Intersections between Feminist Media Studies and Political Economy of Media & Communications
Mutual concerns of the critical study of political economy of the media and feminist media studies call for collaboration
The critical study of political economy of the media
Murdock/Golding: The study of communications as *commodities* produced by *industries*.

Smythe: The *structure* and *policies* of communication *institutions* in their *actual social settings*. 
Growth of the study of political economy of media & communication

*Political Economy of Communications* online journal
iamcr.org/pol-econ-journ
Critique of the political economy of media

• studying media as industries that manufacture and market commodities

• critically analyzing the political, economic, and cultural implications of that process
Political economy’s problems
(Smythe)

DECISIONS about...

• WHAT is produced? (production)

• FOR WHOM? (allocation/distribution)

• HOW? (capital, ownership/control, organization)
Commodities/Commodification

Consumption
Consumerism
Consumer culture
Consumer Ideology

Capitalism means freedom of information...

capitalism gives happiness...

Enjoy Capitalism

capitalism protects the environment
Corporate/Industrial Structure & Policies

• Concentration/integration

• Diversification/synergy/convergence

• Globalization
MAP OF MEDIA CONCENTRATION IN INDONESIA

By MERLYNA LIM, ©2012
Ownership/control

Who is making decisions/profiting?
Next-Generation Media Moguls Aim High

Murdoch Jr., Packer Jr. set sights on Oz's No. 2 conglomerate
Walt Disney Company
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SUSAN E. ARNOLD
Former President
Global Business Units
Procter & Gamble Company

JOHN S. CHEN
Chairman, Chief Executive
Officer and President
Sybase, Inc.

FRED H. LANGHAMMER
Chairman, Global Affairs
The Estée Lauder Companies.

SHERYL SANDBERG
Chief Operating Officer
Facebook

ORIN C. SMITH
Former President and
Chief Executive Officer
Starbucks Corporation

ROBERT W. MATSCHULLAT
Former Vice Chairman and
Chief Financial Officer
The Seagram Company
STEVE JOBS (Apple Inc.)

Jobs Trust: Disney stock Holdings:

7.3%
Robert A. Iger

Annual salary: $34.3 million (2013)
Disney stock: 1 million shares
+ stock acquirable within 60 days: 2.5 million shares
+ miscellaneous bonuses/compensation/payouts
... And the Big Payoff for Some Is in Stock Holdings

Some executives also built their fortunes through holdings in their companies’ stock. As the markets rebounded from the 2008 financial crisis, the rising value of executives’ shares and stock options added, in some cases, billions of dollars to their net worth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</th>
<th>STOCK AND OPTIONS HELD, IN BILLIONS*</th>
<th>CHANGE IN VALUE*, IN BILLIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Hathaway</td>
<td>Warren E. Buffett</td>
<td>$46.17</td>
<td>+$6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oracle</td>
<td>Lawrence J. Ellison</td>
<td>26.32</td>
<td>+ 3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amazon.com</td>
<td>Jeffrey P. Bezos</td>
<td>15.86</td>
<td>+ 3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microsft</td>
<td>Steven A. Ballmer</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>– 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnival</td>
<td>Micky Arison</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>+ 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Eric E. Schmidt</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>– 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISH Network</td>
<td>Charles W. Ergen</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>+ 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Corporation</td>
<td>Rupert Murdoch</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>+ 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Michael S. Dell</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>+ 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hess</td>
<td>John B. Hess</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>+ 0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on end of each company’s fiscal year compared with the previous fiscal year.

Pay Isn’t Always Aligned With Performance ...

Companies have been under pressure to align chief executives’ pay to stock performance. But across disparate industries, many top executives were still paid about the same as their peers, regardless of how their companies’ shares performed for investors. As a group, media companies outperformed other industries.

STOCK TOTAL RETURN

Five highest-paid C.E.O.’s in:
- Oil and gas
- Media
- Financial
- Health care

+40%
+30
+20
+10
0
-10
-20
-30
-40

James J. Mulva
ConocoPhillips

Brian L. Roberts
Comcast

Robert A. Iger
Disney

Leslie Moonves
CBS

Philippe P. Dauman
Viacom

John R. Strangfeld Jr.
Prudential Financial

Ray R. Irani
Occidental Petroleum

Rex W. Tillerson
Exxon Mobil

Michael D. White
DirectTV

David B. Snow Jr.
Medco Health Solutions

Miles D. White
Abbott Laboratories

Jamie Dimon
JPMorgan Chase
Media labor/workers
Labor = commodity

Labor markets

Trade unions
Implications for:

Media content

Media audiences

Democracy

Social justice

Equality
Main point: Critical feminist media studies and critical political economy of media should be more connected.


Intersections of critical political economy & feminism

• motivations and goals

• (many) core assumptions and foundations

• analysis and critique of capitalism and patriarchy

Should be seen in collaboration rather than in conflict
Many presenters (and participants!) agree and have already mentioned many of our mutual concerns...

- Business models/privatization
- Media corporations
- Ownership: owners/board members
- Concentration/integration/globalization
- Commercialization/commodification
- Consumption/consumer culture
- Citizens/consumers as data sources
- Class/concentration of wealth/poverty
- Digital divide
- Labor/workers/trade unions
- State relations: alliances/policies/lobbying
• Alternative/community/independent media
• Media/Internet access
• Media/communication rights
• Media activism
• Media democracy

• Resistance
• (True!) Empowerment
• Change
• Collective action
New approaches to studying media industries
media economics
media industry studies
creative industries
cultural economy
production studies
represent mostly uncritical positions, as well as overlooking feminist arguments about the media
Robert A. Iger
President and
Chief Executive Officer

John E. Pepper, Jr.
Charman of the Board
Disney’s representation of women

Walt Disney:

“I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I have ever known.”
Pretty girls don’t even need to be alive to get some hot princely action.

As a woman, your political worth is reduced to your marriageability.

If you’re beautiful enough, you may be able to escape your terrible living conditions by getting a wealthy man to fall for you.

Appearances don’t matter; what counts is what’s in your heart. Unless you’re the girl.

At first it may seem terrible, being so beautiful that other women get jealous enough to try and kill you. But don’t worry, once your beauty attracts a man, he’ll protect you.

It’s okay to abandon your family, drastically change your body, and give up your strongest talent in order to get your man. Once he sees your pretty face, only a witch’s spell could draw his eyes away from you.
Women and media industries
Why?
The good news
The bad news: the numbers
WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN TV?

Employment statistics of behind-the-scenes and on-screen women in the 2010-2011 prime-time television season

Women comprised only 25 percent of all creators, directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and directors of photography on broadcast T.V. programs during the 2010-2011 prime-time season.

Women Writers for Prime-Time T.V. 2005 - 2011

ONLY 15%
Of all writers for the 2010-11 prime-time season were women. This is a decline of 14 percent from the 2009-2010 season.

What would Liz Lemon have to say about the lack of women writers?

51%
Of the world’s population are women.

Programs with at least one woman creator or writer featured more female characters than programs with no women creators or writers.

ONLY 41%
Of all on-screen characters were women.

NOT very accurate representation, is it?
The bad news: lack of power
The bad news: lower salaries
Explanations?

FCC Loosens Cross-Media Ownership Ban
Newspapers, local TV stations can share parent company

Dec 18, 2007 4:05 PM CST
Issues/Nagging Questions
“Fox News Commentator Babes”
About GAMAG...
EQUALITY...
How much further away?