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Push the Button: Interactive Television and Collaborative Journalism in Japan

by

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Abstract

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As viewing habits have been transformed globally by on-demand services, and viewership has lagged due to competition from social and interactive technologies, television professionals have struggled to articulate a vision for their medium’s future. In Japan, a strong decline in ratings among critical under-40 demographics had already created tension within the dominant broadcast model when the Fukushima disasters ushered in a crisis of confidence in the nation's journalism. While some Japanese media professionals used the incident as an occasion to engage in self-critique, others largely circumvented the delicate questions of self-censorship, reporters’ clubs (kisha kurabu), and sponsor coercion— and focused instead on restoring audience engagement through the development and testing of pioneering interactive television technology. Meanwhile, the technological rather than ethical focus of post-Fukushima changes inspired a new journalistic movement to create alternative digital spaces for informational exchange and political expression, with the intent of harnessing interactive digital technology in a way that bypasses the government controls and self-censorship characteristic of mainstream Japanese media. Despite a common idealism and intellectual curiosity, the two groups are hindered by divergent structural limitations; television industry insiders are fighting a conservative and imitative corporate climate whose content decisions are governed by the interventions of two monolithic advertising firms, while the independent media are profoundly alienated from this
system. Engaging contemporary anthropological conversations concerning the evolving nature of mass media and media professionalism in the digital era, my work tracks the Japanese independent media's epistemic project to reform public culture in Japan and dismantle longstanding barriers to freedom of the press, as well as the mass media's more subtle application of interactive technology to TV content. Thus, I argue that analysis of these Japanese media innovations prompts new theoretical consideration of the divide between expert and amateur production, the use of media to constitute social change, and the nature of television itself.
"Japan is like the Galapagos Islands. There, creatures have been able to exist which do not exist elsewhere, and could not exist elsewhere. And some have died out which should have lived. Japan is also an island, and our TV is like those creatures which could not live anywhere else and ought to have died out." So lamented a former executive for Dentsu, one of the world's largest advertising firms and controller of much of Japan's mass media content, as we stood outside of the Tokyo offices of his new employer—a prominent television production company. He was among many working in the Japanese television industry who, during the months immediately following the massive earthquake and Fukushima nuclear disaster of March 2011, perceived mass broadcast to be on the verge of collapse. People in the industry whispered conspiratorially to me that average citizens would never see the collapse coming, would carry on until—as in the case of the 2008 global banking crisis—its inevitability exceeded the industry’s capacity for containment. Such theories were borne of the industry’s declining advertising revenue, and an increasing amount of time spent by audiences using social media at the expense of TV time. But significantly for this project, television and print journalism in Japan were also suffering from a crisis of public confidence when I first arrived in 2011, a general sense that the system was structurally biased towards compromised ethical performance after citizens and journalists alike found the reporting on the March 11, 2011, earthquake and subsequent Fukushima nuclear plant disaster to be lacking. Blame for the conservative reporting was assigned to various aspects of the broadcast industry—from its close relationship with the monolithic advertising firms Dentsu (one of the world’s largest firms) and Hakuhodo (the oldest in Japan), to the nation’s reporters’ club (kisha kurabu) system, which relegates press conferences to performances before a select group of mutually beholden individuals who share office space every day.

1 Interview, July 7, 2011
Accustomed to such rhetoric by 2012, I was not surprised when during our interview a former Hakuhodo employee mused: “There is NHK, There is TBS, TV Asahi, There is Fuji TV, there is NTV. Five stations is probably too many… too many. And so they all make inane (kudaranai) programs, so I’m thinking that maybe two or three will disappear or become specialty channels. Like one for variety, one for sports. Maybe they can change that way… [Japan has] BS channels, cable, and on-demand viewing, and I think people are going to increasingly move to watching those. I admit that I want a news-only channel. It’s weird that Japan has five networks, eh?”

Meanwhile, by 2001, former Fuji TV producer Ōta Tōru was already identifying one of the main tensions surrounding the medium, stating that Fuji TV, and networks like NTV and TBS have been repeatedly doing the same thing for ten years, and at least in the genre within which he worked (“trendy” dramas), the formula had already been exploited to exhaustion.

Television, he argued, is a medium that “sleeps with the times”, meaning that it surrenders itself to contemporary trends rather than leading them. And the most important task of a television producer is therefore to understand the swing of the pendulum. More recently, Ujiie Natsuhiko, a frequent contributor one of the blogs written for and by industry insiders, commented that television companies must evolve from media companies to media service companies, and update their conceptualization of viewers to the category of users.

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2 These are the national stations. In Tokyo there is also TV Tokyo, for example. Interview, Nov 1, 2012.
4 ibid.
This dissertation is an attempt to understand the current state and stakes of the Japanese television industry, by exploring two ways in which idealistic stakeholders are attempting to force fundamental changes in the way TV does business and produces content. On the surface, the approaches of the two categories of actors on whom I have chosen to focus seem as profoundly different as the individuals themselves. The first group, represented in part one of the dissertation, are the industry insiders; a cross section of business and creative players who are working to construct and introduce provocative new television technology, to fulfill the promise of interactivity suggested by early experiments in symbiotic content and inspired by the rise of internet use in the 1990s. Their projects, which frequently draw upon traditional Japanese programmatic themes and formats, are using cutting edge technology to “turn viewers into users” (see Chapter 3), to allow audiences to co-create narratives as this new genre of television unfolds live. The second group (part two of the dissertation) is comprised predominantly, but not exclusively, of disaffected former industry employees, and those who could not, for reasons that largely amount to insufficient educational credentials in status-conscious Japan, gain employment by the companies and corporations whose members make up the technologically minded first category. For this group, technological transformation is an issue of secondary concern to a project of comprehensive ethical reform—or forcing change to the basic conditions of journalistic labor. The means by which these individuals attempt to induce change varies, but is largely based on a strategy of creating alternate media spaces in which audiences are encouraged to become content creators, or at least participants in non-mainstream production spaces, to increase the diversity of voices represented in the public sphere(s). That the sharpest criticism of the broadcast industry should come largely from outsiders lacking “cultural capital” is not surprising; with the freedom (and often the insider knowledge) to identify mass media’s
structural deficiencies, these astute observers are also often dismissed for being doomed to ineffectiveness on the basis of the same outsider status. Nonetheless, it was interesting to me to see the extent to which the mass media flirted with such individuals, offering more prominent figures such as Uesugi Takashi and Tsuda Daisuke\(^6\) regular hosting gigs on (usually BS channel)\(^7\) television programs, and radio stations.

During my research I encountered much parallel (self-study) being engaged in by the industry insiders, whose project I had begun to think of as a “closed information system,” or a system of interactive technology within which potential expression and use is bounded, always already managed on behalf of users by the time they arrive. The technologies developed and tested by television during my fieldwork can only be used with television, and many of them only with particular programs. When a television special designed to make use of a particular application ended, the app too went dark and inaccessible, politely informing the would-be user that its associated program had ended, and thanking them for their participation. As ephemeral spaces, interactive TV interfaces were generally not designed as downloadable applications–that was the purview of more general program non-specific interactive endeavors, such as wiz tv (NTV), mediaTriggr (Fuji), JoinTown (NTV), TBSbubutasu (TBS), or Miruzō. Rather, they were fabricated as liminal web pages that could be accessed by any web-accessible device, or interfaces using Japan’s unique data hōsō (data broadcast) infrastructure to allow home users to play along via remote control.

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\(^6\) In this dissertation I will follow Japanese and anthropological convention when referring to Japanese individuals, and writing their last (family) names before their surnames. According to American convention, Tsuda Daisuke would be Daisuka Tsuda, as Tsuda is his “last” name.

\(^7\) Each of the major television networks has, in addition to its main channel, a secondary “BS” (broadcasting satellite) channel, whose programming is typically lower rated than that of its parent company’s main digital terrestrial broadcast channel.
By contrast, the “open information systems” appropriated by the independent media resembled less a pop-up retail space, and more a sphere of ongoing engagement. Unlike the closed systems of the major broadcasters, these technologies (Nico Nico Douga, UStream) encouraged individualized, improvisational use, and while the potential range of expression made possible therein was limited somewhat comparably by the design of expert technology workers, their function exceeded that of a particular program. Thus, while the Independent Web Journal (IWJ) might use UStream to broadcast press conferences, their audiences could not only interact with such media events as commentators, but take up the same tools to produce their own broadcasts (Chapter 5). Thus in addition to participating in Jiýū Hōdō Kyôkai; (The Free Press Association of Japan) press conferences via the company dwango’s broadcast/chat service Nico Nico Douga (NND), I was inspired to create my own individual (and short-lived) weekly broadcast, and conscripted to serve as co-host on a NND-transmitted news program (Chapter 6). Media education group Our Planet-TV treated open-information systematicity as a kind of battle cry, lobbying in earnest for a greater diversity of voices in the public sphere (their term), while simultaneously doing their part to train individuals to function as tech-savvy participants (Chapter 7).

The pedagogical spaces of both the inside and outside systems drew upon similar data to make the case for their pursuit of technological solutions. Among these were NHK (Nippon Hōdō Kyôkai, Japan’s public broadcaster)’s 2010 data showing that 11% of the country consumed no television—up 2% from two years earlier, and 1/5 of people under the age of 30 did not watch TV. Moreover, despite the introduction of mobile-phone viewable TV in 2006, television consumption outside of the home had not increased. While seemingly small shifts to the layperson, the fact of Japanese television ratings being buoyed up by the 70+ set was
uncomfortable for the industry, and is perhaps responsible for inconsistent advertising revenue since 2005. According to NHK report, in funding year 2009, for example, the commercial networks experienced a decline in advertising revenue ranging from 8-16% (from a peak of 2 trillion yen it ended up down 10% within five years), but 2010 saw a slight recovery, as advertising revenue rose (1.1%) for the first time in six years. While insiders suggest that a steady decline in ad revenue has leveled out (soko o utta), Japanese networks have continued to lose audience share as the overall number of television viewers has decreased. This is what concerns some TV staff the most, as viewing rates have fallen an average of more than 15.6%. Nonetheless, as I outline in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, an outdated system of ratings measurement is partly to blame; while ratings aggregator Video Research Institute (VRI) states that live viewing remains the dominant mode of television consumption in each genre, TV Asahi owned newspaper Asahi Shinbun reported on January 31, 2013 to the contrary, arguing that the dominant mode of viewing TV dramas and movies has shifted to recording.

Joel Stocker quoted Ien Ang in 1996 as she posed the question of what strategies television has employed to persuade people to become part of its audience. In 2015, I am asking this question again in a slightly reworked form: What strategies are Japanese television companies employing to persuade people to remain audience members or to return to TV if they have abandoned the medium?

The First Citizen in Space Was a TV Newsman, or, Why Television in Japan?

8 Emi Morofuji and Yoko Watanabe, Changes and Trends in Media Use, (Tokyo, 2011).
9 Ujiie, “Terebi No Mirai: Terebi Wa Fuiben De Jidai Okure No Sābisu Da.”
As sociologist John Clammer wrote, attempting to characterize the nature of mass media in Japan "...The sheer size and power of the Japanese media, and of advertising within the media, make it central to understanding cultural processes in contemporary Japan".\(^\text{12}\) His assessment captures the present paradoxical position of the Japanese mass media infrastructure (advertising companies included) who are accustomed to a certain insulation from risk and repercussion as a result of their size and influence, but for whom that size and accordant institutional conservatism render it challenging for them to adapt to a rapidly changing media climate. Thus, in representing these companies as both powerful and perilous, I am representing the nervous circumstances surrounding their current position in Japanese society. Television in Japan represents a conveniently bounded case study with its own set of unique tensions and pressures, even in a world where media circulates transnationally. As mentioned above, the country has five network “key” stations, that supply the entire archipelago with programming, stations that are, as media researcher Sakai Osamu puts it, borrowing the English expression: “\textit{Media konguromaritto}” (media conglomerates), each owning one of the nation’s major newspapers in addition to its broadcast networks.\(^\text{13}\) By contrast with the US, which also has national networks (NBC, ABC, CBS), but also a plethora of cable channels, only nine percent of Japanese homes subscribed to cable in 2014.\(^\text{Anonymous:vf}\) And while there are countries other than Japan whose systems are similarly biased towards national broadcasters, none exhibit the particular characteristics of the Japanese system: the ratio of national broadcast networks to citizens, and the intense role of advertising companies in constructing programming and influencing news content.


\(^\text{13}\) Osamu Sakai, \textit{Terebi Wa Ikinokoreru Ka?}, (Tokyo: Discover Twenty-One, 2011).
Although I do not intend to rehash a general history of Japanese television here, as it has been outlined comprehensively elsewhere, a few moments in the medium’s history do bear emphasis. First, the five major broadcasters in Japan (TV Asashi, Fuji TV, NTV, TBS, and public station NHK) operate “key” stations in Tokyo, and provide content to regional channels, with the identity of that station generally being determined by the network whose news broadcast they use. (Broadcast law prohibits local channels from having an exclusive relationship with any one key station (i.e. establishing affiliates. But partner stations generally get 80% of their content from a single Tokyo key station.) As newspaper (and radio station) owners, the television networks have been consistently challenged to protect the interests of their print and broadcast journalism markets. The result, as summarized by media scholar Eleanor Westney, has been dependence by the conglomerates’ television divisions on the journalistic efforts and resources of their print counterparts, and even the deliberate retarding of their broadcast divisions so as to avoid competition between the two for audiences. By the 1970s Nobutaka Kanai, the chairman of Fuji TV, criticized Japan’s newspapers for the ramifications of this setup, and claimed that the newspapers had prevented Japanese television from modernizing by protecting their own interests. In support of this claim, industry insiders overwhelmingly gestured to the example of TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), whose capacity to aggressively engage new media trends was seen to be a result of comparatively weak ties to its parent company’s newspaper, Mainichi Shinbun, which suffered from systemic financial problems that made it undesirable for its parent company to privilege it to the detriment of TBS. Supporting this assessment, TBS’ news department, TNS (Tokyo News Service) was by 1990 the largest among the commercial

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17 ibid.
broadcasters, and able to pay the equivalent of twelve million U.S. dollars to send one of its TV news reporters, Akiyama Toyohiro aboard a Russian spacecraft as the country’s first citizen in space. The resultant broadcast netted ratings of around 36%.  

The idea of television as something consumed as part of a collective ritual (potentially unfolding in public spaces) seemed to dominate Japan’s thinking about the medium during the early days of television technology. A philosophy of television emerged not just from the reality of the equipment being too expensive for most consumers, but from a related conceptualization of ideal consumption patterns that revolved around numbers of total numbers of viewers rather than individual TV sets. As such, the president of the Yomiuri Shinbun (newspaper), and Japan’s first commercial television network, NTV\(^\text{19}\) Shoriki Matsutaro, focused on installing televisions in public places (gaito terebi), from street corners to train stations.\(^\text{20}\) Bars, restaurants, and barber shops gradually followed suite as spaces of television consumption, and as communications researcher Anne Cooper-Chen has noted, the Japanese press claimed the outcome of such efforts to be sufficiently popular that an estimated 20,000 people gathered to publicly consume a single sumo match in 1953. It was between 1956 and 1960 that television viewing relocated from the public to private sphere, largely in response to the fledgling industry’s appropriation of Emperor Akihito’s marriage engagement to build anticipation for his 1959 wedding as a massive public broadcast event to be consumed in a familial setting. This campaign ultimately succeeded– as two million people hurriedly purchased television sets at

\(^{19}\) NTV began broadcasting on August 28, 1953, months after public broadcaster NTV went on air in February 1, 1953. At the time only 866 television sets existed in Tokyo. Thus, as I describe in Chapter 3, the two networks banded together to celebrate their 60th anniversary on February 1, 2013.  
lowered prices, and therein created an estimated at-home market of 15 million viewers for the fifty-minute wedding parade.

Though I also refer in Chapter 2 to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a catalyst for massive changes in broadcast infrastructure later in this dissertation, it also bears mention upfront to explain how the medium so rapidly became modern. It was in anticipation of this global event that Japan initiated efforts to import American hardware and to develop innovations such as color and satellite broadcast on its own.21 The outcome was a performance of miraculous post-war recovery and sophisticated technological development, which has ostensibly been sustained in the connection between Japanese national pride and global performances of technological innovation and sophistication.

Despite the craze for home television sets mentioned above, Japan has arguably retained a connection between TV viewing and public reception—or at least made regular attempts at innovation in this area. Following the failed introduction of television wristwatches in 1983, which nonetheless predicted the ubiquity of mp3 players, cellphones, and smart devices (including, once again, watches) in the public sphere, TV tried to insinuate itself into even the most basic of cellphones. My own pre-paid flip-phone could, in 2011, receive this live “one-seg”22 (wansegu) signal, but the service has never become popular with users, and its ratings immeasurability is therefore not of primary concern to broadcast industry employees. And it has

22 The service was dubbed “one-seg”, because it broadcast television over “one segment” of an HDTV digital terrestrial signal. Japanese cellphone providers NTT docomo and KDDI have been major promoters of such technology.
been argued that television is returning to the model of *gaito terebi* after a period of incubation inside the home, via mobile devices and the hybridized public/private viewing they introduce.\(^{23}\)

It is this tension between a willingness to readily experiment with new kinds of television technology, and a reticence to depart from proven formats of programming that makes television in Japan particularly interesting. While there are certainly voices clamoring for changes to TV content, I would argue that these are muffled in comparison to that of the press releases and

\(^{23}\) Kazutaka Shimura, “Soto Terebi,” *Ayablog*, October 15, 2013, http://ayablog.com/old/2013/10/15/%e3%82%bd%e3%83%88%e3%83%86%e3%83%ac%e3%83%93%ef%bc%88%e5%bf%97%e6%9d%91%e4%b8%80%e9%9a%86%ef%bc%89/.
fanfare surrounding technological development. Consistent with the country’s hard-won self-conception as a giant of engineering prowess, twenty of Japan’s rival TV manufacturers are currently participating in a government-backed research collaborative called NexTV-F, whose goal is to make Japan the first country in the world to exceed the Ultra High Definition model (so-called 4K sets, capable of 4x the resolution of 1080p displays) that hit the market in 2012, and broadcast in 8K (“Super Hi-Vision”). The race to technological leadership is both a competition with South Korea, who has been testing 4K broadcast, and part a struggle to protect the country’s legacy. While Japanese manufacturers carry on with production of 4K television sets in the interim, national broadcaster NHK currently intends to skip that standard in its direct move towards 8K. And while it has support in this venture—the station was responsible for Asia’s first color broadcast in 1960, and first national HDTV broadcast in 1994—it is unclear whether the consumer market actually desires such technological leaps—a global downturn in HDTV sales for 2013 would suggest otherwise.

Although it might appear arbitrary to select the U.S. as a basis of comparison for the Japanese broadcast industry, I moving to do so in this introduction as part of a conversation about how technological transformation will shape the future of both a medium and of the journalistic profession. Development of next generation television technology, and the consequent reconceptualization of the medium are projects about which a bidirectional international conversation is in progress. Moreover, the structure of these industries in the U.S. and Japan differs to such a degree that comparison is able to draw out the elements of each that

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24 An 8K television set would have a resolution that is 16 times that of current HD sets. As broadcast in 4K is still, as I mentioned, being tested, broadcasting in 8K seems a formidable challenge. It has been suggested that 8K might represent the maximum practical resolution for consumer-level television sets.

25 It intends to start 8K test broadcasts in 2016 and commence full broadcasting in 2020. In the meantime, at least, display manufacturer Toshiba claims that Ultra High-Definition television will be mainstream by 2017.

render them extreme typologies. Indeed, the infrastructure and business of mass broadcast in the U.S. resembles Japan only insofar as both countries, governed by the same neoliberal economic forces that have been acting upon contemporary journalism, are preeminently focused on national markets at the expense of the local. This is not to say that they uniformly speak to a national public—on the contrary, influenced by marketing interests, they have turned to niche marketing on a national scale. But in the U.S., an early drive to regulate and discipline television has largely fallen away, as the country’s numerous cable channels have in a sense distracted from excessive policing of the national non-cable networks. In Japan, as was the case with earlier print and television culture in the U.S., legislated free speech does not prevent informal and cultural policing; in Japan, this often takes the form of exercising “self restraint” in reporting so as to avoid the ire of the vocal political right (netto ugoku—the internet right-wing among them) advertising sponsors, etc. A common critique of Japanese television is that it sees not its potential to help constitute a public sphere (or spheres), but solely to turn audiences into potential consumers to whom it can sell celebrities and other products. I argue in Chapter 4 that Japan in particular is nonetheless skilled at fostering a national imaginary through programming that regularly takes viewers on trips around the country to try local delicacies and visit hotspots, among strategies.

Big Data

29 For more about this group see 1
Regardless of the decline in television viewing mentioned above, media “contact time” (sesshoku jikan) remained essentially the same in 2010 and 2013 surveys of the Tokyo (Kantō) metropolitan area conducted by massive advertising company Hakuhodo, leading to that organization’s speculation that Japan had achieved media saturation.\(^{31}\) But it seems that media consumption has once again left the home to return to the streets, as while internet access via PC steadily declines, cellphone internet access is increasing. And this trend is particularly significant among the young (20s and 30s) women whom advertisers are most desperate to reach.\(^ {32}\) Specifically, between 2010 and 2013, women in their 20s accessed the internet through their smart phones 119.9 minutes a day (up from 67.8 minutes), and 30-somethings increased their mobile internet access from 45.3 to 73.9 minutes.\(^ {33}\) Despite what these statistics may imply, television consumption maintains its claim to the majority of respondents’ media access time despite the aforementioned decline in minutes viewed; according to another survey, TV watching time fell from 163.5 minutes a day to 151.5 minutes a day between 2009 and 2013. This number was certainly buoyed by viewership among older demographics, as Japanese women in their 60s consumed the most TV (211.3 minutes/day), while men and women in their 20s both consumed the least (108.4 and 128.0 minutes)—seemingly because they were spending more time engaged with cellphones.\(^ {34}\) These surveys were extremely specific, tracking how individuals used the internet in order to identify their habits and determine best marketing practices. It can be inferred that the concept of “social TV” was borne of such studies, which showed that these

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33 *ibid*, 2-4.
young audiences were spending the majority of their cellphone time interacting with friends, either via SMS, Line\textsuperscript{35}, email, or by taking and circulating photographs.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, media researcher Osamu Sakai argues this point directly.\textsuperscript{37}

Such data circulated widely among Tokyo’s media research groups during my fieldwork, in support of the various strategies to increase audience share, or simply as the outcome of research conducted by groups like NHK’s Research Association. Those wishing to combine internet and television content, or to go further with experiments in social TV had to face the reality that in 2013, 69.7% of television viewers neither read nor wrote about programs while watching them, and 50.8% had never written about TV on social media at all. A point of optimism was actually to be found in the statistic that only 29.4% of audience members did not use their cellphones at all while watching TV— in this, broadcast professionals perceived an opening, the potential to redirect the individual already holding her phone to employ it in a proscribed manner.\textsuperscript{38}

Other surveys abound: one reported that Japanese iPhone and Android users accessed YouTube more (measured both daily and weekly) than the official websites of television companies, while \textit{Nico Nico Douga} came in third, and UStream fourth. Social media use among the smartphone owners mostly involved the circulation of images— either photographs or videos, but also the re-posting of content via sharing or retweeting. The survey found, too, that while

\textsuperscript{34} Smartphone use was the highest among women in their 20s, while overall media consumption time was highest among men ages 15-19 (380.3 minutes) and women women ages 30-39 years (377.1). \{Partners:2013ta, 4\}

\textsuperscript{35} Korean parent company Naver’s messaging software “Line” exploded in popularity during my fieldwork (2012-2013), largely because it allows users to send “sticker” images in addition to emoticons, and to send messages internationally.


men continued to represent the majority of cellphone users, women, young people (in general), and—most importantly—television viewers were well represented. The authors of this survey chose to view its data in terms of generative potential. Rather than lamenting that only a minority of television viewers or smartphone users were already engaging in the kind of behavior they wished to promote, they saw great potential to nudge these users from one kind of behavior to something proximate, serving the economic exigencies of television.

Ujiie Natsuhiro, a member of the Sōharuterebi Suishin Kaigi (Social TV Promotion Collective), draws his colleagues’ attention to challenges not necessarily represented in the prolific and enthusiastic commentary on the above data. For example, getting viewers to Tweet (post on Twitter) about programs is not necessarily a bridge to their audiences tuning into the program. With so much social media engaged “on the go,” there is no way to set up one’s DVR to record programming when so inspired by a tweet, and easy to forget to do so by the time one returns home. And the industry has not really managed to formulate a response to the ever-rising ubiquity of DVRs, which as of my fieldwork could not be accounted for by ratings, and allow users to skip commercials (Indeed, the latter is cited as the most common reason to record television apart from viewing at one’s convenience: “You can watch a one hour program in thirty minutes!” (Haya mawashi de miru to 1-jikan bangumi ga 30-bun gurai de mirarerushi!))

That the latter is still a source of consternation to the industry is evidence of the turpitude with which it reacts to changes; to an American audience it may seem as though this entire conversation is merely a rehashing of the late 1990s paranoia about the effects of technology like

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the TiVo, and concern for how to convince audiences distracted by the internet to use their online time to engage TV-related content.\textsuperscript{41} And indeed, in contemporary Japan, another survey claims that recorded television represents 68.2\% of consumed television content, while real-time viewing (\textit{riarutaimu de no shichō}) is only 13.7\%.\textsuperscript{42} And while the conversation about audiences abandoning television for social media, or skipping commercials with the help of DVRs is not a new one in Japan, it seems to have taken the country longer to reach the state of hand-wringing seen in the American industry fifteen years ago. And as in the U.S., there is considerable concern about unregulated convergence, of viewers circulating images in a way that defies an outdated economic logic governing the medium. This is to say, when a program airs in Japan, it quickly appears online with Korean or Chinese subtitles and no way to track viewership or reap financial benefit from its transnational (and local) distribution. As in the US, this seems a problem that can only be solved by the industry itself matching the speed of informal channels—becoming equally agile if such a thing is possible.

\textbf{Crisis?}

The current state of television was rarely, in my experience, spoken of as a “crisis” (\textit{kuraishisu}, or any other Japanese synonym). Rather, the situation was conceived of in terms of potential—as a puzzle to be solved, and an opportunity to engage and experiment with new technology, if not a series of worrying circumstances surrounding the aging of the marketplace and ever-evolving modes of viewership. But when I arrived in 2011 to begin fieldwork, variations on the term were being tossed around in relation to state of \textit{journalism}, which many people told me had finally crossed over from “system in need of reform” to “system putting citizens at risk”. What was considered to be unconscionable withholding of information inspired activists such as those I profile in Chapters 5-7 to go beyond their usual punditry to form organizations intended to act as media watchdogs and to provide alternate information channels for others who felt they could no

\textsuperscript{41} See 1 for a great overview of this conversation.
longer trust the mass media. Despite the passion of these activists, the journalistic climate changed again during my fieldwork, between 2011 and 2013, as it became clear that despite the negative publicity and allegations of information withholding, there was unlikely to be any massive backlash against the media conglomerates.

Anthropologist Janet Roitman questions contemporary rhetoric that would situate the world in a constant state of unfolding crisis—like something slowly humming at the edge of perceptible sound, threatening always to subsume the chatter of everyday life. Can crisis really be an enduring condition, she asks, or is more accurately conceived of as a moment? Is crisis (or kuraishisu) an impasse as Roitman posits, or is it a massive breach that threatens the stability of society and forces it into a state of insecure potential? She quotes fellow anthropologist Michael Taussig, who raised the question of what it means for a society to be breaking down, and asked what it takes to catalyze this process? In the months following the March 11, 2011, earthquake in Japan, news coverage favored representation of the order-in-chaos, the choice of individuals to reinforce as much of the still standing structure of the social order as possible by cooperating, refraining from looting and theft, etc. The “anti-crisis” here was presented as choice—with the anti representing mankind and a still-standing social order borne of consensus, and the crisis as outcome of a natural and seemingly inevitable process. If crisis, though is a turning point, then the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant certainly falls into this category. But it remains to be seem whether journalism entered a crisis, or even a genuine breach as measured by both public reaction and societal outcome. Moreover, if the job of critique is to induce crisis, to engender new epistemological states as Roitman suggests, than by that measure Japan’s media activists have not yet fulfilled their purpose. However, theirs nonetheless represents a productive struggle, and continues to constitute small changes in the way Japan “conducts media”; activists and amateurs have made of media a site of contestation,

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42 ibid.
even if on a small scale. Their work has at minimum introduced the possibility of an alternate narrative to Japanese society by stimulating a movement to blog, tweet, information share and consult a variety of sources for news content—prompting activist May Shigenobu to compare the aftermath of Fukushima to the Arab Spring.\footnote{Janet Roitman, \textit{Anti-Crisis}, (Duke University Press, 2013), 35.}

One of the questions I have most often posed to myself and to my interlocutors in broadcast and print journalism is whether the 2011 \textit{daijishin} (major earthquake) and \textit{genpatsu jiko} (nuclear accident) signifies a turning moment, a moment of meaningful historical change in the way that their professional communities conduct business. Most of the television professionals with whom I worked replied in the negative, or demurred—arguing in essence that history is still unfolding. But the independent journalists cited these crises as the very context within which they do business, as the origin story of their respective ventures. Japanese journalism in 2015 has transcended ‘crisis’ insofar as it suffers from a kind of chronic condition; it exists at an impasse in the way that powerful corporations and politicians manage information, and how journalists process it. And it remains unclear what the larger political and social ramifications of this disaster are; even as food is monitored for radiation and the thyroids of children are checked, life in the media goes on. Roitman argues that if a moment does not constitute significant historical change, then the concept of crisis itself implodes.\footnote{Janet Roitman, \textit{Anti-Crisis}, (Duke University Press, 2013), 66.} And yet, the disasters in Japan feel much like crises whose impact the media fights to mitigate and even deny. This is of course not a new move for the country’s mass media, or even uniquely Japanese. In the present, even the most frank coverage of disaster softens as it attempts to bear neutral witness, or to curate rather than create information. It actively avoids assignment of culpability and seeks to protect the powerful from citizens and citizens from themselves.

\textbf{Why Study Media Makers?}

\footnote{“\textit{Arabu No Haru}” \textit{No Shōtai: Ōbei to Media Ni Odorarete Minshu-Ka Kakumei}, (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2012).}
Media constitutes, magnifies, and reflects culture, and its artifacts are products of specialized social worlds. It would seem that following the pivotal conversations in anthropology during the early 2000s concerning the importance of studying media, that we hardly need to have this conversation in the present. Nonetheless, while textual analysis of media products, and audience surveys/study is relatively commonplace, there remains even now a paucity of embedded workplace study of media makers themselves—particularly in East Asian countries. As I discuss in Chapter 6, the communities responsible for mass media (journalistic and other content) create work as a social process, as part of a conversation about audiences and about themselves. As anthropologist Brian Moeran explained regarding his decision to ethnographically study the Japanese advertising industry, it benefits our understanding of media products when we are able to observe and interpret the social processes for which they stand. It is the conversations happening daily around the conference tables of production companies, TV networks, and journalism startups that are among the most significant factors influencing stylistic and content choices, and what is considered newsworthy. Much criticism emanating from parties not privy to conversations among media makers renders them caricatures lacking the savvy to understand the ramifications of a lack of programatic diversity, or sinister actors plotting the obfuscation of politically sensitive information. It is easier, when one excludes broadcast professionals, to assess television as a coherent body with a uniform set of values and messages—to write about it as a sophisticated and even Orwellian behemoth slyly coaxing citizens into desired political positions or lulling them into indifference. The reality is, of course, much messier, and just as reception studies have permitted us to see inside the worlds of audiences and to understand them as active decoders of media messages, ethnographic accounts of the workplace practices of media’s “transmitters” have taught us that their world is no less

negotiated. While early media research focused on consumption and circulation, the practices of institutions themselves were allowed to remain disambiguated social formations that: “menace[d] democracy and local individual autonomy”. This is by no means to suggest that we let mass media off the hook for its role as one of the most powerful agents of cultural production in any community; however, critical commentary must be at least aware of the extent to which metonymic impressions are bidirectional. Writing about audience studies, Ien Ang commented that ethnographic research forces us to acknowledge the "situational embeddedness of audiences" and "undercuts the search for generalizations that is often seen as the ultimate goal of scientific knowledge". Ultimately, then, it is an important counterpoint to the notion of audiences employed by television companies themselves, which has been of necessity reductive. However, it also challenges our understanding of what producers know about audiences, and therefore a pervasive sense that they consciously pander to the “lowest common denominator” or some notion of the basest of human desires with their choice of broadcast content. With this in mind, one of the benefits of the social TV movement as outlined in the first half of this dissertation, is that this technology allows viewers to talk back more directly, to express pleasure or even to affect the structure of content. This further complicates development of a more nuanced sense of audiences as a taxonomic and epistemological category that fieldwork-based accounts allow, permitting more widespread feedback on “what audiences want” than has been heretofore possible—even if, for now, they can only speak within designated margins.

If such work allows audiences to act as opinion-having bodies for whom dis/pleasure is a viable response, it also allows broadcasters to react emotionally to their own work, and to the institutional limitations compromising their vision. An accurate and three-dimensional mass

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media discourse must take into account both what it means to be a viewer in all of its messy contextuality, and what it means to be a producer under similar circumstances. This is not to say that while pursuing a more nuanced understanding of individual actors, we refrain from critiquing institutions for defaulting to the same old entertainment concepts and correlated reticence to think beyond immediate profits. Indeed, Horkheimer and Adorno once applied the logic of Fordism to the practices of the “culture industry,” suggesting that individuals are subject to similar conditions in the workplace and while consuming entertainment. This system both reinforces and reflects Fordist methods, in the sense that the businesses comprising the culture industry reflect the integration of Fordist thought and appropriate it in their construction of mass media. If audiences are tuning into television news broadcasts, for example, these are by one set of criteria successful. By the perspectives of individual journalists, and by audiences, quality broadcast journalism is defined by a higher standard. Even if the notion of a public lulled into a stupor by a combination of mass media, workplace conditions, and religion hadn’t been thoroughly challenged by 20th century scholarship, the technologies of the 21st century have, as Mark Deuze writes, transformed the way that audiences expect to engage media artifacts. In a move whose veracity was partially confirmed by my own fieldwork, he writes: “people not only have come to expect participation from the media, they increasingly have found ways to enact this participation in the multiple ways they use and make media.” To this I would emphasize, as I do throughout this dissertation, that participation is not universal (particularly in Japan), that platforms are not equivalent (although one of the promises of the internet is that they are potentially so), and that my project captures television and journalism’s attempt to appropriate user engagement more directly than ever before (although this is also a kind of salvage project).

Anthropologist Sara Dickey once observed that ethnographers largely avoid initiating projects that address “pleasure, leisure, and escape,” which has certainly ceased to be as accurate as it once was. The publication of a significant body of anthropological work on television alone during the 1990s and 2000s suggests that mass culture has long been recognized for the impact it has on the lived reality of people essentially everywhere, or as media scholar Roger Silverstone wrote: “Television, it might be suggested, is everyday life. To study the one is at the same time to study the other.” Indeed, during the twenty-first century, the social sciences have taken cinema and television seriously, answering earlier calls from anthropologists such as Faye Ginsburg to consider them as among the most powerful cultural forces in any society, and the overlapping social worlds of production, consumption, and circulation as significant ethnographic objects. Nonetheless, there still remains a need to push for deeper (mass media) institutional ethnography in many parts of the world–East Asia among them.

Research Methods
This dissertation is the outcome of eighteen months of fieldwork (2011-2013) conducted within several categories of Tokyo-based sites (with some detours to Nagoya and Osaka), and using a full arsenal of ethnographic tools to track media makers across their many sites of professional activity. My field sites included all of the major broadcast networks (although I spent the most time at two among these), one radio station, the offices of four independent media startups (the Free Press Association of Japan (Jiyū hōdō kyōkai)/No Border, Independent Web Journal (IWJ), Our Planet-TV, and GoHoo (Masukomi Gohō Kenshō) and two television production

60 See above for a comprehensive list.
63 In the interest of protecting those who were so kind to me at each of these networks, I am choosing not to name them outright.
companies. I also held an internship at the company responsible behind most of the interactive and social television programming that aired during my fieldwork, and I visited the offices of the others. Further, I made myself a regular at as many media research presentations as I could attend, and many independent media events that were supported by those at my startup field sites, or involved members of these. Indeed, to echo anthropologist Ian Condry, “the number of potential field sites was daunting”

I had originally sought to do an ethnographic project on the production culture surrounding morning *jōhō bangumi* (information programs), whose combination of news and entertainment content can be best described to an American audience as resembling the ABC show “Good Morning America”. The challenging time-slot (these programs tend to air from 5-8 AM, Monday through Friday meant that the staff was predominantly young and consisted of those who could stand the sleep-deprivation demanded of them by the production cycle long enough to get promoted to a kinder time slot. Indeed, during my preliminary fieldwork I only made it through three *tetsuya* (all-night shifts), with the justification that I’d gotten the gist of the editing and script/subtitle (*jimaku, kommento fuoru*) writing activities that occurred between the last train of the evening and the first train of the morning. I found the production climate surrounding these programs interesting for the way that it served as an initial point of entry for recent college graduates and the context within which they learned the institutional culture of the television networks. Thus, I returned a year after my preliminary fieldwork still intending to investigate *jōhō bangumi*, but while I waited for a new round of access permission to be granted (I had to start over with this after job rotation (*joburōtēshon*) saw my previous contacts moved to different departments in the company), I became aware of a few different ways in which interactivity and social media were being used to mount challenges to the television status-quo. Such challenges came from both within and without the TV networks, with the independent media projects representing not so much a meaningful rival to television’s massive platform as

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64 Who I will also keep anonymous for similar reasons as the TV networks.
an ideological challenge, or an alternative means by which individuals might gain access to information (and comment on it more directly). Ultimately, therefore, I attempted to balance an equivalent amount of time each week embedded in the offices and production sites of both television and independent media, attempting to divide my time in half when specific events, interviews, or other meetings didn’t demand I do otherwise.

In other words, project represents “polymorphous engagement” of the type envisioned by anthropologist Hugh Gusterson, who understood through experience how creative researchers must be when approaching fieldwork in restricted corporate environments. In part, this is due to the cultural proximity of those who study culture and those who create it, as evidenced by a tendency for media producers to be well-versed in ethnographic methods, or at least familiar with what anthropologists “do”.

**On Studying Elites (Up and Sideways)**

On this note, I feel compelled to gesture to an ongoing anthropological conversation regarding how the socioeconomic positions of the people with whom anthropologists work constitutes the nature of their resultant data. Following Laura Nader’s notion of “studying up”, meant to illuminate the tensions inherent in conducting fieldwork among those with greater social power than that of the researcher herself, anthropologist Ulf Hannerz famously characterized research on media professionals as “studying sideways”, (i.e. the ethnographer is among subjects accustomed to critically assessing and reproducing culture themselves, and often possessing similar credentials and cultural capital (if not more) to the anthropologist). Surely, studying the educated elite introduces a particular anxiety; by anthropologist Maureen Mahon’s account, such

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subjects are complicated targets, not easily fixed spatio-temporally or theoretically due to their self-awareness, mobility, and mediation (1995, 123). And in working with those whose professional currency is images and representation it can take a certain amount of adjustment for the anthropologist to come to terms with the notion that she no longer has a monopoly on the representation of another culture.68 But as anthropologist Wahl-Jorgensen helpfully points out, the notion of journalists as elites is exacerbated by an anthropology of media that focuses on national-level broadcasters over local media outlets, and full-time reporters over stringers and other contingent staff who actually dominate the profession.69 My own work in Japan thus spans a few categories of media industry professional, and in all of my field sites I found that power was dispersed between field sites, and my own position in a constant state of flux. Social capital and elite status were to be found everywhere, among independent journalists who had carved out a reputation and some degree of fame, possessed equivalent credentials to those of the broadcast employees, or had left broadcast journalism for their own projects. Anthropologist Elise Edwards has argued an ethics of ethnography has to consider Japan differently than other field sites within which the native research subject is powerless; the body of fieldwork conducted by Western (or Western-trained) anthropologists, manifests different kinds of power imbalances than those of other sites.70 Indeed, although fieldwork about Japan frequently intersects with issues of power, it is notable how often power is a negotiation, and fieldwork a favor in many accounts.

And I unpack further in Chapter 5, there is substantial overlap in the minds of anthropologists and journalists regarding the nature of their professional labor. Acknowledging

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the parallels between the work of news reporting and anthropology, Per Ståhlberg wrote: “I felt that, as an anthropologist, I related to society in much the same way as they did: as someone who always tried to make sense of things by talking to people who knew better…”. And he and his journalistic interlocutors enlisted people similarly in the course of their professional lives—as informants, capable of lending authoritative voice to assessments of a complex society. Nonetheless, when embedded in an expert culture such as these, anthropologists have acknowledged that “participant observation” is frequently a misnomer, and the peril of interpreting those used to representing themselves and others lies in the risk of (productive or uneasy) conflict over readings. Moreover, digital journalistic workflow makes mere observation of embodied negotiations inadequate in many contexts, as so much of the conversation between colleagues is now invisible to the anthropologist whose access is restricted to embodied observation. Hence, the discussions during the 1980s-90s in anthropology regarding the benefits of reconstituting ethnography as more “discourse” than “text”, as “post-modern” ethnography meant to function as dialog rather than a monologue, and born of collaboration with those whose territory one occupies. The resultant project is cooperative, the anthropologist’s impressions of another culture complicated by those of its most embedded subjects. This ethnography is one of multivocal expertise, of collaborative storytelling.

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This shared understanding of the work of anthropology can lead to reticence on the part of individuals and organizations to allow the ethnographer access. Such is the ‘gatekeeper phenomenon,’ the growing tendency of individuals, concerned with liability, to restrict research access to their most protected sites of on-the-job decision-making. In Barry Dornfeld’s conceptualization, subjecting elites to scrutiny often induces dis-ease, as their familiarity with the nature of academic discourse lends itself to a capacity to envision themselves inscribed therein, and their sense of what constitutes useful data can lead to deliberate obfuscation.\(^75\)

Anthropologist William Mazzarella and Communications researcher John Caldwell similarly found that their fieldwork interlocutors were extremely skilled at information management, treating the occasions of their conversations as opportunities to both stay “on message”, and to advertise—Caldwell referred to this as the way that those high up in the “food chain” have learned to speak from scripts.\(^76\) Edwards quotes Andrew Gordon to the effect that those in positions of power are skilled at dodging invasive gazes, and indeed have “well-rehearsed and guarded presentations”.\(^77\) (I found formal interviewing frustrating for this reason.) Further, those in the media industry frequently both engage in their own self-reflexive (auto-ethnographic) practices, a process I observed in their daily conversations, interviews with me, and their public blog, newspaper, and magazine writings about television and journalism. As Caldwell affirmed, media producers are accustomed to functioning as salespeople, and it is not uncommon for them to (consciously or unconsciously) reinforce the mystique surrounding their craft.\(^78\) My experience reflected Caldwell’s to an extent—the higher ranking an employee was, the higher the likelihood

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that his statements would be constituted mostly of spin. And confidentiality/competition were ever-present concerns; I was at various times instructed not to compare “our studio to anyone else’s,” grilled about where else I was conducting fieldwork, and what I was observing. Employees were ever mindful of their commitments to information security, although television as a general theme was fair game to all but the most insecure assistant directors (ADs), and I found staff as likely to engage in overt cynicism as to romanticize the magic of mass media creation. Caldwell wisely notes that we must do ethnography of the media industry (and, I would add, business in general) with awareness of the challenges of seeking answers there: “such an approach fails unless we see and consider such expressions as embedded within broader cultural commitments, economies, and industrial traditions that in turn inflect and transpose those very expressions.”

Further, the anxiety surrounding academic oversight in particular is not unwarranted; despite my attempts to articulate my evolving arguments out loud, my intention was to appropriate their work polemically, to make of their articulations regarding television’s future a point of departure for my own interventions. And in so doing, I was certainly aware of the need to protect my field sites for future ethnographers, to come to a sense of how to write about their scandals and challenges despite potential repercussions. Thus the anxiety is, in a sense mutual, as the ethnographer enters protected spaces with a full awareness of the favor she is being granted, and a consequent sense of indebtedness that—combined with an awareness that her interlocutors will likely read what she writes—engenders a kind of nervous writing condition.

The overlap between journalistic and anthropological identities manifests in attempts to differentiate their work from our own (i.e. they seek novelty, we seek normalcy; Skinner 2009,

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130), or a certain discomfort with the journalistic project in general. Hasty suggests that the overlap between the two fields as transnational “regimes of knowledge production” with contrastive purposes (2009, 132). She proposes that anthropological discomfort among journalists comes from a sense that journalism represents a more politically compromised version of our work, a notion that (as she agrees) requires a certain amount of denial about the compromises inherent in our own work (2009, 133). But media scholar Elizabeth Bird considers it important to retain a sense of the differences between journalism and ethnography, where journalism “finishes” stories and moves onto the next assignment, while the anthropological narrative is more open-ended.81 The process of conducting fieldwork is one of consistent revising and revisiting, or in Bird’s formulation: “the ethnographic process is dialectical rather than linear” (and I would argue, more dialogic as well).82 Even if the journalist, as in Chapter 7’s discussion, covers a regular “beat”, his purpose is to create and construct concise timely accounts. And although my own fieldwork revealed much blurring and overlap, journalistic and anthropological notions of objectivity differ (and anthropology’s have arguably fluctuated more over time). Where journalism, at least in its American ideal-typical form, emphasizes objectivity and “fairness”—often (see Chapter 7) manifesting in artificially balanced accounts, contemporary anthropological accounts foreground the researcher in order to emphasize the interpretive nature of ethnographic projects. As Bird has noted, journalists working on long-form feature pieces are often subjected to similar critiques as anthropologists—accused of over-identification with their informants and of producing subjective,

unscientific, accounts. With Bird, I tend to think that anthropology and journalism had best retain their boundaries; journalism’s project of “informing” makes deep embeddedness potentially dangerous, as the kisha kurabu system in Japan would indicate. As this example indicates, journalists who share workspace with all of their competitors and the politicians they cover essentially have nothing to gain by publishing negative accounts of their powerful patrons’ activities. The anthropologist is protected, in a sense, by her eventual departure from this site and by her being an outsider to this system even while she strives for embeddedness. I would argue that while empathy can be hazardous to good journalism, it can be similarly hazardous to honest ethnography.

As I have written, in my own project position was never fixed, as informants slid between different statuses in relation to my own, contingent on their job function, income, and background; in the position of guest among experts, I felt unrelentingly subordinate. My professional sense of self went through a period of negotiation comparable to that of Laura Grindstaff’s, wherein an academic culture that tends to trivialize popular culture studies (even now) seems to both deny producers their status as experts, and to undermine the status of the academic who studies them accordingly. Like Grindstaff, I worked as an intern while conducting fieldwork (although not for the TV networks, who were transparently relieved when I bypassed their rigid internship programs), and therefore had so little status and such unfamiliarity with the corporate climates within which I found myself that my position was ever in flux.

Indeed, by means of a closing statement, I would argue that arguments attempting to assign our interlocutors a fixed positionality are readily losing their persuasiveness among contemporary anthropologists. I heartily agree with Elise Edwards’ commentary: "Despite the

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dominance of tales of powerful anthropologists and their weaker subjects, most anthropologists find themselves in constantly variable and re-articulated arrangements with all those they come in contact with in the field.”

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Chapter 2: Television and the Limits of Conservative Corporate Structure
On the third floor of Fuji Television’s labyrinth-like headquarters, staff circulate around a dimly lit, grey-carpeted television control room—typical but for the Apple laptops scattered on ledges in front of the switchboards. In two enclosed rooms on the side, essential components of this production are kept behind glass: technology, and people. The room to the left houses a *Nico Nico Douga* (NND) broadcast in process; though the television program itself runs only from 9-10:25 pm, the accompanying internet broadcast runs longer, from 8-11. As such, it is already in progress; two hosts sit behind desks and laptops in this dedicated space, discussing North Korea’s threat to Japan with internet audiences—while in the main studio below another male-female pair have their hair combed and makeup touched up in preparation for live broadcast. As an assistant counts down to broadcast, chatter in the big studio slows, but the internet broadcast in the room above continues unaffected. “Ippun!” (one minute) an assistant director calls.

*The Compass (The Konpasu)*, as it is called, is the project of a small group of ambitious idealists; as such it will soon be cancelled by its parent network, which gave it neither the resources, nor time-slot to enable its success (it is aired on Fuji TV’s secondary “BS” Channel). The program’s dual broadcasts operate like orbiting planets—aligning here, separating there.

Periodically, the internet broadcast’s hosts descend to the main studio and the images become contiguous, the conversation colludes. Viewers and users can contribute opinions via Twitter (#compassTV), Facebook, and of course NND. Behind the hosts’ table a ticker displays select Twitter comments, and a poll is periodically conducted of NND users’ opinions on topical questions. Hosts choose Twitter comments to read as part of the discussion (mediation); to pose questions and points raised by viewers to the usual news-magazine program parade of commentators. Here, as in the case of the interactive and open press conference, those who tune in are granted a differently mediated access. By virtue of being television, but also apart from it,
viewers of the NND broadcast are privy to a less formal construction of the relationship between audience and presenter. The highly controlled comportment of the television newsreader is relaxed somewhat to allow for this reframing. Not just webcast, not quite formal broadcast, the web component of this show breaks ground for its willingness to genuinely ad-lib, for the feeling one gets in watching that they are experimenting with and through viewers. Having never done this before, television is willing to play—not in the manner of Japanese variety shows, with their predictable relaxation of being-for-others but within a context (news programming) that had historically preferred to use bodies as mere conduits, and with the exception of TV Asahi’s revolutionary early *Hōdō Station* broadcasts\(^1\), to obediently refrain from injecting personality into news.

Certainly *The Compass* differs from the Free Press Association of Japan’s press conferences (as we will see in greater depth in Chapter 6), insofar as the television program conscripts users in the service of content creation, while press conferences necessitate no particular contribution from those who watch online. In both cases, the chattering masses exist in a frame apart from that of the event itself—disembodied, dissociated, faceless. Nonetheless, each in its way complicates the relationship between audiences and expert producers of media content; the FPAJ introducing audiences into origin story of newsmaking, and *The Compass*, by relinquishing partial control over programmatic narrative to an unpredictable and unknown body.

Ang has written of audiences that they represent an unknowable category, merely a discourse object useful for indicating something that cannot fully be measured or seen. Indeed, in the conversations between television producers, the slipperiness of audiences, the inadequacy of the antiquated means by which we categorize and account for them, is a primary concern. For one, audience capacity for self-assessment is suspect; in locating oneself within survey boxes and  

\(^1\) See Chapter 7 for more about this program.
accounting for time spent, audiences are suspected of aspirational thinking. The audiences of the FPAJ press conference or participant/observers in *The Compass*, are not simply an aggregate body presumed to engage, nor an uneasy category crudely classified by rounding up presence to interest, but groups of individuals engaged in active self-representation and performances of comprehension. Further, though NND, or even Twitter grants certain anonymity, the service still classifies users as they create accounts, and tracks them after. Simple data, such as age, gender, and location are more than sufficient for the (still) grey system of ratings aggregation, particularly when allied with strong(er) indicators of programmatic consumption. While the industry must, in the case of ratings, exercise a collective will to believe, through NND or the specialized applications of numerous new interactive television programs, the audience looms into a partial focus, and a recalcitrant academic inclination to consider audiences as passive bodies must be challenged anew. Certainly, the users with whom I shared virtual space were a lively and opinionated bunch, and on *The Compass*, often differentiated from expert commentators solely by the manner of their virtual representation; official guests on this program often joined the discussion via Skype, and those present in the studios sat before laptops equipped with webcams and appeared in similar windows on the television/computer screen.

I am in attendance at the program’s final broadcast, and the multiple spaces of its production feel charged. Many more people mill about in the shadows of the cavernous studio space, some of them Fuji TV staff interested in social media and television in general, and wishing to bear witness to the end of this particular experiment. The program’s internet audience is larger than usual as well; before *The Compass* even begins, 11,707 NND users banter about the prime minister, the underfunding of interesting television programs (such as this), and tonight’s theme:

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2 See Chapter 6.
the advantage for politicians of being media savvy. This time, the comparative lack of formality with which online broadcast is approached is in particularly sharp contrast to that of the main programmatic transmission, i.e. while a lack of commercial break has always encouraged the hosts to engage in corporeal gestures before the cameras such as putting in eyedrops, the ending of *The Compass* grants a certain permissiveness in which normative rules of broadcast may be broken, and the repercussions for breaking convention limited. High ranking production staff pass in and out of the NND transmission room, briefly sharing space and bantering with the program’s official “internet hosts”. Separated physically only by a staircase, the semiotic value of the two categories of broadcast is much less proximate, and what might be considered a breach for television is unremarkable for the comparatively informal internet program. Thus, television (particularly the news) seeks to induce flatness, to erase physicality in favor of surface; the staged intimacy of so much TV programming has nothing on the act of putting in eyedrops, and act that violates the normative demand that television refrain from gesturing to corporeality, to allow bodies to be images rather than organisms. The excess inherent in such a tiny breach extends the image into the realm of the physical, disrupting a mode of viewing that cannot quite be said to be the detached aesthetic observation of philosophical discourse (and yet…) More so than on the majority of television broadcast, this category of action creates a mirror of the audience, who in their position on the other side of the screen are free to attend to the demands of their bodies, to become distracted, or unresponsive—to disengage and re-engage at will. To not perform.

There is no consensus as to what images “do,” no final word as to their meaning and reception. In his essay “Photography,” Kracauer writes of photography as a bridge between moments of capture and reception, and the role of a photograph as being to index time. However,
against the sense of easy continuity that the term “bridge” would imply, John Berger describes images in terms of a shocking “discontinuity” a palpable rupture experienced in the gulf between the moment of capture and that of reception.³ Here, the image leaves its audiences in a state of embodied awareness, a sensitivity to the gulf between their own position and that of the image’s capture. There is a certain inaccessibility in Berger’s telling, while for Kracauer the viewer is able to mend the gap through something resembling faith. Television, I would argue, is closer to Berger’s understanding; even (or especially) in the case of “reality TV,” the televsional image, like the photographs of Kracauer’s examples, often gesture to spaces and places for which viewers lack any firsthand reference (and which might as well be fiction for us).⁴ However, unlike that of the photograph, television evades any attempt to fix its location; it fictionalizes even as it films. Where it edits, it removes the possibility (and sense thereof) of presence, and even during live broadcast, it forces distance by never allowing its subjects to forget their inscription. If photographs are a “representation of time,” a time when a person smiled, or turned her head, then television is fictionalized time; as a medium, it misleads by creating false linkages between space and time. Television, like any art form, is not so much a window, as a filter. It compromises (in both senses of the word) even as it inscribes.

Caroline Stevens and Shuhei Hosokawa have noted that television in Japan is dedicated to a project of staged intimacy; much of the medium is comprised of stars bantering with one another, discussing each other’s art, performing each other’s songs, and conversing with the program’s MC.⁵ Rather than intimacy, they note, these interactions are performances of

appropriate social behavior; older stars are treated with respect, and everyone is “politely careful”
to one another.6 The enactment of behavioral norms
is part of a fairly comprehensive effort to instruct audiences, “infantilizing” them by going
beyond simply choosing subject matter, camera shot, etc., but on transferring suggestions
regarding how to interpret such content from the realm of the implicit to a mimetic performance.7
While the television of many countries, for example, guides viewers towards the recognition of a
predetermined narrative, it ultimately leaves room for subjective decoding. But Japanese
television frequently cuts between documentary-style content and the reactions and discussion of
celebrity panelists, replacing implicit direction through narrative with dictation of meaning. One
TV industry employee, Ujiie Natsuhiko writes that a major problems with Japanese television is
that variety programming such as this represents a highly one-sided (ippōteki) sense of fun, while
information and news programs speak to their audiences as though removed, from above (“ue
kara mesen de tsutaerarete iru”).8

But if (Japanese) television misdirects the viewer’s gaze away from any kind of palpable
sense of presence, to what does it direct our attention? I would argue that global mass media is
quite transparently self-referential, even autopoietic. It re-appropriates its own content, endlessly
gesturing to itself in a manner that rewards repeat viewing with the designation of a kind of
expertise, borne of the capacity to identify and contextualize particular actors and tarento. (See
also Chapter 3) The process recalls a generic categorization of fandom, within which the medium
becomes more richly consumable the more time one devotes to mastery of its narratives, and

6 ibid.
7 Patrick W Gailbraith and Jason G Karlin, “Introduction: the Mirror of Idols and Celebrity,” in Idols and Celebrity
viewers classifiable on the basis of acquired knowledge about its dominant players and themes. 9 A casual viewer is in essence like the tourist of Hannerz’ formulation versus the performatively knowledgeable cosmopolitan.10

This is certainly the case with “serial TV”, i.e. telenovelas and dramas that unfold in weekly or daily installments, with continuous plots or, at the least, reoccurring characters, and which engage in memetic reproduction of plot devices to compensate for distracted viewing, and/or build intra-textual references to reward loyal audiences.11 In John Caldwell’s assessment, television is engaged in a constant process of self-referential production–meta-critique blurring with its artistic output, and each new product engaged in a conversation with those of the past.12 That these programs repeat formulae that have succeeded in the past, belying a conservative hedging consistent with a general model of massive corporations in general is actually only part of the story. More can be learned by examining the manner in which programs are constructed as a composite of conversations held amongst their authors, a kind of insider dialog that dances between metonymic assumptions about the nature of audiences, and self-referential discourse about the essential components of good television. Though I will return to the notion of media producers as audience members in Chapter 7, my purpose here is to suggest that something of the autopoietic nature of television can be located in the repetitive nature of the production process itself. Television therefore endures what anthropologists Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe have referred to, quoting Alexi Yurchak, as “hypernormalization”. In their example, the speeches of local Russian communist leaders are comprised of text directly appropriated from

the speeches of their predecessors, as indeed there was substantial pressure to adhere to an established authoritative discourse, and to minimize individual authorial voice.13 Television producers too, internalize a normative discourse, and come to appropriate and accept as normative a semiotic system. This is perhaps the condition (and plight) of expertise in general, as professionalization demands integration of particular semiotic systems, and competent performance of representational habitus. As in Yurchak’s example, Japanese television is fundamentally risk-adverse; it prefers to recirculate texts that have at one point proven themselves effective, and to engage in experimentation within designated zones (such as the predictably unpredictable stunts seen on variety shows). And it rewards those who most competently perform relative originality within accepted framing by elevating them within a rigid system of institutional rank.

But television also interpolates the wider world of popular culture in less subtle ways. For example, being able to identify the costumes of and incidents surrounding the massively popular Japanese idol band, AKB48, was essential to understanding comedian Kintaro’s entire routine when she became a fixture on waidō shō (variety programs) in 2012. As many owarai tarento are known for one “shtick” in particular, to fail to recognize the signified meaning to which they gesture is to be naive in the face of humor that expects and rewards regular television viewing. When an individual tarento is at his peak, as determined by NHK surveys, he is on TV more often than not, moving between multiple programs and occasionally, inadvertently appearing on more than one network at the same time.14 Evolving from being known for a particular comedy routine or musical performance, the most successful tarento are eventually known simply for being famous. But many don’t make this leap and become overexposed; they simply fade away from public memory.

As I observed during fieldwork on Japanese morning programs (jōhō bangumi), television blatantly appropriates other forms of mass media content, creating a kind of retro convergence (or “echo object”). This manner of echoing differs somewhat from the kind of referentiality required to decode the work done by tarento in that, rather than demanding repeat viewing in order to render content decipherable, it condenses media forms within a single moment of broadcast. Specifically, jōhō bangumi presenters frequently hold up poster boards onto which magnified newspaper pages have been glued, using these to dissect a story rather than, or in addition to, relevant filmed footage—as Galbraith and Karlin summarize:

"Displaying the pages of newsprint directly on the screen, Japanese television literally reads you the newspaper".¹⁵

In the studio below, the main program begins with a familiar set of images—former US presidents Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy’s famous television debate and a favorite theoretical trope of media analysts, who have used it to argue that media savvy is as important to contemporary politics as policy know-how.¹⁶ Partly in conversation with the recent amendment of Japan’s laws allowing politicians to use social media, and partly in a nod to its own format, the finale of The Compass addresses the increasing media-savvy of politicians, with a particular nod to current South Korean Prime Minister Jung Hong-won and President Park Geun-hye, and their own Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe’s prolific use of social media (there is considerable

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¹⁶ Convention holds that those who listened to this debate on the radio thought Nixon to have won, while those who watched on TV thought Kennedy to have won. This is allegedly a result of Kennedy’s comparative telegenity and Nixon’s having sweated profusely under the cameras. 1 and 1 for another perspective.
laughter about a Japanese prime minister posting photos of himself in jogging clothes and writing openly about his workout routine on Facebook).\textsuperscript{17} 

As one of the main announcers transitions to the usual explanation of the program’s mechanics, the mostly middle-aged and male cohort collected in the big studio mills around, gazing in the direction of the stage with their arms crossed, occasionally glancing down at the monitors to check on the screen as seen by home audiences. At commercial break, the NND staff dash down the stairs to join the others on the main stage, while an assistant calls the remaining time loudly into the otherwise quiet room: “23 seconds!” It is 9:13 PM, and the program’s additional political commentators are being connected via Skype to the in-studio hosts. Another assistant scurries to the edge of the stage holding large white boards with the names and titles of the remote experts written on them. There are now 20,437 users on the NND application.

Observers in the studio cannot hear the commentary of the Skype experts (generally professors at one of Japan's major research universities); their microphones are fed directly into the earpieces of the hosts and out into the broadcast itself. The only non-muted sound in this room is from a computer in the corner of the studio—which is quickly silenced by a staff member—and the "hmmms" of the hosts as they listen to these comments. A total of seven hosts and experts are seated on the stage, and in order to share air time fairly among those present, one of the assistants holds up signs indicating whose turn it is to speak. The program's four general announcers are responsible for asking the questions that guide discussion; these are poised out loud for debate among the individuals seated before the camera, and simultaneously on NND. The program requires careful choreographing to balance the voices from each different platform; following the closing of a poll on NND, the results are conveyed on TV as part of the broadcast

before moving on to comments from the *nama koe* (literally, “raw voices”) of Twitter. 25,812 people are now in the NND chatroom.

That the comments of individuals participating on Twitter, Facebook, and NND are incorporated into this program should not be inferred overly optimistically as the democratization of television as a medium. Indeed, in a theme I will return to in Chapter 6, the commentary of online users is heavily filtered by assistants; for one, the sheer volume of responses necessitates aggregation and recalls Beatrice Blaagaard's assessment that the increasing volume of news commentary has made the role of journalists all the more essential, as they are needed to "filter, to select, to think about information" in a way that simply is no longer feasible if it is not one's job to do so.\(^{18}\) Media scholar John Hartley echoes this observation, branding advanced nations “redactional societ[ies]” within which there is simply too much raw information being generated at any one time for any single individual to apprehend the whole.\(^{19}\) He argues that under such conditions, organizations (composites of individuals) rather than individuals (by name) become trusted sources of truth. And such organizations are engaged mostly in the work of redaction, revising information into new forms and curating salient points on behalf of the public.\(^{20}\)

As the profession of journalism has globally come to insinuate the model of a Japanese *kisha* club reporter’s daily praxis, insofar as it emphasizes a stationary gathering of information over a mobile and embodied "pursuit of the truth,” journalistic skill becomes about "gathering,


filtering, structuring and disseminating”. That the unfiltered content scrolling by on my NND iPad application favors opinion is simply one of the ways in which it departs from what can be accurately framed as “journalistic” (though, as I mentioned earlier, comments of comparable erudition to those of the official presenters are also present). A learned sense of appropriate tone and performance guides that of the announcers and the behind-the-scenes staff, who choose internet comments to broadcast on television largely on the basis of what they exclude—overt racism, conspiracy theories, derogatory comments about individuals.

Internet content thrives as a result of the comparatively low barrier to entry required in order to join the conversation. But as unpacked in Chapter 5’s discussion of citizen journalism, this means great inconsistency in the quality of content (and commenting)—which television attempts to eliminate as much as possible under the banner of appropriateness. That television broadcast operates under a mandate to which internet broadcast is not subject is discernible in seen in moments where its seemingly innate authority breaks down, when it stumbles in its appearance of neutrality, etc. While the freedom granted online commentators in Japan can be attributed at least in part to a (general) lack of proximity to government officials, mass media executives circulate in close proximity to politicians and are largely responsible for engendering an institutional “trickle down” effect. This process grants politicians a wide berth in the service of both the self-interest of media executives, and their organizations, which depend for the renewal of their broadcast licenses on government approval. The divergent behavior of online and TV commentators in general (and not just in Japan) is significantly more attributable to a lack of accountability than any professional training in journalistic neutrality. Nonetheless,

22 Cooper-Chen, Mass Communication in Japan.
television is held to a higher standard even while it is so frequently disparaged as a medium and tasked with representation of entire national publics. As the need for broadcast licenses keeps the total number of television channels low in Japan and thus protects them from competition, it also demands of TV a certain dance between the necessary fragmentation of targeted marketing, and forms of address suited to national bodies.\(^{23}\) Simply put, with only six television stations, the burden of responsibility is distributed among relatively few entities. Thus, the internet represented a form of competition for audiences that TV, was, in a sense not accustomed to. In Ujiie Natsuhiko’s phrasing the privileged (tokken) space of television infantilized it, allowed it to ignore the development of other media until: “terebi no kabe ga hōkaishi hajimete iru noda” (the wall surrounding television is beginning to collapse).\(^{24}\) Young people, he argues, are anxious if they are separated from their smartphones, but many are indifferent to television or don’t even have sets. With older people buoying the ratings for the meantime, he sees television viewership continuing to decline without a radical change.\(^{25}\)

Actually, though, the liveness of much Japanese programming is extremely well-suited to integration with interactive features such as online chatrooms; without a practice of syndication, most programming is either live, or temporarily contingent. To keep costs down, it also relies heavily on in-studio discussions as mentioned above. There is a sense among scholars of mass media in Japan that, as is the case elsewhere in the world, young people in the second decade of the twenty-first century are more receptive to media that permits them to co-create content through active participation, by contrast with what is often labeled “passive” media (and its accompanying theoretical baggage). And though the argument is frequently uttered as though


\(^{25}\) Ujiie, “Terebi No Mirai: Terebi Wa Fuben De Jidai Okure No Sābisu Da.”
new, and borne of recent technological innovation in the form of smartphones, tablets, etc, it was already being made (At least in the US) fifteen years ago. An April 24, 2000, cover of Variety heralded the arrival of “Television 2.0,” and added: “the next generation of television is here. interactive.personal.internet,” emphasizing television’s interactive future against a passive past. In media scholar Lisa Parks’ assessment, this pronouncement not only reified categories of participation in mass media, but did so by introducing class and nationality-contingent discourses of access and connection speed. But though the capacity to interact with mass media remains socioeconomically contingent, access has opened up significantly since 2000. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 3, Japanese television has found a way to divorce the bidirectionality of future television from internet access—allowing users to play along with TV programs via remote control just as easily as their smart devices or computers.

Nico Nico Douga

Despite the tendency of many people with whom I spoke to taxonomically relegate NND’s user base to the category of the nerdy/antisocial otaku, and/or the politically right wing netto ugoku (see Chapter 5), its user base, comprised 80% of individuals ages 10-30 (or 34.68 million registered users as of June 2013) is extremely desirable to marketers for whom the members of this “movement” (mūbumento) represent a body that is crucial to both understand and appropriate for the purposes of marketing. This is despite the fact that its membership is predominantly male (67% vs. 33%), while advertisers across platforms are primarily seeking

27 By 2013, the service had 2 million “premium subscribers” at this time who paid ¥575 (around US$6.70 then) for features that included the ability to view live-recorded events at any time, and higher video quality. Nico Nico Douga also had 7.57 million users of its mobile application at that time.
access to female consumers. It is among those ages 30-40 that NND saw the most growth between 2012 and 2013, and an increase in the amount of time spent on the site—from length of visit to the number of page views the company recorded daily. Of the more than 1/3 of Japan’s population who has a NND account, many are the datsu terebi (removed from TV) generation, or the generation about whose experience it has been written: “in the era of bidirectional media, television feels [to them] ‘pushy’ somehow” (“sōhōkō-sei ni nareta sedai wa, terebi wa oshitsukegamashī to kanjirun janai deshou”).29 As prominent media activist Tsuda Daisuke writes about NND, its strength lies in its capacity to allow viewers to interact with presenters, and with one another simultaneously.30 Always seated behind his laptop during broadcasts, Tsuda, who appears regularly on both television and radio as well as NND, practices what he preaches by engaging fluidly with both embodied and virtual commentators during his media appearances—if not on NND, then on Twitter.

Asahi Shinbun, who as the owner of one of Japan’s television networks, TV Asahi, has a stake in promoting this argument, reminded its readers that Japanese citizens still turned to television immediately after the 2011 earthquake and Fukushima nuclear plant disasters, and they can still reliably be counted on to prefer television for watching sporting events (Asahi also argues without substantiation that television remains a major source of accurate (seikaku) transmission about world affairs, and a crucial source of documentary-style content).31 Its additional defense, that there are numerous creative people working in the TV industry, rings true on the basis of my fieldwork, but recalls the polite hedging engaged in by many within or wary of offending TV company staff. For example, the assertion that television companies had,
as of 2013, already appropriated social media in productive ways–essentially eliminating the
tension between the two mediums–seems to perhaps be overestimating the transformative effects
of program-related websites and tweeting.\(^\text{32}\) These efforts seemed little changed from early
efforts to extend television to the internet via home pages, by providing supplemental content in
the form of resources, background information, and merchandise.\(^\text{33}\) Indeed, there was only token
interactivity to be found in such efforts, as television used the web mainly as a means by which
to transmit announcements, echoing broadcast content and its monodirectional format.\(^\text{34}\) That
there are creative individuals operating under significant institutional constraint in television
networks is undeniable–*The Compass* as a single case study suggests that this is true in Japan.
But TV content is a text with many authors, and therein diverges from a model of creative output
represented by much of the literary and art worlds. In television, as in film, creative expression is
as likely to originate in the conceptualization of a program as from the directors, editors, and
(more transparently) actors. And in the case of mass media, creative output is composed of the
generally hidden labor subsumed by large corporations, and (if at all) publicly acknowledged in
credits, while independent media (particularly in Japan) customarily foregrounds individual
efforts and personalities.

9:55pm

9:55pm is the typical commercial-break scramble to touch-up makeup and hastily curate
comments from Twitter and NND. Two assistant directors (ADs) peer into laptops at the relevant


\(^{33}\) Hartley, “From Republic of Letters to Television Republic?.”

\(^{34}\) Parks, “Flexible Microcasting.”
windows, while those whose jobs aren’t more immediately pressing snap cellphone photographs of the stage set’s final use. Ignoring the bustle around them, and even the finessing of their appearance, the announcers page through their scripts to get a sense of the lines they will need to deliver. As another commercial pops up on the in-studio monitors, the two ADs select a number of comments from Twitter user @ray_luno, and another calls out to the announcers their speaking order upon resumption of the broadcast. Of the 35,967 individuals in the NND chatroom, most are now typing emphatic missives about the state of mass media, or about how the program ought to continue:35

“It’s said that mass media came to an end fifteen years ago.” (Masu ga owari o tsugeta to iwarete, mō 15-nen darō)

“It’s the era of making mass media online.” (Netto de masukomi o kaku jidai.)

“There’s still a wall between the net and TV.” (Kono jiten de terebi to netto ni kabe o tsukutteru kan aru na.)

“Television has no future. (Laugh)” (Terebi no mirai wa naitte koto ja ne? W)

“TV already doesn’t have a bright future.” (“Iya, mō terebi ni akarui mirai wa nai desu yo.”)

“[It had] good contents.” (“Ii kontentsu datta ni.”)36

(In response to a user question about why it got cancelled:

“Pressure from the top?” (Ue kara no atsuryoku?)

“More people watched online than on TV?” (Terebi de miru yori netto de miru hito ga ōkattan ja ne?)

“Money.” (Okane da ne.)

35 For an archive of the program, see http://live.nicovideo.jp/watch/lv131104618?d=1#3:14:02
36 A user poll featured at the end showed that 78.9% of NND users thought the program was “very good” (totemo yokatta) and 17.6% voting that it was “pretty good” (ma ma yokatta).
“So, what’s next week? Just uncut NND broadcast?” ("De raishū wa? Niko-nama dake demo iin da ze?")

And as the broadcast resumes, the scholars and staff onstage engage in a meta-conversation about the necessity and importance of programs such as The Compass, and a collective instinct that such bidirectionality (sōhōkō-sei), at the very least, is the future of television. As the program approaches its finale, several of Fuji TV’s most prominent innovators, including the general manager of the Information Production Center (jōhō seisaku sentā) and some of his staff, join the hosts on stage to close with a discussion of the network’s intention to pursue this kind of programming as part of an overall modernization project. As the program moves to commercial, NND’s transmission simply goes black, a terminal-esque screen across which the white text representing user comments continues its rapid march from right to left.

That NND’s growth is mostly in the area of premium members, for whom a major feature is the capacity to escape the temporal limitations of a live-only broadcast system would suggest that predictions about the personalization of television (the rise of the “on demand” model) have indeed infiltrated the ways that we consume video content in general. What started with TiVo, according to many commentators, has ushered in what media scholar Lisa Parks calls the “post-broadcasting” era, wherein content is tailored and consumed asynchronously. In a nod to the two major characteristics of this form of broadcast, and by means of contrast with the massive audience shares made possible by more limited channels (the U.S.) and less competition with other forms of media (the U.S. and Japan), she labels the new forms of broadcast “flexible microcasting”.

But to choose to view NND content at one’s convenience is always a tradeoff–commenting on videos can only be done as they are transmitted live. When one views a NND event posthumously, one can consume only the input of others which becomes flattened, like that
of any other online video to be consumed passively and reinstituted as purely visual. Liveness as an essential component of the viewing experience was insisted upon by media scholar Jostein Gripsrud, who more than 10 years ago successfully predicted a growing resemblance between cellphones, computers, and television, and a merging of the characteristics of the internet with that of television. Similar to Parks, he postulated an increase in the segmentation of audiences as transmission channels increase, and the interactivity of all participation channels. Gesturing to the ultimate form of control in mass media broadcast—the selection of camera angle—he theorizes that the television of the future will allow users to take over decision-making about looking. And indeed in talking to TV producers at NHK, I discovered that this was one of the first concepts for interactive television that they envisioned in the 1990s, along with a 1993 program that talked about such possibilities—“SIM TV” (Kinmirai Terebi SIM, or as Nishida-san translated it the name: Simulating the Future with Technology). Using phones, this program allowed users to call in and change the graphics displayed on an on-set screen, thus creating a very early example of television that allowed the viewer to act upon the appearance of mass broadcast directly. But he desired specifically to create the possibility for viewers to control camera angels as well, via some sort of phone-based push button technology. Nishida’s conception was that audiences could take over the role of the broadcast technicians in the control room whose jobs it was to signal and execute camera changes. And indeed viewers would have plenty of opportunity: during one typical program in which I observed the work of such techs, one called 134 camera changes the first twenty minutes of a program that included an extended commercial break. The complicating factors in Nishida’s vision was that viewers could only change the camera once every 20 seconds by phone, and considering the audience size anticipated by even a low-rated

program, the process seemed guaranteed to constitute a frustrated queue of audience members who never made it past a busy signal to take their turn with the camera.

That television entails so many camera changes (the unsightly bones of its production) is ideally subsumed by distracting content. And indeed, while the viewer would likely notice if the camera failed to frame each member of a conversation in turn, the ideal television production process is self-obfuscating, the material conditions of its production are invisible until, in moments of crisis they are not. Television enforces, and has accustomed us to a particular way of looking, one that we recreate naturally in our own media production efforts (see Chapter 7). Even in moments where its gaze lingers, by its selective representation and assemblage of shots it creates a speech-act, of no less subjectivity than a newspaper article or other journalistic and filtered informational exchange.\(^{38}\) In examining a program that aired in 1993, it seems not entirely inappropriate to invoke Baudrillard, about whose assertion that television fails to threaten the imagination by its essential emptiness or failure to exist in the same paradigm as myth, I remain skeptical.\(^{39}\) It seems plausible that every time a camera chooses where to look on behalf of an audience, a degree of imaginative potential is lost. And at risk of digressing too completely, I believe in the cognitive potential of choosing when to turn one’s head; indeed the soft gaze of the not-really-looking is essential to the imaginative process. What television most problematically removes from us is the texture of the fully sensory experience; by its innate incapacity to film an authentic moment, TV accustoms us to a mode of perceptive distance, within which our senses and imagination are disengaged. So actually, I think that nothingness is a risk to the imaginary, and because I also believe in the imaginations of television producers, I


am curious where this loss occurs. And I find the notion of experimenting with audience camera control provocative (if not a bit retro) as a result.

On this basis, I am more sympathetic to Luhmann’s description of (even interactive!) television as prototypically second-order observation. Somewhere within the copious graphics and expert analysis, as well as the transplantation of the camera outside the set of the television studio, (as if to remind us that the televisual still belongs, however tenuously, to the world), we are looking through someone else’s eyes; we observe their observation. With allusion to Laura Mulvey, the televisual allows us to safely watch without risk, to indulge our curiosity even if what we are looking at is self-consciously performing for us, or is edited to seem as such. The human being in the camera lens becomes spectacle, is rendered valuable by attracting the camera’s attention and emerging as ‘character’. Particularly with distance, the individual is trapped in a perpetual cycle of self-repetition, able to become fictional even to herself. Following Benjamin, a successful mediated appearance is defined by one’s capacity to retain one’s humanity against the apparatus’ drive to fictionalize. Nishima told me that they had next experimented with allowing viewers to control the outcome of television dramas by voting but–and he sighed–“It seemed to take the punch out of the drama. It took people out of the immersion in the story that made watching pleasurable.” In his reflection on what hadn’t worked about this kind of audience interactivity, he specifically identified the maintenance of immersion as critical; by permitting audience members to assume the authorial voice (albeit by choosing between a limited set of options), the story’s constructed status became foregrounded and the audience forced to disengage from a position of viewing in order to take action. That this has been tried again in recent interactive programming such as TBS’ *Jinrōrian*, (which resembles dinner

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theater) is not a testament to television’s failure to learn from its history. (Indeed, if accounts such as Caldwell’s teach us anything it is that media production workers are self-reflexive and generally engage in strategic mimesis.\textsuperscript{42}) Rather, in newer experiments, networks have removed the capacity to act upon narrative, and divorced the goal of immersion from that of participation. In cases of successful interactive television, the content is inseparable from audience intervention—the entire product a game that must be played in order to exist. The Compass too, offers the capacity for viewers to integrate their opinions into the show under controlled conditions, but they do so without breaching the space of television through its retention of its gatekeeper role. And without the problematic collision of non-diegetic and fictional components, (a conversion of incompatible intentions), interactivity resembles video games in its capacity to encourage immersion.

On stage, where the cameras have gone dark, those around the U-shaped presenters’ desk congratulate and thank one another; while users are still joining the NND chat room, the department chief brings presenters and production staff together in the hall connecting the upstairs control rooms and downstairs studio. As bouquets of flowers are brought in for those who played critical roles, those assembled take turns making warm speeches to the crowd about their enjoyment of the experience and the collective hard work that made it possible. This prolonged session of mutual appreciation is followed by a return to the stage, where those who worked on the show sit before the TV quality broadcast cameras now uploading to NND, to take questions from the chat room. Recalling John Caldwell’s description of a specific habitus, a mimesis of costume for screenwriters and directors, the producers who sit before the cameras represent some of the basic producer archetypes—one slim and black clad, another square-jawed

\textsuperscript{42} Production Culture,, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
and gruff.43 Both chain smokers. The announcers join them in this secondary presentation, although as television “personalities” they receive another round of makeup and hair touch-ups before returning to the stage. Here, before cameras transmitting only to the internet, this impromptu panel take turns discussing the gap between “TV people” (terebi no katagata, rather than geinōjin–entertainers) and audiences (shichōsha). The difference, according to one producer, is that internet comments are “straight” (sutorēto), while those of TV people are often slanted. Speaking to the more than 30,000 people in the chat room by this time, another producer boldly claims that TV culture is contrary to freedom of the press, while connecting to spaces like the NND chat room is the future of broadcast. This comment passes without further elaboration by the others; instead they turn to invite most of the program’s affiliated staff to appear on camera and bid their farewells.

After a lengthy wrap-up, we adjourn to a nearby American Western themed restaurant for drinks, food, and a post-mortem on the program. Between speeches by those who have worked on The Compass, one of the producers laments that he wants to make more programs of this sort, but that they aren’t valued by the networks. He invokes Marshall McLuhan by name, emphasizing loudly to be heard over the din: “media wa messēji de aru!” (the media is the message). This translation of the phrase, the use of the word media over the word medium (baitai), initially startles me. I ask about it, and he holds up a hand, insisting that it is always translated into Japanese in this way, to remain consistent with McLuhan’s intentionality. It is the media that are the message, and in this case television is sending a very strong message by integrating with internet content. Recalling the on-set conversation from earlier, I ask if the “straightness” of internet commenting is part of this, whether by his interpretation the medi(um) constitutes the message. And why would television be considered slanted if its objective in news contexts is to perform neutrality? He corrects me on this–isn’t forced neutrality a kind of slanting?

43 ibid.
Another producer, Eki, is listening silently next to us. He changes the subject to the economic conditions of television labor, pointing out to me that the individuals drinking together are mostly not employees of Fuji TV, but of various production companies—and they will be scattered to different programs soon. He later writes in an email:

“The Compass and [another program he worked on], BS Fuji Live were experimental, interesting programs that allowed professionals and the general public to discuss the news and social phenomenon, to exchange opinions. The style of the program was not fully realized, even immature—the program was cancelled before it could mature. But I think programming like this will become ubiquitous in the future.”

Eki identified sports as the genre most likely to facilitate interactivity, as individuals were most likely to consume the highly-rated genre live, and to want to talk about it with others. “People already want to share the ‘now’ of sports viewing,” he noted. But he was clear that he didn’t necessarily see the future of television as being coincident with that of “social TV,” predicting: “the devices on which television can be watched in the future will increase, and the content consumed on viewing platforms will include TV without being limited to it. The likelihood that social TV will spread in the future is high but the future of television has no relation to social TV, and social TV has no relation to the future of television.”

Eki’s prediction here contradicts the tone of so many earlier media scholars mentioned above, whose enthusiasm and expectation for the developments in interactive technology of the late twentieth century led to a kind of euphoria about the potential for massive transformation of the medium. One media scholar wrote of television that it has always been a highly unstable medium, that until the early 21st century had been driven by a consistent underlying logic.44 He quotes fellow media researcher Stephen Heath, who advocates for a new set of terms by which to discuss this evolving and hybridized medium.45

45 ibid.
The hindsight provided by another decade of television development plays only partially into my challenge to the notion that television is a slippery medium. If anything, it has proven as exasperatingly obdurate as the corporations within which it is produced. Though affected by the same neoliberal economic forces that have pushed so many other large companies (universities included) to outsource and rely on contingent labor, to require workers to diversify, and to perform the jobs previously assigned to multiple individuals, television has adapted to contemporary economic conditions and is still producing hits. The massively popular 2013 TV drama, *Hanzawa Naoki*, for example, remains consistent to the formulas and styles of dramas from decades past, apart from improvements in technical quality—and the same can be said for much of contemporary American TV. If anything, the logics of television as a medium remain intact as it has spent the past two decades manipulating puzzle pieces in an attempt to find a way to fit interactivity to television without changing television overmuch. With television producers sharing many of the same ideals as academics about potential sociopolitical ramifications of a more bidirectional mass media (and much the same skepticism/cynicism), it can be tempting to read with excessive optimism the ways that viewer contributions have been integrated into programming. But is the integration of Twitter comments to news broadcasts fundamentally different from practices begun in the past of reading audience letters onscreen, or taking calls from viewers? Television, I would argue, is prototypically sluggish, and has remained remarkably stable even as technology in general has changed rapidly around it and the tools with which we engage it become smaller, more portable, and tailored to on-demand viewing. That Japan has developed the tools with which to fundamentally alter the technology of television represents a major transformation of the media, and one that was not seen in the low-budget *The Compass*, which was hindered by structural limitations that clashed with the ambitions of its creators. With its webcams attached to clunky laptops, and its video-chat interface, the program seemed almost
retro at times. However, absent network willingness in this case to pay for technologies such as
the ones explored in Chapter 4, it also appeared to be the work of producers/directors trying to
push up against the edges of all of the interactive technology they could integrate on a limited
budget.

So long as television remains largely a medium consumed through watching, its cachet
among theoreticians concerned by its passivity will remain consistently low. The notion of
aesthetic forms acting upon and inspiring states of cognition was one of central concern to
classical philosophers; so too, the potential of art as experiential and (ideally) communal. As
Rancière recently argued, the purpose of a work of art is to create community, and yet “an
aesthetic community is a community structured by disconnection”.\textsuperscript{46} I posit that contemporary
critical theory and philosophy normatively place greater value on authorship than on looking–on
writing, rather than writing–as an experiential category. Relatedly, media researcher John
Hartley argues that TV will never be considered alongside other “literate” forms of art until
audiences can both read \textit{and} write in response to it.\textsuperscript{47} This is what interactive television, in its
most ideal form, offers audiences–as other means of engaging television through writing (even
the kind of “decoding as writing” articulated by Stuart Hall) relied on disengagement from the
medium itself as in the case of fan fiction, or on a kind of writing as disconnected and cognitive
process as articulated by Rancière. And can fan/slash fiction, as analyzed by Henry Jenkins,
properly be considered audience integration and a step towards dissolving the distinction
between producers and audiences? Hartley argues that media experiments wherein programs are
composed of audience-submitted footage (such as Fuji TV’s recent “Japan in a Day” special)
start to dissolve the boundaries between producers and consumers, and to an extent I think this is

\textsuperscript{47} Hartley, “From Republic of Letters to Television Republic?”
true.\textsuperscript{48} Certainly, such projects make a gesture towards creating the connected art defined by Rancière. But interactive television in its current Japanese incarnation actually strips audiences of the sort of readerly liberty defined by philosopher Hans Magnus Enzensberger and interpreted by John Hartley, while creating space for a new kind of “writing with TV”. If technologies like the VCR, and later the TiVo and other DVRs introduced Umberto Eco’s “aberrant decoding,” wherein audiences can move programs forward and backward, and skip and re-watch portions in a manner resembling that of “literary” reading, then interactive TV challenges interpretation by attempting to render such practices obsolete. That the experience of these programs is contingent on live participation (see Chapter 4) both returns audience-users to the paradigm of an earlier era in TV history by forcing a choice between their capacity to manipulate or participate, and provides them a new means by which to engage in co-authorship of the text.

I have chosen to focus on the case study of a single program, but it is one among a few within the Japanese networks which were attempting to test the boundaries of acceptable experimentation within the bounded infrastructure of conservative mass broadcast. These mostly include low-budget news discussion programs such as \textit{Gekiron! Kurosufaia} (Heated Discussion! Crossfire) and \textit{Nyūsū no Shinsō} (News in Depth) that are attempting to integrate more diverse voices, and were thus assigned to non-prime time slots on the networks’ secondary BS channels; their production budgets tended to be sufficiently limited that the crew almost always joked about the cheapness of their glitter and paint covered sets during my visits. Prior to beginning my fieldwork on technological innovation in this industry, my fieldwork time was spent observing morning \textit{jōhō} (information) program production; in circulating between networks I was able to see how this genre in particular represents a counterpoint to the new experiments in broadcast generally assigned to the late-night slots. \textit{Jōhō} programs are generally not sites of

\textsuperscript{48} ibid.
experimentation, rather they are routinized and fluffier versions of TV news (think *Good Morning America* versus the nightly news). Nonetheless, individual actors within these recalcitrant genres were experimentally minded—following my fieldwork period, one started a blog devoted to intellectual critiques of the TV industry, and another was fond of inviting me to one of the fourth floor’s smoking rooms to pontificate about the future of broadcast. For producers like Eki, technology could reliably be counted on to march forward⁴⁹, but whether content would be permitted to march alongside it, to evolve in a comparable fashion he was less certain: “The future of television depends on our capacity to produce content,” he asserted.⁵⁰ And in the end, he re-articulated a divide between audiences and producers in stating that TV currently panders to audiences, and must be willing to transcend this practice.⁵¹ Whether such a transition might mean eliminating the mimetic and ubiquitous *tsukkomi teroppu* (TV subtitling) and *waipu* (reaction shots), or a transformation of the kinds of stories television tells remains to be seen. However, as will be seen in later chapters, the industry’s agency is constrained by economic conditions that suggest that pandering to advertisers rather than audiences is its primary structural handicap.

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⁴⁹ “Tekunorojī wa kakujitsu ni shinpo shimasu.”
⁵⁰ “Terebi no mirai wa akumade kontentsu no seisaku nōryoku ni sayū sareru to omoimasu.”
⁵¹ “Terebi ga shichō-sha ni taishite geigō shiteiru to omoimasu…”
Chapter 3: Sōsharu Terebi Suishin Kaigi (The Social TV Research Collective) and the Transformation of Ratings
It is February 1, 2013, the 60th anniversary of television broadcast in Japan, and the country’s oldest broadcasters, NHK and NTV, want to do something big, something to usher in the next 60 years of television history. Their plan is rather ambitious: a two-day, live interactive television broadcast, a collaboration between the networks and a small upstart of a Tokyo company called, Bascule. “60 Ban Shōbu” (60-Year Battle), as the program is dubbed, is heavily promoted; a large banner announcing its broadcast hangs over the famously frenetic Shibuya “scramble” intersection. And on the evening of the first, as the clock ticks down to its live broadcast, staff upload giddy cellphone shots of the behind-the-scenes vigil, tagging each other in images documenting their patient attention to the necessary infrastructure of this new television experiment. Seated before laptops, outlines, and monitors, they create a record of this event that inscribes many of the key players in Japan’s Social TV scene. These snapshots, which constitute television content as a process, also extend the concept of social television to be as much about the generally faceless body of producers as the appropriated category of consumer-users. Yet this moment makes no overtures towards genuine transparency; photographs are tagged and circulated among a closed group1, they reveal nothing of the program’s mechanics, and little of its physical viscera. They are, in a sense, the Facebook equivalent of “behind the scenes television” which knows where it may not go and what it must not show.

Certainly studio tension exceeds that of a standard live television broadcast, with viewer interactivity both possible and on the line, but little prior experience in the execution of such systems. And the program itself represents a narrative of technology’s becoming through time; as such it is imperative that this, the current pinnacle of Japanese televisual technology function correctly, that it successfully transfer audience admiration of broadcast technology in its heyday

1 Of course, there is always the potential for leakage, such as my discussion of these images here.
to an equally ambitious future. Entwined with this narrative is that of a nation for whom
technology has been synonymous with pride—with television occupying a critical role. As
viewers screen the historical footage curated by NHK and NTV for the “Shōbu,” we are
reminded of how Japan announced its post World War II techno-infrastructural rebirth to the
world in part through the unveiling of revolutionary new broadcast technology during the 1964
Tokyo Olympics. Following Akhil Gupta, such a project spoke to the aspirational fantasies of a
nation’s leadership, and certainly represented a kind of performance before the nations with
which it had just engaged in combat, and which had taken apart its infrastructure to the point of
necessary surrender. But unlike Gupta’s infrastructure as ruin or abandoned hope, the
infrastructure of television lived on to connect a nation symbolically and visually, to continually
reproduce itself and when, at risk of decline, to return with practiced determination to the
salvation of technological progress.

60 Ban Shōbu’s system is simple: viewers are given a smartphone, tablet, remote control,
or laptop accessible interface with a single button: ii (like). When so inspired by the content
onscreen, they can press this button, and studio graphs behind the program’s hosts reflect
audience responses in real-time. The program is designed as a contest, with one day’s 2-hour
special hosted at NHK studios, the next at NTV, and both networks mobilizing their most
compelling historical footage in order to win the most ii’s. Following the usual model of
onscreen-surrogacy explicated in more detail in Chapter 4, tarento (TV personalities) both
instruct on and participate in the use of this technology, which can be accessed via smartphone,

\[\text{II}\]

4 Sakai Osamu explains why this button is not the “ii ne” of Facebook, but a katana “ii”, using the syllabary that is
traditionally reserved for foreign loan words in Japanese. He writes: “It's not 'ii ne' [in hiragana], it's 'ii' in katakana,
because Japan’s Kenjiro Takayanagi, the developer of the cathode-ray tube television system, first used it to transmit
a katakana 'i'. (“Ii ne’ de wa naku; katakanade ‘ii’ na no wa, Nihon de doki ni terebi o kaihatsu shita Takayanagi
Kenjirō ga hajimete buraan kan ni utsushita moji ga ‘i’ datta kara ni kimatteru yo ne.”)
tablet, laptop, and even remote control. And viewers do engage; hitting their ii buttons almost 20 million times during the two days of broadcast. The program immediately becomes a darling of the terebi no mirai (future of television) research set; over the next eight months I will see its telltale primary-colored stills reproduced on PowerPoint screens across Tokyo, its system explicated and dissected by researchers and industry insiders alike.

To watch this program is to witness television engaging in a conscious and collaborative project of self-definition. In so doing, it has followed two trains of thought: what, of the work we have done thus far, best represents the meaning and history of television? And what, of this corpus, will most delight the audience, whose approval will be uniquely measured by the push of a button? To this end, as the number of app users climbs, they begin with a history of broadcast technology itself; from the 1953 emergence of NHK, to the construction of the Tokyo Tower in Roppongi, to highly rated moments in TV history therefore presumed to be beloved, programs from the 1950s dissecting American culture, the 1973 series Mokuyō Supesharu, a 24-hour television marathon from the 1980s, and, by far the most entertaining to the in-studio and home audiences, as measured by their “likes”: an episode of the 1994 NHK program Shumi Hyakka, featuring a man slowly contorting himself into jaw-dropping yoga poses. More so than the commercial station NTV, as Japan’s public and governmental/viewer funded broadcaster, NHK is even now charged under national law with “elevating the level of civilization,” and must therefore, in performing its history, perform its worth.

Television also began in 2013 to unravel its extant system of ratings calculation via this method. As outlined in the introduction of this dissertation, what started in the 1950s as a means of assuring ratings simply by placing television sets in such locations as restaurants, train stations, and barbershops (gaito terebi), and constituting audiences from public crowds became the
simultaneous collective family viewing of the 1960s living room (cha no ma), and the increasingly divided, separate, and targeted viewing of the present.\(^5\) The current system of calculating ratings, as explained to me by staff at its aggregating company Video Research Institute (VRI) “needs to change”. It simply cannot account for the viewing habits of contemporary audiences, who use DVRs to record television (viewership of which cannot then be tracked under the current ratings system), or consume it in some alternative manner, such as on the phone or online. As I meet with them after the airing of the 60-ban Shōbu, they marvel at the idea of the “ii button”. While traditional ratings measured the status of a television set (on or off, and which channel), these could not effectively curate real-time enjoyment. Moreover, the virtual or street corner crowd’s “collective effervescence” was technology uncontainable; influence on one’s opinion of a program was itself “time-shifted,” informed by reviews and eventual conversations, or was perhaps more nuclear in its unfolding—the collective processing of TV content by the family unit. The nostalgic idea of the three-generation family wrestling over the remote control, staking out their preferred programs, and viewing together regardless of preference, is one that is commonly invoked in contrast to the habits of today. In public service videos and Twitter discussions arranged by Japan’s Association for the Promotion of Digital Broadcasting (DPA, or Ippan Shadanhōjin Dejitaru Hōsō Suishin Kyōkai) to demonstrate the features of contemporary digital broadcast, one of the featured tarento, Tetsu, explains precisely this: “Three generations of us were living together, so when I wanted to watch TV I always had a fight with Grandpa over which channel to watch”.\(^6\) Television content was consumed simply as an element of family routine, its communal viewing a means of reifying ties by acquiescing to the interests of others and enjoying television as the common experience of looking at the same

\(^6\) “Boku wa ojīchan, obāchan to 3 sedai de kurashite ita node terebi o miru toki ojīchan to itsumo channeru arasoi o shite imashita.”
thing. One might interpret this as a kind of Fordist nostalgia as filtered through a lens of Gramscian philosophy; here the home is the quintessential romantic space of perceived historical innocence, its cozy multi-generational TV viewing a foil to the industrializing society. Fordism, it has been said, made of the family the core and most normative social unit, as Ford himself balanced the compromises demanded by his own industrial policies with a nostalgia for a perceived simpler personal life of times past. Prominent social television promoter and founder of the Sōsharu Terebi Suishin Kaigi (Social TV Promotion Collective), Sakai Osamu writes with sensuous detail about this bygone era of television consumption in such a way that recalls American viewing habits of the past: the family would gather around a 20 inch set, eating dinner together while watching TV in the (o)cha no ma. In the present time, by his assessment, a disorganized procession of family members gaze at the LCD screen from sofas or a Western-style dining table, eating separately. And this transformation has been lexicographically indexed by the vanishing of the phrase cha no ma, in favor of the appropriated phrase “living room” (ribingurūmu). “Kotoba toshite wa ribingurūmu no hō ga fusawashi darou.” This vivid, and quintessentially Fordist image of familial utopia is reinforced by the language Sakai uses to describe a bygone era of television culture; television once delivered “dreams” (yūmei) to the cha no ma. Fathers watched the news, children sat pie-eyed, all aflutter (dokidoki) about the heroes, wives excitedly consumed the dramas and content from the U.S. and everyone watched commercials to learn about consumer fashions.

Sakai, born in 1962, remembers fondly a consumer era where to be told what to buy was desirable—the era categorized by the “3 C’s- a car, cooler (air conditioner), and color TV” (none

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9 ibid.
10 ibid.
of which begin with ‘C’ in Japanese).\textsuperscript{11} Then, the audience came to commercials willingly, rather than making of advertising an engineering problem. Even in the 1990s, he noted, television was “the king of media” (\textit{terebi wa media no ōsama}).\textsuperscript{12}

Contemporary Japan is frequently appraised in discussions as one of fragmented and mobile connection—that is, when connections are made,\textsuperscript{13} and thus, characterized as a society in which mass media consumption is both mobile and solitary. Clip art and stock photographs of cellphones inevitably make an appearance in presentations about contemporary TV viewers; as a Symposium “Mobile ’13” (\textit{Shinpojiumu mobairu ’13}) presentation by staff of Korean company Naver’s Japanese subsidiary (Line, Inc.) claimed in relation to its explosively popular application “Line”—we have moved from the eras of the newspaper, the radio, the television, and the PC to arrive in the smartphone’s historical moment. But while technology is represented here in terms of a Hegelian succession of stages, with television already two steps in the evolutionary past, presentations crafted by those among the substantial body of Japanese communications researchers studying television position handheld devices (including laptops) in a reciprocal relationship with television, i.e. with arrows, transmission lines, and presumably data passing between the two.

To return to the concept of ratings, Shin’ichiro, a prominent mid-career television producer who himself has written and presented on the future of Japanese television commented to me: “In the case of Japan, the old model for measuring ratings is large-scale, and we’re still figuring out what of that system to keep. This is the biggest problem confronting television stations…since

\textsuperscript{11} ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} ibid.
the concept of ‘television ratings’ defined by the television set alone has become suspect, we need to extend this notion to the smart phone and computer…”. 14

But by promising rewards, or even by simply making the program sufficiently engaging, television has developed a means by which to track not the viewer, but the user of television content. In registering to participate in such programs, such users voluntarily provide basic demographic data: age, gender, location, and even blood type. If rewards are offered as part of the campaign, they connect to national shopping rewards cards such as Ponta,16 which allow consumers to accumulate points, and are lucrative for their parent company who makes money by tracking spending habits and trafficking user data. Thus, the smartest part of smart TV might be its capacity to directly tie engaged and known-to-be-watching individual consumers to their lucrative spending and profile data, and to collect microscale feedback on what pleases audiences—no longer measuring in terms of “I watched x program,” but “at 3 minutes and 20 seconds, I was enjoying myself.” Thus, the conventional ratings for the “60-ban Shōbu” (2.3% on the first night, and 2.7% on the second), although not bad for a program that aired at 12:58AM and 12:50AM, respectively, were rather beside the point.17 In his commentary on the program, Sakai Osamu wrote that one of its major themes was the breaking of taboos,18 from welcoming comedian Sanma Akashiya to appear on NHK for the first time after his unofficial ban from the network 30 years ago (the most i’ed moment of the show), to the collaboration between two networks on a cross-channel program, the behind-the-scenes exploration of the way

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14 “Nihon no baai, shichō-ritsu no bijinesu moderu ga ōkibona tame, tōmen wa kono ōrudo bijinesu moderu o dō kīpu suru ka ga; terebikyoku no saidai no kadai desu… terebi juzō-ki no shichō-ritsu ga ayashiku natte iru genzai, ’shichō-ritsu’ no kangaekata o, terebi juzō-ki kara sumātofon ya pasokon made hirogete ikitai no ga…” (my notes)
15 See Chapter 4 for more on this concept
16 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Ponta points as used in the program “Bloody Tube”.
18 “Kono tabū o yaburu kanji, to iu no wa, kono bangumi zentai ni nagarete iru, hitotsu no kihon shiseidatta to omou”1.
television is made, and the 24-hour production competition between the two networks to see who could put together the most successful short segment.\textsuperscript{19} As Sakai commented, by extending beyond the boundedness of the television set: “They are literally breaking down the frame of television [with this program].”\textsuperscript{20} By pushing a button, the user can act upon on the screen; her actions directly constitute the reactions of the program’s hosts.

On a sunny day in April, 2013 Tokyo’s Shibuya neighborhood, Gracenote is holding an event for media industry insiders. For the occasion of this presentation, they have flown out some of their Los Angeles technical support staff, who wander around the cafe checking wires and ensuring that iPads and televisions function correctly. Members of Gracenote’s Tokyo office function as the front line, explaining the TV and poster board content to the assembled individuals—among them members of the Sōsharuterebi suishin kaigi. According to its staff, just as Gracenote’s existing technology can be used to identify music based on its digital footprint, the technology it’s seeking to embed in the televisions of the future will identify members of a household, and target advertising to them based on gender, income level, and past purchases. For example, Ford commercial featuring a different vehicle is shown to: “Female 35-39, Household Income $50k-100k, Honda Lease Holder”, another to “Family, HH (Head of Household) Income $25-50K, Los Angeles Designated Market Area,”\textsuperscript{21} based on statistical indications about the car to which they’re likely to be most receptive. Until now, programs and time slots were assigned demographic information rather crudely, with no room for the particular (or the non-Nielsen family individual household). For an industry that trades in aggregates, this represents a small step closer to disambiguating the audience. It feels as though television is “catching up” in this

\textsuperscript{19} ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} “Ima masa ni terebi to iu media no furēmu o mojidōri kowasou to shite iru”
\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, the event was announced at the Sōsharuterebi suishin kaigi meeting earlier in April.
area rather than pioneering, despite the complicated technology involved. It is as though a medium in stasis is finally pushing back at the collective fantasy represented by the ratings concept.

As Ien Ang outlined more than twenty years ago (but without interim change in the system), audience measurement under the current system represents a collective will-to-believe on the part of industry professionals. Still considered quasi-scientific, despite their small sample-sizes and the inevitable introduction of human error and/or deception, ratings are the data by which a highly lucrative industry assigns value. If anything, the accuracy of the associated physical instruments (ratings’ boxes) bears the brunt of critique rather than the underlying methodology.\(^\text{22}\)

Although there is now the potential for change, the ratings system has historically served to quantify the successes of television professionals, to wordlessly disclose what we like. In so doing, it has become the parlance of daily speech about the medium and is treated as factual by industry insiders, press, and even audiences themselves. For audiences, ratings represent mere trivia, and for the press, support for cultural punditry. But for insiders, they dictate the future of programming itself. With suspension of disbelief practiced by all parties, the industry has no need to reinvent its system, to threaten its application of the audience-concept. And although Ang previously argued that the introduction of VCR technology complicated this concept to the point of forcing revision, television staff and researchers in Japan even now make the same worried claims with regard to DVRs, computers, and smart devices.\(^\text{23}\) But this time, their concern is inspired by a consistent decline in ratings since the VCR-era, necessitating a robust self-defense before the powerful advertising agencies \textit{Dentsu} and \textit{Hakuhodo}. In this salvage-oriented discourse, young viewers are imagined not to have strayed, but to be temporarily un-


quantifiable. While the networks focus on interactive television to address both of these problems, VRI explains to me in the Spring of 2013 that they still measure household percentages by the Nielsen model, and rely on surveys to track individual viewing habits. They also offer more complex pay-for services that can be harnessed to probe deeper into the nature of audiences if so required by clients. Research on children’s programming audiences, for example, is a pay-for service. But it is the advertising firms that do real work on demographics and viewing habits. 24 As we sip tea in their Sanbanmachi office, the topic of VRI’s new “assigning ratings through Twitter comments” system comes up, a concept that has attracted the attention of the English language press, but is still considered too new to opine on. It’s “in the testing stage,” I am told.

On this topic, the industry exists in a state of nervous suspension, holding its breath as it tests new technology, awkwardly shares space with older interactive media, and nervously monitors traditional ratings as it ever did. If audiences were in 1991 being “desperately sought” according to Ien Ang, in 2014 the industry is nearly begging. But the walls of television network offices and halls are still covered in pieces of paper announcing exceptional ratings, and recent industry chatter has harkened back to that of the 1990s with the astounding ratings success of TBS’s drama Hanzawa Naoki. 25 When I ask Shin’ichiro, himself a TBS employee, to take a photo for me that represents the future of Japanese television, this is the one he sends back: [image 4] It is of a Taiwanese website where users can stream Japanese television for free. No commercials. No ratings. No DVRs. “Yabaissu” (Dangerous), he says. 26

24 It might be noted that VRI is a subsidiary of the advertising behemoth Dentsu.
25 Ratings for this program exceeded 30%, a figure that was generally described as belonging to the television of yesteryear.
26 Email interview
(The) Sōsharu Terebi Suishin Kaigi

On a day so windy in mid-March, 2013, that it has stopped a couple of Tokyo’s train lines, public television broadcaster NHK’s “Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo” (Broadcast Culture Research Group) is holding one of its regular symposia to discuss the future of television. These presentations, which rely heavily on both survey and ethnographic data, are essentially academic in nature—indistinguishable in practice from a social scientific conference apart from the comparatively large size of the audience. With a focus this time on youth markets and the contexts within which they’re (not) watching television, the data extends from a detailed discussion of kids and their reportedly increasing enjoyment of school, to a survey showing that 90% of middle and high school kids consider themselves happy (ima shiawase). The man sitting next to me with his arms crossed, taking in this data, clears his throat and mumbles: “masukomi wa daijōbu”? (“Is mass media okay?”).

The majority of the data, in addition to suggesting that happiness and regard for Japanese society writ large decreased with age, was grounded in the assumption that in order to maintain television audiences, social connections between individuals must be maintained. Essentially, in a world where engaging social media has become one of the dominant means by which people spend leisure time, and media sharing a large component of this, the industry feels a vested interest in not just insinuating itself into this process, but in keeping audiences sufficiently invested in social contact that media sharing remains appealing. Referring to Sakai’s own reflections on embodied television consumption, another survey asks audiences why they might choose to view programs with their family; the majority answer is pragmatic: the best household television set is in the living room.
I am invited to attend a meeting of the Sōsharu Terebi Suishin Kaigi after this presentation, when Sakai approaches me and introduces himself. He is a walking “snowball effect,” seeming to know most of the people in the NHK auditorium already—and he knows my name and biographical information before I have a chance to recite them. Talking to him means a flurry of business card exchanges as prominent media industry professionals approach in greeting and turn to acknowledge me. With a hidden Facebook group and an invite-only policy, the meetings of the STSK have an air of exclusivity. Therefore I make a point of attending the next one (April 4, 2013)—walking the eleven minutes from Tokyo’s Shibuya station to what from the outside is another nondescript office building. Inside is a startlingly quirky marketing design company, with rooms all constructed according to a different visual theme, and a meeting area where these presentations are held decorated with black crystal chandeliers and ornate shaded lamps. Roll is taken at these meetings, and with each name call, each “hai,” “yoroshiku onegai shimasu,” the individual in question stands and, in some cases, recites a self-introduction. Around the wooden tables, the STSK members drink complementary beers and tea, and listen to a series of presentations about social television and the technologies that are facilitating related changes to the medium. Upon first entering, I note the faces of several people I have met during my television studio fieldwork and interviews; high-ranking producers who have generally spent their entire careers in television and are known for their experimentalism—in at least one case, internationally.28

The first presentation of the night walks newcomers through the basics of the “second screen” as a concept, the idea that television as first screen can become part of a chain of synchronous use that includes all other screen-based technologies. A young female presenter, a rarity among this group of mostly mid-career men, holds a phone up to a television broadcast and shows how an alpha version iPhone application can pick up the audio of the program and display additional information about that program’s content. Her example is an evening drama, and as its audio is

27 I’m referring here to the means by which anthropologists find informants while conducting fieldwork: one usually leads to another, who leads to two more. A snowball, rolling downhill and collecting more snow.

28 For example, “This American Life,” an National Public Radio series, produced an episode profiling a Japanese television series with which some of the STSK were involved.
recognized by the app, it shows the viewer/user where she can buy a handbag and other accessories seen onscreen—product placement without the necessity of viewer research. That the example uses a young female audience is unsurprising; during one of my visits to a television production company near Shinjuku station an HR representative told me: “young women own the market”. Anthropologists Lukacs and Moeran have described a market for media advertising has fragmented substantially since the 1980s, with new consumer demographics being created by marketers in order to sell to them differently.  

An increasing tendency for young women to work outside the home and casually to have their own disposable income, prompted companies to manufacture ever more varieties of consumer goods meant to represent individual niches. Therein lies the justification for the variations on bottled tea in the marketplace, or the number of cosmetic lines. This, in contrast to conventional wisdom from the cha no ma days that entire families could be marked to simultaneously, and indeed must be due to the presumption of a collective viewing experience. A tendency for mass media to subsume Japanese differences into one national public, or to use particular ways of being as a suggestion for universal national selfhood (such as affectations and dialect specific to the Kansai region of Japan) meant that anyone to whom broadcast could be presumed to speak could also be presumed to have an interest in the same consumer goods. A fear of some theorists is that by introducing fragmentation into the marketplace, one does something similar to the damage done by allowing transnational programming to enter the Japanese sphere—just as anthropologist Purnima Mankekar notes about India, Japanese culture has proven itself a battleground, with issues of identity and purity dominating the rhetoric, and the very semiotic tools used to describe the television-watching experience shifting from the Japanese to the Western. Attesting to the cultural sensitivity of television, protests at one of my broadcast company field sites during the

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30 The area including Osaka, Nara, and Kyoto.

31 *ibid.*; Chun, “A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots.”

summer of 2012 over a perceived excess of imported Korean programming function as a symptom of the longstanding tension between the two nations.

However, rhetoric from the early days of television also divided user groups, and it did target them separately, as indicated by Sakai’s poetics about the divergent interests of family members, and TV talent Tetsu reflecting on the conflict between himself and a grandparent over what to watch. These examples, while gesturing to a soft focus version of the 1960s, are also suggestive of an earlier market fragmentation than is generally acknowledged—and articles by Japanese researchers about women’s television consumption from the 1950s support this notion.33 Women, owing to new pressure to recuse themselves from the workplace, were said to watch much more television than their male counterparts, and marketing targeted them accordingly by focusing on labor-saving devices for the home (washers, vacuums, etc.) The genders were further divided by their news medium of choice; women, it was observed, learned 60% of their news from the television by 1958, against 35% of men. This, because television purportedly fit more easily into the multitasking routine of a busy housewife than sitting down to read a newspaper.34

And the ubiquitous (even then) sports programming targeted the men in a household, while entertainment kept its sights on women, and helped to constitute the category of housewife. Nonetheless, an increasing notion of diversity among the groups in receipt of advertising’s suggestive modes of address are often mystifying enough to advertisers (similar to ratings themselves) that they require the interventions of experts whose full-time job it is to research and identify the interests of their clients’ target audiences. So while marketers and public relations professionals still fall back on conventional modes of address that speak to Japanese tradition and uniformity, even ubiquitous seasonal marketing tends to appropriate historical techniques of interpolation by appealing to seasonal ritual and self-referential Japanese-ness.

33 Chun, “A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots.”
34 ibid.
The focus of STSK meetings is divided between the introduction of new technologies, and the analysis of recent social TV experiments—in a format resembling an academic roundtable. One of my interlocutors, a producer of *The Compass*, is giving a talk about that program this evening, leading with a photograph of the program’s stage set identical to one I’ve used in my own presentations. Insofar as this content differs from the normative substance of his on-the-job commentary, with a focus on the theoretical implications of this program rather than the production details, I find myself learning more about its polemical characteristics than I have in any other setting. Nonetheless, there is certainly plenty of factual information to be delivered: the program sourced topic ideas from its audiences, and they carefully track the correlation of activity on Twitter, Facebook, and NND to the on-set discussions. Sakai acts as the emcee for the round of questions that follow (and indeed, for the entire evening). Fellow producers want mostly to know the mechanics of such programming, but they also want an occasion to quip about the network’s decision to cancel it. One of the audience members comments that TV programs come and go, and that a discontinued series makes space for future innovation. Those around him nod and grunt in affirmation.

As mentioned above, the “60 Ban Shōbu” is a subject of ongoing scrutiny among the broadcast illuminati for its potential to modulate the representation of viewers on television, and advance how they can act upon TV content. The subject of discussion at the earlier NHK symposium, it is again dissected here, with representatives from NHK, NTV, and Bascule all commenting on the program. First is the usual run-through quantifying and correlating smartphone use among young audiences occurs, with graphs, Venn Diagrams, and tables marshaled as evidence. One of the NHK producers talks specifically about the tendency of young viewers to use smartphones while watching TV; this is a trend they can appropriate—in 2013, 22% of viewers engaged social media while watching TV on a weekly basis, 14% on a daily basis. But 74% were a firm ‘no’ regarding this kind of television consumption. I look around, awaiting the dismayed reactions of the TV
professionals, but find only pleased or neutral expressions on the faces of those around me. They see this data as potential, as suggestive of a new mode of television consumption that is in the process of happening. One of the assembled group raises his hand: “So, does the connecting of television and social networking (like SNS) have any affect on ratings?” This, unfortunately, nobody can answer. Although STSK members can quantify ratings, and the amount of times viewers report engaging social media (fundamentally unreliable information) while watching television, they can’t yet determine whether tweeting or Facebooking about a program prompts others to tune in. This, is, as I have mentioned, largely due to a ratings aggregation system that lags behind the ways that twenty-first century viewers use television.

Sakai speaks up and echoes some of the content from his book; following the 2011 earthquake, young people are frequently deciding not to watch television—the relevant causation is a desire to save on electricity, but a substantial number of them are also indifferent to it in general.\textsuperscript{36} Representatives from Hulu are in attendance at this meeting, and will give a presentation at the May session, but even the idea of Hulu in Japan is nascent and its arrival coterminous with my fieldwork.\textsuperscript{37} Sakai notes that when he first began research on television, such VOD (video on demand) services belonged to the U.S.; with Netflix, Hulu, iTunes and then Amazon offering downloadable access to TV, there were already a rising number of households choosing to pull the plug on television.\textsuperscript{38} Japan is still struggling to come to terms with the idea of lost DVD sales were they to embrace a similar model, but as of this conversation massive media chain Tsutaya has launched a Netflix-esque disc by mail service, and the pay service Gyao\textsuperscript{39} allows

\textsuperscript{35} “Terebi shichoujitsu to sosoharu media (SNS to ka) o tsukainagara terebi o miru koto no percento wa kankei ga arimasenka?”
\textsuperscript{36} Sakai, Terebi Wa Ikinokoreru Ka?
\textsuperscript{37} Following Hulu’s arrival, Netflix launched in Japan in 2015.
\textsuperscript{38} ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} http://gyao.yahoo.co.jp/
viewers to buy individual episodes of programs to watch on-demand (in a model reminiscent of iTunes, or Amazon.com’s Instant Streaming). Sakai blames time for the shift in modes of viewing, as renting media is significantly more time consuming that streaming, and watching or recording on a household television set means monopolizing it; here the cha no ma collective viewing experience is construed in terms of an inefficiency, of imposing on others rather than inviting them to join one’s viewing experience. Sakai notes that kids in the Showa era knew the television schedule. But contemporary TV cannot compete with rival technologies in its present form.40

The roll call is beginning again on another night. Among the crowd of men in suits who have come from the office (never those directly employed by the television networks, as a casual uniform has emerged to accommodate the long hours and workplace sleeping), I am surprised to see that the number of young women has grown to four among the group. Two are helping with the setup, and indeed will be among the volunteers I’ll collaborate with at a subsequent symposium sponsored by the STSK. Tonight, the business at hand is mostly to plan the Social TV World Summit Japan, among whose guests will be the American founder of the social TV development company Zeebox41, Anthony Rose. To introduce the planning of the event, the meeting starts with a ‘state of the union’ style address by Sakai, who explains the context for the event through a succinct outline of recent developments in the country’s television market. This, against an American market that, when I am asked, I explain is comparatively more focused on tying retail promotions to onscreen content accessed on-demand than it is on attempting to

40 ibid.
41 Zeebox wrote an application called Beamly (originally named Zeebox), which allows users to follow TV shows and receive extra content related to the programs. Its goal is to act as a dedicated social network for the discussion of television shows.

The Guardian claimed in an article that the name rebranding of the application was to lose an image as being the purview of “geeky males”.1
persuade viewers to return to a live viewing experience through interactive program concepts. The U.S., I tell them, seems to be giving up on anything other than an on-demand model, and applications that brand themselves “social” are working with this trend rather than attempting to subvert it.

Anthropologists Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe write about a “lateralist revolution” in anthropological knowledge production, influenced by the bidirectionality of newer forms of media. This is to say that just as there was a “broadcast era” in academia where knowledge was able to rest on a kind of authority borne of inaccessibility. In the present climate of knowledge production, as I discuss in regard to commenting on newspaper articles in Chapter 7, the ecology of new media forces expertise to be subject to a kind of public “talking back,” to participate in public discussions about the validity of its findings. Thus far, Japanese and American social television has embraced different aspects of this lateralism. American television has embraced the idea of creating bounded spaces within which users can comment on content—particularly in applications. Japanese social television generally allows commenting—but in more truncated forms—and it focuses instead on engaging content directly or on live user creation of programmatic components. (This analysis excludes open-ended spaces online, such as television-centered web forums that more properly belong to the tie-in contents revolution of the 1990s.) As I have discussed, television is currently figuring out how to appropriate the technologies that have generally functioned as its saboteurs, just as other forms of historically successful mass media are struggling to adapt.

This is the point made by the first presenter at the STSK this night, who introduces himself by his Twitter handle and refers to himself as a “VJ” (visual jockey, in English). He introduces a

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new application made by one of the television networks that is supposed to work in tandem with
television shows to allow users to receive bonus content about programs—including directions to
restaurants which are being reviewed by presenters and relevant coupons. But then he stops, and
he says suddenly, speaking in a rapid fire and affectless voice: “TV could die, right?” terebi wa
shinu, deshō) This, he blames on the rise of “CGM” (consumer-generated media), and at the
utterance of the anglicized acronym, a few of the suited men frown and sigh audibly. The answer
is not more television, he argues, and several more people look up—among them some of the
auteurs of the most provocative recent social television. “The answer is AR (augmented reality),”
(Kaiketsusaku wa AR desu) he proclaims. His speech goes on to emphasize the need to find a
way to integrate television into physical space, into the everyday lives of people so that it crawls
into their bodies in much the same way that user controlled spaceships entered Mitsu Dan’s
bloodstream during Bloody Tube (see Chapter 4). In the project of this developer, we will at
some point be able to click on designated places within an application’s television listings to
screen a holographic clip related to the show. “Check out the app ‘Dokidoki Precure’,” he
instructs. “AR is now.”

Marxism and the Frankfurt School in Japan

I would like to digress slightly for a moment, and consider the ways in which this new
hybridized form of television acts as a provocation to Adorno and Horkheimer’s polemical
dissection of the culture industry—particularly as the same Marxian underpinnings have
influenced Japan’s native rhetoric surrounding television.43 Adorno and Horkheimer found fault
with the system of mass public entertainment, accusing it of forcing its consumers out of the
realm of cool aesthetic judgment and into one of the sensuous. Their Marxism was perhaps most
apparent in their apperception of categories of art, with those produced by a profit-minded mass
industry compromising an ideal Kantian artistic reception. In their reading, publics subjected to

43 Chun, “A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots.”
the output of the culture industries essentially lost their capacity for reasoned choice, became involuntarily and rapidly subject to the logics of simulated decision-making. In particular, Adorno’s deep unease over the trappings of popular culture led to passages among those deployed by his critics to most hastily dismiss him—on cartoons and jazz, for example. It was in part the lack of active participation in media content that Adorno and Horkheimer found so troubling, the mindlessness of its consumption, and the systematicity of the mass media in general. Their dis-ease was reflected in the Marxism of Japanese media critics Yamada Ichirō and Ōya Sōichi—the latter who coined the famous phrase ichioku sōhakuchi (a nation of a hundred million idiots) to describe the effects of television on the Japanese population. Ōya in particular, as an elite journalist, had the attention of the nation when he wrote that the programs on television were using excessive sensory stimulation to lure in audiences for whom it was a pleasurable diversion.\footnote{44}

As described by anthropologist Dominic Boyer, media form an “operational constructivist” basis for society’s production of reality, and the whole system became suspect once information was divorced from embodied orality.\footnote{45} But while the system has historically rested on a kind of “primary orality” (and remains rooted in orality in Japan, where much news comes from press conferences), second-order orality has been circumvented for the third-order orality represented by audiences telling (blogging, podcasting, video casting, etc.) audiences about news consumed through the mass media.

How then, would Adorno and Horkheimer have appraised “CGM,” of the turning away from this culture industry by so many, in favor of a category of self-produced and circulated media? Would they have found it a more insidious deception? Surely they would have found the meetings of the STSK more than a little bit provocative, as these largely pertained to discussions about how to re-inscribe citizens who had broken from one of the most troubled tools of the culture industry. The production of social media challenges the notion of disconnection as

\footnote{44}{ibid.}
Adorno meant it, and distraction, as did Adorno’s colleague Walter Benjamin. Although there has been as much, if not more attempt to argue that use of social media leads to less real-world connection (and thus, disconnection is its essence), there is no evidence to prove this point, as such. And distraction, as written by Benjamin, describes a state of approaching one’s environment without full engagement of the senses, is if anything driven into the shadows by the CGM revolution. Indeed, it was the Storyteller that was lost in the face of mediums like those critiqued by Adorno, Benjamin, and Horkheimer. Rather than seeing the storyteller rendered obsolete, we have entered the era of the storyteller, where everyone is in essence the author of her own tale, and possessing of access to a potentially massive platform. The appropriation of social media by television only makes this platform potentially larger, with programs like The Compass taking tweets and airing them alongside a username and profile image on television—effecting for their authors a potential future audience of followers.

But so far, much of interactive television is more like a video game (see Chapter 4), with the user constrained to the role of game piece. While users can talk to one another, they cannot talk to non-users, or access the television screen independent of the screening efforts of producers, or in some cases, at all. If what they might have been doing was storytelling, some of interactive television, is attempting to bring them back under the sway of the culture industry by engaging them in one of its most fully sensuous activities—video gaming. Adorno was deeply suspicious of “received authority”; with its constructed barriers and challenges, it is also tempting to read video gaming as among the most authoritative. As discussed in several points within this dissertation, the reading of consumers as passively subject to the authority of a concept like the culture industry has long since been debunked in its totalitarian form. Nonetheless, interactive television has the capacity to both challenge Adorno and Horkheimer’s fears about the inevitable outcome of culture industry projects, and to confirm it—depending on the program.
Perhaps, if ‘system’ is inescapable, it is not so much contra agency as Luhmann has argued, but requires one to exercise agency within its borders. Responding to system by adopting its own language and media is, I would argue, an exercise in agency. But Boyer notes that many accounts of individual human encounters with the systems of their own making are depicted as though to deny intellectual autonomy and artistic agency are even possible. And, while the individual might conceivably escape from systems according to Habermasian thought, social television is not the means by which such a feat will be accomplished. But it bears repeating: the Storyteller is not vanishing. It is being appropriated.

Referencing this chapter’s earlier discussion about the potentials of advertising and data collection through interactive programming, the evening’s next presenter is taking an American route to persuading consumers to return to older modes of television consumption. The “Do[yôbi] dora apuri” (Saturday drama app) that he unveils to the room rewards audiences with points and prizes if they consume commercials (CMs). Moreover, in a resolutely retro gesture to the visions of phone-in-television choose-your-own-adventurism from decades past, the user is also able to indicate midway through a commercial what kind of ending she’d like to see realized.

The presenter shows an example of this working, via a Nissan commercial and an associated application. “You press A or B” he explains, to direct the video to one of two alternate endings. The most popular wins out. As he points out that it also ties in to Twitter and Facebook, audience members are smiling and nodding. But one raises his hand and asks “Will Nissan have access to user data and responses?” He alone expresses this concern.

Issues surrounding privacy are certainly common parlance, and I am told many times that Facebook is declining in popularity because Japanese users are protective of their privacy and will only share material such as glamorous photos of places, consumer goods, and food. Facebook’s predecessor in hegemony, mixi, thrived due to its taxonomic classification of

\[\text{46 ibid.} \]
\[\text{47 ibid.}\]
informations, and its refusal to let those who had not been part of designated real-world networks to connect to one another: same employer, same university or high school, (etc.) Further “Line” has achieved overwhelming success in Japan because it connects users bilaterally rather than through a multigraph, and disallows any user who isn’t part of a direct conversation to view it.

When Nigel Thrift writes about a craving for public intimacy, I wonder about the cultural contingencies that potentially challenge his thesis; performances of intimacy in public are not, it seems, a universal impulse. Read as part of a drive to extend our sensory engagement as fully into the shared space of electronic worlds as possible, this notion—which properly belongs to futuristic visions of the possibilities and limits of technological development—gestures to a universal that doesn’t exist.  

The extent of our drive to fabricate a mass media that engulfs as many of our senses as possible (until it is, in effect, as immersive as reality) has been much commented on in media theoretical literature. What has become a series of projects that, for example, attempt to mimetically reproduce the natural world by digitally crafting color that exceeds human perception, began with the cinematic apparatus and the anxieties found therein. Through Virilio’s conceptualization of picnolepsia (as Cubitt points out, related to the Lacanian process of “suture”), we become subject not to the content of media, but to the apparatus of their delivery. Film demands of us a certain participation by its constant gaps between frames. Film, as Cubitt posits via Virilio, leads to the: “production of continuities where there are none, and which ultimately will lead to ’the authority of electronic automatism, reducing our will to zero’”.  

Though Lacan would grant agency to the consumer of film who must complete the work of the filmmaker, Virilio’s model conceptualizes the spectator in terms of an absence. The spectator is both cursed by her humanity and its concomitant sensory limitations, and forced to cognitively abandon it based on the immersiveness of media. For Virilio, cinema is a pulse and therefore less

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dangerous, while the digital technologies in development now threaten our capacity to disengage: “the more speed increases, the faster freedom decreases.” But is humanity restored through the application of interaction? Certainly, the augmented reality described by the STSK’s second presenter attempts to stimulate and harness the sensory capacity of users to a greater degree than could cha no ma consumed television. It increases the intimacy between user and apparatus, making transmitted material something that is co-constituted and creative. Subject formation is different in response to this kind of media interaction, despite the “always already contingent”-ness of the relationship, the user who helps make a content is partially fixed as a co-producer, particularly in the case of programs that crowd-source their content. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the golden age of television development in Japan, and elsewhere did not always create of its audiences a community—whether on the street, as in the case of gaito terebi, or in the home. Historian Jayson Chun questions the notion of TV in Japan as bringing individuals together; rather in some cases it became an excuse for families to ignore one another, to lose themselves in separate programs, or even to engage in violence over programming disputes. To paraphrase Virilio, television sought to replace the relationship between viewers with many parallel relationships between individual viewers and the apparatus. And as Cubitt writes: “mediation is not representation: media serve to mediate, not between subjects and objects, but between subjects.” The transformation of mass media forms over time does not necessarily mean the destruction of subjectivity, but merely its transformation. This sounds like social television, as much as it did the internet when it was written; social television similarly creates relationships between users of a space constructed, in many cases, by a corporate entity.

ibid.
Chun, “A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots.”
Cubitt, “Virilio and New Media.”
Subjectivity has since the early days of television, been constructed around the idea of a consumer-viewer, who might purchase the goods to which he was subjected via various forms of advertising. Where that subjectivity has changed is in that the new forms proposed by the members of the STSK and others require a greater proximity between moments of television and material consumption. Side by side with applications that allow viewer-consumers to learn more information about material goods featured in television programs (certainly a boon to the audiences of evening “trendy” dramas, which are as much about conspicuous consumption as any storyline 53), are applications that attempt to persuade users to generate content on behalf of a company, or to check in to an application while watching TV in order to earn points that can be traded for goods.

Of the many things I learned about television and advertising during fieldwork, this chapter’s contents represent some of the most provocative. The subject to-be-advertised-to in the future will fundamentally be able to choose the nature of her advertising experience— that is, if she becomes willing to return to a model of television that forces ads, or television becomes willing to risk further alienating skittish audiences.

Social television is speed, for sure. But is it anti-freedom?

Chapter 4: The New Interactive Television
A young woman, Dan Mitsu, enters a room, clad in a bathrobe. Her hair appears damp, as if she has recently bathed. Eyelids half-lowered, she pouts for the camera, and slowly allows her robe to fall away—revealing the sheer white bra and underpants beneath. Her skin glows softly, golden, in the warm lighting of this soundstage. As Dan slowly mugs for the camera in a manner resembling nothing if not soft-core porn, a voice-over tells the audience that we’re about to play a game. And the game will take place in her body. The word LIVE shimmers across the screen, top left. To its right: "ketsuekigata rēsu (blood type race) BLOODY TUBE".¹

Late one night on TV Tokyo, one of Japan’s major networks, this, the latest project of one of Tokyo’s most adventurous young companies is about to begin. The air is filled with tension of a sort both manufactured and autonomic. As with all live TV, and particularly the nascent genre of interactive television, there exists the potential for massive and spontaneous failure. As one employee later confessed, everyone’s heart was racing, dokidoki. “We can’t fail” (Shippai dekinai), he thought.

Programs such as those constructed by Bascule, teamLab, and the in-house production teams of the major networks are, at the moment, emergent. This is to say that just over a year ago, there were none. But in 2013, the interest in and effort to create interactive television has increased dramatically. Driven by technology such as NTV’s “Join TV”, Bascule's "MIES" (Massive Interactive Entertainment System). this kind of television raises provocative new issues for the theoretical apperception of what television means, and what it is. Historically speaking, interactive TV seems a logical progression from problem: "young people aren't watching television," to cause: "because they are spending their 'media time' engaged with interactive technology," to solution: "so we should create programming that combines the platform of

¹ This program went on to win a Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity Gold Mobile Lion Award in 2014.
television with the interactivity of these devices, appropriating them directly as part of the viewing experience.

Indeed, the alternative is to lose out to social media, or whatever comes next— even in the case of young audience members who both own a television, and turn it on. In a spring 2013 NHK special, the network ethnographically tracked individual viewers— watching them watch TV— the camera positioned so that the television appeared to return their gaze. And the program's archetypical teenage subject manifests the fears and expectations of many a media producer. Even with the television turned on, the girl's eyes remain overwhelmingly on her phone. To make light of this, and perhaps to underscore it as well, a comedic sound is triggered each time the girl looks up to face us. But with the audience in the position of the televisual apparatus— watching her not watch us— these moments of connection are fleeting. The scene becomes a commentary on contemporary unwillingness to detach from one kind of technology in favor of another (implied to be more social in its ideal-typical form), whose use permits the embodied audience to share with spatiotemporal synchronicity the same media-moment at the same time, to turn to one another and say: "did you see that?"

Since television has been considered as an object of theoretical inquiry— a trend that peaked in the 1980s— the notion of spectacle has been foregrounded by its prominent theorists (e.g. Baudrillard, Debord). And certainly, television's reliance on this idiom as a means of attracting and retaining viewers hasn't declined, and in many cases appears ever more manic. But what happens to the notion of spectacle when one can participate in its formulation? Bloody Tube, in particular fluctuates between appealing to our impulses to look and to conquer, devoting the first three and a half minutes of its broadcast to the languid appreciation of Dan Mitsu's

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2 NHK is *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, Japan’s public broadcaster
"utsukushii karada" (beautiful body), and the cinematic performance of Bascule's projection mapping artistry. The final effect is part The Matrix, part Tron or even Ghost in the Shell, and, as the overlaid voices of the in-studio tarento (TV talent) remind us, compelling as a visual display.

Ubiquitous on television, the daily parade of reoccurring TV tarento on Japanese television is meant both to provide an on-screen surrogate for the viewer—to react, as captured in the waipu boxes that so often appear in the corners of television screens, and to participate on our behalf. In most cases, these boxes allow us to screen a pre-recorded video clip alongside the tarento and to watch them watching it. Nonetheless, while agreeing with suggestions that tarento and idols are meant to be intimately accessible in Japan (an argument I will return to below), I would argue the relationship of idolization is innately distancing. With allusion to Adorno and Horkheimer: although television aims to make the famous familiar, in the process of making and remaking fame, it also creates distance.

So, as Dan Mitsu moves on the screen, we hear the voices of the male tarento unabashedly issuing utterances of appreciation (“Sugoi!”) as she settles onto the platform to become object. Not simply the recipient of the gaze as so famously articulated by Laura Mulvey, she is the platform within which this program’s game will occur. In the ultimate case of televisual pseudo-exposure, as she lies motionless before us, we enter her body; assigned to teams based on our blood type, we will race within a simulation of her veins to win real-world

3 Tarento in Japan are performers (often comedians), who appear across multiple media platforms, are exposed constantly on the mass media, and are essentially famous for being famous.

4 Having appeared in such boxes myself, I can assert that so doing is a very particular kind of performance; one of attentiveness, but also of bodily discipline. I actually found it very difficult to watch a news clip or interview while that self conscious of my facial expression, comportment, etc. Practiced tarento, many of whom train to learn this skill, may find this easy; I (not tarento myself) found it excruciating.

currency in the form of Ponta Points. Even as we are reminded of her physicality via the simulation of the interior of her body, she becomes no more than a platform within which we operate, a system. More so even than the actors and actresses on screen who may seem to look back, but who cannot return our gaze, she is stripped even of the appearance of consciousness, and could have easily been replaced by a fabricated replica after lying down. (Indeed, while designing the projection mapping, Bascule used a model torso.) The on-screen tarento watch her. We watch her, and also them watching her. But she is denied any kind of subjectivity predicated on the notion of a thinking-self. With her eyes closed, her body still, she is the machine without the ghost.

As tension mounts, as the stage darkens, we cut to the tarento themselves, their faces conveying expectation—seeming evidence of the program’s capacity not just to act affectively upon the viewer, but upon those present in all capacities. Each is the representative of their own blood type’s racing team, for this characteristic of the famous, is typically public knowledge in and listed as a matter of course on their Wikipedia pages alongside such information as birth date and hometown. As such, the four individuals chosen will act as our representatives—learning how to use the program’s interface alongside us, and reacting to the successes and failures of their/our team. We, the external observers, are directed to a web page, where we input a username, our gender, location (from a list of Japanese prefectures), and blood type. By means of interface, Bloody Tube uses a four-color panel resembling the American children’s game “Simon”, or another Japanese game requiring similar mastery of reflexes: Dance Dance Revolution. As the television screen displays our capsule shooting through Dan’s veins, we pass

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6 Ponta points are accrued by making purchases at participating retailers, such as 7-11 and Pizza Hut. Points can then be redeemed for a cash discount on future purchases. See http://www.ponta.jp/
7 AB, A, B, O blood types.
over platelets of various colors, and must press the corresponding button on our phone at the right moment in order to receive points.

Guy Debord defined spectacle as that which demands passive acceptance, a privilege television retained by virtue of its (former) monopoly on appearances. However, in an era of user-created Internet content, previous discourses accounting for television’s power must be updated. While earlier theories addressing the impact of the televisual on the social lives of consumers relied heavily on the notion of acceptance and consumption, Debord’s “pseudo-response,” interactive television relies on the viewer not simply as a measure of commercial success, which the genre has not yet attained, but also to construct the show itself. If viewers did not show up to this late-night, obscure television program then the show would not just flop—it would not happen. True, the 14,906 people who participated in Bloody Tube represented a poor showing by the standard of television ratings, but by those of other forms of social and interactive media, which can be accessed at the convenience of the user, this might be considered a great success.

With reality and image no longer so clearly divisible, new questions must be raised about how submissive the viewer actually is. Surely, Niklas Luhmann’s “second-order observation” remains a relevant concept; audiences are fundamentally beholden to the vision of producers, directors, and artists, their own creative agency sublimated to the choices of media professionals. As in the past, the choice of where to look and when is decided on behalf of the viewer; his individual experience is ideally merged with that if his fellow viewers. The shichōsha, a term that in Japanese colloquially refers to TV audiences, but also means “[he] who looks and listens,” does indeed assume a submissive stance before the television—and yet the experience of

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viewers has become less vicarious than before; the passive viewer has turned into the active user. Where before viewers were thanked for watching, in the aftermath of interactive television programs, they are thanked for participating. Moreover, such programs cannot be re-run. Resolutely live, they conscript audiences bodily, seeping from the two dimensional screen into the third dimension. Thus, in the past year television has broken with a model of artistic engagement envisioned by earlier thinkers like Kant and Schiller, and in Alexander Galloway’s words, it “indicates the implicit presence of the outside within the inside.” 10 Almost twenty years ago, Paul Virilio identified the drive of television towards three-dimensionality, and while full sensory immersion remains pending, television has managed to lesson its authoritative hold in this one way, to allow the actions of unseen masses to directly act upon its content. 11 In so doing there is, as I mentioned, a great deal of tension, redolent of this loss of control. Will people participate? Will too many people participate? Could the system “go down,” forcing television into the excruciating position of being both live and unscripted? Could something entirely unforeseen happen? Though massive amounts of contingency testing do occur, resembling nothing if not the (natural) disaster preparedness drills that are now so commonly held throughout Japan, early forays into this genre represent a massive “unknown” that can be perceived in the bodily comportment of their creators.

I am sitting with Nozomi 12 on the second-floor of Bascule’s hip, airy Kamiyacho headquarters screening the final broadcast footage DVD of Bloody Tube on her laptop. As the projection-mapped graphics wrap around Dan’s body once again, I involuntarily exclaim: “Wow!” After we’ve paused the program to talk about it I ask, somewhat rhetorically: “Bloody

12 Not her real name.
"Tube really is the first of its kind, isn’t it?” and she readily agrees. Such is the groundbreaking nature of this program, and Bascule’s prior work in the genre, that the company will conduct a (participatory), and well-attended workshop on the making of the show for aspiring media artists at Tokyo’s Digital Hollywood\textsuperscript{13} school months later.

Interactive television is particularly intriguing for the plural ways that it operates in and on space, and how it processes diversity. Rather than pacifying the viewer, isolating her in the particularity of her experience, even in the case of popular and (increasingly rarely) communally viewed programs, “social television” takes a step back from the fragmented marketing of mass entertainment in Japan as outlined by anthropologists Gabriella Lukács and Brian Moeran\textsuperscript{14}, and gestures towards reconstituting the national imaginary of Benedict Anderson’s print media. In general, interactive television generally seeks to manipulate the spatiotemporal—first by classifying participants by region and using this information to create live maps and to organize teams, and second, by sorting them on the basis of intimate shared characteristics and rallying them around a collective mission.

Such programs frequently appropriate demographic information to suggest to users that they are part of a mass collective event—Nick Couldry’s media ritual on a (still) reduced scale.\textsuperscript{15} In addition to benefitting advertisers and therefore the networks themselves, the integration of this data into programmatic content reinforces a sense of connectivity and of nationhood. In perhaps the most vivid recent example, NHK’s interactive quiz program “QB47” pitted the prefectures of Japan against one another in a contest to correctly answer the most trivia questions; in this case too, the teams were represented by tarento from each “ken or to”— the

\textsuperscript{13} Dejitaru Hariuddo ( http://dhj.co.jp)
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Media Rituals}, (New York: Routledge, 2003).
onscreen surrogate once again. Repeated ranking of the success of each region using a national map, with bonus points for percentage of participants by area population, served as a visual reminder of the idea of Japan. And viewers could choose their team independent of embodied location (so, someone from Kumanoto-ken who is living in Tokyo might choose either her hometown or current location as a point of identification). Following David Harvey, such moments capture an innate impulse of television to compress space into a series of images, to “annihilate space through time.” Herein, the diversity of Japan is both subsumed and celebrated by the homogenizing impulse of such programming—an ongoing performance and assignation of Japaneseness. Indeed, the regional is repeatedly linked back to the national, so while the participant is encouraged to identify with her team, she is also presented with visuals showing simultaneous participation from across the country—a parallel “we”.

A comparable move is the way social television invests participants in the outcome of their projects. Whether because the result is a concrete reward, or simply a matter of pride, participation means being able to communicate with others engaged in a simultaneous collective struggle. In most cases, such programs connect to Twitter, (whose per-capita use is higher in Japan than anywhere else in the world), and user comments, usernames (etc.) are also viewable in semi-real time on the television screen, if not the program’s specially designed site or application. Thus, one can read commentary by fellow users on everything from the frequency of commercials, to individual performance on various challenges. And Bloody Tube in particular, by assigning teams based on blood type, unites individuals on the basis of an intimately shared biology, presumed by many in Japan to constitute character traits, to comprise the essence of a person.

16 “ken” refers to a prefecture of Japan, while “to” refers to the Tokyo metropolitan area.
The Music Day

A six minute walk from Hongo San-chôme station in the opposite direction from that of Tokyo University’s main campus, an unusual collective of individuals is tucked away in a side-street office building, which betrays from the outside none of the eclectic experimentalism of the five floors of workspace therein. The fifth of these is made up of rows of tables, and individuals busily working away at computers therein, while the sixth floor site of our meeting resembles a conceptual art/built environmental take on office space. The broad meeting tables and eclectic chairs represent a variety of design experiments, many of them inspired by a kind of nostalgic retro 8-bit graphical blockiness, and the legs of our meeting table are cardboard—the same military grade cardboard, the designers and engineers tell me, that comprises a canon in the corner. A canon that is also a projector, powered by jumping on a trampoline.

I am here because of teamLab’s recent entry into the interactive television field with a project for NTV called Ongaku no Chikara/Arashi Feat. You,\(^{18}\) starring top Japanese boy band, Arashi. As staff assemble around the table, they respond to my questions about their history with this summary: teamLab was founded in 2001 by a graduate of Tokyo University’s Jōhō Gakkan (aka the iii: interfaculty initiative in informatics)\(^ {19}\), and represents three hundred staff members whose expertise ranges from aesthetics to engineering. The Arashi television special, which departed from programs like Bloody Tube by virtue of its prime-time slot (9pm on Saturday, July 6) and audience share, was the aesthetic descendent of another teamLab endeavor: a 2011 interactive greeting card application that allowed users to send customized songs featuring instrument-wielding 8-bit characters.

\(^{18}\) “The Power of Music, or Arashi Featuring You”

\(^{19}\) This is also the division of Tokyo University with which I was affiliated while conducting my fieldwork—specifically in Professor Shin Mizukoshi’s lab.
eamLab focuses less on television than Bascule, employing its expertise in interactivity to built environments—spaces that encourage people to interact with technology to learn more about consumer products. Following our television discussion, a few of company’s engineers direct me to a display of clothing on hangers; when I tentatively lift a shirt, a panel above it comes alive with product information and potential fashion “looks” featuring this item. A compelling feature for Tokyo's numerous clothing retailers, I note, and they smile in affirmation.

*Arashi feat. You* unfolds with a dramatic tension of a sort that departs from that of Bloody Tube: The band appears before a typically massive crowd, on a stage atop a set of blue and grey lit stairs. As the crowd's cheering slows to allow Ohno Satoshi to speak, he announces that he's going to explain how we can participate in the show. While he speaks, the other Arashi members take turns playfully gesturing to blue and yellow lines superimposed upon the screen: when the floating musical notes hit the yellow line, we are to push the buttons on our smart devices, laptops, or remote controls. Following instructions himself, Ohno tells us he thinks we need to practice, pauses as though to confirm our preparedness, and yells “START!” In time with a syncopated background beat, the band cheers and counts “1-2-3 HAI!” to signal the correct moment to press our buttons. After a minute of these drills, Ohno cuts off the action, and fellow band member Sakurai Sho bellows with practiced enthusiasm: "Nippon zenkoku no minasan: tanoshimimashō!” (Everyone in Japan, let's have fun!)

Consistent with the many indignant appraisals that have come before it, a recent BBC News article complained that Japan is "dragging down the global music market" by not only "failing" to adopt digital music technology, but by its music industry's staunch localism. Arashi, one of Japan's top selling bands since its formation in 1999, is a prime example of the

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20 “Minnasan gahitsuyounirenshuushiteikaito omouimasu.”
country’s particular form of globalism, as the idol band belongs to a category of Japanese artists known only in the West to those with an interest in Japanese popular culture. And although there is nothing particularly Japanese (or remarkable) about the production of content for regional markets, the Euro-American engagement with Japan in such moments is noteworthy for the tone of obligation it invokes; we frequently find them too foreign to be proper partners in globalization, and our relationship with Japanese popular culture fluctuates in correspondence with our economic and technological relationship with that country.

Indeed, a common theme within the scholarship on Japanese television (and music) is its failure to travel west. The U.S. *anime* boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s came after years of painstaking adaptation of Japanese content for American television, with the erasure of Japaneseness from *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and *Pokémon* being one such example.22 And during this boom, Japanese-ness became something of a fan-fetish, the notion of authenticity and proximity to a Japanese original a source of pleasure for those who identified it as a signifier of more entertaining content, or Japan as a proxy for the fantasy worlds of American cartoon and comic content.23

*Arashi*’s actions harken back to QB47’s more implicit discourse—they address the nation as a whole. "Zenkoku" (the whole country) is by no means an uncommon salutation on Japanese television; rather than functioning as an unknowable aggregate, the audience is collapsed into a reductive national body, a nervous allusion to a historical corpus on Japanese homogeneity, inherent unity, or the historical legacy of television as mostly emanating from Tokyo. Indeed, the members of phenomenally popular idol band AKB48 have, as outlined by Patrick Galbraith and Jason Karlin, been referred to as “national idols” (*kokuminteki aidoru*), or “the performers ‘we’

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22 For a comprehensive discussion of this process, see 1.
Japanese ‘all’ know and love. This willful collapsing of diversity has for many years been problematized by scholars across the globe, with the greatest academic attention being paid to the genre of writing known as Nihonjinron (theories of Japanese uniqueness). And yet, it persists even within the mainstream. While it is certainly true that television in, for example, the U.S., speaks in terms of a reductive “we”, the nuance of the word diverges in its American application. For example, the phrase "Good morning, America!" would more closely approximate Sakurai’s meaning were it to be uttered as: "Good morning, everyone in America!" The sense, conveyed by the common use of zenkoku and other inclusive discourse on television is rather that while “we” know very well that participation (or even viewership) is not universal, “we” nonetheless defer to a sense of national and even racial collectivism. This is comparatively minor mental leap in a country with a single time zone, five major television companies, and only nine main channels in the Tokyo area, where Nippon zenkoku no minasan might very well be presumed to be watching, at least during television’s golden age.

As mentioned above, the Japanese media remains dedicated to the project of promoting a collective ethos by collapsing the distance between Japan’s diverse regions. By mapping the country through culinary tourism, engaging in live coverage of national ritual, or reminding us that one can view and participate in an NHK quiz show simultaneously from the Northern to Southernmost parts of the archipelago, television gestures towards a collective way of being (or at least a capacity for collective enjoyment) for its citizens. But it is also reified in the many smaller ways, as the idea of “being Japanese” is constituted through the performance of tradition on television and the aggregation of activities represented as collective and culturally specific.

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25 I am not counting the BS channels here, and cable TV, which is extremely unpopular in Japan, doesn’t apply to this discussion either.
26 Such events are not, of course, entirely predictable. The major annual display of fireworks in Setagaya on July 28, 2013 was disrupted by heavy rains, causing TV Tokyo’s live broadcast to descend into unscripted semi-chaos.
Therein, the diversity of Japan is subsumed by this homogenizing impulse, an ongoing performance and assignation of Japanese-ness, or a fictive national imaginary. As media scholar Takashi Fujitani described television’s coverage of the Showa emperor’s death:

"Television carried a dominant message that portrayed all the Japanese people as bound tightly together in time and space, from one tip of the archipelago to the other and from some timeless beginning to the present".\(^{27}\)

One of the fundamental gestures that comprises this exclusionary/inclusionary mode of mass address is found in the degree to which many programs seek to hail audiences by performing the idea of an appropriate or common emotional reaction to particular kinds of surprise or discomfort.\(^ {28}\) In other words, the fast-paced and ostensibly anarchic Japanese waidō shō (variety program) format creates space within which home and in-studio observers, as well as participants may be caught off guard, eliciting genuine and spontaneous reactions that unite by virtue of their uniformity. We see this too in the way television makes of foreigners an object of fascination, arranging encounters between Japanese and Others that frequently emphasize differences.

With the world reduced to a slideshow, geography itself becomes simply an image, and distance a simulacrum. What results from these juxtaposed locales is a new, illusory world that nonetheless engenders anxious discourse about the global and transnational, though we do not yet agree on what this looks like.\(^ {29}\) And within the realm of natural discourse, it exhaustively labors to contain us under the collective banner of ‘the country’.

In his discourse about the public sphere and its fragmentation, Habermas suggests that the media’s unifying function is merely illusory, and the varied communicational channels willing to


\(^{29}\) Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 300.
‘meet us where we are’ rather encourage us to isolate ourselves from the collective body.  

However, in his account, the effect of the media is to fragment the nation into special-interest groups, which merely gesture to the existence of a more comprehensive “public sphere”. This is both accurate and inaccurate in the case of Japan. As discussed elsewhere, the drive of television has always been to organize and quantify, to create taxonomic collectives from data without general recourse to specific information about individuals’ everyday habits and experiences. However, television increasingly craves access to this information; it is ever more concerned with marketing to the particular, while producing content that oscillates between narrow and broad demographics. As Ien Ang commented regarding the relationship between television and publics: “the control sought after is never completely achieved.”  

And indeed, I was told many times by many television industry employees about the necessity of marketing specifically to young women with disposable income, the demographic that, judging from Arashi feat. you’s crowd shots, this program has successfully harnessed.

Indeed, in contrast to Bloody Tube, the Arashi program is about the display of beautiful male bodies, and the female gaze turned lustfully upon young men. As the members of Arashi move from the main stage to a platform in the center of the program’s venue, singing all the while, girls (and by all appearances the audience is women-only) cover their mouths in wide-eyed amazement, reach out to touch the men’s bodies, and politely sing along. It’s hard, even for the at-home participant, not to absorb the affect of this moment, even as it seems remarkably well-behaved. The crowd, seemingly inscribed by the camera at random, stops short of excessive emotional display; while enjoyment is palpable, it is also contained and homogenous. But when,

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distracted by its homogeneity, I ask teamLab how the audience was chosen, they insist that it is just like any concert, with no selection or filtering process applied. “Quote goes here.”

To return to my earlier question, does Arashi feat. you do anything to reify Japanese national identity beyond its deployment of inscribing speech-acts? If anything, this program, by virtue of the bodies on display, seems as though it would engender a fragmented audience. But if indeed it does so, the program fragments in a way that serves television. As the screen lights up behind the band members counting participants in the interactive game, timed to hit 100-man nin (1 million people) at the end of the first song, it at least suggests the potential of having exceeded its niche; the eventual figure claimed by NTV of 1.3 million participants represents more than 1% of Japan’s entire population. {The figure published on the NTV website is 1,372,311 participants with 171,733,624 button pushes 32 Of these, the majority (899,658 users) accessed the game via a smartphone/tablet, 333,630 users via data hōsō,33 and 139,023 users via computer. And in an interview about the program, teamLab summarized their intentions: “The idea was to turn the scheduled musical performance from boy-band Arashi into a nation-wide interactive rhythm game where fans could use their mobile phones, computers, or even their TV remote controls to keep up with the beat visualized on screen”. [Emphasis mine.] Thus, the program gestures dually to the concept of the national, while also to the subcategory of Arashi fans. Arashi feat. you, which represented the first attempt by television to turn a live concert into a technologically mediated participatory event, presumes the user to be a fan, and the novelty of this technology-on-display as insufficient in itself to seduce those who would not wish to endure an Arashi song.

33 See Introduction for an explanation of this technology.
To further unpack the notion of “national identity,” I return to the idea of on-screen surrogacy, or representation of the home viewer as mentioned above. Just as in the example of Bloody Tube, and 60-ban Shōbū (Chapter 3), where the in-studio tarento also demonstrated both the use of this interactive technology and its enjoyment, Arashi is responsible for the introduction of its program’s interactive component. But they are unable to function as surrogates, not simply because of their fame (as tarento are also famous), or because they are not using their program’s interactive technology themselves, but because as objects of fantasy they are not intended to be relatable per se. Despite the disposability of the idol as category, some Japanese idols are more disposable than others. And while idols tend not to be particularly talented, but rather “friendly looking” (in the case of women, at least), in order to gesture towards proximity between fans and their objects, I would argue that media inscription still insists upon difference, even when that difference is unrelated to artistic ability. However, the capacity of the Japanese language to convey social distance or proximity hints at degrees of differentiation: as Andrew Painter has noted, television show fans tend to address tarento informally, while their letters to film stars reflect an elevated grammar.

As anthropologist Christine Yano writes, fandom is always an asymmetrical relationship between one (or five) and many; to feel connection with a star, fans must do substantial work to transcend his inaccessibility, privilege, and prestige. And Arashi perform here as seasoned pop idols: they carefully interact with the camera—making eye contact, tilting their heads emotively, and pointing to the home viewer during particularly saccharine lyrics. Yano has described studies which conclude that Japanese audiences prefer “human”, rather than god-like stars, or those with

34 Gailbraith and Karlin, “Introduction: the Mirror of Idols and Celebrity.”
whom they can more easily imagine having a relationship or perceive as like themselves (presumably despite fluctuating perceptions of social distance). The introduction of TV Asahi’s groundbreaking news program *News Station* in the late 1980s appropriated this characteristic of Japanese television to his advantage by appointing as its news anchor former quiz show host Kume Hiroshi, and allowing him to experiment with informality. Kume distinguished himself from the then top-rated NHK news program anchors by his refusal to use a teleprompter, and self-consciously colloquial language (using the casually masculine *boku* rather than the formal and standard *watakushi* to refer to himself, etc.). In so doing, he made of the news a living object about which even a comedian could speak extemporaneously, and to a massive public. The dynamic of *News Station* was therefore somewhat reminiscent of a talk show rather than a newscast—somewhat of a precursor to experiments like the American *The Daily Show*, without the overt satire. By offering his opinion on the stories he covered, Kume broke with existing models of TV news by introducing intimacy between himself and the audience through a kind of conversational discourse, allowing him to transcend the role of mere news reader (announcer, or *anaunsā*) to become (or to maintain to his role as) a television personality.

For a pop idol, the construction of “we” is a particular challenge, as he must represent the desires of a mass audience both physically and performatively. He must serve as a sufficiently blank canvas for the “multiple and moving” meanings of the fan; as noted by Patrick Galbraith and Jason Karlin, Kimura Takuya of the esteemed idol group SMAP once described himself as...

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37 ibid. 47-8.
38 This program was replaced by the similarly titled *Hōdō Sutēshon* (Information Station) after his retirement in 2004. Among other projects, Kume currently has a radio show and podcast on TBS; Kume Hiroshi: *Rajio nan desu kedo* (Kume Hiroshi’s Well, it’s radio…)
40 In Japan a news announcer (*anaunsā*) is differentiated from a newscaster (*kyasutā*), generally on the basis of credentials. The *kyasutā* typically has a journalism background, while the *anaunsā* is hired on the basis of televisuality and speaking voice.
“public property” (kōkyō-butsu), and his public persona as being “like an empty public park without structures… anyone can enter and anyone can exit”. But control does not necessarily reside with the fan either, as she has been presented with a highly scripted and heavily refined product; the massive marketing engines of the music and mass media industry have mobilized to persuade her to like this band, these idols. Their existence, and the spectacle of *Arashi feat. you*, is the outcome of a unified and substantial body of expertise, comparable to that which makes television possible in general (see Chapter 2). Indeed, Japanese television becomes an exercise in reading celebrity culture through time, as individual *tarento*, idols, and stars appear across genres and in conversation with their past appearances. In many cases, specific programmatic content is merely a frame for the circulation of celebrity, and its comprehension requires substantial mass media literacy as performances double back and reference one together in parody or mere allusion. And although it is beyond the scope of this work to delve into the semiotics of pop idols in depth, the AKB48 scandal that occurred during my fieldwork (re-)exposed the mechanics of this industry, and prompted another in a series of intermittently recurring conversations about the degree to which fantasy is produced and (very) tightly controlled in the service of commercial sponsorship. Nonetheless, breaches in this global industry occur on a regular basis, as it struggles to make products from people.

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42 I am merely using “her” as shorthand. The success of the female idol group AKB48, for one, has proven that men are just as susceptible to this form of persuasion.
43 ibid. 11.
44 for this see ibid.
45 AKB48 (a massively successful Japanese idol band) member Minegishi Minami was caught violating one of the major rules of its membership in having a boyfriend. After paparazzi documented her spending the night at his house, the incident garnered international media attention when she responded by shaving her head in a traditional move of penitence (and an interesting assault on her visual appeal), appearing in a YouTube video sobbing and begging to remain in the band. The video was sufficiently shocking to promote widespread discussion about social pressure on idols to function as moving signifieds, to avoid disrupting the fantasies of audiences.
Stars are increasingly known for their willingness to lay bare their personal lives, or at least a version thereof, to a mass audience. In Japan, as in many countries, this amounts to earning newsworthiness and repaying audience interest by attempting to collapse the distance between sides of the television screen. And the relationship is reciprocal; without newsworthy personages, the industry would lack content; tarento provide them with a supply of data to curate, modify, and manipulate, and the media in turn harnesses and appropriates audiences’ drives to domesticate, approach, and ridicule.\textsuperscript{46} This is a different kind of “imagined community”, one with a bleeding edge of potential violence, waiting with drawn breath for the tarento to falter.

Nigel Thrift writes contradictorily about the role of the “glamorous celebrity/persona”. In agreement with me about their introduction of a new kind of “public intimacy,” he both defines them as a hybrid person/thing\textsuperscript{47}, and then as “neither person nor thing but something in between.”\textsuperscript{48} But I appreciate the blurriness inherent in this contradiction, and the nod to the contradictions inherent in the category. I would further propose that Japan does not value the same degree or type of public vulnerability in its celebrities as does the US, particularly when it comes to bands like Arashi. In such cases, too much intimacy is dangerous for the product, and to borrow Thrift’s terms, the audience seems particularly willing to engage in what surplus mental labor is needed to bridge the gap between the band’s “smallness” (i.e. members' accessibility) and their “largeness” (i.e. suitability as a target of fascination/fantasy).\textsuperscript{49}

As one of the main genres of Japanese television, music shows are a suitable, if not inevitable testing ground for experimental technology. However, as suggested by Carolyn

\textsuperscript{48} ibid. 395.
\textsuperscript{49} ibid. 304.
Stevens and Shuhei Hosokawa, it is not the music that makes such programs appealing to audiences, but the speech that occurs between musical performances. They suggest that song itself is insufficient to build affective connection. A related article by Ujiie Natsuhiko (titled “Terebi ga Tsumaranakunatta Ryū” – The Reason Television Became Boring) confirms this assertion: ratings decline when individuals start singing on music programs, and increase when they engage in conversion. Thus, Japanese television, in order to sustain audience interest, repeatedly books the “best talkers” (“Tōku ga umai no wa owarai geinin, takumina MCs”), clever comedians who can offset the loss engendered by the use of songs. This results in programs that are filled with banter and conversation in the name of hedging, and also substantial repetition between channels and shows. One of my television producer informants, Yuji, complains about such programming in terms of a particular, undesirable set of demographics to whom they must not cater: “This is terrible to say but…the great majority of programs are made for old people, the stupid, and the poor. Programs that are stimulating for smarter, younger, and wealthier audiences are very few.”

Indeed, it was not uncommon for the television professionals with whom I worked to openly critique their medium in this way, lamenting a need to appeal to unsophisticated and often meddlesome viewers. Practices such as Kume Hiroshi’s equalizing discourse, rather than representing an attempt to work against the power imbalance of news dissemination, are a cynical indication of its willingness to cater to a presumed lower-level cognitive aggregate. Comparable speech acts were noted by anthropologist William Mazzarella in his work on Indian cinema; in articulating the necessity of censorship, the notion of the “common man” was invoked.

50 “So Close and Yet So Far” 242.
52 (“Taihan no bangumi wa (warui kotoba ni naru ga) ‘baka to rōjin to hibōnin’ ni mukete tsukurarete shimatteiru. Sonna shichō-sha o yori kashikoku, yori wakawashikoku yori yutaka ni suru tame ni shigeki suru yō na bangumi wa hijō ni sukunai.”) Interview
in the third person as a means of transferring the impetus for undesirable actions onto an ill-defined public body whose undesirable characteristics were assembled from media consumption data.\(^{53}\) Moreover, such categories are commonly invoked as a means of separating the speaker from publics classified as receivers of media content, and as paradigmatically less intellectually sophisticated than producers or regulators themselves.

Producers’ complaints call into question the claims made by theorists such as Niklas Luhmann, who locate the failure of television to keep pace with society’s knowledge production in the identities of producers, and instead point to a crippling economic model that necessitates catering to and imagining audiences.\(^{54}\) However, ethnographic work on journalism departs from the normative theorization of television in accounting for a friction between profit-minded businessmen and the intellectuals in their employ. In other words, journalists lament the effects that attempting to capitalize on perceived audience desire has on the resultant quality of journalistic output.\(^{55}\) Indeed, more than thirty years ago, Gaye Tuchman alluded to a general sociological notion of the conflict between professionals and organizations in order to articulate how journalism develops its particular brand of professionalism in consultation with organizational practices and requirements.\(^{56}\) If journalism is deemed an intellectual endeavor by its participants, and audiences cannot be conceived of in terms of a comparable and uniform intellectual selfhood, the product of journalistic output is inevitably compromised—a presumption that is rarely applied to televisual praxis, but probably could be in Japan.

However, with the notable exception of select ethnographies, the majority of critical discourse on television dwells on an imposed cognitive excess resulting from surplus and

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uncontextualizable images, and (even among ethnographic work) foregrounds the perspectives of viewers. Such scholarship falls to complicate the notion of omnidirectional power by reminding us that television producers are themselves actors under constraint. The television they make is often not the television they wish to make, and remains rather symptomatic of a succession of compromises at every step in the production process. If, as Luhmann posits, media does not just represent, but make present, then the experiences that it manifests seem to represent the desires of nobody in particular. Nonetheless, where Arashi feat. You did not represent any particular innovations in content, its performance as a novel technical feat was indisputable, and its conspicuous, mass appeal to the most desirable of consumer audiences made it a success by most of the metrics that matter to television.

The Last Award

September 29, 2013 at five minutes to midnight, another Bascule project, debuts—this time on Fuji Television, and co-hosted by Bascule’s president, Boku Masayoshi. The concept is again, revolutionary. Interested authors are to submit a video of no more than sixty-seconds, representing the idea of “a one minute image to send off the day” (Fuji Terebi no 1-nichi no owari ni nagasu 1-ppun no eizō). Submitted videos are then aired on the program and evaluated simultaneously by a panel of experts and the home audience, with results perceptible on-screen in real-time (jitsujikan).

The program begins by proving the suitability of the program’s judges to function as representatives of the home audience and primary evaluators; ultimately, audience voices are represented only by numerical figures and comments entered into a web field, while experts sit

57 ibid.
58 An encore aired on April 3, 2014 at the same time, also shortly before midnight.
before the broadcast camera and pronounce verbal judgment upon the short films. An
introductory profile of Boku is brief, but offers a sense of his artistic vision, and a selection of
Bascule’s accomplishments. Replicating the company’s “Digital Hollywood” seminar (see
above), the program runs through a “best of” showcase featuring its recent experiments with
image-mapping and interactivity, and offers a glimpse into Bascule’s lobby space (a loft-like
space filled with pop-art inspired decor and an impressive awards corner). This process is
repeated for each of the judges; their credibility established, we are able to move on to the
audience’s role: to first create an account on our smart phone, to vote on each of the curated
videos, and to mirror the experts’ on-screen evaluations with our own Facebook and Twitter
comments; the difference in audience size discernible through comparison of the television-
hosted social media accounts and the main stage of the program itself reminds of television’s
comparative semiotic weight, and the differences that remain between mass media and social
media (social media always belonging to the realm of potential massification, and television
nervously scanning for signs that it is losing its historic privilege).

One at a time the expert and home audiences view the user-submitted videos, and as each
ends in a swirl of animated leaves and wind, sleepy animated eyes, or families watching TV
together, voting begins on the application. Tapping upward on the application’s eye causes it to
open wider, and the associated numerical rating to climb to a maximum of ten. As we vote, ten
columns of animated eyes stream behind the five judges. (The more eyes passing through a
numerical column, the greater the number of users who have thus voted.) The experts have not
yet disclosed their rankings to each other or to us, and in a departure from the general model of
participatory contest shows, audience judgment ideally represents an apperception devoid of
expert mediation.
As the eyeballs scroll by, the experts exclaim and point, noting the number of 5s, in one case, and low marks in another. And with televisual theatricality, they register surprise at the strictness of home audiences, whose members seem at first to assign lower scores than do the judges themselves. The expert evaluations follow the revelation of the aggregate audience score: three eights and two fours are assigned to the first. The second receives two nines, a seven, a four, and a one, and this time designer Morimoto Chie clasps her hands over her face in apology the one is revealed to be hers. While the expert panel defends their rankings in a terms of professional credentials and experience, users of The Last Award’s app complain about the frequency of advertising breaks–lamenting a seemingly constant interruption of programmatic momentum by short bursts of commercial video that must be endured before each user submission is screened–or the jarring juxtaposition of slick product promotion with DIY user content. Of course, these complaints are unsuitable for incorporation into the main stage; their integration as primary content capable of mobilizing audiences in opposition to the ever-present commercial sponsorship supporting this medium, and destabilizing already unstable illusions of universal enjoyment.

The Last Award foregrounds performance of expertise in a few particularly provocative ways–most notable being the capacity to evaluate and label media according to learned standards for what constitutes the “good” and “successful”. Second is the way that this expertise shares space with audience’s own perceptions and means of interacting with the program’s structure and content. And third is the program’s appropriation of user-submitted media, its use of the mass media platform to broadcast videos that one might otherwise watch on YouTube: animated shorts, of varying quality. Departing from “reality” television programs, which place non-

59 Morimoto’s expertise is defined by her credentials as an artist; after working for advertising monolith Hakuhodo for eight years, she formed her own independent company in 2007: http://www.goen-goen.co.jp/
celebrities in artificial situations in order to display their talents (or lack thereof), Last Award cannot so easily be falsified or manipulated in the moment by the introduction of obstacles, the treatment of an individual by camera angle or select cut-shots, etc. In the case of this program, what is viewed is ostensibly equivalent to what was submitted and nothing more. The program is ultimately curated by expertise, as are innumerable talent competition programs; that which we ultimately view has been selected as part of a collaborative and compromise-filled process of becoming content. But the format here is also comparable to that of a classroom art critique, wherein artists mutually screen projects, and reflect on successful components for one another’s benefit.

The case study here differs somewhat from those represented in existing ethnographic projects on journalistic selfhood insofar as journalists self-identify as elites on par with those they cover. In The Last Award, there is potential for slippage between the categories of audience and producer, as both may potentially be comprised by members of the media industry, or at least those skilled in generating media content. However, there remains a prototypically televisual orientation to the directionality of identification, with audiences theoretically
d61 more likely to self-identify as media experts themselves than the officially recognized expert panel is to take the imaginative leap of identifying with an unknown body of contributor/users. In both cases, whether or not one body identifies as “commensurably elite” in the sense of Bourdieuan


61 No assessment of this program’s audiences has been done. However, I would propose that a program whose media content is contributed by viewers is likely to be comprised in part by those capable of producing original media, and those in their social/professional networks.
taxonomies of capital, the other inevitably possesses greater access to professional and financial resources. Though this program does work to blur categories and complicate notions of media and power–turning users and audiences into content producers, and involving panelists in the show’s production–it remains grounded in the status-quo, manifesting a typical awareness of professional success and privilege, and reflecting the comparative access to media platforms that these kinds of power can facilitate. In other words, comparable to those who are routinely covered by journalists as part of a standard “beat,” members of the expert panel need not solicit media coverage, but are simply the recipients of its attention by virtue of their professional network/ prominence.62

Each of the programs described thus far has functioned to complicate the categories of audience(s)/publics and viewers/users–but in the case of a program like *The Last Award*, with an accompanying app that permits user interaction, are there any particular insights to be found in considering the relationship between the theoretical categories of publics versus *crowds*? For there is certainly a kind of repressed and seething energy incorporated and instantiated by the liveness of these programs. As explicated by Mazzarella63, cinema specifically appropriates both categories by engaging both a physical crowd–present in the theater and susceptible to the contagious effects of a collective energy–and a virtual mass public, assumed to be screening the film elsewhere under similar/knowable conditions. The power of cinema, he then suggests, is in its capacity to address on more than one level–to gesture to both intimate and anonymous address, an “open edge” between intimacy and anonymity.64 Just as ratings systems engage in a perpetual metonymic reduction of the home viewer in the service of comprehensibility and

62 Because Bascule worked on this program, those with whom Bascule and Fuji Television employees were personally familiar certainly had a greater likelihood of being chosen.


64 ibid. 48.
capital valuation, particular cinematic audiences are used as functional proxies for a more general cinematic public. With concerns about the generalized spectator in mind, and recalling the concerns of my informants, television and cinema must both appeal to the spectator in his most pessimistic incarnation—uninformed, easily swayed by emotional content, and tolerant, if not enthusiastic, about television’s relentless instantiation of repetitive formulas. But while cinema was traditionally one step removed from the intensity of the theater, television in its most common modes of consumption was yet more diffuse, more temperate. Even in the cha no ma heyday of Japanese television, the family viewing together could scarcely be perceived in terms of an energetic capacity comparable to that of a crowd.

However, current interactive television technology introduces another layer of theoretical complexity to the discussion. Absent the corporeal intensity that “being there” (in the embodied sense) entails, interactive TV nonetheless harnesses some of the energy of a crowd—particularly, I would argue, when it involves Nico Nico Douga. That the latter allows for unfiltered commenting, excludes it from direct integration into television content. But in cases such as that of The Konpasu, discussed in Chapters 2 and 7, and in the Free Press Association of Japan’s press conferences, a simmering tension comparable to that of an embodied crowd can be felt. In such cases, a stray inflammatory comment or collective viewing of a controversial figure can trigger the release of latent energy into the “room”, a virtual barrage of emotive reactions and Durkheimian “collective effervescence”. As I will explore further in Chapter 6, this is particularly true in the case of Free Press Association of Japan (FPAJ) press conferences, wherein a largely conservative internet audience has been known to clash with the left-leaning

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65 See chapter two for a comprehensive discussion of ratings systems.
66 See Chapters 2 and 6 for an in-depth discussion of this company and system.
67 ibid.
political perspectives of activist-presenters and attendees, or with the well-publicized politics of FPAJ members themselves.

That this tension is palpable even at the “virtual” level justifies television’s present decision to contain it by virtue of technologically constructed walls; it is in a sense isolating members of the crowd from one another: commenting on The Last Award’s app, for instance, is like posting on Twitter (and is indeed integrated in to Twitter and Facebook). Although comments are viewable on the app and outside of it, a combination of its latency and the brevity of the program itself stymies the accumulation of tension and prevents the formation of a crowd-like ethos. For now, the “benign dictatorship” of the app’s constraints make of the all-too nervous system of the crowd a domesticated body of users. Or, to appropriate Mazzarella’s cinematic case study, the cooling distance enforced by the app turns this crowd into a kind of managed public. Moreover, it prevents the formation of any meaningful intimacy; referencing Lauren Berlant’s theorization of an intimate public, I would argue that in constructing a theory of what constitutes intimacy in virtual publics (which I strongly believe exists), temporal synchronicity may be left out. Nonetheless, for virtual collectives to pass from the logic of the public to that of the crowd, it seems necessary to approach synchronicity; if, as philosophers Kant, Hegel, and Schiller proposed, distance is necessary for reasoned and critical appraisal, it would logically follow that removing such distance would affect the reasoning subject in the realm of technologically mediated human interaction as well. A virtual crowd, then, is something we see more and more–its energy erupting into online hysteria, “flame wars,” cyber-bullying, etc. With an awareness of the risk that anonymous crowds can have to the managed space of television (sabotage/subterfuge), it is no great surprise that each of these programs’ apps

68 ibid. 128.
constraints the amount of interaction that users can have with one another, while still letting them play along. As I move into a discussion of independent media experimentation in the next chapter, we will see the outcome of a different series of approaches.
Chapter 5: Cultures of Independent Journalism: The *Genbas* and the Players
There used to be two Independent Web Journal (IWJ; http://iwj.co.jp/) offices near Tokyo’s Azabu Jūban subway station, but I didn’t know this the first time I visited. East of the station, the smaller office was close enough to the highways that we could hear the rush of cars from inside a converted apartment—where four computers and a couple of twenty-something women working in front of them shared space with a kitchen area, mailing materials, and copious video equipment.

I watch them work; as members of a small media production company their tasks are occasionally comparable to those of network television employees, and yet necessarily less specialized. As I sit behind her, Ai screens video from a previous day’s recorded broadcast—pausing occasionally to answer the phone or to make a phone call to coordinate attendance by the organization’s sizable staff at press conferences. She switches screens to the IWJ’s elaborate scheduling spreadsheet and enters an event, and then a name. With 184 UStream channels spanning both the country and the world, scheduling for the IWJ is a slot game requiring the cooperation and coordination of many actors. Ai is not the only one editing or accessing the schedule. And her routine is a dance involving many simultaneous bids for her attention, as she continues to stream press conference audio in the background while calling up Google Maps to relay press conference directions to a lost and frantic staff member. He won’t need any ID, she insists, glancing at the clock, but he’s about to be late and the more pressing concern is figuring out where in the labyrinth of bureaucratic government space the event is being held. Flipping to the spreadsheet containing details for this press conference, Ai cradles the phone between cheek and shoulder, and reassures him that press credentials are unnecessary for this particular conference. As she hangs up, Ai brings the IWJ UStream feeds up on her screen to check that
staff members are in place and the tech is working correctly. Then she updates the corresponding Twitter feeds accordingly.

Another woman, Kaori, moves from assembling IWJ mailings to checking the consistent influx of faxes, checking and organizing equipment, and phoning the other office. “This is the boring office,” she tells me. And turning from her computer monitors for a moment, Ai agrees. Perceiving no benefit to my observing her workflow, she offers to take me to the location on the West side of the station where, she assures me, I can get a better feel for how the IWJ really works.

The IWJ is one of numerous independent media organizations in Tokyo that has grown in prominence and refined its mission since the March 2011 disasters in Eastern Japan. Founded in December, 2010, its primary objective is to provide unedited streaming access to important events—from press conferences to protests. And its mission is overwhelmingly defined as one of supplement, if not contrast to that of the mass media. Where the mass media either refuses to go, or offers a heavily edited and filtered version of events, IWJ streams live, relying on its network of regional reporters and a sizable Tokyo staff to provide such exhaustive and resource intensive coverage. “It’s really difficult to do” (Taihen tsukuridzurai), founder Iwakami Yasumi explains.¹

From the perspective of prominent (and self-described) media activist Tsuda Daisuke, this capacity represents social media’s inherent strength; YouTube and UStream introduce a diverse selection of events to a diverse national body, whose members may be inspired to take action or become involved. Unlike regional/selective broadcast or public meetings, internet coverage of protests and action events (such as those held by Democracy 2.0 and One Voice in

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¹ Yasumi Iwakami et al., “Media Akutibizumu [Media Activism],” (Tokyo, December 6, 2012).
Tokyo) permits displaced participation, and as Tsuda argues, can theoretically mobilize political action at the national level. 2

In Iwakami’s account of the organization’s founding, the IWJ was an extension of his work as a journalist, and motivated similarly to the Free Press Association of Japan (Jiyū Hōdō Kyōkai, discussed in the next chapter) by a desire to provide an alternative to kisha kurabu (reporters’ club) journalism in Japan. In 2009, it seemed to Iwakami that Japanese journalism was moving towards opening up, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Financial Services Administration began permitting reporters of all professional categories to enter their press conferences. (http://iwj.co.jp/wj/open/archives/37611) His vision was one of a nimble (migaru) journalistic mobility, one in which he could orchestrate the coverage of many significant political events simultaneously while remaining outside of the major mass media infrastructure, to replicate the resources of the major networks under the ethos of independent journalism (furī jānarisumu). Iwakami writes that it was the sheer number of politically significant topics about which he wished to write and events that seemed worthy of attentive coverage that inspired his creation of a news organization: the TPP3 and American-Japanese alliance issues, the consumption tax increase, issue of nuclear power, etc.(http://iwj.co.jp/wj/open/archives/37611) And it was only three months after the IWJ’s founding that the March disasters occurred—before Iwakami and his fledgling staff (of two) had managed to attain the necessary technical literacy to build the infrastructure that he envisioned. Somehow, in the early days of the IWJ, he secured coverage of the TEPCO (Tokyo Electric, or Tokyō Denryōko) and NISA (Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, or Hoanin) press conferences, and mobilized rapidly to form a nexus of 55 relay points around the country that streamed live to his site.

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3 The Trans-pacific Partnership (TPP) has been a hotly contested issue in Japan for several years. When watching Nico Nico Douga broadcasts it is not uncommon to see viewers asking questions about this topic in particular.
The model represented by the IWJ is not quite one of citizen journalism, although the organization employs numerous individuals as videographers who have no prior journalistic training or experience covering news events. Nor does this model eliminate the traditional gatekeeper role of journalism; as in the case of interactive television, it provides a framework within which audiences may choose the nature of their contribution. But while interactive television (with some exceptions) presently limits the nature of user contribution to that of essentially moving chess pieces around a board, interactive journalism offers the raw material for others to analyze and create news. In other words, it provides the stuff of citizen journalism.

Further, in consulting her students for explanations of the difference between citizen and traditional journalism, media scholar Bolette Blaagard found that a willingness to integrate online news sources did not constitute the difference between professional and citizen journalism; the difference lay in a certain willingness to refrain from self-referentialism in one’s written work.4

Of seemingly decreasing relevance is the notion that one of journalism’s most fundamental tasks is to unify through information, the idea that it is charged with, and is capable of creating publics.5 In Blaagard’s estimation it was with an increase in the diversity of readership that journalism felt the need to retreat to a seemingly neutral common ground, to “unite [readers] under the sign of the factual”.6 Thus, readers of different political orientations might commonly appropriate given factual information in the service of their own opinions. In Japan, where formal journalistic training is uncommon, and reporters who are typically recruited

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from among the country’s elite universities learn “on the job” from their *senpai*, a lack of polemical engagement with news content is the normative model. By focusing on repeating only the facts disseminated by official sources, journalists seek not only to craft a national “we” (as I mentioned in relation to television) of audience-consumers, but to inscribe news generating elites within this body. In other words, rather than simply serving publics in the traditionally monodirectional sense, journalism strives to meet the needs and expectations of politicians, corporations, etc.

Thus, the independent news model in Japan recreates the news as a conversation, in a manner that differs from that of TV talk shows insofar as it permits a more diverse range of voices to enter the conversation, and bypasses conventional limits on what may be said in the Japanese public sphere. Their strength lies in their capacity to provide people a space within which to comment on TV and newspaper information, and therein to complicate its narrative. Such technology in general permits new roles in a more diverse global conversational exchange, and while the utopian ideal of a maximally diverse audience remains just that, the new independent media movement in Japan has performed a function consistent with the theorization of anthropologists Carol Manning and Ilana Gershon by permitting new participants to enter a national conversation. Mothers, for example, have gotten involved in lobbying for an end to Japan’s reliance on nuclear energy, under the banner of *kodomo mamorō!* (help the children).

Moreover, these organizations perform a function consistent with an ideal model of mass media as outlined by anthropologist Sara Dickey, by designating (alternative) platforms within

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7 Daisuke Tsuda, *Dōin No Kakumei - Sōsharumedia Wa Nani O Kaeta No Ka*, (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 2012), 129.
which to “create and contest representations of self and other.”\textsuperscript{10} Or as Anne Allison writes of interactive relations: “Identification is more ghostly than mimetic— the ghostliness that adheres to images not of ‘us’, per se, but of interactions in which ‘we’ appear only as a part.”\textsuperscript{11} This line of argumentation gestures to a space within which subjectivity is redefined; if Japanese virtual space provides an alternate space for the articulation of selfhood, a selfhood that departs from that which is expected and performed in embodied social spaces, then increased participation can perhaps challenge notions of community and permit a more honest expression of belief/mobilization around such forms of expression. Indeed, Dickey outlines the ways in which online communities can become political; particularly in cases where an entertainer crosses over into advocacy, and thus harnesses a certain affective relationship with audiences in the service of political change (a model that is becoming increasingly common around the world, for reasons beyond the scope of this chapter).\textsuperscript{12}

Citizen journalism often represents a break from a prevalent journalistic model of disciplined neutrality, and legitimates its pursuit by arguing for the need to represent a particular perspective, presumed to be overlooked by extant media. This is certainly the case for the entities I discuss in the following three chapters, for whom the conservatism of the mainstream Japanese


press has put the safety of its people at risk, and belied a tendency to protect its own interests (i.e. those of its corporate sponsors) over all else.  

But the primary founder and public face of the FPAJ insists that his organization is not anti-press club, and that he doesn’t understand this portrayal of them–as press club reporters attend their press conferences alongside their freelance counterparts. In a published conversation with notorious Livedoor founder and internet anti-hero Horie Takufumi, aka “Horiemon”, Uesugi argued that the mission of his organization was to model the change they wished to see in journalism by convening press conferences open to all {Horie:2011tb, 62-3} Horiemon confirmed that his own press conference had been attended by press club members. In a reversal of the model within which citizen journalism integrates and responds to mainstream media content, Uesugi claims that the FPAJ’s conferences have generated numerous leads for attending press club reporters, but while their employers will name the Foreign Correspondents’ Club (FCCJ) as a source of information, they refrain from comparably citing the FPAJ.1516

That the Japanese press has been in a state of crisis since 2011 is argued by divergent sources, while not conceded by the mainstream press itself. Notably, the organization Reporters Without Borders, who publishes an annual ranking of journalistic freedom across the globe, had to explain its dropping of Japan from number 22 to number 53 (in 2013), and 59 (in 2014) out of the 179 countries/territories it ranks, and defended the change in a provocative claim:

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14 A joking reference to the popular Japanese children’s cartoon character Doraemon, whose body type, it is claimed, is quite similar.

15 This is true in my experience of seeing footage from the FCCJ and FPAJ incorporated into television broadcast.

16 Takafumi Horie and Takashi Uesugi, Dakara Terebi Ni Kirawareru [Therefore We Hate TV], (Tokyo: Daīwashobu, 2011).
“Arrests, home searches, interrogation by the domestic intelligence agency and threats of judicial proceedings—who would have thought that covering the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster would have involved so many risks for Japan’s freelance journalists? The discrimination against freelance and foreign reporters resulting from Japan’s unique system of Kisha clubs, whose members are the only journalists to be granted government accreditation, has increased since Fukushima.

Often barred from press conferences given by the government and TEPCO (the Fukushima nuclear plant’s owner), denied access to the information available to the mainstream media (which censor themselves), freelancers have their hands tied in their fight to cover Japan’s nuclear industrial complex, known as the “nuclear village.” Now that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government has tightened the legislation on “state secrets,” their fight will get even more dangerous. (http://rsf.org/index2014/en-asia.php)

The change was explained by Yahoo Japan more concisely, and it may be noted, with considerably greater restraint:

“Nihon wa, Higashi-nihon-daishinsai-go no Tōkyōdenryoku Fukushima dai-1 genpatsu jiko ni kansuru jōhō akusesu ni mondai ga aru nado to shite, zen’nen no 22-i kara 53-i ni kyūraku shita.” (Pursuant to restricted access to information about TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Plant after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the country plunged from a rank of 22 to one of 53.) (http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20130130-00000048-jij-int)

This perspective on the state of Japanese journalism is shared by the New York Times’ Tokyo bureau chief, Martin Fackler, who was nominated for a Pulitzer prize on the basis of his post-Fukushima coverage. During 2013, he became a figurehead for the body of individuals critical of the press by publishing a book in Japanese: “Hontō no Koto o Tsutaenai Nihon no Shinbun” (Japanese Newspapers Do Not Tell the Truth), and giving public lectures on his post-March 11 experiences. In these vivid accounts, he tells of his own early reliance on NHK, and his appreciation of their quick mobilization to cover the tsunami and issue alerts. However, in traveling to cover the areas affected by the disaster, Fackler quickly found himself in places other than those the kisha club reporters were willing to go. After arriving in Otsuji, he found the town devoid of media representation; even the mayor inquired of him where the press was. And in Minamisoma, a town 31.9 km north of the Fukushima Daiichi plant, whose kisha club room had been vacated by its usual occupants, the mayor ultimately took to YouTube to plead for coverage of its dire circumstances. While the domestic press focused on officially sanctioned data and
numbers, allegations of *hikokumin* (anti-patriotic) behavior were lodged against those who questioned TEPCO and the government’s statements, or engaged in substantial human interest coverage. Moreover, attempts to clarify the nature of the health risks posed by the Fukushima plant were met with protests that negative reporting was a kind of *fuhyō higai* (libel, or infliction of damage due to baseless rumors). {Untitled:2013wv} Fackler recounts that upon arrival in the town of Iitate (52km northwest of Fukushima Daiichi), he was approached by a mayor angry that foreigners were trying to encourage panic among residents, and who presumed him to be an agent of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—which then arrived on the scene as he attempted to conduct an interview.\(^\text{17}\)

While Fackler argues that there were exceptions to the overall conservative and pack-oriented journalistic output of the Japanese press, his overall assessment is consistent with that of the organizations among whom I conducted fieldwork\(^\text{18}\): that the press in Japan does not make the news, but merely reports the daily activities of its authorities.\(^\text{19}\) Moreover, the kisha club system corrals journalists in particular spaces where they wait, beholden to the officials to whom they are assigned for regular reports. Just as all of the television company employees whom I interviewed had been hired immediately upon graduation from one of Japan’s elite universities (Tokyo University, Waseda, etc.) and worked solely for that employer since their initial entry, it was uncommon for newspaper journalists to switch companies. Therefore, rather than possessing a professional self-conception that emphasized their role as journalist, Fackler posited, theirs was an identity inextricably wed to membership in a particular company—and they were unwilling to take action that might jeopardize their standing or comfort within that organization.\(^\text{20}\)

While organizations like Reporters Without Borders promote an international model for credible journalism, an important contribution of anthropology is to remind us that such ideas are nonetheless cultural, and as such do not travel between borders unaltered and unadapted. Thus, what constitutes responsible reporting in one context, might be considered insufficient in another.


\(^{18}\) I address this in greater depth in the next chapter.

\(^{19}\) Martin Fackler, “Japanese Journalism as Seen Through 3.11: Japan’s Multiple Crises,” (Tokyo, 2013).

Indeed, the weight given by journalists to the notion of “neutrality” varies nationally. Ghanian journalists in one account were little concerned with objectivity and primarily motivated by a desire to tell a good story, defined as a tendency to reconstruct all news as social conflict (Hasty 2006, 78–9). And in Palestine, journalists saw the potential of the medium as a public platform in which to mobilize audiences to political activity, thus triggering a reactive Israeli censorship movement. Even in ostensibly neutral news stories, Pedelty argues that (American) journalists craft a bricolage of the ideological orientation of a collection of stockholders, owners, executives, and advertisers, who use reporters to construct the kinds of stories they wish to tell (1995, 6–7).

Anthropologist Caitlin Zaloom’s account of the affective self-discipline valued by day traders actually recalls both an American and Japanese journalistic model, but in different ways. She writes:

“Discipline demands that while engaging with the market, traders purge themselves of affect and individuality. According to the logic of this technique, they must manage their personal investments and reactions to make possible unobstructed Perception.” 21

Ideally, the journalistic ideal should be similar, despite the influence of political punditry on American and Japanese television. The story, as crafted by a Japanese or American reporter is expected to be devoid of emotional tells, but the American version traditionally emphasizes a formulaic balance between “sides,” (the aforementioned bricolage) while Japan’s newspapers bias more heavily towards unchallenged information handed to reporters by officials. In both cases the reporter, like Zaloom’s traders, must be able to divest herself of the opinions and concerns she has outside the workplace, and perform as the embodiment of pure professional judgment. 22 Moreover, both cases can lead to a kind of distortion; in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, attempts to represent the perspectives of opposing forces does not

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22 ibid.
necessarily lead to a less distorted representation of history, and articles containing the perspectives of both “sides” may rely just as heavily on official statements.\textsuperscript{23}

If disciplined neutrality is said to be a skill separating professional journalists from untrained amateurs, it is interesting that anthropologists have identified among journalists a prevalent skepticism about the success with which emotional divestment can occur. In practice, neutrality is often imperfectly executed, either because of the mandate to identify conflicting sides of an issue (constituting an argument rather than reproducing it) \textsuperscript{24}, or as a result of a sense that neutrality means simply relaying information directly to the public without investigation. Or, as Pedelty wrote: “The demands of balance and fairness, the emphasis on elite sources, and the fetishization of fact lead to a simplistic, and at times cryptic discourse.” \textsuperscript{25} Although a rise in polemical journalism (in many countries) introduces its own complications to the journalistic landscape, by allowing powerful figures to speak without analysis, the media permits these epistemological actors to exercise an unchecked power to determine public knowledge.

The interconnectedness and codependence of powerful players in the media was commented on frequently by my interlocutors, who identified the major advertising firms as being particularly culpable for the nature of television content. I first met Honma-san, a vocal critic of the Japanese advertising firms, at an FCCJ press conference\textsuperscript{26} arranged to promote his new book, \textit{Dentsū to Genpatsu Hōdō: Kyodai Kōkoku-Nushi to Ōte Kōkoku-Dairiten ni yoru Media Shihai no Shikumi} (Dentsu and Nuclear Coverage: How Big Advertisers and Big Advertising Firms Control the Media). As a former employee, not of Dentsu the world’s largest

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\textsuperscript{25} Mark Pedelty, \textit{War Stories}, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

\textsuperscript{26} The next chapter also discusses the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (FCCJ) in more depth as well.
\end{footnotesize}
advertising agency headquartered in Tokyo, but of Hakuhodo, Japan’s second-largest firm.\textsuperscript{27} Honma understood why his book had been ignored by the domestic press, and was difficult to place with a publisher.\textsuperscript{28} However, he appealed to the foreign press to try to force local media’s hand, as it so often had in the past.

His identification of the problem mirrors Fackler’s insofar as both saw in the coverage of the Fukushima crisis symptoms of a mass media system with inherent structural flaws. In other words, commensurate with its codependency on officials for the day’s story, the media relies on the goodwill of major advertisers for a plurality of its revenue. Indeed, this relationship fundamentally dictates its actions and informs its anxieties.

The system described by those who have done work on Japanese advertising (in English, most notably anthropologist Brian Moeran) is one of collaboration and cronyism. Ad agencies monitor the news for coverage of their clients, ever prepared to do damage control. And the same agencies routinely telephone the sales departments of mass media entities to feel out potential coverage of a client, particularly in the case of a major incident. After the sales departments inquire within their own companies and report back, the advertising agency representative might request that a story be moved, diminished or otherwise altered on behalf a client, who has been a reliable supporter of the network (etc)’s programs in the past. \textsuperscript{29}

In essence Honma (and he is not alone in this\textsuperscript{30}, paints a vivid picture of an industry whose content is controlled by a web of social pressures and implied threats. For example, if a network is not inclined to bow to the pressure to alter its content, Honma mentions the this sort of statement as typical: “…it might be difficult for my client to continue the same level of

\textsuperscript{27} Honma worked in the sales and marketing division of Hakuhodo for eighteen years.
\textsuperscript{28} Between the two of them, they control 70\% of the advertising revenue in Japan, with Dentsu representing 50\% of this share.
advertising as in the past”. Conversely, implications are made that clients may be willing to spend more on advertising in the future if their needs are met.

When I met with Honma over tea in the Ikebukuro neighborhood of Tokyo, he described how advertising industry staff come to heavily identify with the clients they represent and to feel personally responsible for their wellbeing and protection.

He told me of various services levels within the big advertising firms— the more a client spends, the more comprehensive is their protection against negative media coverage, and nuclear energy interest groups (such as TEPCO) have the largest budgets. In contrast with the experience of anthropologist William Mazzarella’s interlocutors, one of whom quipped that a PR man could not control the news, but only manipulate impressions, Japanese agents of PR are often able both to act upon the impressions created by a story, and erase it altogether. The meaning of damage control under these conditions is thus more draconian, if not entirely foolproof. In support of his claims, Honma pointed to specific cases of manipulation at TV Asahi: a Hōdō (News) Station anchor mentioned on-air that he was under pressure not to put together a program critical of nuclear energy for the anniversary of March 11, and being sternly reprimanded. And during a late night talk-show immediately following the disasters, a panel discussion on nuclear reactors was assembled from Dentsu-arranged pro-nuclear commentators. Unfortunately and perhaps unsurprisingly, I found no one willing to corroborate his words.

As outlined by Moeran, the advertising that frames a particular show is assembled from among sponsors (ideally) without product rivalries and appears in the form of commercials, product placements, and voice-over announcements. Tantamount to the era of his fieldwork, programs are generally sponsored by around six companies, whose allotted commercial time corresponds to capital investment. My own fieldwork conversations and related observations at the networks, production companies and other satellite components of the television industry

32 Horie and Uesugi, Dakara Terebi Ni Kirawareru [Therefore We Hate TV].
34 Elizabeth Rodwell, ed., Interview, Honma Ryu, n.d.
correspond with Moeran’s account that programs are assembled in a variety of ways—all of which revolve around the solicitation of sponsors. Whether networks come to agencies or sponsors with a particular concept, or agencies approach network with the same. In either case, it is the willingness of advertisers to support a program that makes it happen—one component of an intricate (kashikari; lit. lend and borrow) system. Networks typically find themselves indebted to the big ad firms when ratings are low, or during particularly unprofitable periods during the annual programming cycle—as the big firms are able to coax clients into sponsorship in exchange for future favors, and perform their formidable powers of negotiation at the same time. Van Wolferen labels Dentsu the “hidden media boss,” for this reason, and argues that it plays a greater role in controlling conversation and moulding national culture than any other advertising agency in the world. It is an ad agency with its own internal PR firm, forever monitoring the Japanese news landscape and ready to take the offensive in the case of a disaster involving a client. As Cooper-Chen has outlined, Dentsu (and Hakuhōdo) are institutions (or perhaps an infrastructure) that turn prototypical client-agency relations on their head; clients are customarily flattered by the agencies’ patronage. Moreover, they are able to exert pressure on those who pay them by virtue of their substantial inside knowledge of corporate scandals. A consequence of the meritocratic, or at least cronyistic network of Japanese elites is that individuals from the same schools and families occupy positions of power in Japan’s media and political landscape. Dentsu, for example, is known to be the agency responsible for the LDP’s own advertising, and ostensibly seeks to hire those with family in government, industry, or media to serve in their own offices.

IWJ thus seeks to exist beyond the reach of this system, to elude the manipulative machinations of the advertising industry and to disseminate events as they unfold for use by the public. The west side (main) IWJ office was, in autumn 2012, on the third floor of an apartment

37 ibid.
40 ibid.
building. That the office has a co-op feel to it is partly an effect of it having the features of a home: kitchen, bathroom/bathtub etc. and partly an effect of how its employees occupy the space—rolling out futon mattresses to sleep on the floor when late-night editing or event coverage demands a sacrifice of sleep. As I slip off my shoes, thirteen men and women of various ages turn from their computers, glance up from their food, or peek inside from the patio where they are smoking and drinking cold tea.

The ebb and flow of staff to press conferences is constant: one member enters the room, sweating and dragging bags of equipment behind him, another two sort through and pack batteries, a mic, and a UStream box from the plastic storage units behind a broad kitchen table. It is Friday, and I am invited to attend and to help film the weekly anti-nuclear energy demonstrations outside of the kokkai (Diet). It is my first time piling into an IWJ van, my first time operating an IWJ camera, and my first time watching the viewer count on the UStream transmitter climb as we continue filming. The experience feels every bit like guerrilla journalism, as we seek to represent the ebullient energy of the protesters without permit or parameter. When it is my turn to operate the cameras I am forced to acknowledge that even under such unconstrained circumstances, I am editing—constructing a narrative informed by my own media-fed notions of significance. I zoom in on a Guy Fawkes mask in the crowd, and then an elderly couple dressed as cockroaches. In the absence of a ladder, I lift the camera high above the crowd to convey the scope of the protest. There is no unfiltered news documentary, there are only degrees of filtration, mimetic reproduction of the protest coverage I have already seen, the video production training I have had, a judgment call about what to include or exclude. There is no deterritorializing, only “echo objects”; Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard would find this obvious.


42 Inspired by its use in the film “V for Vendetta”, the mask was appropriated by the hacker/activist group Anonymous, and has in many ways come to be associated with protest in general. For more see {Coleman:2014tl}

43 With apologies to Barbara Maria Stafford for borrowing the title of her momentous book and distorting the concept.
As I acknowledged in my introduction, there is much overlap between categories of knowledge production as well as between the kinds of Gramscian organic intellectuals who are its authors.\footnote{Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).}

But there continues to be slippage between the categories of journalist and audience under the current conditions of media production, a destabilizing of concrete roles despite the continued (and already mentioned) emphasis on training. Accordingly, statements such as: “Citizen journalism may borrow the craftsmanship developed through a century of journalistic work, but [they] will never be professionals until they have the skills, knowledge and sources of the professional journalist”, disqualify my own documentary efforts from representation by this subcategory of intellectuals.\footnote{B B Blaagaard, “Shifting Boundaries: Objectivity, Citizen Journalism and Tomorrow’s Journalists,” *Journalism* 14, no. 8 (October 16, 2013): 1076–90.} As argued by one TV professional, media produced by amateurs and that of his peers are categorically different; the training inherent in television production refines and elevates the output of its agents to an artisanal form—against the naive formulations of a public armed with consumer-grade tools.\footnote{Eiichirou Inai, “Terebi Wa Nan No Tame Ni Aru No Ka?,” *Ayablog*, October 9, 2013, http://ayablog.jp/archives/24260.} But for the activists involved in Japan’s independent media scene, expertise can be more than just elevating, but compromising. And the answer to the objections (offered largely by those with a stake in reifying taxonomic differences) is to train citizens to make their own media; this is the primary work of Our Planet TV’s (www.ourplanet-tv.org ) Shiraishi Hajime, and the subject of Chapter 7.

But the IWJ also engaged in training, although it differed on the basis of its length-of-apprenticeship and foregrounding of the technical rather than ideological or aesthetic conditions of media production. On my second visit, I was trained alongside two new *aribaitō* (part-time) staff members to cover events and upload video to the appropriate IWJ UStream channel; we were warned that it would be essential to remember the particular means by which the equipment
would be operated, and one of my fellow trainees was scolded for failing to bring a notepad on which to record these details. Managing the hardware is relatively straightforward, a matter of connecting camera to laptop, launching the correct software, and selecting a standby image. Complexity is introduced when one must remember to name the files using the “date-iwj” formula, and connect to the proper channel. The bluetooth mic, mobile wifi, and UStream connection devices must also be connected correctly. To test our capacity to carry out these instructions, the two new staff and I are sent outside into the Azabu Jūban neighborhood to take turns handling the equipment, and constructing a tour of the area for the amusement of those watching our progress from the office. It’s hot, and we sweat as we attempt to maintain the steadiness of the camera while filming each other’s walking tours and capturing the sounds of our speech over the din of the crowded streets. Ultimately there is no real evaluation process or critical feedback on our efforts. Back inside the offices, where an older woman sits fanning herself as a few volunteers and part timers cycle through kombini (convenience store) ramen and cigarettes, the youngest in our group of three is immediately conscripted to go to a Takadanobaba (neighborhood) press conference, and I am invited again to help film the protests outside of the Diet. Training over.⁴⁷

This is not to say that considerable reflexivity was inconsequential to the production process, as the staff write up a synopsis of the events they cover before moving them to the archive. And indeed, I found reflexivity to be just as much a component of professional praxis among independent journalists as employees of the major TV corporations, if not more so, because they were consistently called upon to justify their professional activities to others in the

⁴⁷ By November of 2012, the IWJ has relocated to a spacious new set of offices in the Roppongi neighborhood of Tokyo, with rows of new computers and news tables, and a separate suite for Iwakami to conduct live-streamed interviews. A box of common use slippers sits at the door to the main office. While I once memorably knocked a cup of coffee into one of the IWJ laptops in the tight quarters of the old office, here I was able to conduct eight more months of fieldwork without knocking over a single thing. And I almost always had my own desk.
interest of fund raising, and to themselves in light of their small audiences. This is consistent with an anthropology of journalism that describes its practitioners as social agents who themselves encode and decode their own work.\textsuperscript{48} Despite a relative conservatism about extrapolating from the ease with which individuals can produce media to claim that this renders all audiences journalists, I will suggest that present conditions of mediation, coupled with the ubiquity of media-making technology allow individuals to more fluidly pass between categories. In such a climate, a binary opposition between encoders and decoders appears reductive, as the encoders themselves must engage in a degree of transference in constituting their product. In other words, they have to imagine themselves as media consumers, while simultaneously othering their audiences.

To a large extent, the US serves as the model for how Japanese media activists conceive of an ideal journalism, with a traditional mass media complemented and challenged by online newspapers, bloggers and social media activists, and braver public punditry in general. Our Planet-TV founder (see Chapter 7) Shiraishi Hajime has written and commented that compared to the US and the countries in Europe, Japan’s development of a free press is relatively stunted, though the country has had some success with experiments in radio transmission such as FM Waiwai (“wai wai” is the sound of a crowd making a din, and gestures in part to the station’s goal of providing broadcast in many languages), and Rajio Kafe (Radio Cafe, which has worked to create a forum for a diverse series of voices).\textsuperscript{49} Moreover, UStream and Twitter have been among the independent media’s most essential tools in Japan, and together have made space for several small media groups for whom access to any other broadcast platform is untenable,


though as Tsuda Daisuke notes, the baseline for “successful” engagement with content disseminated through social media and television is essentially incomparable. More specifically, former NHK news announcer Hori Jun reminds us that a 10,000 person audience for a television program would constitute a dismal 1% television rating, and thus be considered a failure: “On YouTube, people get excited about that, while on television they want ratings of 60 million people.”

However, both activists see social media as presently existing in a state of becoming, of currently growing in both influence and potential in Japan. Thus, it was of great interest to Tsuda that while in 2010 an estimated 1/3 to 1/2 of Japanese computer users engaged social media in any way, Twitter use in particular expanded dramatically between 2010-2012, as individuals sought alternative means by which to exchange written and visual information. In the case of news about the Fukushima disaster, internet communications allowed individuals to bypass the news, which tended to be both too general, and too cautious, and to exchange information they deemed most essential—such where a bath could be taken, and which supermarkets were open. And as Palestinian-Japanese journalist Shigenobu May writes, this disaster and the Arab Spring of 2010 contained some obvious parallels, insofar as citizens bypassed or supplemented mass media in favor of a social media-driven information exchange. In each case, as well, the major media outlets largely sought to manage and contain the crises, and were therefore deemed untrustworthy, or too proximate to a coercive governmental infrastructure.

Social media also encouraged people to donate both their time and money to the relief effort; no small feat in a country where “kifu bunka ga nai” (there is no donation culture), as I

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was often told. Anthropologist Anne Allison learned the same thing during a pre-2011 group interview she conducted with college students in Japan. One student stated: "We Japanese don't volunteer; it's not part of the tradition," and the others agreed. Moreover, they elaborated that giving money to a homeless person on the street (for example) would feel shameful to both parties. In Allison’s understanding, this way of thinking was informed in part by the Reagan-esque neoliberal policies of former Japanese prime minister Koizumi Junichiro, whose notion of jiko sekinin (self-responsibility) meant that citizens should not expect help from others, and ought to likewise refuse support to anyone.

However, despite rhetoric to the contrary within the independent media groups among whom I conducted fieldwork, 3/11 was not the first time that citizens rushed to one another’s aid in the wake of a disaster; after the Kobe earthquake of 1995, volunteers similarly mobilized to help the victims. And historian Simon Avenell suggests both that the number of civic groups has been steadily increasing in Japan since the 1980s, and that the passing of significant legislation facilitating the activities of designated “non-profits” (kōeki hōjin) in 1998 contributed to a rise in the number of such groups.

One of the major questions raised by Avenell is whether or not such civic groups are creating any lasting change in Japanese society. While a tendency to embrace certain kinds of

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54 Honma, Ryu. Interview by Elizabeth Rodwell. Digital recording. Tokyo, November 1, 2012. Although I was told this often, this is the only time I recorded it in a formal interview.
55 Allison, Precarious Japan.
57 In January 2014, Koizumi Junichiro was relatively involved in another scandal involving the Free Press Association of Japan’s (Jiyū hōdō kyōkai) primary representative, Uesugi Takashi. After an official, and “confirmed” Koizumi Twitter account was launched, it was discovered several days later that it was a fake. [Ito:tp] As seemed to happen often from 2013-14, various internet parties accused Uesugi Takashi of creating the spoof account. Uesugi ultimately took to his blog to deny the allegations, which he called konkyo no nai dema (baseless rumors).1 Uesugi’s presumed motivation was, as a liberal and the author of a book critical of former and current Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, to disrespect the conservative Koizumi.
58 ibid.
activism and volunteerism, particularly at the corporate level, emerged in the 1970s, a 1996 survey by the Economic Planning Agency (EPA) showed that 66% of the civic groups it studied had annual operating budgets of under 500,000 yen (around 4905 dollars). The majority of this money (33%) came from membership fees, 65.3% had fewer than five full/part-time office staff, and only 15.9% had paid staff members. Finally, only 7% of groups owned or rented a permanent office, and 60% had fewer than 100 members. Thus, while the older of the two comprehensive studies Avenell cites represents a pre-3/11 snapshot, its findings were consistent with my experience of media activist groups and their difficulties attracting members and funds. With this in mind, I turn to another organization that I worked with, and whose scale and prominence was decidedly less than that of IWJ or the FPAJ.

**GoHoo (Nihon Hōdō Kenshō Kikō)**

On a cold and rainy October night, a diverse assortment of volunteers gradually trickles in, shaking the rain off their umbrellas and coats as they entered the Social Entrepreneur School (Shakai Kigyō Daigaku) building in Nibancho. The group is here to work on a project that is new, but has already won one startup award upon public presentation. GoHoo (meaning “misinformation”; http://www.gohoo.org) is a website run by the umbrella group Nihon Hōdō Kenshō Kikō (The Watchdog for Accuracy in News-reporting, Japan). The primary topic of discussion tonight, and of most of the subsequent monthly meetings, is that of technology—which features to add to the fledgling website, and the best means by which to promote GoHoo’s mission. The most significant means of attracting internet traffic is (and remains) the group’s Twitter feed and e-newsletter. Therefore, tonight’s primary presentation is given by a professional web marketer, Sato; he stands at a white board and draws arrows and boxes with red

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60 ibid. 253-4.
61 As of June, 2014 the organization had accumulated almost 18,900 Twitter followers (its account is @Watchdog_Japan). However, as of this meeting, the group had only 4000 followers.
marker, explaining to us how Japanese users conduct research online, and how they decide to seek more information about a topic. Sites wishing to be sustainable must monetize their traffic, he tells us, must take advantage of embedded promotion tools like Twitter hashtags to increase page views. Sato is palpably enthusiastic about this topic, about the ways in which people learn. He gestures emphatically with his marker as he expounds on why Twitter’s kensaku (search) engine is bad, while using Yahoo! realtime to search Twitter in Japanese is actually useful.

Like the other independent media groups, GoHoo must reluctantly oscillate between discussions of the highest ideals of an honest, transparent journalism, and those of how to fund their mission. These are necessary, but palpably stressful conversations: faces become serious and brows furrow in concentration as the volunteers flip through circulated packets and study budget numbers. Inspired by rumors of crowd funding’s emergent popularity of the US, the imagination of many Tokyo media activists has turned to how this concept can be used to create an alternative to the mainstream media—comparable to the fantasies of those companies’ employees insofar as both envision an idealistically democratic content, but divergent insofar as the outcome of this process differs in the articulations of the two groups. Referring back to the historical absence of a “kifu bunka” (donation culture) in Japan, Tsuda addresses what he believes is a culture in transition: “Korekara ‘kifu’ ga bāmu ni naru,” (The ‘donation’ boom is coming) he titles a chapter in one of his recent books. Within his formulation and that of many television producers (see Chapter 3), America’s donation culture is one worth emulating. While he praises services like the Japanese crowdfunding website Just Giving, his acquisitiveness about the potentials of a distinctly Japanese means to fundraising leads him to society’s widespread use of Suica cards, which could perhaps be set up to create regular “micro donations” to causes. Thus, the sairento majoriti (silent majority) can perhaps be drawn in to a greater extent than would be possible if donation required active steps on the occasion of each charitable impulse. In

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62 Dōin No Kakumei - Sōsharumedia Wa Nani O Kaeta No Ka 192.
63 Suica cards are generally used to pay for subway rides. They can be auto-reloaded from one’s bank account, and also used to purchase items at many stores. The card winds up functioning much like a debit card in a country that still uses cash for most transactions.
64 Tsuda, Dōin No Kakumei - Sōsharumedia Wa Nani O Kaeta No Ka.
the meantime, he acknowledges that social media has made political action easier, but, as many commentators have similarly noted, merely clicking an ii ne (like) on Facebook is unlikely to create change. The most provocative question raised by this discussion, is whether it engenders in people a sense that they have contributed sufficiently, thus making them less likely to donate or volunteer.

While money remains limited to what can fund (gradual) organizational expansion, involvement must remain a side-project for nearly everyone present at the monthly meetings; this is to say that while Gohoo might be their passion, it is secondary to their main occupation. Among the volunteers are lawyers (including the founder, an ex-journalist turned lawyer), students, retired journalists, and social media professionals. Inspired by American websites such as Politifact and Factcheck.org, GoHoo seeks to investigate information reported by the mass media, and confirm or correct the factual information used therein. As Y-san explains it: “Our purpose is to check the information provided in the mass media” (masukomi no hōdō o chekku suru). Unfortunately, such an endeavor transparently requires substantial manpower; pursuant to the 24-hour news cycle, comprehensive news monitoring would require an infrastructure like that of the Associated Press Germany as described by anthropologist Dominic Boyer, wherein an ever-attentive body of individuals tracks news in real-time. But if even the news could be effectively monitored round-the-clock by this organization, scrutiny and research requires substantial resources. For one, there is the issue of whether to monitor television or “print” news (in the meantime, they stick to the latter), and for another, the scope of their monitoring even within this subset of journalism risks being untenably massive.

During our initial meeting, held at the offices of his legal practice, Y-san explained to me of his organization’s motivating principles—a passionate missive he would repeatedly deliver to new audiences in my presence: American newspapers, when they make a mistake, print a

65 ibid.
66 Yasumi Iwakami, Takashi Uesugi, Hajime Shiraishi, and Hitofumi Yanai, “Media Akutibizumu [Media Activism],” (Tokyo, December 6, 2012).
68 Although Y-san tells me they do have a VCR for recording television, it’s simply untenable to attempt to keep pace with TV news.
retraction or an apology in a particular place, he said, using the New York Times as example. “Amerika no bai wa, korekushon shite iu pēji ga mainichi aru desu ne” (In the US, corrections are printed on a designated page each day), he explained. 69 This is to say, such revisions are easy to find in newspapers if one looks for them— and online, journalists usually acknowledge at the bottom of an article that factual updates were made. However, Japanese newspapers do not do this; although a culture of online news influenced by Western models has begun to take hold in Japan70, the media is not in the habit of admitting mistakes. Gohoo therefore attempts to function as mediator between the infrastructure of mass media and its publics, by selecting stories to verify, and if necessary, posting “warnings” (chūihō) and “misinformation reports” (gohō repōto) on its website, and alerting the public primarily via Facebook and Twitter. And just as individuals attempt to appropriate the reach of the mass media for their own ends, independent media groups must, of necessity, harness one another’s social capital and share their comparatively limited platform. For example, Y-san tells us that when GoHoo can get the IWJ’s Iwakami-san to retweet one of their pieces to his 129,000+ followers, they see a reliable spike in web traffic.

But affiliation can similarly be the source of infection, a tacit endorsement of a particular person or idea. And in a society where personal connections are essential to many kinds of transactions, GoHoo is not immune to concerns that linking to the wrong person or accepting affiliate ads from the wrong group could derail their mission.71 What were at that time just rumors about the difficulties plaguing the FPAJ72, had nonetheless led to concerns about the desirability of using one of its press conferences to debut the organization and its mission. A press conference with the FPAJ, however, brought with it access to both its and the IWJ’s

69 ibid.
70 For example, a Japanese language version of the Huffington Post, run by major Japanese national newspaper Asahi Shinbun, launched during my fieldwork.
72 See the next chapter for details of the scandal and difficulties.
audiences—a body already (arguably) sympathetic to the activities of the independent press; Our Planet TV had recently held an FPAJ press conference without suffering negative repercussions, as had the Tsuda Daisuke-affiliated political group “Democracy 2.0”–although both of these groups benefitted from and were somewhat insulated by the accumulated social capital of their most prominent representatives. Tsuda-san and Shiraiishi-san both represent a credible and high quality journalistic body of work, and their integrity generally unquestioned. GoHoo, on the other hand, was still a comparative blank slate, occupying a precarious early stage within which reputation needed to be carefully nurtured, and support courted. Thus, Y-san and the GoHoo members in general, weighed affiliation, endorsements, and invitations carefully and on the basis of a credibility they hoped to construct as a meta-level journalistic entity.

With each monthly meeting, GoHoo had gained momentum. By November 2012, Y-san was excitedly announcing to the group that Nihon Hōdō Kenshō Kikō had officially been registered as a non-profit entity, and proposing that the group begin staking out potential locations for their office space, to move past their appropriation of the Entrepreneurship school’s first-floor meeting space towards something more official. “Subarashii,” (excellent) a professor named Koizumi replies, smiling broadly. And then, quietly to himself again as he flips through the meeting’s agenda: “Subarashii”. A smaller smile. Members toss around potential Tokyo office locations, largely based on their proximity to other journalistic outposts and news hubs: Akasaka, Kojimachi, or maybe Yotsuya. One of the lawyers ventures that they also need to recruit more student interns, to try to increase the number of corrected articles. Everyone nods and makes noises of accession, as he outlines the reasons: Gohoo’s operating budget is best spent on the physical trappings of a legitimate and growing business, and students are more

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73 If not drawn from among the subset of 2ch users who mostly seemed to show up to heckle presenters and badmouth Uesugi Takashi.
74 The Democracy 2.0 press conference can be viewed at http://goo.gl/SroHAB
75 I have chosen to not print their budget here out of respect for the organization’s privacy.
likely to have both the time and the tech-savvy to do the work of identifying gohō. Much of the
discussion in this chapter has been about what constitutes a journalist or journalistic praxis,
however if we accept that much of journalistic selfhood is a combination of a collective (and
locally contingent) ethos, and experience, it seems that there is much common ground between
what is expected of independent journalists and those in the major corporations. Specifically,
organizations such as GoHoo, IWJ, etc. rely on their staff’s capacity to blog, tweet, and live-
stream in addition to being able to author feature length articles (and perhaps even more so on
their technical savvy than on writing). This is the case even in television journalism; during my
fieldwork at Fuji TV, for example, I observed producers oscillating between research,
interviewing, on-camera narration, site direction and script writing—all for the same three-minute
segment. The only task they almost never took on was the actual filming of news, as cameramen
from external production companies were hired to this end.

This category of journalists, who are expected to possess similar skill sets to those of
their print-only counterparts, coupled with the technical sophistication to work with websites, has
been noted by many who study journalism. 76

Moreover, their studies have offered insight into workplace debates as to whether these (usually)
younger members of the workforce epitomize journalists, and explored the tensions between
online news staff and the increasingly overlapping category of print journalists. Just as the most
physically grueling work is typically assigned to the newest, and youngest members of Japanese
television companies, online journalism demands of its practitioners a capacity to work across

76 Pablo J Boczkowski, Digitizing the News, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); V Colson and F Heinderyckx,
“Do Online Journalist Belong in the Newsroom?,” in Making Online News, ed. Chris Paterson and David Domingo,
formats and to keep up with the demanding temporality of the online news cycle. Thus, it is
frequently the purview of an organization’s youngest employees.\textsuperscript{77}

As outlined, the current state of Japanese journalism represents a hybrid of earlier
American conditions and its own particular tensions. Specifically, Shiraishi Hajime argues that
9/11 transformed the American journalistic landscape in a way comparable to the transformation
Japanese journalism is currently undergoing as a result of 3/11.\textsuperscript{78} Prior to 2001 in the US,
organizations were generally concerned with hedging: remaining abreast of new trends in
journalistic technology, while simultaneously limiting experimentation so as to avoid alienating
segments of their audience, whose capacity to access technology cutting-edge experiments was
inconsistent.\textsuperscript{79} In its early days, it must be recalled, the audience for experimental online
reporting did not immediately appear.

This is indeed the current status of the independent media in Japan, where the audience
has not fully manifested, and is inconsequential when compared to that accessed by print
newspapers or TV news. There is perhaps always a gulf between what institutional cultural
permits, and what is technologically possible in mass media, and one might argue that this is
particularly true in Japan.\textsuperscript{80} The distinction between journalists and the individuals working on
the GoHoo project is perhaps purely an academic one, but their work certainly contains elements
in common with that of many contemporary journalists who do more filtering, synthesizing,
editing, and fact checking from their desks than they do actual reporting. GoHoo staff’s work
remains a step above that of a mere aggregator–the reporter who merely republishes articles

\textsuperscript{77} J Brannon, “Maximize the Medium,” in Making Online News, Assessing Obstacles to Performing Multimedia
\textsuperscript{78} Shiraishi, Media O Tsukuru: “Chiša Na Koe” O Tsutaeru Tame Ni [Making Media: to Transmit Small Voices].
\textsuperscript{79} Boczkowski, Digitizing the News.
\textsuperscript{80} ibid.; Dominic Boyer, “News Agency and News Mediation in the Digital Era,” Social Anthropology 19, no. 1
sourced from elsewhere—insofar as they essentially perform journalistic work by repeating its investigatory processes. This also puts them in a category apart from that of early online journalists, whose job was dominated by editing and adapting a newspaper’s print articles for the website.81

The July, 2013 GoHoo members forum is a chance for even non-volunteers to learn about the status of the organization, and to get their feedback on elements of its strategy. Y-san outlines their progress and activities thus far, from the launch of the website, their presentations, the magazines and websites within which they have been featured, the monthly GoHoo report, and the seminars they’ve organized. Among the chief upcoming projects is a logo and website re-design, with the intention of creating a more interactive experience for users. Chiefly, those present lobby for a hanron (rebuttal) feature on the site—a way for media or site users to reply to GoHoo’s corrections. Mori-san notes that when they receive feedback via Twitter, it does not serve to create the kind of exchange that is GoHoo’s mission.

An example sited by GoHoo of the kind of interactivity they wish to cultivate is the project of a rising star in the independent news world—Hori Jun, whose 8-bit News (http://8bitnews.org/) arose out of his own experience of Japanese mass media. Before a sizable audience at one of its sponsored seminars, Y-san introduces Hori-san as a former NHK news announcer who left the organization after his study of new media at UCLA inspired him to cultivate and promote alternative news services in Japan. Hori’s project, Y-san says, is “ōpun jānarizumu” (open journalism), reflected by the taglines of 8-bit News’ website: “nyūsu wa ‘shiru’ dake janai” (Don’t just ‘know’ the news), “‘YOU’ are news creator”, and “paburikku akusesu jitsugen ni muketa hatsugonsha ikusei purojekuto” (Project to move towards the implementation of public access by training speakers). Hori thus begins his presentation before

an attentive audience, by asking the crowd if we’ve encountered the notion of public access media, and proposing the American model as representative of an engaged democratic mass media whose public can both access and transmit content. This he contrasts with Japan’s own media history, outlining a system that his parents recall as filled with “uso bakarî” (nothing but lies; i.e., propaganda). From the tightly controlled media of the Meiji period to the “aimai” (vague) reporting of the contemporary NHK, which attends to official happyō (presentations), but too often refrains from genba kenshō (on-site investigation), Hori looks to the internet as a solution—but although he draws on European and American examples of citizen (crowd-sourced) journalism sponsored by major mass media conglomerates (Al Jazeera’s user submitted content maps, or CNN’s iReport, for example), he is less optimistic about the capacity of local organizations to facilitate an authentic exchange.

Taking out his smartphone, Hori demonstrates that it takes only thirty seconds for him to record and upload a video to YouTube. And 8-Bit News encourages users to perform the role of journalists in this way “jibun jishin haishin suru” (to distribute [content] themselves) in the service of a better society. 82 This, finally, is the citizen journalism as articulated by Blaagard’s students, the crowd-sourcing of content from individuals whose training is not journalistic enough to muddy the waters. This, as agreed upon by most of the players in Japan’s independent journalistic scene, requires greater attention to citizen media literacy, a project I will return to in Chapter 7.

82 Hori, “Ima Koso Motomerareru Ōpun Jānarizumu.”
Chapter 6: The Free Press Association of Japan
On the second floor of a nondescript building in Tokyo’s Kamiyachō neighborhood, the Free Press Association of Japan’s (Jiyū hōdō kyōkai) cohort of interns and volunteers is setting up for a press conference. The room is a bureaucratic white and grey, lit by fluorescent lighting and dotted with cameramen setting up their equipment. It is both cleaner and emptier than the press club (kisha kurabu) conference rooms, and the wall behind the speakers’ table is papered with the FPAJ’s cerulean logo. Interns and volunteers take names at the registration table, set up the chairs, and prepare tea for the speakers “backstage”. In the hall to the right of the lobby sits a formal tatami-matted tearoom, and flanking the main conference room are a kitchen, green room, and fire-escape-esque back entrance from which speakers can furtively arrive and depart. The building is owned by Dwango, the company behind popular YouTube rival (and former partner)¹ site “Nico Nico Douga” (NND), and is occupied alternately by their own events, and the FPAJ’s. Thus, one of the cameras present at every FPAJ press conference belongs to and streams the proceedings to Nicodō, while another uploads using the American-founded webcasting service UStream.

In this chapter, I will use the FPAJ as a case study and springboard from which to discuss the politics of news reporting in Japan. Although some of this material was alluded to in the previous chapter, the FPAJ’s particular attention to the kisha (reporters’) club situation offered a compelling reason to reserve much of my commentary on this system for the current discussion. The press conferences of the FPAJ, and indeed their process in general, provide occasion to discuss what precisely they were reacting against, and why transparency of process was such a fundamental component of their organization’s mission. Further, the generally low attendance of the FPAJ press conferences by employees of the major media conglomerates suggests a rigid

¹ Initially, Nico Nico Douga relied on YouTube to host its videos, but it sent such so much traffic to YouTube that it was eventually blocked, and forced to relaunch with its own video streaming capabilities.
system for news gathering within which the press cannot be summoned at will. The press conference is both a media ritual, and a kind of spectacle, but it is a highly rehearsed and bounded one; it requires for its functionality the framing of the *kisha* club conference room in Japan. Thus, in this chapter I will argue the constraints impacting the work of journalists, both on the level of system, and on the individual level.

**The FPAJ**

Ethnographic work on journalism is notable for the extent to which it embeds journalists in a web of institutional constraint and marginalizes their professional agency; indeed it is for this reason that former journalist Mark Peterson (whose reading has been contested by anthropologist Dominic Boyer) takes exception to much of the work on journalistic praxis prior to 2001. But if anywhere, the limitations of structure, and the tension between interpersonal and institutional constraints cannot be over-stated, it is in the case of Japan’s press (*kisha*) club system—described to me by a former NHK bureau chief as “[the nation’s] biggest problem” (see Introduction and Chapter 5). The *kisha* club system is unique in the world insofar as it assembles reporters from all of the major newspapers and television networks within one shared office/room, subjects them to reductive official sources of information at periodic intervals, frequently excludes the foreign and independent press, and punishes deviation from the official story. The FPAJ (http://www.fpaj.jp) was conceived of in reaction to this system by one of its most vocal critics, Uesugi Takashi—who sought to construct an alternative space for the production of news-content, accessible to anyone with an interest in “practicing journalism,” or really, anyone at all. During the winter of 2012, Uesugi explained:
“Along with Iwakami-san and Shiraishi-san’s organizations the FPAJ is fighting the Japanese press club system which does not allow freelance, magazine and online journalists, foreign media, etc. to enter its conferences. To put it simply, employees of the major TV and newspaper companies have spaces with specialized access, wherein the freelance journalists can’t actually collect data (shuzai katsudo wa dekinai to iu funiki)... Since 1990 I myself have been working on this issue...after I became involved in working with the New York Times and Koizumi Junichiro became prime minister the issue became even more urgent...”

He continued:

“[Our] model was the FCCJ (Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan).² [Founding member] Jimbo [Tetsuo]-san and I, we thought: ‘Let’s us Japanese make a version of this as well.”{MediaAkutibizumu:2012wo}

The organization’s founding declaration was posted online in January 2011, and by February had been reposted on the internet forum “2chan”³–where its reception was mostly lukewarm, if not a bit incredulous. The overall tone of the 653 comments posted in this thread was to pit the FPAJ as David against the Goliath of the mass media status quo; despite acknowledging the prominent independent media names attached to the organization’s initial press release⁴, most commenters conceived of the project as futile, and wondered what the FPAJ’s work would actually entail, or how it could appropriate the mainstream press to its advantage, if at all. One wrote: "Netto jānarizumu wa amari ni muryoku da (‘Net journalism doesn’t really have any influence”).⁵, and another noted: “The problem is that individual journalists have no platform [from which to speak]; they need the structure of the traditional media itself... it’s a serious paradox”⁶.

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² See below for an elaboration on the role of this organization.
³ As outlined by Yamaguchi, 2channeru (2Channel; http://2ch.net) was launched in 1999 and allows users to post anonymously about a wide range of topics. The popularity of such websites has allowed right-wing political perspectives to gain prominence (the so-called netto uyoku, or net right-wingers). The forums were the inspiration for the English-language 4Chan forums.
⁴ Shiraishi of Our Planet, Iwakami of Independent Web Journal, etc.
⁶ “Koko no jānarisuto ni hashshin-ryoku ga nai no ga mondai. Kekkyoku, happyō suru ba ga kizon media da mono. Sugoi paradokkusu o kakae teru. w” 1
Nonetheless, Uesugi Takashi’s vision for the organization was articulated in profoundly idealistic terms, underscoring the significance of his ongoing struggle against the system of Japanese journalism:

“[Earlier in this statement] I referred to the third ‘opening up’ of Japan. The first was the Meiji Restoration, and the second was the rise from the destruction of WWII. Together, these constituted revolutions that has [sic] fundamentally altered the social composition of the whole country and society. If events on this scale in the past constituted the first and second ‘opening up’ of Japan, then what’s going on now globally with social media surely has the potential to be the third for us.”

Although the FPAJ was certainly not a solo venture, as its principle taihyō (representative), and public face, Uesugi became the individual most prominently associated with the organization, and one of its most tireless promoters. And by the time of my entry into the organization’s offices, the FPAJ seemed to be gaining momentum; on the heels of a press conference with the Dalai Lama, the major news organizations were attentive to its presence if not actually influenced by it.

But the 2ch comments highlight a common appraisal of the difference between the privileged platform of the mass media, and the internet as its more democratic but diffuse other. Amidst a din of overlapping voices, internet audience share can be unpredictable and comparatively diminutive—particularly in a country where cable television has failed to catch on, and the number of television channels accessed by a majority of residents is limited. The question therefore became: how would the FPAJ gain mass public recognition outside of the powerful ōte masumedia (major corporate media) infrastructure. Ultimately, the FPAJ only sought to provide an alternate space for the dissemination of news content, and solicited major newspaper and television participation in their press conferences just as any PR-seeking entity

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might. And sometimes, the mass media does come. On one occasion, while conducting fieldwork at TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System, one of the major television corporations), I was startled to see the telltale FPAJ press conference backdrop flicker onto the television screens in its lobby, appropriated by the morning news in the manner of any mainstream press conference. Indeed, events such as the FPAJ’s November 2012 debate between Tokyo’s mayoral candidates attracted a sizable mass media cohort; the network logo-branded and bulky news cameras filled the back of the room, and the telltale din of numerous clicking keyboards and camera shutters created a semiotic indication of newsworthiness by virtue of their presence; the interns and major FPAJ representatives in suits comparably underscored the gravity of the conference as event. As one attending journalist, standing in the back for lack of free seating commented: “this event is utterly unique to the FPAJ; nobody else is having an event where all of the candidates are in one place and debating one another. So [all of the mass media companies] are here.”

Moreover, the FPAJ sought to circumvent the infrastructure of the mass media while simultaneously courting it. It was a typically muggy late August day, during the press conference of a visiting American nuclear scientist, when I first realized how the FPAJ had conscripted the *Nico Nico Douga* platform in the service of a fully open journalistic model. Seated in the same row as the chief of NND’s news division, I could see the press conference room echoed on his tablet screen, the signature NND image-overlayed comments passing rapidly over the face of the conference’s presenter. I hastily downloaded and launched the app on my own tablet; more than 2000 people were watching at this early stage in the presentation, and their comments sped by as quickly as I could parse them, sometimes faster (as one television company employee describes it: they are “*barabara*”, like a barrage of gunfire). Comments on such occasions are prototypical internet fare, or it might be noted, are reflective of the range of content one can find on 2chan in

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8 fieldnotes, November 25, 2012.
general; astute commentary shares space with humorous insults, anti-American/Korean sentiment, and no shortage of the right-wing conspiracy theories for which it is known.

The view count surpassed 5000 users at 5 minutes, 40 seconds into the conference. In another window on my tablet, tweets composed by those seated around me popped one-by-one onto my feed as representatives of the FPAJ and other independent media ventures narrated the proceedings to their followers. The woman to my right, a semi-famous internet personality borne of her commentary on the Fukushima disaster, took furious notes on a netbook, attended to Twitter, and glanced at NND in practiced succession—her tweets called attention to particular moments in the internet broadcast, which viewers could either access live (nama) or recorded (taimu shifuto de). The NND users spotted her trademark bob-haircut on camera: “Ohhh Yoko is there!” (Aaaa Yoko-chan ga kita!) one wrote.

**The Practice of Professional Journalism**

Projects accounting for professional habitus of journalistic subjects do well to account for the social lives of journalists, the embodied experience of performing journalism. Because the construction and dissemination of news was historically mono-directional; accounts of record were the purview of embodied witnesses, the news gathered and massaged to fit standard forms. Certainly prior ethnographic work on journalists and journalistic production has done much to illuminate the contingencies of this kind of labor, and the degree to which individuals act upon media as well as being acted on by it. But in a news landscape where the model of journalism differs radically from that of the intrepid and radically individualistic news correspondent—a romantic construction that permeates the mass culture of the United States—it means something different and arguably more revolutionary for even a faction of journalists to attempt radical
transparency. And it’s not a model with which Japanese politicians are particularly comfortable; Then-prime minister Noda Yoshihiko was a no-show at his September 18, 2012 FPAJ press conference; after his assistant reportedly warned him about the nature of NND users and live internet broadcast, he deemed the audience generally undesirable, and the event too risky so close to a general election.

The FPAJ (and its ally, the Independent Web Journal), by providing direct access to moments of news dissemination, create a provocative challenge to the necessity of meditation and interpretation by professional journalists. But again, Japan complicates Western academic models of professional journalism; while its practitioners are among the educated elite, they are almost never trained as journalists prior to commencing work as such. Nonetheless, their social position and habitus remain consistent with the model of expert professionalism formulated by Dominic Boyer and Ulf Hannerz\(^9\), John Hartigan\(^{10}\), Karin Wahl-Jorgensen\(^{11}\) (etc.), although members of the *kisha* club are discouraged from pursuing investigative reporting, and denied individual bylines (and thus public identity) by their employers. So, if the primary activity of Japanese journalists is to occupy space at the numerous daily press conferences held by politicians, governmental entities, and corporations, what but the benefit of aggregation for audiences demands professional intervention in the process of news dissemination? Moreover, a press conference is always already media ritual at its most self-consciously performative; its utterances rehearsed and revised, the acceptable position of bodies and equipment mapped out on the floor. While journalism, as Anne Cooper-Chen\(^{12}\) has argued, is not about confrontation in

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\(^{10}\) John Hartigan Jr, “Culture Against Race: Reworking the Basis for Racial Analysis,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, no. 3 (Summer 2005).


Japan, the replacement of corporate embedded journalist with an amateur online Other introduces its possibility— and not merely by unmooring the individual from the checks and balances of social position through anonymity. Rather, I have seen embodied confrontation at these conferences; social breeches that induce comparably unpredictable responses in their targets: from former Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro’s condescending sexist mockery, to his successor Inose Naoki’s irritated barbs.

**Media Rituals and the Press Conference**

Amidst the clamor, NND’s news bureau chief was handed the mic, and (alluding to the model of surrogacy I address in Chapter 4) asked a question on behalf of the 30,535 viewers watching live through its app. As he spoke, a line of golden text appeared over the internet video feed stating that this question was harvested directly from the discussions of these online participants. The app erupted like popcorn exploding from a kettle into cries of “oshare!” (classy, cool).

If spectacle has indeed conquered the national imaginaries of neoliberal nations—as Nick Couldry has argued (and cited Baudrillard, Boorstin and Debord in support of), what elements indicate a plausibly marketable spectacle, and therefore newsworthiness to media authors, and potential appeal to audiences?^{13}\footnote{Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 16.} When attending FPAJ press conferences, I noticed irregular participation on the part of both freelance journalists and regular employees of the mass media conglomerates—in contrast with their permanent station at the headquarters of major political parties and corporations (such as *Tokyo Denryōku*, aka TEPCO)^{14}\footnote{Tokyo Electric (TEPCO) is the company responsible for the Fukushima Daiichi plant, and therefore its cleanup after the March 11, 2011 disaster.} Indeed, in some cases, attendance was almost nonexistent—and anticipated as such by the interns, who set up an
appropriate number of chairs in advance. Spectacle was attended to by those who viewed the press conferences online as well; during a September, 2012 press conference featuring candidates for the Minshutō presidency (The Democratic Party of Japan, or DJP), the NND camera switches to a wide-shot of the press conference room while reporters ask questions; this body of online viewers has been particularly critical—calling the candidates liars, making fun of their appearances and political speech (heckling their choice of metaphors) etc. As the press conference room looms into online view, comments moving onto the screen reflect a giddy hilarity: “Dare mo inai. Minna ki ni shinai wwww” (Nobody’s here! Nobody cares! Laugh) one types gleefully.

But in this case, the subjects of this particular mediated gaze were members of the political elite, leaders within the party that had gained power over the usually ruling Jimintō (Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP) for the first time in 54 years, and was about to lose it again in the 2012 election. This was the conference that then-prime minister Noda Yoshihiko skipped at the last minute, prompting Uesugi Takashi to read a statement explaining his absence as the conference began. And FPAJ staff chose to leave his name placard on the table, a semiotic referent to an absent body, and a gesture to the potency of non-attendance and information withholding. Such a failure to cooperate is made possible by the Japanese media’s powerlessness in the face of an extensive lack of power in comparison with its political infrastructure, and the even lesser degree of power represented by the FPAJ. Nonetheless, for the members of the DJP who chose to attend, their incapacity to summon the media by virtue of any embodied and inherent newsworthiness reflected an uneven distribution of power throughout the political

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15 The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been in power since 1955, with the exception only of a brief period between 1993-4 and 2009-2012. A common joke is that, as a conservative party, the LDP is neither liberal, nor democratic. The figure of 54 years does not include the period of eleven months between 1993-4 that it was not the dominant party.
infrastructure; attracted elsewhere by greater spectacle, the news media identified no particular repercussion in its refusal to appear

Nick Couldry argues that “media ritual” does not require the presence of cameras, but can be constituted by the presence of those previously associated with television, i.e. the appearance of Japan’s numerous idols, tarento, and other elites alone is sufficient to invoke the residuum of the camera. But Couldry and Karin Becker differ in regards to whether everything televised automatically enters this category or whether, as Couldry suggests, the media’s power and duty to represent becomes naturalized.16 Surely though, a press conference is an example of a particular kind of media ritual, as these rehearsed and controlled presentations of self-defined news, held in response to demand from the public or to instantiate such demand, are carried out in repetitive daily increments. Surely these are media ritual in its most literal form. But they are certainly not naturalized, nor equivalent to the ritual of a royal wedding or presidential inauguration event, for example. And is it still media ritual if only a small fraction of media entities appear when summoned? Is the presence of a single news camera sufficient to create this category? I would argue that media ritual is indeed a sensory category; it can be felt by those present in a space of ritual production, but also by those viewing its transmission. Self-surveillance and self-promotion are in themselves problematic in relation to this category, and it is perhaps the artificiality of press conferences in general, the degree to which they foreground the mechanics of mediation, are comprised of the collective semiotic weight of its instruments of production that makes of the press conference an uneasy category. Though cameras are present in abundance, these spaces lack a public (per se) to respond to this display of occasion ritualistically.

More than an audience, a media ritual demands a crowd, and the associated autonomic quickening that arises in such contexts. Cameras do indeed metonymically recall the power of mass media, but insufficient camera and reporter presence indicate it differently by reminding us that the media has the power to ignore. Indeed, the demand for press coverage often conflicts with the media’s interest in allotting its resources to a particular occasion, or with what it deems newsworthy (which usually means sellable). Therefore companies desiring coverage of their new products or services tend to appropriate the auratic potency of those who Couldry argues formulate media ritual solely by their presence: celebrities (idols, tarento, stars, etc), used as “image characters” (imēji kyarakutā) to sell a brand.¹⁷ That the product in question becomes subordinated to its celebrity spokesperson in these live events is of no particular concern to those who engage in this form of marketing. So long as the media is successfully seduced into attendance, and the product and company’s name are circulated, the interaction is deemed a success. Thus, in a process that recalls the model of media advertising in general, these entities have purchased their way into mediation. However, money alone is not enough to secure coverage; one must channel capital expenditure according to predetermined flows, and operate according to the language of television. By inviting a celebrity who is newsworthy as a product herself to appear at an event, the event itself becomes media ritual in accordance with her current value to and for the system. This suggests that even politicians running for the presidency of one of Japan’s dominant political parties can still be insufficiently newsworthy unto themselves. As not-quite-commodities appearing outside of their party’s headquarters and its affiliated kisha kurabu space, their capital is greatly diminished. Absent a scandal or a specific announcement, senior DJP officials hardly register as news.

This said, I mentioned above the tension between Japan’s mass media and its political parties, with the political system increasingly indulging in performances of power over television and newspapers. In one particular 2013 incident, the LDP announced that it would boycott TBS over a June 26 comment made by a natural energy activist on one of its news programs, that was critical of the party’s energy policies. While the party claimed to have no issues with the factual content of the report, it commented that its “editorial presentation” was problematic, and that the party could not allow TBS to “cunningly highlight a negative image of our party.” The LDP then concluded by stating that none of its senior officials would appear on TBS until the network apologized in a manner that it deemed sufficient. But TBS didn’t back down either, expressing its regrets about the LDP’s position and quipping that a party leader debate scheduled for the following week could take place without Abe or a senior-lawmaker rep from the LDP.

It has become common currency of discussion in Japanese journalistic circles that Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s second administration has introduced a new kind of restriction over the media, encouraging journalists to neutralize their reporting for fear of losing access to sources. As a Reuters article wrote of the climate: "No one is accusing Abe's administration of overt meddling in specific news coverage, but media insiders and analysts say the government's message is getting through."

Requests made of television broadcasters, for example, to cover the party fairly, are taken as veiled threats that they must do so, and Abe’s own appointee to the chairmanship of Japan’s public broadcaster, NHK, seemingly conveyed a lack of independence insofar as he claimed during his first press conference that “[The media] cannot say left when the government says right.” Meanwhile, journalists who do not avoid criticizing the Abe

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20 ibid.
administration face institutional repercussions including transfers and personal blacklisting. For now, it seems that the control over the nature of ritual rests in the hands of Japanese politicians to a degree not seen in decades.

It is mid-September and we are on our way to the Jimintō (Liberal Democratic Party) headquarters for a press conference. One of the FPAJ’s directors, Mr. Sekimoto, has invited some of interns and me to accompany him, so that we might better grasp the semiotics of a kisha kurabu press conference in relation to our own events. At this particular moment in time, freelance reporters are able to enter LDP press conferences by turning over a business card, but not to hold desk space in the building alongside the major papers–whose reporters have simply walked across the room and claimed all available seats long before we arrive. The five of us stand in the back with the camera operators, pressed in between TV Asahi and Fuji TV, who each have a reporter speaking into their cameras as party officials enter. From here, over the din of frenetic typing and camera shutters it is difficult to make out the presentation. Only slightly more audible are the subsequent questions by reporters themselves; each prefices their questions by leading with their institutional affiliations, e.g.: “Fuji terebi no Matsuo Takahiro”. There is a rhythm to the proceedings; this press conference unfolds as have so many before it. But it is hard to conceive of this particular ritual as an intellectual endeavor on par with romantic notions of reporters’ work. These conferences are generally edited and broadcast as such, with their viscera exposed and yet displaced, the reporters themselves serving to gesture to the concept of news much in the way of a crowd attending to a celebrity appearance: the reporters themselves are anonymous, symbolic. One of the interns, Kaori, snaps photographs with her iPhone and posts them to her Twitter feed as we stand, sweating, in place.
The FPAJ: Teaching Journalistic Professionalism

The FPAJ had as its headquarters a single office room with sections partitioned off by bookcases and white boards: by the door, a meeting area comprising two sofas and a coffee table; in the center, a large conference table; in the back a row of desks and computers, fax machine, and piles of paperwork. The organization’s Kamiyacho office, located up the street from its press conference space, was conveniently located within the daily beats of many reporters—if not walking distance, a short subway ride away. And indeed, reporters wandered in and out regularly, checking in on FPAJ business, chatting with the office manager, interns, and volunteers, or indulging in a respite from the summer heat with a cup of cold tea. Organizational routine was contingent on the day’s schedule: press conferences, association meetings, and the comings and goings of various affiliated personages. On press conference days, nearly everyone but Mariko, the office manager, would wander over to the Dwango building early to set up chairs, test the mics, and prepare the check-in table or security devices (in the case of high-profile presenters). And as a daily habit, we worked to the backdrop of a streaming 1980s themed radio station preferred by Daisuke, one of the interns. At irregular intervals, Uesugi Takashi might breeze into the room, flip through his mail, check for messages, and be back out the door in such haste that the interns had little time to pour him tea. On one occasion, he arrived in the middle of an intern interview and hastily inquired its purpose of the staff not involved in that process; with the main staff occupied by interviews, he began handing off packages and mail to the rest of us, asking for them to be opened, explained, and filed according to his directions. One handwritten letter wrapped in purple tissue paper is left unread, although he glances quickly at the return address while his phone rings. On more than one occasion, I exchanged bemused looks with the
interns about his frenetic speech and activity: “I can’t always follow everything he says,” I confessed. But: “I have the same problem,” one laughed.

With his then-consistent output of blog entries, popular email magazine (mēru maga), radio show, miscellaneous media appearances, and book publishing (among activities), Uesugi was usually multitasking—snapping his phone open and closed to check messages, conducting an interview over lunch, or glancing at his email while listening to updates on a particular project or attending a meeting. This is consistent with a model of Japanese activism in general, wherein copious publishing seems par for the course; a book each year is not only unexceptional, but seemingly a requisite to maintaining one’s cultural capital. Comparable to the model of television tarento, activists circulate consistently through diverse forms of media: Uesugi Takashi hosted a weekly Tokyo FM radio show, which I frequently observed, as well as a frenetic schedule of participation in internet-streamed panels, television programs, and other events. In another case, the prominent and self described “media activist” (media akutobisuto), Tsuda Daisuke—instantly recognizable by his platinum-dyed hair (kinpatsu) and sticker-covered laptop—maintains a public schedule of appearances on his website (http://tsuda.ru/); indeed his circulation as a product, and the circulation of his work is sufficient that they must be subcategorized on the basis of television, radio, publications, etc. Like most contemporary media activists, he tweets avidly (@tsuda), and was not only an early adopter of the medium, but a vocal proponent of its adoption as a means to circumvent the mainstream Japanese press.

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21 He also avidly participates in golf tournaments and writes about golf. He has jokingly referred to himself as a “golf journalist” (gorufu janarisuto).
22 See Anne Allison’s discussion of activist Amamiya Karin 1.
The model for activism might be considered in terms of a national/cultural emphasis on performances of workplace exertion in general, wherein the self-employed activist must indicate his dedication to a cause not by working tirelessly for the benefit of a boss, but for a public that consumes the products of this labor.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, Uesugi’s passion for his project was implied by this state of perpetual motion; a key component of this work on journalistic reform was in his efforts to reach those whose inculcation as mass media employees was pending (i.e. students). On my first day of fieldwork at the FPAJ, Uesugi invited me to join his new interns for lunch at a nearby cafe. In a dialog that modeled academic exchange techniques, he asked each of us about our research specialities/majors, and future career plans, and offered an opinion about the pitfalls and problems we might face.\textsuperscript{25} He then asked us if we’d heard the news about a female freelance reporter, Yamamoto Mika, who had just been killed in Syria, and animatedly reminded us of the loss’s more intimate registers: in addition to her gender and freelance status, she was an anomaly among Japanese journalists for her willingness to report from a war zone.\textsuperscript{26}

Much like academic labor, with which many parallels have been drawn, that of journalists has its ideal expression, and a corresponding sense that one’s work is about knowledge production and the uncovering of truths. Indeed, in his work on journalists in India, Per Ståhlberg found that many journalists had graduate degrees in the social sciences and considered anthropological praxis as essentially equivalent to their own.\textsuperscript{27} And Japan is comparable to his Indian case study insofar as journalistic training is not often institutionalized, and professional habitus/expectations are learned on the job. But Japanese journalistic habitus


\textsuperscript{25} The interns were almost all undergraduate students interested in a journalistic career, although one wanted to be a doctor and was merely interested in journalism reform.

\textsuperscript{26} The story was picked up by the American Time Magazine, among others: http://world.time.com/2012/08/24/the-freelancer-as-martyr-mika-yamamoto-1967-2012/

differs from that defined by Ståhlberg, and a romantic Western notion in general, insofar the capacity to seek out and identify news is not considered to be essential, and can actually be detrimental to one’s career. As one of my television interlocutors reflected on the state of contemporary journalism:

“The main purpose of media activity is the pursuit of social justice. In recent years a sense of crisis has arisen because the media only chases each day’s events, and investigative reporting based on substantial data collection and coverage has waned. I want us to move towards a culture where social justice can be clearly realized; recently you can see evidence of the decline of such culture here and there…”

Indeed it is the weekly news magazines (shūkanshi) which are most known for being willing to publish investigative journalism, as their exclusion from the reporters’ club system lends them a certain freedom to offend major newsmakers. In some cases, such magazines have been known to buy information from insiders privy to a story and cite it anonymously, or to hire reporters from the big-6 newspapers to write under pseudonyms as freelancers. {Farley:1996tq, 140} Moreover, they have been known to base entire stories on single, unnamed sources. But their record of having uncovered legitimate scandal and stimulating prosecution (and thus, coverage by one of the major national papers), is sufficient to garner them a sizable audience, despite their reputation for sensationalism and a stated mission to entertain above all. In their book about the Japanese press, Adam Gamble and Takesato Watanabe cite an interview with then-Shūkan Shincho29 editor-in-chief Matsuda Hiroshi during which he characterizes such magazines as “literary-narrative journalism,” or not quite comparable to the intention and tone of the American Newsweek and Time, so much as a literary magazine.30

28 (“Kai seigi jitsugen o ichigitekina mokuteki ni katsudō suru no wa media. Deiri no jishō nomi o oikakeru hōdō ga medachi hajime, takai shuzai nōryoku to dōsatsuryoku ni motodzuku chōsa hōdō ga sukunaku natte kita koto ni tai suru kiki-kan ga kin'nen takamatte imasu. Shakai seigi jitsugen no bunka o shikkari kenji shite ikitai to omoimasu. (Saikin, sō shita bunka no suitai no chōkō ga sanken sa remasu.”) Interview
29 See http://www.shinchosha.co.jp/shukanshinchou/newest/
Like most non-profits, (media-related or otherwise), the FPAJ was passionate about their particular mission and eager to articulate their experience of journalism with those who were just starting out in the profession. For many of those seeking to intern with the organization, involvement was defined by a certain prior orientation to the group’s message. I observed the intern interviews conducted during autumn 2013, and noted that most of the candidates indicated familiarity with Uesugi Takashi’s books, and therefore exposure to the ideals of his organization.\(^{31}\) These candidates represented a cross-section of the Japanese elite that often finds work within the largest media conglomerates; while Uesugi Takashi is dismissed by some alumni and faculty of Japan’s elite universities for violating the normative profile of the country’s prominent journalists and cultural critics by graduating from a lesser-ranked college,\(^{32}\) individuals seeking internships at his non-profit generally held these credentials. Most had also internalized the performance expected of collegiate job seekers and have accordingly arrived in uniform: a crisp white shirt, black skirt or pants, loafers, or in one case, a suit. In short, they were not merely attuned to the requirements of a white collar Japanese professionalism, or a journalistic one, but to a particularly sensitive journalistic selfhood that recognized the *kisha kurabu* as a problem needing intervention, rather than an as ambivalent and inevitable institution.

Conflict with this infrastructure was not merely theoretical, a project of abstract argumentation and manifesto publishing, but an interpersonal battle fought through contentious meetings and passionate, in-person confrontations. On one occasion, I joined Uesugi, two directors, and the FPAJ office manager, Mariko, for a meeting at the National Diet Press Club building (*Kokkai kisha kaikan*), which houses approximately 159 media companies, but denies

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\(^{31}\) The Free Press Association of Japan was not solely his organization, but a collaboration. Nonetheless, he was its most prominent member.  
\(^{32}\) He attended Tsuru University.
access to freelance, magazine, and foreign reporters. Not long before our visit, Our Planet TV\textsuperscript{33} had petitioned to film the anti-nuclear protest in front of the prime minister’s house from the roof of this building, but despite making the request three times, they were denied.\textsuperscript{34} This request was followed by similar requests made by three other independent journalists, one of whom was prominently involved in the FPAJ. Our Planet eventually petitioned in Tokyo’s lower and higher court to gain access, but were denied, and later that fall brought a lawsuit against the National Diet Press Club for discrimination.\textsuperscript{35}

Our meeting with the director representing this institution therefore belonged to this nervous context, and was in fact part of the ongoing agitation of the journalistic status quo by those excluded from it. Having sent a formal petition for office space in the building (see Appendix 1) in July, the September meeting was a first chance to discuss its appeal with the director in person. As we’re waiting in the lobby, Sekimoto comments that they have empty space in the building that the FPAJ could use. Upon entering and exchanging business cards, we sit with the jimukyokuchō (office director)’s card before each of us on the table, and I note that he is also affiliated with Kyodo News, the dominant Japanese news wire service. Everyone is quiet and ignoring the tea before them as the jimukyokuchō slides on his glasses and examines the letter. He begins to read it back to us out loud, as everyone looks down at their hands and laps.

The news isn’t good, and Uesugi asks in a low voice if he might make his case again. What follows is a series of dueling monologues, the tension between the two rising with each

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Our Planet (Awapura) TV’s Shiraishi was also a board member of the FPAJ. See Chapter 7 for more about this organization.}
\end{footnotes}
exchange. Uesugi punctuates each statement with *ijō desu* (I’m done), and the *jimukyokuchō* in
turn repeats that he’s already answered all relevant questions. As Uesugi stands up to pace and
glance at his phone, Sekimoto and another director, Nishimura look up from their notepads, and
trepiditiously inquire as to whether there would be any conditions under which the FPAJ could
hold space in the building. The *jimukyokuchō* repeats once again that he’s already answered the
question, but that membership is a matter of characteristics the FPAJ lacks: organizational scale
and funds. Uesugi has become making sounds of disgust in response to the man’s words,
snorting and snickering, and stepping aside to leave the occasional related voicemail in pursuit of
advice and support from his allies. Returning to the table, he snaps that the FPAJ will have to go
over the *jimukyokuchō*’s head and talk to the club’s *seiji buchō* (political director). The
*jimukyokuchō* responds curtly in turn that the *buchō* is very busy, and Uesugi fires back “He is
not. You could call him right now if you wanted to.” With the meeting having reached a
standstill and Uesugi’s temper irrevocably lost, we rise to leave. Mariko has only looked up from
her note-taking to pass copies of the letter to each of us at the table, and the others are withdrawn,
frustrated. As we leave they complain that access is all a matter of money, and affiliation with
one of the major media conglomerates. After a quiet ride back to the offices in Uesugi’s car,
Mariko and I climb the stairs to return to the FPAJ’s office. She says quietly, sadly: “This is my
least favorite part of the job.”

**The FCCJ and the Kisha Kurabu**

The advantage of *kisha kurabu* membership is primarily about the access to meta-level
information that it provides, as members are often informed about the scheduling of press
conferences up to a month in advance (the *kokuban kyōtei*, or “blackboard agreement”), so they
might fix the schedules of their camera crews and collectively agree not to pursue extracurricular reporting about designated topics. Moreover, the clubs are not just attached to each outpost of governmental news generation, but also to major corporations and agencies—most telling among them Tokyo Electric, the Japan Atomic Energy Headquarters, and even NHK itself. Although in theory these clubs protect their members from retaliatory activity by governmental agents, the practice of “pack journalism,” or individuals from various news companies engaging in daily contact and covering identical events, results in rampant press conformity. Further, individuals, rather than being protected by their club, are inclined to engage in a fundamentally conservative journalism to prevent retaliation against the group. The nature of this system discourages investigative journalism in general, as reporters working in close quarters and in the same press club space day after day coordinate questions, and even collaborate to rehearse the process of question-asking in general. Their routines are also occupied by the sorting of frequent press releases and attentiveness to the public routines of the officials they are assigned to cover, making even leaving the building unpredictable, and pursuance of outside informants both unrealistic, and by the current standards, unnecessary. Among the advantages for reporters is a certain implicit legitimacy granted their organizations and reporting, although I was told by a few reporters that there is always a pecking order in each kisha kurabu between media outfits.

Nonetheless, the ritual of regular and controlled news dissemination means that everyone has the

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same story, and peer pressure assures that in most cases, everyone sticks to it. Much in the world of the *kisha kurabu* works in terms of implicit agreement regarding what can and cannot be said, with allegiance to one’s colleagues and employer more important (and useful longterm) than gaining an exclusive scoop. Under the formerly guaranteed model of lifetime employment in Japan, where individuals were promoted on the basis of seniority and spent their entire professional lives with the same individuals, antagonism was a form of guaranteed misery.

Among the complaints I heard most frequently about this system was the use of “off the record” as a means of controlling journalistic output; at its worst this system has been known to allow companies to get in front of controversial issues by calling a press conference and then speaking about them “off the record” to reporters; the information contained therein then becomes unpublishable even if a particular reporter had acquired the same facts separately, and beforehand. That said, when I asked about this practice, journalists complained about more routine breaches, citing a recent (in 2013) incident in which Fuji TV had used some off the record information and been barred from press conferences for a while after that. As Anne Cooper-Chen describes it, the system is set up to reinforce a particular behavior (“loyal group members do not tell tales out of school”), to minimize the agency exercised by reporters, and to make freelance journalism an unappealing option by restricting access to those who the system cannot insure will play by its rules. In some ways, this is the inverse of the new expectations placed on German journalists interviewed by anthropologist Dominic Boyer: their work, rather than becoming increasingly more about perfunctory attendance at press conferences, had become more interpretive. Rather than reporting in its most literal form, German journalists were

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41 Although no longer guaranteed, per se, journalists generally work as lifetime employees in practice.
42 Farley, “Japan's Press and the Politics of Scandal.”
therefore tasked with explicating context, with helping readers to further hasten the process of reading by transferring substantial cognitive labor to the author of a news story.\textsuperscript{44}

Prior to the founding of the FPAJ, Uesugi Takashi was already Japan’s most prominent critic of the \textit{kisha kurabu} system, and of its mass media infrastructure in general,\textsuperscript{45} but complaints about the system extended to the foreign press as well. Members of the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (the FCCJ) were historically open about their displeasure regarding the exclusion of foreign journalists from so many of Japan’s press conferences. When anthropologist Ulf Hannerz interacted with this group, his description was of an organization that was itself insular, and at that time, the largest organization of its kind anywhere in the world.\textsuperscript{46} Indeed, the FCCJ grew out of a desire to organize and gather among foreign journalists stationed in Japan following World War II. Its walls chronicle this history through photographs: images of past press conferences involving famous international leaders, images of members and their affiliations, etc. At present, one of the most controversial aspects of the FCCJ’s existence can be summed up by this line from Hannerz’ work: “The relative inaccessibility of Japanese society to foreigners makes the organization a haven, with some members spending all of their time there.”\textsuperscript{47} One of the board members of the FPAJ, Mr. Ono, a fluent English speaker and regular attendee of FCCJ events, was highly critical of the excuses made by foreign reporters that they


\textsuperscript{45} His books include: J\=anarizumu H\=okai (The Collapse of Journalism, 2013) and Kisha Kurabu H\=okai: Shin bun Terebi to no 200-Nichi Sens\=o (The Collapse of the Reporters’ Club System: The 200 Day War with Newspapers and TV”, 2010) J\=ai Uikirikusu-igo no Nihon ~ Jiy\=u H\=odo Ky\=okai (kari) to Media Kakumei (Japan After Wikileaks ~ FPAJ and Media Revolution, 2011).


\textsuperscript{47} ibid.
could not attend FPAJ press conferences. He explained that the large foreign news organizations have Japanese language staff they could send, if they wanted to.\footnote{fieldnotes: September 5, 2012.}

While participating in the FCCJ as a student member and attending many luncheon press conferences\footnote{fieldnotes: August 8, 2012}, I was told by the people with whom I dined that, much like any [other] kisha kurabu, the FCCJ had a pecking order. On one occasion, a freelance journalist complained to me that the foreign media organizations with a regular presence in Japan had become part of the “cartel,” a body that while lacking in power compared to its native counterpart, still “gets what it wants” by collaborating with the local press.\footnote{fieldnotes: August 8, 2012} Another mentioned, in response to my general question about the kisha kurabu system, that protests had all but ceased since AP, Bloomberg, and Reuters had been granted access to many formerly restricted press conferences; AP and Reuters in particular were known to collaborate with local television companies, and thus benefitted from a system that still discriminated against much of their competition. However, Ono, and an American reporter I spoke to both agreed that the Fukushima disaster had reintroduced policies of exclusion, prompting AP and Reuters to protest once again.

Membership to the FCCJ, and thus attendance of its events, was open to essentially anyone when I arrived in Tokyo during the summers of 2011 and 2012. As a student member, my capacity to invite whomever I chose to accompany me to its events was similarly unrestricted. Specifically, the FCCJ had chosen to open its membership to non-journalists willing to pay a much higher fee, in order to take in more revenue.\footnote{See http://www.fccj.or.jp/membership/categories-and-fees.html} Ono told me that the organization was in dire financial straits; the FCCJ had flourished when Tokyo was considered the epicenter of East Asia, but the reporters had “all been transferred to Beijing,” a comparatively cheaper outpost.
whose occupation was indicative of changing Western preoccupations in the region.\textsuperscript{52} He instructed me to observe closely at the next FCCJ conference, and I would note the presence of many lobbyists and businesspeople, as the FCCJ tried to climb out of debt via membership fees. Indeed, he was apparently correct, as many press conferences were either lightly attended, and/or only partially comprised of journalists. And each time I visited the FCCJ headquarters it was, although never empty, certainly never bustling either.

The self-isolation of many journalists, and refusal to attend press conferences at which there was no English translator would, of necessity affect the quality and nature of the news they could represent from Japan. As a club, the FCCJ must organize press conferences to meet the demands of its members, whose interests can be presumed to be a hybrid of received assignments and self-direction. That this model is problematic does not single out the FCCJ, but rather gestures to the practice of constituting news via press conference in general. Referring back to the inconsistent attendance of FPAJ press conferences, and also of FCCJ’s own events, it may be argued that a sacrifice in terms of the quality and diversity of news is made when journalists rely on newsmakers capable of soliciting the press in order to assemble programs or papers. The automatic reproduction of activities to which elites wish to call attention, while expedient, takes resources away from those which might benefit from scrutiny. In other words, newsworthiness has come to be defined in many countries by agreement between powerful entities. And in others, participation in journalism demands either the capacity to pay for coverage, or the ability to acquire the skills to solicit media attention.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, as Schudson commented almost twenty years ago, the media's independence (at least in the U.S.) tends to be overestimated, that the media has "few intellectual resources for independent judgment and no political portfolio for

\textsuperscript{52} field notes; September 27, 2012
in other words, the bias of the press fluctuates with the administration in power, beholden as it is to official press events. In Japan, at least, there is little doubt that this is the case.55

In some parts of the world, official events are mere concessions to the media, performances in which acknowledgement of the media’s concerns is merely played at. In the case of Palestine, press conferences are a means of orchestrating foreign coverage of local stories, of sculpting foreign policy by speaking directly through the press of particular countries.56 Provocatively, Bishara’s informants became so accustomed to media inscription that they could mimetically reproduce the narratives being constructed by Western reporters as any given event unfolded.57 Of course, the context within which news is reproduced differs dramatically between Japan and Palestine, but the performance of news dissemination between the powerful and the journalists bears more than a passing resemblance. In both cases, control over message is carefully maintained, and reporters function primarily as members of a relay team.

In many locales (such as Japan), the balance of power is such that officials unabashedly grant and withhold favors from members of the press. Such a luxury permits politicians to distribute information unevenly, informed by an awareness of which reporters have produced officially approved stories in the past. In Pedelty’s account, this meant that staff reporters, whose output was easy to track and whose capacity to perform appropriate journalistic neutrality had been implicitly approved, were more likely to gain access to members of the American embassy. Freelancers, conversely, were often comparatively excluded from elite networks of

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57 ibid.
information.\textsuperscript{58} That the same sources are repeatedly cited by reporters in their accounts is concealed from audiences by the practice of anonymity. Moreover, this general practice of obscuring the bureaucratic or official role of cited officials challenges the capacity of audiences to correctly interpret the stake that official sources have in international or national conflict. Journalists habitually foreground the opinions of the most senior officials rather than allotting such ground to the most interesting commentary.\textsuperscript{59} In India, they may not even consider junior officials worth visiting, as these individuals tend to be more reticent to talk, and relegated to crowded working conditions under which it is more difficult for a reporter to ask questions.\textsuperscript{60}

Officials do retaliate when they disapprove of particular media representations. In Japan, retaliation can be relatively effortless in the case of the NHK (\textit{Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai}), who is beholden each year to National Diet approval for its budget. Thus, during the 1990s when NHK needed to raise taxes on the public to remain solvent, they were subjected to ongoing bullying by the ruling \textit{Jimintō}, who considered them to have been insufficiently neutral in their coverage of its activities.\textsuperscript{61}

Comparatively, Chinese journalists are subjected to more overt controls, and thus frequently construct news stories in ironic, euphemistic terms that avoid directly criticizing government actions.\textsuperscript{62} Beyond East Asia, reporters are frequently insulated from criticism and feedback about their articles, however, officials do not refrain from attempting to interfere. Rather, they tend to go bypass the reporter himself by speaking to editors and even publishers.

\textsuperscript{58} Mark Pedelty, \textit{War Stories}, (New York: Routledge, 1995).
\textsuperscript{60} Per Stahlberg, \textit{Lucknow Daily}, (Stockholm: Stockholm Universitet, 2002).
about objectionable content.\textsuperscript{63} As we have seen in Japan’s case, it is considered appropriate to hold an entire network responsible for the utterances of a program’s staff or its guests; this happened to a reporter on TV Asahi’s Hōdō Station when her remarks were deemed contrary to a policy of avoiding criticism of Prime Minister Abe’s government.\textsuperscript{64}

\textbf{Freelance versus Staff Reporters}

The tension between freelancers and those employed by the major media conglomerates manifested in occasional contentious interactions—the fraught interview with the \textit{Jimukyokuchō} being one such example. When I began visiting the FPAJ offices during the summer of 2012, there remained substantial chatter among members of Tokyo’s journalistic set about a 2011 confrontation between a reporter from the \textit{Yomiuri Shinbun}\textsuperscript{65}, Uesugi Takashi, and Iwakami Yasumi (of the Independent Web Journal) at an FPAJ press conference. At the Foreign Correspondents’ Club, one reporter opined that the \textit{Yomiuri Shinbun} had sent someone to disrupt the FPAJ’s press conference; the incident was articulated as a form of sabotage, with the FPAJ having unwittingly taken the bait. And months later, when organizing a symposium at Tokyo University (see previous Chapter), I was warned multiple times of covert pushback by faculty against inviting Uesugi Takashi to campus—many read the incident as one of unprofessional journalistic intimidation.

Nonetheless, pursuant to the transparency of the FPAJ’s process, the entire incident (the “\textit{Jiyū hōdō kyōkai/Yomiuri Shinbun jiken}”) had been streamed live on \textit{Nico Nico Douga}, commented upon by users, and subsequently edited/compiled and uploaded with the caption: 

“\textit{Yomiuri no Baka Kisha ni Buchi Kireru Uesugi-shi to Iwakami-san}” (Uesugi and Iwakami Flip

\textsuperscript{63} Pedelty, \textit{War Stories}.
\textsuperscript{64} Sieg, “Japanese Media Self-Censorship Grows in PM Abe’s Reign.”
\textsuperscript{65} The newspaper which has the highest circulation in Japan.
Out at Stupid Yomiuri Reporte)\textsuperscript{66}. In the approximately 20 minute video, the press conference presentation is truncated in order to cut to a Q&A with former Minshutō (DJP) representative and prominent politician Ichirō Ozawa.

Following presentations, the rules of FPAJ press conferences are read in a straightforward manner by the conference’s volunteer moderator: reporters are to wait to be called on and handed the microphone, state their affiliation, limit themselves to a single question unless time permits (hitori ichimon de onegai itashimasu), and exercise brevity in the asking of this question\textsuperscript{67}. As his speech passed from question into monologue, then, the Yomiuri reporter quickly entered the territory of social breach; rather than the prototypical journalistic inquiry, his was a lengthy polemic designed to both challenge and provoke its target. Indeed, the semiotics of this moment are belied by the camera’s oscillation (cutting) between his face and Ozawa’s, as Ozawa interjects and then retreats into impassivity as the reporter’s monologue continues. Its status as a breach is underscored by the physical reactions of fellow journalists, who shift in their chairs and mutter audibly—a perceptible but passive attempt at censoring the wayward individual. After allowing Ozawa the briefest of responses, the reporter declines to solicit the microphone, his speech increasing in speed as he races the rising tide of collective ire. He holds up his hands, warding off the moderator’s attempts to interject, and continues to speak to Ozawa. The camera cuts to Ozawa, who maintains engagement with the reporter as the moderator attempts apologetic intervention: “We need to move on.”

The articulation of position is not in and of itself a journalistic breach, although it is not commonly done at mainstream press conferences, whose attendees, as I have discussed, tend to shy away from provocation. At the FPAJ, questions revealing the political orientation of their

\textsuperscript{66} http://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15938686?ref=teiban
\textsuperscript{67} See the outline of rules and regulations at http://fpaj.jp/?page_id=90
author are commonplace; Uesugi in particular takes the opportunity of their events to press prominent politicians on whether they’d be willing to hold open press conferences, and occasionally to reiterate the FPAJ’s position and his synopsis of the *kisha kurabu* problem. If neutrality is a fundamental part of journalistic selfhood, and the means by which professional journalists create distance between themselves and citizen journalists, then the FPAJ’s attendees often blur the lines between these two categories, and make of themselves media activists in the model of the previous chapter’s actors. As articulated by media scholar Bolette Blaagard’s student interlocutors, journalism in the absence of such professional ethos occupies a different category of information, and rather than replacing or even supplementing journalism, acts as source material for its more disciplined mode of praxis.68

The video then cuts to documentation of the altercation. A ring composed of curious onlookers and their recording devices forms around Uesugi, Iwakami, and the reporter, whose conversation is at first muffled before growing into a din of shouting and effusive display of hand gestures. Proportionate to his anger, the speed and volume of Uesugi’s speech increases over time until it is insufficient, and diverted into physical obstruction. He stands in front of and close to the reporter and blocks his exit. The incident as recorded lasts fifteen minutes.

*NND* comments about the incident are by no means supportive of the FPAJ, Uesugi Takashi, or Iwakami Yasumi in general. With comments such as: “Fujiyū vs Gomi-uri” (Mockery of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* often includes a pun on its name, as *Gomi* is Japanese for trash, and users question the “jiyu” (free) part of the FPAJ’s name by appending “Fu” (not) to the front.) Even in the early days of the FPAJ, the pushback by 2ch and *NND* users against the organization was substantial, and gestured to the inherent conservatism of these online

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collectives in contrast with the FPAJ’s own liberal politics. However, amidst the usual racial slurs, conspiracy theories, and attacks on FPAJ members, the NND users are similarly displeased with the offending reporter and his breaches of etiquette. In general, users find Uesugi and Iwakami’s response to be disproportionate and odd (iyō); one user makes a pun on Uesugi’s name by writing Uesugiru (sugiru is the Japanese verb used to represent an excess of something/“too much”).

Months later over drinks one night, when I asked Mariko and fellow board member Mr. Nishizaki about the incident they both winced and sighed audibly. The incident was an embarrassment, and in its wake Uesugi had publicly apologized for his role on both Twitter and his own website, and resigned as FPAJ representative. On Twitter aggregation/discussion site “Together,” around which much online gossip circulates, users discuss the discrepancy between the triumphant tone of FPAJ members’ tweets in the moment, and their eventual reversal and assumption of a repentant stance. Their general consensus is that an external backlash (kazeatari) affected the change; though social pressure ought to have similarly acted as a check upon the wayward Yomiuri reporter.

**Donations and the High Cost of Scandal**

Over the course of many months, the flow of donations to the FPAJ has waned. I have seen it firsthand, as I translated the organization’s budget records in order to petition for an (ultimately ineffective) page on English language fundraising site globalgiving.org. A similar page on kickstarter.com also has little effect. Over tense evening meetings during that winter of 2012-2013, the budget issues are discussed: how will they pay dwango for use of the press

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69 Such as the notion that the Yomiyuri Shinbun reports to America’s CIA, for example.
70 See http://uesgitakashi.com/?p=999
71 http://togetter.com/li/204811
conference room? On one particularly cold day in late January, I comment on the office’s temperature and am told we cannot afford to turn the heat on.

There are three issues affecting the organization’s revenue at this time, two of them repetitional. The remaining is more circumstantial and speculative: as time passes between the March 2011 disasters, the capacity of public anger to manifest substantial social change has begun to seem less inevitable, and (not to minimize the tireless efforts of many reformers), a certain amount of fatigue has crept into the discourse. Moreover, the organization’s reliance on volunteer labor to lobby nonstop for donations to pay for the office and press conference (something the kisha kurabu do not need to do), had made it difficult for individuals to attend to this need while keeping up with their work as freelance journalists.

However, the FPAJ’s reputation has suffered from two complications: mismanagement of funds, and allegations of plagiarism involving Uesugi Takashi. Both have become public enough as issues to necessitate a formal response by the FPAJ– the latter in particular has been seized upon by the already critical body of 2ch users, who tirelessly keep Uesugi’s name at the top of the site’s list of active topics. The accounting problems stem from concerns about funds from the organization’s publication of a book about 3/11: Jiyū Hōdō Kyōkai ga Otta 3.11 (The FPAJ Pursues 3/11). According to FPAJ founding member Hattori, the controversy had arisen over the handling of royalties from this book project and whether they would be distributed among the volunteers who had helped assemble the book, or those who had provided content. On December 8, 2012, board members of the FPAJ issue a memorandum to the effect that there had been two related bodies working on this project– the FPAJ and a group dubbed the Yūshi no kai (Volunteer Group), which was dissolved of November 30, 2012. They further stated that the Yūshi no kai

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72 http://fpaj.jp/?p=5691
73 http://hatakezo.jugem.jp/?eid=44
had no connection to any accounting irregularities (fusei keiri), and that while they have resolved these financial issues, they understand that the matter has reflected poorly on the FPAJ.\textsuperscript{74}

Of the two FPAJ board members/founders cited as representatives of the Yūshi no kai, one articulated later in a lengthy blog entry (posted December 31, 2012) that he had intended to resign during the organization’s December 7 meeting, but that attention had been diverted from the accounting issues by discussion of the mounting plagiarism scandal surrounding Uesugi.\textsuperscript{75} In fifteen elaborate points he outlines the mission of the FPAJ, explains its importance and why he thinks the cause remains worthy of support, and catalogs in detail the reasons he cannot remain with the organization. During an interview with me after this posting, Hattori claimed that he had been contacted by a magazine (Saizō) for a followup story, but he replied that his position had been adequately represented on his blog, and that, regardless, he would decline any interview in which Uesugi’s perspective was not also represented.\textsuperscript{76}

The blog post caught the attention of FPAJ affiliates and, inevitably, 2ch, but was temporarily shelved as the organization wrestled with its response to the plagiarism scandal. The allegations were as follows: In a September 22 2011, Diamond Online (Daiyamondo Onrain; an online newspaper)\textsuperscript{77} article, Uesugi Takashi had appropriated a table\textsuperscript{78} that had been published by the Yomiuri Shinbun on March 19, 2011, without citing it. However, this was not his first use of the table, as it had similarly appeared in his own March 23, 2011 newsletter (mēru maga).

\textsuperscript{74} The memo was reposted online at http://blog.goo.ne.jp/information_project/e/3cd1dd27c822fe9b63b1d56fd230063f

\textsuperscript{75} http://hatakezo.jugem.jp/?eid=44

\textsuperscript{76} “‘Saizō’ to tu zasiki kara intairyū irai ga arimasita ga ‘buroguni subete kaita node sochira o goran kudasai. Tarinai ten ga areba shitsumon shite kudasai. Watashi dake ga intairyū o ukeru no wa fea de wa nai to omou node, Uesugi-san nado hoka no hito ga ukerunara watashi mo ukemasu’ to okotowari shimashita.”

\textsuperscript{77} http://diamond.jp/

\textsuperscript{78} The table outlined various countries’ official evacuation recommendations regarding Fukushima, by means of contrast with Japan’s.
And it was not the last, as he included it in his November 2011 book *Kokka no Haji* (National Shame). Uesugi argued that he’d been given the table by a journalistic acquaintance, and had been ignorant of its distribution to and use by another reporter.

After the allegations surfaced during the winter of 2012-13, the FPAJ was divided over the appropriate response. In tense gatherings at the Kamiyachō headquarters, they discussed whether such an accusation warranted a formal defense by the organization, or was a matter best left to the individual. Of the board members, three took the position that the organization itself need not respond to the incident. But for the rest, a scandal involving the FPAJ’s public face demanded some manner of acknowledgement. Hattori was among those who wished to see the FPAJ respond, while Uesugi tersely argued that his lawyer had asked him to refrain from (further) public comment as his libel suit progressed. In the wake of Hattori’s blog post, however, the organization was forced to act. By its February 20, 2012 meeting, three of its board members had engaged the issues plaguing the organization in a message to mailing list members.

The core members are pouring over the budget statements in late February— and in particular recounting the expenses of their December symposium (an ambitious formal event with panel discussion and reception) and January awards ceremony. Each of these were orchestrated in part as fundraisers, but neither was sufficiently effective to keep the organization afloat. It appears to everyone that the FPAJ can continue through April (2013) on existing funds, but will have to cease operations after that. The assembled members glance sadly at the budget sheet, while some type on their laptops in short, uneasy bursts. Uesugi begins arguing with Mariko about her management of the FPAJ’s funds, and Mariko becomes small and withdrawn. Before long she excuses herself, defeated, and a few of the members pursue her, one by one, to

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79  p 188-9.
comfort her on the street in front of the building and to affirm that the FPAJ’s financial plight is not her fault. The FPAJ will be effectively no more by March, and Uesugi will open up an office across town for his online newspaper, Newslog.80

The independent media market in Japan should not be considered as inevitably fighting against the mainstream in futility, despite the forces acting to stymie efforts like that of the FPAJ. Certainly the FPAJ was up against some formidable challenges, from a need for nonstop fundraising, to the aggressive opposition of online communities. But despite these stumbling blocks, the FPAJ was raising significant questions about what constitutes a journalist, and re-making press conferences as participatory media events that inscribed amateur audiences in the same manner as they did journalists—by providing them with the raw stuff of news making, and allowing them to either turn it into accounts on par with those seen in the major news outfits, or simply to digest it as raw material. In so doing, the FPAJ—just as the IWJ in the previous chapter, and Our Planet-TV in the next chapter—call into question the role of professional journalism, and blur the lines between audience and media makers.

As Sakai Osamu wrote in a Huffington Post Japan article, [the Japanese] need journalists, but journalists keep failing [Japan] in different ways. The function of journalism is different when anyone can pursue activities that are close to journalism. (“Dare mo ga jānarisumu ni chikai katsudō ga kanō da.”)81. Summarizing the perspective that has informed much discussion on the shifting roles of journalists in the current media landscape, he writes that it is both

80 http://newslog.jp
fantastic (*subarashī*) and terrible (*osoroshī*) that an article written on BLOGOS\(^{82}\), for example, might be treated similarly by readers to the output of a professional journalist.\(^{83}\) In a sentiment that prefigures the next chapter, he voices his concern about a worst-case scenario in which an article might be dashed off naively, without a mind to accuracy, and influence the thoughts and beliefs of readers.\(^{84}\) Newspaper articles, by contrast, have a system of more robust checks and balances—from editors, to peer review. But as outlined in this chapter, despite the greater pressure to produce an accountable and accurate journalism under the umbrella of mass media corporations, systems like the *kisha* clubs work to limit the range of information about which reports can accurately write. Thus, Japan needs an independent media in the same way it needs the weekly newsmagazines, which often publish stories too risky for the Yomiuri Shimbun and its peers. As we will see in the next chapter, the utility of blurring the line between consumers and producers of media extends to video, and whatever loss of accountability might be coterminous with independent video production is compensated for by a comparative gain in freedom of speech.

\(^{82}\) A blogging site popular in Japan.
\(^{83}\) ibid.
\(^{84}\) ibid.
There are fourteen of us assembled for one of Our Planet-TV’s three month eizō seisaku wākushoppu (video production workshops). We seat ourselves around a series of conference tables arranged in a square arranged amidst the cozy clutter of overflowing bookshelves, shelves filled with carefully labeled video tapes, and awards. Participants flip through workshop packets, and thumb through the required reading: Our Planet-TV founder Shiraishi Hajime’s book Bideokamera de Ikō (Let’s Go With a Video Camera).¹ This book deconstructs the making of documentaries with a goal to making the process accessible to anyone. The group represents a diverse range of ages from college students to women and men in their 40s and 50s. Everyone is in the brainstorming stage now; our packets are comprised of thirteen proposals for a documentary, and the task on this Thursday night will be to pitch them to the group, to narrow the potential projects down to six, among which the workshop participants can choose to join one. Therefore, one-by-one each participant tries to sell his or her idea while Shiraishi asks questions intended to flush out the practicality of the project and the extent to which its author has thought through issues of access, the difference between narrative versus topic, etc.

The proposed topics mostly fall under the heading of what might be called ethnographic film, and are inspired by people and places that their authors have found compelling around Tokyo. One young woman hopes to make a film about the steadily climbing aggregate age of marriage in Japan, the connection between financial insecurity among her generation and delayed marriage, as well as young women’s desire to work and to avoid the pressures to quit that accompany marriage. She cites a page of statistics that she’s brought with her, and then, placing this paper back on the table before her, looks around at the group to gauge their response. But in the end, hers is not one of the pitches chosen by the group for further development; these

¹ Hajime Shiraishi, Bideokamera De Ikō [Let's Go with a Videocamera], (Tokyo: Nanatsumori Shokan, 2008).
are instead projects profiling a neighborhood experimental film group, street musicians, a dance troupe, an Oncologist, and an innovative Japanese-language instructor.

Our Planet-TV, founded in 2001, is the venture of Shiraishi Hajime, a media educator who began her career within one of the major commercial broadcast corporations: TV Asashi. By her explanation, she eventually quit with the intention of trying to force a diversification of Japanese media by training citizens to create their own images, and take back control over the representation of their experiences.\(^2\) While continuing work on her own award winning documentaries\(^3\), Shiraishi also devotes substantial time to her role as an educator through workshops, books that outline production techniques and the structural problems with contemporary Japanese mass media, and cultivating Our Planet as a resource for a media production pedagogy. Like Uesugi Takashi, Shiraishi has identified the nation’s kisha club system as especially problematic, and her work as contributing to efforts to constitute an alternative space for news production. In this chapter, I will continue my discussion of the approaches taken by the independent media to create a participatory alternative to the mass media, to allow viewers to participate in media in a way that allows them to retain direct control over their own representation even as it inscribes its subjects in ways that are conceptually similar. I hesitate to invoke the notion of primary versus secondary authorship when contrasting social television with individual documentary production; social TV turns viewers into primary contributors of content and authors of the outcomes of such projects. But they are at best partial authors, as the framework remains that of mass media, and the boundary between audience and producer remains fundamentally intact—insofar as the representation of audiences is under the

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\(^3\) In 2014, Our Planet-TV received the Japanese Association of Science and Technology Journalists’ “JASTJ Prize”, for its film about Tokyo Electric. The organization beat out national broadcaster NHK for this award.
management of producers. With that said, Our Planet-TV workshops also introduce a new relationship between individual participants and the media, by providing them with the conceptual and material tools with which to engage mass media content more critically and to (accurately) approach it as the outcome of a series of decisions made by individual actors. Our Planet-TV is hoping to produce a cadre of citizen journalists, to go one step further than even the IWJ or Free Press Association by challenging traditional divisions between producers and consumers of news. In so doing, the group works in Marxian fashion to restore the visibility of the labor inherent in media products, to produce subjects capable of identifying the original in Baudrillard’s hall of mirrors.

**The Public Sphere in Mass and Independent Media**

In her articulation of Our Planet-TV’s mission, Shiraishi cites Habermas’ formulation of a public sphere, and her desire to increase the representation of “small voices” (ちさなコエ) and diverse information in that space, in a manner suggesting a kind of adaptation of a 1960s American counterculture attitude towards media that was “founded on a belief in liberation via the democratic pluralism of television–anyone could control the means of production, anyone could and should be an artist”.  

The notion of a public sphere in control of elites, and the potential for technological development to create space for a more democratic variation thereof is by no means new rhetoric. But as I have mentioned in the previous two chapters, Japan’s most prominent media activists have argued persuasively that the country has only recently begun to manifest signs of a more diverse journalistic landscape. The current state of alternative journalistic output resembles the relationship between minority interest groups and the

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mainstream media in other countries, such as between religious groups with the purchasing power to buy substantial airtime in places where it is for sale, and those that cannot or for ideological reasons will not. These groups remain committed to self-surveillance and self-presentation, generating their own PR and making it available to major news outfits—which generally do not find them newsworthy. This isn’t to say when such groups take their cameras out into the world that their subjects don’t respond to the cameras with a discernible sense of its potential as a tool of representation; although I can speak from experience only to the occasions when this happened during Japanese independent media productions. A sensitivity to the camera as risky, as potentially appropriating one’s image in a way that one cannot manage, extends from the cameras wielded by men hired by the major networks, to those of our four person Our Planet TV production group.

In particular I have accompanied both network television staff and independent media producers in their pursuit of commentary to support a news story. Taking the form of both gaitō intabyū (man on the street) type interviews as well as what I might call “impacted person” interviews, the tendency to seek these out can be conceived of as a supplement to the producers’ own perspective and a means by which to invoke a more democratic public sphere, while the capacity to edit and reconstruct remains the privilege of producers. Initially indistinguishable from one another in the moment of their approach, programs prompt reaction by those they attempt to appropriate in degrees commiserate with their access to audience. They convey this both in the language of their approach; one of my producer interlocutors, Shinji hails potential subjects with a greeting that moves from the general to the specific: “[Network name] no [Program Name] no [His Name].” His vinyl armband, comparable to those worn by most affiliated with the news media (including IWJ staff), provides an additional signifier of potential.
And though he calls out with friendly familiarity “Onēsan” (lit. older sister), “Onīsan” (older brother) as he approaches, even before his subject can read the identifying band or hear Shinji’s affiliation, the sight of the camera is enough to elicit defensive gestures and uncomfortable murmuring. In the case of the independent media, the presence of a camera and the explanation of an unknown project or recitation of an obscure affiliation before the identifying name of the producer prompts less of a palpable retreat on the part of bystanders, however, the nature of a project is an additional factor.

That such man-on-the-street interviews are commonplace on Japanese TV does not seem to have engendered comfort in participation. And perhaps this is due to an accurate sense that to take part in such projects is to lose control over one’s image, to permit it to be edited, reconstructed and appropriated in a manner that represents its authors’ best hopes for what one might have said. Upon returning to his network’s building after collecting several such interviews regarding consumer fears over radiation-contaminated rice, I observed Shinji constructing a narrative for the segment at his desk on the twelfth floor, while periodically sending his assistant producer down to the eleventh to search for one of the transcribers. When she finally locates the bespectacled, buzz-cut wearing Toshio, she hands over a piece of paper on which she’s scrawled the names of these individuals; he will transcribe their speech within a central database, to be turned into another signature element of Japanese television—the colorful and animated selective *commento fuorō* (subtitling) by a graphics guy. Within this fluorescent-lit cubicle maze of transcribers, several young men and women sit with headphones on, moving backwards and forwards through footage of individuals interviewed at festivals, concerts, and of course, the streets of Tokyo.
But ultimately, the shape of a segment is borne of the intentions and actions of many individuals, who pass tapes and notes between one another in a process resembling a relay race. As I screen Shinji’s interviews over and over again during the transcription process, I am struck by the extent to which the narrative is most self-consciously manipulated at the level of embodied interaction, hewn by producers who coax desired reactions from interviewees. With one exception, the individuals Shinji approaches are unaware that officials suspect radioactive contamination of local rice crops, and he must explain this to them before asking once again whether they are concerned.

In formulating a narrative for their documentary project, the three members of my Our Planet-TV group do not speak in terms of public sphere(s), but define their project as being one of conscientious representation, of remaining faithful to a subject in a way that eludes mainstream media, for whom intimacy is not inherent, but engineered. As Shiraishi’s rhetoric makes of Our Planet-TV’s cumulative efforts a challenge to the dominant public discourse, the task of this single group is not massively metonymic, but rather, symbolic.

That the public sphere is a fiction authored by the mass media is a suspicion of many; allegations that most of Japanese television is yarase (scripted) are commonplace. In particular, suspicion has recently fallen on television networks by viewers, who claim that they are using actors for gaitō intabyū, and provide screen captures that show the same individuals being interviewed multiple times for different stories.

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5 I have seen this done most self-consciously by American reality TV, whose producers aggressively sculpt interviews.

Considering the implication by Japanese television that although it points the camera, anyone can theoretically become an agent of its content and a representative of the audience, the idea of these interviewees belonging to a separate representational category—of tarento, does not sit well with online commentators. Despite a growing sense among audiences after 3/11 that television traffics in deception, for those who curate screen captures of television’s uncannily repeating faces, the general, and somewhat romantic, consensus is that the mass media is betraying its ethical mandate to embrace transparency.

With this taken into account, then, can the Japanese state be said to benefit from commercial and public television’s implementation of national media ritual? The members of one particularly large focus group that I conducted (40 people) replied with a tentative “sometimes” to a variant on this question. This I asked as a followup to an initial questions about television consumption, to which my participants overwhelmingly answered that they neither watched television, consumed independent media, nor were even aware of any recent technological experimentation by TV companies. In other words, these had not hit the mainstream in 2013—and seemingly deliberately so, as the companies involved were still preparing and testing relevant technologies:

ER: “Do you think that popular television events, i.e. the Olympics, or the NHK Red and White Song Battle? (Kōhaku Uta Gassen) are important? Why?

Respondent #1: “It’s not about Kōhaku being a program. It’s the way that we mark the end of the year. It’s something that occurs every year.”

7 NHK’s Kōhaku Uta Gassen (aka Kohaku), is an annual televised singing contest held on New Year’s Eve, wherein the year’s most popular singers or singing group members are divided into teams by gender. Red=female, White=male. The program still earns ratings around the fifty percent mark.

8 “Nihon de ninki na terebi ibento (Orinpikku toka `NHK kōhaku uta gassen’) wa taisetsu na bangumi da to omoimasu ka? Sore wa naze desu ka?”
Respondent #2: Yeah, It’s the feeling of watching it together that’s important. I’ve been watching it with my family since I was a child, and it’s the feeling of continuity that’s important.

To a degree, the notion that there is a “natural center” within society that the mainstream media is charged with representing is still implicitly accepted—even in such cases and by individuals for whom consumption of older forms of mass media (television and newspaper) is minimal. Referring back to the notion of mass media as potentially experiential in a manner that gestures to classical aesthetic theory (see Chapter 2), the community that grows up around workshops such as those of Our Planet-TV more closely resembles that of the nascent interactive TV interest movement than that of large-scale televised events like Kōhaku Uta Gassen. Unlike special interest television, which attempts to create dominant roles for individuals and institutions in peripheral social centers (religious programming is a great example), and to naturalize their claim to a mass audience, the work produced by independent media would seem to lack the inherent power to differentiate producers and subjects, or to unify beyond a minimal level. But it does possess symbolic power nonetheless—as we will see.

**Managing Ideas and Impressions**

Those authors whose documentary topics were chosen by their peers for further development are presenting their outlines for a June filming schedule—including locations and lists of interviewees. Of these individuals, four have brought printouts for the group, one has prepared a PowerPoint presentation, and the last elects to narrate his concept without supporting materials. From these six potential projects, our task will be to select four finalists; therefore the presentation of schedules and defense of feasibility are therefore as much an exercise in salesmanship as they are
a means to encourage organization. A lack of tangible documentation seems to impact reception of the Cancer treatment project idea, and it accordingly receives zero votes, while the Suginami-ku neighborhood cinema project benefits from a detailed catalog of relevant people and film sites, and accordingly wins the support of seven workshop participants. To force a more equal distribution of volunteers across the documentary topics, we revote twice, and everyone cooperatively shuffles between groups until these are balanced. I have seen this process before, albeit in a less democratic form, conducted around tables in the headquarters of commercial television stations and external production companies. Producers, many of whom are coming off tetsuya (overnight shifts), nurse plastic cups of coffee, distribute story outlines, and take turns updating the executive producer on their plans for particular projects. In one case (daily news), some of the planned segments were to air in less than 24 hours, and their presentation was framed in terms of an agreement to cover a particular story. In another (weekend variety program), all potential filming was months away. In all cases, executive producers critically appraised the proposed projects, communicating the process of consideration via particular gestures: looking upwards while fanning their faces with paper fans, sucking on their teeth, drumming on tables, or lighting a cigarette. But Our Planet’s workshop involves no such judicious pronouncements of approval by Shiraishi, whose role as coordinator meant guiding the workshop participants into thinking through their proposals and organizing timelines for filming. Thus, while the process at Our Planet resembles that of the journalists among whom anthropologist Dominic Boyer worked, insofar as ideas within this space were first tested and refined before peers in a process of experimental exchange, that of the major television networks was less democratic and bilateral. A facet of the news program content meetings that I observed was that while sheets of paper outlining proposed stories were circulated to all in attendance, it
was frequently only the executive producer to whom their presentation was directed, and it was
the producer(s) alone who determined their status. Directors and assistant directors typically sat
quietly, reading over the sheets in front of them and speaking only in response to questions from
the producers, but no peer feedback was exchanged during my attendance. Television production
companies such as Synthesis\(^9\), whose meetings I attended frequently, operated in something of a
hybrid of Our Planet’s workshop format, and the formal and hierarchical television networks
themselves. If Synthesis was working on a project for TV Asahi, for example, representatives
from that television network would be in attendance. On the occasion of such meetings,
production company staff would trickle in one-by-one with photocopies of scripts, proposed
topics and outlines, etc., and while the interns poured coffee, approximately sixteen assembled
staff members dissected and refined the scripts, crossing out portions in red pen as concepts were
vetoed or refined, and elaboration sought from producers about segments that had already been
filmed, or tarento with whom concepts had already been brainstormed. In all cases, knowledge
was constituted through collective inquiry, and in such cases as nobody could provide an answer
to a particular question, laptops were at the ready with which to perform a Yahoo! search. Or, if
the question pertained to the U.S., the entire meeting would turn to me in near-unison: “What
kind of person uses fountain pens in the U.S.?” Or: “Is it true that ‘baby showers’ were invented
in the U.S.?” (I didn’t know.)

Consistent with restrictions placed by corporations on the online behavior of media
professionals in other parts of the world\(^10\), Japanese commercial television seems to take
seriously the status of its employees as organizational representatives and act to filter their public
utterances accordingly. As one staff member told me during our interview, employees of his

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\(^9\) Not its real name.

company must adhere to a rule that they only use Twitter individually, but not in an official capacity (as representatives of their employer) because: “there have been a lot of SNS related blunders”. He recalls one former announcer who used his Twitter account to badmouth a female colleague, and others who used their personal accounts to make quasi-official statements about projects. In one such case, the staffer told me “[the author] was demoted,” and word spread around the network about this incident and the resultant official censure. Indeed it seemed, based on my informal observations, that those who most publicly used Twitter were mostly well advanced in their careers, while those below the level of director appeared more cautious. Of the television industry employees who participated in the Sōsharuterebi Suishin Kaigi, for example, all of whom I met during 2013 used Twitter as part of a consistent pattern of interest and participation in social media; this included individuals affiliated with that network. Moreover, opinions on news content were never expressed during production meetings during my observation. Rather, focus was on logistics, and the producers’ opinions of feature story/entertainment ideas. What one individual thought, for example, of the Social Democratic Party’s new manifesto, was of no concern in that context.

Sitting with my new group members in the Japanese-language teacher documentary group, we perform a ritual more reminiscent of an academic collaboration than that of a Japanese television production meeting. The documentary’s progenitor, Seiji, a Japanese language instructor himself, says: “Let’s do self-introductions and tell each other why we are interested in this theme.” Kaori, a college student, starts the exchange by announcing that she wants to be a Japanese language teacher herself, and she hopes to pick up some teaching tips at the same time as documentary production. Mitsuko, who along with Seiji is in her 40s, comments that she has
studied English extensively, and that language learning is interesting to her in general. Seiji explains his own participation: “Daigaku de no shigoto, gakusei no shidō ni yakudatetai kara” (In my university work, I want to be able to guide the students [to use technology in this way]). With our introductions finalized Seiji places his notes on top of his copy of Shiraishi’s book and begins to outline his vision for the filming as well as the language school’s background in general. We decide to meet early on Wednesday to observe two different levels of Japanese language class taught by the documentary’s intended protagonist, Koshino Sensei. As Seiji outlines his ideas for filming, including following the Sensei as he works at his desk and prepares for class, and interviewing him in his home to gain a balanced sense of who he is and how he works, I comment on the parallels between this project and my own fieldwork (and ethnographic film in general). Within minutes of my asking if I can interview the members of this production group, Seiji comments that we will need to seek out the school’s Japanese language students for interviews if we want to gain a sense of their experiences and motivation for studying the language. Otherwise, these students largely come to class, talk to each other, engage in limited utilitarian transactions with Koshino Sensei, and answer his prompts during class time. I am again taken with the easy comparison between my observation of media-makers, and their own professional praxis, echoing Dominic Boyer’s own self-reflection about the common “life informatic” of contemporary anthropology and news journalism, and my own earlier commentary on what has become a somewhat dated dialog on “studying up/sideways”, or the relationships between anthropologists and those with comparable or greater cultural capital.\footnote{ibid. xi.}

As neoliberal economic conditions have created a job climate where employees are expected to be capable of performing multiple job functions, an increasing number of jobs require both technological savvy, the capacity to cross disciplinary boundaries, and a broad range
of intellectual and employment experience. At least in the U.S., the credential barrier to entry has been raised, and prompted young people to spend more time in “training” (in university or other settings). In Japan, the transformation of labor conditions due to economic stagnation has been well documented, and the former system of gaining employment solely on the basis of university affiliation and alumni networking has broken down (at least somewhat). Nonetheless, as noted earlier, all of the television employees I met were alumnae of elite universities.

It did not surprise me that of the members of my production group, all were, (or hoped to be) educators, and were therefore, (taxonomically speaking), intellectual laborers. But in the world of television and independent media production, there is no easy Marxian divide between intellectual and physical labor. As our group rejoins the others in Our Planet’s media workshop, the discussion turns to what kind of equipment we should all bring to our production sites this week; at the minimum a boom mic and a digicam are recommended by Our Planet’s staff, while we can use our own headphones to monitor sound. The creation of any kind of video-based media involves the transportation of heavy equipment and unlike print journalism, still necessitates embodied attendance, i.e., it remains an intrinsically physical practice. Typically, the more junior the employee in major production outfits, the more equipment they are tasked with—while contracted cameraman are perpetually lugging oversized and unnecessarily bulky cameras for the sheer semiotic value of their presence. On one occasion while we waited for a producer to obtain filming clearance, a kamera-san, explained to me why heavy beta-cams were still so ubiquitous in broadcast journalism when smaller cameras can garner the same quality footage: “I

13 ibid.
prefer using the smaller SD card-driven smaller cameras, or at least the ones that take mini tapes, but when people see this [big] camera they think: ‘Oh, they are making television’! Otherwise they think I am just some ojisan (old guy) with a video camera.” When I asked him about the weight of the massive camera, he let me feel it. I exclaimed at its heaviness, and he answered: “That’s why they need strong (ganjō) young men like me to carry them.” Shinji, climbing back in the van just in time to overhear this, rolled his eyes.

Nonetheless, even the production of video on a smaller scale, such as the IWJ’s nonstop movement around the country covering events and press conferences, or my group’s trip to the language school to shadow Koshino Sensei entails physical labor. And while not demanding the kind of physical sacrifices—mostly sleep deprivation—of television work, the production of this documentary cannot be assigned exclusively to either the categories of material or immaterial labor. As producers of original knowledge for the benefit (or entertainment, or in Marxian thought, pacification) of the masses, television professionals straddle an epistemic line between the theoretical categories of intellectual, and something else. Depending on the role of a particular staff member, he might be an agent or producer of knowledge—creator or executer of particular segments. This was the case in our group, where the project’s concept was Seiji’s, and Kaori and Mitsuko labored primarily in the support of his vision. But in what ways does the meaning making of media professionals depart from what might be easily claimed as intellectual authorship? Is this a Bourdieuan categorical distinction, wherein a kind of obtuse and abstract discourse gestures serves to classify one type of content, while excluding that which is broadly accessible and widely distributed? Can students ever be categorized as intellectuals, or are they inherently unclassifiable as such by virtue of their role as apprentices? Material conditions of labor have substantial impact on the outcomes of video production, and although the gap
between the perceptible technological quality of amateur and professional video is narrowing, it remains discernible even before one factors in the influence of training on the habits of professional videographers. Observing the painstaking editing of footage intended for both TV broadcast, and that of this amateur project intended for DVD/YouTube, I am struck by the palpable televisuality of the mass media version, the gulf introduced by its access to more expensive equipment, practice in framing and reproducing individuals on camera, and aggressive elimination of imperfect material (The OP group’s finished documentary incorporates an interview conducted with Koshino Sensei’s colleagues even though the telephone rings incessantly in the background. By contrast, a series of motorcycles roaring behind an interviewee for a television news segment are only faintly picked up by the high quality boom mic, and had this not been the case, would have likely been discarded before broadcast.) Herein, it seems clear that the context within which knowledge is produced constitutes aesthetic decision-making, and thus its eventual form; just as substantial training/apprenticeship is a prerequisite for most academic work, to pass from the category of amateur to that of professional, video camera wielding professionals net many hours observing and imitating the sanctioned outcomes of their seniors’ labor. As Boyer has outlined, much of the existing work on knowledge production has minimized or neglected the role of its immediate material conditions, however any account of TV or documentary production that neglects to foreground this element of the process would inauthentically represent the physical toll it takes on its authors. Indeed, after observing the degree to which television production demands the sacrifice of sleep, and encourages its authors to substitute caffeine and tobacco for food (Shinji once commented to me that he does not eat during a 30+ hour shift, as it makes him sleepy– and a few of his colleagues who were sitting within earshot agreed), I became specifically interested in what physical demands are made by

TV on its authors. Thus, it was a matter of earning the right to a certain relative amount of leisure time through one’s tenure at the organization, earning the right to eschew overnight shifts and claim more desirable hours—something that had to be endured if one hoped to gain rank within the system.

Comparatively well-rested then, the Our Planet group meets at Tokyo’s Higashi Nakano station to scout the language school building and its classes, and determine the best means of recording Koshino Sensei’s routine. Sitting at a large wooden table in the reception area, we observe the students arriving and collecting their name tags from bins next to a handsome wooden globe. This school is overwhelmingly attended by students from other East Asian countries, Seiji informs us, with South Koreans representing the largest subgroup. In his estimation, this is reflective of the audience this school has chosen to target, in order to differentiate itself from other Japanese language schools. Mitsuko and I write this down.

The group spends the afternoon in a jōkyū (advanced) level class taking notes on the room, the way the Sensei and his students interact, and the parts of his workday that might metonymically indicate his commitment to teaching. Later we dissect these at a nearby coffee shop; Kaori suggests that Koshino Sensei speaks sufficiently loudly in his classroom that a boom mic is unnecessary. Moreover, the narrowness of the space and the potentially disruptive repercussions for their video of accidentally catching the mics on camera make it desirable to use only handicams. Placing her hand to her mouth thoughtfully, Mitsuko adds that it’s hard to tell what the students are thinking based purely on observation, and Kaori (in a nod to ethnographic methods) emphatically agrees that we’ll need to interview them. From here the discussion turns to one of production technique; Seiji wants the group to employ two cameras simultaneously in the classroom. He asks if we’ve ever noticed the way a video can cut from one perspective to
another in the same filmic space\textsuperscript{16}, and when we all nod, he proposes that we replicate this effect to represent the classroom as though the camera were looking through the eyes of the professor, and then the students.

Just as media scholar Barry Dornfeld gleaned from his participant observation in public broadcast that producers take on the role of media consumers in their consideration of audience needs, and decoding of texts, the participants in the Our Planet workshop oscillate between assuming the technical gaze of a media producer, and that of their eventual audience.\textsuperscript{17} In both cases, media consumed outside of this context informs ultimate artistic output and permits producers to reference the interpretive experience of viewership during the course of their own professional praxis. Although the needs of audiences are unpacked in a theoretical and potential way during the course of media construction, producers’ capacities to anticipate the needs of audiences comes much from producers own experiences in that role. Moreover, their vision for this documentary unfolds in reaction to those for which they have functioned as audience member; sociologist Laura Grindstaff’s interlocutors (producers of daytime talk shows) similarly formulated their topics in relation to those of other talk shows, using them as metrics by which to position their own programs, based on a vision of audiences potentially considered “trashy” or “classy”.\textsuperscript{18} Journalists in general, including all of my television and print interlocutors, often monitor the output of rival media entities to determine what they themselves should be covering, and to contextualize their own reporting, producers of entertainment fare (even of the educational sort) use relevant work to determine what constitutes a successful media narrative.\textsuperscript{19} Seiji’s

\textsuperscript{16} He was describing a simple shot/reverse-shot process.
group, although comprised of non-professionals, similarly places their documentary in the context of the work they themselves have screened as they make decisions about who to interview and how to construct a story from a combination of interviews and live footage.

As Seiji’s group sits around a table in Our Planet’s “Media Cafe” space, we discuss what kind of outcome they want from the project. Do they want viewers to come away from it saying to themselves “I want to be a Japanese teacher?” Everyone considers this possibility. What kind of image do they want to present of the school? Noting that what they choose to film can dramatically impact the form that Japanese language education takes in the minds of viewers, Seiji thinks it’s important that we focus on filming the school space in a way that conveys what is unique about it. But also, he posits, most Japanese people don’t have a sense of the climate (funiki) of a Japanese language classroom and how the way foreigners are taught Japanese differs from their own experiences as native speakers. In other words, we have the opportunity to introduce audiences to a kind of space they might not otherwise ever enter, to be ambassadors.\(^{20}\)

In theorizing the potential reception of their product, Seiji and the rest of the group lack the taxonomic and quantitative tools that mass media relies on to bring audiences into relative focus. The American PBS network, for example, relied on data in order to escape stereotypes about the profiles of its own viewers.\(^{21}\) But they made consistent overtures to anticipating the interests of their audience, and while the content of the seminar itself has been focused on the technological aspects of filming since the evening during which we finalized documentary topics, discussions within Seiji’s group are as much about envisioning audience response to particular techniques as they are learning the means of acquiring knowledge of them. The use of, for example, a hand mic over the one built into a camera is articulated as indicative of a certain

\(^{20}\) I again note that this is much like the intention of ethnography in general, and ethnographic film in particular.
\(^{21}\) Dornfeld, *Producing Public Television, Producing Public Culture*. 
savvy professionalism, or the know-how to maintain viewers’ attention by performing a technical competence that underscores the content’s significance. A lengthy discussion of the backdrop of Koshino Sensei’s interview and the ideal nature of this portion of the project, becomes a matter of balancing the amount of exposition introduced into the storyline so as to avoid a loss of audience interest. Mitsuko has written a list of questions that everyone feels might be too long. Certainly they want to hear an in-depth explanation of Koshino’s journey to become a language teacher, but they also want the program to have flow, to introduce many voices to help tell this story, and to move between them at such a pace that viewers won’t find themselves bored.

The workshop participants break away from their documentary groups, where everyone has been examining scripts and playing with the settings on handicams, to cluster around Hiro, the Our-Planet staff member who, apart from Shiraishi-san, spends the most time with us, so we can listen to a talk about filming technologies and how to use the Adobe Premiere film editing software. Hiro is quick to explain that any hand mic can be plugged into a digicam that costs more than go-man en23. And moreover, above that price point the video quality will be sufficient that any resulting material can be shown in a theater. Hiro recommends Sony cameras, both in terms of quality and price, and while some jot this down, others nod in approval. One of the workshop’s older men asks why TV cameramen are often seen on the streets wearing headphones, and lugging large boom microphones that hang over the heads of interviewees like umbrellas. Hiro smiles at this observation and nods. He asks us to try plugging a set of simple earbuds into our cameras, and to have a group member speak in a normal voice near the camera. Seiji taps Mitsuko to try this exercise, and after a beat he ventures a guess: “You can hear the

22 ibid.
23 Around five hundred US dollars in 2013.
sound quality in real time (*jitsujikan*)”. Yuji points emphatically into the air: “*sō desu yo!*” (Right!)

Hiro moves on to the rational behind external mic use, drawing a diagram for us that is redolent of those used in music classrooms to explain basic acoustics. “Directional range,” he says, is why those television directors use external mics. They pick up sound very well from directly in front of them, and soften the sound from around the edges. We all try this as an exercise—plugging one of the big external mics into our cameras and listening to the audio on headphones. Kaori, who wears the headphones while I speak into the mic, notes enthusiastically that the resultant sound is *kirei* (lovely) and clear—she can hear really well. Seiji listens with an expression of deep concentration as Mitsuko speaks near the camera, switching between its built-in mic and one he’s brought from home. Watching over his shoulder, Kaori remarks in surprise that the video seems so high quality for a handheld, consumer-level camera. Simultaneously, Hiro continues his lecture: if we want to capture environmental noise, going without an external mic is best. For interviews, pin mics (*pin maiku*) are the convention among documentarians at this time, but television stations employ expensive 10-30,000 yen ($100-$300) lapel mics (aka *taipin-gata*, or “tie-pin mics”—because they clip onto one’s necktie) when conducting interviews. “The IWJ,” he notes, and several people look up, “employ wireless microphones most of the time”.24 Next to me, Seiji jots this information down in his notebook, below his reproduction of Hiro’s microphone sound diagram. Fostering insight into the mechanics of mass media production is one of the main goals of these workshops, and students bring to this experience their own astute observations on the techniques of its creation. As so much pivotal work in media and cultural studies has alleged, with support for its theorizations by ethnographic reception studies, audiences by no means receive (or “decode”) mass media content in a straightforward or

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24 “IWJ wa hotondo waiyaresu maiku o tsukaimasu…”
unproblematic way.\textsuperscript{25} To that end, audiences educated in media production techniques are seemingly more likely to contest suggested modes of viewing than those for whom production decision-making is less transparent. If we know, based on Stuart Hall’s formulations, or from recent ethnographic work, that audiences are both active co-constituters of meaning and adapt messages as part of their own semantic and experiential systems, than Bertelsen and Murphie’s invocation of Guattari’s “problematic affects and complex refrains” to describe the viewing experience has a certain logic.\textsuperscript{26} In their interpretation of Guattari’s ideas about viewing, the body and temporality have enormous impacts on ultimate affect of viewing experiences.\textsuperscript{27} If viewership is always temporal (and made more interesting by the way interactive television toys with spatio-temporality and attempts to force viewers back into the space of determined “liveness”), then the specific kind of affect induced by a program is contingent on the experiences a viewer has prior to viewing. As argued by Bertelsen and Murphie, if “I” have just meditated before viewing, or had a relaxing cup of tea and my breathing is slower than normal: “a complex refrain, a problematic affect envelops me, with or without my feelings, in accord with my opinions or not”.\textsuperscript{28} That framing is both significant and helps to constitute the affect of viewing is commonly accepted by advertisers and producers, who are acutely interested in the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
“contiguities between everyday spaces”.

Consumer research has for many years pursued women, for example, between spaces of potential consumption, tracking plausible patterns of shopping behavior and attempting to synchronize advertising with the errands likely to take women into relevant points of purchase. Thus, the blurry spaces around TV viewing are not simply significant in terms of Benjamingian cognitive manipulation, but are potentially lucrative as well.

While allowing for a life-context that frames TV viewing (and increasingly punctuates it as we multi-task with “second-screen” devices), this theorization comes dangerously close to the fearful rhetoric of twentieth century theory regarding the medium’s capacity to lull us into a stupor, to captivate our bodies and minds. Therefore, I am inclined to appropriate from this the significance of environment rather than the paralytic potential of TV; with the new technology that allows us to interact about TV while we are watching, decoding is an even more profoundly unstable and complicated process.

By means of example, after the workshop one evening, a participant named Keiji offered to show me his preferred mode of TV viewing; he often watches while participating in NicoNicoDouga’s live dedicated TV chatrooms (http://jk.nicovideo.jp/). Unto the wee hours of the morning, these rooms are bursting with activity, as individuals exchange rapid-fire commentary about television programs. At key moments in each show the application seems to explode; text enters and exits the frame of this “second screen” as quickly as it can be read. Moreover, this group dialog continues during commercial breaks, as viewers dissect ads together in realtime and, mostly, make critical comments about their content or the tarento used to sell goods. This subset of NND ostensibly reinforces the popularity of individual shows; when a user

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accesses the site, its portal displays the number of comments per minute being typed by viewers of each TV channel. Thus, this individual might find himself presented with a choice regarding whether to enter the chat room representing the most commented upon program, or the one he is actually watching—choosing, in effect, the experience of disembodied collective viewing that he seeks by visiting the site, or a more subdued viewing experience. Certainly users who seek out this section of http://www.nicovideo.jp/ are looking to combine a certain community affect that the site is known for (and is associated with live-streamed web events: The Free Press Association of Japan’s press conferences, for example), with television content—in a sense restoring the pleasure of collective viewing considered to be quaintly redolent of a bygone era. But departing from a usual model of online community, where users come to know each other as avatars, NND remains, like 2ch, anonymous. What one experiences when participating in NND-style collective TV viewing suggests the vagaries of traditional ratings-measurement, where the viewer never fully resolves into focus, but is constructed from an aggregate of thousands of collective actions. In this section of NND, one is literally entering text into a black box, one’s anonymous commentary passing briefly onto the screen and disappearing off the edge.

Mitsuko has brought to this meeting an outline of both potential interview questions for Koshino Sensei and his students, and another outline of how they might weave themes from these interviews into their shot choices. For his part, Seiji has followed Shiraishi’s textbook example and storyboarded his own minute-by-minute filming timeline—including camera positioning and shot type, and the goal of each “scene change”. As Kaori and Seiji read over these documents and rearticulate the documentary’s dai tēmu (main theme), Hiro approaches to ask us if we understand how best to position the camera during an interview. “Tripod,” he
announces, reminding us that we can’t risk having our hands cause the camera to shake while we focus on a face that is likely to remain relatively steady. “Don’t move up and down, move right and left only. Slowly.” He asks us what else we have noticed about broadcast interviews, and Seiji comments that their subject is generally seated. “Right!” Hiro confirms. “And what else?” After a pause during which nobody ventures a guess, he suggests that the interviewer is generally neither seen nor heard on camera. Raising his voice so the rest of the class can hear, he encourages us to think of an “imaginary line” (in English), behind which the camera must not film. One of the older members of the other group pipes up in consternation to suggest that he sees television staff on-camera all the time. Hiro nods, adding that this points to a Japanese preference for foregrounding the material conditions of television production in its final products. Against the perception I mentioned earlier, that Japanese television is always staged, scripted or otherwise fake, Hiro’s theorization posits an earnest desire on the part of television producers to perform certain kinds of programming as a process. While it appears to be much more common for bodies and equipment to penetrate the “imaginary line” (or fourth wall, to use another term) in some programmatic genres (such as variety shows), whose organization and execution is less formal, the presence of an interviewer on-screen in documentary or news-style productions seems to gesture to a different kind of strategy, one that harkens back to the notion of onscreen surrogacy from Chapter 4. Considering its documented lack of willingness to embrace transparency of content, the idea of broadcast embracing transparency of process is a particularly interesting theory. The strategy is also an unstable one, the bodies of staff acting as a moving signifier whose meaning fluctuates with programmatic genre and style. In some contexts, such as that of the waidō shō (variety programming) production I observed, the movement of directors from behind the imaginary line to before the camera seemed calculated to emphasize the
program’s *realness*. When Miyuki, an assistant director (AD) is suddenly asked to taste fish on camera despite wearing heavy glasses, no makeup, and having her hair pulled back in a disheveled ponytail, this is seemingly an unremarkable transition for all present. Like most TV personnel, she is simply referred to onscreen as “staff” (*sutaffu*), an embodiment of the program as process. *Sutaffu* tries a bite of raw hoya. *Sutaffu* doesn’t care for the taste and can’t keep an expression of disgust from flickering across her face. As amateurs, I note, Seiji’s group is far more formal. Even in cases where we are filming in shot-counter shot formation within a small classroom, we dodge and duck the cameras in attempts to create an authentic [sic] representation of the classroom. The audio of Kaori’s voice asking questions during the interview process is carefully edited out, leaving as little of the residuum of the production as possible.

Hiro informs us that NHK[^30], when planning a documentary and when editing, makes heavy use of post-it notes to storyboard the sequence of particular scenes. Rather than looking at images, they find working with textual representations easier. He distributes poster board, markers, and post-its to Seiji’s group, but the group is still mired in the pre-production technical discussion (how many cameras to bring, the battery life of these, which mics to use). Seiji frets that using an external mic stretched across the floor (*katai*) will result in the camera picking up the ambient noise of its cord. Before we adjourn for the evening, Hiro reminds the class to seek out wide varieties of shots. And looking sympathetically at Seiji, he affirms that to do this in a small classroom will indeed be *taihen* (difficult).

**Filming in Progress**

[^30]: *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai* (NHK) is Japan’s public broadcaster, and is perhaps most easily compared with the British BBC.
On a muggy Sunday, we interview Koshino Sensei in his 3-story home near Shinkoiwa station. While his wife accepts the flowers and sweets brought by Mitsuko and arranges both on the table, Koshino Sensei asks us questions about the documentary and workshop. Seiji’s group eventually becomes distracted by practical concerns; the second floor lighting is unsuitable for filming, and scene too informal and domestic. After we move to Koshino Sensei’s third floor office, Seiji must reassure him that we intend to frame him tightly while he answers questions; as filmic images are always bounded, this one is able to erase a messy toy covered bed in the corner, to exclude all but the desired version of place. However, the group also sets the scene in a way that again recalls ethnographic filming technique: Mitsuko and Kaori want to painstakingly record the room’s personal artifacts so that these shots can be spliced into long sequences of the sensei’s narration: his books, the objects on his desk, the crucifix on his wall. They want to film him flipping through his notes, pretending to work so that this too might combined non-diegetically with his speech. And Kaori, like so many teachers of interview technique before her, recommends that they begin by asking him simple questions so that he might relax. “How long has he been a Japanese teacher?” “Where did he first start teaching?” Despite the use of an external mic, sound is our main complication, as we need to close the office door against the excited shrieks of the Sensei’s son playing downstairs, and re-ask a question about common language learning mistakes after his cat begins meowing loudly. Further, Kaori cannot help but make noises of acension as Koshino Sensei speaks, despite reprimanding herself multiple times. Nobody crosses the invisible line until, jokingly, we talk about wanting to include behind-the-scenes bonus footage with DVDs of the documentary, and then Seiji points the camera at each of us in turn.
Interviews prove to be the easiest part of this project, as the cameraman and the subjects stand in a relatively fixed position. There is a single long shot to be taken, and we complete our interviews with the jokyū (upper level) students the following day without significant trouble. Filming in the classroom, however, proves trickier, as the group is uncertain about where to position the cameras and mics. Which angle will show the faces of students most clearly? How much panning and zooming can be done without creating a jarring effect for the viewer? Seiji’s group remains particularly interested in material artifacts, and as there is a long break before the start of the next class, they follow him to his desk and begin filming the artifacts therein. Mitsuko asks him if he has any photographs of his early teaching days—particularly the time he spent in Jakarta, and with them spread out before him on the table, Koshino Sensei tells us about them as Seiji films over his shoulder, and Kaori closely frames him from the front. “Ahh,” he says, “This was my soccer team. After practice we would go drink tea, as Indonesia is an Islamic country and they don’t drink sake. I still keep in touch with them by letter….there wasn’t really a Japanese community there.” “And oh here!” he indicates, passing by an image of himself at a wedding “nihongo gakko de hataraki o hajimeta bakari.” (I had just started working at the Japanese school.)

That the documentary tell a story was considered to be the utmost importance. As the team moved around the school, the objects, people, and events at which they chose to point a camera reflected their own interests, but also a profound interest in creating a rich biography of the Sensei. Absent a need to make production contingent on marketability and potential advertising revenue, the group still defaulted to a way of articulating narrative decisions that mirrored that which can be heard in TV corporation conference rooms. Recalling Susan Sontag’s work on the degree to which our sense of everyday experience emerges in conversation with our
consumption of media images, I would again posit that this overlap was due to the aesthetic language of both groups having been constituted by their own media consumption, and of filmic technique being more a matter of tradition than individual ingenuity.\(^{31}\) In media scholar Anna Everett’s formulation of activism and its appropriation of “the logic of network news gathering”, the capacity of (in this case) black American women to successfully appropriate the language of mainstream broadcast indicates its the capacity of new technology to take back television’s power to represent, to self-represent by “recoding” using consumer-level tools.\(^{32}\) Facilitating this process, Shiraishi’s own writing about media production, and the contents of Our-Planet’s workshops, are informed by her own tenure as a TV Asahi employee, and indeed many of those I encountered in the independent media had learnt their craft as employees of one or another of the mass media conglomerates.

Filming unfolded in the classroom as a dance between the pre-planned and highly organized system decided upon by the group, and improvised movement around and behind the students to capture them writing in their workbooks, commenting to each other, and reacting to Koshino Sensei. During a pow-wow/break in filming, the topic turns again to matters of representation—particularly which shots of Koshino to use so that the documentary conveys a balanced sense of him as both ningen/kyōshi (human being/teacher). Kaori emphasizes to the group that it is essential we correct the stereotype that daremo (anyone) can teach Japanese.

“Who thinks that?” I ask, interrupting. She replies quickly: “minna mo sō omotte iru.”

(Everyone thinks that.) Mitsuko adds: “nihonjin wa...” (Japanese people) Seiji picks up this line of thought to raise the question of how they might best convey a Japanese teacher’s societal role.

By only featuring Koshino Sensei in this documentary, he worries, they risk representing the


\(^{32}\) Everett, “Double Click.”
ichiban erai (most esteemed) teacher in the school as the normative standard. After a short pause he decides that interviewing some of the other teachers could function as an implicit proof of and context for Koshino’s exceptionality. At the most basic level, the difference will be visual; the tie-wearing Koshino will, by contrast to his more casual colleagues, look all the more diligent (majime).

By the next week’s workshop meeting, Mitsuko is lamenting worriedly: “torisugita” (we recorded too much). Without the round-the-clock and/or expansive staff of a major production group, editing is a task impossible to finish in the remaining four workshop days, and must be distributed as homework. Leaning over our shoulder, Hiro exclaims “sugoi kirei” about our interview with Koshino. Unfortunately, the group decides, in the service of creating a decent “monogatari” (story) they need to sacrifice some of the content which best represents him as ningen, and prioritize those which frame him as kyōshi. With headphones on, watching as a group, the dialog is intermittent, and generally coincides with a shuffling of the post-it notes that the group has finally arranged on their poster board.

S: “kore ga iranai...” (We don’t need this…)
K: [Where Koshino is explaining important reasons to teach Japanese to foreigners] “kore daiji na to omoimasu...” (I think this is important…)
(M, watching interview footage where Koshino describes an incident in which he became angry at a student: “Kitte mitai.” (I’d like to hear that.)
K: *snickering*
M: “kore...katto hoshi.” (I want to cut this.)
S: “Demo kono hen no kurai yatsu mae ni. shashin no setsumei mo aru” (But before this dark bit is the part where Koshino is explaining about those photos.)
K: [About one of the student interviews] “kono hen... shizukasugi... (It’s too quiet here.)
M: “un... kikinikui. Demo kono hen dake de subtaituru wa...” (Yeah, too hard to hear. But if we just use subtitles here…”)
S: [Cutting a chunk of slow class-time footage] Kou iu kurikata ii? (Is it okay if I cut it like this?)
K: “kono dōryō hanashi–zenbu irerarenai” (We can’t put all of the discussion with [Koshino’s] co-workers in.)
S: “Saigo no saigo... Koshino no eigao. Eigao de, owari. Dokyumentarī-tekī na kanji na node. Sono mae: ‘kyō no jugyō, nan-ten.’” (Very last... Koshino’s smiling face.... We’ll finish with his smiling face, because that feels really documentary-ish. Before that, the ‘how was today’s class’ segment.”

K, M, S: [Voices overlapping as they practice fading out audio] “bimyō ni fade?” (Subtly fade?) “Koko, okashi.” (This is weird here.) ”Sukoshi dekiteiru hazu.” (I think we can do it a little...) ”Chotto wakarinikui desu.” (This is hard to understand.) ”kono kiroi sen wa volume?” (Is this yellow line the volume?)

These conversations reflect an extrapolation from a sense of the audience as demographically like them, to an expanded sense of national identity. “Everyone” in the conversation about mission is once again defined as “Japanese people,” and while this represents a perspective that was expressed directly only once, conversation surrounding the documentary’s purpose frequently took the form of a mission to correct mistaken impressions circulating on the societal level. Inspired by Shiraishi’s own explanation of these workshops as intending to facilitate a transfer of power over media representation from an elite (and largely) corporate controlled group to potentially any member of a Japanese democratic society, the group characterized their project in terms of societal improvement, and a duty to both subject and audience to reproduce the work of language instruction as faithfully as possible. During his initial project pitch, Seiji rhetorically asked his classmates: “How can we best convey the image of Japanese teachers in society?”

That conversations about media, and the nature of mass media itself in Japan should prompt such dialog is not necessarily surprising; media scholar Michael Curtin argues US has arguably given up on attempting to sculpt a “national cultural agenda” via the media after the Cold War, I would suggest that it made relevant attempts following 9/11. And despite a sensitivity to the outcomes of nationalism in World War II, I also argue that the ways in which Japan’s mass media structure differs from that of the US (see Introduction) permits a

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33 See Chapter 4 for a more in-depth discussion of this
simultaneously sensitivity to niche marketing, while also speaking to a national imaginary. Due to spacial limitations, I’ll refrain from chronicling the editing process, and Mitsuko’s recording of the voice-over in a nearby radio station studio in depth; these steps happen in quick succession; as Kaori pronounced: “eizō o minagara narēshon o kimaru–jikan ga nai ne!” (While we’re watching the video, [let’s] decide on the narration–time is short!) Mitsuko confirms: “un, henshū o shinagara, narē o kakimasu ne.” (“Yes, while we’re editing, let’s write the narration, eh?”) But they wind up stalled over the group’s incapacity to recall Koshino’s age. “Koshino Shiro-san, x-sai, nihongo kyōju...” (Shigeru Koshino, x-years old, Japanese teacher), Mitsuko mumbles, and then: “Nan darō...” (What to do?) But despite a collective writer’s block, the group agrees that narration is critical: “sutōrī o shite iru node...” (so we can tell a story).

This process of seeking balance between a mission to educate and one to entertain is one that is common to many forms of television and film “infotainment”, as well as (more recently, one might argue) journalism in general. Recalling a point made above about the balance between exposition and flow, authors must consistently check their expectations about what audiences can be expected to already know, their likely sensibilities, etc. Even in this brief, biographical documentary, Seiji’s group returns consistently to two themes: 1. Their obligation to correct a mistaken impression at the societal level 2. While telling a story that will sustain attention and improve the likelihood that they may succeed at #1. Despite the intense labor of editing (and the process consumes many hours outside of the workshop), the group is less than confident in the coherence of their footage; what they have had to cut for the sake of time and viewer fatigue, they summarize orally through voice-over. While there seems to be a general consensus among media professionals that entertainment is the enemy of pedagogy, without any

meaningful expectation of audience, nor concerns about commercial viability, Seiji’s group nonetheless sought the same balance. And rather than lamenting this state of affairs, the group spoke in terms of a mandate to adhere as closely as possible to convention, to succeed in this workshop by mastering the appearance of the documentary genre in a truncated form. In creating “public interest” media, there seems to be endless debate about how to gauge what actually interests the public(s)—but even more so, whether publics are qualified to steer broadcast decision-making, or whether decisions are best imposed. 36 Viewer data allows producers to escape the metonymic use of their own selves as surrogates for the audience, allowing them to gesture to the seeming neutrality of numbers rather than conceding a subjective paternalism. Referring to such audience studies, Ien Ang argued: “More often than not, research is a tool for symbolic politics rather than for rational decision-making”.37

It is July 18, 2013, the night of the documentary screenings. The documentary authors fidget anxiously in their chairs, their finalized films burned to DVD and stacked in a queue, waiting for their turn. Shiraishi rises from her seat, introducing the event by stating that she is always impressed by how quickly workshop participants transition from their role as consumers of documentary content, to producers capable of manipulating its visual conventions. “Hontō ni yoku dekita mono ga ōkute…” (There is truly a lot of well-done work…) she says, marveling that these workshops result in “keko ii mono” (generally good work). Koshino Sensei arrives late to the screening, just as she concludes her opening remarks, unable to bring his family because of the late hour. We screen Seiji’s group’s documentary first. As Koshino watches, his face begins to flush a deep red, and his eyes fill with tears. He gazes up at his own likeness, looking overwhelmed, holding his hand to his mouth as his colleagues and students praise him. As the

36 Ang, Desperately Seeking the Audience; Dornfeld, Producing Public Television, Producing Public Culture.
37 Ang, Desperately Seeking the Audience.
credits appear, Shiraishi probes him for his reaction: “How can I comment on such material?” He asks.
Conclusion
It is tempting, in lieu of a conclusion, to engage in the project of a technological futurist. After all, fieldwork among those working on the frontier of television’s technological capacity lends itself to speculation on which projects will succeed and which will have been relegated to the annals of TV history by the time this manuscript sees print. And I do have predictions, but they are influenced as much by the social processes I observed as the technological development. Most individuals working in broadcast is likely to conclude that the future of the medium is personalized, and in the U.S. it seems indisputable that personalization means on-demand viewing. But a focus on services like Netflix and Hulu, both of which have come to Japan, should not allow us to forget that television’s most successful events still coax viewers to the television for a live viewing experience, and sports will continue to lend itself to live consumption both in the U.S. and Japan. This permits television an entrance, a means by which to potentially lure viewers into event-driven live viewing experiences of the kind pioneered by Bascule, Fuji TV, NHK, NTV and TBS. And where there is room for liveness and interactivity, there is certainly room for advertising.

The structure of the broadcast industry in Japan, revolving as it does around Dentsu and Hakuhodo, is unlikely to change. While these companies have the resources, they will continue to purchase all of the advertising space that the networks have to offer, and by that means control over the content bookended by such advertising, as well as control over the sponsors who will likely continue to sign contracts forcing them to use these companies as middlemen between them and the television stations. For the meantime, this means that television (and its affiliated newspapers) will remain gun-shy about news stories criticizing major advertising clients such as Tokyo Electric, and continue to self-censor in the name of protecting ad revenue.
Japanese TV will not fail. As mentioned before, the country has both unique tensions in an aging and declining population, and decreasing ratings among desirable marketing demographics. But despite predictions that Tokyo’s key stations will have to consolidate in order to afford to produce content, it seems as though television has ways to go before this will be necessary. Much of the panic appears a result of a comparison being made between television in its heyday—as mentioned in the introduction, a from a place where more television was consumed in Japan than anywhere else in the world— and the present, where television retains its capacity to attract audiences, but is having to adapt the means by which it counts and sells to them. This is nothing new either. With every leap in technological capacity, TV has experienced growing pains as it tries to avoid alienating its audiences, while forcing them to consume its message. Product placement isn’t going away. Commercials, as we know them, will likely become integrated into on-demand viewing, and if Gracenote’s model is any indication, they will have sufficient information about who we are to target their marketing more precisely than extant demographics research allows.

The concept of audiences is a major theme of this work, as it is most monographs about mass media. The audience as unknowable aggregate, however, is moving towards extinction. The interactive TV programs mentioned in Chapters 2-4, as well as the interactive projects of independent journalism that use Nico Nico Douga and UStream, demand user data be entered as a prerequisite to their use. By partnering with systems like NTV’s Join TV, and Basculue’s MIES, television will be able to sell to its audiences more successfully than before. Against claims that advertising on television is in trouble, which I heard repeatedly at media events around Tokyo, I argue that television might have finally re-discovered how it will balance highly personalized methods of television consumption with the need to please sponsors. During my
fieldwork, the time-shifted viewing of television using DVRs or subscription services like Hulu and Tsutaya’s Discas\textsuperscript{1} was considered a threat to an industry for whom those users became a black box–uncountable, unsaleable, but tantalizing insofar as they were viewing. Surveys showing the percentages of young people who viewed TV this way were invoked to remind sponsors that ratings were only part of the picture of viewership. When NHK and NTV teamed up to create the 60-ban Shōbu, thereby satirizing the tensions between the two broadcasters that existed during the early years of the medium, they asked viewers to voluntarily step into the light to be counted, to convey to sponsors when they were watching and how, by pressing buttons at regular intervals. Using such systems, the collection of ratings using devices that merely measure the on/off of a TV set becomes obsolete, its incapacity to account for the engagement of bodies making it rife for replacement by a system that encourages viewers to indicate approval of individual programmatic moments. During post-mortems on 60-ban Shōbu, producers made a practice of scrutinizing the precise moments in time when audiences experienced peak enjoyment. This, they could practice alongside explorations of detailed information on the locations, ages, and genders of the individual viewers known to be actively co-constituting content synchronously with on-screen tarento and program staff. Savvy marketers are already conscripting this capacity for use in ads using Japan’s unique data hosō (data broadcast) technology; a program might indicate that a viewer could take a quiz after a commercial for Mister Donut; she presses the ‘d’ button on her remote control to access the questions, and to earn a coupon. Smartphone applications that can hear and respond to advertising audio similarly can offer viewers attempts to access promotional content. Watch a commercial, earn a discount code or rewards points. Play a game, earn a discount code or points. One of my interlocuters, a former advertising executive named Sakai, complained about Japanese companies:

\textsuperscript{1} Netflix has since moved into the market, and Hulu sold to television network Nihon Terebi (NTV)\textsuperscript{1}
“[Omnidirectionality as a strength] is what we’ve found with Facebook… So if you’re following a company and leave a comment, you expect the company to comment back. But…for so many Japanese companies, their idea of how to build a website is to put up some pretty pictures of the brand, and you just mention the [company’s] contact details and that’s it. That’s something we’ve found, that there’s just one-way communication.”

Television, too has historically suffered from this monodirectionality—an aspect of the medium that has greatly impacted the scholarship on it. From the Culture Industry to postmodern projects critiquing the zombifying impact of mass media forms that would encourage their audiences to submit to enforced stupefaction, televisual theory has decried the assumed passiveness of audiences, been corrected, and employed ethnographic fieldwork as a further corrective. Social media further instantiated a mass form of media with omnidirectional production and reception, and the flawed rhetoric of universally equivalent platforms.

Combining the latter with the news has thus been a significant challenge to the authority and workflow of professional journalists across the globe. As captured in communications scholar Elizabeth Bird’s interviews, journalists frequently maintain a sense of themselves as trained experts more on par with anthropologists, and as far removed from the work and projects of those without professional cachet and/or affiliation. This, even as their own jobs expand to include ever more responsibility to Tweet, blog, maintain organizational websites, and harvest information from online sources.

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So I want to return to the story of Nico Nico Douga and Ustream once more, as these technologies are employed by the Free Press Association of Japan / No Border, and the Independent Web Journal. In a sense IWJ is performing the work of beat journalists by collecting the raw information of news production—filming an entire press conference and making it accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Therein, they enable their viewers to make a choice regarding information consumption: First, they can watch the entire live event. Second, they can use that event as the basis to author their own account, a rival to that of the mainstream news outfits. Third, they can screen the material and immaterially contrast their own perception with the aggregation of news organizations. Unfortunately, no data has been collected on what users do with the IWJ’s information.

As outlined in this text, both Nico Nico Douga and UStream allow users to comment while watching live-streamed content, and only when watching live. As NND integrates user comments directly into the visual field, making them an unescapable part of the story, its means of framing becomes another means by which audiences loom into focus. The audience of a typical online broadcast is typically only knowable through limited data sets—region, user profile, for example. As in the case of interactive television, NND users participate in the unfolding of content, acting upon it by their reactions to its inscribed images. Many of the NND broadcasts to which I was privy were monitored carefully for user comments; these were responded to verbally, or used to direct the broadcast’s action in some manner. In the moment of broadcast, then, this system allows producers to gain immediate feedback on programming, to move beyond time-delayed surveys that rely on the memories of viewers, to understand what audiences enjoy. As discussed in chapter two, networks often (already) play at having a sense of who their audiences are based on profiling, surveys, and general consumer research. The PBS of Dornfeld’s
monograph is one such entity, using the slogan “viewers like you” to inscribe the type of viewer “known” to be watching in the “we” of public television. Believing it knows its audience is essential to programming for them, and for television audiences in general, as producers must engage in cognitive leaps regarding what their viewers will respond to, what they already know (etc.) Nico Nico Douga, as seen in the case of The Compass, allows producers to ask them directly and if not to sculpt a given program in the moment, to use this feedback in future production meetings. The immediacy, the lack of delay between feeling and reflection on feeling is what differentiates this process from existing survey practices; the omnidirectionality of the production process is foregrounded and self-selective with a lower barrier to entry than what has come before.

That said, much has been made of television’s fragmentation of audiences—particularly in Japan where the medium vacillates between a nationally inscribing mode of address, and one targeting microdemographics for the purpose of marketing. {Lukacs:2013jq, Moeran:2001tm, 67} Personalization and customization trends seen in the television market seem to suggest that this trend is on the rise. Nonetheless, this should not be inferred as suggestive of an increase in choice; a limited number of channels in Japan funnel images from advertisers to producers, (whose standards for what constitutes good programming often date back to the early days of the medium), to the audiences upon whom they are imposed. Indeed, during fieldwork in two of the major television network offices, I inquired of various staff about the colorful subtitling found on the bottom of the screen during much Japanese television programming. “It is because old people can’t hear?” ventured one, articulating his answer in the form of a question. Another, filling out a worksheet describing text and aesthetic choices for subtitles on a morning news program (to be sent to the graphics department) shrugged at this and answered “We have always done it.” The
real hope to break out of the conventions of this medium and engineer new ways by which
audiences can relate to it therefore comes from adopting the conventions of social and interactive
video entertainment, wherein the program must always be completed by viewers’ willingness to
engage.

Following my discussion in Chapter 2, television in Japan both supports its viewers and
requires self-support, specifically demanding that they acquire the cultural information necessary
to follow tarento and their endless mimetic and cross-referenced performances. Subtitling on
Japanese television, conversely helps to support casual and distracted viewers by explaining and
echoing content visually, thus making messages easier to digest. Nevertheless, the mystery
inherent in broadcast has until now been whether audiences are understanding references that
they are expected to have the acquired knowledge to grasp, how they feel about the necessity of
particular subtitling, and reaction boxes featuring the faces of tarento, (etc.) Able to respond in
the moment using new technologies, the audience becomes co-authors of the TV text. Producers
can observe in real time, much the way clicks determine the viability of online content, audience
approval can be seen in the context within which it is performed, within the spatiotemporal point
in time within which they are reacting. As Bird, Spitulnik (and others) have mentioned, and as I
echoed in the introduction to this work, ethnography is essential in media studies to permitting a
contextual understanding of how media circulates. Interactive technologies do some of the
work of ethnography, by permitting users a voice as they make selections, and respond to content.
It asks the viewer/user on our behalf how much of a commercial she’s heard, and if she indeed
likes a product enough to take steps to learn more. News consumption, as Bird notes, is a process,
always already a dialog between the beliefs and preconceptions of users, and the material

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presented. If interactivity becomes more ubiquitous, market researchers can reverse engineer the framing employed by viewers by looking at demographic information, then choices. It has been stated that one of the reasons for low news consumption among younger demographics is that they are always in contact with information; in other words, a lack of interest in consuming news in conventional forms does not indicate a lack of interest in news; generally, social media using tech savvy young adults will come in contact with important news through their networks. The nightly news or the newspaper read cover-to-cover may no longer be appealing. {Bird:2011wr, 493} If stories emerge through interpersonal communication, then, the interest of television and journalism must be in presenting the right information in the right format, and appropriating that urge to share stories with one’s network. Technologies like NTV’s Join TV connect select programs to Facebook to that end.

As has been noted in the case of Facebook’s studies, performed in collaboration with researchers from nearby universities, social scientific studies benefit from extremely large sample sizes when they partner with mass media content developers. As a researcher from the University of California, Berkeley who consults for Facebook stated during a recent radio interview, in her academic life she is used to conducting experiments using twenty subjects. Interjecting, a Facebook scientist asserted that from his perspective, such a study would not be worth conducting; he’s used to working with data sets in the hundreds of thousands, if not more than a million. The interviewer makes a point that collaboration with entities such as Facebook thus helps scientists respond to criticisms that they draw conclusions from too little data. But could academics ever be comfortable with this kind of uneasy partnership?—one in which those involved may have voluntarily relinquished their data, but are being experimented upon unbeknownst to them.

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7 “The Trust Engineers” 32 (February 9, 2015), http://www.radiolab.org/story/trust-engineers/.
This is not democracy. As I argued in Chapter 2, putting Twitter users on screen does not make a democratic medium. For one, comments do not pass unfiltered between the Twitter stream and the television screen, but are selected for their presumed contribution to the program. *Nico Nico Douga* comments are similarly harvested and pruned, incorporated only as they are inoffensive to a presumed general sensibility, and topically relevant. As I discussed in this manuscript, there is an incommensurate degree of formality between the internet and television broadcast, with television still scrambling to maintain a certain distance from viewers. The way internet comments are harvested reflects this need to protect the space of TV from social breaches, insofar as it is possible. What makes the internet so different from the ubiquitous *gaitō intabyū* (man on the street interview) beloved by Japanese television? It is likely the issue of anonymity; while street interviews force the individual to take ownership of her words, the systems currently used to bring internet comments onto the TV screen permit ambiguous identities, and thus (as has been outlined at length in the majority of work on internet communication) allows users to speak more freely. Indeed, as anthropologist Gabriella Coleman outlined in her book on the social activist hacker group Anonymous, anonymity can permit the formation of social movements in ways that might not be possible should individuals be forced to disclose their identities.\(^8\) When attending anti-nuclear energy protests in Japan, I frequently glimpsed the telltale Guy Fawkes mask\(^9\), signifying at least a passing awareness of the international Anonymous collective. On the negative side, there is the online bullying that I mentioned in chapter six, which in Japan often takes the form of anonymous bands of 2

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\(^9\) The Guy Fawkes mask was first used in the film *V for Vendetta* (2005, Dir. James McTeigue), and is worn during public events to obscure the identity of Anonymous participants. See (Coleman, 2014) for more information.
channeru users\textsuperscript{10}, and is driven by objection to the liberal politics of independent journalists to self-consciously work against the missions of their organizations. Sakai therefore found it amusing when I asked him about “2ch”:

\textit{ER}: How much do you think 2chan drives internet trends in Japan?

\textit{S}: (Laughing) 2chan \textit{is} the internet here.

As mentioned in this dissertation, the forum tends to be particularly critical of Uesugi Takashi, claiming that his preference for the approach to journalism taken by U.S./European newspapers (including bylines and the pursuit of scoops) has led to an anti-Japanese journalism bias that prevents him from being able to function as a journalist himself, and makes him a favorite source of Western, but not Japanese scholars and journalists\textsuperscript{11}. Moreover, the scandal surrounding his potential plagiarism of data from the Yomiuri Shimbun echoed relentlessly around 2ch during my fieldwork, prompting them to relentless troll him across platforms and to attempt to undermine the work being done by the Jiyū hōdō kyōkai (FPAJ) by flooding press conferences with digs about his honesty. Anti-Uesugi online groups ultimately followed him to his new venture, \textit{News Log}, which while intended to be a Huffington Post-equivalent, was much more political then its American inspiration, much more focused on articles chronicling the nuclear cleanup at Fukushima and continuing revelations that the government and press club media knew more and different things than they were willing to share in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters. Towards the end of my fieldwork in 2013, 2ch was making a fuss over Tweets it claimed were deleted from Twitter aggregating site Togetter (togetter.com), and claiming that

\textsuperscript{10} This is the Japanese original of the American forum, 4chan, that spawned Anonymous.

\textsuperscript{11} See 1
Uesugi was responsible for a fake “official” Twitter account for former prime minister Jun’ichiro Koizumi. (See Chapter 6)

This brings me to one of the major themes of this work—the division between citizen and professional authors of mass media. I have written extensively here about the attitude of journalists employed by the major newspapers to those working either as furî janarisuto (independent journalists) or citizen journalists creating their own blogs, newspapers, or media organizations. The suspicions of professional journalists regarding the capacity of citizen journalists to practice their profession at the same level is well known, and has been thoroughly accounted for in this text. Nonetheless, I would like to briefly summarize the relationship between the theoretical category of publics, professionalism, and—one of the major themes of this dissertation—the process of co-creating media content between professionals and a tidier (if less knowable) version of the audiences discussed above.

That newspapers are changing was well accounted for in anthropologist Dominic Boyer’s work on the German news media; individual staff members switched between panoptic computer windows at rapid speed, adapting their nervous systems over time to a relentless influx of information needing taxonomic sorting. At present, ethnographic descriptions of workflow are remarkably consistent among print, broadcast, or online news. The major task of such in-office editors and reporters is one of filtering, of processing vast amounts of information to determine what is newsworthy and ought to be prioritized by the organization. For some organizations, lacking the capacity to acquire their own images, this involves aggregating images from the wire

services, and requesting stories from in-house reporters to accompany them or rewriting them while monitoring the angle taken by one’s competitors. As part of this essentially limitless process, images are rapidly tagged, purchased (where necessary), and archived by journalists, often using (computer) scripts to identify appropriate images. In many cases, including in my own fieldwork settings, journalists must cultivate a certain capacity to predict newsworthiness from among a substantial volume of press releases, press conferences, and circulating rumors.

In the case of broadcast journalism, an additional layer of workflow exists in ensuring temporal fit, and authoring scripts to be read by newscasters. The output of most institutions is regular, if not a default state, and although some organizations work towards fewer, more concentrated bursts of output, speed is universally of the essence. Anthropologist Amahl Bishara actually tracked the duration of unique tasks performed during the course of a long journalistic workday, and found coded actions to have an aggregate duration of 2 minutes, 14 seconds. And Boyer calculated the number of discrete activities performed by the “slotters” he observed at 97 per hour, or a change in focus/medium approximately every 37 seconds. It is difficult to avoid association with notions of specialized labor and species being under such conditions; indeed the comparison to a factory is readily made. Ultimately, then, an erratic temporality seems much

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more common in the work of broadcast journalists, but is quickly becoming an historical artifact in this field as well.\textsuperscript{19}

Newspapers, just like television, are therefore transforming globally by virtue of the ways that a digital (and neoliberal) economy continues to act upon their workflow, and are attempting to compete as online content providers— a practice that first entered institutional parlance during the late 1990s. But online newspapers in Japan still remain less successful than their print editions, and are less visited than the news aggregating sites like Yahoo! News.\textsuperscript{20} Television similarly attracts fewer viewers to its online postings than it does to actual programming. This suggests that the successful television of the future will most likely be of two kinds: technologically traditional programming that merely increases in resolution, and interactive television that brings the interactivity to the immediate moment of consumption and relies not on a television set but can be engaged with on mobile and smart devices. This will likely include three-dimensional television.

\textbf{On Publics}

What media is attempting to do in this dissertation, in the hands of those who believe that interactivity is the key to its transformation, to constitute publics through omnidirectional discourse. Warner has claimed in his seminal work on the subject, that a public cannot be created from discourse operating in the model of sender-receiver, even insofar as such simple performances can be considered to exist.\textsuperscript{21} “Texts themselves,” he writes cannot create publics,

but demand the “concatenation of texts through time.” 22 Warner’s definition does not require active participation of all subjects within earshot, but it does require a dialog that operates within the range of their hearing. The space of Nico Nico Douga constitutes that possibility, as does that of interactive television; in these spaces not everyone using the system will do more than observe the comments of others. As he writes: “the agonistic interlocutor is coupled with passive interlocutors.”23 Our Planet-TV too exists as part of this paradigm, by encouraging media consumers to produce original works in conversation with perceived journalistic oversight or failure—to engage with sensitive topics, and by engaging in their own right, formulate a rebuttal in the language of mass media itself. This is the “wide flow of discourse in and out” that defines public, and while television edits incoming discourses (as discussed), so does print media. I would argue it is the intent to create such a dialog and its manifestation, even in truncated form, that makes of it a public. Reflexive circulation, as described by Warner via examples of an emergent French discourse in print serials, may emerge under any conditions, but when television and journalism won’t engage in conversation, but will only broadcast mono-directionally, a genuine public isn’t formed.24 Interactive television crafts a public, then, through its hosts noticing the input of audiences, commenting on it, and thus instigating further commentary from audiences. Independent media use NND to host press conferences and events that move from their characterization as omnidirectional broadcast towards the development of publics by screening comments that are input and displayed on the broadcast window, and posing them out loud to conference presenters. This is not to mention their nature, as I wrote above, as responses to mass media content in general; their very existence takes a form similar to that of a letter-to-the-editor that voices objections to content and suggests improvement.

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22 ibid.
23 ibid.
24 ibid.
Public discourse was not traditionally that of television, owing to its lack of circulation ("just emitted in one direction") The “asymmetrical” mass media, Warner has argued: “take care to fake a reciprocity that they must overcome in order to succeed”.\textsuperscript{25} In this dissertation, I have critically examined emergent television experimentation for signs that it has shed this fake reciprocity– and as mentioned above in my conclusion on publics, I believe that it has in specific moments where those on television are engaging in a dialog with audiences. But there is still room for substantial improvement and greater transparency overall. The “interaction” engaged in by television during the late 1990s, as discussed in Chapter 2 and which heralded an age of new interactive TV is largely implicated by this critique of false reciprocity, even as Warner couldn’t quite account for it due to the timing of his piece. The websites and forums with bonus content did provide fans a space within which to speak, but only to one another and almost never in dialog with the authors of their framework. Thus, the media described in this work represents a leap forward in the constitution of media based publics, and as interactivity increases, Japanese TV/Interactive news publics will become more robust and less comprised of aficionados and specialists.

\textbf{Independent Journalism and Reporters’ Clubs}

Although fellow media anthropologist Laurie Anne Freeman’s book on the \textit{kisha} club system represents an extremely thorough unpacking of its nuances,\textsuperscript{26} I would like to add a few closing remarks regarding the system’s influence on my fieldwork. Having worked amidst some of the most famous and motivated reformers of Japanese media, the idea of this system was never far from my imagination.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{25} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Closing the Shop}, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
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The purpose of the examples contained herein, regarding the many ways that the Japanese media is being pushed back upon, has been to illustrate that there is an evolving mode of journalistic and media professional selfhood in Japan, and to profile some of the organizations most responsible for emphasizing its necessity. My argument has largely been twofold—that the inscription of interactivity has necessitated a rethinking of what journalism is, and its relation to audiences. However, organizations like the FPAJ largely operate on the periphery; their influence remains minor and although they seemed to be growing in prominence during my early fieldwork, the re-election of Abe Shinzo as Prime Minister and the later disillusion of the FPAJ seemed to indicate a shifting of the climate back towards the status quo. Although the FPAJ’s activities (which I have only begun to discuss here), and their establishment of interactive, participatory press conferences represent a provocative challenge to the nature of journalistic praxis as an overall concept, their articulation of an ideal journalistic selfhood on an individual level also challenged what it means to be a reporter in Japan. For an American audience, the romantic ideal of the heroic and indefatigable newsman is a trope with considerable longevity in our national imagination. But in Japan, to conceive of the journalistic mission as such is to still think outside of a system that values restraint and respect above all. That the FPAJ was forced to close for lack of funds during the spring of 2014, merely underscores the notion that theirs was an ideal for which mainstream acceptances remains elusive.

Along those lines, just as online versions of newspapers attract smaller audiences than do print, many Japanese independent journalists remain pragmatic about their capacity to mount a substantial challenge to the status quo of mass media. According to activist Michiko Ishizu, there will always be a place for citizen journalists in the country as long as they conduct themselves
ethically, stand behind their work, and are doing something different from the mass media.\textsuperscript{27} If my fieldwork among the progressive independent media suggests anything, it is that the comparative agility with which independent media is able to experiment with new technology will allow it to stand apart from mainstream television and journalism. Each of the groups profiled here, whether independent or within the mainstream mass media infrastructure are doing something profoundly new, and genuinely increasing the number of voices audible in the Japanese public sphere(s). That the major entertainment conglomerates are unlikely to crumble should not be taken as a sign of negative progress.

\textsuperscript{27} Rausch, \textit{Japan's Local Newspapers}. 