PROCESS APROACH TO GENRE ANALYSIS

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- the **<u>FUNCTION</u>** is analyzed (= the purposes for creating and receiving media presentations)
- (a) **MANIFEST** and (b) **LATENT** functions
- ad a: news programming – to provide information to the public
- ad b: Fox News – to support the Republican Party in the US (the news is biased against the Democrats)

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- MANIFEST function is often subordinate to its LATENT purposes

e.g.: *The Scholar* produced by ABC

Manifest: education, entertainment, community service, advertising

Latent: image enhancement (sending positive messages to the young audience about WalMart)

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- **COMPETING** functions (undermining each other):

e.g.: infotainment (dressing up news reports, which then alters the content; flashy graphics, sensational stories, crime, celebrity news)

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- **EDUCATIONAL** function:

genres serve as a vast reservoir of knowledge (incorporating social message into popular genres – e.g. safe-sex practices, AIDS awareness)

- **PERSUASIVE** function:

promoting a particular idea or motivate the audience to action (e.g. learning the sign language)

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- **ECONOMIC** function:

profit tends to be a driving underlying function

- **THERAPEUTIC** function:

genres put people in touch with a range of emotional reactions (affective responses)

primal emotions: comedies – laughing, romances – crying, horror – fear, feel good movie – jolly mood, etc.

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horror films – controlled environment to confront elemental emotions (fears, phobias, dangers…) in safety

comedies – pleasure principle ("inner child") versus the reality principle (acting like adults)

demolition shows – provide a healthy outlet for the destructive side of human nature

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- **MECHANISM FOR SOCIALIZATION:**

genres are agents of socialization, they teach about societal rules and expectations

e.g.: "tween" genres (for children between 9 and 14) – instruct them about what is/should be "cool", provide positive role models

in addition sitcoms (morality plays), dramas (good versus evil)

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- **ESCAPE**:

exploring in fantasy the boundaries between the permitted and the forbidden

e.g.: experiencing the excitement of living outside the law without suffering the consequences (*The Sopranos* by HBO)

escape into a world as it could be

e.g.: an ideal relationship between a mother and a daughter (*Gilmore Girls* by CW)

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- **PROVIDING COMFORT**:

talk shows (*Oprah, Dr. Phil*)

in the aftermath of 9/11 – situation comedies have seen an increase in the audience – familiarity with the genre provides comfort (e.g.: *Friends*)

- **FOSTERING COMMUNITY:**

genres create shared cultural experiences (broadcasting of sports events such as the Olympic Games)

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<u>COMPARATIVE MEDIA APPROACH</u> – What is the influence of the media on a genre?

e.g.: *Superman* has appeared in print, radio, TV and film.

political talk show – more types of media cooperating together: phone calls, emails, blogs, twitter, facebook – convey a message that the opinions of the audience matter.

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- **AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS**

SOAP OPERAS – sponsors are sellers of household products for housewives, changing character of the genre: previously considered to be low quality, nowadays is watched by a wider audience (teenagers, college students, men…)

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REALITY SHOWS – appealing to different audiences with the following interests:

art (*The Art Scholar)*

politics (*American Candidate)*

business (*The Apprentice)*

fashion (*Project Runway)*

music (*American Idol)*

etc.

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The most sought-after audience: between the ages of 18 and 34

In ten years – **Generation Y** – they never knew a time when there wasn't the Internet, or 75 to 100 channels, and music was purchased instead of downloaded.

e.g.: by 1998, once popular quiz genre had largely disappeared from the US televisions (because they were unable to attract a young audience)

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- A key to a new genre – the ability to attract young audience – in 2002 **American Idol** (FOX) reached 30 percent of the audience between 18 and 49.

- Many sponsors were attracted: Coca-Cola, T-Mobile, KFC...

- The latent function of the Coca-Cola: to develop a long-term relationship with its young audience