

Salve Regina University

Digital Commons @ Salve Regina

Pell Scholars and Senior Theses

Salve's Dissertations and Theses

5-2010

Screening Culture: Is Western Media to Blame for "Tainting" Traditional Third World Values?

Angelina M. Campbell

Salve Regina University, angelina.campbell@salve.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/pell_theses



Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Campbell, Angelina M., "Screening Culture: Is Western Media to Blame for "Tainting" Traditional Third World Values?" (2010). *Pell Scholars and Senior Theses*. 57.

https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/pell_theses/57

Rights Statement



In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted. URI: <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC-EDU/1.0/>

This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. In addition, no permission is required from the rights-holder(s) for educational uses. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

Although globalization is a process in which regional cultures become integrated through global networking of communication and ideas, many assume that it is the Western world which dominates lesser-developed countries. Driven by a combination of economic, technological, political, biological and socio-cultural factors, globalization creates a transnational circulation of ideas, constantly flowing due to technological advances. The aspect of globalization I will focus on is the spread of regional ideas and information and the impact that this spread has.

While some see globalization as a bad homogenous process of cultures impacting each other negatively or positively, others see the ways in which local cultures their own meaning from the cultural impacts they receive. Within the Western world, some see this as the “responsibility” of the Western world while others believe that countries in the West, such as the United States, negatively impact the traditional culture of Third World countries.

Without narrowing a focus to a particular type of media and its impact on a specific group, many people are quick to blame “the media” for all sorts of societal problems. In this paper, I will complicate the typical ways that people discuss the impact of American television in the Third World. I will examine and question the commonly held belief that Western media negatively impacts (and changes) traditional values held in Third World countries.

Specifically, I look at two studies of cultural change in the Third World, first in India and then in Fiji. Both cite television as the source of change. The studies both focus specifically on cultural change in terms of the country’s women; in India, women’s roles within the family and in Fiji, the reformation of “ideal” beauty and its health consequences. These studies are performed by prominent anthropologists who acutely aware and observant

of the respective cultures. As both a scholar of anthropology and media studies I am interested in the role that media plays in shaping the cultural world of both India and Fiji. Coming of age in a media saturated environment, I am keenly aware that media images impact the ways in which people's lives are shaped. I am fascinated by cultural production and media images, more specifically, the way in which people negotiate media images, interpret them, adopt them and how those images give meaning to their behavior. From a strictly anthropological standpoint, it is easy to pinpoint American media as the source of such significant change. An anthropologist would first observe what the change is and then proceed to see what induced it; he or she would not necessarily question the change itself. Studies that draw these conclusions from such observations often fail to recognize other theories from varying schools of thought.

Bringing media studies in the picture to examine these studies provides a richer analysis. Knowledge of media effects theories helps to ask important questions about the studies themselves. The studies that involve the media often jump to conclusions and the lessons learned in media studies can enrich the questioning of the impact of media itself. Without asking questions incited by media studies theories, I would likely not be able to say that an audience is not necessarily passive, or that a specific media image has more than one meaning. Further in this paper, I will be looking at Purnima Mankekar's ethnography examining the role of television in womanhood in post-colonial India. Mankekar analyzes a scene from a popular television show that depicts a partition of events. In the scene, a husband is speaking to his wife about the invasion of "barbarians" and he turns to wife promising that if the "barbarians" come, he will kill her first and then himself. For some viewers this scene affirms India's sense of nationalistic pride, cultural identity and powerful

gender roles. Other viewers may interpret the scene as representative of female subordination. Represented here is vast difference in meaning of one global image. Combining media studies with other schools of thought allows me to ask more complicating questions and aid the study of media impacts on a global audience.

Coming from both an anthropology and media studies background; I want to use media studies theories to contradict the notion that American media is solely to blame for the shift in Third World cultural values. From an anthropological view, I understand that culture is not static and is constantly changing. One cannot pinpoint a single source for inciting such a vast change; it is the nature of culture to shift and morph in conjunction with globalization and modernization. Combining these views, I will provide two studies as examples of shifting values within traditional cultures and question the conclusions that the authors draw from the results.

Decoding American television in Fiji

In terms of media globalization, many interpret this to mean media dominance of the developing world by the West, and specifically the United States. Through assumptions like this, American media is formulated as an infiltration and subsequent “tainting” of the traditional culture and values of the developing country. Cultural anthropologist Anne Becker doesn’t see traditional culture as “ruined,” but she cites a significant change in national cultural values as a result of globalization and the media. Becker headed a Harvard Medical study aimed at assessing the novel, prolonged exposure to television on disordered eating and behaviors among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls. The actual study was comprised of two pools of adolescent girls. Sixty three girls participated in the first part of the study in 1995, one month after cable television was introduced, and another sixty five participated in 1998, three

years after television broadcast had reached the area. With the original study, the pool subjects responded to a 26-point eating attitudes test (EAT-26) concerning bingeing and purging behavior. In 1998 additional survey questions concerning body image, dieting and potential inter-generational issues between family members were added along with 30 minute narrative interviews conducted with Becker herself. In addition to the surveys that were administered to the surveys that were administered to the two groups, three years apart, Becker also engaged in traditional ethnographic research.

Becker's ethnographic method follows the tradition of Bronislaw Malinowski. In 1919, Malinowski laid out the primary methods for conducting ethnographic research in his classic, *Argonauts of the South Pacific*. Years later, Becker deployed the same research strategies. In addition to her surveys, Becker conducted in-depth interviews collecting life histories and narratives. She also relied on participant observation. Malinowski describes this as participating and observing in all aspects of daily life. In this way, Becker differs from other social scientists who simply administer surveys without placing the findings within a larger cultural context. Becker's insight is in to the larger cultural context, in this case Fijian life and traditional views of beauty and body image, has been gained through the long term participant observation. Becker gains a complex of traditional Fijian culture. I rely on Becker's study as it is the first ethnographic account of Fijian culture and its relationship with television.

Just as many cultures (and at one point in time, the Western world) traditional Fijian culture equates beauty with a higher weight and more rotund figure which is a direct reflection of Fijian diet on the island. Starchy, root vegetables and coconut milk (both high in natural sugar and calories) primarily make up the diet with beef and pork being the main

forms of protein. In addition, the traditional values on the island encourage robust appetites to keep up strength and create a vigilance surrounding appetite and weight loss. Individual efforts to reshape the body by dieting or exercise have traditionally been discouraged (Becker 1995). Fuller figured women are seen as healthy and strong, capable of supporting their families. In traditional Fijian culture, a fuller figure is associated with wealth and social status: being more robust means one has plenty to eat and can afford to, literally, put food on the table.



Figure 1: Fijian women proudly display their robust bodies

Despite these strong traditional values surrounding weight, appetite and body image, Becker's study revealed a considerable change.

The study found that the key indicators of disordered eating were significantly more prevalent following exposure to cable television. From this study, the conclusion was that “this naturalistic experiment suggests a negative impact of television upon disordered eating attitudes and behaviors in a media naïve population” (Becker 509). Becker presents traditional Fijian culture as valuing curvier, full figured women over thin women. In fact, thinness was frowned upon and it was seen as embarrassing to be viewed as such. According to Becker, after the introduction of satellite television in 1998 in which Fiji gained access to such American shows as *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Melrose Place*, adolescent girls began to show an interest in the “American” body type and in order to achieve such, turned to purging and self-starvation, which are characteristics of traditionally Western diseases anorexia and bulimia nervosa. According to Becker this can also be credited to the rapid process of globalization. “As Fijian adolescents become increasingly aware that their traditional culture does not equip them to negotiate the novel conflicts posed by rapid social change, television provides the illusion of a template for the successful engagement in a Western lifestyle” (512). In this instance, rapid social change is characterized by the short period of time in which a greater number of Fijians were exposed to American television images. In the early 1980’s, the existence of a single television set would reach a small number of people, perhaps one television set per village. By Becker’s study in 1998, television had become more ubiquitous and a greater number of Fijians were consuming media images. By the introduction of more television set, the exposure of Fijians to media images increased as well.

For Becker, television is not only providing a tool for awareness of other cultures, but is providing the means to achieve it; television is acting as a vehicle for undertaking new

behaviors and lifestyles. Fijian girls see what the Western world is through television, and then in order to achieve the Western lifestyle, begin to engage in behavior or practice what they might observe on television.

Similarly to Becker, Meenaskshi G. Durham studies the crafting of one's self identity (in this case, as it relates to sexuality and adolescent girls). In Durham's, *Constructing the "New Ethnicities": Media, Sexuality, and Diaspora Identity in the Lives of South Asian Immigrant Girls*, she stresses the idea that sexual identity (in groups of immigrant diaspora girls) is crafted through the process of cultural hybridization that is a direct result of globalization. For the girls who Durham interviews in South Asia, the media's representation of sexuality is what connects them all. According to Durham, "sexuality is conceptualized as a locus of cultural hybridization; media representations of sexuality often mark the global/local nexus for diaspora people" (140). In other words, images of sexuality often capture the global and local for people who have been displaced, in the sense that it offers something familiar (from their traditional culture) and something new (from their "new culture"). Southeast Asian immigrant girls occupy multiple social positions in that they have their traditional culture that they invoke (often played out in family life) but at the same time, are exposed to new culture. This is where the global/local nexus occurs. Not only do the girls have traditional family culture, but they find themselves in a new place. On top of this they are living in a larger globalized world.

Durham cites Stuart Hall's idea that identity must be conceptualized as the relationship between the individual and the larger culture. Hall recognizes both shared notions of culture and contest norms; he allows for culture to be shared (people have similar ideas, views and meanings) and contested (differing views and meanings).

More specifically, in the relationship between place and sexuality, sexuality can be traditional (ideas and practices taken from traditional culture) and innovative (new practices forming that come from global images). The girls occupy both a hybrid place in terms of geographic location (past and present homelands) and a hybrid place in terms of sexual identity (a combination of old and new practices).

But how does this change when it's the construction of a diaspora identity? Further, Durham questions, "In particular, to what extent do diaspora adolescents' negotiations of nation and culture intersect with the struggles around gender and sexuality that are a hallmark of coming of age in America?" (141). Wanting to answer this question, she seeks an understanding of the role of "media culture" in the process of coming of age and "ethnocultural" identification in diaspora girls. In order to do so, the author must explore recent theories of globalization that focus on the link between local practices and behaviors and the larger global ones. After citing current theories on adolescence being socially constructed and in flux, Durham boldly states, "In fact, it is virtually uncontested that adolescents rely heavily on the mass media for learning about sex" (143). Durham clearly sees a direct correlation between what girls see on television and how they act. What Durham does that Becker does not is account for the hybrid nature of globalization. While Becker places blame on American television, Durham is able to see the "meshing" of two different cultures having an equally profound effect.

Anne Becker's studies clearly evoke an anti-Western attitude. She shows the traditional culture as valuing thicker women and then with her research, points to the girls' exposure to American television as the reason for the shift in values and the subsequent eating disordered behaviors that emerge. While she doesn't explicitly state that it has a

negative impact on culture, the behaviors associated with such eating disorders are destructive in their very nature so by Becker saying American television has “changed” Fijian values and culture, it is assumed that the change is a bad one. Becker is relying on many assumptions when she merely pinpoints American television as the creator of eating disorders on Fiji.

While I don’t doubt the depth and authenticity of her research, Becker’s study seems to have a flaw. Her initial survey in 1995, three months after the introduction of television, seems too simplistic in comparison to the work she did in 1998. In 1995, she administered an EAT-26 that was based on bingeing and purging behaviors. It was three years later that she sat down with the girls, asking probing questions about their beliefs and behaviors and discovered a more significant pattern of eating disordered behavior and sentiment. My initial question was to ask whether or not these beliefs and behaviors were preexisting and if her initial EAT-26 simply did not cover it. Maybe in 1995 the girls were participating in such behaviors but did not know what to call it, or what to attribute it to.

Another potential problem embedded in Becker’s study is the way in which she conceptualizes the girls’ relationships to television. The problem with this is that she does not account for the ways in which the girls interpret television messages and through that interpretation process, how they might adopt and/or resist the dominant messages on television.

Initially, Becker characterizes adolescent Fijian girls as a “media naïve population.” Here she is relying on the idea that these girls have little exposure to televised media and are overwhelmed with the messages they received once exposure was initiated. In media effects theories, the direct effects model is when the media shoots its potent effects into

unsuspecting victims. This theory implies that mass media has a direct, immediate and strong effect on its audience (Campbell 475). This model is problematic in that it assumes that there is one intended message and it is directly received and wholly accepted by the receivers; everyone takes the same message and interprets it the same way.

In this case, Becker is assuming that these girls are unsuspecting media viewers being bombarded with images of thin American women that they have never experienced before. Because they are so “unsuspecting” the images are all the more powerful and according to Becker, the girls act on what they see. This is problematic because Becker fails to look at other sources of media and the possible impacts those sources might have. Here she is assuming that these girls have had absolutely no exposure to media in any form. As a popular vacation destination, it is incorrect to assume that they have never seen thin Western women. In addition, American films and magazines are available on the island and have been for a considerable period of time (roughly, the early 1970’s). Could the girls not have got their ideas from these outlets? Could they have been blind to the images from these sources? Arguing that although these forms of media exist, the newness and prevalence of television is what has the significant impact (512). Coincidentally, not much information is provided in her study on the girls’ exposure to television. In fact, “Variability in daily television viewing was not substantial enough in the 1995 and 1998 samples to allow for meaningful analysis of the association between frequency of viewing and disordered eating behaviors” (511). Instead, Becker and her team examined the association between television ownership and disordered eating behavior. So how would this be able to accurately account for the young girls whose families own a television set but are not permitted to watch it? Does the simple fact of it being a background medium in their household mean they watch it and take in the

images they see? In characterizing them as “media naïve,” Becker is not only making an assumption about how much media the girls are exposed to but what they are exposed to as well. This is her reliance on the media effects theory, the cultivation effect, which suggests that heavy viewing of television leads individuals to perceive the world in ways that are consistent with how the world is portrayed on television. It seems as if Becker is saying that the girls on Fiji see a certain “world” as portrayed in American television shows and perceive that world to be their own or something to be desired. This, though, does not account for their eating disordered behavior being used to achieve this Western portrayed world or how the girls make sense of these television worlds and what meaning the girls derive from them.

Building off of this, Becker makes assumptions about how the girls, once exposed to the media, interpret and act upon the messages they see. She is relying on the notions that the girls are a) acutely aware of the inability of their traditional culture to provide them with the tools they need to achieve the Western lifestyle they so desire and b) interpreting the images they see exactly the same way. How else could she account for the sudden and widespread increase in previously non-existent eating disordered behavior and thought? Becker fails to address the idea the ways in which the girls interpret the media’s images, beyond the girls’ adoption of Western practices. The basis and reasoning of the complication here lies in the encoding and decoding processes of media. Encoding is the way an image gains meaning (through representation) and decoding is the way in which each individual derives that meaning (reliant upon the individual). Stuart Hall’s theory accounts for the argument that each individual interprets the meaning of an image differently. Hall argues that representation is the way in which meaning is given to the thing depicted, so the notion that there is a “true” meaning of an image or a distorted representation is false. Hall even

discusses the existence of “shared meaning.” Hall believes in the idea that, although we all may take a different meaning from a single image, it is possible that people from a group or the same culture, can derive the same meaning from an image (through traditionally shared and held beliefs). Becker still fails to address even the idea that images can have different meanings. Here, it is important to note that Becker does not blatantly attempt to craft a specific meaning or intention of the media and its images. Instead she discusses the girls’ acting upon the images they see, therefore she assumes that they when they see images of thin American women on television, they automatically desire that specific body type. In contrast, we all see the same images but we craft meaning on our own. The meaning I take from the image of the stick arms and jutting ribs of the main character on *Melrose Place* is different than the meaning a 16-year-old on Fiji may. By attributing the girls’ adoption of disordered eating behaviors to their viewing of images of thin Western women on television, Becker is eliminating the idea that each girl interprets those images differently.

Perhaps a better explanation for the association between Fijian girls’ television consumption and subsequent disordered eating behaviors is the social learning theory (Campbell 480). As one of the most prominent theories that suggest a link between mass media and behavior, the social learning theory is a four step process: attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation. The first step, attention, calls for the subject being an attentive witness to the respective media. In this case, it would mean Fijian girls must (consistently) witness thin women on American television shows. The second step, retention, calls for the memory of the image to be stored and later retrieved. This would mean that Fijian girls would have to take the image of a thin American woman and “burn” it into her brain and later recall it. The third step, motor reproduction, is physical imitation of the

behavior. In this case, thin is not really a behavior that the girls can reproduce, but the attitude, language and behavior of American television subjects is something that can be reproduced by Fijian girls. Lastly, there must be motivation. The girls must see a reward or positive reinforcement to encourage the modeling of the behavior. This could be evident in a thin woman having a relationship with a man versus a full-figured woman constantly being pictured as alone. Here the association of social status is associated with thinness versus fat.

Of course, this theory fails completely if the girls have no meaning or understanding of thinness and what it implies. That meaning (thin = beauty) must be previously established, and this is where Becker's study fails. There is nothing that points out Fijian girls associating the images they see of thin American women on television with value or beauty. What is telling them that thin is beautiful? Simply seeing the images alone is not enough of an explanation. Just because that is something we do in the West, doesn't mean that the adolescents on Fiji do. Do these steps of social learning help the girls establish the meaning of thinness being valued and/or beautiful?

It is important to note that the basis of these arguments is that the images seen on American television have induced the introduction and growth of disordered eating habits that conflicts with traditional Fijian culture and values. Do these images on the television set show a thin American woman giving a step by step instruction of how to purge your dinner in order to be thin? It seems as if Becker is making strong assumptions on how Fijian girls are making sense of these images. She assumes that, due to their naivety and the inability of their traditional culture to help them achieve their goals (in terms of achieving a Western lifestyle) the girls turn to Western eating disorder behaviors like self starvation and bingeing and purging to do so.

While Becker cites the presence of television in Fijian culture as creating a negative change to traditional values, it seems as if Becker is forgetting that notions of culture are constantly shifting. Within anthropology it is a commonly known idea that culture is not static and is constantly changing. This is due directly to globalization and the constant flow of cultural facets from one place to another. Whether or not a specific culture adopts these new pieces of information into its everyday lives, the impact is nonetheless there. Additionally, significant change within a culture can happen within the culture itself, regardless of outside factors. If Becker were to view culture as a bit more flexible and malleable, perhaps she would see the ability of cultural traditions to change and adapt as a result of globalization, which may spur change within the culture itself, as is evident in post-colonial India.

Internal cultural change in India

In considering deeply rooted cultural traditions, those that surround women in India have dictated their lives for centuries. Growing up and living in what the Western world sees as a dominant patriarchal society, value was placed on daughters from a young age. “Good daughters” always deferred to the authority of the patriarchal society and those that transgress their assigned position in the patriarchal family were “severely punished by exile, profound emotional anguish, or suicide” (Mankekar 118). Unmarried women had to be “protected” by their families. Thus we see the role of women as existent only in relation to the family domain. Outside the family dynamic, they have little importance but inside the family (whether an unmarried daughter, or a house wife) they are seen as the soul of the family, worthy of the highest protection. Women that strayed from their expected roles of “good daughter” and then “good mother/wife” in lieu of a career were seen as too ambitious and not keeping her “place” as a daughter or wife. While the most forward of Indian thinkers

praised these women for their courage in fulfilling their ambitions, most consider the women to be self-centered as her desire for personal success outweighs her value of family life. With the introduction of Indian television creating a middle class in modern day India, cultural anthropologist Purnima Mankekar cites significant change in the roles of Indian women, from that of a dependent housewife to a self-sustaining independent being.

It is also important to keep in mind that the change in the roles of women in India is taking place in a post-colonial society. In this respect, post-colonialism deals with the development of cultural identity in societies that have been colonized, in this case (India after being occupied by Britain). It also deals with how a nation creates or reshapes a national identity. Facets of national identity are often reclaimed from before the colonial rule or are maintained from the overwhelming power and impact of the colonizer. Post-colonial theory also examines the way in which the knowledge/mindset of the colonized people has been affected by the colonizer. In terms of cultural change, post-colonialism is a lens in which to view the culture at hand. One cannot look at Indian culture without considering their history of British colonization and how that history has impacted their cultural and national identity.

In a culture marked by strict social distinctions (the caste system), social change in India is conceptualized in terms of middle class conceptions of reform. Mankekar focused on the relationship between television viewers' ownership of commodities, their aspirations and desires to become a middle class and their constitution as modern subject (49). Mainly, she examined how television affected women's aspirations to become middle class and thus, "modern." How have their roles in the family changed as television and consumerism become a bigger and bigger factor in their "new and modern" lives? According to Mankekar, "the expansion of the reach of television and the launching of commercials titillated the

consumerist desires of viewing subjects by introducing them to a range of goods that promised to make their lives more modern, more exciting, more middle class (76).” To most Indians, the formation of a middle class was a signifier of modernity, as a middle class is characteristic of “modern” societies like the United States.

Mankekar observed that “the ownership of a television was an index of middle class-ness and, as middle class lifestyles become equated with modernity, of the modernity of their families” (49). It is, according to Mankekar, “the home (typically a woman’s domain) that became a landscape of their desires for modernity” (49). It is the home that held the indicators of middle class life, including a television and the usage of it. The upper classes can afford a television but may not have the time or family dynamic to watch it, while the lower classes can’t afford a set. Therefore, the ownership of a television set and the family time spent watching it signifies association with a particular socioeconomic group, namely, the middle class. So not only does the television signify a family as being modern, but it provides means (through images of already modern India) to becoming modern.

Because the main desire of the Indian family is modernity, it forces the woman to modernize as well, being the backbone of the family. For Indian women, this means breaking away from their traditional roles as “good daughter”, wife and mother. This means getting a secondary education, getting a job and making their own income. “In order for women to be considered ‘citizens,’ they had to be ‘unyoked’ from aspects of traditional Indian culture that impeded the culture/ nation’s march toward modernity” (57). Mankekar is claiming that in order for women to become modern, they have to become disassociated with the aspects of traditional Indian culture (“good daughter”) that prevents the nation from becoming “modern.” The women must be separated from traditional culture values in order to

“modernize” themselves which, with women being the backbone of Indian culture, will help to bring Indian values up to “modern” standards. The ways in which to do so are introduced to them through television which is a symbol of modernity in itself.

It is important to note that throughout Mankekar’s work, she suggests both the presence and prominence of an anti-Western attitude in Indian culture. Despite the desire for modernity, Indians do not actively associate modernity with the Western world, although some of the makers may be similar (a burgeoning middle class and a growing self-sufficient female population). In terms of women’s roles, “the authenticity and cultural superiority of women lay in her difference from the ‘Westernized’ woman and women of lower castes” (57). Mankekar routinely cites discussions with her female informants in which they divulge a passionate desire for modernity and breaking away from their expected roles coupled with an equally fervent distaste for Western culture. The women see no connection between the two. Mankekar sees their shift in views (and subsequent shift in traditional cultural values) as a result of an emerging middle class and television encouraging women’s rights.

It is here that we see internal cultural forces creating cultural change within. Mankekar discusses how women are representative of the core of Indian culture and with the modernization of Indian culture (through the middle class, brought on by television) the women desire modernity as well. It has turned into a cycle between women and culture, but most importantly, the cycle is devoid of Western influence. From what Mankekar discusses, it’s all internal.

Despite what Mankekar sees in terms of an anti-Western attitude, I still question the impact that the Western world might have. Although the women Mankekar interview

specifically mentions the lack of Western influence, the idea is still present. These women may not consciously know what they are being exposed to and how it is impacting their lives.

Complicating this further, Marshall McLuhan's idea of "the medium is the message" can be directly applied to Mankekar's work. McLuhan's view is that the medium is what has the stronger impact, not necessarily the message. In this view, the experience of watching a film in a theatre is a different experience (and subsequently has a different impact) than watching it at home. McLuhan supports the idea that the content of the subject matter on television is a secondary media impact. It is the nature of technology and the television set itself that have the greater impact on culture. In relation to women and television in India, McLuhan would argue that it is the television set itself that has the bigger impact. It's not just the ownership of, or watching of the television but the patterns of behavior that are associated with it. The introduction of a television set into an Indian family may have changed the dynamic of said family. Meals may no longer be shared around a table, but the television set instead. "Quality" family time may now be spent in front of the television. The television set/technology incite a behavioral change, that the content of a television show cannot. McLuhan would say that it is the impact on the traditional patterns of family behavior (induced by the television set) that have created such a significant role shift within the lives of Indian women.

Mankekar recognizes an anti-Western attitude but still sees a shift towards modernity through the introduction of a middle class. While encouraging women's rights, the separation of women from traditional culture is recognized, but at the same time, the women were representative of the core of Indian culture. Most importantly, there is still a shift in cultural values (women as "modern" beings versus homemakers) despite the lack of Western

influence and the presence of an overwhelming anti-Western attitude. With this in mind, let's look at the following example of another anthropologists' study from Fiji which doesn't take into account the internal cultural shifts and their impacts, but blames the seemingly negative changes on the introduction of American media.

Consequences

The initial conclusions that Becker comes to in her study are exactly the reason why critics of American media have examples to solidify their beliefs of American media "tainting" the cultures of the Third World. Becker's study explicitly states that the introduction of American cable television changed the view of ideal beauty on Fiji, which in turn, induced disordered eating behavior to the island. Anyone who did not fully examine the contents of Becker's study would take her drawn conclusions as correct. Even within Becker's study, she is making assumptions that traditional Fijian culture is static and unchangeable. As media studies critics, we can examine the other factors beyond American television that may have incited the change ie. international magazines and tourism. Even without television, might this change have come at a different time? We also understand the population of Fijian adolescent girls is made up of individuals with free thinking minds, not a group who thinks in unison.

In turn, Mankekar's study shows us that changes in tradition and values can come about within the culture itself. India's growing consumer culture has induced the emergence of a middle class – one in which women are breaking from the role from traditional homemaker. In this study, we see a strong anti-Western attitude, so much so that there is a strong attempt to completely shut it out from the lives of all Indians. Despite the lack of

Western influence, the strong values held traditionally by Indians (women as homemakers) change considerably in Mankekar's ethnography.

As anthropologists, we know that culture is not static and ever-changing. As media studies scholars, we know that people are affected differently by media. These studies and our examination of them prove that pinpointing a (negative) change in cultural values as a result of American media is poorly supported. Media studies allow us to ask questions of studies like these that are not being asked by the anthropologists themselves. By combining the lessons learned in media studies to anthropological studies in studies like these, I can examine the impacts of such media on global audience much more thoroughly.

While media studies offers content analysis and audience reception, anthropology puts those (content analysis and audience reception) into a larger political, economic and social context. It is then that the true impact of the content on an audience can be examined. Within anthropology, the impact of media is a negotiation process in which the audience is not full of members that are passive, but members that are active agents of social change. Without anthropology, the impact of media would not be thoroughly examined and studied.

Coming of age in a media rich environment, I find myself constantly aware of how media impacts global citizens' lives. Through travels in sub-Saharan Africa I was able to witness firsthand how young Kenyan children act out scenes from American movies. The cultural production and consumption and subsequent negotiation of the media's images is fascinating to me. Looking at studies such as Becker's and Mankekar's it is simple to see where people craft conceptions of the impact of media on the global population. By looking at studies like these from a media studies and anthropological point of view, the typical ways that people interpret the impact of American media in the Third World is severely

complicated. Perhaps this will allow us to remain open minded in assessing the impacts of media across the globe.

Works Cited

- Becker, Anne E., Rebecca A. Burwell, David B. Herzog, Paul Hamburg, and Stephen E. Gilman. "Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Following Prolonged Exposure to Television Among Ethnic Fijian Adolescent Girls." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 180.1 (2002): 509-14.
- Campbell, Richard, Christopher R. Martin, and Bettina G. Fabos. *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.
- Chang, Yu-li. "Glocalization of Television: Programming Strategies of Global Television Broadcasters in Asia." *Asian Journal of Communication* 13.1 (2003): 1-28.
- Curran, James, and Myung-Jin Park, eds. *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Durham, Meenakshi G. "Constructing the "New Ethnicities": Media, Sexuality, and Diaspora Identity in the Lives of South Asian Immigrant Girls." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21.2 (2004): 140-61.
- Mankekar, Purnima. *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India*. New York: Duke UP, 1999.
- Shahaf, Sharon. "Welcome to the Sitcom School: A Globalized Outlook for the Study of Television History." *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4.1 (2007): 103-22.