

You Are What You Eat

We take as the title for this chapter the phrase “You Are What You Eat” because never before has this simple idiom held such complex meanings. The dinner table has long been a site of negotiation between children and parents, but the conflicts have moved from whether to eat your vegetables and finish what’s on your plate to a much larger arena. Food studies as a field have become a battleground between epicureans and nutritionists, ranchers and activists, and local growers and big business. Thinking about food and its impact on the individual, the environment, and the future has become a new obsession.

Let’s consider the ways that our discussions about food have moved out of the kitchen. Walk into any bookstore and you’ll not only find glossy-covered gourmet magazines and fully illustrated cookbooks, but you’ll probably also encounter a display adorned with copies of Maria Rodale’s *Organic Manifesto*, Bryant Terry’s *Vegan Soul Kitchen*, Peter Singer’s *The Ethics of What We Eat*, and numerous copies of Michael Pollan’s best-selling books: *Cooked*, *In Defense of Food*, and *Food Rules*. Feel like watching a film? You can select from a variety of movies that celebrate food, relationships, and community: from *Julie and Julia* to *Chocolat*, *Tampopo*, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, *Babette’s Feast*, *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*, and even *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. Perhaps you simply decide to browse online. You’re likely to come across a recipe site aggregating family recipes; a food blogger photo-documenting his every meal; or a food activist providing commentary on the latest incursion against processed foods, GMOs, and fast food chains. Turning on the television will have similar results; shows like *Cake Boss*, *Top Chef*, *Hell’s Kitchen*, and *Kitchen Nightmares* grow every week in popularity, and the Food Network has carved out its own niche on cable TV. Even a stroll down the street will bring food culture in sharp focus, from the rampant spread of Jamba Juices, Starbucks, and McDonald’s into the empty nooks

and crannies of our consumer spaces to the rise of specialty markets like Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods. Food provides more than just sustenance; it increasingly has come to shape and mediate our understanding of ourselves and our culture.

Perhaps because of the omnipresence of food culture, we are also witnessing a growing critique of it. To see this, we need look no further than our local movie theater and the release of several documentary films over the past ten years that have challenged us to reevaluate the role of food in our lives. While *Fast Food Nation* and *Super Size Me* began the trend in the mid-2000s by targeting the fast food industry and its deleterious effects on American health, these two ground-breaking films were followed by a series of similarly food-focused documentaries. One standout example is the 2009 film *Food, Inc.*, which shifted attention from individual eating habits to corporate farming and industrialized agriculture. The theatrical release poster, shown in Figure 10.1, succinctly epitomizes this critique.

What we notice first in the poster is the stereotypical scene of bucolic America, a cow standing in a green field under a vivid blue sky, with an iconic red barn in the background. However, one detail disrupts this idealistic vision: the large barcode branded broadly across the cow’s side. This film’s goal, the poster argues, is to challenge our romantic notions of food culture, to expose the inner workings of this big business industry, and to problematize our understanding of our relationship to our food.

In the readings that follow, you’ll be introduced to the range of commentaries on food culture today, from the food bloggers who memorialize each meal with a highly pixelated photo and pithy commentary to activists who draw a link between American food obsession, a sedentary lifestyle, and the rise of obesity among American children. We’ll look carefully at the government nutritional information graphic, and also consider ways that people define themselves according to their eating choices: as locavore, globavore, vegetarian, and vegan. Finally, we’ll delve into the controversy surrounding genetically engineered crops, looking at

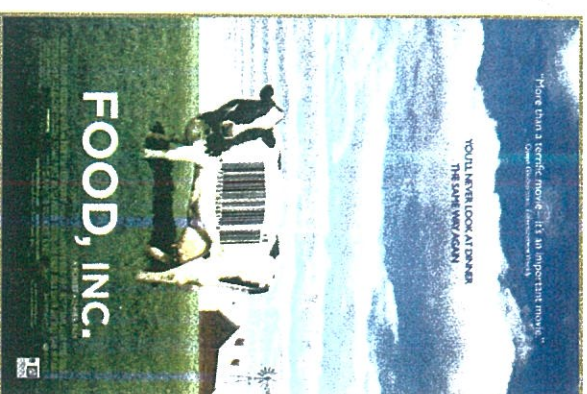


FIGURE 10.1 This poster for *Food, Inc.* challenges the romantic ideal of the food industry.

their viability as a solution to world hunger. As you read through these selections, we invite you to contemplate your own eating habits and ask yourself: How are food and culture linked? How does what we eat, how we eat, where we eat, and who we eat with shape our ideas of ourselves and our community?

KNOWLEDGE & WRITE

- ☐ Notice the subtitle to *Food, Inc.* at the top of Figure 10.1. How does it complement and complicate the argument of the poster's central image and main title?
- ☐ Considering that this film exposes some of the more controversial practices in the food industry, why do you think the poster designers chose this image rather than one that would have more shock value?
- ☐ **Write.** Compose a rhetorical analysis of this image that uses a strong thesis statement and specific references to the visual composition of the poster. Argue about the significance of this image in relation to the film's title and main idea.

In this article, The New York Times journalist Kate Murphy describes the culture of "food blogging," the practice of keeping an online food diary, complete with photos. This article originally appeared in The New York Times on April 7, 2010.

First Camera, Then Fork

Kate Murphy

JAVIER GARCIA, a 28-year-old neuroscientist at the University of California,

Irving, was in the campus pub recently having a grilled cheese sandwich. But before he took a bite, he snapped a digital picture of it, cheese artistically oozing between toasted white bread, just as he has photographed everything

he has eaten in the last five years.

Every other week he posts the photos on his Web site, ejavi.com/javiDiet, providing a strangely intimate and unedited view of his life and attracting fans from as far away as Ecuador. The nearly 9,000 photos leave nothing out, not even snacks as small

as a single square of shredded wheat.

When he lost his iPhone while visiting New York last month, he pleaded with exasperated friends to take pictures of his food and to e-mail them to him, lest his record be incomplete. "It was a nightmare," Mr. Garcia said, particularly because the

unfocused pictures "were not the quality I'm used to."

In 1825, the French philosopher and gourmand Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are." Today, people are showing the world what they eat by photographing every meal, revealing themselves perhaps more vividly than they might by merely reciting the names of appetizers and entrees.

Keeping a photographic food diary is a growing phenomenon with everything from truffle-stuffed suckling pig to humble bowls of Cheerios being captured and offered for public consumption. Indeed, the number of pictures tagged "food" on the photo-sharing Web site Flickr has increased tenfold to more than six million in the last two years, according to Tara Kirchner, the company's marketing director. One of the largest and most active Flickr groups, called "I Ate This," includes more than 300,000 photos that have been contributed by more than 19,000 members.

There would be more, but members are limited to 50 photos a month. The same phenomena can be found on other sites like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Foodspotting, Shutterfly, Chowhound and FoodCandy.

Nora Sherman, 28, the deputy director of the City University of New York's Building Performance Lab, which promotes sustainable construction, finds that the pictures she takes of her food are her most popular posts on Facebook, Twitter and on her blog, Thought for Food (noralab.com). The immediate and enthusiastic commentary on, say, an arugula and feta salad or a plate of fried okra have given her a sense of connection and community since moving to Manhattan from New Orleans in 2006.

"People I have never met follow my blog and know me through the food I eat," Ms. Sherman said. She was even introduced to her boyfriend through someone she came to know through his comments on the food pictures on her blog, and who thought the two might be a match.

She said she takes pictures of at least half the meals she eats, omitting, for example, multicourse meals when it might "interrupt the flow." But she has noticed lately that it's becoming harder to suppress the urge to shoot. "I get this 'must take picture' feeling before I eat, and what's worse is that I hate bad pictures so I have to capture it in just the right light and at just the right angle," Ms. Sherman said. She uses a Canon PowerShot S90 and uploads pictures

to her Web site daily, sometimes several times a day, which takes at most 30 minutes a day. The camera, she said, is small but works well in low light. She doesn't style her photos, saying, "I like to take shots that no pro would ever take—holding an oyster in my hand about to slump it down, or a bagel with a bite out of it."

Her impulse to photograph her food and do so artistically has made her a more adventurous eater. "It's driven me to seek out interesting, photogenic foods," she said. She is now more likely to eat foods she would have once avoided, like beef tendon, heart and tripe at an Asian shopping mall in Flushing, Queens. And, she said, photographing the food has kept her honest when she has started diets: "When I decided to have salad for dinner during a juice fast, I snapped and posted that."

Photos are also a means of self-motivation for Mr. Garcia, who began photographing his food after he lost 80 pounds. "It's definitely part of my neuroticism about trying to keep thin," he said. "It keeps you accountable because you don't want to have to see that you ate an entire jar of peanut butter."

And, ever the scientist, he hopes to one day use the photographs to calculate how much money he spends to

consume a calorie versus how much he spends in gym memberships and sports gear to burn a calorie. "People I have dated haven't been that into it," he said of his food photojournaling. "But it's never been a deal breaker."

Pamela Hollinger, 36, an independent radio programmer and announcer in Stephen-ville, Tex., said her husband of eight years is resigned to her taking pictures of her food. "When we were dating, it was like, 'What are you doing?'" she said. "Now it's a quirk he's come to accept."

Her habit began in 1997 as a way to show her mother what she was on vacations, but she now photographs almost everything she eats, leaving out only insignificant snacks and anything unappealing looking, like a bowl of oatmeal. "I think getting an iPhone had a lot to do with it," Ms. Hollinger said. "It's so easy to just take a quick picture of what I'm eating and no one really notices." Or maybe they think she is just texting at the table.

She e-mails the pictures directly from her phone to a few friends and posts some of them on her Facebook page as well as on Chowhound. "I like to show off what I'm eating or something I've made that I'm proud of, like a pork rib-eye roast that became pulled pork

sandwiches and then pork tacos and then pork salad," she said. "I get more comments on my food pictures than anything else. Within seconds, I get, 'Oh, I'm jealous,' or 'Hey, can I come over?'"

That some people are keeping photographic food diaries and posting them online does not surprise psychotherapists. "In the unconscious mind, food equals love because food is our deepest and earliest connection with our caretaker," said Kathryn Zebe, a psychiatrist who specializes in eating disorders and food fixations at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland. "So it makes sense that people would want to capture, collect, catalog, brag about and show off their food."

Photographing meals becomes pathological, however, if it interferes with careers or relationships or there's anxiety associated with not doing it. "I'd have to ask if they would feel O.K. if they didn't do it," said Tracy Foose, a psychiatrist at the University of California, San Francisco, who treats patients with obsessive-compulsive disorders. "Could they resist the urge to do it?" Joe Catterton, the general manager of Alinea restaurant in Chicago, said that, interestingly, people can't. "One guy arrived with the wrong lens or something on his camera and

left his wife sitting at the table for an hour while he went home to get it," he said.

Such compulsion is apparent even at restaurants where the plating is less elaborate. "They've got to take a picture of their pancakes and send it to their friend," said John Vasiliopoulos, the manager at the Cup & Saucer, a diner on the Lower East Side. "I don't get it because their food gets cold, but I take it as a compliment."

Evidently aware of the trend, manufacturers like Nikon, Olympus, Sony and Fuji have within the last two years released cameras with special "food" or "cuisine" modes, costing around \$200 to \$600. "These functions enable close-up shots with enhanced sharpness and saturation so the food colors and textures really pop," said Terry Sullivan, associate editor of digital imaging technologies at Consumer Reports.

This bemuses Thacker Shaw, the food critic for The Denver Post, who made do with a basic point-and-shoot digital camera to take pictures of everything he ate in 2004; he published the photos in his book, "Everything I Ate: A Year in the Life of My Mouth."

"It used to turn heads if you took a picture of your food, and I even got in trouble at a few restaurants," he said.

"Now it's ubiquitous and just shows that we are in a spasmodic food era—we couldn't get more obsessive."

Nonetheless, Mr. Shaw said the year he spent photographing his food (and a year was enough for him) resulted in an achingly honest account of his life that revealed far more than the fact that he ate too few leafy green vegetables. "The pictures, I realize now, are incredibly personal, and by looking at them you can probably deduce the type of person I am." Moreover, the pictures set off memories

and emotions in a way a written journal could not. "I remember every single day, who I was with, what I was feeling," he said.

Unlike a picture of a flower or friend, a picture of a meal recalls something smelled, touched, tasted and ultimately ingested. Carl Rosenberg, 52, a Web site developer who divides his time among San Francisco; Austin, Tex.; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, photographs his food along the way with a Nikon D3.

"You have more of a direct connection with your food,

so it forms a more essential memory of an occasion," he said. He often places a small stuffed animal, a sheep, which he calls the Crazy Sheep, next to his food before taking a picture; reminiscent of the globe-trotting garden gnome in the French film "Amélie."

"I think photographing food is a more accurate way to document life," said Mr. Rosenberg, who shares photos with family and friends but does not post them. "Food isn't going to put on a special face when you take a picture of it."

REFLECT & WRITE

- ☐ What strategy does Murphy use to hook her readers into the article?
- ☐ Find the original article online and look at the use of visual evidence. What do the images contribute to Murphy's argument? How does the visual rhetoric change your experience as a reader?
- ☐ According to the article, what effect does food photography have on the photographer? In terms of community? In terms of eating habits?
- ☐ Why do you think Murphy includes the opinion of psychiatrists? How does their opinion change your understanding of the practice of food blogging? How might the article have been different if she had omitted that section?
- ☐ **Write.** Murphy quotes one of her sources, Carl Rosenberg, as saying, "I think photographing food is a more accurate way to document life . . . Food isn't going to put on a special face when you take a picture of it." Do you agree that photographs of food document life more accurately than other types of photographs? Why would that be the case? Write a personal essay that draws a connection between your food practices (how you snack; your food addictions or favorite foods; childhood memories associated with food; your grocery shopping habits, when or where you eat) and a larger commentary about who you are and your overall approach to life.

REFLECT & WRITE

Writing Connections
Refer to Chapter 2
for more on rhetorical
appeals and strategies of
argumentation.

- The MNM editors called this image a “beginner’s guide to what being a ‘locavore’ or ‘globavore’ really means.” How is this infographic composed to appeal to “beginners”? Consider content, style, and design in your analysis.
- How does the infographic utilize *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in developing its definitions? What strategies of argumentation do you see at work?
- This infographic suggests that it is simply informative, providing definitions, but it implicitly makes an argument. What is the claim it makes about locavorism vs. globavorism? How does it suggest this position on the issue?
- **Write.** Focus on one individual identity (“The Ultra Locavore”; “The Locavore”; “The Semi Globavore”; “The Globavore”) as represented in this image, looking carefully at the various ways in which the artist defined each particular stance. Write a paragraph organized around the strategy of *definition* in which you synthesize the different points made about that character type into a single, unified, and cohesive paragraph.

In this article, originally published in *Slate* in May 2008, Taylor Clark takes a closer look at the way vegetarianism has been defined in our culture. Based in Portland, Oregon, Clark has contributed pieces to magazines such as *GQ* and *Psychology Today* and is the author of two books: *Starbucked* (2008) and *Nerve* (2011).

Meatless Like Me

Taylor Clark

Every vegetarian remembers his first time. Not the unremarkable event of his first meal without meat, mind you. No, I mean the first time he casually lets slip that he’s turned her-bivore, prompting everyone in earshot to stare at him as if he just revealed plans to sail his carrot-powered plasma yacht to Neptune. For me, this first time came at an Elks scholarship luncheon in rural Oregon when I was 18. All day, I’d succeeded at seeming a promising and responsible young man, until that fateful

moment when someone asked why I hadn’t taken any meat from the buffet. After I offered my reluctant explanation—and the guy announced it to the entire room—30 people went eerily quiet, undoubtedly expecting me to launch into a speech on the virtues of hemp. In the corner, an elderly, suited man glared at me as he slowly raised a slice of bologna and executed the most menacing bite of cold cut in recorded history. I didn’t get the scholarship.

I tell this story not to win your pity but to illustrate a point: I’ve been vegetarian for a decade, and when it comes up, I still get a look of confused horror that says, “But you seemed so . . . normal.” The U.S. boasts more than 10 million herbivores today, yet most Americans assume that every last one is a loopy, self-satisfied health fanatic, hellbent on draining all the joy out of life. Those of us who want to avoid the social nightmare have to hide our vegetarianism like an Oxycontin addiction, because admit it, omnivores: You know nothing about us. Do we eat fish? Will we panic if confronted with a hamburger? Are we dying of malnutrition? You have no clue. So read on, my flesh-eating friends—I believe it’s high time we cleared a few things up.

To demonstrate what a vegetarian really is, let’s begin with a simple thought experiment. Imagine a completely normal person with completely normal food cravings, someone who has a broad range of friends, enjoys a good time, is carbon-based, and so on. Now remove from this person’s diet anything that once had eyes, and, *wham!*, you have yourself a vegetarian. Normal person, no previously ocular food, end of story. Some people call themselves vegetarians and still eat chicken or fish, but unless we’re talking about the kind of salmon that comes freshly plucked from the vine, this makes you an omnivore. A select few herbivores go one step further and avoid *all* animal products—milk, eggs, honey, leather—and they call themselves vegan, which rhymes with “tree men.” These people are intense.

Vegetarians give up meat for a variety of ethical, environmental, and health reasons that are secondary to this essay’s goal of increasing brotherly understanding, so I’ll mostly set them aside. Suffice it to say that one day, I suddenly realized that I could never look a cow in the eyes, press a knocking gun to her temple, and pull the trigger without

feeling I’d done something cruel and unnecessary. (Sure, if it’s kill the cow or starve, then say your prayers, my bovine friend—but for now, it’s not quite a mortal struggle to subsist on the other five food groups.) I am well-aware that even telling you this makes me seem like the kind of person who wants to break into your house and liberate your pet hamster—that is, like a PETA activist. Most vegetarians, though, would tell you that they appreciate the intentions of groups like PETA but not the obnoxious tactics. It’s like this: We’re all rooting for the same team, but they’re the ones in face paint, bellowing obscenities at the umpire and flipping over every car with a Yankees bumper sticker. I have no designs on your Canny or your hamster.

Now, when I say that vegetarians are normal people with normal food cravings, many omnivores will hoist a lamb shank in triumph and point out that you can hardly call yourself normal if the aroma of, say, sizzling bacon doesn’t fill you with deepest yearning. To which I reply: We’re not *insane*. We *know* meat tastes good; it’s why there’s a freezer case at your supermarket full of woefully inadequate meat substitutes. Believe me, if obtaining bacon didn’t require slaughtering a pig, I’d have a BLT in each hand right now with a bacon layer cake waiting in the fridge for dessert. But, that said, I can also tell you that with some time away from the butcher’s section, many meat products start to seem gross. Ground beef in particular now strikes me as absolutely revolting; I have a vague memory that hamburgers taste good, but the idea of taking a cow’s leg, mulching it into a fatty pulp, and forming it into a pancake makes me gag. And hot dogs . . . I mean, *hot dogs*? You *do* know what that is, right?

As a consolation prize we get tofu, a treasure most omnivores are more than happy to do without. Well, this may stun you, but I’m not any more excited about a steaming heap

of unseasoned (tofu blobs, than you are. Tofu is like *figu* blowfish sushi. Prepared correctly, it's delicious; prepared incorrectly, it's lethal. Very early in my vegetarian career, I found myself famished and stuck in a mall, so I wandered over to the food court's Asian counter. When I asked the teenage chief culinary artisan what was in the tofu stir-fry, he snorted and replied, "Shit." Desperation made me order it anyway, and I can tell you that promises have rarely been more loyally kept than this guy's pledge that the tofu would taste like shit. So here's a tip: Unless you know you're in expert hands (Thai restaurants are a good bet), don't even try tofu. Otherwise, it's your funeral.

As long as we're discussing restaurants, allow me a quick word with the hardworking chefs at America's dining establishments. We really appreciate that you included a vegetarian option on your menu (and if you didn't, is our money not green?), but it may interest you to know that most of us are not salad freaks on a grim slog for nourishment. We actually enjoy food, especially the kind that tastes good. So enough with the bland vegetable dishes, and, for God's sake, *please* make the Gardenburgers stop; it's stunning how many restaurants lavish unending care on their meat dishes yet are content to throw a flavorless hockey puck from Costco into the micro-wave and call it cuisine. Every vegetarian is used to slim pickings when dining out, so we're not asking for much—just for something *you'd* like to eat. I'll even offer a handy trick: Pretend you're trapped in a kitchen stocked with every ingredient imaginable, from asafetago to zucchini, but with zero meat. With no flesh available, picture what you'd make for yourself; this is what we want, too. For those kind-hearted omnivores who willingly invite feral vegetarians into their homes for dinner parties and barbecues (really! we

do that, too!), the same rule applies—but also know that unless you're dealing with an herbivore who is a prick for unrelated reasons, we don't expect you to bend over backward for us. In fact, if we get the sense that you cooked for three extra hours to accommodate our dietary preferences, we will marvel at your considerate nature, but we will also feel insanely guilty. Similarly, it's very thoughtful of you to ask whether it'll bother me if I see you eat meat, but don't worry. I'm not going to compose an epic poem about your club sandwich.

Which leads me to a vital point for friendly omnivore-herbivore relations. As you're enjoying that pork loin next to me, *I am not silently judging you*. I realize that anyone who has encountered the breed of smug vegetarian who says things like, "I can hear your lunch screaming," will find this tough to believe, but I'm honestly not out to convert you. My girlfriend and my closest pals all eat meat, and they'll affirm that I've never even raised an eyebrow about it. Now, do I think it strange that the same people who dress their dogs in berets and send them to day spas are often unfazed that an equally smart pig suffered and died to become their McMuffin? Yes, I do. (Or, to use a more pressing example, how many Americans will bemoan Eight Belles' fatal Kentucky Derby injury tonight at the dinner table between bites of beef?) Would I prefer it if we at least raised these animals humanely? Yes, I would.

Let's be honest, though: I'm not exactly St. Francis of Assisi over here, tenderly ministering to every chipmunk that crosses my path. I try to represent *for* the animal kingdom, but take a look at my shoes—they're made of leather, which, I am told by those with expert knowledge of the tanning process, comes from dead cows. This is the sort of revelation that prompts meat boosters to pick up the triumphant lamb shank once again and accuse us of hypocrisy.

Well, *sort of*. (Hey, you try to find a pair of non-leather dress shoes.) My dedication to the cause might be incomplete, but I'd still say that doing something beats doing nothing. It's kind of like driving a hybrid: not a solution to the global-warming dilemma but a decent start. Let's just say that at the dinner table, I roll in a Prius.

¹⁰ Finally, grant me one more cordial request: Please don't try to convince us that being vegetarian is somehow wrong. If you're concerned for my health, that's very nice, though you can rest assured that I'm in shipshape. If you want to have an amiable tête-à-tête about vegetarianism, that's great. But if you insist on being the aggressive blowhard who takes meanness as a personal insult and rails about what fools we all are, you're only going to persuade me that you're a dickhead. When someone says he's Catholic, you probably don't start the stump speech about how God is a lie created to enslave the ignorant masses, and it's equally offensive to berate

an herbivore. I know you think we're crazy. That's neat. But seeing as I've endured the hassle of being a vegetarian for several years now, perhaps I've given this a *little* thought. So let's just agree to disagree and get on with making fun of Hillary Clinton's inability to operate a coffee machine.

Because, really, peace and understanding are what it's all about: your portehouse and my portobello coexisting in perfect harmony—though preferably not touching. We're actually not so different after all, my omnivorous chums. In fact, I like to think that when an omnivore looks in the mirror, he just sees a vegetarian who happens to eat meat. Or, no, wait, maybe the *mirror* sees the omnivore through the *prism* of flesh and realizes we all have a crystalline animal soul, you know?

This is excellent weed, by the way, if you want a hit. Hey, while you're here: Have I ever told you about hemp?

REFLECT & WRITE

- What level of decorum (high style, middle style, plain style) does Clark use to make his argument? What elements of his writing style contribute to the level of decorum he chose?
- Throughout the essay, Clark integrates second person (you) to draw in the reader. Did this explicit reference to you—the reader—engage you more or less in his argument? Why?
- Clark is clearly taking aim at some of the cultural stereotypes of vegetarians. What alternative profile of a "vegetarian" does he present here? How does this portrait challenge or rewrite these cultural stereotypes?
- "One day," Clark writes, "I suddenly realized that I could never look a cow in the eyes, press a knocking gun to her temple, and pull the trigger without feeling I'd done something cruel and unnecessary." How persuasive a defense of vegetarianism do you find it to be? What rhetorical appeals is Clark using here? How else might he have presented his point if he wanted to use a different appeal? Which do you think would be most persuasive?

Imagining the Ideal Body



FIGURE 12.1 A woman asserts her identity by making her body with piercings and body art.

When you look at the photo of the woman in Figure 12.1, what do you see? What catches your eye? Is it the model's sideways glance? Her ornate tattooing or her nose piercing? Her elaborate make-up? Her eclectic outfit? How does she choose to mark herself—and how does her body consequently operate as a rhetorical text? Finally, how did you begin to draw conclusions about her identity based on your reaction to or interpretation of the markings on her body?

When we look at bodies as visual texts in society, we often participate in a social process of reading people according to certain social categories: as male or female; young or old; rural or urban; and from a certain race, class, or culture. We try to mark our bodies with signs of our identities, to announce who we are, our affiliation with a particular group or religion, our sexual orientation, and sometimes even our political stance. Hairstyles, piercings, clothing choices, tattoos, toned abs, or even painted toenails: these choices all constitute ways we “mark” ourselves in relation to our culture—or try to change the way we are perceived by remarking the signs of our identities. We may be judged by the social standards of “ideal” beauty, operating in our communities and our society at large.

Now consider the image in Figure 12.2. How does the woman's face and body evoke ideas about beauty that come from magazines such as *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Cosmo*, or *Marie Claire*? Many aspects of the ad reproduce common elements found in fashion and cosmetics advertising: the model's direct gaze into the camera, her partially parted lips, her nearly bare neck and shoulders, her almost impossibly smooth complexion. What sort of visual argument is Figure 12.2 making about the ideal face and body, especially given that the billboard is actually an ad for a skin-lightening cream in Seoul, South Korea? Clearly, the normalizing of ideal beauty becomes even more problematic if we consider it in the context of racial, ethnic, and national difference.

However, keep in mind that it's not just the female form that has been subjected to such stereotypes. Magazines like *GQ*, *Maxim*, and *Men's Health* are packed with advertisements for cologne, shaving products, running shoes, casualwear, and even watches that reinforce idealized notions of what it means to be an attractive man in contemporary society. Television shows—from night-time dramas to reality shows like *The Bachelor*—and Hollywood films similarly feature the Perfect Man in lead roles, providing somewhat unrealistic role models for boys and young men. Even video games, arguably, propose a specific type of athletic, hypermasculinity, which young teen boys are invited to play through and measure themselves against as they level up in the games. All around us, media continues to shape and craft a gendered ideal. Your rhetorical analysis of these images can help you begin to formulate your argument about how visual representations construct social notions that we come to accept as “natural.”

It is important to consider what happens to our sense of self when the body we are meant to strive for is represented by an ideal that is overly



FIGURE 12.2 Korean billboard ad for skin-lightening cream.

Photograph: Swedish Mannequins



FIGURE 12.3 Realistically-proportioned mannequins from a Swedish department store.

REFLECT & WRITE

- ❑ The mannequins that most stores use are proportioned to U.S. women's size 00. These Swedish mannequins reflect U.S. women's sizes 6 and 10. How does this sizing information influence your understanding of the messages that mannequins (these particular mannequins, but also more traditional ones) send about female body size?
- ❑ The photograph in Figure 12.3 depicts mannequins in a lingerie section of the department store. Would the image make as strong an impact if it

depicted mannequins from a dress department? An underwear department? Why or why not? What role does placement play in making an argument?

- ❑ **Write.** Create a photo essay on "Mannequins and Body Image" by visiting your own local mall or shopping center and taking photographs of the mannequins you find there. Arrange your images strategically, and write captions and accompanying text for your photographs to produce a solid and cohesive argument. Share your photo essay with your class.

Seeing Connections

Review Chapter 8's advice on creating a photo essay to help you construct your own powerful argument.

Psychoblogger and writer **Susie Orbach** first became a leading participant in the discussion of women's body image issues with the publication of her 1978 book *Fat Is a Feminist Issue*. Since that time, she has both written and taught extensively on the issue of women's physical and emotional health and has appeared on numerous television and radio programs. This article recounts Orbach's involvement in the genesis of Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" and was originally published in the June 17, 2005, issue of *Campaign*, an online advertising, marketing, and public relations magazine.

Fat Is an Advertising Issue Susie Orbach

When O&M called Susie Orbach to ask her advice on Dove's campaign for real beauty, she jumped at the chance to turn advertising's often destructive relationship with women's body image on its head.

More than one million hits on the "campaign for real beauty" website; pictures of women on billboards all over the UK that make you smile inside; a programme to deconstruct beauty ads going into secondary schools; a fund to raise girls' and women's self-esteem; mother-and-daughter workshops on self-image; a mission to change negative feelings women can have towards their bodies . . . and all this from a soap-cum-beauty company?

In January two years ago, Mel White of Ogilvy & Mather rang me. "I'd like to book an hour of your time. Some of us working

on the Dove brand have been worrying that beauty advertising has been damaging to women. We want to make sure we understand how, and what we might do to change it."

White was the global brand and category partner at O&M. She was part of a team spearheading an attempt to make a positive contribution to women's lives. "We all—at Dove and the agency—are women of a certain seniority," she said. "We think we can make a difference, a positive impact on women's lives. Dove has never sold products on the basis of stoking up insecurity. But maybe we can go further. Can you help?"

Could I help? To hear that creative teams were now interested in investing their energy in strengthening women was extraordinary. Years of banging on the doors of clothing manufacturers, government, the

food industry and advertising, to persuade them that by making fashion funkier and food more interesting they would increase sales, made this a dream meeting. I never thought the beauty industry would come asking. I was delighted. I was intrigued.

Could White be serious? Was this a bit of ethical window-dressing or a sincere endeavour? Could they change the grammar of beauty in an industry that had been so instrumental in promoting exclusivity? Was Dove really up for a genuinely radical transformation of the representation of women?

Would the creatives actually hear the dissatisfaction emanating from girls and women about the absolutely torturous standards of beauty they had either wittingly or unwittingly foisted on them? Could the art directors come up with some way to meet that dissatisfaction and make difference sexy, something the fashionistas could resonate with?

The first step was to persuade Unilever. Such a retool was going to take a lot of money and steady commitment. If the executives there could understand the difficulties their wives, mothers, lovers, sisters and daughters had with their own physical appearance, then maybe we had a chance. The change that the Dove team were advocating would require consciousness-raising throughout the agency and the business. The 400 or so people working on Dove would have to be behind it. This was not just a whoopee new campaign like any other.

On the advertising side, O&M assembled creative teams that knew the Dove brand and had done some of their best work on it. They also brought on board teams who did not know Dove, but who had previously done outstanding work on other accounts across the world.

¹⁰ The film O&M made for one of their first internal pitches featured the daughters of executives talking about their own bodies and the cute noses, freckles, hair and tummies they wanted to do away with or change. The poignancy of these little (and big) girls showing their dissatisfactions and their wish to be free of some of the most quintessentially adorable aspects of themselves was completely compelling. It's not possible to watch that three-minute DVD without reaching for a tissue. It was a testimony to the hurt and damage we were unintentionally doing to our daughters.

The film hinted at the longing these lovely girls had to be acceptable, to be pretty, to feel good about themselves.

That DVD and others made for internal Unilever and O&M purposes provided the opening through which I, as a psychotherapist, academic and political activist in the area of women's psychology, body image and eating problems, could now deliver the relevant clinical evidence. My writing, public speaking and research experience with thousands of women could provide the backbone to the Dove initiative, an initiative that had the potential to turn around the grief and distress that lurked inside so many girls' and women's physical experience of themselves.

I told Dove that the Harvard psychiatrist and anthropologist Anne Becker had found that three years after the introduction of TV into Fiji in 1995, 11.9% of adolescent girls were puking into the toilet bowl trying to change their Fijian build into one that resembled the Western images they were imbibing via their TV sets.

I told Unilever that just half-an-hour looking at a magazine could lower youngsters' self-esteem significantly. I told them that one

in four college females has a serious eating problem and that most women wake up and feel their tummies to check how good or bad they've been the day before. Before they've even brushed their teeth, their critical selves are planning how punishing to be today.

¹⁵ I told them that without intending to, mums were passing on negative attitudes about their own bodies towards their infant girls, and that their daughters were now absorbing a shaky body sense that made them vulnerable to the blandishments of the market that purported to meet this distress while actually reinforcing it.

The women working on Dove knew how women's magazines had discreet cosmetic surgery ads in the back long before TV shows such as *The Swan* and *Extreme Makeover* came along. However expectant you felt before reading *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Cosmo* or *Marie Claire*, you felt coshed by a mood depressant after it. And all the Dove women knew they weren't just victims of the image industries. In a sense, all of us women are complicit in these unrealistic representations of femaleness. In order not to feel entirely powerless inside a visually dominating landscape that represents beauty so narrowly, we play out our own beauty scripts inside it: not questioning it, but trying to meet it.

The psychoanalyst in me could try to explain how women's relationship to the beauty industry perfectly encapsulates the psychological essence of the abused. The victim, shunning that awful feeling of being exploited and to gain some self-respect, rejects the idea she is being used. Instead, she makes the job of appearing beautiful her own personal project. She is not being compelled to bind her feet, she

does it willingly. It's the only way to be. She will involve herself in trying to look younger, skinnier, taller, bigger-breasted, smaller-breasted and making sure every surface is coiffed, painted, plucked, waxed, perfumed, moisturised, conditioned or dyed. Taking the job on for herself is her response to being targeted.

It is her refusal to, as it were, be done to. That this can't bring women satisfaction works in the interest of the beauty industry. Having set up this relationship of insecurity, there is always another area to work on—and even if all enemies were banished, ageing would be waiting just around the corner.

²⁰ Dove's mission was to reformulate this warped and damaging engagement with beauty and offer in its place something based not on impossibility, but on possibility. Darling and innovative, so far. But could they take the campaign through their company and into the public domain?

In May 1999, work coming out of the Women's Unit at the Cabinet Office showed eating problems and concern about the body was the number one issue for girls and women aged between 11 and 80. The UK Government held a Body Image Summit, under the leadership of Tessa Jowell and Margaret Jay. Research showed that the promotion of images of ever-skinnier, wan-looking but apparently need-free women who shoved attitude into the camera lens was creating serious (health and mental health) problems in the lives of girls and women.

The Body Image Summit included influential magazine editors, fashion designers and buyers who could have changed our narrow visual culture.

But the Summit programme collapsed at the first whiff of contempt in the media. The Government showed itself to be entirely pusillanimous, back-peddalling and equivocating at its own subsequent press conferences.

After my experience as a consultant to and keynote speaker at the Summit, I was now interested to see what the commercial sector could do. I didn't expect the same kind of inertia and collapse from business when the first criticism came along. But I also hadn't quite understood how considerable are the resources the business community can call on when it is serious.

I'd known that a significant part of a product's cost was spent on marketing and advertising, but I hadn't appreciated how much time, labour and money could go into the development of a brand. As my work with Dove developed, I began to feel increasingly hopeful about how we might begin to challenge the negative aspects of what I'd come to call the visual musk—the ersatz femininity—around us and to include diverse, vibrant, pleasing and sexy images of women of all sizes, ages and physical types.

One of my key objectives was to get across the idea that recent times have seen a widening, a democratising, of the idea that everyone could be beautiful. Triggered by Twiggy and then fully realised by the Kate Moss generation (as much because of their class backgrounds as their skinniness), beauty had moved from being the interest of the few to the aspiration of all girls and women. This was pretty positive stuff in itself. But the terms and the expansion of beauty faltered on a paradox: The industry was simultaneously promoting an anti-democratic ideal of beauty that was narrow

(literally) and excluding. Everyone had to be thin, thinner, thinnest.

If Dove was going to turn around the limited, destructive aspects of the beauty and dieting industries, then it was going to have to produce bold, startling, appealing images of women in all their sumptuous variety that would swagger in and dent the visual field. Dove would have to find a way to meet women where they had trained their eyes to be—on those images of skinny, untouchable and yet needy sexy women—and touch them deeply and humorously enough [to] bring them to where I knew from my clinical practice they wanted to be: appreciated for their magnificent differences, their uniqueness, not their sameness.

Women have had enough of not finding themselves in the ads they look at. If Dove could get it right, other companies would be playing catch-up. And, of course, they did. Within months of the launch of the "campaign for real beauty," Revlon hired Susan Sarandon as one of its faces. It was a vindication that not only had Dove and Ogilvy caught the zeitgeist, but others would follow and the aims of the campaign would be met not just by women flocking to their brand, but also by their competitors.

What impressed the most and continued to impress me is the commitment of the leadership team at Dove—Silvia Lago, Alessandro Manfredi, Erin Iles and Daryl Fielding and, of course, White. They're making the campaign work. Everyone doing Dove business now asks the questions I was brought in to help them confront in order to make the campaign effective. How does this marketing help women's and girls' self-esteem? In what ways could it harm them? How does

this product affect me? How do I want it to affect my daughter, my niece, my sister, my wife? How can I make a positive impact and turn the scourge of body hatred around? How can I be a global player in the beauty industry spreading good feelings about women's bodies rather than promoting insecurity?

How can I give girls and women a chance to enter into a new, contented relationship with their bodies? These are deep, painful and complex issues. That's why they called in the shrink. But, as their performance so far shows, it is a really good start.

REFLECT & WRITE

In this article, Orbach chronicles the process she used to persuade Unilever, the makers of Dove beauty products, to embrace the "Campaign for Real Beauty." How did Orbach and the O&M team deploy strategies of *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* to accomplish their goals? Consider the order in which they used these appeals. Why did they structure their patterns of persuasion in this way?

How might Orbach be trying to offer the same argument she makes to Unilever to the reader? In which paragraphs can you see places where she makes her case to both audiences?

At one point, Orbach claims that in order to be successful at this campaign, Dove was going to have to "produce bold, startling, appealing images of women in all their sumptuous variety that would swagger in and dent the visual field." Look at the images from the Dove campaign that they share on their official website, on television, and in fashion magazines. Has Dove accomplished this goal? What differences do you see between Dove's campaign and advertisements produced by other beauty product companies?

Write. Some might argue that the "Campaign for Real Beauty" is simply an *ethos* appeal to the consumer. Write an essay in which you argue this point, considering whether or not the campaign has the potential to enhance or detract from the popularity of Dove's products—or whether it will have no distinguishable effect overall either on the company or on the self-esteem of women and girls.

John Rivello is a graphic designer specializing in Flash animations. The screenshots in Figures 12.4–12.15 are from a movie hosted on Rivello's website about body image issues and their relationship to the diet industry, fashion magazines, and consumers' self-perceptions.

Seeing Connections
See advice for creating your own op ad in Chapter 8.

- ❑ **Write.** Search online for the Adbuster “Obsession” parody ads. Examine how they use different rhetorical strategies to make similar arguments. Sketch out a design for your own parody poster to raise awareness among young girls about the dangers of eating disorders. Include both visual and written elements. Peer review your work with a partner before presenting it to the class.

WRITING COLLABORATIVELY

The posters created by the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) primarily focus on body image issues and eating disorders experienced by young girls. Working as a group, identify body image problems facing boys in your community. Working in a team, create a poster (using both images and written text) aimed at addressing body image in young boys. Be sure to decide on your argument before drafting your poster; for instance, your poster could be designed either to promote positive body image or to call attention to male body image problems. Share your work with your class.

Award-winning journalist Susan McClelland has written on a variety of topics, from teenage pregnancy, to sex trafficking and the children victimized during Sierra Leone's civil war. In this article, originally published in Maclean's on August 14, 2000, she tackles the cross-cultural implications of western body image issues.

Distorted Images: Western Cultures Are Exporting Their Dangerous Obsession with Thinness

Susan McClelland

When Zahra Dhanani was just seven years old, her four-foot frame already packed 100 lb.—so her mother, Shabbana, put her on her first diet. “My mother, a fat woman, daughter of another fat woman, thought if I was skinny, different from her, I would be happy,” says Dhanani. The diet, and many after, did not have the desired effect. By 13, Dhanani was sporadically swallowing appetite suppressants; at 17, she vomited and used laxatives to try to keep her weight under control.

There were times when she wanted to die. “I had so much self-hate,” recalls the 26-year-old Toronto immigration lawyer, “I couldn’t look in the mirror without feeling revulsion.”

The hate reflected more than just weight. “It was race,” says Dhanani, who had moved with her family to Canada from East Africa when she was 4. “I was straightening my hair—doing anything to look white.” Her recovery only began when, at age 19, she started to identify with women in other

cultures. “I came to realize that there were people who revered large women of colour,” says Dhanani, who now says she loves all of her 200 lb. She blames part of her earlier eating disorders on the images in western media: “When you have no role models to counteract the messages that fat is repulsive, it’s hard to realize that you are a lovable human being.”

Body image may be one of the western world’s ugliest exports. Thanks to television, magazines, movies and the Internet, rail-thin girls and steroid-built beef-boys are being shoved in the faces of people all over the world. As a result, experts say, cultures that used to regard bulk as a sign of wealth and success are now succumbing to a narrow western standard of beauty. And that, in turn, is leading to incidences of eating disorders in regions where anorexia and bulimia had never been seen before. But body-image anxiety in ethnic cultures runs much deeper than weight. In South Africa, almost six years after the end of apartheid, black women still use harmful skin-bleaching creams in the belief that whiter is prettier. “We’re seeing a homogenization and globalization of beauty ideals,” says Niva Piran, a clinical psychologist at the University of Toronto. “It’s white. It’s thin. And the result is that people come to identify less with their own cultures and more with an image in the media.”

In most cultures, bigger was considered better until the 19th century. “The larger a man’s wife, the more he was seen as a good provider,” says Joan Jacobs Brumberg, a professor of American women’s history at Cornell University and author of *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*. That began to change during the Industrial Revolution, she says, as women in the United States and Great Britain began to see thinness as a way to differentiate themselves from the lower

classes. By the 1920s, fat was seen as unhealthy. And in the burgeoning magazine, movie and fashion industries, the women depicted as being successful in love, career and finances were slim and almost always white.

Still, eating disorders are not a modern affliction. Records of women starving themselves (anorexia) date back to the medieval period (1200 to 1500). As Brumberg notes in *Fasting Girls*, during this time, a woman who did not eat was admired for having found some other form of sustenance than food, like prayer. Yet, until the last century, the number of women who fasted was low. But, particularly over the past 30 years, the number of anorexics and women who self-induce vomiting (bulimia) or use laxatives has increased dramatically. “It’s generally this obsession with the body, constant weight-watching, that introduces a person to these behaviours,” says Merry I Bear of the Toronto-based National Eating Disorder Information Centre. It was commonly believed, however, that sufferers came predominantly from white, middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Experts thought ethnic minorities were immune because of their strong ties to communities that emphasize family and kinship over looks alone.

Studies done in the United States with Hispanic, black and Asian college students, however, show that women who are alienated from their minority cultures and integrated into mainstream society are prone to the same pressures of dieting as their white counterparts. In a recent study of South-Asian girls in Peel, Ont., 31 per cent responded that they were not comfortable with their body shape and size. Fifty-eight per cent compared their appearance with others, including fashion models—and 40 per cent wanted to look like them.

Some of the most compelling research comes from Harvard Medical School psychiatrist Anne Becker, who was in Fiji in 1995 when the government announced that TV, including western programs, would be introduced. “Fijians revere a body that is sturdy, tall and large—features that show that the body is strong, hardworking and healthy,” says Becker. “Thinness and sudden weight loss was seen as some kind of social loss or neglect.”

In 1998, Becker returned to Fiji and found that this had all changed. Her studies showed that 29 percent of the girls now had symptoms of eating disorders. Many said they vomited to lose weight. But what was most alarming were the girls’ responses about the role of television in their lives. “More than 80 percent said that watching TV affected the way they felt about their bodies,” Becker says. “They said things such as, ‘I watched the women on TV, they have jobs. I want to be like them, so I am working on my weight now.’ These teenagers are getting the sense that as Fiji moves into the global economy, they had better find some way to make wages and they are desperate to find role models. The West to them means success and they are altering their bodies to compete.”

Cheryl McConney has felt the pressures to alter her body, too. The black 32-year-old native of Richmond Hill, Ont., co-hosts a daytime talk show on cable TV. And although it has not been difficult for her to get where she is in her career, she is concerned about how to navigate her next step. “Looking at Canadian television, I don’t see many people who look like me on air,” she says. At five-foot-five, and weighing about 145 lb., McConney has never been told she should lose weight. Still, in 1998, she went on a six-month,

high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet, hoping to look better in front of the camera. She shed 20 lb. “I felt good. People in the studio thought I looked great, but it wasn’t easy to maintain.” Within a year, she had gained it all back.

For McConney, race has been more of an issue. An industry insider jokingly told her that she would do better if she dyed her hair blond. And just a few months ago, she was discouraged from applying for another on-air host position because of what the casting agents said they were looking for. “They wanted the ‘girl next door’ and ‘peaches-and-cream’ pretty, not chocolate and cream,” says McConney, adding: “It was pretty clear some women were not invited to participate because of their skin colour.” As to the girl next door part: “I said it just depends where you live.”

While McConney says she is determined to make it on-air despite the barriers, Linda, who requested *Maclean’s* not use her real name, may not be around to see her success. The 19-year-old—part South African and part East Indian—has anorexia. She says trying to fit into a Canadian suburban community played a big role in her illness. “I was never proud of my different religion, different skin colour,” she says. “I would put white baby powder on my cheeks just to make me look white.” What alarms her now, Linda says, is that with her skin pale from malnutrition and her weight fluctuating between 75 and 85 lb., other young women often come up to her and say, “You look so good, I wish I looked like you.” But she adds: “What they don’t know is that my body is decaying. People glamorize eating disorders. But what it is a lifetime of hospitalization and therapy.” As long as the western media promote thinness and whiteness as the pinnacle of beauty, stories like Linda’s will remain all too familiar.

REFLECT & WRITE

- In this article, Susan McClelland addresses not only the way body image relates to thinness but also its relationship to different racial features and skin color. Do you agree that the media tends to model its ideal of beauty around a Caucasian standard? What evidence can you cite from your own observations to support your opinion?
- What rhetorical appeals does McClelland utilize in this article? *Pathos*? *Logos*? *Ethos*? Which does she use most prominently and which is most powerful in solidifying her argument?
- How does McClelland’s integration of direct quotations provide evidence for her claims? Make a list of all the sources she mentions in her piece. Then, evaluate them according to the criteria in Chapter 5. How rigorous is her argument, based on this selection of research sources? What credibility and power do these sources add to her piece?
- **Write.** Look at international or culturally targeted beauty magazines at your local bookstore, on the newsstand, or online. Select a few images or ads, and draft your own argument concerning how that magazine defines beauty for specific audiences. Consider bringing in *doxa*, or the appeal to shared values in a particular community. Or, argue that the image of ideal beauty reflects white, Western standards. Finally, you might ask: are the magazine ads progressive, offering new or alternative visions of bodily beauty?

Seeing Connections
See Chapter 6 for guidelines on including direct quotations in your writing.

As the NEDA ad and McClelland’s article both demonstrate, debates over body ideals and body image carry very serious consequences. Taking this fact as her starting point, Elinor Frankel asks whether Americans should follow the example of their Israeli counterparts in treating the promotion of female “whiteness” ideals as a threat to public health. This article appeared in the website *divinecivonline.com* in 2012.

Should America Follow Israel’s Example and Ban Too-Thin Models?

Elinor Frankel

Each year 280 people die in the United States, suffering from an eating disorder, and about 24 millions are living with one.

Many people blame the media and the fashion industry for showing the wrong image of women’s bodies and thus become a contributing factor to the increasing number of eating disorders among young girls

3. What kinds of visual rhetoric might you design to address body image issues for women of different races and cultures? Research a body image related topic for a specific population (for instance, skin bleaching among African-American women or eyelid surgery among Asian women), then mock up a public service media campaign (consisting of radio spots, print ads, and posters) designed to address this issue. Pitch your campaign to the class, making sure to be clear about your underlying claim about body image anxieties within that particular demographic.
4. Research the connection between media images of “ideal bodies” and eating disorders for women and men. Are there significant differences in how these images affect men versus women? What additional factors might be involved, such as steroid use, athletic pressure, the drive for perfectionism, and even mental illness? As you research these issues, consider what prevention strategies might be possible in your community. Based on your prewriting and research, design a new campaign against eating disorders using both images and words.

CHAPTER 13

Playing Against Stereotypes

Sports figures play many different roles in contemporary culture. These roles range from models of physical perfection to embodiments of national pride; they span from representations of local identity to symbols of global community. For many viewers and readers, these figures become much larger than life.

How is the media complicit in this process? Scholar Paul Mark Pederson has suggested, “Sport and mass media are inextricably linked together in a symbiotic relationship. These two institutions rely on each other—the mass media sell sport and sport sells the mass media.” In this chapter, we’ll explore the way that the media constantly projects images of athletes to the consumer public, whether from the glossy covers of magazines, in flashy TV ad campaigns, or even on giant posters plastered on the sides of buses, billboards, or in the corridors of malls. Too often, images of sports celebrity remain flat and two-dimensional, even if scaled to poster size or projected in surround sound on a high-definition TV. That is, we tend to see not complex, fully developed individuals, but instead figures that feed into and perpetuate certain cultural stereotypes. So a key question emerges: how do sports—and in particular the media coverage of sports—both reinforce and dismantle such stereotypes?

We can see the complicated relationship between stereotype and media at work in Nike’s famous 2004 “Tennis Instructor” commercial. In that ad, the tennis pro arrives to meet his class: a group of young teenage girls. As he starts the lesson, he flips his hair and walks among them, the girls looking adoringly after him. However, on the court, the situation changes radically. He gently tosses a ball to a young blond girl who catches it, tosses it in the air to serve it, and then changes suddenly into Serena Williams who drills the ball over the net. The pro blinks, then walks on, but the transformation repeats: all around him, the giggly young girls literally turn into Williams on the court, astounding him with their strong backhands and power returns. At the climax, he ducks to avoid a ball that narrowly misses hitting

Pioneers, inspirational:

10 each

Courageous, disciplined, talented: eight each**Resilient:** six

Female Olympian: "Resilient. We've come so far, and it's because those athletes were resilient enough to fight for their dreams and keep going despite how many times they were hammered down and told they can't. They said 'No, I can,' and they pushed through."

NBA player: "Disciplined, because, I mean, if you and me walked through the hallway and people are throwing drinks and stuff at us and cussing us out and punching us and doing whatever they can to hurt us, I think me and you would have a problem with that and would react to it. But those guys went through that every game night in and night out."

MLB player: "I'd say strong. Those athletes went through more in one year than we'll ever have to deal with in our whole athletic careers. It's actually hard to get your mind around some of the hurdles they overcame."

WNBA player: "Perseverance. You hear and read stuff about black athletes these days, and that's just crap you get on Twitter or on the Internet. Our predecessors had to persevere through that stuff in every game, in every stadium."

REFLECT & WRITE

- ☐ Reflect on the responses to the survey questions. What do they say about the stereotype of black athletes today?
- ☐ In sharing the results of their survey, the authors had to carefully sift through the responses to decide which quotations were worth including in the article. Which quotations seem particularly powerful to you? Why? Which quotations seem less impactful?
- ☐ Consider the canon of arrangement. Why do you think the authors chose to list the comments and questions in this particular order? Select a particular example of a quotation or question and analyze how its placement was rhetorically strategic.
- ☐ Why do you think the survey writers included a question about the relationship of the athlete to the larger community? Why is a question like this important when considering stereotype?
- ☐ Consider a revision of the final question of the series: When thinking of the image of black athletes, what three words come to mind? Answer this question, using tangible examples as evidence to support your claim.

- ☐ **Write.** Conduct your own similar survey, sampling at least 20 sports fans (rather than athletes) and asking the same questions listed in the preceding paragraphs. Compare their responses to the ones given by the professional athletes. Write up a short report in which you evaluate the similarities and differences between their responses, taking into account the difference in demographics (athlete vs. fan) between the original survey respondents and your own.

Called "the best sportswriter in the United States" by veteran sports journalist Robert Lipsyte, **Dave Zirin** writes about the politics of sports for the *Nation* magazine and the *Los Angeles Times* and is host of Sirius XM Radio's *Edge of Sports Radio*. He was named one of *UTNE* Reader's "50 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World" and was *Press Action's* Sportswriter of the Year in both 2005 and 2006. In this article, Zirin addresses the responsibilities that Major League Baseball has toward its Latin American-born players. This piece originally appeared in the November 14, 2005, edition of the *Nation*.

Say It Ain't So, Big Leagues

Dave Zirin

In early October, 30-year-old Mario Encarnación was found dead in his Taipei, Taiwan, apartment from causes unknown. His lonely death, with the lights on and refrigerator door open, ended a tragic journey that began in the dirt-poor town of Bani in the Dominican Republic and concluded on the other side of the world. In between, Encarnación, or "Super Mario," as he was known on the baseball diamond, was the most highly touted prospect better than future American League Most Valuable Player Miguel Tejada. Tejada, also from Bani, paid the freight to bring his friend home from Taiwan. It's hard to imagine who else from their barrio could have managed to

Encarnación's death was not even a sidebar in the sports pages of the United States. A 30-year-old playing out his last days in East Asia might as well be invisible.

But he shouldn't be. As Major League Baseball celebrates its annual fall classic, the World Series, it is increasingly dependent on talent born and bred in Latin America. Twenty-six percent of all players in the major leagues now hail from Latin America, including some of the game's most popular stars, like David Ortiz, Pedro Martínez and Sammy Sosa. Lending the way is the tiny nation of the Dominican Republic. Just five years ago there were sixty-six Dominican-born players on baseball's Opening Day rosters. This year, there were more than 100. This means roughly one out of every

seven major league players was born in the DR, by far the highest number from any country outside the United States. In addition, 30 percent of players in the US minor leagues hail from this tiny Latin American nation, which shares an island with Haiti and has a population roughly the size of New York City's.

All thirty teams now scout what baseball owners commonly call "the Republic of Baseball," and a number of teams have elaborate multimillion-dollar "baseball academies." The teams trumpet these academies. (One executive said, "We have made Fields of Dreams out of the jungle.") But unmentioned is that for every Tejada there are 100 Encarnacións. And for every Encarnación toiling on the margins of the pro baseball circuit, there are thousands of Dominican players cast aside by a Major League Baseball system that is strip-mining the Dominican Republic for talent. Unmentioned is the overarching relationship Major League Baseball has with the Dominican Republic, harvesting talent on the cheap with no responsibility for who gets left behind. Unmentioned is what Major League Baseball is doing—or is not doing—for a country with 60 percent of its population living below the poverty line. As American sports agent Joe Kehoskie says in *Stealing Home*, a PBS documentary, "Traditionally in the Latin market, I would say players sign for about 5 to 10 cents on the dollar compared to their US counterparts." He also points out that "a lot of times kids just quit school at 10, 11, 12, and play baseball full-time. It's great, it's great for the kids that make it because they become superstars and get millions of dollars in the big leagues. But for ninety-eight kids out of 100, it results in a kid that is 18, 19, with no education."

5 Considering both the poverty rate and the endless trumpeting of rags-to-riches stories of those like Sosa and Tejada, it's no wonder the

academies are so attractive to young Dominicans. Most young athletes in the DR play without shoes, using cut-out milk cartons for gloves, rolled-up cloth for bats, and sticks and branches for bats. The academies offer good equipment, nice uniforms and the dream of a better life.

Sacramento Bee sportswriter Marcos Breton's book *Home Is Everything: The Latino Baseball Story* highlights the appeal of the academies: "Teams house their players in dormitories and feed their prospects balanced meals. Often it's the first time these boys will sleep under clean sheets or eat nutritious meals. The firsts don't stop there: Some of these boys encounter a toilet for the first time. Or an indoor shower. They are taught discipline, the importance of being on time, of following instructions."

The competition to get into the "baseball factories," as they are often referred to, is fierce. Sports anthropologist Alan Klein describes, in *Stealing Home*, the scene in front of one of the academies:

Every morning you would drive to the Academy, you would see fifteen, twenty kids out there, not one of them had a uniform, they all had pieces of one uniform or another, poor equipment, they would be right at the gate waiting for the security people to open up the gates and they would go in for their tryout. If they got signed, they were happy. If they didn't get signed, it didn't even deter them for a minute; they would be on the road hitchhiking to the next location. And they would eventually find one of those 20-some clubs that would eventually pick them up. And if not, then they might return to amateur baseball.

Yet even the ones who make it through the academy doors often find themselves little more than supporting players in a system designed to help pro teams ferret out the few potential stars. As Roberto González Echevarría, a Cuban baseball historian who also appears

in the documentary, says, "I take a dim view of what the major leagues are doing in the Dominican Republic with these so-called baseball academies, where children are being signed at a very early age and not being cared for. Most of them are providing the context for the stars to emerge; if you take 100 baseball players in those academies, or 100 baseball players anywhere, only one of them will play even an inning in the major leagues. The others are there as a supporting cast."

10 And little is done for those very select few who make it into a major league farm system to protect them from the likely fall to the hard concrete floor of failure.

Brendan Sullivan III, a pitcher who played five seasons for the San Diego Padres, told author Colman McCarthy, "Sure, they were thrilled to have gone from dirt lots to playing in a US stadium before fans and getting paychecks every two weeks. But once a team decides a Dominican won't make it to the big leagues, he is discarded as an unprofitable resource. That's true for US players, but at least they have a high school diploma, and often college, and thus have fallback skills. Most Dominicans don't. They go home to the poverty they came from or try to eke out an existence at menial labor in the States, with nothing left over except tales of their playing days chasing the dream."

Major League Baseball seems unconcerned and uninterested in the situation it has a central role in shaping. Boston Red Sox owner John Henry speaks of the "special relationship Major League Baseball has with the people of the Dominican Republic," but it's unclear whether he believes the Bosox and Major League Baseball have any responsibilities regarding the players they employ and the families left behind.

Al Avila, assistant general manager of the Detroit Tigers, whose father, Ralph, operated the Los Angeles Dodgers' Dominican

academy for decades, told ESPN.com, "Baseball is the best way out of poverty for most of these kids and their families. They see on television and read in the newspapers how many of their countrymen have made it. For parents that have kids, they have them playing from early on. The numbers show that the dream is within reach. And even if they don't make it, these Dominican academies house, feed and educate these kids in English. They become acclimated to a new culture, which is always positive. At the very least, even if they don't make it as a player, they could get different doors opened, like becoming a coach."

The question we need to ask is, Does baseball have a broader responsibility to the Dominican Republic and these 10- and 11-year-old kids who think they have a better chance of emerging from desperately poor conditions with a stick and a milk-carton glove than by staying in school? Does the highly profitable Major League Baseball have any responsibility to cushion the crash landing that awaits 99.9 percent of DR kids with big-league dreams, or the 95 percent of players who are good enough to be chosen for the academy but are summarily discarded with nothing but a kick out the door? We can probably surmise where the family and friends of Mario Encarnación fall on this question.

15 The death of "Super Mario" went unnoticed in the US press with one exception, a heart-wrenching column on October 6 in the *Sacramento Bee* by his friend Marcos Breton, who wrote, "Mario wasn't a warped athlete like we've come to expect in most ballplayers. He was big-hearted, fun-loving, a good friend.... The pressure of succeeding and lifting his family out of poverty was a weight that soon stooped Encarnación's massive shoulders."

Should it have been his responsibility alone to shoulder such a burden?

REFLECT & WRITE

- ❑ How does Zirin engage his audience in his topic from the beginning of the essay? Look at both the language he uses and the strategy of development. How might he have started the essay differently? How would that have changed the way that he constructed his argument?
- ❑ How does Zirin use *logos* in his essay? How does he use direct quotation? Where does he bring in these elements and to what effect?
- ❑ If there is a "villain" in this piece, who is it? Find specific passages in the article where Zirin creates this characterization.
- ❑ Look at the structure of Zirin's argument. How does he create a frame? How do his introduction and conclusion work together? What is the effect of that cooperation?
- ❑ **Write.** Take Zirin's argument and transform it into a 2–3 minute oral presentation designed to open up this question of responsibility to a very specific audience: Bud Selig, Commissioner of Baseball. How would you persuade him of the importance of this issue? Consider issues of arrangement, style, example, embodied rhetoric, and multimedia support in planning your presentation. Script your presentation in middle- to high-style English.

American sports journalists Robert Lipsyte has written extensively about sports culture, more specifically about the negative impact on children that he calls "Sportsworld"—an approach to sports that prioritizes winning over all else. In this piece, originally published in the August 15, 2011, issue of the Nation, Lipsyte dissects the predominantly male jock stereotype and how it influences broader American politics and culture.

Jocks Vs. Pukes

Robert Lipsyte

In the spring of that hard year, 1968, the Columbia University crew coach, Bill Stowe, explained to me that there were only two kinds of men on campus, perhaps in the world—Jocks and Pukes. He explained that Jocks, such as his rowers, were brave, manly, ambitious, focused, patriotic and goal-driven, while Pukes were woolly, distractible, girlish

funny and articulate, that I found his condescension merely good copy. He'd won an Olympic gold medal, but how could I take him seriously, this former Navy officer who had spent his Vietnam deployment rowing the Saigon River and running an officers' club? Not surprisingly, he didn't last long at Columbia after helping lead police officers through the underground tunnels to roust the Pukes who had occupied buildings during the anti-war and antiracism demonstrations.

As a 30-year-old *New York Times* sports columnist then, I was not handicapped by as much lack of certainty about all things as I am now. It was clear to me then that Bill Stowe was a "dumb jock," which does not mean stupid; it means ignorant, narrow, misguided by the values of Jock Culture, an important and often overlooked strand of American life.

These days, I'm not so sure he wasn't right; the world may well be divided into Jocks and Pukes. Understanding the differences and the commonalities between the two might be one of the keys to understanding, first, the myths of masculinity and power that pervade sports, and then why those myths are inescapable in everyday life. Boys—and more and more girls—who accept Jock Culture values often go on to flourish in a competitive sports environment that requires submission to authority, winning by any means necessary and group cohesion. They tend to grow up to become our political, military and financial leaders. The Pukes—those "others" typically shouldered aside by Jocks in high school hallways and, I imagine, a large percentage of those who are warily reading this special issue of *The Nation*—were often turned off or away from competitive sports (or settled for cross-country). They were also more likely to go on to question authority and seek ways of individual expression.

This mental conditioning of the Jocks was possible because of the intrinsic joy of sports. Sports is good. It is the best way to pleasure your body in public. Sports is entertaining, healthful, filled with honest, sustaining sentiment for warm times and the beloved people you shared them with. At its simplest, think of playing catch at the lake with friends.

Jock Culture is a distortion of sports. It can be physically and mentally unhealthy, driving people apart instead of together. It is fueled by greed and desperate competition. At its most grotesque, think killer dodgeball for prize money, the Super Bowl. (The clash between sports and the Jock Culture version is almost ideological, at least metaphorical. Obviously, I am for de-emphasizing early competition and redistributing athletic resources so that everyone, throughout their lives, has access to sports. But then, I am also for world peace.)

Kids are initiated into Jock Culture when youth sports are channeled into the pressurized arenas of elite athletics on travel teams driven by ambitious parents and coaches. A once safe place to learn about bravery, cooperation and respect becomes a cockpit of bullying, violence and the commitment to a win-at-all-costs attitude that can kill a soul. Or a brain. It is in Pee Wee football, for example, that kids learn to "put a hat on him"—to make tackles head first rather than the older, gentler way of wrapping your arms around a ball carrier's legs and dragging him down. Helmet-to-helmet hits start the trauma cycle early. No wonder the current concussion discussion was launched by the discovery of dementia and morbidity among former pro players.

There is no escape from Jock Culture. You may be willing to describe yourself as a Puke, "cut" from the team early to find your true nature as a billionaire geek, Grammy-winning

band fag, workish pundit, but you've already had to deal with Jock Culture attitudes and codes, and you have probably competed by them. In big business, medicine, the law, people will be labeled winners and losers, and treated like stars or slugs by coachlike authority figures who use shame and intimidation to achieve short-term results. Don't think symphony orchestras, university philosophy departments and liberal magazines don't often use such tactics.

Jock Culture applies the rules of competitive sports to everything. Boys, in particular, are taught to be tough, stoical and aggressive, to play hurt, to hit hard, to take risks to win in every aspect of their lives. To dominate. After 9/11, I wondered why what seemed like a disproportionate number of athletic women and men were killed. From reading their brief *New York Times* memorials, it seemed as though most were former high school and college players, avid weekend recreationists or at least passionate sports fans. When I called executives from companies that had offices in the World Trade Center, I discovered it was no coincidence: stock-trading companies in particular recruited athletes because they came to work even if they were sick, worked well in groups, rebounded quickly from a setback, pushed the envelope to reach the goal and never quit until the job was done. They didn't have to be star jocks, but they did have to have been trained in the codes of Jock Culture—most important, the willingness to subordinate themselves to authority.

The drive to feel that sense of belonging that comes with being part of a winning team—as athlete, coach, parent, cheerleader, booster, fan—is a reflection of Jock Culture's grip on the male psyche and on more and more women. Men have traditionally been taught to pursue their jock dreams no

matter the physical, emotional or financial cost. Those who realized those dreams have been made rich and famous; at the least, they were waved right through many of the toll-booths of ordinary life. Being treated like a celebrity at 12, freed from normal boundaries, excused from taking out the garbage and from treating siblings, friends, girls responsibly, is no preparation for a fully realized life. No wonder there are so many abusive athletes, emotionally stunted ex-athletes and resentful onlookers.

At a critical time when masculinity is being redefined, or at least re-examined seriously, this sports system has become more economically, culturally and emotionally important than ever. More at service to the empire. More dangerous to the common good.

Games have become our main form of mass entertainment (including made-for-TV contests using sports models). Winners of those games become our examples of permissible behavior, even when that includes cheating, sexual crimes or dog torturing. And how does that lead us to the cheating, the lying, the amorality in our lives outside the white lines? It's not hard to connect the moral dots from the field house to the White House.

The recent emergence of girls as competitors of boys has also raised the ante. Boys have traditionally been manipulated by coaches, drill sergeants and sales managers by the fear of being labeled a girl ("sissy" and "fagot" have less to do with homophobia than misogyny). Despite the many ways males can identify themselves as "real men" in our culture—size, sexuality, power, money, fame—nothing seems as indelible as the male made in childhood when the good bodies are separated from the bad bodies, the team from the spectators. The designated athletes are rewarded with love, attention and perks. The

leftovers struggle with their resentments and their search for identity.

Of course, the final score is not always a sure thing. There are sensitive linebackers and CEOs, domineering shrinks and violinists. Who won in the contest between the Face-book Puke Mark Zuckerberg and his fiercest competitors, the Olympic rowing Jocks Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss?

"I don't follow that stuff these days," says Bill Stowe, now living in Lake Placid, New York, after retiring as crew coach and fundraiser for the Coast Guard Academy, a far more comfortable fit than Columbia. "And I have to tell you, I don't remember separating the world into Jocks and Pukes, although it sounds good. I liked good brains in my boats, as long as they were willing to concentrate and pay the price."

Stowe, at 71, is still a conservative Republican. But he doesn't like to talk politics. "It's time to give up the torch," he says. "People are still living in ignorance, but I'm not running it up the flagpole anymore. Life's too short to fight." He surprises me when we talk sports. "The big-league thing, that's a circus. I don't understand how anyone could look up to those guys. But the real issue is with the kids. Did you read where they're building a \$60 million football stadium for a high school in Texas? Just for the Jocks. Have you got any idea how much good you could do, even just in athletics, for all the other kids with that much money?"

I dutifully write all this down, which doesn't at all seem Puke-ish now. We're on the same page, the coach and I. There's hope.

REFLECT & WRITE

1. Lipsyte uses the terms *jocks* and *pukes* to define the opposing stereotypes of the athlete and non-athlete. Do you see similar stereotypes in your own experience? Considering those terms derived from 1960s culture, what more current stereotypes characterize the way we understand contemporary athletes?
2. Several times in his essay, Lipsyte connects jock culture with male identity. How does gender factor into stereotypes of athleticism in your experience?
3. What purpose do the stories of Coach Howe serve at the beginning and the end of the piece? Why include Howe? Why didn't Lipsyte simply define his terms from the beginning on his own?
4. According to Lipsyte, why does understanding the tension between "jocks" vs. "puke" matter? What is the "So What?" of his piece?
5. Write. Write a paragraph in which you define a current stereotype in sports culture. Be sure to pay close attention to style, sentence flow, word choice, and tone. Give concrete examples to help your reader understand this stereotype. If possible, try to complicate the stereotype that you describe, avoid creating a two dimensional portrait, instead giving your readers a more nuanced understanding of this cultural construct. Include one or more images to support your definition; be sure to cite your image sources.

Crisis and Resilience

With the ubiquity of news coverage and global media today, we get our understanding of both local and world events from powerful images. From the devastation and radiation fallout after the 2011 tsunami in Japan to the disastrous effects of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, we get a glimpse into the suffering of others through vivid photos, news films, blog posts, and videos from those on the ground.

Consider the photograph in Figure 14.1, taken in the wake of the devastating floods in Boulder County and along Colorado's Front Range. The image captures a spot where the road has completely washed away from the floods.



FIGURE 14.1 In September 2013, raging floodwaters in Colorado washed away roads, cutting off entire towns and communities.

In another context, this might seem to be an environmentalist's photo of how abandoned roads can crumble and the land can return to nature. But what effect do the other photographic elements have in constructing the meaning of the text as one of crisis?

Notice how the double yellow lines just stop, leaving an eerie gap before the creek waters spill out into a cluster of rocks, tree branches, and floating debris. The shred of pink clothing on the left side of the photo is a compositional element that evokes emotion in the viewer and reminds us of the suffering of people who experienced this natural disaster. In these ways, the photo makes a power visual argument about severity of the destruction wreaked by five days of solid rainfall and extensive flooding which destroyed thousands of homes, damaged dams and sewer plans, and forced the evacuation of towns across three counties.

Analyze the written caption accompanying the photograph. How does the phrase “cutting off entire towns and communities” shape our interpretation of the visual text? How do words and image combine to place our emotional sympathy with the people experiencing this crisis? At the same time, consider the possible *motif* of the photographer. How does the rhetorical strategy of depicting the exact spot where the road ends focus our attention on the severity of the damage?

Now compare the photo in Figure 14.1 with the photo in Figure 14.2, which shows two houses crashed into one another and even collapsed into the creek. How does the inclusion of former homes serve to humanize this environmental disaster? Observe the details: a family's possessions still visible through a mud-splattered widow, the satellite dish that brought in entertainment now perched precariously on the roof, the overlapping layers of asphalt, sidewalk, creek barrier, and rocks making passage impossible. What is the *pathos* effect of such signs in this image? How does a photo make an argument that competes with statistics for its power?

And yet, the photo could also be interpreted as an image of resilience. Despite the ravages of nature, two houses did survive somewhat intact. The truck parked in the distance suggests the massive rebuilding that began almost immediately. Even the wet side of the house, which shows that the waters have receded, offers a glimpse of hope. The visual rhetoric of the photograph thus bridges experiences of ruin and recovery, crisis and resilience.

I wanted to help, but the rain wouldn't stop. All I could do, all any of us could do was watch and wait, watch and wait.

So far, we've watched and waited for five days. Emergency management officials are saying that nearly 18,000 homes were damaged and about 1,500 destroyed. Eleven thousand, seven hundred people have been evacuated. Six are dead. No, seven. I just read it in the news.

Boulder is my backyard, my home. To me, the floods are urgent; they are an emergency. To others, our floods are another face in the crowd of headlines. Today alone, I read in the news that 260,000 people had to evacuate Kyoto due to a typhoon. In Washington's Navy Yard, someone murdered 13 people with a gun. There's the new episode of "Breaking Bad" and the threat of war in Syria. Every headline screams to be first in line. Everything is a crisis. And let's face it, in media language, Colorado is a small mountain state that likes to ski and smoke pot. Decimation here doesn't echo as loudly as it does in New York, Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles.

I wasn't that surprised when only one of my out-of-town friends called to check on me that first morning of the flood. People are busy. They're stoned on headlines and tweets, emails and texts. But on the second and third days of the flood, I still only had two friends contact me. When I sent my immediate family an email stating our Colorado situation in no uncertain terms, they responded with surprise. They knew about the floods, they said. But they didn't realize that I was affected.

I'd like to think that in our networked world, it's easy to comprehend how the things we read about in the news or on social media might be impacting friends and loved ones. It seems, however, that we're so drowned in data that we've become comfortably numb. Even our reactions have become passive, disconnected. Hitting "like" on Facebook or leaving a sympathetic tweet doesn't come close to the human power of a phone call, especially for someone facing the loss of their home, their health, their life. We're too disengaged to connect the dots between disaster and its human impact. And that scares me.

REFLECT & WRITE

- Compare the *pathos* appeal of the title to the calm first line of the piece. What is the effect of this sudden switch? Now trace the emotional response produced by each subsequent paragraph. How does the writer's style work as a persuasive tool to make you as a reader identify with her plight, then experience humor, then feel alarm or even outrage?

Daniel Okrent *The Public Editor: No Picture Tells the Truth—The Best Do Better Than That*

What is your overall sentiment at the end of reading the piece? What do you learn about using emotion in writing?

- Notice the mention of specific people in the article. How does that writing technique build the writer's *ethos* or credibility? What other elements in the piece also establish her authority as a witness and commentator on the crisis?
- The author makes a strong argument at the end of her first paragraph: "Junk news melds with actual emergencies, to the point that we can't gauge danger anymore." Scholars have termed this state "compassion fatigue." How common is "compassion fatigue" in your life? Bring to mind instances where friends or family have not taken a crisis seriously. What do you think is the writer's larger message about this situation? Locate the sentences as evidence for your answer.

- **Write.** Throughout the article, Knufken points to social media as well as news media as part of the problem. What is her argument about communication in today's networked world? Create a digital position paper in response to her argument. You can write a blog post, draft a series of tweets, or set up a photo album with captions on Facebook. Whatever medium you choose, be sure to quote some of Knufken's lines and then compose your own position as a reply.

Daniel Okrent's article was published in the New York Times in the wake of the media blitz covering the tragic 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia that claimed over 230,000 lives across fourteen countries. Okrent was the first public editor of the New York Times, and he has published several books, including Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition. He's also a baseball fan and the inventor of Rotisserie League Baseball, the best-known form of fantasy baseball.

The Public Editor: No Picture Tells the Truth—The Best Do Better Than That

Daniel Okrent

Two Mondays ago, the scale of the Indian Ocean catastrophe was just emerging from the incomplete earlier reports (from a *Times* article the

day before: a tidal wave had "killed more than 150 people in Sri Lanka"). By the 4:30 Page 1 meeting, picture editors had examined more than 900 images of devastation to find the one that would stretch across five columns and nearly half the depth of Tuesday's front page. Into a

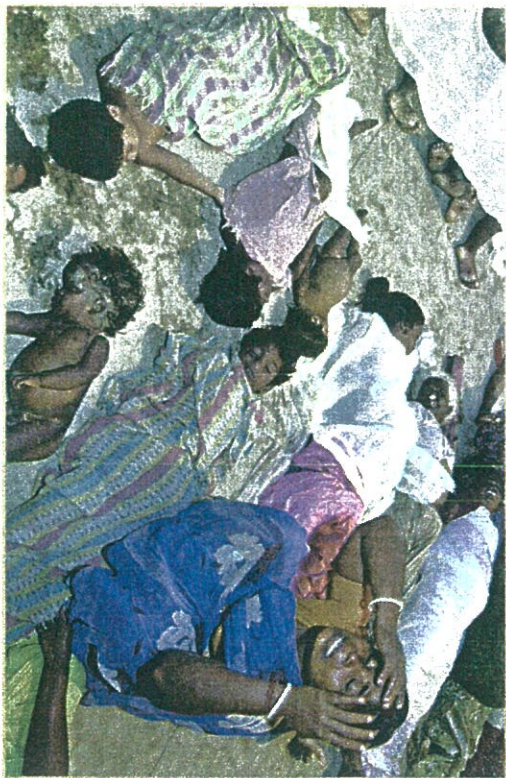


FIGURE 14.3 This shocking photo appeared on the front page of the *Times* on December 28 in the wake of the tsunami and was one of many featured in Okrent's article.

million homes came a grieving mother crouched beside the lifeless bodies of tiny children, and perhaps more horrifying, three pairs of feet extending from beneath a white sheet in an upper corner, suggesting the presence beyond the frame of row upon awful row of the tsunami's pitiless toll.

Many readers and at least a few members of *The Times*'s newsroom staff considered the picture exploitative, unduly graphic, and by its size and placement, inappropriately forced upon the paper's readers. Some felt it disrespectful of both the living

and the dead. A few said *The Times* would not have published it had the children been white Americans. Boaz Rabin of Weehawken, N.J., wrote, "Lead with letters the size of eggs, use any words you see fit, but don't put a nightmare on the front page."

I asked managing editor Jill Abramson why she chose this picture. She said in an e-mail message that after careful and difficult consideration, she decided that the photo "seemed to perfectly convey the news: the sheer enormity of the disaster, as we learned one-third of the casualties are children in a part of the world where more than

50 percent of the population is children. It is an indescribably painful photograph, but one that was in all ways commensurate to the event." When I spoke with director of photography Michele McNally, who believes the paper has the obligation "to bear witness" at moments like this, she had a question for me: "Wouldn't you want us to show pictures from Auschwitz if the gates were opened in our time?"

The surpassing power of pictures enables them to become the permanent markers of enormous events. The marines planting the flag at Iwo Jima, the South Vietnamese

general shooting his captive at point-blank range, the young John F. Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's passing coffin: each is the universal symbol for a historical moment. You don't need to see them to see them.

But in every case, someone needs to choose them. Photo editors (*The Times* employs 40) and their colleagues make hundreds of choices a week. Stories may whisper with nuance and headlines declaim in summary, but pictures seize the microphone, and if they're good, they don't let go. In most cases, a story gets a single picture; major stories may get more, but usually only one on the front page itself—and that becomes the picture that stands for the event.

This won't make every reader happy. From last year's mail:

■ "The picture hardly reflects the regular Turkish population."

■ "I have never been a particular [fan] of Richard Grasso, but *The Times* should not prejudge his lawsuit by publishing photos that portray him as a monster."

■ "I find it appalling and disgusting that you would print an Iraqi holding up

the boots of one of our dead soldiers."

■ "Why are we shown the pictures of tragically mutilated U.S. civilian contractors but not slain Iraqi children?"

One reader felt that a picture of a smiling Jesse Jackson next to George W. Bush made it appear that Jackson had endorsed the president. Another believed that a photo of a dead Palestinian child in the arms of a policeman looked staged, as if to resemble the Pieta.

Richard Avedon once said: "There is no such thing as inaccuracy in a photograph. All photographs are accurate. None of them is the truth." In this Age of Fungible Pixels, when not every publication, political campaign, or advocacy organization follows the *Times* policy prohibiting manipulation of news photographs, I'm not even sure about the accuracy part. But the untruth—or, at least, imperfect truth—of any single photograph is inescapable. Some readers object to the way a picture is cropped, arguing that evidence is being sliced out of the frame. But meaning is determined long before that. A photographer points the camera here, then turns three

inches to the left and snaps again; different picture, maybe a different reality. A photo editor selects from the images the photographer submits (should the subject be smiling? Frowning? Animated? Distracted?). The designer wants it large (major impact) or small (lesser impact). The editor picks it for Page 1 (important) or not (not). By the time a reader sees a picture, it has been repeatedly massaged by judgment. But it's necessarily presented as fact.

Last May, for an article considering whether Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had a drinking problem, editors selected a seven-month-old file photo showing the president hoisting a beer at an Oktoberfest celebration. It may have been a sensible choice; drinking was the subject, and a picture of the president standing at a lectern would have been dull and disconnected. But any ambiguity in the article was steamrolled by visual evidence that may have been factual (da Silva once had a beer), but perhaps not truthful.

Even in the coverage of an event as photographically unpromising as a guy in a suit giving a speech, pictures convey judgment. When George J. Tenet resigned as C.I.A. director in June, a front

page shot showed him looking down, biting his lip, possibly near tears; according to Bruce Mansbridge of Austin, Tex., at other moments during the broadcast of Tenet's speech, "he appeared quite upbeat." When Donald H. Rumsfeld visited Abu Ghraib in May, *The Times* showed him flanked by soldiers, striding through the grounds of the prison, as if (wrote Karen Smullen of Long Island) "Karl Rove must have said, 'What we really need now is a photo of [Rumsfeld] leading soldiers and looking earnest and determined and strong.'"

Did Rumsfeld pause at any point and laugh at a joke told by a colleague, or bark at a reporter who asked him a difficult question?

Did any of these pictures tell the whole story, or just a sliver of it?

Mix a subjective process with something as idiosyncratic as taste and you're left with a volatile compound. Add human tragedy and it becomes emotionally explosive. The day *The Times* ran the picture of the dead children, many other papers led with a photograph of a grief-racked man clutching the hand of his dead son. It, too, was a powerful picture, and it's easy to see why so many used it. But it was—this is difficult to say—a portrait of generic tragedy. The devastated man could have been in the deserts of Darfur, or in a house in Mosul, or on a sidewalk in Peoria; he could have been photographed

10 years ago, or 10 years from now. His pain was universal.

But the picture on the front page of *The Times* could only have been photographed now, and only on the devastated shores of the Indian Ocean. My colleague David House of *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram* says, "In this instance, covering life means covering death." The babies in their silent rows were as real, and as specific, as the insane act of nature that murdered them. This picture was the story of the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004—not the truth, but a stand-in for the truth that will not leave the thoughts of those who saw it. *The Times* was right to publish it.

REFLECT & WRITE

- ❑ What do you make of the writer's decision to use "I" in this article? How might it be a persuasive and effective tool here? How does relying on his *ethos* help Okrent make his point effectively? What other cited sources also lend authority to his argument?
- ❑ Search online for the images for the many examples Okrent mentions in his argument as standing in for the event.
- ❑ How do the images and Okrent's selection of mail comments on them work together to offer coherence and depth for his thesis? Why might he have arranged them in the order he did?
- ❑ After examining over 900 photos, the editors picked the one shown in Figure 14.3. Some readers felt "it disrespectful of both the living and the dead." Yet Okrent concludes that "covering life means covering death." What is your

position on the ethics of publishing such graphic and emotional photos? What more recent events can you recall that faced similar controversy in the media's choice of specific visual rhetoric?

- ❑ **Write.** Draft your own captions for contemporary examples of ethically troubling photographs that you find for a recent conflict in the world today. Then, compose a letter as if you were the editor of a journal defending their publication on the front page.

Charles Porter is a bank clerk and an amateur photographer; he captured the defining images of the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize. The selection here is a transcription of his account of taking the photographs as told to BBC News, which published the article and images on its website on May 9, 2005.

Tragedy in Oklahoma

Charles Porter

I am talking about two photographs that I took on 19 April 1995 from the Oklahoma City bombing.

One being of a policeman handing an infant to a fireman and the other of a fireman gently cradling this lifeless infant.

I have these images in front of me here, looking at them now, and there are things that strike me.

One is that the fireman has taken the time to remove his gloves before receiving this infant from the policeman.

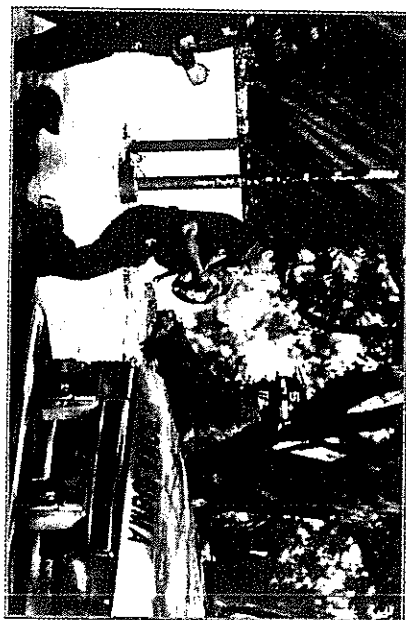
Anyone who knows anything about firefighters know that their gloves are very rough and abrasive and to remove these is like saying I want to make sure that I am as gentle and as compassionate as I can be with this infant that I don't know is dead or alive.

And the second image is of this fireman just cradling this infant with the utmost compassion and caring.

He is looking down at her with this longing, almost to say with his eyes: "It's going to be OK, if there's anything I can do I want to try to help you."

He doesn't know that she has already passed away.





Spring Morning

And these images are in such contrast with the day.

10 It was such a beautiful, crisp, bright spring morning. And at 0902 it was just amazing.

Our building shook and I looked out the window and saw this huge brown cloud of dust and debris and papers just flying in the air, and as I ran across towards the debris cloud, I turned this corner at the building and the street was covered with glass.

There were people on the street that were injured and bleeding, and there was a gentleman that was walking towards me who had taken his dress shirt off from the office building that he was in and had it to his head, and blood was dripping from that.

I just took my camera out and instinctively started taking pictures.

I ran to the front of the building and took some images of that, and as I ran back down the side, I noticed this ambulance where these firefighters were working on these people that were wounded and mortally wounded, and I noticed something out of the corner of my eye that was running across my field of vision.

15 I didn't know what it was, but I trained my camera on it and it was this police officer.

And as this policeman handed this infant to the fireman, I took one frame and then as the fireman is cradling this infant I took the second frame and that is exactly how these images came to be on 19 April 1995.

After I left I got my film developed and called a friend who was the head of photography at a local university.

I called him, and he said: "If you have images that have just happened, you need to go to somebody that wants to see them, like the Associated Press or somebody like that."

I looked the address up in the phone book, I got in my car. I drove over there, I knocked on the door and I went in and said: "Hi, I've got some

images of what you're seeing on TV and wanted to know if you would like to look at them?"

Speechless

20 "Chills go over me just to think about the magnitude and the enormity of where that picture went."

Wendel Hudson, who was the AP photo editor at Oklahoma City at the time, picked them out immediately and said: "We'd like to use these." And I thought: "Wow!"

It went out on the AP wire, and not knowing exactly what the AP wire is, I go home and I honestly went home and told my wife: "You know what, I just took some images and they might be in the *Daily Oklahoma* tomorrow."

I go home about 1300. About 1320 I get this phone call from this lady and she says: "Hi, I am so-and-so from the *London Times* and I want to know if you are Charles Porter."

I said: "Yes I am, but how do you know who I am?"

25 She said: "Well I just received your image over the AP wire . . ."

And she proceeded to explain to me what the Associated Press wire was.

I said that I didn't know how to respond and she said, "Well sir, can I ask you one question?" And this is where it hit home: "Could I get your reaction and response to what your feelings are going to be, knowing that your image is going to be over every newspaper and every magazine in the entire world tomorrow?"

I was silent and speechless, and chills go over me just to think about the magnitude and the enormity of where that picture went and the impact that picture had at that time. It was beyond my scope of comprehension and understanding, way beyond.

■ **Joe Strupp** is *Investigative Reporter and Senior Editor at Media Matters for America*. Previously, he was *Associate Editor at Editor & Publisher*, where this article appeared one month after the *Oklahoma City bombing*. Strupp has been an invited media commentator on *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Fox Report*, *Air America Radio*, *National Public Radio*, *Wisconsin Public Radio*, *Voice of America*, and *WPJX TV News in New York City*. He has won two *Jesse H. Neal Business Journalism Awards*, the "Pulitzer Prize" of business journalism, and also contributes to *Salon.com*.

The Photo Felt Around the World

Joe Strupp

Writing Connections
prepare this project:
read the article in the
student samples in
Appendix 3; as you learn to
write, use your own abstract.

Abstract: Bank clerk Charles H. Porter took a picture of a firefighter cradling a burned infant in his arms right after the Oklahoma City bombing, in OK, in April 1995. The photograph was sold to an AP state photo editor who sent it over the wires. Different newspapers discussed how they should use such an emotionally-charged picture, and, after its publication, many readers called to ask what happened to the baby. Other readers called to protest the picture's publication. However, most newspaper officials believed that it captured the tragedy of the situation in a wordless moment. The baby died the day after the picture was taken.

It sparked heated debate in several newsrooms, caused one veteran newspaper editor to cry, and, for most photo editors, became the focal front-page shot of the tragic April 19 bombing in Oklahoma City.

"It was the photo that was felt around the world," said Tommy Almon, the baby's grandfather.

President Bill Clinton even mentioned it in a televised address.

Ironically, however, the dramatic photo of firefighter Chris Fields cradling the badly burned body of infant Bryce Almon in his arms—which landed on numerous front pages the next day—was shot by a local amateur, developed at a one-hour photo shop, and nearly missed being distributed by the Associated Press.

Charles H. Porter IV, a 25-year-old Oklahoma City bank clerk, shot the picture of Fields holding the child, just moments after the bomb blast occurred.

He then sold the photo to AP state photo editor David Longstreath, who sent it over the wires.

"It was everything that was indicative of the bombing," said Longstreath. "It was one of those rare shots that gives the entire story, but in a way that words cannot."

Once Porter took the picture, and developed it with other bomb-blast photos, he still had nowhere to publish it. He initially took the shot to Dan Smith, a photographer at the University of Central Oklahoma, who knew Longstreath.

Longstreath said Smith called him and sent the photo over to AP to be considered. But, in the chaos that followed the explosion, Longstreath almost ignored the shot.

"My initial reaction when he sent it was that I was too busy," said Longstreath. "I looked at the roll he shot and took that frame. He took the rest of the roll and left that afternoon."

The infant, who had turned one-year-old the day before the explosion, was pronounced dead at the scene. The baby also was the subject of another widely distributed photo, which showed the infant being handed from police Sgt. John

Avera to firefighter Fields, just moments before the Porter picture was taken.

Once it reached the AP nationwide photo wire, the shot of Fields holding the young baby became the subject of debate for several major newspapers, and the main front-page photo for many others.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which played the picture on Page One the following day, made it the solo front-page art, except for a small, inside tease photo along the left column.

"That photo showed what happened better than anything I've seen," said Ashley Halsey, the *Inquirer's* national editor. "There wasn't a photo that better captured what happened there, so we decided to use it."

Halsey, a 27-year newspaper veteran, said he briefly discussed the decision to play up the shot with fellow editors, but believed the tragic elements were important to the story.

"When you have an event that is this absolutely horrible, you will have this kind of photo," Halsey said. "It was deeply disturbing, but it best captured the tragedy."

Halsey said the photo sparked about a dozen phone calls from concerned readers the next day, including several who opposed its publication. But, he said, most agreed it was proper.

"It touched me very deeply because I have a child that same age," Halsey said. "After we put the paper to bed, I walked out to the parking lot and cried. I have never done that before."

Other editors, such as Morton Saltzman of the *Sacramento Bee*, chose not to print the photo, deciding it was inappropriate.

Joe Strupp The Photo Felt Around the World

"We had a rather lengthy discussion about which photo to use on the front page, and we decided not to use it because we believed the baby was dead," said Saltzman, the *Bee's* assistant managing editor for news. "We viewed it as a picture of a corpse, even though there was no information about the baby's condition. It was the most dramatic photo and very compelling, but we chose to go with a photo of a live child rather than a dead one."

For other newspapers, the decision to use the Porter photo or various others involving bloody victims also included lengthy discussions and compromises.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, for example, published the firefighter photo, but did not use it as its main art. The *Chronicle* also took the unusual step of printing a short message to readers, warning them of the brutal pictures.

"There was a lot of discussion over that baby and firefighter photo, and everyone agreed that it had to be used because there were so many children who died," said Lance Iverson, the *Chronicle's* picture editor. "But, at the same time, we didn't want to shock or offend anyone. We just wanted to tell the story and give a visual impression; that is why we ran it."

The response from readers about the baby's condition was so great, the *Chronicle* published a short story the next day explaining how the child had died.

"We got close to 100 phone calls asking what happened to the baby, and we had to report it was deceased," said Iverson. "We rarely get phone calls on photos; I can't recall the last time."

At the *New York Daily News*, where the shot of Avera handing the baby to firefighter Fields made Page One, executive editor Debby Kirenel said the emotion of the shot made the decision easy.

"We thought it showed the gripping feeling of the situation," said Kirenel. "We didn't think it was too harsh; there were a lot of other ones that we used inside that had blood running down shirts and on faces, but this was Page One."

Still, can a newspaper go too far in portraying such a tragic, bloody event as the

Oklahoma City bombing? And did the dramatic firefighter/baby photo cross that line?

For Professor Tom Goldstein, dean of graduate journalism studies at the University of California at Berkeley, the answer is no.

"Newspapers are supposed to reflect the world, and that's what they did," Goldstein said. "There seems to be absolutely no doubt in my mind that those riveting photos should have been used, no doubt. It's not something that you necessarily want to look at during breakfast, but they are riveting."

REFLECT & WRITE

- ❑ Both Porter's and Strupp's articles cover the same event and raise the ethical question of whether or not to publish a disturbing photo of a baby who later died as a result of the Oklahoma City bombing. What is the argument of each one? How does the first-person testimony by Porter convey a different perspective than Strupp's more journalistic coverage? What rhetorical strategies are at work in each one?
- ❑ Porter's account ends with the offer of publication and Strupp's article takes up the debate among editors and officials about whether to publish. How does each one address a different audience? What is the *kairos* shaping each stance and the argument of each?
- ❑ Compare the styles of the two articles, noting rhetorical appeals, language, and even formality. How do these choices influence you as a reader?
- ❑ **Write.** Strupp's article mentions hundreds of calls and protests. Imagine that you are against the publication of this photo for ethical reasons. Consult a recent Prezi presentation created by three students who take this stance: <http://prezi.com/ddlhy/cmu35p/the-photo-felt-around-the-world/> and then compose a storyboard for your own Prezi presentation in which you include more photos and quotations from callers and writers in protest of the photo. Design your presentation to make your argument clear and sound.

Mark Glaser is Executive Editor of *PBS MediaShift* and *Idea Lab* and an expert on online media. Formerly a freelance journalist, he wrote a weekly column for *Online Journalism Review*, where this article appeared on July 13, 2005, five days after the London bombings. Glaser has also written essays for *Harvard's Nieman Reports* and the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, as well as for the *Los Angeles Times*, CNET, HotWired, The New York Times, Conde Nast Traveler, Entertainment Weekly, and the San Jose Mercury News. He was the lead writer for the *Industry Standard's* award-winning *Media Grove* daily email newsletter, named a finalist for 2004 *Online Journalism Awards*, and he won the 2010 *Innovation Journalism Award*. He received a Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Missouri at Columbia and lives in San Francisco.

Did London Bombings Turn Citizen Journalists into Citizen Paparazzi?

Mark Glaser

July 7, 2005, was one of the darkest days for London, as terrorists blew up three underground trains and a double-decker bus, killing scores and injuring hundreds. But out of that darkness came an unusual light, the flickering light from survivors such as Adam Stacey and Ellis Leeper as they shot the scene underground using camcorders and video phones.

Like the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia, the first reports came from people at the scene who had videocameras. In this case, the cameras were smaller and built into phones. But despite the day being a major breakthrough for citizen media—from Wikipedia's collective entry to group blogs such as Londonist's hour-by-hour run-down—it also brought out the worst in some bystanders.

A London blogger who identifies himself only as Justin and blogs at pff.co.uk, told his story of surviving the bombing on the train that exploded near Edgware Road.

His harrowing account includes this scene as he finally comes out of the underground tunnel and into the fresh air: "The victims were being triaged at the station entrance by Tube staff and as I could see little more I could do so I got out of the way and left," he wrote. "As I stepped out people with camcorders vied to try and take pictures of the worst victims. In crisis some people are cruel."

The next day, Justin reflected a bit more on the people outside who were trying to photograph the victims.

"These people were passers-by trying to look into the station," Justin wrote. "They had no access, but could have done well to clear the area rather than clog it. The people on the train weren't all trying to take pictures, we were shocked, dirty and helping each other. People were stunned, but okay. The majority of the train was okay as I walked from my carriage (the last intact one) down through the train I saw no injuries or damage to the remaining four or so carriages. Just people dirty

Claiming Citizenship

Surveying the social and political landscape today, it is clear that America is a place where many cultures combine and cross over one another. And yet even as we have grown accustomed to this reality, the fact of our ever-increasing diversity remains the subject of ongoing, often intense, debate. In the wake of continued demographic changes, key questions arise. In the face of competing interests, whose needs are recognized, and whose viewpoints are overlooked? What does it mean to “claim citizenship” in this country—but also in a larger global community? Questions such as these carry real power, in part, because they require us to negotiate representations of identity, ideals about belonging, and structures that often decide for us the parameters within which we live. How can we preserve the democratic principles of equality and opportunity, while confronting at the same time the many boundaries—of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class and national origin—that seem to divide us? And how are these boundaries both reflected in and maintained by aspects of visual culture all around us?

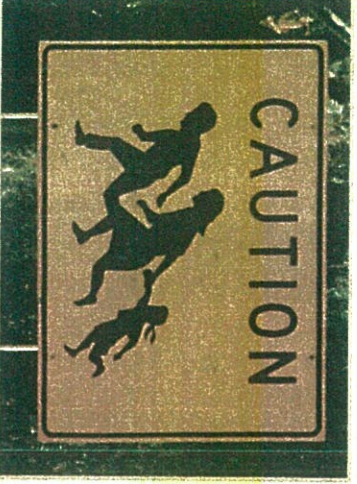


FIGURE 15.1 A road sign near the U.S.-Mexico border, entitled “Caution,” is caught in this Flickr photo by Penny Green.

To get started thinking about these questions, examine the photo in Figure 15.1, of a sign found on the freeway near San Diego. What do you make of the characters’ shapes on the sign? Does the stance and lines of their bodies look like they are running? What might be suggested through the choice of hairstyle on the woman and the girl? How does this highway sign, located just inside the American border, speak to the tension and the trauma surrounding the borderlands of America and Mexico?

Now consider the image in Figure 15.2. How does this image challenge what we might have in our minds about who or what



FIGURE 15.2 A dynamic map reveals the history of immigration through a combination of words and images.

defines “an American”? This map, from the Library of Congress, reveals the shifting history of our country’s demographics through visual rhetoric. Examine the words beneath or above the images of people who were all once considered “immigrants,” crossing from one culture to another, shaping what we now consider to be “American identity” and claiming American citizenship. Both Figure 15.1 and 15.2 present a visual argument about belonging, about who has the right to live, work, be educated, and participate in America.

Throughout this chapter, you’ll encounter many arguments that build upon the points raised by these two images, and you’ll have a chance to explore vital issues such as the fight for equal rights, the struggle for access to land and jobs, and the movement of American culture outward, across the globe, even as new populations seek to enter and become part of this country’s citizenry. In making your way through theses texts, you’ll have the opportunity to reflect in critical ways on what it means to claim citizenship in a country—and a world—as diverse and in flux as our own.

REFLECT & WRITE

- Rice-Oxley immediately engages the interest of the reader with two particularly vivid opening paragraphs. Discuss the brand names and examples in those paragraphs. How many do you know? How many surprise you? How do the examples help establish the author's argument about both globalization and what Rice-Oxley calls "McDomination"?
- In asking, "how much good does American culture bring to the world?" the writer offers a critical analysis about the effects of exporting American products, expressions, and practices. In what ways does this article extend the chapter's focus on "citizenship" to a global level? What do you think constitutes a "global citizen"?
- How does the writer both construct an audience and create a unique *persona* through word choice? What word choices target a specific demographic?
- How does the article integrate quotations as research and as appeals to authority? What is the effect of this rhetorical strategy on you as a reader? What is the effect of this on the writing as a text?
- What organizational structure does this article employ? That is, how does this article itemize its arguments logically? Map out the strategies of rebuttal, concession, and qualification. What is the impact of the last paragraph?
- **Write.** Compose a *personal narrative* about how elements of diverse cultures intersect in the community around you. Include visual evidence and explore how each text shapes how you might think of yourself as participating in a "world community." What examples in your narrative strike you as having "staying power"? Be as detailed as Rice-Oxley in naming specifics. Integrate your images strategically in your personal essay, and then share your work with others.

The two pieces that follow appeared in Rutgers University's newspaper, the Daily Targum, in October 2002. The Targum ran the first piece, written by 2001 Rutgers graduate Joseph Davisin, in its October 16 edition; "Globalization or McDonaldization?" appeared in response the following day. Its author, Jeremy Sklarsky, was a first-year student at Rutgers at the time.

The Daily Targum: Two Opinions on McDonaldization

The Daily Targum: Two Opinions on McDonaldization

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Corporations Leave Small Business Behind

Joseph Davisin

Three months ago, a coffee shop opened on Church Street—where the used CD store "Tunes" was—called Basic Elements. This shop offered homemade beverages and food at prices comparable to similar chain stores. I say "offered" because, as of recently, the place has flown the coop like so many boiler room scams. I later saw the proprietors at Starbucks doing espresso shots and mumbling Wicca chants at the Cranium board game. Basic Elements deserved a hell of a lot more than it was given—a crappy side street with little visibility, despite being right near the Court Tavern (which I know for a fact that you frequent because I can never get a square foot of space to stand on when I'm in there), irregular hours—which is understandable in a quality place run by two people (you can't expect Walmart)—and most of all, our apathy.

Our apathy is linked largely to globalization, which is trying to unite the planet in blanket sameness so that you can experience a thrill at the notion of shopping at a Gap in Prague and eating at a McDonald's in India. Now, something in your mind should tell you there's something wrong with going to a McDonald's in India. The idea of going abroad is to experience new things outside your microcosm. But alas, the success of these businesses in pandering their crack all over the world has gotten people comfortable with this sameness. We stick to the chains because they're familiar, convenient and plowed into our faces on a regular basis. When you get

Globalization or McDonaldization?

Jeremy Sklarsky

I am writing in response to Joseph Davisin's commentary about international corporations conquering the world and eliminating "mom and pop" establishments. Davisin's comments exemplify some of the most commonly held misconceptions about globalization and corporations.

Globalization is not an enemy. It is an international, socioeconomic-political system. Due to advances in information technology, the rise of a postindustrial economy and the collapse of the bipolar Cold War world, a system has arisen in which the interests of individuals and governments around the world are intertwined. The overlap of people's interests has led to increased global cooperation. It can even be argued that the motivation for acts of international terrorism like Sept. 11 is actually a categorical rejection of the globalization system. The young men who crashed airplanes into the World Trade Center were born and raised in some of the countries that are the least globalized.

Globalization is not trying to "unite the planet in blanket sameness." Actually, quite the contrary is true. Take McDonald's, a notorious symbol of globalization, for example. McDonald's was not introduced into foreign countries in order to push American cultural hegemony over the rest of the world. McDonald's was mostly imported into foreign countries by nationals of those countries that wanted to make some profit—not as a part of a master plan to make everyone American. McDonald's is just a company that wants to make money. It isn't part of a "conspiracy of American corporations to take over the world."

that taste of mocha, you're hooked and nothing else seems to matter.

Of course, if it were simply laziness and chemical brainwashing causing the underdogs to fail, it would be easier to rectify, but life is never that simple. There's also the notion of capital to think of. Corporations like Starbucks have enough money to keep their prices relatively the same no matter where you go, so there's not only uniform coverage, but also uniform prices. The same cannot be said of the localized stores because they have less coverage and really need the extra money to stay alive, forcing them to increase their prices to compete. This delegates them to the "fine arts" category in which only the wealthy can indulge, resulting in an even split between cheap and prevalent and expensive and exclusive, with the midways—i.e., the moderately priced Basic Elements—getting squished in the ever-shrinking gap. Our culture becomes the following: Either you go to McSystem for victuals or spend exorbitant amounts of cash on the trendier French fry.

Then, of course, there's the small matter of demand, and that's when convenience takes precedence. Anyone who still reads out there will have little hope of finding a Recto & Verso when the majority only cares about getting textbooks and spirit clothing. The alternative is Barnes and Noble. If you want a real alternative you have to walk the world over to Pyramid Books in Highland Park, which, judging by the abundance of romance novels festering their shelves, leads me to believe that they too are trying desperately to stay afloat.

Countless fables tell of local pizza places rejecting the system, but are they really? Or are they just hiding their time before Burger King offers pizza for breakfast? They too seem to be getting increasingly gimmicky (check out

Furthermore, a quick trip to the McDonald's Web site will put to rest anyone's fears that Ronald and friends are trying to undermine the culture of a local population. In Italy, McDonald's serves Mediterranean salads, Japanese customers can get teriyaki burgers. In Israel there are several kosher McDonald's restaurants, and in Mexico burritos are served. These are just a few examples of when McDonald's has actually changed itself to fit into the local culture. In India, the country that Davisin used in his column as an example, consumers can get McDonald's sandwiches made with mutton and chicken instead of beef, as McDonald's recognizes the importance of the dietary laws in Indian religions and cultures. McDonald's has also initiated many community service programs. In Saudi Arabia, it was the first chain restaurant to sponsor a campaign to increase seatbelt awareness.

A McDonald's in every country? Sounds good to me. Thomas Friedman, columnist for *The New York Times*, recently put forth a theory—which has been proven—that states that no two countries with a McDonald's have gone to war with each other since McDonald's arrived in their countries. In Friedman's own words, people in countries that have developed an economy at the level needed for McDonald's to be successful would rather "wait in line for burgers instead of in line for gas masks."

Davisin refers to corporations as though they are some supernatural enemy imposed upon us by some external forces. Where did they get all of their money? And why are they so successful? A chain like McDonald's or Starbucks Coffee has had so much success for one simple reason: They are just better than the "corner shop." But chances are, if a local store can make a lower-priced product of higher quality, it will thrive. Take another corporation—Pizza Hut. Pizza Hut just isn't that good. Result? There are hundreds

King's Pizza and the ultimate tax write-off that is their wide-screen TV) and streamlined (top-pings ranging from torrellini to ecstasy). There are still a few locales, like Noodle Gourmet, that do solid business on their own two legs, but it's not enough. What we need to do is alternate our habits a little. Back to coffee—like Café 52? I know you do because I see you bastards flood it every Monday night for the free music, then try West End on alternate nights. Spread out! Balance the pros and cons of each place and try to find a niche in one when the other doesn't meet your needs. But above all, give newer places your undivided attention because they may not be around long enough without you. Show the smaller places that there's a need for them and that quality need not mean pricey. And don't let companies know where you're going, lest they turn that into a trend as well. Be as random as a chaos pendulum.

of individually owned pizza parlors around America. We shouldn't, however, support every local pizza place just for the sake of fighting corporations—that's just silly.

I'm not suggesting globalization or corporations are perfect—they are far from it. Many Third World countries would probably be better off if the World Bank or IMF behaved better. And corporations could probably afford to pollute a little less and pay their workers a little bit more. But that's really not the issue. The point is that globalization is not a choice. The real question is how everyone is going to act in order to benefit from its existence. If local coffee shops wish to thrive in the globalization system, they'd better be damned good, otherwise Starbucks will run them out of business—and for good reason. Consumers deserve to consume good products. If the only reason to go to a local burger joint is to prevent the domination of McDonald's, then I'll have another Big Mac.

REFLECT & WRITE

- Notice how each writer relies upon a different understanding of "globalization" and what it means to be a member of such a radically changing society. Based on this, map out the points of each argument. How does each writer use concrete examples and structure his perspective through carefully chosen rhetorical appeals?
- Davisin emphasizes the necessity of what he calls "visibility" and small establishments. How does his language create a favorable image for local stores in contrast to his disparagement of "blanket sameness" across the globe?
- How does Sklarsky structure his rebuttal? What points does he choose to refute and do you follow the logic of his conclusion? Which piece is more persuasive to you, and why?
- **Write.** Draft a response to both pieces, advancing beyond the debate between Davisin and Sklarsky. Be certain to quote passages from both in your own article and offer your own argument about where we stand with regard to our participation or place in a global economy. Finally, where might you publish your composition?

In this humorous essay, Paul Feine discusses the fearsome aspects of the McDonald's empire but concludes that Americans both at home and abroad just cannot live without the Golden Arches. Feine is director of Innovation for the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. He published this piece in aworldconnected.org, a project committed to promoting conversations about how to achieve a free, peaceful, and prosperous world. Feine regularly posted this article on his blog, A World Connected.

McBastards: McDonald's and Globalization

Paul Feine

On a recent trip to Paris with my family, I was standing inside a McDonald's restaurant gazing out at the street as my wife ordered Le Happy Meal for our two-year-old. My son at the time was happily tugging away at my hair from his perch in his baby backpack (one of the most significant technological innovations in recent history, to my mind).

We hadn't traveled to Paris with the intention of eating at McDonald's, but we were looking for a quick fix for our hungry little boy, and McDonald's represented a cheap alternative to the more traditional cafés. Typical Paris cafés are not only far more expensive, but as previous experience made clear, they tend to be filled with Parisians who are less than charmed by the presence of toddlers.

As I pondered the differing cultural attitudes toward children and stared out onto the busy Paris street, my gaze rested on an elderly French man, whom I instantly categorized as quintessentially French, complete with black beret, long black trench coat, and a cane. The man hobbled by the entrance to McDonald's, stopped, turned to look inside, spat loudly, and sneered "bastards," or its rough equivalent in French.

I sipped my coffee, which was very good (Café Jacques Vabre, I learned later), while our son used his pommes frites as a ketchup delivery device and my wife chafed from bottle Evian. We both chuckled as I shared with her image of the authentic anti-McDonald's activist I had just witnessed.

McWhipping Boy

As the symbol for cultural imperialism and multinational corporate greed, McDonald's takes a lot of heat. McSpotlight, the anti-McDonald's website, for instance, boasts over one million hits per month. Critics



FIGURE 15.10 This McDonald's locates itself inside a mall, inviting children to sit on the bench next to Ronald.

demonize McDonald's for its unabashed pursuit of profits, its disregard for nutritional value and the environment, and the way it panders to children.

Most recently, McDonald's has been condemned for systematically seeking to addict naïve youngsters to its fatty fare, just like its evil older brothers in the cigarette business. In fact, crusading public interest lawyer John Banzhaf (whose van sports a license plate with a shortened version of "sue the bastards") is suing McDonald's in an attempt to hold them responsible for fast food addicts' health problems.

Indeed, though this multinational giant controls 43% of the US fast food market, McDonald's avarice seems to have no bounds. As Nick Gillespie of *Reason* magazine points out, "McDonald's is so desperate for customers that it's held prices essentially constant over the past two decades, while boosting portion sizes (burgers, fries, and drinks are all bigger than they used to be), expanding its menu, and building elaborate play structures for kids while simultaneously throwing increasingly sophisticated toys at them."

As anyone with small children knows, safe and secure McDonald's Playlands can be a dream come true, especially when you're stuck inside on a rainy day with kids who desperately need to burn some energy. Tiny plastic toys are received with as much delight as any large plastic toy they might have received last Christmas and, it must be emphasized, they're free.

Maybe, just maybe, McDonald's, in its unwavering pursuit of profits, has figured out the secret to succeeding in business—you've got to give the people what they want.

McCulture?

Oh, yes, maybe McDonald's is fine for the US. Perhaps we're too value conscious, gluttonous, and superficial to care that our landscapes are littered with gleaming arches that have already polluted our bodies and our minds. But surely the same cannot be said for other societies around the world. Isn't it true that places that still have truly authentic dining experiences should be protected from the barbaric McHordes that are clamoring at their gates?

Golden Arches East, a recent book edited by James Watson, seeks to gain a better grasp on how McDonald's is affecting Asian culture. The results of this inquiry are in many ways surprising. For instance, one essay tells the story of an unintended and unanticipated consequence of McDonald's invasion of

Hong Kong—the rest rooms in the city became cleaner.

Before the first McDonald's opened up in the mid-1970s, restaurant restrooms in Hong Kong were notoriously dirty. Over time, the cleanliness standards of McDonald's were replicated by other restaurants eager to out-compete the increasingly popular restaurant.

In Korea, McDonald's established the practice of lining up in an orderly fashion to order food—the traditional custom, it seems, was to mob the counter.

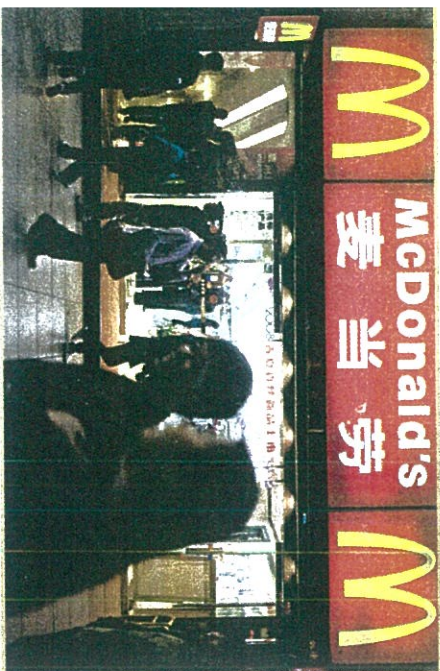


FIGURE 15.11 This photo reveals the consistent "McCulture" of each store, in terms of the trademark colors and golden arches.

When the first McDonald's was opened in Moscow, it was necessary for an employee to stand outside the McDonald's with a blow horn in order to explain to those in the queue that the smiling employees were not laughing at them but, rather, were pleased to serve them.

Moreover, and in contradistinction to the widespread assumption that McDonald's is having an implacably homogenizing effect on global culture, *Golden Arches East* is filled with examples of the pains McDonald's takes to appeal to the unique local tastes and customs of people around the world. My own experience with the decidedly leisurely attitude of McDonald's employees in southern Spain further attests to McDonald's ability to adapt to the local culture.

Is It True That No Two Countries with McDonald's Have Ever Gone to War?

Long before I'd enjoyed the Andalusian version of McDonald's, I traveled to Belgrade, in what was then Yugoslavia, and I must admit that I was ecstatic to see a sign for a recently opened McDonald's. I'd just spent a couple of months consuming nothing but souvlaki, salad, and Ouzo in Greece, and the very thought of Quarter-Pounder and a Coke made my mouth water.

My traveling buddy and I proceeded to wait in line for more than an hour and, as I stood happily munching on a french fry that brought back sweet memories of childhood Sunday-after-church treats, I looked across a sea of dark haired Yugoslavians into the eyes of two beautiful, blonde, obviously American women (actually it turned out they were Canadian nurses, but who am I to complain?). Absurdly, we waved to each other and fought through the crowd to greet one other like dear old friends. The memory of that day in Belgrade still brings a smile to my face.

Although you often hear people say it, it's not quite true that no two countries with McDonald's have ever gone to war—both the US and Serbia, for example, had McDonald's during the conflict between the two nations. But even if McDonald's isn't a kind of multinational for-profit god of peace, McDonald's does provide cheap food, decent coffee, and free entertainment for kids, not to mention a salad-in-a-cup for health-conscious parents.

Around the world, this increasingly popular symbol (like it or not) of America is encouraging healthy competition—competition that, in many cases, is leading to improved sanitation standards and civility. And sometimes, just sometimes, McDonald's even brings people together and creates a few smiles. . . . just like its commercials say it does.

The bastards.