

## Assignment 8 #1

Madison William Taylor

As Todd Gitlin clearly demonstrates in *Media Unlimited* all humans must navigate through the overwhelming torrent of the media. Every individual, knowingly or unknowingly, utilizes a method in dealing with the media madness. I have played the role of fan, content critic, and secessionist in my personal journey through the various portrayals of pop culture. Regardless of my position, I have learned a lot about myself as well as the world around me.

In my younger adolescent years and into my early teen years I was a rabid fan. The reason for this was social acceptance. The media taught me which teams, styles, and games were cool. I followed the different trends and enjoyed a variety of material fads throughout those years. I bought or requested that my parents purchase a countless amount of media endorsed memorabilia, which two months later would collect dust in my closet. Slowly athletic gear turned into designer clothing and board games gave way to electronic devices. I shifted into watching more mature television shows and settled into consistently rooting for the same sports teams. No longer was I blown by the wind but began asserting my own opinions.

Then one day I quickly I realized my support, or lack of it, was not important. I did not experience a rush or sense of community from attending sporting events or seeing others do the same things I did. I met a variety of sports, music, and television stars whom, despite their warm salutations, I felt no connection. Then I began reading and hearing stories about the mistakes of my favorite characters in their personal life. Suddenly I took a step back and said I am not significant. No longer were my friendships centered on who had the coolest toys or best clothes. I wanted to become my own person and not simply blend in with the status quo. Therefore, after spending fifteen years as a fan I realized I was not one. Although fanship brought me relationships and extrinsic rewards, I knew something intrinsically was missing. I did not like the way fans acted and saw how the media manipulated their emotions based on their biased reports. I was far too loyal to call myself a fan of anything. Therefore, I became a devoted follower of my interests, not allowing public opinion to dictate personal policy.

The next role I played was the furrow browed content critic. I was not ruthless toward people, places, or individuals. Still I watched television, bought clothes, and kept up with pop culture. However, through every cultural encounter I would analyze the real motives behind the secular system. I enjoyed listening to sports talk radio as the analysts broke down games' outcomes. I loved watching modern day muckrakers bring out the real stories or causes of events in cultural society. Through the internet I read numerous blogs or gossip sights making seemingly factual assertions about people and ideas. I valued transparent people not living in an effort for pleasing others yet upholding their own values and beliefs. I developed my own beliefs, morals, and religion apart from my parents. I stripped ideas down to the core and judged for myself their validity. With friends, I would examine both sides of an argument showing how both were wrong. I gained satisfaction out of seemingly knowing truths others could not figure out. Slowly criticism turned into cynicism.

I began seeing all the bad in people and things. I clung to the news hosts and television personalities whose ideologies were built on negativity in all circumstances. Then I began questioning the questioners as their hidden agendas slowly came into light. Also I began envying those media made so happy. How could shallow entertainment make so many people so happy? The question of contentment loomed as I no longer felt pleasure in effectively criticizing the media. Slowly I began to realize I was an uncontent critic. Was I the problem or was the media still jading my view of society? Slowly the same feeling I had as a fan, insignificance, still presented itself. Even if I was right or wrong about my judgments nobody really cared. As long as I was watching, listening, and downloading, the media was happy. I was wasting my time and making myself miserable with my critical beliefs. Therefore, I decided some major changes were in order for me as well as the world around me.

The most effective form of navigation in dealing with the media in my life is secession. I am not a complete secessionist but heavily monitor my exposure. No individual can exempt themselves from the media but contact can be limited. After realizing in my other roles my declarations did not matter then I stopped verbalizing them. The most powerful move an individual can make in society is physical action. I did not want my dislike for the media to control my mood and attitude. Therefore, if a song came on I hated then I switched off the radio. On television when a show appeared I did not agree with then I simply changed the channel. I stopped downloading music and buying compact discs. In short, I exercised some self discipline. I took back my individual autonomy by conceding the media will impact my life. However, by realizing this I choose the media outlets I plug into. Too many people are walking around without understanding the external factors affecting their internal behavior. Others simply have given into following the media manipulation. In my life this knowledge cannot be ignored and I will not concede defeat. Although I cannot overthrow the media's power I can regulate its control over me.

In the end, my experience with the media has been a lifelong process. Through all my personal stages I have learned a lot about myself as well as the world around me. However, the more things change the more they stay the same. Regardless of my opinions or behaviors the media will continue being a ubiquitous force in America today. It's simply up to the individual on how much influence the media has on their life.

## Assignment 8 #2

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The implications of *Media Unlimited* on American society today cannot be ignored. All Americans must wake up and realize the media inundation swirling around society. The media is threatening the very existence of democracy in America. Different sources are subliminally and openly overloading citizens' minds. Individual freedom of thought and action are being hypnotized by hidden agendas. Daily citizens are swarmed with borages of images at a speed beyond normal cognitive cognition. Advertisers are not promoting ideas but center their campaigns on utilizing sensations. These masked marketing manifestos manipulate the senses without providing individuals the opportunity for choice. Sadly, most citizens do not realize the long term repercussions or even really care about the detrimental consequences. Action must be taken on individual as well as organizational levels.

The first group in America that must meet the media head-on is the educational system. Many would argue the media's influence on society cannot be stopped. However, individuals starting at a young age can be taught how to effectively navigate through our computerized culture. Informative programs on acceptable policies in regards to content and time management with media must become staples in the curriculum. Students need to understand mental, physical, and emotional affects of all media resources. Students must realize short hand text typing is destroying vocabularies and writing skills. Additionally students' eye sight is deteriorating because of excessive amounts of time looking at computer screens. Also playing violent video games accompanied with sadistic television shows is harming human conscience.

Society is not turning back from the excessive dependence on technology. Therefore, students must understand responsible, as well efficient, operation of digital innovations. Furthermore, students need enlightening on how the media works. Scores of literature exists detailing behind-the-scenes looks at commercialization. Students need to know what is happening and why it is happening. The reason for this is so they can make autonomous well-informed decisions. One of the truest forms of democracy is freedom of thought. Students who are unaware of societal circumstances are not being allowed sovereignty in their own lives. In the end American schools' goal is producing the most prepared students possible. As a result of this media education must be emphasized throughout all grade levels.

Importantly, the responsibility does not mainly lie on the shoulders of educators but on individuals. Repeatedly citizens are taught the best forms of behavior but do not listen and therefore reap the consequences. An example of this is texting on a cell phone while driving. The amount of accidents and deaths due to this action is staggering. However, individuals continue this literal reckless behavior. Many individuals understand the harms of the media but do not change their behavior. In essence many citizens willfully forfeit their rights or control of their life.

The answer for this problem is simple but not easy. If an individual wants to make a difference, then simply regulate your exposure. Similarly no one can stop the sun from shining but can wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and not go outside during the hottest time of the day. Stop watching television shows, buying products, and visiting websites that you do not approve. In doing this an individual will still be able to see the sun (media). However, by it they will not be forced to see everything else.

The media does not care whether you agree or disagree as long as you watch. So proceed with caution and put your ideas into action. Stop channel surfing and make yourself stay on one channel. Never allow yourself simply sit in front a screen without purpose. The media is saturating the brain. Parents must stop enabling their kids with unlimited access to video games, television, and computers. They must get their students involved in other activities with other kids. I am not saying to completely remove technology from our lives but have healthy limits. This rising epidemic must be stopped with the younger generations behaving properly. Everyone must commit themselves into making the world both digital and socially as healthy as possible.

The most controversial group's involvement in monitoring the media is the government. A democracy is government for the people by the people. In this instance some individuals do not want any mainstream control. Therefore, the government cannot effectively come out and take away civil liberties. In my humble opinion the government is at least making an attempt in regulating the media. The expansion and current management of actions such as NSA electronic surveillance program and total informational awareness program are effective anti-terrorist moves. The government passed the Communications Decency Act regarding the regulation of internet pornography. Moreover they passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act barring individuals from illegally copyrighting material. Although multiple individuals have problems with the government's involvement it's leading some into the ultimate goal of self censorship.

Multiple special interest groups exist on both sides of the issue. The ACLU cannot take a firm stance on either side of the equation due to the vague interpretation of first amendment rights. The conservative minority is too radical on the right to meet in the middle with the liberals on the left. The FCC does fine individuals for inappropriate content regularly. However, as Gitlin so poignantly explains the media is no longer simply a part of our society. Therefore, no organized body can stop commercialization much less meet the needs of every individual.

In the end, American culture is a forest full of many different trees. As Gitlin explains all people must find their path through these tangled woods. Unfortunately some will never see the forest for the trees. As a result of *Media Unlimited* I have found a new way through the forest and it's by only climbing and swinging from my chosen trees. Although I must be in the forest I will be content as long as the government allows me to selectively swing.