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ABRACADABRA:

KEY AGENTS OF MEDIATION THAT DEFINE, CREATE, AND MAINTAIN TV FANDOM

by

DAVID H. GARDNER

Under the Direction of Dr. Alisa Perren

ABSTRACT

From a media industries, fan studies, and emerging socio-cultural public relations perspective, this project pulls back the Hollywood curtain to explore two questions: 1) How do TV public relations practitioners and key tastemaker/gatekeeper media define, create, build, and maintain fandom?; and 2) How do they make meaning of fandom and their agency/role in fan creation from their position of industrial producers, cultural intermediaries, members of the audience, and as fans themselves? This project brings five influential, working public relations and media professionals into a conversation about two case studies from the 2010-2011 television season – broadcast network CBS' *Hawaii Five-0* and basic cable network AMC's *The Walking Dead*. Each of these shows speaks to fandom in particular ways and are representative of the industry's current approaches in luring specific audiences to TV. This study shows that the relationship between entertainment publicists and media is dynamic, intertwined, complex, and historically hidden.

INDEX WORDS: Public relations, Television, Media, Multimedia, Audience, Fandom, AMC, CBS

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DAVID H. GARDNER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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by

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Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2012

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master's thesis to my parents, Barry and Norma Gardner,

along with my brother Michael, my sister Allison, Brett, Alex, and Anna.

Thank you for giving me the love, comfort, support, and tools to move forward in life.

Love always.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

From ancient Greek amphitheaters to traveling vaudeville troupes to today's Hollywood, entertainment workers and companies have historically and institutionally hidden all sorts of mediated labor "off-stage" in order to infuse magic, mystique, and ultimately, value into actors, directors, productions, properties, brands, franchises, and more (Adams, 1997; Caldwell, 2008). Through intensive emotional, physical, and technological labor, modern entertainment publicists and media personnel earn privileged industrial and cultural positions within vertically integrated, transnational conglomerates, and enjoy vast national and international influence. Fusing my academic, professional TV publicist, and fan perspective and experience with that of five television publicists and journalists, this investigation into the mechanics of modern press coverage and criticism of television hopes to pull the curtain back on the industrial side of current TV fan construction, attraction, support, and maintenance (Caldwell, 2008; Hayes, 2008); Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009; Ortner, 2010).

More specifically, this study investigates a little-researched industrial mediated step towards the creation of actively engaged, emotionally invested, participatory niche audiences, consumptive tribes, and segmented activist publics collectively known as "fandom," and increasingly branded as "superfans," "superviewers," and "superusers" by industry, media, and academia (Jenkins, 1992; M. Ryan, personal communication, June 5, 2012; Sternbergh, 2012, March 14; Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2011). The dynamic, hidden mediation between a handful of influential entertainment industry public relations practitioners and key tastemaker critics, reporters, and editors in the U.S. results in most – if not all – the mainstream Hollywood news coverage and criticism consumed today across media platforms. This behind-the-

scenes mediation initiated by TV publicists' strategic communication has a direct, measurable effect on current industrial and academic concepts of fandom, as this study's comparative case studies of the first seasons of broadcast network CBS' "re-imagined" procedural cop drama *Hawaii Five-0* (uses a zero in place of the letter "O" in the original 1968-1980 title) and basic cable network AMC's Emmy-nominated horror drama *The Walking Dead* will reveal. Concluding themes drawn from interviews with five influential, working TV publicists and journalists further bolster the comparison results from case study content analysis of press materials and resulting coverage.

This study shows that educationally- and demographically-similar U.S. publicists and journalists working in today's Post-Network Era are primarily interested in a particular kind of TV. Niche cable television produces this particular kind of TV in order to attract similarly segmented audiences, particularly fandom, which traditionally gravitates toward niche media. Ideally, publicists and journalists industrially drive and control a certain modern taste culture that fandom reflects back with their combined multimedia labor and obsessive purchasing power. This labor, in turn, ripples and magnifies outwards and ultimately creates "mainstream" pop culture phenomena. I argue that most mainstream pop culture phenomena today aren't really mainstream in media. Rather, these phenomena are magnified niche in media. As a result, true mainstream, mass-appeal products are virtually ignored by media, fandom, and most networks as a matter of taste and business models. So, CBS and AMC represent different current TV business models, complete with distinct goals, strategic communication strategies, and measurement standards of success (Lotz, 2007). The case studies explored here and comments from professionals in this project reveal a shared, ingrained ambivalence toward mainstream

audiences and procedural TV programming at best, although overall mainstream consumer

attention remains an ideal rhetorically and a hope industrially for properties big and small.

Specifically focusing on the completed 2010-2011 broadcast and cable network "TV

season" (traditionally spanning August-July), my methodologies are based on macro-level

content analysis of texts and "paratexts" created through public relations mediation and micro-

level ethnographic interviews of public relations practitioners and key journalists (Barfield,

2008; Gray, 2010). As mentioned, the case studies focus on CBS' *Five-0* and AMC's *Dead*, two

one-hour dramas that premiered in the 2010-2011 season. Within the general context of modern

industry pursuing a mass aggregate of viewers (typically within the Adult 18-49 and 18-34 target

demographic in the U.S.) to consistently watch a specific show, at a specific time or tech-

supported, time-shifted period, and consume all associated products, across all platforms, *Five-0*

and *Dead* are considered "successful" in industry terms, simply on face value for having been

picked up by their respective networks and/or conglomerates to continue for second seasons in

2011-2012, and now, third seasons in 2012-2013 (although detailed measures of success differ

for a broadcast drama and a basic cable drama) (Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Gray, 2010; Lotz,

2007).

In addition, I define both series as successful in 2010-2011 for the following reasons:

1) Each has sustained, intensive, positive critical reviews and national media attention for
   the shows and their stars.

2) Each has secured various TV industry-related award nominations.

3) Each has financial success resulting from good audience ratings, ad revenue, product

placement, and/or licensing fee revenue, based upon particular individual network business models, goals, and expectations.

4) Each has a basis in prior source material – a past TV series and a comic book/graphic novel series, respectively – with varying degrees of established fans.

5) Each has been filmed far away from the centers of media conglomeration (e.g., in Hawaii and Atlanta, GA), so their networks and studios must maximize marketing and public relations opportunities, production resources, and budgets at every turn.

Finally, the organization of the case studies – *Five-0*, then *Dead* – reflects a chronological order, according to premiere dates, and goes from a traditional broadcast network to a relatively smaller, younger basic cable network. Industrial size varies: CBS/Viacom represents one of the 6-7 massive transnational media conglomerates that house most major broadcast, cable, and premium television networks in the Post-Network Era. Major broadcasting network CBS has been part of a publically-traded conglomerate since the mid-90s when it was bought by Westinghouse Electric Corporation, and sold to Viacom in 2000. In late 2005, Viacom split off and re-established the network as the core of a new CBS Corporation (CBS press materials, 2012; Lotz, 2007). Meanwhile, AMC Networks, Inc. represents a typical basic cable company with origins in the Multi-Channel Era and includes networks AMC, IFC, WE TV, and Sundance Channel; film company IFC Films; international programmer AMC/Sundance Channel Global; NYC's art house movie theater IFC Center; and AMC Networks Broadcasting and Technology. AMC Networks, Inc. went public on July 1, 2011 (AMC Networks.com, 2011; Lotz, 2007).

Along with subscription cable network HBO's *Game of Thrones* (*GoT*), *Dead* remains noteworthy for flourishing in a television period littered with episodic and genre series

cancellations, including *Invasion*, *V*, *No Ordinary Family*, *The Cape*, and *The Event*. In the U.S.,

112 countries, and 64 territories, *Dead* effectively negotiated and provoked an engaged,

energized, emotional attachment by fans, which fed a "groundswell" that soon after launch

"tipped" the show into rarified mainstream, "watercooler" status (Creeber, 2008; Gladwell, 2001;

Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012; Li & Bernoff, 2011). In its first season,

Dead cultivated, attracted, created, and built individualized (possibly overlapping) segments of

highly-engaged viewers – circularly expressed, reinforced, and magnified by media (via public

relations contact, participation, and placement); online fan activity; and industry-supported fan

space, which includes local and national conventions (e.g., San Diego's Comic-Con

International, Atlanta's Dragon*Con, Wizard World-branded conventions in major cities, etc.),

along with official and non-official viewing parties (Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009). In an

interview, publicist Informant #1 explains the show's international appeal as follows:

> Everyone understands death. We all get it and live it in some capacity. And what viewers realize is that this show is not about the zombies. There is also a cult following, the zombie, comic book fans that already existed. But in my dealings with the show we had older woman, like my grandmother's age, coming up to talent saying that they loved the show. I think it has to do with the drama and the survival aspect. The fact that death is a huge part of the series that people just relate to. People die everyday, and obviously, there's so much going on in the world about the apocalypse, the end of the world that people are trying to find ways of coping with the possibility. I did see people relating. To give you an example, one of the actors went to Japan in December and a lot of the fans came up and said that I just want you to know that Japanese culture doesn't even understand what a zombie is because they cremate every single one of their dead. Once they die, they cremate and bury their dead, so there is no way that a zombie can happen. Seriously, but we love the show not because of the zombies but because of the drama, the survival aspect of the show….(and) that little old lady in Spain, saying she loves the show. That was incredible to hear an 80-year old woman saying she loves the show. In Spanish. It was weird. And I'm sure she's not a fan of the comic book. (Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)

> Although industrially engaged in much of the same activity in 2010-2011, major

network's *Five-0* has had to "settle" for being meaningful to industry, as a financial

success in terms of record ratings, national advertising, and international revenue. Many TV

shows should be so lucky. With a first season high of over 19 million viewers, *Five-0* was the

"number one new television series" in terms of overall viewing audience, and consistently

ranked in the Top 20 of all TV series, both network and cable (CBS press releases, 2010-2011).

To put this into context, *Five-0*'s ratings were generally over three times that of *Dead* (with 6

million viewers for its season finale) and six times that of GoT (with 3.041 million viewers for

the season finale) (CBS, HBO, and AMC press releases, 2010-2011; *Zap2It.com*, 2011, June 21).

Publicist Informant #5 notes:

> I think it helps to launch a show when you have, when you already have a fan base, when you've already got a hook. I don't want to say an easy angle, but there is an inbred angle on launching a show that has source material. And you got a dedicated fan base. It's easier to watch something that people already know. It's the same reason that they keep making "Batman" or "Spider-Man" and "Superman," you know, with new people every five years. It's something that people know. You could literally walk into a grocery store and say, "bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bam, ba" and five people behind in line at the grocery store would go, "bum, bum, bum, bum, ba." (Note: referring to iconic *Five-0* theme song)…Everybody knows that theme song. I didn't have to sell them on what that was. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and June 11, 2012)

Impressed by initial ratings, Time Warner-owned cable network TNT jumped early to

secure American syndication rights to *Five-0* for a reported $2 million per episode, with

broadcasting to start in 2014 (*AdAge.com*, 2011). Networks around the world have shared

TNT's enthusiasm – *Five-0* has been sold and is airing internationally through CBS/Viacom

related-channels and businesses for about $2.3 million per episode in each major territory in the

world, including Canada, Australia, U.K., Poland, Croatia, Italy, Germany, Norway and India

(CBS press site, 2011; *The New York Times*, 2010, August 19).

From casting to production to air, *Five-0* made and continues to make a concerted effort

to cultivate and attract genre and fandom audiences, but as a procedural drama seems to entirely

test traditional fan limits and boundaries. "Procedural" refers to a genre of typically hour-long drama programming where a problem is introduced, investigated and solved all within a self-contained episode. These shows are often police or crime-related. The general "formula" for a police procedural involves the commission or discovery of a crime at the beginning of the episode, the ensuing investigation, and the arrest or conviction of a perpetrator at the end of the episode. CBS' *CSI* franchise and NBC's *Law and Order* are good examples. FOX's *House* and ABC's *Gray's Anatomy* are examples of non-crime, medical related procedural series. Due to their self-contained, audience accessible, one-off stories, this genre is very attractive financially to broadcast syndication, based on my experience. As a genre, procedurals are typically criticized or ignored by media for their lack of character development, with little or no attention being paid to recurring character's lives outside of work. While audiences like them, as evidenced by CBS' overall embrace and reliance on this format, I suspect this might be the main reason TV critics – and thereby, fandom – usually do not enthusiastically embrace these types of shows – unless, like *Grey's*, they have a strong soap-opera elements with a youthful, photogenic cast.

From the start, *Five-0* cast attractive stars (otherwise known as "series regulars") noted for their popular genre show pedigrees (e.g., *Moonlight*, *Lost*, *Battlestar Galactica*). Using genre and nostalgia as key promotional components, the series immediately displayed ratings success and gained mass-appeal traction over 24 episodes. In contrast, *Dead* produced six episodes. *Five-0* even won "Favorite New TV Drama" on CBS' *37th People's Choice Awards* in early 2011. Its formula in place, the show continued genre casting in season two (2011-2012), with *Heroes'* Masi Oka, *Buffy*'s James Marsters, and *X2*'s Kelly Hu.

Despite genre casting, network and studio support, consistent "Top 20" national ratings, a nationally voted-upon TV award, and international success, the series has never been acknowledged as a "fan favorite" or "best of TV" within discourse generated by TV press or fandom, as evidenced through a general media content survey of *The New York Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Zap2It.com*, *TelevisionWithoutPity.com*, *Ain't It Cool News*; Facebook and fan pages; Twitter followers, etc. (all of which will be explored in more detail in the case studies). *USA Today*'s TV critic Gary Levin (2011, March 3) seemed to sum up media and fan attitudes on *Five-0* in its first season, writing the show isn't "…generating much excitement." Here, I believe Levin defines "excitement" as a high benchmark or saturation of pop culture media and fan attention, e.g., magazine covers/features, dedicated Facebook and fan pages, Twitter followers, and other factors. That said, Levin's statement (and the overall shrinkage of media coverage of *Five-0* since its first season) complicates and challenges us to dig into fan attachments to television dramas, and consider how or why certain genres, certain shows, and certain pedigrees are traditionally embraced as more "fan friendly" by fandom and media. Meanwhile, publicist Informant #5 might counter Levin's sentiment with this assessment:

> …I think the 49-plus demographic matters now more than ever. Because I think networks do this all the time, if you chase 18-34, you are chasing a super, super fickle audience. They may love your shows. They may have a tattoo of your show, but it doesn't mean they are going to watch ever week. And it doesn't mean that they are going to buy the products that you advertise. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and June 11, 2012)

Although fandom traditionally loves an underdog, the fact remains that TV's still a business that has to show profits for stockholders, cable companies, advertisers, and other stakeholders.

Still, questions remain: Why has *Five-0* failed to resonate – in terms of popular mainstream press and fandom conversation and production – within pop culture this time

around? Can procedurals resonate with fandom? In my experience and with genre series in particular, a passionate fan base coalesces as part of any first season, and builds from there. Fans and media initially reinforce each other's opinions to a point where mainstream audiences catch on, want to join the conversation, be part of the part of the "club," and turn into fans themselves – which only magnifies the cycle in concentric loops. *WIRED*'s Thomas Goetz (2011) explained, "The true power of the (positive-reinforcement) feedback loop is not to control us but to give us control. It gives us an emotional connection to a rational goal (p. 127)." Fans by definition feel an emotional connection, ownership, and a sense of control (through encyclopedic knowledge, unique language/terms, and activities, e.g., fan fiction, cosplay) over the characters, content, etc. But, if media turn away, as with *Five-0*, the loop short-circuits. Mainstream audience might find, consume, and take pleasure in a show, but their experience doesn't synch up with media or traditional, organized fandom (Creeber, 2008; Gray, 2010; Gwenllian-Jones & Pearson, 2004).

I come to this project eager to illustrate that the industrial activity of publicists and journalists serves as an integral step that transverses original text authorship and audience reception of news and entertainment media content (Caldwell, 2008; Mayer, Banks, Caldwell, 2009). Furthermore, since public relations was not fully conceptualized by du Guy, Hall et al. (1997), who admitted that this sort of work "is often harder to identify" as opposed to marketing and advertising, one of the main goals of this project is to give voice to several influential individual agents who actively fuel "articulations" within today's "Circuit of Culture" (see Figure 1.1). Overall, I found professional kinship and theoretical underpinnings for this project through a broad range of cultural, television, fan, and public relations scholars, including

Bourdieu; Caldwell; Deuze; Curtin and Gaither; Edwards and Hodges; Fiske; Gray; Jenkins; Hesmondhalgh; Shoemaker and Reece; Lendingham and Bruning; and Barfield, among others.

In the tradition of Hortense Powdermaker (1950), Laura Grindstaff (2002), and particularly writer-producer-academic Felicia F. Henderson (2011), my fundamental perspective on this project is "deeply reflexive and autoethnographic," in my role as a "boundary crosser" or boundary spanner between Hollywood and academia. Since 1995, I have worked as a public relations executive in network, cable, international and syndicated television, supervising over 50 TV series, specials, and events, most notably *Heroes*, *The Office*, *Veronica Mars*, *Everybody Hates Chris,* and the live *2006 Primetime Emmy Awards*. As such, I have an intimate relationship with all the traditional points of "production, text and consumption" that define, create, build, and maintain current genre- and celebrity-based fandom and close, long-time professional relationships with all of the participating interviewees (Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

Strategic communication, which includes my work in public relations, along with marketing and advertising, is the "purposeful use of communication to by an organization to fulfill its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007). According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2005), "public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." While a variation of this definition was ratified in 2012 by the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA), within a fandom context, an expanded definition is useful for this project. Public relations is also a socially constructed activity and communication practice that produces, sustains, and regulates meaning and provides the basis of how individuals, society, and industry

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positively construct symbolic and material "reality" (Lee, Hodges, 2011; VanSlyke, 2006).

Television publicists hope to steer consistent viewing habits into full, active, energized engagement, resulting in an expanding groundswell of activity, interest, and constructed communicative behaviors common with fans, superfans, "superviewers," or "superusers" (as named and defined by Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Gray, 2010; Li & Bernoff, 201; Lotz, 2007; M. Ryan, personal communication, June 5, 2012; Sternbergh,, 3/14/12). In a business of "human attention," the viewer call-to-action can only happen through the negotiated labor between publicists like myself and professional and non-professional media that results in a myriad of press across platforms – from the "log line" sentence that describes each episode on your DVR and review online (which is subsequently linked to and tweeted) to the celebrity talk show appearance and red carpet photo opportunity (Napoli, 2010).

Like the TV professionals interviewed for this project and many peers throughout my career, I share entertainment audiences' "spectator identity," replete with all the feelings of "adoration," "devoting," "aspiration," and "inspiration," and/or nostalgia (Informants #1-5, May-June, 2012; Stacey, 1994). Also, I strongly self-identify as a "fan" and "geek," making me somewhat unique in historically female-dominated public relations departments. This subject position speaks to my gravitation towards and professional success with cult and/or genre (French for "type" or "kind," often associated with offbeat, edgy sci-fi, fantasy, and horror programming) TV and fan relations (Banks, 2009; Creeber, 2008). So, this project pushes forward: 1) my progression from a public relations professional to a socio-cultural participant/observer; and 2) my primary identification from a fan to "aca-fan," per Matt Hills'

(2002) original definition, and term popularized by Jenkins and his blog (2011).

Naturally, any discussion of modern television must include Lotz's delineation and definition of TV periods, particularly Post-Network television. As touched upon above, I believe du Guy, Hall et al. (1997) and Bourdieu's theories can complement each other and help fill in gaps left by their lack of attention to public relations. I also attempt to more accurately place public relations into articulations of the Circuit of Culture model. In addition, the literature review that follows outlines applicable theories in public relations theory and practice, gatekeeping theory, and fan studies. In part, these sub-sections attempt to map out the boundaries in TV publicist and media populations, in terms of reported U.S. government and industry numbers and demographics, to better display the power of this small industry population on a larger mainstream audience. Finally, this section concludes with a detailed review of method, and research questions.

As case studies, Chapters Two and Three illustrate current industry practice and mediation in *Five-0* and *Dead*'s first seasons. Hall (1981) points out that popular culture involves continuous and unequal struggle between forces of domination and points of resistance. While fandom usually isn't normally characterized as a dominating force, I believe the 2010-2011 season marks a distinct period where the small, vocal collective of fandom came to dominate mainstream pop culture in America. Though a detailed look at network press materials and reportage from four key outlets (*Ain't It Cool News*, *Entertainment Weekly/EW.com*, *Television Without Pity*, and *The New York Times*), these chapters attempt to trace how hard-bodied, surf-and-sand procedural *Five-0* was culturally marginalized by a pack of zombies.

Finally, from an anthropological and ethnographic tradition, Chapter Four outlines my conclusions from informant interviews and suggests paths for future research. For most informants, this was the first time they had ever participated in an academic study. The TV staff writer, editor, and critic were specifically chosen for their personal and professional identification as and with fans. Based on my experience, this has always informed our work and relationship to readers and audience. In fact, I have learned professionally that there exists an informal core group of 25-30 key journalists in the U.S. who can determine the fate of any genre series. After trusted media sources for fandom, this opinion leader block can make or break a genre show. Ultimately, any genre show needs about 75-80% of support from this core group to make any significant inroads into fandom and/or pop culture. Moving forward, perhaps, these journalists can be better described as "media-fans," much in the same spirit as aca-fans.

Ultimately, this project embarks on a search for how the two industrially-intertwined professional communities of television public relations practitioners and journalists jointly define, identify, and make meaning of fandom across platforms, and how they privately articulate their agency and role in the creation of fans from the position of industrial producers, Bourdieuian "cultural intermediaries," particularly as members of the audience and fans themselves, ever students of the craft. In other words, this project delves into how these figures make the "magic" happen. The two case studies will use the Circuit of Culture's (original and expanded model) articulations to show how public relations is the hocus pocus and "locus of transactions that produce emergent social and cultural meanings," which "become part of the fabric of society and are thereby integrated into public relations in the future" (Edwards and Hodges, 2011).

Literature Review

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) wrote, "The work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art" (p. 35). Like art aficionados, fandom and narrowly-targeted modern audiences embrace certain TV media texts and paratexts as "art" and as "quality." I assert that these varying tribes of viewers spring directly from and are fostered by the negotiated industrial activity of text and paratext production (e.g., press releases, press, quotes in advertising, postings and photos on fan sites, tweets, etc.) by industrially-veiled cultural gatekeepers, who work as key professional as well as amateur media and entertainment public relations practitioners (Lotz, 2007; Sandovall, 2005). In the 2010-2011 television season, *Dead* and *Five-0* were heavily advertised by their networks; heralded by key critics and media outlets; and, ultimately, variably embraced by fandom and TV viewers, as confirmed by their uncommonly fast second (and third) season pick-up announcements.

Since then, *Five-0* has virtually disappeared from the media landscape (as surveyed in major media, official Facebook page "likes," trending tweets and Google searches, etc.) and has seemingly little public relevancy. Still, during the November 2011 sweeps period, *Five-0* averaged almost twice *Dead* in terms of total viewers (11.47 million vs. 6.6 million viewers), although this gap narrowed significantly in May 2012 sweeps (11.29 million vs. 9 million) (FutonCritic.com, 2012, *Zap2it.com*, 2011-2012; CBS press releases; 2011-2012).

This numerical comparison brings to mind a number of questions: How does initial and ongoing media acknowledgment (or lack thereof) of a series affect and elevate perception of a cult or fan favorite to watercooler status (Abbott, 2010; Creeber, 2008; Sandvoss, 2005; Hills,

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2002)? How heavily does positive media attention factor into industry decision-making and taste? Do media outlets define and/or struggle against industrial measures of success (as a complex mix of financial, artistic, critical, and popular factors)? Is the key to media attention that fandom has its own boundary-crossing insiders – similar to "acafans" – placed within media and publicity (Jenkins, 2011; Hills, 2002)?

The literature review has been divided into sections below to better delineate some of the veins of research and definitions that I believe are essential to my understanding of and broad scope for this project. This includes Post-Network Era theory, Circuit of Culture and Bourdieu, Public Relations Theory and Practice, Gatekeeping Theory, and Fan Studies. Whenever possible, I put these ideas into personal context from my autoethnographic, professional point of view.

Post-Network Era Television

"Television has always been a convergent medium," explain Kackman, Binfield, Payne, Perlman & Sebok (2011, p. 4). In a cyclical manner, the medium has historically drawn from, conflicted and compromised with, and been transformed by industrial and technological peers and competitors, from radio and film to mobile devices and DVRs (Hilmes, 1990). As currently defined and understood by academia, contemporary TV audiences (of which fandom is a highly coveted segment) exist in a post-industrial, post-network world with converging platforms, technologies, and industries that increasingly financially support and promotionally encourage a wide array of fan participation (Kackman, Binfield, Payne, Perlman and Sebok, 2011; Jenkins, 2011, 2010, 2006; Gray, 2010, 2007; Holt and Perren, 2009; Lotz, 2007).

Daniel Bell proclaimed in the 1960's that American society made a major historical transition from an "industrial" to a "post-industrial" society, with "the production, processing, and communication of information in services and cultural commodities" taking precedent (Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter, 2003, p. 5). Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter note, "These changes were associated…with a growing role of 'knowledge workers,' who could communicate, accumulate information, and ultimately process the flow of data in the competitive market economy" (p. 5). Today's fan epitomizes this predicted role with information about entertainment properties competing each year to become cultural capital.

Amanda D. Lotz's *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (2007) outlines how television specifically has utterly transformed from the centralized Network Era of television (late 1940s-80s) to a diffused Multi-Channel Transition (1980s-mid-2000s), and finally, the Post-Network Era (2005-present). While a clear start of the Network Era is complicated by industry fits and starts, this time "was the providence of three substantial networks—NBC, CBS, and ABC— which were operated by relatively non-conglomerated corporations based in the business center of New York." The Big Three spoke to a true mass American audience, and combined to help build and sustain a national identity post-WWII. Much of what the Big Three established remains in place today, from the national system of affiliate stations to TV's (increasingly contentious) relationship with long-time monopoly Nielsen to measure audience for advertisers. Viewers during this period had little choice, mobility or time-shifting ability. As a mass medium, programming was created to appeal to the most viewers possible, and to do so content had to be uniformly "least objectionable." Film studio and independent TV producers only had three potential buyers for their programming, and fell in line with network requests, practices,

standards, etc.

In the 1980s, federal deregulation and new technologies, including the remote control, VCR, satellites, and analog cable system, pushed television into a new period, the Multi-Channel Transition. Targeted new cable channels were introduced (CNN, MTV, TBS, etc.) and "netlets" FOX, The WB and UPN were launched in 1986, 1995, and 1995 respectively. As Big Three dominance eroded from 90% to 33% in 1990, programming content towards niche audiences and overall audience fragmentation, polarization, and narrowcasting became the norm. Meanwhile, viewers discovered and reveled in a new sense of choice and control similar to DVR, Video On Demand (VOD), and streaming video use today. Studios and producers felt freed to push sexual, racial, gender, race, and other production/content boundaries with an expanded number of potential buyers. Production also began to move internationally to save costs and push towards "broadcast (or Big Three) quality."

Subsequently, television has settled into the Post-Network Era, where networks still have relevance but significantly less control over a market that has now expanded to include hundreds of digital channels. Unlike the Network Era, today is marked by "no singular (viewing) behavior or mode of viewing," with trends toward differentiation and individualization continuing. While TV sets have become bigger, lighter, and visually clearer, you don't even need a TV to watch TV anymore, thanks to mobile devices, computers, and tablets. Although still much very much in progress, some of the biggest changes during this era might be Viacom's UPN (where I worked at this time) and TimeWarner's The WB merging into The CW network in 2006, and broadcasting's move in June 2009 from analog to digital television (DTV) signals, allowing for

even more HDTV channels.

Proulx and Shepatin's *Social TV: how marketers can reach and engage audiences by connecting television to the web, social media, and mobile* (2012) describes how social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, in conjunction with the television industry, have created an increasingly powerful, parallel "backchannel." According to the authors, this interactive, immersive, multiplatform mode of viewing is fueling a new audience, fan, and media "renaissance" back towards live television. However, they argue that with this increased mobile and internet use, we might be on the cusp of a generational shift where younger audiences see TV as something "to use" rather than view – a marked shift in attitude towards content, production, etc. That said, television continues to retain its overall status as America's most popular and influential mass medium, sharing space with radio, print, and the internet.

Though it may have been popular and influential, where did TV stand financially in 2011-2012? According to the *Los Angeles Times* (James, 2011, November 15), TV ad revenue ended 2011 at nearly $68 billion (out of an expected $144 billion in U.S. ad spending overall), an industry record but 4% less than expected by networks at the top of year. As James (2011, November 15) observes, "The March (2011) earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which put a months-long halt to automobile production, combined with a moribund job market and a steady drumbeat of bad economic news to slam the brakes on television advertising sales." Also, major film studios released fewer movies and spent much less on marketing in 2011. This data serves as a reminder of TV advertising's vulnerability to forces both inside and outside entertainment (James, 2011, November 15). Still, like viewership, TV ad revenue continues to trend up, with a growing percentage moving towards cable. According to *The Hollywood Reporter* (2012, April

30), broadcast TV upfront revenue increased 4.3% and cable networks revenue rose 6.3% in 2012, bringing "upfront primetime ad sales for the broadcast networks to $9.49 billion, a new all-time high, and the cable channel total to $9.88 billion." Within this context, this project falls explicitly within contemporary discourse of Post-Network Era theory. Furthermore, this model provides an overarching frame to contextualize the project.

Circuit of Culture and Bourdieuian Cultural Consumption

According to du Gay, Hall, et al. (1997), "culture" is the process by which meaning is produced, circulated, consumed, commoditized, and endlessly reproduced and renegotiated in society. We socially construct the meanings of television – in part thanks to the agency and industrial activity of TV publicists, key media, and critics, as this project shows. Culture forms the basis of a society's shared meaning system. It provides the classification schema we use to make sense of our world, making culture, meaning, and language inextricably linked. We extend meanings by drawing on shared, historical cultural experience, by defining anything new in terms of what we already know.

To illustrate how this meaning is created, Stuart Hall (1997) formulated a model for the "circuit of culture," which draws upon the work of Marx and continues in turn to be built upon and reformulated by many other subsequent scholars (figure below). His model consists of five moments in a process – regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity (defined in detail by Curtin and Gaither, 2005, using the brand of Coca-Cola as an example) – that work in concert to provide a shared cultural space in which meaning is created, shaped, modified, and recreated. With no beginning or end, the moments work synergistically to create

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meaning, and each moment contributes a particular piece of the whole (du Gay, Hall, et al.,

1997; Curtin & Gaither, 2005):
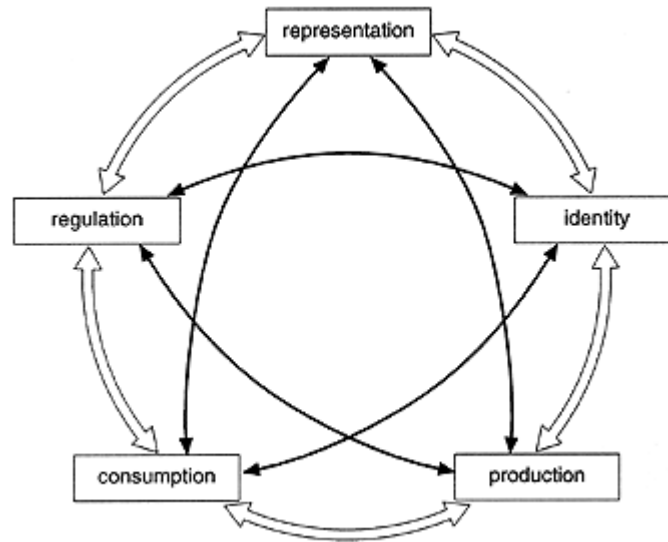
Figure 1.1   Circuit of Culture (du Gay, Hall, et al., 1997)

At any particular spot on the circuit the moments overlap in what Hall calls "articulations." This

term has a dual meaning – to articulate is both to express and to join together. Each articulation

signals a particular situation or instance, a particular confluence of the five moments. (du Gay,

Hall, et al., 1997; Curtin & Gaither, 2005).

The circuit indicates how meaning will arise, but it is situational, relative, and always

subject to change. So, within this structured framework, a range of meanings are possible.

Meanings may be socially constructed, but they are constructed within the range allowed by

institutional frameworks and based on past meanings and formulations. Meanings are then

reconstructed as consumers use them in their particular social situations, which arise in the

articulations (du Gay, Hall, et al., 1997; Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Curtin and Gaither (2005)

point out:

> From different articulations, different dominant and competing discourses arise. Discourse prescribes how a cultural artifact can be meaningfully discussed and used. It "facilitates cultural communication while always recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different 'speakers' within the same cultural circuit" (Hall, 1997b, p. 11). Within the confines of historicity, then, articulations put relationships and power firmly at the forefront of what meanings will arise in any given situation (p. 42).

For a better understanding the circuit, I have found it helpful to integrate a second, complementary model. Pierre Bourdieu – as outlined by David Hesmondhalgh (2006) – created a distinctive model to better understand culture and explain media and cultural production through his work in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), *The Rules of Art* (1996), and to a lesser extent, *On Television and Journalism* (1996). It too shares roots in Marxist theories of class and conflict. Focusing on art, literature, television and journalism, Bourdieu's body of theoretical work on cultural consumption stressed power relations, and laid out a model through specific terms: Habitus, Capital and Field – with the latter two being particularly crucial.

As defined by Bourdieu, habitus is an individualized set of expectations and understandings based on the collection of experiences a given person encounters that shape his/her sense of the "rules of the game." It is what regulates interactions within a field in an observable, "objective" manner, affecting not only the individual but all those who interact with that individual (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). In my experience, publicists and journalists gain a firm understanding of "rules" over time, according to interaction with each other (e.g., reporters' preferences, their beats, outlet needs and space restrictions), their executives, supervisors or editors, their co-workers, and more. Meanwhile, fans take cues from media and learn rules each other.

Capital, or "symbolic capital," defines the tools used by individuals and institutions within a field to gain dominance and reproduce themselves over time. Bourdieu broke from Marxist tradition by splitting capital into two types: economic (e.g., monetary and property assets) and cultural. Cultural capital is equivalent to cultural competence. Like economic capital, cultural capital conveys legitimacy, as regulated by traditional, hierarchical, hegemonic institutions within society. But with cultural capital, this legitimacy is regulated by artistic and educational institutions, not the government. Bourdieu noted that cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, and conversely, economic capital can be converted into cultural capital (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). In Hollywood, capital or perceived status is everything. Between publicists and media it certainly plays into daily choices, such as who gets exclusives or whose call gets returned first. Publicists create, build, and sustain legitimacy and cultural capital as an inherent function of their labor. Fans historically gain capital and dominance through the collection of material products and encyclopedic knowledge bases.

Bourdieu defined Field as a competitive system of social relations functioning according to its own specific logic or rules. It is the economic and political site of struggle for power between the dominant and subordinate classes, and is the place where legitimacy – a key, defining aspect of the dominant class – is conferred or withdrawn. Individuals bring the two forms of Capital with them into the Field system and use it increase and enhance their status, power, etc. Hesmondhalgh (2006) explains:

> Bourdieu sees the field of power as characterized by high levels of economic capital and low levels of cultural capital. The field of cultural production, meanwhile, is constituted by low levels of economic capital and high levels of cultural capital…certain goods tend to be favoured by the dominant fraction of the dominant class, and others by the dominated fraction of this class. The former class fraction…have high levels of economic capital, but lower levels of cultural capital. The latter, dominated class fraction have lower levels of economic capital, but make up for this by accumulating cultural capital,

which can be converted to other forms of capital, including economic and social capital (in Bourdieu's sense) at a later date… By identifying key fields within a particular social space, Bourdieu is able to theorize interconnections between different areas of endeavour, and the degree to which they are *autonomous* of each other. (p. 212)

Television networks, media outlets, and their employees historically compete for dominance through audience and readership, according to various scales of economic and cultural measurement. In recent years, fandom has gained a tremendous amount of capital and status within the competitive system of industry and national consciousness, affecting business practices and priorities and transforming fan events such as Comic-Con into "Hollywood's most important event" (*Entertainment Weekly*, 2012, August 10). With industry and EP/showrunners actively conferring fans power over products – at least rhetorically, as will be discussed later in this chapter and in the case studies – in the last 10-15 years, fans have moved towards a more legitimate, dominant class from their prior subordinate position, which mirrors industry transition into the Post-Network Era emphasizing niche channels, audience, and more. Still, fandom has its own internal struggles for legitimacy (e.g., general fandom maligning of "twihards," superfans of the *Twilight* franchise). Fans also seem to feel more empowered to organize attacks against media critics now (e.g., *The Avengers* star Samuel L. Jackson twitter battle with *The New York Times*, and *The Dark Knight Rises* fans' death threats on *RottenTomatoes.com* directed to some critics' negative-to-moderate early reviews).

While different on the surface, I see Bourdieu and Hall's models as similar in creating interconnected, intertwined, self-contained models to explain modern, increasingly global production and consumption culture, where autonomous agents (a.k.a, knowledge workers, publicists, media and critics) negotiate and mediate meaning at specific key areas. Fundamentally, both models deal with differentiated power relations, although I believe

Hall's model accounts more for individual agency and better explains the actual practice and mediated feedback in public relations.

For this project, Hesmondhalgh's (2006) observation that "Bourdieu is drawing attention to the structured nature of making symbolic goods, and the way that the social making-up of the rules surrounding such activities, is hidden from view, or misrecognized" is particularly key. While he critiqued Bourdieu for not offering an "account of how the most widely consumed cultural products – those disseminated by the media – are produced," I suspect most entertainment publicists would like to keep in that way. I believe this study helps to address this critique and provides some ways to further these conversations. To further the conversation, I attempt to better situate public relations into the model at the study's conclusion.

Public Relations Theory and Practice

Since Edward Louis Bernays (1891-1995) was coined as the profession's "father" in 1945, the activities of public relations and publicity have been purposely, institutionally, and by definition shrouded. Like Merlin to King Arthur, industry publicists are generally taught to be educators, advisors, and protectors to power and, in a more modern sense, industry, subtly and strategically acting to create specific, contextualized meaning to audiences via agents along the way. While there is variation depending on type of industry and individuals, the highly political, ambassadorial nature of the work is always top of mind. For example, one could examine the key tool and text of public relations – press releases – and see that attention, quotations, power, agency, etc. are always attributed to others. The publicist is only mentioned as a contact – or conduit, gatekeeper – for more information.

"Until fairly recently, Public Relations was an occupation defined more by its techniques than by its theory. Recently, however scholars of Public Relations have developed a body of knowledge that puts public relations on par with recognized professions," as J.E. Grunig (2003) notes.   The 2006 Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education confirms that literature in the field is growing "exponentially" (VanSlyke, 2006). That said, significant major gaps in public relations research – especially in the area of entertainment public relations – still exist (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). This study begins to address this gap.

To date, collegiate public relations programs generally teach that there have been four overlapping evolutionary stages to the profession, with remnants of each in current practice: press agentry, public information, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical (Botan & Hazleton, 2006; Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Heath, 2001, 2010). First, with press agentry, the profession was characterized by a "public-be-fooled" posture, or a misleading, publicity-seeking one-way information flow utilized by 19th and early 20th century business leaders and entertainers, including P.T. Barnum (Adams, 1997). Then, in *A Declaration of Principals* (1906), pioneer Ivy Lee promoted a "two-way street" stance where practitioners/embedded journalists were to advise companies on policies to gain public good will. Combined with public pressure, this pushed business into the second stage – public information – with a "public-be-informed" attitude. Around the same time, AT&T and other major businesses began to use social scientific tools (e.g., audience research) to form a new model – two-way symmetric "scientific persuasion."

Bernays introduced the idea of an advisor/counselor role for practitioners in *Crystallizing Public Opinions* (1923). He pushed to disassociate public relations from publicity/press

agentry, and championed a "public-be-understood-and-met-halfway" attitude – the two- (or more) way asymmetric model. This latter multidirectional model is one that I generally practiced, and might best be exemplified today by corporate, TV network, series, series showrunner, and star Twitter activity with and between media, fans, audience, and consumers. To varying degrees, these conversations are managed by public relations and public affairs departments as part of an overall representation and identity (or branding) process. Bernays' work began the debate over ethics and professionalism, which helped construct Grunig's excellence theory (Gitter, 1981; Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Heath's (2010) contingency model of public relations and Dozier, Gruning and Grunig's (1994, 1995) excellence theory both modernize and contextualize the practice as a business function between stakeholders and provide the basis for much of current public relations scholarship. Both embed public relations practice and theory into an industrial organizational structure, as a critical function of management. Here, public relations' value to businesses, organizations and society is based on 1) socially responsible managerial decisions; and 2) public relations department and employee's quality of relationships with stakeholders and publics, such as media and fans. To be most effective, organizations must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders and publics as well as of management. If not, stakeholders will pressure for change – or oppose it – in ways that add capital risk and cost to decisions and policies. To behave in socially acceptable ways, businesses must research and scan their environment to identify publics affected by potential organizational decisions, or who want organizations to make decisions to solve problems that are important to them. Then, businesses must communicate strategically – e.g., taking the interests of both the organization and publics

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into account to cultivate meaningful, long-term relationships with them (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2005; Dozier, Gruning & Grunig, 1995; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Hallahan et al., 2007).

Similarly, relationship management theory places these relationships at the forefront of public relations theory, over individual stakeholders and publics, the organization, and communicative processes. Here, public relations functions as a tool to balance the relational interests of organizations and publics through the management of organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Relationships are the most important part of public relations and media production. In practice, jobs and job titles come and go due to the revolving nature of the business, but trust-based relationships remain. In fact, this was one of the themes from the interviews that will be discussed further in the conclusion chapter.

The focus on diverse, intercultural, niche relationships in the social world, assisted by increasingly technology-based means of interconnection, is at the crux of new public relations scholarship (Tindall, 2012, February 1; Sha, 2006). According to Sha (2006), cultural identity is the key to public relations' role in helping to define, create, build, and maintain activist publics across platforms around the world:

> The real significance of cultural identity for public relations may lie in 'the (profession's) capacity…to bring about consensus, unity, or a sense of among people' (Cross, 1987, p. 126)…A refined version of the situational theory that included efficient measures of cultural identity would help organizations determine which stakeholder groups are likely to become active publics. With this ability to predict active communication behavior, public relations practitioners could plan communication programs to prevent or hinder the rise of activist publics or to encourage groups likely to become active in support of the organization, particularly in situations dealing with cultural issues. (p. 61)

Hoping to push the field out into the social world where organizations operate, current socio-

cultural research argues for repositioning scholarship towards "the socially constructed nature of practice, process and outcomes" in a racially, ethnically, and demographically diverse world with segmented publics (Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Sha, 2006). It sees public relations as "a social and cultural practice, a profession with it own dynamics that generates discourses in order to shape our attitudes, values and beliefs in the interests of organizations" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). Meanwhile, Ihlen, van Ruler and Fredrikson (2009) believe public relations should be studied as a "social phenomena." The trio argues that "practice needs to be understood in relationship to societal (macro), organizational (meso), and individual (micro) properties" (Ihlen, van Ruler & Fredrikson, 2009). All combined, the above public relations models provide a broad theoretical foundation to place this project within current publicity research.

These abovementioned theories dovetail nicely into Li and Bernoff's (2011) thoughts on "Groundswell," defined as "a social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations (p. 9)." Springing from eBay, Craigslist, Napster, and MySpace, today's social networks, including Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, LinkedIn, a variety of apps and games, and user-generated content sites, such as YouTube, Pinterest and Tumblr, provide a rich environment for the intersection of people's desires to connect, new interactive technologies, and online economics. This increasingly fast, networked audience creates an incredible ongoing challenge to industry and the existing balance of power. Nonetheless, fundamentally this activity is still about facilitating positive engagement and relationships (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Groundswell should increasingly become an important concept for one's overall understanding of current modes of Reception by stakeholders in the Circuit (as outlined in the conclusion's Figure 4.2) too.

Publicists' Labor and Role as Cultural Intermediaries

Consensus-building and service are key components to public relations labor. In many regards, entertainment publicity is very similar in nature to how Banks (2009) describes the labor involved in costume design: "The day-to-day work of the costume designer requires skill, discipline, humility, creativity, attention to detail, and speed – all on a budget (p. 92)." This perspective was further expressed in the Banks (2009) article by TV costume designer Nicole Gorsuch:

> "…It's a combination of what everybody wants. It's like you are a diplomat, trying to get what the producers want, what the actors want, and what the director wants. You're just trying to make everyone happy and mesh it all together and fit it into the budget, and ultimately make the actors feel as comfortable as possible (p. 92-93)"

In my experience, publicists function similarly, but with exponentially more publics to serve and make happy, including network and studio co-workers, public relations department supervisors, other department heads, business affairs, network and studio heads, supervisory and/or writing executive producers (EPs), writers, hair/makeup and assorted crew on multiple sets. Still, within the Hollywood system, publicists have privilege and power, based on their advisory and gatekeeper of knowledge roles as well as their perpetual motion within and between groups as intermediaries.

Both entertainment publicists and press as knowledge workers are key agents of mediation. In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1987), Bourdieu defines public relations as one of the cluster of occupations staffed by "cultural intermediaries," associated with the "new petite bourgeoisie," a new faction of middle-class workers that has grown in size and influence since the mid-20th century. He says:

The new petite bourgeoisie comes into its own in all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services . . . and in cultural production and organization which have expanded considerably in recent years (p. 359).

As such, publicists and traditional journalists, critics, and non-traditional online media representatives (e.g., bloggers) act as mediators who actively connect specific aspirations, doubts, and desires to particular products, establishing identification between developers and publics. As Maguire (2008) notes, "Those involved in cultural intermediary work are thus mediators in a double sense: they help to link consumers to specific cultural products and services, and to a more fundamental consuming mentality." Certainly, in my experience, it's easier to help others form an emotional connection to a new TV show than say, a new brand of perfume, because of its visuality, story-telling ability, projected and aspirational nature, and individual connections that people have to past "good TV" experiences.

As reviewed by Negus (2002), Featherstone (1991) argues that these new cultural intermediaries are "specialists in symbolic production" and "cultural entrepreneurs and intermediaries who have an interest in creating postmodern pedagogies to educate publics" (p. 503). As cultural intermediaries, the role of public relations practitioners is here defined as 1) translators between distinct areas of production and consumption; 2) educators and experts instructing audience in the art of consumption and the social distinctions of taste; and 3) mediators between the needs of producers and the desires of consumers. Simply, they – combined with press – are vanguard tastemakers who define, maintain, and sustain legitimate cultural capital.

For Bourdieu and Featherstone, publicists translate and transmit through media new ways

of consuming through their "slyly imperative advice" in order to align consumers' practices with the demands of the consumer-based economy. So, public relations practitioners mediate taste and consumption practices in tune with the needs of the system of production, which increasingly is associated with niche programming and audiences. These intermediaries essentially are "needs merchants" who manipulate consumers' needs and wants not through the classic hard sell of traditional marketers, but by "new subtle techniques of domination," e.g., "velvet glove" methods (Bourdieu, 1987; Negus, 2002). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1987) says:

> This economy demands a social world which judges people by their capacity for consumption, their 'standard of living', their life-style, as much as by their capacity for production. It finds ardent spokesmen in the new bourgeoisie of the vendors of symbolic goods and services, the directors and the executives of firms in tourism and journalism, publishing and the cinema, fashion and advertising, decoration and property development. Through their slyly imperative advice and the example of their consciously 'model' life-style, the new taste-makers propose a morality which boils down to the art of consuming, spending and enjoying (p. 310-311).

Certainly, to some, fandom has perfected this art of consumption. Collection, consumption, re-consumption, analysis, and shared experience are all celebrated parts of fandom's DNA by industry, academia, and fans themselves. Is the difference between yesterday's fan and today's "superfan" anything but an increased, public level of conspicuous consumption?

While public relations professionals would be averse to verbalizing the term "velvet glove" – at least in conversation with fans, media, or academics – professionals certainly consider rhetoric, persuasion, position, hegemony, and power as concepts on a daily basis, consciously or unconsciously. Bernays described the profession of public relations as "an art applied to a science." Like art, there are numerous, successful, empowering ways to approach the field. And like asking, "What is art?," urging an average person to define "public relations"

can lead to hilarious, bewildering, or distressing answers (Adams, 2003). In fact, my parents still

cannot tell you what exactly I did for a living in Hollywood. And to this day, they are confused

and mildly upset that my name was not included in any of the stories I worked so hard to place

across media.

If some of the public don't know what public relations is, more seem to have a skewed or

negative perception of it. Adams (2003) believes that some of these perception problems stem

from a media's reinforcement of ingénue stereotypes; judgment-laden, derogatory terms,

including "flak," "flacks," "spin," "spin doctors," etc. (which are frequently used by other

scholars, e.g., Hesmondhaugh & Baker, 2011); systematic attacks on honesty, ethics, and skill

sets by journalism, business and marketing; and overall limited understanding of the scope of the

work, beyond media relations and event planning. Gitter (1981) believes part of the lack of

clarity is due to changes in the field's definition and practice throughout the 20th century.

Further complicating perception, the 2006 Report of the Commission on Public Relations

Education (VanSlyke, 2006) reports almost every professional organization, industry press site,

and public relations textbook constructs a different definition for the field. The Report noted

over 300 definitions internationally. As previously mentioned, the PRSA initiated a

crowdsourcing campaign and public vote in 2012 that produced a definition similar to Cutlip,

Center and Broom (2005): "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds

mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics."

Ideally, successful public relations practitioners (and educators) are highly intelligent,

literate, and incredibly well-read. They possess excellent personal and professional

communication skills, and have both exceptional depth and breadth in public relations theory and

cross-platform media intelligence. In addition, they should have an extensive knowledge of both history and global current events. With this, the practitioner functions as a professional advisor and intermediary who helps shape and maintain an organization's relationships with its stakeholders across platforms (VanSlyke, 2006). As a field defined by constant feedback and reinvention, successful practitioners in television must develop and continually hone a multitude of "knowledge-intensive" and "service-oriented" skills sets, including the following in my experience:

- Media Relations (e.g., direct contact with media and critics to pitch, shape, and facilitate stories)
- Press Release/Materials writing/editing/approvals
- Media Training (e.g., teaching and preparing executives and creative types for interviews)
- Event Planning
- On-site/On-location/Unit Publicity
- Brand Launch/Maintenance
- Strategic Partnerships
- Internal Communication
- Crisis Communication
- Transmedia and Social Networking Site (SNS) Planning/Messaging
- Speech Writing
- Charitable Tie-ins
- Research/Specialized Knowledge and Pedagogy
- Technological Expertise and Pedagogy

Again, based on my experience, most of these skill sets are learned "on the job," with the assistance and guidance of mentors. It's a job learned by doing, for the most part, supplemented by basic skill education at a college and university level. Television public relations in particular also requires extensive above- and below-the line-production, on set, acting, and other sets of knowledge, which are not usually taught at a college-level. Industrially-hidden, experience-based knowledge, or "rules of the game," are key to establishing, legitimizing, and maintaining

power in terms of habitus, capital and field, as theorized by Bourdieu.

Television Publicity Employment

As reflected in much of media industries scholarship, a number of different sources must be combined to get a sense of scope, activity, and industrial practice by agents in Hollywood. The following section attempts to map the boundaries of TV publicity in terms of population and employment, and complements the next section which does the same with TV journalists. This attempt at mapping shows how limited a number of individuals engage in this sort of labor and helps agenda-setting theory conversations. My professionally-derived experience that says TV professionals in the U.S. define, create, and maintain cultural capital in regards to fandom.

According to Henri Bollinger, long-time head of the professional public relations organization Entertainment Publicists Professional Society (EPPS), based in Los Angeles and New York:

> (There are) 3500 entertainment publicists in LA. Of these, about 1,000 belong to the Publicists Guild (current and honorable withdrawn). About 1700 plus are on the EPPS invite list. Our NY list has about 600 people. There are independent publicists, publicists attached to studios, agency publicists, publicists for non-profits who work within entertainment industry and there are those publicists who have changed careers. The other groups include Hispanic PR Association and the Asian PR Association. (H. Bollinger, personal correspondence, July 11, 2011)

These numbers correspond with membership figures available from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA.org) and The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (www.emmys.tv; both of which I'm a member), along with The Publicists' Guild Local 600 (https://www.cameraguild.com/Home.aspx), which includes only studio publicists. While I believe these numbers are informative and hint towards these groups' exclusive, privileged

natures, they are not comprehensive. For example, these lists do not include gender or demographic breakdowns. In my experience, TV publicity departments in NY and LA are 80%-85% staffed by middle-class, college-educated, white, females in their 20-40s. Also, these lists do not include or account for many junior level publicists in TV, who don't have the time, financial resources, managerial support, or experience to participate with these upper-level professional groups. When I became a member of the TV Academy in 1998, I had the required three years of experience and three professional nominations from department heads at FX, who were trying to boost the network's voting block.

While not broken down by industry, numbers from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010-11 ed. (last modified 2011, May 17) might provide some scope for the field of public relations in general. Here, the government estimates that there are 53,460 Public Relations and Fundraising Managers working in America, with most concentrated in California (6,320), New York (5,460), District of Columbia (3,130), Texas (2,670), and Illinois (2,660). At a possibly more general and/or junior level, there were 275,200 Public Relations Specialists in the U.S. in 2008, and the Department projects this number to grow to 341,300 by 2018. They add, "Competition will be keen for jobs at large metropolitan and national newspapers, broadcast stations, and magazines; small publications and broadcast stations and online newspapers and magazines should provide the best opportunities." (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010-11 Ed.). Combined, this would put the current 2011 number of Public Relations workers (Managers and Specialists) at around 328,660 in the U.S., with 4200+ entertainment practitioners (per EPPS figures) at roughly 10% of the field.

So while a fraction of the field, entertainment public relations gets the most public attention – in part due to its aura of glamour; ubiquitous red carpet media coverage (staffed by hovering practitioners); and terribly misrepresentative cable TV series (e.g., *The Spin Crowd*, *PoweR Girls*, *Kell on Earth*). In fact, modern PR encompasses the spectrum of local, national, and global business as well as government, non-profit, advocacy, and health and medicine. Still, practitioners are professionally trained to be sociable, yet personally media shy and secretive in nature. "Seen and not heard" is standard operating procedure – unless you are the White House Press Secretary, who is probably the most public practitioner in the world. It's not magic if you have to explain the trick to the audience.

Naturally, technology continues to greatly challenge and impact the field, from the accessibility of practitioners and company employees to the control of information dissemination and industry definitions of audiences (Li & Bernoff, 2011; Argenti, 2006). Practitioners who best utilize and educate others in time and money-saving technological innovations are rewarded with more perceived power and status within organizations (Diga & Kelleher, 2009). During the current recession, savvy uses of technology have enabled departments to do more with even fewer resources and senior personnel. Personally, to be successful, I've always felt pressure as a practitioner to be an "early adopter" of technology – from bulletin boards and TiVo to social networking sites (SNS) and new phone apps – and, likely, this was reinforced through success. I was one of the first publicists in TV to trust and embrace non-professional bloggers (AICN, TWoP) as "real journalists," and introduced "Blogger Days" – modified set visits/press junkets with independent fans who created substantial, sustained, in-depth websites about key television shows – to UPN and, later, NBC for *Veronica Mars* and *Heroes*. Being a fan and frequent

visitor of fandom-related online sites certainly helped frame this professional endorsement.

Similarly, as journalists are increasingly required to work across platforms, media and critics that

have cultivated brands and managed a fan readership via blogs and social media have been

rewarded with something as central as being able to hold onto recent and current jobs (magazine

editor Informant #3, personal correspondence, June 4, 2012; M. Ryan, personal correspondence,

June 5, 2012).

Television Journalism Practice and Employment

As the Fifth Estate, protected under the First Amendment, media in the U.S. have

traditionally functioned as political, social, and cultural watchdogs as part of a vital American

democratic process. Television critics, journalists, editors, and more recently, bloggers with

significant followings and brands have sought to leave their imprint on both the medium and

audiences. Hayes (2008) explained:

> Generally, critics aspire to make their specific targets better and improve the genre that
> they review, at least as they see it, whether they review movies, literature, restaurants,
> consumer goods, or the news media. Sometimes, from a critic's eye, the object of his or
> her analysis is so egregiously bad that it deserves to be shunned. Implicit in all criticism
> is the notion of the public good: that the critic's assessment is offered to help the
> moviegoer, the lover of novels, and, for our discussion, the news consumer make
> informed choices (p. 4).

To better understand who constitutes professional TV media in the U.S., the first

organization to look to is the Television Critics Association (TCA). Currently with 217 active

members, the TCA has acted as the industry's sole organizing body for working TV press for the

last 27 years (tvcritics.org). Historically, this restricted gatekeeping body has served to establish

legitimacy for individual professional TV print journalists (e.g., trade and consumer TV critics,

feature reporters and freelancers, editors, and, more recently, online press and bloggers

with the largest followings, corporate backing, etc.). The bulk of these members cover TV from

mainstream media outlets, and as part of membership, are given priority access and attention by

each network's public relations department. The official website explains, "TCA represents

more than 200 journalists writing about television for print and online outlets in the United States

and Canada" and includes "full-time TV writers at newspapers, magazines, trade publications,

news wire services, news syndicates, and text-based Internet news organizations." In addition to

establishing credentials, TCA exists to:

> …serve its membership of full-time TV critics, most of whom do not live near the entertainment capitals of Los Angeles and New York. The twice-yearly TCA press tour (in July and January), then, represents an unparalleled opportunity to gain access to the people (in Hollywood) who make television. The reporting our members do at press tour creates story material year-round as well as valuable face-to-face contacts with network executives, producers and actors. (Television Critics Association, 2012)

Not surprisingly, publicists are left out of this description though they are instrumental

behind-the-scenes. Nonetheless, the twice-yearly press tours in January and July do provide

invaluable one-on-one time and solidify working relationships between network public relations

representatives and critics, which are initially built over the phone, via email, etc. and reinforced

at these events. Like the professional public relations organization Entertainment Publicity

Professional Society (EPPS) above, it should be noted that while TCA includes most mainstream

media and critics working today, their membership list should not be considered complete or

comprehensive. For example, critics from local TV affiliates and bloggers generally are not

included. *Huffington Post* TV critic and interview participant Maureen ("Mo") Ryan explains

the TCA as follows:

> MR: ...The demographic of TCA was very much heterosexual white men who worked for newspapers, which is again a small subset of people in the world. I'm not dishing those guys. Those are my friends. I go to TCA now and I feel the room is a lot more female. Certainly, the sites that I deal with are…I feel that…I'm sure everyone in PR feels like they know everyone in TV PR. I know almost everyone that writes about TV. Most of the

people I know, most of my friends, our bosses are women, our bosses are all sorts of ethnicities. There's a lot more gay people, and so it feels to me that the whole dynamic of who covers TV. It's not to say it's all perfectly great now. I think there's a lot more fluff and a lot more celebrity-driven nonsense that I personally care about. I think that's great, you know. To me, that's…if we were all just writing about television in a rote way to be like, well, you know, 35-year old Latina women will really go for this. We would probably fail, but if you come from a position of engagement and passion about what you're writing about then people will kind of pick up on that – I hope. (M. Ryan, personal correspondence, June 5, 2012)

Still, in my experience, TCA members, network, studio, personal publicists, and TV executives in attendance do share great similarities in terms of education, ethnicity, and demographics, along with a certain amount of shared history, viewership, and engagement for television overall.

Again, numbers from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010-11 Edition (last modified May 17, 2011) help to provide scope, although no detail. The government estimates that there are 45,130 Reporters and Correspondents in America, with the largest concentration in New York (4,120), California (3,870), Texas (2,600), Illinois (2,190), and Ohio (2,280). Another breakout puts the total number of media much higher in 2008 – news analysts, reporters, and correspondents (69,300); broadcast news analysts (7,700); and reporters and correspondents (61,600), which combine to total 138,600 media. This overall number of journalists is expected to decrease to 129,800 by 2018. The Department explains, "Competition will be keen for jobs at large metropolitan and national newspapers, broadcast stations, and magazines; small publications and broadcast stations and online newspapers and magazines should provide the best opportunities" (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010-11 Ed.).

As these figures show, TCA's 200+ figure of TV media and critics represents a very small percentage of overall media in the U.S. and underlines how much power and

influence a sanctioned key few have. Still, industry totals are increasingly open for challenge. Over the years, I've personally found, worked with, and to some extent, helped lend credibility to a number of non-professional bloggers, several of whom have become brand names with fans and continue to contribute greatly to overall TV discussion in the U.S. and internationally. "Hercules" from AICN stands out, probably because he actively protects his online anonymity (for various reasons). For almost a decade, I was one of the only publicists in Hollywood ever to have met him in person, but I've heard Herc is an attending TCA member now.

Increasingly, "unofficial," non-TCA critics and fans can start buzz and push a show towards pop culture relevancy through social networking. In fact, the first critic to see and review the pilot of *Heroes* in July 2006 was UK comic book industry blogger and columnist Rich Johnson, then of *ComicBookResources.com*, now of his own *BleedingCool.com*. Because of my position as a fan, my experience might be atypical – not everyone in the industry embraced bloggers as enthusiastically. While what constitutes a legitimate outlet outside TCA remains a matter of ongoing, individual negotiation, there is no doubt that TV critics' traditional role as media gatekeepers has been complicated and eroded by this influx of non-professional opinion-makers. Even as this further empowers fans and the audience, ironically, it creates a profound need to rethink the value and validity of those same filters via gatekeepers and tastemakers. As fans begin to contradict and criticize the critical opinion across platforms, media's power, legitimacy, and relevancy can only increasingly be called into question. My five participating informants address some of these concepts in Chapter 4. Ultimately, it comes down to whose opinion do TV audiences and fandom trust?

Television Gatekeepers

The idea of media gatekeepers dates back to the time of early television. Gatekeeping theory was originally developed by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947, 1952) to explain the focal points of social change in communities (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). As an in-out/guard-preserve/gather-disseminate selection process, the concept has since been academically applied to interpersonal and mass communication (divided into individual, routines, organizational, institutional, and social system levels), journalism, law, management, health, politics, sociology, technology, etc. (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Gatekeeping theory – along with agenda-setting theory – helps explain information control and flow in modern mass media. Shoemaker & Vos (2007) say:

> Gatekeeping is one of the media's central roles in public life: People rely on mediators (or cultural intermediaries that they trust) to transform information about billions of events into a manageable number of media messages. This process determines not only which information is selected, but also what the content and nature of messages, such as news, will be. (This theory) describes the powerful process through which events are covered by mass media, explaining how and why certain information either passes through gates (as represented by individual agency and media industry) or is closed off from media attention (p. 1).

Here, key tastemaker media/critics are the first gate/public/audience to get the "wow factor," a pleasurable, emotional reaction to entertainment content (Jenkins, 2007). For a variety of aesthetic and industrial reasons – from personal taste to simple editor assignment and timing – pleasurable content is culled and crafted into messages and coverage across platforms, eventually transforming into social capital and, maybe, TV ratings (Shoemaker & Vos, 2007). As everyone in Hollywood knows, being the first to see something automatically bestows VIP status and

power, and TV publicists keep a hierarchy in mind when approaching media and sharing materials.

In Fall 2010, over 100 TV series premiered from September through November, including 55 new shows (*Mediacritic.com*, 2010). *Entertainment Weekly*'s "Fall TV Preview" featured stars from six returning and one new series, including the new *Five-0*, along with *30 Rock*, *Glee*, *Modern Family*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Cougar Town*, and *Dexter* (*EW.com*, 2010). *EW* here departed from previous years where the magazine featured one series/a pair or triad of stars (e.g., 2009/*EW – Fringe*, 2008/*EW – Gossip Girl*; *EW.com*). Competing *TV Guide*'s Fall TV Preview (*TV Guide.com*, 2010, September 13) featured stars from 11 new shows, including *Five-0*. *TV Guide* also featured a *Five-0* cover story several weeks prior (*TV Guide.com*, 2010, August 16). From a Gatekeeping perspective, 100+ shows each Fall TV season vie for media attention, some with greater network and studio support than others. These 100+ get whittled down to just a handful through screenings, mediation, and internal magazine processes by supervising editors and reporters/critics, who produce covers/cover stories to sell the most magazines to their subscriber base and more unpredictable newsstand buyers. Generally, covers featuring fan-favorite, genre, watercooler, or highly-rated shows and stars have built-in audience, advertising bases, and – with luck – sales and online attention. This helps explain how genre TV-related actors Grace Park and Daniel Dae Kim's were featured on a 2010 *EW* cover spotlighting *Five-0*.

Generally, these cover choices are made weeks and months ahead of any season's launch, with a variety of factors at play, including buzz coming out of May Upfront presentations and/or Comic-Con; pilot screenings by editors; stars and EP/showrunner popularity, availability, and

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interest; publicists' exclusives and more. One point where individual editor and critic choices

might unconsciously or consciously affect other media choices is at the previously mentioned,

twice-yearly TCA press tours, where critics all live and work together in an upscale LA hotel for

three-week periods, attending network-sponsored days of introductory show panels and nightly

parties. (Note: Based on my experience, networks provide the daily programming and

entertainment, while press' media outlets pay for all expenses, including flights, lodging, food,

etc.). Lotz (2007) writes about press tour:

> In addition to leveraging cross-ownership, the networks also maintained conventional
> promotional strategies or enhanced efforts in established venues such as through television
> critics. The networks staged elaborate press tour events for critics in hopes that they would
> draw attention to new shows, as critics' columns provided a way to reach viewers who
> may not be watching the network. Critics became increasingly important as their reviews
> and 'tonight on' recommendations provided promotional venues to alert viewers of
> programming on networks and cable channels they did not regularly view and as
> legitimate, unbiased sources within the cluttered programming field (p. 109).

Applying the circuit of culture within this structured framework, a range of meanings (or

criticisms) is possible in terms of reception and taste. These meanings may be socially

constructed by the body of critics (who have their own particular rules, hierarchy, and cliques),

but meanings are also constructed within the range allowed by industry frameworks and based on

past meanings and formulations (e.g., based on individual past TV viewing, taste, personal

history of criticism, genre success or failure). Meanings are then reconstructed as critics use

these frames in their particular social and professional situations, from LA to home to the office

(Curtin & Gaither, 2005; du Gay, Hall, et al., 1997). At the very least, a public discourse by

media begins and a tone is set for any given show around press tour. Few events outside of

Comic-Con can currently challenge these set tones moving into Fall launches.

How much gatekeeper choices combine to transfer "salience," or importance, and foundationally set the national and international news agenda and public agenda (including TV viewing) is matter of debate (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). According to Agenda Setting Theory, as it is called, TV shows become part of public awareness and global culture because international media conglomerates and their employed critics have told audiences that they are important, relevant, of quality, worth thinking about and watching. Per this theory, the media are good at telling us what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). While massive consolidation of global media and the influence of advertising (internal and external) to any media outlet and critic must be considered, I believe that this top down, political economy-related theory fails to properly account for a great deal of individual agency dictated by the personal tastes of individual media, public relations practitioners, niche and mainstream audience members and fans. By turning to the forementioned theoretical frames, this project attempts to articulate ideas about taste, power, and fandom, as illustrated by content analysis of media derived from gatekeepers in the two forthcoming case studies and through the personal opinions from five influential gatekeepers working in today's television industry provided in the concluding chapter.

Fan Studies

Western, neo-liberal consumer culture, and indeed popular culture, revolves in large part around shared admiration and shared likes. Fandom is a thing that can bring us together; much like tribes formed by bonds of kinship, a common language, and shared storytelling (Campbell, 1949). "Most people are fans of something…or know someone who is," note Gray, Sandvoss. and Harrington (2007). Matt Hills (2002) agrees:

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Everybody knows what a "fan" is. It's somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme, band; somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom, and can quote their favoured lines or lyrics, chapter and verse. Fans are often highly articulate. Fans interpret media texts in a variety of interesting and perhaps unexpected ways. And fans participate in communal activities – they are not "socially atomized" or isolated viewers/readers (p. ix).

Fandom often starts with "very explicit attachments to stars or to particular programmes and types of programmes" (Abercombie & Longhurst , 1998, p. 138-139). While sports fans historically have enjoyed a distinct, celebrated mainstream position in the U.S., modern fandom has generally been associated with less popular, less masculinized, more obscure entertainment properties and merchandise linked to sci-fi/fantasy/horror-themed film and TV, comic books, animation, anime, video/online/multiplayer games, and cosplay, or to TV soap operas, telenovelas, tween/teen/young adult, reality/competition-based series (Abbott, 2010; Theodoropoulou, 2007; Sandvoss, 2005). By the 1970s-80s, the stereotype had descended into pictures of socially awkward teenage teen boys and furtive single men, along with lonely, single, middle-aged women with cats (Abbott, 2010). Around the same time, "cult" – with all the word's negative connotations – became popular media's term of choice to describe (and marginalize) "loosely offbeat and edge" niche product and its enthusiasts, e.g., "cult-following," "cult movie," "cult TV show," and even, *Cult Times* magazine (Abbott, 2010; Gwenillian-Jones & Pearson, 2004; Hills, 2002). Meanwhile, academic fan studies began to embrace all sorts of marginal status entertainment product – including *Star Trek*, soaps and romance novels – and slowly helped rehabilitate the term as television splintered (Gray, 2010; Jenkins, 2011, 2007, 2006 a/b, 1992; Sandvoss, 2005).

In the Post-Network Era, cable networks increasingly embraced niche audiences, launching CNN, Sci-Fi Channel, Food Channel, and more (Lotz, 2007). Broadcast

networks, first with The WB and UPN, have since chased and continue to chase premium and basic cable's niche strategies – pushing a variety of broadcast regulation standards and industry practices in terms of content (e.g., language, nudity, and violence), editing, and format. According to Stacey Abbott (2010), this move gave audiences tacit approval to embrace their offbeat, cult-ish appetites and helped them identify as being fans of news, food, etc. Now saved from the cultural margins (and stereotypical parents' basements), the fan – of both sexes, but leaning male – has been transformed into a central, coveted demographic, "ideal" consumer, and cover-worthy object of corporate, media, advertising, and academic fascination (Gray, 2010). So much so that Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2007) declared we are in the "Fandom is beautiful" phase, starting 10-15 years ago, as witnessed by the rise of entertainment product playing to traditional fan tastes (e.g., film franchises *Batman*, *Spider-Man*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and "cult" TV series *The X-Files*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Star Trek*, *Alias*, *Lost*, *Heroes*, *Battlestar Galactica*), and academic attention.

Today's media products include a variety of transmedia entertainment properties specifically developed, marketed, and publicized to cultivate, cater to, and commodify fan attention and engagement, from on screen and online to on shelves and on bodies (via licensed merchandise and clothing) (Jenkins 2006b, Gray 2010). More recently, media and industry have cast (and seemingly empowered) fans as cutting-edge cultural prognosticators, judges, and tastemakers (although some memorable, recent failures, such as *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, NBC's *The Cape*, ABC's *The Event* and *Charlie's Angels*, could put this role into question). Based on my experience, I don't believe all shows have to be transmedially engaged to succeed, but fandom is key to the success of niche- and genre-based transmedia properties because they

specifically cater to fans' all-encompassing, consumptive attitudes and behaviors. Superfans are driven to collect and complete any knowledge base as part of their definition and power. Still, as superfans hierarchically rise above fans in today's industry, major procedural genres such as *Five-0* succeed with minimal fan acknowledgment, interaction, or proof of engagement in the media, all of which calls into question the parameters of fan power and current industry taste.

In order to get at a more precise definition of fandom, recent scholarship has attempted to define and classify its seemingly binary opposite. Focusing on TV viewers, Gray (2003, 2005) coined the term "anti-fan," and found them to be as present and equally engaged as fans on website bulletin boards and chat rooms. He sees antifandom as a "mode of engagement with text and medium that focuses heavily on the moral and the emotional, seeking in some ways to police the public and textual spheres" (2005, p. 841). With this, I was reminded that several major communities are particularly known for and defined by their traditional dislike and/or hate of each other online, including most prominently *Star Wars* vs. *Star Trek*. In an attempt to apply current fan studies to sports, Vivi Theodoropoulou (2007) took a detailed historical, socio-economic look at fans of two fiercely rival soccer teams in close proximity near Athens, Greece. From this grounded exploration, she suggests that sports anti-fans, in particular, are in binary opposition of an opposing team as an integral part of their personal identification as a fan.

As attractive as binary relationships are in their simplicity, fandom relationships remain more elusive, complicated, and interconnected to other concepts, such as likes or dislikes. Gray explains, "As fan studies have shown, some fan readings are deeply oppositional, some are dominant…Fandom involves anti-fandom and vice-versa (many haters are performing a love for something else). So just as we can't truly understand a concept like gender without

interrogating both 'masculinity' and 'femininity,' we won't truly get how affect works generally, or even how fandom works specifically, till we explore anti-fandom a little more" (Jenkins, 2010). For their part, as will be expressed in more detail later, the five publicists and journalists interviewed for this project were all unable to identify binary oppositions to *Five-0* or *Dead*, and all felt fans didn't have to admire one genre over another as part of definition and activity (Informants #1-5, 2012, May-June).

Along these lines, Hesmondhalgh (2006) highlights the work of Patrick Champagne (2005), who says that the fundamental structure "opposing symbolic goods produced according to internal intellectual imperatives to symbolic goods produced to respond to external demand," can be found within the mass market (sub-) field, as well as in restricted production. He likens the repetition of this structure across different (sub-) fields to a series of Russian dolls. Not all media outlets, he notes, are "equally subject to this desperate search for the largest possible public," which speaks to the idea of different broadcast and cable TV models and my two particular case studies.

Looking back over the history of film and television, the entertainment industry, media, and advertisers all seem to have always had some hand in shaping and aggregating fans through product and promotion. According to film historian Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, the history of fans, particularly fan clubs, exists, but is "very scattered and anecdotal." She explained

> I've seen documents from a Jack Benny radio fan club in 1936, and a Rudolph Valentino film fan club in 1927 (a year after his death, so that is a memorial fan club). The early kid fan clubs on radio were actually started by the advertising agencies who created the programs (Little Orphan Annie, Jack Armstrong, etc). Heck, I have documents on a small local theatrical fan club revolving around a local stock company in Richmond Virginia in 1914, a bunch of teenaged girls had a crush on the young leading man, and the woman who ran the stock company capitalized on it (as well as redirected them to try to be interested in her role as historical researcher and costume creator). There are

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academic articles about the history of fan magazines (such as a couple chapters in my book "At the Picture Show" about the creation of Motion Picture Magazine and Photoplay. And there is some good stuff in Shelley Stamp's book *Movie Struck Girls* about young women and their fannish passions. I think you can SAFELY say that early groupings of fans into semi-organized fan clubs was an ad-hoc affair, with many of them initially organized by film studios (and later radio advertising agencies). They usually involved the participation of some dedicated fans as secretaries and officers, and did business through the mail. (The Beatles Fan Clubs in the UK and US were like this.) It has taken until the 1970s-80s-modern times for fans to start gathering at conventions, publishing newsletters, and making fan clubs a majorly growing concern, with easier transportation, better communication and pop culture approval to smooth the way. (K. Fuller-Seely, personal correspondence, July 28, 2011)

To understand fans (post 1970s-80s), it is helpful to start with how academics classify audiences. Grunig and Repper (1992) categorize different audiences as "active," "aware," "latent," and "nonpublics." Jenkins (1992b) says desirable "segmented culture taste publics," "inspirational consumers," "loyalists," and "brand advocates" are simply different sorts of fans of a text – or more specifically, individuals with a heightened intellectual and emotional investment in a media text who increase their activity surrounding the text to the point of being productive consumers (Jenkins, 1992b). Building upon key tastemakers and gatekeepers' work as well as by word-of-mouth, these fans summarize and editorialize on installments of the text, evangelize the merits of the text to others, evaluate storylines and performances, and create art, literature, music and more surrounding the text (Jenkins, 1992b). This labor and activity has become very powerful symbolic and social capital, especially as we have moved from the Multichannel Era to the Post-Network Era.

The discourse on and popularization of fan as a positive term, constructed personal identity, and source of media interest has completely transformed since I first arrived in Hollywood in 1996 (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). That was the year, *The Fan*, starring Robert De Niro and Wesley Snipes, hit theaters and featured a typical period

representation of the maladjusted, fixated, furtive, violent, male loner fan. The film might only

be unique for its focus on a sports fan, rather than a *Star Trek* or *Batman* zealot. *The Fan* built

upon prior events and representations, from *Taxi Driver* to the late 80's-90's assassination and/or

attempts on John Lennon, Ronald Reagan, and actress Rebecca Schaeffer (*My Sister Sam*) by

obsessive "fans" and/or stalkers (Sandvoss, 2005). In contrast to this depiction of social and

psychological pathology, as of 2011, the media celebrates the 175,000+ flock of fans and

creators to San Diego's Comic-Con International in late-July through multiple magazine covers,

and across-platform coverage before, during (live and recorded), and after the event (*EW.com*,

2011; G4 Network, 2011; *TV Guide.com*, 2011, July 11). Recently, the term fan was widely

embraced by diverse and international audiences when Facebook co-opted and popularized the

term in 2008 through its implementation of an interactive "Fan" button (before switching to

"Like") that asked individuals to self-identify for fun and commoditization by advertisers

(Kirkpatrick, 2010). For good or bad, fan has become a powerful self-identity and something to

be exploited by media corporations (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). As fandom's objects of

obsession have become popularized, particularly in terms of social capital, it has become easier

for everyone to "come out" as a fan of something to better negotiate their social and professional

lives.

Henry Jenkins' body of work, in particular, reflects the positive rise in perception of

fandom (1992, 2006 a/b, 2007, 2011). In his 1992 book *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins offered that

"like the poachers of old, fans operate from a position of cultural marginality and weakness" and

"have only the most limited of resources" with which to influence producers. Since then, he's

observed that active fan sites (hubs of creative consumption where fans interact, create, and

critique) and producer attentiveness to these sites has subtly and not so subtly altered the relationship between fan and producer (Jenkins, 2007). The "fans as peasants" reality of 10-15 years ago disappeared as a digitally-mediated dialog between fans and producers became more acceptable, commonplace and, yes, financially advantageous (Jenkins, 2007).

Working in our Post-Network, audience-splintered world, I found that genre TV and its fans provide a "built-in," financially-attractive, predominantly male audience for networks that have needed to brand themselves, bolster ratings, and survive in the marketplace (e.g., FX's *The X-Files* and *Buffy* in syndication; UPN's *Star Trek: Enterprise* and pick-up of last two seasons of *Buffy*). In order to attract and cater to this elusive, technologically-savvy group (Male 18-25, Male 18-34, etc.), marketers, public relations professionals, and producers all flocked to places where the boys played online and tried to communicate directly with them (via bulletin boards, chat rooms, blogs, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter).

I don't believe that fans would be perceived as positively or have any perceived power today if industry publicists, media, and executives didn't see a major financial benefit overall. The question moving forward is whether the love affair of present will continue or shift forms. While pocketbooks remain open, I believe fans will continue to enjoy a certain amount of influence over industry, but not nearly as much over immediate content, characters, or story direction as is (directly or indirectly) promoted by publicists or written about by mainstream media and academia. In my experience, networks allow fans (and some popular academics) to believe they have more of a voice than they do. For example, even if fans loathe a TV character or plotline, most special-effect heavy series take at least two and a half to three months go from first draft of script to filming to post-production to network air, so audience power is

completely restricted by basic TV production timelines. Of course, some EP/showrunners might legitimately listen to fans and bring feedback into the writers' room, but generally they have to be coy about this in tweets, online, in the press, etc. because they, the studio, the network, and advertisers still need viewers to tune in next week, and the weeks that follow. Fans want to hear that they are being listened to, with immediate, concrete effects – which might be overplayed industrially to make them feel more empowered and primed to consume more.

While publicists and media curry favor of fandom to promote increasingly niche entertainment and media to the mainstream, a complex power relationship continues to take shape between producers and fans. Some producers and EP/showrunners, such as *Lost*'s Damon Lindelof and *Dead*'s EP and comic book creator Robert Kirkman, seem to enjoy actively engaging with fans via Twitter, blogs, videoblogs, and email (while being sensitive to copyright and other industrial regulatory/business affairs issues). Ultimately, it is smart business. EP/showrunners' ongoing courting and conversations with fans heighten their privileged authorial status as well as raise their media profiles – which likely add to their overall salaries. Still, even the most tech-savvy producers can run into unexpected fan divisions. For example, a major death on GoT at the end of the first season resulted in a public uproar with TV fans setting themselves against fans of the novels, who were aware of the execution of the character and anxious to see the show closely adhere to the original source material (*EW.com*, 2011, June 13). The producers nimbly acknowledged the controversy, while stating respect for overlapping sets of fans and modes of engagement with the material. Örnebring (2007) expresses this in a traditional political economy manner:

> …To be sure, media convergence is opening up new possibilities for interactivity, but it
> is difficult to ignore the fact that much of the interactivity on offer is produced by the
> 'usual suspects' of transnational media conglomerates, and that audiences are addressed

primarily as consumers or cultural artifacts (p. 446).

While tenuous now, the EP/showrunner-fan relationship can only become more central to success as audiences continue to splinter. Having been involved with connecting EP/showrunners to fans via online media outlets, I find it difficult to see individual EP/showrunners – with egos that can parallel any stars – even wanting objectify viewers as a simple consumer bloc, particularly when any one follower can tweet and start a conversation with them. How people relate to a text, each other, and producers is central to understanding a significant portion of modern-day consumer culture, one that publicists, media, advertisers, and academics are increasingly interested in understanding. It certainly warrants more exploration.

Trade magazine *Advertising Age* outlined industry's perspective towards fans in the 2010-2011 season and helps mark this as a very specific time in television (Steinberg, 2010):

> Identifying rabid fans of TV shows has already become a strategy the TV networks use to promote their new programs. The theory among TV executives is that highly interested fans start talking and tweeting about their expectations for such shows, and that chatter carries over to other potential viewers…Sussing out such folk is likely to become more crucial in the industry. Despite any number of new ways consumers have to watch video entertainment -- from screening them on iPods to calling them up OnDemand via a cable box -- the success or failure of a TV show has long hinged on the number of people who tune in to watch at a specific time.

> As more consumers obtain technology that lets them watch a favorite TV program at times of their own choosing, however, the audience for the more traditional way of watching TV is dwindling. Should new measures taking viewer interest into account gain traction, the pecking order of TV shows could radically shift. Nielsen's IAG, a company that measures viewer recall of and response to TV shows and TV commercials, found programs such as NBC' *Chuck* and ABC' *The Middle* -- both of which have reached well under 7 million viewers on average season to date as of Aug. 1, according to Nielsen -- often strike a deeper chord with the smaller audiences that watch them than powerhouse programs such as *American Idol*.

> Executives at NewMediaMetrics say they have found a strong correlation between determining levels of "emotional attachment" for programs and actual Nielsen ratings. The firm said it found an 85.5% correlation in 2009 between shows that attracted a strong

preponderance of emotionally engaged viewers and Nielsen ratings, and that it found an 87% correlation for the same between 2006 and 2009.

In step with executives and advertisers, producers tend to see a variety of organizational benefits through commanding the loyalty and arbitrating activity of these productive consumers (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007; Taylor, 2006; Murray, 2004). For instance, *Alias*, *Lost*, *Fringe* and forthcoming *Revolution* executive producer J.J. Abrams claims that he reads Internet chatter about his TV shows because it imbues his productions with some characteristics of live game play and allows the writers to respond and adjust to audience reactions as the show goes on (Andrejevic, 2008). My former boss Chris Ender, Senior Vice President, Communication at CBS, called show-related forums "the best marketing research you can get" (Jenkins, 2006). Of course, all involved are aware that this "research" lacks any pretense of being "objective" or "randomly selected." There's also the question of how much these new technologies and ratings systems "contain" fandom. Are these new systems changing the perceived nature of fandom in industry, and how do publicists and press fit in? As we find ourselves on the cusp of seeing the first generation to live cradle-to-grave in a digital era, Haythornthwaite and Kendall (2010) surmise: "Early on, the question was whether community could exist online; now the question may be whether it can exist without online." Certainly, one would be hard pressed to find a stronger mediated community – outside of religion – than fandom, and informants' perspectives on the subject will be explored further in the Interview Themes area in the conclusion.

Method

Inspired by recent public relations scholarship – particularly *Public Relations, Society and Culture* by Lee Edwards and Caroline E.M. Hodges (2011), which urges academics to "add

momentum to the emergent socio-cultural 'turn'" in the field of public relations study through

the embrace of the traditions and methodologies of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and

political economy – and work in the emerging field of media industry studies, this project

explores the current state of the television industry, the field of television public relations, and

the national and international cultural phenomena of fandom as it relates to the medium of

television (Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Holt & Perren, 2009). My methodologies primarily rely

on content analysis in a case study structure, which enjoys a rich communication tradition,

particularly within fan studies; and secondarily on ethnographic interviews (Agar, 1996;

Bernard, 2006; Genette, 1997; Gray, 2010; Leslie, 2010; Spradley, 1979; Yin, 2003).

According to Yin (2003), case study is a triangulated research strategy used to establish

meaning, ensure accuracy, and confirm validity. Case studies achieve these three goals by

combining multiple sources of data. This methodology is "the preferred strategy when 'how' or

'why' questions are being posed…and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within

some real-life context (p. 1)." Through a socio-cultural communication, anthropology, and

sociology lens, I believe that this combined case study-interview approach allows me further

insight into the grounded micro- and macro-levels at work within the intertwined entertainment

and media industries. Possibly, this could model future research into entertainment public

relations and journalism as well.

Content Analysis

According to Leslie (2010), content analysis as a method was introduced in 1952 by

Bernard Berelson and the approach "attempt(s) to find out *what* messages are being presented as

well as *how* they are being presented" (emphasis author). It is a "research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Leslie, 2010). Using this framework, I built two comparative cases studies for *Five-0* and *Dead*, which speak to specific industry conditions and modern fan practices. As defined by Gerard Genette (1997) and expanded upon in Jonathan Gray's *Show Sold Separately* (2010), I traced their available CBS publicist-created paratext materials and resulting media placements and criticism through online and GSU Library database searches. Initially, I found and explored a broad range of industry and media materials, as detailed in references, including:

- Press and promotional materials (e.g., upfront and launch press materials, TCA panel transcripts, Comic-Con panels, official series and set photos, ad campaigns, promotional tie-in campaigns. official websites, previews, and episode descriptions);
- Resulting media coverage and criticism (e.g., reviews, interviews, profiles, show launch and Sweeps period press);
- Online/Social Networking Site (SNS) attention, criticism, comment (e.g., show and individual star fan sites, recaps) and quantifiable populations (e.g., on Facebook and Twitter).

After this broad review of press materials and media, I narrowed the case studies' focus and sampling frame to four key media outlets that represent specific, yet overlapping, points of view for mainstream audiences and fandom, including *Ain't It Cool News* (AICN), *Entertainment Weekly/EW.com*, *Television Without Pity* (TWoP), and *The New York Times* (Leslie, 2010). From the two series' initial pilot and talent announcements to their first season finales in May 2011, I chart how public relations messaging for each show was introduced, interpreted, and reinterpreted by professional journalists, critics, non-professional media, and fans in both quantitative and qualitative fashions. The case studies clearly show how media divergently reacted to *Five-0* and *Dead* as respective series from launch through their first

seasons. This media coverage both set the tone and reinforced traditional fandom tastes and biases.

Industry materials and/or paratexts here were expressed through official network and production studio-produced press releases (in my experience, typically written by network public relations and approved by studio public relations, followed by EP/showrunners, and finally, upper-level executives from both network and studio) and media interviews arranged, generally, in conjunction by two partnered publicists/PR departments situated within businesses that are part of vertically-integrated, multinational corporations, studios and networks. Over the course of each show's first season in 2010-2011, this official documentation was compared to the messages and texts that result from publicist placement, outreach, and mediation within U.S.-based trade and consumer media.

Ethnographic Interviews with Industry Professionals

"Ethnography is the work of describing a culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view. The goal of ethnography, as Malinowski put it, is 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world,'" explains Agar (1996, p. 3; emphasis author). The ethnographic interview is "a (one or multiple time) speech event" where rapport is built in order to help researchers elicit terms, definitions, and cultural meanings from "informants," a term traditionally used by anthropology (Bernard, 2006; Agar, 1996; Spradley, 1979). Semi-structured interviews utilize a standard set of questions and topics "that need to be covered in a particular order," but leave room for flexibility where questions need to be tailored, such as here for publicists or journalists

(Bernard, 2006). This methodological framework emphasizes respect for informants and provides an academic structure to enable people to speak for themselves.

Following the two case studies, my second methodology relied on semi-structured ethnographic interviews with three working American journalists and two public relations practitioners, who all regularly interact together in the overall promotion and coverage of national and international TV series (Bernard, 2006; Becker, 1998; Agar, 1996; Barley, 1983; Spradley, 1979). The participating informants included Jeff Jensen, senior writer for *Entertainment Weekly*; Maureen "Mo" Ryan, TV critic for *Huffington Post*; a national entertainment magazine editor; and two publicists associated with Five-0 and *Dead*. Over the years, I have worked personally with all five of these informants on numerous TV series, specials, and events. Generally, we are all of similar class, background, and economic status. Based on my experience, while more diversity in terms of ethnicity and sexual orientation permeates industry today, TV executives, TV publicity professionals, and TV media are still generally white and in their 20s-40s, mirroring many broadcast and cable networks' primary target demographics. Of the five informants, there are three female participants. The two publicists are based in LA, and Ryan lives in Chicago. Jensen and the editor are male and based in LA and New York City. NYC, LA and Chicago are the top three markets for TV in the U.S.

All of the participating informants are long-time friends and business associates – people with whom I might have professional dealings in the future (Bernard, 2006; Becker, 1998; Barley, 1983). All five of the hour-long, taped, semi-structured interviews took place via phone from my home during a two-week period, from May 30, 2012 to June 11, 2012, following their participation in May Upfronts 2012 in New York City (Bernard, 2006). The fifth interview took

place over two sessions (June 6, 2012 and June 11, 2012). All have been transcribed by me, with minor edits to publicist Informant #1, national entertainment magazine editor Informant #3, and publicist Informant #5 to protect personal identities and/or employers, per my approved IRB protocols (Protocol #H12289,

https://irbwise.gsu.edu///sub/submissionview.form?submissionId=22623). To protect identities, specific media organizations and companies where informants work are generalized and/or noted through the use of parenthesis. Jensen and Ryan approved having their identities revealed here. The magazine editor and the two publicists spoke with me on the condition of anonymity. Since few entertainment professionals can go on record in media or academia, I believe that any studies like this are enriched and gain legitimacy by those who can be identified, while completely respecting the professionals (like myself) with sensitivities and/or non-disclosure agreements with past and current entertainment employers who donated their time and insights. Furthermore, from my Hollywood perspective, where rumor and gossip are rampant, I personally give power and legitimacy to named sources. With their verbal permission, all phone interviews were recorded, with the understanding that the audio files would be temporarily saved on a separate, personal hard drive for the purpose of transcription, and deleted upon graduation. All informants approved finished transcripts, from which quotes are incorporated in this study.

Whether on the publicist or media side, all of us as professionals have historically labored with essentially one basic goal – to attract the attention of audiences. In a modern sense, this means laboring to convince a mass aggregate of viewers (typically within the Adult 18-49 and 18-34 target demographic in the U.S.) to consistently watch a specific show, at a specific time or tech-supported, time-shifted period, and consume all associated products, across all platforms

(Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Gray, 2010; Lotz, 2007).

Interview Procedures

During the five hour-long interviews, approved questions were asked in a semi-structured interview style, meaning there was a standardized list of questions in hand, but room for some deviation depending on what data each informant gave during the course of the interview (Agar, 1996; Barley, 1983; Becker, 1998; Bernard, 2006; Spradley, 1979). At multiple stages in the interview and transcription process, as proscribed by anthropological practice and tradition, I reviewed and re-reviewed data in order to look for evidence of applicable theory and themes via content analysis, including evidence of taste, aesthetics, engagement, position, power dynamics, conflict, hegemony, morality and emotional judgment, and binary opposition. I also attempted to pay attention to what was not said, particularly word choice, tone of voice, consistency (or lack of) via all communication. Furthermore, interview content was compared, contrasted, and incorporated into the two case studies (Agar, 1996; Barley, 1983; Becker, 1998; Bernard, 2006; Spradley, 1979).

The questions were shaped to help participants elicit clear definitions and aesthetics, defining industry and individual agency practice. Questions were tailored for each individual participant, particularly with regard to whether they were publicists or journalists. Sample interview questions are in the Appendix.

Researcher Reflexivity

To provide full disclosure, I've always identified as a "fan," as expressed and supported

though consumption, collection, and participation in many forms – comics, books, movies, television shows, websites, toys and merchandise, clothing, games, art, events, conventions, and more. I grew up watching first iterations and purchasing products related to popular genre properties (e.g., the original *Star Trek*). I've professionally worked on and consumed multiple second iterations of fan properties as an adult (e.g., all of the *Star Trek* original cast movies, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Enterprise*); and continue to consume second and, now, third iterations of genre product as I move out of entertainment's traditional target demographics in my 40s (e.g., 2009's *Star Trek* reboot). After that, my subject position is fairly "mainstream" and/or dominant hierarchical position as a white, middle class, educated, single, urban male. As mentioned, I have worked as a TV publicist in LA on over 50+ television series, specials, and events. Not surprisingly, my closest professional relationships are probably with media employees/laborers/professionals that share my fan sensibilities and demographics, some of which were interviewed for this project.

While I consider myself a fan of *Dead* through collecting the source material comics, watching each episode, and participating in SNS dialogue about the show, I don't have the same emotional attachment or level of engagement to *Five-0*. Certainly, there's some feeling of nostalgia for the original *Five-O* series, but outside of this study, I have not viewed an episode past the first season. That said, I don't consciously hold a bias against "procedurals." In fact, I watch a number of procedural television dramas, including ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*, *Revenge* and *Scandal*; FX's *Justified*, and USA's *Necessary Roughness*. Some of these procedurals, such as ABC's *Castle*, with fan-favorite Nathan Fillion (Joss Whedon's *Firefly* and *Serenity*), have built in genre appeal. Generally, a TV "procedural" refers to a type of drama programming where a

problem is introduced, investigated and solved all within a hour-long self-contained episode.

Stretching back to the days of early radio and TV, from *The Shadow* and *Dick Tracy* to *Dragnet*

and *The Untouchables*, this type of programming historically is police or crime-related, but can

also be medical-related (Barfield, 2008). The general "formula" for a police procedural involves

the commission or discovery of a crime at the beginning of the episode, the ensuing

investigation, and the arrest or conviction of a perpetrator at the end of the episode.

CBS' *CSI* franchises and NBC's *Law and Order* franchise are good examples of this

format. FOX's *House* and ABC's *Private Practice* are more serialized examples of non-crime,

medical-related procedural series. Due to their self-contained, audience accessible, one-off

stories, this genre is very attractive financially to broadcast syndication. As a genre, procedurals

are typically criticized for their lack of character development, with little or no attention being

paid to recurring characters' lives outside of work. While audiences like them, as evidenced by

ratings and CBS' overall embrace and reliance on this format, I suspect the guest star-based,

formulaic structure might be the main reason TV critics – and thereby, fans – usually do not

enthusiastically embrace these types of shows. A key question to explore thus becomes: Are

publicists, journalist-fans and fans systematically biased against procedurals and more broadly

with mass-appeal and/or formulaic TV? Again, the participants have some interesting insight

into this, as will be evident in the following pages.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Americans watched more television than ever in 2010, according to the Nielsen Company

and *The New York Times* (Selter, 2011, January 2). Total viewing of broadcast networks and

basic cable channels rose about 1% for the year, to an average of 34 hours per person per week.

Brian Seltzer notes that "The generation-long shift to cable from broadcast continued, but subtly,

as the smallest of the big four English-speaking broadcast networks, NBC, still retained more

than twice as many viewers as the largest basic cable channel, USA" (Stelter, 2011, January 2).

This upward trend continued through 2012, but with viewers under 35 turning to devices other

than TVs, such as smartphones and tablets (Stelter, 2012, February 8). During this period, cable

TV – as represented by AMC's *Dead* and a handful of others (e.g., HBO's GoT) – was

showered with industry, media, and fan attention – if not, outright affection – even though the

2010-2011 season's biggest new show financially and in total viewers was CBS' *Five-0*, a reboot

of a 40-year old tropical drama.

Questions of labor and taste are at the heart of this project. I hypothesize that niche cable

series in the Post-Network Era require a different type of labor and engagement with the material

on the part of publicists and media. These variations ultimately impact current TV audience and

fandom identity, labor, and engagement. With the most emotional investment, fans absorb the

greatest amount of mediated messaging from the industrially-hidden labor and engagement of

publicists and media. As agenda-setting gatekeepers, publicists and media prioritize what gets

covered and what's important to each specific fan tribe (from Trekkies to Twihards), as broadly

defined by Jenkins, Gray, and others. The case of studies of *Five-0* and *Dead* are important

because absence in media is as important as presence in media. If Jenkins' defined fans don't

materially show up to *Five-0* and can be counted in terms of mainstream media coverage, fan

sites, or social networking site activity then can this series' massive audience be called fans in

the current academic sense? As a professional, I believe that fans are fans whether they tweet,

Facebook, blog or not. *Five-0* viewers and similar audiences simply are a less labor-intensive, materially productive form of fan and represent a mainstream "silent majority." In my experience, most people want to passively watch TV after work and not be challenged by programming. The professionals interviewed and I might recognize these sorts of passive viewers as fans, but our general definition is much broader than is typically encouraged by our bosses in the television and new media industries or reflected by the work of academics such as Jenkins, Gray and Sandvoss. Simply, the non-active viewer and fan falls outside modern conceit of target demographics in the ever-merging entertainment and technology industries. That said, all of the informants argued that it is a professional mistake to underestimate procedural fans. The discrepancies between *Five-0* and *Dead*'s media attention and total audience alone should push us to revaluate and broaden fandom definitions, at least in academia.

In addition, this project draws several micro- and macro-level conclusions for fan and public relations studies. First, I believe that struggle and mediation between Bourdieu's "cultural intermediaries" within the Circuit of Culture is alive and well, and can be expressed by industrially-hidden agents (namely publicists) embedded within media conglomerates and major public relations agencies (which have also merged into their own corporate behemoths in the last two decades). Procedural TV fans seem to be as equally as hidden as the labor between TV publicists and journalists. Second, the moments of articulation are dynamic, and while industrially-hidden, public relations and its individual practitioners are fundamental to movement within – particularly in the area of Reception (see Figure 1.2). And third, the working industrial relationship between TV publicists and journalists in practice encapsulates "articulation's" dual meaning – to both express and join together – in a multitude of ways.

As such, TV public relations practitioners' professional interaction with media as an intervening public is instrumental to attracting television audiences, creating fans, organizing fandom, and sustaining invested viewer attention and engagement across platforms, over multiple seasons. As an active participant in TV public relations, I see this mediated relationship, as materially expressed in print and electronic press materials and media coverage in the case studies, as the cornerstone to defining, creating, and maintaining fandom in the entertainment industry. Historically, television has been a unifying entertainment medium. Laborers in the TV industry have always shared similar demographics and education. While overall industry demographics are slowly changing to reflect national trends, the idea of "quality TV" remains. Increasingly, quality TV is defined (consciously and unconsciously) in the Post-Network Era by niche programming. Social capital and success are also defined by niche programming and audiences. As such, I would argue that the most influential media and public relations practitioners in the U.S. are niche fans themselves, and their jointly-expressed reach can only grow as audience splinters and emotionally-engaged, active viewers become more central to industry success – be it measured financially (e.g., *Five-0*) or by social capital (e.g., *Dead*) standards.

2. CASE STUDY #1 – CBS' *HAWAII FIVE-0*

In order to more accurately display the above-mentioned industry standards of financial success, this first case study focuses on broadcast network CBS' *Hawaii Five-0*, a "reimagining" of the classic tropical crime series. While this one-hour procedural drama was one of the few success stories from the 2010-2011 TV season, it currently stands as a hugely popular, mass-appeal broadcast show, which has ranked highly despite little media attention and no typical fandom appeal or labor. In short, *Five-0* has no social capital in pop culture. Although TV publicists industrially engaged in similar labor across broadcast, basic cable, and premium channel network programs in 2010-2011, major network's *Five-0* has instead "settled" for being meaningful to industry, as a financial success in terms of record ratings, national advertising, and international revenue. *Five-0*'s financial success and ongoing lack of media coverage reveal one of several taste-oriented "blind spots" currently present with critics and journalists, who face the same pressures as the TV industry to quantifiably reach emotionally-engaged, active readers and viewers across platforms. In my experience, procedurals, broad-based comedies, reality shows, animated series, and tween programming are just a few of the mass-appeal oriented genres that frequently have to fight for media coverage against comparatively little-watched, high-income oriented, serialized niche shows with "cool" factors. Through content analysis, this *Five-0* case study documents the rise and fall of a procedural drama in terms of social capital, despite built-in fan hooks. Quite simply, this case complicates all fandom definitions and beliefs held by industry, academia, media, and fans themselves, and allows for a more complete picture of Post-Network Era practices. The fact that *Five-0* has an established genre pedigree in terms of stars, EP/showrunners, and source material, and went from grabbing TV cover mentions to virtual

media obscurity in a season only makes this case study more fascinating.

On the afternoon of May 19, 2010 at New York City's famed Carnegie Hall, long-time CBS President and CEO Les Moonves unveiled his network's new Fall schedule for the 2010-2011 television season with pomp, circumstance, and a star-studded multimedia presentation to a full audience of advertising agency representatives and buyers, national and multinational corporate executives, television producers and executives, Viacom and CBS Television Studios executives, international media and, soon, their audiences. At 8:30 am ET that same morning, CBS' internal Public Relations Department, headed by (one of my former bosses) SVP Chris Ender, sent out via email to internal media lists and the national media wires the network/studio-approved press release outlining the "Tiffany Network's" upcoming schedule of new and returning series, specials, and events for the coming season, which traditionally starts the third week of September 2010 and ends the fourth week of May 2011. Key to this release – as revealed by its headline, subheadings and content – was the introduction of CBS' slate of six new dramas and comedies – highlighted by a one-hour "re-imagined" police procedural drama, *Hawaii Five-0*.

The new series was introduced to advertisers and audiences through the following CBS-provided description:

> HAWAII FIVE-0 is a contemporary take on the classic series about a new elite federalized task force whose mission is to wipe out the crime that washes up on the Islands' sun-drenched beaches. Detective Steve McGarrett, a decorated Naval officer-turned-cop, returns to Oahu to investigate his father's murder and stays after Hawaii's Governor persuades him to head up the new team: his rules, her backing, no red tape and full blanket authority to hunt down the biggest "game" in town. Joining McGarrett is Detective Danny "Danno" Williams, a newly relocated ex-New Jersey cop - a working man in paradise who prefers skyscrapers to the coastline - but who is committed to keeping the Islands safe for his 8-year-old daughter; and Chin Ho Kelly, an ex-Honolulu Police Detective, and former protégé of McGarrett's father, wrongly accused of

corruption and relegated to a federal security patrol. Chin's cousin, Kono, is a beautiful and fearless native, fresh out of the academy and eager to establish herself among the department's elite. McGarrett, repairing his relationship with his estranged sister Mary Ann, vows to bring closure to their father's case, while the state's brash new FIVE-0 unit, who may spar and jest among themselves, is determined to eliminate the seedy elements from the 50th state. Peter Lenkov, Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci are executive producers for CBS Television Studios. (*CBS.com*, 2010; *Zap2it.com* press release reprint, 2010).

Advertisers liked what they saw at Upfronts. So much so, *Five-0* helped CBS top all broadcast networks in upfront ad sales for 2010-2011 to the tune $2.4-2.6 billion, according to buyers and others familiar with the negotiations. This was up from 2009-2010 where CBS secured between $2.13 billion and $2.25 billion, according to *Advertising Age* estimates. (Steinberg, 2010). The show was one of 25 new broadcast series that premiered in the 2010-11 season.

Two months later in July 2010, *Five-0* debuted to fans in a panel at Comic-Con in San Diego and to TV media at a TCA panel in Los Angeles. By launch, *Five-0* ranked as the number one "new TV show with the greatest number of emotionally attached viewers," according to NewMediaMetrics (Steinberg, 2010, August 9). This ranking alone challenges stereotypes that traditional fans shy away from and cannot engage with procedural dramas. From the start, *Five-0* was certainly constructed with components geared towards attracting both a male and a wider fan audience. Early in the process, Peter Lenkov (*24*) was announced by CBS Television Studios as EP/showrunner (AICN, 2008). Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci, the screenwriters of 2009's successful *Star Trek* reboot, wrote the pilot and remain listed as executive producers. Subsequently, the genre-oriented casting announcements began. News of Daniel Dae Kim's role as Honolulu Police Department (HPD) Detective Chin Ho Kelly was a media coup for CBS. Timed just as *Lost* was concluding its popular run, this CBS Television Studios public relations

announcement secured massive international press and tremendous goodwill by critics and fans. This was followed by the announcement of Alex O'Loughlin (CBS' *Moonlight*, *Three Rivers*, CBS Films' *The Backup Plan*) as lead Lt. Commander Steve McGarrett. *Five-0* represents his third CBS series in a short period, which could indicate a long-term talent holding deal or some other business relationship with CBS/CBS Television Studio. Casting of Grace Park (*Battlestar Galactica*) as rookie HPD cop Kono Kalakaua and Scott Caan (*Ocean's 11*) as Detective Danny "Danno" Williams soon followed.

Recurring stars on the series reinforced this niche and fan-favorite casting theme, from Jean Smart (*Designing Women*) and James Marsters (*Buffy The Vampire Slayer*) to Masi Oka (*Heroes*) and Kelly Hu (*The Scorpion King*, *X2*). Additional one-off episodic guest stars in season one, such as music mogul Sean "Puffy" Combs, continued to strategically attract new demographics and niche audiences, such as African Americans. Furthermore, *Five-0*'s outward genre leaning was cultivated as part of the materials and ongoing messaging of the show – at least initially. In addition, first season storylines involved genre themes, such as the March 21, 2011 episode "Na Me'e Laua Na Paio," officially described as: "Five-0 must unravel the mystery of why a mild-mannered sci-fi fan wearing a cape was given truth serum before being tossed out of a 21st-story window" (*CBS.com/Five-0* page, 2011).

In addition to the one paragraph description above, *Five-0*'s four lead actor biographies (O'Loughlin, Caan, Kim, Park) all featured short character descriptions and actor credits that reinforce the procedural drama's overriding themes emphasizing action, sex, and tropical exoticism. As basic elements of "pure escapist" television, many of these themes have been utilized by industry throughout film and TV history, including *Gilligan's Island*,

Magnum P.I., Baywatch, *Lilo and Stitch*, and other beach-based series. Most of the CBS photos

initially featured Park in a string bikini with a surfboard, and O'Loughlin and Caan shirtless in

swimsuits. Other photos across the season focused on action, with buddies O'Loughlin and Caan

charging, guns drawn. It wasn't until late in the season that photos began featuring Park dressed,

much less armed with a gun like her character's police counterparts (CBS.com, AICN,

Zap2it.com, *EW*, *The New York Times*, 2010-11).

As yet another example of the entertainment industry's recycling of ideas and concepts to

ultimately protect against financial risk, *Five-0* sought to capitalize on the success of the original

Emmy Award-winning series *Hawaii Five-O* (note the "O," rather than new "0" – likely a

deliberate attempt to brand the series in a more modern, youthful, technologically-savvy 2.0

manner). The original series aired for 12 seasons (1968-1980) on CBS, and continues to air on

cable and around the world in syndication. It was produced by CBS Productions and Leonard

Freeman Productions. Like today's show, the previous version featured a fictional Hawaii-state

police unit, headed up by Detective Steve McGarrett, here played by actor Jack Lord. The "dun-

duh, dun-duh, dun—duh" theme music composed by Morton Stevens became especially popular

– and remains a key component of the current reboot. Most episodes would end with McGarrett

instructing his fellow officer to "Book 'em, Danno!" – a phrase that entered into the public

vernacular through the series' popularity and internal repetition. (Coded warnings of "five-O,

five- O," by criminals did too.) Again, this component was reintroduced into the reboot as well.

CBS actively hoped to capitalize on nostalgia and interest in the original series, as well as

attract viewers who watched the prior version. To "prime the pump" with new and returning

viewers, the first seasons were made available on DVD through CBS's Home Entertainment

division and were also available free online through CBS.com, as coordinated through CBS Interactive (*CBS.com*, 2010). In an added synergistic move, a week-long, 22-episode marathon of the original first season aired in August 2010 on Viacom-owned Spike TV to help raise interest and awareness among targeted 19-34 male viewers leading into series launch. (*SpikeTV.com*, 2010).

As mentioned above, CBS Television Studio's interest and development in *Five-0* dates back to 2008, according to various reports (*The New York Times*, 2008; *AICN*, 2008). A number of media outlets and original version fan sites subsequently tracked development updates, pilot casting announcements, and other items. AICN reminded its readers that this was CBS/Viacom's second attempt to bring another version to air. Over 15 years ago, they shot a pilot with Gary Busey leading the cast (*AICN*, 2008; *YouTube* trailer, 2010). But repurposing is no guarantee of ratings, as CBS learned from flops like its remake of *The Fugitive* (produced by Warner Bros. Television, following its movie division's hit film), which lasted a single season in 2000-2001. Also, the industry just watched revivals of *Bionic Woman* and *Knight Rider* fail on NBC in the prior 2009-2010 TV season. Not surprisingly, CBS Television Studio/CBS took their time in developing the current version considering these factors.

The new *Five-0* premiered on Monday, September 20, 2010 – 42 years to the date from the premiere of the original show, September 20, 1968. According to Nielsen, the premiere was the highest rated by any new show that week, watched by 14.20 million viewers in the U.S. and it received a 3.9 rating among adults 18–49 (*CBS.com*, 2011, September 21). Caan was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role. The series won "Favorite New TV Drama" at the 37th People's Choice Awards, which aired live on

CBS on January 5, 2011. On January 23, 2011, the series saw its highest ratings to date, with the 15th episode drawing 19.34 million viewers and a 5.6 Adults 18–49 rating. The series is currently ranked in the Top 20 series on air (*CBS.com*, 2010; *Zap2it.com* press release reprint, 2010).

Midway through its first season, Time Warner-owned cable network TNT bought the syndication rights for a reported $2 million an episode, with reruns set to begin 2014. Not surprisingly, this deal quickly solidified network and studio support. In comparison, USA Network bought rights to *Modern Family* for $1.4 million an episode (9.48 million viewers in its first season), and Oxygen Network picked up *Glee* for $500-600,000 an episode (9.77 million viewers in its first season) (*AdAge.com*, 2011). Furthermore, *Five-0* gained a strong worldwide audience, and currently airs in Canada, Australia, U.K., Poland, Croatia, Italy, Germany, Norway, and India for about $2.3 million an episode in each country (*CBS.com*, 2011; *The New York Times*, 2010, August 19).

So why did *Five-0* not become a cultural touchstone in a way that the original was? It could be that CBS as a particular broadcast network did not have this as a specific goal. Outside of aging series *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race* and newer series *The Good Wife*, CBS does not currently have a series on air that would be traditionally branded a "fan-favorite" by media and fandom. This is in contrast to the other broadcast networks, which air multiple fan-favorite series. For example, ABC has *Revenge*, *Once Upon A Time*, *Castle* and *Dancing with the Stars*; FOX has *American Idol*, *Glee*, *Fringe*, and its Seth MacFarlane animated block; NBC has *Grimm*, *The Voice*, and *Smash*; and The CW has *Supernatural*, *The Vampire Diaries* and *Gossip*

Girl. However, CBS does have economically powerful franchises, including *CSI* and *NCIS*.

In a 2011 Upfront preview, *USA Today*'s TV critic Gary Levin seemed to sum up critics and fandom's overall reaction to *Five-0* at midseason (*USA Today*, 2011, March 23). He wrote that all four major networks lost minimal audience in 2010-2011 as compared to recent years, but "new shows drawing respectable crowds, such as CBS' *Five-0*, aren't generating much excitement." In a companion piece about the development slate for the then-upcoming 2011-12 season, CBS programming chief Nina Tassler said, "In new dramas, (we) look for 'much more of an emphasis on character,'…But overall, CBS is not looking to surprise viewers: 'It's less about noise coming out than (sparking viewers') emotional attachment.'" Of note, Tassler did not mention *Five-0* as an example of character or emotional attachment in the piece. Rather, she mentioned another then-freshmen series, the critically acclaimed *The Good Wife*. In my experience, since examples are very strategically placed in previews like this as indicators to the ad community, this marks a big step away from the 2010 Upfront presentation when Tassler enthusiastically proclaimed, "The thrilling reboot of 'Hawaii Five-0' is ridiculously sexy" (Fine, 2010).

To provide a better understanding and documentation of hidden TV publicist labor involved in the industrial process, and to contextualize how this activity likely contributed to media coverage and perception of *Five-0* in its first season, I will attempt here to outline how network TV public relations departments and show launches operate. To start, *Five-0* press materials were likely written leading into Upfront by the CBS network-assigned publicist and her CBS Television Studio publicist counterpart. Generally, press materials consist of a "one-sheet" series overview with marketing-driven language; contractual "series regulars" and

executive producer biographies; and a combination of approved, art-directed "gallery" and from-the-set "episodic" photos. These materials and the first several episodes (if available) are combined, "eblasted" and/or mailed to the public relations department's continually updated, targeted media list. This list usually is segmented into niches by media release dates (e.g., monthly and weekly magazines, daily newspapers) and target audiences. These lists can be further divided into a variety of subsections, according to specific demographics, such as gender and race. Industry lore generally says that public relations departments "live or die" by their media lists.

Based on my experience with the CBS public relations department, *Five-0*'s press materials almost certainly went through a lengthy, multi-stepped approval process that involved edits and individual sign off by separate public relations department supervisors; the show's EPs; executives in charge of *Five-0*'s development, called the "current production department"; marketing; and finally, the separate studio and network heads. The editing and approval process is supervised by the network publicist, in association with her/his assigned "studio counterpart."

The production studio's public relations practitioner generally takes lead on the series through the development and pilot stage, and then moves into a secondary, but close, sustained partnership role. The network publicist usually takes lead on writing, securing approvals, and presenting the overall series public relations plan. All costs for hair and makeup, appearances, events, stunts, mailings and more are negotiated step-by-step by agents, managers, personal publicists, EPs, executives, and individual supervisors, and shared by the network and studio, bounded internal budgets.

Media, including the aforementioned members of the Television Critics Association (TCA) and increasingly unaffiliated online press, first come into contact with these materials and approved, edited trailers for the series during the first three weeks in July when the TCA collectively travels to Los Angeles for hosted panels and evening sponsored parties by each major network and their sister network(s). In addition to programming 1-2 days (depending on whether it is a network or cable outlet) of hour-long panels, each major network PR department hosts same-day, all-day corresponding press junkets with electronic press (TV, radio, online), since talent is in town and cleared from production as part of the overall PR plan.

It should be noted that star and EP/showrunner participation in publicity – including Upfront red carpet, Comic-Con panel/party, TCA panel/party, set visit interviews, phone interviews, satellite media tours, radio media tours, talk show appearances, local station events/appearances, and more – is a contractual obligation, usually built in unspecific terms (e.g., number of hours) into show contracts. Sometimes, this can be a surprise to stars. For example, *Veronica Mars* lead actress Kristen Bell once said at a TCA panel that no one told her that half her job would be promoting the show, and the other half shooting it (12-16 hours a day, 5 days a week, generally, in San Diego).

That said, targeted press mailings with 1-3 episodes of a series – sometimes with themed packaging and/or collectible branded "tchotkies," depending on budget – follow TCA in August, generally 5-6 weeks before launch to make media deadlines. Eventually, these materials are shared and posted on network/series websites and corporate/media areas, including CBS.com's CBS Press Express, a press area allowing searches for press releases, photos, etc. Certain

materials can be password-protected in these areas, depending on exclusive deals with media, etc.

The typical network public relations cycle for a weekly drama series, debuting in the fall (typically late September), follows a certain timeline that even in a Post-Network Era has only changed minimally. This regularity probably eases the public relations-media relationship too. For example, press releases for the traditional Fall season are written, approved, sent, pitched, and negotiated with exclusives given across platforms to maximize exposure, interviews/set visits scheduled and made, and mediated as follows:

- Development/Casting – Fall/Winter prior to premiere
- Upfront – May 19-21
- "Spring TCA Press Tour" – 1st three weeks in July in L.A.
- Premiere Week/Day – 3rd week in September
- November Sweeps
- Winter Finale Episode
- January Return Episode
- "Winter TCA Press Tour" – 1st weeks in January in L.A.
- February Sweeps
- May Sweeps
- Listings Descriptions for each episode, usually combined with all network series into weekly combination releases, sent 6 weeks in advance to make Sunday TV insert deadlines.

In addition, overnight ratings information from Nielsen follows set patterns too, and includes daily ("fast overnights" [am] and revised [early afternoon]) ratings; weekly reports; and Live+5 (day) or Live+7 (day) DVR ratings. Also, "Summer Season," traditionally June-August, has become part of this set publicity-media schedule too. Initial outreach, panels, and mailings for the summer can begin as early as Winter Press Tour in January. Some networks, beginning with NBC in 2005, have introduced Summer Press Tours – independently organized from the TCA

organization and financed by networks and studios – in April to support summer programming.

Since *Five-0* shoots in Hawaii, rather than New York City or Los Angeles, "set visits" by

media are certainly limited in terms of network/studio and media outlet travel budgets and

specifically timed to promote premiere and Sweeps periods. This means media typically are

brought to set in short condensed bursts at key moments. Throughout the season, additional

promotional information might warrant special attention, with an approved press release,

targeted media outreach, etc., including:

- Special episodes pegged to timed events (e.g., AFC Championship game) and special guest stars (e.g., Sean "Puffy" Combs' episode aired April 20, 2011);
- Online – CBS.com, Webisodes;
- Promotional contests, across platforms.

While network PR departments as policy never reveal PR plans to media or consumers,

marketing plans are typically outlined in the press by network publicists for various stakeholders

and audiences as part of that PR plan. For example, *The New York Times* showcased key

elements from the *Five-0* plan with this strategically-placed feature with business/advertising

reporter Stuart Elliot (2010, August 30):

> The campaign includes commercials on CBS, of course, along with spots on CBS Radio stations and in movie theaters; tune-in ads in newspapers and magazines; aerial ad banners; billboards; and ads on newsstands, atop taxi cabs and in train stations.
>
> And do not be surprised if during a coming National Football League game on CBS, an announcer describes a play on the "five-0" yard line.
>
> There are also promotional partnerships with General Motors and Hawaiian Airlines. And reruns of episodes of the original series are on cbs.com and the Spike cable channel, which on Monday begins a five-day, 45-hour marathon interspersed with previews of the new version.
>
> Many nontraditional elements of the campaign will underline the contemporary tack that the reboot takes. They include ads that will play when people walk past bus shelters in Los Angeles and store windows in New York; a presence on Facebook and Twitter; free

ringtones to cellphone users who text H50 to 69937; numerous clips on YouTube; a presentation at Comic-Con International in San Diego of a music video about the recording of the new theme song; and a contest, through CBSCollegeSports.com, called Hawaii Five-0 Marching Band Mania.

Although "we love all our children," said George F. Schweitzer, chief marketing officer for the CBS Corporation in New York, "Hawaii Five-0" is getting a lot of attention because it's a reboot that has landed "our best drama time slot" of 10 p.m. Monday, after sitcom hits like "Two and a Half Men."

Mr. Schweitzer explained why so much of the campaign was centered on the theme music, written by Morton Stevens, a CBS executive, and popularized by the instrumental group the Ventures. Research by CBS found that "70 percent of people over 35 were familiar with 'Hawaii Five-0,' while 70 percent of people under 35 were not," Mr. Schweitzer said. "But of the people not familiar, they knew the song."

"When we asked what was the expectation for a remake," he added, "people said, 'I want to see the crime-fighting, I want to see Hawaii, and play me the song.'"

…With a rating of 82 percent positive and 18 percent negative, "Hawaii Five-0" lags behind the leading new series, he added, which is "Lone Star," from Fox Broadcasting, with a rating of 94 percent positive and 6 percent negative.

(Note: FOX's *Lone Star* got cancelled after airing two low-rated episodes, and was the first major network series to be axed in the 2010-11 season.)

Finally, most good network series public relations plans contain at least one big promotional stunt to attract media and audience attention. As noted above, CBS' outreach focused on the series' most recognizable aspect – its theme song – to target teens, young adults, and fans. According to *The New York Times* (2010, August 5), "…college bands across the country are marching to the tune of *Hawaii Five-0*, competing in 'CBS's Hawaii Five-0 Marching Band Mania' contest for a prize of [drum roll, please…] $25,000 toward their school's band program – and the opportunity to have their winning video performance broadcast on the CBS Television Network during an act break of the Oct. 11 episode..."

After reviewing CBS' paratextual official materials online in the network website's press

area, as mentioned above in the methods section, I conducted a search of key tastemaker media

coverage, resulting from these materials, media outreach and publicist-journalist mediation. I

further narrowed my focus to four media outlets, based on my professional experience, that are

held in high esteem by entertainment industry, network, studio, marketing, publicity and a range

of target audiences, specifically male, genre, and fan audiences:

- Ain't It Cool News (AICN)
- Television Without Pity (TWoP)
- *Entertainment Weekly/EW.com*
- *The New York Times*

According to agenda-setting and my experience, *The New York Times* continues to set what's

important in news in the U.S., but these other outlets have overlapping effects on each other too.

All combined, these four outlets exhibit varying influences on niche audience and fandom in

general. AICN and TWoP are squarely historical fan sites, while *Entertainment Weekly* targets a

more general pop culture readership. In looking at these four media outlets' coverage of *Five-0*

across season one, I was particularly struck by the following coverage. What these outlets

featured seems as important as what they did not, particularly when the outlet coverage went to

prominent to nonexistent or coverage was simply nonexistent.

Ain't It Cool News (AICN)

Since reporting on the show's development (2008, August 12); two of the executive

producers' connections to the *Star Trek* reboot (2009, October 8); and on Grace Park's casting

(2010, February 27), Ain't It Cool News – founded and run by "king of all geeks" Harry

Knowles – generally ignored *Five-0*. In fact, the site's TV critic "Hercules" (or "Herc") has not

written about the show since September 20, 2010 when he proclaimed:

> CBS' disappointing new 'Hawaii Five-0' comes to us from writer-producer Peter Lenkov (*CSI:NY*) as an uninspired buddy-cop caper. It's maybe trying to be a white-boy 'Bad Boys' but doesn't clear that fairly low bar… The best thing about the hour is the tan body of skinny, sexy Grace Park (*Battlestar Galactica*). Her lanky cadet character is introduced in a bikini, then later finds herself forced to strip down to her bra and panties by a human trafficker. Park's physique is almost reason enough to give this pilot a look; CBS will want to keep her half-naked at all times. Let's hope the producers continue to find excuses." Adding, there's "no reason to sit through an hour of tepid procedural to get to (two 'nifty' CGI-enhanced vehicular stunts).

In the same piece, Herc also provided a round-up of trade and consumer media critical reviews,

following a premiere-day style he has established, as follows:

> *The Hollywood Reporter* says: "We have all the makings of an odd-couple buddy show, but the banter and chemistry are so annoying it's hard to watch. Alpha-male pissing contests are not unknown on cop shows; a little macho energy and friction can work as a driving force. But when Williams offers, at the end of a running argument, "Let's just not talk," you find yourself wishing they'd stick to it. … some things are better than they were in the '60s -- including the top tier of television shows. This just isn't one of them."

> *Variety* says: "…the expensive pilot -- millions were spent on front-loaded explosions -- doesn't necessarily indicate smooth sailing, relying as it does on playful banter (more like frat-boy hazing) between the leads that grows tiresome even before the hour's over. … Admittedly, those weaned on the original are only a peripheral part of the audience CBS covets, and the pacing required a modern-day makeover. Still, the raw materials -- from the island setting to the underused Kim and Park -- have more potential than punch in the pilot, resulting in just another crime procedural with a nifty blue-sky backdrop."

> *USA Today* says: "It's TV at its least challenging, but it has an incredibly gorgeous setting, a pre-sold concept, a cushy time slot, a solid supporting cast and a starmaking turn by Caan. And if the actual star marries the body of a surfer to the magnetism of a board, let's just say it won't be the first time CBS has overcome such a problem."

> *The New York Times* says: "McGarrett and Danno meet and pair up in the premiere with the kind of bickering contentiousness usually reserved on television for men and women about to land — to the surprise of no one but themselves — in bed."

> *The Los Angeles Times* says: "… the limpid-eye woodenness O'Loughlin inevitably brings to a role (settle down, "Moonlight" fans; you know it's true) works well enough for Steve McGarrett — Jack Lord played it clenched and clipped too — but that's about as far as it goes, and "well enough" cannot be what CBS was looking for. Fortunately, O'Loughlin's by-the-book performance is buoyed by a fast-paced script and a splendid supporting cast, including and especially Scott Caan as Danno, that radiates enough hit-

making energy to render even Oahu's azure waters and perfect sunsets superfluous."

TV Squad says: "… replicates the premise of a whole host of CBS procedurals. Your mileage will vary as to whether that's a problem for you. … despite the dude-tastic charisma that Caan brings to Danno, I can't quite see a reason to watch 'Hawaii Five-0' again, given that each week, the stories will probably feel like something we've already seen on 'NCIS,' 'NCIS Los Angeles' or any number of the 'CSIs.' Bad guys will be caught, the team shall be triumphant. Rinse and repeat. …

The San Francisco Chronicle says: "… nothing but entertainment. It's eye candy. Waves, sun, island culture, Park. A bad guy surfaces, McGarrett goes to work. Danno books him. End of story. Sometimes there are gun battles. Fists fly. That's all there is, folks. It's not rocket science. True, watching the original is more fun. And more cheesy. But waves are waves. Hawaii is still pretty. And if you're looking for anything deeper than that, you've landed on the wrong island. "Lost" is over. Let your mind take a break."

The Washington Post says: "…a big bag of dumb fun, with a story told as tautly and smoothly as the surface of a Polynesian drum. … His fan base strongly believes O'Loughlin is hot to trot, but his screen presence seems so completely cardboard that I think he should have This Side Up tattooed on his abs. But here, a stiff McGarrett is the way to go. …

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette says: "Overwrought and humorless, this remake of the classic '70s series offers some strong action sequences but generic plot and character introductions. … O'Loughlin takes his shirt off just once in the pilot (perhaps to distract from his sometimes wooden performance), and he's teamed with the more charismatic Scott Caan."

HitFix says: "… nothing new to see here … it's fun. Not thought-provoking, not innovative, not super-quotable the next day (unless you want to trot out the old "Book 'em, Danno" catchphrase, which the new show wisely does at one point). But entertaining, in the kind of mindless but effective style of your better action flicks."

The Boston Herald says: "O'Loughlin is taking his third shot ("Moonlight," "Three Rivers") in as many years on CBS and seems to have finally found series gold, but Caan's the real delight. You'd never know it from his recent run on HBO's "Entourage," but he's warm and funny and exhibits great chemistry with everyone in the cast."

The Boston Globe says: "There's nothing groundbreaking going on here, just old-fashioned action-adventure fun."

To be fair, Herc has also ignored CBS' biggest procedural *NCIS* since his September 22, 2009

review of that series premiere:

> It's interesting how everybody in the show seems to know what an NCIS is. I know I'd
> have no idea were it not for the Mark Harmon hour long. Perhaps an "NCIS" show airs in
> the universe these characters exist in as well? And is there an Air Force Criminal
> Investigative Service out of which someone could fashion a series? It's heavy on gunplay
> and punching and creaky banter that's in not a lot of danger of making anyone laugh.

To me as a fan, it speaks volumes when one of fandom's biggest sources of news and gossip

can't be bothered to report on most CBS series and popular procedurals in general. The site's

lack of coverage on CBS indicates to fans that this particular network does not feature series

worth their time, attention, or labor.

Television Without Pity (TWoP)

Initially launched as a mocking *Dawson's Creek* fan site in 1998, Television Without

Pity.com (TWoP), along with AICN, truly pioneered and popularized the online art of "snarky"

rhetoric, and gained a loyal, engaged fan audience as a result. Due to its perceived industry

capital and fan influence, the site was purchased by NBC Universal/Bravo in 2007. During the

last two TV seasons, the site added several new series to its selected list of dedicated network

and cable "recap" reviews and smaller "weecaps" reviews, as evidenced by dropdown lists on its

main page. The following is a list of TWoP's writers and the shows they review as of July 2012:

Angel Cohn	*How I Met Your Mother* (weecaps), *The Walking Dead* (weecaps)
Cindy McLennan	*Once Upon a Time* (weecaps), *The Vampire Diaries* (weecaps)
Couch Baron	*Dexter*, *Mad Men*
Daniel	*The Bachelor* (weecaps), *Fringe*
DeAnn Welker	*The Apprentice* (weecaps)
Demian	*Glee*, *Supernatural*
Jacob Clifton (aka Bayliss)	*The Good Wife*, *Gossip Girl*, *Nurse Jackie* (weecaps), *Pretty Little Liars* (weecaps), *True Blood*
Jeff Long	*Dexter*, *Project Runway*
Joe R.	*Boardwalk Empire*, *Breaking Bad*, *So You Think You Can Dance* (weecaps)
Kim	*Dancing with the Stars* (weecaps), *Top Chef* (weecaps), *Top Chef Masters* (weecaps)
Lady Lola	*Jersey Shore* (weecaps), *The Killing* (weecaps), *The Lying Game* (weecaps), *The Real Housewives of New Jersey* (weecaps)
Lauren S	*Grey's Anatomy*
LTG	*Glee*, *Doctor Who*
LuluBates	*The Bachelorette* (weecaps), *Top Chef: Just Desserts* (weecaps), *The Voice* (weecaps)
M. Giant (Jeff Alexander)	*American Idol* (weecaps), *The Amazing Race*, *Big Brother* (weecaps), *The Office* (weecaps), *Touch* (weecaps), *The X Factor* (weecaps)
Montykins	*Game of Thrones*, *House* (weecaps), *So You Think You Can Dance* (weecaps)
Pablo G	*Revenge* (weecaps)
Potes	*America's Next Top Model*, *The Biggest Loser* (weecaps), *Falling Skies*
Sara M.	*Survivor*
Sobell	*Sons of Anarchy*
Tippi Blevins	*Doctor Who*, *Hell on Wheels*

Table 2.1   TWoP Writers in 2012 (TWoP, 2012; Wikipedia, 2012)

Despite CBS' aggressive marketing and public relations push to attract a genre audience –

including dispatching young women in grass skirts to plug the show at Comic-Con 2010 – TWoP

did not select *Five-0* as a series for regular review during the 2010-2011 season (Barnes &

Ciepley, 2010, July 22). In fact, as evidenced from the above list, the site seems to completely

shy away from all broadcast and cable procedural dramas. Of the 51+ shows TWoP currently

reviews (see Table 2.1), only CBS' *The Good Wife* and USA's *Suits* seem to fall into the

traditional procedural category. Dramas outside of its "Sci-Fi TV on TWoP" area generally tend

to be critically acclaimed (or sometimes utterly reviled, and worthy of their scorn). TWoP also

tends to focus on mass-appeal reality series, with gradating forms of "snark."

Overall, as of July 2012, TWoP focuses on four CBS series: *The Good Wife, How I Met*

Your Mother, *The Amazing Race,* and *Survivor*. The site also reviews several Viacom-family

series, including Showtime's *Dexter*, *Nurse Jackie*, *The Big C*, and *Weeds*, and MTV's *The*

Jersey Shore. These series either have great cultural capital among niche audience and/or critical

acclaim. Meanwhile, having long settled into typical procedural mystery- and guest star-of-the-

week patterns, *Five-0* is defined by its broad appeal and lack of critical acclaim.

Five-0's only consistent presence on the site continues to be buried on page three of their

Forum/Dramas Subforums section, currently under the banner, "Hawaii Five-0 (2010): Get Your

Shaved Ice Here" (changed from the original banner "Hawaii Five-0 (2010): New, but Is It

Improved?"). Traffic as of July 1, 2012 shows this area to have 7629 Replies, 1,088,018 Views

and 509 Pages. AimingforYoko started the thread on February 11, 2010, with the post, "Alex

O'Laughlin to play McGarrett. He seems like a nice guy but he's 0 for 2 with CBS. Does Nina

Tassler have a massive crush on him or something? (I heartily endorse Daniel Dae Kim as Chin,

though.).” This was followed up by “poor Jin – he didn’t make it off the island.”

In comparison, *Five-0*’s direct Monday night competition, ABC’s *Castle*, has 25,031 Replies, 3,297,644 Views, and 1669 Pages. Fan-favorite actor Nathan Fillion, who was proclaimed “Geek God” by EW in 2011, likely is a big contributing factor to activity on *Castle*’s TWoP area (2011, March 25). In the same manner, Fillion’s popularity with fandom has enabled *Castle* to become one of the few procedurals to world-build into original novels and graphic novels and arguably become a transmedia property. *Five-0* does not seem to be able (or willing?) to make the same jump cross-platform. Meanwhile, CBS’ “CSI Franchise” is prominently featured in a “Dramas Subforum” box, along with *Dawson’s Creek*, “*Law and Order* Franchise,” *Gilmore Girls*, and *Veronica Mars*. CSI Franchise is further subdivided into *CSI* (212 Topics, 26,848 Replies and 15 Pages), *CSI: Miami* (185 Topics, 12,211 Replies and 13 Pages), and *CSI: NY* (177 Topics, 8,815 Replies and 12 Pages) folders (TWoP, 2012, July 1).

TWoP helped establish the tone for modern pop culture and fan media reporting and lends pop culture and fan legitimacy to any series it regularly covers. Again, *Five-0* did not make the editors’ cut as a regularly featured series in the first season (or beyond). When procedurals are not deemed important by fan sites by their absence or buried nature, then how can traditional fandom incorporate them into its DNA?

Entertainment Weekly/EW.com

Owned by Time Warner, *Entertainment Weekly* (*EW*) magazine and its companion site *EW.com* have covered the entertainment industry news, celebrity, and critical reviews, with a decidedly winking pop culture eye, since February 1990. Creator Jeff Jarvis reportedly

called this consumer guide to popular culture (with movies, TV, music, and book features and reviews, sometimes with video game and stage reviews), "…the post-modern *Farmers' Almanac*." (*EW.com*, 2012).   As a gatekeeper of "cool," *EW* frequently focuses its editorial attention to major entertainment industry franchises, brands, initiatives, stars, etc. who sell magazines. For example, *The Hobbit*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *Louie*'s Louis C.K., *Dallas'* Larry Hagman, and *Doctor Who*, and the James Bond franchise have graced its covers from June into August 2012 (*EW*, 2012).

Editorially, the magazine was by its nature poised to embrace *Five-0*, mainly due to the cast's genre pedigrees. Plus, most of the magazine's editors and writers, including staff writer and thesis interviewee Jeff "Doc" Jensen, were obsessed with anything *Lost*-related. Jensen wrote a complex, detailed weekly *Lost* episodic blog on *EW.com* that pieced and deconstructed every second and brought to light obscure thematic minutiae. *EW* pounced on Kim's casting as *Lost* was concluding, and the relationship seems to have solidified (for a time) from there (*EW/EW.com*, 2010-2011). For example, *EW* and CBS partnered to host a "Fandemonium" Red-Carpet Event/Party at Comic-Con 2010 in San Diego. Photos on *EW.com* feature various CBS stars, including Park, interacting at the event (2010, July 23). Editorially, this led to the series being spotlighted in pre- and post-Con coverage. Furthermore, *Five-0* made *EW*'s industry-coveted "Top 10 Must List" in print and online (2010, July 26).

Gossip items from the set followed, which might indicate a close editorial relationship with CBS publicists coming out of Comic-Con. For example:

> After aggravating a previous knee injury, last week Scott Caan flew from Hawaii, where he's filming CBS's new fall series *Hawaii Five-O*, to L.A. to undergo surgery. A rep for CBS says that Caan will be back on set on August 23rd and will not miss any episodes. The injury will be written into the show in a lighthearted way, according to the network

(2010, September 18).

For the show's premiere, *Five-0* and its actors Kim and Park were one of seven series – and the

only new show for Fall 2010 – featured on the industrially crucial "Fall TV Preview" issue, as

seen here:

Figure 2.1   *Entertainment Weekly*'s "Fall TV Preview" issue cover (2010, September 9).

In this issue, *EW*'s TV reviewer Ken Tucker raved:

> The new fall season's most unexpected pleasure has got to be **Hawaii Five-0**, one of the
> rare reinventions of an old show that doesn't just work, but may even prove superior to
> the original. If you think that's sacrilegious to say, let me remind you that the original

> *Five-0*, which aired from 1968 to 1980, was no TV classic. You'd be hard-pressed to find any enduring moments of high drama in the Jack Lord version — that's one reason most people remember only three things about it: the theme music, Lord's triumphant catchphrase "Book 'em, Danno!" and Lord's haircut, which waved like the surrounding palm trees. …Going up against ABC's *Castle* at 10 p.m., *Five-0* will have to compete in the chemistry department of crime solving. It has the elements to succeed. **B+**"

While initially positive, Tucker did not mention *Five-0* in early December 2010 as one of his picks for "10 Best TV Shows of 2010" or his subsequent online "10 MORE Best TV Shows of 2010" list (*EW.com*, 2010, December 23). Instead, AMC's *Breaking Bad* was his number one pick and *Mad Men* was his number five pick for 2010. He even picked Spike's *Ultimate Fighter 12* as his number 20 pick while ignoring *Five-0* in his "MORE" list. From launch until December, it is possible Tucker had a change of opinion on the series after seeing half a season's worth of episodes. This hints towards editorial shifts on *Five-0* to come.

Meanwhile, writers Lynette Rice, Mandi Bierly, and Darren Franich have since championed Scott Caan as a breakout star – likely helping to secure Caan's award nominations later in the season – and the show itself. Rice's enthusiasm and the magazine's editorial links to CBS helped her secure interesting interviews with Caan and EP Lenkov (Rice, 2011, October 29, underline added):

> Good thing Scott Caan doesn't always listen to his dad. When deciding last spring whether to take the role of Det. Danny "Danno" Williams in CBS' reboot of *Hawaii Five-0*, the 34-year-old actor sought guidance from <u>his father, James Caan, the Oscar-nominated actor who headlined NBC's *Las Vegas* from 2003 to 2007. "He told me, 'Absolutely don't do it.'</u> I think what he meant by that was 'It gets tiring playing the same guy. You get bored. You get creatively stifled,'" says Caan. "He didn't really love doing a network show. My dad likes to pretend he's not an artist, but he is." Fortunately, the *Ocean's Eleven* star took the producers' word over Pop's — but only after asking lots of questions about whether *Five-0* would morph into another by-the-numbers *CSI*. "<u>I wanted to make sure this show was not just a procedural</u>," he says. "I can only imagine it does get boring playing the same character after four or five years. But we have really good writers and I trust them to make it interesting for us."
>
> Caan, in return, has turned Danno 2.0 into this season's most irresistible character…"I

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didn't approach this role as, like, 'Oh, I'm going to figure out how to be a cop.' The last thing I wanted to end up being was a cliché," says Caan…On his vision for Danno, Caan says, "I wanted him to be fresh and different, so I actually based my character on a criminal." The only thing he's getting away with stealing, though, is the attention: Critics have largely overlooked the rest of the all-star *Five-0* cast, which includes *Lost* alum Daniel Dae Kim and *Battlestar Galactica* fave Grace Park, to heap praise on the sidesplitting sidekick…

Caan's off-the-cuff comment, "not just a procedural," should be noted since it subtly demeans the whole genre as not "interesting," and possibly points to industry perception, at least from a certain section of working actors or Hollywood legacies. One can only hope that Caan continues to enjoy working on a series deemed "just a procedural" by media and active fandom alike.

For their enthusiasm and continued interest, *EW* likely received additional exclusives from CBS public relations, including guest star Dane Cook's casting announcement as Danno's brother (2010, December 10) to "a special tsunami episode" first look (2011, January 15) and subsequent comment with the network in "damage control mode" (2011, March 11) – which spotlights how public relations department had to quickly pivot after the 2010 Japanese earthquake and tsunami disaster to prevent the drama or network as being labeled insensitive. It remains to be seen if this episode will air in syndication on TNT in 2014:

> **"'Hawaii Five-0' exclusive video: First Look at the special tsunami episode"**
> by Sandra Gonzalez - As we promised in yesterday's edition of Spoiler Room, here's an exclusive First Look at the special Jan. 23 episode of *Hawaii Five-0*, which airs on a Sunday following the AFC Championship game on CBS. In the episode, called "Tidal Wave," the team goes up against one of their most terrifying foes ever: a tsunami. And it becomes a race against the clock in more ways than one when the head of the Tsunami Warning Center goes missing. Check out the EW exclusive video below:…(2011, January 15).

> **"Ratings: Tsunami of viewers from football boosts faux tsunami on 'Hawaii Five-0'"**
> by Lynette Rice - …Even the fake tsunami on *Hawaii Five-0* kept footballers glued to the tube (following the AFC Championship Game). The special edition of the freshman drama that began well after 10 p.m. earned a 5.7/15 in 18-49 and 20.7 million viewers. Each 18-49 ratings point equals 1.3 million. (For more on the episode, click here).,, (2011, January 24)

"'Hawaii Five-0' cast and crew safe and shooting today" by Mandi Bierly - Star Daniel Dae Kim tweeted about the warning and earthquake, the largest ever recorded in Japan, early this morning, calling them a "Reality check." He added, "Thank you for all your thoughts and prayers. My family and I have moved to high ground. Now we wait…" *Hawaii Five-0* executive producer Peter Lenkov, in LA, followed up on Twitter three hours later. "Cast and Crew safe. All at high ground. So far it's wait and see. Thanks for all the thoughts and prayers." (**UPDATE**: A rep for CBS Television Studios tells EW, "Hawaii had no land damage we are told, and therefore production is shooting today.") (2011, March 11)

In addition, throughout *Five-0*'s season, *EW* piqued reader and audience interest through a number of print and online listings, stemming from episodic press releases (e.g., 2010, October 4) and titillating round-up stories, such as Park's bikini-clad spotlight in the "12 Kick-Ass Ladies of Fall TV" (2010, September 7), and where to buy that first bikini (10/12/10). An exclusive season finale photo/item was in the May 6, 2011 issue. As seen with Tucker's stance above, content analysis shows the magazine pulled back and reduced coverage to date, indicating that editorial has moved on to TV's "next big thing."

While print praised the series' action and adventure (2011, May 6), *EW.com* took a decidedly snarky tone from the start. For example, writer Darren Franich even went so far as to create a weekly Bingo contest for readers to frame all reviews – which doesn't necessarily speak well for the showrunner and writing staff's abilities to create original content (2011, September 18):

"'Hawaii Five-0' Bingo: Play it at home tonight!" by Darren Franich

Scientists estimate that something ridiculous happens on *Hawaii Five-0* roughly every five milliseconds. Every episode features hot chicks, hot dudes, malevolent gangsters, car chases, and shots of the Hawaiian coastline that will make you weep with envy. Daniel Dae Kim rides around on a massive motorcycle, Alex O'Loughlin executes some sort of incredible athletic feat of strength, Scott Caan snarks off, and Grace Park inevitably goes undercover in some sort of skimpy outfit. Lessons are learned. Family values are upheld in the most risqué manner possible.

And now, you can play along at home! Click forward for a look at the Utterly Unofficial *Hawaii Five-0* Bingo Board**.** Be sure to mark it off whenever O'Loughlin shows some skin, Park goes surfing, awesome cars awesomely crash, or a really tasty-looking fish swims across the screen. (The surfing square is a free space, because someone will always be surfing in Hawaii.) You might already be a winner!

Figure 2.2   *EW.com*'s *Hawaii Five-0* bingo game (2010, September 18)

Even assuming *EW.com* takes a more snarky tone than the magazine (along the same lines of

TWoP), the fact that the show could fall into such predictable storyline patterns after one season

gives credence to overall media and fandom attitudes that the series is not intellectually-

challenging enough to warrant merit, attention, or obsession.

Meanwhile, fellow *EW.com* contributor Mandi Bierly noted, "'Hawaii Five-0': Anyone else think this show needs some real sexual tension?'…I loved last night's episode of *Hawaii Five-0*…Do you agree that the only thing this show is missing is some good sexual tension? If so, what do you (the fans) propose?" While Mandi consistently writes about her love of O'Loughlin shirtless, she also comments on the chemistry and homosexual subtext between and Danno – information and themes not found or supported by CBS press materials, an indication of Jenkins' active audience text interpretation. She also got more critical as the season progressed, as evidenced by this headline/item: "'Hawaii Five-0': Three ways this chase scene from tonight's episode could've been better" (4/21/11).

Entertainment Weekly/EW.com probably sums up media and fandom attitudes towards *Five-0* the best. The editors and writers as fans jumped on the series' casting and pilot, but as episodes progressed and the show seemingly fell into standard character and villain-of-the-week tropes, it ceased "being cool" to like *Five-0*. Now, these standard tropes might just be restricted to *Five-0* and not procedurals in general. But nonetheless, as the series returned for season two, *Five-0* became an object of ridicule by one of pop culture's main legitimizing media outlets. Since then, this and other legitimizing pop culture media outlets have ignored the series, with the exception of season premiere and finale mentions. The overall lack of coverage has negated or withdrawn any kind of "guilty pleasure" support in the process.

The New York Times

This venerable media outlet is considered by most in the entertainment industry to be on

par with industry trades *Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter* as a publication of record, due to its proximity to many multinational corporate and media headquarters, the advertising community, stockholders, etc. in the number one U.S. market. Entertainment publicity departments, particularly corporate public relations, continually seek to place stories with the *Times'* editors/reporters in both the Entertainment and Business/Advertising sections.

As an industry story, the *Times* – like AICN – has followed this version of *Five-0* since its development was announced by CBS Television Studio in 2008 – possible because its older readership might remember the series fondly. As with AICN and *EW*, the abovementioned lead casting announcements saw immediate pick-up with good placement. In particular, a humorous mention regarding Kim's casting immediately following the airing of *Lost*'s finale: "LOST - ArtsBeat Blog: …a two-and-a-half-hour extravaganza in which we learned the whole ABC series had just been one long setup for the 'Hawaii Five-0' remake…"

A number of stories, likely with corporate publicity fingerprints on them, position CBS positively both before and after Upfront, including *The Times'* marketing plan feature. From *The Times* to filtered-down, web-only blogs, this sort of favorable network coverage strongly supported CBS' programming slate, marketing initiatives, and overall *corporate* direction at the time, and speaks to how reporters and publications of all statures participate in publicist-media mediation. For example:

> Continuing a multi-year run, CBS again was the #1 network among total viewers for 51 out of 52 weeks, and three of its new shows – *Hawaii Five-0*, *Blue Bloods* and *Mike and Molly* –landed in the top 20 for the year, the only new shows to do so. CBS also used the Super Bowl to introduce the reality show *Undercover Boss*, which cracked the top 25. 'CBS has been able to replenish its lineup as older shows fade,' said Brad Adgate, the senior vice president for research at Horizon Media. He contrasted CBS with ABC, which bid adieu to *Lost* in May and seeded no new hits since (Stelter, 2011, January 2).

Additional stories tout CBS and CBS officials as industry leaders:

> "This is more like it," said David F. Poltrack, chief research officer at the CBS Corporation and president of its CBS Vision unit. "After two years that have not been pleasant for any of us, things are looking up."
>
> Television is increasingly about "the development, nurturing and harvesting of franchise programming," Mr. Poltrack said, that viewers will want to watch on conventional TV sets, the Internet, mobile devices, video on demand, DVDs and in syndication.
>
> Among them, he listed series like the "CSI" shows on CBS, "Grey's Anatomy" on ABC, "The Office" on NBC and "American Idol" on Fox.
>
> Three drama series that CBS introduced for the 2010-11 season — "Blue Bloods," "The Defenders" and "Hawaii Five-0" — are already profitable, from their network licensing fees and international sales, Mr. Poltrack said, with additional revenue like syndication in the offing.
>
> Even better, in Mr. Poltrack's (CBS) eye, all three series are being produced by the CBS Television Studios division of CBS (Elliott, 2010, December 5).
>
> Beyond mostly positive reviews leading up to the launch of the series, *The Times*

continued to support the show throughout the first season, for the most part. CBS publicity's

weekly episodic description releases (and likely follow-up calls) have resulted in regular "What

To Watch" area mentions across the season, including:

- What's On Today
  And in "Hawaii Five-0," at 10, Steve McGarrett (Alex O'Loughlin) deals with theft, kidnapping, murder and the Japanese Yakuza. ...January 3, 2011 - By CHRIS HARCUM

- What's On Today
  10 P.M. (CBS) HAWAII FIVE-0 The real-life lovebirds Vanessa Minnillo and Nick Lachey play an engaged couple who are among those kidnapped ...February 14, 2011 - By KATHRYN SHATTUCK

- What's On Today
  10 P.M. (CBS) HAWAII FIVE-0 The team must protect a ruthless dictator after a member of his security detail is murdered before he can reveal ...February 28, 2011 - By KATHRYN SHATTUCK

While business and listing stories ran, TV critic Mike Hale pointedly changed his opinion

on the show as the season progressed. He originally summed up the series on August 12, 2010

as:

> HAWAII FIVE-O This souped-up remake of 1960s-'70s cop series is the most high-profile new network show of the fall, which means it will take the most abuse if it doesn't succeed right away. In the Jack Lord role, Alex O'Loughlin ("Moonlight," "Three Rivers") will try to break the single-season curse. Daniel Dae Kim and Grace Park give this the highest hot-Asian quotient among the new shows, edging out "Nikita" and its star, Maggie Q. (CBS, Mondays beginning Sept. 20.)

But he became more critical in the latter half of *Five-0*'s season, pointing out in a feature on

CBS' *NCIS*, entitled "Sugar and Spice and Vicious Beatings" (2011, March 10), that Park was

playing the exception to the female rule on major network television dramas: "Kono on 'Hawaii

Five-0' is more in the category of conventional eye candy, but both she and Daniel Dae Kim tend

to play businesslike and heavy while Alex O'Loughlin and Scott Caan try for laughs as the

mismatched 'Turner and Hooch' leads." By publically calling Park's character out as a weak

example of female characters on TV, Hale certainly affected the show's standing with fellow

TCA critics – who likely would agree with him and *The Times* according to agenda-setting. As

such, his feature should be seen as a contributing factor on why media has slowly shied away

from the series since. Why embrace Park's character as a journalist when you have strong,

powerful female characters on *The Good Wife*, *Fringe*, or *Burn Notice*?

That said, several industry stakeholders – from the obvious (e.g., Viacom/CBS/CBS

Television Studio) to the not-so-obvious (e.g., state of Hawaii) – are seeing huge financial

benefits from the series, as supported by CBS' huge first season campaign for the 2010-2011

season and typically smaller second season campaign. For example, while some local media

periodically question the series' authenticity, the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau has

embraced the show. In the *Times'* feature on a 10% rise in tourism in 2011 (2011,

February 17), "several tourism officials reeled off a spate of positive publicity for the islands, including the return of 'Hawaii Five-0,' the sun-and-surf police drama CBS revived last year." It probably does not hurt that the credits of each episode prominently feature a Hawaiian Airlines jet landing at the airport.

While CBS focused on original dramas, not reboots, in the 2011-2012 season, the Tiffany Network returned to the well of proven entertainment properties in the 2012-2013 season, having picked up "the Sherlock Holmes-centric *Elementary*" (*Huffington Post*, 2012, May 16). Informant #5 sums it up best:

> You would think (hit network drama) or (2nd hit network drama) would get the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* every week, but it doesn't. It doesn't. And I think that (network) always has a mountain to climb. It's perceived as unsuccessful in 18-49, and we're just a smidge behind FOX. We're very aware that critical acclaim and the press acclaim don't equal viewers. And it's something that we strive to change, but aside from the (hit network drama) and (hit comedy series), our shows don't win awards. If *Mad Men* aired on our network, it would get cancelled with those numbers. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and 11, 2012)

Despite big viewership numbers, CBS and *Five-0* do not cultivate audience and fans in the same manner that basic cable networks and traditional genre show such as AMC's *Dead* do. For example, since its 2010 introductory panel, *Five-0*'s cast and producers have not been sent to Comic-Con again by CBS – although this can be an expensive and labor-intensive prospect since the show is already in production in Hawaii in July. Nonetheless, in today's marketplace, a lack of appearance and outward deference to fans at Comic-Con alone can create perceptional disconnections with fans and media. Simply, it is difficult to be perceived as a fan-favorite series by fandom and attending media if you are not physically at Comic-Con.

Similarly, *Five-0* viewers do not seem as materially engaged on social media, which again affects perception from fandom and media. For example, *Five-0* had 1,131,386 "Likes"

with 9,944 "talking about this" on Facebook vs. *Dead*'s 9,203, 903 Likes and 128,783 talking about this – almost nine times as many Likes, but more significantly almost 120,000 more mentions (*Facebook.com*, 2012). At the same time, *Five-0*'s official Twitter feed ("@HawaiiFive0CBS," #H50, #Five0Redux) has 85,220 followers with 853 tweets sent by CBS vs. Dead's ("@Walking Dead_AMC") 447,499 followers with 1,186 tweets sent by AMC (*Twitter.com*, 2012). According to a chart displaying "TV's Social Disparity" during the 2011-2012 TV season in *Fast Company* magazine (2012, September), CBS viewers are the least engaged viewers on Facebook and Twitter overall. As follows, FOX viewers are the most active "word-of-net" (with 16.8 million) compared to CBS (3.2 million, an increase of 5.25 times) (Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2011):

**TOTAL FACEBOOK AND TWITTER COMMENTS ABOUT
SHOWS ON THE TOP 5 TV NETWORKS LAST SEASON (2011-2012)**
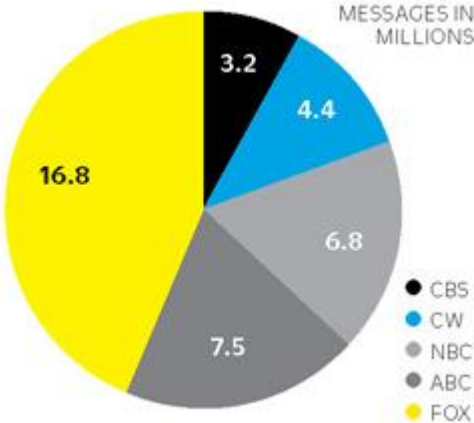
New Girl
Total comments: 506,591
% about Zooey Deschanel: 12

The X Factor
Total comments: 3,824,583
% about Simon Cowell: 7

Bones
Total comments: 181,892
% about Emily Deschanel: 3

Family Guy
Total comments: 338,468
% about Seth MacFarlane: 1

American Idol
Total comments: 6,124,117
% about Ryan Seacrest: 1

The Office
Total comments: 106,473
% about Mindy Kaling: .03

Figure 2.3   "TV's Social Disparity" chart. (*Fast Company*, 2012, September).

In this light, application of the Circuit of Culture model to *Five-0* poses some interesting

questions in terms of communicative flow between publicists, media, fans, and mainstream pop

culture. Weekly Nielsen ratings prove that millions of fans exist and they consistently consume

the show, but these regular viewers either seem to behave or are being represented as behaving in

a predominantly spectator fashion – if and when media and social networking are used as scales

of measurement. Furthermore, procedural dramas are traditionally rejected as part of overall fan

identity as a matter of quality and taste. The identity and representation of *Five-0* fans remains

unclear in terms of media and fan social networking at best.

As a case study, *Five-0* documents the social capital rise and fall of a procedural drama,

despite built-in fan hooks. Quite simply, this case complicates all fandom definitions and beliefs,

and allows for a more complete Post-Network picture overall. The fact that *Five-0* had a genre

pedigree in terms of fan-favorite stars, EP/showrunners, and nostalgic source material, and went

from grabbing coverage at Comic-Con 2010 to virtual media obscurity in a season only makes

this case study more remarkable. Overall, as a professional, academic, and fan, *Five-0*'s arc in

the media tells me that procedural dramas as a genre are a matter of aesthetic taste and

distinction. As such, Bourdieu's (1993) assertion that art becomes art through collective belief

applies here since important fandom tastemakers, such as AICN and TWoP, editorially dismissed

Five-0 from the start. Mainstream pop culture critics, such as *EW* and *The Times*, have since

leaned in the same direction. As the show continues, I suspect that *Five-0* will never be labeled a "fan favorite," despite its huge ratings and international appeal. Still, introducing questions about this show compared to *Dead* in the next chapter challenges some media and fandom assumptions, and certainly informed professionals' answers in this project's conclusion regarding taste, quality, and fandom at this specific time.

3. CASE STUDY #2 – AMC'S *THE WALKING DEAD*

Basic cable network AMC's *The Walking Dead* stands as one of the most unlikely hit

television series ever – a limited-episode horror genre series featuring unrelenting graphic

violence and a cast of unknowns. Still, the series proved to be one of the few hits in 2010-2011,

and was only matched in critical acclaim by premium channel HBO's *Game of Thrones* (*GoT*).

Whether solo or combined with *GoT*, *Dead* reveals that that we have possibly entered a new

period in the Post-Network Era, one where fandom and niche audiences are fully empowered to

determine what has legitimate social value and capital on television for the rest of the

mainstream. No one can laugh at *Star Trek* or *Batman* anymore. In my experience, journalists-

fans, exemplified by thesis interviewees Jeff Jensen, Mo Ryan, and magazine editor Informant

#3, have certainly spearheaded fandom's interests into modern pop culture's consciousness.

Publicist-fans like me cultivated professional journalist-fan relationships over time based on

shared geeky interests, trust, and ultimately, shared success based on capitalization of niche

shows, such as *Veronica Mars* and *Heroes*. Our combined enthusiasm for genre programming

eventually filtered through to audiences, particularly like-minded fans, and back again as these

properties found success in the marketplace. Because of this, I find the evolving, revolving

private-public conversation between publicists, media, and fans reflected best in the Circuit of

Culture model and through Bourdieuian concepts of cultural intermediaries, habitus, capital, and

field. This chapter contains a brief history of AMC, *Dead*, the zombie genre, and industry forces

challenging today's basic cable business model. The chapter concludes with content analysis of

paratexts and press appearing in the same four media outlets as the *Five-0* case study.

The Walking Dead's march towards pop culture pandemonium began in 2003. The concept started as a monthly black-and-white comic book series created by writer Robert Kirkman and artist Tony Moore and published by Image Comics (*Walkingdead.com*, 2012). For almost a decade, the hit comic has chronicled the travels of police officer Rick Grimes, his family, and associated survivors of a zombie apocalypse. The series reached its 100th issue milestone in July 2012, with pre-sales of the issue (with multiple covers) reported at over 330,000, making it the best-selling single issue in years (*ComicBookResources.com*, 2012, June 18). Meanwhile, the series' graphic novels remain consistently in national distributor Diamond Comics Top 10 and various publishing bestseller lists (*DiamondComics.com*, 2012). It received the 2010 Eisner Award for Best Continuing Series at San Diego Comic-Con International, and has been translated into several languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish (*Walkingdead.com*, 2012). Due to this popularity and international success, the comic started being reprinted as *Walking Dead Weekly* in January 2011 in order with one issue a week (*Walkingdead.com*, 2012). *IGN.com* (2011) ranked main protagonist Rick Grimes as the 26th Greatest Comic Book Hero of All Time, stating:

> Kirkman seemingly has an endless supply of ringers to run Rick through: he's lost his hand, his mind, and most vividly, his wife and infant baby – the latter two shotgun'd right in front of his eyes. As the body count rises, so do the chances of Rick losing more pieces of his soul. It's a game of inches as nothing (yet) can detour Rick's plan for survival. You know what they say about the fittest…

According to Kirkman, AMC/AMC Studios picked up the rights to produce a show based on the comic in 2008 after NBC passed on it. The project had been in development with Oscar-nominated director Frank Darabont (*The Shawshank Redemption*), who re-joined the project when AMC got involved (*ComicBookResources.com*, 2009, September 4; *Hitfix.com*, 2009, August 12) With Darabont writing, directing, and serving as an executive producer/showrunner,

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AMC ordered a pilot episode on January 21, 2010 and began filming a six-episode first season

(with some ongoing narrative divergences, particularly with Rick's character) on May 15, 2010

(AMC Press Materials, 2010-2011; Uncle Creepy, 2010).

Premiering on Halloween night, October 31, 2010, *Dead* scored AMC's highest premiere

rating to date, with 5.3 million viewers, according to Nielsen and AMC press materials (2010).

The premiere overall attracted 3.6 million Adults 18-49, 3.1 million Adults 25-54, and 2.1

million Adults 18-34, and was the highest debut for any 2010 cable series among the 18-49

demographic (AMC, 2010). In comparison, AMC's *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* averaged 2.3

million and 4.3 million viewers, respectively, in 2011 (Masters, 2011). AMC president Charlie

Collier said in a press release (2010):

> It's a good day to be dead. We are so proud of this series, its depth of storytelling and the
> remarkable talent attached. As the network dedicated to bringing viewers the best stories
> on television, we are so pleased to have the opportunity with 'The Walking Dead' to raise
> the bar within this popular genre and continue our commitment to being the home of
> premium television on basic cable.

On November 8, 2010, after broadcasting two episodes with widespread critical acclaim,

the cable network renewed *Dead* for a second season of 13 episodes – a move that shifted and

complicated AMC's overall brand moving ahead. For publicists, media, and audience, it remains

a challenge to see the overall link between *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Dead* other than in

some amorphous "quality" way. HBO has similar issues combining *Girls*, *Veep*, *The Newsroom*,

True Blood, and *Game of Thrones* under one umbrella, but that network has cornered the market

on quality over the years – particularly as a subscriber-based channel. Nonetheless, the first

season finale in December 2010 drew more than six million viewers, and the audience continued

to grow through the second season (premiering on October 16, 2011), culminating in a record

nine million viewers for the season finale of *Dead* (airing March 12, 2012), a 50% jump from the

first season finale. Total viewers in the U.S. jumped up to 10.5 million viewers with the night's

repeat 34 (AMC press materials, 2012).

Season one of *Dead* marked the best performance for a U.S. cable show in the

international market, and was such a success that many territories aired the second season the

same day and date as the U.S. (*ComicBookResources.com*, 2011, July 25). These networks and

their related mobile, non-linear and high-definition extensions, reach over 300 million

subscribing households (875 million cumulative) worldwide. According to Fox International

Channels (FIC), which owns all international rights for *Dead* outside of North America, *Dead* is

broadcast in 122 countries across Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, in 35

languages. The show's second season debut also "delivered the best performance for a cable

drama outside of the U.S. Over 10 million viewers around the world tuned in for the live

premiere telecast, (making it) the highest rated program on pay television of the night in most of

FIC's major markets and winning its time period among all Pay TV" (FIC, 2011). As with the

U.S., international ratings continued to grow as the second season progressed. According to FIC,

the second season scored the following:

- Delivered 16.9 million households within all FIC markets
- Delivered 8 million households across all FIC metered markets
- Ranked #1 in regions like UK (1.76 rat%), Spain (2.75 rat%), Argentina (0.81 rat%), Colombia (0.94 rat%) and Mexico (1.31 rat%), Italy (1.93 rat%) and Slovenia (0.62 rat%). (Seidman, 2012, February 12)

In addition, international distributor Entertainment One handles third party broadcast TV, digital

and home video sales for the show outside of FIC's channels (FIC, 2011).

According to AMC, *Dead* to date is the number one drama series in basic cable history

with Men 18-34 (AMC press materials, 2012). This is just one of a series of accolades and

awards the show has accumulated to date. According to AMC's *Dead* website (2012):

> The first season of *The Walking Dead* won the (Academy of Science Fiction Fantasy &
> Horror Film's) Saturn Award for Best Television Presentation and was nominated for
> Best Actor on Television (Andrew Lincoln), Best Actress on Television (Sarah Wayne
> Calllies), Best Guest Starring Role on Television (Steven Yeun), and Best Supporting
> Actress on Television (Laurie Holden). It also received a Director's Guild Award
> nomination for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Dramatic Series' — Night (Frank
> Darabont), a Golden Globe nomination for Best Television Series — Drama, and a
> Television Critics Association Award nomination for Outstanding New Program of the
> Year. In addition, *The Walking Dead* recently won the Emmy award for Outstanding
> Prosthetic Makeup for a Series, Miniseries, Movie or a Special; and was nominated for
> Emmys in Outstanding Sound Editing for a Series and Outstanding Special Visual Effects
> for a Series.

Yet the series didn't come through its second season unscathed in the press or within fan

circles. In my experience, wildly popular series have a difficult time replicating their early

success in second seasons and beyond. Controversially, *Dead* EP/showrunner, writer, and

director Darabont quit (or AMC fired him) on until July 25, 2011, due to reported budgetary

reasons. Darabont's public departure was even more significant to fans since it took place just

three days after his appearance on a packed Comic-Con panel to promote season two (Masters,

2011, August 10).   Reports estimate that *Dead* was given a budget of $2.8 million per episode

for the 13-episode second season, down from $3.4 million for the first six episodes – which can

be read a number of ways, including AMC's version that this reflects the same budget essentially

being spread further (Andreeva, 2011, August 3; Masters, 2011, August 10).   Budget is

important here since AMC went public around this time, and it is possible that the network's

fiscal responsibility might have something to do with budget restrictions on *Dead*'s season two

(AMC Networks.com, 2012). Along these lines, some fans speculated that AMC spent too much

to keep *Mad Men* going (at $10 million a season), to the detriment of its other four originals

(2011, August 8). *The Hollywood Reporter* (Masters, 2011, August 10) claims, "…(a) source

says that AMC had its own ideas about how to make the show more cheaply. The show shoots

for eight days per episode, and the network suggested that half should be indoors." It should be

noted that after this very public stumble (the first of several for AMC in the 2011-2012 year),

many critics and fans vocally argued that the series got narratively and creatively bogged down

shooting in one location (Hershel's farm) for all of season two. Fan site *io9.com* (Woerner,

2012, August 11) summed up that sentiment: "We're not sure what we're more frustrated about,

the fact that Darabont (and the fans) were so cruelly lied to at Comic-Con, the lack of budget

negotiations AFTER *Walking Dead* proved to be a financial and critical success, or the notes."

Kirkman and Charlies H. Eglee currently remain writers and executive producers going into the

16-episode season three, set to debut October 2012 (AMC press materials, 2012). AMC has not

announced the budget for season three.

Similar to other successful transmedia properties from *The Matrix* and *The Avengers* to

Lost and *Heroes*, *Dead* has succeeded in world-building (even further than *Castle*, for example),

proliferating across multiple platforms to include (Gray, 2010):

- Season one and two DVDs (an ad for which inadvertently spoiled a major season two death, Goldberg, 2012) and soundtrack;
- An AMC-released animated film of the first part of the first issue of the comic with animation by Juice Films, vocals by Phil LaMarr, and art by Tony Moore;
- A Kirkman-approved full-length novel serving as a prologue to the comic book's timeline;
- An episodic adventure video game for iOS, Mac OS X, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, released on April 24, 2012, which Kirkman says focuses more on characterization and emotion than action;
- Two board games, including Kirkman's *The Walking Dead The Board Game* from Z-Man Games, based on the comic, and AMC's *The Walking Dead Board Game* from Crypotzoic Entertainment, based on the TV series;

- Action figures resembling the characters in the comic book and TV series from genre toymaker McFarlane Toys; and
- A variety of licensed merchandise, including limited edition watches, clothing and more (*AMC.com*, 2012; *WalkingDead.com*, 2012; Kirkman, R. on Twitter, 2010-2012).

Like *Five-0* and Hawaii, the show is also a success story for the city of Atlanta and state of

Georgia, which passed the Entertainment Industry Investment Act in 2008 and approved

revisions to it in 2012. This act is essentially a package of tax incentives meant to bring films,

TV shows, commercials, digital entertainment and more to the state (Ho, 2012, September 29;

Georgia.org, 2012). *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reports:

> The bill keeps a 20 percent tax credit for qualified production companies that spend at least $500,000 here in a given year. It also provides a bonus 10 percent tax credit on top of that if the film, TV show, music video or video game includes a special peach logo to promote Georgia tourism. Georgia provides among the most generous incentives available worldwide. There are no caps to how much an individual film production company can accrue in tax credits. (Gaming companies with annual revenues of $100 million qualify for up to $25 million.)…For the calendar year ending June 30, 2011, Georgia handed out about $200 million in tax credits for $689.3 million in qualified production dollars. The Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Office estimates this has generated more than $2 billion in overall economic activity. (Ho, 2012, September 29)

Furthermore, according to *Atlanta Magazine*:

> From the start, that was one of the coolest things about *The Walking Dead*—the graphic novel was set partly in our Downtown area (merely because it was the closest big city to Cynthiana, Kentucky, where the writer, Robert Kirkman, went to high school), so they decided to film in Downtown Atlanta…*Dead* production offices and studios are stationed at Raleigh Studios Atlanta, in the woods of Senoia, a little town southeast of Peachtree City (where many of the cast and crew actually stay). (Heckert, 2011)

Zombie 101

In fact, *Atlanta Magazine* (Heckert, 2011) might have said it best when it declared,

"Zombies Are *So* Hot Right Now." After decades of being ridiculed by critics and written off as

light, "popcorn" fare without serious merit, zombies – and the horror genre – seem to have found

new life at the box office, on television, in novels, across gaming platforms, online, and more. In

fact, while vampires seem to perennially corner the market on "cool," many academics note that

we are presently in the middle of something of a "zombie renaissance" (Bishop, 2011, 2009;

Christie & Lauro, 2011; Hendershot, 2011).

Horror has long been a staple of entertainment in the U.S. and around the world, from

Georges Méliès's silent short film *Le Manoir du diable* (*The Haunted Castle*, 1896) to this

summer's *Teen Wolf* on MTV (Hoffman, 2011, April 19; Muir, 2001; Babbis, 1990). In

Hollywood, companies ranging from Universal Pictures Studio to New Line Cinema were

practically built by *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Wolf Man, A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Blade*.

Muir's (2001) *Terror Television: American Series, 1970-1999* and Hendershot's "Masters of

Horror" article (2011) remind us that an entire generation of acclaimed writers and directors cut

their teeth on cult horror, specifically horror television, including Sam Raimi, Peter Jackson, and

Joss Whedon, for the simple reason that massive profits can be seen from these relatively

inexpensive thrills and chills.   For example, according to BoxOfficeMojo.com (2012) and *Los

Angeles Times* (Fritz, 2009, October 5), Sony and co-financier Relativity Media's *Zombieland*

(2009) cost approximately $23.6 million to produce and grossed $75.5 million dollars to date.

Assuming that *Zombieland* had a typical industry marketing budget equal to the cost of the film,

it made a tidy profit. While the horror genre consistently takes a backseat to drama and comedy,

a surprising number of TV series, including *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *Dark Shadows*,

The X-Files, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Supernatural*, *True Blood*, and *Fringe*, have

Charmed audiences, and even critics, to become pop culture phenomena, some so popular as to

be revisited and rebooted every generation or two. Each successive wave of entertainment

technology, from radio to film to TV to the internet, has adopted horror as a storytelling vehicle.

According to Hoffman (2011, April 19):

> Radio horror shows were popular in the mid-20th century, and although you may never
> have listened to one yourself, you can probably imagine what they were like: Self-
> contained tales of the macabre brought to life through quavering narration, creaking
> footsteps and cracks of thunder. Various radio shows featuring this atmospheric, low-key
> style were adapted for TV, including *Lights Out*, which aired on NBC from 1946 to 1952,
> and *Inner Sanctum*, also on NBC, which ran for one season in 1954...As a result, these
> early shows (including the classic *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, which ran from 1955 to
> 1962 but was not itself a radio adaptation) often skewed toward the gray-area genres of
> "suspense" or "thriller"; in fact, there were actual shows entitled *Suspense* (1949-1954)
> and *Thriller* (1960-1962). However, these early attempts to televise fear quickly birthed a
> new breed of program, one which would eventually bring TV horror back to its
> supernatural, blood-spattered roots.
>
> *The Twilight Zone*, which premiered in 1959 and lasted until 1964 (not counting two
> reboots in later decades), took the anthology format established by the radio-based shows
> and exploded it, in the words of the show's opening narration, into "a land of both
> shadow and substance, of things and ideas"—and, most importantly, of imagination.
> Horror TV had previously consisted mainly of intriguing but formulaic stories of murder
> and revenge; *The Twilight Zone* expanded the genre's repertoire to include aliens, time
> travel, alternate realities, and pretty much anything else a writer might be capable of
> dreaming up…Its most similar contemporary, *The Outer Limits* (1963-1965), also
> branded itself more as science fiction than as horror. However, those shows'
> wholehearted embrace of the supernatural and paranormal paved the way for the
> emergence of true horror anthologies, which remain horror's purest TV incarnation.

As TV moved from the Multi-Channel Era into the Post-Network Era, the genre moved

with it. Premium cable networks and syndication producers profited the most from the genre

during this shift. Some notable series include father of the modern zombie George A. Romero's

Tales from the Darkside (1983-1988); HBO's R-rated *The Hitchhiker* (1983-1991) and *Tales

from the Crypt* (1989-1996); syndicated *Freddy's Nightmares* (1988-1990) and *Friday the 13th:

The Series* (1987-1990); and Showtime's *Masters of Horror* (2005-2007), which featured

episodes by legendary horror filmmakers such as John Carpenter, John Landis, and Joe Dante

(Hendershot, 2011). NBC and Lionsgate unsuccessfully attempted to resurrect Showtime's

success and auteur-mystique with a short-lived, 13-episode summer anthology series *Fear Itself*

(2008) – for which I was in charge of publicity. (Although *Masters* creator/EP Mick Garris was

EP/showrunner on *Fear* too, I believe the broadcast series failed to succeed because it was not

gory, violent, and/or erotic enough for horror fans – or modern mainstream audiences). A whole

generation of kids couldn't escape the genre either. Popular shows included Nickelodeon's *Are*

You Afraid of the Dark? (1991-1996) and *Goosebumps* (1995-1998) (Hoffman, 2011, April 19).

Until I started researching this project, I had completely forgotten the original Haitian

voodoo myth of the zombie, as victimized thralls brought back from the dead via exotic African

and Christian-fused mysticism to do the bidding of a nefarious zombie master (Christie & Lauro,

2011). For decades now, all contemporary zombies are "born of infection," a walking epidemic

with a taste for human flesh (Christie & Lauro, 2011). Zombies remain one of the few popular

modern monsters with an origin outside of Europe (Christie and Lauro, 2011). The 1932 film

White Zombie, starring Bela Lugosi, is often cited as "patient zero" for the genre, although some

sources point to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) and the first *Frankenstein* (1910) for

examples of reanimated corpses and mindless states. Not only does this sub-genre historically

tap into fears of death, slavery, and the Other, film scholars frequently point to these films as

reflections of society's anxieties and allegories to the perils of modern life, such as unnatural

death (via infection, infestation or violence), decaying family values, rampant consumerism,

Cold War paranoia, terrorism, and even postmodern media (Bishop, 2009, 2010). Potentially,

these "deeper" meanings help publicists intrigue media and fans in zombie material too. Bishop

(2010)) notes that 1968's *Night of the Living Dead* was a turning point for zombie films:

> *Night of the Living Dead,* which has now become the standard zombie narrative model,

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became a cult classic because of its visual shock, excessive violence, and perceived originality. Yet (co-writer/director) Romero didn't invent the film from nothing; he was working in an established generic tradition and drawing from a variety of inspirations and antecedents. The essential motifs and tropes of Night of the Living Dead have many thematic and stylistic roots in the Haitian travel narratives and the zombie films of the 1930s and '40s, but they also developed out of Cold War horror and science-fiction short stories, novels, and cinema of the 1950s and '60s, particularly their end-of-the-world scenarios…Romero used his own imagination and invention to unite the tried-and-true zombie legend with these newer stories of the primal struggle for survival, creating a terrifying tale of the walking dead and cannibalism the like of which no one had yet seen.

In *Atlanta Magazine* (2011), then-showrunner "Darabont referred to *Night of the Living Dead* as 'the Book of Genesis,' and specifically implored that none of the zombies in *The Walking Dead* move any faster than the very first zombie who ever chased Barbra through that Pennsylvania cemetery." Without a doubt, Romero's classic today serves as the template for a virtually unstoppable onslaught of zombie projects, including the upcoming 2011-2012 films *ParaNorman*, *World War Z*, *Resident Evil 5*, *R.I.P.D.*, *28 Months Later*, *Escape of the Living Dead*, *Evil Dead 4*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *Zombieland 2*, and *Zombies vs. Robots* (ZombieZoneNews, 2012). Bishop (2009) notes 575 zombie narrative titles in 2006 alone. Since *Night of the Living Dead*, the spirit of Romero's vision has shuffled across nations internationally, and inspired New Zealand's *Dead-Alive* (1992), China's *BioZombie* (1998), England's *28 Days Later* (2002; which infused quick-cut speed and visceral action into the lumbering genre), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007), Japan's *Tokyo Zombie* (2005), Spain's *[REC]* (2007), and Norway's *Dead Snow* (2009), and more (Casciato, 2012).

With film studios making a killing on zombies worldwide, it makes sense that a basic cable channel looking for hit niche programming would take a calculated risk on this genre. Like CBS' recycling of the *Five-0* concept to ultimately protect against financial risk, it was in this context that AMC placed their bets on *Dead*, which at least had a built-in comics following.

AMC

As skillfully detailed in Jaramillo's "AMC: Stumbling Toward a New Television Canon" (2012), AMC's history reveals a complicated, shifting map of format changes, like many early basic cable and premium cable networks in the Post-Network Era. Outside of a conglomerate like TCM/Time Warner or Fox Movie Channel/News Corp for most of its life, AMC has been a victim of competitive market forces more than anything else. This section outlines how AMC remains a work-in-progress industrially, despite its newfound programming success with niche audiences and critical media acclaim.

American Movie Classics was launched as a premium cable network in 1984 by Rainbow Media, a subsidiary of Cablevision, but soon shifted to a basic cable network. To date, AMC has had a "relatively uncomplicated" ownership history (Jaramillo, 2012). In 2011, Cablevision spun Rainbow Media into a new company named AMC Networks, Inc. (AMC, 2012).

As noted in its current press materials (AMC, 2012), "AMC reigns as the only cable network in history to ever win the Emmy® Award for Outstanding Drama Series four years in a row, as well as the Golden Globe® Award for Best Television Series — Drama for three consecutive years." The basic cable channel is part of AMC Networks, Inc. which includes AMC, IFC, WE tv and Sundance Channel; the art house movie theater IFC Center in New York, New York, and the film company IFC Films. AMC also operates AMC/Sundance Channel Global, an international programming business, and AMC Networks Broadcasting and Technology, a full-service network programming feed origination and distribution company. The company went public on July 1, 2011 (AMC Networks.com, 2012).

Looking back to 1984, AMC launched with one of the clearest brands on cable – it aired "classic," pre-1948 American films from Universal and Paramount Studios. A decade later, AMC lost most of the rights to Hollywood's classic film library to Turner Broadcasting, which launched Turner Classic Movies (TCM) in 1994 as direct competition to AMC (and another launch I worked on). As a result, AMC was forced to rebrand and introduce "the new classics," or films post-1970, and dabbled with original programming, starting with *WENN* (1996), a 30-minute show about a 1930s radio station. In 2001, AMC moved to an ad-supported format, a move that might have rubbed film purists wrong, but greatly supplemented revenue from its cable carriage fees and finally gave the network a real budget for original programming. Hit mini-series *Broken Trail* (2006) and *Mad Men* (2007-present) were the earliest results of this shift. While *Mad Men* is reminiscent of AMC's original brand, its subsequent choices in programming have resulted in one of the least coherent brands on cable, despite its media, pop culture, and devoted niche audience success. Part of the confusion is its original programming presently lacks thematic focus, ranging from a period piece (*Mad Men*) to a modern crime drama (*Breaking Bad*) to a comic-book store reality show (*Comic Book Men*) to a horror drama (*Dead*) and its related "post-game" live talk show (*Talking Dead*; which follows the model of NBC's *Heroes* and its 2007 G4 network talk show, entitled *The Post Show*, which I helped book) (Jaramillo, 2012). Still, AMC and cable networks in general are expected to see upfront advertising revenues for the 2012-2013 season to increase 4-6% on average, with cable taking in $9.6-9.8 billion in upfront sales (Adegoke & Richwine, 2012, May 9).

With the current catch-all advertising slogan "AMC: Story Matters Here," AMC has moved very aggressively into the digital distribution marketplace in recent years, securing a

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variety of deals with Netflix, Amazon and iTunes for its award-winning, critically acclaimed, fan favorite original programming – although it only owns a piece of *Dead* as a production studio. (For example, Sony Pictures Television owns *Breaking Bad* and Lionsgate, Silvercup Studios and Weiner Bros. have the rights to *Mad Men*). This might backfire on them though – and industry in general – moving forward as broadcast, cable, and premium TV network's business models adapt to increasingly diverse cross-platform viewing habits in the Post-Network Era. According to PaidContent.org (2012, June 28):

> Those familiar with AMC's carriage renewal talks say the cable programmer is seeking to translate the niche popularity of critically acclaimed original series including *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead* into major carriage-fee increases — to around 75 cents per subscriber from a current base of around 25 cents.

By comparison, CNN and Fox News Channel respectively command much higher carriage fees of 54 cents and 78 cents per subscriber (Frankle, 2012, May 7).

Both satellite TV company Dish Network and cable operator AT&T feel that AMC's aggressive "over the box" marketing and sales of its original programming has "devalued" its programming, and its pursuit of rates triple the current base now are "disproportionate compared to viewership…especially in these economic times," according to AT&T (Frankel, 2012, June 28). As this project has been attempting to address, perception isn't everything. While AMC has become an expert at cultivating a niche class of affluent, educated viewers, its overall viewership numbers still don't compare to USA, ESPN, TNT, FX, Disney Channel or even The History Channel. While up in 2011, AMC ranked 17th in total primetime viewers (1.182 million, +8%), and 19th in Adult 18-49 (0.4, +10%) (Andreeva, 2011, December 28).

Dish Network's chairman Charlie Ergen no longer believes in AMC's (and much of

industry's) argument that "catch-up" viewing of previous seasons on Netflix, Amazon and iTunes augments current season ratings for shows like *Dead*. Speaking to investors, Ergen explained that digital distribution of shows is a key factor as to why Dish and AMC still are not able to come to terms on a new carriage deal in 2012. First, Dish banished AMC (along with its sister networks Sundance Channel, WE tv and IFC) from channel 130 to the 9609 phantom-zone of channels. Most recently, AMC channels were completely pulled off Dish when the current carriage agreement expired on June 30, 2012, and no resolution is in sight as of August 6, 2012 (*Dish.com*, 2012).

Dish's carriage accounts for around 15% of AMC's base of over 97 million homes (AMC press materials, 2012). As a substantial segment of its viewership, Dish believes that AMC must take its customer base interests into account. "One of the things that programmers have done is they've devalued their programming content by making it available in multiple outlets," Ergen said. "Our customers are not really saying 'we want to pay more money,' they're saying 'we want more flexibility in our programming and we don't want to pay more'" (Frankel, 2012, May 7). Cable's "catch-up" argument held up for decades through the advent of VHS, DVD and Blu-Ray, as fans kept purchasing each successful technological iteration and "Director's Cut." With DVD sales continuing to slide in 2012 and TV programming's second- and third-run premiere windows closing tighter and tighter to broadcast air, major partners in industry such as Dish and AT&T seem ready to question current TV business practices, even to the detriment of viewers (*USA Today*, 2012, January 9). Public clashes such as this have a much greater effect on basic cable networks such as AMC simply because of its different financial model. CBS and other major broadcast networks must be carried on cable by law and don't have to negotiate carriage

fees with cable operators. It really comes down to what kind of viewer AMC values. Are they

chasing an older, more affluent demographic who can afford cable TV or are they placing more

value on younger viewers who might watch AMC programming through some combination of

Netflix, iTunes, and Hulu for less money? As with many niche audiences, it comes down to

active, emotional engagement and purchasing power (Rogowsky, 2012, June 20; Li & Bernoff,

2011). Ultimately, any carriage dispute affects AMC's bottom line, but choices remain for

current warring parties and consumers. It promises to be a true TV spectator sport as 2012

moves forward.

As with the *Five-0* case, the latter half of this chapter focuses on content analysis of four

major media outlets, which have overlapping agenda-setting effects on media, pop culture, niche

audience and fandom at large. While *Five-0*'s publicists had a catchy theme song, nostalgia, an

attractive genre cast, and wide broadcast viewing audience to build from, *Dead*'s publicity team

had an arguably stronger, more actively engaged Comic-Con fan audience to build from as they

reached out to media and introduced the show, unknown cast, and gross makeup and special

effects to a smaller cable TV audience. Also, media and viewers did not know what to expect

from this horror series, unlike the familiar crime-of-the-week format found in procedural *Five-0*.

At the very least, *Dead* promised some Halloween fun initially.

Ain't It Cool News (AICN)

As opposed to *Five-0*, AICN TV critic Hercules and his fellow site correspondents have

devoted a significant amount of attention to covering *Dead* from its initial announcement to

present, especially after having reviewed each issue of the comic books series and related

merchandise to date. Because of that long-term relationship, EPs and talent at various times have spoken directly with the site, and, by extension, with fans. For example, Darabont sent an email to Hercules on March 31, 2010 with a confirmation that *Dead* wasn't just a project or miniseries from AMC, but "a regular ongoing series." A variety of updates, photos, and other items from the set were provided throughout the initial six-episode shoot (e.g., 2010, June 2). Fans in Atlanta started sending in spoiler photos and details, starting on June 17, 2010 with comments such as "the cops chased me off before i got some good flics, hopefully these are awesome enough. i found myself a copy of the production schedule, hope to get a few more. I would like to remain anon." Likely as result, regular AICN correspondent "Quint" received a set visit and VIP treatment (2010, June 22): "I was already over the moon to be visiting the set of Frank Darabont's pilot for the Walking Dead series and then to hear I'm going to be sharing a ride with Robert Kirkman? Get outta here…," resulting in favorable multi-part story – and very representative of the overall positive tone of coverage through the first season.

Leading into the first season launch, the site sponsored a contest via Twitter for "The Official Drew Struzan poster for 'The Walking Dead,'" and other "swag" giveaways followed (2012, September 13). In addition at launch, AICN's correspondent Ambush Bug kicked off a six-week series of columns on zombie movies in general (2010, October 29).

Hercules' reviews for the first season were overwhelming positive, with headlines such as "Hercules Gives Five Stars Out Of Five To Sunday's Season Premiere Of AMC's MAD MEN!!" and "'I'm Going Back!' Herc Says WALKING DEAD 1.3 Is The Best So Far!!" Regarding the pilot, he wrote on October 31, 2010:

> The series starts strong, and keeps getting better. Things get gory and scary, more than one expects from a basic cable series, even if it does air after 10 p.m. I was plenty

hooked by the third episode, which shifts the focus to the social dynamic shared by a tiny community of survivors who have found a tenuous refuge in the woods outside Atlanta. Not to give too much away, but things get very agreeably complex.

The project eventually evolves into an ensemble piece, but its central character is Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln), a Kentucky lawman whose story could initially remind viewers of "Day of the Triffids" and "28 Days Later."

To promote the first season finale, British lead actor Andrew Lincoln – representing the previously unknown, likely cheaper than *Five-0* cast – did a Q&A with correspondent Quint, who had previously visited the set (2010, December 5).

Overall, AICN's positive relationship with *Dead*'s producers and talent and its enthusiastic coverage remains in place to this day, with the exception of taking Darabont's side in the wake of his departure from the series. As one of fandom's biggest sources of news and gossip, AICN's success today is based on providing a "direct line" from industry to fans, as mediated by its critics and correspondents, who secure information and access from publicists. AICN's coverage of *Dead* as a genre series is completely expected from my fan point of view and professional assumptions about their target demographics as a fan website business. Their embrace of all programming sci-fi, fantasy, and genre falls directly in line with traditional fandom sensibilities and stands in stark contrast to its lack of *Five-0* – and overall CBS -- reporting.

Television Without Pity (TWoP)

While *Five-0* remains buried on page three of TWoP's Forum/Dramas Subforums section, *Dead* has consistently received prominent placement in a variety of areas on this fan site's front page since 2010. This placement includes inclusion in the main Forum pull-down

menu, mentions and photos twice per week with the snapshot "recaplet," and in-depth follow-up reviews. At the bottom of the site's main page, *Dead* is imbued with social capital by sharing distinguished genre company in the "Sci-Fi TV on TWOP" box, as follows:

- **SCI-FI TV ON TWOP**
- Game of Thrones
- Battlestar Galactica
- Smallville
- Supernatural
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer
- The Walking Dead
- Vampire Diaries
- True Blood
- Fringe

Moving into the Forum area, *Dead* is one of 35 broadcast, basic cable, and premium channel series spotlighted on "Current TWoP Shows" Subforums. AMC's *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* also are included in this list. The actual *Dead* forum is entitled "The Walking Dead General Gabbery: The first show to be an elaborate metaphor for its own production." This is a catch-all for 60 topics (spread over four pages) and 15, 569 replies. Topics include discussions on each episode, feedback on *The Talking Dead*, and typical fan minutiae debates, such "Walkers Verses Other Zombies from Print, Movies, and Beyond," "T-Dog: Please Give This Man a Storyline," "Daryl: Redneck Renaissance Man," and "Zombie Haiku." The views range from 153, 292 for "Spoilers and Spoilery Discussion" to 610 for "Give Me A Sign: Religion in The Walking Dead." By all indications, this fan forum is active, healthy, and very much alive, and stands in stark contrast to *Five-0*'s hidden, smaller, less active area here (TWoP, 2012). Again, like AICN, TWoP's coverage of *Dead* is completely expected from my fan point of view and professional assumptions about their website business model. As a longtime fan of this site, I am pleasantly surprised that the site has kept its tone and niche appeal, and not attempted to broaden

out to a more mass-appeal audience after its purchase by NBC Universal/Bravo. That said,

TWoP's loss of "indie" status and increased coverage of reality shows in recent years has been

criticized by some fans.

Entertainment Weekly/EW.com

Looking at both the magazine and website coverage, *Entertainment Weekly/EW.com* has

editorially embraced the show from its first Comic-Con panel onwards with a variety of coverage

in print and online. Based on experience, it is likely that *EW*'s editors and writing staff were

more inclined to give a horror series by AMC a chance following the critical success of *Mad*

Men. At the very least, *EW*, media, and industry were interested to see what AMC was going to

do next in terms of programming and branding.

On August 24, 2010, *EW.com*'s Michael Ausiello featured the series' premiere trailer in

the "Inside TV" section, calling it "super spooky" and "mind-blowing" and explaining that it

debuted earlier at Comic-Con with the warning, "I don't recommend watching it alone!" Just

before the *Dead*'s launch on October 16, 2011, both the magazine and website featured TV critic

Ken Tucker's warm "B+" review as follows:

> As protagonists for a TV series, zombies have a few disadvantages. They don't talk much
> beyond *Yarrggghhh!* They don't move very quickly, which makes for slow chases. They
> are, however, relentless and steady. And they're not brooding romantics — they lack the
> tragic sexy self-awareness that gets vampires such good PR.
>
> Nonetheless, *The Walking Dead* is a success as a comic-book series written by Robert
> Kirkman, and deserves to be an even bigger success in this clever, gross, humane AMC
> version…
>
> *Dead* takes the standard modern zombie trope — urban survivors of a zombie invasion
> (in addition to Kirkman's comics, begun in 2003, there are movies such as *28 Days Later*
> and *Shaun of the Dead*, and Max Brooks' best-selling novel *World War Z*) — and faces
> down the problem with turning that notion into a series. The challenge is to make running

away from zombies engrossing every week, and under the guidance of high-profile exec producers — *Shawshank Redemption* director Frank Darabont, who also helms the pilot, and *The Terminator*'s Gale Anne Hurd — *Dead* has found a solution. The focus shifts to humans still extant, and folds in elements from TV shows ranging from *Lost* to *Survivor*, to make you care about who these people are and how they eke out an existence.

On the Friday prior to premiere, *EW.com*'s "Popwatch" section (tagline: "Keeping an Eye on Pop Culture") posted a lengthy feature with Darabont, entitled "Night of the Living Dead: How a 42-year-old zombie movie refuses to die." Popwatch also had a playful Kirkman Q&A up the day after the "shocking" pilot premiere (2010, November 1), with an introduction as follows:

> Last night, AMC screened the pilot of new show *The Walking Dead*, in which Andrew Lincoln's small town Georgia sheriff Rick Grimes desperately attempts to reunite with his family in a zombie apocalypse. The result was an epic start to this adaptation of Robert Kirkman's long-running comic—and an amazingly horrific display by TV standards.

> How did pilot director Frank Darabont get away with featuring so much bloody mayhem? Will knowledge of the original comic series help viewers guess which characters are going to live and which become undead chow? And was that really Jim Carrey cameo-ing as a zombie?

Also online on November 1, 2010, Jensen and Dan Snierson took a lengthy, in-depth "geek-dive" into the pilot, and kicked off a humorous count that was revised in later coverage:

SEASON-TO-DATE STATISTICS

EPISODES: 01

BRAIN-SPLATTERING, BLOOD-SPURTING ZOMBIE HEADSHOTS: 12

TOTAL ZOMBIE KILLS: 13

ZOMBIE-RELATED HUMAN KILLS (DEPICTED): 0

Jensen and Snierson's article was accompanied by an October 29, 2010 podcast with writers Dalton Ross, Michael Slezak, Annie Barrett, and Michael Ausiello. *EW*'s broad initial coverage set the overall tone and scope of its reporting to date. In fact, *EW* got extraordinarily behind the

show towards the end of *Dead*'s first season, featuring it on the industry-coveted cover "The Best New Show on TV" (2010, December 1) as seen here:

 Figure 3.1   *Entertainment Weekly*'s first season *The Walking Dead* cover (2010, December 1)

In comparison (e.g., Figure 2.1), *Five-0* never received this level of coverage or endorsement of quality from this outlet. In fact, *Dead* concretely beat *Five-0* and many other series out for the title of "Best New Show on TV" here. Just think that by this point in the 2010-2011 season, *Five-0* had aired approximately 7-8 episodes, including initial November sweeps episodes. At the same time in early- to mid-November 2010, *EW*'s editors had only seen 2-4 episodes of *Dead* (as likely provided by AMC public relations). As such, their cover choice here indicates a

greater depth of support and scale of impression. *EW*'s editors made a distinct choice regarding quality after seeing fewer episodes. They lent their legitimizing power to *Dead*, helping to push the horror series into its current pop culture phenomena status. *The New York Times* editorially gave similar support to the show.

The New York Times

 As opposed to the short blurb review for *Five-0*, *The New York Times* had reviewer Alessandra Stanley use *Dead* as the springboard to write a larger, more comprehensive look at current trends in horror going into Halloween on October 28, 2010. She playfully summed up the horror series here:

> The one good thing about the walking dead is that they don't drive.
>
> All it really takes to outrun a zombie is a car. Also, a bullet to the head will stop one cold. And that may explain why so many men prefer zombies to vampires: zombie stories pivot on men's two favorite things: fast cars and guns. Better yet, zombies almost never talk. Vampires, especially of late, are mostly a female obsession. Works like "Twilight" and "True Blood" suggest that the best way to defeat a vampire is to make him fall so in love that he resists the urge to bite. And that's a powerful, if naïve, female fantasy: a mate so besotted he gives up his most primal cravings for the woman he loves.
>
> Vampires are imbued with romance. Zombies are not. (Zombies are from Mars, vampires are from Venus.)…"The Walking Dead" is not for everyone, obviously, but it is well made: a hard-core zombie story that even vampire lovers can watch.

Stanley's positive review was preceded by a glowing feature a week earlier by Dave Itzkoff (2010, October 22), who interviewed Kirkman, Darabont, Collier, and others from AMC. Itzkoff had been tracking the series since March 29, 2010, and posed a question at the crux of *Dead* and many modern zombie tales – Once the pathogens are unleashed, the dead rise, and civilization collapses, "…what happens next? For some fans of the genre, not enough." Thus, according to

the creators, *Dead* was fashioned to follow a band of survivors in a more long-term, detailed fashion.

As *EW* was likely starting to decide on their "Best New Show" cover, *The Times* ran an interesting season-to-date review piece on the network, entitled "At AMC, Two Character Dramas, Just One Hit" (2010, November 14), which tried to explain why *Dead* connected with critics and audiences but *Rubicon* (on air at the same time) did not. He wrote, "On its face, 'The Walking Dead' would seem a hard sell to viewers, with its gory flesh-eating scenes and its comic-book roots…(Gary Lico, the chief executive of CableU) thought 'Rubicon' also suffered because it was 'too complicated' to explain to viewers. In contrast, 'with zombies, you get it,' said. 'It's a one-sentence thing.'"

"What comes up, must down" as the old adage goes, so maybe it's not surprising that critical, fan, and viewer goodwill towards AMC and several of its shows ebbed a bit in 2011. *Deadline.com*'s Nellie Andreeva noted:

> For a network that has only five shows on the air, AMC has been in the headlines with series-related issues an awful lot during the past 8 months, first over the difficult and very public negotiations with *Mad Men* creator Matt Weiner and more recently over the abrupt exit of *The Walking Dead* showrunner Frank Darabont and the ongoing negotiations for *Breaking Bad*. (2011, August 3).

In the same article (*Deadline.com*, 2011, August 3), AMC President Charlie Collier tried to clarify that *Dead*'s "pattern budget" was actually higher moving into a full 13-episode season, summing up the situation with:

> Negotiations, staffing issues, good and bad reviews, it's all part of the business. Ours happen to be a little higher profile right now. We feel privileged to be telling some of the best stories on television and working with some of the most talented people in the business.

The Times' Adam Sternbergh (2012, March 14) recently positioned AMC and fandom

industrially (in an article mentioned during my interview with Mo Ryan, personal communication, June 5, 2012) as follows:

> Not long ago, TV was a relatively simple three-legged stool: you had creators, you had critics and you had viewers, e.g. the passive, Nielsen-monitored masses. But the Internet, and specifically social media sites, has served as a kind of electrocharged amniotic fluid for the gestation of a powerful fourth entity: what I'll call the superviewer. These people are engaged, passionate and vocal, an online jumble of professional critics and opinionated amateurs who gather together to watch and discuss and dissect their favorite shows. Early fan forums like Television Without Pity gave these viewers a voice; now sites like Twitter have given them a megaphone.
>
> Superviewers can't make or break a show — if they could, "Community" would be the highest-rated TV show in the history of ever. But they do influence programming, particularly on cable, where intangibles like buzz can be as crucial as overall viewer numbers. HBO, for example, recently canceled several series — "Bored to Death," "How to Make It in America" and "Hung" — while sparing another one, "Enlightened," despite its being the lowest-rated of the bunch. This was in part because those other shows had not generated the kind of significant fan engagement or critical support that can lead to award consideration. They had not, in short, earned the passion of the superviewers.
>
> For AMC, the calculus is slightly altered — unlike HBO, AMC sells ads against its shows, so it values ratings in a different way. Still, its hits, like "Mad Men," "Breaking Bad" and "The Walking Dead," are among the most superviewer-friendly on TV. Thanks to the communal nature of social media and "its ability to metastasize, you have to take that stuff seriously," Stillerman told me. "You want those early responses to be positive — and help guide the rest of the responses." At first, "The Killing" offered that kind of viral potential, sparking a mini-phenomenon of live-tweeting and parlor-game guessing. Then the superviewers turned on the show. It didn't help that, in interviews after the finale, Sud suggested that her show was a "holistic journey" and that disgruntled fans might be happier watching something not quite so sophisticated. "The irony is that these are exactly the kind of viewers networks are trying to engage," Maureen Ryan told me. "And that's great. Go after them. Just know that, if you disappoint them, that's the worst thing that can happen to your show.

While *Dead* can be characterized as a "surprise," AMC's continuing evolution in the

Post-Network Era is fairly standard for basic cable networks. For example, FX was one of the

first channels I worked at and part of my job there was to help promote the network's complex

branding shift from its family-oriented *FOX After Breakfast* with host Tom Bergeron period to a

hard male-driven, gritty, serialized dramas/distinctive comedies orientation heralded by *The*

Shield. With *Dead*, *Mad Men*, and *Breaking Bad*, AMC again finds itself at a pivotal point in its history in the eyes of industry, media, and the viewing public. This is in contrast to CBS, which continues to enjoy success based on its specific business model as a national broadcast network.

Dead signifies a typical flow of communication on the Circuit of Culture between publicists, media, fans, and mainstream pop culture, particularly within Reception (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2 in the conclusion) and between the model's articulations of Representation-Reception-Identity. *Dead* is squarely a genre drama, and as such, the show expresses and reinforces traditional American fandom definitions held by industry, media, and academia. As comes to light during informant interviews (personal communication, 2012, May-June) below, a number of key gatekeeper and tastemaker media saw *Dead*, and publically expressed their "like" through mediated activity. Their media labor in turn was magnified by receptive, active fandom, eventually bringing a more extensive, international mainstream audience to the show.

When compared, the case studies of *Five-0* and *Dead* reveal that that industry is moving into a new period where fandom and niche audiences find themselves fully empowered to determine what has legitimate social value on TV for the rest of the mainstream. Of course, as I've attempted to show in this project, these active, emotionally-engaged fans gain this power through industrially-hidden, well-choreographed mediated activity between TV publicists and media, who share many similar demographics, education, and interests. As mentioned, journalists-fans have helped like-minded publicists like me spearhead a niche perspective into pop culture and industry practice. Particularly in the last decade, our combined enthusiasm for genre programming has become not only relevant, but important to the overall launch and long-term success of a range of properties – embraced by fandom or not – within today's TV

marketplace. In the following chapter, I introduce five main themes that emerged from

ethnographic interviews with five influential, working publicists and journalists, and help

support the ideas presented thus far. I also introduce some ideas for further academic research.

4. THEMATIC INTERVIEWS

As a seasoned TV publicist, fan, and academic, I embarked on this study to dispel some of Hollywood's industrial magic and explore two questions:

1) How do TV public relations practitioners and key tastemaker/gatekeeper media define, create, build, and maintain fandom?

2) How do they make meaning of fandom and their agency/role in fan creation from their position of industrial producers, cultural intermediaries, members of the audience, and fans themselves?

This project sought to bring five influential, working public relations and media professionals into a conversation about two case studies from the 2010-2011 television season – CBS' *Hawaii Five-0* and AMC's *The Walking Dead*. As discussed, I feel that these two case studies speak to fans (of which I am one) in particular ways at a certain time and are representative of the industry's current approaches in luring specific audiences to television. In this study, I have outlined how the relationship between TV publicists and media is dynamic, intertwined, complex, and historically hidden. Before making a few closing comments and recommendations for future research, I want to first review five main themes from my former co-workers and media peers who were associated with and/or directly wrote about both *Five-0* and *Dead*. In some cases below, I present longer quotes than are traditional in communication research in order to give interview participants the respect to speak for themselves, as is found in anthropology tradition.

As noted in the Method section in Chapter One, I conducted five phone interviews

between May 30, 2012 and June, 11, 2012 with a publicist associated with *Dead* (Informant #1, personal communication, 2012, May 30), *Entertainment Weekly* senior writer Jeff Jensen (personal communication, 2012, June 1), a major entertainment magazine editor (Informant #3, personal communication, 2012, June 4), *Huffington Post* TV critic Maureen "Mo" Ryan (Informant #4, personal communication, 2012, June 5), and a publicist associated with *Five-0* (Informant #5, personal communication, 2012, June 6 and June 11). All interviews were transcribed and edited in June 2012. Upon reflection and in comparison to the case studies, five main themes emerged through content analysis that I believe are important to understanding the hidden mediation between TV publicists and media. In addition, I believe these themes tie back directly and indirectly to a variety of theories detailed in Chapter One and the case studies presented. The main themes I identified through content analysis of interview transcripts are as follows:

1) Trust remains the foundation of the mediated publicist-press relationship and media-audience and/or media-fan relationship;

2) New changes and challenges to traditional TV publicist and media roles are emerging;

3) Fan definitions are diverse;

4) The Hidden Majority: Don't underestimate procedural fans, and;

5) Procedurals face an uphill battle with media.

Trust Remains the Foundation

"I think the best publicists are as interested in television as we are. So, they can help guide you," says Ryan (personal communication, 2012, June 5). "They become people whose

opinion you trust, and forms what shows you are going to probably take more seriously when they come down the pike," As outlined in the public relations theory section in Chapter One, public relations is a relationship-based profession. Based on my professional experience, this is especially true in Hollywood. It truly is "who you know." In my case, who I knew helped me secure *Entertainment Tonight* segments, *TV Guide* covers, *Jimmy Kimmel* appearances, and *USA Today's Pop Candy* spotlights for TV shows, talent, and EP/showrunners – and interviews for this project. I suspect that both *Five-0* and *Dead* received initial attention at launch, if not coverage throughout the first season, simply because the publicists associated with both show were linked to the shows by name and media had long-term positive professional relationships with them. All three journalists interviewed agreed that they could not do their jobs without publicists (network, studio or personal). Both media and the network publicists agreed that personal publicists most complicate mediation behind-the-scenes in today's industry, which has implications for how stars, series, and networks are covered by press. But first, Ryan explains how the media-publicist relationship ideally works:

> …there are people like yourself who I've known for a long time, and if you give me a heads up and say, "Hey! We have this really cool arc coming up with this guest star. Do you want to talk to this person?" What really helps the most is when people know what I'm into. Of course, there's too many press people to keep track of, so who even knows. But this is how a press person works well in my opinion – I don't need a fancy press kit. I don't need the toy that comes with it or stuffed animal or nail polish or any of this stuff people send. I put the DVD in the player or my laptop, I watch the show. I'm like, "Wow! This is really good." If I'm really into it and want to do a piece, I'll call the publicist, and say, "Great! Let me set you up with the showrunner or star or whoever. Or maybe you want to talk to this person. They might help guide how I might approach a feature article or an interview. Or they, you know…Here's how my ideal thing works, like, show X exists. And I wrote about show "X" five times during its first season, and I loved it. The publicist approached me and said, "Hey! Do you want to talk to so-and-so from the show? We noticed you're a really big fan." Oh sure, let's do that. And then, like season two rolls around, and I'm not one of those people that's chasing exclusives every week, but you know…Show X is coming up. I got an interview with the showrunner and the star, an exclusive clip that no one will have for like a day. And then I feel like that's value added. That's something. I'm covering the show in an in-depth way for fans who

are really into it. Maybe you're not that into it, and you just want to see the clip. Then, I got something for you too. (laugh). So, I feel that the best pieces are the ones that have a lot of different levels to them…

Publicists, when it works well, they are helping me just as I'm helping readers sift through what's worth their time. Publicists are helping me sift through what might be best to watch or take a look at or who might be best to talk to. One of the best things publicists can do is tell me who doesn't like dealing with the press, and make sure I don't have to deal with them. I don't want it to be an endurance thing. I know some people hate to do press, and that's fine. The publicist that doesn't give me a heads up on that is letting me down a little bit. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

From an upper-level editorial perspective, top magazine editor Informant #3 adds:

We work much more as partners with networks and studios than historically has happened. You can speak to this. When we worked on (a genre show) together, it was a partnership. We didn't always do everything that you wanted us to do…Like we didn't get everything. There were times that you were going to give exclusives to other outlets and that's – it's like you have to have multiple partners, the same way that we have to be partners with multiple shows. And that's the way entertainment media works now. If anyone, if any media outlet wants to be successful, they have to learn to play by the rules. You have to give a little, to get a little from the studios and the networks…One way is the way that you and I would do it, where I'd call you and say, "It's been a few weeks since we wrote about (genre show), what's coming up? Or just in general, at the start of a season, and talking through what's going to be the big story that we want to do in September, what's going to be the November Sweeps, you know. Or the other way around, you'd call and say we've got something big coming up and think you might want to cover it. And then, we have internal discussions – and I'm sure you did too. How do we want to promote this specific arc or season or guest shot. So where we internally might say, "I hear so-and-so's coming up. There's going to be a big arc on *NCIS* where Jamie Lee Curtis' character is going to be a romantic interest for Marc Harmon's character and then taking it to the network and saying, What's the best way of covering this?" (Informant #3, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

All of the Informants touched upon trust built between TV series, EP/showrunners, stars, and audiences. Unfortunately, that trust can be broken – with high-profile, social network-fueled, messy consequences. For example, after positive media and fan reception for *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Dead*, AMC seemed to be completely taken off guard in 2011 by fan uproar about *The Killing*'s unsatisfying first season finale. Ryan explained, "The biggest sin that a

network or a television storyteller can commit is to purposely waste people's time," adding:

> Again, *The Killing* isn't the first one to go down this road. At the end of season one, people were really, really let down by the *Lost* finale because, it's like, Oh, there's a hatch! Wait, wha--? What's that? I think the reason for that particular rage. Or maybe, two things, I think, Twitter and Facebook, and social media allowed what was a very real fire to blow up into a giant raging forest fire. I don't know if I'm 100% comfortable with all the places that the forest fire went. I will fully cop to being one of the people fanning the fire. (laugh). But I think Twitter can amplify something that is small and medium into something that is large and extra-large, for good or bad. I also think what got lost in that debate was some of the finer points of it, which is people were disappointed in that show for weeks before the finale. What really started to bother me, and so much so that I wrote another piece about it, was here's the five things that were going wrong way before the finale.

> DG: So, it set the match.

> MR: Yes. That's the perfect analogy. If you've got a dried out field, full of tiny little sticks and kindling and straw, that's going to go up way bigger than something's that normal. There was a kind of perfect storm that developed over that show. I think it's really an object lesson on how do you market a show, how do you deal with fans, how to do create and deal with expectations, and hopefully, people have learned from that experience…I think really smart shows respect fans' emotional engagement, while not letting that emotional engagement rule everything that happens. I think both happen. I've seen shows, I think, make changes, or add or subtract characters, or take stories in particular directions almost because they are trying to directly cater to fans. There's a really fine line there, and I think every show and every group of writers and producers have to decide where that line is. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012).

> Jensen further explains:

> How do I define bad television? Well, strangely enough, I don't define it by mediocrity. I think that the average television show is pretty crappy. It's mediocre. But what I define as bad TV are the television shows that make me mad. That clearly did something creatively, and I think that goes to one of the themes that you're exploring too, that breaks my trust, that violates my trusts as an audience member where I feel that I'm invested in something, invested in a story and they do something that's violates that journey I'm on. That breaks integrity with the characters. So, flashpoints for me in terms of television shows that I love, nothing makes me…Ironically enough, the worst episodes of television that I have ever seen are in series that I love. You know what I mean? (Jensen, J., personal communication, June 4, 2012)

Still, Jensen remains realistic about the situation, and understands how hit shows can "jump the

shark" after a successful hit season or two due to industry and audience pressures. In the

following interview excerpt, he discusses some of types of EP/showrunners, as previously

touched upon in Chapter One's fan studies section:

> The truth of the matter is when it comes to television, you're foolish to be a showrunner and have something like a master plan. If you actually believe when you begin a show with episode one and you know exactly how things are going to go from here until presumably five or six seasons into your run, and you think you're actually going to be able to execute that master plan, boy, you may feel that way after a hit first season, but once things start to get a little shaky and you're starting to deal with actors who are pulling prima donna acts and being difficult, and your ratings start to sink a bit, and you have to make adjustments. They sink a little more and you lose budget, all things kinds of things. That master plan goes out the door…
>
> And from my more nuanced position as an entertainment journalist, sometimes when I can look at a show and give it grace. And say, I know what's happening here and these are some of the things you have to roll with, and you hope that it can hold onto enough integrity to keep you watching. And then, there are other times when you just know in your gut, you feel cynically in your gut, they really don't know what they are doing, do you? I never lost faith with *Lost* in that way, but a show that's really near and dear to our hearts, I felt that way about *Heroes*. Not that I think *Heroes* went quote-unquote as bad as everyone said it did, but there was an example of a very, very strong show that ran into problems and it shook everyone's faith, or some people's faith, and all of a sudden people started writing about it….
>
> What fans love most about a storyteller is that they have a story to tell. And they love that story. So, I think that we all may have different opinions on how *Lost* ended. We can all feel very polarized…But at the same time what you feel about that show was they told the story they wanted and can criticize it, whether it was well told or not. We can love it or hate it, but they told their story. Whereas with other shows, I don't know it's so bad with *Heroes* that definitely paid attention with what's trending with our audience here, but part of the ultimate failure with that show was a feeling of what a wonderful world, but do they really have a story a tell. Are they guided by a vision for these characters? (Jensen, J., personal communication, June 1, 2012)

"If you're telling this story, than you have to pay off that story. If you're not willing to that, than

fans will sense it," explains Ryan (personal communication, June 5, 2012). Ryan has the

following thoughts about another sort of EP/showrunner:

> And I think the flip side of that is that some showrunners can be really arrogant and/or just completely tin-eared about an aspect of a show. If you're going to pursue a particular direction or character arc or whatever, that's fine. Be able to defend it without being defensive. And I think that's really hard. This being, you know, in charge of a huge network show isn't enough, now you're supposed to interact with fans and set

up expectations or deal with expectations and give interviews and be engaged in a whole different way. I think it's hard for some people, I think, to embrace the fact or just deal with the fact that whatever you do, someone's going to be mad. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

Meanwhile, magazine editor Informant #3 summarizes it as:

For a TV show, it's not just a two hour, you know, you're in and you're out experience like a movie. It's an ongoing commitment of – if you're on network television – 22 episodes a year. The writing has to be strong and consistent, and take your characters through some sort of growth or at least some sort of change. I guess a lot of characters are flawed and growth may be relative. But it's important that a consistent voice is applied to characters, which is one reason that so many people are so up in arms about Dan Harmon being ousted as the *Community* showrunner because he established such a specific, clear voice for that show, for those characters that I think a lot of fans are seriously scared. The new people running the show might not be able to duplicate that. You become connected to TV characters in a way that you don't often for movie characters because they are in your home every week, for 22 weeks a year. And you really feel a strong connection, so when a superfan knows someone is taking over the voice of that it can be a really serious concern.

When these active, engaged superfans fall in love, that emotional attachment can make careers not only for stars, but EP/showrunners too:

Joss Whedon is a very interesting example because prior to a month or two ago with *Cabin in the Woods* and *The Avengers*, his commercial success has been negligible. But there's something about him that he's…his fame and adoration from fans was so disproportionate to his commercial success…You look at actresses like Summer Glau and Felicia Day, who starred on his shows, and they are guest-starring on your show now – a non-Joss Whedon show – that's a big deal. Like people want to break that news. People want to read that news. People want to tune-in and see them, and then you look at them and think, these people have appeared on shows that were watched by, like, a million and a half people that made no…By all other measures, were not successful, but because they worked for Joss Whedon, that makes them superstars – in that universe of the superfan. And I think with Joss, it's that even though his stuff had not previously reached such critical mass, or I should say commercial mass, critical mass, but he just writes such really strong characters. He made a teenage girl who actually, whose life is about killing vampires, something that no one relates to in real life, he makes her one of the most relatable characters in recent TV history. She still had to deal with the loss of parent, and taking on responsibility, and relationships and friendships and loss in ways that yes, the exact specifics are heightened – vampires, demons, what not – but when you boil it down, her experiences for a lot of people were very relatable. (Informant #3, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

As gatekeepers and tastemakers, publicists and journalists have had to evolve more quickly than most in order to retain their cultural status and influence. Buffered and revolutionized by one successive wave of technology after another, avenues of communication between publicist-journalist, journalist-audience, and audience-audience have expanded, segmented, closed, and diverted in brand-new directions in the last decade (Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2012). As mentioned in Chapter One, TV isn't even TV anymore, not in the traditional and historical sense. From his point of view, Jensen explains how industry has changed for TV journalists:

> Certainly in this decade, it's just been amazing to write about television and to engage that readership. They are very engaged with their material, with their shows. It's a relationship with the show. It's an active relationship. They are on message boards. They are on our websites. They are dialoging with fellow TV viewers about a show. That relationship is constantly fed during the television season, at least, by new content and material. It's also being fed increasingly, and this is another revolution I know you know at ton about, what role publicity at networks, at studios and marketing can play in engaging and feeding that fan base with material that is quote-unquote technically marketing material, but feels and has the value of enriching and expanding their entertainment experience. And television has got that, got that. And does that in a way that movies are still learning to crack.
>
> That said, movies definitely have their fans and their cults, if you will, and their followers. But they are taking cues from television. I think the film industry is looking at TV and TV fandom, and saying – not that movie fandom doesn't exist – but these days, I have to think that film, the film side looks over at the TV side and is wondering how can we import some of those dynamics into our relationship with our consumers, especially when it comes to franchises. (Jensen, J., personal communication, June 1, 2012)

Yet some things remain the same. Fundamentally, as gatekeepers, TV media at every level and at every stage make aesthetic judgments as part of the mediated process of getting a story or review to print or electronic press, according to all three journalists. While the journalists said it typically starts with watching the pilot, I believe subtle first

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impressions are made much earlier from studio announcements about EP/showrunners, pilot script writers, pilot directors, and talent announcements on shows in development.

Interestingly, everyone was challenged by the question, "Do you see yourself as a gatekeeper or tastemaker?," but all Informants eventually concluded that these labels do apply. For example, publicist Informant #1 started her career as a journalist, before she "fell into" public relations professionally as many do – including me. Since she was a journalist first, publicist second, the concepts of gatekeeper and tastemaker were distinct for her. She finds herself in more a gatekeeper role these days:

> I currently work for a studio so I am a gatekeeper. I say yes or no to requests coming in. I make that decision. And working on the other side of it, on the broadcasting side, I was the one asking for interviews with talent. So, I wasn't the gatekeeper. I was the one requesting. (publicist Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)

> To be successful in engaging readers and viewers, media's position as gatekeeper and

tastemaker to the viewing audience must be nuanced. Magazine editor Informant #3 explains:

> One thing you learn is that people who, readers of our magazine – and magazines in general, I think, but I'll have to speak to ours exclusively – They don't like to be told to directly like something or not. They actually just like to be presented with information. With critics, they tend to…If they are reading a critic's column or something, they know they are going in getting that. But for the most part, they in stories, they don't like to be told you have to like this show.

> We do help to guide people, especially in this day and age where they are so many choices, so many channels, so many different options for people…for things for people to watch. I think people do expect a little bit of guidance, not so much that you have to watch this, but here's an option. You know, I think that's the way people like to have it presented – readers – like to have it presented. Here's a good option. We think you might want to consider watching. They do not…there is definitely some resistance when you tell people, you know, you have to be watching this. (Informant #3, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

Essentially agreeing, Jensen was very thoughtful about this question:

> JJ: …It's funny being on the other side, being on this side, and being called that. You

suddenly realize…It makes a lot of sense, right? Because when I was on the other side, reading people who have basically my jobs today, they were tastemakers. They were gatekeepers. They were my window into this world, and helped frame it. I looked to them to tell me what was important. I looked to them to shape what values should be prized. So, now to be on the other side of it, and producing this content, and to be thought of someone else's gatekeeper or someone else's tastemaker is humbling. And sobering. Because, to be honest with you, you realize how much, to be on this side of it and to this job, I'm writing this article as, you know, a tastemaker or gatekeeper. I'm just trying to like, you know, I've been assigned this piece. I'm trying to figure out what this thing is, and write about it fairly. But in an interesting way too. And so, you kind of shut that part of you, shut down that part of you that ironically enough, you know, in order to do your job, you have to shut down that part of you, that voice that might be telling you how significant your job might be. That what I might do is significant. But you are impacting the way people think, and that can be kind of perilous if you let that get to you. (Jensen, J., personal communication, June 1, 2012).

Furthermore, Jensen explained how technology has changed the media-reader relationship:

…as the job changed, in terms of now having this direct communication between me and readers, and readers being able to respond and post messages on the message board and send me emails – and again, this began when I started writing about television, and writing things about *Lost* and stuff like that. You know, my attitude toward that, I still viewed my magazine and my feature writing in the same sort of way, but suddenly there was this other part of me that, thinking about, what is the best way to serve that reader who is, with whom I have potential two-way communication on the internet, and I started become more opinionated, or more colorful, more myself, more presenting myself out there as a personality so to speak. But here's what I think about shit, what do you think? Um, and not necessarily saying, and this is where, I don't know how much we'll get into this, but this is a really dicey position for a journalist to take. This kind of gets to your idea of tastemaker or gatekeeper, but in those situations, I like to think of myself ultimately just like you, dear reader. I'm a fan. I might be a slightly better writer than you. I've thought a lot about all this stuff. But ultimately, like, you and I are in the same boat. Here's what I think. Here's what I think about this stuff. My offer to you to get you thinking, to stir the pot, to invite you to interact, and come to your own opinion and share it. Or don't share it. It's my point of view, and other people might have different perspectives on this. But like that's how I kind of view my…That's an additional form of, dimension to my job as the internet came online. (Jensen, J., personal communication, June 1, 2012).

All three media Informants discussed challenges for building personal brands in our social networked world, so fans (or readers) will follow them across platforms and job-to-job, since entertainment is an industry of continuous movement and job transitions. For example,

Ryan said:

> You have to create the brand of you as a critic. And you have to have an identity. You have to be consistent. You have to write stuff every day. And like you just said about trust, I think way before I left the *Tribune*, I was trying to establish myself as a brand that I could take with me to my next gig. Believe me, it was terrifying. I left to go to AOL, and AOL TV turned into Huff Post TV. And that was, you know…Actually when I arrived, it even had a different name before I got there. It's terrifying to think about that, but I think, you know, Alan Sepinwall – I call him the Pope of TV now. (laugh)…You have to build up that good faith relationship with the people who are interested in your work. And then if they, if you change your work situation, they will follow you and they may trust you in your new work situation. A lot of what, 10 years ago when I started my first TV website, I did it at a risk to my career because, why are you wasting time on this? Why are you doing that? I don't know – It's fun! It seems cool. Doses of crack for my brain. Oh, look 10 comments – Yay! I would get excited when a story got 1000 hits. It's the engagement. I want to feel like people can trust me to bring a certain level of engagement to what I do, which is why I don't want to be writing about things that I hate or don't care about. If I'm down on something, if I have an argument to make about what I don't like it, then I'm happy to write that up. Yeah, I just think that the cool thing is establishing your relationship with people as a trusted source. And being a trusted source doesn't mean that they always agree with you. It means that they believe you are bringing good faith and enthusiasm and perspective to whatever that it is you are doing. I don't always hit that mark, but I hopefully they will come back tomorrow and see what else I have to say. (laugh). (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

Publicist Informant #5 observed from her side:

> There became a point when in order, how I feel, in order to preserve their jobs, reporters had to make themselves part of the story somehow. And even if it was 15 minutes, they had to get the story first. I think that in the end, it kind of did them a big disservice. Now, there aren't just 15 press people who do that. There's 115 press people who do that. They diluted it so much. And now, the people with the biggest brands theoretically win, but I don't think that's the case. I think they kind of lose out because, now, with so many people wanting to do that, and so many people pushing their brands, the networks have decided that instead of choosing amongst between 115 people, we're just going to tweet out that casting news. We're just going to push out that exclusive videos ourselves. We're going to publish ourselves. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and 11, 2012)

I believe this comment hints towards a greater industry shift.   The foundation of trust can be

shaken by these new industrial conditions between publicist-media. Several Informants feel a

temperature shift in the overall working relationship today.   For example, Tribune Media

reporter Kate O'Hare recently told me that publicist-media relationship should be framed as

"adversarial" (personal conversation, 2011). Although she and I share a warm friendship off the

set, O'Hare explained that the business relationship between journalist and publicist is

diametrically-opposed by definition, and should remain so in order to keep journalist objectivity

intact – especially in entertainment where it is all "spin." Publicist Informant #1, who has

worked on both sides, added:

> #1: Yes. I would agree with that, to an extent. You both have your agendas. You want best placement for your show or your talent in their paper, their magazine. And they want the scoop. They want to be the first. (Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)

> The other Informants fundamentally disagreed, saying that "adversarial" was too strong a

word or didn't sum up their more cordial working relationships – with one major exception. All

informants said that Hollywood's personal publicists, who represent show talent in conjunction

with and away from shows (e.g., entry into movie premiere and red carpet events unrelated to the

show/studio; access to red carpet gowns and accessories, gifting rooms, range of free tickets,

upgrades, etc.) have become much more of a hinderance than help in the mediation process. In

fact, Informant #5 introduced me to a brand-new category of representatives, called "The

Blackberry Publicist." She defines this up-and-coming industry subcategory as follows:

> #5…what we call "The Blackberry Publicists" – younger publicists who come across quite obnoxious, not ready to collaborate with us, see the network and the studio as enemies, who are overprotective, and say "no" for their client without even checking with their client, who are unwilling to be flexible or to bend. I feel that's really, really hard.

> DG: And where is that coming from? Is that what's being trained at agencies? Because where is that really bad behavior coming from?

> #5: It's younger publicists who are trained from the wrong people. I do. I really do. You know, not a long time ago, you'd have certainly publicists like Pat Kingsley who could call the shots. It's a different world. Some of these Blackberry publicists, they really are a hindrance to their clients. I think they'll get their due. I think that a lot times they are misrepresenting what the network publicist is doing to the actor...And that's a really, really bad plan. We had to have a company meeting about it, a meeting on how to deal with this new kind of publicist. And there is no answer. There is no good

answer. A lot of executive producers don't want to fight the battle, or they can't – except for the leading ones. So, really, you just have to go with the high priority stuff. You have to pick you battles was basically what our decision was. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and 11, 2012)

Ryan (personal correspondence, June 5, 2012) humorously concurred, "Let me just say a blanket thing – personal publicists are just the handiwork of Satan, generally. (laugh). If you want to put that as a title of any piece you do down the road…" Informant #1 adds that from the studio side:

> #1: Um, when it comes down to talent, personal publicists, they hinder. And I think a lot of times they think they know better than you do or they are trying to get the most for their client, but they don't understand that we want the same for the client or for the show. The ultimate goal is to publicize the show, right. So, I think it hinders a lot, the personal publicists. But in a lot of cases, international studio publicists are hindering as well. You know, you'll ask them to get you an interview with a certain show that you acquisition or with a certain talent, and 70% of the time, they say no….Oh yeah, they have this complaining attitude where it's like, no, no. It's like this power trip. It's not even about talking to your client, talking to your talent or the producers. They just want to feel like they have the power over you, so they say no, no, you can't do it. You always hear no's, and it's like mean no's. It's not even like she can't do it at this time, let's try another time. No. It's just like no. You find out later on from the talent that they're like no yeah, they never asked me to do it. I was completely unaware. How is that possible? (Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)

I've been on the receiving end of the wrath of numerous personal publicists, and can attest to the fact that no matter how emotionally-invested you are in a project, you give up when faced with ever-increasing roadblocks to the detriment of the show. Public relations and journalism both contain substantial emotional labor, and a contentious or hostile relationship between official publicists, media, and outside personal publicists does not bode well for industry, especially for shows that need time to find an audience. According to interviews, this sort of complicated working environment affects at least one show discussed in this study.

Multiple Tribes: Fan Definitions Are Diverse

We all want to belong to a family, a tribe, a community. Joseph Campbell's *The Hero*

with a Thousand Faces (1949) reminds us how powerful and unifying storytelling can be. It

creates and strengthens kinship, shared language and memory, codes of behavior, rituals, and

pushes individuals to form bands, clubs, tribes, hierarchical roles. Increasingly, fans are being

simply defined by Comic-Con attendance and social networking word-of-mouth (or "word-of-

net") as globally expressed and quantified by grouped Facebook "Likes" and Twitter followers

(Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2011). That said, "fan" definitions by Informants were very

consistent and more nuanced. Everyone believes that emotional attachment is the key:

> #3: I think it involves passion. You have to feel passionate about whatever. In this case,
> it's a TV show. Is it something that you look forward to each week, or when it's off the
> air, do you look forward to the returning season? Where you're interested, you don't just
> turn on the TV at 8:00 the week it's on, and just blindly go in. And at 9:00 when the
> episode's over, you don't just walk away and not think about it. There's a larger
> experience, I mean, even for a fan, maybe not so much a superfan, but even for a more
> casual fan, you may be more interested in, oh, so-and-so is going to be guest-starring on
> this show. And I know a little more about what the role is going to be, or when is the
> season finale of the show coming up? I want to make sure that I don't miss that. In some
> cases, it could be where you actually schedule of life a little bit around it. I'm not going
> out on Wednesday night because that's the finale of "American Idol" kind of thing.
> (Informant #3, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

`   While fandom is discussed many times by industry, media, and academia as a unified

block, the Informants help shape a definition that's more like a descriptive umbrella for a range

of interests, types of engagement, activities, vocabulary, histories, and more. I should mention

again that I chose these specific media Informants for their shared interest and participation in

fandom and genre TV, based on professional experience. As such, all three media self-identify

as fans. In fact, Jensen, the editor, and I all collect comics, and have certainly thrived during the

rise of fandom in pop culture likely due to our added engagement with genre material. The

publicists admit to being fans too. For example, Informant #5 was such a soap opera fan that she

interned for several shows, started working for *Soap Opera Magazine*, and then moved into

soaps at the network before moving into primetime. Publicist Informant #1 explains her personal

definition:

> #1: How do I define fans? A fan can be anybody from a cult fan following every little piece of news regarding that one particular show or actor or whatever. A fan can also be someone like myself. Like I'm a fan of "Pretty Little Liars," but I'm not liking every single page and every single person on the show on my Facebook. But I like it. I like the show. It goes many ways. You can be a fan in many ways.
>
> DG: So are there certain activities that you have to participate in to be a fan?
>
> #1: I don't think so.
>
> DG: Do you have to watch every single episode? Or is it just a kind of emotional attachment?
>
> #1: I just think it's an emotional attachment. But it depends. Again, if it's a show like "Pretty Little Liars" where you have to, you can't miss an episode because you'll be lost then, yes, you do have to watch every single episode. If it's something like "16 and Pregnant" or "CSI," you could miss every single episode but one. You could be a fan of David Caruso and his glasses, and, you know, you don't watch the show but you are a fan of his glasses and the way that he loves them. You don't watch one episode and you don't miss anything if you don't watch the last. (Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)
>
> From a journalist perspective, Ryan defines several levels of fans, which could help

contextualize CBS, *Five-0*, and procedural fans in general:

> I would say a casual fan of a show is someone who watches it four or five times in a season. And I think there are plenty of people out there, and I would almost argue that's the majority of people out there. You know, I live out here in the Midwest. I don't live on the coasts. Nobody I know is involved with entertainment, so I'm constantly to people who are just engaging with TV as something to hang out with at the end of the day. I talk to lots of people who say, "Oh, you know, I saw 'Desperate Housewives' last week, but I hadn't seen it in like three months, or two months...So, I think there's that level, and that person might call themselves a fan, and I think that's perfectly valid.
>
> And then, I think the next level is someone who watches every episode and again, I think that's not the silent majority, but a big chunk of any fans or any show's audience because you know you're talking about, especially at a broadcast network, at least four or five or six million people watching a show. So, you know, the majority of them, do they watch every week? I don't know, but maybe the majority of those people watch the majority of the time, which I'm sure would make the networks very happy.

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And then, I think the next level of fan, which is kind of what we are more commonly talking about when we use that word is the person that goes on message boards or starts a site or frequents TV sites and that kind of thing. And engages in dialog with other fans and follows people on Twitter or follows Facebook pages and that kind of thing. So, I think that's…I think we need to come up with a better word, or something like "engaged fan," or something like that to denote that cut off line. And maybe people only have one show in their life like that, like they have 40 shows in the DVR, but there's that one show that they are very invested in, and very engaged in, and they go to that next level.

And then, I think there are even within that kind of super-users. You know, those are the people that run the fan sites and the people that comment every week, or the people that go and read my site or other TV sites and are constantly popping up in Tweeter and in comments to give their 2 cents on things. And so, I think it was The *New York Times*, Adam (Sternbergh's) piece on "The Killing" – I don't know if I have the name right – but he threw out the term, like, "super-users" or something…

DG: The academic term en vogue right now is "superfan."

MR: Superfan, right. And then, Adam and that piece on "The Killing," I think made a good point that I'm certainly very aware of, that the line between the superfan and myself as a critic, or self-styled critic, or paid critic, however you want to draw the distinction, is not really huge. I think the one thing a critic brings to the party is that I'm not just watching "The Walking Dead." I'm not watching "Community." I'm watching everything, so I kind of put things into a bigger context of like, ok TV as a whole, where does it fit in, and TV's history, where does it kind of come along in that timeline. And so, I don't know who's interested in that – I mean I hope enough people to pay my paycheck, but that maybe my, part of my job is to engage the people who are the most intense users in a kind of a dialog about what's valuable and what's not about these show. And so, sometimes you find yourself running into trouble as a critic with the superusers because you are at, actually to some fans what being a fan means is that you praise everything, you celebrate the show. I'm not…I don't get up in the morning wanting to rain on people's parade, you know. If people are happy with that, and it's bringing them joy, then that's great. You know, I'm not forcing them at gunpoint to read any critiques I make of that show, but I think it's actually…So that's one way to look at a fan, who views any discussion of the show as a celebration.

Those people, again, perfectly valid in their approach, but sometimes we as critics or people in public relations make the leap and think that's how all the super-engaged fans are all like. And they're really are not. What I tend to think is that the fans who are more engaged are actually pretty discriminating and discerning. The best thing that can happen to your shows is to have them on your side, and the worst thing that can happen to your show (laugh), one of the worst, is have them turn on you. And so, again, the whole turning on a show thing is also, it's not like fans behave in a block. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

Ultimately, Ryan summarized what active, engaged fans want and how they relate to series as:

> Again, when you have the fans on your side, it's awesome. But they are the people that will help publicize what you don't want out there if things start going south. I think it's what we talked about earlier. I think for me there's much more of an awareness among engaged fans, superfans, and critics and media of who the people with that consistent vision are. And if there's anything that's encouraging about the rise of social media and the rise of the fans and their importance is that people are aware of and have more respect for the people who create the things that they love. There's a sense that…But as we get into space where media is spreading out over so many platforms, and the internet, and there's so many different places to go and get stuff, I think it's great that there's more of a sense that you have to respect the makers of things because fans want that. They want a vision. They want something distinctive that they won't get anywhere else. And so, the cookie cutter approach of just having a bunch of faceless elements and assembling them into an acceptable, competent show that will not get a bad score from a focus group that's…I mean, maybe that model works forever, but I don't see it though. I think that people require, they want a greater level of engagement and they want more of a vision or more of an emotional investment than that. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

As with the Anti-Fan phenomena, sometimes fans can exhibit a serious edge (Theodoropoulou, 2007; Gray, 2003). Ryan introduced me to another new concept worth further academic investigation, a new form of fans called "the Anti-Critic," a viewer so involved that they will set up a site to personally criticize any criticism:

> I think that there's an actual "anti-critic" phenomena. There's a critic, Todd VanDerWerff, that writes for A.V. Club. and there's someone who established a website to mock and make fun of Todd's reviews of "Community."…Talk about falling down the rabbit hole. "Community" is such an intense fandom, and so just rabid about tearing apart every little scrap of meaning. So, I think sometimes that they also want to tear apart the people that write about it…Ok. Maybe there's a line we should draw here. How far do you go with this involvement thing? (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

Personally, as a viewer, a reader, and a fan, I engage with different comic book titles, popular novels, TV shows, and movie franchises along the same lines described by Ryan above. I also follow some entertainment figures and properties from a distinctly "Anti-Fan" perspective. Although industry, Li and Bernoff's (2011) *Groundswell*, and much of fandom research tends to

push and group active fan tribes together, I believe fandom should be explored more closely and redefined as a robust, segmented, demographically rich set of overlapping audiences with different active-passive modes of online behavior, similar to Vardeman-Winter and Tindall's (2011) conception of socially-constructed, segmented, participatory publics in public relations. Furthermore, as fan studies matures, I hope that aging is taken into greater account and explored further. I feel particularly sensitive to aging as a factor as I move out of the target demographic for many summer movies in 2012.

The Hidden Majority: Don't Underestimate Procedural Fans

Number one-rated broadcast network CBS and number one basic cable network USA share two things – programming slates heavy with one-hour procedural dramas and massive national/international profits stemming from such a focus. A lot of people coast-to-coast are watching these shows, per Nielsen and the networks. Nonetheless, they might not be seen as "cool" by media and genre fans. And they might not be actively typing and posting on Facebook and Twitter. I would argue that procedurals are a genre that asks for less attention, less engagement, less memorization of character histories and plot twists, and as a result, less social networking activity. You don't need to freeze-frame your DVR and translate Egyptian hieroglyphs from a background wall onscreen to get a clue about the overarching plot. In other words, not cool. Magazine editor Informant #3 supports this perspective:

> #3: …people are watching in larger numbers these procedurals shows. They may not be…It could be an older audience or a less, less social media engaged audience. So I could see if *Hawaii Five-0* is getting 12 million viewers and *The Vampire Diaries* is getting 3 million viewers, but like if you check the metrics of tweets per second during the hours that those shows airs *The Vampire Diaries* probably blows *Hawaii Five-0* out of the water. I think with a quarter of as many viewers – or whatever the stats are. I bet it's disproportionately higher than the actual radio of viewers. The engagement might be. (Informant #3, personal communication, June 4, 2012)

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Meanwhile, Ryan admitted:

> One of the biggest mistakes I ever made was assuming that procedurals don't have superfans. And that was a huge eye-opener to me. I think, I want to say this was five or six years ago, I got an email from a reader when I was at the *Tribune*, and she was really mad that *CSI* had revealed that Billy Petersen's character was in a relationship with Jorja Fox's character. I actually just wrote it up, like, "Oh, this is interesting. You know, if you saw *CSI* last night this came up and this woman Karen had a huge reaction to it, and I wonder what's your take?" I must have gotten, like, 1000 comments. And then I learned there's this whole subculture of *CSI* sites, and I think I've made the mistake of assuming that certain shows don't have passionate fans because I don't see them. I think they're more likely to be on the network sites or they are more likely to be on more obscure sites that I don't know about. Soap operas have superfans. And procedurals have superfans. I'm still willing to ponder that maybe there aren't *CSI: NY* superfans. I mean, maybe there are. But I bet there are. That's the thing.

> I feel that sci-fi, the fans that are really into sci-fi, supernatural, and even certain comedy shows are very vocal and very in people's faces about what they love, and are willing to campaign. And I think definitely sci-fi and supernatural shows feel that they have to come out of the gate, like they have to adopt that mentality of really fighting for their favorites because they are so used to them getting canceled. So, they are kind of pre-primed to go into hyperactive mode. But I think there are superfans of other shows, but they're just, I think they don't tend to be as web-savvy or going to prominent websites like the ones we're used to. Like Television Without Pity, I'm sure if it has a *Hawaii Five-0* board, it's probably like people making fun of the show. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

While being measured as "watching," as witnessed by CBS and USA's success,

procedural viewers are almost invisible in the pop culture media landscape, with the exception of

TV Guide, which regularly spotlights a variety of broadcast and cable series in this genre.

Furthermore, as imperfect as the measurement systems that we take for granted here in the U.S.

are, these systems are the same all over – that is, if they exist at all. Informant #1 says:

> #1: …What they sometimes do is measure number of subscribers and then come up with a number of who potentially may be watching your series. *The Walking Dead* was seen in the premium owned channels in several countries, like a HBO, so if people are paying than they are going to watch these shows they pay for.

> DG: So they are measuring through subscriber bases.

> #1: Basically, that's it. Yeah. Whether they watch or not, they can be counted. That's the only way they can measure. There's no other way. Turkey is one of them that they just

don't have any kind of ratings system…I guess internationally there really isn't a way to measure who your audience is. But with *The Walking Dead*, for example, it already had such a fan-following abroad, all over the world. Our audience was everybody. And we didn't discriminate. We weren't just looking to find that 18-49. We wanted everybody to watch the show that could, or that was allowed. We wanted 80 year olds watching the show. (Informant #1, personal communication, May 30, 2012)

Visible or invisible, measured or not, cool or not, the magic of good TV could be summed by the

genius of good writing, according to Informant #5:

You've got to find writing that loves the audience – what's a better way to say it…? – It's got to be a show that really respects the audience. It's got to be sharp writing, and then I also think that if you have the sharpest writing, that you also have to catch lightning in a bottle with your cast. Then, if you have those two, but it's really hard to have incredible writing and even harder to have – take "The Big Bang Theory," if that show wasn't as well-written and cast that was really quick, then you wouldn't have a hit show. . (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and 11, 2012)

Procedurals Face an Uphill Battle with Critics and Engaged Viewers

All of the media Informants have to write and edit stories on TV across several platforms,

from print to podcast, on a daily basis according to deadlines. They too have to be engaged in

what they are writing about in order to be productive. None of the Informants named a

procedural as one of their favorite shows. Instead, they pointed to more culturally-relevant

series, such as *Game of Thrones*, *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Fringe*. Ryan tried to explain

why procedurals get such a bum wrap from critics:

MR: … I think, is for both fans, superfans and for critics, how much red meat is there, if you will, for us to dig into? A sci-fi show or supernatural show with some kind of big mythology is going to give us more to write about quite frankly. I used to write about music all the time, and it's the same thing there. I mean, a bubble gum pop record is not going to give you as much food for thought as, you know, Radiohead. There wasn't as much meat on the bone.

So, I think part of it is, you know…*NCIS*, another great example of a show that I think nobody in the press really writes about. I've written about it a few times just to kind of overcorrect the fact that I don't tend to write about it that much. I think that show has a really invested, tiny sub-audience, if you will, superusers, but what are they

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really writing about. So the smart procedurals have these kinds of ongoing stories that people can take apart and parse. But I think part of it is that people, there's less there, if you will. There's less overall going on. So, in terms of, ok, there's a case and then we wrapped up that case and next week there's a new case. I think that's part of what drives it. It's strange. That applies to media too. If the media is like ok, I've seen five episodes of *NCIS*. I know what *NCIS* does, and that's fine that it does that. But *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men* are going to give me more to write about. The things that critics and media people like to do, and you're just handing me a big plate of it. Where NCIS is not giving me as much to gnaw on.

DG: So is it possible for a procedural to be a critical success?

MR: I think so. But it has to tweek the format a little bit. I would say *Grey's Anatomy* was a kind of a medical procedural, and still is. But that gets a ton of press. It's trendy, or it has been trendy, I guess…For a police procedural to be kind of buzz worthy and what not…I mean, I think there's a higher bar for certain shows to meet. You know, like *Grimm*, I don't know if they have a really huge…I think there is a fandom. I don't much love the show, but that has a supernatural element which helps the fans rally around something. So, in terms of just being a straight up courtroom drama or courtroom procedural, you have to be doing something really interesting to get the media hype. And I guess, one example I'd say – and it's rare because this is, you know, one of the broadcast network shows to get a huge media response – and it's *The Good Wife*. That's taking the legal show and doing some really interesting things with it. If it was just Alicia trying a case in a courtroom every week, like a *Boston Legal* format, then I don't think it would be getting the same amount of play. (Ryan, M., personal communication, June 5, 2012)

Conversely, publicist Informant #5 feels:

#5…I think that there is something in a procedural that makes it about the story and about the crime. And a lot of times, the heart of that crime comes from the guest cast. Something happened to this person. Our heroes are going to go get that person justice. And from week to week, that isn't a lot of emotional meet for the series regulars. You're not delving…You know, a *CSI* and you see a murdered child or a murdered mother, cumulatively those things affect the characters, but when you see that moment emotionally for that actor and that character, but next week, they aren't saying, "Oh, that last case really got to me."

DG: Oh, so it has to do with that self-contained aspect of the story?

#5: Yeah. In a procedural, these characters are professionals. They can't wear their heart on their sleeve. And I think a lot of the time, critics and Emmy voters want to see that raw emotion. And when you're a cop or a *CSI*, it's part of the job. You can't. You can have one scene in the breakroom where you're breaking down crying, and that will be your Emmy reel, but when you're on a crime scene, you have to keep emotion out of it.

DG: You've been such a pro, working on a vast range of shows, and a lot of procedurals, like me. Is it frustrating when a show that gets three million viewers – vs. a show that gets 15-20 million viewers – gets more attention?

#5: It's extremely frustrating. I worked on (a network show) for a decade, a decade, literally a quarter of my life I spent with (this show), and it was a show that – First launch, people really liked it, but over the years, it became a joke. The series one-liners became a joke. But do you know how many shows we killed going against us? That show was a powerhouse, a powerhouse. (The lead actor) can't walk in Europe without people shouting out. They love (his character). I don't even think – what's the critical darling? – I think Tina Fay walking in Europe is just fine. (Informant #5, personal communication, June 6 and 11, 2012)

Not surprisingly, given our similar demographics, education, backgrounds, long-time working relationships, and overall camaraderie, I found that publicists and journalists shared a great number of ideas and perspectives on current Post-Network Era industry. Very rarely did one publicist, journalist, or group contradict a statement or idea, and any contradictions above were relatively minor. The five main themes and thoughts above are including in this study to complement and maybe even complicate the case studies. Ultimately, in this section, a publicist spoke to his friends and peers, which might color all findings, but was done in the spirit of revealing some of the hidden mediation between TV publicists and media.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this study, I have found questions of emotional labor and intellectual taste lie at the heart of Post-Network Era industry and individual professional approaches to current TV public relations and media practice. Increasingly, today's television programming requires a different type of labor and engagement with material on the part of TV publicists and media, all of which ultimately impacts mass TV audiences, niche TV audiences, and fandom in terms of identity, representation, activity, and engagement. With the most emotional investment by definition, fans as activist publics absorb, process, and reinterpret the greatest amount of mediated messaging resulting from the industrially-hidden labor of publicists and media. As cultural intermediaries and agenda-setting tastemakers in a multicultural world, TV publicists and journalists prioritize what gets covered and what is important to each specific fan tribe (from Trekkies to Twihards), as broadly defined in current fan study research.

Ultimately, *Five-0* and *Dead* can teach us that *absence* is as important as presence in the socially- and industrially-constructed world of fans and niche audience. The absence of measurable fan activity and engagement with procedurals displayed in the *Five-0* case study speaks directly to and reflects industry, media, and fan views of what sort of genre programming a modern fan can and should embrace. This absence also likely directs how broadcast and cable TV network public relations departments allocate budgetary and labor resources, and certainly steers public relations strategies to attract audiences to modern drama series. Furthermore, combined with Nielsen ratings and current scales of online metrics, this absence prioritizes what networks are currently popular with fans and pop culture (CBS vs. FOX and ABC). Ultimately,

this absence dictates media's editorial decisions on coverage and placement, along with overall labor expectations and budgets for individual series at broadcast, cable, and premium cable networks.

This study originally sprang from the following question: If Jenkins' "loyal" fans don't materially show up to *Five-0*, then can that series' massive audience be called fans in a current academic sense? As a professional and burgeoning aca-fan, I believe that fans are fans whether they tweet, Facebook, create fan pages, blog or not. Individual fans consume an almost infinite range of entertainment products across platforms in multiple individual ways, and each fan has varying levels of interest and engagement that change over time. For example, I remember when letters to the editor, photocopied 'zines, and furtive local conventions were the few public forums available for fan expression. I later surpassed all personal benchmarks of fan nirvana by writing a small advertorial column in *The X-Files* official fan magazine for FX; getting photographed sitting in the captain's chair on the set of UPN's *Star Trek: Enterprise*; and being with the *Heroes* cast for their second season panel in Comic-Con's famed 10,000-seat "Hall H." Nonetheless, throughout these activities, I remember being a quiet, somewhat isolated, and moderately embarrassed fan.

As a "silent majority" in total viewers, today's procedural fans – and possibly CBS' weekly audience in general – simply encompass a less popular, less vocal, less organized, less labor-intensive, and less materially productive form of fan. Still, I suspect that it is an ongoing challenge internally and externally for CBS and its publicity department to manage expectations across publics for *Five-0* and most of its procedural programming. Based on this study and current fan tastes, CBS and *Five-0* simply cannot generate anywhere near the total

number of fan conversations of a FOX and *American Idol* or AMC and *Dead* for that matter. However, CBS remains the most-watched and the most profitable TV network in the U.S. today, which is a bit of a surprise when you consider that their business plans rely on programming that – when it succeeds – seems practically tastemaker-proof and almost fan-repellent. It remains to be seen when or if CBS will experience a "tipping point" where mass-appeal programming is no longer profitable for CBS/Viacom shareholders, appealing to ad buyers and conglomerates, and thereby, successful in an ever-increasing niche media landscape. In the meantime, CBS defines, creates, builds, and maintains fans for *Five-0*, their other procedural series, and the network brand overall in an intersecting, yet very different way than AMC based on their separate economic models.

In my experience, most people in the U.S. just want to watch TV and not be challenged by programming. Unfortunately, the non-active viewer and fan falls outside the most current Post-Network Era conception of target demographics in the ever-merging entertainment and technology industries, and the increasingly associated media industry. Yet as critic Mo Ryan's comments on the different levels of TV audience – from occasional viewer to regular viewer to fan to superfan – reflect, "fan" is no longer a sufficient label. Perhaps we should begin to consider and account for different degrees and types of fandom, and explore how procedural, comedy, reality show and other more mass-appeal genres fit into, expand, and complicate our overall conception of fandom and television, especially as niche publicity and promotion, niche marketing and advertising, and niche programming increasing becomes the norm. As the term popularizes and mainstreams further, "superfan" should continue to be a fertile area for study across disciplines as a new, traceable, and distinct industrial and economic category with

attractive power. Furthermore, as this study highlights, key tastemaker media sources and (when identifiable) publicists should also be considered fans themselves who mediate, create, distribute, and enjoy the same materials that fans collect, categorize, analyze, debate, and (re)create. At the very least, TV publicists and journalists are television medium fans first and foremost if not outright, card-carrying geeks like entertainment magazine editor Informant #3, Jeff Jensen, Mo Ryan, and myself.

As urged by Evans & Hesmondhalgh (2005), I attempted to place my case studies within a historical context as well as an industrial context in order to fit within media industries and public relations research.   Quite simply, major broadcaster CBS' *Hawaii Five-0* complicates all definitions and beliefs about modern fandom, and allows for a more complete Post-Network picture overall. I believe that introducing questions about this show compared to *Dead* challenged and inspired informants' answers regarding taste, quality, and fans at this specific time. It was essential that a network series was represented in the mix here, especially as one of the few success stories from the 2010-2011 season. The fact that *Five-0* has a genre pedigree in terms of stars, EP/showrunners, and source material and went from grabbing TV covers to virtual media obscurity in a season only makes this case study more fascinating.

As basic cable AMC's *The Walking Dead* displays, horror is a very particular television genre, generally with an extremely narrow, young male following. As a result, it poses a number of challenges for public relations. When I oversaw publicity on NBC's *Fear Itself*, I was forced to confront that not everyone is a fan, although there is a great deal of overlap among fan communities. Based on my experience and overall research, *Dead* absolutely stands as the unexpected fluke of the 2010-2011 season. No one could have predicted that critics

and audiences alike would have latched onto a graphic, violent zombie drama on basic cable with no stars. Like *Five-0*, this case elicited some interesting answers and some insights into industry, media and fandom at this specific time.

In pop culture, *Dead* is cool, and *Five-0* is not. Why? Tastemakers in the media explained to me that procedurals aren't "meaty" enough. The genre does not give media, audience or fandom enough character or subtext to write and obsess about. That said, there are some current exceptions, such as TNT's *Rizzoli and Isles*, where apparently fans have embraced the show's lesbian subtext, much to the dismay of star Angie Harmon. As magazine editor Informant #3 pointed out, the natural assumption might be to attribute this to a factor of age – those darn kids! – but in 2011, the average age of viewers watching CBS was 55.1 and AMC rose to 56.7, up from (2010's) 55.5 (Rice, 2011, June 1). More research clearly needs to be done with the relationship between age, demographics, gender, class, race, ethnicity, professional and educational backgrounds, aesthetics, media and fandom in the U.S. and internationally.

From the combined case studies and interviews, several micro- and macro-level conclusions for fan and public relations studies can be offered here. First, I conclude that struggle and mediation between Bourdieu's "cultural intermediaries" within the Circuit of Culture is alive and well, and can be particularly expressed by industrially-hidden agents (namely publicists) embedded within media conglomerates and major public relations agencies (which have also merged into their own corporate behemoths in the last two decades). Second, public relations departments and their individual practitioners' labor are fundamental to dynamic moments of articulation within the Circuit. As I attempt to illustrate through charts below (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2), I see public relations and marketing as a joint, intervening lens and filters to

critics, public, fans in the area of Reception. And third, the working industrial relationship between TV publicists and journalists in practice encapsulates "articulation's" dual meaning – to both express and join together – in a multitude of ways. As such, TV public relations practitioners' professional interaction with media as an intervening public is instrumental to attracting television audiences, creating fans, organizing fandom, and sustaining invested viewer attention and engagement across platforms, over multiple seasons. As an active participant in TV public relations, I believe television publicists and journalists' similar demographics, education, and overlapping labor all combine to (consciously or unconsciously) express a niche-oriented industrial point of view that reflects greater Post-Network Era conditions. I see this mediated relationship as the cornerstone to defining, creating, and maintaining fandom in the entertainment industry today. Furthermore, I would argue that the most influential media in the U.S. are fans themselves, and their reach can only grow in the Post-Network Era as audience splinters and emotionally-engaged, active, socially-networked viewers become more central to industry success – be it measured financially or in terms of social capital.   In public relations and media, these professional fans moving forward have an edge and are better situated to identify, classify, and aim more effective communication towards fandom, as an activist, segmented public.

Taking this all into account, there is room to play with and build upon the traditional Circuit of Culture model (see Figure 1.1). For example, while missing the original illustration's compelling, kinetic, circular feedback structure, the following expansion of the Circuit of Culture model (Friedman, 2006; 2005) is helpful in its attempt to assign industrial roles and agents to specific loci of articulation:

The Circuit of Culture

Production

- Industry
  - Expenses
    - Star and director salaries
    - Below the line
    - Marketing
    - Distribution
    - Studo overhead
  - Revenues
    - US box office
    - Overseas box office
    - DVDs
    - TV - US and International
      - PPV
      - Premium cable
      - Basic cable
      - Network
    - Video/computer games
    - Toys
    - Soundtrack
    - Books
    - Theme-park rides
    - Cross-promotional tie-ins (Happy Meals, etc)
- Creators
  - Producers
  - Director
  - Screenwriters
  - Actors
  - Director of photography
  - Editor
  - Composer
  - Art director
  - Costume designer
  - Makeup director
  - Visual effects supervisor
  - and so on . . .

Regulation

- Intellectual property regime
- Trade agreements
- Tax policy and subsidies
- Censorship
- Anti–trust law

Identity

- Race/ethnicity
- Class
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Age
- Religion
- Nation
- Region
- Cosmopolitanism

Representation

- Form
  - Screenplay
    - Narrative structure
    - Characterization
    - Dialogue
  - Visual design
    - Location
    - Costumes
    - Makeup
    - Set decoration
  - Cinematography
    - Camera angle and framing
    - Camera movement
    - Lighting
    - Image (lens, film stock, color, etc)
  - Editing
    - Shot length
    - Degree of continuity/discontinuity
    - Structure of time (compression, flashback, real-time, etc.)
  - Sound
    - Diagetic
      - Dialogue
      - Foley
      - Motivated music
    - Nondiagetic (soundtrack)
  - Visual effects
    - CGI
    - Computer-controlled cameras
    - Miniatures
    - Matte paintings
  - Acting
    - Star image
    - Acting style
  - Genre
    - Adherence to/variation from generic expectations
    - Hybridity
- Ideology
  - Individual vs. community
  - Nature vs. culture/technology
  - Violence and its consequences
  - Inequality
  - Utopian or dystopian?

Reception

- Critics
  - Reviews
  - Scholarship
- Public
  - Box office
  - Cinescore and other marketing surveys
  - Online discourse
  - Ethnographic research
- Fans
  - Online communities
  - Conventions
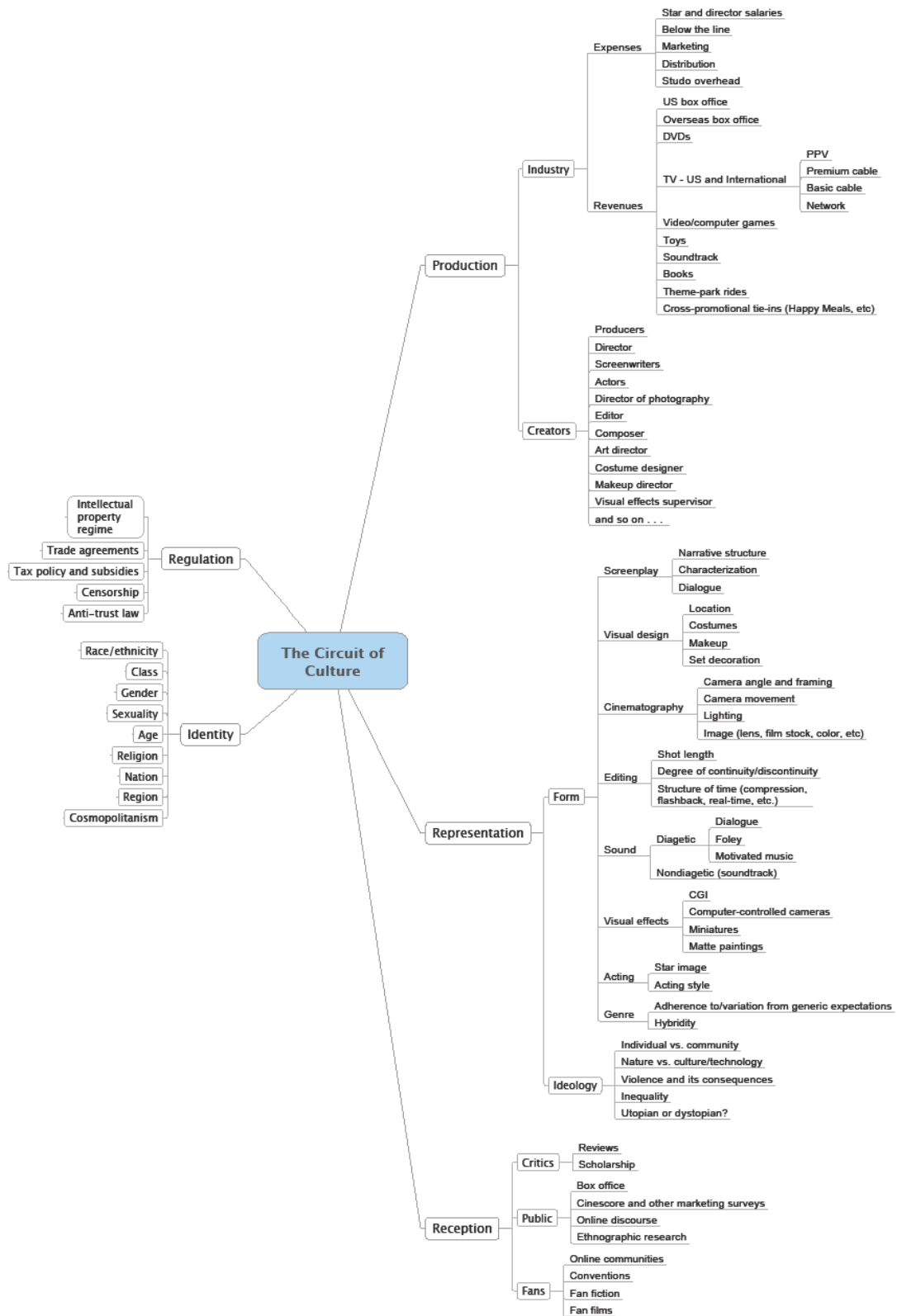 - Fan fiction
  - Fan films

Figure 5.1   Circuit of Culture expansion model (Friedman, 2006; 2005)

In the chart above, marketing is embedded in Industry, as one of many industrial "Expenses." Meanwhile "Critics," "Public," and "Fans" are attached to Reception, with public relations conspicuously missing. To revise this model based on this study, I add below a two-pronged frame, like "Industry" and "Creators" under Production, and place Marketing and Public Relations into separate pods directly connected to Reception. These linked activities can then jointly act as mediated buffers to Critics, (mainstream) Public, and Fans as follows:
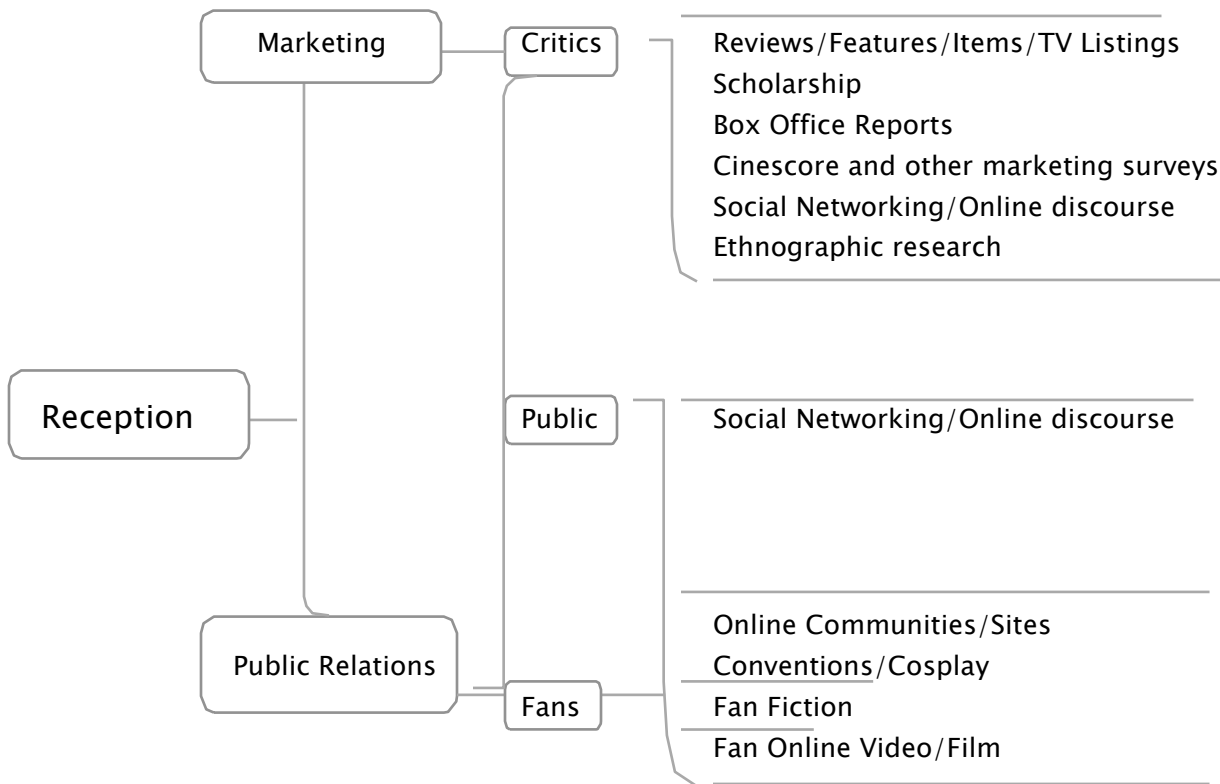

Figure 5.2   Public Relations in Circuit of Culture expansion model (Gardner, 2012)

To further expand on all of these ideas, HBO's *Game of Thrones* would make for an intriguing case study as a pay cable example from the 2010-2011 TV season. It was the second

most critically acclaimed, successful TV series from the 2010-2011 season. Certainly, it serves as the most representative of genre TV and the sort of content that appeals to fans, especially after the industrial and critical success of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Although premium channel HBO has long-since cornered the market on "quality TV" and found recent success with sexy, violent, quirky *True Blood* (6.2 million viewers total watched last year's fourth season finale), *GoT* wasn't a "sure thing" (*EW.com*, 10/13/11). The series doesn't feature any stars; has a multitude of revolving characters moving through an extremely dense, political storyline; and was reportedly extremely expensive to produce, even with few special effects. That said, HBO's subscribers liked it and it worked. Furthermore, in 2011, it picked up the TCA Award for Outstanding New Program, along with a Best Supporting Actor Emmy for Peter Dinklage and a second for its inventive building-block map title sequence. Both HBO and AMC speak to certain Post-Network Era industry conditions at the time and specific measures of success. Recent niche and mass-appeal comedies that have made it past one season, such as FOX's *Raising Hope* (which premiered in the 2010-2011 season), CBS' *The Big Bang Theory*, FX's *Louie*, or Showtime's *Nurse Jackie*, could also complement this line of study as one of many genres to explore in this context.

In conclusion, as any publicist knows, access is everything. Unlike fandom, TV public relations practitioners and journalists in the U.S. are relatively similar, stable, and limited populations to study, although I can attest that these industry groups are one of the most challenging to build trust with, gain access to, and get on record in a substantial, meaningful way if you are an outsider. Even as a TV insider familiar with industrial practices, it was still a challenge for me to identify and categorize the almost-instinctual professional patterns in

mediation, particularly when I know the public relations population purposely obscures itself and its labor as good practice. In many instances during research, I had to draw on past experience as a member of said department or consider I how I would have negotiated said outlet for media coverage. For both TV publicists and media, there is a learned, shared, and internalized hierarchy according to type of network or media outlet, total viewership and/or readership, body of work, pop culture cache, and other factors. In Hollywood, you always know where you rank. For publicists and media, this rank can manifest as simply as how fast you receive or return an email or phone call. If I didn't get an immediate response from press, I would keep trying. So, while it will always be a challenge to get a call back or find an executive to go record without public relations-approved bullet points, I urge researchers to keep trying, make inroads with all media, use your understanding that information is power, and excavate as much hidden activity and history as possible, like Caldwell or anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (*Hollywood: The Dream Factory*, 1950). In the meantime, I hope communication departments all over the world can reach out and encourage more boundary-crossers like me to ethnographically document our experiences in entertainment. The entertainment industry is even more subtly complicated, interconnected, obscured – and yes, full of magic – than most realize.

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Sample Interview Questions

Sample interview questions for Informants included:

1. Tell me about your background. Where from, education, professional experience?
2. Did you watch TV with your family? What did you watch?
3. Why did you become a TV journalist, critic, or publicist?
4. Would the label tastemaker or gatekeeper apply to you?
5. Who do you feel responsibility towards as a professional?
6. What are your current favorite TV shows? What about other forms of entertainment (e.g., movies, websites, books, etc.)?
7. What qualities does a good TV show have? A bad TV show?
8. Are you the same as your target audience? Does gender, ethnicity, education, social class ever come into play in your position?
9. How are assignments decided? Based on your interest (or lack thereof), coverage, need to cover, types of coverage of shows? How do you or do you distinguish between broadcast, basic cable and premium channels on cable?
10. In retrospect, how would you sum up last year's 2010-2011 season? A good or bad year for TV?
11. More specifically, let's discuss the first seasons of Game of Thrones? The Walking Dead? Hawaii Five-0? Does source material hurt or help a series?
12. Can you walk me through how you construct a story for work from start to finish, and maybe use *GoT*, *Dead* or *Five-0* as an example? How are ideas generated editorially? Personally? From outside sources? Other media/peers?
13. How does coverage change from a TV show's first season vs. later seasons?
14. How do you measure success in television? Can procedurals be critical and popular successes?
15. Do you cover or feel the need to cover all products associated with a show? Graphic novels, games, webisodes, DVDs, books?
16. How do you define audience? How do you define your audience? Do you consider yourself part of the TV audience?
17. How would you define pop culture? How do fans fit in pop culture?
18. What is a fan? How would you define it? Have fans changed since you started in the business??
19. Do you identify as a fan? What are you a fan of? Do you have fans?
20. What makes a show, star, showrunner, etc. a "fan-favorite"?
21. Do fans have to be connected to particular genres? Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Horror? What about procedural dramas? Genre vs. "middlebrow"?
22. Many shows with strong fan bases don't have strong ratings, but network support, cross-platform and/or transmedia appeal (e.g., *Fringe*). Do you or do you feel like you have to root for underdogs? Does this help your position as a critic?
23. Do you have to agree with the audience? Fans?
24. Do you see yourself as building fans of shows and networks?

Additional questions specifically for press informants, depending on time, were as follows:

1. Does the word "adversarial" define the media-publicist relationship?
2. How do you work with press materials?
3. How do certain kinds of publicists – network, studio, personal – affect how you construct stories? Do they help or hinder?
4. What kind of qualities or behavior makes for a good publicist? Bad publicist?
5. Could you do your job without publicists? What value do publicists have to you? What obstacles do publicists create?
6. Do you consider publicists your business associates? Partners? Friends? Do you choose to cover or not cover shows according to your relationship?
7. How does negotiation or persuasion come into play? Are you being persuaded? Are you persuading from your position? Source of influence (network, cable)? Ethics?
8. Do you speak at, to, or with your readers/viewers/audience?
9. Who has the power in the media-public relations relationship?
10. How does technology affect your position? Does your work appear on different platforms? Relationship to readers/viewers/audience?

Georgia State University
Department of Communication
Informed Consent

Title: How Entertainment Publicists and Key U.S. Media Define, Create, and Maintain Fandom

Student Investigator: David Gardner, Georgia State University, Communication Department, graduate student, 678-732-0338, gardnerdh@aol.com

Thesis Advisor/PI: Dr. Alisa Perren, Georgia State University, Communication Department, 404-413-5636, aperren@gsu.edu

I.   Purpose:

You are invited to be in a research study for my thesis. The purpose of this study is to understand the behind-the-scenes workplace experiences of media and public relations practitioners in television, and explore the following questions: 1) How do entertainment public relations practitioners and key tastemaker/gatekeeper media define, create, build, and maintain TV fans?, and 2) How do they understand their role in the creation of fans from the position of industrial producers, cultural intermediaries, and members of the audience and/or fans themselves? The study employs approximately 10-15 in-depth interviews with key media and working publicists. The interview should take no longer than one hour of your time.

II.   Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will participate in an in-depth interview with David Gardner. The interview will be audio taped. You will be given an alias by which you will be known throughout the session, and within the study. This is done to ensure confidentiality. You will enter into a discussion about your work and beliefs concerning professional criticism in television, as well as your background as a TV viewer and fan and how that might shape and mold your experiences in entertainment/media. Follow-up interview(s) based on answers might be called for, based on your continued interest and availability.

III.   Risks:

By participating in the interview, you should not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV.   Benefits:

Being in this study may not benefit you directly, but you may enjoy sharing your opinions. Also, the sharing of experiences by professional media and public relations practitioners involved in this project may be beneficial to both current and future media scholars. Standpoint theory states that individuals' daily activities or material, lived experiences structure their understanding of the

social world. Interviewing working media and publicists thus should provide insight into their unique perspectives concerning TV audience, fandom, and news/criticism.

V.   Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Being part of this research is up to you. I want you to feel comfortable. You can let me (as the interviewer) know if you are uncomfortable. You don't have to answer any question that feels uncomfortable, and you can leave or stop the interview if you need a break at any time. You do not have to be in this study. You can decide to be in the study and change your mind. You have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time.

VI.   Confidentiality:

All records will be kept private. An alias or ID number will be used in place of your name on study records. Only David Gardner and thesis advisor Dr. Alisa Peron will see your records or have access to the information you provide. Any computer files related to the project will be password protected on a machine equipped with firewall protection in a locked office. All information (like tape recordings, backup computer files, and typed transcripts) will be stored in a locked cabinet. Furthermore, after the interview transcript is typed up, the tape recording will be destroyed. Your name, employer, and other facts that might point to you will not appear in any written report. You will not be identified in any findings. As an extra measure to preserve your privacy, you will be assigned (or may pick) an alias and identified by that alias in both the interview discussion and transcripts.

VII.   Contact Persons:

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact my GSU thesis advisor Dr. Alisa Peron at 404-413-5636 or aperren@gsu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, contact Susan Voter in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII.   Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

I will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you want to volunteer for this research and be audio taped, you will be asked to give verbal approval at the start of the taped interview and/or please sign below. By giving verbal approval, you also confirm that you are at least 18 years old.