

# **PRODUCTION STUDIES, THE SEQUEL!**

Cultural Studies of  
Global Media Industries

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## "WHAT ACTUALLY MATTERS"

### Identity, Individualization, and Aspiration in the Work of Glossy Magazine Production

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Over the past two decades, profound shifts in information technologies, economies, and markets have transformed the glossy magazine industry. Indeed, changes wrought by digitization have unsettled the very notion of what a magazine *is* and *does* materially. From a commercial standpoint, magazine publishers have had to contend with pressures to defend their authority as textual information providers against the encroachment of native new-media entities, such as blogs and online publications, as well as visual storytellers in the face of photo-based social media in the form of Pinterest and Instagram. In response to these and other sources of competition, most magazine companies have implemented sharp turns in strategy and corporate structuring. The organizational decisions that result from these negotiations are the signposts that industry watchers monitor to best predict outcomes in what remains a highly murky and speculative future, the relationship of print to digital production. However, the implications of these moves for individual workers and their professional identities demand closer attention.

There is a scarcity of scholarship that analyzes the effects of digitization on magazine company workforces. Discussion of these effects is commonly found in trade and mainstream media reports of corporate strategizing. It is worthwhile, therefore, to begin by briefly considering two of these reports as tangible examples.

In the summer of 2014, Condé Nast Publications and Hearst Publications, two industry-leading U.S. corporations, announced decisive shifts in their production practices. Both shifts were designed to intensify these corporations' competitiveness in an economy where deals once brokered in the impervious, brick-and-mortar chambers of print publishing are increasingly conducted on interactive digital platforms.

First, Condé Nast announced the merger of its digital direct-sales unit with its automated, or so-called programmatic, advertising sales initiatives as part of a large-scale partnership with Google. Across industries, the negotiation of ad rates and placement in the digital space has been moving away from classic methods, whereby ad reps try to woo prospective marketers with offers of premium placement and package discounts, to automated systems programmed to algorithmically conduct transactions. Trade press coverage of the Condé Nast–Google partnership speculated whether it was a sign that the publishing company was “one step closer to . . . handing severance packages to direct sales teams” to be replaced by “Google robots.”<sup>1</sup> Alanna Gombert, Condé Nast’s head of digital sales, who, significantly, had been hired from Google merely two months prior, refuted this claim. She praised programmatic sales technology for clearing time for the workforce to explore creative horizons beyond the day-to-day demands of direct selling. The sales team, she said, could now “focus on *what actually matters*. I’m having lots more phone calls about creative and how to tell the story to the consumer to accomplish the goals of the campaign.”<sup>2</sup> While Gombert’s own corporate storytelling articulates a standing corporate discourse that online and offline convergence is ultimately beneficial, it fails to acknowledge the consequences for individual workers trained for and professionally socialized in the analogue world.

A few weeks after the Condé Nast announcement, Hearst Publications went public with a new advertising-related digital strategy of its own. The company launched a content distribution platform to which it planned to migrate all of its eighteen magazines’ Web sites. *Cosmopolitan.com* was the first to be moved, inaugurating a template that featured enhanced opportunities for native advertising and sponsored content, including “ads that appear seamlessly between videos of male models cuddling kittens and buzzy stories on celebrities.”<sup>3</sup> Nodding toward the benefits of the template for advertisers and readers alike, Hearst reps explained that new features would simultaneously widen opportunities for marketers in the ‘post-banner world’ and make content more responsive and sharable for the expanding digital audience base. As for the platform’s benefits to the workforce, *Cosmopolitan.com* editor in chief Amy O’Dell cited productivity and speed. “We could publish 20 percent more content a day,” she said.<sup>4</sup> The question remained of how the corporation intended to adjust its infrastructure to support workers, keep pace with this acceleration, and increase in content production.

These are merely two ventures in a stream of implementations at major magazine corporations that are integrating e-commerce and digital distribution to the monthly print-based repertoire. Yet the significant shifts they either trigger or reflect in the culture and organization of contemporary magazine production have received scant attention to date.

This chapter thus takes a cultural sociological approach to examining the contemporary magazine industry’s digital evolution and some of its implications for

magazine workers. We look at developments at the three largest U.S. magazine publishing companies: Condé Nast, Hearst, and Time, Inc.<sup>5</sup> Our focus is on the glossy magazine sector of the industry, which is distinctive in the content and physical properties of its products and the cultural characteristics of its professional environment. Glossies come in a range of consumer genres—indeed, it was in this sector that publishers pioneered the practice of niche marketing—including lifestyle, fashion, sports and fitness, travel, bridal, and home and garden. The most numerous offerings fall under ‘women’s interest,’ which makes glossy magazines highly consumed by women. Moreover, because the magazine publishing industry has historically been characterized as a welcoming career for women, it is a useful context in which to explore the gender-technology-media work nexus. In this vein, this chapter searches for definitions behind Gombert’s assertions of ‘what actually matters’ in the work of digitized magazine production. In so doing, it responds to Mayer’s call for “production studies that consider identity and identification as key factors in future labor struggles.”<sup>6</sup>

### Contextualizing Magazine Production Studies

Although contemporary studies of media industries have enriched our understanding of the creation, distribution, and marketing of film, TV, music, and advertising,<sup>7</sup> the glossy magazine sector has been underappreciated as a fertile site for critical analysis. Such neglect is indicative of a wider blind spot in the study of print and digital media convergence, wherein research has tended to privilege the production and delivery of hard news. Or, as David Abrahamson put it, “Magazines remain second-class citizens in the journalism academy.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, because much of the academic work on consumer magazines has been preoccupied with magazine *texts*,<sup>9</sup> questions of labor and organization have been marginal in magazine scholarship.

In the early 2000s, a spate of book-length studies of UK-based magazine production cultures was published that engaged more fully with magazine workers and their environments. Crewe’s work approached popular men’s magazines produced in the 1980s and 1990s by, in part, analyzing the motivations and dispositions of the publications’ editors.<sup>10</sup> He argued that the editors’ subjective tastes were important determinants of magazine content, which was noteworthy because the men’s magazine genre in the timeframe and national context of Crewe’s study was interpolating male youth identity, the so-named new lad. Similarly, Gough-Yates explored the ways editors at women’s magazines discursively positioned their readers as subjects in a political economy that afforded greater lifestyle choices for women, creating a cultural milieu that celebrated the “new woman.”<sup>11</sup> These and other editorial agendas interface with the commercial and representational forces of advertising, hence Nixon explored the professional relationships, both formal and casual, between the two industries. The study offered

an account of how professional considerations of consumerism and marketing play a role in the reification of gendered identities.<sup>12</sup>

The insights of these studies require updating to take account of the challenges digitization is presenting the magazine industry. Magazine publishing outfits now compete for advertisers and audiences with Web sites, mobile apps, and social media sites. Audience categories are continually splintering, their tastes and identities demanding closer editorial scrutiny to address and satisfy. The 24/7 information cycle has increased work demands, at the same time that technological innovation, such as data analytical tools and platforms, has altered the character and composition of workforces. For one, companies have devised new systems for the design, production, and distribution of digital content, such as the Hearst platform discussed earlier. Magazine companies have also reconfigured their workforces by hiring workers with technological expertise and multimedia branding acumen, such as Condé Nast's Gombert and Hearst's O'Dell, who came to the company from the Internet native outfit BuzzFeed. Yet even staffers who hail exclusively from print backgrounds are encouraged to self-define as content producers for *brands* rather than individual print publications. In line with this adjustment in job title and description, magazines such as *Seventeen*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, and *GQ* have made inroads into the merchandising, radio, TV, and interactive media industries, respectively, by producing branded content and commodities across multiple platforms.

This branding rhetoric also structures the overt commercial logic of many twenty-first-century publishers. Not only are companies working with advertisers in more explicit ways (e.g., native advertising, sponsored content, ad-subsidized covers), but they are also visibly partnering with clients as they move more directly into the territory of marketing services. These initiatives dovetail with efforts to compile more granular data on magazine audiences by utilizing data-tracking and monitoring programs. Taken together, these challenges and responses urge a critical reinvestigation of glossy magazine production culture.

## Method

Our account of production cultures in the glossy magazine industry brings together two independently produced projects. One involved more than thirty in-depth interviews, including those conducted for a book-length project on the women's magazine industry in the era of digital and social media.<sup>13</sup> Informants, who represented titles and divisions across Time, Condé Nast, and Hearst, included senior executives, editors-in-chief, junior writers, brand directors, developers, and former interns. The second study was an ethnographic exploration of Condé Nast that involved a fifteen-month participant-observation stint as a freelance blogger at one of the company's largest Web sites.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, formal interviews were conducted with company employees involved in both print and new media

production, personnel at other magazine corporations such as Hearst and Time, independent industry consultants, and deans of graduate journalism schools. Both of these studies also entailed participant observation at industry events (e.g., Association of Magazine Editors, MPA, Association of Magazine Media, and the Magazine Innovation Summit), as well as systematic reviews of trade and mainstream presses that disseminate news and analysis of the magazine publishing industry.

We draw on this data here to reassess three issues that have been remarked on in the existing media production literature: identity politics; the individualization of creative and media work; and discourses of aspiration deployed toward the extraction of 'free' labor. These areas have been the primary battlefronts as digitization continues to transform the magazine publishing industry.

## **Worker Identity: Gender and Class**

Feminist media scholars have long condemned glossy magazines, particularly women's fashion, beauty, and service titles, for perpetuating heteronormative ideals of domestic femininity. While these critiques implicitly define women's magazines as *magazines for* female audiences, we have argued elsewhere that these texts should also be understood as *magazines of*—or produced by—a predominantly female workforce.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, histories of the industry suggest it was one of the few employment sectors where women were granted access, even if their role was largely to connect with fellow readers in a commercial context. The movement of female editorial workers into magazine offices accelerated in the last decades of the twentieth century and, specifically, in the wake of second-wave feminists' singling out of women's magazines as places where women should have improved access to careers, income, and benefits.

More recently, and in light of the emancipatory discourse that has coincided with the rise of new media (e.g., the assumption that women are 'empowered' by technologies that enable them to work from home),<sup>16</sup> some may conclude that the industry is an even more inclusive work environment. In 2009, a leading female magazine executive declared publishing was a "great career [field] for women."<sup>17</sup>

However, our findings suggest that the movement from analogue to digital production cultures may reproduce—rather than challenge—social inequalities of gender. More specifically, assumptions about the technological proficiency of the male worker subject seemed to guide hiring and placement decisions. Most of the digital executives we spoke with were male; most of the editorial representatives were female. *Marie Claire's* former digital assets manager Emily Masamitsu Scadden was clearly an exception, making her assessment of the field especially noteworthy. Emily acknowledged discernible gender patterns in the workplace: "The reality of it is that a lot of men are into [technology]. . . . So I think a lot of times that can overshadow some of the participation by women or women's

publications." Emily's acknowledgment of women's magazines being 'overshadowed' spoke to a more pervasive narrative about the women's magazine industry, namely that it doesn't do "serious journalism,"<sup>18</sup> or that the industry is akin to what another informant termed "the stiletto ghetto."

Participant observation conducted at a Condé Nast Web site revealed highly gendered dynamics between two groups of employees we dubbed the Glitterati and the Digerati. The former group was composed of female fashion print journalists, stylists, or marketers valued for their authority in the glossy magazine industry and hired to staff the Web site. The latter group, composed of men, arose from the new media workforce with expertise in digital and had been hired to manage the site. The two Digerati held most senior management positions at the site. About this situation, Jessica, a Glitterati, commented:

They hired them more for their Internet experience, not for their experience in fashion. So, here are these straight men who are into, like, "the scene" and, you know, are kind of excited that they're at the "cool" place now. And clearly they had come from a place that was not fashion and they didn't really get it and didn't understand how fashion magazines are really put together or work. So, it was hard [for me] adjusting because they didn't necessarily structure it [the Web site] in the way that all fashion magazines are structured, so it was a big adjustment that way.

A bit of history is in order to unpack this quote. The recruitment of personnel at this Web site, one of Condé Nast's oldest and most heavily trafficked, reveals wider shifts in the media ecology. The burst of the dot.com bubble in 2001 produced widespread joblessness among Web developers and content producers.<sup>19</sup> These laid-off people were not only Web-trained professionals, but culturally oriented to the Internet. When the Internet reconstituted itself into what came to be known as Web 2.0, media companies began implementing new models for their online platforms. They turned to refugees from the first wave of online activity who were the best trained, most experienced, and, crucially, readily available professionals. At Condé Nast, these mostly male workers were the first hires in the group we define as the Digerati. These examples suggest we should approach narratives of technologically enabled meritocracy with a healthy degree of skepticism. In the magazine industry, at least, social hierarchies of gender may be reaffirmed—rather than challenged—by emergent production cultures and mandates.

### ***Intensified Demands and the Individualization of Work***

Creative workplaces have long been marked by long hours, temporary work arrangements, and the mindset that "you're only as good as your last [TV script, magazine article, commercial]."<sup>20</sup> Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not surprising

that our informants were scrambling to keep abreast of technological change, particularly managerial directives or expectations that they 'think across various platforms.' At times, this cross-platform intelligence was facilitated by the company by, for instance, arranging skills-building retreats for staff such as one we attended in 2008, a stage of intensifying digital brand extension in the glossy magazine industry. More often, it was incumbent upon workers themselves to 'get up to speed' on such methods. Martha Nelson, who was editor in chief of Time Inc. at the time of our interview, remarked of the incorporation of tablet production mandates, "There were bumps along the road but generally it's really successful . . . [and editors] wanted to be involved when we were putting the magazine up. Because it's in their business and they know that." She added, "For their own career development, they need to know more about the iPad."

Many informants indicated that their added duties were not accompanied by adjustments in pay or time schedules. Sophie, a senior features editor at one of Condé Nast's premiere women's magazines, said in 2009:

We are now required to edit for online. I am 36; I'm the youngest of the editors. So, you can imagine, none of us signed on to, or trained in, or really desire, to be frank, to work on the Net. Nothing against the Web, but that's not my thing. I don't want to do 200-word, fast, slap-it-on stories. But now each of us posts a couple times a week, partly because our pages in the magazine are down. [Editor in chief] is focused on the Web because she feels like it's a way to raise the profile of the magazine. So we now have online content that we have to produce. It's become an annoying part of my job, a fly buzzing around reminding me that "Oh, there's this post that I have to get up today." It's another couple of pieces to think about each week versus a monthly 2,000-word piece.

Others acknowledged how work responsibilities crept into non-work hours, symptomatic of what Melissa Gregg termed "presence bleed."<sup>21</sup> While *InStyle*'s Lisa Arbetter explained that working across platforms had become "a juggling act of sorts," Chris Wilkes, vice president of the App Lab at Hearst Magazines, explained how about half of the staffers in the lab "had a day job in our company" but "moonlighted" in the App Lab. As he explained, "they have a primary focus that is not having to do with app lab but they've got skill sets that I've recruited . . . and I have them contributing or participating."

While digitization is creating new challenges for producers to 'think across platforms,' emergent platforms have also created opportunities for freelancers to write for blogs. However, they do so with the long-standing obligation to self-promote, commonly termed 'the hustle,' the never-ending quest to identify and secure the next or better gig. This quest was visible in a stable of bloggers that formed a virtually connected network although they were based in

geographically disparate locations: New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin, and Paris. Their professional training and educational backgrounds were also quite varied. Among them were a PhD student at an elite UK university, a columnist for an internationally renowned newspaper, a former editor at one of *Vogue's* international editions, and a male socialite who self-fashioned as a latter-day Truman Capote auteur, socializing very closely with a well-heeled New York society crowd. This last blogger always wrote his posts in the first person—something none of the other bloggers was allowed to do. He was no doubt self-branding with a view toward striking out on his own media ventures, and because of his extensive social connections that facilitated his reporting, he was permitted to do so by editors.

Another way individualization manifested was as what scholars have termed ‘compulsory sociality’ or networking that takes place in leisure time.<sup>22</sup> As a blogger, even when not on actual assignment, it was an informal, unspoken element of the job, un-facilitated and unfinanced by the company, to go out socially to ‘check out the scene’ and scout for bloggable material. Regular outings were done to make connections with people who would keep bloggers apprised of upcoming events and put their names on media or guest lists. There was a pervasive overtone of instrumentality in these social interactions: bloggers and other reporters seeking out stories, contacts, and ‘ins’; entrepreneurs promoting their products or brands; and publicists of various stripes, while enjoying social time, keeping their professional antennae attuned to marketing possibilities or media opportunities for their clients. These instrumental dealings were not taken as expressions of insincerity, or even opportunism, unless they were carried out either by amateurs whose affective skills—their facility at schmoozing—were underdeveloped, or by individuals deemed to have nothing to offer in return on the terms set by the context: access to product, insider knowledge, career opportunity, or social capital.

The reward of the individualization of work we observed came in the form of a narrative that constructed those successful in mastering multiplatform competencies, adjusting to extended work hours, and absorbing additional expenses on their own cognizance and resourcefulness as ‘right fits.’ The cultivation of this technology of the self and discourse of individual agency, we found, in turn enabled the worker to advocate for less precarious work conditions.

### **Contingent Labor and Aspiration**

Magazine companies have long maintained a contingent workforce of freelance creative workers on contract. While some companies boast of integrating these temporary workers into the corporate culture—an online editor for *InStyle* explained that freelance contributors are given office space within the organization to ensure a consistent editorial voice—the majority hold marginal standing within organizations. Blogging, as both a new technology and form of labor, disrupted this model.

While most pre-digital freelance workers were satellites in their professional universes, the blogger, given the spatial and social affordances of the Internet, was, at least initially, a far more independent and agentic worker who did not require, or even seek, the same measure of integration into the organization.

The practice of blogging intervened on established professional and organizational hierarchies. As Singer observes of newspaper industry dynamics, “Bloggers and others who have never set foot in a newsroom can and do legitimately claim some of the same occupational turf [as journalists].”<sup>23</sup> The blog introduced a channel through which aspiring or independent media professionals could pursue career or creative aspirations outside the mandates and platforms of corporate media. Initially, magazine publishing companies assumed a defensive stance on blogging, enabled by gatekeepers in related industries, such as fashion, where bloggers were denied official access to spaces such as Fashion Weeks, for media coverage. Condé Nast’s peculiar organizational culture complicated this dynamic. As one Condé Nast online editor, who belonged to the Glitterati workforce, said:

Condé Nast encourages unreasonable behavior [in its senior employees] because it kind of adds to the mystique of Condé Nast. A blog is not part of that mystique. It’s not a beautiful, glossy magazine. It’s the Web. And Condé Nast does not respect the Web.

This scenario began to change once industry insiders came to acknowledge blogs’ economic and communicational potential. As noted in a 2006 *Wall Street Journal* report:

Once snubbed by the insular fashion world . . . fashion bloggers are now attracting the attention of the fashion establishment. As blogs claim bigger followings, and advertisers shift more spending to them, designers see these independent Web publishers as a new marketing opportunity. Many small designers, in particular, now realize they can get valuable exposure on blogs that they might not get in mainstream media. This year, with 191 shows in New York, up 25% from five years ago, there aren’t enough old-media critics to cover them all.<sup>24</sup>

In this climate, the stance of a magazine company like Condé Nast on bloggers and the blog platform shifted from defensiveness to what management theorist Daniel Isenberg has termed strategic opportunism: the organization integrated blogs into its own online editorial offerings.<sup>25</sup> Yet, as late as September 2008, when we began our research as freelance bloggers there, Condé Nast still regarded blogging practices as antithetical to its ethos, an organizational culture that operationalizes aspiration. In the words of a senior online director, a Digerati, who oversaw the Web site at which we worked:

We are an aspirational company, whether we're online or in the magazine space. I mean, that's the DNA of Condé Nast. It is upscale. If it's not that, then what is Condé Nast? I think that's important for the Web arm of the company, too. And, yes, so how do you translate that online? I think if you look at what we do, it's all really nicely designed. We're not *just a blog*. I shouldn't say, "just a blog," because blogs, in some ways, are the dominant way of presenting material on the Web and there are fabulous blogs and they're really successful, but, you know, I don't think that's quite right for us. We present these really nicely designed stories and I think that maintains the aspirational quality.

Internships were another form of contingent 'employment' for magazine companies in the midst of post-recession financial turmoil that instrumentalizes aspiration to extract free or low-cost labor. Bright-eyed college students and newly minted graduates eager to stand out among the inflated supply of creative workers willfully provide administrative and editorial support in exchange for a bit of padding on the résumé or the fleeting chance to schmooze with industry power players. One of our informants even bragged that her internship at Condé Nast gave her the distinct privilege of "carry[ing] Anna Wintour's dresses down to her limo." Of course, as Ross Perlin and others have noted, unpaid internships within the so-called glamour industries tend to exacerbate social hierarchies as young people whose families earn modest incomes can scarcely afford to forego monetary compensation.<sup>26</sup> Recent college graduate Kelly reflected rather favorably on her stint as an intern at *Teen Vogue* and "would not take back that experience for the world." However, she confessed that the unpaid position required her to commute back and forth between Philadelphia and New York (nearly 100 miles) at least three times a week. She continued:

There were times when events were happening, and I wanted to be there so I'd end up staying a whole week. I would have to buy new outfits because I was staying extra days, and buy new bus tickets because I was staying extra days, brushing my teeth in a Starbucks. Like the weirdest things that I thought I would never be doing, I was doing for this job, and I wasn't getting paid to do it.

Others have faced quite grueling conditions, ranging from long hours and menial tasks to pejorative treatment and most staggeringly, a lack of recourse in sexual harassment suits. In October 2013, Condé Nast announced the shuttering of its coveted internship program. The decision came in the wake of a class action lawsuit filed by two former Condé Nast interns who alleged that the company violated federal and state labor laws by compensating them less than the minimum wage.

The close of Condé Nast's internship program (and the subsequent attention to internship conditions at competitors Hearst and Time) coupled with the dwindling of full-time employees may help to explain why magazine companies increasingly rely on digital content freely provided by consumers. From Instagram accounts that magazine readers are encouraged to 'follow' and 'like' to user-generated contests promoted on the Web sites, to opportunities to directly connect with editors and stylists, magazine companies are encouraging their fans to interact with publications and their staffers across brand platforms. Some digitally enabled initiatives seemingly address consumers' aspirations to break into the fashion or journalism industry. In 2014, for example, *Teen Vogue* launched the Instalist promotion that spotlighted ten young fashion enthusiasts with a substantial number of Instagram followers. As Publisher/Senior VP Jason Wagenheim explained to us, the initiative featured "up-and-com[ers] . . . that we would deputize, for lack of a better word, to work editorially and help us identify street style, and trends, and everything else."

Although these denizens of the new media world presumably enjoy the opportunity to gain followers to their own sites, they are lured to participate by the rhetoric of 'exposure,' a pipedream of rising above the din of the truly ordinary. In fact, in the *Teen Vogue* campaign, Wagenheim admitted that they don't pay Instalist-ers but, rather, are "helping them build their own brand through promotion in *Teen Vogue*." This celebration of self-branding does little to obscure the value provided to the magazine and its sponsors who benefit from 'free' word of mouth. Commenting on the benefit for advertisers, Wagenheim added, "We had three editorial themes that the editors released on Instagram and then the Instalisters went and used those themes to tag advertisers and give a nice . . . swell to some of our advertising partners." Moreover, because these individuals fill their sites with personal information (e.g., habits, preferences)—and encourage their readership to do the same by leaving feedback or entering contests—they are enabling what Van Dijck and Nieborg describe as "tak[ing] the guesswork out of marketing by letting customers create online brand communities which then serve as marketing niches."<sup>27</sup>

While other companies have yet to suspend their internships, they continue to appeal to audiences' career aspirations, suggesting that by participating in a contest (e.g., *Glamour*'s "Young and Posh"), getting one's name emblazoned on a billboard screen (e.g., *Cosopolitan*'s "Fun, Fearless, Female" promo), or being incorporated into a magazine-branded network (e.g., *Lucky*'s Style Collective for Bloggers), consumer-audiences can share the spotlight with magazine 'professionals.' Such forms of brand devotion encourage participants to align themselves with corporate sponsors while serving as brand ambassadors who work not for money, but for potential 'exposure.'

## Conclusion

From the ever-revolving door of the C-suite to the flow of magazine brand content across social media platforms to savvy 'partnerships' with audiences and advertisers, the glossy magazine industry has changed dramatically in recent years. However, such transformations should not obscure some of the traditional work realities and tensions that have become more firmly ingrained in the culture of magazine production. For one, despite emancipatory discourses of female empowerment that frequently circulate in the new media sector, the gender distribution of workers in the digitized magazine space remains markedly disproportionate. Such social hierarchies are embedded in larger structural inequalities of the male-dominated tech sector. We find this imbalance particularly problematic within an industrial site where cultural products are primarily aimed at female consumers. It signals the continued relevance of an argument Liesbet van Zoonen put forward over a decade ago that "The political (new) economy of the internet thus tends to reconstruct the common gendered distinction between consumption and production, between entertainment and information."<sup>28</sup>

Demands on creative workers in the scene of magazine production are intensifying. Magazine editors are increasingly expected to work across magazine platforms and titles, often without commensurate remuneration. Meanwhile, for those trying to break into the industry—whether as freelance bloggers or interns—forms of compulsory sociality may prove a more reliable path than accomplishments listed on a résumé. The instrumentalization of social media platforms means that not only full-time and contract-based workers are contributing content; in an era where the power of the audience is valorized, magazine brands are encouraging consumers to contribute to the output of knowledge or content vis-à-vis interactive promotions, feedback spaces, and other incentives channeled through an aspirational prism. Aspiring media makers are enlistees in the reserve army of the unpaid, seduced by companies who promise to pay in 'exposure' rather than immediate income. That these participants—*Teen Vogue* Insta-listers, *Cosmopolitan* "Fun, Fearless, Female" entrants, *Lucky*-affiliated bloggers—are women may make these assurances particularly pernicious. As Sarah Banet-Weiser writes of the rise of such forms of post-feminist self-branding, "technologies of the self have vast and often contradictory implications for women in the 21st century, where 'putting oneself out there' and the ensuing quest for visibility, is an ever more normative practice."<sup>29</sup>

Taken together, these findings suggest that magazines are what historian Nancy Walker described as "revealing cultural artifacts" because of not only their nuanced *textual* messages, but also a *production* culture rife with contradiction and nuance. And it is because—rather than in spite—of such nuance that we urge more scholarly attention to the consumer magazine industry, particularly the glossies.

In this chapter, then, we have shown how magazine production research can shed new light on industrial transformations related to digitization, participatory culture, and the individualization of work. More significantly, we contend that the magazine industry's recent challenges and responses may presage larger shifts in creative labor in an era of digitally reconfigured circuits of media production and consumption.

## Notes

- 1 Tim Peterson, "Condé Nast Teams with Google to Pitch Programmatic Ad Deals," *Ad Age*, May 22, 2014. <http://adage.com/article/media/conde-nast-teams-google-pitch-programmatic-ad-deals/293366/>.
- 2 Peterson, "Condé Nast Teams"; "Condé Nast's Digital Ad Army Is Not Being Replaced by Google Robots, Thank You!" *Media Wire Daily*, May 2014. [www.mediamiredaily.com/2014/05/conde-nasts-digital-ad-army-is-not.html](http://www.mediamiredaily.com/2014/05/conde-nasts-digital-ad-army-is-not.html).
- 3 Alexandra Stiegard, "Cosmopolitan.com Gets a Makeover," *WWWD.com*, July 8, 2014. [www.wwd.com/media-news/fashion-memopad/cosmopolitancom-undressed-7787275](http://www.wwd.com/media-news/fashion-memopad/cosmopolitancom-undressed-7787275).
- 4 Steigard, "Cosmopolitan.com Gets a Makeover."
- 5 The former two are privately held by family dynasties, while the latter is publicly traded. Condé Nast and Hearst produce so-called aspirational magazines with heavy advertising from luxury brands, particularly women's designer apparel companies, whereas Time's offerings are news- and service-oriented, with diversified advertising content.
- 6 Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.
- 7 See, for instance, Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John T. Caldwell, eds., *Production Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Mark Deuze, *Media Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries* (London: Sage, 2012).
- 8 Quoted in Scott Fosdick, "The State of Magazine Research in 2008." *Journal of Magazine and New Media Research* 10, no. 1 (2008): 1–4.
- 9 See, for example, Ros Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (New York: Macmillan, 1991); Bethan Benwell, ed., *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2003); Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer." *Signs* 20 (1994): 1–22; David Gauntlett, *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Angela McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture: From "Jackie" to "Just Seventeen"* (London: Macmillan 1991; New York: Routledge, 2000); Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (New York: Pandora Press, 1987).
- 10 Ben Crewe, *Representing Men: Cultural Production and Producers in the Men's Magazine Market* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).
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