

### Media and the Life Stages

In the process of putting together this issue that analyzes media use over a life span, the editor thought about her own media habits at various stages of her life and began speculating about her future media needs, uses, and gratifications. She also reflected on how her own experiences with the mass media compare with those of her friends and family who are either older or younger. Hence, in deciding the articles that constitute this issue, she felt that the overarching concern should be to answer this question: What issues need to be considered when studying media use over a person's lifetime?

This issue of *Plaridel* tracks how audiences' mass media preferences and use change in the transitions through life stages, i.e., from the youngest ages to the teen years, into young adulthood, on to the parenting stage, and then into retirement and the senior years. From infancy until the pre-school years, the responsibility for the care and development of a child lies entirely with adults. During the teen years, the youthful individual starts looking to peers for company and identity. Leaving adolescence, the young adult begins to develop mastery towards achieving her/his dreams and ambitions. For some, adulthood signals entry into the parenting stage. Further onward lies the stage of old age which signals the beginning of the end of life.

The idea for an issue on media and life stages stems from the limited material – local and foreign – that puts in a single volume articles on how people use and make sense of the mass media as they grow up and as their media choices grow. Life stage changes dramatically impact on how they behave as media consumers, that is, how they make their media choices, how they assess the media that they choose, and how their contents teach them about their social world, especially the realities and conflicts in it.

Taking off from market research which has made a science of consumer segmentation, it would do well for them in media/communication research to look at media use by life stage in order to

better understand how the media and their contents impact on audiences. Far from being passive receivers of media messages and images, audiences at each life stage are capable of making active choices and expressing insights into their own media use.

The articles in this *Plaridel* issue are amalgams of multidisciplinary interests and concerns. They reveal ways in which the mass media and communications technologies are part of people's everyday lives, i.e., where they are sources of information and proper behavior, where they are useful for getting together with peers, where they facilitate identification with groups and their values, and where they provide the means for developing individual identity.

The first two articles in this issue present the dynamics involved when children watch cartoons and food advertisements on television. In the Philippines' commercial media environment, animated programs and food advertisements have become such staples on television. Popular foreign cartoons are Tagalized so that children from across economic classes can understand them. Food advertisements dot television's landscape where distinctions between nutritious and delicious are vague.

Ma. Margarita A. Acosta's concern is how pre-school children's play behaviors are influenced by their favorite television cartoon characters and how their parents' vigilance tempers their children's violent speech and actions. Operationalizing Gerbner's concept of a cultivation differential, Alexandra More M. San Joaquin reports on TV's influence on a slightly older age group, i.e., how children aged 8 to 13 with varying levels of TV exposure differ in their beliefs and attitudes regarding food and nutrition.

The teenager, particularly adolescent angst, is the focus of two articles. Alfonso B. Deza and Dong Hwan Kwon collaborate on an article dissecting the Korean expatriate adolescent's struggles adjusting to the disparate cultures of the home or passport country, the host or country of current residence, and western orientation of the international school. Centering on the roles that communication and the media play in forming a sense of cultural identity among Korean missionary children, Deza and Kwon conclude, rather colorfully, that these teenagers live in a virtual yellow submarine.

With media contents implicitly and explicitly sexual in nature, the transition from child to adolescent is becoming increasingly difficult for children and their parents. It is not surprising for teenagers to turn to the mass media for information on sexuality. Elma P. Laguna and Antonio Jesus P. Pagaduan II look into how the Filipino adolescents' consumption of x-rated movies/videos and sexually explicit print materials affect their risky sexual behaviors. Using data from the 2002 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS3), Laguna and Pagaduan attempt to identify factors affecting and predicting the Filipino teenager's engagement in premarital sex.

Moving into adulthood, an individual endures more varied anxieties. Maria Rosel S. San Pascual examines the function of job advertisements in the major newspapers for the working age group while Lourdes M. Portus scrutinizes the social and functional uses of mobile phones for selected urban poor married couples. San Pascual's innovative content analysis integrates the concepts of statistical discrimination and rational stereotyping with contemporary labor economics theory to make inferences about the source and audience of print job advertisements. Between husbands and wives living in an urban poor community, Portus finds differential uses and interpretations of the mobile phone that betray subtle influence of traditional and societal beliefs. New communications technologies appear to reinforce the husband's supremacy and power in the household and the wife's primary role or responsibility as nurturer of husband and children.

Who was it who said that age and aging are all in the mind? Don't they wish that they could indeed live long but not grow old? These sentiments resonate in Florinda d.F. Mateo's article on the elderly as audiences of the mass media and users of communications technology. Mateo points out that because people are living longer, enjoying active lives, and good health, the stereotypes defining elderly lifestyles need to be re-assessed.

In this volume, there are two grand dames of media, Eugenia Duran-Apostol and Fidela Magpayo are featured. Apostol, the first U.P. Gawad Plaridel awardee, reminds the readers that a journalist should be a noble watchdog, not a *tuta* or a puppy dog. Radio counselor Fidela Magpayo, or Tiya Dely to millions of listeners, has lived true to her

name – dispensing advice on radio for more than 65 years. Elizabeth L. Enriquez’s interview with Tiya Dely reveals how her long years of radio work have given her insights into how the industry and its audiences have changed over the last six decades.

The three reviews in this issue likewise consider change and adaptation. Alfonso B. Deza reviews two Michael Moore documentaries, *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which are searing in their criticism of certain cultural and political aspects of American society. Kate A. Mirandilla’s review of selected 2004 Philippine election websites assesses how well candidates for national positions exploited the new communications technologies for their campaigns. Jose R. Lacson, Jr.’s focus is Jude William R. Genilo’s book, *Community-Based Communication: A New Approach to Development Communication*, which proposes an alternative strategy for effective change in rural communities.

The various articles in this issue are testimonies to how society and culture are changing and how the communications and media industries are also changing alongside them. If the media are to remain relevant and powerfully connected to their audiences, it is time for them to rethink their content.

  
**Elena E. Pernia**  
Issue Editor