

Sample essay on advertising analysis or television study: commentary on lauren za...

[Media](#), [Television](#)



Variations in culture theory has demonstrated how scholars differ in how they have analyzed and evaluated how advertising and television-watching has mapped human values. Researcher Lauren Zalaznick, in thinking about popular (pop) TV, posits her theory that television literally holds or reflects the idea of human conscience. In relation to Zalaznick's ideology, the task herein is to analyze whether the weight of her arguments and concepts bear out collected evidence, in terms of her thesis holding up in light of the observer's personal viewing habits. In addition to contributing findings that may support or refute her ideas, a cursory mention of names of shows, length watched, and types of advertising commercials seen shall be documented in this paper.

Zalaznick clearly distinguishes the theory she believes in. In the video presentation Lauren Zalaznick explains that most people in the world watch TV, but that "Americans love it" devoting at least five hours a day to the practice ("Lauren Zalaznick Conscience of Television"). Commenting on the fact that her mother referred to television as 'the idiot box' Zalaznick prefaces her introduction to the presentation of her theory by reminding the listener of distinct human qualities, in the ability to: laugh, cry, or feel awestruck. Zalaznick basically believes that television has a conscience, and the reason why is because it "directly reflects" issues of "moral, political, social, and emotional need-states of our nation" ("Lauren Zalaznick Conscience of Television"). In other words, Zalaznick advances the theory that television operates as a value system that serves as a kind of channel to disseminate values of the culture. She does not clarify whether this 'conscience of television' is being dictated to the people, or reflects the

reactions of people. Therefore, it may be fair to assess the situation as a combination of both.

Zalaznick says that pop TV appeals to our craving for entertainment in two ways: (a) delivery of programming, and (b) our human conscience. When asking if it is literal, Zalaznick refers to a study that characterized the 1960s-era of television featured mostly inspirational shows. Some examples include *Gunsmoke*, *The Brady Bunch*, and *Leave It to Beaver*, while a very small percentage of TV programming styles reflected “moral ambiguity” in terms of an irreverent social commentary. Zalaznick notes that in later generations beyond the 1960s, that television programming developed a majority of shows, depicting or alluding to irreverent social commentary. The reason why, Zalaznick explains is due to social realities such as the Vietnam War, race riots, assassination of JFK – then fast-forward to AIDS, Chernobyl, and so on. Furthermore, Zalaznick describes ‘inspirational’ shows as those that make you “feel good” about the world, while the ‘moral ambiguity’ shows make you question the difference between right and wrong (“Lauren Zalaznick Conscience of Television”). Other categories Zalaznick mentions are: Comfort, Social Commentary, Fantasy and Imagination. By the way, the study reflected that ‘Fantasy and Imagination’ shows closely followed high unemployment rates.

This observer is strongly inclined to agree with Zalaznick. She further elaborates that as the 2000’s approached our society experienced the tech-bubble bursting, a 2000-Presidential-election “decided by the Supreme Court,” anthrax, and 9/11 (“Lauren Zalaznick Conscience of Television”).

Basically Zalaznick is correct in her theory that television maps the national

and collective conscience through media. In the case of trending reality TV shows, Zalaznick says the public no longer wants humor, but that the public wants 'judgment' - as in you could vote someone off an island, or choosing the next American Idol. She correctly assess that most of the time TV reflects a dominate model. In today's world a perusal of shows viewed by this writer, along with a mention of their names or content, times of engagement, and commercials seen are very important to introduce into this conversation because they serve as findings in support of Zalaznick's claims. Mostly, the television programs personally enjoyed fall into the realm outside of pop TV, but some shows viewed have been aired on channels like: E!, MTV, BET, or TBS. When flipping to these kinds of pop TV channels one notices the programming appears to be more filled with advertisement commercials, than the featured programs themselves.

The TV advertisements seen on the pop TV channels mostly air, in this observer's opinion, as stupid and silly attempts to make viewers spend more money. The viewers are addressed as mindless imbeciles who will believe anything, and who want to live up to the ideals perpetrated by the visual-imagery of the culture. For example, scholar and researcher of the effects and implications of advertisement in the culture Jean Kilbourne (creator of the 'Killing Us Softly' critique series) enlists vital elements for analysis. Kilbourne's decades long gaze at how advertisements frame women's images, and by implication demeans and devalues them by portraying them as sexual objects or worthless beings has been extremely valuable to a critical analysis of the culture's media. Some of the so-called reality shows which feature famous and rich women like Kim Kardashian, reflect that

women need to be perfect beauties and forever young. This type of programming directly shows what American culture values in terms of social standards, and expectations. There may be Pantene shampoo commercials, ads for expensive cars, cosmetics, and perfume. Personally, the most time devoted to watching shows considered to be 'pop TV' are only viewed for less than two hours by this observer. The commercials are usually muted, if close enough to the remote control device, otherwise you just cringe through the annoyingly aggressive appeals for all the reasons why you need to unnecessarily part with your dollars.

However, the true reality for many American women is that they are struggling as single mothers, trying to raise their children with a severe lack of jobs occurring. Kilbourne notes that the negative advertising symbolism that demeans women has gotten worse, noting one ad that said: "If your hair isn't beautiful the rest hardly matters" ("Killing Us Softly 4 Advertising Image of Women"). From annoyances like fake 'laugh tracks' in the background of such pop TV shows as Family Guy, in addition to the endless parade of pharmaceutical commercials advertising to cure mental depression or 'bi-polar' conditions - the average viewer feels either completely hypnotized, or mind-assaulted. Zalaznick's theory that television directly reflects the socio-political, emotional, and moral codes that those who control media want us to feel, is correct. While it may be true that Zalaznick did not specify that the power elite, or corporate ruling organizations are behind everything we see on pop TV, this much is clear. According to pop TV women should look as beautiful as the Kardashian women - never mind the fact that they never have to work, are never seen

breast-feeding their children, or never have a selfless thought about anything beyond the pinched little circles of their own disgustingly sybaritic lives. The sad reality is that our national American culture seems to feed off, and feed into socio-politically correct 'need-states' of society. Flipping through popular TV channels, a thoughtful person can hardly find anything worthwhile watching. Most of the women are wearing excessive layers of facial cosmetics, wigs or hair extensions, youthful and depicted as having no jobs, whose mission is to keep (get, or replace) a man in their lives. The new sense of morality on pop TV is that there is none. In a report entitled 'Positive Media: An Introductory Exploration' Meghan Keener states "Media has become an increasingly large part of our lives, and therefore plays a crucial role in our well-being" ("Positive Media," 2012). The concept she offers is that media can offer positive improvements for human psychological well-being. However, one would need to seek that kind of programming out. You certainly will not find it in pop TV programming, in the humble opinion of this writer.

In conclusion, Lauren Zalaznick contributed a keen and insightful examination on the state of pop television culture and its affect and correlation to society today. She gives a reasonable overview of television's pop culture transformational evolution from the 1960s through the 2000s, and offers an explanation of how the conscience of TV has negotiated the value system of a nation. Once considered a great nation, the United States has rather become a global laughing stock, deemed a society of non-thinking consumers who only want their fake hair, electronic gadgets, while ignoring world hunger among children in war-torn areas.

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