

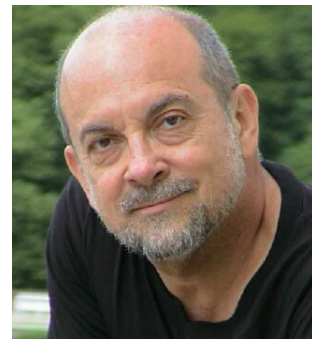
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The Streaming Body as the Site of Telecommunications Convergence

In this paper we argue that telecommunications convergence occurs not primarily in infrastructure or devices but rather in the lived human body. The lived body is already theorized by phenomenology as the substratum of the stream of experience and as a platform for technology that provides us access to the world (Merleau-Ponty, Ihde). Through telecommunications convergence the body is not only receptacle, context, container, battleground, emitter and integrator of streaming digital information but also literally a streaming body. The continuous consumption, alteration, synthesis, and production of information as not merely cognitive but corporeal processes transform the body into a dynamically unstable system. The body is in continual flux in response to the inflowing digital stream, producing new syntheses through lived bodily experience, and streaming out new versions of itself and these syntheses into the information environment.

We articulate the notion of the streaming body as a new historical form of the lived body through integrating concepts from phenomenology, critical theory of the culture industry (Adorno), media theory (McLuhan, Jenkins), and cyborg theory (Haraway, Clark). At the same time we infer and elaborate it through analyzing a variety of contemporary cultural phenomena, including alterations of the body in response to media images (tattoo representations of celebrities, epidemics of anorexia); bodily empowerment through the use of Web-based medical and health information; social interactions from social networking to cyberstalking; and individuals not only "syncing" their sexuality to mediated images and relationships but radiating their bodies by posting videos of their own orgasms. Amplified by occurring in the moving body through the use of mobile devices and cyberspace, these activities extend and redefine the sphere of embodied action. Identifying the streaming body as the site of telecommunications convergence furthers the discussion that is reconceiving technological trends in their embodied significance.

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