ETHNIC MINORITIES AND THE MEDIA
ISSUES in CULTURAL and MEDIA STUDIES

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Changing Cultural Boundaries

EDITED BY
Simon Cottle

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Simon Cottle's edited collection Ethnic Minorities and the Media: Changing Cultural Boundaries constitutes an incisive intervention into a number of controversial debates about media representations of 'race' and ethnicity in societies such as those in Europe and North America. Each of the eleven contributors engages with a key aspect of these debates from a new vantage point, showing how the cultural boundaries of identity formation may be discerned precisely as they are imposed, transformed and contested across the mediasphere. As the editor makes apparent from the outset, the media engender an array of crucial sites whereby the cultural dynamics of racial and ethnic discrimination (frequently characterized as an 'us' versus 'them' opposition) are being actively invoked in hegemonic terms. At the same time, however, he points out that these same spaces also can be used to affirm social and cultural diversity and, as such, help to create the conditions for the articulation of resistance to these forms of discrimination. It is this shared concern to examine afresh the fluidly contingent forces of cultural power being played out in media discourses, institutions and audiences which lies at the heart of this timely and sophisticated collection.

The Issues in Cultural and Media Studies series aims to facilitate a diverse range of critical investigations into pressing questions considered to be central to current thinking and research. In light of the remarkable speed at which the conceptual agendas of cultural and media studies are changing, the authors are committed to contributing to what is an ongoing process of re-evaluation and critique. Each of the books is intended to provide a lively, innovative and comprehensive introduction to a specific topical issue from a unique perspective. The reader is offered a thorough grounding in the most
salient debates indicative of the book’s subject, as well as important insights into how new modes of enquiry may be established for future explorations. Taken as a whole, then, the series is designed to cover the core components of cultural and media studies courses in an imaginatively distinctive and engaging manner.

Stuart Allan
An edited volume necessarily incurs many debts of thanks, and this one is no exception. I would like to thank Martin Barker, Charles Husband and Teun van Dijk for offering their interest, support and kind words at the outset of this project. I thank, too, all the authors in this volume for providing their very different chapters. These collectively represent, I think, some of the very best, critically engaged, scholarship in this most humanly pressing of fields. My sincere thanks, then, to all contributors who produced their chapters on – or even before – time, and I here publicly forgive the laggards among them who, for reasons not always within their control, began to unhinge my sanity along the way. Such is the lot of the editor!

Once again, I would also like to say a personal thank you to Professor J.D. Halloran for all the support and encouragement that he has kindly offered to me over recent years. His formative influence upon the field of mass communication research and research into issues of media and racism would here be difficult to overestimate. I would also like to thank all the producers both past and present of Black Pyramid, an independent film and video collective based at St Pauls, Bristol, for agreeing to share with me their insights into the problems of making minority television programmes while struggling to make a difference. Thanks, then, to Lorna Henry, Ian Sergeant, Femi Kolade, Shawn Sobers and Rob Mitchell.

This book, in no small measure, bears the imprint of the series editor, Stuart Allan, whose editorial talents have effortlessly moved back and forth between the minutiae of syntax to the book’s abstract conceptualization. Stuart has also proved to be a dab hand at wielding an axe when necessary, though mercifully his gentle swing and precision cuts have proved (relatively)
pain free. I thank Stuart for helping to make this a better book than it might otherwise have been, and for his consistent support, editorial acumen and unfailing good humour – all essential qualities in the very best of editors. Thanks too, to my colleagues at Bath Spa University College, particularly Rob Mears for his gracious support across the years and Andy Brown for his theoretical knowledge of all things ‘race’.

Finally, as always, heartfelt love to my family, Lucy, Ella, Theo and Sam, and to my mother Rita Cottle, for putting up with the often dissociated presence in their midst.
Introduction

MEDIA RESEARCH AND ETHNIC MINORITIES: MAPPING THE FIELD
Simon Cottle

Mapping the field

Today in countries such as those in Europe and North America, the relationship between the media and ethnic minorities is typically characterized by continuity, conflict and change. This book aims to explore the complexity of this interaction by bringing together a range of the latest findings produced by some of the leading international researchers in this field - a field, as we shall hear, which is also essentially contested.

In academic discourse, as in wider society, contending definitions of ‘race’, ‘racism’ and ‘ethnicity’ - to name but a few of the key terms with which we must grapple - currently struggle for theoretical and political recognition. These terms and their corresponding theoretical frameworks, sometimes called the problematics of ‘race’, variously provide us with the means of thinking about and/or thinking through some of the most fundamental categories, distinctions and discriminatory processes that humanity has yet produced for itself and within which, or in relation to which, many of us conduct our lives and construct a sense of who we are, where we belong and where we want to be. Specifically, three general ‘problematics’ currently contend and debate the field of ‘race’ and ethnicity in terms of ‘race relations’, ‘racism/racialization’ and, most recently, ‘new ethnicities’. We shall encounter each in the discussion that follows. Approached through these frameworks ideas of ‘race’ and ethnicity can be evaluated positively or negatively, seen as imposed from outside or mobilized from within, and accounted for with reference to deep-seated social inequalities or the pursuit...
of cultural differences. Fundamentally, though, questions of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ are about the drawing and redrawing of boundaries.

Boundaries define the borders of nations and territories as well as the imaginations of minds and communities. By definition, and often by design, they serve to mark out the limits of a given field, territory or social space. Depending on where one is positioned or is able to stand – whether inside or outside, at the centre or on the margins, or perhaps crossing and recrossing borders – they serve simultaneously to include some of us, exclude others and to condition social relations and the formation of identities. Over time, boundaries can become deeply embedded in the structures and institutions of societies, in their practices and even in their ‘common sense’. Once institutionally sedimented and taken for granted, these boundaries all too often harden into exclusionary barriers legitimized by cultural beliefs, ideologies and representations. In such ways, the marginalized and the excluded can become ontologically disenfranchised from humanity, misrecognized as ‘Other’, exploited and oppressed and, in extremis, vulnerable to systematic, lethal violence.

The media occupy a key site and perform a crucial role in the public representation of unequal social relations and the play of cultural power. It is in and through representations, for example, that members of the media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who ‘we’ are in relation to who ‘we’ are not, whether as ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’, ‘citizen’ and ‘foreigner’, ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’, ‘friend’ and ‘foe’, ‘the west’ and ‘the rest’. By such means, the social interests mobilized across society are marked out from each other, differentiated and often rendered vulnerable to discrimination. At the same time, however, the media can also serve to affirm social and cultural diversity and, moreover, provide crucial spaces in and through which imposed identities or the interests of others can be resisted, challenged and changed. Today the media landscape is fast changing.

Global and local developments in media markets, corporations and technologies are transforming the media environment, leading to new possibilities as well as to new forms of containment with respect to the production, circulation and consumption of media representations of ethnic minorities. Forces of political deregulation, global competition and the convergence of (digitalized) technologies – principally telecommunications, computers, broadcasting and satellite and cable delivery systems – have all reconfigured the global operations, institutional structures and strategic goals and market capabilities of major media players (Herman and McChesney 1997; Mohammadi 1997; Thussu 1998). These same forces have also contributed to the proliferation of media systems and output, growing
audience fragmentation and the strategic importance of niche marketing within and across the borders of nation-states – forces that look set to continue into the foreseeable future.

Set against this wider tide of strategic corporate change, however, are the daily encounters and growing (tactical) uses made of new – and old – interactive technologies of communication by ethnic minority groups and diasporic communities. Today these communication technologies include international telecommunications, audio and video cassettes, mobile phones, mobile music systems, the Internet and email, digital cameras, photocopiers and fax machines, camcorders, and home-based computerized music recording and production systems. These time-space collapsing technologies present new communication opportunities for embattled and/or dispersed ethnic minorities, not least by helping to sustain subcultures and networks and keeping alive memories and myths of homelands as well as collective hopes for the future (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994; Gillespie 1995). These technologies facilitate instantaneous flows of information and ideas as well as the ritual exchange of symbols and images, thereby serving to construct and affirm ‘imagined’ – and now increasingly – ‘virtual’ communities.

Between the international media conglomerates and the daily mediated communications of ethnic minorities, there stands an array of ‘intermediate’ minority media organizations – the minority press, local cable TV stations, local radio, independent commercial television production companies, community-based film collectives. These organizations steer a difficult course between universalist appeals, market imperatives and systems of patronage on the one side, and particularistic aims, community based expectations and felt obligations on the other. Taken together they contribute an important, albeit under-researched, dimension to the communication environment of ethnic minorities and their struggles for ‘authentic’ and/or pluralistic representations (Cottle 1997; Dayan 1998; Browne 1999).

Integral to these struggles are demands that relate specifically to the cultural-politics of representation based on calls for enhanced media access and recognition, whether in mainstream and/or via minority media and outlets. Here limited gains, as well as continuing constraints and setbacks, characterize the contemporary ethnic minority media scene. The mainstream media, though differentiated by medium, outlet, genre and subject interests, all too often produce shocking examples of xenophobic reporting and racist portrayal, while often publicly committing to the ideals and practices of an inclusive multi-ethnic, multicultural society. Institutional inertia, as well as countervailing tendencies, are at work in the operations and the output of today’s mainstream media, as are ideas of multiculturalism and the
representations of white backlash culture. Contradiction and complexity, continuity and change characterize the media today.

Ethnic Minorities and the Media examines how representations of ‘race’ and minority ethnicity are reproduced, elaborated and challenged within today’s media. Particular attention is devoted to the forces that currently shape and constrain their inflection across the media sphere, and how ethnic minorities themselves respond to, use and deploy media within their everyday lives, cultures and identities. The subtitle of this book, Changing Cultural Boundaries, deliberately seeks to draw attention to the ways in which processes of change are currently impacting on the production and reception of ethnic minority media representations, as well as the necessity for many of the media’s representational practices to be challenged and changed. No one can seriously deny the importance, not to say urgency, of this field of investigation. How could they given the enormity of the human consequences – both historical and contemporary – that ideas of ‘race’ and ethnicity have played, and continue to play, in structures of domination and inequality and in the political mobilization of cultural differences and identities.

Towards new departures

Historically, ideas of ‘race’ developed as a means to differentiate social groups as biologically discrete subspecies marked out by physical or phenotypical appearance, innate intelligence and other ‘natural’ dispositions. These ideas are generally traced back to the Enlightenment and scientific attempts to measure, calibrate, typologize and rank people in a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. Within the context of western imperialism and colonialism, such efforts served to naturalize, in the most literal sense of the term, oppressive social relations. In so doing they sought to legitimize systems of power and domination – systems that also found expression in the production and circulation of popular cultural imagery and artistic forms (Said 1978; McLintock 1995; Pieterse 1995). Today, scholars debate ideas about ‘race’ in relation to the historical encounters between different peoples (Jahoda 1999); their ‘disciplinary’ force in legitimizing imperialism and colonialism (Said 1978); their basis in the philosophical tenets and culture of Enlightenment thinking (Goldberg 1993); or how they arose through the contradiction between Enlightenment ideas of equality and the inequalities of capitalist modernity (Malik 1996a). In other words, ideas of ‘race’ are debated not in relation to the discredited reductionism of biology but in relation to the changing social and discursive formations of history.
When approached in this way — historically, socially, discursively — we find that ideas of ‘race’ in fact assume different forms and are intimately entwined with systems of cultural representation — processes that continue to this day. Following the Holocaust, the ultimate racist exclusion, the use of explicit racist language and images within western multi-ethnic societies is likely to confront public opprobrium. In such circumstances it is understandable that essentialist ideas of racial difference may now become re-coded into more ‘acceptable’ ideas of primordial ethnicity or deep-seated cultural differences. Here culture itself becomes largely naturalized as the carrier of collective ancestry, traditions and group/national belonging and destiny: ‘the concept of race arises through the naturalization of social differences. Regarding cultural diversity in natural terms can only ensure that culture acquires an immutable character, and hence becomes a homologue for race’ (Malik 1996a: 150). The ‘new racism’ of public language and discourse, for example, does precisely this when addressing potential immigrants, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers (as well as ethnic minorities ‘within’ the territorial confines of the nation) as cultural ‘outsiders’ who do not belong to a traditional (mythical) ‘way of life’ (Barker 1981; Solomos 1986, 1989; Murray 1986; van Dijk 1991; Gilroy 1992).

Confronted by such racism(s) — those that dare not mention their name — we need to deploy sensitive analytical tools if we are to recover exactly how racialized and racist meanings are embedded within, and reproduced through, the discourses, language, narratives and images of media representations. We also need to recognize the historically variant forms that racism(s) can assume, and how these are produced within and through different state, institutional and everyday practices. And we must also seek to understand how the ideas and practices of ‘race’ inform, and are informed by, other forms of social exclusion and oppression — whether those of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, nation or state. ‘There is considerable historical variation’, as Goldberg writes, ‘both in the conception of races and in the kinds of social expression we characterise as racist’ (Goldberg 1990: 295). Essentialist ideas of (demonized) national character and (tribalized) ethnic differences are often mobilized by state and media in times of war and conflict, further illustrating how racist discourses are not necessarily confined to minorities or need necessarily depend on the physical markers of skin colour (Allan 1999; Allen and Seaton 1999; Beattie et al. 1999b). Racism, then, remains an imperializing and opportunistic discourse capable of accommodating all. These issues are disturbing and should challenge us all to take very seriously indeed the media’s representations of ‘race’ and ethnic minorities. They do not exhaust, however, the complexities of the interactions between ethnic minorities and the media.
The contributors to this collection seek to engage, for the most part, with the changing relationship and interactions between ethnic minorities and the media in the United Kingdom and in the United States. This is deliberate. As the opening statement to this introduction suggests, the relationship between media and ethnic minorities is characterized by complexity, and one way of opening this up to considered discussion is to focus on particular contexts - especially when seeking to identify and theorize new developments and how these depart from previously established research findings. Both the UK and the US have established research traditions in media research, and both have generated considerable research in the field of ethnic minorities and the media - which is not to suggest, of course, that important work has not been produced elsewhere. Strong parallels (as well as differences) exist between these two countries with respect to the multi-ethnic nature of their societies and in the encounters of ethnic minorities with the media - reflecting histories of enforced and voluntary minority settlement, systems and structures of inequality and political struggles for change (Small 1994; Parekh 1997; Stone and Lasus 1998).

A detailed comparative study of the changing cultural politics of ethnic minority media representation in both the UK and the US has yet to be written. The research studies presented here demonstrate that strong parallels do indeed exist and that findings, theoretical discussion and methodological frameworks generated in one national context often have relevance in another, whether in respect to changing representations, changing contexts of production, or changing cultures of identity, and how each separately, and in combination, register and contribute to changing cultural boundaries. Many of the chapter contributions also have relevance of course for those studying the minority media fields in other multi-ethnic, inequalitarian and increasingly media-dependent societies. Whether focused on the globalizing practices of transnational media corporations, diasporic and transnational communities and/or fundamental questions of minority ethnic media access and representation these concerns, by definition, transcend narrowly conceived national borders and may well ‘travel’ and speak to other minority experiences and contexts. It is hoped that readers of this collection, wherever they are based, will be stimulated to ponder, discuss and even better still to study and research for themselves the extent to which the ideas and findings advanced by the different authors on these pages in fact apply to their own situations and changing cultural boundaries.

Each of the chapters that follow is written by a leading researcher in the field, draws upon their latest research and thinking, and can be read as a
self-contained and authoritative statement demonstrating new research departures. When read together, however, this collection also encourages you to situate each of these insightful discussions in relation to each other, in relation to the wider processes of change (and continuity), and also in relation to past research frameworks and findings. To this end each of the chapters that make up the rest of this book shall be introduced so as to highlight their distinctive contribution to the wider research field.

**Changing representations**

Today researchers make use of powerful theoretical frameworks and sophisticated tools of analysis. Varieties of neo-Marxism, multiracial feminisms and post-colonial studies, for example, all currently inform and contend with both established and emergent approaches to the study of the media including political economy, sociology of organizations and professions, cultural studies, discourse analysis and new audience studies. The theoretical encounters within and between these respective approaches often produce lively, sometimes acrimonious, debates centring on fundamental questions of knowledge, epistemology, methodology and the role of politics in academic study. Like all fields of academic endeavour with direct political relevance, such contestation is hardly surprising, nor should it necessarily be lamented. The clash of frameworks and methodologies can prove useful in staking out a field of shared concern and can also help to push the boundaries into new and productive areas.

Frameworks and debates help guide the questions asked by researchers and the approaches that they adopt, and they also help to ‘test out’ the robustness of research procedures, the validity of research findings, and the political relevance of the work undertaken. That said, when confronted by the array of approaches currently debating the essentially contested field of ‘race’ and ethnicity, it is perhaps all too easy to lose sight of the common ground, as well as some of the more fundamental differences structuring the debates and disagreements. Here we can refer once again to the wider problematics of ‘race’ and how each has informed research agendas and priorities and helped to conceptualize different objects of inquiry. Their influence can be detected throughout much of the research field now subject to review.

Over recent decades, a considerable body of research conducted in both the UK and the US has examined the media’s representations of ethnic minorities. The collective findings of this research effort generally make for depressing reading. Under-representation and stereotypical characterization
within entertainment genres and negative problem-oriented portrayal within factuality and news forms, and a tendency to ignore structural inequalities and lived racism experienced by ethnic minorities in both, are recurring research findings.

In Britain in the late 1950s through to the 1970s, for example, studies observed how immigrants were reported in relation to the so-called ‘race riots’ of 1958 (Miles 1984), public health scares (Butterworth 1967), problems of ‘numbers’ and tensions of ‘race relations’ and how this effectively concealed problems of British racism (Hartmann and Husband 1974; Hartmann et al. 1974; Critcher et al. 1977; Troyna 1981). In the 1970s and across the 1980s, studies of news, and other factuality genres, identified the ways in which a ‘moral panic’ orchestrated around ‘mugging’ (Hall et al. 1978), the portrayal of street violence (Holland 1981) and inner city disorders served to criminalize Britain’s black population and ignored continuing social inequalities and growing anger at policing practices and harassment (Sumner 1982; Tumber 1982; Joshua et al. 1983; M urdock 1984; Burgess 1985; Downing 1985; Hansen and M urdock 1985; Solomos 1986, 1989; Cottle 1993a). In the 1980s and 1990s, studies have charted virulent press attacks on anti-racism campaigns, the vilification of black representatives and the support given to statements of ‘new racism’ by prominent politicians, as well as xenophobic reportage of refugees and migrants – actively disparaging attempts to further multicultural and anti-racist agendas (M urray 1986; Gordon and Rosenberg 1989; van Dijk 1991; M cLaughlin 1999; Ph ilo and Beattie 1999). Across the years, numerous studies have also observed the media’s use of stock stereotypes of black people as ‘trouble-maker’, ‘entertainer’ and ‘dependant’ (Hartmann and Husband 1974; Barry 1988; Twitchin 1988; Hall 1990a).

In the US in 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders published its report into the causes of the major ‘disturbances’ that erupted across many US cities (Kerner 1968). In an oft-repeated passage it stated:

The Commission’s major concern with the news media is not in riot reporting as such, but in a failure to report adequately on race relations and ghetto problems . . . In defining, explaining and reporting this broader, more complex and ultimately far more fundamental subject the communication’s media, ironically, have failed to communicate.

(Kerner 1968: 382)

More recently, bell hooks maintains,

there has been little change in the area of representation. Opening a magazine or book, turning on the television set, watching a film, or
looking at photographs in public spaces, we are most likely to see images of black people that reinforce and reinscribe white supremacy. (hooks 1992: 1; see also M artindale 1985; M acDonald 1992; Corea 1995; Ramaprasad 1996)

These and many other studies, then, provide us with evidence of the general patterns, impoverished representations and sometimes starkly racist portrayal found in both the UK and US mainstream media. As general findings, however, these may suggest a relatively static and uniform picture of ideological or representational closure and, in consequence, cover over historical processes of change. Studies are now beginning to recover, for example, how the changing ideas and political agendas of ‘assimilation’, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘anti-racism’ have informed the development of TV representations across the years (Daniels and Gerson 1989; Pines 1992; Daniels 1994; Ross 1996; Bourne 1998) as well as those of the press (Wilson and Gutierrez 1995) and cinema (Shohat and Stam 1994). The influence of ‘liberal’ TV producers (Seymour-Ure 1974; Braham 1982) as well as ‘responsible’ newspaper journalists and newspapers (Paletz and Dunn 1969) have also been observed to have contributed to, respectively, the downplaying of white racist fears and the selective curbing of sensational press treatments of civil disorder. These studies point to further representational complexities and differences in and across the media. And we must also note the limited but real advances in ethnic minority media presence in recent years, whether in respect of TV genres of light entertainment, comedy and advertising in the UK (Givanni 1995; Hall 1995; Beattie et al. 1999a), or successful ‘soaps’ based on black characters in the US (Downing 1988; Jhally and Lewis 1992; Gray 1995), as well as in the commercial crossover (and commodification) of the ‘black culture industry’ more generally (Cashmore 1997). These, too, are important features of ethnic minority representation.

Today, studies increasingly deploy an array of textual methods of analysis when examining the myths, narratives, discourses and language embedded within media representations of ‘race’. The work of Mercer (1994) and Hall (1997), for example, demonstrates how recent images of black bodies often deliberately ‘embody’ ambivalent meanings that play on ideas of cultural difference, stereotypes and intertextuality prompting readings that go ‘against the grain’. Other studies also generally detect at least some discursive contestation and/or challenge to dominant viewpoints across mainstream genres and within minority media outlets whether, for example, in ‘raced’ representations of urban disorders in the US (Gooding-Williams 1993; Fiske 1994a, 1994b; Jacobs 1996; Hunt 1997) or the portrayal of
inner city ‘riots’ in the UK (J. Lewis 1982; Burgess 1985; Hansen and Ur-
dock 1985; Cottle 1993a).

To be clear, none of the above suggests that dominant views of ‘race’ no
longer inform media representations or serve to ‘racialize’ media events –
they most certainly do – but rather that this outcome is precisely that, an
outcome which has to be secured and managed if definitions, interpretations
and prescriptions are to be effectively imposed on such ‘events’. In other
words, media representations of ‘race’ are a product of social and discursive
processes mediated through established cultural forms; they are not a fore-
gone conclusion and they most certainly are not beyond challenge or
change.

Sensitized to the textual forms and discursive nature of media represen-
tations, recent studies have tended to reflect the growing influence of cultural
studies and the wider linguistic (and cultural) turn in contemporary social
theory. Here empiricist ideas of representation and ‘ideology’ have become
increasingly challenged by approaches exploring the ways in which ‘reality’
is constituted (and/or known) within language, discourse and representa-
tions. Approached in such discursive terms, representations do not so
much ‘distort’ reality as productively provide the means by which ‘reality’ is
actively constructed and/or known (whether via ‘social realist’ or ‘social
constructionist’ epistemologies). While this culturalist turn has helped to
sensitize many to the discursive forms in which ‘reality’ is literally made to
mean or ‘signify’, a strict adherence to structuralist (and post-structuralist)
preoccupations with language, texts, signifying systems or ‘regimes of truth’
must always, according to its critics, collapse into forms of textual deter-
minism, cultural relativism and political idealism (Ferguson and Golding
1997). For these commentators, the culturalist analysis of ‘texts’ should be
integrated into a deeper appreciation of the ‘contexts’ of production and
reception and becomes fatally undermined if permanently severed from the
sociological (empirical) analysis of social relations, unequal life chances and
the wider play of power.

Drawing a theoretical line in the sand an influential variant of cultural
studies theorizes popular culture as the terrain on which, and through
which, hegemonic struggles for consent are ideologically conditioned and
discursively played out and thus seeks to keep both the interactions (and
‘articulations’) of the ‘cultural’ and the ‘social’ in view (Hall 1980b, 1999).
British cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s through its reworking of
European structuralisms (Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes) and variants of
Marxism (Voloshinov, Thompson, Williams, Gramsci, Althusser) has
proved to be extraordinarily influential (Hall 1980a, 1980b), and its ideas
have informed analyses of media representations of ‘race’ (Hall 1978; Hall
et al. 1978; Gilroy 1987; Hall 1990a, 1992c). Policing the Crisis (Hall et al. 1978), for example, had sought to analyse how black youth had become criminalized and symbolized as a new ‘folk devil’ by the media in the ‘mugging’ scare of the early 1970s. This ‘moral panic’, it was argued, helped pave the (ideological) way for a new form of state ‘authoritarian populism’ (neo-conservative politics) that itself was a response to processes of national economic decline and growing political dissensus. This analysis relating representations of ‘race’ to wider state interests and processes of ideological reproduction has proved seminal though its explanation of the exact mechanisms linking media institutions, professional practices and cultural representations to political forces of change may now appear under- (or over-) theorized and in need of empirical support.

Recent studies in the US (discussed further below) have made similar connections between ‘media events’ and deep cultural anxieties around issues of ‘race’ (Fiske 1993, 1994a, 1994b; Reeves and Campbell 1994; Hunt 1997, 1999). These studies generally observe how ‘raced’ media events serve conservative political projects but may also sustain counter-hegemonic discourses. Studies such as these, then, remind us how media representations can both register and contribute to the shifting political-cultural climate of ‘race’ – a conflictual and contested terrain that by definition is constantly on the move. Today this terrain increasingly accommodates ideas of ‘multiculturalism’. In my study of a UK regional television news programme, for example, I observed how ethnic minorities are now often portrayed in deliberate ‘multiculturalist’ ways through a (superficial) focus on cultural festivals, individual success stories and the cultural exotica of ethnic minority cultures (Cottle 1993a, 1993b, 1994). These representations are examined with reference to the established conventions of this particular news genre with its populist pursuit of positive stories and ‘celebratory’ features around lifestyle and consumption, as well as a growing multicultural sensibility inside the newsroom. Despite the best intentions of the producers, such ‘multiculturalist’ representations, I argued, may actually serve to reinforce culturally sedimented views of ethnic minorities as ‘Other’ and simultaneously appear to give the lie to ideas of structural disadvantage and continuing inequality.

Interestingly, recent US studies have arrived at similar findings and discerned a new and subtle form of ‘modern racism’. This is interpreted as the unintentional outcome of news producers who seek to move beyond ‘old fashioned racism’ by portraying African Americans in more positive ways but who thereby create an impression of black social advance and thus undermine black claims on white resources and sympathies (Entman 1990; Campbell 1995; Lule 1997). Similar criticisms have also been levelled by Jhally and
Lewis (1992) at the so-called ‘enlightened racism’ of successful ‘black’ TV programmes such as The Cosby Show, ‘which tells us nothing about the structures behind success or failure’ and ‘leaves white viewers to assume that black people who do not measure up to their television counterparts have only themselves to blame’ (Jhally and Lewis 1992: 138) (for an alternative interpretation see Downing 1988). Herman Gray has also questioned the ‘advances’ represented by such portrayals, maintaining that: ‘In the world of television, [America's] open and multiracial society operates within a carefully defined social, cultural and economic assumption that keeps alive the assimilationist assumptions of racial interaction’ (Gray 1986: 232).

These and other studies, then, increasingly point to the dynamic nature and subtleties of media discourse and representation, features that cannot always be captured through simplistic and static applications of the concept of ‘stereotype’ (Mercer 1988, 1989, 1994; Daniels 1990; Cottle 1992). Given the common-sense status of this concept in public and media criticism, it is perhaps worth pointing out some of its limitations when unthinkingly applied to media representations of ‘race’ and ethnicity. Criticisms of the concept of ‘stereotype’ include, for example, its apparent conflation of universal processes of cognition with those more socially motivated or ideological processes of perception; its competing realist and idealist political premises – should representations portray the ‘negative’ realities of ‘raced’ lives and thereby seemingly endorse wider cultural typifications or portray a more ‘positive’ imaginary but then be accused of distorting reality?; its assumption that meanings are ‘contained’ within its terms and are not dependent on (differentiated) audience interpretations; its pulverization of textual complexity and meanings, the latter of which are assumed to be confined to, embodied within, and ‘read off’, depicted characters – though these in any case all too often are methodologically ‘flattened’ in quantitative counts of occupational roles; and its displacement of how, for example, narrative, irony and audience expectations of genre may all contribute to the communication of meaning. In more practical terms, the concept of stereotype may also prove increasingly out of step with the changing cultural politics of representation. Recent ideas concerning new ethnicities and the cultural politics of difference, with their fluid understanding of contested subject-positions (Hall 1988, 1992a, 1999; West 1993) prompt a more diversified stance towards the politics of representation – one that increasingly questions essentialist stereotypes whether ‘negative’ or ‘positive’.

A ritual view to representations of ‘race’ also promises to move beyond the relatively static ideas of stereotypes (Carey 1989; Ettema 1990; Hunt 1999). ‘A ritual view of communication is not directed towards the
extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time’, says Carey, and it involves, ‘not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared belief’ (Carey 1989: 43). Ettema (1990), in a study of ‘press rites and race relations’, develops this approach and demonstrates how the mass media not only reinforce social consensus by routinely affirming shared beliefs but also ‘mediate situations in which individuals or institutions actively engage each other – often to further their own ends – in a stylized public event – a “public enactment” ’ (Ettema 1990: 310). This approach is important because, again, it reveals how some representational opportunities or openings can sometimes be won within an unfolding narrative enacted (and contested) through time. These openings, then, are not entirely predetermined by the forms of news texts or contained by the strategic advantages of dominant social interests.

Hunt (1999) further illuminates the power of this ritual approach in his detailed analysis of the ‘media event’ of the O.J. Simpson case. This study observes how different political projects sought to mobilize their interests in and through four principal narratives that surrounded the black celebrity’s televised trial and his subsequent acquittal for the murder of his wife and her friend. Narratives of the ‘Celebrity-Defendant’, ‘Black “Other”’, ‘Domestic-Violence’ and ‘Just-Us’ variously served, according to Hunt, as hegemonic discourses in support of the status quo or as counter-hegemonic discourses aimed at disrupting the status quo and its current treatment of women and black Americans. The study thus ‘acknowledges the potent effect of integrative, hegemonic forces like ritual without discounting the possible infiltration of counter-hegemonic ideas’ (Hunt 1999: 46).

Fiske (1994a) has also deployed ideas of ‘media events’ to capture the seemingly ‘hyperreal’ media exposure granted to major stories like the O.J. Simpson case. This media event became such a phenomenon, according to Fiske, because it served to express the deep conflictual cultural undercurrents of ‘race’ within American society as well as the increasingly ‘mediated’ nature of our ‘postmodern times’. Fiske attends to the succession of ‘media events’ involving black men in recent years, for example, O.J. Simpson, Rodney King, Clarence Thomas, Willie Horton, Mike Tyson and Marion Barry, and argues:

These men do not figure as unique individuals, but only as the products of the white imagination; they figure as embodiments of the white fascination with and terror of the Black male and his embodiment of a racial-sexual threat to white law and order.

(Fiske 1994a: xv)

These representations of ‘race’, then, serve to racialize, criminalize and
sexualize black men and, by processes of symbolization, the wider black community.

Notwithstanding the ‘postmodern’ nature of our societies these findings in fact resonate with those from earlier times. A chilling example helps make the case. In 1938 Ames reported on her study of (pre-modern) American society in the 1930s and how, ‘Newspapers and Southern society accept [racist] lynching as justifiable homicide in defence of society’, particularly with respect to ‘the protection of white women’, and how ‘This attitude of society in the south – this sympathetic understanding of a barbarous act while regretting the fact – influences editorial opinion’ (Ames 1938; see also Omi 1989). Notwithstanding the developments and complexities of media representations it seems that significant sections of today’s media continue to reproduce racist myths and white fears.

In their different ways each of the three chapters that comprise Part I on ‘Changing representations’ interrogate the continuing influence of white racism within today’s media. This is so, notwithstanding the development of new technologies of communication, growing multicultural awareness within sizeable sections of the media audience, and the increasingly unacceptable public use of explicit racist language. Each chapter provides us with new departures in the analysis of contemporary media representations and together these alert us to the necessity of engaging with, and critically challenging, the discursive and representational forms of contemporary media racisms.

In Chapter 2, ‘New(s) racism: a discourse analytical approach’, Teun van Dijk outlines his discourse analytical approach and the insights that this delivers when applied to an example of ‘new(s) racism’. Van Dijk’s work has been at the forefront of recent international developments in discourse analysis as well as in the applied examination of communicated racism in both text and talk (van Dijk 1987, 1988a, 1991). His discussion provides us with invaluable tools for the analysis of mediated ‘new(s) racism’ often embedded within the structures and presuppositions of language. The example used in this chapter is a news report taken from the popular British newspaper the Sun, a tabloid that has often been criticized for its racist portrayals in the past. In the light of continuing press reporting of refugees, ‘economic migrants’ and asylum seekers in Britain in xenophobic, ethnocentric and racist terms, van Dijk’s approach is all too relevant to our times and will hopefully equip others to examine, expose and challenge the subtleties of new(s) racism wherever it is found.

Fiske, as we observed above, has recently interrogated some of the US’s most spectacular, hyperreal ‘media events’ involving black Americans and how these have served to visualize white fears and imagination in powered
displays of cultural representation (Fiske 1993, 1994a, 1994b). In Chapter 3, ‘White watch’, John Fiske develops his earlier analyses with particular reference to practices of racialized surveillance since, in his view, ‘the relations between the seer and the seen, between the knower and the known, are ultimately ones of power’. Videotapes and televised pictures have featured prominently in recent media events, whether the live televised broadcast of O.J. Simpson fleeing the attentions of the police and his subsequent court trials, the videotape of Marion Barry, the former Black mayor of Washington, DC, allegedly accepting drugs from an ex-girlfriend, or the videotape of the Los Angeles Police Department beating Rodney King that subsequently led to televised scenes of the Los Angeles ‘riots’ or (discursively contested) ‘radical shopping’ (Fiske 1994a). Developing theoretical ideas from Foucault, Fiske argues that the growth of contemporary forms of social surveillance are involved in the construction of a ‘regime of truth’ which serves to abnormalize and racialize black people and maintain the social order of whiteness. Fiske’s chapter thus challenges us to rethink the apparent neutrality of technologies of surveillance and examine how these produce and communicate racialized knowledge which differentially penetrate into white and black lives.

In Chapter 4, ‘Dreaming of a white...’ John Gabriel also interrogates ideas of ‘Whiteness’ and the roles played by both established and new media in its construction and circulation. His discussion therefore develops previous themes of the discursive complexity and articulation involved in racialized representations, especially in relation to those of ethnicity, gender and sexuality as well as the varying roles played by different forms of media – cinema, television, radio, the press, the Internet, CD-ROMs – in affirming and popularizing forms of white consciousness and racist backlash culture. Gabriel situates these developments in relation to the shifting politics of ‘race’, global processes of change and the intertwined histories of the US and Britain. Whiteness should not be regarded as a monolithic discourse, he maintains, nor are whites a homogeneous ethnic group; rather, whiteness is a ‘pathological discourse which has been constructed to create the fiction of a unitary and homogeneous culture and people’. Today many whites feel anxious and under threat and this produces, according to Gabriel, a white backlash culture expressed in and across today’s different media.

**Changing contexts of production**

In comparison to studies of media representations of ‘race’, racism and ethnicity, studies of media production in this context are relatively few and far
between — a finding that reflects an imbalance in the wider field of media communication studies more generally, the practical difficulties of securing research access to media production domains, and the influence of theoretical frameworks disposed to privilege the 'moment' of the text. Currently this imbalance threatens to underestimate, and under-theorize, the important forces that both condition and constrain, as well as facilitate and enable, ethnic minority media involvement in the production of representations. Studies of media representations often lack a theory of 'mediation' and, in consequence, collapse the forces of production into culturally defined 'frameworks of knowledge' that are thought to be at work in the production (or, to borrow Stuart Hall’s terms, the 'encoding') of media output (Hall 1980c). As such, they tend to overlook Hall’s recognition of ‘the relations of production’, the ‘technical infrastructure’ and the ‘institutional structures’ that also condition and shape the practices and output of media workers. There is much more to ‘media production’, of course, than the professional incorporation of surrounding cultural discourses. Neither can ‘production’ usefully be confined, as theorized in structuralist accounts, to the ‘production’ of meanings within ‘texts’ and systems of signification, or processes of identity formation ‘produced’ exclusively within/through contending narratives and discourses. That said, ‘production’ is not hermetically sealed behind institutional walls nor confined to organizational decision making and professional routines, and nor is it simply the (unmediated) expression of market forces. ‘Production’ involves all of these forces in dynamic combination and much else besides.

Research into media production has particular relevance for our understanding and theorization of racialized and racist media representations as well as for the under-representation of ethnic minorities as media professionals and cultural producers. Miles (1989) has usefully differentiated between the processes and mechanisms involved in the reproduction of social exclusion, disadvantage and racist discrimination – processes that by definition cannot all usefully be analysed and understood as ‘racism’. Historical processes and structural factors can lead to exclusions and disadvantages that are not, in consequence, consciously intended or ideologically premised on racist ideas. When we consider the operations, institutions and practices of the media we should therefore not be surprised to find that a complex of factors and processes may also be at work here too, resulting in ethnic-minority under-representation. Of course this is not to deny that racist thinking and institutionalized racism may also be involved. But if we want to better understand the forces that contribute to the under-representation of ethnic minorities within the media workforce as well as their misrepresentation in terms of media portrayal, we have to grapple with all the complexities at work.
Viewed through a wide-angled lens, media production is shaped by prevailing state policies and socio-political responses to ethnic minorities, as comparative studies of different multicultural nations demonstrate. Political ideas of assimilation, integration, pluralism, multiculturalism and/or anti-racism can all variously inform the regulatory frameworks and cultural climates in which mainstream and minority production can either flourish or flounder (Riggins 1992; Dowmunt 1993; Husband 1994a; Frachon and Vargaftig 1995; Jakubowicz 1995). State regulatory frameworks and media policies are themselves subject to international forces including, as mentioned above, globalizing market trends, increased commercialism and technological developments, as well as other impinging geopolitical realities. Media industries and organizations are competing in uncertain times and volatile markets, and they strategically seek to position themselves in relation to regulatory authorities, competitors and consumers. Changing media structures and processes therefore shape the production contexts and frame the operations, budgets and strategic goals of media institutions, and these are condensed within senior decision making and must be professionally (pragmatically) negotiated by media professionals and producers in their daily practices.

Only a few studies have empirically examined how these and other forces impact on the production environment and producers of ethnic minority representations (defined here as 'about', 'for' or 'produced by'). Such studies include, for example, those of producers and the production of TV documentaries (Elliott 1972; Anwar and Shang 1982; Roscoe 1999); local radio programmes (Husband and Chouhan 1985) and black liberation radio (Fiske 1993: 227–33; Albert-Honore 1996); commercial TV magazine programmes and regional news (Cottle 1993a, 1993b); public service (BBC) multicultural programming (Cottle 1997, 1998); independent commercial and community-based TV and film (Salam 1995; Cottle 1997); minority cable TV (Tait and Barber 1996; Ismond 1997a, 1997b); the British Punjabi press (Tatla and Singh 1989) and the Black minority press more generally (Benjamin 1995); independent video and film collectives in Britain (Pines 1988; Hussein 1994) and in Britain and the US compared (Snead 1994). Key factors and constraints identified at work here include, inter alia, limited finances, resources and training opportunities, systems of patronage and corporate gatekeepers, institutional conservatism and organizational hierarchy, producers’ attitudes and cultural capital, source dependencies and source inhibitions, professional norms of balance and objectivity, professional status claims, cultural obligations and the ‘burden of representation’, audience expectations, temporal production cycles, and the conventions and aesthetics of media forms. Some of these forces ‘at work’
will be unpacked and discussed further below, as well as in some of the chapters that follow.

Together, however, these studies suggest that both individualist and instrumental explanations of media production do not fully encapsulate the complexities involved. There is more going on than simply the enactment of individual ideas and preferred cultural outlooks, or the manipulation of the media by senior corporate figures and/or surrounding political interests. Indeed, early studies of ‘race’ and the media by James Halloran and others had pointed to the complexities involved in explaining the media’s ‘failure to communicate’ when indentifying the involvement of, inter alia, the ‘event orientation’ of news, the operation of deep-seated news values (‘negativity’, ‘drama’, ‘conflict’, ‘personalization’, ‘violence’), the commercial logic of the media industries, as well as the ‘inferential frameworks’ or cultural/professional outlooks and expectations of the media workers concerned (Halloran 1974, 1977; see also Kushnick 1970; Knopf 1973; Hartmann and Husband 1974).

Accordingly, we must also attend to the various structures, contexts and dynamics that inform and shape media representations – regulatory, institutional, commercial, organizational, technological, professional, and cultural/ideological. To date, by far the most developed area of production research concerns journalism and news organization and the levels of production and professionalism. A brief review of some of these key findings thus helps to illustrate some of the complexities ‘at work’, complexities that are often missed and under-theorized in analyses of the cultural discourses ‘at play’ within media texts.

**Journalist and proprietor prejudice**

Anecdotal evidence provided by working journalists and observers suggests that many journalists and news proprietors do indeed harbour racist views and sentiments (Hollingsworth 1990: 132). Proprietorial involvement in setting news policy, hiring and firing senior editors, and even dictating headlines are also well documented (Pilger 1986, 1998). Much might seem to depend, therefore, on the personal views of proprietors, senior editors and ordinary journalists. However, on closer examination, research suggests that other more influential structures and processes are at work.

**Ethnic composition and journalist training**

The ethnic composition of journalists, their recruitment, professional training, on-the-job socialization, and problems of retention are clearly of
relevance here. If journalists are found to come predominantly from white middle-class homes, select educational institutions and/or share similar middle-ground political values, undoubtedly this will influence the sensibilities and knowledge base informing journalist output. Recent data and discussion of Britain's ethnic minority journalists confirm that a gross imbalance between white and ethnic minority journalists continues to structure training and employment patterns and opportunities within the news media industry (Ainley 1998). Of the estimated 4012 national newspaper journalists only 20 (0.5 per cent) according to Ainley, are Black or Asian, while a mere 15 (0.2 per cent) out of 8000 work for the provincial press. In the broadcasting industry matters are slightly improved with an estimated 100 (2.7 per cent) Black or Asian editorial staff among 3700 – here, the equal opportunities policies, ethnic minority monitoring and training schemes of the BBC are thought to have helped, though Ainley (1998) reminds us that half of all Black staff work on black-only radio and television programmes. (For US data and discussion see Downing 1994; Wilson, this volume.)

Such figures are an indictment of the news media and demand concerted action to bring about real improvement. Ethnographic studies of news organizations and professionalism nonetheless also indicate that processes of journalist socialization (and retention) may be as important as journalist recruitment. Colleague esteem, successful newsroom acceptance and promotion and career moves depend upon conformity to a news policy and news organization goals, not their disruption (Breed 1955; Mazingo 1988; Cottle 1993a; Wilson, this volume). Researchers have also often commented on the ostensible lack of conflict within newsrooms and the unspoken acceptance of both shared news values and a widespread professional ideology of ‘objectivity’ – an ideology that may well have the effect of distancing ethnic minority journalists from acting as advocates for those minority groups and interests they might otherwise seek to serve (Cottle 1998; Allan 1999).

**Competition and marketplace pressures**

News organizations, for the most part, are in business to make profits and all compete for readers and audiences. Political economy research raises a third explanation based on the wider system of commercial constraints and pressures bearing down on the ‘cultural industries’ and their news output (Murdock 1982; Golding and Murdock 1996). Surviving in a competitive marketplace means seeking the maximum audience/readers and the maximum receipts from advertisers. In this context, news is produced just like
any other commodity for the largest possible group of consumers. Within a predominantly white society and culture, economic forces can centre ‘middle ground’ white opinion and interests since this is where the largest market and profits are found, and thereby marginalize minority interests, voices and opinions. Also, high market entry costs and potentially smaller audiences, and hence advertiser reluctance to pay for advertising in such outlets, all inhibit the successful formation and growth of minority ethnic news media - though some have managed against the odds to secure a niche market (Tatla and Singh 1989; Riggins 1992; Benjamin 1995). In the mainstream, market pressures also contribute to press sensationalism, populist forms and formats, and can lead to the orchestration of ‘race’ controversy in pursuit of readers, ratings and revenue.

Bureaucratic organization and new technologies

Bureaucratic and organizational pressures within the newsroom, as well as impersonal economic forces outside, are also at work. Confronted with the daily pressures of news deadlines and the uncertainty of tomorrow’s news events, news teams seek, as far as possible, to ‘tame the news environment’ and ‘routinize the unexpected’. One way of doing this is to rely on key institutional sources of news, such as the police or government sources, for example, who serve as the nation’s primary definers of reality (Hall et al. 1978). The result is that little energy or resources are devoted, as a matter of routine, to the search for non-institutional voices and viewpoints. When coupled with a professional journalistic claim to impartiality and objectivity which, ironically, is achieved in practice via the accessing of authoritative (that is, authority) voices, so the bureaucratic nature of news production is geared to privilege the voices and viewpoints of (white) social power holders, and not those excluded from powerful institutions.

That said, recent sociological studies of news source interventions, as well as ritual studies of news representation and production referenced earlier (Hunt 1999), now suggest that questions of news access may not be so clear cut and are contingent on the contestation of competing sources. The changing cultural-political field of ‘race’ and the unfolding narratives of particular news stories can also contribute to a wider caste of news actors, voices and viewpoints than may be anticipated, as certain stories break through news thresholds and become mobilized by different political interests and projects and stimulate ‘pack journalism’ (Cottle 2000a). In the context of the UK, the unprecedented media exposure that has built across the years following the racist murder of the young British student Stephen Lawrence in 1993 is a case in point. Across the years 1993 to 1998 The Guardian
newspaper, for example, produced no fewer than 347 news reports on this one murder and its aftermath. Generally media attention has focused on the actions, pronouncements and failings of the police, the courts, a public inquiry as well as senior government ministers suggesting that a powerful combination of social and cultural forces are at work in the creation of this high profile ‘media event’ (Cottle 2000b).

Researchers also need to attend to new digital technologies of news production and delivery which, in combination with increased commercial pressures and political deregulation, have recently begun to reconfigure newsrooms and journalist practices. Journalists are increasingly under pressure to work ‘flexibly’ as multi-skilled workers producing news for multimedia news outlets. A recent study of just such a multimedia ‘news centre’ demonstrates how the introduction of new technologies and multi-skilled practices have contributed in practice to undermining community source involvement. This was so notwithstanding the possibilities of electronic news production systems, the Internet, email, video telephones, video cameras and so on to enhance search facilities, community access and widen forms of minority ethnic news participation (Cottle 1999). Quite simply the multi-skilled journalists fashioning news for TV, radio and on-line had neither the time nor the professional imagination to enhance ethnic minority community involvement through the use of these new technologies.

Deep-seated news values

News values, ‘one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society’ (Hall 1981: 234), have long been noted to help select, order and prioritize the production of news representations (Galtung and Ruge 1981). In the context of ethnic minority reporting, then, it is perhaps unsurprising that news often forefronts images of ethnic minorities in terms of conflict, drama, controversy, violence and deviance (Halloran 1974, 1977; Hartmann and Husband 1974; Troyna 1981; Cottle 1991). The question here, though, is not whether these news values are exclusive to ethnic minority reporting because clearly they inform other news stories as well, but rather to what extent they figure in a disproportionate number of stories about ethnic minorities framed in such ways. We should question to what extent ‘news values’ can really be assumed to be universal given the professionally produced variations found in and across different news forms. The recent development of, and controversy surrounding, the so-called ‘public journalism’ in the US, for example, with its advocacy of democratic participation helps to illustrate how ‘news values’ need not be seen as written in stone (Glasser and Craft 1998).
News forms and news genres

News organizations typically work to an identifiable editorial position and in-house style. Journalists also reproduce these distinctive news forms according to a number of genre and sub-genre conventions. These too exert a shaping impact upon the selection and framing of news stories about ethnic minorities, as the discussion of local news representations of ‘race’ above, has already suggested. We can also observe how processes of ‘tabloidization’ or, in more derogatory terms, ‘dumbing down’, led by commercial imperatives and professional perceptions of their audience are today changing television schedules, programme formats and newspaper appeals. These processes indirectly and directly impact on subject selection and silences within and across the news (and other forms of ‘factuality’ programming) and often inform the sensationalist and/or superficial spin that accompanies their presentation – processes already documented to have deleteriously influenced the TV representation of ethnic minorities and issues (Cottle 1993a; Ross 1996).

The above has done no more than briefly indicate some of the interrelated structures and processes of news manufacture that condition and shape – both directly and indirectly – the production of news representations of ethnic minorities. Not everything, it seems, can necessarily be accounted for with reference to the hegemonic play of cultural power and discursive contestation embodied within media representations – behind the scenes there is often more going on than meets the eye. Today, as we have already heard, the media landscape is fast changing and the three chapters that comprise the second part, ‘Changing contexts of production’, examine this changing scene in relation to the production of television programmes and press representations of ethnic minorities. The three chapters address different levels of interrelated change. These comprise the changing patterns of newsroom recruitment of ethnic minority journalists and the impact of traditional processes of journalist socialization; the informing context of commercial and corporate change and the response of professional programme makers to these new media constraints and pressures; and the changing global and technological landscape of the media industry more widely and its impact on the production and circulation of representations of ‘blackness’.

In Chapter 5, ‘The paradox of African American journalists’, Clint Wilson addresses the contemporary position of African American journalists in US newsrooms. The chapter first historically contextualizes the current situation of African American journalists in relation to earlier calls for change, and provides up to date data on the employment of black journalists and editors in today’s newsrooms. Wilson argues that the situation, though
slightly improved in recent years, nonetheless remains woefully inadequate
and seeks to explain why it is that news representations continue to ignore
black perspectives, notwithstanding the employment of some black journal-
ists. Wilson focuses on how processes of institutional socialization and sanc-
tions within newsrooms continue to work against necessary change in news
media content. In effect, he argues, the pressures for change and the forces
of news media institutional socialization have created a paradox for black
journalists.

In Chapter 6, ‘A rock and a hard place: making ethnic minority tele-
vision’, Simon Cottle also attends to the production environment and pro-
fessional practices of ethnic minority media workers. Here, however, the
focus shifts to the production of ‘multicultural programmes’, that is, pro-
grammes produced by, for and about Britain’s ethnic minorities, by the
public service broadcaster the BBC, as well as by independent commercial
companies and community-based producers. Producers and the production
of multicultural television have often been overlooked in theoretical discus-
sions. Drawing on his recent empirical research, Cottle illuminates, with the
help of the producer’s accounts and experiences, how a number of commer-
cial, corporate and cultural constraints are pragmatically accommodated by
today’s producers. These constraints and accommodations are shown to
thwart programme intentions and cast doubt on corporate statements of
commitment towards multicultural programme production.

In Chapter 7, ‘Black representation in the post network, post civil rights
world of global media’, Herman Gray explores the structural transform-
ations in the global media industry and ponders what this means for black
television programming and black media representations. He raises ques-
tions about the ‘meanings of blackness’ when played in the distant reaches
of the vast corporate marketplace made possible by satellite, cable, the Inter-
et and other forms of global delivery, as well as the possibility that the per-
sistence of racialized programming patterns and viewing preference may
suggest the presence of a ‘post civil rights discourse’. Gray concludes, how-
ever, that though media representations do obviously signify at multiple
levels and in different times and places, they continue to bear the traces of
their conditions of production and the historicity of their time and place.

**Changing cultures of identity**

Studies of ethnic minority audiences, remarkably, remain a rarity. Given the
recent enthusiasm for ideas of ‘active’ audiences in recent media approaches
(Dickinson et al. 1998), this silence, with a few exceptions only, is perhaps
all the more surprising. In another sense, however, it simply continues the institutional logic and academic inertia which, until recently, has conspired to ignore what ethnic minorities themselves might think, want, or say about media representations, the media's involvement within their everyday lives, or their media hopes for the future. This situation is now under pressure to change. In these 'new (media) times' of technological proliferation, accelerating global reach, fragmenting markets and increased competition, minority audiences can become targeted as potentially lucrative markets and their consumer tastes and media requirements may, in consequence, be deemed worthy of market research. A growing ‘multiculturalist’ sensibility combined with a corporate PR (public relations) culture has also, no doubt, encouraged major media players to publicly commit themselves to multicultural aims and occasionally sponsor research aimed at finding out what they should already know - and many ethnic minorities, of course, have always known.

More theoretically, academic interest in processes of audience reception involving ‘interpretative communities’, ‘polysemic texts’, differentiated ‘decoding’, situated contexts of domestic appropriation, and media use within local settings and cultural milieux, has also recently combined with research interests previously signalled within the ‘new ethnicities’ problematic. Together these conceptual approaches are now prompting new and significant work in this area (J. Lewis 1991; Jhally and Lewis 1992; Gillespie 1995; Barker 1997, 1998). Linking both these new approaches to audiences and the new ethnicities problematic are shared concerns with cultural processes of sense-making and how these inform the construction of identities and communities - whether ‘interpretative’ and/or ‘imagined’. This culturalist approach to audiences thus promises to deliver deep insights into processes of communicated meaning and sense-making. As such it is a far cry from earlier sociological attempts to map and record processes of media communication and diffusion as in, for example, a study of the Detroit riot of 1967 which involved interviews with 500 arrested ‘Negro’ men (Singer 1970), or the behaviourist simplicities that suggest a ‘causal’ media effect prompting ‘copycat’ rioting (Scarman 1986: 173–5).

Market surveys, prompted by the commercial logics that underpin their design, are generally poorly equipped to delve into the complexities of minority and diasporic interpretative processes and/or situated media appropriation and use. Recent academic surveys have revealed, however, important patterns of majority and minority media use, programme preferences and attitudes towards majority and minority ethnic provision (Hallooran et al. 1995; Mullan 1996). When aggregate results are followed up with interviews, as in both of these studies, qualitative findings emerge that often
reveal collective minority dissatisfaction and frustration with the media's seeming inability to provide representations that portray their communities and cultures, their difficulties and diversity, in ways that are thought to be valid or fair – findings also exposed and discussed by Karen Ross (this volume). Viewer response mail has also provided researchers with retrospective insights into how white and Black viewers have differentially responded to and made sense of early 'symptomatic' TV texts, that is, programmes that register the racial tensions of their time (Bodroghkozy 1995). Interviews with ethnic minority audiences of contemporary media 'texts' have also revealed differential readings (Bobo 1995).

These latter studies invariably move beyond a concern with differentiated 'attitudes' towards media output and pursue a deeper appreciation of interpretative processes with the help of a model of audience 'decoding' (Hall 1980c). This model anticipates differential audience responses, given the 'polysemous' nature of media texts which are thought capable of sustaining 'dominant-hegemonic', 'negotiated' and 'oppositional' codes of audience reading. This model informed David Morley's early empirical study of audience responses to the UK television news programme Nationwide though, revealingly, he noted how a group of black students 'make hardly any connection with the discourse of Nationwide. The concerns of Nationwide are not the concerns of their world. They do not so much produce an oppositional reading as refuse to read it at all' (Morley 1980: 134).

In-depth qualitative studies of 'raced' responses to selected 'media events', whether the Los Angeles 'riots' of 1992 or the trials of the black celebrity O.J. Simpson, are also revealing. Hunt (1997) observes, for example, how 'black-raced' informants exhibited a consciousness qualitatively different from that exhibited by 'Latino-raced' and 'white-raced' informants when 'reading' the same mainstream television news portrayal of the Los Angeles 'riots'. According to Hunt, 'They were generally hostile toward KTTV assumptions that localized the significance of the events, that blurred the event's connection to issues of systematic racial and economic injustice in the US' (Hunt 1997: 163). He concludes that 'we are presented with a case where textual interpellations and audience resistance are intimately connected to raced ways of seeing' (ibid; see also Fiske 1993, 1994a, 1994b; Hunt 1999).

The complexities of audience reception and sense-making are not exhausted, however, with reference to these 'raced' ways of seeing. The interactions and various uses made of different media technologies and their insertion into everyday cultural practices and cultural milieux involves more than this – important though the structuring logics and outlooks of 'raced' media involvement undoubtedly are in shaping media responses and
interpretations. Questions of identity and media interpretation are unlikely, when viewed from the new ethnicities problematic, to simply render down into what can often appear to be essentialized audience positions and predicted differences of ‘raced’ decoding. The complexities and contestation of multiple ‘subject positions’ or ‘positionalities’ discursively mobilized within and through ‘new ethnicities’, hybrid-cultures and contested cultural spaces would rather suggest a more fluid and complex set of cultural responses within processes of media reception and identity formation (Barker 1997, 1998). Here concerns of mediated ‘race’ and racism appear to have become decentred within emergent work conducted within the new ethnicities problematic. Current use of the terms ‘transcultural’, diaspora and diasporic consciousness, terms increasingly substituted for those of ‘ethnic minority’ and ‘ethnic minority culture’, further signal this theoretical shift towards culturally fluid, spatially transnational, and multi-layered discursive (and affective) ‘reading’ positions and how these are sustained within the cultural boundaries of diasporic experience (Dayan 1998; Hall 1999).

The chapters in Part III, ‘Changing cultures of identity’, help to illustrate the importance that is currently attached to this area of empirical research and theorization and provides four very different discussions. In Chapter 8, ‘In whose image? TV criticism and Black minority viewers’, Karen Ross outlines and discusses findings from an innovative study of black audiences commissioned by the BBC. The study involved 353 members of different black minority communities and made use of different methods – focus groups, interviews, viewing diaries, questionnaires. Ross considers the ways in which black minority audiences interact with television images and explores the perceptions which different black minorities hold towards televisual output. Salient audience themes raised, and discussed, include audience ideas of ‘stereotyping’ and the marginality of black minority characters, the dominance of ‘racism’ themes in programmes featuring black characters, cross-cultural relationships, and the impact of negative images on both white and black audiences. The chapter also explores some of the methodological concerns which arise when research with black minority communities is undertaken by white researchers and problematizes the notion that only black researchers can do black research. Ross concludes that ‘What black minority viewers want is not something huge and extravagant but something small and relatively easy to provide: the opportunity to see themselves, in all their diversity, portrayed credibly on that most powerful of media – television’.

In Chapter 9, ‘Ethnicity, national culture(s) and the interpretation of television’, Ramaswami Harindranath calls into question the tendency within recent audience reception studies to work with a static view of ethnicity and
a crude and reductionist understanding of cultural differences. Too often, he contends, influential audience studies like Liebes and Katz’s *The Export of Meaning* (1993) run the risk of reproducing racial stereotypes when television’s interpretations are thought to be determined by the ethnic community to which the respondent belongs. Drawing on his recent cross-national research and deploying theoretical ideas drawn from H.-G. Gadamer, Harindranath acknowledges the centrality of the notion of collective identity in processes of audience interpretation but proposes a more complex link between understanding and collectivity. His discussion identifies the presence of a ‘third’ culture, a hybrid between his two selected national cultures. Not only is this pertinent to debates concerning ‘cultural imperialism’, but also it suggests a vital avenue for audience research concerned with cross-cultural consumption of mediated knowledge and the complexities involved.

In Chapter 10, ‘Transnational communications and diaspora communities’, Marie Gillespie explores how transnational media play a role in sustaining South Asian diaspora formations and consciousness by focusing on the everyday cultural and discursive practices among British Asian youth living in Southall, London. Gillespie argues for the relevance of an anthropological approach and illustrates her case with findings from a study of the reception of two TV versions of the *Mahabharata*, a foundational text of Indian society and culture, widely viewed in India and in the diaspora. She shows how Hindu women in London and Delhi selectively appropriate and contest key narratives for their own purposes, and in so doing subvert patriarchal and nationalist discourses in the construction of their own worldviews and identities. The key finding reported here is that young British Asians make shared use of transnational TV programmes and video films and that TV talk about them, far from being trivial and inconsequential, constitutes an ‘embryonic public sphere’ involving forms of self-narration and a forum in which different identities are experimented with and performed.

In Chapter 11, ‘Media and diasporic consciousness: an exploration among Iranians in London’, Annabelle Sreberny discusses findings from recent research into one of Britain’s near-invisible Muslim and ‘unmarked’ ethnic communities. She reflects on the developing ideas and theorization of ‘diaspora’ and notes how work which focuses on racism, xenophobia and the dynamics of exclusion in western societies often overlooks the importance of cultural memories and attachments to other spaces and places that ethnic communities often hold dear. Sreberny explores this dimension of diasporic experience and consciousness, and examines how the contemporary media forms of diasporic communities can ‘bind’ such transnational
communities together and serve to maintain minority ethnic cultural identities, and cultural attachments. What we need, she argues, are empirically grounded studies of how diaspora is experienced, lived in the everyday, and what kind of roles different media play within the complex set of psychological, sociological and cultural locations that comprise diasporic realities.

**On the right to communicate**

The chapters in this book all contribute new departures in the media-ethnic minority field, and each presents new research findings with respect to ‘changing representations’, ‘changing contexts of production’ and ‘changing cultures of identity’. Implicit to the structure of this book, as well as this brief sketch of the research field, is the argument that each of these areas of research and theorization are indispensable for an understanding of the interrelated complexities informing the interactions between media and ethnic minorities and changing cultural boundaries. These different research emphases and approaches are productive of different insights as well as theoretical tensions – some of which have surfaced and remain unresolved in this introductory ‘mapping’. Hopefully, however, the different levels of analysis and insights produced by each can be acknowledged as necessary for improved understanding. Political economy remains an indispensable tool in the analysis of the changing configuration of media industries and new production technologies. Cultural studies and forms of discourse analysis are no less necessary in the interrogation of media texts, representations and meanings. Sociological approaches to media organizations and professional practices, for their part, continue to produce improved understanding of the processes and practices by which media workers routinely grapple with institutional constraints and cultural obligations. And ethnographic and other qualitative approaches to the studies of audiences are now producing real advances in our appreciation of audience media involvement in processes of identity formation and identity maintenance.

Implicit to all the chapters that follow, despite their inevitable differences, is a shared concern with how the media currently represent, respond to, and perform in relation to ethnic minorities living with multi-ethnic, multicultural societies. Often informing these critical discussions, then, is a normative evaluation of how the media ought to represent, respond or perform in relation to ethnic minorities, and it is this commitment which often animates detailed research and provides the critical cutting-edge of engaged scholarship. The term ‘multicultural’ is perhaps pivotal here and contains within it fundamental questions (and immanent disputes) about the
relationship between cultural identity and diversity, citizenship rights and responsibilities, and the exercise and organization of state power and civil society. It also begs questions about the normative role of the media in relation to all of these issues. When ‘multicultural’ is converted into an ‘ism’ – ‘multiculturalism’ – as it so often is today, this tends to flatten thinking about cultural heterogeneity and glosses over the differentials of power and historical privilege embedded in the institutions, practices and thinking of ‘multicultural’ societies. In other words, ‘multiculturalism’ often presents as a ‘pat and pedestrian doctrine’ and parades as ‘the dogma of presumptive correctness’ (Goldberg 1994: 1; see also Shohat and Stam 1994; Hall 1999). Difficult issues that go to the political heart of what it means to live in a ‘multicultural’ society are thereby side-stepped.

In a final afterword chapter, ‘Media and the public sphere in multi-ethnic societies’, Charles Husband thinks through and renders explicit his normative ideas about the role of the media in multicultural societies and how the media should help to construct a multi-ethnic ‘public sphere’. Rooted in ideas of contemporary political philosophy, Husband challenges the inadequacies of much multicultural policy and Eurocentric human rights discourse. He argues for a policy of differentiated citizenship rights that acknowledges the distinctive histories and current experiences of differing ethnic groups and proceeds to develop a case for a further human right, a communication right – ‘the right to be understood’. This right, he contends, must be enacted in and through a multi-ethnic media public sphere. Husband’s chapter is perhaps a little more demanding than the other chapters in this volume; it challenges us all to think through exactly what we should expect, and demand, of the media in multi-ethnic societies and why. It provides a fitting conclusion to this collection.

**Note**

1 Ideas of ‘race’, racism and ethnicity have been, and continue to be, subject to heated debate and this informs the politics of language choice and use. This book is no exception. Thus, each of the contributors to this volume use and often define their preferred terms in the context of their own chapter discussions and these follow their informing political viewpoints. Some, for example, seek to signal the positive meanings of ‘Black’ and/or its political mobilization through capitalization, while others use lower case ‘black’ to describe enduring conditions of disadvantage, discrimination and racism experienced by different minority groups and people of colour. Others prefer to refer to specific minority groups such as ‘African-Americans’ in the US or ‘African-Caribbeans’ in the UK and acknowledge the important experiential and other bases of difference both within and
between minority ethnic groups. These and other language choices, then, signal the politics of difference and often give expression to three underlying problematics of ‘race’, racism and ethnicity. Terms set in bold throughout the remainder of this book refer the reader to the discussion of key terms and concepts (see pages 215–20).