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Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America.

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of view as necessarily correct are indeed needed to address larger policy questions. Preoccupation with controversy, however, seems to lead some authors here to present their case against constructivists more contentiously than many constructivists would probably respond towards their adversaries.

With few exceptions the articles are clearly written and well documented. On the whole the volume is a much needed addition to the STS conversation. As is characteristic of this field, the authors come from various backgrounds including but not limited to sociology, philosophy, history, and biology. Their work should interest an even broader readership, including those engaged in micro and macro approaches to culture, ecology, organizations, theory, and policy.


**DENISE D. BIELBY**  
**University of California, Santa Barbara**

Gamson’s deconstruction of entertainment celebrity is a highly absorbing analysis of a cultural phenomenon, its particular dynamics, its place in our lives, and its broader societal implications. His analysis unlocks the institutional and cultural production of celebrity and the social organization of celebrity gossip, which he refuses to dismiss as a trivial pursuit. He tackles the spectrum of claims to fame, breaking out the essential elements of any cultural phenomenon: texts, producers, and audiences.

The celebrity text, according to his historical analysis, evolved from selection of individuals who were lauded for public virtue or action into those who were chosen for their presumed authentic, gifted selves. Celebrity became identified with inherent talent, star quality, and personality, with people who were “discovered,” not manufactured. The reality was just the opposite of this image, and the publicity apparatus grew to legitimate itself even as it was manufacturing celebrity. The task of that apparatus is to fabricate a text that weaves “real” with “reel” celebrity personas, constructing both according to shifting expectations of how the two should co-mingle. (If you question the cultural centrality of this, consider the collective disbelief over the revelation of O.J. Simpson’s private persona.)

Gamson shows how celebrity, as a commercially produced commodity, elevates notoriety to a type of capital. According to Gamson, the social organization of the industry symbiotically binds independent celebrity producers, entertainment institutions, and the entertainment-news media into a disingenuous whole that no longer discovers celebrity but “breeds” its semification as they compete for control over celebrities’ images. (Gamson’s observations about how the tabloids puncture the artifice of the publicity apparatus are particularly enlightening.) Industry participants struggle over control of the commodification process but, as Gamson reveals, that battle is decoupled from its intended recipient—the audience—which is virtually excluded from input into the production of celebrity.

This is somewhat paradoxical because audiences’ interests are not only presumed reflected in the industry’s product, but also they are the reason for the product in the first place. Yet part of the artifice of the publicity industry and entertainment journalists (in contrast to “harder” artistic news journalists) is to convince audiences that they in fact do direct its course, and have power to make or break careers. Audiences are led to believe they, too, are producers of celebrity by the industry’s self-revelation of the means of production (e.g., through “behind-the-scenes” coverage of television celebrities and their work). But audiences, according to Gamson, are willing coparticipants, driven by the quest for a Kodak moment with a celebrity that will disclose a celebrity’s ultimate authenticity. Consequently, audience awareness of the artifice ultimately subverts the publicity apparatus. In fact it keeps audiences engaged through the production of their own gossip-based text, offering an explanation for the successful persistence of the celebrity phenomenon.

Gamson argues that most consumers of celebrity texts are to varying degrees aware of the publicity system, and achieve a compromise between their knowledge of it and their use of the information it produces.
for their own enjoyment. Only a small fraction of consumers, Gamson asserts, are "traditional" believers who possess a low level of production awareness or are, on the opposite end of the continuum, "postmodernists" who conclude the search for authenticity is hopelessly naive, while remaining undisturbed by evidence of manipulation. The book concludes with a rather strained attempt to link the celebrity enterprise to the social construction of political illusion.

Gamson's work makes a fine contribution to the intersection of institutional and interpretive approaches to the sociology of culture, a contribution that successfully examines the interplay between production and reception. The strength of the book lies in its balanced exploration of text (the cultural object), institutional production, and consumption by audiences. Gamson advances cultural sociology in the direction that Griswold and other specialists have advocated. One quibble I have with his work lies in its reliance upon California residents for the study of audiences. The entertainment industry dominates California's economy and culture through syndicated television programming, the news and print media; residents of the Bay Area may be only slightly less exposed to it than southern Californians. It is an empirical question whether exposure to and awareness of the publicity apparatus are the same for residents outside the two major urban areas of this state, or whether it even means the same thing elsewhere as a facet of one's culture. I hope that this issue will be addressed by future empirical work, and inspired by this informative investigation.


SUZANNE VROMEN
Bard College

The original German version of this book was published in 1972 as part of a series of longstanding debates about the public sphere inspired by Jürgen Habermas. The work is a specific and expansive response to Habermas's The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, a critical examination of the liberal tradition of the public sphere, which appeared in 1962, and was translated nearly thirty years later.

Oskar Negt, a former assistant to Habermas, is a sociologist. Alexander Kluge, who studied with Adorno, has been at the center of the West German cultural scene for a considerable time as a lawyer allied with protest causes, an award-winning filmmaker and TV producer, a leader in the New German Cinema and a writer of fiction. Thus both the public sphere as the organization of collective experience and specific media practices are at the center of the authors' concerns. Each also writes from a consciousness troubled by the Nazi past.

The book is a product of its time. The late Sixties saw the disintegration of faith in the emancipatory potential of the bourgeois public sphere. Arguing that the contemporary bourgeois public sphere is more ruled by class interests and exclusivity than Habermas admits, Negt and Kluge see the need for a radically different collective communication, a proletarian public sphere. They conceptualize this as an oppositional public sphere that ignores the dichotomy between public and private, which is grounded in material relations of production and, they insist, in human experience. As one early reviewer has remarked, the book functioned as a political unifying force, for it articulated a common program that could be embraced by all fragments of a divided Left. The novelty here is the insistence that the critical and oppositional public sphere be rooted in a collective horizon of experience, in "the block of real life that goes against the valorization interest" (p. 57). A countermovement is set in motion by capitalism itself, because not all experiences and actions are ruled by profit considerations. Articulating the need for giving voice to different kinds of experiences set the stage for future environmental and antinuclear demands, and for gay and lesbian rights.

Negt and Kluge pay much attention to the development of new mass media with