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Particip@tions Volume 1, Issue 3 (January 2005)

Introduction to Issue 3

Martin Barker (Editor)

We are pleased to bring to you Issue 3 of *Participations*. It is a smaller issue than the previous two, but we see it as one of the virtues of a web journal that it does not have to follow a fixed format. We have adopted editorial processes designed to be as helpful to authors as possible, and to ensure that articles are in the best possible form when they come forward to publication. Therefore it will happen from time to time that issues will vary in size, just as articles can vary greatly in appropriate length.

In this issue, then, we carry two essays: Janet Staiger's close investigation of three collectors, and the ways in which, through an examination of their collections, we can 'read' cultural identities in formation. Work on collecting has been gaining momentum in recent years. We see this essay as a very distinctive contribution to this field, not least because of the way it brings into view the organising principles underlying the three collections. Desiree Boughtwood's essay is an excellent example of what audience research does so well – taking a popular and widely-repeated claim about putative effects of the media, and putting that claim to the test of empirical research. In this case, it is the topic of anorexia, and the supposed role of the media in promulgating dangerous images of 'thin women'. As so often the picture that emerges is one of complexity, and here of the women themselves seeing the mismatch between their sense of self, and the images offered.

For the first two issues, we made a decision not to consider publishing articles by members of either the Editorial Board or the Editorial Advisory Group. However, we are now sufficiently confident both of the future of the Journal, and of the seriousness and effectiveness of our editorial processes that we believe there should be no reason not to consider work from 'inside' from now on.

In our last issue, we said that we would very much like to get feedback from readers. Well, we did – but perhaps not in the form we might have expected. Fiona Carruthers' essay on [Hack Fiction](#) provoked some annoyed responses from a number of people involved in this area – and the creation of a website spoofing this Journal and looking uncannily like it (see for yourself [here!](#))... It is not just being clever to say that we welcome these responses. It is right that arguments put by academics should be open to challenge – and challenges don't only have to come from other academics, or in the form of 'official responses'. Equally, we absolutely defend the rightness of our decision to publish the essay and the propriety of the issues it raised for debate.

Finally, we have a serious request to readers. A little over a year ago, a very important conference took place in France, at the University of Versailles. The conference considered the future of audience research, and it brought together a considerable number of the leading Francophone audience researchers. French audience research is little known outside its language-area, and those of us who attended the conference learnt a great deal. We have the chance to publish some of the most important of the presentations in *Participations* and have been trying to find a way to get six essays translated from French to English. Unfortunately a grant application for funding for this failed, although the project was recognised to be of great value. If any readers can think of ways in which we might achieve this, or are sufficiently proficient in French to be willing to consider translating just one of the articles for publication, we would be delighted to hear from you.

