

Reality TV

Remaking Television Culture

Second Edition

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Based on this brief description of the premise and style, are we able to identify whether this nonfiction series was a documentary or a reality television program? Would it help us to know that it was funded by and shown on public television or that it was made by two well-respected, independent filmmakers and produced by someone whose past works had focused on the fine arts? What if we also discovered that it was simultaneously criticized for exploitation and sensationalism? Or that it was marketed as a “starkly intimate portrait of one family struggling to survive a private civil war” in newspaper ads?

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Such confusion over how to place the series led anthropologist Margaret Mead to remark to *TV Guide*, "I do not think that *American Family* should be called a documentary. I think we need a new name for it, a name that would contrast it not only with fiction, but with what we have been exposed to up until now on TV." Thirty years later, the program's generic status remains liminal as it is now alternately discussed as an observational documentary and an early form of reality television. The struggle to define exactly what *An American Family* was bespeaks much of what is at stake in our current generic placement of texts into the categories of documentary and reality television.

While some nonfiction television texts fit squarely within the generically agreed-on borders of either documentary or reality television, many others seem to defy easy classification. In a recent essay on *Big Brother* and tele-reality, John Corner argues that the "extensive borrowing of the 'documentary look' by other kinds of programs, and extensive borrowing of non-documentary kinds of look by documentary, have complicated the rules for recognizing a documentary."³ For this and other reasons, Corner wonders whether we are entering a postdocumentary cultural moment.

In this chapter, I am not interested in redefining, reclaiming, or reasserting the documentary genre—or in predicting its demise. Instead, I explore how a network's brand image and marketing and positioning of particular programs work in conjunction with our critical judgments, expectations, and knowledge of previous documentary and reality forms, to help us as viewers and critics decide what is "reality TV" and what is a "proper" documentary. In this way, I'm engaging in the type of analysis that Jason Mittell calls for, which at its base, conceives of television genres as discursive practices. As Mittell argues, "[the] goal in analyzing generic discourses is not to arrive at the 'proper' definition, interpretation, or evaluation of a genre, but to explore the material ways in which genres are culturally defined, interpreted, and evaluated."⁶

Traditional analyses of the documentary form have focused on the textual elements that distinguish it from other forms of nonfiction film and video. While there is no doubt that such elements do work to define the genre, the goal of this chapter is to examine the ways in which certain extratextual factors can impel the viewer to see a nonfiction television text as either documentary or reality television, sometimes even despite its textual characteristics. This type of discursive generic analysis helps us understand what reality television is, since it reveals many of the

assumptions that surround the generic category, as well as the cultural role assigned to it, particularly in relation to that of documentary.

Genre, "Social Weight," and the Observational Mode

To begin a discussion of the reality television genre, it is important to first recognize that there are many different formats—most of which are generic hybrids themselves—that fall within this category. Some of these formats are more readily differentiated from documentary than others. Gamedocs (such as *Survivor*), for example, embody only a few aesthetic or textual characteristics of the documentary and seem more closely aligned with game shows.

The types of reality programs that share the most textual and aesthetic characteristics with documentaries tend to focus on the everyday lives of their subjects in somewhat "natural" settings without a game setup, use cinema vérité techniques, and do not contain flagrantly commercial elements such as product placement or the promise of prizes. One such type is the docusoap, which Stella Bruzzi has identified as a legacy of direct cinema (also called observational or cinema vérité).⁷ She points out that British nonfiction programs such as *Vets in Practice* and *Driving School* (American equivalents include *The Real World* [MTV] and *American High* [FOX/PBS]) combine many of the textual and aesthetics characteristics of direct cinema (handheld camerawork, synch sound, focus on everyday activities) with the overt structuring devices of soap operas (short narrative sequences, intercuts of multiple plot lines, mini cliff-hangers, use of a musical soundtrack, and a focus on character personality).⁸

Yet there are programs that have been classified rather definitively by critics as documentaries that look—in terms of their aesthetics and narrative structure—quite similar to the docusoaps mentioned above. In the United States, the public television series *An American Love Story* (which chronicled a year in the life of an interracial family in Queens, New York) and *A Farmer's Wife* (which centered on a Midwest farming family's economic and domestic struggles), for example, followed the *American Family* model quite closely, yet they were never considered to be reality television. Therefore, there must be characteristics beyond narrative form and aesthetic qualities that help critics and viewers define such programs.

Indeed, much of our evaluative process is based in the belief that documentaries should be educational or informative, authentic, ethical,

socially engaged, independently produced, and serve the public interest, while reality television programs are commercial, sensational, popular, entertaining, and potentially exploitative or manipulative.⁹ These somewhat subjective assumptions work to construct a dialectical relationship between documentary and reality television, even as they have many similar characteristics. Documentary is seen as a valid and productive social and artistic endeavor, while reality television is often vilified or dismissed. Consequently, generic placement becomes a way in which to gauge a program's cultural value and import through discursive means.

Documentary has traditionally been assumed to be rather high-minded and, if not fully educational, than at least informative. Mobilizing a "discourse of sobriety" documentaries reference established traditions of ethical and political mandates for their own form.¹⁰ Although observational documentaries tend to focus on the mundane, the everyday, the personal—and as a result, can appear just as obsessed with the intimate as reality TV—they are seen by many viewers and critics as doing this for the greater good of the subject, the viewer, and the society at large.¹¹ Brizzi contends that the most important distinction between observational projects and docusoaps is the "social weight" of their content—specifically, the latter's focus on entertainment rather than the exploration of cultural and political issues.¹²

This is familiar logic and has been borne out throughout the history of television as documentaries have often been produced and aired to compensate for the "sins" of commercial television. For instance, in response to the quiz show scandals in the late 1950s and growing criticism of the networks for their failure to serve the public, networks commissioned more documentaries to recoup their public image, appease critics, and win back the trust of the viewing audience.¹³ Largely because of this rhetorical and social positioning, documentary producers are often the recipients of government and private funding, and their resulting work is commonly shown on PBS—which maintains a mandate to provide its viewers "programs that the present system, by its incompleteness, denies [them]."¹⁴ Documentaries are therefore *believed* to play a central cultural role in representing minority viewpoints and having serious historical or social significance (although this has been troubled during different historical moments, such as the "culture wars" of the 1980s).

Yet "social weight" is an interesting and potentially contentious distinction here, since claims of social relevance are often made by the creators of docusoaps as well. As Jon Kraszewski's research has shown, *The Real*

World, for example, often highlights the ways in which it consistently deals with issues of race and sexuality.¹⁵ Social weight is not something that can be empirically measured, nor is it necessarily an inherent textual characteristic. Rather, it is a rhetorical stance that can be mobilized in an effort to endorse or authenticate a particular television text and to attract an audience who cherishes liberal notions of social responsibility or public service. Even if it is possible to measure social import/impact in some way, it is still important to ask whether "entertainment" and "social weight" really exist as mutually exclusive terms, since, as I detail later in this chapter, programs such as *American High* and *America Undercover* are presented as both sensational and educational.

To court a particular type of audience identification and set of expectations, television networks can take a program that has somewhat liminal textual generic identifiers and sell it as either a documentary or a reality program by packaging it in such a way to appear either more educational/informative or more entertaining/sensational, or, in some cases, both. In this way, the networks are working with the audience's prior experience and expectations of each form and then highlighting certain aspects of the text to ensure that it is read (and therefore classified) in a particular way. As Bill Nichols points out, "The distinguishing mark of documentary may be less intrinsic to the text than a function of the assumptions and expectations brought to the process of viewing the text."¹⁶ Although Nichols is talking primarily about the ways in which the audience experiences with prior documentaries informs their encounters with future examples of the genre, I would also add that the site of exhibition (and the discourses that construct it) plays a vital role in the audience's process of generic classification and their assignment of social weight to a particular text.

In the following section, I focus on two programs, *America Undercover* (HBO) and *American High* (FOX/PBS), that serve as productive examples of the ways in which the context of reception of a program can be manipulated to encourage a viewer to understand the meaning of the text through a particular generic lens. If a viewer reads the text through the lens of "documentary," for example, they will be more likely to read it as socially engaged, informative, authentic, and artistic. In the following examples, I explore the ways that FOX, the U.S. public television channel PBS, and the premiere cable channel HBO mobilized their different brand images along with publicity and marketing tools to push viewers to see programs carrying signifiers of both documentary and reality television as

simply one or the other. In these instances, genre turns on the industrial management of extratextual discourses. Through these examples, we'll see that these strategies do not always work out as planned, since the tensions that exist in the bifurcation of the two generic categories can, at times, be difficult to contain.

American High and America Undercover: Packaging Documentary/Reality Television

American High was sold as a reality program on FOX and, a year later, as a documentary series on PBS. Obviously, these two networks have disparate brand images, financing structures, and target audiences and therefore had different interests to serve. Executives at both networks believed they could alter the reception context of *American High* to suit their particular needs.

The production context of the series reveals direct links to documentary practice. Director R. J. Cutler, a renowned documentarian who received an Academy Award nomination for *The War Room* (1993), shot 2,000 hours of film tracking the lives of 14 seniors in a suburban Chicago area high school. He also arranged for the students involved in the show to take a video diary class, the results of which were edited together with the verité-style footage to create the final product. Cutler claimed to use *An American Family* as his model, yet he also told reporters at the time of the program's premiere that he was influenced as well by the fictional teen drama *My So-Called Life*, thereby underscoring the hybrid nature of his series.¹⁷ He appeared to avoid using the term "documentary" to describe the project in interviews and press conferences, but also he refused to overtly align it with reality television. In a chat room interview, Cutler told fans that shows like *Big Brother* and *Taxicab Confessions* "are not real the way our show is. . . . Our show is a drama series with real characters and real stories that continue over the course of a year."¹⁸

In contrast, FOX was eager to label *American High* a reality program as executives were hoping that it would be FOX's answer to CBS's recent success with *Survivor* and *Big Brother*. Aired on the network late in the summer of 2000, the show was scheduled against *Big Brother* and was expected to win over the youth demographic with its combination of reality and teen drama. At a press conference before the show's premiere, a cast member played up the program's competition with other reality series:

"This is our real life. We're living in our real houses, and we get cameras where we get to talk about what we're really feeling. Compared with *Real World* and *Survivor*, I think we are the closest you can get to reality."¹⁹ FOX entertainment president Gail Berman used the series' documentary heritage to make a similar assertion: "This is the real *Real World*. No False Settings, no contrived situations. This is a type of reality programming that can be enlightening as well as entertaining."²⁰ Despite such allusions to enlightenment, FOX hyped *American High* with its usual antieablishment style, creating bumpers that declared (over a hard rock sound track), "What you're about to see will get you hooked! Real Kids! Real Families! Real Life! . . . Find out what it's like to be young in America. The bold new summer series—*American High*!" Such promotions played up the series' sensational aspects and reality television conventions in order better suit the network's brand identity.

Since its inception, FOX has crafted itself as an antieablishment provider of innovative and often controversial, youth-directed programming. As such, it was one of the first networks to experiment with prime-time reality formats in the mid-1990s. Under the leadership of Mike Darnell, FOX's alternative programming unit succeeded in attracting large numbers of young male viewers with reality specials such as *When Good Pets Go Bad*, *World's Scariest Police Chases*, and *Allen Autopsy*, which were derided by critics as "gross-out shockumentaries and socially unredeeming freak shows."²¹ In February 2000, the network was forced to reign in Darnell's programming style as a result of the backlash that resulted from the airing of *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire*. Although highly rated, the special—a bridal/beauty pageant culminating in an on-air wedding—was lambasted by the press and scared off advertisers after the bridegroom's background and financial standing was put into question.

Coming in the wake of that scandal, *American High* allowed FOX to retain its reputation for groundbreaking and risky programming while providing an opportunity to clean up their public image. It was a balancing act meant to redefine reality television for FOX, while not straying too far from viewer expectations. Even though it did receive much critical acclaim at the time of its premiere, FOX dropped *American High* from its lineup after only four episodes. Although network heads simply cited low ratings as the reason for their rather hasty decision, it appears that this series' particular blend of formats and aesthetics did not ultimately square with the average FOX viewer's vision of what reality television was supposed to provide. By the time *American High* aired on public television

almost a year later, the series had been repackaged in a strikingly different manner.

Pat Mitchell, a former CNN producer, was hired in 2000 as president and chief executive officer of PBS after the channel's prime-time ratings hit a historic low and its average viewer age had reached a high at 56.²² As part of a larger effort to attract younger viewers, Mitchell acquired *American High* in 2001, touting it as a hip but ultimately educational documentary series from an acclaimed independent filmmaker. Just like the executives at FOX, Mitchell tried to use *American High* to renegotiate her organization's brand identity. Yet, in contrast to FOX's marketing strategy, she downplayed the "boldness" of the program's more controversial elements—such as its use of explicit language, frank discussions of sex and sexuality, and intense family conflicts—and emphasized its "authentic" and informative representation of the adolescent experience.

In other words, in an effort to temper the negative connotations that accompany the reality television label, Mitchell worked strenuously to assert the program's ties to the values and traditions of both PBS and the documentary project. She was also aware that a program harboring similarities with network reality programs would help draw younger viewers, particularly when such a show centered on teen life.

At this point, PBS had already experienced success with one reality program, *1000 House*, which placed a family in a demodernized London townhouse in order to experience middle-class life as it was in 1900. This series, however, was produced with the average PBS viewer in mind and therefore eschewed commercialism, had historical reference, and represented an idyllic vision of family togetherness. *American High* did not contain any such features, but nevertheless had the potential to resonate with the PBS audience through its references to documentary traditions.

By engaging in a two-pronged campaign, using both conventional PBS marketing methods and overtly commercial strategies, it would seem that Mitchell hoped to appeal to new and old viewers alike. She convinced Coca-Cola to sponsor the series and entered into promotional deals with MTV (which cosponsored a contest in which the winners would appear on *Total Request Live* with the *American High* cast) and *Teen People* to cohost dances at high schools where clips of the program would be shown on dance floor Jumbotrons.²³

In addition, ads for the series (shots of individual cast members in their bedrooms or school hallways, accompanied by copy such as "No actors. No scripts. Just life.") were placed on the teen websites alloy.com, launch.

com, and bolt.com. In an attempt to balance the PBS mandate with her aggressive marketing, Mitchell also used the PBS.org *American High* website to situate the program as an educational and therapeutic documentary tool for families and teachers.

Besides the message boards, chat rooms, production stills, cast biographies, and streaming videos that make up most television program webpages, the *American High* site contained a Teachers' Lounge and Parents' Guide. The Teachers' Lounge used the tools of media literacy to instruct teachers how to teach students to make their own videos of their high school experience, as well as to explore "the legal and ethical aspects of reality TV." (It is interesting to note that the only time the term "reality genre" is mentioned in this campaign is when it is directed toward the teens, and then only in terms of its ethical ramifications.) The downloadable 25-page Parents' Guide, which consistently described the series as a documentary, begins with a letter from Pat Mitchell:

[*American High*] is not just a remarkable window into the lives of teens, but also a frank, gripping and often poignant depiction of the teens' parents and the daunting challenges they're facing in raising teens. As a mother of a teenager now, and having raised another, I immediately felt a sense of gratitude for what I learned from watching *American High*. The father of one of the teens in the series told the press, "watching the series is like the anthropology of our family. It made us look at issues in a completely new light—one that probably saved our relationship with our son." We at PBS believe this series can be meaningful for you, as well. And, to deepen your viewing experience, we have created this *American High* Parents' Guide. With insights from parenting experts and psychologists, the Guide uses the real life stories from *American High* as catalysts to help you better understand the world through your teenager's eyes. Plus, the Guide provides a wealth of ideas to support you in what is arguably the most difficult relationship on earth: parent and teen.²⁴

For parents and teachers, the series was constructed as what Mitchell calls "an observational documentary in the tradition of PBS,"²⁵ or, as the parent in the preceding quote describes it, an anthropological project, that was made to be viewed and processed within an institutional—either school or family—context so that the more sensational or explicit aspects of the program could be "properly" narrativized as socially relevant issues. The idea was to attract teens to PBS by making the series appear

entertaining, while simultaneously appeasing its core audience—many of whom would be parents or grandparents—by wrapping it in the discourse of education.

The strategy failed on both fronts. Although the program did attract a significant number of young viewers, it was not as popular as PBS executives had initially hoped. And, perhaps even more important, *American High* offended and alienated the sensibilities of the network's older viewers with its frank themes and explicit language, forcing Mitchell to admit that, by choosing to air the series, PBS had "built an audience and then let them down."²⁶ It would seem that a specific set of expectations for and understanding of the form and function of documentary were so formed in the minds of the core PBS audience that Mitchell's attempt to refashion them through extratextual means did not take. It is also possible that PBS viewers may not only be sensitive to sensational and sexual content but also reject programs that could be seen as too commercial in regard to content or marketing.

While PBS viewers may have a difficult time accepting strategies that work to redefine social relevance and public service outside the conventional liberal model, HBO viewers seem to be more willing to ascribe social weight to programs that are both sensational and commercial. This may have to do with the history of HBO's nonfiction programming division, which grew largely in response to PBS's content limitations. The early- and mid-1990s saw a significant shift in the market for television documentaries, since the culture wars over arts funding and increasing competition from cable outlets left PBS (the primary outlet for television docs up until that point) in a state of crisis.

Due to the close scrutiny the network was receiving, it became increasingly difficult for them not only to fund documentaries but also to air work that was explicit or controversial. And it is exactly this type of content that HBO excelled at. The very nature of HBO's premium channel payment structure allows the network to escape the cultural vilification and calls for censorship that plague broadcast and some basic cable stations. This, coupled with an audience that wishes to see itself as more capable, responsible, and mature than the average television viewer, creates an ideal setting for the presentation of "tasteful" but possibly lurid nonfiction programming.

Since the 1990s, HBO has aggressively marketed itself as a quality network for the (paying) television connoisseur. Through its original programming, such as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, and *Sex in the City*, the

cable network has refashioned liberal notions of "quality" television to include "adult" content. Consequently, viewers come to programs such as the nonfiction anthology series *America Undercover* with the expectation that what they are about to see is above and beyond the usual network fare.

Shelia Nevins admits that early in her career as HBO's head of adult documentary and family programming she saw documentaries primarily as cheap time-fillers, but now she considers them an essential marker of prestige for the company. Certainly Nevins has deliberately cultivated this prestige, as she has spent years showcasing the work of renowned established talent, such as Albert Maysles, Jon Alpert, Barbara Kopple, Lee Grant, and Alan and Susan Raymond (*An American Family*), as well as supporting up-and-coming independent filmmakers. The resulting critical praise and industry accolades that her programs have acquired over the years have helped HBO in its effort to brand itself as the quality cable network.

Yet Nevins is also responsible for such series as *Real Sex*, *G-String Di-vas*, *Autopsy*, *Cathouse*, and *Toxicab Confessions*, which have come under some scrutiny from critics for their sensational subject matter. These programs share a number of aesthetic characteristics with the network's more serious fare, are often shot or directed by independent documentarians, and are packaged alongside more traditional documentaries as a part of HBO's "investigative" *America Undercover* series. Although Nevins packaged many of her documentary programs under the *America Undercover* heading for 19 years, in 2002 the program was moved into one of HBO's prime program slots. Showing at 10:00 PM eastern standard time on Sunday nights in the spring and summer that year, the program followed *Six Feet Under* and *The Sopranos*, which gave the show not only increased visibility but also a higher level of prestige. The network has invested more in its promotion of the show, even taking out two-page, full-color ads in highbrow venues such as the *New Yorker*.

America Undercover is marketed in such a way as to intentionally blur the boundaries between reality and documentary. Alternating between works that engage in the "discourse of sobriety"²⁷ covering topics such as labor struggles, racial profiling, terrorism, and the death penalty and the regular round of sex-based programming, *America Undercover* straddles traditional formats and viewing positions. As Nevins herself states, she and her staff "try to balance programs that nudge the world and programs that are more titillating and fanciful" in order to temper or contain the

sometimes startling.
sometimes heartbreaking.
always real.

america
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Sundays

SUNDAYS AT 10PM/9c **HBO**

all new season
montecarlo **black and white**
gladiator (day), anatomy of a **prison**
the execution of wanda jean
taxicab **confessions** 2002's rarest documentary
murder on a sunday morning
autopsy 8 **dead giveaway**
southern **comfort**
hookers at the point (revenge) **blue vinyl**
small town **ecstasy**
lalee's skin and **legacy** (documentary)
telling **memoirs**

SERIES PREMIERES MARCH

America *Undercover*'s ad in a spring 2002 issue of the *New Yorker* reveals the way that HBO highlights the sensational in the series even as it tries to appeal to a so-called quality audience.

reception of its risqué episodes and to help sensationalize more staid subject matter.²⁸ It is important to note, however, that the narration and editing of *Real Sex* works to position the series as investigative and somewhat cerebral explorations of the sexual underground rather than straightforward pornography or erotica. In other words, the episodes employ the discourse of traditional documentary to mitigate or justify their more voyeuristic tendencies. The show also enables viewers to feel better about their engagement with text as they can more easily read it as an educational text if they wish.

Outlining the way in which she negotiates the often-conflicting desires of her audience, Nevins told the *Los Angeles Times* that "if you could see it on A&E, if an advertiser would sponsor it, then I don't want to put it on HBO, because people are paying to see something a little spicier. But if it's ugly like *Playboy*, if it's lowbrow sexuality, then it's not what I like to call 'erotic eros.' I don't want it."²⁹ Nevins also has asserted that the unifying element of the nonfiction programs that air on *America Undercover* is their ability to fully represent "the real." She told *Reelscreen* in 1998:

The concept of our unexpurgated [programs] began to mean a certain kind of license to push reality to where it would naturally go without any censorship. There was no need to curtail what was happening. That's when reality began to be as interesting to me as theater, because it meant people could realize their stories to their full extent and where they could take them, whether the stories were happy or sad or violent or tragic or sexual.³⁰

Nevins is making a claim here for all her nonfiction programming, equating lack of mediation or censorship from higher authorities with the ability of these programs to move beyond realism into the area of unfiltered reality. In doing this, she is touching on arguments given by both reality television and documentary producers and marketers. However, texts that are placed in the documentary genre tend to make an additional claim—that of social and historical relevance, or, in the language of television, public service. Nevins is trying to shift the discourse to incorporate her presentation of sexual and other such controversial content as a public service in itself.³¹ Or at least she is alleging that sensational/sexual and educational/informational contents are not mutually exclusive.

In Nevins's explication of her tactics and reasoning, it becomes clear why the documentary label is so important in this context. If her programming was classified simply as reality television, it is possible that programs such as *Real Sex* would be evacuated of any sense of social weight. As it stands, *America Undercover* is able to mix content and form because it is wrapped in a redefined discourse of public service or education. Consequently, viewers of the program exist in a context of reception that tells them that "documentary," as defined by HBO, can both educate and titillate.

With *America Undercover*, HBO was able to do what FOX and PBS could not: successfully incorporate popular pleasure into a discourse of quality. Nevins and her team reworked the discourse around their program not only to suit their network's brand image but also to redefine the terms on which it was understood and classified. Certainly *America Undercover*'s anthology format contributed to the success of their strategy, but it was also a result of an audience who, through their prior experience with HBO and their conception of themselves as a unique and select audience, were willing to accept a dismantling of the bifurcations that separated traditional definitions of documentary and reality television.

Some of this willingness can be attributed to HBO's championing of the First Amendment, which Nevins says provided "[HBO] with a comfort

11. Corner argues that the "discourse of sobriety" is no longer relevant in television's postdocumentary context as most documentaries are now infused with a "lightness of being." Corner, "Performing the Real," 264.
12. Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 78–79.
13. For more on this, see Michael Curtin, *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
14. Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, *Public Television: A Program for Action* (New York: Bantam, 1967).
15. See Jon Kraszewski, chapter 10 in this volume.
16. Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 24.
17. Mark Jurkowitz, "High Time at PBS," *Boston Globe*, 4 April 2001, C10, at <http://www.pbs.org/americahigh/behind/index.html>.
18. From a chat room transcript found at <http://www.pbs.org/americahigh/behind/index.html>.
19. Quoted in David Zurawik, "This Is as Good as It Gets: School Series Really Is Reality TV," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 August 2000, 1E.
20. Quoted in David Zurawik, "A Silver Lining in the Reality Cloud," *Baltimore Sun*, 23 July 2000, 5F.
21. Alex Kuczynski and Bill Carter, "Point Man for Perversity: World's Scariest Programmer," Starring Mike Darnell as Himself," *New York Times*, 25 February 2000, C1.
22. By end of 2001, PBS was being viewed by 1.7 percent of U.S. homes. Elizabeth Jensen, "A Network's Mastery Has Gone to Pieces," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 May 2002, A1.
23. Kay McFadden, "Kid You Not: PBS Going after Adolescent Viewers," *Seattle Times*, 31 March 2001, C1.
24. Parents' Guide, at www.pbs.org/americahigh.
25. Quoted in David Bauder, "Finding an Audience for a Worthy Documentary," *Associated Press*, 24 April 2001.
26. Elizabeth Jensen, "A Network's Mastery Has Gone to Pieces," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 May 2002, A1.
27. "Undercover Wins Spotlight," *Boston Globe*, 9 March 2001, C4.
28. Ibid.
29. Quoted in Paul Lieberman, "Confessions of an HBO Original," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 2000, C3.
30. Quoted in Ed Kirchdoerfer, "Flash, Cash and the Ratings Dash: HBO's Sheila Nevins," *RealScreen*, 1 September 1998, 33.
31. Brian Winston decries this sort of thinking, since he considers this willingness to investigate sexuality and nudity—which he calls "docu-glitz"—cable's "unpublic service" contribution to the documentary form." Quoted in Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 48.
32. Quoted in Kirchdoerfer, "Flash, Cash and the Ratings Dash," 33.
33. The history of the public television audience and how it has been constructed by PBS is a long and complicated one. It is described in detail in Laurie Ouellette, *Viewers Like Us: How Public TV Failed the People* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
34. Mittell, "Cultural Approach," 10.