it does little to clarify or explain the reasoning by which this demographic has been projected squarely into the locus of the contemporary advertising/entertainment business model. Are people between ages 18 and 49 really more receptive to advertising? Have those over 50 truly developed secure brand loyalties, and therefore become content to wile away the years, allocating their disposable income to their children, charities and/or travel? Do most prime-time advertisements skew toward the younger half of this demographic, and even reach down into the teen-age market? And do ads inserted into these 18 to 49-intended programs actually break through the clutter and seize the peripatetic attention spans of their intended consumers?

Of greater importance are issues relating to network programming strategies and, even more so, to the social needs of what Ien Ang calls "the infinite, contradictory, dispersed and dynamic practices and experiences of television audience-hood enacted by people in their everyday lives."⁵⁴ What true audience is being served by the efforts to entertain the eighteen to forty-nine demographic? What sorts of programs are being created specifically for them? Is anyone in this 130 million-mass being ignored? Television has long been criticized for its limited, formulaic programming, for its unwillingness to challenge – or even expand and enliven – the boundaries of popular culture. But what happens when so much of American television becomes fixated on

population between ages 44 and 55, from the total population numbers for age 18 and above.

⁵⁴ Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991): 13.

a singular illusion, seeking to captivate a collective "target audience" that, by any tangible definition, does not exist?

The Road to 18 to 49

To trace the origin and development of demographics measurement in television is to delve into the prolonged, uneasy alliance between the television industry, advertisers, and ratings services. During the first half of the twentieth century, as both the media and advertising industries evolved, demographic targeting ploys were primitive, relying on basic distinctions such as gender to differentiate their print enticements.⁵⁵ After the advent of radio as a mass commercial medium necessitated the first efforts at audience measurement, several incipient companies set their sights on devising a national ratings system for television.⁵⁶ A.C. Nielsen Company (now known as Nielsen Media Research and owned by Dutch conglomerate VMG) quickly rose to dominate the competition on a national level, providing what was accepted at the time to be a fairly representative sample of television households and individual viewers through its combination of electronic meter set-recording and personal diary-keeping.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Basic Books: 1976 [2001]): 167-179 for a critical account of early advertising directed at women.

⁵⁶ See Hugh Beville, *Audience Ratings, Radio, Television and Cable* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1985): for a detailed history of the origins of audience measurement in broadcasting, and Eileen Meehan, "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience," in *Logics of Television: Essays In Cultural Criticism*, ed. Pat Mellencamp (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990): 117-125 for a more critical overview of the early days of audience ratings which focuses on the ways radio ratings services tailored their sample sizes and means of measurement to satisfy their most preferred customers.

⁵⁷ See Elizabeth Heighton and Don Cunningham, *Advertising in the Broadcast Media* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1976): 180-195, Bob Shanks, *Cool Fire: How To Make It In Television* (New York: Norton, 1976): 244-258, and especially David Poltrack, *Television Marketing: Network/Local/Cable* (New York:

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Radio necessitated the first efforts at audience measurement and several companies set their sights on devising a national ratings system for television. A.C. Nielsen quickly rose to dominate the competition.

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Although diary information provided by the first Nielsen viewers contained demographic statistics, the system was suspect from the start due to viewer neglect and inaccuracy. Over the proceeding years, television networks discussed, and occasionally even financially supported, alternative systems, but none could topple Nielsen, whose NTI (Nielsen Television Index) results became the common parlance of the industry. By 1973, new set-meter technology enabled the three networks and their advertiser clients to receive household ratings data from certain key markets within twenty-four hours. However, demographic data for the NTI was only provided on a bi-weekly basis throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, and still reliant on personal diaries. All of this changed in September 1987, when Nielsen's people meter – combining a television set-meter with a remote control that contained a personal code for each viewer in the house – was implemented as the standard measurement device for both household data and individual information in Nielsen's national sample of 5,000 households (it is important to keep in mind that approximately one-fourth of Nielsen's 210 local markets still use a combination of electronic set-tuning meters and personal diaries for demographic information, while the remainder rely on sweeps diaries alone, as of November 2002).⁵⁸ Despite nagging questions about viewer vigilance – would everyone in the people meter sample be dedicated enough to punch their keypad each time they watched television? – the movement

McGraw-Hill: 1983): 7-66 for overviews of the Nielsen ratings system from the 1950s to 1970s.

⁵⁸ See Nielsen Media's web site, www.nielsenmedia.com, for a list of their Designated Market Areas (DMAs) as well as information on audience measurement in the "Who We Are and What We Do" link.

towards capturing target audiences on a national level gained considerable momentum.⁵⁹

Nielsen's upgrade in ratings measurement technology made explicit what had been a slow, inexorable shift in advertising and programming objectives. The success of such programs as *Monday Night Football* in the 1970s and daytime soap operas from the 1950s onward had convinced advertisers that buying commercial time during certain shows could benefit their bottom line by drawing in large numbers of similar viewers. Nevertheless, while many network programming decisions during television's first half-century were made with particular audiences in mind, overall the final choices relied more on the independent opinions – or hunches – of programmers and executives than on a mandate from the advertising industry. The most successful example of a network makeover occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when CBS President Robert Wood engineered an overhaul of the network's prime-time lineup by ending the runs of several aging hits, including *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Andy Griffith Show* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and replacing them with more culturally relevant, and younger-audience-skewing, programs such as *All In the Family* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.⁶⁰

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The debut of Nielsen's people meter in 1987 gave the movement towards capturing target audiences at a national level considerable momentum.
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⁵⁹ See "Television In the Peoplemeter Age," *Broadcasting* 7 Sep. 1987: 35-41 for a report on the early days of the new system and William Baker and George Dessart, *Down the Tube: An Inside Account of the Failure of American Television* (New York: Basic Books, 1998): 92-93 for a discussion of the new measurement technology within a larger context of commercial television's fortunes in the 1980s. The first people meters were actually developed by a British company, AGB, in 1984, and for several months in 1987 AGB competed with Nielsen for television contracts. Such was Nielsen's dominance, however, that AGB withdrew from the American market in 1988.

⁶⁰ See Richard Jencks, "How Network Television Program Decisions Are Made," *Network Television and the Public Interest*, eds. Michael Botein and David Rice (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980): 45-46, and Douglas Gomery, "Maybe Younger Isn't Better," *American Journalism Review* 19.4 (May 1997): 48.

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Television, long content to flourish its reach to advertisers, could no longer simply deliver an undifferentiated chunk of the audience: differences in age, income, race and “lifestyle” were increasingly seen as crucial.

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As the 1970s wore on, however, more detailed demographic statistics were becoming easier to obtain, and by the early 1980s advertisers and their agencies were exhibiting what Joseph Turow labels "a passion for detail – the desire to get more specific about consumers' activities through a cannonade of research."⁶¹ Television, long content to flourish its broadcasting reach to advertisers, was thus faced with some of the challenges that affected the print media sector during the 1960s and early 1970s. Simply delivering men, women, or both in a large, undifferentiated chunk was not acceptable any longer; differences in age, income, race, and the mysterious vagaries of "lifestyle" were increasingly seen as crucial. Cable television, including premium channels such as Home Box Office and networks such as Turner Broadcasting, had become a permanent threat to the broadcast networks by the early 1980s, as many cable programmers followed the specialized print media model and scheduled demographic-driven entertainment in hopes of taking advertising revenues away from the more general interest fare of the broadcasters.⁶² A major change in the commercial television economy was happening, and television critic Les Brown captured its essence in 1983 when he observed that "since buying power is what matters, nearly every program in prime time aims at the same segment, people in the young-adult category."⁶³ Just as magazine publishers were forced to re-assess their marketing agendas a decade or so before, during the mid-1980s the broadcasting industry faced a challenge to its

⁶¹ Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 55.

⁶² See Turow, *Breaking Up* 37-39 regarding Ted Turner's efforts to separate his new cable channels from the networks, J. Fred MacDonald, *One Nation Under Television: The Rise and Decline of Network TV* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990): 222-232 for an overview of the rising threats to network television during the 1980s, and Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion* (New York: Basic Books, 1984): 69 for a comparison of cable strategies and print media.

⁶³ From "Living in a Nielsen Republic," collected in Les Brown and Savannah Walker, eds., *Fast Forward: The New Television and American Society* (Kansas City/New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1983): 106.

During the mid 1980s, the broadcasting industry faced a challenge to its dominance, so improved measurement technology provided a veneer of statistical legitimacy as they scaled down their broad-audience aspirations.



With the conversion of Nielsen national ratings to the people meter system in 1987, the ascension of the 18 to 49 demographic to an industry-wide *raison d'être* was guaranteed.

dominance of the medium; and in both cases, improved measurement technology provided a veneer of statistical legitimacy to the content providers as they scaled down their broad-audience aspirations.⁶⁴

So, with the conversion of Nielsen national ratings to the people meter system in 1987, the ascension of the 18 to 49 demographic to an industry-wide *raison d'être* was guaranteed. For years, the 18 to 49 age span had existed as one of several demographic sub-categories compiled by Nielsen (along with such 1950s-era staples as *Lady of the House*), but over the next decade, a torrent of industry reporting gradually re-configured 18 to 49 into the "key demo," and trade publications and general entertainment periodicals alike began to keep a running score on the networks' success or failure in attracting this newly-prized chunk of viewers.⁶⁵ The two television networks that first took advantage of this change were, not coincidentally, NBC, a habitual ratings loser for many years prior to the mid-1980s, and Fox, the embryonic network started by Australian Rupert Murdoch that began nationwide broadcasting with only two nights of programming. In 1985, NBC captured the top year-end standing in the Nielsen ratings by developing both family-oriented hit shows (*The Cosby Show*, *Family Ties*) and several programs that foundered a while before finding a largely 18 to 49 audience (*The A-Team*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Cheers*). During the late 1980s, Fox copied NBC's strategy of patience, but jettisoned NBC's full-demographic ambitions and focused heavily on the younger

⁶⁴ See Beth Barnes and Lynne Thomson, "Power to the (People) Meter: Audience Measurement Technology and Media Specialization," in *Audience Making: How the Media Create the Audience*, ed. James Ettema and D. Charles Whitney (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994): 75-94 for a comparison between the two media industries as they began to seek more specialized audiences in order to strengthen their advertising-supported revenues.

⁶⁵ Denise Bielby and William Bielby, "Audience Segmentation and Age Stratification Among Television Writers," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 45.3 (Summer 2001): 394.



Throughout the mid 1990s, despite slips in overall ratings from time to time, both NBC and Fox were able to maintain revenue growth by emphasizing their strong 18 to 49 numbers to advertisers.



Criticism of television's reliance on demographics has occasionally come from within the industry itself due to networks' qualms over the fragmentation of their audiences and their distrust of the Nielsen data's accuracy.

half of the 18 to 49 target with programs such as *The Simpsons*, *Married With Children* and *Beverly Hills 90210*.⁶⁶

In 1990, NBC Entertainment President Brandon Tartikoff explained the sea change in network rationale when he noted that "when your level of success no longer has to be a twenty-five share but could be a twenty share with the right demographics, it does widen the spectrum of shows that are now acceptable and viable entities."⁶⁷ Throughout the mid-1990s, despite slips in overall ratings for both networks from time to time, both NBC and, until recently, Fox were able to maintain revenue growth by emphasizing their strong 18 to 49 numbers to advertisers. NBC in particular has capitalized on the 18 to 49 allure like no other broadcast network; its decision to shake up the traditional "family hour" of prime time (8 to 9 PM) and populate it with programs such as *Friends* and *Mad About You* ended another traditional programming practice and guaranteed that NBC would remain the industry leader in terms of advertising income into the new millennium.⁶⁸

Criticism of television's reliance on demographics has occasionally come from within the industry itself, mainly due to the networks' continuing qualms over the fragmentation of their audiences

⁶⁶ See "NBC, 1981-85: The Climb to the Top," *Broadcasting* 9 June 1986: 80-88 for a lengthy account of NBC's turnaround, and both W. Walley, "Fox Rates Look From Advertisers: Fourth TV Network Rebuffs Skeptics," *Advertising Age* 14 December 1987: 24 and Bill Carter, "Television: A Wily Upstart That Did a Lot of Things Right," *New York Times* 4 Jan. 1998, final ed., sec. 2: 34, for analysis of Fox's early fortunes.

⁶⁷ Tartikoff quoted in Stephen Battaglio, "Nets Sell Demos to Offset Shrinking Share," *Adweek* 6 Aug. 1990, Eastern ed.: 20.

⁶⁸ See Joseph Turow, *Media Systems in Society* (2nd ed. New York: Longman, 1997): 108 for a description of NBC's scheduling switch, soon followed by other networks. See also Steve Coe, "NBC Preens In Prime Time," *Broadcasting & Cable* 26 Feb. 1996: 26 and Tom Bierbaum, "Diminished Peacock Poised for Demo Dash," *Variety* 7 Dec. 1998: 33 for reports on NBC's continuing success throughout the late 1990s in the eighteen to forty-nine demographic, even when, as noted in the Bierbaum piece, its overall ratings decline.

and their distrust of the Nielsen data's accuracy. There was an overall ratings drop after the people meter was implemented in 1987, and again in 1996, when Nielsen increased its national sample size to 5,000 households. Network objections were fierce on both occasions, and alternative systems to the Nielsen monopoly were debated, but no change in methodology has occurred as of yet.⁶⁹ In all likelihood, the networks' hesitance to recalibrate – or even eliminate – ratings and demographic measurement is rooted in a fear of the unknown, very understandable given their nearly fifty-year relationship with Nielsen. The numbers that arrive daily from Nielsen's sample of households may be unreliable, or even indefinable, but remove them and the entire economic system crashes. As Todd Gitlin observed in 1982, "the numbers are a currency for transactions. Given their commitments to gross efficiency in time and dollars, what else are networks and advertising companies to use?"⁷⁰

Cable's response to the broadcasters' pursuit of demographics has been predictably varied. As some of the more successful cable networks grew during the 1990s, they expanded their programming in order to directly engage the broadcast networks in a battle for the 18 to 49 prize. The current strategies for Lifetime (focusing on the female half of the demo), the USA Network, and "the new TNN" are examples of this trend.⁷¹ Even traditionally niche, or specialty, cable companies such as Comedy Central and the Sci-Fi Channel have attempted to broaden their advertising base over the past several years.⁷²

⁶⁹ See "Television In the Peoplemeter Age," *Broadcasting*, Jane Hall, "Company Town: Networks Give Nielsen a Low Rating," *Los Angeles Times* 24 May 1996, home ed.: D-4, Elizabeth Jensen, "Tuning Out: Networks Blast Nielsen, Blame Faulty Ratings for Drop in Viewership," *Wall Street Journal* 22 Nov. 1996, Eastern ed.: A-1+, and for a report on general network unease, Bill Carter, "Shrinking Network TV Audiences Set Off Alarm and Resentment," *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1998, final ed., sec. 1: 1.

⁷⁰ Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1985): 54.

⁷¹ See R. Thomas Umstead, "Eyes on the Demo Prize," *Multichannel News* 25 Feb. 2002: 5-A for discussion of this eighteen to forty-nine objective, Heather Hundley, "The Evolution of Gendercasting: The Lifetime Television Network – 'Television for Women,'" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 29.4 (Winter 2002) for an overview of Lifetime's expansion of programming, and "TNN is the Fastest Growing Cable Network in Prime-time with the Largest Increase in Household Ratings, Households, 18-49 of Any Network in the Second Quarter," *PR Newswire* 3 July 2001 for information about the modest success of the re-vamped TNN as a general-entertainment network.

⁷² Sharon Moshavi, "Niche Cable Networks Attract Advertisers of the Same Genre," *Broadcasting & Cable* 8 March 1993: 47-48.

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A survey of the present state of the television industry finds that concerns about audience demographics, and especially the 18 to 49 demographic factor into nearly every programming decision being made.

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Therefore, as the broadcast networks have cast aside certain demographics, the more enterprising cable networks are searching for new ones to attract. A trade-publication report covering the 2002-03 mission statements from cable networks finds that a hierarchy of sorts is taking shape: while new ventures seek to pinpoint and draw in their niche audiences, and established networks such as the Travel Channel and ESPN aim to strengthen their traditional target-demographic bases, many of the general-entertainment networks are, in terms of programming development and strategy, broadcasters in all but name.⁷³ The landmark ratings payoff of HBO's incessant promotional campaign for both the 2001 and the 2002 season premieres of *The Sopranos* has garnered more industry attention than all but a handful of broadcast network programs over the past two years, despite the fact that the crime drama is shown on a premium cable network with no advertising sponsorship.⁷⁴

The Current Situation

A survey of the present state of the television industry finds that concerns about audience demographics, and especially the 18 to 49 demographic, factor into nearly every programming decision being made. ABC rode *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* to a first-place finish in 2000, both overall and among viewers 18 to 49.⁷⁵ Two years later, after over-scheduling *Millionaire* and failing to build any hits around it, the

⁷³ Barry Garron, "Cable's Ready," *Hollywood Reporter* 3-5 May 2002: S-4-S-16. See also Baker and Dessart 101 for a brief discussion of cable's increasing reliance on original programming.

⁷⁴ See David Bauder, "Sopranos Sets HBO Ratings Record," *Salon* eighteen Sep. 2002, available online: www.salon.com/ent/wire (Sep. 2002) for information about the 2002 premiere, and Bill Carter, "TV Notes: Bada-Bing Go the Ratings" *New York Times* 7 March 2001, final ed.: E-6 for a report on the fallout over the 2001 *Sopranos* premiere.

⁷⁵ Lisa de Moraes, "Millionaire Treats ABC to a No. 1 Season," *Washington Post* 25 May 2000, final ed.: C-7.

game show moved on to syndication and the network fell back into the ratings cellar. The Fox Network, a consistent threat to NBC in the 18 to 49 demo throughout the 1990s, stuck with former hits *Ally McBeal* and *The X-Files* a season too long and saw its demographic numbers plummet during 2001-02, only to rebound slightly with a summer phenomenon, *American Idol*, that gradually accumulated older, 18 to 49 viewers to its initial teenage audience base.⁷⁶ Cable networks MTV and E! captivated the entertainment press with the initial 18 to 49 successes of reality series *The Osbournes* and *The Anna Nicole Smith Show* respectively, the latter of which quickly shed most of its audience. These two cable networks, along with the WB broadcast network, are also at the forefront of a youth-seeking movement that isolates the younger half of the 18 to 49 range, the 18 to 34 demographic, as the primary programming and advertising target.⁷⁷

Overall, the 18 to 49 demographic remains of paramount importance to television networks, and the exceptions prove the rule. A Fall 2001 CBS reunion special of *The Carol Burnett Show* cast drew an unexpectedly strong rating, causing some to predict that family-oriented programming would soon make a comeback – and as the broadcasters' revealed their 2002-03 prime-time schedules, there indeed did seem to be a slight increase in family shows.⁷⁸ However, as CBS President Leslie Moonves pointed out at the time, the Burnett reunion special proved to be such a surprising hit precisely because of the 18 to 49 demographic, not despite it. Tellingly, few at CBS expected young adults to watch the program, and it provided advertisers with a cut-rate windfall of commercial exposure as a result.⁷⁹ Although CBS won the overall network season ratings in 2001 and finished a close second to NBC in 2002, the network continued to lag behind in the 18 to

⁷⁶ See Wayne Friedman and David Goetzl, "TV Marketing: Fox Hunts for Ratings - and Senior Marketing Executive; Network Looks for Answers to Prime-Time Slide," *Advertising Age* eighteen March 2002: 3 and Sharon Waxman, "Song and Dance Derision: Would-Be Stars Risk Humiliation on *American Idol*. For Fox, It's Paying Off," *Los Angeles Times* 28 July 2002, Sunday final ed.: G-1+.

⁷⁷ See Bill Carter, "WB Succeeds By Serving Youth Alone," *New York Times* 11 Jan. 1999, final ed.: C-1, and also Allison Romano, "At E!, Youth Will Be Served: By Aiming At Younger Demos, the Net's Succeeding – and Then There's Anna Nicole," *Broadcasting & Cable* 22 July 2002: 22.

⁷⁸ Robert Bianco and Gary Levin, "TV's Family Affair," *USA Today* 20 May 2002, final ed.: 1-D.

⁷⁹ See Tom Shales, "Cheer Factor: CBS Sweeps Win a Boost for Friendly Fare," *Washington Post* 30 Nov. 2001, final ed.: C-1, and Bill Carter, "The Media Business: Advertising; Carol Burnett, Armed

49 demographic due to its commitment toward diversifying its programming. This creates an interesting situation for CBS, for while the network's Carol Burnett reunion show appealed to many 18 to 49 viewers in 2001, and its current ratings winner *CSI* does likewise, as far as advertising rate-charge averages are concerned, CBS still lags far behind NBC heading into the 2002-03 season, and is barely ahead of the Fox network.⁸⁰ It seems that drawing in young and middle-aged viewers in relative isolation is more financially rewarding than mixing them into a larger mass audience; quite a paradox indeed for "America's Most Watched Network," as CBS's early 2003 promotional spots proclaim.

Industry executives were thrilled to see a healthy increase across the board in the upfront ad market before the 2002 season, but no one was surprised to see NBC – third place in 2001, barely first in 2002, but above all the station of *Friends*, *ER*, *Will and Grace* and *Frasier* – generate the highest revenues, with nearly a billion dollars more than CBS.⁸¹ NBC's dominance can be further illustrated by its strength in another statistic that has recently drawn attention: the "upscale" demographic, consisting of 18 to 49 viewers with a median income of over \$60,000.⁸² NBC's showcase programs all rate highly with upscale viewers, making the network even more attractive to advertisers, and indicating that many members of the 18 to 49 audience are truthfully a lot less important to programmers and advertisers than are those at the higher reaches of the socioeconomic ladder.⁸³ Joe Flint observes that this single-minded programming strategy does "clash with the traditional notion of a broadcast network," where, "in return for the use of the airwaves...a network should provide a public service by helping to inform and educate the general populace," but the average network executive, surrounded on all sides by advertiser-driven

With Old Clips, Is a Hit," *New York Times* 28 Nov. 2001, final ed.: C-1, which includes the Moonves comment.

⁸⁰See David Goetzl and Wayne Friedman, "Exclusive Survey: *Friends* Tops Ad Price List; NBC Lands Six Shows in Top 10, Leads Nets in Prime-Time Rates," *Advertising Age* 30 Sep. 2002: 1.

⁸¹ Suzanne Vranica, "Advertising: Nearly All Prime-Time Space For Network TV Ads Is Sold," *Wall Street Journal* 6 June 2002: B-3 and Meg James, "NBC Advertising Sets Sales Record," *Los Angeles Times* 4 June 2002, home ed., business sec.: 1.

⁸² Joe Flint, "How NBC Defies Network Norms - To Its Advantage," *Wall Street Journal* 20 May 2002: A-1+.

⁸³ See Tom Bierbaum, "NBC Does Demos, Even Sans *Seinfeld*," *Variety* 1 June 1998: 26 for a report detailing NBC's dominance in households with incomes over \$75,000 during the 1997-98 season, a trend that has continued over the ensuing six years.

demographics mania, would probably retort that adhering to such an anachronistic concept in the current television marketplace is tantamount to self-destruction.⁸⁴

Criticism – of Methods and the Madness Itself

The surface statistics gleaned from NTI people meters provide the basis for day-to-day decision-making in network television, but what do they ultimately signify? As befits such an unstable, pressurized industry, no one, it seems, is content with the ratings "evidence" provided by Nielsen for very long. The increase in network advertising rates in the 2002 upfront market provided a bonanza for NBC, and to a lesser extent the other networks, but another season-ending statistic was overlooked by many during the self-congratulation: the decline in broadcast network viewership in primetime reached an all-time nadir, to a point where basic cable and the major networks both drew equal audience shares.⁸⁵ This and other alarming evidence caused Omnicom Media Group's Andrew Green to charge in *Advertising Age* that "the metrics we rely on to tell us this dismal story of declining broadcast network ratings and shares are themselves becoming more suspect every year." Concluding that many problems lie within the inexact, Nielsen-monopolized technology, Green implored advertisers to take the lead in creating a totally new paradigm for measuring, and valuing, audience information.⁸⁶

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By the end of the 2002 TV season, the decline in broadcast network viewership in primetime reached an all-time nadir, to a point where basic cable and the major networks both drew equal audience shares.

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⁸⁴ Flint, "How NBC Defines Network Norms." See also Louis Chunovic, "NBC's Audiences Are More Upscale; WB Had Biggest Growth in Median Household Income," *Electronic Media* 12 August 2002: 3.

⁸⁵ Rick Kissell, "Season Springs Surprises," *Variety* 27 May-7 June 2002: 16. See also John Dempsey, "Cable Turns Up Heat on Networks," *Variety* 5 Aug. 2002: 18.

⁸⁶ Andrew Green, "The Amazing Game; The Basis for the TV Upfront Grows Shakier Every Year. It's Time to Change the Way We Measure Viewership," *Advertising Age* 17 June 2002: 30. See also Lisa de Moraes, "Diaries to People Meters: The Old Stone Age to the New Stone Age," *Washington Post* 10 Dec.

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With audience fragmentation, with viewers spread ever-more thinly across the cable spectrum and with the widespread arrival of digital video recorders, the statistical difference between demographic estimates for the majority of programs could become so miniscule that television advertising will lose whatever effectiveness its proponents have long insisted it had.

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Other criticisms of the people meter, and specifically its demographics capability, have been building in recent years. Once a national sample size of approximately 5,000 households is broken down into demographic groups, the pools of competing viewers suddenly become much smaller.⁸⁷ This understandably increases the standard error deviation range for reporting demographics, but what would be of grave importance in a scientific study is merely discomfoting in an industry where, as Todd Gitlin noted twenty years ago, "executives functionally forget what they were taught in elementary statistics."⁸⁸ Still, with audience fragmentation a reality, with viewers spread ever-more thinly across the digital cable spectrum and the widespread arrival of digital video recorders on the immediate horizon, the possibility exists that the statistical difference between demographic estimates for the majority of programs will become so minuscule that television advertising will lose whatever effectiveness its proponents have long insisted it had. One-tenth of a ratings point may not seem like much, but the fates of jobs, programs, and entire careers have rested on similar distinctions many times before. Increased competition for ad revenues demands less margin for error within the industry, a hollow irony considering the vagueness of the numbers.⁸⁹

Beyond the issue of statistical inaccuracy are enduring concerns over the actual effectiveness of marketing and advertising in

1999, final ed.: C-7 for more criticism of people meters, this time coming from network executives, as Nielsen unveils plans to gradually shift its local demographic measurement methodology from personal diaries to people meters.

⁸⁷ This potentially significant inaccuracy is discussed in Mike Budd, Steve Craig and Clay Steinman, *Consuming Environments: Television and Commercial Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 76, in Buzzard 37, and in Elizabeth Jensen, "Meet the Nielsens," *Brill's Content* March 1999: 90.

⁸⁸ Gitlin 53.

⁸⁹ See Jensen, "Meet the Nielsens" 90 and Jim Rutenberg, "Keeping Up With the Nielsen (Executive) Family," *New York Times* 18 Nov. 2001, late Sun. ed., sec. 3:

Can these demographic dossiers ever truly determine the various needs of consumers, or will they always remain oblique, statistically insignificant measurements compiled in order to appease advertisers as they go about the intrinsically inexact business of maintaining demand for their products?



Throughout the industry, numerous profiles of demographic groups are constantly commissioned, uncovering patterns of behavior that tend to either corroborate simple common-sense assumptions or resort to trite stereotypes like “men watch sports on TV.”

general. Marketers have long sought to establish complete profiles of the most desirable consumer bases, and by the mid-1980s, enough improvements in overt and clandestine research tactics had transpired to reveal a fuller "lifestyle" portrait of demographic groups than ever before.⁹⁰ More years have passed, and new research products have bestowed an even more detailed array of information about potential consumer behavior into the hands of marketers. One of the most significant developments affecting television has been the introduction of optimizer software programs into U.S. agencies from Europe in the late 1990s. These complex computer programs enable advertising agencies to take the most minute, "real time" program viewing data from Nielsen and break it down even further in order to, presumably, measure a potential consumer's slightest hint of attraction/distraction while watching television.⁹¹ Despite all of the apparent innovation, lingering doubts persist: can these demographic dossiers ever truly determine the various needs of consumers, or will they always remain oblique, statistically insignificant measurements compiled in order to appease advertisers as they go about the intrinsically inexact business of maintaining demand for their products?

Throughout the industry, numerous profiles of demographic groups are constantly commissioned, uncovering patterns of behavior that tend to either corroborate simple common-sense assumptions or resort to trite

4., where NBC executive Alan Wurtzel comments on the twisted marriage of inexact statistics and precise programming decisions in the industry.

⁹⁰ Turow, *Breaking Up 18-49*.

⁹¹ See Cristina Merrill, "High Stakes, Big Jackpot," *Adweek* 14 April 1997, natl. features ed., for an early article describing the influx of the somewhat-mysterious optimizers into the U.S. advertising industry after their success in Europe. For examples from the business world, see the Web site of Audience Analytics, Inc., an optimizer-based research company, at www.audiencewatch.com for an overview of services that includes a glossary, and the Web site of MicroStrategy, a computer data service that has partnered with Nielsen to increase the specificity

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There is a permanent epistemological chasm between the television and advertising industries and their audiences/consumers that ensures that even the most sharply measured demographic data is educated guesswork at best.

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stereotypes. Without fail – and by design – the diversity of human experience is washed over. Consider the following excerpts from two simultaneous reports from 1999 that examine the 18 to 49 demographic, and the subsets contained therein: "At a time when some marketers are unable to generalize in even the broadest terms about this diverse group, remember: men watch sports on TV."⁹² Also: "Non-boomer women in the 18 to 35 demo are especially vulnerable to the upscale, pamper-me ads that many makeup brands are developing since, without families, their often high salaries are spent on products to indulge themselves."⁹³ Michael Schudson clearly elucidates the perpetual state of conjecture that permeates the marketing and advertising industries when he observes that

(E)ven as techniques for testing advertising effectiveness or pretesting advertising copy become more refined, the chances of a theoretical understanding of consumption grow no greater in the advertising business. Most consumer research is proprietary. It has very limited goals and a very narrow focus and it often concentrates on product categories where the stakes for business are high but the interest of consumers low.⁹⁴

If the interest of consumers can never be fully ascertained apart from making mundane product choices, then it follows that television audiences, the basic currency of the television industry, will always be confined within this narrow economic conception. In *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Ien Ang critically analyzes the construction of audience as a commodity form, and notes that "although the television institutions do have the power to determine the formal boundaries of television culture, they cannot get to grips with the social world of actual audiences," because "the identities of actual audiences are inherently unstable, they are dynamic and variable formations of people whose

of its audience demographic measurement (including information like "pet ownership"). Available at www.microstrategy.com/Customers/Successes/nmr.asp.

⁹² Terry Lefton, "18-49 Men: Ups and Downs," *Brandweek* 10 May 1999: 12.

⁹³ Stephanie Thompson, "18-49 Women: Spin City," *Mediaweek* 10 May 1999:16.

Conceptually, the model for the 18 to 49 demographic speaks for over 125 million Americans as consumers, and TV in turn creates programs that attempt to speak to this audience. Realistically, such a notion is absurd.



Concerns about reaching the 18 to 49 demographic have become the bedrock impulse in TV programming, resulting in programs that are remarkably similar and restricted. Many new shows for the 2002-03 season are crafted with a young, male audience in mind.

cultural and psychological boundaries are essentially uncertain.⁹⁵ This permanent epistemological chasm between the television and advertising industries and their audiences/consumers ensures that even the most sharply measured demographic data is educated guesswork at best.

So, in review, an arguably inadequate sample provides questionable statistical data on an idealized population about which countless collective assumptions are made, all of them oriented around trivial consumption preferences. Conceptually, this model for the 18 to 49 demographic speaks for over 125 million Americans as consumers, and television in turn creates programs that attempt to speak to this audience. Realistically, such a notion is absurd. But, granting that the television industry has learned to manage such absurdities over time – indeed, it thrives on them – the question becomes, how have these economic practices affected the culture of television, the creative product that fills in time between commercial breaks? Who or what stands to benefit the most from this skewed conceptual audience? And, whose interests are ignored?

Lasting Effects – On Both Sides of the Screen

Programming motives certainly vary according to the needs of each network, and no doubt a modicum of intuitive or "gut" decisions still occur when executives organize their prime-time schedules. Nevertheless, concerns about reaching the 18 to 49 demographic have become the bedrock impulse behind many crucial judgments, resulting in programs that are remarkably similar, and restricted. Despite the re-emergence of a handful of family-oriented sitcoms – mainly on struggling ABC – many new shows for the 2002-03 season are crafted with a young, male audience in mind. For example, a recent *Washington Post* season preview isolates two revealing trends: an increase in police/crime dramas, and several new comedies that pair

⁹⁴ Schudson 65.

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NBC, more than any other network, has tethered its prospects for future prosperity to the 18 to 49 demographic. One could watch NBC's primetime schedule for months and come to the conclusion that modern-day America is predominantly well-off, educated, youthful, childless and white.

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average-looking, 30-something men with attractive female companions, in the tradition of *The Drew Carey Show*.⁹⁶ The spate of "reality" programs over the past three years, including game shows such as *Who Wants to Be A Millionaire* and *The Weakest Link* along with contests such as *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and *Fear Factor*, can also be attributed to the strong 18 to 49 numbers many of these shows have gleaned, although, as the quick rise and fall of *Millionaire* suggests, the appeal of such programs among younger viewers may turn out be temporary.⁹⁷

NBC, the network most successful within the profitable confines of 18 to 49, continues to shape the bulk of its network schedule around the twin pillars of its Thursday night lineup: *ER* and especially *Friends*, the quintessential 18 to 49 program.⁹⁸ The *Friends* template has been tweaked over the past half dozen years by NBC programmers desperate to replicate the sitcom's success, and its influence can be spotted in programs ranging from the half-hour comedies *Will and Grace* and *Just Shoot Me* to the slice-of-life "dramedy" *Ed*. NBC, more than any other network, has tethered its prospects for future prosperity to the 18 to 49 demographic; there are no recurring working-class characters in any of their situation comedies,

⁹⁵ Ang 40.

⁹⁶ Lisa de Moraes, "The Fall Strategy: Call the Cops!" *Washington Post* 22 Sep. 2002, Sunday ed.: G-1. CBS, the network that has traditionally refrained from narrowing its programming to a younger demographic range, is responsible for several new programs in both of these categories. de Moraes notes that four new cop dramas are scheduled for 10 PM on weeknights in order to both capitalize on the success of its Thursday night forensic-specialist drama *CSI* and hopefully provide a stronger male lead-in to David Letterman's *Late Show*.

⁹⁷ See Lisa de Moraes, "CBS's Post-Game Strategy Scores A Touchdown," *Washington Post* 30 January 2001, final ed.: C-1. The slow decline in *Survivor*'s ratings and the cancellation of NBC's *The Weakest Link* are also evidence of this fickle relationship between audiences and reality shows.

⁹⁸ See Rob Walker, "How *Friends* Wins Advertising Friends," *Slate* 9 Oct. 2002, available online: www.slate.msn.com/?id=2072059&device=, Flint, "How NBC Defies Network Norms," and Joe Flint, "Networks Prepare Fall 2002 Schedules

and, several urban dramas aside, one could watch NBC's prime-time schedule for months and come to the rational conclusion that modern-day America is predominantly well-off, educated, youthful, childless and white.⁹⁹

In terms of minority representation on network broadcast television, the prominence of 18 to 49 targeting has erased years of modest progress. In the 1970s and 1980s, several programs featuring black characters and storylines crossed over racial boundaries and became enduring hits, but the past decade has witnessed a gradual removal of African-American-themed programming from the four dominant networks. For the 2002-03 season, a total of three programs on major networks – each of them half-hour comedies – have African-American lead characters, and the two family sitcoms with black stars, *The Bernie Mac Show* on Fox and *My Wife and Kids* on ABC, began the season scheduled opposite each other on Wednesday nights, the result of a strategic programming move by Fox that drew criticism from *My Wife's* lead actor.¹⁰⁰ The disappearance of African-Americans from prime time has provoked condemnations from civil rights groups, coalitions of actors and other industry workers since the mid-1990s, but periodic protests have done little to improve the situation. News media analyses of this disheartening trend insist that the problem of minority neglect is due to several factors, and demographic mania is only partly to blame.¹⁰¹ Still, the evidence on hand – the actual

Ever Hopeful New Season Will Be Better," *Wall Street Journal* 10 May 2002, Eastern ed.: B-1.

⁹⁹ See Flint, "How NBC Defies Network Norms."

¹⁰⁰ See Charlie McCollum, "Black, Latino Series In Fall Faceoff," *San Jose Mercury News Online* 24 July 2002, available online:

www.bayarea.com/mid/bayarea/entertainment/columnists/charlie_mccollum/3724514.htm and Glenn Garvin, "Bernie Mac Won't Protest," *Miami Herald Online* 23 July 2002, available online: www.miami.com/mid/miamiherald/entertainment/columnists/glenn_garvin/3714163.htm. In late 2002, Fox announced that it was re-scheduling *The Bernie Mac Show* to its original premiere time on Wednesday nights (moving back to 9 PM from 8 PM EST), after several weeks of finishing behind *My Wife and Kids* in the ratings.

¹⁰¹ See Brian Lowry, Elizabeth Jensen and Greg Braxton. "TV's Diversity Dilemma: Networks Decide Diversity Doesn't Pay," *Los Angeles Times* 20 July 1999, home ed.: A-1+, and Paul Farhi, "In Networks' New Programs, A Startling Lack Of Racial Diversity," *Washington Post* 13 July 1999, final ed.: A-1, for two reports on the outburst of protests that occurred in mid-summer 1999, after the four top networks released a fall schedule that included no new programming with African-American leads. Both reports speculate that the absence of blacks on network TV is partially due to the lack of black executives within the industry. See Christopher John Farley, "TV's Black Flight," *Time* 3 June 1996: 66-68 for an earlier report, as the situation began to worsen.

prime-time programs themselves – strongly suggests that, in addition to age and income, race, or rather the uniformity of a specific race, is a key component of the networks' ideal 18 to 49 audience.

As the established networks began to primarily seek upscale white audiences, African-American-themed programming found a home on the new WB and UPN networks during the late 1990s, which had neither the economic clout nor the nationwide market reach of the majors. Following the Fox Network's start-up strategy in the 1980s, these motion-picture studio-backed upstarts created programming for audiences neglected by the other networks in order to spur initial growth. Programs featuring blacks existed for a time on both networks; however, over the past two years, the WB has reorganized its programming to target the younger half of the 18 to 49 (white) demographic, just as Fox did in the early 1990s, leaving UPN as presently the lone broadcast holdout for African-American entertainment.¹⁰²

The Hispanic/Latino population, growing at a rate faster than any other ethnic or racial group in the United States, has suffered a similar lack of representation on broadcast television. The 2002-03 schedule finds two programs featuring Hispanic/Latino lead characters among all six networks, and despite the national presence of two Spanish-language cable networks in Univision and Telemundo – the latter of which was recently acquired by NBC – there remains little opportunity for the ethnically diverse, and overwhelmingly young, Hispanic/Latino population to access appealing programs over the airwaves.¹⁰³ As of 1999, according to the *Washington Post*, minority representation on

¹⁰² See Bill Carter, "WB Succeeds By Serving Youth Alone," Lowry, et al., "TV's Diversity Dilemma," and Farhi, "In Networks' New Programs," all of which discuss the WB and UPN's strategy. Farhi also notes that most black-oriented programming is "clustered" on the new networks, segregated to specific nights away from other shows, a practice that currently continues on UPN. Michael Schneider, "Black, White Tastes Merging," *Variety* 14 Feb. 2000: 31 discusses the WB's near-total removal of black-themed programming from 1998 to 2000, when the WB went from the second-place network among black viewers to last place.

¹⁰³ See Sharon Waxman, "Missing From the Pictures; Hollywood Hasn't Caught Up With A Fast-Growing Latino Population," *Washington Post* 8 July 1999, final ed.: C-1+ for a report on Hollywood's sluggish, stereotypical treatment of the Hispanic/Latino market, and Rebecca Gardyn, "Habla English?" *American Demographics* April 2001: 54 for an investigation into the cross-section of the young Hispanic population. Bill Carter, "'Los Simpsons': Don't Have a Vaca, Man," *New York Times* eighteen Feb. 2001, Sun. late ed.: 3 offers evidence that Hispanic/Latino viewers, who have a median

network television (measured by tabulating principal characters on entertainment programs) measured out to 10% African American (down from 18% in 1994) and 3.8% Hispanic/Latino (up from 2% in 1993).¹⁰⁴ Comparing these numbers against 2000 U.S. Census figures of 12.3% African American, 12.5 Hispanic/Latino, gives a clear indication of how worrisome this trend has become; and it bears reminding that the *Post's* figures are over three years old. The situation has not improved in the interim.¹⁰⁵

The dearth of minority programming in broadcasting becomes even more troublesome when socioeconomic factors are considered. Despite the rapid saturation of cable companies across the country, roughly 25% of households still rely solely on broadcasting for their television content, many of them located in inner-city, economically destitute, and minority-populated areas.¹⁰⁶ These viewers do not have the option to switch to BET or Univision in order to watch culturally relevant programs. The broadcast networks and their advertiser-sponsored programming are this group's sole entertainment option – and as Matthew McAllister notes, the influence of advertising interests inevitably "makes the mediated division between rich and poor worse," since "advertising is much more likely to subsidize, with advertising revenue, media aimed at the upper class than media aimed at the poor."¹⁰⁷ A study conducted during the mid-1990s by James Webster and Patricia Phalen compiled data for 199 television markets and determined that, in addition to ratings, variables such as audience youthfulness, audience affluence, and audience racial

age of 28.8, are drawn to English-language, youth-oriented programming on the Fox network when they venture beyond Univision and Telemundo. See Flint, "How NBC Defies Network Norms," for executives' comments about NBC's acquisition of Telemundo.

¹⁰⁴ Statistics are from the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington, DC and are included in Farhi, "In Network's New Programs."

¹⁰⁵ Allison Romano, "A Language That Media Understand," *Broadcasting & Cable* 23 Sep.2002: 30-32 discusses recent expansion efforts by the Spanish-language cable networks to reach various slices of the Hispanic/Latino population, a much-needed increase in programming options for the rapidly-growing population that remains neglected by the broadcast networks.

¹⁰⁶ Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned* 871 and 874. 1999 statistics, indicate that a) 68% of American households have cable service of some kind, and b) household satellite subscriptions are purchased in approximately 10% of television households. Source: Statistical Research, Inc. for cable, Electronic Industry Alliance for satellite.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew McAllister, *The Commercialization of American Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996): 46. See also Meehan 131 for a discussion on the implications of cable television on ratings

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18 to 49 has come to represent more than just an age span for the industry. If this continues, minority audiences, and their desires for cultural representation, may become even more marginalized.

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composition (white over non-white) were positive factors in determining CPM (cost per thousand) rates in television markets.¹⁰⁸ Such a study indicates that, in addition to capturing viewers within the 18 to 49 demographic, advertisers also place a premium on viewers of a certain race and income, and it lends credence to the argument that over the past decade, 18 to 49 has come to represent more than just an age span for industry businesspeople. Therefore, if the present emphasis on the 18 to 49 demographic from broadcasters and advertisers alike continues – in particular, on the predominantly white-populated, “upscale” element that finds its programming mirror image in shows such as *Friends* and *Will and Grace*, as well as current reality-show fads *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette* and *Joe Millionaire* – minority audiences, and their desires for cultural representation, may become even more marginalized.¹⁰⁹

The networks' standard response to any objection about their avoidance of minority programming usually adheres to the following line of reasoning, which is also employed to refute any assertion that older viewers are being unduly neglected. According to the Nielsen ratings and additional marketing research, which are cited ceaselessly by network executives and advertising agencies, African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and older people in general watch more television

measurement, and how non-cable-subscribers will necessarily become second-class viewers in the eyes of Nielsen due to their unattractiveness to advertisers.

¹⁰⁸ James Webster and Patricia Phalen, *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997): 57-65. The television market data for the study is from the December 1993 issue of *Spot Quotations and Data Reports*.

¹⁰⁹ A possible exception to this is the increased presence of homosexual characters on primetime network television. See Paul Brownfield, "TV's Diversity Dilemma: As Minorities' TV Presence Dims, Gay Roles Proliferate," *Los Angeles Times* 21 July 1999, home ed.: A-1+ for a report examining some of the reasons for this upsurge. See Turow, *Breaking Up* 79-89 for an overview of diverging marketing strategies for African-Americans, Hispanics, and homosexuals during the 1990s.

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Evidence suggests that the more lucrative audience bloc for advertisers is of a distinctly riper vintage. In 2000, baby boomers and their parents accounted for about 78% of aggregate consumer spending.

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than the white viewers that populate the holy grail 18 to 49 demographic. Therefore, so the thinking goes, advertisers must direct the lion's share of their attention, effort, and money to those television watchers that are most difficult to reach.¹¹⁰ The reality of an aging, often affluent population comprised of media-literate baby boomers has so far largely escaped the attention of television advertisers and programmers, whose focus on younger audiences has generated criticism in recent years. Ten years ago, in *American Demographics*, David Wolfe summarized marketers' conception of young adult consumers, forecasting what would soon become the fundamental axiom of Madison Avenue by the mid-1990s:

Young adults are driven by strong acquisitive desires. They need to acquire household goods and other material objects, and they depend heavily on these acquisitions to mark their material progress in adulthood. Their focus is on quantity, and they buy with impatience.¹¹¹

Wolfe noted then that, despite the growing numbers of middle-aged and elderly Americans, prevalent marketing philosophy held that the older people grew, the more autonomous their purchasing decisions became, making for more difficult calculations about how to persuade them to switch brands. By contrast, the consuming habits and psyches of young adults were ostensibly easier to comprehend, and therefore cultivate.

¹¹⁰ See Farhi, "In Networks' New Programs," Stuart Elliot, "The Media Business: Advertising; Networks Deliver Smorgasbord to Fill Order for Young Viewers," *New York Times* 21 June 1999, final ed.: C-1, David Ward, "America's Aging Not Getting Attention They Deserve," *PR Week* 25 Feb. 2002: 12, and, more recently, Jonathan Dee, "The Myth of 18 to 34," *New York Times Magazine* 13 Oct. 2002: 58-61 for analysis of this programming justification.

¹¹¹ David Wolfe, "Business's Mid-Life Crisis," *American Demographics* Sep. 1992: 41. See also Turow, *Breaking Up* 75-76 for a discussion of marketers' reluctance to target older consumers in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Increasing evidence suggests, however, that the more lucrative audience bloc for advertisers is of a distinctly riper vintage. Recent testimony by a senior partner of J. Walter Thompson at a U.S. Senate Committee on Aging contained an abundance of statistical indicators foretelling the impending influx of the baby boom generation into the over 50 age bracket, and in terms of dollars spent, detailed statistical data in the 2000 Consumer Expenditure Survey (compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics) reveals that in 2000, baby boomers and their parents (age 35 and above) accounted for approximately 78% of aggregate consumer spending.¹¹² Furthermore, in terms of lifestyle, recent statistical portraits of the aging boomers indicate that they intend to remain highly active – and independent – in their consuming habits. According to the Motion Picture Association of America, moviegoers over age 40 increased attendance by 10% from 1990 to 2000 (from 22% to 32%), and a recent *New York Times Magazine* article cites a study by Nielsen Media which shows that female "heads of households" in the 35 to 64 age bracket were more willing to experiment with new products than those in the younger 18 to 34 demo (Adults 35 to 64: 70%; adults 18 to 34: 67%).¹¹³ Nevertheless, marketers' longstanding general estimation about age-affected consumerism, labeled a "self-fulfilling prophecy" by Jonathan Dee, has led advertisers to aim the bulk of their televised commercial messages at viewers aged 18 to 49, and the imbalance is startling: *Advertising Age* reported in early 2002 that while people over 50 account for half of the nation's discretionary spending, they are targeted by approximately 10% of advertising messages.¹¹⁴

The adoption of 18 to 49 demographic has, as discussed above, resulted in a distorted business model for the broadcast networks, where programs with lower Nielsen ratings but strong

¹¹² Consumer Expenditure Survey data from Michael Weiss, "Inconspicuous Consumption," *American Demographics* April 2002: 31-39. Testimony of Daniel Snyder, Mass Market Group at J. Walter Thompson can be found at "The Image of Aging in Media and Marketing," U.S. Senate Committee on Aging Committee Event, Washington, D.C., 4 Sep. 2002, available online at: aging.senate.gov/events/090402.html

¹¹³ First statistic is cited in both Weiss, "Inconspicuous Consumption": 37, and Patrick Goldstein, "The Big Picture: A Graying, Growing Audience," *Los Angeles Times* 24 Sep. 2002, home ed., Calendar sec.: 1. Second statistic cited in Dee, "The Myth of 18 to 34": 61.

¹¹⁴ Dee 61. Statistic from economist Ken Dychtwald, and is cited in Hillary Chura, "Ripe Old Age: Time's Running Out for Myth That Keeps Marketers Eyeballing the Still-Coveted 18-49 Demographic," *Advertising Age* 23 May 2002: 16.

The network evening newscasts, once sacrosanct, are also falling under the influence of demographics.



The near-replacement of *Nightline* with the *Late Show* proves that an overabundance of older viewers threatens any program and the venerated concept of national news as public service has been overcome by the networks' desire to reach the optimum audience for advertisers.

demographic numbers often reap higher advertising revenues than more popular programs. The ramifications of this have spread throughout the television industry, affecting individual careers as well as non-entertainment programming. Concerning employment practices, recent studies have clarified the extent to which the demographically-inspired observation that "one has to be young in order to write scripts for a youthful audience" has taken hold in television production studios.¹¹⁵ Consequently, an increasing number of television writers with long and successful careers have become unemployed – or, in the industry's view, unemployable – before they reach fifty, leading to class action suits alleging age discrimination.¹¹⁶

The network evening newscasts, once sacrosanct, are also falling under the influence of demographics, leading some to question whether the overall format will survive once the present trio of established anchors retire at CBS, NBC, and ABC. Although the erosion of broadcast news' dominance on a national level can partly be attributed to the influx of cable news channels, of greater importance is the aging, and therefore inadequate, makeup of the evening news audience.¹¹⁷ The near-replacement of ABC's twenty-year old late-night staple *Nightline* in late 2001 by a transplanted David Letterman *Late Show* from CBS proves that in the current system, an overabundance of older viewers threatens any program, at any time slot, and the venerated concept of national

¹¹⁵ Bielby and Bielby 391.

¹¹⁶ See Bob Shayne, "No Experience Wanted: A Writer of a Certain Age Finds Awards and Credits Mean Little to Youth-Obsessed Executives," *Los Angeles Times* 10 June 2001, Sunday home ed., Calendar sec.: 8+ for an impassioned, anecdotal account of Hollywood's ageist hiring practices, in which Shayne calls several marketing executives and asks them point-blank whether younger audiences are provably more valuable to advertisers. He finds no on-record confirmation of this "excuse," which he says is responsible for the dissolution of his career. The ongoing litigation by television writers, broken down into separate class action suits against specific defendants and re-filed in California state court after a federal court dismissal, can be followed on www.writerscase.com.

¹¹⁷ See Howard Kurtz, "Troubled Times for Network Evening News," *Washington Post* 10 March 2002, final ed.: A-1+ for comments by several industry veterans.

news as public service has been overcome by the networks' desire to reach the optimum audience for advertisers.

Viewers cast aside by the broadcasters' allegiance to the 18 to 49 demographic must turn to cable for programs geared toward their interests, and even then there is no guarantee. Some channels, such as MTV and TV Land, have carved out successful niche audiences composed of populations that largely fall outside of the 18 to 49 range.¹¹⁸ Still, as mentioned above, many of the general-entertainment cable networks are now seeking to acquire the same audience demographics as the broadcast networks. Turner Networks, a cable pioneer now under the Time Warner corporate umbrella, has attempted to develop original drama series during the past two years, in an effort to steer its already respectable, but primarily professional wrestling-based, 18 to 49 numbers in a more upscale direction.¹¹⁹ Another Time Warner property, the premium cable channel Home Box Office, has become successful since the mid-1990s by positioning itself as a "quality" alternative to the programs on broadcast and other cable networks – and tellingly, the quality in most cases arises not from different subject matter, but from improved, distinctive treatment. HBO has a history of creating programming intended for under-represented audiences, in particular African-Americans, but the majority of its current prime-time series roster – *Sex In the City*, *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *The Mind of a Married Man* – can easily be envisioned as broadcast network, 18 to 49 fare once removed, distinguishable primarily by profanity and looser restrictions on sexual content and violence.¹²⁰ So, while cable television may serve as a last resort for neglected viewers, it is not a foregone conclusion

¹¹⁸ See Allison Romano, "MTV Operating Without A Net," *Broadcasting & Cable* 27 May 2002: 21+ and John Dempsey, "It's Boom(er) Time For TV Land," *Variety* 8 March 1999: 49 for details on the programming strategies for these two networks owned by the same conglomerate (Viacom).

¹¹⁹ See Brian Lowry, "False Starts Raise Questions About TNT's Series Strategy," *Los Angeles Times* 19 June 2001.

¹²⁰ See Deborah Jaramillo, "The Family Racket: AOL TimeWarner, HBO, *The Sopranos* and the Construction of a Quality Brand," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 26:1 (Jan 2002): 59-75. See

The emphasis on 18 to 49 implies that certain segments of society have become worth less—if not worthless—to advertisers and to those who once upon a time ostensibly acted in the public interest and programmed to the



The consistency of this advertising/programming credo throughout television begs the question: When does a mutually beneficial deception become the truth?

that they will find sanctuary in its expanded choices. The allure of the almighty 18 to 49 demographic is increasingly present on cable as well.

Despite nagging questions about the 18 to 49 demographic's validity as the best possible target for advertisers, the infatuation shows no signs of fading. The baby-boomer fueled boost in the over 50 population may eventually rewrite the existing marketing mindset, but for now the advertisers and networks are in lockstep, sights set on attracting what one prominent advertising executive labels the "limited eyeballs" of the young.¹²¹ Even CBS, the lone partial holdout among the networks during the 1990s rush toward 18 to 49, has learned from its early advertising rate slumps and is now trumpeting "a seismic shift in younger demos" that will hopefully further revitalize the former home of *Matlock* and *Murder, She Wrote*.¹²²

The motion picture industry has created its own structure for maximizing a youthful demographic turnout – the make-or-break opening weekend gross – but while the movie business' courting of teenage and young adult filmgoers to the exclusion of more discerning older adults is certainly contestable on many levels, it differs from television in terms of scale.¹²³ Broadcast television's reach as a medium makes its collective audience the preeminent potential market for advertisers, who would, one would think, relish the opportunity to promote their products to the widest range of consumers possible. The narrowing of this market implies, however, that certain segments of society have become intrinsically worth less – if not

Henry Goldblatt, "In the Black: Smart, Minority-Friendly Television," *Fortune* 11 Oct. 1999: 60+ for a brief article about HBO's success in drawing minority subscribers.

¹²¹ Donny Deutsch of Deutsch Advertising quoted in "Over the Hill," narr. Morley Safer, prod. Steven Reiner, *60 Minutes*, CBS 29 Sep. 2002.

¹²² CBS president Leslie Moonves quoted in "Over the Hill," *60 Minutes*. See James Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture* 2nd ed. (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997): 234-236 for an overview of CBS' early ratings setbacks due to its unwillingness to scrap its older-skewing programs during the demographic upheaval.

¹²³ See Goldstein, "The Big Picture," which investigates the reluctance of film studios to back movies aimed at older audiences due to what is perceived to be their higher demands for quality pictures.

worthless – to advertisers, as well as to those who, once upon a time, ostensibly acted in the public interest and programmed for the masses. Dissenting voices may continue to question the economic wisdom of ignoring older, richer, viewers, but the consistency of this advertising/programming credo throughout broadcast television begs the question: When does a mutually-beneficial deception become the truth?

Conclusion – Will the 18 to 49 Paradigm Endure?

The broadcast networks' reliance on programming for the 18 to 49 demographic has enabled them to stave off cable's increased competition for advertising revenues, but it is likely a temporary remedy, and the challenges to the networks' prosperity in the future will come not only from competing entertainment sources but, more crucially, from their clients. The advertising industry's desire for ever-more-specific consumer data means that no matter how beneficial the current paradigm has been over the past decade, a target group consisting of young to middle-aged wealthy white Americans will soon become inordinately broad, and insufficient to their aspirations. Already, marketers are experimenting with a return to direct-sponsored programming, and exploring other, more "street-level" ways to more directly identify and capture their preferred-consumer base.¹²⁴ Even as Nielsen people meter technology begins to slowly expand into local market measurement (with the Boston DMA the first to convert in May 2002) there is a growing distance between marketers' need for more "qualitative" precision and the indeterminacy of the ratings system, and it is

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The networks' reliance on programming for the 18 to 49 demographic has enabled them to stave off cable's increased competition, but it is likely to be a temporary remedy.

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¹²⁴ See Corie Brown, "Advertisers Seek A Bigger Role in TV Programming," *Los Angeles Times* 15 Jan. 2002, home ed.: A-1+ for a report on the Ford Motor Company's backing of an unscripted "adventure" program called *No Boundaries* that aired in March 2002 on the WB Network before being canceled, along with other direct-sponsored programs in the works. See Daniel Eisenberg, "It's An Ad, Ad, Ad World," *Time* 2 Sep. 2002: 38-41 for an overview of even more innovative marketing strategies, such as interpersonal "guerrilla" marketers who subtly push products in bars and other social gatherings, as well as more blatant product-placement methods.

It is apparent that the corporate conglomerates that own TV networks are aware of the temporary relevance of the 18 to 49 demographic.



Each of them is taking steps to safeguard their properties by eliminating the boundaries between broadcasting and cable—they continue to diversify their portfolios to reduce across-the-board risk.

beginning to tear at the foundation of the advertising-television relationship.¹²⁵ The adoption of optimizer software by marketers, discussed above, has raised the stakes in terms of collecting immediate measurement, and improved accuracy is sure to be the next hurdle. New technologies are being developed and tested – from Comcast's digital set-top boxes to Nielsen's and Arbitron's portable "personal people meters" – that promise to one day give marketers and their advertising clients every morsel of commodity-audience information they desire, to say nothing of the forever-predicted, but yet-to-be realized transformative effects of interactive television.¹²⁶ As John Polich notes, "the real challenge for the broadcast networks will be how well they incorporate this focus on the individual viewer into a business model that has always depended on the mass-audience franchise."¹²⁷

Judging by recent developments, it is apparent that the corporate conglomerates in ownership of television networks are aware of the temporary relevance of the 18 to 49 demographic. Each of them is taking steps to safeguard their properties by eliminating the boundaries between broadcasting and cable. Inspired by the groundbreaking acquisitive efforts of media titans such as Rupert Murdoch and Ted Turner from more than a decade ago, and further emboldened by the deregulatory federal government policies of the Reagan, George H.W.

¹²⁵ See Kate Lynch and Horst Stipp, "Examination of Qualitative Viewing Factors for Optimal Advertising Strategies," *Journal of Advertising Research* 39.3 (May/June 1999): 7-16, whose study concludes that there is some correlation between program appreciation and commercial recall, but also warns that "the available research evidence is far from satisfactory."

¹²⁶ See Michael Weiss, "Trying To Clean Up Sweeps," *American Demographics* May 2001: 43+ and Brian Lowry, "Leadership Shifts In the Land of Nielsen," *Los Angeles Times* 2 Jan. 2002, home ed., Calendar sec.: 1 for discussion of these and other technologies that are intended to one day replace the established Nielsen system and its inaccurate measurements. Michael Kokernak, "Madison Avenue Seeks Quantifiable TV Ratings," *Advertising Age* 15 Jan 2001: 510 examines the prospect of interactive television and warns that, if implemented, the initial data collection process may result in watered-down information for advertisers due to "everyone involved in the distribution of the ad wanting a piece of that transaction pie."

¹²⁷ John Polich, "Mass Appeal," *Adweek* 31 May 1999, Eastern ed.: 38.

These programming and advertising strategies mark only the very early stages of what promises to be a transformation of the advertising/television business model, one necessitated by technological development and individualistic viewing habits.



It is open to debate whether this future, more streamlined and precise programming/marketing paradigm will be beneficial to society at large.

Bush, and Clinton Presidencies, companies such as Disney/ABC and Viacom/CBS continue to probe foreign markets for new stations and cable companies to purchase, in order to diversify their portfolios and therefore reduce across-the-board risk.¹²⁸ Within the United States, consolidation allows for similar vertical-integration maneuvers between broadcast and cable networks that share the same corporate parent. No broadcast network is an "only child" anymore: NBC, the lone network not under control of a larger media-conglomerate parent, still has branched out into cable with MSNBC, CNBC, and now Telemundo. All of the other broadcast networks have strong conduits into the cable realm: ABC has ESPN, ABC Family (recently acquired from Fox), and the Disney Channel; Fox has the Fox News Channel, FX, and Fox Sports; CBS and its struggling corporate sibling UPN have MTV, Nickelodeon, and TNN; and the WB Network has perhaps the most beneficial kinship of all, with the cable properties of Time Warner. Such cable-broadcast synergy expands programming and advertising options for media companies, allowing for novel concepts such as "repurposing" – repeating broadcast-network programs on cable channels – and "multiplatform" advertising, described by Johnnie Roberts in *Newsweek* as "bundling together in a single purchase ads that can run on cable and broadcast TV, on the Internet and in magazines," to be utilized.¹²⁹

These programming and advertising strategies mark only the very early stages of what promises to be a transformation of the advertising/television business model, one necessitated by technological

¹²⁸ See Chapters Nine and Ten of Kerry Segrave, *American Television Abroad: Hollywood's Attempt to Dominate World Television* (Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998) for an overview of mid-1990s U.S. corporate expansion into media markets overseas.

¹²⁹ Johnnie Roberts, "Cradle to Grave TV," *Newsweek* 19 March 2001: 40. See Stuart Elliot, "The Media Business: Advertising; NBC Adopts A Package Strategy Intended To Sell Advertisers A Spot On Each of Its Divisions," *New York Times* 25 April 2001, late ed.: C-6 for a more specific example of multiplatform advertising. For more on repurposing, see "To Infinity and Beyond," *The Economist* 13 April 2002, U.S. ed., Survey sec. and, again for a more specific discussion, Bill Carter,

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Within networks, the thrust towards capturing this “key demo” has never been more pronounced and intense, yet an undercurrent of skepticism remains constant as well.

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development and increasingly individualistic viewing habits. It is open to debate as to whether this future, more streamlined and precise programming-marketing paradigm will be more beneficial to society at large. Some feel that the cable-provided multiplicity of choice opens up opportunities for previously marginalized segments of the population to create their own programming, while others lament the passing of what broadcast television once purportedly provided, a "sense of community."¹³⁰ A more critical assessment of the specialized, individual marketing methodologies on the horizon might argue that any improvement of audience measurement, no matter how accurate, would only be a refinement of what Eileen Meehan calls "corporate tactics in the struggle for market control," as statisticians amass elaborate consumer profiles for product-pushers while continuing to disregard the cultural complexities of actual television viewers.¹³¹

On a financial level, then, broadcast networks' present trend of programming to a national demographic of adults aged 18 to 49 is revealed as a temporary barrier against the inevitability of change. Within the networks themselves, the thrust toward capturing this "key

"Disney Discusses Strategy Behind Buying Fox Family," *New York Times* 24 July 2001, late ed.: C-9.

¹³⁰ Max Frankel, "The Way We Live Now: One TV Nation, Divisible," *New York Times* 3 Oct. 1999, Sunday final ed.: G-30. Frankel echoes Turow's *Breaking Up* in his column, insisting that "the more we have been wired together, the faster we have spun apart." Frank Rich, "What the Tube Is For," *New York Times* 20 Sep. 1998, final ed., sec. 6: 53 holds out hope that "culturally disenfranchised Americans" could benefit from the "balkanization" of television, and believes that mass audiences will always have a network outlet for congregation, even if it is only for a major news event. See also Webster and Phalen 110-114 for a discussion of the potential for "audience polarization" in a media universe replete with increased entertainment options.

¹³¹ Meehan 118. See also Chapter Three of Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996): 53-65 where Ang applies critical arguments from *Desperately Seeking the Audience* to the proposed development of more precise audience measurement devices such as the passive people meter, and notes that "the more 'watching television' is put under the investigative

The effectiveness of the existing marketing model may be difficult for advertisers to verify, but on a cultural level its effects are troublesome.



It is naïve to expect the advertising/TV alliance to cast aside its lucrative, albeit mythical, 18 to 49 target demographic and take the sole initiative in developing a more representative, socially responsible format for appealing to viewers and consumers.

demo" has never been more pronounced and intense, yet an undercurrent of skepticism remains constant as well. The audience-as-commodity has obviously been redefined by the 18 to 49 paradigm, and this has benefited the broadcast networks since they are able to negotiate advertising rates based on a theoretically smaller, more affluent consumer base. However, advertisers' overall capability of influencing this 18 to 49 audience is, as ever, dubious; for even when segments of the population such as those over 50 and minorities are excised from the target-demographic pool, those most desired by advertisers remain essentially autonomous in their consuming choices. The effectiveness of this existing marketing model – and future ones as well – may be difficult for advertisers to verify, but on a cultural level its effects are troublesome. As Michael Schudson notes, "advertising may shape our values even under conditions where it does not greatly corrupt our buying habits."¹³²

It is obviously naïve to expect the advertising/television alliance to cast aside its lucrative, albeit mythical, 18 to 49 target demographic and take the sole initiative in developing a more representative, socially responsible format for appealing to viewers and consumers. Still, a growing number of voices have criticized the current go-for-broke reasoning during the past several years from several different perspectives. For example, British professor Andrew Ehrenberg published a broad critique of the marketing profession in 2001 that decried its "romantic" conception of advertising's persuasiveness and its "unrealistic" goals of continuous profit maximization and product differentiation. By setting more realistic objectives, Ehrenberg argued, marketers can implement more intricate strategies that aspire toward

scrutiny of new measurement technology, the less unambiguous an activity it becomes" 60.

¹³² Schudson 210.

As technological advances increase audience measurement capabilities and broad demographics like 18 to 49 are usurped by other targets, an opportunity to redress, or at least improve, the entire commercial system may appear.



It is up to those who sell products to people, and people to advertisers, to make the business model a more progressive one, and the outlook may not be as bleak as it seems.

achieving widespread product recognition rather than demographic product dominance; or as he put it: "Darwin got it wrong: It's not survival of the fittest, but survival of the fit enough."¹³³ On the television side, certain industry personnel are breaking away from doctrinaire 18 to 49 worship and are challenging the assumption that young-to-middle-aged whites represent a higher premium audience than all others. A September 2002 *60 Minutes* story on 18 to 49's ageist disposition included several pointed comments from both CBS Vice President David Poltrack and audience researcher Mark Cannon, who deduced from his optimizer-software-collected data that "there is no ideal audience. It depends on what's being sold. It depends on the advertisement entirely."¹³⁴ These critical voices remain isolated as of now, but as advanced technology increases audience measurement capabilities, and broad demographics such as 18 to 49 are usurped by other – not necessarily better – audience targets, an opportunity to redress, or at least in some way improve, the entire commercial system may appear. If so, it will be a formidable challenge.

In the final determination, it is up to those who make a living selling products to people – and people to advertisers – to make the business model a more progressive one, and the outlook may not be as bleak as it seems. After all, the ethos of the modern American entertainment industry has always included an element of creative integrity, a sense of obligation to the audience that is as old as the art of public performance itself and still can be found even in the most unlikely corners of Hollywood today. That sentiment might not be easily identified in a climate where the business end of show business clearly holds sway, but it does endure – and with the prospect of more

¹³³ Andrew Ehrenberg, "Marketing: Romantic or Realistic?" *Marketing Research* 13.2 (Summer 2001): 40-42.

¹³⁴ Cannon quoted in "Over the Hill," *60 Minutes*.

There is a chance that after the 18 to 49 demographic recedes in importance networks could turn their attention and effort back to the more expansive goals of yesteryear. Their unifying power has been diminished, but it still exists.



18 to 49ers are warped into attractive packages for advertising agencies and provided with programming that reflects a limited value system back at them—and everyone else—through the screen.

accurate data collection in the near future, not to mention the inclusion of more audience feedback into the measurement process, there is no reason why leaders in the entertainment and advertising industries cannot re-shape their approach to audiences somewhat, and stop taking them so much for granted. American television will never return to the halcyon days when it was truly mass entertainment; the networks' monopoly is over, and like every other entertainment entity, they will always have to adjust and evolve if they are to remain competitive. Nevertheless, there is a chance that after the 18 to 49 demographic recedes in importance broadcast networks may turn some of their attention and effort back to the more expansive goals of yesteryear. As CBS President Leslie Moonves recently noted, "network television can still aggregate an audience like nothing else in the country," and although that unifying power has been diminished during the past two decades, it still exists.¹³⁵ The question is: aside from Super Bowls and major news events, will the networks ever cast forth that wide of a net again?

Certainly not as long as the 18 to 49 mindset dominates industry thinking. John Polich observes that "you don't have to be Freud to figure out that the individuals within a particular demographic break are not homogeneous," yet that is how 18 to 49ers are constantly treated today, warped into attractive packages for advertising agencies and provided with programming that reflects a limited value system back at them – and everyone else – through the screen.¹³⁶ When pressed on the accuracy, or occasionally even the integrity, of the audience-targeting demographic process, advertising and television executives alike rarely provide more than a partial admission of responsibility and a structural defense; the recent explanation of NBC Entertainment President Jeffrey Zucker

¹³⁵ Moonves quoted in Chris Albrecht, Leslie Moonves and Jeff Zucker, interview with Lynn Hirschberg, "The Thinking Inside the Box," *New York Times Magazine* 3 Nov. 2002: 71.

It is the cultural functions of television that have enabled it to endure for so long as the most influential mass medium. The networks' obsession with reaching an 18 to 49 demographic does little to enrich the public interest.



The portrait of American life on broadcast TV has become even more limited, a retrenchment that does not serve the twenty-plus million households without cable.



The ascension of 18 to 49 into a marketing mantra proves that TV has squandered much of its creative energy by restricting the opportunities for innovative, progressive programming.

that "they're (the advertisers) running a business and we're running a business, and if that's the business they want to play, then we're going to play that game, too," is typical.¹³⁷ Even if this 18 to 49 fixation does nothing to halt broadcasting's decline, and millions of people and billions of dollars are perpetually ignored, it is the game the powers that be are currently playing.

The business goals of advertisers and networks have always affected broadcasting, and will no doubt continue to do so for the foreseeable future, but economics aside, surely it is the cultural functions of television that have enabled it to endure for so long as the most influential mass medium. The fragmentation of the broadcast television audience – perhaps our last bastion of cultural affinity – is but one of the tears in our contemporary social fabric, and probably not the most damaging one. That being said, cultural matters are important to any society, and as it stands, the networks' ongoing obsession with reaching an 18 to 49 demographic does little to enrich the public interest. The portrait of American life on broadcast television, from the beginning confined along racial, class, and age-restricted lines, has become even more limited, a retrenchment that especially does not serve the twenty-plus million households without cable. Furthermore, the ascension of 18 to 49 into a marketing mantra proves that television's commodity dimension has squandered much of the creative energy in the entertainment community by restricting the opportunities for innovative, progressive programming. In critiquing the dissection of American society along economic alignments, Joseph Turow wonders, "Should the ability to share the consumer experience be the one characteristic linking us together?"¹³⁸ In the modern televisual world of 18 to 49, the answer is an unqualified yes . . . but only for a select few of us.



¹³⁶ Polich 38.

¹³⁷ Zucker quoted in "Over the Hill," *60 Minutes*.

¹³⁸ Turow, *Breaking Up* 200.

(Mis)Calculating the Ideal Audience: An Annotated Bibliography

By Patrick Reed for the Norman Lear Center

Albiniak, Paige. "The WB Sets A Record Pace." *Broadcasting & Cable* 21 Oct. 2002: 16.

Brief report on the WB Network's rapidly-increasing success in prime-time during the early 2002-03 season, which gives the network a real chance at turning a profit for the first time ever, according to the network president. The WB's 30% or better gains in the 18 to 34, 12 to 34 and 18 to 49 demographics are mainly due to its strong Monday-Wednesday schedule, according to the article. Also mentioned is CBS's lead in overall households and viewers early in the season, as well as its strong challenge to NBC in the 18 to 49 demographic.

Albrecht, Chris, Leslie Moonves and Jeff Zucker. Interview with Lynn Hirschberg. "The Thinking Inside the Box." *New York Times Magazine* 3 Nov. 2002: 67-71.

Forum interview with CBS President Moonves, NBC Entertainment President Zucker, and HBO chief Albrecht elicits several observations on the challenges networks face in terms of building and retaining audiences. While acknowledging that very few people at opposite ages of the 18 to 49 demographic have much in common, all seem to agree that diverse programming can only exist if it manages to attract a substantial amount of viewers within this preferred demographic range. All three executives also concede that the days when a broadcast network could give a promising program enough time to "find its audience" are over.

"All In the Family." *The Economist* 13 April 2002, U.S. ed., Survey sec.

Part of a special section on television in both the U.S. and the U.K., this article examines the spiraling costs of television (network and cable), as well as some of the potential consolidation-driven remedies, such as "repurposing" (networks replaying programming on cable outlets) and vertical integration; i.e., cross-promotion of programming through various media.

Ang, Ien. *Living Room Wars*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996.

Ang's collection of essays on media audiences discusses, among other topics: the necessity for understanding the political motivations behind all supposedly "scientific" empirical studies of viewing behavior, the rise of ethnographic research as an alternative to empirical research, and the chaotic (in a positive sense) nature of the postmodern global village. Of importance here is Chapter Three, "New Technologies, Audience Measurement and the Tactics of Television Consumption," in which Ang updates her argument from *Desperately Seeking the Audience* and assesses the implications of the "passive people meter" then (and still) in development. Ang observes that the quest for more detailed

and intricate systems of audience measurement technology is indicative of the television industry's intense need to maintain control over a commodity audience that is splintering due to an explosion in entertainment viewing options. As before, she argues that, no matter what advanced measurement system eventually becomes the industry standard, "any attempt to construct positive knowledge about the 'real consumer' will always be provisional, partial, fictional (64). "

–. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London/New York: Routledge, 1991.

Perceptive argument concerning the television audience's essential complexity, and how efforts to identify and label it are simply exercises in the assertion of power – particularly epistemological power – by media companies. In the case of American broadcast networks, Ang correctly observes that their established power over the past decades was beginning to erode in the late eighties due to cable and VCRs, and she asserts that new devices such as the people meter that purport to measure demographics will only reveal more ultimately unverifiable data. Much of Ang's critique is inspired by Foucault's writings on power and discourse, and this theoretical perspective is applied to illustrate how, by defining the audience objectively, as a "taxonomic collective," the commercial television industry (and, Ang notes, some academics) can then make generalized assumptions about them. Ang concludes by proposing an "ethnographic discourse" approach to assessing audiences. This approach would reveal no concrete, sweeping insight – TV-watching is far too dynamic a process – but would be useful in challenging the institutional framework through which "audiences" have been regarded.

Baker, William and George Dessart. *Down the Tube: An Inside Account of the Failure of American Television*. New York: Basic Books, 1998.

Two long-time industry executives assess the state of television in the late 90s, and Brown states immediately in the preface that the medium has "failed to achieve its potential to deliver a superior product or contribute to the public good." The rest of this rather alarming overview examines public television's struggle to survive, the effects of government regulation on the industry, and the declining importance of news divisions, as well as broadcasting and cable in general. Chapter Three, "Eyeballs for Sale," discusses the genesis of the modern broadcasting business paradigm – ratings, demographics, etc. – while Chapter Four, "The Scarcity of Abundance," reviews the emergence of cable in the eighties and nineties and argues that, while cable has reduced the broadcast networks' dominant hold on the national audience, the networks will endure as long as their longstanding interdependence with the advertising industry remains mutually profitable.

Barnes, Beth and Lynne Thomson. "Power to the People (Meter): Audience Measurement Technology and Media Specialization." *Audience Making: How the Media Create the Audience*. Ed. James Ettema and D. Charles Whitney. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994.

Essay analyzes the reasons behind growing audience fragmentation in television during the 1980s, and offers a thorough and insightful comparison with the similar transformation that swept through the print media sector (in particular, the magazine industry) during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The decline of long-established mass magazines such as *Life* and *Look* was originally attributed to the rise of television, but here the authors make a case that these magazines ceased publication due to improvements in print media marketing techniques during the 60s, which shifted advertisers' interests toward attracting more specific audiences instead of an undifferentiated mass audience. In the authors' judgment (circa the early nineties), the development of the people meter by Nielsen in 1987 (and its welcoming of cable stations into the audience measurement process) will ultimately have a similar, lasting effect on the television industry.

Barwise, Patrick and Andrew Ehrenberg. *Television and its Audience*. London; Sage, 1988.

Chapter Nine, "How We Pay," discusses the primary economic imperative of the television networks: selling audiences to advertisers, instead of programs to viewers. According to the authors, this strategy insures that viewer choice will always be limited, since innovative programming rarely has a chance to remain on the air long enough to build a following before it is discarded in favor of another potential mass-audience hit.

Battaglio, Stephen. "Nets Sell Demos to Offset Shrinking Share." *Adweek* 6 Aug. 1990, Eastern ed.: 20.

Brief article from 1990 illustrates the near-total shift in emphasis from basic rating/share statistics to demographic information nearly three years after the advent of the Nielsen people meter. Several network and advertising executives cite the proliferation of channels due to cable, and the resulting decline in top programs' ratings, as the primary reason for this change toward selling the 18 to 49 demo.

Bauder, David. "Sopranos Sets HBO Ratings Record." *Salon* 18 Sep. 2002. Available online: www.salon.com/ent/wire/2002/09/eighteen/sopranosratings/index.html

Brief Associated Press report on the record-breaking Nielsen ratings of the HBO series' fourth-season premiere on Sep. 14 at 9 PM. "The episode drew an estimated 13.4 million viewers, and was believed to be the first time an HBO telecast drew a larger audience than any of the broadcast networks at the same time."

Baughman, James. *The Republic of Mass Culture*. 2nd. ed. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Broad history of mass media since World War II situates the development of print media, motion pictures, and the recording industry as adjustments to the widespread saturation of television into American society from the 1950s onward. Of particular interest with regards to programming/demographics are Chapters 7 and 10. In Chapter 7, Baughman discusses television during the 1970s, when the Big Three networks reached the height of their power and programs such as the miniseries *Roots* drew record viewing audiences. Two key programming decisions are covered: CBS's overhaul of its 60s, "rural"-oriented hit series with more topical (and younger-skewing) shows such as *All In the Family* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in the early 1970s, which enabled it to lead in the Nielsen ratings for the first half of the decade, and ABC's move in the mid-1970s to best CBS in the ratings war by catering to a broader audience with programs such as *Happy Days* and *Three's Company*. Chapter 10, added to the second edition, briefly covers many 1990s developments, with two or three pages devoted to the increased, and "more ruthless" importance of demographics to network programmers.

Beville, Hugh. *Audience Ratings, Radio, Television and Cable*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1985.

A detailed history, analysis and defense of broadcasting ratings measurement written at a crucial point in the medium's evolution, when cable was just beginning to expand and the people meter and its promise of delivering more detailed and timely audience demographics was first tested. Though supportive of ratings accuracy in general, Beville stresses that the increasing emphasis of "qualitative" audience information instead of strict numbers measurement "would only serve to weaken television's economic base, which rests on its broad reach and heavy frequency characteristics. Audience size must remain the foundation of a successful measurement for broadcasting (233)."

Bianco, Robert and Gary Levin. "TV's Family Affair." *USA Today* 20 May 2002, final ed.: 1-D.

Report from the Fall 2002 schedule presentations by the networks to advertisers, where a trend toward family programming and, to varying extents, away from shows aimed at the 18 to 49 demographic is examined. Struggling ABC leads the charge, but even the small youth-driven network WB and 18 to 49 champ NBC are offering family-oriented programs for Fall 2002.

Bielby, Denise and William Bielby. "Audience Segmentation and Age Stratification Among Television Writers." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 45.3 (Summer 2001): 391-412.

The authors examine the issue of age discrimination against television writers through a research study, and in doing so recount the transition of broadcast networks' objectives, from reaching a mass audience to seeking demographics. While the practice of targeting advertising to particular groups during specific programs and dayparts had been employed since the 1950s for some products, the authors illustrate how, during the 1980s, and especially after Nielsen's implementation of the people meter in 1987, the priorities quickly began to change, and the phrase "key demos" began to surface in trade magazines as indicators of a network's programming success or failure.

Bierbaum, Tom. "Diminished Peacock Poised for Demo Dash." *Variety* 7 Dec. 1998: 33.

Trade report on the November 1998 sweeps (the first Fall season sweeps after *Seinfeld's* departure) covers NBC's continuing reliance on the 18 to 49 demographic to stave off the other networks' bids for top-dollar advertising rates.

-. "NBC Does Demos, Even Sans *Seinfeld*." *Variety* 1 June 1998: 26.

Statistical evidence gleaned from Nielsen during the 1997-98 television season is used to illustrate how NBC's strength in the "upscale" demographic enables it to reap much higher advertising rates than all of the other networks. NBC's rating in reaching homes with incomes of \$75,000 or more is listed at 13.8, with ABC at 9.3, CBS at 7.7, and Fox at 7.6. NBC's rating "indexes" out to 133 – 13.8 in \$75,000-plus compared to 10.4 overall, making it 33% more likely to be watched by "upscale" household than one from the general population – separating the network even more from its competitors (indexes: ABC – 108, Fox – 106, CBS – 82).

-, and Cynthia Littleton. "NBC Wraps Up Win; Fox 2nd in Demos." *Variety* 25-31 May 1998: 26.

Boosted by the series finale for *Seinfeld*, NBC claimed victory in the overall season standings, according to this report and analysis. Its victory margin in the 18 to 49 demographic during the May 1998 sweeps (57% over second-place Fox) is a record as measured by Nielsen, although Fox gained a measure of consolation by finishing second for the season in the 18 to 49 demo, beating ABC. The authors make an astute prediction: after measuring the gradual decline in broadcast networks' overall prime-time share among television households against basic cable's increase (broadcast: 62% in 1997, 59% in 1998; cable: 32% in 1997, 36% in 1998), they forecast that by 2002 both sides will hold equal shares of the television audience.

–. "NBC Routs Rivals." *Daily Variety* 22 May 1996: 1W.

Report on the results of the May 1996 prime-time network television sweeps, as well as the total season standings. NBC's top finish in both races is viewed as a return to prominence of sorts, as the network had dominated ratings in the late 1980s only to fall behind during the first half of the 1990s. NBC's Thursday night lineup, anchored by *Friends*, *Seinfeld* and *ER*, earned the highest 18 to 49 demographic ratings average "for any lineup on any net in the nine years since NBC's 1986-87 Thursday night schedule" began.

Bounds, Wendy. "Rushing To Cash In on The New Baby Boom." *Wall Street Journal* 9 Aug. 2000: B-1+.

Article explores the burgeoning purchasing power of "Generation Y," U.S. children born between 1977 and 1997 that represent the largest birthrate increase since the post-WWII baby boom. Bounds notes that "this generation will harvest the social, scientific and economic revolutions of the last quarter of the 20th century," making them "the most informed consumers in history," and then contrasts their tastes with those of their boomer parents as well as those of the previous "Generation X."

Brown, Corie. "Advertisers Seek A Bigger Role in TV Programming." *Los Angeles Times* 15 Jan. 2002, home ed.: A-1+.

Article reporting a new direction for advertisers frustrated with declining network ratings: brand-sponsored feature programming. "The concept is a return to the origins of TV," where, until costs became too prohibitive in the mid-to-late 1950s, businesses sponsored entire programs. Through these new promotional vehicles, advertisers intend to build a lasting brand image and merge it with entertainment, directed at their preferred demographic.

Brown, Les and Savannah Walker, eds. *Fast Forward: The New Television and American Society*. Kansas City/New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1983.

Collection of opinion pieces includes two of note by Brown, a respected TV writer/critic during the era of network dominance. In "Living in a Nielsen Republic" (103-107) Brown decries the (de)regulatory policy of President Reagan's Federal Communication Commission and its chairman Mark Fowler, lamenting that "government prefers to think of us today not as citizens but as *consumers*, the purchasers of products and services (emphasis in original)," and then claims that this conception of democracy is modeled after the television ratings system. On pages 105-106 Brown goes on to make one of the first direct criticisms of the 18 to 49 demographic, noting that in its quest for the supposedly affluent and active, it ignores the young, old and poor. This "democracy of market forces is no democracy to those who don't constitute a sufficient market." In "Are the Networks Dinosaurs?" (67-76) Brown tackles the myriad of potentially debilitating threats (circa 1983) that loom just around the chronological corner for the long-titanic broadcast networks, and spotlights the demographic issue as it relates to cable television's profitability (a cable station will focus on a sharply defined – and desirable – audience, profess to deliver it, and garner a higher advertising rate).

Brown, Les. *Television: The Business Behind the Box*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971.

Variety reporter Les Brown writes about one tumultuous calendar year in the American television business, 1970. Among the upheavals were the launch of PBS, the imminent ban on cigarette ads (which took effect January 1, 1971), and the new break-outs for the Nielsen demographics. In the fall of 1970, Nielsen began providing more detailed adult demos, expanding from three categories (18 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 and upward) to five (18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64, 65 and upward). ABC released a study indicating that younger people were a more attractive demographic, and that older people were attracted to youthful merchandise as well. CBS offered a point by point rebuttal of the study, thereby inaugurating a new debate about which demo would dominate: the "older young or the younger young?" (Of course the 65 and upward demographic was never in the running). Acknowledged as one of the first good accounts of 18 to 49, this book explains how shows are merely bait for the real merchandise – consumers.

Brownfield, Paul. "Tenuous Hold on the Crown." *Los Angeles Times* 26 Dec. 2002. Available online: www.calendarlive.com/tv/cl-wk-brown26dec26.story

Article on NBC's decision to renew the Thursday night sitcom *Friends* for another season, its tenth (2003-04). This sitcom, which ranked first in the 2002-03 *Advertising Age* survey of most expensive programs for advertisers (in terms of ad cost for a thirty-second commercial) is, along with *ER*, the last remaining linchpin of NBC's "Must See Thursday," a scheduling ploy that enabled the network to win the pre-movie weekend, pre-mall weekend Thursday night ratings race for almost twenty years. According to the report, the extension of *Friends* is a last-gasp effort by NBC to keep this lucrative programming slate alive for one or two more years; for even though the sitcom has become extremely expensive to produce (estimates go as high as \$10 million per episode), NBC, like the other networks, has had little success in developing long-standing hit sitcoms in recent years, forcing the network to capitulate to *Friends* producers and talent and pay enough to keep the 18 to 49 juggernaut on the air.

–. "TV's Diversity Dilemma: As Minorities' TV Presence Dims, Gay Roles Proliferate." *Los Angeles Times* 21 July 1999, home ed.: A-1+.

The increase in openly gay characters in network television is contrasted to the lack of minority representation in primetime, and possible explanations for this imbalance are debated by industry personnel. Since most of the gay characters in primetime are male, the author surmises (and is supported by an anonymous executive) that their presence does not derive from progressive impulses but is instead another way to draw in the hard-to-reach 18 to 34 male target audience.

Budd, Mike, Steve Craig and Clay Steinman. *Consuming Environments: Television and Commercial Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

In addition to chapters that deal with semiotic analysis of television programs and commercials, the "flow" concept, and narrative conventions, the authors examine the institutional structure of commercial television and its relationship with the advertising industry in Chapters One and Two. These chapters contain a wealth of information and many perceptive comments; their discussion of demographics is especially illuminating as they both invoke Len Ang's central argument about the audience as a construct and then relate how the abundance and complexity of Nielsen data seduce most within the advertising-broadcasting partnership to accept said data as precise, factual indicators. They also show how, when television ratings are broken down by demographic, the sample size is also necessarily reduced, making the chances for a sampling error larger than simply measuring households as a whole (78).

Buzzard, Karen. *Electronic Media Ratings: Turning Audiences into Dollars and Sense*. Boston/London: Focal Press, 1992.

A slim volume, almost an addendum to Beville's history of ratings measurement, that includes sections on potential errors in sampling and reporting (27-38) and a summary of the Nielsen people meter's implementation and the resulting objections of broadcast networks when their ratings fell in the late eighties (57-58).

Carter, Bill. "The Media Business: Advertising; Carol Burnett, Armed With Old Clips, Is a Hit." *New York Times* 28 Nov. 2001, final ed.: C-1.

The surprising, demographic-crossing success of CBS's Carol Burnett reunion show in the autumn of 2001 is analyzed, and it is revealed that since the network at its most optimistic expected the reunion to be half as successful as it eventually was, all of the advertisers that ran commercials during the hour-long program received "one of the biggest bargains in years."

– "Disney Discusses Strategy Behind Buying Fox Family." *New York Times* 24 July 2001, late ed.: C-9.

Brief article about the summer 2001 acquisition of Fox Family Worldwide by Disney/ABC. After reconfiguring Fox Family into the ABC Family Channel, executives will rebroadcast network programs on cable, a practice known as "repurposing." The overall intention is to "create a cable channel built on the model of a broadcast network," in this case one with a fairly narrow range of programming that, for a change, is not directed toward the 18 to 49 demographic.

– "TV Notes: Bada-Bing Go the Ratings." *New York Times* 7 March 2001, final ed.: E-6.

Brief report on the unprecedented ratings for the third-season premiere of HBO's *The Sopranos*, which, although appearing in less than one-third of all television households, were competitive with many network programs. In the 18 to 49 demographic, *The Sopranos* ranked 19th of all shows (including network) during the week it was broadcast.

– "'Los Simpsons': Don't Have a Vaca, Man." *New York Times* eighteen Feb. 2001, Sun. late ed.: 3.

Column discusses the popularity of Fox's *The Simpsons* among Hispanic viewers – the highest-rated English-language program in 2000-2001, according to a report from TN Media (whose information is based on data from Nielsen Media). The TN report also reveals that the top sixteen programs overall in Hispanic TV households are all on the Spanish-language network Univision. The success of *The Simpsons* is indicative of a larger trend: of the top-twenty rated English-language programs for Hispanics in 1991, ten are on the Fox network. The vice president of research at TN Media reasons that Fox's success with Hispanics is due to its programming slant toward younger viewers; the median age of TV viewers in Hispanic households is 28.8 years.

– "WB Succeeds By Serving Youth Alone." *New York Times* 11 Jan. 1999, final ed.: C-1.

"For WB, 'broadcasting' is increasingly a misnomer because the network is unflinchingly dedicated to never becoming too broad for its own good," notes the author in this analysis of the network's growth during the 1998-99 season. (Then) WB CEO Jamie Kellner admits that their programming strategy is strictly demographic driven, seeking a core audience far younger than the 18 to 49 range.

WB execs contrast their focused outlook by criticizing Fox, which began as a niche network and then acquired unprofitable assets (like professional sports) as it attempted to mature (some would argue, successfully so) into a full-fledged broadcasting network.

–. "Shrinking Network TV Audiences Set Off Alarm and Resentment." *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1998, final ed., sec. 1: 1.

A commentary on shrinking network audiences from a qualitative standpoint, dealing less with economic concerns (although they can never truly be ignored) and more with the lack of creativity, originality, and potential long-term quality in prime-time network programming. With four out of six networks (at that time) setting their schedules toward the 18 to 49 (or 18 to 34) demographic, Carter notes that since the days of truly attracting a massive amount of viewers to a single program seem to be over for good, many network decision-makers believe that narrowing their ambitions to a specific target audience will be the only way to maintain their advertising sponsorship and save their careers.

–. "Television: A Wily Upstart That Did a Lot of Things Right." *New York Times* 4 Jan. 1998, final ed., sec. 2: 34.

The ascension of the Fox network to its strongest season ever, in terms of both 18 to 49 demo ratings and cultural word-of-mouth, is examined, and although Fox's reduced primetime schedule (15 instead of 22 hours a week) is regarded as a distortion of its strength within the 18 to 49 demo by competitors, Carter regards this as a shrewd decision, and also praises the patience the network had in its early years to slowly build on its roster of programs as it broadened its programming strategy.

Chunovic, Louis. "NBC's Audiences Are More Upscale; WB Had Biggest Growth in Median Household Income." *Electronic Media* 12 August 2002: 3.

Short piece on the fortunes of networks in drawing "upscale" viewers (defined as members of the 18 to 49 demographic with a median income of \$60,000 or more). Led by *The West Wing* and *Law and Order* (both drawing over \$70,000 median income), NBC leads the broadcasters, with specialty networks such as ESPN, CNBC and HGTV finishing high in the cable standings.

Chura, Hillary. "Ripe Old Age: Time's Running Out for Myth That Keeps Marketers Eyeballing the Still-Coveted 18 to 49 Demographic." *Advertising Age* 23 May 2002: 16.

Chura states upfront that marketers' obsession with the 18 to 49 demographic "appears based more on habit and theory . . . than on quantifiable evidence." She then cites a recent AARP survey that indicates consumers in their mid-40s and above are still receptive to marketing and advertising. The aging baby boom generation will force a far-reaching change in priorities for marketers, several of those interviewed predict, due to their large numbers and increased life expectancy as well as their secure financial status and pop-cultural fluency.

Coe, Steve. "NBC Prens In Prime Time." *Broadcasting & Cable* 26 Feb. 1996: 26+.

Trade magazine report on NBC at its mid-90s ratings peak. Programs such as *Seinfeld*, *Frasier*, *Friends* and *ER* are ensconced at the top of the Nielsens, and strengthening the network's position as the dominant source for 18 to 49 programming. Along with a look back at NBC's reversal of fortune in the mid-1980s, the author also scrutinizes NBC program chief Don Ohlmeyer's decision to keep *Frasier* in its established time slot on Tuesday at 9, even after ABC moved the family hit *Home Improvement* to challenge it (which was a response to NBC's prior move of scheduling *Frasier* up against *Roseanne*).

The move eventually turned out to be successful for NBC, which established another night of 18 to 49, upscale programs (*Just Shoot Me*, for instance) around *Frasier*.

Dee, Jonathan. "The Myth of 18 to 34." *New York Times Magazine* 13 Oct. 2002: 58-61.

Article provides a history of youth-oriented marketing from the 1950s onward, and argues that this prioritization of the young became widespread in the 1960s and has spread its pervasive influence throughout American consumer culture ever since. The author believes that this objective has always been poorly conceived, but is especially so now, in an era of individualized consumption and entertainment decision-making. Interestingly, the author replaces the more commonly-referred to 18 to 49 "key" demographic with its subset – the 18 to 34 demographic – to better support his argument that chasing young consumers is misguided. Comparisons between the aging and affluent baby boom generation and their less predictable, poorer offspring are made to further support the author's opinion about 18 to 34's irrelevance.

Dempsey, John. "Cable Turns Up Heat on Networks." *Variety* 5 Aug. 2002: 18.

Brief report concerns the encroachment of basic cable networks on the broadcast networks' ratings share over the summer "off season" of 2002. According to the report's statistics, basic cable increased 8% to a fifty-three share from July 2001 to July 2002, while broadcast networks declined 12% to a thirty-seven share during the same period.

-. "It's Boom(er) Time For TV Land." *Variety* 8 March 1999: 49.

Report on the third-year success of Viacom's TV Land cable network as a niche-programming haven for baby boomers. Reasons for TV Land's strong initial growth include: the enduring appeal of the sitcoms re-run during its 10-11 PM slot (*All In the Family* and *Sanford and Son*, which are counter-programmed against broadcast network dramas, for the most part), the creative promotional efforts by its corporate sibling Nickelodeon/Nick at Nite, and also the appeal of its programs to young viewers (Generations X and Y) who either watched them as children, or are watching them for the first time.

Ehrenberg, Andrew. "Marketing: Romantic or Realistic?" *Marketing Research* 13.2 (Summer 2001): 40-42.

Provocative critique of several industry maxims that calls for the development of a more level-headed, patient and comprehensive marketing ethos, both for individual agencies and for the industry as a whole. Echoing Michael Schudson in *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion*, the author states that "literature sports no generalizable evidence on many or any lasting pervasive effects of advertising," and advocates instead a business model that acknowledges the limited influence of ads. Achieving product awareness instead of product dominance is one aspect of this new paradigm; curbing the industry-wide drive for continuous growth is another.

Eisenberg, Daniel. "It's An Ad, Ad, Ad, Ad World." *Time* 2 Sep. 2002: 38-41.

Report on the new tactics employed by marketers to reach American consumers, dubbed "stealth," "guerrilla" and "undercover" by the author and "the brand washing of America" by a critic. Since "the old model, the thirty-second TV spot, is proving less and less effective," marketers have beefed up their street marketing offensives, hiring people to hang out in bars and other gathering spots to praise products during conversation. Also, celebrities are increasingly being paid to appear on news

channels or talk shows to endorse products (medicines, for example), often without disclosing their compensation. Finally, the merging of "content and commerce" in TV and motion pictures is examined, as simple product placement within a film or program is being replaced by "brand integration," or tying in a product to the basic story. Examples include: Revlon figuring importantly in the plot of *All My Children*, an upcoming MTV "documentary" about a Dodge nationwide contest, and a future animated film, *Food Fight*, co-starring mascots from well-known advertising campaigns, such as Charlie the Star-kist Tuna.

Elliot, Stuart. "The Media Business: Advertising; Networks Deliver Smorgasbord to Fill Order for Young Viewers." *New York Times* 21 June 1999, final ed.: C-1.

Written during the height of dot-com mania and its worship of all things new and vibrant, this article explores the growth of programming aimed at drawing both the 18 to 49 demographic and its oft-cited, trendier subset, the 18 to 34 demo. A list of upcoming programs seeking to draw young viewers for the 1999-2000 season is offered as evidence (primarily NBC, Fox, and WB programs, all of which were unsuccessful), but several media experts warn that this trend on serving youth works against the traditional wide-reach capabilities of the broadcast networks, and will threaten to turn the networks into niche programmers.

Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. 25th anniv. ed. New York: Basic Books: 1976 (2001).

Seminal study of the origins of the modern consumption-oriented economy in the early decades of the twentieth century, and its saturation into all corners of American life. Contains a new preface in which the author replies to some of his own critics (including Michael Schudson, who felt Ewen's analysis overstated both the advertising industry's power and its intentions in shaping a consumer society). Though Ewen's point of view is somewhat portentous in its claims toward exposing the capitalist system's totality, he does show how the earliest advertisers envisioned a great business opportunity by promoting consumption as a cure-all for people's problems. Furthermore, he illustrates how the industry took advantage of the changes in traditional family structure by targeting two new, broad demographics for their persuasive enticements: women and young people.

Farhi, Paul. "In Network's New Programs, A Startling Lack Of Racial Diversity." *Washington Post* 13 July 1999, final ed.: A-1.

Written during the brief protests over the lack of African-American characters and themed-programming in the upcoming 1999-2000 network schedule, Farhi interviews several industry professionals and receives several responses that indicate economic considerations (an industry-wide focus on white, affluent 18 to 49ers, for instance) are causing the "white-out" of network television.

Farley, Christopher John. "TV's Black Flight." *Time* 3 June 1996: 66-69.

Magazine article concerning the decline in African-American programming on network television reports that gains made in the early nineties are reversing due to networks' professed need for higher (i.e., 18 to 49-drawing) ratings. The strategies of new networks WB and UPN, whose programming schedules cater to minority audiences, are discussed, and the author wonders if the networks will shed their black-themed programs once they become established, as the Fox network did. A list of the top-ten rated programs for whites and blacks is also included (the only programs that rank on both lists are *Monday Night Football* and *ER*).

Flint, Joe. "How NBC Defies Network Norms - To Its Advantage." *Wall Street Journal* 20 May 2002: A-1+.

Detailed analysis of NBC's programming successes, and how it separates itself from the other networks due to its courting of upscale demographics. Unlike each of its competitors, NBC is not owned by a larger media conglomerate, which enables the network to employ more innovative programming methods, and thus for NBC overall household ratings are of secondary purpose to the pursuit of "the young and the wealthy." Flint reports that NBC's superior ad revenues justify this focus in the eyes of NBC executives. Criticisms relating to the shirking of public-interest responsibilities of a broadcast network and the "whitewashing" of race are leveled against the network, and NBC responds by touting its recent acquisition of the Spanish-language network Telemundo as a signal of its intent on reaching minority audiences.

- . "Networks Prepare Fall 2002 Schedules Ever Hopeful New Season Will Be Better." *Wall Street Journal* 10 May 2002: B-1+.

Short article discusses the upcoming prime-time network season, contrasting the dearth of network hits with MTV's successful (though comparatively low-rated) *The Osbournes*, and briefly recounting the lackluster 18 to 49 demographics for both Fox and ABC.

Frankel, Max. "The Way We Live Now: One TV Nation, Divisible." *New York Times* 3 Oct. 1999, Sunday final ed., sec. 6: 30.

Opinion column belabors the "loss of our sense of community" due to "technology-driven commerce" as media conglomerates turn from mass programming to collecting niche audiences. The author sees little positive potential in the future direction of American media: "The power of speech is being concentrated in just a few mammoth corporations even as the audience, carved into ever smaller units, is losing the opportunity for concentrated, communal experience." The author concludes by predicting that the Internet will exacerbate social alienation even further.

Friedman, Wayne and David Goetzl. "TV Marketing: Fox Hunts for Ratings - and Senior Marketing Executive; Network Looks for Answers to PrimeTime Slide." *Advertising Age* 18 March 2002: 3.

Three and a half years after Bill Carter's report on Fox's ambitious rise into the "Big Three" network neighborhood, these reporters cover its decline in the 18 to 49 demographic. The reversal of fortune for former hits such as *Ally McBeal* and *The X-Files* is noted, and the network's overall marketing vision is questioned (interestingly, Fox still places second to NBC in the 18 to 49 demo, but has lost much of its forward momentum that it built during recent years).

Garron, Barry. "Cable's Ready." *Hollywood Reporter* 3-5 May 2002: S-4-S-16.

Comprehensive list of cable networks' mission statements, aimed at advertisers and journalists and containing much trade-show gloss and ingratiating sales pitches. Each network touts its particular niche, and notably, several general-entertainment cable networks (A&E, Comedy Central, TNN, TNT, USA) profess to target their programming to a specific demographic, confirming that there is truly no cable network in the current environment that has any mass-audience aspirations.

Garvin, Glenn. "Bernie Mac Won't Protest." *Miami Herald Online* 23 July 2002. Available online: www.miami.com/mid/miamiherald/entertainment/columnists/glenn_garvin/3714163.htm

Online newspaper article covering the aftermath of Fox's decision to move *The Bernie Mac Show* to a competing primetime slot (Wednesday, 8 PM EST) against ABC's *My Wife and Kids*, thereby pitting two of the three African-American-themed programs on the four major networks against one another. *The Bernie Mac Show's* executive producer defends the move, as do Fox executives, who cite research showing that *Bernie Mac's* audience is over 50% white. Bernie Mac himself offers a compromise that no doubt unsettled executives: viewers should change channels to *My Wife and Kids* during his show's commercial breaks, and then switch back.

Gitlin, Todd. *Inside Prime Time*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

In Chapter One, "The Problem of Knowing," Gitlin explores the pretext of subjectivity that so many network executives profess is the backbone of their decision making. Then, in Chapter Three, "By the Numbers," he reveals how Nielsen ratings are used by the networks to give their decisions a measure (however imprecise) of quantifiable support. Gitlin's analysis of the broadcast networks predates many of the changes that have affected the industry and lessened its hold on American culture (Gitlin anticipates several of them in his conclusion, and envisions possible "narrowcasting" via more channels as abetting a social shift towards solipsism), but this book still offers valuable insight into the risk-taking, yet essentially conservative, world of commercial American television.

Goldblatt, Henry. "In the Black: Smart, Minority-Friendly Television." *Fortune* 11 Oct. 1999: 60+.

Brief article detailing Home Box Office's successful forays into original programming aimed at African-American audiences. The piece includes an impressive statistic: HBO's black subscriber base is estimated at 22% of its total number, compared to 12% of the U.S. population. HBO's progressive approach – and quality programs – are due mainly to its lack of dependence on advertising revenues, according to the author.

Goldstein, Patrick. "The Big Picture: A Graying, Growing Audience." *Los Angeles Times* 24 Sep. 2002, home ed., Calendar sec.: 1.

Article focusing on the film industry lists arguments similar to a growing number of dissatisfied television businesspeople: the baby boom generation is entering their fifties, necessitating a re-envisioning of just what an "older audience" means in terms of marketing. The gap between films directed at young (teens and twenties) audiences and those aimed to attract the over-50 demographic is explored, and the author cites statistics from an MPAA study which indicate that the only demographic group that actually grew in movie attendance during the 1990s was the over-50 group (all other groups decreased slightly). Several industry observers suggest that motion picture studios – and by extension, Hollywood decision-makers in general – are neglecting their most loyal, and potentially most lucrative, market.

Gomery, Douglas. "Maybe Younger Isn't Better." *American Journalism Review* 19.4 (May 1997): 48.

Article examines the networks' adherence to 18 to 49 programming and in particular analyzes CBS's attempt at combating the status quo by sticking with aging programs such as *Murphy Brown* while broadcasting other shows for an over-50 audience. The author contrasts this strategy with CBS's network overhaul in 1970, which replaced several long-running series with baby-boom oriented

programs. Interestingly, the author cites the success of TNN (with its reruns of *Dallas* and other older-skewing programs) as evidence of the over-50 demographic's value (TNN re-vamped its programming toward an 18 to 49 audience three years later).

Green, Andrew. "The Amazing Game; The Basis for the TV Upfront Grows Shakier Every Year. It's Time to Change the Way We Measure Viewership." *Advertising Age* 17 June 2002: 30.

This argument for a re-assessment of the advertiser-network business relationship begins with a sobering statistic: primetime viewing shares fell below 50% during the 2001-02 season. Breaking down the Nielsen numbers, the author proclaims that the long-held dominance of Nielsen benefits the researchers first, the networks second, and the advertisers/marketers not at all. Several of the usual complaints about Nielsen ratings are offered before the author suggests that a measurement system using cable set-top boxes could potentially be more effective than the current people meter.

Hall, Jane. "Company Town: Networks Give Nielsen a Low Rating." *Los Angeles Times* 24 May 1996, home ed.: D-4.

Short article, quoting primarily NBC executives, that reports a growing amount of distrust between the broadcast networks and Nielsen Media. Accusations fly back and forth between parties – the measurements by Nielsen are inaccurate, the television business is more difficult and networks must adjust, etc. – and the networks provide their own set of statistics that, in their view, prove Nielsen's system to be inadequate.

Heighton, Elizabeth and Don Cunningham. *Advertising in the Broadcast Media*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1976.

Textbook that covers the advertising framework of mid-1970s broadcasting, a time when the Nielsen overnight ratings had recently come into being and were beginning to accelerate the decision-making procedures of programmers and their sponsors. Chapter 11 offers a thorough overview of the Nielsen Television Index and its reliance on the in-set meter, and also of the national demographic (sex and age) gathering process, a combination of a different set meter and personal diary-keeping.

Hundley, Heather. "The Evolution of Gendercasting: The Lifetime Television Network – 'Television for Women.'" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 29.4 (Winter 2002): 175-181.

History of the growth and eventual maturation of the Lifetime cable channel, covering several innovative "gendercasting" decisions over the past fifteen years that opened up its initially all-talk-show format to a varied program schedule that attracted a more demographically diverse, though still predominantly female, following. In the conclusion, the author envisions the fragmentation of television audiences as a positive cultural development ("mutually beneficial" to both consumers/fans and business interests), noting that once-underserved viewers will "theoretically" encounter and enjoy programs that better address their lifestyles and interests.

James, Meg. "The Big Picture for TV." *Los Angeles Times* 15 July 2002, home ed., business sec.: 3.

Addressing the financial situation of the networks, this piece includes a prediction by Jamie Kellner of Turner Broadcasting that free commercial television will become extinct by the end of the decade due to the impeding saturation of personal video recorders. Other responses to financial problems are

examined, such as the WB network's upcoming experimentation with "multi-plays" (repeat showings of a single program within a week, following HBO's lead), and product-placement.

–. "NBC Advertising Sets Sales Record." *Los Angeles Times* 4 June 2002, home ed., business sec.: 1.

Brief report on the surprisingly strong upfront ad market for the Fall 2002 network season, which is benefiting even struggling networks such as ABC. Not much analysis on the reasons behind the surge, although one possible indicator is that NBC, the leading network in drawing 18 to 49ers, drove the market upward with its strong sales.

Jaramillo, Deborah. "The Family Racket: AOL TimeWarner, HBO, *The Sopranos*, and the Construction of a Quality Brand." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 26:1 (Jan 2002): 59-75.

Journal article reveals the clever, deceptive marketing of HBO's *The Sopranos* as a stand-alone, uniquely creative, quality "brand" that exists several notches above the rest of the current television offerings. In describing the rise of HBO over the years, the author exposes the way in which, under the ownership of a vertically-integrated conglomerate parent (Time Warner since 1989), HBO manages to position itself as an autonomous, demographically elite alternative to both the broadcast networks and other Time Warner cable channels such as TNT. The transformation of Nielsen ratings into a cultural barometer is viewed as an important factor in assisting corporate influence over television, since they in effect legitimize any and all decisions that are made. The Nielsen ratings are thus a "foundational campaign of misinformation," a "mutually agreed-on deception between the industry and the talent," and at their core a means to "construct a commodity audience for advertisers and networks."

Jencks, Richard. "How Network Television Program Decisions Are Made." *Network Television and the Public Interest*. Eds. Michael Botein and David Rice. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980: 37-55.

Informative overview of network programming practices as they existed during the dominant "Big Three" era (1960s and 1970s). Includes observations on several common strategies, as well as an examination of CBS's landmark network programming revision during the early 1970s, which hatched a "producer"-driven industry trend that lasted for most of the decade (Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin's Tandem Productions, MTM, Garry Marshall). The author also summarizes television's unique appeal as it existed before audience fragmentation began to occur in the 1980s: "The very linearity of television – that makes it so difficult to attend to minority interests and drives it to seek the largest possible audiences – operates to produce news and informational audiences that are truly mass in nature, a phenomenon that has never happened either in print media or theaters (54)."

Jensen, Elizabeth. "Meet the Nielsens." *Brill's Content* March 1999: 87-91.

Well-researched and thorough exposé of the flaws in the Nielsen measuring system, including respondent apathy, inadequate sample size, neglect of minorities, and the decades-long skepticism regarding diary-keeping, especially salient in the current age of the remote control. Jensen also provides two sidebar articles, the first of which further illustrates the inadequacy of the 5,000-home sample size, as a handful of people tuning in to one program or another can often shift a ratings point by one-tenth, thereby affecting a program's fortunes. The second sidebar succinctly reviews the growth of demographics obsession among advertisers, offering up the usual "young people/harder to

reach/build brand loyalty" reasoning, and also a counter-argument based on greater discretionary income among older adults.

–. "Tuning Out: Networks Blast Nielsen, Blame Faulty Ratings for Drop in Viewership." *Wall Street Journal* 22 Nov. 1996, Eastern ed.: A-1+.

A precursor to Jensen's *Brill's Content* piece, this account of the networks' dissatisfaction with the Nielsen system (due to their collective drop in ratings after Nielsen's reorganization) offers some statistical evidence that indicates the Nielsen national television sample is biased towards higher-income, better-educated viewers.

Kissell, Rick. "Season Springs Surprises." *Variety* 27 May - 7 June 2002: 16.

Mini-report on several trends that occurred during the 2001-2002 network television season. Among the topics: NBC and CBS's dominance of the top-rated programs according to Nielsen, the continuing decline in the broadcast networks' primetime audience share (to a point where they became basically even with basic cable: 44.7 million viewers for broadcast, 43.7 for cable), and the rapid burn-out of game shows' popularity in primetime over the past year and a half.

–. "Alphabet Looks Like a Million." *Variety* 29 May - 4 June 2000: 15.

Report on the unprecedented seasonal-ratings rebound by ABC during the 1999-2000 prime-time network television season, due in immense part to its multiple-night scheduling of the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. ABC's victory in the 18 to 49 and 18 to 34 demographics for the season is also attributed to the popularity of *Millionaire*, and its three weekly airings end the season ranked as the top three programs overall – a first for ABC since 1978-79. A brief forewarning is also offered: statistics from recent months indicate that the program's median age has risen, while its total viewers have declined.

Kurtz, Howard. "Troubled Times for Network Evening News." *Washington Post* 10 March 2002, final ed.: A-1+.

Column examines the plight of the network evening news due to increased competition from cable, Internet, and also, the aging of the core evening news audience. Issues such as pending anchor retirement, the insertion and promotion of soft lifestyle pieces instead of hard news, and the decline of public-interest sentiment within the newsroom are discussed.

Lefton, Terry. "18-49 Men: Ups and Downs." *Brandweek* 10 May 1999: 12.

In-depth article discussing marketing strategies for the male half of the eighteen to forty-nine demographic, with comments from marketing execs in beer, auto, and pro sports. Sports programming is touted as the surest path toward capturing targeted males, an interesting claim considering the decreasing ratings of sports, and the financial losses incurred by networks that have owned sports broadcast deals in recent years.

Lembo, Ron. *Thinking Through Television*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

The author first provides an overview of several established methods of analyzing television's impact on society: social theory (derived from Frankfurt School criticism), social science (more quantitative, "effects"-driven analysis) and the wide-ranging and currently dominant cultural studies model (originating in 1970s Britain from the Birmingham Centre). Then, the author argues that all of these models, while illuminating in their own ways, fail to fully recognize the myriad ways people make use of television as a part of their everyday lives. These "components of a viewing culture," make the practice of watching television "a symbolically rich and highly ambivalent activity (108)," one that involves "much more than accounting for power and resistance (113)." Lembo's own ethnographic research (consisting mainly of interviews with his peers and several diaries) is far too limited to provide much support for his ideas, but nevertheless he does highlight several aspects of television viewing habits that have often been ignored by previous studies: the proclivity of channel flipping, simultaneous viewing (watching TV while doing something else), and what he calls "image-play" viewing (responding not to television's narrative conventions but instead to the symbolic power of its images).

Lowry, Brian. "Leadership Shifts In the Land of Nielsen." *Los Angeles Times* 2 Jan. 2002, home ed., Calendar sec.: 1.

The change in leadership at Nielsen Media Research serves as a springboard for a discussion of the firm's importance as "a cultural touchstone, a tool people use to gauge the prevailing mood and public tastes." Along with interviews and statistics, Lowry offers several important reminders and observations, noting that although the ratings are, and always will be, imprecise estimates, they have become "gospel" in the media/advertising business, and also comparing the industry's uneasy acceptance of Nielsen to Winston Churchill's statement that democracy is the worst system of government ever created, except for all the others.

-. "False Starts Raise Questions About TNT's Series Strategy." *Los Angeles Times* 19 June 2001, home ed., Calendar sec.: 10.

Article details the TNT cable network's tentative and costly foray into drama series development from the perspective of frustrated television writers and producers. After ordering several episodes of two highly-regarded series in 2000, TNT delayed, and then finally shelved, both projects as cast members departed for other shows and millions of dollars were wasted. Several sources observe that TNT's initial missteps into series programming indicate that cable entities will have to create especially distinctive programs to draw viewers away from the broadcast networks.

-, Elizabeth Jensen and Greg Braxton. "TV's Diversity Dilemma: Networks Decide Diversity Doesn't Pay." *Los Angeles Times* 20 July 1999, home ed.: A-1+.

Along with Paul Farhi's piece in the *Post*, this wide-ranging article covers many of the issues surrounding the criticism directed at networks in the summer of 1999 for their reluctance to include African-Americans on the upcoming programming slate. The 18 to 49 demographic surfaces several times as a primary reason for this lack of diversity, as does the lack of integration within the industry itself and the absence of any influential "crossover" hit during recent years.

Lynch, Kate and Horst Stipp. "Examination of Qualitative Viewing Factors for Optimal Advertising Strategies." *Journal of Advertising Research* 39.3 (May/June 1999): 7-16.

This jargon-filled study examines ways to measure program "likeability" through ratings to better ascertain how well audiences remember commercials that run during their favorite shows. The authors state that the adoption of optimizer software by the advertising/marketing industry has enabled them to collect more definite quantitative "delivery" data, but the qualitative or "impact" aspects of audience involvement are still far too vague. Statistics from Nielsen and other audience research sources indicate that there is some correlation between highly-rated television programs and audience attention to (and retention of) commercial messages that are scheduled within the programs' time blocks, but as the authors note, "attention is a subjective state of mind" that is "hard to measure directly," and conclude that more detailed research methodology is needed.

MacDonald, J. Fred. *One Nation Under Television: The Rise and Decline of Network TV*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1990.

History of television written at the turn of the previous decade, as several forces necessitated a change in the business model for the networks. Chapter Ten, "The Decline of Network Television," relates how cable, VCRs, the upstart Fox network, and (importantly) deregulatory government policy collectively put an end to what had been a thirty-plus year monopoly, ending the networks' continuous expectations of growth and profitability. The following chapter, "Broadcasting versus Cable," examines specific programming decisions, and important shows, that were made during the eighties as the networks struggled to hold on to audience share. MacDonald's outlook on the future of television is decidedly ambivalent; he sees "signs of international cultural homogeneity," but is uncertain whether this will be a detriment to global-cultural relations or will bring people closer together.

Mandese, Joe. "Top-Buying Shops Weigh In With the Heavy Machinery." *Advertising Age* 11 May 1998: 522+.

Informative report on the adoption of optimizer software by several large New York media buyers/agencies, which signals a wide-scale effort by advertisers to gain more precise information on the "reach" of their commercials throughout the television schedule. According to several television and advertising industry people, the use of optimizers will theoretically challenge the broadcast networks' longtime assurance that prime-time is the most valuable daypart for most commercials; meaning that the optimizer technology may indicate to media buyers that other air times – or other networks, on cable for instance – could offer a more effective "reach" than primetime broadcast. Others interviewed dispute this notion and predict that optimizers will actually increase the amount of ad revenues spent on primetime broadcasting. One interesting side note: ABC researchers claim in the article that their 18 to 49 numbers are actually at parity with NBC's across the 1998 primetime schedule. They stress that NBC's 18 to 49 strength is concentrated on its Thursday night schedule, while ABC's is spread out throughout the week, making it the ideal network for "reach delivery" to a wide spectrum of 18 to 49ers.

Martin, Ed. "Renewed Mass Appeal." *American Demographics* May 1999: 30+.

Article explores the decline in most of the broadcast networks' 18 to 49 numbers from the 1997-98 to 1998-99 prime-time seasons, and predicts a return to a "pre-90s," broader-audience outreach strategy by most of them. The absence of NBC's *Seinfeld* from NBC's schedule and the re-scheduling

of *Frasier* are offered as evidence for NBC's reversal of fortune, as the programs slated to replace them did not capture the same demographic numbers. In response, the President of NBC Entertainment predicts that NBC will offer some wider-appealing, "family-oriented" programs in 2000. CBS President Leslie Moonves criticizes the 18 to 49 mindset and offers an alternate strategy: get more people watching CBS initially, and then worry about filling in demographics. On the other hand, WB's Entertainment President baldly declares an intention to dominate ratings within the 18 to 34 demographic, contesting Fox's 1998-99 strength among younger viewers.

McAllister, Matthew. *The Commercialization of American Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.

A highly critical overview of commercial culture that posits the argument that the majority of current media fosters anti-democratic values. Chapter One, "The Changing Nature of Advertising and Control" examines how media's evolution during the eighties forced advertisers to devise new methods of catching audiences' attention. McAllister makes some cogent observations about this difficulty: in the 90s, potential consumers have many more options among media that is not directly advertiser-supported, plus fairly new technology (the remote control) that can aid them in largely "escaping" broadcast television advertising. One response to this among both advertisers and programmers has been an intense effort to appeal to the most economically desirable audience possible, which is discussed in Chapter Two, "The Social Implications of Control." McAllister observes that such a limited focus inevitably removes a large portion of the population (the poor and much of the middle-class, and often minorities) from the cultural mainstream.

McCullum, Charlie. "Black, Latino Series In Fall Faceoff." *San Jose Mercury News* Online 24 July 2002. Available online:
www.bayarea.com/mid/bayarea/entertainment/columnists/charlie_mccollum/3724514.htm

Online newspaper article details the scarcity of minority-programming on the broadcast networks heading into the 2002-2003 season: UPN's block of African-American sitcoms on Monday nights, a Latino comedy on the WB, and a total of four sitcoms on the "Big Four" networks. Furthermore, the latter sitcoms are scheduled opposite of one another, with two airing on ABC and two on Fox, all during the 8-9 PM EST prime-time block. Regarding this, the chairman of Fox Television Entertainment is quoted as saying: "We really don't feel like we're under any obligation to ensure the success of any of our competitors' shows. . . . So whether casts are black, white, green, yellow, purple – we're in a business here."

"Media Roundtable: Tools of the Trade." *Adweek* 10 April 2000.

Forum interview with four marketing executives touches on a myriad of topics, most of them relating to the future of consumer branding. Optimizers, labeled by one executive as "another tool that we use; not the be-all and end-all" of measurement technology, are discussed briefly. One interesting aspect about optimizers is that, according to another executive, marketers' conception of particular time slots ("dayparts") have changed due to the more accurate data collected on audience attentiveness (for example, early morning, once "an efficient daypart," is now "background music" because optimizers have confirmed that most people aren't paying much attention to television during the early morning hours). An interesting prediction concludes the discussion: by 2010, television will be personalized at the "set-top," meaning that each television household (or even each individual viewer) will have commercials directed specifically at them through their own TV set. This innovation would render the broadcaster-advertiser business model obsolete, and thereby make mass television advertising, as we have come to know it, extinct.

Meehan, Eileen. "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience." *Logics of Television*. Ed. Patricia Mellencamp. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990: 117-137.

This overview of television ratings establishes a critical tone early on: "To accept the claim of scientificity without scrutinizing the historical development of ratings and the economic conditions that constrain ratings production is naive (118)." The author professes that the ratings business is and has always been a business first, and objective research second, and reviews the history of A.C. Nielsen and its early 20th-century predecessors in order to "uncover the underlying economic structure" of audience ratings measurement. By extensively describing the manner in which ratings companies have altered their measurement techniques to accommodate new media (or advertising) objectives through the years, the author forms an argument that complements the "audience as commodity" critique found in the work of other scholars such as Ewen, Ang and Budd/Craig/Steinman. The author closes with an analysis of how Nielsen's adoption of the people meter in 1987 transformed the national ratings sample into a model better fit to serve the demands of new cable television companies, and notes that "unless you live in a cable area and subscribe, you have almost no opportunity to count" in the upgraded system (132).

Merrill, Cristina. "Media Agencies: High Stakes, Big Jackpot." *Adweek* 14 April 1997, natl. features ed.

Article analyzes the potential impact optimizers (originating in Europe) will have after they become fully implemented into marketing and media-buying sectors across the U.S. The author acknowledges that the product and what it purports to do are hard to comprehend at first, and then defines optimizers as follows: "sophisticated computer-based programs that manipulate real-time audience measurement data to sharpen planning and buying of television time." In other words, the optimizer program instantaneously analyzes Nielsen audience data, for example, and gives clients "real-time" information about viewer behavior they can then consult when determining how, where and when to spend their advertising budget. Some early examples of optimizers' success in the U.S. are cited, although one source warns that marketers still need to develop and utilize other "qualitative" methods of consumer research to complement the enhanced quantitative information provided by optimizers.

de Moraes, Lisa. "The Fall Strategy: Call the Cops!" *Washington Post* 22 Sep. 2002, Sunday final ed.: G-1.

As the Fall 2002 network television season begins, the *Post's* television writer observes the scene, and notices in particular the continuance of two overdone trends in programming, both directed toward attracting the hard-to-lure younger male half of the eighteen to forty-nine demographic. The first: a preponderance of police/crime dramas, including three new ones scheduled on CBS in an attempt to keep David Letterman's late-night male audience from straying from the network during the 10-11 PM slot. The second trend has become a staple of eighteen to forty-nine programming: what de Moraes identifies as "male pattern optimism;" that is, shows featuring the coupling of "dull pudgy men" with "babes." *The Drew Carey Show* is mentioned as an originator of this genre, begetting modest hits such as *King of Queens* and new programs such as the sitcom *Still Standing* and even the variety comedy show *Cedric the Entertainer Presents*.

–. "A Season Full of Winners and Spinners." *Washington Post* 22 May 2002, final ed.: C-8.

Re-cap of the final broadcast network standings for the 2000-2001 season, with NBC edging out CBS mainly due to its Winter Olympics coverage. In the 18 to 49 demographic, however, NBC finished a stronger number one, and the other networks' fortunes in this demographic are also discussed.

–. "CBS's Post-Game Strategy Scores A Touchdown." *Washington Post* 30 January 2001, final ed.: C-1.

Report on the debut of the second season of CBS's *Survivor*, which aired following Super Bowl XXXV and excited CBS executives by drawing in 21% of viewers ages 18 to 49. *Survivor 2's* numbers are given a positive spin due to the fact that the lead-in audience from the Super Bowl was lower than in recent years, and the increase in 18 to 49 viewers is contrasted against *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire's* rapidly aging core audience. *Survivor 2's* younger average contestant age, and CBS's decision to schedule the remaining episodes on Thursday night against NBC's 18 to 49 powerhouse *Friends* are also discussed.

–. "'Millionaire Treats ABC to a No. 1 Season.'" *Washington Post* 25 May 2000, final ed.: C-7.

Report on the final network standings from the 1999-2000 season, in which ABC, behind *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, jumped from third place to first in both the overall standings and the 18 to 49 demographic. Early demo reports suggest, however, that the audience for *Millionaire* is aging, which could (and indeed, did) signal a quick change in fortune for both the show and the network.

–. "Diaries to People Meters: The Old Stone Age to the New Stone Age." *Washington Post* 10 Dec. 1999, final ed.: C-7.

Report on Nielsen's planned transition from diary-keeping to people meters in measuring local demographics. Since 1987, Nielsen has only used the people meter for NTI (Nielsen Television Index) measuring, and relied on diary-keeping for local demo statistics. The article's title is indicative of the concern that, even as the people meter becomes more ingrained in Nielsen's system, it is becoming obsolete due to the rapidly changing viewing patterns of television audiences.

Moshavi, Sharon. "Niche Cable Networks Attract Advertisers of the Same Genre." *Broadcasting & Cable* 8 March 1993: 47-48.

Report on niche cable networks' effort to attract more diverse advertisers; the concept of "endemic advertising," i.e., advertising products that are similar in appeal to their programming (for example, computer games on the Sci-Fi Channel), is increasingly viewed by cable executives as insufficient to their networks' future growth and prosperity. This concern is indicative of the tension between niche programming and a desire to branch out and gain more viewers that tempts nearly every media entity at one time or another.

"NBC, 1981-85: The Climb to the Top." *Broadcasting* 9 June 1986: 80+.

Long account of NBC's efforts at climbing out of the ratings cellar and securing first place among the "Big Three," which finally occurred, for the first time in 31 years, in summer 1985. There is much discussion of NBC's "success over time" programming strategy, which allowed initially-struggling programs to remain on the air and build audiences, and further analysis of the key programs that catalyzed NBC's improvement reveals that most of them were building strong 18 to 49 numbers. This

demographic-driven programming strategy has, since the mid-80s, enabled NBC to consistently charge the highest advertising rates among the networks, even though it has not always finished first in the overall Nielsen standings.

Neuendorf, Kimberly, David Atkin, and Leo Jeffres. "Reconceptualizing Channel Repertoire in the Urban Cable Environment." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 45.3 (Summer 2001): 464-482.

Research study concerning cable television audiences' establishment of personal channel "repertoires." A survey of cable subscribers conducted in Cleveland, OH revealed certain cable viewing tendencies attributable to both degree of television usage and "social category differences," i.e., demographics. Much of the research corroborates Nielsen data, which indicates that, for example, minority viewers exhibit different viewing patterns than whites (less network, more cable) due to the lack of programming targeted toward them on the broadcast channels.

"Over the Hill." Narr. Morley Safer. Prod. Steven Reiner. *60 Minutes*. CBS. 29 Sep. 2002.

Television investigative report focuses on the age-discrimination dimension of the eighteen to forty-nine advertising/programming paradigm. Reporter Morley Safer interviews the president of a leading Madison Avenue ad agency as well as the President of NBC's Entertainment division and gets no statistical proof of the 18 to 49 demographic's purchasing-power supremacy. Safer also collects opinions from other industry figures and researchers that contest the abundant attention paid to the 18 to 49 demographic; these critics insist that the expanding population of Americans over age 50 has been continuously under-served by the networks over the past decade.

Polich, John. "Mass Appeal." *Adweek* 31 May 1999, Eastern ed.: 36-38.

Report and opinion piece explores the tension between broadcasters' traditional wide-net modus operandi and the shrinking-focus mandate of the new demographic paradigm. Polich gives a quick history of the growth of demographics measurement, identifying ABC founder Leonard Goldenson as the first proponent of "selling people, not households" in order for his fledgling network to compete with CBS and NBC. Polich points out how the endlessly-sought-after 18 to 49 demographic is at its core a ludicrous overgeneralization, and then argues that the broadcast networks will irreparably harm their collective future if they ignore their mass-audience track record of success and persist in competing with cable, the Internet, and other more precision-oriented media.

Poltrack, David. *Television Marketing: Network/Local/Cable*. New York: McGraw-Hill: 1983.

Compete overview, in textbook form, of the business world of television advertising and marketing. Chapter One deals with audience measurement, including definitions and explanations of basic terminology, and a breakdown of traditional demographic categories dating back to the 1950s (18 to 49, 18 to 34, 25 to 54, and for women, "Working Woman" and "Lady of the House"). Successive chapters concern the process of buying media time, constructing an advertising campaign, test research, new markets (cable), and so on, all from the perspective of a consummate industry insider. Poltrack is a long-time executive at CBS and is quoted in many of the newspaper and trade magazine articles in this bibliography.

Rich, Frank. "What the Tube Is For." *New York Times* 20 Sep. 1998, final ed., sec. 6: 53.

Opinion column on the state of television acknowledges the increasing "balkanization" of the viewing audience but isolates a potentially optimistic side-effect: increased opportunities for previously ignored or dismissed segments of the population to get their own nationwide programming out to the public. Rich also points out that *Seinfeld*, the "signature TV smash hit of the decade," would have barely made the Nielsen top twenty during the 1970s.

Roberts, Johnnie. "Cradle to Grave TV." *Newsweek* 19 March 2001: 40.

Article addresses a growing desire by media conglomerates to manipulate their diverse properties in a unified-front campaign in order to recapture the broad-audience results of network television's yesteryear. The new plans call for cable channels, broadcast networks, and any other appropriate media outlets to promote one another's programs. Examples of this "multi-platform" advertising are offered: Turner Networks promoting WB's *PopStars*, and Viacom tapping into MTV's youth audience for CBS's Super Bowl halftime show.

Romano, Allison. "A Language That Media Understand." *Broadcasting & Cable* 23 Sep. 2002: 30-32.

Report on Hispanic television audience begins with a statistic from Initiative Media that indicates Hispanic television households now account for almost 10% of all television households in the U.S., and that this bloc is growing by 1% per year. Furthermore, the report notes that the median age of the Hispanic population in America is 29 according to the 2000 Census, which "puts more than half of the population squarely in the young 18 to 34 demo." The report discusses efforts by Spanish-language networks Telemundo and Univision to address this growing audience by offering more sports and MTV-oriented programming, and quotes industry executives as saying that Fox, NBC, MTV and BET are the most popular English-language destinations for Hispanics.

-. "At E!, Youth Will Be Served: By Aiming At Younger Demos, the Net's Succeeding – and Then There's Anna Nicole." *Broadcasting & Cable* 22 July 2002: 22.

Brief report on the niche programming strategy of the E! network, which, according to its president, values 18 to 49 watchers over total household numbers, i.e., "fewer viewers mean more – so long as they are younger." As a result of this direction, E!'s most recent upfront advertising sales have increased. The soon-to-premiere (and now fading fast) reality series starring former Playmate and millionaire heiress Anna Nicole Smith is touted as E!'s next big draw for young, hip, audiences, and as a ratings threat to MTV's *The Osbournes*.

-. "MTV Operating Without A Net." *Broadcasting & Cable* 27 May 2002: 21+.

Examination of MTV's unique programming strategy, which expands the number of pilot proposals and speeds up the typical concept-to-execution timeline in order to stay in sync culturally with its teen-age and young-adult audience. The structure of MTV's development department is explained: eight different groups are assigned a specific area (reality, news, documentary, etc.) and they influence one another as program ideas are debated (for example, the hit reality series *The Osbournes* originated as an *MTV Cribs* episode). The article maintains that, due to its commitment towards continuous self-reinvention, MTV takes a creative, risky and often-intuitive approach in its programming, where failures are not fretted over for long and even successful shows are guaranteed a short shelf-life.

Rutenberg, Jim. "Keeping Up With the Nielsen (Executive) Family." *New York Times* eighteen Nov. 2001, late Sun. ed., sec. 3: 4.

Similar to Brian Lowry's piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, this report on the transition of Nielsen CEO's spends more space elaborating on the ways Nielsen Media is planning to adjust to new challenges such as digital cable and personal video recorders. The improvement in estimating demographic information is touted by several sources as Nielsen's greatest advance over the past fifteen years.

Schlosser, Joe. "Odd Sweeps, Same Old Winners." *Broadcasting & Cable* 3 Dec. 2001: 6-7.

Report recounting the November 2001 network sweeps, with NTI breakdowns of total ratings/shares and separate 18 to 49 numbers. CBS is the overall winner, but NBC and Fox lead in the prize demographic; the strong showing of the *Carol Burnett Show* reunion special on CBS is briefly discussed.

Schneider, Michael. "Black, White Tastes Merging." *Variety* 14 Feb. 2000: 31.

Report discusses several trends in regard to viewing trends among blacks and whites. While there is an increase in the number of programs that appear on the top twenty list for both audiences (six in 2000 vs. one in 1996), there is still a wide divide in the most favored programs, with UPN's African-American Monday night sitcoms drawing few white viewers in particular. CBS is reported as the number one broadcast network for black viewers, which President Les Moonves explains is a result of CBS's efforts to create programs with a broad appeal. One major development discussed is African-Americans' abandonment of the WB network due to its removal of numerous black-oriented programs in favor of programs featuring white characters. While its overall ratings increased, the WB declined from the second most-watched network by African-Americans in 1998 to the least-watched one in 2000.

Schudson, Michael. *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

Schudson demands that social analyses of advertising and marketing rise above the polar-opposite perspectives of Marxist anti-consumerism and status quo apologia. The practice is more complex than that, he argues, and one of the more cogent points he makes is that there is very little hard evidence available that proves advertising – especially the "national consumer goods advertising" that exists on network TV commercials and magazine ads and relies on abstraction, pleasant imagery and values-based persuasion techniques targeted at specific consumer blocs – actually works a majority of the time. Nevertheless, even if advertising and marketing fail to directly inflate consumer spending, Schudson does acknowledge that their cumulative effects do tend to reassemble American life in a decidedly anti-democratic, alienating manner.

Segrave, Kerry. *American Television Abroad: Hollywood's Attempt to Dominate World Television*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 1998.

This history of American media's relationship with foreign television markets includes two chapters focusing on late 80s-90s developments: the largely successful attempts by magnates Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch to establish a global media reach, the rise of indigenous television programming in certain countries (and the consequential reduction in popularity of American imports), the perpetual inability of foreign-made programs to be shown in the U.S. (unless they are remade for American audiences, such as the recent spate of reality shows), and MTV's international expansion. The overarching issue that complicates the relationship between American producers and foreign markets

can be defined as "free trade vs. cultural imperialism," and Segrave concludes his book with some troubling thoughts on how the spread of transnational corporations may continue to stifle the development of incipient national television markets, further cementing what he views as a distinctly American cultural hegemony.

Shales, Tom. "Cheer Factor: CBS Sweeps Win a Boost for Friendly Fare." *Washington Post* 30 Nov. 2001, final ed.: C-1.

Opinionated re-cap of the November 2001 sweeps, contrasting the strong overall showing of CBS and its broad-demographic-drawing *Carol Burnett Show* reunion with eighteen to forty-nine winner NBC's reliance on *Fear Factor*, which the author disparages as a crass attempt to draw young, hip viewers. ABC's meager showing, due to its over-reliance on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, is also criticized.

Shanks, Bob. *Cool Fire: How To Make It In Television*. New York: Norton, 1976.

A longtime television producer and executive, Shanks' overview of the industry as it existed in the mid-1970s is filled with detail but, unsurprisingly, very little outright criticism. The system is accepted as is, and although his chapter on the Niensens and other research is titled "Ratings, or the Emperor's clothes (Chapter Eleven)," Shanks generally accepts his industry comrades' collective willful aversion to the ratings' imprecision, and reserves mild scolding only for easy-target aspects of research: diaries, the overemphasis on overnight numbers, etc.

Shayne, Bob. "No Experience Wanted: A Writer of a Certain Age Finds Awards and Credits Mean Little to Youth-Obsessed Executives." *Los Angeles Times* 10 June 2001, Sunday home ed., Calendar sec.: 8+.

Long, episodic story detailing the discrimination faced by the author in Hollywood after he passed fifty years of age, where he found that his track record of success was ignored due to his lack of cultural affinity with the prized 18 to 49 demographic. Shayne attacks this mindset by asking several media buyers and ad execs to provide hard evidence that younger consumers are more receptive – and therefore more valuable – to advertisers, and reports that his contacts could not provide any. He also discredits the notion that young viewers provide the bedrock of support for network blockbusters by offering up the Nielsen top 10 programs for 2000-2001, eight of which are "across the board" in demographics.

Silverman, Fred and Dean Valentine. Interview with Lynn Hirschberg. "What's A Network To Do?" *New York Times* 20 Sep. 1998, Sun. late ed.: 59+.

Lengthy and revealing interview with Fred Silverman, who oversaw programming for all of the "Big Three" networks during the 1970s and early 1980s, and Dean Valentine, (then) head of the UPN network. The former executive and the current network chief offer perspective on a number of topics, including the influence of the 18 to 49 demographic on programming decisions. Silverman comments: "Networks have listened too much to their sales departments. And the sales departments say, the only thing we can sell is 18 to 49 viewers. That's it. And almost blindly they've accepted that and totally changed their programming, which is insane." Nielsen's grouping of people over 50 together is also criticized (Silverman: "They're trying to put me in the same category as someone who's 85 years old."), and Valentine offers a rather bleak outlook on the situation near the end of the interview: "Everyone is narrowcasting. If you're broadcasting ... you will be suspect. In truth, the only hope is to attract a broad audience. Because I can imagine a world where the networks go out of business."

Sterling, Christopher and John Michael Kittross. *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*. 3rd. ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.

Voluminous history of broadcasting from the earliest days of radio to current (2001) developments. Notes the first attempts by advertisers to glean audience demographics in the 1950s (385) and the first use in America of people meter technology 1984 by the British company AGB (554), as well as numerous other facts and events. Comprehensive appendices, glossary, and bibliography.

Streeter, Thomas. *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

History and critical examination of the various aspects of commercial broadcasting from the 1920s to the present, with an emphasis on government's role in establishing the parameters of broadcasting in American society. Chapter Eight, "Viewing As Property: Broadcasting's Audience Commodity," examines previously theorized assessments of audience involvement (as sovereign decision-makers versus unwitting pawns, for example) and insists that Ien Ang's "romantic valorization" of everyday-life complexity in television viewing fails to fully illuminate just how institutional limits on what audiences are, and can do, have shaped the overall concept of broadcasting. Streeter observes that "the chasm across which broadcasters try to make sense of their audience is a segment of the more general divide between production and consumption, a social division built out of relations of class and gender." The chapter also includes a well-researched section on ratings as the "collective agreement" within the industry to provide a pseudo-scientific cover for their business transactions.

"Success Story: Nielsen Media Research." *MicroStrategy Website*. Available online: www.microstrategy.com/Customers/Successes/nmr.asp.

Product and customer overview from a corporate Web site that details the combined efforts of Nielsen Media and MicroStrategy to develop "a new, state-of-the-art, customer analysis system that allows Nielsen's clients to better understand television viewing patterns." Demographic information that can be obtained by this optimizer includes, in addition to the more common categories: "professional occupation, pet ownership, and long distance provider." The product description/statement goes on to describe other advantages of this technology, including this telling comment: "The results of (the product's) analysis can suggest changes to program content to lift viewership ratings (ital. added)."

"Tangled Webs - Media Conglomerates." *The Economist* 25 May 2002, U.S. ed., Special Report sec.

This article takes up much of the ground covered in the Survey from the 13 April 2002 issue and re-examines the issues in light of the struggling mergers of AOL/Time Warner and Vivendi/Universal in 2002, making a case for media conglomeration despite its recent pitfalls. However, the article does highlight the problems consolidation poses for creativity and diverse programming, as networks that are now producing their programming in-house shoulder more financial risk.

"Television in the Peoplemeter Age" *Broadcasting* 7 Sep. 1987: 35-41.

Extensive summary of the first week of Nielsen's changeover to people meters for national audience measurement, competing with (and, as it turned out, quickly defeating) British company AGB's similar device. Despite early discrepancies in ratings compared to Nielsen's previous national numbers,

advertisers and network execs alike are eager to utilize the increased (and daily-measured) demographic data provided by the people meter, while TV producers question how this new emphasis on specific audience characteristics will affect the kinds of programs they will be able to get made in the future.

"Television Takes A Tumble." *The Economist* 20 Jan. 2001, U.S. ed., Business sec.

Overview of American television's sagging fortunes during the 2000-2001 season, as Internet advertising revenues dry up and digital cable continues to gain converts among TV households. Audience fragmentation is isolated as the primary determinant of television's future: if the broadcast networks and larger cable stations can somehow adapt to this new reality, the article argues, there will still be a place, however diminished, for them in the new-technology future.

Thompson, Stephanie. "18 to 49 Women: Spin City." *Mediaweek* 10 May 1999: 16.

The task of marketers to satisfy lifestyle choices for 18 to 49 women is the subject of this trade magazine report. Along with strategies for selling makeup and candy, the report cites a study from Leo Burnett advertising group, which segments mothers into four different lifestyle groups to target accordingly: "June Cleavers" (upscale, stay-home), "Tug of War" moms (want to be June Cleaver but have to work), "Strong Shoulders" (lower-income, often single) and "Mothers of Invention" (inventive, career-oriented).

"TNN is the Fastest Growing Cable Network in Prime-time with the Largest Increase in Household Ratings, Households, 18 to 49 of Any Network in the Second Quarter." *PR Newswire (prnewswire.com)* 3 July 2001.

Short, informative press release on the ratings increase of TNN (The National Network) after being acquired by MTV Networks in September 2000 and reformulated as "America's first pop network." With WWF Wrestling capturing top cable ratings, and the upcoming addition of programs such as *Star Trek* and *Baywatch* to TNN's schedule, the continuation of its upward trend in the 18 to 49 demographic seems to be assured (tellingly, TNN's top prime-time rating overall at this time of tremendous improvement, June 2001, was a mere 0.91).

"To Infinity and Beyond." *The Economist* 13 April 2002, U.S. ed., Survey sec.

This survey of the state of programming, as cable stations further erode network dominance and personal video recorders arrive as a high-tech option for time-shifting, stops well short of proclaiming the end of broadcasting, noting that changes in TV marketing can still create a sizable "buzz" over a particular show, and that there will always be a need for a wide-audience outlet for certain events. The effects of increased audience fragmentation on the advertising aspect of programming (its sponsorship of the broadcast networks), however, is barely addressed.

Turow, Joseph. *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

After reading eighteen years of *Advertising Age* (1977-95), examining numerous other trade publications, and interviewing eighty-plus media industry professionals, the author surveys "a revolutionary shift that is taking place in the way advertisers talk about America and the way they create ads and shape media to reflect that talk." What could be viewed as a troubling fracturing of American society into self-interested groups and individuals is seen by marketers and advertisers as a

movement to be mastered, and then exploited to sell even more products. Chapters Two and Three detail the rise of target marketing over the latter half of the twentieth century, where in the case of television, advertisers didn't begin to fully re-direct their energies toward audience segments until the 1980s, despite receiving data provided by Nielsen diaries from the 1950s onward. Chapter Four investigates how, once the target-demographic paradigm took hold, various groups of the heretofore mass audience were cordoned off and either aggressively engaged (upscale consumers) or mostly ignored (people over 50 and African-Americans, especially in television advertising). Turow's final outlook on the future of this polarizing trend is a troubling question: "Should the ability to share the consumer experience be the one characteristic linking us together?"

–. *Media Systems in Society*. 2nd. ed. New York: Longman, 1997.

Media studies textbook that describes broadcast television programming and advertising techniques in clear, succinct language. In Chapter Four, the author recalls one of the most indicative programming moves of the mid-90s, which clearly revealed a new shift in broadcast networks' priorities: the decision by NBC to abandon family-oriented programs in the 8 PM to 9 PM primetime slot and instead schedule shows that appealed to the upscale (and white) 18 to 49 demographic. Chapter Five, "Targeting the Audience," examines targeting demographics in more detail, stating up front (in language simpler than, but similar to len Ang's) that all market research into audiences is inexact at best, if not completely futile, for the very term "audience" is a social construct utilized to assign a certain set of values (in this case, consumer values) upon a disparate group of people.

Umstead, R. Thomas. "Eyes on the Demo Prize." *Multichannel News* 25 Feb. 2002: 5-A.

Brief article commenting on cable networks' increased attention toward capturing more of the 18 to 49 demographic (and encroaching on the broadcast networks' audience) rather than remaining strictly defined niche programmers, with the general-entertainment cable networks (TNN, TBS, TNT) leading the charge.

"United States Census Bureau: Census 2000 Demographic Profiles." *Census Bureau Home Page*. File: censtats.census.gov/data/US/01000.pdf Available online: censtats.gov/pub/Profiles.shtm. (Sep. 2002).

Pdf. file contains four demographic tables: DP-1 (General Demographic Characteristics), DP-2 (Selected Social Characteristics), DP-3 (Selected Economic Characteristics), and DP-4 (Selected Housing Characteristics).

"Up the Tube." *The Economist* 13 April 2002, U.S. ed., Survey sec.

A companion piece to "To Infinity and Beyond," this examines the common argument about American television's programming pandering to the lowest common denominator, and how the multiplicity of choices offered by cable affects this depressing tendency. The overall outlook is positive, however, as HBO programs (free from advertising sponsorship) and the increased power accorded to (very few) television writer/producers to follow their own muses are offered as examples of television's ability to produce "gems of quality" amidst the dross.

Vogel, Harold. *Entertainment Industry Economics*. 4th. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Chapters Six and Seven of this comprehensive and thoroughly-researched account of business practices within all sectors of the entertainment industry concern broadcasting and cable, respectively. Vogel defines broadcast networks as "in effect, programming and audience-delivery wholesalers," and identifies cable as the principal reason broadcasters' profits have leveled off during the 1990s. He notes that, although cable networks draw income from several streams in opposition to broadcasters' sole reliance on advertisers, cable advertising revenues continue to grow and the two industries are now often in direct competition. Nevertheless, Vogel forecasts a long future ahead for the television broadcasting networks, albeit one with more modest profit margins.

Vranica, Suzanne. "Advertising: Nearly All Prime-Time Space for Network TV Ads Is Sold." *Wall Street Journal* 6 June 2002: B-3.

Another report on the surprising advertising sales in the upfront market heading into the 2002-03 network television season, containing more information than the *Los Angeles Times* article. Media buyers and advertisers theorize that the rush to purchase on the upfront market is due to the high rates charged for last year's "scatter" (week-to-week) market, and Vranica notes that since around one-third of the commitments made during this upfront seller's market are open to negotiation and/or cancellation, a feeling of uncertainty remains within the industry.

Walker, Rob. "How *Friends* Wins Advertising Friends." *Slate* 9 Oct. 2002. Available online: www.slate.msn.com/?id=2072059&device=

Online newsmagazine article extols the economic virtues of the NBC sitcom *Friends* during the Fall 2002 prime-time season, when it became the most expensive show on the air in terms of cost to advertisers (the amount, cited from *Advertising Age*, averages out to \$455,700 per thirty-second commercial). The author speculates that *Friends*' achievement – due primarily to its nine-year-long strength in the 18 to 49 demo – will cause NBC and the show's producers to rethink their previous assertion that the current season will be *Friends*' last. Assessing the debate about the possible end of broadcasting due to continuing audience fragmentation, the author insists that "mass still matters." that the eighteen to forty-nine demographic is broad enough to "include parents and kids watching the same show," and that *Friends*' appeal to viewers outside the 18 to 49 demo is the main reason for its popularity.

Ward, David. "America's Aging Not Getting Attention They Deserve." *PR Week* 25 Feb. 2002: 12.

"Advertisers remain obsessed with the 18 to 49 year-old demographic, in part because of the myth that the younger you are, the more your brand loyalty is up for grabs." The author mainly focuses on print media coverage of older-skewing issues, but much of his argument easily applies to television as well. Interviews with AARP officials and several journalists (one from the 50 to 55-targeted magazine *My Generation*) illustrate the growing complexity of defining exactly what "the elderly" is most interested in, especially since the ranks of the retired are now being filled with the first of what will soon be millions of baby boomers, people who grew up during the rise of mediated pop culture and have lived with it all of their lives.

Waxman, Sharon. "Song and Dance Derision: Would-Be Stars Risk Humiliation on *American Idol*. For Fox, It's Paying Off." *Los Angeles Times* 28 July 2002, Sunday final ed.: G-1+.

Along with brief biographies of the final ten contestants and judges, this article examines the rapidly building popularity of the summer 2002 talent-contest reality series *American Idol* on Fox. Waxman reports that, while *Idol* is not on the level of 2000's *Survivor* as far as reaching a large aggregate of the desirable 18 to 49 demographic, the program has broadened its audience from a largely teen-age base early on during its summer run, "addicting" growing numbers of middle-aged viewers and thus attracting top-brand advertisers (Coca-Cola, Ford) to peddle their wares both during commercial breaks and within the program itself.

-. "Missing From the Pictures; Hollywood Hasn't Caught Up With A Fast-Growing Latino Population." *Washington Post* 8 July 1999, final ed.: C-1+.

In-depth report on the lack of Hispanic programming in mass media covers the motion picture industry as well as television. Despite census evidence that indicates a large spike in the Hispanic/Latino population, and a cited study which reveals that Hispanics spend a larger portion of their income on entertainment than non-Hispanic whites, this segment of the American viewing and consuming population has been neglected. In the case of television, industry officials cite several possible explanations, including the success of cable networks Univision and Telemundo and the diversity in heritage of the Spanish-speaking audience nationwide, as well as the lack of organized protest by the Hispanic community.

Webster, James and Patricia Phalen. *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

Chapter Three, "The Audience Commodity," provides a concise, thorough overview of the advertising-television business model, and also includes a study by the authors that isolated probable factors in determining cost per thousand rates (CPM) in television markets. Using data from 199 television markets, the study concludes that an audience's youth, racial characteristics (white over non-white) and household income are positive variables that increase CPM rates in television markets. Chapter Seven, "The New Media Environment," addresses the issues of audience fragmentation and what the authors label "audience polarization" – "the tendency of individuals to move to the extremes of either consuming or avoiding some class of media content" (110). The authors conclude that increased media choices will invariably increase the risk of both fragmentation and polarization, but predict that the mass audience will exist – altered, but still attractive to advertisers – for the foreseeable future.

Weiss, Michael. "Inconspicuous Consumption." *American Demographics* April 2002: 31-39.

Report draws on data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX), which contains detailed information on how individual consumers spend their discretionary income and is provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The recently released 2000 report is analyzed and comparisons are drawn between it and the 1990 report. Census personnel, demographers, and marketing executives all offer commentary on the new numbers, and much attention is paid to the dominance of the baby boom generation (people between the ages of 35-54 during the 1990s), which accounted for over half of the overall aggregate spending during the decade (the "mature" demographic, people over age 55, finished second with 27.5% of the total, nearly 10% higher than the 25 to 34 demographic). Some interesting numbers: 1) "Boomers between ages 45 and 54 upped their spending for movie admissions by 17% during the decade." 2) "Over the course of the decade, these older boomers increased their share of aggregate spending by 22%, to \$1 trillion." 3) "In 2010, the oldest

Boomers will turn 64, and the number of consumers between ages 55 and 64 will increase by 50% from 2000."

–. "Trying To Clean Up Sweeps." *American Demographics* May 2001: 43+.

Lengthy report focuses on audience measurement problems of Nielsen Media, starting with the antiquated, widely discredited diary-keeping method still utilized in the majority of local television markets during sweeps. Alternative or supplementary systems to the entrenched system are then discussed. Those currently in development include: audience cluster packages, which segment viewers according to what kinds of programs they like (i.e., cop shows or reality shows) and then sells them in groups to advertisers; a digital set-top monitor developed by Comcast that better measures channel surfing; and the "portable people meter," a device that is carried around by the viewer and detects an inaudible audio code in any TV program the viewer interacts with. The future of interactive TV and of Web-based "convergence technology" (clicking from a TV screen image to a web page) are also discussed. The author professes that technology will one day make "sweeps" obsolete due to a new capacity for continuous demographic measurement, but no firm timetable for change is predicted.

Wolfe, David. "Business's Mid-Life Crisis." *American Demographics* Sep. 1992: 40.

Wide-ranging analysis of older consumers' attitudes towards advertising has several dated passages and false predictions but also some perceptive observations on the differences between young and older mindsets as they relate to spending money. Older consumers often resist the traditional materialistic, persuasive approach that much of modern advertising utilizes, Wolfe argues, and are concerned more with values such as altruism, self-sufficiency, and personal revitalization. The task for advertisers in the upcoming years is to tie these values into their overall strategy.

The Tyranny of 18 to 49: A Timeline for Audience Ratings Measurement & Advertising Dollars Spent

Compiled by Patrick Reed for the Norman Lear Center

1950

- A.C. Nielsen Company buys out Hooper radio and television ratings service and soon achieves monopoly in national television ratings; competes with American Research Bureau (Arbitron) in local markets.

1954

- Nielsen implements set-meters and diaries into two national samples in order to measure more detailed demographic information. The first age demographic breakdowns are collected from the diary (Audilog) sample.

1970

- CBS executives overhaul prime-time network lineup and replace several long-running, rural-setting series with urban series directed toward younger (baby boomer) audiences.

1972

- Nielsen institutes advanced measurement techniques, making national ratings available to networks in 48 hours, and "overnight" ratings from select local markets within 24 hours.

1979

- Nielsen begins measuring cable television station audiences.

1980

- Percentage of U.S. television households with cable: 20
- Percentage of U.S. television households with video cassette recorders: 1

Early 1980s

- Marketers increase ad campaigns targeted at specific subsets of television viewers, taking advantage of cable television's more limited and defined core audience.

1983

- Final network standings in the 18 to 49 demographic: 1)ABC 2)CBS 3)NBC

1984

- British company AGB initiates "people meter" trial model in U.S.

1986

- Final network standings in the 18 to 49 demographic: 1)NBC 2)CBS 3)ABC
- The Fox Network premieres with programming airing two nights a week.

1987

- Nielsen implements its own People Meter measurement system in its national sample; AGB withdraws from U.S. market in 1988.

1989-1990

- Networks' results in attracting viewers from the 18 to 49 "key demographic" begin to appear with regularity in industry trade publications.

1990

- Percentage of U.S. television households with cable: 60
- Percentage of U.S. television households with video cassette recorders: 69

1992-93

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *Murphy Brown*: \$310,000
 - 2) *Cheers*: \$300,000
 - 3) *Roseanne*: \$290,000
 - 4) *Coach*: \$280,000
 - 5) *Monday Night Football*: \$265,000ⁱ

1993-94

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during prime-time:
 - 1) *Home Improvement*: \$325,000
 - 2) *Roseanne*: \$300,000
 - 3) *Seinfeld*: \$295,000
 - 4) *Coach*: \$290,000
 - 5) *Monday Night Football*: \$260,000ⁱⁱ

1994

- Arbitron withdraws entirely from the television measurement business, leaving Nielsen as the sole provider.

1994-95

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *Seinfeld*: \$390,000
 - 2) *Home Improvement*: \$350,000*
 - 3) *Roseanne*: \$310,000
- Others of note:
 - Frasier* (second season): \$230,000
 - Friends* (first season): \$190,000
 - ER* (first season): \$165,000
 - 60 Minutes*: \$225,000
- *Home Improvement* won the overall highest rating for the 1993-94 season; *Seinfeld* finished third.ⁱⁱⁱ

1995

- Premiere of WB and UPN broadcast networks.

1995-96

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *Seinfeld*: \$490,000
 - 2) *Home Improvement*: \$475,000
 - 3) *ER*: \$450,000
 - 4) *Friends*: \$400,000
 - 5) *Monday Night Football*: \$385,000

- Others of note:
Caroline in the City (first season): \$375,000
Murphy Brown: \$335,000^{iv}

1996

- Nielsen increases national household sample size to 5,000.
- NBC dominates ratings in the 18 to 49 demographic, led by programs such as *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Frasier* and *ER*.

1996-97

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 1) *Seinfeld*: \$550,000
 2) *ER*: \$500,000
- Others of note:
Suddenly Susan (first season): \$370,000
The X-Files: \$290,000
 NBC's average for its Thursday night lineup: \$448,000^v

1997

- Optimizers introduced into U.S. advertising industry.

1997-98

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 1) *Seinfeld*: \$575,000
- Others of note: *Home Improvement*: \$350,000
The X-Files: \$275,000
Everybody Loves Raymond (second season): \$215,000^{vi}

1998-99

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 1) *ER*: \$565,000
- Others of note:
Frasier: \$475,000
Friends: \$410,000
Monday Night Football: \$375,000

Ally McBeal: \$265,000
Monday Night Football Pregame Show: \$230,000
The Hughleys: \$185,000^{vii}

- Network averages: ABC: \$172,000
 NBC: \$168,000
 FOX: \$137,000
 CBS: \$129,000

1999

- Percentage of U.S. television households with cable: 68
- Percentage of U.S. television households with video cassette recorders: 85
- Digital video recorders are introduced into the U.S. consumer marketplace.
- Final network standings in the:
 18 to 49 demographic: 1)NBC 2)FOX
 18 to 34 demographic: 1)FOX 2)NBC
 35 to 54 demographic: 1)NBC 2)ABC
- Top programs for men 18 to 49:
 1) *Monday Night Football*
 2) *Friends*
 3) *ER*
 4) *X-Files*
 5) *Frasier*
- Top programs for women 18 to 49:
 1) *ER*
 2) *Friends*
 3) *Frasier*
 4) *Jesse*
 5) *Veronica's Closet*

1999-2000

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 1) *ER*: \$545,000

- Others of note:
 - Friends*: \$510,000
 - Frasier*: \$466,000
 - The Drew Carey Show*: \$370,000
 - Dharma and Greg*: \$315,000
 - Everybody Loves Raymond*: \$312,000
 - The X-Files*: \$300,000
- Network averages:
 - NBC: \$171,114
 - ABC: \$165,068
 - CBS: \$163,773
 - FOX: \$150,310
 - WB: \$52,769
 - UPN: \$28,550^{viii}

2000-01

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *ER*: \$620,000
 - 2) *Friends*: \$540,000
- Others of note:
 - Will & Grace*: \$480,000
 - Just Shoot Me*: \$465,000
 - Everybody Loves Raymond*: \$460,000
 - Cursed* (NBC Thurs.): \$410,000
 - Becker*: \$365,000
 - Ally McBeal*: \$335,000
 - The Simpsons*: \$335,000
 - Malcolm in the Middle* (second season): \$320,000
 - Who Wants to Be A Millionaire* (second season): \$271,000^x

2001

- Network standings in the "upscale" (plus \$75K) 18 to 49 demo:
 - 1)NBC 2)CBS 3)ABC 4)FOX
- Nielsen and Arbitron begin testing trial model "personal people meters," portable devices that measure program viewing/listening outside of the home.

2001-02

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *Survivor*: \$445,000
 - 2) *ER*: \$425,000
 - 3) *Friends*: \$353,600
 - 4) *Monday Night Football*: \$330,200
 - 5) *Will & Grace*: \$321,200
 - 6) *Everybody Loves Raymond*: \$305,600
- Others of note:
 - Angel*(WB): \$68,400
 - Buffy the Vampire Slayer*(UPN): \$62,000
- Network averages:
 - NBC: \$158,400
 - FOX: \$154,600
 - ABC: \$149,700
 - CBS: \$129,000
 - WB: \$66,000
 - UPN: \$37,400^x

2002

- Final network standings in the 18 to 49 demographic: 1)NBC 2)CBS 3)FOX
- NBC's *ER* finishes as the number-one drama among 18 to 49 viewers for its eighth straight season.
- The new fall schedule contains a total of four programs featuring minority lead characters among the "Big Four" networks (NBC, CBS, ABC, FOX).

2002-03

- *Advertising Age's* survey of estimates for the cost of a thirty-second commercial during primetime:
 - 1) *Friends*: \$455,700
 - 2) *ER*: \$438,514
 - 3) *Survivor*: \$418,750
 - 4) *Will & Grace*: \$376,617
 - 5) *Everybody Loves Raymond*: \$301,640
 - 6) *Monday Night Football*: \$298,000
 - 7) *Scrubs*: \$294,667
 - 8) *The West Wing*: \$282,248
 - 9) *CSI*: \$280,043
 - 10) *Good Morning Miami*: \$279,813

■ Others of note:

Law & Order: \$266,200
Frasier: \$252,067
The Simpsons: \$248,300
That '70s Show: \$164,950
Fastlane: \$133,271
Girls Club (first season, quickly cancelled): \$115,799
Ed: \$99,733
JAG: \$97,355
60 Minutes: \$90,000
60 Minutes II: \$68,322
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: \$59,032
Touched By An Angel: \$42,342

Network averages:

NBC: \$176,462
 CBS: \$124,247
 FOX: \$123,617
 ABC: \$118,850^{xi}

ⁱ Joe Mandese, "Advertisers Vote for *Murphy Brown*, CBS Show at Head of Pack in Cost Per :30," *Advertising Age* 7 Sep. 1992: 3.

ⁱⁱ Joe Mandese, "Home Improvement Wins \$ Race," *Advertising Age* 6 Sept. 1993: 3.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joe Mandese, "AA's Fall Price Survey: *Seinfeld* Rates Soar," *Advertising Age* 19 Sep. 1994: 1.

^{iv} Joe Mandese, "*Seinfeld* is NBC's \$1M/Minute-Man," *Advertising Age* 18 Sep. 1995: 1.

^v Joe Mandese, "NBC's *Seinfeld*, *ER* Hit Record \$1 Million Minute," *Advertising Age* 16 Sep. 1996: 1.

^{vi} Joe Mandese, "*Seinfeld* Nears Price Ceiling As Sophomore Shows Soar," *Advertising Age* 15 Sep. 1997: 1.

^{vii} Joe Mandese, "*ER* is Primetime Price King in Post-*Seinfeld* Marketplace," *Advertising Age* 21 Sep. 1998: 1.

^{viii} Joe Mandese, "Primetime Pricing Woes – Analyze This," *Advertising Age* 20 Sep. 1999: 1.

^{ix} Joe Mandese, "*ER* Tops Price Charts, Regis Wears the Crown," *Advertising Age* 2 Oct. 2000: 1.

^x Wayne Friedman, "TV Networks' New Reality: Ripples From Terrorist Attacks Spread to Fall Season," *Advertising Age* 24 Sep. 2001: 1.

^{xi} David Goetzl and Wayne Friedman, "Exclusive Survey: *Friends* Tops Ad Price List; NBC Lands Six Shows in Top 10, Leads Nets in Primetime Rates," *Advertising Age* 30 Sep. 2002: 1.