http://eprints.lse.ac.uk

MAKING POPULATIONS APPEAR

NICK COULDRY

Introduction

Reality TV is more than just a series of texts or generic variations. At the very least, reality

TV needs to be understood as a form whereby objects, mechanisms of representation, and

people (producers, participants, audiences) are arranged so as to sustain claims - plausible at

some level - that social 'reality' is presented through these means. This social form (in many

varieties) has persisted for nearly two decades across an ever-expanding range of countries.

Five years ago, the death of reality TV was widely predicted, yet we are now debating its

political implications on a global scale. This persistence is not guaranteed into the future, but

so far it has surprised many, and so too needs explanation. If 'reality production' proves an

enduring social form in late 20th century and early 21st century media - even as media

interfaces undergo huge transformation - then we need to understand why.

Dominant so far have been explanations that prioritise economic factors and one type of

political factor (neoliberalism and/or biopolitics). While I will acknowledge those

explanations' importance , I will link them to wider dynamics. We need here to separate

long-term factors from shorter-term, more 'local' (and more obviously contingent) factors.

My wider aim will be to formulate ways of thinking about the phenomenon of reality TV that

facilitate international comparative research. In so doing, I will extend aspects of my earlier analysis of how media rituals contribute to media's role in the development of modernity .[1]

Long-term contexts for interpreting reality TV

Many analysts dismiss the 'reality' claims of reality TV, as if the word 'reality' was here just a dead metaphor. Of course audiences discount such claims, if made explicitly. But that doesn't mean audiences (any more than marketers) treat these claims to 'reality' as trivial. As ~~recent~~ research by Bev Skeggs, Helen Wood and Nancy Thumim and even more recently by Katherine Sender brings out~~.~~,[2] whether or not people say they discount such 'reality' claims does not affect whether they act on them, for example, by treating reality shows as sources of knowledge or as presenting real moral choices. Authenticity is something people look for in reality TV, as Annette Hill's audience research has brought out.[3] Ignoring this cuts us off from recognising a wider process of which reality TV is part: the constant, contested but generally naturalised construction of media institutions as privileged sites for accessing 'our' social 'realities', and the myths associated with that construction. So it is exactly from this reality claim that our framework for analysing reality media should start.

Reality TV and the myth of the mediated center

Media invest a lot of effort in reinforcing the legitimacy of their symbolic power ,[4] or even better its naturalness - when they tell us that we must watch because everyone is watching (*Big Brother*, *American Idol*), when they tell us they know what a nation thinks (*Daily Mail*, *New York Post*). In English such claims are even condensed in language. As Todd Gitlin notes,[5] we often slip the definite article in front of the word "media" – <u>the</u> media. But what object is referred to by this term? What is at stake in this language?

There are of course many media, and important contrasts between them; recognising that has never been more important, as media interfaces have proliferated in the past decade. But I highlight the term 'the media' in order to emphasise that this term's apparent naturalness is part of a much larger, ongoing social *construction* whose relevance extends far beyond the vagaries of the English language. In my book *Media Rituals* I called this construction 'the myth of the mediated centre',[6] by which I mean the *claim* that 'the media' are our privileged access-point to society's centre or core. This myth enfolds another myth, 'the myth of the centre', the idea that 'societies', nations, have not just a physical or organizational centre – a place that allocates resources – but a centre in a different sense, a generative centre that explains the social world's functioning and is the source of its values. In isolating this myth, I was attempting to extend an earlier analysis of media power ,[7] and the highly dispersed processes whereby that power is legitimated, that in turn had drawn on late 20th century readings of power as pervasive and decentered (Foucault, Bourdieu, Actor Network Theory). The broad, seemingly ever-expanding phenomenon of 'reality media' can be productively analysed both as a site of media rituals[8] and as an instantiation of the myth of the mediated center. Indeed that myth is a good starting-point for developing a framework for analysing comparatively how reality TV is embedded in institutional settings across the world.

The mythical object - 'the media' – is not a trivial construction. *Socially*, it sounds like an answer to Durkheim's question about what bonds sustain a society as a society.[9] Durkheim's account of how social bonds are built through ritual has remarkable overlaps with how we have talked about 'the media' – as what everyone is watching, as the place where we all gather together.[10] We must be wary of course of functionalism in our readings of society and media, yet some version of that functionalism is a real force in everyday life, and that

discourse helps sustain media institutions (in all their particularity) as a site of general importance in our lives. *Politically*, the idea that media provide a representative space for a social 'totality' is crucial to how languages of politics in modernity have developed, since by this fiction, media can be treated as providing the means through which governments can plausibly assume they appear to 'their' populations, and their populations appear to them. This is not to claim media's representational spaces are co-terminous with 'our world', or provide our only space of politics: it is the functionalism of such claims that I seek to avoid by emphasising the *constructive* work necessary to sustain the fiction of 'the media'. In the *economic* domain, media's role in focussing attention in particular directions, and the cultural work necessary to sustain this role, is relied upon not just by media industries (ratings) but by marketing industries generally. This is part of the cultural *supplement* to political economy explanations of media power; in times of economic instability, particularly in media markets, it is even more important that we think about how this cultural supplement works in tandem with economic pressures.

In these interlocking domains (social, political, economic), then, a great deal is at stake in 'the media's' claimed ability to make populations appear, and to make a 'world-in-common' appear to populations. The emergence and continuity of reality TV as a social form needs, I suggest, to be interpreted as part of this process. But this process is itself subject currently to various complex transformations to which I now turn.

Challenges to the myth of the mediated centre
If reality TV should be first understood as part of a wider construction of 'the media' as socially central, it is necessarily caught up on the tensions to which the myth of the mediated centre is now subject. Those tensions require ever more work if that myth is to be sustained.

4

Socially, if the claim of 'liveness' was an essential component in the construction of 'the media' as socially central[11] because 'liveness' captures our sense that we *must* switch on centrally transmitted media to check 'what's going on', then we must note how new forms of 'liveness' are emerging through online interfaces and mobile media that are primarily *interpersonal* and so potentially more continuous than mass media have ever been.[12] Is there emerging a sense of social 'liveness' – mediated, yes, but not by central media institutions? Manuel Castells' and his co-authors suggest that a new 'mobile youth culture' is emerging that helps young people 'set up their own connections, bypassing the mass media'. [13]So will interpersonal media become people's primary mode of connection, with 'the media' increasingly incidental to our checks on what our friends are up to? Will this challenge our notion of media as socially central? This is unlikely but, to see why, we need to consider some other dimensions.

Politically, the remarkable events of Barack Obama's 2008 election should not allow us to forget the more pessimistic narratives in recent decades about the declining trend of engagement in mainstream politics, in many countries including the USA (Pharr and Putnam 2000).[14] Outside of the USA, where voter turnout rose in 2008, the broader context – longer-term fears in some countries that turnout, particularly among the under 25s, will stabilise below or close to 50%[15] - provide a troubling context for considering whether governments will be able in future to assume that media provide an effective means for making 'their' populations appear and for them to reach those populations. Although the Obama campaign *did* tap into social networking sites for political mobilisation, and benefited from huge attention from mainstream media also, the question for the future is whether, in less exceptional circumstances, governments will be able to use these extra-media focuses of

social attention as sites for reaching populations: Barack Obama's one million 'friends' on Facebook may prove an exception, not the norm.

In the *economic* domain, the uncertainty is of a different nature. As the search for advertising audiences intensifies, marketers are already using the counter-space of social networking sites as an important alternative to television for reaching consumers: media institutions from the BBC and NBC to music majors to commercial brands are all building profiles in social networking sites to create a 'buzz' about bands, products and programmes. Consistently with the above analysis, falling advertising revenues have *generated* a cultural response, that is an attempt to renegotiate where and how 'we' must focus our attention. Long-term, I suspect, new interpersonal media, far from being divorced from centrally produced media flows, will become increasingly intertwined with them in a sort of *double helix*. There is a complication, for sure, since this dynamic – the attempt to recreate the general pull of fashion in new ways - will interact with a competing dynamic (whose source is also intensified economic competition): the pressure to narrowcast audiences and to obtain their loyalty by differentiating consumers' needs and performance (what Joseph Turow has recently called 'niche envy').[16] We cannot be sure how these contradictory economic pressures (aggregating and disaggregating) will play out. But the aggregating pressures condensed in the construction of 'the media' are likely to remain an important part of the mix for the foreseeable future.

A potential comparative frame

So far I have argued that reality TV is best seen as part of a much wider process that I have called 'the myth of the mediated center'. By examining the tensions to which that myth is now subject, at least in particular territories, I have brought out how this broad analytic

framework allows us to get a broader perspective – that *links* social, economic and political dynamics – on how reality TV's claims have come to matter. Clearly my account of the myth of the mediated center and its tensions, formulated above in terms shaped by media's role in Europe and North America, remains a hypothesis to be tested and possibly reformulated afresh for other parts of the world. No assumption is made here that such tensions are universal: Indian and Chinese media/advertising markets, for example, are (subject to the current economic downturn) in a phase of long-term growth, leading to the possibility that in those countries 'the myth of the mediated centre' may, in relation to a large proportion of the population, be digitally enhanced from the outset. Nor, of course, can we assume there is one form of modernity or ignore the highly particular ways in which, for example, histories of state formation or the institutionalisation of religion have shaped modernity in different places, and media's varying role within such processes.

I will return more explicitly at the end to the comparative implications of this long-term framing of the phenomenon of reality TV. I want first to turn to some other dynamics of reality TV that are more directly contingent. Under this category, I will deliberately, if provocatively, include neoliberalism, sometimes discussed as if it was universal.

Contingencies

If the continuing pressure to sustain media institutions' status as a privileged access-point to 'what's going on' is, I would suggest, a feature of all states where media institutions have been an important feature of modernity – with reality TV one clear form for working through that long-term pressure - there is still a great deal to say about the particular pressures that have encouraged this form, this particular 'solution', to that broader problem. Here is where I

rejoin other accounts of reality TV, since there is something like consensus on some of the key factors.

The economics of form

Few would disagree that economic factors were crucial to the initial emergence of reality TV. While similar factors affected many countries ,[17] in the UK growing competition in the television market with satellite and cable expansion, alongside the Thatcher government's pressure on public broadcasting to cut costs and operate more 'commercially' (the Peacock Report), quite obviously favoured program forms that were cheap, yet in economic (audience) terms sustainable. Even if the *idea* of presenting so-called 'ordinary people' (that is, those outside media institutions)[18] as actors had its source in a longer documentary tradition and, quite plausibly, in rising tensions about the representative authority of 'the media' themselves, the economic advantages of early reality TV formats were of overriding importance.[19]

The ways in which such basic economic pressures translated into formal patterns has, however, particular interest.[20] Because the point of reality TV is to attract regular audience attention for non-professional performers, but without the expense of a formal plot, it needs a temporal structure targeted at '*events*' which 'cannot' be missed. It is not accidental that reality programmes which a few years ago tried to narrativise observation (observing staff at an airport, a hotel, and so on) have in part been replaced by programmes that, as John Corner puts it,[21] 'build their own social' - within event-structures constructed for the purpose (*Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *American Idol*). Those event-structures require critical moments – how better to generate these than through *judging* behaviour between characters, who thus become 'contestants'? (Clearly there are older lineages of popular culture – the singing contest, the

talent show[22] - to draw on here.) This in turn requires recognizable *forms of authority* through which decisions are ratified. In reality TV, media draw on various external forms of authority in order to fill out their wider authority to present 'the social': the psychologist as judge of the 'facts' of general human nature, the industry expert (music producers, professional chefs and so on) as judges of skill. The economic advantages of *game-like* structures (as ways of generating events based on judgements) have further consequences: game-based forms shield media's underlying claim to social knowledge from direct criticism (it's only a game!), and guarantee a structure whose detailed rules are difficult to challenge (if you're playing the game!). It is rare for contestants explicitly and publicly to challenge the rules of reality TV and those who do get treated harshly. In the UK *Big Brother*'s third series one contestant reacted to the tedium of the house, quite rationally you might have thought, by reading a book in the bedroom – he got voted off and heavily criticised in public for this by the show's presenter (29 and 31 May 2002).

Teaching and judging 'reality' in the UK

Various pressures then (above all economic) encouraged particular resolutions of the problem of how to embody media institutions' authority and make populations 'appear' in new popular entertainment formats. But equally important are the factors favoring particular inflections of the basic forms of reality tv as meaningful. I want to resist the temptation to reduce all such content-related factors to just one, neoliberalism, for reasons that will become clear later on. My discussion will focus on the UK.

In the UK (and perhaps other countries) an important factor behind the growth of reality tv may be not so much neoliberalism, as the growing opacity of the social world. Individuals, if we follow Axel Honneth's recent analysis, operate in a social world with fewer clear signals

9

about values, more incitements to mark themselves off from others through consumption, and increasingly abstract measures of their "performance" – a conflict that Honneth claims is 'making [individual] lives into fiction'.[23] The 'fiction' that results from this gap between people's lives and the narratives available for making sense of them is, arguably, filled through reality TV's various forms of instruction and guidance. This incitement towards 'instruction' is inflected, without doubt, by wider features of UK society, particularly its growing inequality and indeed inhospitability as a place for receiving instruction! If we exclude housing, the top 10%'s share of UK national wealth increased (by more than 20%) to 71% between 1986 and 2003, while in terms of income the UK top 10%'s purchasing power is nearly 14 times more than that of the bottom 10% (this is according to the UNDP's comparative figures); the latter figures suggest the UK is twice as unequal as Germany and Sweden and three times more unequal than Japan (in the US however the multiple was nearly 16). That opaque and increasingly unequal world is one that has provided poor conditions for young people as they grow up. A much cited 2007 UNICEF report on child well-being placed the UK bottom out of 21 rich countries and identified the UK as one of only 2 countries where less than 50% of children found their peers 'kind and helpful'.[24]

Underlying pressures towards formats where 'ordinary people' compete at everyday tasks have in the UK intersected with an older tradition of media's pedagogic authority (one of the staples of the Reithian BBC): from television in the UK we can learn not only how to cook or undergo 'extreme adventures' but also how to decorate our rooms, move house, go on a date, even see potential criminals learn what prison is 'really like' (*Banged Up*, Channel 5 2008). This last example illustrates how such pedagogy is often purely *vicarious*: one is encouraged to watch others very distant from oneself undergo a pedagogic experience before the hybrid authority of television. Note also the equally bizarre *Fast Food Junkies Go Native* Channel 4

2008, which took overweight people to remote rural Pakistan to experience the local diet and work routine. In the UK , such reality-based pedagogy has become an arena where barely disguised judgements of *class* have become acceptable again,[25] notwithstanding Tony Blair's vision of a 'classless society'.

Political irony aside, what is most striking about this new popular version of 'the media's' social and pedagogic authority is how it works, not through impersonal instruction delivered to an unseen and anonymous audience (as in cooking and gardening programmes till the 1980s), but through *judgements* meted out *in public* on *the bodies of 'ordinary people'* in all their particularity and vulnerability. While aspects of this process are specific to the UK's tortured class politics, the USA for example shares the increase in inequality in recent decasdes and, as Ouellette and Hay demonstrate,[26] offers many examples of pedagogy through 'reality-based' media judgement.

Neoliberalism

It is only at this point in exploring the dynamics of reality TV that we need to consider what impact neoliberalism has had. By neoliberalism here I mean the complex of forces – discursive/ economic/ organisational/ political - which have converged to sustain a view of the social world that gives absolute priority (in terms of explanation, organisation and values) to the market,[27] and have therefore helped marketise social space and the relations between government and governed. This does not, whatever the rhetoric, involve a simply withdrawal of the state from social space, but on the contrary the installation as common sense of new principles of organisation that Rose calls 'degovernmentalisation' (1996), because it involves forms of power that seek, so far as possible, *not* to rely on the explicit orders of the state .[28] An analogous process has been under way in the corporate domain whereby power in

corporate settings is displaced in new forms of 'self-management' that, because of the norms they entrench, are wholly consistent with the increasing arbitrariness and violence of authority's actual operations .[29]

Take the UK version of *The Apprentice* where the US show's Donald Trump is replaced by the abrasive working class entrepreneur Sir Alan Sugar. Here the most important rule is that Sir Alan Sugar's personal authority overrides everything else;[30] indeed contestants show *character* by submitting to that authority in all its arbitrariness. A clear illustration came towards the end of Series 2 when Sir Alan confronted Paul (who had been on the winning team in every previous task and so hadn't yet appeared to defend himself before Sir Alan in the programme's 'Boardroom'). Here's Sir Alan: **'**the fact that you've won all the tasks doesn't mean jack shit to me because I haven't talked with you yet. So you speak to me now, you speak to me now, because, I'm telling you, it's getting close to that door.' So the message was clear – playing by the rules, doing all the approved tasks, counts for nothing, unless you have proven yourself *in front of* Sir Alan. This rule fits rather well with working conditions in those neoliberal democracies where, as Richard Sennett ,[31] corporate authority is increasingly personalised and charismatic. The argument can be extended to shows such as *Big Brother*, where the arbitrary authority and compulsory emotional labour of today's workplaces is translated, in disguised form, into the rules of harmless play, within what I have called a 'secret theatre'.[32]

There is no doubt a strong case for the convergence in the UK and USA between wider social and economic regulation under neoliberalism and reality show formats (,[33] with US shows offering a clear case of television 'filling out' domains of social instruction and guidance from which federal governments have withdrawn, telling citizens to rely on self-discipline.

Neoliberalism is not, however, a master-narrative for understanding reality TV. Reality TV is better seen as a site where the authority of 'the media' – their distinctive claim, however playful, to give us a privileged access to the social world – is doing work, in alliance with other types of authority, to present the social world in a consistent way: as a place where the complexity of people's experiences and motives is easily reducible to *rules*; where one key rule is that submission to continuous *surveillance*[34] and the judgement of *external* authority is necessary for 'self-improvement' or self-development. The result is a new form of mediated authority, enacted in public, in which not just neoliberalism but multiple overlapping factors - of varying sorts and temporalities, economic, social and political – converge. This causal complexity suggests that reality TV is not just a format, but something more like what the great German sociologist Norbert Elias called a '*figuration*' which in highly condensed form enacts, through the bodies and judgements of individuals, the outcome of many types of mutual dependency and pressure.[35] So far all I have done is recharacterise an emerging consensus about the deeper social and political implications of reality TV's particular way of making populations appear, particularly among North American and European writers. But it is clear we can't stop the story here.

Complications

There are two types of factor which require us to complicate the story told so far: first, international comparison; second, the site of the audience.

Marwan Kraidy's work[36] has brought out how in the Middle East, with its distinctive constellation of media, political and social authority, reality TV becomes an important site for rearticulating issues of national identity and religious authority, while neoliberalism, for

example, is rarely directly relevant as a frame of analysis. Indeed we would expect the stakes in an overdetermined figuration such as reality TV to vary from place to place (Elias was one of the classical sociologists most committed to comparative analysis). Comparative research into reality TV requires the largest possible set of reference-points and framing reality tv as part of a wider social conflict over the construction of 'the media' provides this. Within this broader frame, we can expect a number of possibilities:

1. cases where the very construction of 'the media' is interpreted not consensually, but as acting *against alternative* constructions of society's 'centre' (for example, religion or secular authoritarian power);

2. variations in the range of forces competing over 'the media' (in some places religious organisations, in others competing political forces, in still others competing models of economic organisation);

3. cases where the territory over which a given reality tv form circulates does not match with the boundaries of political or state power (the Middle East with its regional television flows being a key example), creating obvious conflicts of authority;

4. variations in the degree to which the act of *becoming visible in media* as an 'ordinary person' (essential to reality tv) is itself socially regulated or constrained for particular groups, for example women or ethnic minorities.

To the extent that in any location one of these axes coincides with wider social or political faultlines, then we would expect that a discourse dominant elsewhere (such as neoliberalism) will *not* be the primary reference-frame for reality TV in that location, even before we consider the uneven global circulation of neoliberal discourse itself. In addition, there may be

uncertainties whether 'the myth of the mediated center' has been successfully constructed at all in a particular location, or, even if it has, whether it is now subject to collapse (a more radical version of the tensions discussed earlier). These are the sorts of possibilities that a comparative analysis of reality TV could hope to explore.

The second complicating factor is what, for shorthand, we can still call the 'audience'. My point is not the banal one that analysing the effectivity of texts requires an account of audiences' possibilities of resistant interpretation. The default assumption that audience 'decoding' is a site of freedom has long been exploded.[37] Texts become embedded in action, thought and belief - with significant implications for power - far beyond any initial act of 'reading', and a key aim of analysing reality TV and other 'media rituals' was to highlight this point. My point instead is that, in so far as media forms such as reality tv carry traces of wider contests over authority and power, we need to find out rather more than we currently know about *how* those forms get embedded in everyday life. Do traces of neoliberal models of self-government in a reality show get circulated in forms of everyday talk ('the Apprentice' as office joke?) or in individual forms of playful acting-out? What forms of informal collective play (for example the exchange of comments and opinions at the climax of a show such as *American Idol*) are now common? But reality tv formats may also be embedded in quite different ways, for example in the form of crisis, as where reality tv formats have attracted political or religious attention in Brazil, the Middle East or Southern Africa.[38] At this point, we come face-to-face with a larger difficulty for comparative media analysis, which is the lack of work to date on how to compare 'media cultures' rigorously (Hepp and Couldry forthcoming), a topic with which I have no space to deal here.

It is important therefore that our accounts of reality tv do not close down the possible complexities of how cultural formations around reality TV work. Here the overwhelming emphasis of governmentality approaches such as Ouelette and Hay's on discourse runs into some difficulties. Their excellent deconstruction (following Foucault and Rose) of US reality tv only talks about the action of reality TV's discourses on US society, as if social space itself was simply a plane of discourse. Their language for describing television – as 'everyday technologies of the self',[39] as 'an integral relay within the entrepreneurial network of welfare provision and private social support'[40] – offers precious little scope for asking the crucial question: *how, by whom, under what circumstances and to what practical ends* does such pedagogy get accepted and internalised? To write, as they do, that 'television's lasting value may have to do with its rootedness in daily life, as a serialised framework for personal regimes'[41] only indicates the site of the problem, not the answer. In this, they risk repeating the explanatory foreshortening in Nikolas Rose's work, when he depicts 'mass media' as merely one among 'a plethora of indirect mechanisms that can translate the goals of political, social, economic authorities into the choices and commitments of individuals, locating them [citizens] into actual or virtual networks of identification through which they may be governed'.[42] This notion of 'translation' ignores the question: through what mechanism exactly is it that individuals are 'formed', indeed reformed, as subjects?[43] It is here that the reference-point of the myth of the mediated centre – related on the macro-level to media's widest claims to social authority and on the micro-level to the minutiae of media's ritualization – can complement governmentality accounts to broaden our understanding of how reality Tv works in 'society'.

Conclusion

The subject of reality TV is complex and multidimensional, and our understanding of it no doubt still incomplete. This chapter has reflected on how best to frame reality TV, as we enter the age of more seriously comparative international research.[44] Unhelpful is any account which reduces reality TV to the operations of one causal dimension, whether of discourse (for example 'neoliberal discourse') or the economy, expression of national community, or television history. Reality TV is everywhere a multidimensional (social, political, economic and cultural) process, whose variations need to be understood within a comparative frame that recognises this complexity.

Our analysis also needs to be in touch with media's broader claims to present social 'reality' within the various forms that modernity has taken; 'reality media' as an example of those claims has has significant political implications. The claim of particular media institutions anywhere to present central social 'realities' will always be clothed in language that is variable, often ironic, perhaps discounted by those who encounter it, and multiply determined. But just as the claim to present 'reality' is not trivial, neither are the stakes involved in such claims trivial, since behind them lies a contest of wider long-term significance: the continual struggle within modernity to *make populations appear*, whether to governments, markets or to themselves, and so help sustain the plausibility of key assumptions on which modern politics, economies and societies depend.

That is why I suggest we analyse reality TV as first, but not only, an example of media institutions' attempts to claim social authority for themselves, and other institutions' practices of underwriting or buying into such claims. Such processes will play out very differently in different locations, and this variation is something a fully international media studies must explore, along the axes of comparison mentioned above and no doubt more. The modest aim

of this chapter has been to provide a framework within such comparative work might
develop.

[1] Nick *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[2] Beverley Skeggs, Nancy Thumim and Helen Wood '"Oh Goodness, I *am* Watching Reality
TV" How methods make class in audience research', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*
11 no. 1 (2008): 5-24; K. Sender (2008) 'Audiences as Citizens: Management and Meaning
in the Reception of Makeover TV Shows', paper presented to ICA preconference on the
Global Public Sphere, Montreal, May 2008.

[3] Annette Hill (2004) *Reality TV* (London: Routledge, 2004) and *Restyling Factual TV*
(London: Routledge, 2007).

[4] John Thompson *The Media and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) and Pierre Bourdieu
Language and Symbolic Power (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

[5] Todd Gitlin *Media Unlimited* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 5.

[6] Couldry, *Media Rituals*.

[7] Nick Couldry *The Place of Media Power* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[8] Couldry, *Media Rituals*.chapter 3.

[9] Emile Durkheim *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press
1995 [o.p. 1915]).

[10] I have discussed this in much more detail elsewhere: Couldry, *The Place of Media Power*,
14-16, *Media Rituals* , 6-9.

[11] Couldry *The Place of Media Power,* 42-43; Jane Feuer 'The Concept of Live Television' in
E. A. Kaplan (ed) *Regarding Television*, (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1985), 12-
22, at p. 12.

[12] See Nick Couldry 'Liveness, "Reality" and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone' , *The Communication Revie*w 7, no. 4 (2004): 353-362   for early speculation about the role of mobile phones here, before social networking sites became so dominant.

[13] M. Castells,M. Fernandez-Ardevol, J. Qiu and A. Sey *Mobile Communication and Society : a global perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 1.

[14] Susan Pharr and Robert Putnam (eds) *Disaffected Democracies* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000)..

[15] For the UK, see The Hansard Society *Fifth Audit of Political Engagement* . www.hansardsociety.org.uk (2008).

[16] Joseph Turow *Niche Envy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

[17] Richard Kilborn, R. '"How Real Can you Get?" Recent Developments in "Reality" Television', *European Journal of Communication* 9, no. (4) (1994): 421-440.

[18] Couldry *The Place of Media Power,* 46-48

[19] See Ted Magder 'The End of TV 101: Reality Programs, Formats and the New Business of Television' in S. Murray and L. Ouellette (eds) *Reality TV* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 137-156, and Chad Raphael 'The Political Economic Origins of Reali-TV' in S. Murray and L. Ouellette (eds) *Reality TV* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 119-136 for helpful accounts of these economic pressures.

[20] For an interesting and different reading, see Colin Sparks 'Reality TV: The big Brother phenomenon', *International Socialism* 114 (2007), www.isj.org.uk.
 .

[21] John Corner 'Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions', *Television and New Media* 3, no. 3 (2002): 255-269.

[22] Stijn Rijnders, Gerd Rooijakkers and Liesbet van Zoonen 'Community Spirit and Competition in *Idols*: Ritual Meanings of a Television Talent Quest', *European Journal of Communication* 22, no 3 (2007): 275-293.

[23] Axel Honneth 'Organised Self-realization: some paradoxes of individualization', *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no 4 (2004), 463-478, at 478.

[24] Sources: [UK] Office of National Statistics, 2008, *www.ons.gov.uk/*; UNDP Human Development Report 2007/8, www.undp.org.

[25] Angela McRobbie *The Aftermath of Feminism (*London: Sage, 2008); Deborah Philips 'Transformation Scenes: The television series makeover', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. (2 (2007): 213-229

[26] Laurie Ouellette and James Hay *Better Living Through Reality TV* (Malden, NH: Blackwell, 2008).

[27] Pierre Bourdieu *Acts of Resistance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); David Harvey *A Short History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2; Toby Miller *Cultural Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007).

[28] Wendy Brown 'Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory & Event* 7, no. 1 (2003): 1-23.

[29] Richard Sennett *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

[30] Nick Couldry and Jo Littler 'Work, Power and Performance: Analysing the "reality" game of *The Apprentice*', *Cultural Sociology* (forthcoming).

[31] Sennett, *Culture*.

[32] Nick Couldry 'Reality TV, or the Secret theatre of Neoliberalism' *Review of Education Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 30, no. 1 (2008): 3-13.

[33] Ouellette and Hay, *Better Living* .

[34] Mark Andrejevic *Reality TV: the Work of Being Watched* (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

[35] Norbert Elias *The Civilising Process* (Malden: Blackwell, 1994 [o.p. 1939]).

[36] Marwan Kraidy 'Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the Changing Arab Information Order', *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007): 139-156

[37] Nick Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst *Audiences* (London: Sage, 1998).

[38] Esther Hamburger 'Politics and intimacy: the agrarian reform in a Brazilian telenovela', *Television and New Media* 1, no. 2 (2000): 159-179; Kraidy 'Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the Changing Arab Information Order'; Sean Jacobs '*Big Brother*, African is watching', *Media Culture & Society* 29, no. 6 (2007): 851-686.

[39] Ouellette and Hay, *Better Living*, 15.

[40] Ouellette and Hay, *Better Living*, 31.

[41] Ouellette and Hay, *Better Living*, 31.

[42] Nikolas Rose 'Governing "advanced" liberal democracies' in A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds) *Foucault and Political Reason* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 37-64, at p. 58, added emphasis.

[43] Judith Butler *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 1-2.

[44] See the special themed issue of *Global Media and Communications* 3, no. 3, November/December (2007).