SOFT CONTROL: TELEVISION'S RELATIONSHIP TO DIGITAL MICROMEDIA

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Michael Lahey
SOFT CONTROL: TELEVISION'S RELATIONSHIP TO DIGITAL MICROMEDIA

This dissertation explores the role soft control plays in the relationship between the television industry and short forms of digital media. Following James Beniger and Tizianna Terranova, I define soft control as the purposive movement by the television industry towards shaping audience attention toward predetermined goals through a range of interactions where development happens somewhat autonomously, while being interjected with commands over time. I define such things as media environment design, branding, and data collection as soft control practices. I focus on television as a way to understand how an industry historically patterned around more rigid forms of audience control deals with a digital media environment often cited for its lack of control features. And while there is already a robust discussion on the shifting strategies for the online distribution of shows, there is less of a focus on the increasing importance of shorter forms of digital media to the everyday operation of the television industry. Shorter forms of media include digitally circulated short videos, songs, casual digital games, and even social media, which is itself a platform for the distribution of shorter forms of media. I refer to all these forms of short media as "micromedia" and focus my interest on how various television companies are dealing with media environments saturated with it.

To do this I look at, for instance, how television companies use the data available on Twitter and appropriate the user-generated content of audiences, as well as how standard digital communication interfaces are utilized to more easily retrofit previous audience retention practices into new digital environments. Through the investigation of how television creates and appropriates micromedia as a way to reconfigure practices into the everyday lives of participatory audiences, I argue that we can see soft control elements at work in structuring the

industry-audience relationship. These soft control features call into question the emancipatory role attributed to participatory audiences and digital technologies alike. If we think about media forms in their specific contexts, making sure to focus on their intermedial connections and their materiality, we can complicate ideas about what the categories of audience or industrial control mean.

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Introduction

"The point is not to stop the flow of information, but rather to channel and direct it, and even positively encourage it, by embedding surveillance and control mechanisms within it."[1]

The year is 2018, the setting is Cape Town, South Africa. This dystopic future is ruled by a corporate-state megaplex with walled divides between the haves and have-nots. Smart phones are must-have access points to the world. Through them people pay for things, confirm their identities, become traceable entities, and occasionally get "defused" (i.e., shocked) by the police if they step out of line.

Kendra is an art school dropout fascinated by old photographic technologies. She has been selected as a brand ambassador for the soft drink Ghost. In doing so she is injected with small nanobots—"designer robotic microbes"—that light up her wrist with an effervescent green glowing Ghost brand logo.[2] Toby, a trust fund kid and full time vlogger, captures his everyday life on his "Baby Strange," a fully wired, responsive shirt that acts simultaneously as a camera and billboard for whatever image or feed Toby wants to display. While it's nice when he gets mentioned in *BoingBoing*'s feed, he really wants to make a splash and appear on *CNN*. Tendeka is an activist who conspires with a mysterious Dutchman he meets on a *Second Life*-like online world called *Avalon*. This man helps Tendeka gain access to information so he can set up

1. Steven Shaviro, *Connected: or what it means to live in the network society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 46.

2. Lauren Beukes, *Moxyland* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2008), 6.

guerilla-style culture jamming-style raids on high profile art installations and billboards. Lerato is a programmer for Comminqué, a major multinational corporation. She has been assigned a roommate through "synchronous personality matching" by all the data collected on her by her company.[3] She is possibly interested in jumping ship to another corporation but to do so will mean trading information secrets, a major offense.

Through the course of Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* (2008), all of these characters intertwine. Kendra, in her nano-enhanced state, meets Toby, who is tagging along with Tendeka in hopes of videoing something sensational to post on his vlog. Lerato, out of a mixture of boredom, hubris, and curiosity, helps Tendeka (via Toby) and his crew of street kids with their culture jamming activities. Over the course of the narrative, Tendeka escalates the public nature of his activism from malfunctioning billboards to destroying the Woof & Tweet sound installation—a "plastech bio-breed" that mixes sound technology with lab grown meat "with just enough brainstem hard-wired" to respond to input but not enough to feel pain.[4] Tendeka's crew finally arrives at a major activist media moment when they try to interrupt the *FallenCity: Underworld* game, a game Toby is participating in for money after being cut off from his trust fund. Everything goes haywire when the game, a mixture of virtual game play in real world situations full of hired actors and corporate fine print, goes horribly wrong. One of the fake guns is stocked with real bullets and someone is now dead. Instead of rushing into the mayhem, police spray the crowd with the M7N1 virus. To be cured, they can report to various police facilities around town. This creates panic that spawns media events, spreading fear throughout South Africa.

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3. Beukes, *Moxyland,* 39.

4. Beukes, *Moxyland,* 128.

As it turns out, though, the fear created by the police response to Tendeka's activism was planned. Comminqué, the company behind the game, had encouraged it via the mysterious Dutchman called skyward*. It turns out he wasn't really Dutch; you can't really trust avatars, can you? After figuring out what Lerato was doing, the company allowed her to continue, subverting her desire for subversion, using her to facilitate supposed acts of terrorism against the corporate-state. In lieu of killing her, Communiqué transfers her to Mumbai, so she can repeat the process of producing civil unrest to justify creating more control.

In this work of fiction, a story about the relationships between networks, technologies, people, and the quest for control exists at the intersection of corporate power, data collection, branding, guerilla marketing, viral videos, user-generated content, programming, mobile devices, and gaming. And, while this is a work of dystopic science fiction—or near-speculative fiction—it may not sound that far off from various zones of contemporary experience in the United States:

> Social media companies like Facebook and search companies like Google collect enormous amount of data on user preferences to create a more targeted environment for both the user and the advertisers after those users. With this data and connectivity, major corporations can respond in real time to changes in consumer attitude.
>
> Companies like BzzAgent get people to work for them for free as undercover word-of-mouth marketers. These agents set up events and drop helpful suggestions to friends while using a packet of information from BzzAgent to help them become the best agents they can be.[5]
>
> *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, a show on the Cartoon Network, strategically placed adverts in various spots around Boston that just happen to look suspiciously like bombs. Panic arises, media generates, and promotion ensues.[6]

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5. See Rob Walker's *Buying In* (2008) for an in-depth discussion of BzzAgent, especially Chapter 10.

6. "Two held after ad campaign triggers Boston bomb scare." *CNN.com*. Accessed April 3, 2009. http://articles.cnn.com/2007-01-31/us/boston.bombscare_1_bomb-scares-charlestown-district-court-peter-berdovsky?_s=PM:US

> We now have a media environment where audience attention is a scarce commodity. Video games, web sites, television shows, movies, songs, and books all compete for audience attention across a range of platforms. Additionally, "prosumers"—participatory, active producer-consumers—like Ze Frank (*The Ze Frank Show* on YouTube) with access to digital technologies now have a much easier path to creating their own content and potentially finding an audience.[7]
>
> Digital gaming platforms like World of Warcraft and Everquest engage users in both real and virtual economies. In addition, causal games like Angry Birds or Solitaire engage users across a range of media platforms, especially mobile devices.[8]
>
> Mobile devices have become an increasingly important part of the media landscape. According to the Pew Research Center, as of 2011, 35% of American adults own smartphones.[9]

These examples point to spheres of experience in the contemporary United States wrapped up in the fragmentation of markets, an increase in the intensity of media responsiveness, the convergence of media devices, and the use of data trails to create detailed feedback loops.

In addition, the above examples point to a continued fascination with the role technological innovation plays in shaping society. Ken MacLeod, a noted science fiction author, commented on the disorienting effects of technological innovation in our everyday lives in a tweet on February 10, 2013: "I recharged my cigarette, blocked a sex robot from my timeline, and followed an astronaut. Then I wrote a science fiction story."[10] In *Connected: or what it means to live in the network society* (2003), Steven Shaviro says, "our lives are increasingly

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7. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 53.

8. See Edward Castranova's *Exodus to the Virtual World: How Online Fun Is Changing Reality* (2007).

9. "35% of American Adults Own a Smartphone," *Pewresearch.org*. Accessed March 4, 2011. http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2054/smartphone-ownership-demographics-iphone-blackberry-android

10. Ken MacLeod, Twitter post, February 10, 2013, 12:24pm, https://twitter.com/amendlocke.

transformed in ways, and by devices, that seem to have come out of the pages of speculative fiction."[11] And perhaps this is what makes the contemporary media landscape in the United States feel as if it almost took a page out of *Moxyland*.

I opened the dissertation with *Moxyland* as a way into a conversation about the role control plays in the relationship between various institutions and actors in society. For my purposes, I am specifically interested in how control is implemented in the relationship between media industries and audiences in a digital media landscape. Control—or a lack thereof—has been a particularly salient talking point concerning all media industries, as centralized industrial control in a digital media landscape appears difficult to attain. While looking at a range of media industries through the lens of control could be profitable, I want to focus my analysis on two areas of interest: the television industry and short forms digital media. Focusing on how a pre-digital "old media" industry, historically patterned around more rigid forms of audience control, deals with mapping itself into a digital media landscape is an interesting way into the conversation about industry-audience relationships.

There are many issues that trouble the television industries' ability to control its relationship to potential audiences. First, the contemporary digital media environment in the United States has often been described as being hostile to the television viewing experience because DVR-empowered, time-shifting audiences "watch what [they] want to watch, when [they] want to watch it."[12] Second, audiences are increasingly streaming and sometimes illegally downloading television in lieu of being tethered to a cable subscription. Third, television shows exist in crowded media markets where there is an incredible amount of choice from a range of

11. Shaviro, *Connected*, ix.

12. Richard Kastelein, "The Future of Brand Delivery on Television." *WIRED Magazine*, Accessed May 14, 2013, http://insights.wired.com/profiles/blogs/the-future-of-brand-delivery-on-television#axzz2U2YlXnJ4

media industries. Fourth, through utilizing relatively cheap digital technologies, audiences now have the ability to easily produce their own content on a greater scale, only adding to the choice.

Finally, our present digital media environment is increasingly friendly to the production, distribution, and reception of shorter forms of digital media. How does television compete and thrive in an environment that accommodates a range of formats outside of its standardized 30 minute and 1 hour frameworks? Shorter forms of media include digitally-circulating illustrations, photographs, short videos, animated GIFs, songs, and even social media, which is itself a platform for the distribution of short digital works. Additionally, we could talk about casual games, games that are simple in design and relatively short in length. This category includes games like Solitaire and simple Flash games made for the internet or, more likely, your smartphone. I will refer to these shorter forms of media collectively as "micromedia" and will have more to say about them below.

All of these factors troubling television are animated by a contemporary discourse on the media industry-audience relationship that says that "active" and "participatory" audiences are in control of their experiences with media. These ideas have been championed by people such as Nicholas Negroponte and Alvin Toffler, scholars who "celebrated the wave of creativity unleashed via the Internet" and predicted a "shift of power from media bureaucracies to digital networks, and spoke in rather apocalyptic terms of the future of 'old media.'"[13] Furthermore,

13. Des Freedman, "Internet transformations: 'old' media resilience in the 'new media' revolution," in *Media and Cultural Theory* ed. James Curran and David Morley (New York: Routledge, 2006), 276. Additionally, from an academic angle, see the Howard Rheingold (2002), Pierre Lévy (1997), and Henry Jenkins (2006) on the relationship of digital technologies to an audience's ability to form some type of collective action. From an industrial perspective, there are range of places exhorting industries to pay attention to an audience's ability to technologically control when and where they watch. For instance, see Eric Picard's "The Consumer is Taking Control of Advertising" *ClickZ*. August 30, 2004. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1717902/the-consumer-is-taking-control-advertising

drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau and Pierre Lévy, Henry Jenkins argues that media content increasingly depends on consumers' active engagement with any number of media artifacts, where "participation is more open-ended, less under the control of media producers and more under the control of media consumers."[14] Digital technologies—the internet, peer-to-peer file sharing, instant messaging, smart phones, and digital cameras—are also at the core of this argument about contemporary transformations in audience control. Additionally, digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are characterized as liberating forces that allow people to produce by tapping into the wellspring of their creativity.

I will argue that too much emphasis has been placed on discourses of freedom and the positive role technologies play in fostering these discourses. An industrial emphasis on using these discourses creates the need to redress the issue of what control means. In what ways and to what extent can television companies control their relationship to audiences? And what roles do various digital technologies play in this process?

While robust scholarly discussion on the role of intellectual property in the media industries, market fragmentation, audience choice, and technological time-shifting already exists, I find less of a focus on the role shorter forms of media now play in the everyday life of the television industry.[15] Television companies are presently dealing with a media environment saturated with micromedia.

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14. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 133.

15. For intellectual property see Lawrence Lessig's *Free Culture* (2004), *Code: Version 2.0* (2006), *Remix* (2008), Adrian Johns' *Piracy* (2009), Ted Striphas' *The Late Age of Print* (2009), and Rosemary Coombe's *The Cultural Life of Intellectual* Properties (1998). For market fragmentation see the work of Joseph Turow, like *Niche Envy: Market Discrimination in the Digital Age* (2006).

It is in this area that I can enliven the discussion about the role control plays in the contemporary television industry-audience relationship. A key to mapping control possibilities in this new environment is to understand how television is competing and utilizing micromedia. Examining industrially-produced and/or appropriated micromedia, I will show a range of its uses to the industry, from stand-alone content to promotional value. Through this investigation into television and micromedia, I argue that we can see soft control elements at work in structuring the industry-audience relationship. While "hard" control refers to more deterministic forms of control like the use of intellectual property laws to shut down certain uses of television shows, "soft" control refers to things like product and environment design, branding, and data collection. "Soft" does not imply a gentler approach; rather, it refers to interactions among different elements that are allowed to develop somewhat autonomously, while being interjected with different commands and controls over time.[16] These are generally things that don't appear to be about control in the first instance.

To show various implementations of this logic of soft control, I will focus on design scripting, translation, the everyday life of television audiences, and the intermedial nature of our media landscape. Design scripting refers to anything utilized to adjust audience attention to pre-determined goals. In television, a designer script could manifest as, for instance, the way a social media environment is assembled or how a particular television star is used in a promotional piece, or the linkages created between a causal game, a social media page, and a television company's official page.

16. See Tiziana Terranova's *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (2004). I will discuss her work more fully below.

Translation, a term borrowed from Actor-Network Theory, refers to the processes that take place between actors (and actants) to build and sustain the networks that comprise social worlds.[17] Translation is an important concept at the center of understanding soft control, whether we mean the translation of value between industries and audiences or the translation of data between different data sets.

Additionally, emphasizing translations allows me to discuss the everyday life of television audiences and the intermedial nature of the digital media landscape. First, it should be noted that trying to understand the everyday life of television audiences has always been a central feature of the industry-audience relationship. Television, as a technology and cultural concept, colonized and shaped the meaning of everyday life in the United States during the latter half of the 20th century. The point of my dissertation is to show how certain television companies are reorganizing their practices to account for an everyday life of potential audiences that is increasingly lived differently. For instance, through the data collection abilities coded into social media, television companies have the ability to create even more detailed profiles of our everyday lives. This translation of everyday activities into data sets is key to understanding how soft control techniques can be implemented. Also, by acknowledging the intermedial relationships among different media forms, we can see how these networks of soft control are actually sustained.

17. In actor-network theory, actors are actants. While the two terms of often (confusingly) used interchangeably in actor-network scholarship, the term "actant" is used to denote both human and non-human actors as they are both given agency to shape network connections. This necessarily broadens the concept of agency and will be discussed more below.

Methodology

The object of study is especially challenging relation to networked digital culture. Digital culture does not produce discrete phenomena, only discrete ways of framing them. Scholars discuss digital culture in terms of connection, circulation, modularity, and speed, while focusing on processes of networked relationships in and through socially recognized textual borders. Therefore, I will be investigating phenomena that jump from device-to-device, include a wide array of media, and combine the trajectories of media and computing cultures. In addition, this is an environment where data move quickly, transforming industrial strategies and cross-platform promotional strategies; where major corporations hire and fire legions of boutique firms in the blink of an eye to create games, advertisements, short videos, and "real world" promotional stunts. These features point to a state of perpetual transformation where audience whims change quickly and "monolithic" corporate entities change just as fast. Terranova would refer to this state as "hydrodynamic," Delezue would identify it as "perpetual training," and Zygmut Bauman might refer to it as "liquid."[18]

To study this dynamism, I will combine theoretical approaches that lead to an understanding of the process of designing soft control. This means that this project will be, at its core, interdisciplinary and why I take a cultural studies approach to this phenomenon. Cultural studies is more or less synonymous with interdisciplinary work; and it often can mean wildly different things depending on who is talking. Asking someone what cultural studies is is bound to get you invited to conference devoted to figuring out what cultural studies is.

The brand of cultural studies that most informs my work the most has roots at the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies. As is well known, this work was heavily

18. See Tiziana Terranova's *Network Culture* (2004), Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992), and Zygmut Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000).

invested in merging theory with the realities of material culture, combining a history of textual analysis with an anthropological focus on the social creation of meaning.[19] This means that process and objects are understood relationally to their contexts. I look to Julie D'Acci's circuit of media study model as a way to approach an object (or process) of inquiry.[20] This model constitutes four domains: (1) production (2) the cultural artifact; (3) reception; and (4) sociohistorical context.[21] In addition, it inscribes the researcher within the model as a de facto fifth element, acknowledging one's own interpretive role in relation to the phenomena one chooses, the data one collects, etc.

A cultural studies approach makes sense for a dissertation that investigates the television industry but does not always fit neatly into television studies. Television here is used partially as an experiment to understand what the relationship of an older medium to a newer media landscape can tell us about control. Thus, this project isn't discretely about television. Rather, it is about the intersections of television and digital media that would feel at home in a journal like *Television & New Media.* It is best situated as a study of relationships and intersections rather than discrete objects. Needless to say, this dissertation will interweave the histories and trajectories of many different disciplines from television studies to digital studies to gaming studies to anthropological approaches to culture.

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19. See Cary Nelson, Paula A Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction" in *Cultural Studies* (1992). Additionally see Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" in *Social Text* (1986).

20. D'Acci's revises the circuit of culture model proposed in the "Introduction" to *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (1997).

21. Julie D'Acci, "Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in Humanities" in *Television After TV: Essays in a Medium in Transition*, ed. Lynn Spigel & Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 432.

Additionally, a cultural studies approach also makes sense when using multiple theoretical approaches to understand a phenomenon. As I will explain in Chapter 2, I believe that elements of actor-network theory and theories of everyday life can be utilized to profitably explain how soft control works across a range of spaces and times in and through digital media.

I also should note that this is an investigation into the theories and methods the television industry uses to combat and shape sociotechnical transformations. Thus, industrial producers are my primary focus. In a sense, what I am trying to do is to gain access to the "back-office" knowledge and practices of television digital media departments.[22] To do this, I use the qualitative methodological approaches of textual analysis, discursive analysis, interviews conducted with industry practitioners of micromedia, and audience surveys. Textual analysis is used throughout the dissertation to understand the relationship between media forms and practices. In addition to analyzing textual objects like short videos, I consider objects like computer code to be quasi-textual objects—the texts that run behind the surface textual features. For instance, in Chapter 4, I investigate the relationship between application programming interfaces and the ability of media texts to easily move between platforms. Analyzing the text of these codes is important to understand how an intermedial digital environment fosters soft control.

I employ discursive analysis to provide context for my analysis of particular texts. To do this, I mined industry trade journals like *Advertising Age*, *Brandweek*, *Adweek*, *Creativity*, *Television Week*, *Variety*, *Broadcast and Cable*, *Multichannel News*, and *The Hollywood Reporter*. These publications are impressive in their cataloguing of the industrial anxiety

22. Thanks to Ted Striphas for suggesting the term "back-office" to me.

surrounding digital transformation. Understanding the prevalent discourses here will help me situate my textual readings in relation to "official" industrial discourses on media change.

I also used interviews with media practitioners and media audiences in a more limited sense, primarily in Chapter 3, to better understand micromedia production. I interviewed 15 cultural industry workers who engage in short form creation and/or circulation.[23] These participants come from the world of television and advertising and all worked on the creation of meicromedia. I analyze their statements to pursue a fuller understanding of the relationship of short media to traditional media when trying to argue for the importance of short form media today.

Finally, acknowledging that design is a process that is never completely done in-house and considering the characterization of the digital media landscape as interactive, I surveyed 200 potential audience members of digital micromedia. Utilizing a network of current and former students during the spring of 2012, I asked them questions about the role digital micromedia play in their lives. Additionally, I interviewed 20 randomly selected individuals in more depth to better understand their relationship to micromedia.

Through this research, I acknowledge audiences as important actors in the process of shaping digital media. Yet, by engaging conversations about the circulation of short media and the role of technology in industrial and social change, I conclude that we need to have a more nuanced and contextual understanding of the role industries play in shaping the circulation and responses to media texts. The pervasiveness of television's attempts to understand and plan for audience activity needs to be foreground. So, while audiences will be an important focus of this

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23. I received IRB approval for this study (Protocol #: 1110007024) on November 11, 2011.

dissertation, their methodological existence will significantly depend on my broader industrial emphasis.

Scope

This is not a dissertation about the future of television, nor is it about a broad understanding of the business models that will work for television or what television will become. It is most specifically about how a mature industry like television deals with the proliferation of micromedia by both resisting and experimenting with it and what this interaction can tell us about the present and past of control in the media industries.

This dissertation is also not about long form digital distribution. As of now, companies like Netflix, Amazon, iTunes, and YouTube are jockeying to be the digital distribution portals for television and movies on your desktop, laptop, tablet, and smart phone. While this is a fascinating topic, it is beyond my area of concern. My focus here is on short media, because short forms of media are a good place to look for the front edge of industrial experimentation considering the lower outlay of associated costs. Additionally, shorter forms of media are an often overlooked part of the media landscape. These "paratexts," as Jonathan Gray refers to them, largely exist as promotional fodder for the media machine.[24] This means that they are often disregarded as unimportant, or at least subordinate to putatively real or primary texts. Drawing on the work of Barbara Klinger and Jonathan Gray, I argue for the importance of studying these texts whether you view them as "mere" promotional fodder or as texts in their own right. The study of these texts is important in an environment that fosters short media so prolifically,

24. See Jonathan Gray's *Show Sold Separately* (2010). Gray borrows the term "paratexts" from Gerrard Genette who coined the term. See Genette's *Paratexts* (1987).

especially when thinking about how an industry like television has tended to be built on longer formats.

I also want to note that companies, television shows, micromedia, and various social actors investigated in one chapter will reappear in others, albeit from a different point of view. In a sense, I will pursue a networked approach in my work here that so heavily characterizes digital media. This has its advantages and disadvantages. What each chapter may lack in specificity it will gain, I hope, in connection. I want to look at the embodiment of networks and will be primary concerned with how those networks operate. While some depth of engagement may be sacrificed, I believe focusing on the connection between disparate actors allows me to approach the circuit of production and reception more fully.

Additionally, I should note that this study will not fully cover the scope of what is happening on television. There are a variety of reasons I chose the particular television shows that ended up being short examples or more in-depth case studies. I was led to some shows because of their early moves into creating digital content like NBC's *The Office*. Others, like the USA Network's *Psych*, were of interest to me because of how frequently survey and interview participants mentioned the show (see Chapter 3 and Appendix A). This means that my examples are not consistent with the range of formats we see on television. For instance, I do not cover reality television, which means there is more work to be done, and the lessons learned here may or may not map neatly to all areas of television.

Because of the complexity of speaking about digital phenomena, I will use Chapter 2 to more fully explain the key terms of the dissertation like control, micromedia, intermediality, and scripting. In addition, I will fully explain how I will incorporate aspects of actor-network theory and theories of everyday life.

Each of the four remaining main chapters will focus on particular aspects of how television companies use soft control techniques to shape their interaction with audiences in a digital media landscape. Interwoven through the chapters are works of science fiction by William Gibson, Stanislaw Lem, Vernor Vinge, and Bruce Sterling. Each of them will be helpful in framing issues such as branding (Gibson), technological mediation (Lem), data-rich environments (Vinge), and framing (Sterling).

Chapter 3 looks at a core way television companies create linkages between older and newer media environments through the retrofitting of older practices. I will pinpoint how some of the commodifiable elements of television—star power, behind-the-scenes knowledge, and textual extension—are operationalized to design new media experiences. Additionally, I will look at the role branding plays in creating a unity to the use of these elements. Through the continued focus on creating branded media environments, television companies find ways to map their practices from an environment of few to one of many screens. Rather than focus on one example, I will focus on a range of examples—the Adult Swim Network and the television shows *Eastbound and Down, House, Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, the New Girl, The Office, Psych, The Ricki Lake Show, The Walking Dead*—to show the breadth of these practices. Each example shows a specific embodiment of these practices. Before I do this though, I will discuss micromedia to more fully situate its importance in today's media landscape and then turn to interviews I conducted with industry practitioners alongside surveys I did with potential audience members to understand the interlocking nature of the different regimes of value associated with micromedia production and reception.

Chapter 4 will focus primarily on the materiality of technology and the protocols that shape it. This will be a highly technical chapter focusing on the role application programming

interfaces (API) play in fostering intermedial connections**.** APIs are the interfaces that allow different datasets of information to communicate with one another. APIs are incredibly important to a discussion of how different media forms can technologically "talk" to each other and how that relationship is shaped. Furthermore, we can look to APIs as a process that makes it easier for television companies to transition into a digital media environment. The materials and scripts of technical objects define a range of possibilities, making some things easier than others. In doing so, these technologies physically embody the larger material-semiotic chains of the social that centrally position information sharing between businesses that track audience attention. The goal of this chapter is to introduce the discussion of APIs and explain its relevance to television through the USA Network's show *Psych*'s use of API-connected social entertainment.

Chapter 5 will investigate the role data plays in the industry-audience relationship, focusing on the role of social media in resituating television within the everyday life of consumers with a seemingly infinite amount of choice at their fingertips. The main focus in this relationship will be the translation of social media activity into quantifiable data. The goal of this chapter is to chart the importance of data as a powerful generator of soft control and to look at the role social media plays in programming industry-audience interactions. To investigate this, I will look at the connection between television companies and the social media company Twitter as it positions itself as a new form of audience metric for television.

Chapter 6 investigates the connection between technologies of digital content creation and a rhetoric of empowerment that frame audience engagement in particular ways. I focus on how contests based on the creation of user-generated content are utilized in the industry-audience relationship; here my primary case studies are the use of user-generated video contests for *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* and *The Office.* I will explore how these shows try to both produce and

harness the activity of participatory audiences. How is the creativity of everyday life used to enhance the brand of a television company? By looking at how framing and rhetoric are used, we can illuminate some of the discursive tools of soft control that are used to shape the industry-audience relationship.

2 Soft Control and the Nomadic Critic

"The task of cultural criticism is less that of interpreting texts and audiences than of describing vectors, distances and densities, intersections and interruptions, and the nomadic wandering (whether of people in everyday life or as cultural critics) through this unequally and unstably organized field of tendential forces and struggles."[1]

Before I discuss the ways in which soft control can be implemented through micromedia in the relationship between television companies and potential audiences, I need to set the table by defining some key terms for the dissertation. Words like "television," "control," and "intermediality" are key to understanding my study, yet they do not have consistent usages. And "micromedia"—a term I use to embody some type of unity between a range of short form media—needs to be fully explained before I can draw a connection to the practices of television companies. Finally, I want to spend some time discussing how I think elements of actor-network theory (ANT) and some theories of everyday life illuminate how soft control works. I argue that putting elements of ANT into conversation with a more fixed place—everyday life—allows me to better examine how soft control operates. An ANT approach helps me understand the wide array of materials and people that make up digital media, while a focus on the everyday life of audiences allows me localize all these trajectories on a place that is of great importance to the television industry.

1. Lawrence Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics," *Cultural Studies* 2, no, 3 (1988): 383.

Defining Television

Built on the infrastructure laid by radio broadcasting, television broadcasting has long been a planned affair.[2] From the beginning of television as a national medium through the late 1970s, its networked structure grew into the limited amount of broadcast spectrum space available. This meant there were only a relatively small number of channels in any given TV market. Because of technical standards, FCC frequency allocations, and the economic concentration of the industry, television grew into a control-centric medium in terms of the technologies used and access to these technologies.[3]

Within this limited broadcast spectrum, the US television industry grew into a structured daily flow of programs and a more or less rigid management of exhibition. According to Raymond Williams, television developed on a "planned flow" model, meaning that the formal parts of television—the shows, advertisements, promotional interstitials—were carefully patterned around different times of day to persuade the audience to stay with a particular channel.[4] Television producers did so in part to match and further structure existing routines of daily life, but also as a way to convince advertisers that they could secure audience eyeballs at specific times of day, regularly.[5]

Defining "television" is a tricky proposition, perhaps even more so today as it tentatively experiments with becoming a cross-platform medium. We move from a media environment that

2. William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1999), 16.

3. Ibid., 15-28.

4. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 2003 [1975]), 92.

5. See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life* (1996), which will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Williams described as having a "fixed frequency, speed, and direction" to one of multiple screens and networked flows.[6] As Amanda Lotz says in *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (2007), "television as we knew it—understood as a mass medium capable of reaching a broad, heterogeneous audience and speaking to the culture as a whole—is no longer the norm in the United States."[7] It is no longer a cultural forum, but many cultural forums that take many forms.[8] The logic of television today bends more toward "television as a cult conduit" as "the expanding fan cultures facilitated by the web perhaps proliferate."[9] Considering these shifting meanings (which have never been remarkably stable anyway), I need to define what I mean when I talk about "television."

First, I will only use "TV" when I am referring to something that can be called a "television set." I will refer to other devices as "screens," whether they exist on mobile phones, tablets, laptops or desktops. Thus, TV directly refers to a technological apparatus. On the other hand, when I write "television," I am referring to what lies at the nexus of the social, economic, industrial, technological, and audience formations that produce what we know as "television."

These formations and technologies that make up "television" have changed ever since the beginning of television in the United States. For instance, it would be a mistake to identify the "flow" model of television in a consistent, monolithic way. Over the course of television's

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6. Kathleen Oswald and Jeremy Packer, "Flow and mobile media: Broadcast fixity to digital fluidity" in *Communication Matter: Materialist approaches to media, mobility, and networks,* eds. Jeremy Packer and Stephen B. Crofts Wiley (New York: Routledge, 2011), 279.

7. Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 2.

8. See Horace Newcomb and P. M. Hirsch, "Television as a Cultural Forum," in *Television: The Critical View* (6th Ed.), ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 561-573.

9. Lotz, *Television Revolutionized*, 44.

history, a range of technologies and business practices—the remote control, VCR and DVD players, the rise of cable and satellite companies—have upset and reconfigured this flow.[10] Yet, the plethora of contemporary digitally-configured challenges to television seem to be somehow different from previous exigencies to television's market dominance, even posing a threat to the future of something called the "television industry." All this adds up to what seems like a powerful challenge to the television industry. If the many companies that make up the television industry now increasingly operate in an environment of choice and empowered audiences, the question is: How, or even can, television producers control a relationship with these audiences?

What is Control?

I started the dissertation by using Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* as a framing device to focus on how some measure of control could be implemented by a media industry like television in a digital media environment often cited for a lack of control features. Like Beukes, I wanted to focus on how technologies that foster the ability for everyday people to participate in public communication and culture have the potential to be turned against them.

But because "control" is a term so pregnant in its colloquial usages, I want to spend some time explaining the word and how I am using it. By all means, control is a scary word. For me, it conjures up old fears of subliminal advertising, (i.e., this message made me do that specific thing, but I am unaware of the cause of my behavior).[11] While this looming, sinister form of

10. William Uricchio, "Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow," in *Television After TV,* eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 170.

11. See Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers* (1997). In this book on the history of creativity and research in the formation of the advertising industry, Fox retells the tale of market researcher James Vicary's claim that he significantly raised sales of Coke and popcorn by slipping

control is a very popular usage of the term, it is but one of the many ways control has been imagined academically. There is rich genealogy of the use of control in academic conversations regarding social control.

In *The Control Revolution* (1986), a sweeping rereading of Earth's history through the framework of informational control, James Beniger offers a good starting point to understand how the term can be used. Beniger says, printed at length:

> the word *control* represents its most general definition, purposive influence toward a predetermined goal. Most dictionary definitions imply these two essential elements: *influence* of one agent over another, meaning that the former causes changes in the behavior of the latter; and *purpose,* in the sense that influence is directed toward some prior goal of the controlling agent. If the definition used here differs at all from colloquial ones, it is only because many people reserve the word *control* for its more determinate manifestations, what I shall call 'strong control.' Dictionaries, for example often include in their definitions of control concepts like direction, guidance, regulation, command, and domination, approximate synonyms of *influence* that vary mainly in increasing determination. As a more general concept, however, *control* encompasses the entire range from absolute control to the weakest and most probabilistic form.[12]

Beniger explains the range of definitions for control from determination to influence. He refers to these as existing on a continuum between stronger and softer forms of control (discussed in more detail below). The only thing that encapsulates these different definitions is the notion of a "predetermined goal." Thus, to Beniger, "all control is thus programmed."[13]

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subliminal messages into movies. This claim turned out, surprisingly, not to be true. Also see Charles Acland's *Swift Viewing* (2011), where he positions popular understandings of subliminal influence as a way of coming to grips with social change in consumer society, and later in the information age.

12. James Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 7 (author's italics).

13. Ibid., 40.

Focusing on the role technology and the economy play, he looks at how public institutions dealt with social control in a nineteenth and twentieth century industrial world increasing in size and speed. Beniger points to the concepts of information and feedback as central to understanding control.[14] This means that since the 1840s, long before the "Information Age," social organizations needed to be able to utilize information as quickly and efficiently as they did material energy resources. Simply: if the world was moving faster, more information was needed to shape the direction of that world.

Looking at the rise of the advertising industry as a "nascent infrastructure for control of consumption," Beniger points to the long list of innovations in the industry—newspaper distribution numbers, coupon reinforcement, the scientific methods of audience investigation by advertisers like Claude Hopkins—as proof of this desire for control.[15] This information was used as a feedback technology to gain a better understanding of the audience and how to reach it. While it is sometimes unclear whether Beniger views advertising as a subtler or more explicit form of social control, he does point to the importance of advertising as an signpost of the need for control, if not as proof that determination in and through advertising exists.

Beniger clearly is indebted to the work of cybernetics and information theory as seen through his citations of luminaries like Claude Shannon and Norbert Wiener, two founding figures in the study of information. Wiener defines cybernetics as the science of control and communication across a range of biological and manmade machines.[16] The focus of cybernetics, as W. Ross Ashby says in *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (1957), was to understand the behavior

14. Ibid., 434.

15. Ibid., 349.

16**.** Norbert Weiner, *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Amherst: MIT Press, 1948), Kindle edition, location 5 of 290.

of machines as far as they were "regular, or determinate, or reproducible."[17] This study of behavior wants to identify the range of possibilities of action as a way to chart and predict results in complex systems. In these complex systems, the concept of difference—or the change from one state to the next—was important, because it offered a way to plot, predict, and program change mathematically.

Henri Lefebvre analyzes the relationship of feedback technologies to control in the way cybernetic systems are utilized to shape human communication in a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption." The idea of bureaucratically controlled consumption is most clearly articulated in Lefebvre's *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1984). He argues that society and its various "sub-systems" are functionally organized and rationalized, produced and re-produced though programming, obsolescence, and management via cybernetic systems.[18] It is our everyday lives where this control, in the form of programming, takes place.[19] An important take-away from this is thinking about how cybernetic systems have the potential to produce as much control as they do freedom. This view of societal control exists in the intense amount of data that cybernetic systems collect and that human statisticians and computer-based algorithms interpret, which has become a central force in how media industries understand and shape their relationship to audiences.

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17. W. Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (London: Chapman & Hill, 1957), 1. Note that cybernetics' view of machinery is much broader than its popular usage. A machine is anything that can interact and change whether metal or biological.

18. Although, like Ted Striphas says in *The Age of Late Print* (2009), I think the word "bureaucratic" doesn't seem to apply anymore. Controlled consumption is a much more "free market"-centered approach.

19. Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004 [1984]), 74.

To Deleuze (a slight extrapolation on my part. since he wrote very little on this topic), the networked nature of audiences and contemporary media do not work against a society of control, but rather are a chief feature of a control society. In his short work, "Post-script on the Societies of Control," Deleuze discusses the transition from a disciplinary society built on enclosure—as you move from the hospital, to the factory, to the school—to a control society built on more open-ended forms of continuous control where technology interlinks all these previously separate domains. In this formulation, the modes of a control society are not unyielding but flexible—something Lev Manovich would call "modular."[20] These systems of control are at the crux of a contradiction where freedom of spatial movement is paired with constant monitoring, auditing, and adjustment. As Gilles Deleuze says, a society of control is one where the "controls are a modulation."[21] In other words, this logic of control is flexible, reconfigurable, and fast. "Control is about the constant subtle structuring of social life, the ways that we are sorted, tracked, cajoled, and tempted."[22]

Kevin Kelly, founding executive editor of *WIRED* magazine, speaks about new forms of technical, biological, and social organization in *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines* (1995). Kelly looks at how we can understand our emerging technologies as biological rather than simple mechanical systems. His assertion is that "(1) Human-made things are behaving more lifelike, and (2) Life is becoming more engineered."[23] These "vivisystems" are defined by their complexity, which means they do not operate well under conditions of strict control.

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20. See Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2002).

21. Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *The MIT Press*, October, vol. 59 (Winter, 1992) : 3-7, 3.

22. Wise, "Attention and assemblage in the clickable world," 162.

23. Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines* (New York: Basic Publishing, 1995), 3.

Rather, at the most abstract level, the goal is simply to let the system organize itself, as a type of hivemind activity not built around central control. For instance, a "swarm system" like the internet is adaptable, evolvable, resilient, and boundless in ways that "old linear systems" cannot support."[24] To Kelly, these systems harbor a fair amount of uncontrollability for these very reasons. Like Beniger, Kelly views control as a continuum with determination on one end and "out of control" on the other while "in between are varieties of control we don't have words for."[25] He looks to the word "manage," decides it is imperfect and settles on is something "more like 'co-control.'"[26] As we discuss more deeply in Chapter 4, this co-controlling between humans and machines acknowledges the agency of technology, but does not entirely dispense with the idea of an architecture of control for complex systems.

Read as a corrective to some of the more enthusiastic views of Kelly on technology, Tiziana Terranova, in *Network Culture* (2004), talks about the possibility of "soft control" in networked environments. Soft control refers to the type of systems Kelly identifies above—open ended, built with biological metaphors in mind. To Kelly, these systems can only be "co-controlled" as we share a (itself a concept that is perhaps too warm and fuzzy) symbiotic relationship with our technological creations. This is not a strict form of control, if "strict" refers to determination, yet Terranova thinks that some level of control can be administered. "Soft" means that systems are allowed to develop somewhat autonomously, subject to different

24. Ibid., 22.

25. Ibid., 329.

26. Ibid., 330.

commands and controls interjected over time.[27] An example of this would be the modeling of an environment, whether it is the forecasting of actual weather patterns or the simulation of various actors within an open-world video game. For this model, environmental parameters are created and algorithm-based, and relatively autonomous actors are introduced. Their actions are monitored, and, through feedback, results are pondered, algorithms are tweaked, parameters are reset, and the environment is remodeled. The softness of this form of control comes from the apparent openness to the evolution of the behavior of the actors. The control comes in because the environment can be tweaked and even thrown out if it does not produce the appropriate results.

In this light, we can see a networked system as open, but also as somewhat amenable to regulation over time and though experimentation. Terranova applies this idea specifically to management theory and audiences, suggesting that networked systems can be designed to have open periods of seemingly no control that are nonetheless programmed to be controlled in the first instance (design) and in the last (outcome). This type of control is not totalizing, nor does it have to be; rather, it is about testing and re-testing, making slight adjustments until you achieve a desired result.

If we switch gears and think more specifically about media studies, the most obvious touchstone may be the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. In "The Culture Industry," focusing mostly on radio broadcasting (and to a lesser extent film), they suggest that

27. Kevin Kelly would referring to this as "scaffolding," or the rules, materials, or structures that work to create a new area for a "swarm" to grow into and self-organize. There are also some resonances with what Terranova says and what Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein define as "nudging"—" choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives." (2009, Kindle locations 179-181).

mass culture produces gross uniformity among its members.[28] The culture industry only produces the illusion that individuals have agency. Rather, individuals are actually subject to the sameness determined by larger capitalist market imperatives. The culture industry thus simultaneously entertains and disciplines its members, who are compelled to "insist on the very ideology that enslaves them."[29] In this formulation, because the individual consciousness of the audience has been suppressed, it forestalls any resistance to central control. This view points to an imbalance between industrial and audience control, giving a high degree of agency to industrial action.

However, David Hesmondhalgh, a leading scholar of the cultural industries, cautions against over determining the idea of control. He refers to the 80/20 rule—the so-called Pareto principle—to suggest that 80% of the profit in media industries comes from just 20% of the products.[30] The implication here is that very little cultural production is actually successful, at least financially, and therefore media and other types of cultural goods hold less sway over people's lives than we have been led to believe. Similarly, the *Harvard Business Review* estimates that roughly 75% of products fail to be successful.[31] If that is the case, how can one say that the cultural industries, including the television industry, control anything?

In principle, I agree with Hesmondhalgh's assertions. To suggest that the cultural industries can control (at the level of strict determination) what any one individual does is to

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28. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" in *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1987), 128.

29. Ibid., 134.

30. According to the work of Chris Anderson, former editor-in-chief of *WIRED Magazine,* this rule, called the Pareto Principle, seems to no longer work in the digital "long tail" age.

31. Joan Schneider and Julie Hall, "Why Most Product Launches Fail," *Harvard Business Review* 2011, no. 4, accessed March 13, 2012. http://hbr.org/2011/04/why-most-product-launches-fail/sb3

imagine that there is a room where a producer pushes a button and a consumer responds in a zombie-like fashion. Doing so, furthermore, gives these disparate industries a cohesion that doesn't exist. While we use phrases like "the television industry" as a shorthand, it is perhaps more appropriate to refer to these interrelated companies as the television industries. We have a satellite television industry, a network industry, a cable industry, burgeoning online channels, and local television stations. Within these industries, we have companies that are ruthlessly competing with one another for Nielson ratings. To assume any industries or companies could have a direct one-to-one relationship of control with a consumer is obviously false. There is a rich history of work in cultural studies and reception studies that argue against such a deterministic point of view.[32] There is no scary hypodermic needle.

Even reception studies scholars, however, will readily admit that we make our choices in a cultural surround that shapes our decision-making. This means that aberrant readings do exist—the process of reading itself is unruly. But, as Barbara Klinger notes, the act of reading does not exist in a "context full of free-floating signifiers that can be operated by members of a society as they will."[33] Therefore, the technologies, the industrial formations, the laws of a society, and the social norms of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability all shape the reading and interpretation of a text. Still, there are perhaps some forms of soft control out

32. See, among others, Stuart Hall,"Encoding, Decoding" (2001); David Morley, *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies* (1992); Janet Staiger. *Interpreting Film* (1992); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* (1984); Tony Bennett, "Text and Social Process: The Case of James Bond" (1982); Barbara Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture" (1989).

33. Barbara Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture," in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, Ed. James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1992), 132.

there, ones that fit Beniger's broader definition of "purposive influence toward a predetermined goal" or Terranova's idea of soft control.

It would thus seem that control encapsulates a contradiction. On the level of the individual, it seems impossible to have power over any one person in an absolute sense. Yet on a societal level, it seems plausible that industries and institutions exercise some directing influence that is nonetheless less than totalizing. To try to reconcile this apparent contradiction, I want to suggest that we have to look at control as embedded within a larger context—not worrying about the success or failure of any particular show, or how any specific experiment works out, but rather as a field of possibility to which the phrase "logic of control" is more appropriately applied. To me, this implies a goal rather than a certainty. In claiming that control is what companies wish to produce, and not necessarily what they attain, I can say that each one of us has some type of agency. We are actors with choice, but we also live in a social world with a range of actors pursuing "purposive influence" toward predetermined goals.

Thus, as mentioned above, the features of this logic of control are actualized in both "harder" (i.e., more strictly determinate) and "softer" (i.e., less strictly determinate) forms. The harder forms of this logic of control consist of copyright, digital rights management (DRM), and distribution windows to control circulation. Softer forms of the logic of control include branding, design, framing, and information gathering. These are informed both by designer intuition and, more importantly, by data accumulated through industry-audience interactions. I will focus this dissertation mainly on the softer forms of control, as much has already been written about harder forms. This does not mean that I will not mention issues like copyright law, but it means these issues will not occupy centrality in this dissertation.

Following James Beniger and Tiziana Terrnova, I define soft control as the purposive influence toward a predetermined goal through a range of interactions where development happens somewhat autonomously, while subject over time to interjection with commands and controls. To identify the logics of soft control, I will focus on the role of designer scripts in fostering such logics. I do this as a way to think about the processes and products put into circulation by television producers to engage with digital micromedia. In "The De-Scription of Technical Objects," Madeleine Akrich looks at the way technologies shape and are shaped by designer scripts and user de-scriptions. From the perspective of designers, these scripts "define a framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act."[34] While this framework has to be put into action by users, it has a technical and performative force that suggests avenues of use. When these avenues are easy and popular, it is hard to refuse them, or to not think on their terms. This means that, as Jonathan Sterne notes, material technologies embody in physical form "particular dispositions and tendencies—particular ways of doing things."[35]

In "Scripted Spaces: Television Interfaces and the Non-Places of Asynchronous Entertainment," David Chamberlain says that digital media interfaces like *Hulu*'s main page appear as "non-places," but really are "scripted spaces" that operate as "pointed examples of how control operates in a networked age. They are delivered up as experiences that offer a promise of

34. Madeline Akrich, "The De-Scription of Technical Objects," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change,* eds. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 208.

35. Jonathan Sterne, "Bourdieu, Technique and Technology," *Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3/4 (2003): 377.

empowerment, of consumer sovereignty over technology, information, and consumption."[36] Chamberlain draws on the work of Norman Kline, who, in *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (2004), looks at a history of "fancy public spaces" like Disney World or Las Vegas to understand how "scripted spaces" operate.[37] Chamberlain argues that we can see still scripts at work in shaping audience interaction once we move to the digital realm from "exceptionally planned physical environments."[38] Unlike physical spaces, which tend to be built more on spectacle, digital spaces are built "around the effect of interactivity at the interface. In essence, the experiential modality of the media interaction is about choice and personalization, expressed through interaction with the interface itself."[39] Thus, I will foreground the strategies various television companies use to shape audience attention into what Madeline Akrich calls "causal pathways."[40]

The Many Forms of Micromedia

WIRED magazine calls this "Snack Culture," where "movies, TV, songs, games . . . pop culture now comes packaged like cookies or chips, in bite-size bits for high-speed munching. It's

36. Daniel Chamberlain, "Scripted Spaces: television Interfaces and the Non-Places of Asynchronous Entertainment," in *Television as Digital Media,* eds. James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 233, 250.

37. Norman Kline, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 2. Kline suggests that planners have gone to great lengths to design an environment that generates expected reaction for visitors to that space.

38. Chamberlain, "Scripted Spaces," 239.

39. Ibid., 243-244.

40. Akrich, "De-scriptions," 221.

instant entertainment – and boy, is it tasty."[41] And while short forms of media are nothing new, their importance both culturally and economically arguably has risen. Shorter forms of media constitute a collective phenomenon in their own right; people watch, listen, and read an incredible amount of short content today.

In the field of media studies, "micromedia" is not a very common word. When used, it generally refers to digital content appearing on small, portable devices such as smart phones. Its signature features are small screen exhibition, short length, and simple design.[42] While I will be using the term in a similar manner, I should state that "simple design" does not necessarily mean we will find small amounts of data. For example, video compression formats like MPEG-4, H.264, or Xvid (to name a few) allow for the compression of massive amounts of audio and video data into tiny, transportable packages. Even though this media may be short, it is often data rich.

Micromedia have become a significant part of our media landscape, as we have seen an explosion in recent years of short-form visual media content. While I will be talking primarily about short professional and amateur videos, casual games, and their placement within social media, this does not exhaust the range of micromedia. For instance, within a social media platform like Twitter, a single letter or word could be understood as a form of micromedia. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, Twitter collects the words you write and crunches them into data to be used to better understand television audiences. So, while a word like "swears" written on Twitter, a short video of cool skateboard tricks, or a pop song by Beyoncé have very little to do

41. Nancy Miller, "Minifesto for a New Age," *WIRED Magazine,* accessed 3/10/2009, http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/15.03/snackminifesto.html

42. Lev Manovich, "Macromedia and Micro-media." *Lev Manovich*. (2000, Accessed: November 16, 2008), 4.

with one another, they exist alongside each other in digital networks.[43] Although I will call into question the "frictionless" nature of the following statement, the internet's hyperlinked capabilities and "polyglot nature" challenge any idea of discrete medium specificity, as all short-form media are potentially interconnected and must compete with one another for attention.[44] The only limitation on this categorization would be the potential duration of the short media, making micromedia ideal for an environment that favors speed of circulation and fosters a cornucopia of choice.

In terms of video and film production, the breadth of this category is expansive, including amateur YouTube videos, "Vines" (six-second long video clips shared on Twitter), Facebook-backed Instagram videos (15-second videos shared socially), professionally produced shorts, webisodes, and midtails.[45] New digital platforms of exhibition—which have expanded in popularity in relation to broadband penetration rates—open up a space for amateurs using relatively cheap digital cameras to express themselves, augment official media texts, and comment on the world in general.

New digital platforms have also been populated by industrial content either made specifically for this type of short-form exhibition or as digital extensions of longer, official texts. This type of official content is seeking to find audiences that are increasingly interested in online

43. "Swears" comes from the account of someone/something called "everyword" who is tweeting every word in the English language in separate tweets. See: everyword, Twitter post, August 11, 2013, 6:00a.m., https://twitter.com/everyword/status/366484170295353344

44. Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 192.

45. Virginia Heffernan coined the term, referring to "nouveau videostuffs that are kind-of produced, kind-of user-generated." See "Are 'Midtails' the Future of Television?" in *The New Your Times Magazine* (2009).

video. And the reasoning behind industry interest in colonizing this space is clear. A study carried out by Mary Madden for the Pew Internet & American Life Project in 2007 says that 57% of all internet users watch online video and that a small core (19%) does so daily.[46] By 2010, in a follow up study by Kristen Purcell, 69% of adult internet users had watched online videos with 14% uploading videos.[47]

Social media are significantly platforms for the mixing and matching of short forms of content into small publishable bursts. This stacking of formats, one within the other, creates a complex, hyperlinked web of short media where the lines between one form and the next are often blurry. Tumblr, for instance, the popular microblogging format, creates a space where a user can easily grab content—videos, images, songs, and, yes, even text—to be mixed together within the same stream. Additionally, we have something like Twitter, built on 140-character bursts of communication and 6-second bursts of video on their app Vine.

In reference to social media, a 2012 study by comScore pegged social networking sites as accounting for one out of every five minutes spent online. More than half the world's internet-connected population visited Facebook in October, and Facebook users as a group alone share roughly 4 billion pieces of content daily.[48]Additionally, *The Next Web* said there were roughly 25 billion tweets sent in 2010. And there was also 35 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every

46. Mary Madden, "Online Video," *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Accessed November 16, 2008. http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Online-Video.aspx

47. "State of Online Video," *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, accessed May 11, 2011. http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2010/State-of-Online-Video.aspx.

48. Zachary Rodgers "ComScore: Social Universe Still Quickly Expanding," *ClickZ*, accessed March 14, 2012. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/2145298/comscore-social-universe-quickly-expanding

minute in 2010, 60 billion YouTube videos watched per month, and 20 million YouTube videos linked to Facebook each month.[49]

We also have casual games that people idly play at work, on the bus, at home, and, yes, on the toilet in the "between time." In reference to casual gaming, a 2010 report by *Newzoo* said that short, casual games take up 25% of the total gaming marketplace across internet and mobile platforms. Additionally, there was a 66% rise in social network-based casual games from 2009 to 2010.[50] A 2012 study found that 39% of all 215 million hours spent gaming each day in the U.S. was focused on casual gaming. This is roughly split between men and women, with 21-35 being the largest age demographic at 53%.[51] Finally, a study in 2011 by Nielsen showed that gaming applications (apps) across mobile platforms accounted for 64% of apps used, beating out weather and social media.[52]

Finally, I want to note that suggesting today's contemporary media environment is hospitable to the emergence of micromedia does not preclude other logics in this environment. People do indeed binge on whole seasons of television shows on DVD and, increasingly on platforms like Netflix.[53]

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49. Martin Bryant, "User Generated Content by the Numbers," *The Next Web*. Accessed June 23, 2011. http://thenextweb.com/shareables/2011/06/22/user-generated-content-by-the-numbers-infographic

50. Jack McGrath, "Gaming in 2010: A Look at the Statistics," *TechnoBuffalo*, accessed January 22, 2011. http://www.technobuffalo.com/2010/12/28/gaming-in-2010-a-look-at-the-statistics

51. "Casual & Social Games Trend Report," *New Zoo*, accessed March 13, 2012. http://www.newzoo.com/trend-reports/casual-social-games-trend-report

52. "Report the Rise of Smartphones, Apps and the Mobile Web," Nielsen Media Research, accessed March 2, 2012. http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2011/report-the-rise-of-smartphones-apps-and-the-mobile-web.html

The Intermediality of Digital Media

Endeavoring to understand how a media industry like television competes with a range of digital media forms in networked environments necessitates investigating the relationships created at the intersections of various forms and technologies. If anything, a focus on a digitally-networked environment—with its "meshwork of overlapping cultural formations, of hybrid reinventions, cross-pollinations, and singular variations"—forces an acknowledgement of the interrelationship among media forms.[54] In this light, I will look at the process of intermediation between different forms, different companies of the television industry, other industries, and even the work of audience members.

Intermediality can refer to a range of relationships—textual, technological, industrial, promotional, and cultural—that occur between media forms. While the word has been mostly used in European scholarship, it has strong resonances with concepts of intertextuality and convergence.[55] According to Johan Fornäs, instead of studying media separately from each other, "the intermediality perspective investigates their intersection with differentiated networks of communication."[56] In a North American context, in *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and*

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53. Steven Johnson, "Snacklash: In praise of the full meal," *WIRED Magazine,* accessed March 12, 2011. http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/15.03/snacklash.html

54. Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (Pluto Press: London, 2004), 1-2.

55. See the work of Johan Fornäs, Juha Herkman, Mikko Lehtonen, Kaarina Nikunen, and Irina Rajewsky. Additionally, "intermediality" can be confused with "intermedia," a term used by Fluxus artists in the 1960s to refer to works of art that did not fit well into established hierarchies of art mediums.

56. Johan Fornäs, "Passages Across Thresholds: Into the Borderlands of Mediation," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 8, no. 4 (2002): 89.

Global Culture (2003), Charles Acland similarly refers to intermediation as the relationship between different forms of media. In his discussion of the global film culture, he points to the impossibility of analytically separating film from other media in a contemporary media landscape.[57]

The value of a term like intermediality to me is that although a lot of intermedial work focuses on textual issues, "intermediality can be a productive concept if it is understood more broadly."[58] Thus, we can see a largely textual theory like Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's concept of "remediation"—that all any form of media can do is borrow and repurpose previous forms—in congress with other types of intermediality, since, as Acland suggests, we should "consider the intermedia linkages of texts, production, and reception."[59]

Moving the focus solely from aesthetic change and continuity allows me to engage with the transformations that happen behind, inside, and around that aesthetic transformation. This gets to the materiality of this transformation, to understand the role technologies and protocols play in the interaction between different media forms. Intermediality offers a way into charting and identifying experiments in audience control in a contemporary environment. It allows me to understand the material interrelationships that need to take place when understanding how one industry tries to map its practices into a new environment.

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57. I would like to thank Ted Striphas for pointing me toward this term, a term he also puts to use in *The Late Age of Print* (2009).

58. Juha Herkman, "Convergence or intermediality? Finnish political communication in the New Media Age," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 18, no. 4 (2012): 373.

59. Charles C. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 122.

Furthermore, intermediality allows me to bring balance to one of the core principles in network culture: the relationship between conceptualizing homogeneity and heterogeneity in a digital media environment.[60] Digital networks are often spoken of as if they are, collectively, a singular entity (e.g., "the internet") when they are better imagined as assemblages sustained by a great deal of variety. So, on one hand, as Friedrich Kittler states, media are now mostly delivered over optical fiber networks, standardized and differentiated only by "transmission frequencies and bit format."[61] While this is certainly true, a danger arises in assuming that this process is not rife with its own roadblocks and dead ends. Media formats, even in their digital form, do not simply or easily borrow from other media or move easily from platform-to-platform. Nor do new forms of media simply displace existing forms. Rather, this process is exceedingly messy, filled with technological innovations, legal wrangles, obsolescence, regulations, interfaces, protocols, experimentation, human assumptions, statistical data, backroom industrial deals, and temporary linkages. So, whereas a term like convergence—a word popularized in academic journals like *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* and books like Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (2006)—implies things coming together into a neat package, the word intermedial better preserves some of the messiness surrounding the digitization of media forms.[62]

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60. Or as Tiziana Terrnova says in *Network Culture*, we need to try to think simultaneously of "the singular and the multiple, the common and the unique" (2004, 1).

61. Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999 [1986]), 1.

62. Herkman, "Convergence or intermediality," 370. While Herkman critiques Jenkins rendering of "convergence," he makes sure to note that even Jenkins notes that "convergence" operates more like "divergence" if we focus solely on media industries and the range of devices they use.

As I will discuss in more depth later, I believe materialist frameworks like intermediality are important to understanding the relationships created between media forms, technologies, industries, and audiences. We need concepts that foreground materialism to tie theoretical concepts to their worldly articulations. Relatedly, we need to understand how semiotic chains of thought are realized in our everyday lives.

A materialist approach is important when dealing with media forms like digital media that tend to efface or background the work that goes into their presentation.[63] Not only does "data" or "information" tend to come off as a neutral entity, agnostically and logically arranged into 1s and 0s, but also technologies themselves tend to disappear both physically into their environments and "phenomenologically, by falling into habit."[64] I would argue that a materialist approach that brings "work" to the forefront can be used as a way into unpacking discourses on digitally configured audience control and empowerment.

By showing how intermediality operates in certain instances to make the movement between different media forms appear seamless, I will show how it is possible more easily to program the presence of control features in a digital media environment. I will show how television companies utilize control features to compete with a range of other choices present in this environment. We can clearly see that television companies are making big pushes into experimentation in digital environments through the creation over the last 10 years or so of digital media departments. In these departments, you will find jobs like Information Architects, Designers, Page Code Developers, and Content Producers. For instance, NBC Digital offers a position as "Audience Data Manager," working with technology to "manage the collection of

63. See Bolter and Grusin's concept of "immediacy" in *Remediation* (2001).

64. Wise, "Attention and assemblage in the clickable world," 161.

audience data across more than 21+ NBCUniversal digital businesses and hundreds of sites."[65] They also offer a job as "Junior Systems Developer" to run the programming architecture at Fandango, a movie ticket purchasing site and one of their "sub-businesses."[66]

It is through a focus on intermedial connections that we can see how a network of soft control practices can exist across a range of devices and in the various places that make up the everyday life of digitally-enabled audiences.

The Nomadic Critic, Actor-Network Theory, and Everyday Life

In "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics," Lawrence Grossberg looks for a way to understand the relationship of the cultural critic to the world. He settles on the nomadic critic who recognizes that his or her nomadism is not contrasted with the fixity of his or her field of analysis. Rather, the nomad "recognizes that any practice has multiple effects and that the identity of a practice is only the articulated site of the intersection of lines of effects."[67] Furthermore, effects, and their intensities, change depending on specific contexts. This is an image of the world that foregrounds complexity.

For my purposes, I take this to mean that the world does not always (if ever) operate in a consistent manner that would allow the cultural critic to pin down and easily explain. Rather, in a world full of complexity, the critic cannot expect any individual point of view or theoretical resource to adequately explain everything. Thus, one lesson to take from Grossberg's concept of

65. "Audience Data Manager," *Brassring.com.* Accessed March 13, 2011, https://sjobs.brassring.com/1033/asp/tg/cim_jobdetail.asp?SID

66. "Junior Systems Developer," *Brassring.com* Accessed March 13, 2011, https://sjobs.brassring.com/1033/asp/tg/cim_jobdetail.asp?SID

67. Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences," 383.

the nomadic critic is that borrowing resources from a certain theoretical approach or blended elements from multiple theories is a perfectly reasonable way to try to grasp at the complexity of our world.

This point about complexity, as stated above in my discussion of intermediality, is especially salient in regards to a digitally networked environment with its "meshwork of overlapping cultural formations" and "hybrid reinventions." Over the course of the dissertation, I move between computer servers, application programming interfaces, the everyday act of tweeting, complex computer algorithms, branding strategies, and the poetics of short media construction by media professionals to name a few. Thus, it makes sense that I would borrow from different theoretical approaches to better grasp this intersection of phenomena.

In this light, I want to explain how I use different theoretical resources to approach the programming of soft control. While ANT and theories of everyday life are different theoretical approaches, they are both, at least to my understanding, materialist theories. They are both concerned with how ideas, practices, and habits emerge relationally and are embodied by particular actors. Theories and ideas do not just spring to life in ANT or theories of everyday life; rather they must be embodied. Material embodiment is important because it makes tangible the logics of soft control. By seeing how ideas are translated into practice in a meaningfully material sense, I believe we can engage and enliven the discussion about some of the ways soft controls are programmed by the television industry and picked up by audiences.

To utilize these theoretical approaches, I put ANT terminology like "network," "translation," and "obligatory passage points" into conversation with the concept, space, and time of everyday life. To do this, I will first explain these approaches and show how they are useful to understanding how control works in a digital media environment.

Working with ANT in "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39," Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer offer a model to explain how scientific knowledge is created in the intersection between diverging social worlds. Their assertion is that scientific work is heterogeneous, requiring the input of a vast array of actors and institutions across social worlds of conflicting value. For the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology to survive, for instance, an entrepreneurial actor must work to manage the tensions and specificities of various social worlds (i.e., networks) so as to produce generalizable findings. For instance, "a university administrator in charge of grants and contracts . . . answers to a different set of audiences and pursues a different set of tasks, than does an amateur field naturalist collecting specimens for a natural history museum."[68] Yet, all of these different systems of value, with varying agendas, must be aggregated to form a network that produces specific goals for each various social world and also the general goals of the entrepreneurial actor or manager of the network. Although there is an organizing, managerial control to the network, Star and Griesemer suggest that we approach networks from a holistic perspective where "the viewpoint of the amateurs is not inherently better or worse than that of the professionals."[69] In this way, we can see how, at different times, any actor within this network—from university administrators to beetles—have moments of agency that make their goals stand out, change the flow of information, or even disband the network. This view presupposes that certain actors have more power than others, but it does not close down avenues for the network's change and transformation. Star and Griesemer suggest

68. Susan Leigh Star and James Greisemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39," *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989): 388.

69. Ibid., 389.

that a standardization of methods and boundary objects help to produce specificity of context and generality of knowledge for the network.

Standardization of methods would be any technique that spans social worlds to translate knowledge from one context to the next. For instance, by requiring all field workers to follow the same meticulous processes of transcription, Joe Grinnel, head of the Museum, standardized the translation of knowledge from the field to the lab. In addition, boundary objects are "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites."[70] The state of California would be a boundary object in this instance as it acts as a common unifier among networks yet also retains specificity for various actors. For Joseph Grinnell, California is a laboratory and for Annie Alexander, chief patron, California is a space of disappearing flora and fauna. In addition, the University of California at Berkeley sees California as a pool from which to draw capital and new students. We can see how the term California is generalizable to the extent that different social worlds all understand its meaning but, in the specifics, it is used toward different ends.

This view changes what a sociological view of society should be. The “social” is not the stuff left over after the law, arts, education, and other higher institutions are abstracted out. The social is not a category; you cannot just dump things into it and then call them “social.” The social is precisely the interrelation of materials, people, objects, ideas, and more—an effect, not a cause. These “material-semiotic chains” are referred to as networks, which are interconnected with other networks.

70. Ibid., 393.

To help understand networks of association, ANT researchers have developed a somewhat strange but necessary terminology—words like obligatory passage points, problematization, interessement, enrollment, intermediaries, actants, and translations. As noted above, translations are what happen between the different actants that comprise the network. Translation is the process that mediates between different positions in a network, and its purpose is to hold the network together. For instance, in Michel Callon's "Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay," researchers who want to restock scallops in the Bay have to describe "a system of alliances, or associations, between entities, thereby defining the identity and what they 'want.'"[71] By setting up a problem, the researchers position themselves as obligatory passage points—points that must be crossed to sustain a network—into how the network is imagined and what the roles of everyone and everything will be. This involves enrolling actants into particular roles through interessment—the process of getting other actants to agree to the terms laid out by the focal actant. If interessment is successful, then actants become enrolled in the network. This enrollment is performative, meaning it has to happen over and over again to remain a network.

What is key here for me is this concept of translation. In fact, Bruno Latour has referred to ANT as a "sociology of translation."[72] Placing an emphasis on translation foregrounds the transformations that information and objects undergo in the process of assembling social worlds. Different actants have different goals, and there must be a way to translate between these goals, the materials and ideas used, and different contexts.

71. Callon, "Sociology of Translation," 204.

72. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (London: Oxford Press, 2005), 9.

As we will see in Chapters 3 and 6, a focus on translation helps explain the multiple meanings and values that are cobbled together to form the circuit between media production and reception. In addition, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, the concept of translation is important when discussing how computer code is written to allow different databases of information to interact with one another.

Additionally, ANT is helpful in the way it understands technology. "Technology" is one of those words everyone knows but no one seems to know how to define. It is a floating signifier that covers a range of actions and objects, where "dictionary definitions don't match up very well to actual use, and popular usage is inconsistent."[73] That said, one of the key points of contention about technology is its "thingness"—its borders, its ability to be something that can do something for someone. In public discourse, technology generally refers to the instruments, (i.e., having material forms), used to solve a problem or achieve a result.

One of the reasons technological determinism—the belief that technology is the main driving force behind society and its related cultural values—appears to be so prevalent in popular consumer discourses is the material thingness of technologies that "helps to create a sense of causal efficacy made visible."[74] I want to, on one hand, critique the belief that technology is an

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73. J. D. Slack and J. MacGregor Wise, *Culture + Technology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing: 2005), 97.

74. Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith, "Introduction," in *Does Technology Drive History?* eds. Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith (Boston: MIT Press, 1994), xi. Take, for instance, Microsoft Window's "Life Without Walls" campaign for Windows 7. In these ads, we see the many devices of your life—televisions, laptops, desktops, and mobile smart phones—lined up against a yellow background. On each of the screens we see a roller coaster connecting; technological devices in harmonious union. The walls between these devices are disappearing with the rush you might get from riding a roller coaster. They connect with ease and swiftness; they are exhilarating. Technology is here to make our life easier, more efficient, and better. See Harry McCracken, "Windows' Life Without Walls Print Ads: Handsome! Unconvincing!" *Technologizer*. Accessed July 9, 2010. http://technologizer.com/2008/09/19/windows-life-

independent force in society while, on the other, try to understand technology as an important shaper of meaning.

Following scholars like Lisa Gitelman, a helpful way to position technologies is to think of them less as discrete objects and more as clusters of materials and protocols. Additionally, following J.D. Slack and J. MacGregor Wise in *Culture + Technology*, I acknowledge technology as polysemic. Alternatively, as Jonathan Sterne says, "A technology is a repeatable social, cultural, and material process (which is to say that it is all three at once) crystallized into a mechanism or set of related mechanisms."[75] This way, we can see technologies not only as things but also as embodying the techniques that go into them. Technologies in the material sense are then things that "are structured by human practices so that they may in turn structure human practices."[76]

From an ANT perspective, there is no bright-line distinction between the technical and the social. Second, all materials can be either mediators or intermediaries—active or passive shapers of the social.[77] You may have noticed the use of the word "actant" in lieu of "actor" and the curious placement of things like beetles, shellfish, and starfish within social networks. That is because, to ANT, agency is not just the domain of humans. Cars, monkeys, bacteria, scallops,

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without-walls-campaign-the-print-ads

75. Sterne, "Bourdieu, Technique and Technology," 376.

76. Ibid., 377.

77. In ANT, mediators are active shapers of the social whereas intermediaries are things that transpose social force more or less unchanged. What I take this to mean is that, while some material-semiotic chains are important to what is being studied, others can be left in the background. This does not mean that some materials are neutral and others are not. Rather, it means that within a particular frame, some materials are of more interest than others. Thus, from another perspective, things that are mediators of the social can become intermediaries in another instance. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (2009, 39-41).

beetles, and fences all can have agency, if for no other reason than because objects are seen as composite and heterogeneous.[78] A technology, like a car, may look like a discrete object. It is technical, material, and freestanding. But, from the ANT point of view, it is not so much discrete as it is part of a long chain of "people, products, tools, machines, money, and so forth."[79] The car is a network of smaller networks—engines, protocols of construction, machines and humans that created the car—interconnected to larger networks—laws that govern the road, gasoline prices, cultural understanding of car ownership, distinctions of taste. Therefore, the boundary between what we call "technical" and what we call "social" is not as discrete as it may at first appear. This also means, as Roger Silverstone says, that technology does not come naked or neutral.[80]

I fully explained the idea that technologies have agency and shape the world around them. Now, of course, this agency is not separate from the networks of actants that imbue technologies with their force, nor should the "thingness" of technologies imply that they are as discrete as they seem. One way to explain this is to fully understand the approach that ANT takes to considering how the social comes into being, is sustained, and how our networks of association can also disband. Material technologies and specific learned techniques are part of the larger network of material-semiotic chains that have the ability to shape our world. Thus, a particular technology is an actant made up of other actants that shapes yet other actants while being shaped by an engagement with different networks of actants. Thus, to try and discuss technology without the larger backdrop of ANT would be unproductive.

78. Akrich, "De-Scription of Technical Objects," 205.

79. Ibid., 205.

80. Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994), 79.

Unlike actor-network theory, which studies actants wherever they go in the network, theories of everyday life address the specific contexts of the mundane and the rituals of the ordinary. Much of the academic discourse on the concept of everyday life has centered on the problem of repetition—the space and time of the habitual. Day-to-day experiences like eating, sleeping, driving to work, doing laundry, and watching television inhabit the everyday. Everyone has everyday life, albeit under different circumstances. Additionally, organizations also have everyday rituals particular to how their time and space are organized. Therefore, I can have an everyday life—a set of habitual practices—that are individual to me while I also operate within an academic institution. For Henri Lefebvre, everyday life consists of those things and practices left over after purportedly "higher" forms of knowledge and practice—art, the legal system, economics—are abstracted.[81] Yet, these "higher forms" are nonetheless fed back into and structure the everyday. "Thus we must define everyday life in two ways: as a residual deposit and as a product."[82] In this way the everyday is, paradoxically, everything that cannot be easily rationalized cognitively, but is also shaped as a product of rationalization systemically. It is in the habitual that Lefebvre sees both the passivity of people willing to accept the dictates of rationalized knowledge that structure time, space, and possibility**,** but also the place to look for the potential of radical transformation.

While Lefebvre often sees the everyday as both a negative aspect of atomized modernity and a space for resistance and subversion, Rita Felski wants to see everyday life neither as an unfortunate or fortunate state of existence. Rather, "everyday life simply is the routine act of

81. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* (London: Verso, 2002), 31.

82. Ibid., 64.

conducting one's day-to-day existence without making it an object of conscious attention."[83] Thus, an everyday life just *is,* no matter where or who you are; repetition and habituation are part of the process of making sense of the world and being. According to a study out of Duke University, up to 45% of our daily behavior is habitual. Thus, habits—"response dispositions that are activated automatically by the context cues that co-occurred with responses during past performance"—are a major part of our everyday life.[84]

I want to take both of these views of the everyday into account. On one hand, I see the everyday as a precondition of being human—we, phenomenologically, must have habits to navigate the chaos of being alive. But, these habits also happen to be the things that the "higher forms" are most interested in learning about us. When understood in relation to the media industries, the codification of your everyday into a text that can be read for meaning is of central importance. You may not think much about how and when you, for instance, click through applications on your smart phone—but media industries do, and quite a bit.[85]

In this vein, Lefebvre says that the major sectors of social life—work, family, private life, and leisure—share a sense of organized passivity.[86] He sees the passivity as both a physical passivity in which we take no part in revolutionary change and also as a mental passivity where we accept the "imposition of consumption" in forms dictated by organized institutions like the media and advertising industries. This is a fascinating view of everyday life when contrasted

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83. Felski, *Invention of Everyday Life,* 27.

84. David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, "Habits: A Repeat Performance," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 4 (2006): 199.

85. Perhaps a title like "Interventions to Break and Create Consumer Habits" by Bas Verplanken and Wendy Wood from the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* gives you pause.

86. Lefebvre and Christine Levich, "The Everyday and Everydayness," *Yale French Studies,* no. 73 (1987): 10.

with contemporary industrial rhetorics of empowerment that see digital technologies as giving rise to an interactive, engaged, and, thus, empowered audiences. Can we be both oppressed and emancipated simultaneously? I would argue no, and Lefebvre's view on everyday life is one of the ways into thinking through this contemporary rhetoric, a rhetoric we will return to question more in depth in Chapter 6.

The everyday lives of audiences are something that has historically been important to the medium of television as it grew into an "all-day everyday service."[87] In *Radio, Television & Modern Life* (1996), Paddy Scannell asks: What are the "conditions of the intelligibility of any radio or television programme?"[88] Scannell asks what the social structures of care are for television; that is, what makes people care about watching a TV—when, where, and with whom? Scannell makes the point that television cannot control the nature and definitions of the occasion in the same way as an embodied, live event. Television is a medium built around a proximally absent audience, and to become part of peoples' everyday life, television producers had to put an incredible amount of work into understanding audiences so as to make television watching a habitual practice.[89] To Scannell, it "requires a particular thoughtfulness and care to make programmes that are listenable to or watchable by anyone."[90] To do this, television shows could not be tone deaf to the vernacular, since television producers wanted to address audiences as "ordinary." It had to be sincere in its address, and it had to focus on particular formats and styles and express an "experiential time."[91] John Durham Peters backs this up, saying that "over the

87. Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life,* 145.

88. Ibid., 3.

89. Ibid., 18.

90. Ibid., 76.

twentieth century the media became increasingly conversational. They learned to mimic speech styles and genres of ordinary life and to start a variety of forms of talk."[92]

This process of working into the routine and vernacular lives of audiences was made easier by the fixity of the televisual apparatus since, historically, the television has tended to be associated with the home.[93] Combined with the infrastructure laid by the newspaper, radio industries, and a cultural fascination with new technologies, television became a social and economic phenomenon almost as quickly as social media have today. As television became a format filled with content, it developed from isolated shows to an express interest in programming that stretched across the entire day. This "characteristic organization" of television, as Raymond Williams would call it, helped it develop as a technology and cultural form.[94] Thus, the programmed nature of television gave the medium "a deeply settled, ordered, orderly, known and familiar character."[95] By being known and familiar—always on, television perhaps gave people what Roger Silverstone calls an "ontological security."[96] In a period of modernization, when people began to live further and further from familial structures as they coalesced in urban centers, television gave them a view of the world around them and their place in it. To Williams,

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91. Ibid., 154.

92. John Durham Peters, "Medias as conversation, conversation as media," in *Media and Cultural Theory,* eds. James Curran and David Morley (New York: Routledge 2006), 117.

93. Ibid., 24-29. See Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television* (2001) for the role the television played outside the home.

94. Raymond Williams, *Television*, 86.

95. Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life,* 8.

96. Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life,* 6.

this was the paradoxical nature of television: it allowed one to be both at home (private) and able to view the world all around us (public and mobile).[97]

The broad goal of television executives was to make the TV and its programs a common part of the home, open to the habitual practice of watching. As long as the television was a fixed entity and there was not too much other media competition, this concept relatively works. As Jonathan Sterne notes, the television industry went to great lengths to make sure that television was a "fundamentally scarce service on a rigidly segmented schedule."[98] This rigid mode of distribution, built on a "planned flow" of media content, was meant to shape the viewing options of the audience in a meaningful way.

Over time, television companies have tried different strategies in the process of constant re-habitualization. This means that television needed to balance the interest needed to capture the user's attention among a variety of options with the desire to be a banal—commonplace—part of a viewer's life. This involves a holistic approach to the relationship of a television text to its reception. While movies in the theater may be a special treat and you may only pick up a book from time-to-time, television executives want their products to be thought of as habitual—always on, always there. But, as Roger Silverstone asks, what happens to the role of television in structuring everyday life after broadcasting gives way to narrowcasting and beyond?[99] How does television, once a center of a symbolic and actual home, remake itself in a media environment of intense digital competition and choice?

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97. Williams, *Television*,19-25.

98. Jonathan Sterne, "Television under construction: American television and the problem of distribution, 1926-62," *Media, Culture & Society* 21 (1999): 506.

99. Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life,* 174.

Putting these two theoretical approaches in conversation with one another allows a better understanding of how soft control operates in a digital media landscape. On one hand, through an emphasis on the idea of translation, ANT provides the tools for critically assessing the wide range of actors (and actants) that make up the relationship between television companies and audiences. On the other hand, focusing on the everyday as a space and time where audiences and the soft control architecture of television companies meet is important, because it is in the everyday lives of television audiences that industrial experiments in audience control are materialized. Contemporary digital tools of analysis give the industries mountains of data on individuals, data that severely skews the industry-audience relationship in the favor of industries by creating what law professor Daniel Solove refers to as an asymmetry in privacy between individuals and corporations.[100] In short, media industries know far more about media users than media users know about the industries.

Through identifying designer scripts, focusing on intermediality, and using elements of ANT and theories of everyday life to both follow and situate soft control, I will show that control features in a digital media environment call into question the emancipatory role placed on participatory audiences and digital technologies in general. If we think about media forms in their specific contexts, making sure to focus on their intermedial connections and their materiality, we can complicate ideas about what audience or industrial control could mean. As I will discuss below, "control" is far more complicated that an either/or decision. Rather, we need to foreground how problems are framed in certain ways to fulfill the agendas of a range of actors.

100. See Daniel Solove, *The Digital Person* (2004).

3 Retrofitting Practices: Television and Commodifiable Elements

"In between are the morsels that fill those whenever minutes."[1]

Cayce Pollard (pronounced "Case") is an advertising marketing consultant. More specifically, she is a cool hunter. Companies pay for her intuition—her ability to figure out what will be the next big thing. She also happens to be allergic to brands; the "terrible eyes" of the Michelin Man give her panic attacks.[2] Her Casio G-Shock watch is actually a Korean knock off, "its plastic case sanded free of logos with a scrap of Japanese micro-abrasive."[3]

Hubertus Bigend—"a nominal Belgian who looks like Tom Cruise on a diet of virgins' blood and truffled chocolates"—is looking for "the footage," 135 haunting, short clips full of ghostly narratives posted on various hip online message boards, like the "Fetish:Footage:Forum."[4] Clip #48, for instance, has been compared to the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Stalker*. These clips, which are very short, appear sporadically and have no acknowledged source. They have gained a cult following online and, if you are hip, you know

1. Miller, "Minifesto for a New Age," 1.

2. William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2003), 315.

3. Ibid., 7.

4. Ibid., 3, 6.

about them. All of these factors give ”the footage” an air of intrigue, an undeniable draw for someone like Hubertus.

Hubertus runs Blue Ant, a “viral” advertising agency, and hires Cayce to find the maker. While Cayce enjoys discussing the clips online as a form of art, Huburtus wants to learn what drives interest in these clips. Like any advertiser, he is interested in “attention focused daily,” something that could be turned into “the most brilliant marketing ploy of this very young century.”[5] To find this mysterious person, Cayce travels across the globe, questioning media workers and computer programmers, searching for digital watermarks, and dodging Russian mafia hit men curious about her inquiries into their digital security systems.

William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition* (2003) tells a tale of the relationship between brands, creativity, the internet, and short forms of mysterious media. Unlike his futuristically inclined work—he famously coined the phrase “cyberspace” in *Neuromancer* (1984)—these works are rooted in the present.[6] Rather than speculate on the future, this is speculative fiction that takes investigating our contemporary reality as its main goal. In fact, portions of this narrative would not seem out of place in Rob Walker’s consumer culture-based “Consumed” column for *The New York Times* magazine or in advertising magazines like *Creativity*, a magazine that focuses of the industry creators of new, entertainment-based branding strategies.

Gibson’s book, among other things, hones in on the desire for cultural industries (of which advertising is one) to detect patterns of emerging behavior so as to retrofit that emerging behavior within paradigms that industry understands. The desired outcome would be to harness

5. Ibid., 65.

6. Perhaps William Gibson did not change as much as everything else around him just got more “sci-fi.”

that behavior or attention within branded parameters. In doing so, companies hope to control this emergent phenomenon so that it generates value.

This chapter will focus on how television companies program a presence in a digital micromedia landscape through branding strategies. I will first discuss micromedia in more depth to understand its many components, incorporating industry interviews and audience surveys as a way to more fully appreciate the practices of creating and consuming micromedia. I will then turn to how television companies engage with digital micromedia to create linkages across multiple screens by retrofitting longstanding practices to digital media environments. They achieve this by focusing on what distinguishes them from other media forms, namely, their commodifiable elements. Commodifiable elements are anything that a television company owns exclusive access to and can be used to attract audience attention. The commodifiable elements I will focus on are star power, behind-the-scenes access, and textual elaboration. These elements are updated to account for the interactivity and participatory aspects of a digital media environment, a point that will be elaborated on in Chapter 6. These elements act as designer scripts to shape the industry-audience relationship. Finally, I will look at the role of branding as the glue that holds all of these elements and screens together. Thus, I argue that through looking at how television companies retrofit previous practices, we can see how older methods of audience soft control are retrofitted into new environments. From this perspective, a digital media landscape does not looks entirely separate from industry-audience articulations that precede it, nor does it appear to be as difficult to manage as are mobile audiences. The question, then, is: How do television companies combine branding strategies and commodifiable elements to help achieve a soft control—a type of patchwork "flow"—in a digital media landscape?

Through these retrofitting practices, we can see some of the ways in which television companies remap their presences into the everyday lives of digital audiences.

Digital Micromedia and Television

Micromedia appear to be a defining logic of a harried, "on-the-go" media moment that favors many screens over a few, where production is purportedly democratized, where coherent "flows" are the thing of the past, where cultural goods have the potential to circulate quickly, and where choice abounds. There is a virtual cornucopia of content, like 5 Second Films ("wasting your time but not very much"), that exist in what is described in *The New York Times Magazine*'s Screens issue as the "ADHD world of the internet."[7] In *Faster* (1999), James Gleick, a popular science writer, comments on the acceleration of our everyday lives from fast food to MTV to the "oversupply of information" provided by the internet. Robert Hassan calls it the "speed effect of the network effect." Additionally, Barbara Klinger suggests that online short films and videos are "well-suited to the rhythms of work, media, and information cultures."[8]

Networks, modularity, and speed are identified as features of a digital media landscape that fosters the production of micromedia. According to Manual Castells, author of *The Rise of the Network Society* (2000), the network has now become the crucial organizational arrangement for production, experience, and power. Contemporary social life—the material-semiotic chains

7. Matt Ufford, "UPROXX Presents: The Best of 5-Second Films," *UPROXX*. Accessed on April 12, 2012. http://www.uproxx.com/webculture/2011/10/uproxx-presents-the-best-of-5-second-films-part-2

8. James Gleick, *Faster* (New York: Vintage Press, 2000), 90. See also Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 199; Robert Hassan, *The Information Society* (London: Polity, 2008), 11.

of networked individuals—is more dynamic, built of temporary affiliations that, for better or worse, are defined by, to borrow a term from Mark Deuze, "precarity."[9]

Contemporary digital networks are made of material things—Cisco Systems cables, satellites, computers, routers, servers, etc—in conjunction with the relationships between people, political forms of organization, rules, laws, and cultural mores.[10] The flexibility of digitally-networked computer environments manifests itself in the form of modularity—the ability to take apart and reassemble texts quickly for a "production on demand," "just in time" media environment.[11] This fosters an environment where media texts can easily be altered and reused. These types of environments can be profitable for media companies as they are able to cut up, repurpose, and customize texts for a variety of platforms and niche markets. For an industry like television this means shifting their programming strategies toward tactics of "aggregating, migrating, and repurposing" across a variety of television and computer-based channels.[12]

In terms of micromedia, high levels of modularity and speed are present in how quickly established media companies incorporate the flows of social media. Take, for instance, television news rooms, which increasingly incorporating viewer's Facebook commentaries and Twitter feeds in live broadcasts, or when producers for FOX's *House* created an online alter to respond

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9. See Mark Deuze, *Media Work* (2008).

10. According to actor-network theory, networks are what make society. They do not come after society, they are the building blocks of society. There is nothing outside networks except, at least conceptually, chaos. Networks are something that are fragile and the relevance to all actants (actors) involved must be performed over and over again.

11. Manovich, *Language of New Media,* 36.

12. John Caldwell, "Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration," in *Television After TV,* eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 44.

to the sudden death of Dr. Kutner, played by Kal Penn. Trying to capitalize on the outpouring from fans over his death, FOX created a space on the official website where fans could leave their memorials along with a video explaining his suicide. The site also offered a Facebook link and other "information" about Kutner's life, as well as memorial music supposedly composed by Hugh Laurie, the actor who plays Dr. Gregory House. The memorial was not received well. The interesting thing though is how quickly it was taken down as producers monitored social media reactions. There and gone in a flash—no harm, no foul (to the goals of *House'*s producers).

While the further accelerated speed of contemporary life and the technologically enabled modularity associated with digitally networked environment may be newer features to the media landscape, the use of short forms of media by industries and audiences is not. The "shorts" of early cinema that ran mere minutes were the feature content. Lawrence Samuel, in *Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream* (2002), refers to the TV commercials of the 1940s as very cinematic "one minute shorts."[13] The advertising spot on TV has always been understood, at least since the transition to magazine-style advertising in the late 1940s, as 30-, 60-, and 90-second spots. Additionally, we have newsreels and, later, news segments that are a collection of shorts situated within a larger framework. Amateur shorts you might find on YouTube can be situated in a longer history of home videos. Popular commercial songs have, for the most part, always been short as have the music videos made to accompany them. Short and simple causal games also have a longer history in the form of arcade and console games like *Pac-Man* or *Tetris*. Furthermore, you could find similarities between digital games and their analogue counterparts like, for instance, card games (which are often digitized as casual games today).

13. Lawrence Samuel, *Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 9.

Thus, rather than looking at short media as something entirely new, I am studying a specific articulation of shorter media in a context that is particularly amendable to its production and reception. There are many players in the related field of micromedia production. I want to provide a snapshot of short film and video production as a means of understanding the breadth of micromedia production coming from amateurs, semi-amateurs, freelance professionals, boutique firms, and established cultural industries.

Short films and videos are most obviously first defined by their length. Yet, the distinction between "long" and "short" is fuzzy, referring to anything from a 15 second film to "any film under feature length."[14] Eileen Elsey, Andrew Kelly, and Gareth Evans in *In Short* (2002), their overview to short film and video making, settle on 30 minutes as the upper end of short production. While noting that this definition is somewhat arbitrary, they point to the fact that most film festivals set this time limit. That said, film festivals are relatively minor players in the exhibition of shorts today, and many shorts are considered much shorter than that.

For instance, in the spring of 2009, I taught a class called "The Visual Short," which focused on the short form from early cinema to YouTube, in addition to the students producing their own video shorts. Part of the class consisted of defining a poetics of short video production that we could then apply to various contexts of short film and video production. Almost unilaterally, the students decided that a short had to be shorter than five minutes. To them, most things over five minutes were boring and just too long. While this information is anecdotal, it points to a media landscape where short production is often very short. Kevin Beggs, head of TV

14. Eileen Elsey, Andrew Kelly, and Gareth Evans, *In Short: A Guide to Short Film-Making in the Digital Age* (London: BFI Film Institute, 2008), 2.

production at Lionsgate, backed up this assertion that the "truly short-form of five minutes" will be the way that many people will consume their media over the long run.[15]

Short film and videos do not imply any overarching aesthetic or narrative logic; their length defines these films and videos. For instance, short "filmmaking," the kind of film you might find in a film festival is just a subset of all short production. This type of production is generally like miniature feature filmmaking, following the same rules on a smaller scale.[16] Internet, mobile, television-based, and audience production tends to be much more varied.

Crisscrossing the digital media landscape, you are bound to run into short webisodes and appisodes—extension properties of longer media texts made for distribution on the internet or via an app on your smart phone—with logics tied to the illumination of their source material. You could encounter a standard 30-second advertising spot on television repurposed on the internet via a platform like Hulu.com, or on your smart phone, or via an in-app ad on a casual game. You can find the experimental work of artists on Ubuweb.com (in both its long and short formats). Additionally, you can come across promotional clips for a TV show like *Jersey Shore* that have no overarching narrative structure. On YouTube, you view all of these examples sandwiched next to amateur content, like the spectacle-driven footage of a mother videoing her baby laughing maniacally. On Vine, Twitter's video service, you can see 6-second clips (edited and raw) from people's everyday lives. The same goes for Instagram's 15-second long clips. The

15. Robert Keating, "The Future of Media: Television," *MediaPost*, accessed July 1, 2010. http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/91780/the-future-of-media-television.html

16. In fact, most books on short filmmaking are like books on long form filmmaking, only changing the length of the production. See Clifford Thurlow, *Making Short Films* (2008); Peter Rea and David Irving, *Producing and Directing the Short Film and Video* (2010); and Chris Patmore, *Get Started in Short Filmmaking* (2005).

point is that short-form video and film production take on a variety of expressions that cannot be equated with shorter forms of feature films.

That said, there are still some similarities to most film and video work. Max Dawson refers to the "conspicuous display of temporal economy" of the short film and video form as its "aesthetic signature."[17] Citing a historical precedence in movie trailers, Dawson highlights such features as streamlined expositions, discontinuous montage, ellipsis, decontextualized narrative, and visual spectacle.[18]

In addition to the range of user-generated videos that will be discussed at length in Chapter 6, take, for example, the work of semi-professional and professional participants in micromedia production like Felicia Day, Turquoise Jeep, and Michael Eisner. Felicia Day, an American actress, has significantly advanced her acting career through her use of Twitter and through her web series, *The Guild*. The first season appeared on YouTube and garnered the YouTube Video Award for Best Series in 2007.[19] The show follows the lives of a group of gamers who participate in an MMORPG, or Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game. Since appearing on YouTube, the show has been picked up by Microsoft to be distributed through its XBox Live and MSN Video content services.

In 2010, Turquoise Jeep, a collective of unknown musical artists such as Flynt Flossy and Young Humma, started putting polished (but low tech) and humorous videos on YouTube. These

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17. Max Dawson, "Television's Aesthetic of Efficiency: Convergence Television and The Digital Short," in *Television As Digital Media,* eds. James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 210.

18. While Dawson investigates these new short forms of media in terms of their narrative compactness and as important texts in their own right, I will be thinking about how they are utilized by media industries historically devoted to longer forms of entertainment.

19. "Felicia Day's 'The Guild' wins another award," *Whedonesque*, accessed March 12, 2011. http://whedonesque.com/comments/15837

videos, loving parodies of hip hop and R&B videos, became popular on the internet with songs like "Fried or Fertilized," where Young Humma asks a woman with whom he slept the previous night if she wants him to make her some eggs or if she hopes she is pregnant. This aesthetic has been referred to as a "midtail" aesthetic by Virginia Heffernan; things that are "kind-of produced, kind-of user-generated."[20] Access to affordable media production tools has facilitated the growth of this aesthetic. The green screen is an almost guaranteed feature, allowing something that is shot cheaply, in one location, to look more professional and on location. The Turquoise Jeep collective now runs a cottage industry through its official web page, tours to promote its music, and opens up for stars in their field like OutKast's Big Boi.

Michael Eisner comes from a slightly different background. The former head of Disney, Eisner now runs Vuguru, an independent, multi-platform studio that produces content for smart phones, tablets, and the internet. The goal of this venture is to monetize short video, connecting platforms like Hulu and YouTube, and brands like Nissan, Honda, and Expedia. This is part of the first tentative wave of media industry luminaries trying to make sense of how to monetize short video. Many studios and television networks have tried and failed so far, including Disney's Take180.

These are just a few of the players in what amounts to a range of interlocking fields for the production, distribution, and reception of micromedia. To broaden my perspective on the relationship of micromedia to industrial strategies, I interviewed 15 cultural industry workers who are responsible for creating or circulating micromedia. Some of individuals worked in advertising agencies creating digital content for brands. One worked on promotional videos for a major cable television company's digital studio. Two were independent producers who have

20. Heffernan, "Midtails," 1.

edited and produced episodes for a wide range of television companies. While only one individual worked strictly in video game production, two more worked in creating spaces for casual games as part of larger transmedia strategies. Another occupied a space very high on the food chain for digital content creation with a major cable company. I also talked to a few people who worked in boutique firms catering mostly to video production. These were not full-fledged advertising houses although they would often work for companies in the advertising, television, and film industries. This group of people skewed heavily male and Caucasian. Other than one person who was in upper management and the two who owned their own companies, the majority of them occupied roles best described as, using John Caldwell's term, mid-level practitioners who pitch ideas, interpret data, and work within larger corporate imperatives to both materialize and refine theories of audience engagement, among other things. [21]

In addition to these individuals being mostly male and Caucasian, there is a range of other qualifiers to this information. They worked in different industries with different goals and imperatives. And, as one practitioner told me, there are no definitive rules for micromedia-type production even with his field, that of advertising. Additionally, some of these individuals are freelancers, working for whatever industry has a job for them. So, while some specificity for any one industry is lost, I do want to notice some similarities in the ways they talked about what is important for the production and circulation of micromedia.

All practitioners acknowledged that "viral" is a popular buzzword for their respective industries whether they were making short videos or games. Viral media are media that gain

21. John Caldwell, *Production Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 25. While I am somewhat leery of the hierarchy this term creates, I believe he uses it merely to distinguish this type of theorization from the "high theory" of academia.

popularity through extensive sharing on digital networks.[22] Speaking about how to make something viral, Jonah Peretti, founder of *Buzzfeed* and co-founder of *The Huffington Post*, suggests that the "key is to make something that is easy to understand, easy to share, and includes a social imperative."[23]

While one creative practitioner who worked in advertising defined viral as "well written and well staged" mixed with the impossible-to-define "social imperative," he nonetheless also expressed frustration with what "viral" means.[24] Now that viral is a word that has itself gone viral, his bosses come to him and say impossible things like, "Make a viral."[25] Noting that campaigns change with time, and that they routinely change things on the fly, "how could you ever say what is definitely viral?" asked one of the practitioners.[26] As one practitioner told me, "viral means make something a lot of people will tell their friends about but also make it for no money."[27]

Perhaps obviously, spectacle was a common talking point in relation to micromedia production. One practitioner told me of a game he worked on where, without getting into specifics, the content of the game had absolutely nothing to do with the brand it was made to

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22. Henry Jenkins disagrees with this term, preferring to use "spreadable" instead of viral. To him, this shifts the power from producers to audiences. However, I am using "viral" because this is the word that media practitioners used during interviews. See *Spreadable Media* (2013), his book with Sam Ford and Joshua Green.

23. Jonah Peretti, "Mormons, Mullets, and Maniacs," *Scribd.,* accessed January 25, 2011. http://www.scribd.com/doc/35836865/Jonah-Peretti-Viral-Meetup-Talk

24. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, October 29, 2011.

25. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, May 20, 2012.

26. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, May 22, 2012.

27. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, August 11, 2011.

support. That said, the game, with its "cheeky violence in a side scrolling format" was praised in a meeting with his clients for being "exactly what they wanted."[28] Additionally, practitioners who worked on short videos said that anything was fair game as long as it attracted eyeballs, be it through humor or a well-told story. They just needed something that "felt right" and could be "liked in less time" than a traditional narrative allows.[29]

It would appear that this notion of visual spectacle, long subsumed under the narrative dominance of feature-length film, seems to be making a comeback. Scholars such as Teresa Rizzo are looking back to early cinema theories, such as Tom Gunning's "Cinema of Attractions," to understand our contemporary relationship to the short form.[30] Producers I talked to mentioned OK GO's Rube Goldberg-inspired music video for "This Too Shall Pass" and Tyler the Creator's shock-inducing music video "Yonkers" where Tyler plays with large insects, eats them, vomits them out, and hangs himself as the type of spectacle that creates viral results. Other producers point to the "eternal cultural relevance of cute kids and animals" as the ultimate in cheap spectacle.[31]

Whatever the formula for "going viral" may be, virtually all practitioners saw their work as part of larger business strategies.[32] This means that while many of these practitioners make stand-alone content, what they could or could not do was defined as being part of a larger media

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28. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, May 22, 2012.

29. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, May 24, 2012.

30. See Tom Gunning's "Cinema of Attractions" and Teresa Rizzo's "YouTube: the New Cinema of Attractions."

31. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, April 14, 2012.

32. Thales Teixeira, "The New Science of Viral Ads," *Harvard Business Review,* accessed March 23, 2012. http://hbr.org/2012/03/the-new-science-of-viral-ads

mix. This means that the micromedia they are working on is largely promotional, trying to excite people into purchasing some other commodity (a film, book, television show, album, etc.). So, in essence, the micromedia they make acts as a promotional vehicle or loss leader to remind the audience that official texts exist relative to the creation of micromedia. In this light, the micromedia they make acts as "the in-between stuff, the reminders, the promotion."[33] In *Spreadable Media* (2013), Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green identify a distinction between shorter forms of content made for strictly promotional reasons ("quick media experiences") and content that enriches the textual universe of a brand across multiple media experiences.[34] The work these practitioners are doing falls along this spectrum from things that are blatantly promotional, like advertisements, to more entertainment-based promotional work. That said, no matter whether the media experience is identified as crassly promotional or not, it all lives within the logic of promotion.

Because of the sheer amount of micromedia available, the practitioners had to be very careful about when their work was released, to whom it was released (although they acknowledged they could not control circulation after that), and how much was released to social networks. One producer cited the concern of "oversaturation" to digital campaigns, which is something he has to monitor closely. According to him, if you are getting traction with something, you do not move on to the next part of your campaign and you certainly do not overlap within the same target markets. Overloading looks desperate and you do not want to look

33. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, May 24, 2012.

34. Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (NYU Press. Kindle Edition, 2013), 135.

desperate.[35] Thus, as one practitioner stated, you had to reach the "diggers," those people who search out information and pass it on to others. Another said that his goal with digital advertising is to reach "relatively few people and have them do the rest of the work."[36]

The notion of the "influencer" is a key element of cultural industry discourse. In "The Coolhunt," his landmark article for *The New Yorker* in 1997, Malcolm Galdwell talks about those "innovators" who lead other people to follow suit. Gladwell's view is in many ways an update of Elihu Katz and Paul Lazersfeld's "two-step flow" model of media effects.[37] This theory says that influential opinion leaders shape peoples' opinions. Additionally, Gladwell draws from a 1940s study of corn seed distribution by Bruce Ryan and Neal Gross that he finds in Everett Roger's *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962). In this work, there is a similar idea of how early innovators and early adopters work to spread ideas. It would appear that his concept still holds some sway in the poetical assumptions that many of the creative practitioners I interviewed make about how micromedia work.

Related to working micromedia into overall strategies, an interesting discussion came up when I talked with three creative practitioners in advertising: the notion of not creating content at all. Instead, a strategy is to create "real world" events and let the ancillary digital media do the work of creating micromedia for you. The question would be, "can we own the blogosphere for a day?" Because, "when you can't actually afford to make content, you have to trick someone else

35. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, May 25, 2012.

36. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, April 14, 2012.

37. Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-To-Date Report on a Hypothesis," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1957): 61-78.

into doing it."[38] They talked admiringly about the promotion for the Electronic Arts' (EA) game *Dante's Inferno*. The game follows Dante as he works through the nine levels of hell to reclaim his soul. During the 2011 E3 annual video game convention, there was a small protest equating EA with the Anti-Christ. This was picked by traditional media and only later recognized as a marketing stunt. This stunt was simple and cheap, yet created resonances in the blogopshere and traditional news media.[39] Examples like this point to how ancillary sources—in this case people on social media and traditional media outlets—are at the core promotional processes.

Since micromedia are part of larger strategies, they often act, as one practitioner said, as the "fodder or glue" to hold everything together. Acknowledging that media cannot live in silos anymore because "very few people will seek it out," micromedia are often used to strengthen a brand's resonance with social networks.[40] For instance, an independent producer who worked on several very popular television programs said it is routinely part of his contract, when hired as a producer or editor, to not only deliver a broadcast quality cut of the show, but also "sometimes up to 40 minutes of single minute clips" from the hours and hours of footage they shoot to hand over to the digital department.[41] It also shows that most industrially-produced micromedia is not meant to stand-alone; rather it exists alongside and inter-relatedly with all this other "stuff"—this ephemera.[42] Furthermore, acknowledging that much of this work is promotional means that

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38. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, April 14, 2012.

39. "E3: Protesters target Dante's Inferno game," *Los Angeles Times,* accessed April 14, 2011. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2009/06/e3-protesters-target-dantes-inferno-game.html

40. Anonymous Media Practitioner, telephone with author, April 14, 2012.

41. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, May 25, 2012.

42. See Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately* (2010).

industrially-produced micromedia are often sourced from existing long form texts. With this in mind, I can also position the term micromedia more broadly, not only as short media, but also as a way of taking stock of how traditional mass media texts have become increasingly fragmented and modular in a time of prevalent digital media. My understanding of the term "micromedia" now takes into account not only the rise in popularity of short-form media but the proliferation of niche markets and the multiple platforms of exhibition that exist in a digital media landscape.

Thus expanded, the use of the term micromedia incorporates both long and short forms of media because the logic of an "age" of micromedia forces companies and individuals to deal with an environment that will force competition with shorter forms while also forcing that larger text to be sourced for a variety of different contexts, devices, and audiences for which it might not have been originally intended.

Moreover, in this usage, micromedia can include both shorter forms of media as well as longer, more traditional forms, like the 30- or 60-minute television show, that now often circulate on the internet. These longer forms can be understood as sources of micromedia in the way that they are cut up and repurposed for a range of official promotional and unofficial fan activities. This would imply a sort of hierarchy between the "official text" as source and the digital extensions as modular creations of that source text. In addition, these longer, traditional forms can be understood as sources of micromedia that are digitally promoted in a variety of ways to reach targeted audiences.

Speaking specifically about television, there are not, as of now, any viable business models that would suggest micromedia could be considered as primary texts. As the practitioners I interviewed noted, micromedia are better thought of as being part of larger audience retention strategies. In this light, micromedia are designed primarily to funnel audiences toward more

profitable times and spaces for the television industry. Micromedia works best, it appears, by simply evoking a presence much like, perhaps, Coca-Cola advertising that exists to remind consumers of Coca-Cola's existence more so than as a hard-sell type of advertisement.

Considering the noted importance of technologically-enabled active audiences to the circulation of micromedia, I also surveyed 200 potential audience members of digital micromedia.[43] This survey covered micromedia practices in general, focusing most specifically on the relationship of television to micromedia. Utilizing a network of current and former students during the spring of 2012, I asked them questions about the role digital micromedia play in their everyday lives.[44] Because I used (at the time) current and former students at Indiana University to help promote my survey, it is not shocking that the overwhelming majority of participants had (or were in the process of attaining) an undergraduate education. I deliberately chose this group, first, because of access, but also because this group is a key demographic for micromedia and have valuable insights into thinking about these media changes. A 2010 Pew Research study states that "by every key measurement, college students lead the way in tech and gadget use."[45] They are more likely to go online, with 95% of undergraduates and 93% of graduate students having access to broadband. Additionally, these students are more likely to be on social networking websites and own "gadgets" like iPhones, e-Readers, and tablets. This means that while I can glean some insights of early adopters in a digital media environment, more work would have to be done to extrapolate these results to additional groups.

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43. I eliminated surveys that did not complete 4 or more of the assigned questions, leaving me with 175 participants.

44. A list of questions I asked and responses I received to the survey can be found in Appendix A.

45. Aaron Smith, Lee Rainie, and Kathryn Zickuhr, "College Students and Technology," accessed 12/21/2011, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/College-students-and-technology.aspx

The participants I surveyed were between the ages of 18 and 32. Females made up 54% of the participants while 44% identified as male. They came from a range of self-identified racial and ethnic backgrounds although 70% identified as some derivation of "Caucasian" or "White." They were, on the whole, comfortable with social media, with 68% logging on to Facebook at least once a day, while 44% of them admitted to reading Facebook multiple times a day. They also showed, unsurprisingly, a familiarity with Twitter and YouTube. Of all the participants, 75% of them own a smart phone and when asked what apps they used frequently, the most popular categories were games (60%) and social-based apps (65%). They were, on the whole, well versed in a digital micromedia environment, with 48% playing casual games (predominately through mobile devices) weekly and with 25% of them playing daily. While they monitor the frequency of their posts into social networks, almost everyone surveyed had forwarded or posted a link to some type of micromedia to friends.

Additionally, I interviewed 20 individuals (who volunteered through the survey) in more depth to better understand their relationship to micromedia. Many of them had backgrounds in media criticism and video production, but some did not. While there was a diversity of opinion about short media and how they use it, there were still some identifiable strands.

While one survey interviewee likened micromedia to tentacles just dangling in the water, hoping to catch something, the overwhelming majority of survey participants agreed that most micromedia was either for fans or for "the boring moments."[46] Henry Jenkins' more recent work on fans suggests that contemporary media are being made for fans, as they are the trailblazers of what he calls contemporary convergence culture.[47]

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46. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 12, 2012.

47. See Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (2006).

But perhaps the more interesting interpretation here is about micromedia being made for "the boring moments" as television companies expand promotional opportunities into every nook and cranny of our everyday lives. Many of the potential audience members I interviewed talked about playing casual games not so much because they were drawn to them, but because they were bored or killing time, for example waiting in a doctor's office.[48] This fits with the idea that micromedia cover a lot of ground for television companies. They act as nodes within a larger network of media texts to remind users about the network in the "off hours." In addition, micromedia are made to be entertaining, thus giving pleasure to audience members. Finally, as I will discuss below, micromedia can be used as textual extensions for fans of a television show.

Additionally, from the perspective of the these participants, digital micromedia act as a lingua franca to create affiliations with other users in online communities, chat with friends, or as a way to meet new people. As I will discuss below, this is not a new feature of society. Audiences have always used mass cultural texts as a way to form groups of affiliation and as conversation starters.

When asked questions about micromedia sharing practices, responses ranged from watching short videos with a friend on the couch to posting on Facebook to using funny short videos as a way to break the ice during "the early end of a party when not many people are there."[49] The reasons to share micromedia were also caught up in various social mores. One participant said he felt the need to "reciprocate" if someone sent him a video or a song on Facebook.[50] And all of the 20 people said they would never forward a "straight up TV ad,"

48. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 14, 2012.

49. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 28, 2012.

50. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 12, 2012.

almost all of them said it was okay to post or forward ads to friends if they were "funny" or "entertainment-based."[51] And while the line between industrial and amateur content was blurry, for these survey interviewees as long as the content was "good" to them, many still wanted to watch professional looking stuff. The relative cheapness of high definition digital video equipment means people's standards in this regard remain fairly high. As one of the potential audience-members, who herself is also a budding video maker, said, "You can shoot a project in one day and have a professional looking project."[52]

This sentiment about sharing something no matter its source (industrial, amateur, or somewhere in-between) as long as it is packaged in a particular way is of importance to television producers who use micromedia as a "fodder or glue" to connect social experiences with micromedia back to their commodifiable texts. In addition to attracting eyeballs, the micromedia has to do something for the audience. The idea being that to get micromedia to work for purposes of television producers (i.e., shifting eyeballs back toward monetizable times and spaces), it also needs to fulfill some personal or social functions among individuals. This translation between different values will be explored more in Chapter 6.

It is clear that there is a burgeoning presence of television-related micromedia from the survey participants and subsequent interviewees. Of all survey participants, 59% had "friended" or "followed" TV shows or stars on Facebook or Twitter. (See Appendix A for the range of shows they liked.) That said, only 38% were either likely or very likely to join a show's Facebook page and 37% would consider liking a comment that showed up in their Facebook stream.

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51. Survey Interviewees, meeting with author, April 12, 2012.

52. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 20, 2012.

A considerable amount of work for television producers goes into reimagining their place in the everyday lives of audiences (a topic I will return to at some length in Chapter 5). A key to this is listening to potential audiences and creating content and communication strategies that work in their everyday lives. On one hand, this opens up avenues for the "collective interests" of audiences to shape representations, to assert "meanings and values," to alter "terms of service and conditions of labor," and perhaps, according to Henry Jenkins, even deploy "the platforms toward larger movements for social change."[53]While participatory audiences may use interactions with media companies to further their own interests, on the other hand, the act of participating also creates avenues for companies to exploit the public's desire to participate "in ways which serve commercial ends while ceding very little control to those who participate."[54]

Take, for instance, MTV's "Millennials' Digital Habits" survey.[55] This study of "digilife" seeks to connect with youth in its "native tongue and on its digital home turf."[56] The study focuses on a brand's use of digital etiquette. For example, they offer such observations as "does your company understand the nuanced codes and rules of digital behavior?" And "do you curate your online identity like a "millennial," i.e., do you constantly modify your brand image?" They go on to point out that "millennials love appropriate feedback" and, most importantly, "do you understand that Millennials expect a depth of engagement that goes beyond the original text?"

53. Henry Jenkins, Same Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media,* 165.

54. Ibid., 165.

55. Again, the applicability of this study should be tempered, as it may not be relevant to companies who do not target this particular age group.

56. Nick Shore, "Five Tips for Marketers From MTV's Study of Millennials' Digital Habits," *Advertising Age*, accessed March 12, 2012. http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/marketing-tips-mtv-s-study-millennial-digital-habits/228811

Essentially: Act like a Millennial to reach Millennials in their digital space. This points to how these companies think a great deal about how to approach their audiences. They do so by patterning their communication strategies around some measure of authenticity for that specific audience. From a producer's side, are you able to talk in the vernacular of your target audience? From an audiences' side, are they making something for me, and if so, do I accept this? Many of the potential audience members I talked to did not really make distinctions between industrial or amateur content as long as it made them laugh, or, as one interviewee said, if he felt like it "was made for me."[57] It is clear from the discussion above that there is a range of determinants that go into the production and reception of micromedia. That said, there is a core strand of thinking coming from industrial interviewees that of situates micromedia in a longer history of promotional work.

The Glue of Branding

While clearly not a new phenomenon, branding takes on a greater importance in relation to digitally enabled user-directional flow. That the contemporary media environment in the United States is alternately fragmented and networked means that branding has increasingly become a central part of how the advertising and media industries work since the 1980s.[58] Branding, at its most basic, refers to a name, design, or logo that identifies a range of products and services. But, analytically, brands operate as a framing device that enables the "production, or co-creation, of an experience, or, for that matter, more enduring forms of immaterial use-

57. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 20, 2012.

58. Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2; Celia Lury, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy* (London: Routledge Press, 2004), 20.

values, like identity and community."[59] For instance, a company like Nike has a brand image that is infused with particular ideals—success, individualism, transcendence, irreverence—that Nike wants to communicate to potential consumers.[60] For Adam Arvidsson, brands are managerial tools in the relationships between companies and potential audiences. Using a word like "managerial" implies that they can "program human communication" as much as they can be programmed by what audiences do with a brand.[61]

In theory, a brand is open to the activities of consumers. What consumers do with your products and services (who buys them, how popular they are, how they embed them into their personal narratives) acts as information to be fed back into the brand image. The brand image can subsequently be tweaked. If that brand resonates with an audience, they are "explicitly adopted as salespeople and as marketing tools."[62] As Adam Arvidsson says, "brand value was increasingly understood to derive not so much from the product itself as from the ability to give coherence and direction to such a range of disparate activities."[63] In this light, brands act as points of cultural identification, as marks of distinction between one brand and the next, and as a collective identity for a range of products and services. Thus, through a stable and recognizable brand image, companies can mitigate the risk of bringing new products to market.

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59. Ibid., 35.

60. See Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, *Nike Culture: The Sign of the Swoosh* (1999).

61. Arvidsson, *Brands*, 35.

62. Lury, *Brands,* 43.

63. Adam Arvidsson, "Toward a Branded Audience: On the Dialectic between Marketing and Consumer Agency," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, ed. Virginia Nightingale (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 280-281.

In relation to the cultural industries, branding is seen as a strategy to bring coherence to multi-directional, multi-platform flows in addition to creating synergy points across multiple industries to strengthen the relationship between television and advertising.

Take, for instance, the case of Kraft Mac & Cheese's "Cnt Sleep" promo spots. This ad, produced by Crispin, Porter + Bogusky, a popular advertising firm out of Miami and Boulder, and directed by Bob Odenkirk of *Mr. Show* fame, is the epitome of contemporary speed. On the morning of March 28, 2011, a crew of CP+B workers trolled Twitter for tweets about Kraft's Mac & Cheese, conceptualized an ad based on a user's tweet, shot it, edited it, color corrected it, and had it ready for air by 11:00p.m. EST that night to be shown on TBS's *Conan*.[64] The spot, featuring Larmone Morris, soon to be on FOX's *New Girl*, starts with an image of the tweet "Eat mac n cheese cause I cnt sleep" by U_kant_B_Me followed by Morris and another guy on a couch trying to figuring out if they are awake or asleep, each one thinking they are eating mac & cheese in the other's dream. The speed here exists not only as a reminder of how fast things can get accomplished in the right context, but the commercial also becomes grist for the promotional wheel as Kraft gets to circulate the behind-the-scenes info about how it was made so quickly. And, yes, the ads were so successful that Kraft did it again…the next day.

This Kraft example uses branding to tie together multiple platforms (television, Twitter, the internet), a range of industries (consumer goods, television, social media), and user input. As is suggested by the inclusion of *Conan* as a node in this branded micromedia experiment, all of these strategies are germane to the television industry. In "Second-Shift Media Aesthetics," John Caldwell suggests we can still see programming strategies (and thus a type of "flow") in digital

64. Todd Wasserman, "Kraft Mac & Cheese Ad Based on Consumer's Tweet Runs on Conan," *Mashable*, accessed March 14, 2011. http://mashable.com/2011/03/29/kraft-mac-cheese-ad-conan

media. In television, there is a move from producer-centered strategies historically seen on television (e.g., time-of-day planning, counterprogramming, tent-poling, hammocking, stunting, and seamlessness) to audience-centered ones.[65] Producer-centered flow from one text to the next is characterized as linear and thrives in a world of scarcity. Audience-centered flow tends to be multidirectional or circular in nature and thrives in a world of media plentitude. But, to Caldwell, these new audience-centered strategies are not entirely new, but a way to map "modified programming strategies" onto contemporary circumstances.[66]

One of the core strategies is the use of branding, an essential strategy for "*market share footholds* in the multichannel clutter."[67] Jeffery Bewkes, chief executive of Time Warner, describes "Time Warner's new raison d'être as 'dominating niches with a clear brand strategy.'"[68] And Peter Chernin, former Chief Operating Officer of News Corporation, sees, on the macro level, the digital media environment increasing the fragmentation of audiences across a variety of platforms where, hopefully, big television brands act as the "glue" that holds all the fragmented iterations together.[69]

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65. John Caldwell, "Second-shift Media Aesthetics: programming, interactivity, and user flows," in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality,* eds. by John Caldwell and Anna Everett (New York: Routledge Press, 2003), 136.

66. Ibid., 132.

67. John Caldwell, "Critical Industrial Practice: Branding, Repurposing, and the Migratory Patterns of Industrial Texts," *Television & New Media* 7,*no.2* (2006): 120 (author's italics).

68. Tim Arango, "Holy Cash Cow, Batman! Content Is Back," *The New York Times,* accessed October 12, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/business/media/10warner.html

69. John M. Higgins, "Chernin Reveals Strategy for News Corp," *Broadcasting & Cable,* accessed March 12, 2011. http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/106256Chernin_Reveals_Strategy_for_News_Corp.php

In light of Bewkes and Chernin's statements, brands are used, in the language of John Fiske, to tie together the primary, secondary, and tertiary texts of television. In short, primary texts are the television shows, secondary texts are the promotional ephemera used to position the primary text in discourse, and tertiary texts are those things "produced by the viewers themselves in the form for letters to the press or, more importantly, of gossip and conversation."[70] The use of branding in a digital media environment allows television companies to program strategies to hold together disparate texts, platforms, times, and devices. As the practitioners I spoke with said, the micromedia they make most often falls into the secondary text classification and is used to remind audiences to reorient themselves toward environments where their attention can be most profitably commoditized. Through specific branding strategies these pieces of micromedia do not appear as stand-alone texts but as nodes within larger media networks. These nodes are simultaneously extracting a bit of capital (in the form of, say, an advertisement before a short video clip) while also indexing an experience with a primary text elsewhere. As I will discuss more in Chapters 5 and 6, digital media environments make it easier for companies to incorporate tertiary texts on a much grander scale than "letters to the editor."

Brands are used in a variety of ways in and through television. First, you have different levels of brands; brands within brands within brands.[71] A branded star acts on a branded show on a branded network owned by a branded multinational conglomerate. Trusted brands, in theory, produce a type of cohesion that keeps consumers within the ambit of the brand. Brands are also interconnected with other brands in cross-promotional synergy.

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70. John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987), 108.

71. Caldwell, *Second Shift*, 138.

We can see both of these brand alignments in the way the USA Network television show *Psych* deploys brands. *Psych* is a show about a psychic detective. Well, he is not really psychic. Trained by his cop father (Corbin Bernsen) at an early age to be observant, Sean (James Roday) helps the Santa Barbara Police Department solve crimes. To do so he opens up a psychic detective agency with his pharmaceutical rep best friend Burton "Gee Buttersnaps" Guster (Dulé Hill). The show, a pastiche of police procedurals, 1980s and 1990s pop references, and whatever else they want to throw in, has been a hit for the USA Network since 2006.

For *Psych,* brands act as the connective tissue to stitch together multiple platforms, devices, and other brands. First, *Psych* is a brand that articulates itself within another brand, the USA Network. The phrase "Characters Welcome," the official tagline of the USA Network since 2005, organizes all branded content across multiple media ventures. In looking at the USA Network's official website, everything is organized around the concept of the character: theme park tie-ins, advertising tie-ins, characters in films they show, characters in their original content programs, and "you" as a character. As the USA Network says, "Characters make us #1."

It is not hard to see that a notion of "character" is important to the USA Network's success, whether that character be the phobic detective Monk (a retired character the USA Network still uses quite a bit in promotion), a wrester like Triple "I am The Game" H, or even "you," as the USA Network is very fan friendly. According to Bonnie Hammer, then President of the USA Network, "The beauty of our new brand is that it truly embraces everything we do . . . it's the compelling, sometimes complicated, often funny characters that make USA Network what it is."[72]

72. "Characters Welcome at Usa!" *The Futon Critic*, accessed March 28, 2008. http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news/2005/06/23/characters-welcome-at-usa-18602/20050623usa01

Psych is utilized within this character-driven environment when the character of Sean is used in cross-promotional branding opportunities within the USA Network's character-driven universe. For instance, James Roday (Sean) appeared on WWE Raw, the USA Network's wrestling show, to announce a match between The Miz, a heel, and CM Punk, reigning WWE Champion. In return, The Miz, a former reality star on MTV's *The Real World*, appeared on *Psych*. These horizontal linkages pull the audience outside of either show, but create the potential for the audience to stay within the ambit of the "uber-brand."

The USA Network also incorporates audience-as-characters into their branded universe through various fan experiences. For instance, the producers of *Psych* incorporate a "Fan of the Week" into the official website and, more spectacularly, the producers let fans choose via Twitter the ending of *Psych*'s 100th episode in real time.[73] From an audience's perspective, this may add personalized value to their particular fandom while this adds value to how the brand circulates for the USA Network. According to Jesse Redniss, Senior Vice President of Digital at the USA Network, this type of engagement for fans enhances the potential of creating "brand ambassadors" that embody the ideals of the brand and share this with their friends.[74] Thus, brands cobble together brand value across a range of primary, secondary, and tertiary texts and experiences.

Also consider the Adult Swim Network, a sub-network or a share-network that exists along the same spectrum as the Cartoon Network and broadcasts only from 9:00 p.m. until 6:00

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73. Lisa Lacy, "USA Network Lets Psych Fans Determine Whodunit," *ClickZ,* accessed March 28, 2013. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/2257662/usa-network-lets-psych-fans-determine-whodunit

74. Jessie Redniss, "Case Study: USA Networks," *SlideShare,* accessed November 1, 2012, http://www.slideshare.net/gzicherm/3-jesse-redniss-g-summit

a.m. Unlike the "all ages" content of the Cartoon Network, Adult Swim is identified as 18+ programming. That said, Adult Swim routinely is the #1 cable network for the 18-34 demographic and often beats Nickelodeon, MTV, and the Cartoon Network in the 12-17 demographic.[75] The numbers cited are from 2005, yet even in 2012, "across all of March 2012, Adult Swim again ranked #1 on basic cable for Total Day Delivery of adults 18-34, 18-49 and 18-24, and men 18-34, 18-49 and 18-24."[76]

The shows it offers are "idiosyncratic," to say the least. Some of the shows include *The Venture Bros*., an animated series that chronicles the lives of the Venture family, from the super-scientist father to the reformed villain and "cured" pedophile bodyguard, Sergeant Hatred; *Aqua Team Hunger Force*, an animated show full of incoherent plots and gags that follows the adventures of anthropomorphic fast food characters; *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!,* a live action sketch comedy show composed of surreal public-access style humor, nonsensical editing, tweaked sound effects, and cheesy special effects; *The Boondocks*, an animated series about the Freeman family, an African-American family that moves from the south side of Chicago to the mostly white suburbs; *The Heart, She Holler*, an absolutely mind-bending 15-minute long Southern Gothic soap opera, live action miniseries that aired at the end of 2011. The show follows the travails in the town of Heartshe after the town leader, Hoss, dies and leaves his children Hershe, Hambrosia, and Hurlan to compete over town ownership; and *Childrens Hospital*, a 15-minute long satirical live action comedy series that sends up the medical genre.

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75. Abigail Azote, "Rising tide of teens for Adult Swim," *Media Life Magazine,* accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.medialifemagazine.com/News2005/april05/apr18/5_fri /news4friday.html

76. "TBS Officially Reigns as Basic Cable #1 network in Primetime Among Adults 18-34 and Adults 18-49," *The Futon Critic,* accessed April 23, 2012, http://www.thefutoncritic.com/ratings /2012/03/27 /tbs-officially-reigns-as-basic-cables-number-1-network-in-primetime-among-adults-18-34-and-adults-18-49-720411/20120327turner01

There is nothing "safe" on Adult Swim and that is a core part of its branded image. Huge Inc., the fastest growing marketing agency in 2009 according to *Adverting Age*, redesigned Adult Swim's website in 2011, combining "Adult Swim's anarchist sensibility with our real-world usability."[77] In talking about what inspired the design, Huge Inc. referred to Adult Swim as "edgy and cerebral cartoons for grown-ups," positioning their shtick as "mass individualism."[78] Comparing Adult Swim to an "anti-establishment force" positions Adult Swim within 1960s counterculture, which maps fairly well onto contemporary digital youth marketing.[79]

Adult Swim uses its brand to connect an array of micromedia across devices. Take, for instance, the collection of gaming platforms that make up Adult Swim Games. While some of the games are tied to their shows, many of them are not. If you search hard enough on their website you can find *Worst Game Ever*, which included characters from *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. Perhaps this is a strategy geared toward not making the games look like promotional products, or mere extensions of the brand (even though they are). The games are very popular. Some of the most popular include *Robot Unicorn Attack* (46,901,449 plays as of October 2013), a side-scrolling game set to the song "Always" by Erasure where you control a . . . robot unicorn. Your goal is not to die, prolonging the game for as long as possible. You avoid stars, collect pixies, and try not to fall in chasms. In *Hemp Tycoon* (19,148,664 plays as of October 2013) you control Hempy, a pot leaf with legs and eyes. The goal is to become a "hemp" tycoon, planting as many seeds as you can, watering and tending to your crop along the way. *Amateur Surgeon*

77. "Booyah," *Huge, Inc.,* accessed November 28, 2012, http://hbs.hugeinc.com/casestudies/adultswim

78. Ibid., 1.

79. See Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (1998) for a discussion of the relationship between counterculture and marketing.

(56,225,338 plays as of October 2013) is self-explanatory. In *Zombie Hooker Nightmare XXX-Mas* (11,595,865 times as of October 2013) you control Lola, the "last hooker on Earth," who must survive 12 nights of zombie attacks while searching out elves to "bring back to her trailer." Each of these games has a relatively simple interface. In *Zombie Hooker Nightmare XXX-Mas*, you use the arrow keys to move Lola around, the space bar to attack any zombies and the "X" button to tempt elves.

Each of these games is built on interlinked Flash programs, which include a pre-game advertisement, an Adult Swim Games title card, and the actual game. Flash is a platform for creative interactive multimedia that is well suited to creating casual games. Like any interactive object, Flash games are an aesthetic design wrapped around a coding platform. In this case, what you have is a library of image files that are combined into objects that then can be deployed by the coding platform which, in this case, is ActionScript 3.0. These elements combine on the user interface to create a gaming experience. The image files are modular, able to be put together in a variety of ways. For instance, you can have an image of a gun that can be used in a variety of different contexts and does not have to be created from scratch over-and-over again.

The Adult Swim games can be found across a range of platforms—the Adult Swim website, the Adult Swim Games Arcade Community on Facebook, and iOS and Android mobile devices. The Adult Swim Games Arcade Community on Facebook is also structured by its interaction with Facebook and their Open Graph API, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

Since these games are rarely textual extensions of the shows, they work better as code-based value extensions of the Adult Swim brand. These games, like the shows, are often absurd, pushing the boundaries of "acceptability." The games work to extend the brand of Adult Swim

into different areas and across different platforms. These games colonize digital spaces that may or may not be exceptionally profitable (the jury is still out on that topic). But by extending the brand of Adult Swim through the use of these games, they are able to engage with potential consumers across a range of devices. Additionally, with the inclusion of Adult Swim logo, the game makers can signify the type of experience a user can anticipate even if that user stumbles across a link to *Lesbian Spider-Queens of Mars* (734,405 plays as of October 2013) on Facebook but is not sure of its origin. This type of game play does not rethink the narrativity of Adult Swim's shows, because these games aren't explicitly part of the primary textual universe for Adult Swim. Yet, these games do reformulate the concept of Adult Swim—the hipness, the devil-may-care attitude—for an audience that is increasingly friendly to gaming-style engagements. As to what purpose these games serve other than potential future monetization platforms is difficult to discern. Perhaps, as many of the potential audience members I interviewed noted, these games are meant for those "in-between" moments. This falls in line with a view of micromedia as secondary texts that most practitioners put forth. If so, they are largely promotional in the larger context, meant to remind the user and the collective audience of the existence of the Adult Swim brand while they are not interacting directly with the on-air programming.

Television's Retrofitted Elements

Within the networked nodes of branded media we can find what Barbara Klinger refers to as "commodifiable elements" like style, star power, popular genres, and spectacle to shape the

attention of the audience.[80] These elements act as designer scripts to shape audience attention toward specific goals. The commodifiable elements I will focus here on are star power, behind-the-scenes access, and textual elaboration because of the popularity of their usage. A star, perhaps obviously, is a high-profile performer. Behind-the-scenes access refers to the process of revealing any extratextual information about a particular show. Textual elaboration refers to anything that specifically extends the textual content universe of the show. Behind-the-scenes access and textual elaboration overlap with behind-the-scenes referring more strictly to extratextual content and textual elaboration to extensions of the primary text into micromedia. While they are distinct in this manner, they should both be understood as varying forms of promotion.

Rather than focus on one program, I will show how these elements are being used across a range of programs to show the breadth of their usages. Take, for instance, Kenny "fucking" Powers, the star of HBO's *Eastbound and Down*. Kenny is a lewd former Major League Baseball player who, while down on his luck, ends up back in his hometown of Shelby, North Carolina. From there, he somehow ends up, among other places, in Mexico, and finally in the minor leagues. Along the way he offends just about everyone with his oversized egotism and politically incorrect behavior. A popular comedy on HBO, the show is soon to enter its fourth season.[81] In 2011, Kenny, played by Danny McBride, was tasked with using his brand to raise the value of another brand. In a string of viral videos, Kenny appears as the new CEO of K-Swiss, a small

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80. Barbara Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture," in *Modernity and Mass Culture,* eds. James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1991), 123.

81. It is only popular because HBO says it is. HBO is notoriously private about giving out information about how many people watch their shows. Rather, I can only assume that since they have renewed it for its fourth season that something works for HBO.

athletic shoe company.[82] With slogans like "fuck yeah," Kenny, the MFCEO (Mother Fucking Chief Executive Officer) talks about what makes K-Swiss so great. In a parody video of Steve Jobs' Apple product reveals, a turtle necked Kenny mock masturbates on the crowd, holds a Powerpoint-like clicker in the shape of women's breasts and boasts about K-Swiss' new shoe—the Blades. With these shoes, K-Swiss athletes like football star Patrick Willis can run "really fucking fast."[83]

The experience of using Kenny Powers as a spokesman to launch the Blades shoe line was a complete social experience spanning YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. What started as a viral video announcing Kenny Power's takeover of K-Swiss transformed into an interconnected social experience. For instance, I had to join K-Swiss' Facebook page to get extra content. The page had interactive content, more videos and pictures tagged with share buttons, and a Twitter feed where fans could show their appreciation of either the shoe or Kenny.

This type of cross-promotional work is indicative of what is happening in the cross pollination between traditional media, digital media, and consumer goods companies—a television star used in a social media campaign for a consumer goods company. According to Matt Murphy, creator of the ad campaign for the "nontraditional branding agency" 72andSunny, the "speaks his mind" authenticity and popularity of Kenny Powers was leveraged to "reach the college kid."[84] McBride as Powers is the reason to watch this advertising-based entertainment

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82. Katia McGlynn, "Kenny Power: New K-Swiss CEO," *The Huffington Post,* accessed July 12, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/11/kenny-powers-ceo-k-swiss_n_ 894483.html

83. "Kenny Powers MFCEO of K-Swiss Unveils His Greatest Creation LIVE," *YouTube,* accessed March 12, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aErcUdpOqHI

84. Curtis Silver, "Smart Branding; Kenny Powers, MFCEO K-Swiss," *WIRED Magazine,* accessed March 12, 2012, http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2011/07/smart-branding-kenny-powers-mfceo-of-k-swiss

and the glue that holds together the articulation of this website across a variety of socially enabled platforms.

The USA Network also uses its stars in all of its Character-centric endeavors. Take, for instance, the USA Network's "Characters Unite" campaign that aims to support activities that combat prejudice and intolerance while promoting understanding and acceptance.[85] A cross-platform, socially enabled campaign (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), "Characters Unite" asks the viewer to sign a pledge of tolerance, share what makes them unique, and spread the world through their social networks. Stars of USA Network shows, like James Roday and Dulé Hill, created spots for this, lending their star power to this endeavor.

Specifically for the show *Psych,* Dulé Hill was deployed in an extra-textual capacity during the 2011 South by Southwest panel titled "TV + New Media = Formula for Success."[86] During this panel, Hill, along with Jesse Redniss and show creator Steve Franks, spoke about the importance of using new media to engage fans. Hill talked about his Twitter account to show how he is creating a closer form of engagement with fans.

On Hill's Twitter, we find a range of behind-the-scenes content sandwiched in between Hill's comments on everything from NBA basketball to the weather. On October 3, 2011 Hill sent out a tweet to "Pysch-os" (*Psych* fans) with a link to *Inside TV* that announced Joey McIntrye of New Kids on the Block fame will appear in the upcoming season.[87] On July 12, 2012 Hill reposted @BtronCline's tweet of a cartoon he drew of James Roday and Hill at Comic

85."Characters Unite," *USA Network,* accessed on March 2, 2012, http://www.characters unite.com

86. "TV + New Media = Formula for Success," *South x Southwest*, accessed March 12, 2012, http://schedule.sxsw.com/2011/events/event_IAP6723

87. Dulé Hill, Twitter post, October 3, 2011, 8:53p.m., https://twitter.com/DuleHill/status /121010004542238720

Con 2012.[88] On February 26, 2013 Hill features a retweeted picture from @TheKurtFuller (who plays Woody the coroner on *Psych*) of Fuller and Timothy Omundson (who plays Detective Lassiter) on the set of *Psych.*[89] In these tweets, Hill deploys himself as a television star, incorporates the tertiary text of fan micromedia tweets, and uses his Twitter as a platform for behind-the-scenes knowledge.

In addition to Hill's behind-the-scenes tweets, there is a plethora of behind-the-scenes footage utilized as micromedia. As I will elaborate on in Chapter 6, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* created weekly behind-the-scenes video blogs in the months before Fallon took over the show in 2009. These videos were designed to show off the new set and familiarize people with Fallon's type of humor. Additionally in April of 2012, *The Ricki Lake Show* streamed a production meeting live on Facebook. Ricki said during the meeting, while sitting behind her @RickiLake place card, "We want your input. We want you to be active participant in this project and create the show that you want to see."[90] This use of behind-the-scenes access, coupled with direct address to fans will be investigated in more depth in Chapter 6 when I look at the way television shows like *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* and *The Office* use a rhetoric of empowerment to supposedly collapse the space between producers and consumers.

There are also examples of extensions of the primary text into secondary micromedia. Take, for instance, the use of webisodes by *The Walking Dead* producers. Webisodes are short

88. Dulé Hill, Twitter post, July 26, 2012, 3:43p.m., https://twitter.com/DuleHill/status /228561304657481728

89. Dulé Hill, Twitter post, February 26, 2013, 8:53p.m., https://twitter.com/DuleHill/status /306506053179289600

90. Cory Bergman, "Ricki Lake to stream production meeting live on Facebook," *Lost Remote,* accessed November 12, 2012, http://lostremote.com/ricki-lake-to-stream-production-meeting-live-on-facebook_b28236

episodes made primarily for exhibition on the internet. Mobisodes or appisodes are a variant made for distribution on mobile devices. *The Walking Dead* is a zombie show for AMC based on the comic book series by Robert Kirkman. The producers often released the webisodes to tide fans over between seasons and signal the eminent return of a new season. For instance, *Torn Apart,* a 6-part webisode series, was used to promote the return of Season 2. In this series, we follow Hannah, one of the more spectacular zombies seen in Season 1. In the original episode from Season 1, Hannah's half-corpse can be seen crawling on the ground. These webisodes are used to give the back story of how Hannah got infected and ended up in her half-corpse state. The webisodes operate more as what Joshua Green, Sam Ford, and Henry Jenkins would refer to as a fuller expression of a transmedia experience as they directly engage the textual universe of the show. That said, they still exist primarily as part of a larger promotional strategy to use textual extensions to engage audiences on mobile devices and the internet primarily through social media.

On March 12, 2012, NBC's *The Office* created a video to thank its 10 million Facebook fans.[91] In this video, many of the actors of the show appear behind a "Thank You" cake. On the wall behind the actors, a banner says "We (heart) our fans! Thank you from all of us at the office." The actors, performing in character, question each other about the best way to say thank you to so many people. The video got 2603 likes, 244 comments, and 68 shares on Facebook. This allows the actors on the show to speak to fans in a different register while incorporating this mixture of behind-the-scenes access and textual extension of the show in the form of a micromedia video posted into a micromedia platform like Facebook.

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91. "The Office Cast Celebrates 10 Million Facebook Fans," *YouTube,* accessed April 12, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeC_wYMbHzU

In February of 2012, FOX's *New Girl* released an interactive music video that fleshed out the theme song to the show on its official website. *New Girl* is a show about Jess (Zooey Deschanel), a girl who breaks up with her boyfriend and ends up living with three guys. With over 950 variations, this choose-your-own-adventure video allows the user to interact with the screen via their mouse to decide how this party will unfold. Characters like Cece can get into a "naughty pillow fight" with others or Nick, one of Jess' roommates, can dance or not. "After you're done playing, show off your masterpiece to all your friends on Facebook, Twitter, etc. and then hit the comments to tell us what was your favorite traveled *New Girl* party road."[92]In addition to the video, the producers of the show also created a behind-the-scenes video to explain the complex process of planning a party with multiple paths.

Through the examples above, I have shown a range of ways that television companies utilize commodifiable elements to program a soft control of audiences in micromedia friendly digital environments. In this way, television leans on its "historic prowess in entertainment, programming, and the economic realities of electronic media" to leverage their way into new digital spaces.[93]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at a range of ways by which television companies retrofit practices to a digital media landscape to mitigate competition among other forms of micromedia. As the title of the chapter suggests, these practices are not entirely new. Media stars have long

92. Vlada Gelman, "Hey *New Girl* – It's a Make-Your-Own-Video party," *TV Line,* accessed March 12, 2012, http://tvline.com/2012/02/06/new-girl-interactive-music-video/

93. Caldwell, "Convergence Television," 42.

been deployed to promote their work, acting as key elements to both grab attention and set the meaning of a text in social discourse. Behind-the-scenes material also has a much longer history in the media industries, including the way behind-the-scenes material is often packaged in DVD releases. Often, a lot of micromedia are, as a media practitioner said, a "new format for DVD extra content."[94] We can even chart the access to behind-the-scenes access all the way back to Disney's use of behind-the-scenes information in short spots before its movies in the 1940s and 50s.[95] Furthermore, the move towards personalization of digital media experiences needs to be considered as part of a longer history, since as Klinger says of mass media, "the audience is encouraged to locate the subject matter of the film in relation to their own lives."[96]

In "Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture," Barbara Klinger points out that commodifiable elements have always been central meaning shapers for a media text. Speaking about films, Klinger suggests "the internal components of a film were, then, partially fashioned to meet the external objectives of conventions of promotion."[97] These commodifiable features were not only used to promote the primary text in secondary promotional texts but also to create relays between the primary text and various audience viewing practices. To Klinger, "part of the text's mass cultural status relies on this lack of self-containment—its social life depends on the extension of its elements through the agency of certain contextual forms into the everyday social sphere."[98] Focusing on how commodifiable

94. Anonymous Media Practitioner, meeting with author, August 11, 2011.

95. See Christopher Anderson, *Hollywood TV* (1994).

96. Klinger, "Digression," 128.

97. Ibid., 123.

98. Ibid., 122.

elements are deployed as part of socially-enabled micromedia strategies allows us to contextualize digital micromedia within a longer history of the way promotional elements have always shaped the meaning and pre-figured the text in social discourse.

But, the word *retrofitting* also implies a tension between old and new contexts. If we think about interconnected media environments that we view at home or on the go, it would appear that these strategies are more pervasive. It seems as if part of the strategy today is to keep the programming permanently on our mind, in all facets of our everyday life (no matter where our everyday lives take us). Micromedia are used to fulfill goals such as: fill in gaps of time between television programs, provide content for audiences that merges branded environments with those "in-between moments," index the experiences of primary texts, and act as a brand impression (some type of experience within a branded universe). As John Caldwell says of television's digital media practices, "If the television industry has mastered anything amid recent and rapid changes in delivery and technology, it is in its ability to flood both production *and* viewer cultures with multiple, secondary, and tertiary production texts."[99]

There is a stated belief in media industries that audiences "are no longer satisfied with on-air programming. They think about their favorite characters beyond the program, they're interested in the people behind-the-scenes and they want to share their passion for their favorite shows with others."[100] While it is historically inaccurate to assume that viewers *now* want to engage media they love outside of "on-air programming" more than they used to, it does appear that the opportunities present in a densely networked digital media environment expand this concept to a much grander and more pervasive scale.

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99. Caldwell, "Critical Industrial Practice," 106 (author's italics).

100. "TV + New Media = Formula for Success," *South x Southwest*, accessed March 12, 2012, http://schedule.sxsw.com/2011/events/event_IAP6723

This pervasiveness is part of the competition among a range of media industries for audiences. Through this chapter I hope to have shown how television retrofits older strategies aimed at the soft control of its audiences into a digital media landscape. While the utilization of commodifiable elements is not new, this strategy can be used as a way to distinguish television's micromedia attempts from the glut of other choices. This ties the present articulation of brands and commodifiable elements used by television to longer traditions of audience control strategies.

I want to turn to thinking about some of the material features that allow for television to make a smooth transition into a digital media environment. In doing so I can set the stage for thinking about how television companies augment retrofitted practices with audience data and, finally, how they foreground rhetorical strategies of empowerment as a way to strengthen industry-audience networks.

4 Code-based Actants: Television and Application Programming Interfaces

"Objects do do something, they are not merely the screens or the retroprojectors of our social life. Their sole function is not merely to 'launder' the social origin of the forces that we project onto them."[1]

In Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*, the appearance of Kris Kelvin's dead wife Rheya causes him stress. Sent from Earth to a space station to study the planet Solaris, Kelvin quickly learns that the crew is experiencing disturbing visitors. One of the doctors on board has already committed suicide and the other two are not far behind. Kelvin quickly follows down this path of maddening behavior when Rheya appears. Overwhelmed by her appearance and knowing logically that she is dead, he tricks this projection into a space pod and blasts her out into space. Yet, the next day, there she is again.

Kelvin, along with the other scientists, slowly realizes that the people who appear—different people for each scientist—are projections from the planet Solaris. Solaris is, for lack of a better way to describe it, alive. But it is a "life" that the scientists who study Solaris do not adequately understand. It is an organism that looks like a giant ocean, that creates amazing wave sculptures that build up and fall apart. It occasionally engages, or seems to engage, with different sensors but not in a repeatable, meaningful way.

1. Burno Latour, "On Interobjectivity" in *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, Volume 3, Issue 4 (1996) : 10.

The visitors from Solaris, which the scientists hypothesize are made of neutrinos and held together by some type of force field, are sentient beings. Rheya knows vaguely that she is Rheya, but doesn't know how she got there or why she is there. She just knows she wants to be close to Kris. The scientists assume that the planet has somehow scanned their brains and these visitors are projections of their deepest, most closely guarded memories. Is the planet trying to torture them? Or is the planet trying to give them what they want?

Lem's novel is about the profound impossibility of inter-species communication, as our notions of consciousness differ from species-to-species, or rather planet-to-planet. There is the implication throughout *Solaris* that the tools we use to understand the world around us are implicated in how we view the world. For instance, the humans on board the space station employ different technologies to make sense of an entity that does not fit very well into their concepts of "being." At the same time, the planet also appears to sense the humans and use whatever tools at its disposal to understand them. While the motivations of the planet are unclear, it does read the humans and respond to them through these neutrino-based life forms. Thus, Rheya is not Rheya, she is a projection of the Rheya that Kris had in his mind, which is then mediated by the materials and techniques used by the planet to interact with Kris. Thus, Solaris produces the materialized idea of Rheya as much as it represents her.

Solaris utilizes technologies to understand the humans in the same way that the humans try to understand it. In a real way, the technologies used to understand the world around us shape our relationship to it and partially prefigure the ways we will interact with it (at the same time that our technologies are part and parcel of world they help investigate). The techniques imbued and the material forms of technology play an active role in how we understand our relationship to other beings, materials, and objects.

Taking a cue from *Solaris,* in this chapter I will look at the role technologies play in how we construct and are constructed by our social world. I will do this by focusing specifically on the role application programing interfaces (API) play in the ways television companies produce their own micromedia and harness the micromedia of audiences. A web API, at its most basic, is a software interface released by a company that allows it to interact with other software. This opens data up to a variety of people who may be interested in manipulating it. Twitter is a simple example of this—the social media communication tool built around the 140 character communications known as "tweets." Twitter officially exists at Twitter.com, but many people who engage with Twitter do so through other means like external desktop clients or mobile applications. This means that non-Twitter entities can use Twitter's data via Twitter's access API to bring the functionality of Twitter to another interface. This happens because Twitter releases an API to the "public" (i.e., people who know how to program). With this API, a computer programmer can make a program that can interface with the coded data that runs behind Twitter's homepage, allowing the code of Twitter to spread to non-Twtter related programs and sites.

Web APIs are important to the television industry because the use of web APIs allows for easier interactions across a range of digital platforms in ways that break down potential walls between siloes. In doing so, television companies can avoid interoperability between platforms. In short: web APIs are a core to intermedial connections. Their centrality to facilitating intermedial connections makes them, in ANT terminology, obligatory passage points for the translation of soft control techniques across socially-configured digital platforms.

While, at first glance, these little bits of code may not seem to have much to do with soft control, I would argue that it is web APIs that foster the connections that make networks of soft

control practices possible. Through web APIs we can see the growing emphasis on audience tracking data that we will hear more about in Chapter 5. As we saw in Chapter 3, web APIs help create durable connections between different digital platforms that allow for the spread of branded content into areas not normally associated with television. They also allow for the connecting of devices that foster a more pervasive presence of television-related content in the everyday lives of digital audiences. Thus, I argue that web APIs allow for intermedial connections to be made between various media forms, as web APIs mediate between different programs through coded interfaces. It is though the material processes of coding and code sharing that we can see a key way bridges are created between television shows and various forms of digital micromedia. Without these bridges, interconnected networks of soft control would be much more difficult to sustain.

Additionally, using elements of actor-network theory, I will argue for the agency of technology via web APIs by seeing this tool as an active shaper of our social worlds. I will also discuss the seeming lack of medium specificity in the digital world as content, reduced to 1s and 0s, travels from screen-to-screen with apparent indifference. I want to acknowledge that the digital media landscape erodes some notion of medium specificity but that this view of digital homogenization is difficult to produce, built on a network of standards and agreements between businesses and also the governing actors of the world wide web.

This means that web APIs are not germane specifically to the television industry but are open to a range of industrial and amateur actors. But it also means that television companies are not starting from scratch. This allows television to be where audiences are and not where television wants them to be. And by investigating web APIs, I aim to show how they are used to facilitate the creation and implementation of various designer scripts. Web APIs are used as one

way designer scripts can talk to one another and proliferate across platforms. In this light, material technologies can be used "to enhance or promote certain activities and discourage others" and web APIs are at the core of facilitating this process.[2]

Soft Control and the Interdependence of Protocols and Interfaces

In *Protocol* (2006), Alexander Galloway asks how a concept of "control" could exist in what he calls a "society after decentralization." This is a chronological period focused on decentralized and distributed computing technologies after "the central control of the sovereign" and "the control of the prison or the factory."[3] This appears to be an environment where some measure of industrial control is difficult to attain. To Galloway this view is embodied in the writing of such places as *WIRED* magazine, which has championed the belief that the connectivity and structure of the internet creates more freedom.[4]

Yet, if we look at the architecture of the internet, a more complicated story unfolds. Galloway focuses on the rules for communicating between computing systems as a way to understand how control works in a society after decentralization. Basically, the internet is a connection of computers using the same type of agreed upon "handshakes" or protocols. Galloway parses out the four layers of communication between machines—the application, transport, internet, and link layers.[5] Protocols are the "set of rules that defines a technical

2. Sterne, "Bourdieu, Technique and Technology," 376.

3. A periodization he borrows from Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on Control Societies." Alexander Galloway, *Protocol* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 3.

4. Ibid., xv.

5. Ibid., 42.

standard" of communication on the internet.[6] These protocols allow for data to be condensed and separated on one end, and repurposed on the other. Take, for instance, the transmission control protocol/internet protocol (TCP/IP) that breaks up an email into discrete packets of data that move from one point to another across the world wide web. These packets are sent along the fastest paths to reach their destination. Yet not all of these packets follow the same routes. To be able to successfully reconstitute the email, the TCP has to be able to identify your information. If it cannot, how can it reconstitute your email for a receiver? This technological tracking is basically agnostic to your data and what you do, but is a framework that theoretically can be utilized for the collection of data that I will return to in Chapter 5.

In addition to protocols, the concept of the interface is also relevant here. While the term interface is most often applied to thinking about the screen of a machine, it is actually a term that covers the range of connections that happen between the material and immaterial parts of the internet. For instance, a port that connects two internal parts of your computer together is a material interface supported by a coded interface that allows these two parts to speak to one another through various code protocols. Thus, the interface and the protocol are interdependent layers in the process of computer communication. As one web development specialist I talked to said, "an interface is the structure of how two parties talk to each other. The protocol is the actual language of how they talk to each other."[7]

In *The Interface Effect* (2012), Galloway refers to the interface as a "mode of mediation" between all the materials, layers, and levels of computer-networked environments.[8] To

6. Ibid.,74.

7. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

8. Galloway, *Interface Effect*, 54.

Galloway, interfaces stand at the threshold between two different objects and/or processes. In this way, he compares interfaces to what Gérard Genette identified as "paratexts"—those liminal objects and practices that exist outside the text but mediate our understanding of the text. Like a media paratext (a movie trailer, a piece of advertising, a cute keychain ornament), an interface conditions "passages and trajectories" between the text and the expectations of the audience.[9]

Coding interfaces, however, are more strictly technical; like protocols, interfaces are agnostic to your information. However, it cannot be said that interfaces are agnostic to their design and the ways they can be marshaled to do certain things by other actors in our society. This is where concepts of soft control and translation come into play. A focus on protocols and interfaces shows us how control and translation can be articulated to a distributed and decentrailized environment. For my purposes, I need to note that protocols and interfaces allow for a trackable media environment. Through the use of Twitter, I will show how companies collect data from a wide range of API-connected sites across in the internet and mobile devices in Chapter 5. With this data they further the asymmetry of knowledge between what media industries know about us and what we know about them. It is through this asymmetry that we can see the reinforcement of social control architecture.

Interfaces are also implicated in the processes that allow for the translation between unlike materials and code to happen. A computer-networked environment that favors connection over interoperability allows for the easy implementation of designer scripts across a range of devices. This, for instance, allows for media companies to more easily create and circulate the branding strategies we saw in Chapter 3.

9. Jonathan Gray. *Show Sold Separately* (New York, NYU Press, 2010), 18.

If I survey the breadth of devices, protocols, and interfaces that make up the networks of the internet, I see a range of machines that need ways to communicate with one another and, thus, a great deal of standardization of various protocols and interfaces. A set of interfaces that, to my knowledge, haven't really been discussed much in relation to media studies are APIs—application programming interfaces.[10]

Web APIs as Obligatory Passage Points

According to a web development specialist I talked to, "API is a generic term" and you could call "the first time a computer talked to another computer" a use of an API.[11] Yet, when you hear API today it most likely refers to a "web APIs" that are used to create standardization between how different companies and technologies can talk to one another and share data.

A web API is a small but crucial part of the process of communicating between databases, as web APIs are "the interface implemented by an application which allows other applications to communicate with it."[12] These code interfaces, often in the REST (representation state transfer) protocol today, are generally invisible to the end user. Web APIs open doorways to data but only to specific sets of data that the providing database wants seen.

10. See Mirko Tobias Schäfer's *Bastard Culture! How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production* (2011) for some discussion of "media services" and API.

11. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

12. "What is An API & What Are They Good For? [Technology Explained]," *Makeuseof*, accessed January, 13, 2013. http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/api-good-technology-explained. To be clear, an API is not something you can see as user interface means something different that a code interface.

At its core, all a web API does is "establish a contract between requester and responder."[13] It does this in tandem with whatever programs are being used because APIs are "technology agnostic."[14] Web APIs are also tied to HTTP protocols, the protocols that manage the transfer of information on the world wide web.

To do this, a program would execute a "GET" or "POST" function it its code. These functions are used to transfer data over HTTP. Think of a GET function as someone picking up a phone and dialing a number. The person on the other end answers the phone but cannot interpret what the caller is saying. That is where the web API steps in; a web API is the contract set up between the sender and receiver as to whether information will be exchanged and how to make that intelligible. A web API is the interface that confirms if this GET or POST (GET is taking database information, POST is posting information into the database) request is allowed to access this database and, once confirmed, it then only allows that GET function access to pre-defined data sets.

A web API does this by translating all information into a "data-interchange format" that most computer programming languages can read such as Extensible Markup Language (XML) or JavaScript Object Notation (JSON). This means that a range of different programs and computer languages can have access to your data through these common formats, thereby solving problems of interoperability.[15] Using an XML or JSON format, a range of programs that could not easily talk to another before can do so now.

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13. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

14. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

15. John-Paul Kamath, "APIs lead the way to better interoperability," accessed January 13, 2013. http://www.computerweekly.com/feature/APIs-lead-the-way-to-better-interoperability

This allows for the stabilization of the networks that make up the world wide web, where web APIs become, in ANT terminology, "obligatory passage points" to a particular type of "social" activity. Obligatory passage points are points through which networks must pass to be involved in the creation of a network. An obligatory passage point can be any actant. For instance, Michel Callon identifies researchers who want to resuscitate scallop production in St. Brieuc Bay as obligatory passage points in addition to the type on anchorage used on the floor of the Bay to facilitate scallop growth. The researchers are obligatory because they are the ones trying to arrange the actors into tasks that will accomplish their goal. The anchorage is obligatory as long as it produces the intended results. Thus, it is through obligatory passage points that certain actants become functionally indispensible to the network. The actants I have investigating here are little bits of code that make up web APIs. These web APIs gain power by the "number, extensiveness and stability of the connections routed through them."[16]

We start to see significant implementation of web APIs in the early 2000s in the United States because of the standardization coming from World Wide Web Consortium, the organization that sets standards for how the web should work.[17] This allowed a wide range of different actors to work with a common vocabulary. During this time Microsoft began pushing

16. Nick Couldry, "Actor Network Theory and Media: Do They Connect and On What Terms?" in *Connectivity, Networks and Flows: Conceptualizing Contemporary Communications.* Ed. Andreas Hepp (New York: The Hampton Press, 2008), 93.

17. The concept of the API has longer history than the contemporary iteration of web APIs. Before the presence of the world wide web in the early 1990s there was the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), which was used as a method to transmit data between different computer networks. This was a used as a business-to-business exchange and not oriented toward interactions with consumers. Because of cost and complexity, the EDI was difficult to implement on a large scale. See Jason Levitt, "From EDI To XML And UDDI: A Brief History Of Web Services," *Information Week,* accessed January 13, 2013. http://www.informationweek.com/from-edi-to-xml-and-uddi-a-brief-history/6506480

"Web services," which are a range of "technologies that facilitated communicating via HTTP."[18] According to a web development specialist I talked to, web APIs in their present form got "popular really with 'Web 2.0' when Ajax started getting used more for web interfaces and when SAAS (Software as a Service) took off as the predominate software sales model."[19] Ajax is an important coding implementation because, before it, web sites were generally based on completely coded HTML pages. When a user interacted with page in some way, the entire page had to be reloaded from the server. The new ability to asynchronously load web pages led the way for the implementation of web API, which could now easily and efficiently grab data from a varied of different databases without taxing the web browser.

Some of the key events in the rising popularity of web APIs are eBay's launching of a web API to standardize how developers communicated with the site in 2000.[20] In 2002, Amazon launched "welcome mat" for developers.[21] In 2004, Flickr became a pioneer in super-robust APIs as they released a range of them to help integrate Flickr functionality in other web pages. In 2005, Google Map's API was released and, in 2006, Twitter and Facebook came out with APIs that developers used to build social applications.[22] Web API ecology continues to be robust today. There is a range of "API services" (3Scale, Apiphany, Intel Expressway API Manager,

18. Ibid., 1.

19. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

20. "eBay Launches New Initiative to Provide Expanded E-Commerce Solutions." *eBay*. Accessed January 14, 2013. http://pages.ebay.com/aboutebay/thecompany/2000/november.html

21. "Amazon.com Launches Web Services," *Amazon*, accessed January 13, 2013. http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=503034

22. Biz Stone, "Introducing the Twitter API," *Twitter,* accessed January 13, 2013. https://blog.twitter.com/2006/introducing-twitter-api

Uservoice, Google Groups, Appgalleries) built on helping companies manage their APIs and drive developer adoption of web APIs.

It would be short sighted to say that APIs became popular simply because of some technological advancement. Rather, a web developer I talked with pointed to a "paradigm shift away from the selective withholding of information" toward the sharing of information that characterized the move to Web 2.0 practices.[23] On one hand, information becomes "freer," but, on the other hand, it also facilitates a move "towards using that data as a service to allow others to make apps that rely on your data."[24]

In "Cultural Anxiety 2.0," Dave Everitt and Simon Mills describe a shift in thinking about the internet from web sites that use static pages of earlier web sites to "social software applications." As identified by Tim O'Reily, who coined the term Web 2.0, the original motive behind the "2.0 suffix was to help open source expertise and ethics integrate with commercial interests."[25] From a very narrow perspective, this shift was identified as being facilitated by "the blossoming of social software applications, the increased capacity of processors, and bandwidth to handle video streams."[26] But, as the authors note, technologies to facilitate this had existed before 2004. Rather, it was the need for business and other organizations to tap into "human interactions that grow semi-organically."[27]

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23. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

24. Anonymous Web Development Specialists, meeting with author, July 16, 2012.

25. Everitt, Dave and Simon Mills, "Cultural Anxiety 2.0" in *Media, Culture & Society,* Vol 31, no. 5 (2009) : 760.

26. Ibid., 750.

27. Ibid., 750.

This fits within what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron call the Californian Ideology, a "mix of cybernetics, free market economics, and counter-culture libertarianism" that dominated the discourses surrounding computer-based technologies.[28] For Barbrook and Cameron, the Californian Ideology simultaneously argued for "the New Left utopia of the electronic agora and the New Right's vision of the electronic marketplace."[29] We can see this ideology present in business models like Google that are built on ways to make their information accessible while simultaneously reaching out to monetize social interactions with that information. This environment that espouses the need for certain types of information accessibility (i.e., those that can be monetized) are what make web APIs obligatory passage points, for it is through them that different actors with different goals can communicate and form networks of affiliation.

Imagine Google as if it were a massive software program with which you want to interact, but you only want to interact with parts of it. With web APIs, Google now gives programmers access to Google's libraries of data. So, if you work for a company that wants to integrate the functionality of Google Maps, you grab the Google Maps API key that allows you access to those maps. You can then plot your own data onto those maps for your business purposes if you have at the very least some basic programming skills. In addition to Google Maps, Google has more that fifty other APIs like the Civic Information API that "allows developers to build applications that display civic information including polling place, early vote location, candidate data, and election official information to users." Or the BigQuery API that

28. Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, "The Californian Ideology," in *Mute*, Issue 3, (Autumn 1995), 1.

29. Ibid., 5. For more information on the history of California Ideology Fred Turner's *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* (2008).

allows programmers to use Google to run SQL-like queries against big data sets provided the data sets are stored at Google Storage. [30]

This access to data is important to businesses that want to add the functionality of Google to their models or interact with powerful Google tools and services. Yet, this is also important for Google as it allows them to collect more data and reach their brand out across a vast array of web pages. Google itself becomes an obligatory passage point. From Google's perspective, why would you create a program from scratch when there are so many blocks of programming you can utilize easily? Additionally, why would you create something in a locked down silo when you have the opportunity to push in out onto the social graph?

So, while web APIs philosophically are not new, the new interest in them is built on a type of structured openness, where many businesses want to give away access to their data and services, but only on their terms. As stated above, this is where the trajectories of web APIs and soft control meet as a proliferation of web API usage makes this type of intermedial-friendly digital media environment possible. Furthermore, we can conceptualize something like Google not as a discrete entity, but as a collection of programming packets, data objects, data libraries, and interface protocols that can be put together in different ways. This makes sense in a fragmented, multi-platform environment, as this thinking has allowed companies to spread out across platforms, where widgets on one device, apps on another device, and screens on a third are all drawing from the same source material and distributing it far and wide.

In theory, your brand and its associated code could spread across the web. Facebook, for example, uses something called an "Open Graph API." This allows developers to integrate their

30. See "Google BigQuery," *Google Developers,* accessed January 13, 2013. https://developers.google.com/bigquery/docs/overview and "What is the Google Civic Information API?" *Google Developers,* accessed January 13, 2013. https://developers.google.com/civic-information

work with Facebook's social graph—the connections created by how people relate to one another on Facebook. In addition to the Open Graph API, it also has the Connect API, which allows Facebook members to connect to third party websites. On the one hand, web APIs are about allowing outside entities—companies and individuals with programming experience—to engage with Facebook. On the other hand, this allows Facebook to extend its reach out across multiple websites, devices, apps, and platforms. This means that the rest of the internet becomes a great deal more social on Facebook's terms, while also allowing Facebook more advertising opportunities by integrating third party content into its streams. In 2012, 42% of the URLs processed by the service Embedly had Facebook Open Graph tags.[31] Clearly, this type of interaction is becoming incredibly popular on the world wide web.

So, APIs help connect a range of machines and computing languages together so that different entities can share information. Why is this important for television, and what role can web APIs play in facilitating the intermedial relationships between television shows and various forms of micromedia? I argue that web APIs open up a range of avenues for television companies to explore intermedial relationships that wouldn't easily be available otherwise. Web APIs act as reliable access points for television companies to create networked nodes in a digital media environment through the openness and standardization facilitated through web APIs.

Television companies first benefit from the standardization offered by web protocols as APIs act to standardize the digital media environment. For television, web APIs are used as a way to solve the problem of interoperability between different platforms and devices. Relatedly, web APIs also solve a problem with access. For instance, producers at *Saturday Night Live* can

31. Emil Protalinksi, "42% of URLs have Faceook Open Graph tags," *ZDNet*, accessed, January 14, 2013. http://www.zdnet.com/blog/facebook/42-of-urls-have-facebook-open-graph-tags/13107

more easily facilitate the spread of micromedia, like the short video *Laser Cats,* across a range of interconnected digital properties: the NBC.com/saturday-night-live website, a posting of *Laser Cats* on Hulu.com, and posts about *Laser Cats* on SNL's official Facebook page and Twitter feeds.[32]

We can see television companies engaging with this type of interface usage. See, for instance, a job at NBCUniversal for "Sr. Software Programmer" that asks for a minimum of 4 years experience "working with parsing JSON objects and XML feeds," while a job at CBS for "Senior Software Engineer" asks for "familiarity with web APIs and development."[33]

I want to turn now to investigating the relationship between web API and television more deeply through how the USA Network's *Psych* used web APIs as a way to engage audiences in a cross-platform way.

Club*Psych* and Web APIs

As stated in Chapter 3, the USA Network's *Psych* is a show about a faux psychic detective. According to Jesse Redniss, VP of Digital Content at the USA Network, *Psych* is the USA Network's "youngest series" and #1 cable program in their 18-49 demographic."[34] The show has also made significant use of micromedia as a strategy for audience outreach. In 2010, *Psych*'s Club*Psych* was awarded *Ad Age*'s Media Vanguard Award for Best Social-Media

32**.** *Laser Cats* was an SNL digital short about cats that . . . shot lasers out of their eyes.

33. See "Sr. Software Engineer" *NBCUniversal Careers*, accessed on March 12, 2013, http://www.nbcunicareers.com/view-job?id=169209 and "Senior Software Engineer" *Careers 2.0,* accessed March 12, 2013. http://careers.stackoverflow.com/jobs/34856/senior-software-engineer-cbs-interactive

34. Jessie Redniss, "Case Study: USA Networks," *SlideShare*, accessed November 1, 2012. http://www.slideshare.net/gzicherm/3-jesse-redniss-g-summit

Loyalty Program. In 2012, Psych won the Shorty Award's Best Social Media Campaign for TV for its transmedia #Hashtag Killer game.[35]

Club*Pysch* is a loyalty program that spans all of *Psych*'s branded offerings—the TV show, the official website, games, short videos, and social media platforms (Get Glue, Facebook, and Twitter). The club, for which you sign up with Twitter or Facebook, is built around challenges.[36] I received 10 points for signing back into the club. I can get 500 points for joining the "*Pysch* Mobile Fan Club" or 500 points for playing the "Squirrel Assassins" game. I can also get 500 points simply for watching an episode of *Psych* on the USA Network's official web site (but not on another portal). Users can redeem these points for virtual goods or tangible partnership offerings. According to Redniss, USA saw a huge bump in participation when they added tangible goods like a Nintendo Wii into the mix.[37]

Redniss estimates that "Club *Psych"* led to 130% increase in page views through the season and 40% increased in return visits to USANetwork.com. "Club Psych 2.0," rolled out during season six of the show, attracted 65,000 registrants over the course of the season. During this time 6,000 pieces of merchandise were redeemed and 25,000 people installed the second-screen experience app for iPad.[38] Redniss pinpoints some of the success on the user interface design that funnels users back to the Challenge Board after they are done with their present task. In addition, he points to how this experience draws on the competitive energy of fans and to engage them in games of status.

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35. "Best Social Media Campaign for Television." *Shorty Awards*, accessed November 12, 2012. http://industry.shortyawards.com/nominee/4th_annual/J/psych-hashtag-killer

36. You can also sign up through a USA Network password but eventually you will be asked to sign in through Facebook or Twitter.

37. Jessie Redniss, "Case Study: USA Networks," 1.

38. Ibid., 1.

In addition to Club*Psych*, writers on the show rolled out #HashtagKiller, a "transmedia execution of storytelling" ahead of the sixth season.[39] #HashtagKiller would end up, according to Redniss, gaining 128 million page views for Clubpysch.com, 455,000 Facebook shares with 59 million fiends, and 361,000 Twitter shares with an estimated 19 million follows.[40] Additionally, users spent an average of 15 minutes on Club*Psych* and 60% of users returned at least 5 times.[41]

The game goes something like this: You have to help Sean and Gus catch a killer by watching videos and following clues that range across various social media sites. At Hashtagkiller.com you find a short video (2 minutes 29 seconds) of Sean and Gus. Sean is playing around with the Twitter feed for his psychic detective agency even though Gus is the computer savvy one. Gus admonishes him, even more so when someone named @#hashtagkiller responds to Sean's tweets with a riddle that disconcerts Sean. The video ends and you are prompted to continue by hitting the "next" button.

You are asked to sign in to Club*Psych* for the game to work. As a bonus you earn 1000 points for signing up to #HashtagKiller and 25 points for logging into Club*Psych*. You are then led to a screen where "episodes" of the game are stored; "the story unfolds in real time over the whole seven weeks so come back daily for new events, mini-games, videos, phone calls and more."[42]

The original video, with Sean and Gus at a computer in front of their Twiter feed, sets up the framework for the transmedia game. Each week participants learn new information and can

39. Mike Johnson, "Hastag Killer Psych USA Network Social Media Strategy," accessed March 13, 2013. http://themikejohnson.com/2012/02/27/hashtag-killer-psych-usa-network

40. Ibid., 1.

41. Ibid., 1.

42. "Returning #Hashtagkiller Users." *#Hashtag Killer, a*ccessed June 12, 2012. http://htk.clubpsych.usanetwork.com/story_assets/HTK/index.html

interact with Sean and Gus through Twitter when they ask "the user for guidance on how to proceed. The user receives texts providing clues to continue."[43] Users also engaged in real time communication through messages on Facebook, picture messages, audio feeds, and video shot with cast members specifically for the game. Through interactive crime scenes, users applied their investigative skills to notice out of place items, find crime scene clues and critical leads that could all help catch the killer.

To produce this game, the USA Network partnered with Glow Interactive, a digital marketing and creative agency more skilled in the creation of such content, to create the short videos. Additionally, they partnered with SocialSamba, a social media firm that enables "fans to connect with TV and movie characters through scripted interactions," to architect interactions across branded platforms.[44] While the game may feel like it evolves with your interactions, according to Aaron Williams, head of SocialSamba:

> It is a platform. Our Sagas are written as scripts, with all of the posts, comments, images, and videos, as well as the branches and choices, all planned out at the outset. Then our engine takes that script and creates a great experience for each fan, and the writer doesn't have to touch it after they publish it. We skin each Saga, to give them a unique branding, but the real work is in writing the script, not creating code or any engineering.[45]

43. Mike Johnson, "Hashtag Killer," 1.

44. Frank Rose, "SocialSamba's Aaron Williams on Hashtag Killer and why you might want to friend those guys on Pysch," *Deep Media,* accessed January 13, 2013. http://www.deepmediaonline.com/deepmedia/2012/09/socialsambas-aaron-williams-on-hashtag-killer.html

45. Ibid., 1.

This game is a platform with interconnecting pieces of micromedia as the driving experience behind the game. The key here in architecting these types of micromedia experimentations are the standardizations created by web APIs.

For Club*Psych*, the USA Network engages the services of computer programmers who are most likely in house.[46] First, the infrastructure of Club*Psych* will be created and housed on servers leased by the USA Network. A range of micromedia are made or appropriated to fill that infrastructure. Some of this content is made in-house and some is outsourced. Images of *Psych* cast members plastered on cover art for fictitious bands or animated GIFs for the "GIF gallery" that we find in Club*Pysch* are most likely created in-house. Short videos, such as season six interviews or "*Psych*-Outs" (behind the scenes footage shown at the end of *Psych* episodes and housed on the Usanetwork.com), are most likely outsourced to a boutique video firm to create before being housed as part of "Club *Psych*." The content for other point-earning challenges, like causal games or character quizzes, are most likely created in-house by the computer programming team while the rules for these challenges exist on a web API connected server. Thus, a space—Club*Psych*—is created where various forms of micromedia content can exist alongside one another.

Because all this work is not done in house, the computer programmers, working with a project manager, cooperate with other partners the USA Network hired for this particular job. Thus, companies that deal in web API-connected data come into play very early in the process. For Club*Pysch*, the USA Network worked with the gamification platform Bunchball in addition to other firms like SocialSamba and Glow Interactive on the #HashtagKiller game.

46. As noted above in the NBCUniversal example, it is clear that many of these programmer jobs are in-house jobs.

Bunchall offers "game mechanics across websites, social networks and mobile applications."[47] To facilitate this, Bunchball has a web API (which is, in reality, a range of web APIs working under the same heading) that "provides the back-end infrastructure that makes it easy to create Macromedia Flash-based multi-player, networked games. You don't need to worry about managing users, games, databases, servers, data storage and routing, presence, chat, or any of that other stuff. Write to our ActionScript API or use one of our frameworks, and we handle it all for you, for free. Leaving you to concentrate on creating a great game."[48]

Through web APIs, Bunchball can bring the gamification experience—game thinking in a non-game context—to Club*Psych*. To facilitate this, Bunchball gives the producers at the USA Network an account and a screen-based interface to interact with Bunchball's database of rules and content. Through this screen-based interface, the USA Network can create Club *Psych* content through pre-fab rules and parts on Bunchball's servers. For instance, when you sign up to ClubPysch.com, you get 100 points for completing your first challenge. Other challenges include checking out the classic heavy metal parody album "Taintëd Stew" under *Psych*'s Greatest Hits tab, or following *Psych* on Twitter. These challenges are created from pre-fabricated challenge types found on Bunchball that are tweaked by the computer programmers of Club*Psych*. Additionally, while Flash-based games like "Squirrel Assassins" are created in-house, they are coded with added functionality from Bunchball's API to be able to connect to various platforms.

There are many web APIs at work behind the screen at Club*Psych* and each offers different bits of functionality that allow a television company to easily create a digital property that easily connects to a range of other digital properties. The main ones I can identify (using

47. "Who We Are," *Bunchball,* accessed on January 12, 2013. http://www.bunchball.com/about

48. "Bunchball API," *APIhub,* accessed January 12, 2013. http://www.apihub.com/api/bunchball-api

Safari's Web Inspector tool to read through the website's code) are Facebook's Open Graph API, Twitter's access API, Get Glue's access API, and Bunchball's API, which is a mashup of its core APIs bundled with access APIs for Youtube and Flickr.[49] There could be others that end users cannot see, because web APIs generally operate behind the graphic user interface.

What would happen during an interaction facilitated by a web API? The Bunchball APIs present might work like this: The USA Network codes Club*Psych* with GET and POST functions. When those functions are processed, the code knows to reach out to Bunchball's servers when directed. A message is then sent out via HTTP to Bunchball's servers that would look something like this: http://clubpsych.usanetwork.com/API/clubpsych/GetChallenge. The message is received, the requested information is translated into XML and sent back over HTTP to the web programmers for Club*Psych,* where is it decoded and implemented. Bunchball thus acts as a data repository to be accessed whenever necessary. Because of web APIs, the GET and POST functions written into the code for Club*Psych* know when to reach out to Bunchball's database.

Facebook's Open Graph API, which "lets apps tell stories on Facebook," works in the same way described above as would Twitter's API.[50] These allow for an incredible mount of functionality to be brought to the user experience. This means that Club*Psych* becomes a social experience. Through the implementation of web APIs, television companies gain a greater foothold in a digital media landscape, by allowing Club*Psych* to act as a seamless experience

49. This is assuming that Bunchball didn't also aggregate Facebook and Twitter's APIs. This may have happened but they would work the same, only with Bunchball as a proxy in one iteration.

50. "Open Graph Overview," *Facebook Developers,* accessed on January 12, 2013. https://developers.facebook.com/docs/opengraph/overview

across multiple devices.[51] But what appears as a seamless experience is actually the combination of many different media forms, partners, and devices, particularly web APIs.

Conclusion

Lev Manovich, in *The Language of New Media* (2002), says that digital media represent a convergence of two separate historical trajectories: computing and media technologies.[52] Thus, "new media" combine the narrative and aesthetic possibilities of cinema and television, while incorporating the programmed flexibility of computing technologies. The language of media studies merges into the nomenclature of the "digital," as a new vocabulary begins to take hold in media studies: APIs, protocols, interfaces, interoperability, compression, bandwidth, TCP/IP, etc. Many of these terms have been discussed in an academic sense before, although more frequently in the realm of computer science than in the humanities.

Through a discussion of web APIs, I analyze one of the bridges that help to connect these two object domains. The protocols and interfaces of the web allow for a structured openness and standardization to communication between machines. This is important to how television can engage in a digital media environment. This allows television companies like the USA Network to create digital networks of association between audiences, databases, mobile devices, television sets, and social media platforms.

On his personal website, Chris Dixon talks about web APIs in a way that I think highlights their relevance to television companies:

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51. Social media like Twitter and Facebook gain just as much from an intermedial relationship with the television industry in terms of prestige, promotion, and an increase of brand awareness.

52. Manavich, *Language of New Media,* 20.

> A few successful websites were built almost entirely through viral growth. The vast majority, however, started off by partnering with other, already successful websites. Even Google began by partnering with Yahoo. As superior as Google's search algorithm was, it was very hard to get the masses to switch to a new search engine.[53]

The "partnering" that web APIs make available and easy is crucial to thinking about how television can more easily create intermedial connections in a digital media environment. The standards, coding, ideologies, and practices embedded in web APIs make it easy for a range of actors to interact across a range of digital platforms in ways that break down walls between siloes. This allows television companies to use Facebook as much as Facebook is using them as they both strive to monetize audience attention. Furthermore, it allows a way in for a once dominant media form to compete with and utilize a range of emergent, digital media forms as a way to reach active audiences.

Web APIs open up a path for television companies to cobble together platforms. Additionally, this gives television companies access to the data and services of a range of companies that help extend television properties into spaces where active audiences reside. This means television does not need to start from ground zero in a digital media environment that is open to companies sharing functionality with one another for their mutual benefit. This makes web APIs core to intermedial connections. Intermedial connections can happen without web APIs but web APIs make the process much easier and much more plausible. In this light, the interactions between dominant and emergent media forms looks less like one displacing the other and more like a contingent mess of intermedial connections.

53. Chris Dixon, "Good bizdev cannibalizes itself," *Chris Dixon,* accessed March 13, 2013. http://cdixon.org/2010/08/28/good-bizdev-cannabilizies-itself

Web APIs, then, show us the material and coding properties that undergird an environment favorable to the concept of pervasive soft control practices. Thus, web APIs play an active role in shaping the networks of association between a television show like *Psych* and a range of digital partners. Speaking about the role of immaterial coding techniques and the material technologies present in this process, I want to reassert my argument for the agency of technologies. Web APIs make certain types of connections easier and, in doing so, shape the relationship between dominant and emergent forms of media. Hence, conceptualizing technologies is not divorced from social networks but is the product and process of various social networks. While web APIs may be immaterial on a coding level, they facilitate the material connections and material manifestations of code spread across a range of databases to range of different devices.

Yet, giving agency to technologies, even when described this way, feels a bit mystifying. In *What Technology Wants* (2010), Kevin Kelly tries to reframe "life" and technology under the umbrella of information, since "both life and technology seem to be based on immaterial flows of information."[54] Although Kelly doesn't believe technologies are conscious (yet), he believes that what technology wants is "to encourage more tool making, more technology invention, and more self-enhancing connections."[55]

Arguing against this view of technology, ANT would say that just because an actant has agency in reference to the actions of other actants does not presuppose the intentionality of these actions. Because the actions of a group of beetles in cleaning the corpses of dead animals in California or of a few lines of code that shape the way databases communicate happens does not

54. Kevin Kelly, *What Technology Wants* (New York: Viking Adult Press, 2010), 10.

55. Ibid., 16.

mean the beetles or the code are aware of this larger process. While what Kelly is doing mystifies technology, I am trying to show how a technological object's agency is part and parcel of the networks from which it was made and with which it interacts. Technology is, in the words of Bruno Latour, "society made durable."[56]

That said, it still sounds like Kelly and I have some overlap when he says things like, "when a technology has found its ideal role in the world, it becomes an active agent in increasing the options, choices, and possibilities of others."[57] This is something I do agree with in the sense that technologies, in the forms they take, make some things easier and some things harder. Web APIs are a key part of a process of facilitating a digital media environment where the sharing of information (toward a variety of goals) is not frowned upon but celebrated. They make certain types of information sharing easier; they perform a role in the world that connections must pass through to become digital networks. With this idea I want to turn to thinking about the everyday life of television audiences and how data is used to architect soft control.

56. Bruno Latour, "Technology is Society Made Durable." *A Sociology of Monsters? Essays on Power, Technology and Domination, Sociological Review Monograph*. Ed. by John Law (London; Routledge, 1991), 103.

57. Kelly, *What Technology Wants,* 269.

5 Everyday Life as a Text: Television and Data Reinforced Behavior

All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits. [1]

Robert Gu is having a bad day. He can't exactly remember who he is, where he is, or who these people are who are looking after him. A former Nobel laureate poet, Robert is starting over again at square one. His wife is presumably dead, the world he knows is gone and his detour through Alzheimer's is finally lifting. Medical advances have saved Robert's brain, although he isn't really the same now. Neither as smart nor as cantankerous, Robert must relearn what it is like to live in a society that has left him behind.

Vernor Vinge's *Rainbow's End* (2007) follows Robert's reintroduction into the society of San Diego, CA in 2025, which includes his step-daughter, a military intelligence officer, being unwittingly drawn into a plan to steal programs that point toward a new type of mind control technology. And while the implications of this technology are potentially fascinating, what is more central to my concerns is the sheer amount of data that exists in this world. To Robert the world looks as it ever did, but most people wear smart, responsive clothing and contact lenses that supply them with virtual retinal displays. In this augmented reality, the way you interface with world is customizable. While these technologies are central to commercial gaming and entertainment arenas, it is also functional, used by construction workers who match real

1. Taken from William James' *Habit* (Kindle Edition, 2005 presented by www.all-about-psychology.com) locations 6-7.

materials to schemata on the fly, or doctors who see the vital signs of the patient emanating in real time.

All of this is built on seemingly endless streams of data. Data have changed society so much that Robert, who was always slightly technophobic, must now take retraining classes at the local high school—classes based on search and analysis, "the heart of the economy."[2]

The speculations made in Vinge's book are not just the limited provenance of science fiction authors. A "deluge of data" is a common theme across popular and consumer culture.[3] Take, for instance, the "A Day Made of Glass" by Corning glass. In this video, smart photovoltaic glass allows information into every facet of our life—smart bathroom mirrors, kitchen counter, walls and phones embedded with movable displays.[4] Data is literally everywhere. In a similar vein we have Google Glass. In early 2013 Google slowly rolled out glasses that, when worn, overlay data on top of our daily experiences. You can take pictures with the glasses, give them voice commands, chat with friends, interface with Google maps, or have updates pushed to you about, for instance, suspended subway services.

Also, we have IBM's "Smarter Planet" advertisements about the coming "tsunami of information"—RFID chip transmissions, store transactions, medical records, emails, photos, videos, blogs, traffic patterns, et cetera. One of the commercials in the series asks, "What if technology could capture all this information and turn it into intelligence?" IBM could help you identify patterns faster and "pull insights from the noise." The company could help organizations

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2. Vernor Vinge, *Rainbow's End* (New York: Tor Science Fiction, 2007), 51.

3. David Carr, "Why Twitter Will Endure," *The New York Times*, accessed June 15, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/weekinreview/03carr.html

4. "A Day Made with Glass," *YouTube,* accessed March 21, 2101. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Cf7IL_eZ38.

"manage their people" and "mitigate risk." And, most importantly, they can help you "convert data into action."[5]

In addition to the examples above, we recently got a glimpse into this world in Charles Duhigg's *New York Times Magazine* piece "How Companies Learn your Secrets."[6] Duhigg, who expands on this work in his book *The Power of Habit*, tells the tale of how Target uses data science to better understand its customers. One of the more humorous and alarming examples is how Target cross-references purchases to figure out when a family is pregnant, even though they haven't told Target. Because of these algorithmic calculations based on your shopping data, Target can better target ads and discounts more strategically to these families.

These are just a few examples of the ways our lives will be—and in some cases *are* being—translated to data to better serve the companies that want our attention. This emphasis on creating, managing, and utilizing data falls under the buzzphrase "Big Data"—datasets too large for traditional computation and the technologies, engineers, and statisticians who support it.

In this chapter I want to address the role Big Data plays in the relationship of television to the short bursts of micromedia that constitute social media. First, I argue that the ways television companies are experimenting with digital micromedia are best understood as the tentative first steps in redefining the medium's place in the space and time of the everyday life of potential audiences. An emphasis on everyday life is important because it is at the level of the everyday, as understood by Henri Lefebvre, where the materialization of attention and monetization takes place. Additionally, everyday life, as Rita Felski argues, is understood as the space and time

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5. "IBM New Intelligence toward a Smarter Planet." *YouTube,* accessed June 12, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wfZH6ZWxmk

6. Charles Duhigg. "How Companies Learn Your Secrets," *The New York Times*, accessed March, 12 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html

where we become "acclimatized to assumptions, behaviors and practices."[7] While our habitual practices may be practices that we don't think about too much, I can guarantee you that the television industry is charting and identifying them in great detail. As TV screens increasingly move outside their symbolic hearth and home, there is an emphasis on trying to reacclimatize television-viewing practices to the new rules of media consumption.

Looking at the "social TV" relationship between social media and television foregrounds how consumer attention isn't something that is easily taken for granted. In fact, this process of capturing eyeballs is never fully complete and always in flux. But this doesn't mean that television companies are not using social media to control the terms of the industry-audience relationship—far from it, as we have seen in previous chapters. The amount of data we pump into this social feedback loop is astounding and points to the unequal dynamic between producers and active (or otherwise) audiences.

Having argued in the last chapter that technologies like web APIs create intermedial connections that help explain how soft control works, here I want to suggest that the material-semiotic connections of television to the everyday life of digital audiences are strengthened through data-reinforced behavior. So, while web APIs help to open up the ability for dispersed data collection technologies and data exchanges, data reinforced behavior helps to stabilize such networks. As I will discuss below, this data reinforced behavior is the product of designer scripts that are algorithmic in nature.

To investigate these designer scripts, I will first discuss what Big Data is and how it applies to the television industry today. Big Data, as a field, is first about atomization—breaking the audience-as-consumer down into information. Big Data is then about mapping and reducing

7. Rita Felski. "The Invention of Everyday Life" in *New Formations* 39, (1999/2000) :31.

that information, that is, re-atomizing information into data structures. Big Data is finally about creating "actionable" plans to use this data. In tandem with the discussion of web APIs, a technology used to connect disparate platforms, I argue that the processes that fall under Big Data are used to leverage the transition from a broadcast environment to a multi-screen environment. To see how this is leveraged, I will discuss what may best be referred to as background designer scripts that exist within the digital media environment. While the work of these background scripts eventually manifest formally, they are not formal scripts per se. Ironically, these scripts work on us because, well, we do the work. They are there to track, atomize, and tabulate us. They exist along a longer chain of designer scripts. By looking specifically at the role of Twitter in harnessing social media, I will show how background designer scripts are put into action for the television industry and how data-reinforced behavior helps strengthen television's position in a new environment.

The Rise of Big Data

Behind all these efforts at programming in a networked world, we have a key feature to habituating television to a digital environment: the aforementioned data footprints, whose significance merits its own discussion. The world of Big Data, although relatively new as a term and industry, does have some historical precedent in supercomputing and weather forecasting, which have been around for 30 to 40 years.[8] What is new in terms of the technologies is the movement from large supercomputers to networked nodes of smaller computers to process large amounts of data. And because of the ease and relative cheapness of processing this data, more

8. "Big Data: What's Happening To Information About You?" *Blip*, accessed on March 12, 2012. http://blip.tv/slowtv/big-data-what-s-happening-to-information-about-you-5817744

and more industries are beginning to conceptualize their relationships to themselves, other industries, and their audiences/users in terms of data.

In a recent analysis from IBM, Big Data comprises three dimensions: Variety, Velocity and Volume.[9] Variety is key to the advancement of the field of Big Data because you expand the amount of things that can be considered data if you can incorporate unstructured data, or data that does not fit into a pre-defined data model. This data can be documents, any type of tagged metadata, health records, video and audio samples, unstructured text from an email, PDF, or Word Processing file. The resulting ability to correlate different data sets of unstructured sources allows whoever controls that data to better understand (in theory) the behavior of those data points.

The velocity of data assimilation and rendering is important to be able to feed into flexible and responsive real-time environments. Additionally, the volume of data is immense. We are talking about processing a terabyte (1 trillion bytes of data) every minute and a petabyte (1024 terabytes or 13.3 years of HDTV) every 16 hours.[10] Clearly, this is a lot of data. To give you an example from social media, in 2011, Facebook moved 30 petabytes from one data center to another.[11] And they are building two more data centers.

As a way into this environment, let's look to a company like Cloudera, a Palo Alto-based company. It offers products, professional services, technical support, and Hadoop training as a

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9. See Noreen Burlingame, *The Little Book of BIG DATA, 2012 Edition.* New Street Communications, LLC. Kindle Edition.

10. Aanand, "Hadoop Sorts a Petabyte in 16.25 Hours and a Terabyte in 62 Seconds," *Yahoo! Developer Network*, accessed on March 14, 2012. http://developer.yahoo.com/blogs/hadoop/hadoop-sorts-petabyte-16-25-hours-terabyte-62-422.html

11. Derrick Harris, "How Facebook moved 30 Petrabyes of Hadoop Data," *Gigaom*, accessed March 13, 2012. http://gigaom.com/2011/07/27/facebook-hadoop-cluster

way to monetize the Apache Hadoop open-source software.[12] Hadoop is two things, a file storage system, HDFS (Hadoop File System), and a "high-performance parallel data" processing software framework called MapReduce. A software framework is kind of like a program except it allows a lot of user-end manipulations. With MapReduce, a user can process data across highly distributed datasets. MapReduce can scan both unstructured and structured data by first "mapping"—a master node (computer) takes a command that it distributes to other nodes—and then "reducing"—using a particular query into the data set to come up with a solution. So, simply, the framework maps the data, decides what fits its query and reduces that data down to an answer. To give you another way to think about Hadoop/MapReduce and the data it is capable of processing, IBM's supercomputer, Watson, used Hadoop/MapReduce to cull information from over 200 million pages of content and 500 gigabytes of information to answer questions and "win" over $77,147 on Jeopardy.[13]

Data, in a mapped but unreduced form, appears as utter chaos. Approximately 80% of the effort involved in dealing with data is simply cleaning it up.[14] But once all that data is sorted and made readable and relatable by a file storage system, it needs to be "reduced." This reduction happens through the implementation of various algorithms.

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12. The Hadoop file system and the MapReduce application are not the only ways to engage with data. You have NoSQL databases like Cassandra, which was developed from Amazon's Shopping Cart database and is now used by Netflix to catalogue and make user recommendations. To make the issue even more confusing, because Hadoop is open-source, it can be used by other non-relational, distributed databases like HBase, which Facebook uses.

13. Oom, "I'll Take Hadoop for $400, Alex," *Yahoo! Developer Network*, accessed on March 14, 2012. http://developer.yahoo.com/blogs/hadoop/posts/2011/02/i'll-take-hadoop-for-400-alex

14. Burlingame, *The Little Book of BIG DATA, 2012 Edition*, Kindle Locations 72-73. Although "cleaning it up" implies you are finding the clean, "true" hidden in the data, which is a misrepresentation of data mapping and reducing. These processes make data as much as they find data, a point I will return to in the Conclusion.

An algorithm, at its most basic, is a defined computational process that identifies, sorts out, and transforms data. Algorithms can be used for anything from remedial data processing to sophisticated automated reasoning. Algorithms need not involve computers, but when people speak of them today, they usually do. Algorithms are built on functions, like if-then clauses: *if* x piece of information fulfills y parameters *then* perform z function. They stand between inputs (unread data) and outputs (data that has been processed by the algorithm).

First and foremost, while there are algorithms that can learn from feedback loops of data, data analysts are still needed. As Nora Burlingame says in *The Little Book of Big Data* (2012), the importance of data analysts is in the "framing important questions."[15] According to a Big Data industry insider I talked to, a "good way to understand data scientists are as people who are better at statistics than computer scientists and better at understanding programming than statisticians."[16] Using a mixture of machine-learning and human statisticians, data is input, processed, reprocessed and then transformed into "actionable" decision-making processes for these industries. There are companies like Mapr, Horton Works, and Clourdera that set up Apache Hadoop driven data crunching environments. Cloudera markets its Hadoop-based services to a range of companies. For marketing purposes it suggests it can be used for:

> Large-scale clickstream analytics. ad targeting, analysis, forecasting and optimization, abuse and click-fraud prevention, social graph analysis and profile segmentation, campaign management and loyalty programs. event- and behavior-based targeting, market and consumer segmentations.[17]

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15. Burlingame, *The Little Book of BIG DATA 2012 edition*, Kindle Locations 505-506.

16. Anonymous Big Data insider, telephone call with author, June 12, 2012.

17. "Media & Entertainment" *Cloudera*, accessed June 18, 2012. http://www.cloudera.com/content/cloudera/en/solutions/industries/media-entertainment.html

Companies like Rapleap, BlueKai, Invidi, eXelate, Acxiom, Experian, Datran Media, and Netezza act as marketing firms that collect, collate, and sell large amounts of consumer-based data. And all of these companies use Hadoop clusters or something very similar. According to Facebook, in 2010, they had "the largest Hadoop cluster in the world, with over 20 PB of storage. By March 2011, the cluster had grown to 30 PB—that's 3,000 times the size of the Library of Congress!"[18]

These data-intensive companies are responding to this urge by actors in the public sphere to capitalize on this ever-growing amount of data. Because of the networked environment of digital media, this means that data collection happens across a range of platforms and devices, mostly through technologies like cookies and web beacons. A cookie is a small text file that is stored in your computer's browser history that you get from visiting a website that supports cookies. Its main purpose is to identify users. There are session cookies, which are erased when you close your web browser. There are also persistent cookies that are stored on your hard drive to collective identifying information from the user such as your browser search history. However, cookies can be use maliciously to track your online activity in a more thorough manner. While a cookie is a string of code, a beacon is an often-transparent graphic image, usually no larger than 1 pixel by 1 pixel, that is placed in an email or on a website to track behavioral patterns of the user. A web beacon might be used by a company that owns a collection of websites to track how users travel among the websites within the company's network.

18. Paul Yang, "Moving an Elephant: Large Scale Hadoop Data Migration at Facebook," *Facebook*, accessed on March 2, 2013. https://www.facebook.com/notes/paul-yang/moving-an-elephant-large-scale-hadoop-data-migration-at-facebook/10150246275318920

To understand how these might operate let's look at an example. For instance, say I go to a popular travel website like Kayak.com. Kayak.com would collect information from me via cookies. It would then sell that information to BlueKai, a data collection firm, who acts as an intermediary between your web experience on Kayak.com and the advertisements trying to reach you. Thus, any information Kayak has on me is (in theory) atomized and packaged for advertiser consumption.

This type of cookie tracking is used in both television and social media in various ways. Companies like NBCUniversal collect cookies from you when you surf their websites.[19] TiVo "correlates data on television viewing habits to third-party purchasing data to show advertisers which ads are driving more sales, whether it's consumer packaged goods, automobiles or even prescription drugs."[20] Time Warner Cable offers a program to "target customers with the same advertising campaign simultaneously in cable television, mobile devices, the web, social media advertising, and other platforms."[21] This means that that television companies try to create data sets that pair viewing habits with information that companies like BlueKai or Acxiom collate such as voter registration records and real estate records.[22]

Social media companies like Facebook not only collect petabytes of data on its users, but with Open Graph initiatives, it branches out to track users across the web. This gives other web

19. "Privacy Policy," *NBC,* accessed on January 12, 2013. http://www.nbc.com/privacy-policy

20. Doug Henschen, "Tivo Research Analytics Mines Big TV Data" *Information Week,* accessed on May 7, 2013. http://www.informationweek.com/software/business-intelligence/tivo-research-analytics-mines-big-tv-dat/240154206

21. Neal Ungerleider, "How Big Data Keeps Cable TV Watchers Hooked," accessed January 17, 2013. http://www.fastcompany.com/3004619/how-big-data-keeps-cable-tv-watchers-hooked

22. For more information on firms like BlueKai see Joseph Turow's *The Daily You* (2013).

companies like CNN the ability to connect to Facebook's Social Graph.[23] For instance, I love HBO's *Game of Thrones*, an adaptation of George R.R. Martin's fantasy novels set in the Machiavellian land of Westros. It made sense that I searched for it on Google—the first season had just came out on DVD and there was promotional material circulating to announce the return of Season 2 on April 1, 2012. So, like any eager fan, I had been surfing the ephemera. After typing "Game of Thrones" into Google, I meandered between this and that website, eventually ending up on the *Television Without Pity* website reading an article comparing *Game of Thrones* to AMC's *The Killing*, a police procedural set in Seattle, WA. What is interesting to me was that the *Television Without Pity* website seemed to know my Facebook account. There it was, an avatar of my face next to the phrase "add a comment" at the end of the article. I've never signed up with *Television Without Pity*, nor can I ever remember allowing Facebook to share my information with them. It appears Facebook's cookies can find me just about anywhere. And this is exactly what Facebook's Open Graph does (provided I don't disable this function).

With all this tracking data, a range of actors like Acxiom, Google, and Facebook can create personalized, algorithmic identities. All this data creates a very specific profile of who I am or could potentially be—at least a composition of all the data they can collect about me from the places I visit. This personalization can then be fed back into the many interconnected platforms and technologies, creating slight differences in approach to each individual. This is what Eli Parsier would call the "invisible algorithmic editing of the web," and what Joseph Turow would call "permission-based" databases.[24] In *The Filter Bubble* (2012), Parsier states that Google uses

23. Samuel Axon, "Facebook's Open Graph Personalizes the Web." *Mashable,* accessed on September 11, 2011. http://mashable.com/2010/04/21/facebook-open-graph

24. Turow, Joseph, *Niche Envy: Market Discrimination in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 88. Also See Eli Parsier's *The Filter Bubble* (2012).

57 signals to better understand you (and thus better understand how to serve you up to advertisers). They can do this without you even logging in. And, of course, many of these signals are proprietary. The only ones they will readily share are the computer you are using, the browser you are using, and your location.[25]

With all this data—credit scores, faces, passports, driver's licenses, search patterns, web site visited—we have perhaps transitioned from the individuals of the disciplinary societies to the "dividuals" of the control society.[26] To Deleuze, who coined the term, "dividuals" are not us, per se; they "can be seen as those data that are aggregated to form unified subjects."[27] So, "as more data is received about a certain user's behavior online, new coded computations can be done to change who the user is believed to be and what content that user might desire."[28] In this way, there is a constant feedback loops between how we imagine ourselves and the categories created for us by all this data. John Lippold-Cheney sees the "digital construction of categories of identity" as a new axis of soft control where "control can be enacted through a series of guiding, determining, and persuasive mechanisms."[29]

I have pointed to a range of places where data may be introduced into increasing data sets and how this data can be used to gain an algorithmic understanding of who audiences might be.

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25. Pickhardt, René. "What are the 57 signals google uses to filter search results?" *René Pickhardt: a blog by a Webscience PHD student*, accessed on May 20, 2012. http://www.rene-pickhardt.de/google-uses-57-signals-to-filter

26. Deleuze, "Postscript," 5.

27. John Cheney-Lippold, "A New Algorithmic Identity : Soft Biopolitics and the Modulation of Control," in *Theory, Culture & Society,* vol. 28(6) (2011) : 169.

28. Ibid., 168.

29. Ibid., 169.

I'd now like to turn to social media as a more specific example of how data can be used to shape the television experience through what is increasingly called "Social TV."

Social Media as a Data-Rich Environment

There is a lot of chatter these days about the relationship of social media to traditional media. Twitter is the first thing star reporter/TV-host Anderson Cooper reportedly checks when he wakes up.[30] Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, says social media are the future of the cultural industries, including television and music.[31] *Advertising Age* sees the integration of social media into traditional media as producing a new type of hybrid media.[32] Gail Becker, global head of Edelman's Digital Media, who counsels the National Association of Broadcasters, says that we have "officially entered into an era of social entertainment" when people are beginning to expect to interact with the entertainment they consume.[33] Relatedly, in Edelman's survey of media consumers, 57% of "general consumers 18-54 in the United States" consider social networking as a form of entertainment, the number jumping to 70% among 18-29 year olds. Add to this the massive amount of people engaging in social media—41.6% of the U.S.

30. "Importance of Social Media: Anderson Q+A " *YouTube: Anderson Live,* accessed June 12, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqA6HCtvym4

31. Matthew Campbell and Jonathan Browning, "Facebook's Zuckerberg Says Music, TV Are Social Frontiers," *Bloomberg*, accessed May 25, 2011. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-25/music-tv-are-next-social-frontiers-zuckerberg.html

32. Steve Rubel, "In Battle Between Social and Mainstream, Hybrid Media Will Be the Winner," *Advertising Age*, accessed May 12, 2012. http://adage.com/article/viewpoint/hybrid-media-trumps-social-mainstream/230273

33. "Value, Engagement and Trust in the Era of Social Media," *Fora.tv's Edelman's survey: Trust in the Era of Social Entertainment,* accessed October 12, 2012. http://fora.tv/2011/06/09/Value_Engagement_and_Trust_in_the_Era_of_Social_Media. I will critique this limited notion of interactivity in Chapter 5.

population has a Facebook page[34]—and the seemingly endless number of conferences like South by Southwest's Interactive Conference that are pushing social media to the center of academic and business discourses.

It wasn't so long ago that talking about Facebook or Twitter media icons wouldn't make any sense, because they simply didn't exist. Facebook was launched in 2004 and Twitter in 2006. From a historical perspective, the rise of digital social media—technologies, media, designers, and users who actively co-create communication across internet and mobile platforms—as a social and economic phenomena has been relatively swift. Social media today can refer to a wide range of technologies and platforms such as social networking platforms, internet forums (which have been around for some time), blogs, microblogs, wikis, photograph- and video-sharing sites, internet rating and bookmarking systems, and virtual gaming worlds.

Social media are, perhaps obviously, built around the concept of sharing, which is materialized in the ubiquity of "share" buttons across the internet connecting web pages to Digg, Delicious, Facebook, Flickr, Google+, Reddit, Twitter, and YouTube, just to name a few. These buttons allow you to share content across a variety of platforms and socially enabled sites. This web API-enabled form of communication is hybrid from top to bottom. While some platforms like Facebook started as a way to allow friends to communicate, consumer- and media-oriented companies have flooded this space as a way to reach out to their customers wherever they are. This mixture of consumer, personal, and interpersonal messages is precisely what these

34. "41.6% of the US Population Has a Facebook Account," *Social Media Today,* accessed March 13, 2103. http://socialmediatoday.com/index.php?q=roywells1/158020/416-us-population-has-facebook-account

companies are after—"a superior alignment of commercial, consumer, and wider public interests."[35]

It should be noted, however, that contemporary social media forms should be situated as part of a longer history of companies trying to understand their audiences. According to James Beniger, the technologies "for collecting and processing all these types of information" appear in the late 1910s and develop through the 1930s.[36] Yet this was still a relatively unsophisticated process at the time, as Karen Buzzards notes:

> Prior to the 1930s, knowledge of media audiences consisted primarily of subjective impressions such as anecdotes, postcards mailed in by the audiences, and other schemes conceived by advertisers.[37]

Since that time, audience research has grown into a robust industry supporting a range of other media industries as they tried to control the "reciprocal flow of information from the mass audience back to the media writers and programmers" with the goal of closing the gap between ideal (what they wanted) and real behavior (what actually happened).[38] By the 1960s, "the expansion of the research community also made the social scientist a common figure in marketing circles, and introduced social science terminology into marketing and advertising jargon. The result was a pressure to generate more detailed and deeper descriptions of consumer behavior."[39]

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35. Spurgeon, Christina. *Advertising and New Media* (London: Routledge, 2008), 113.

36. Beninger, *The Control Revolution,* 92 and 378.

37. Karen Buzzard, *Tracking the Audience: The Ratings Industry From Analog to Digital* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2.

38. Beninger, *The Control Revolution,* 276.

39. Arvisson, "Toward a Branded Audience," 277.

In relation to television, by the end of the 1960s, Nielsen Media Reach became a monopoly provider for audience information to the television industry. Nielsen's methods have, over time, becomes more sophisticated, moving from a period of diary usage where a statistically meaningful range of individuals self-reported behavior to, since 1984, the use of the People Meter to technologically track viewing habits.[40]

The point of this brief historical tour is to first situate practices of trying to understand audiences with a longer tradition. As Mark Andrejevic says, contemporary efforts "to track the behavior of viewers can trace their lineage back to the efforts of early audience rating researchers to find a two-way channel for monitoring the audience."[41] This would mean that use the technological methods offered in social media platforms are "amplified or supercharged" versions of audience research and not completely different.[42] Thus, what makes social media compelling for media companies is the sheer amount of potentially useable data that these data rich environments foster. Surveys and diaries are a voluntary form of engagement whereas social media data is often referred to as "naturally occurring" or "ambient" data. This means it is not based on surveys, diaries, or viewing logs collected from a small sample of TV viewers but rather this data simply exists as a function of the way the internet and social media technologies work. For instance, we simply have to log on to Facebook, click through some links and chat with some friends. Or post our opinion about a TV show on Twitter. This is a key feature to how

40. Buzzard, *Tracking the Audience,* 52.

41. Mark Andrejevic, **"**The twenty-first-century telescreen" in *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television In the Post-Broadcast Era.* Edited by Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (New York: Routledge, 2009) 33-34.

42. Mark Deuze, "Convergence Culture and Media Work" in *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method.* Edited by Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 144.

soft control works now; we simply have to live and let the background designer scripts do their algorithmic parsing.

It is clear that there is a burgeoning connection between television and social media. According to *Lost Remote*, a blog about social TV, "Facebook is [now] a huge distribution and promotional platform for TV shows." As of May of 2011, 275 million Facebook users had liked television shows 1.65 billion times, and television shows are always well represented during the evenings on Twitter's top 10 trending words.[43] In hoping to reproduce the so-called "water cooler effect" through social media, television companies believe they have to remap their products onto the times and spaces of contemporary consumers.[44]

As discussed at length in the Introduction, many people now live in a multi-screen world. Contemporary screens offer platforms for a wide range of professional, amateur, and quasi-amateur production. Yet it is clear that usage of these screens is not entirely separate. Many studies show that these screens overlap as people chat on their smart phones, run apps, or use social media while watching TV. While Nielsen Media Research has been recently trying to create a cross-platform ratings system, it is struggling with moving from an environment with very few inputs to an environment with limitless inputs.[45] Thus, part of the reason why television companies engage with social media is to try to foster and exploit viewers' two- (or more-) screen behavior and move away from more limited data sources.

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43. Cory Bergman, "Facebook users have 'liked' TV shows 1.65 billion times" *Lost Remote,* accessed May 23, 2012. http://lostremote.com/facebook-users-liked-tv-shows-1-65-billion-times_b18650.

44. Brian Stelter, "TV Industry taps Social Media to Keep Viewers' Attention." *The New York Times,* accessed June 14, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/business/media/21watercooler.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

45. Jason Del Rey, "Group M and Nielsen Aim to Bridge Ratings Divide of TV and Web," *Advertising Age*, accessed April, 12, 2012. http://adage.com/article/digital/group-m-nielsen-aim-bridge-tv-web-ratings-divide/233395.

The Presence of Background Designer Scripts in Social Television

According to Madeline Ackrich, "a large part of the work of innovators is that of '*inscribing*' this vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of a new object."[46] In this way, designers attempt to "define a framework" for how audiences will engage a particular object. Of course, no audience may come forth or they may do something radically different from the intended use, as was the case in how photoelectric light kits made in France were actually used in ancillary markets in Africa.[47] The failure of a particular object to be "correct" for an audience does not signify the end of the road per se. Rather, the experience translates into data to be fed back into the design process where designers redefine "actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, political prejudices, and the rest."[48]

In the process of inscribing an object with particular uses, designers script potential outcomes. If we focus on a design object—a short video—then we get a certain orientation to what design can be. Talking about designer scripts that work in the background forces us to take a different approach. When I talk about background designer scripts, I am referring to how user data is ingested, mapped, reduced, and made actionable through various audience retention strategies. Thus, in a sense, these scripts lay dormant, waiting for users to do the work. Background design scripts may best be seen as proto-design, running as a parallel process to the creation of design objects, services, and environments.

The data that background designer scripts collect is used to shape the direction of television shows and, more importantly for me, the creation and implementation of micromedia

46. Akrich, "De-scription of Technical Objects," 208 (italics by author).

47. Ibid., 209-212.

48. Ibid., 208.

strategies. The micromedia being investigated here is user-generated—the work we do when we play with social media. Recall: social media are both a form of micromedia and a platform to facilitate connections between other forms of micromedia. Micromedia can be the work of media industries or media audiences.

The background designer scripts analyzed here are used to create the structured tracking, personalization, and responsiveness that are becoming an important part of how television relates to digital media environments. One central way we can see this is the intermedial relationship between Twitter and television companies.

As mentioned previously, Twitter is a social media (or "microblogging") service that allows users to send either single photos, 6-second or less video clips via their Vine app, or 140 character bursts of communication known as tweets. According to Alexa ranking, Twitter is regularly one of the top 20 most visited sites on the internet.[49] It is a heterogeneous space of superstars like Justin Bieber using tweets as a way to reach fans, politicians using tweets to comment on public culture, and everyday people using it to comment on their lives and the world around them, just to name a few.

There is a range of ways television companies use Twitter as a platform for audience outreach and response. For instance, Nina Dobrev, an actress on the CW's *The Vampire Diaries*, can tweet out to fans:

> Feeling soooooo much love from the Teens!!! Thank you for nominating me - you guys are amazing ! <3 you!!!! @teenchoicenews[50]

49. According to Alexa rankings, http://www.alexa.com/topsites

50. Nina Dobrev, Twitter post, May 28, 2013, 4:09 p.m., https://twitter.com/ninadobrev

This tweet is retweeted by *The Vampire Diaries'* official Twitter account, creating more circulation. A "perhaps-fan" (we really don't now about much about "her"—if she is a bot, corporate account, etc) like @dobrevselenas can respond to the tweet with "@ninadobrev you deserve it baby, i love you more <3."

An even more meaningful connection between Twitter and television comes from monitoring the volume of unstructured conversation that happens outside of interacting with official television accounts. For instance, on June 4th, 2013 @bobbychiu wrote "My expression after watching Game of Thrones this week . . . Omg" which was paired with a picture of a rabbit emerging from a hole, ears perked, face wide with terror.[51]

Why is this different? This tweet has no hashtags to identify it as part of a strand of discourse on Twitter.[52] Nor does it have any direct connection to the HBO show *Game of Thrones*. This user is not trying to talk back to *Game of Thrones*, "he" is merely sharing his opinion with a range of his followers. Thus, this individual just has to tweet about what is happen in his or her everyday life.

Let's look at Bluefin labs, one of many companies (Radian6, General Sentiment, Sysomos, Convereon, Trendrr) in the growing field of social TV analytics. According to Bluefin, their clients "include 40 of the largest TV networks in the US."[53] Founded in 2008, Bluefin was

51. Bobby Chiu, Twitter post, June 4, 2013, 5:01 a.m., https://twitter.com/bobbychiu

52. Hashtags are words you can put at the end of your tweet to categorize your tweet. They are increasingly becoming irrelevant as Twitter increasingly sifts through your tweets to uses non-hashtagged words to categorize posts.

53. "Social TV Analytics," *Bluefin Labs,* accessed May 12, 2013. https://bluefinlabs.com/solutions

purchased by Twitter in February of 2013 to shore up a relationship to television companies.[54] Additionally, Twitter further bolstered its ties to television by adding Peter Chernin, former News Corporation president, to its board. It would seem that, as Sarah Perez of *TechCrunch* says, Twitter is "betting big on being the TV companion app."[55]

Bluefin calls its work in social TV analytics the "TV genome." This "genome" is created by cross-referencing comments made on Twitter with program guide information, the names of characters and actors, closed-captioning text, demographic information about who is commenting, along with an advertising schedule that BlueFin created. The "genome" works in two tiers, one tied into those watching within a three hour window of the show and another focusing on the 90 days after a shows premiere to catch time-shifted viewing.

This is a data-driven approach that uses our tweets as data points in conjunction with the unstructured data of television video feeds. To create something like a "graph" of television, Bluefin records linear television streams and turns these feeds into data. Data is not just something that exists. Everything in our world only has the potential to become datum and only does so when it is translated into a "unit or morsel" of information.[56] To put it another way, this feed of video is just a feed full of potential data until it translated into mapped data. Bluefin has experience in trying to map video data; Michael Fleischman, the Chief Technology Officer of Bluefin, actually worked to help machines recognize home runs by watching Boston Red Sox

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54. Douglas MacMillian, "Twitter Acquires Bluefin Labs to Add Social TV Tools," *Bloomberg,* accessed February 6, 2013. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-06/twitter-acquires-bluefin-labs-to-add-social-tv-tools.html.

55. Sarah Perez, "As TV Falls Apart, Tumblr and Twitter Aim To Pick Up The Pieces," *Tech Cruch,* accessed Mary 31, 2013. http://techcrunch.com/2013/05/31/as-tv-falls-apart-tumblr-and-twitter-aim-to-pick-up-the-pieces

56. Lisa Gitelman and Victoria Jackson, *"Raw Data" is an Oxymoron,* Ed. Lisa Gitelman and Victoria Jackson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 1.

game broadcasts.[57] While the algorithms that run Bluefin's TV genome are proprietary (more on this below), I spoke with a Big Data insider who explained how this translation into data could happen.

Video feeds would be broken down into still images, or frames, and then stored into something like an Apache HBase—a Big Data file system where you can store images. The images are stored as raster images (as pixels with discrete number values for color) or vector images (color-annotated polygons). The images are then broken down into particular features based on pixel placement, luminance, color, patterns of pixel movement (including camera movement), etc. This data is often cross-referenced with automatic speech recognition systems to improve accuracy.

This "semantic analysis" of video is then combined with an analysis of tweets.[58] This, according to Bluefin, makes it possible to place generic comments into the right context. Thus, a generic tweet with no reference to a television show or advertisement can be linked back to that show or ad. To identify what the folks on Twitter think of particular shows, Bluefin breaks Twitter responses down into categories that more sophisticated than good or bad—"vulgar or polite, serious or amused, calm or excited."[59] Thus, Bluefin utilizes "deep machine learning algorithms" that "ground the meaning of comments pulled out from social media."[60]

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57. Duncan Graham-Rowe, "Searching Sportscasts," *Technology Review,* accessed March 13, 2013. http://www.technologyreview.com/news/408112/searching-sportscasts

58. "Mapping the TV Genome," *Bluefin Labs*, accessed May 12, 2013. https://bluefinlabs.com/thesciencebehindit

59. David Talbot, "A Social-Media Decoder," *Technology Review,* accessed March 23, 2012. http://ww.technologyreview.com

60. "Mapping the TV Genome," *Bluefin Labs*, 1.

While Twitter uses Bluefin to target advertisements at particular tweeters, the use of our tweets to create a map of human behavior is another animal.[61] This map takes shape in a variety of places that we can exist in our everyday lives. We can be at work or home, at a friend's house or at a bar. As long as we have a smart phone and a Twitter app (or via another Twitter-based API extension app) we can do the things we may normally do: respond to a tweet by a friend, comment about the role of nudity in HBO programming, or any other example from the vast array of choices that constitute our everyday lives. Using our tweets, Bluefin can atomize our tweets, reassemble them within larger identified data trends into something like water cooler "talk." In this way, the micromedia we may create—in this instance, a tweet—becomes the data for background designer scripts that try to understand how we feel about television.

I've been looking at the role of data as a background designer script to the relationship of television in the everyday lives of digitally-enabled audiences. On one hand, it is frustrating that we cannot know more; no company is going to share its proprietary algorithms or tell you specifically how data becomes actionable. That said, there are some important lessons to glean from an acknowledgement these background designer scripts are in place.

First, the fact that social media are central to the everyday lives of a lot of individuals, especially "digital natives," points out why we should be so interested in application of Big Data principles to our micromedia actions. Pair this with the discourses on audience empowerment and the picture of audience control gets a bit murky.

In an industry talk at The Paley Center for Media entitled "Value, Engagement and Trust in the Era of Social Media," Gail Becker, President (Western Region) and Chair (Canada and

61. Ingid Lunden, "New Keyword Targeting Lets Twitter Ads Chase Purchase Intent, Similar To Search Ads," *Tech Crunch,* accessed April 17, 2013. http://techcrunch.com/2013/04/17/advertisers-can-now-target-twitter-users-by-keywords-from-their-tweets

Latin America) at Edelman, laments that "you can't control things like you used to." After agreeing with her, Andy Marks, another panel member and managing director of brand integration at Edelman, ends up suggesting that industries can have a form of control in the ways that they "can architect distribution strategies these days and have much more control over the outcomes."[62]

Reading this comment in a particular light, the network of relationships built on culling data between television companies, social media platforms, and audiences is, in its first instance, not necessarily about control. But through these technologies, companies can "measure" and "adjust" their relationship to audiences. Thus, the moment data is mapped, reduced, and fed back into these relationships is when we can start to analyze it in terms of a logic soft control.

I think returning to Tiziana Terranova's idea about soft control is instructive here, because the ways television companies use social media to collect and map data of potential audiences act like the open environment "biological computing" systems she identifies in *Network Culture*. To Terranova, these environments are characterized by potentially enormous productivity; their difficulty to control; "nonlinear interactions, feedback loops, and mutations;" and a central designer (television company) that wishes to produce an "emergent behavior" out of other actors (Tweeters).[63]

For Terranova, "biological computing models" have a moment of construction, then a positioning of constraints, and, finally, the "moment of emergence of a useful or pleasing

62. "Value, Engagement and Trust in the Era of Social Media," *Fora.tv's Edelman's survey: Trust in the Era of Social Entertainment,* 1.

63. Terranova, *Network Culture,* 104-105.

form."[64] Control is implemented in the beginning (founding the model) and the end (the survival of the most "useful or pleasing variations").[65] If no "pleasing variations are found, then the model is fine-tuned" and sent through another modeling run.[66]

While Terrnova doesn't give a lot of concrete examples, her concepts can be mapped on to a range of real world situations. Take, for instance, the experiments run by John Rula and Fabián Bustamonte to use various incentives to control the movement of participating users. In "Crowd (Soft) Control," Rula and Bustamonte wondered how they could, for instance, facilitate data collection for a 3D modeling experiment. They would either need a sufficiently large group of mobile device-enabled people or a smaller set that they could "introduce some form of control over" in regards to their mobility. Choosing the later option, they conducted an experiment to "exert limited control over the temporal and spatial movements of mobile users by leveraging the built-in incentives of location-based gaming and social applications."[67] They set up an augmented reality game for the Android mobile phone platform called "Ghost Hunter." A player chases ghosts around their neighborhood, using a smart phone to snap a picture of the ghost and earn points. On their mobile phone the players have a map screen pinpointing the relative location of ghosts. When they are close, cross hairs appear on the screen, enabling the photo function of the mobile device, allowing them to "capture" the ghost. In doing so, they take pictures of a place, oriented in the correct direction and angle by their phones, that also provides

64. Ibid., 118.

65. Ibid., 118.

66. Ibid., 119.

67. John Rula and Fabián E. Bustamante, "Crowd (Soft) Control: Moving Beyond the Opportunistic," In Proc. of the Thirteenth Workshop on Mobile Computing Systems and Applications (HotMobile), (February 2012) : 1.

data for a 3D mapping project unknown to the participants of the game. Rula and Bustamonte used an incentive (playing the game) to complete a project (the 3D mapping of a particular area/building).

Imagine this experiment on a much larger scale and you get close to conceptualizing what television companies are doing. Twitter, via Bluefin, allows television companies to program something that looks like an open-ended biological computing model. For instance, let's say Bluefin Studios analyzes the Twitter response to an episode of *The New Girl*. The data sets are theoretically open since tweets only trigger algorithms when certain parameters are met. The actors here—the tweeters—are given relative autonomy. They are not told their data is being used and whether Bluefin "ingests" this tweet or not doesn't affect the tweet. This ingested tweet is paired with a range of tweets to create data for the Fox Network to view via Bluefin's Signals app—an application that aggregates and display the information from the TV genome specific to that client. And like a biological model, it is open to change depending on when, where, and what people tweet. Thus, it is open ended; the TV genome is always transforming. This mode of open-ended control works because it does not "require an absolute and total knowledge of all the states of each single component of the system."[68] As more people tweet and as Bluefin tweaks its algorithms, the analysis of these tweets has the potential to gain in complexity.

These bits of data and the background scripts that animate them lay the framework for the re-habituation of television in a more open-ended environment. Various companies can achieve a new type of habituation by serving up to the consumer that thing that they didn't even know they wanted. This is done through a combination of designer intuition and from all those digital

68. Terranova, *Network Culture,* 119.

footprints we leave and the interconnectedness between web sites, platforms, and devices that characterize social media.

Conclusion

In the last chapter I showed how actants like web APIs have made it easier to create an intermedial network of soft control across a range of media, materials, and devices. In this chapter I showed how television companies, in conjunction with social media companies, have used data reinforced behavior to strengthen the feedback loop between soft control practices and the everyday lives of potential television audiences.

This feedback loop is significantly sustained through the role algorithms play in the proliferation of data in our society. While I have been looking at the role algorithms play from an industrial standpoint, according to Tarleton Gillespie, "algorithms play an increasingly important role in selecting what information is considered most relevant to us, a crucial feature of our participation in public life."[69] Thus, we have algorithms that read tweets as data on one end, and algorithms that suggest search results on Google or suggest purchases on Amazon on the other end.

Noting the centrality of algorithms, Gillespie also ask if algorithms can be wrong?[70] Well, of course they can. Algorithms are programmed by humans to produce a result from immensely huge sets of data. Algorithms show a view of the world, one that is based on what it was asked to see on the front end. In the case of something like Amazon suggestions, algorithms source our previous selections and, through a predictive analysis, portray a contingent version of

69. Tarleton Gillespie, "The Relevance of Algorithms," *Culture Digitally,* accessed December 12, 2012. http://culturedigitally.org/2012/11/the-relevance-of-algorithms

70. Tarleton Gillespie, "Can an Algorithm be Wrong?," *Limn* Issue 2 (2012), http://limn.it/can-an-algorithm-be-wrong

ourselves back to us. The issue then is not whether algorithms can be wrong or right but with the belief in "*the promise of algorithmic objectivity*: the way the technical character of the algorithm is positioned as an assurance of impartiality."[71]

The belief in the neutrality of algorithms is a problem. Eli Parsier, in a talk on TED.com based on *The Filter Bubble* (2012), says we tell ourselves a reassuring story. In a broadcast society, editors largely had control of the flow of information. They could tell us when, where, and how. The internet swept these structures away. But rather than the baton of control being passed to us, it has been passed from industrial gatekeepers to algorithmic ones.

Thus, to combat this idea of neutrality that elides all the work that gets done by algorithms, we need, as C.W. Anderson says:

> to pay attention to the materiality of algorithmic processes. By that, I do not simply mean the materiality of the algorithmic processing (the circuits, server farms, internet cables, super-computers, and so on) but to the materiality of the procedural inputs. To the stuff that the algorithm mashes up, rearranges, and spits out.[72]

And recognizing the ways in which data must be "cleaned up" is an important counter to the seeming automaticity of algorithms.[73] This means that data are never neutral and, furthermore, are never truly raw.

Finally, I want to point out that the amount of data collected by a company like Bluefin (and, remember, they are but one player in this larger field of data collection) helps identify logics of control by reinforcing an asymmetry of information between those that hold data and

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71. Tarelton Gillespie, "Relevance of Algorithms," 1 (author's italics).

72. C.W. Anderson. "The Materiality of Algorithms," *Culture Digitally,* accessed December 12, 2012. http://culturedigitally.org/2012/11/the-materiality-of-algorithms

73. Tarelton Gillespie, "Relevance of Algorithms," 4.

those who do not. As I will elaborate more in the Conclusion to the dissertation, the "information flow" goes from our micromedia to their databases and not the other way around.[74]

In the amount of knowable things circulating today—the texts of our everyday lives, or at least the information traces these texts leave behind—we can start to see the way Deleuze's society of control might work. To think of television as part of the everyday, as part of a habit, means to think of it as a learned but quasi-subconscious process. "This process, in which the brain converts a sequence of actions into an automatic routine, is called 'chunking.' There are dozens, if not hundreds, of behavioral chunks we rely on every day."[75] As entities like the television industry create more sophisticated portraits of who we are, they arguably gain the upper hand in routing the flow of information. As a nod to Pierre Bourdieu, these corporations know my habitus perhaps better than I do.

Because of a proprietary nature of data-related issues, I have spoken about the television industry in this chapter with some vagueness. To be clear, "television" is multivariate place and the uses of data follow the needs of different companies. For instance, TiVo uses of data may differ from the uses of cable companies or even how Netflix, a new player in television uses data.

It should also be noted that this is not just a report on television's use of algorithms and data. While it is clear that algorithms are implicated in how television industry is changing today, this emphasis on data collection would not feel out of place in regards to other cultural industries. This points to the deeply intermedial nature of a digital environment where similar tools are available to those who have the ability to pay for them.

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74. Daniel Solove, *The Digital Person*, Kindle Location 162.

75. Charles Duhigg, "How Companies Learn Your Secrets," 1.

Thus, television companies don't necessarily distinguish themselves though their use of data until this usage is tied to other designer scripts. I have already looked at how television uses it proprietary properties as a way to distinguish their micromedia from micromedia from less familiar sources. I will now move in the next chapter to looking at the use of framing devices based in audience empowerment to show how television companies ask for digital technologies and audience creativity to be used in specific ways to help architect soft control.

6 The Framing of Value: Television and Interactive Involvement

"We're not trying to ignore the fact that people are in front of a computer at work and surf the Web all day long, or that kids check the Internet when they get home from school . . . WE want to exploit that, and have fun with it. I'm on Facebook and I've been on Twitter just talking to my fans. It's amazing!" –Jimmy Fallon[1]

Oscar Valparaiso has a "personal background problem."[2] As the product of South American black market in vitro baby dealers, he technically isn't human. While it means he won't ever hold legitimate office, it doesn't stop him from being a valuable behind-the-scenes political operative. His world is the game of spin, making the best of a bad situation and framing it for public consumption.

Bruce Sterling's *Distraction* is a political thriller set in 2044 America, a place "gone to hell": rising sea levels, an economy gutted by "netwar" with China, and hyperinflation that causes even the U.S. Air Force to put up pay-for-passage roadblocks.[3] The American government, virtually bankrupt and long run by a succession of "Emergency Committees," doesn't exist in the same way as we think of it today. There are sectors where law still reigns, like Boston, but most everywhere else, squatters' rights prevail. With amazingly cheap

1. Frazier Moore, "Fallon's 'Late Night' will be interactive." *The Boston Globe,* accessed May 2010. http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/articles/2009/02/27/fallons_late_night_will_be_interactive

2. Bruce Sterling, *Distraction* (New York: Bantam Spectra, 1998), 21.

3. Ibid., 89.

technology that can easily produce substitute food and shelter, gangs of humans called "proles" have literally dropped out, returning to nomadic tribe-like organizations built on prestige economies.

After running Senator Bambakais's campaign, Oscar is now trying to create a name for himself so he can gain a different type of prestige in the back halls of whatever political power remains. To do so, he ends up at a lab in Eastern Texas, where cloning and studies of the neural basis for attention are caught up in a battle between the Governor of Louisiana and the President of the United States.

Oscar is a good guy, a reformist who wants to restore some order to the U.S. To do so he has a range of technologies at his disposal. He wiretaps people while constantly also being bugged. He talks to operatives over his doubly-encrypted phones. He sets up a hotel built on crowdsourcing techniques virtually overnight for his political "krewe."[4]

Yet, material technologies are not the most important thing for Oscar. In fact, technology is cheap and readily available even to "prole" populations who create new wonders out of old technologies. No, Oscar's advantage is the way he thinks, or the way he frames the issues. He is constantly tinkering with "new graphic looks and media treatments" for his coup inside the Buna Science Lab.[5] He also pays attention to the details, like designing outfits for Greta—his new girlfriend and the puppet Science Lab Director—or crafting her public speeches with just the right phrasing.

In Sterling's futuristic economy, a lot of people create things, for a variety of reasons and rarely for money. Significantly, our own capital-intensive media industries are now increasingly

4. Ibid., 8.

5. Ibid., 367.

dealing with what Joshua Green and Henry Jenkins call the "gift economy" of fan culture.[6] While not new (see, e.g., Henry Jenkins' work in *Textual Poachers*), participatory audiences are a newly central feature of discourses surrounding digital media and technology. Perhaps we could even call fan affinity groups "proto-proles," as they exist both outside and in engagement with the "real" economy.

The arguments concerning participatory audiences come from a variety of industrial, popular, and academic sources. Alvin Toffler (1980) and Don Tapscott (1995) argue that the consumer is increasingly being replaced by the so-called "prosumer," a person interested in the active co-creation of goods and services rather than in their passive consumption. Howard Rheingold, in 1995, looked toward emergent online communities as empowered groups that could challenge political hierarchy and perhaps revitalize citizen-based democracy. Andrew Shapiro wrote in *The Control Revolution* (1999) about "the clash between old and new media at the end of the twentieth century" with new media allowing individuals to exercise more control and personalization over information.[7] Personalization, to Shapiro, "is more than just a marketing fad."[8] Beginning in the 2000s, Charles Leadbeater saw a new breed of amateurs who are smart, adaptive, innovative, and—perhaps their key feature—committed to and networked by new technologies. To Leadbeater, these amateurs are a manifestation of the flexible, Post-Fordist economy, crossing boundaries between work and play, professional and amateur.[9] Furthermore,

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6. Joshua Green & Henry Jenkins, "The Moral Economy of Web 2.0: Audience Research and Convergence Culture" in *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method.* Ed. by Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) : 214.

7. Andrew Shapiro, *The Control Revolution* (New York: Century Foundation, 1999), 34.

8. Ibid., 44.

9. See Charles Leadbeater's *The Pro-Am Revolution* (2004).

the 2006 Person of the Year edition of *Time Magazine* expanded on this theme of empowerment when Lev Grossman posited "you" as the person of the year for "seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy."[10] In the same year Steven Levy and Brad Stone of *Newsweek* looked at the increasing presence of user-generated content (UGC) on what is popularly called Web 2.0 and what they called the "living Web."[11]

In the above manifestations, digital technologies are central to claims about empowered and active audiences. While someone like Clay Shirky wants us to stop watching television so much to orient the "potential" of our cognitive surplus toward loftier goals, Jeff Howe suggests that companies harness this potential by designing for a crowdsourced world.[12] As John Durham Peters notes, "we live in the age of conversation. It is one of the unquestioned goods of the moment and a normative ideal of how the media are expected to work in a democracy."[13] It is no wonder, then, that "in a capitalist society where the persuasion of audiences is essential for profits . . . that communicative styles have evolved from sender-oriented to audience-oriented."[14] Television companies, as well as many other industrial actors, are doing just that, experimenting with audience-oriented technologies and platforms as a way to attract audience attention. In addition to creating their own micromedia, television producers are finding ways to utilize a wide range of UGC. By including various forms of UGC and audience activity into their textual

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10. Lev Grossman, "Person of the Year." *TIME Magazine,* accessed May 12, 2007. http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1569514,00.html

11. Steven Levy and Brad Stone, "The New Wisdom of the Web," *Newsweek*, accessed November 13, 2007. http:// www.newsweek.com/id/45976

12. See Clay Shirky's *Cognitive Surplus* (2010) and Jeff Howe's Crowdsourcing (2008).

13. John Durham Peters, "Medias as conversation," 115.

14. Ibid., 119.

universe, television shows are finding ways to harness the productive potential of the audience. Indeed, harnessing is an apt way to describe the way in which media and consumer goods companies are trying to control the collective surplus of this unruly, chaotic, shifting, malleable thing identified as the audience. One of the ways television companies utilize UGC is by creating contests that allow audiences in interact with shows by creating their own material. In this light, contests that ask audience members to contribute in some way should be seen as a form of soft control.

In this chapter, I will focus on how television shows utilize UGC in such a way as to harness an audiences' creative energy. I will focus primarily on the user-generated video contests put forth by NBC shows *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* and *The Office*. In 2009, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* offered two contests, "Jimmy Fallon Dance Challenge" and "Late Night Intern," that asked fans to create videos that draw them into the official text of the show. I chose to focus on *Late Night* because the idea of using digital technologies to incorporate audience interactivity was central to the show from the start.[15] Additionally, in 2006, NBC, in conjunction with YouTube, offered its fans a contest: create your own video promotion for *The Office*. For this contest you provide the content while NBC gives you the show's theme song and network tag to use. According to Daisy Whitney of *TelevisionWeek*, NBC decided to use Apple's iTunes as a secondary distribution platform for the show based on a belief in the computer savvy-nature of *The Office's* audience.[16] Therefore, the show can give us a look at some of the ways television

15. Alessandra Stanley, "Fallon Face the Camera, Conscious of the Web" *The New York Times,* accessed March 6, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/06/arts/television/06fall.html

16. Daisy Whitey, "NBC: iPod Boosts Prime Time," *Television Week,* accessed January 16, 2006. http://www.tvweek.com/printwindow.cms?newsId-91911&pageType=news

producers who perceive their audiences as computer savvy used digital technologies to engage with these audiences outside of the television text.

While there are many ways to approach these contests, I will focus on how audiences are positioned as collaborators with an emphasis placed on a rhetoric of empowerment. As stated in the Introduction, this rhetoric of empowerment is part and parcel of a discursive surround for digital technologies that highlight interactive involvement and creativity. I will pinpoint how important the participatory audience discourse—the audience-as-collaborator—is to the contemporary industry-audience relationship and how it is becoming central to how television producers imagine the industry-audience relationship as more and more potential audience members are comfortable in a media-making and media-viewing digital landscape. Thus, like Oscar Valparaiso, I want to focus less on the technologies used by television and more on the official framing of these technologies and how they should be used.

I will first offer some examples of UGC and how it relates to television before moving on to the specific examples of *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* and *The Office*. The examples from *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* will be connected directly to contemporary discourses of audience activity. Additionally, the examples from *Late Night* offer a way to connect contemporary digital interactivity to a longer history of audience participation in television. The example from *The Office* will highlight a clear use of the rhetoric of empowerment.

I argue that instances of the implementation of the discourse of audience empowerment should be seen as designer scripts meant to route audience activity into the logics of soft control utilized by the television industry. As Tara McPherson says, "metaphors and representations are

powerful processors."[17] To implement these discourses, television companies have to find way to translate between two different regimes of value, meaning "audience empowerment" must make sense within both industrial and audience logics. Only in this way can a network of association be formed. Translation is the act that allows for a wide range of materials, actors, and actants with different goals to work in a network. In this instance, successful translation practices create an environment where soft control can exist and flourish. Television producers are central actors in this network, can define the user roles and expectations, and do so through the use of a rhetoric of empowerment. It is through these translations that television can strengthen its perch in the everyday lives of digital, participatory audiences.

The Phenomenon of User-Generated Content

User-generated content is an incredibly broad category that covers everything from Amazon product reviews to Facebook profiles to user-uploaded YouTube videos and more. While I will not be talking about the full range of content, it is worth noting that all of this content should be considered micromedia and that the conclusions I arrive at in this chapter about user-generated video contests will have some larger applicability across different forms of micromedia. Remember, this is a densely interconnected media landscape where the micro content of comment posting exists alongside short videos, games, etc.

YouTube, a popular video-sharing site, offers a platform to exhibit and host videos linked to other websites and devices. This allows many people with access to increasingly inexpensive digital cameras and editing software to post content from the mundane to the silly to the political to the extravagantly creative for a potential audience. YouTube (along with Wikipedia) has

17. Tara McPherson, "Reload: Liveness, Mobility, and the Web," in *New Media, Old Media.* Ed. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 206.

become the subject of an intense debate around notions of audience creativity. On one side of the debate, YouTube fosters kids behaving badly, cat videos, and mash up videos combining the detritus of popular and bedroom culture.[18] On the other side, YouTube and other digital sharing technologies have seemingly stoked a revolution in viewing and consumption, a user-led revolution that operates in this gray area both inside and outside of the media industries.

YouTube (2009), Jean Burgess and Joshua Green complicate any simple dichotomy between cultural malaise and a purported "user-led revolution," preferring instead to see YouTube as a space of engagement between multiple participants with a variety of motivations.[19] In doing so, they situate YouTube within discourses of everyday creativity by users as much as they situate it within capitalist imperatives. This is a hybrid space full of multiple determinations that cannot be reduced to any simple cause or effect. That said, as Burgess and Green note, many businesses—media or otherwise—have utilized user-generated video as free content and promotion.

When talking about the relationship between business and user-generated video, contests appears to be a prevalent form. These contests, when related to consumer goods, center on using the product in a novel way or integrating it into one's own creative work. For instance, drawing on our endless capacity to find domesticated animals cute, Purina created the "Most Incredible Small Dog Video Contest." For this contest you simply submit a video of your dog doing "something incredible" for a chance to win $5000 dollars.[20] This contest, created in conjunction

18. This position could be identified in works like Andrew Keen's *The Cult of the Amateur* (2008) or even Clay Shirky's *Cognitive Surplus* (2010).

19. Burgress & Green. *YouTube,* 4.

20. Alisha Paul, "Most incredible small dog to make Purina's next ad," *Snoo.ws,* accessed July 5, 2011. http://snoo.ws/2010/08/23/most-incredible-small-dog-to-make-purinas-next-ad

with YouTube, offers not only money but also the allure fame for you and your pooch. More earnestly, in 2009, the San Francisco Ballet, in conjunction with YouTube, put on a contest for fans of the ballet to "Reenact or re-imagine a magical scene from Nutcracker OR create a video depicting your favorite magical Nutcracker memory."[21] There is an emphasis here on creativity when the contest's rules implore contestants to, "Be creative! Be funny! Innovative characters, dancing, scenery, costumes, and props will be judged favorably."[22] While the contestants can vie for several prizes, ranging from a vacation in Aspen, Colorado to dinner at local San Francisco restaurants, the Ballet garners promotion and, more importantly, audience engagement with their content and branded environment.

These contests are by no means unique. For the Super Bowl XLI (2007), Doritos ran the "Crash the Super Bowl" contest that allowed the work of two fans to be aired during the game. Doritos has continued the contest and by 2012 it had become the "largest online video contest in the world." [23] On a smaller scale, videos contest from Nesquik, Converse, and Klondike have likewise echoed the call for fan engagement with their brands. Even Madonna got into the act, asking fans to make a video for her 2009 release, "Celebration."[24]

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21. "The Magical Memories Nutcracker Video Contest," *San Francisco Ballet,* accessed August 1, 2010. http://www.sfballet.org/contest

22. Ibid., 1.

23. "Doritos reveals five 'Crash the Super Bowl' finalists competing for $1 million and the opportunity to work with The Lonely Island," *Pepsico*, accessed February 1, 2012. http://www.pepsico.com/Story/Doritos-reveals-five-Crash-the-Super-Bowl-finalists-competing-for-1-million-and-01042012.html

24. "Fan Contest: Create Your Own Madonna's 'Celebration' Video," *Aceshowbiz*, accessed June 12, 2012. http://www.aceshowbiz.com/news/view/00027366.html

These types of contests have become so prevalent that a young internet entrepreneur, Justin Johnson, capitalized on the popularity by creating the website, Onlinevideocontests.com.[25] An online videomaker himself, Johnson's site is beautiful in its simplicity. It aggregates a variety of contests, from the *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* contests discussed below to contests from STIHL power tools, Harrah's Entertainment, and even non-consumer cause-based promotions like the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's "Spare the Air" video contest. Categorizing contests by age, type of judging, location, and prize (monetary, trips, prizes), this site has an informal but comprehensive feel. On a randomly sampled day in 2010, the site listed over 100 contests going at once. On another randomly sampled day in 2012, the site linked to 157 contests with over $460,000 in cash prizes, 13 trips, and 59 prizes available. And while the site is specifically addressed to filmmakers to find, track, and win video contests, in practice it aggregates a wide range of contests including those targeted at fans, like Spooferman.com's "'Best Survival Fire' Video Contest," which asks "superfans" to spoof the Outdoor Life Network's television show *Survivorman*.

Like the *Survivorman* contest suggests, television is no stranger to user-generated contests. In 2006, *The Simpsons* launched a create-your-own-promo "Slice-Dice-and-Win" contest for its "Treehouse of Horrors XVII" show. Users couldn't upload any of their own footage but were asked instead to assemble creatively video clips, sounds, transitions, and music from *The Simpsons*. In 2009, ABC's *Lost* ran a similar create-your-own-promo contest, where

25. Onlinevideocontests.com is not the only user-generated video contest aggregation site. Poptent.net also connects filmmakers with various brands, yet they do so in strictly a monetary sense. Poptent.net is a business venture aimed at capitalizing on a media ecology where lots of people have videomaking production and editing capabilities at their fingertips. Thus, they operate more like a Temp agency, connecting brands with freelance, but not necessarily professional, videographers. They bill themselves as "The first social network for the video creator community." Unlike Onlinevideocontests.com, they actually solicit projects from brands to outsource to the crowd.

fans had to create a trailer for the final season of the show. "The Ultimate LOST Fan Promo Contest" was a bit different in that contestants could mix and match their own content with images and sounds from the show. The winner, "Convergence," which aired during an episode of *Lost*, used images of the show illuminated against various computer-generated black and white rocks that end up on a scale. It is poetic piece that gets to the root of *Lost*'s good vs. evil theme. In addition, the TV show *Mad Men* ran a contest from late 2008 to early 2009 for the release of season 2 on DVD. Fans were asked to send in a video of them reading pre-selected dialogue from famous characters like Don Draper or Joan Harris. The winner got the chance to appear in a walk-on role during season 4 while runners-up received, you guessed it, *Mad Men* season 2 on DVD.

The point of talking about these contests is to show the breadth and seriousness of this playful, interactive engagement between brands and potential users. This engagement is certainly not limited to video, but video contests are nonetheless prevalent. Investigating these contests offers a way to understand the strategies used by TV shows to try to manage audiences with a great deal of choice at their finger tips.

Interactive Involvement

Jimmy Fallon's first appearance as host of *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* didn't occur on March 2nd 2009, the day of the first live-to-tape broadcast on NBC. It happened many months before that, and it happened on the internet. On December 8th 2008, Fallon's first "Video Blog" went live at Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com. These online videos—a new one appearing almost every weekday until the show went live to TV—were used as a platform to introduce the

audience to Fallon, understand the transition from former host Conan O'Brien to Fallon, and to introduce us to his cast of players like co-host Steve Higgins and The Roots, his house band.

In this first installment, standing in the yet-to-be-complete Studio 6B, dressed in grey tee pulled over a long sleeve shirt, Fallon gives off the kind of collegial charm and youthfulness seemingly appropriate for a late night college-aged demographic. In the process of showing off his set, Fallon sets the tone for the show when, addressing the camera, he says, "as soon as we see it, you see it, and we want to hear what you think."[26] Not only do these videos act as promotion for the show as they circulate around the blogosphere and through industrial commentary, but they are also Fallon's first chance to establish his presence and frame his relationship to the audience. Later in the video, Fallon further explains how he will relate to the audience by pointing out what these pre-show video blogs are for:

> . . . that is where the internet comes in, that's where you come in. You see this thing over here that says 'Ask Jimmy'? Click on that and, uh, send me a video, send me an email, send me a question, complaint, concern, anything and we'll answer them here on the blog every week.[27]

Throughout the remainder of these videos, Fallon provides a taste of the comedy on the show, gives you a tour of the building, introduces you to more behind the scenes people, and also answers questions from fans. On Friday installments, Fallon, always sartorially casual, can be found sitting before the camera at a desk next to a prominently displayed branded tie-in Mac

26. "First Video Blog (12/08/08)," *Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com*, accessed May 12, 2010. http://www.latenightwithjimmyfallon.com/video/first-video-blog-12808/869181.

27. Ibid., 1.

laptop. He uses this time to answer video questions from the audience. During the December 12th video, a "fan" named Steve Garfield and Jimmy trade this dialogue: [28]

> Steve: It's great to see you video blogging, I love the behind the scenes stuff and I'm excited at the possibility for you including content from people formerly known as the audience. What are you going to do with that? How are you going to include us?
>
> Jimmy: Thanks, that's a good question Steve Garfield. We want to use the audience as much as we possibly can, what we are doing for the webisodes will carry over to our show. I'm a fan of what Colbert did with the green screen challenge. I think it's awesome, so whatever's coming out, however we can incorporate technology with the audience on the show, you will be on the show. Uh, it's going to be fun. This is going to be great. Thanks, good question.[29]

The important point to note here is that he followed through on his promise—the show is very dynamic and interactive. At least in some small way, the voice of his audience is being heard and directly responded to. Fallon even let the audience of his video blogs pick the official logo for the show.

Through these above examples, it is clear that *Late Night* is a good place to look for this interchange between old and new media. I want to look at how discourses of audience-as-collaborator play into the mode of address of television texts. To do this, I have to situate what *Late Night* is doing within a larger discussion about digitally interactive involvement.

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28. It is unclear whether Steve and his question have been planted by *Late Night*. Digital media, like all other media forms, intersect debates about trust. I only mention this fact because I get the uncanny feeling while watching the video that Steve is an actor. In the end it turns out Steve is an "online video blogger" who makes his living online and writing books like *Get Seen: Online Video Secrets to Building Your Business*. That said, this is never stated in the video as Steve Garfield is treated like any other "fan."

29. "December 12th – Ask Jimmy," *Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com*. Accessed May 12, 2010. http://www.latenightwithjimmyfallon.com/video/december-12th-ask-jimmy/881001

A key assumption about digital media is that it offers a "deeper" experience for the user, compared to traditional "lean back" forms like television.[30] We are in an "experience era" in which we reportedly "want to touch and feel," and "don't want to sit back anymore."[31] Thus, it is up to the media producers to "enrich and deepen" this experience for users.[32]

Increasingly, we are asked by the cultural industries to share our point of view, contribute our opinion, and accept media ostensibly on our terms. Note, for instance, the YouTube-Canon funded "Project Imagin8tion" where Ron Howard, the popular Hollywood director, chose 8 photographs from the 96,262 that were sent in via YouTube.com/Imagination. His daughter, Bryce Howard, then directed a short film based on the inspiration she received from the contributors' photos. Now more than ever, *the* media now seen to be *our* media, or even *my* media.

This type of technologically-enabled digital interactivity can be defined as any activity "in which the text or its content is affected, resequenced, altered, customized or re-narrated" by an outside source, namely the users.[33] This type of interactivity is championed as giving users the feeling like they can act upon their world via engagement across space. This has led to what, some say, is a collapse of the space between production and consumption.

The promotion of audience empowerment by a range of social actors, alongside technologies that offer interactive involvement, is believed to foster a "greater interest by

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30. Ayelet Noff, "Big Data in the visual age," *Social Media*, accessed April 12, 2013. http://www.socialmedia.biz/2012/05/07/big-data-and-the-visual-age

31. "Value, Engagement and Trust in the Era of Social Media," *Fora.tv's Edelman's survey: Trust in the Era of Social Entertainment,* 1.

32. Ibid., 1.

33. Rob Cover, "Audience inter/active: Interactive media, narrative control and reconceiving audience history" in *New Media & Society* 8(1) (2006) : 140.

audiences to change, alter and manipulate" texts.[34] This ability for users to engage with texts offers, according to Tim O'Reilly, a "rich user experience."[35]

This "rich user experience" is often compared positivity to mass media technologies like television. In *The Control Revolution*, Andrew Shapiro positively compares the "*many-to-many interactivity*" of the internet to mass media.[36] To Sharpiro, mass media such as television and newspapers are "one-to-many but they're not interactive: One broadcaster or publisher can speak to a huge audience, but those who watch or read can't easily speak back."[37] Because of this, to Shapiro, "many-to-many interactivity has rightly been hailed as one of the most potential democratic aspects of the Net because it allows individuals to be creators of content rather than just passive recipients, and active participants in dialogue rather than just passive recipients."[38]

The active-passive binary is a fairly common trope concerning the relationship of television to the internet, where the TV is a weak object and the internet, being an interactive device, offers "a more demanding activity."[39] And while television fails as a one-way portal, "the interactive Web 2.0 environment provides innumerable opportunities for expanding one's reach."[40]

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34. Cover, "Audience inter/active," 140.

35. See Tim O'Reilly's *Tim O'Reilly in a Nutshell: Collected Writings of the Founder of O'Reilly Media, Inc.* (2004).

36. Shapiro, *The Control Revolution*, 15 (italics are the authors).

37. Ibid., 15.

38. Ibid., 15.

39. Barry Wellman, *The Internet in Everyday Life* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 231.

40. Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: The New Social Operating System* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 14.

Yet, this type of digitally interactive involvement can be situated within a longer history of audience engagement with media forms. Reception and Cultural Studies scholars like John Hartley, John Fiske, and David Morley have gone to lengths to show that television is not inherently a passive medium.[41] Audiences have historically done lots of activities with and through a television text from writing fan letters to chatting with friends about a particular show. Furthermore, as John Durham Peters notes, "the cognitivists tell us that watching TV is an extremely complex attentive process; the ethnographers have found a variety of talkative behaviors, some outlandish, some mundane, which audiences perform in front of their sets."[42] He goes on to say that "'passive listening' is one of the worst ideas ever to infest cultural criticism—as if listening it were not one of the most difficult things people ever do."[43]

This said, this strand of discursively shaped digital interactive involvement is popular now as producers seek audience involvement on terms that ostensibly favor audience needs and demands. Television wants your digital participation, needs your conversation, and frames it as an unqualified good. And, indeed, the discourse of digital interactive involvement that is central to the early blog posts for *Late Show with Jimmy Fallon* is carried over into the show. In 2009, the Webby Awards honored Fallon with the Webby Person of the Year Award for his "enthusiastic embrace of the Internet to connect with his fans."[44] In addition, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* won the 2009 and 2010 Emmys for Best Creative Achievement in Interactive Non-

41. See, for instance, John Hartley's *Uses of Television* (1999), John Fiske's *Television Culture* (1987), and David Morley's *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* (1992).

42. John Durham Peters, "Medias as conversation, conversation as media" in *Media and Cultural Theory* ed. James Curran & David Morley (New York: Routledge 2006), 116.

43. Ibid., 125.

44. "13th Annual Webby Special Achievement Award Winners," *Webby Awards*, Accessed, May 1, 2010. http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/specialachievement13.php

Fiction for their "efforts to bridge the gap between web and television via blogs, videos and other experiments in engaging audiences."[45]

Late Night also has roots in the technology world as it coproduced by Gavin Purcell, who ran *Attack of the Show* on the technology and video game friendly G4 channel. In addition, Fallon updated his video blog from CES 2009—CNET's big consumer electronics conference—while also doing an interview with Engadget's—a popular technology blog—Joshua Topolsky, who would later not-so-coincidentally do technology updates on *Late Night*. Jimmy also interviewed Kevin Rose and Alex Albrecht from Diggnation—a popular video podcast—on his January 20th 2009 video blog. He tells them "we are still experimenting on how to get interactive with our audiences and our fans," to which Rose responds, "the great thing is that you are having a conversation with them."[46] Jimmy responds that "there is a lot more positive people who are just like, just want to be part of building something, or making something, or having input in something."[47]

This pre-show internet media blitz operates as a grand act of contextualization. By associating with already known luminaries of the digital realm, *Late Night* positions itself in line with an already called-into-existence audience or a public in the third sense that Michael Warner discusses in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005)—a "public that comes into being only in relation

45. Miller, Liz, "Jimmy Fallon, Star Wars, Old Spice Win Creative Arts Emmy Awards," *The New York Times*, accessed August, 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/external/gigaom/2010/08/23/23gigaom-jimmy-fallon-star-wars-old-spice-win-creative-art-89307.html

46. "January 20th – Diggnation." *Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com*. Accessed May 1, 2010. http://www.latenightwithjimmyfallon.com/video/january-20th-diggnation/950081.

47. Ibid., 1.

to texts and their circulation."[48] This public is not present in the physical sense; it is not the temporally and spatially situated public of the in-studio television audience. Nor is it totally identical or concomitant with the situated audience at home. It is diffuse in terms of space and time, interconnected by these technologies of transmission and exhibition that allow this public to come into existence and interact with others in the bounded network. The particular features of this public frames relationships to the show in particular ways, calling into existence the official ways this show will be positioned in public discourses.

While I have been talking quite a bit about *Late Night's* website, the idea of the digitally interactive involvement is also featured on the live broadcast. Fallon always has a computer at his desk, where he runs skits like "#LateNightHashTags." In this skit, Fallon creates a #Hashtag (the metatags on Twitter that identify topic trends) for #whydonttheymakethat, which he then posts to Twitter. His followers tweet back replies like "eyebrow toupées" or "wine in pouches, like Capri Sun for grownups." After introducing the skit Fallon says: "So tune in, you might see one of your tweets on the show!" While *Late Night* may have been an early adopter of the deep integration of Twitter into the text of the show, shows like NBC's *The Today Show* include Twitter hashtags in the bottom left hand corner of the screen and CBS even tried to turn two Twitter accounts into TV shows, (*$#*! My Dad Says* and *Don't Tell Steve*.[49]

In addition, *Late Night* ran fan video contests that offered a slightly different, more involved form of audience creativity. On March 12th 2009, Fallon introduced the "Jimmy Fallon Dance Challenge," which asked fans of the show to create videos in the hope of having them—

48. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 66.

49. Ben Parr, "CBS Turns Another Twitter Account into a TV Show," *Mashable,* accessed March 1, 2011. "http://mashable.com/2010/09/27/cbs-turns-another-twitter-account-into-a-tv-show.

both the videos and the participants—appear on the show. For the contest, Fallon sets the stage by talking about how artists and everyday people are using YouTube to popularize dance movies like Solja Boy's "Crank Dat" or GSBoyz' "Stanky Legg."[50] He wants to join the fray by creating his own dance for *Late Night*. Using a song created by members of The Roots and *Late Night* staff writer Diallo Riddle, Fallon opens up the contest to the audience:

> You ready to get your dance on? Now it is up to you guys to show us what the *Late Night* dance is . . . I have no idea what it could be, can't wait to see what you people come up with . . . we saw what these guy can do with this [in studio audience members], we want to see what you guys can do with this![51]

This audience empowerment message was repeated on the *Late Night* blog, with the message: "We want YOU to choreograph a dance aptly titled 'The *Late Night*.' The Roots and a couple of the show's writers came up with a hot track with the same name ('The *Late Night'*), and now the rest is up to you."[52] According to *Late Night*, there were hundreds of videos submitted, with 112 of them available to view at the official website.[53]

On August 5th 2009, Fallon also introduced the "*Late Night* Intern Contest." For this contest, Fallon was looking for a fan of the show to be a new type of intern. While he states that they already have many college interns working on the show, he wants someone to be a correspondent that lets the home viewer learn about college life. Like the Dance Contest, fans were asked to send in videos where they do something creative to prove that they should be the

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50. "Jimmy Fallon Dance Challenge," *Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com*, accessed on May, 2010. http://www.latenightwithjimmyfallon.com/blogs/contests.

51. Ibid., 1.

52. Ibid., 1.

53. Ibid., 1.

Late Night intern. *Late Night* made an instructional "how to" video aimed at explaining the contest, setting expectations, and, of course, creating laughs:

> Welcome to the LNJF Intern Contest, this will be an exciting opportunity for just the right person, is that person you? The LNJF intern must be responsible, energetic, fun, plugged in to the world around them, outgoing, creative and positive. Now that you know what we're looking for, we thought you might also like you know what we're not looking for: you should not be a slacker, someone who passes out in public, fight instigation guy, unsolicited massage guy, the girl who cries too much, the all-night library girl, or the Juicy sweatpants girl. You should not be: the campus weed dealer, the guy who wears pajama bottoms and flip flops to class, or the guy with the acoustic guitar on your floor, and as always, no Lebowski quoters. We are looking for someone who is enthusiastic for working hard for no monetary reward. But if you win, you'll be on television, the best reward of all! So be a *Late Night* intern, send in your videos today![54]

In both of these contests we can see this same emphasis on empowerment and creativity. For the Dance Contest, contestants are seen as being worthy of working with critically and commercially acclaimed members of the legendary Roots crew as you make the video set to their song. Aside from the obvious emphasis on "you" and the motivational rhetoric that goes with trying to inspire creative submissions, there is also a more collapsing of distance going on in these contests. The Dance Contest winners—John Wampler and Cole Krietemeyer of Columbia, South Carolina—and the Intern Contest winner—Jason Sheedy—not only get their videos displayed on *Late Night* and the official website, but they also get to appear on the show to perform in skits. This collapsing of distance is also a major part of interactive involvement as seen through the audience-as-collaborator discourse, especially when it puts "you" closer to the stars you love. Do you want to meet Jimmy Fallon and the Roots? Share the stage with them? Do you want to feel as if someone within the media industries can appreciate your work?

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54. "Intern Contest: We Want Someone as Awesome as this Tiny Monkey," *Latenightwithjimmyfallon.com*, accessed May, 1 2010. http://www.latenightwithjimmyfallon.com/blogs/contests

In the collapse of space between producer and consumer roles, a particular type of immediacy is created between the text and audience. According to Bolter and Grusin, designers see a sense of immediacy produced through interactivity that draws users closer to a text.[55] What is most important here is this collapse of space and how this frames a relationship with fans as a type of interactive, loose collaboration.

Yet, while there is something new about the way digital technologies are being incorporated into *Late Night* and the way they address their audience as a tech-savvy public, it all feels fairly standard for the talk show format. While scripted, pre-recorded shows like *Mad Men* occasionally integrate fans as walk-on actors into the show, late night television programming has always been very audience friendly. Shows like *Late Show with David Letterman* use the live audience in skits like "Know Your Cuts of Meat." What makes late night shows like *Late Night* or *The Colbert Report* different is how they utilize and integrate diffuse digital audiences. For instance, the Jimmy Fallon Dance Contest's introduction, the on-air Contest progress reports, showing the winning submission on air, and inviting the choreographers to the studio all become content for the show. In this way, both the makers of the video and the video itself are literally drawn into the official text of the show.

While network television shows like the ones I study above are deeply invested in attracting eyeballs, they are equally, and relatedly, invested in attracting advertiser dollars. In this regard, these contests fit nicely within contemporary branding practices such as those I discussed in Chapter 3. In a media landscape where consumers have a lot of choice and, furthermore, can TiVo past standard commercial spots, television producers and advertisers seek ways to reaffirm the network of association between television and advertising. They do this, in part, by returning

55. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 28.

to time honored practices like product integration. As part of the Intern Contest, the winning contestant, Jason—cleverly wearing the same "normal guy" authentically rumpled shirt and jeans outfit he wore during his winning submission—appeared on the show to talk about his experience of winning. During his visit he was awarded free *Late Night* t-shirts to pass out to friends, a new Mac Book Pro, and a Canon Vixia HF20 digital camera. Also, during the interview, Fallon hit the nail maybe a bit too precisely on the head when he told Jason: "Nothing comes for free, you know, even this free stuff doesn't come for free. We're going to get you started working right now."[56] His assignment? Go out into New York and find everyone in the crowd a free donut. He performs this task admirably, returning at the end of the show with an arm full of prominently displayed Dunkin Donuts, which he and Fallon pass out to the crowd while end credits roll. This contests works well with contemporary branding practices that emphasize a movement toward customization for the consumer, going where the consumer is, folding products into content, and an intimacy and engagement with brands.

A Rhetoric of Empowerment and Creativity

An emerging rule of thumb in the fragmented, convergent, brand-centric cultural industries today is connecting to a consumer in a meaningful way across a variety of platforms. In relation to the television industry, John Caldwell states that there is leakiness to this flow back and forth between the TV and the internet. To Caldwell, companies try to control this multi-device flow by programming a degree of stickiness to digital endeavors.[57] The concept of

56. *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*. Aired: 10/15/2009.

57. John Caldwell, "Second-shift Media Aesthetics: programming, interactivity, and user flows" in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*. Ed. John Caldwell and Anna Everett (New York: Routledge Press, 2003), 139.

stickiness is echoed in industrial literature about audience retention when, for instance, Alex Alexander says that for websites "to be sticky, they need to have three general characteristics: They should be interactive, dynamic and personal."[58] Like the examples from *Late Night,* NBC's *The Office* emphasized interactive involvement as a way to create audience loyalty and stickiness.

On June 26, 2006 NBC launched a contest for fans to make their own video promotions for *The Office*, an adaptation of a BBC show of the same name. The genre mixing show, shot in a faux-documentary style, revolves around the life and times of the employees at the Dunder Mifflin Inc. paper supply company. Over the space of a month, 347 videos were submitted for the contest and 3321 people applied to be part of the contest's YouTube group.[59] The breadth of these videos is impressive, ranging for computer graphics to live action, from simple paper animation to claymation. The winning video, by Elliot Diviney of Plymouth, Minnesota, shows a "typical" corporate office where an employee is bouncing a rubber band ball off the wall. The ball accidentally bounces into another worker's cubicle, who then takes out a substantially larger ball, tosses it back, where it makes a large clatter off screen while the name of the show, the NBC logo, and airing time appear. This video, which is quite funny, takes its humor from the everyday objects that are part of corporate office culture. In many ways, this promotional contest allowed people to take experiences from their everyday, mundane corporate office lives—mediated by knowledge of the genre and style of *The Office*—and do something creative with it.

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58. Alex Alexander, "Interactivity, changing content, personalization are keys to Web 'stickiness,'" *Kansas City Business Journal*, accessed March 2, 2010. http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/stories/2001/12/10/focus8.html

59. As it stands in May of 2013, there are 317 active videos and 3774 members on the contest's YouTube page. Thus, there is a slight difference in the number of videos (reduced from 347) and members (increased from 3321) associated with the contest. The YouTube's contest page can be found at http://www.youtube.com/group/theoffice

Looking at the specifics, the promotion could only be 20 seconds long. Video-makers could not use any found footage from the show and were only able to use its theme song and the NBC network logo. NBC suggests that this is to make you more creative, to show something of yourself. This address can be seen as a rhetoric of empowerment when clearly crystallized in NBC's own promotion for the contest. To help facilitate video production by amateurs, NBC uploaded a YouTube video to instruct video-makers on how to make their own creative products. In this video, Bill, the usual promo guy for *The Office*, is cleaning out his office since he has been fired and "you" have been hired.[60] He explains the nature of the contest and its rules:

> Hi, my name's Bill, I usually do the promos for The Office. So why is NBC having a You Do the Promos contest? Oh, I don't know. . . apparently somebody thinks you can do just as good of a job as I can. Hey, I got an idea for a contest, how about I take a video of me doing your job and send it to your boss? Hey look at me, I can sweep!
>
> Just click the link at the bottom of the page, that will take you to NBC.com for all the rules and registration and everything else you need to know to steal my job. You can also get the graphics and the only music you can use, or use no music at all. Your promo has to be exactly 20 seconds long and you have to upload it here at YouTube by July 21st.
>
> Still think it's easy? Try doing it without using any footage from the show. That's mine. You have to shoot it yourself, so be creative. Maybe it's something from your office or Dwight as a boy or you reenact a scene from the show. Just remember, it may seem funny on TV, but sneaking into your boss's office and leaving a present on his carpet gets you fired in real life.[61]

60. To be clear, Bill is *not* the actual promo guy for *The Office*. He is an actor playing a promo guy and has been used by NBC on other shows too, such as *My Name is Earl*, *Chuck*, and the reboot of *American Gladiators.* Interestingly, he was also featured in a YouTube video responding to negative comments about NBC putting promos on YouTube.

61. Sadly, the link to Bill's speech (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax_4mhJHOx0) is no longer working.

In this video about video-making, we get a wide range of information about the relationship this video tries to articulate between itself and an audience. First, the incompetence of "official" employees is foregrounded, because "somebody" (presumably the NBC brass), thinks that fans can do the job just as well as paid employees like Bill. This message is reinforced by the mise-en-scène where Bill, in casual dress, clears out his desk, emptying his possessions into a box. This visual imagery rhetorically reinforces the message by drawing on this familiar representation and what it signifies.

Wrapped up in this address is this dynamic between the authority of business leaders and the creativity "you" are purported to possess. While the higher ups at NBC still fulfill functions you presumably cannot, they are bequeathing this opportunity on you to show how creative you can be on the big stage of television. This message is enhanced by juxtaposing your mundane real job, which Bill identifies as "sweeping the workplace," with this creativity you have inside you.

The persuasive strength of the address is achieved by articulating creativity and pleasure to production—it is not enough to just watch the shows you love, you have to get involved in some way. This rhetoric suggests that there is always something more than the televised text: to really understand the universe of *The Office* you have to become involved in some way. In addition, as a rhetoric of empowerment and creativity would suggest, Bill's address hinges significantly on making the audience feel as if it has some power over the meanings and directions of the text. This empowerment takes the form of telling your story or giving your unique take in a way that shows your abilities as a creative person. You have the chance to have your work shown during the live broadcast of the show and placed within *The Office* canon (or at least among its official paratexts).

Through this example, digitally interactive involvement is seen as not just being about pointing and clicking; it is also undergirded by the psychological notion of empowerment. The implication is that, by interacting, the consumer gains some measure of power and control. Thus, how NBC addresses its audiences is as important as the platforms and technologies it uses. To say this is to acknowledge that technologies have no inherent use and are open to the flexibility of social protocols. I call NBC's audience address a rhetoric of empowerment to put an emphasis on the persuasive quality of the message. In this case, there are many ways for audiences to use digital technologies while NBC actively pursues avenues for audiences to embrace a certain vision of empowerment and creativity within the ambit of NBC.

I would further argue that a rhetoric of empowerment has become a fundamental feature of all media industry modes of address, as media companies move from managing employees to managing audiences as de facto employees. Because of increased competition over audience attention, addressing audiences as active is now important to how the cultural industries work. Audiences with a bewildering amount of choice at their fingertips must be persuaded to stay, play, and engage, in order for them to invest themselves over the long term. Thus, one could see how a rhetoric of empowerment is a key feature of all digital media interaction. This rhetoric crisscrosses wide ranges of society, from industrial compounds to internet start-ups to suburban bedrooms. Yet, we must acknowledge that this empowerment is not in the ether, swirling around like some zeitgeist of the times. Rather, it is something that is put into practice through actors, materials, and translations. Discourses of empowerment are not an empirical given but take work to produce.

Speaking about the problems of translating between non-scientific and scientific points of view in the collecting of participants behind a Vertebrate Zoology Museum, Star and Griesemer

say: "Unless they use coercion, each translator must maintain the integrity of the interests of the other audiences in order to retain them as allies."[62] Translation is the ANT term Michel Callon uses to refer to the process of forming a network. First a need for translation should be defined through problematization, i.e., why do we need to create a network? To enact this process, each human actor or representative of a material actant in the network has to enroll in the network through some type of participation. In the case of the Invertebrate Museum, this participation would mean accept roles as collectors, collators, cataloguers, measurers, etc. Unless it is coerced there has to be some adequate translation between the points of view of different actors. Their individualized goals must be met or the network risks dissolution. If we were to reframe this example and think about it in relation to television in a digital environment, the question is: What do the different actors get from participating in the network, and how does their participation become intelligible to other actors? This is a more theoretically inflected way of asking: What reasons are there for the existence of user generated video contests?

From the perspective of the producers and distributors of TV shows like the *Office*, a central value present in contests is their ability to generate, if not free, then cheap labor. Your play is their work, so to speak. Indeed, a central concern in the Information Age is on how work and play are understood in relation to free labor. Tiziana Terranova argues says that free labor is "a trait of the cultural economy at large, and an important, yet undervalued, force in advanced capitalist societies."[63] She sees this free labor as existing in a wide variety of practices, such as building websites, modifying software, engaging in mailing lists, message boards, and building virtual spaces like MUDs and MOOs. She defines free labor as "the moment where this

62. Star & Greismer, "Institutional Ecology," 389.

63. Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy" in *Social Text* 63, 18(2) (2000) : 33.

knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into productive activities that are pleasurably embraced at the same time often shamelessly exploited."[64] More mundane examples abound of unpaid workers—"netslaves" and fans—who work in a "diffuse swirl of unpaid creators, test subjects, expert informants and volunteer labour."[65] For my purposes, I would like to frame what constitutes work narrowly as the translation of labor into monetary compensation. Too often what people are and are not paid for is incredibly important when trying to understand how opportunities and power are constituted. That these television shows can get hundreds of people with varying goals and reasons to spend their time to make promotions for no monetary compensation is important.

What ties notions of free labor together across the cultural industries is the discourse of audiences-as-collaborators, centered on creativity and empowerment. For instance, Bill, the "official" promo guy for *The Office*, positively inflects what it means to be a fan and empowers the participants of the contest to imagine that they could do the same job. NBC and *The Office* employ a rhetoric of empowerment in this instance to tell the audience that their ideas are worthy of merit and, if they win the contest, they are potentially worthy of broadcast. Why not? Many people who watch *The Office* presumably have an intimate knowledge of the show and probably have an equally sophisticated understanding of genre and narrative structure from having watched years or even decades of television. An implication of Bill's rhetoric is that the difference between the amateur who owns inexpensive home editing software and the expert who cuts promotions for a living is relatively marginal. There are, in fact, lots of people who could do what "Bill" does for a living. In a sense, they could do it better because, ideally, their

64. Ibid., 37.

65. Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford, and Greig de Peuter, *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing* (Toronto: McGill University Press, 2003), 201.

motivation comes from a nonmarket source of pleasure. The goal of this contest is to set up an instance where the pleasure of playing with and augmenting texts can be translated into a productive kind of work, in the industrial sense.

In *Distinction* (1979), Pierre Bourdieu examined the interplay of economic, cultural, and social capital in French society, emphasizing the interchangeability of these forms and their uneven distribution among individuals and groups in society. Thus, social capital overlaps with and finds equivalences in economic capital. Or, rather, they are not incomparable entities. These contests mentioned above work when they create equivalences between various forms of capital. Indeed, part of the reason social and monetary capital are translatable is because of the fluidity of work and play.

To Terranova, what happens in post-Fordist cultural economies is the "immanent process of channeling collective labor (even as cultural labor) into monetary flows and its structuration within capitalists business practices."[66] This does not mean human creativity is reduced to a capitalist imperative nor does it suggest that actions are determined by a base of capitalist production. Yet, it does highlight how cultural industries are deeply invested in materially and rhetorically opening up opportunities for consumers, while trying to build certain tendencies into those opportunities that always loop the circulation back through business market imperatives.

It is worth pointing out that *The Office* and NBC get free promotion not only in the form of the videos themselves but also in the way knowledge of this contest circulates among a network of fans, who in turn help to translate the pleasure and play of fandom into productive work. For instance, *The Office* contest generated a considerable amount of attention among YouTube users and fans on unofficial *The Office* fan pages. On fan sites like

66. Terranova, "Free Labor," 39.

LifeInTheOffice.com and OfficeTally.com, the contest was posted on the main page. On both sites fans asked if others had heard of the contest, said that they thought it looked cool, and asked other fans to pass it along. This circulation not only increased the ambit of both *The Office* and NBC's branded image (and a willingness to work with fans), it also increased awareness of a more interactive engagement with audiences-as-fans.

On the other side of the coin, we must ask about the value participants receive from these contests. If we have already stated that there is no monetary value in these contests, what are the personal, psychological or social equivalences that can be made between these contests and audiences?

In *Buying In* (2008), Rob Walker makes an intriguing discovery while investigating contemporary word-of-mouth marketing campaigns: The people who sign up to be covert marketers of Al Fresco sausages or Crest toothpaste don't mind that they don't get paid. They put in hours of work each week, casually chatting up people on the street about their product and organizing parties around certain brands. In the process of doing all this, Walker finds that most of them don't even collect the prizes they win while working for stealth word of mouth firms like BzzAgent. In fact, most of them "just wanted to be part of something" bigger than themselves and relished the fact that they got their hands on consumer goods before their friends.[67] Their motivations weren't monetary; they were personal and social.

This type of thinking is an inroad into understanding why audiences sign up for these types of contests. It could be that contestants are seeking 15 minutes of fame. The discourses of fame, stardom, and "getting noticed" are deeply connected to the present moment of online video

67. Walker, *Buying In,* 188.

making.[68] Television, for all of its characterizations as an old medium, still seems to be a cultural legitimate institution, i.e., "You were on TV?" It could also be that contestants are fans and want to interact or be part of the branded media they love.[69]

In the case of *The Office* contest, how one should approach the social value of exchange is open to interpretation. It is hard to make a clear distinction between fans and the aspiring professional in many of these cases. Kris Van Nest, a self-described "actor/host/precision driver," displays his contest entry on his website and demo reel while others, like Ronin, simply want you to check out their video and are glad people liked it.[70] Maybe this variedness is the point when thinking about how value translates between economic, psychological, and social realms; consumption is so deeply embedded in our everyday lives there is a fluidity between economic and social value, because we think through and with the objects around us.[71] For example, Amanda Zweerink and Sarah Gatson, in their work on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* websites and users, notice that "people have adapted the advertising purpose of the site itself and colonized it as a point of entry for face-to-face socializing, networking, and other community-building activities."[72] Here Buffy fans are playing with resources of the show and refashioning

68. Burgress & Green, *YouTube,* 24-25.

69. Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006) 13.

70. "Kris Van Next" *Casting Notes,* accessed March 14, 2010. http://castingnotes.com/directory/K/Kris+Van+Nest

71. See Sherry Turkle's *Evocative Objects* (2007).

72. Amanda Zweerink and Sarah N. Gatson, "www.buffy.com: Cliques, Boundaries, and Hierarchies in an Internet Community" in *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Ed. by Rhonda Wilcox and David Lavery (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 240.

them to suit their own needs and desires. They are using the material and social conditions of the site through which to think, feel, and relate.

What this points out, to me, is not that Buffy fans are taking control of the meaning of the text. Rather, that media forms work not because we ingest the "preferred" meaning of a media text but, rather, that we do something with it at all. By actively engaging with a media text and drawing it into our everyday lives, we create avenues for equivalences in value to take place.

In these equivalences we find "conversation" happening on industrial terms "in the service of the shifting patterns of global capital."[73] To Jodi Dean, these forms of networked communication "reinforce the hegemony of democratic rhetoric. Far from de-democratized, the contemporary ideological formation of communicative capitalism fetishizes speech, opinion, and participation."[74] Communicative capitalism, to Dean, is "the materialization of ideals of inclusion and participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism."[75] Thus, forms of networked participation from online political debates to participating in, say, user-generated contests reinforce the individualizing force of neoliberalism rather than strengthening communal ties.[76]

In the discussion above, I hope to have shown that each group has its own internal logics. Thus, the meaning and values that contestants, advertisers, and/or television producers ascribe to these contests do not have to be the same provided they are translated successfully across each group. In this way, what these contests mean to various participants is open and flexible as long

73. McPherson. "Reloaded," 207.

74. Jodi Dean, *Communicative Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 17.

75. Ibid., 2.

76. Ibid., 32.

as, from the perspective of NBC, it can be productively fed back into the company's goals. Notice how this constitutes a loose form of control in which participants can have a wide range of reasons to join the contest (from the sheer pleasure and communal aspects of fandom to fleshing out a hopeful demo reel). That these motivations are multiple does not matter to NBC as long as they do not disrupt the translation of social or psychological value into economic value.

Conclusion

The different ways that the *Late Show* and *The Office* gain value from these contests—as promotion, as free labor, as ad hoc focus groups, as content, and as audience retention—are characterized by the ability to translate between work and play. To facilitate this translation, a rhetoric of consumer empowerment on the cultural industries' terms is utilized, one that leaves the relationships with advertisers and audiences intact. In a moment of seemingly instability of television, where audiences are both rhetorically empowered and unruly in their mobility, what better way to find the mobile consumer then to ask them to contribute?

Additionally, revisiting Chapter 5's insights for a moment, all of these contests and promotions facilitate the transfer of information from the audience to NBC producers. For the *Late Night* contests, entrants had to register with NBC.com to participate. *The Office* contest was similar, except the video makers had to sign up for both YouTube and NBC. As NBC states, no submission will be complete until you join both the YouTube Promo Contest Group and also "you MUST complete the full registration process on NBC.com for your entry to be valid."[77] In addition, they ask that you set your video to private on YouTube so that only those who sign up to YouTube can actually watch the videos. Thus, these contests translate the audience into

77. The web page no longer exists.

"audience power" for advertisers in the form of specific demographic marketing.[78] As Joseph Turow states in *Niche Envy*, the trick of using the internet as a tool to connect consumer and advertiser lays in "figuring out a way to lead consumers to reveal themselves to marketers online and give the marketers use of that information."[79] The general fear in the cultural industries is that consumers' embrace of new technologies will empower them in ways that will make them too unruly or untraceable. By having a plethora of consumer data on hand, the cultural industries have a tool in hand to mediate against too much consumer unruliness. Through these videos, patterns can be tracked about the disposition of the contestants, i.e., what they think is funny. In addition to actual demographic information they may give up through signing up to NBC or thorough internet cookies, these videos offer a richer picture that can be used to construct potential audience for the shows.

A chapter focusing on how television companies create and shape avenues of engagement with participatory audiences will invariably intersect with academic questions about the potentials of digital technologies. One could also argue that one-off contests come and go and don't have considerable and lasting influence. Yet, I argue that these contests are specific articulations, concrete instances of theories and methods of reaching the audience in practice, where we can start to see their effect in the aggregate. What I find instructive is how television companies successfully continue to use promotional practices—retrofitted to the possibility of digital media—to manage the added influences of the consumer. Television is finding outlets for this energy; this creative surplus. Thus, it seems that creativity has been brought into the logic of

78. Dallas Smythe, "On the Audience Commodity and its Work', *Media and Cultural Studies Key Works*." Ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham & Douglas Kellner. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 256.

79. Turow, *Niche Envy,* 71.

the industry in a way that shapes its possibilities in highly sophisticated ways. In this light, as Joseph Turow says, "the rhetoric of consumer power begins to lose credibility."[80]

It is instructive to remember that, as the shape of television transforms, as it mutates in relation to changing environments, it still holds a great deal of monetary and cultural power. I believe that acknowledging this helps when thinking about how it may deflate the unrestrained buoyancy of an industrially evoked rhetoric of empowerment without reducing human creativity before the fact to simple market imperatives. Thus, my goal is not to try and reduce human creativity in this instance to industrial logics, but to acknowledge that the discourse of collaboration peddled by the cultural industries today is so prevalent and sophisticated that we need to take a step back and interrogate these claims.

One way to interrogate these claims is through situating the use of user-generated content with a longer history of audience engagement. Well before the YouTube phenomenon, television companies found ways to monetize amateur videos, most notably with *America's Funniest Home Videos*. In an article titled "How Bob Saget Invented Modern Media," author Tal Pinchevsky refers to *America's Funniest Home Videos* as a "harbinger for the user-generated pipeline that is media today."[81] Furthermore, contests as promotional material to engage an audience are nothing new. Television companies, along with other media industries, have always used contests and stunts to engage their audience. When I was 8, I submitted drawings to *Highlights Magazine* and wrote letters to tell them about my desire to be an archaeologist. And I eagerly awaited the next issue, hoping they would choose my words to put on their pages. In a sense, I performed free labor for them that filled their pages at no extra cost. Thus, the concept of crowdsourcing for

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80. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 3.

81. Tal Pinchesvky, "How Bob Saget Invented Modern Media," *Big Think*, accessed March 12, 2011. http://bigthink.com/trend-world/how-bob-saget-invented-modern-media.

content and promotion is nothing new. Corporations have always sought audience information, such as the TV's Nielson ratings, as a way to strengthen the bond between industry and audience. Yet, the dense network capabilities and the speed of information exchange associated with digital technologies are presently increasing the intensity of these practices.

Another way to interrogate this is through critiquing the rhetoric surrounding digital interactive involvement by acknowledging that "digital interactivity" is an over-simplification of what engagement can mean. So, rather than assuming that digital technologies and related rhetorical persuasions produce active audiences, we should imagine a continuum of engagement like Roger Silverstone's idea of strong and weak engagement. In *Television and Everyday Life* (1994), Silverstone suggests we need to move from thinking about active or passive audiences toward reframing the argument around engagement. This puts both producers and consumers on a continuum where "engagement might be weak or strong, positive or negative in its implications."[82] Thus, no one particular activity, whether it be watching TV, editing a Wikipedia page, or entering a user-generated video contest is inherently active or passive. They are all types of engagement that can be interpreted and framed in different ways. Through interrogating claims of audience empowerment we can bring forth the logic of soft control to understand what role it plays in shaping the industry-audience relationship.

In the instance of these contests then, audience empowerment looks more like Jeff Howe's *Crowdsourcing* (2008) than Pierre Levy's *Collective Intelligence* (1997). This change in emphasis brings the idea of audience control back into focus and complicates the conversation about empowerment. If one were to imagine a walled city, market-driven consumer empowerment is about breaking through the outer walls and milling about the courtyard. As this

82. Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life*, 170.

metaphor implies, the inner-walled sanctuary remains intact. To me, any industry-led rhetoric of empowerment is undercut in every instance by the realities of intellectual property. At the end of the day, all creative labor remains in the "rightful" hands of the producer. Thus, the logics of soft and hard control work together in this instance to shape audience attention. Furthermore, through the use of soft control strategies, the audiences end up where television companies wanted them to be all along, within the porous walls of its walled city. In this light, the participatory audiences we see in these contests are not in control per se; rather, they are already working inside of what John Durham Peters calls the "cold righteousness of dialogism," a "moral tyranny" of the call to the other to interact on a subject's pregiven term.[83]

83. Peters, John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 159.

Conclusion

Audience: What would this movie be without audience partici...?
Frank: ...pation.
—callback for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*[1]

Like most successful science fiction authors, Ursula K. Le Guin has had to answer questions about what science fiction does for her. Le Guin, in the forward to *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), says that while some science fiction aims to predict the future, she prefers to see science fiction as a vehicle for thought-experiments that are descriptive instead. By this she means to turn science fiction back onto our present reality, to see what new strands she can tease out of our everyday lives. For instance, in *The Left Hand of Darkness,* Le Guin tells the tale of Genly Ai, an ethnographer-type explorer visiting a planet to make contact with the residents to convince them to join the Ekumen, an intergalactic union of sorts. Humans with fluid sexual states and gender identifications, being neither discretely male nor female, populate this planet. Rather than suggesting that one day in the future we will evolve into androgynous beings, Le Guin suggests that this novel is "merely observing, in the particular, devious, and thought-experimental type manner proper to science fiction, that if you look at us at certain odd times of day in certain weather, we already are."[2] Thus, science fiction gives her the vocabulary and tools to say something about how we live today. William Gibson shares this view, arguing "science

1. "Audience Participation," *TV Tropes,* accessed February 15, 2013, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/AudienceParticipation

2. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 2003 [1969]), vi.

fiction is never about the future, that it is always instead a treatment of the present."[3]

For my purposes, I also wanted to turn science fiction back onto the present day, as a way into some of the things happening in our contemporary media landscape. It was my hope that through using science fiction stories as framing devices, I would be able to tease out some core themes of my dissertation: the role that new manifestations of technology play in our everyday lives, the networks which imbue those technologies with significance, the role technologies play in extending various techniques in a pervasive manner, and the roles different actors play in trying to shape the meaning of these articulations.

Thus, I think science fiction offers me a way into conversations about how technologies used by us could also be used by industries to shape our behavior toward predetermined goals. This conversation challenged me to synthesize strands from a wide range of resources. My dissertation explored branding practices of digital media departments, everyday of television audiences, user-generated content practices of active audiences, little pieces of code that facilitate connections across platforms, social media activities of everyday people, and the translated data sets that these activities create. All of these strands helped me shed light on what soft control is and how it is implemented in the industry-audience relationship.

While I am arguing for the presence of soft control and the importance of rebalancing how we understand what control means in the industry-audience relationship, it should be noted that it is probably impossible to prove the causal effects of soft control entirely. Doing so would deny the larger network of associations in which the television industry and its audience are involved. Television companies are responding to profoundly complex conditions in much the same way

3. David Wallace-Wells, "William Gibson, The Art of Fiction No. 211," *The Paris Review,* accessed March 12, 2012, http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6089/the-art-of-fiction-no-211-william-gibson

that individuals do. To say that television companies could control an audience, (i.e., make them consume their products), would be to imagine social life as a hierarchy with the media industries at the top. Rather, the television industry is a range of loosely affiliated actors competing not only amongst themselves but also within a larger network of cultural, historical, and economic forces. This means that some companies will be successful at mapping themselves onto digitally-augmented everyday lives and others will not. Some will leverage their commodifiable properties in sophisticated ways and others will fail. That said, as I have stated throughout, television still holds a great deal of monetary and cultural power. So, more often than not, television shows will find ways to incorporate soft control techniques in surprising ways.

Additionally, we have to think of soft control practices as complementary to and equally important as harder forms of control. As I stated in Chapter 6, the framing of audience engagement in terms of empowerment is best understood in relationship to how NBC's Terms of Service works to keep the "play" of audiences under the control of NBC. Additionally, in reference to the web APIs discussed in Chapter 4, we can see harder forms of control realized, for instance, in the ways that companies like Netflix succeed in getting more hard control features built in to newer forms of HTML to make it harder for audiences to copy video streams.[4] So while web APIs act to make a soft control environment more realizable, they also exist alongside more hardcoded control features. Thus, these two forms of control work together to program control practices in both a variety of ways.

Thus, rather than look at soft control in an all-encompassing manner, I wanted to show how institutions like television have the ability to leverage their content, technologies, and

4. Janko Roettgers, "Netflix presses ahead with HTML5, as free software activists call for boycott," *GigaOM,* accessed July 19, 2013, http://gigaom.com/2013/07/18/netflix-presses-ahead-with-html5-as-free-software-activists-call-for-boycott

techniques to shape audience attention. Furthermore, the companies that make up the television industry still have the ability to leverage their content in a digital media landscape, albeit unevenly. This falls more comfortably under a logic of control—what television companies hope to achieve—rather than an ability to totally control. As Deleuze says, a control society cannot be seen in a starkly positive or negative light. Speaking about the relationship between disciplinary and control societies, he says "there is no need to ask which is the toughest or most tolerable regime, for it's within each of them that liberating and enslaving forces confront one another."[5] Deleuze suggests that control societies are those structurally focused on the concept of modular control rather than suggesting that control, in the strict sense, is what that society produces.

To reinforce this idea of the logic of control, I want to take a final look at soft control and what it means to look at how an industry like television uses control features in the design of goods, their circulation, and how it addresses audiences. To do so I want to revisit two interrelated portions of my argument: what intermediality tells us about control and what highlighting control features says about the potentials of audience empowerment.

What Intermediality Tells Us

A focus on intermediality opens the door to understanding how newer and older forms of media interrelate. In doing so, I can problematize the idea that the internet represents "a distinct rupture with everything that has come before."[6] Rather, new industrial formations have a rich history of borrowing from previous institutions.

The YouTube video "Submarine Cable Systems Development" posted by the AT&T

5. Deleuze, "Post-scripts," 4.

6. Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism.* New York: Public Affairs, Kindle Edition, 44.

Archives explains that underwater telephone cables built off the technology and systems in place for telegraphy as the ships that laid telephone underwater cable were the same ones used for laying telegraph cables.[7] Since telegraph cables did not need repeaters to amplify the signal and the mechanical system to unfurl cable was made to accommodate telegraph cables, the telephone companies had to create cables with repeaters that were no larger than the cable itself. Doing so allowed telephone companies to use preexisting technology (in the form of a boat fleet) to successfully lay new cable with different technological demands.

We can also see these types of interrelationships between other industries and technologies. William Boddy points out the structural interrelationship of television to its broadcasting predecessor radio when he says, "Broadcasting was, as the president of RCA put it, the 'surprise party' of radio. But the history of commercial television is the story of the deliberate shepherding of a technological apparatus by powerful established interest in the electronic manufacturing and broadcasting."[8] The Radio Corporation of America (RCA), born out of a relationship between General Electric and the United States military, was a big player in the development of broadcast radio in addition to later building television sets. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), itself a product of RCA, General Electric, and Westinghouse, was first a collection of radio networks before becoming known as one of the primary television broadcast networks in the United States.[9]

Additionally, today we are seeing new players in the realm of what we conventionally call "television." After pleading with the everyday person to "Broadcast Yourself," Google-owned

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7. "AT&T Archives: Submarine Cable Systems Development," *YouTube,* accessed February, 3 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVRL4UcT1sQ

8. Boddy, *Fifties Television*, 16.

9. See Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 33-50.

YouTube is now starting to look a lot like a television company. In addition to changing the YouTube lay out to be more friendly to industrial content, in 2012, Google put on an event that looked very much like a television upfront—an event used to stoke advertising sales for the upcoming season of shows. Entitled "NewFront," the event unveiled "yet more original programming channels for their YouTube platform, as well as an ambitious $200 million promotional campaign."[10] Daniel Frank of *Paid Content* suggests that this event equates to YouTube saying, "We are to cable what cable was to broadcast."[11] This event is clearly intermedial, borrowing the industrial format for exhibiting new shows. So also are the structural changes to YouTube's interface meant to reinforce a burgeoning interest in creating high end content for YouTube. It appears Google finally wants to turn a profit with YouTube. While a technology firm is at the core of this example, Amanda Lotz suggests that our "residual acculturation" to what television programs look like will cause us to "approach screens that feature familiar programs" and still call it "television."[12] As Nico Carpentier states, "techno-optimism" about new media technologies does not take into consideration that the "routines, identities, practices, conventions, and representations that circulate in the old media system have not been lost, but still co-structure the 'new' media system."[13]

Examples of television companies purchasing interests in digital companies also exist, like

10. Daniel Frankel, "YouTube: 'We are to cable what cable was to broadcast," *paidContent*, accessed May 7, 2012, http://paidcontent.org/2012/05/03/youtube-we-are-to-cable-what-cable-was-to-broadcast

11. Ibid., 1.

12. Lotz, *Television Will Be Revolutionized,* 80.

13. Nico Carpentier, "New Configurations of the Audience," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, ed. by Virginia Nightingale (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 207.

Turner Broadcasting's investing in the social video site *Funny Or Die*.[14] The micromedia-heavy site founded by Will Ferrell and Adam McKay incorporates industrial and amateur funny videos. Turner's investment allows them to "serve as the exclusive seller of advertising opportunities" for the site.[15] This is a clear example of how a television company is harnessing micromedia content as a participant in its network of association with advertisers. This move strengthens Turner's relationship to advertisers while offloading the risk of creating a portal for micromedia from scratch.

It would seem that no major media form lives in a silo. As newer technologies and media practices challenge established business models, it does not mean that previous industries just disappear. As Mirko Schäfer says:

> In the cultural industries, traditional companies not only adapt and attempt to change business models accordingly or develop new ways of earning revenues; it is also evident that new enterprises emerge and gain control over cultural production and intellectual property in a manner very similar to the monopolistic media corporations of the 20th century.[16]

In this light, there is no great divide, rather an intermedial relationship where older forms of media are "just as likely to affect the 'new' as the 'new' is likely to make life difficult for the 'old.'"[17]A lesson from this intermediality is that it appears, perhaps obviously, that moneyed corporations seem to be better at adaptation in times of economic, social, or technological crisis.

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14. Cory Bergman, "Turner Broadcasting invests in social video site Funny or Die," *Lost Remote,* accessed May 18, 2012, http://lostremote.com/turner-broadcasting-invests-in-social-video-site-funny-or-die_b29435

15. Ibid., 1.

16. Schäfer, *Bastard Culture!,* 10-11.

17. Freedman, "Internet Transformation," 288.

Summing this sentiment, Lotz says:

> What is clear from the past is that the freedom of use and open content availability that characterize new technologies in the early years of adoption tend to be subsequently constrained by the imposition of commercial structures and the establishment of practices that favor dominant industrial entities.[18]

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the television industry can entirely dominate digital entertainment firms. It is true that the digital shift has upset the networks created between television companies, audiences, and advertisers (to name a few). In this process of acclimating to digital environments, there will be some "winners" and "losers." The point here is not that there is no change or transformation, and that entrenched industrial actors do not fall. Rather, the question is: who is most able to deal with changing conditions? The argument about how portions of the television industry will survive and thrive in digital media environments full of intense competition from long and short forms of media ultimately comes down to an argument about infrastructure and content.

In Chapter 4, to point out how television leverages content in a micromedia landscape, I looked at how internet protocols like web APIs help integrate television companies into the digital media landscape. Web APIs should be seen as facilitating intermedial connections that allow television companies to easily use social media data sets, like the ones Twitter uses to leverage a relationship with television. Through web APIs, any entity (industrial or otherwise) can find ways to engage in a data rich environment built on the decentralized collaboration of databases over HTTP protocols.

In Chapter 3, I looked at the role of time-tested practices like branding and how commodifiable elements factored into situating television in a digital media environment full of

18. Lotz, *Television Will Be Revolutionized,* 145.

competition from long and short forms of media. Branding was used as the glue to tie together a range of long form and micromedia content across a range of screens distributed in time and space. Stars, textual elaboration, and behind-the-scenes footage were used as lures to bring audiences into the branded and commodifiable universe of certain shows. Because television can still produced professional quality content, these designer scripts have the ability to work more smoothly than micromedia from unknown sources.

Much of the micromedia television companies make is not meant to be stand-alone. Rather, it acts more as promotion to point audiences to more profitable portals. Because this content is rarely stand-alone, belonging to a larger branded universe, it has some advantages in recognition over less well-known sources of micromedia. A focus on intermediality not only shows how television companies transition into digital media environments but also how television can retrofit practices to shape the seemingly open-ended clickable environments of the internet toward their branded universes.

That said, there are some limits to the success of micromedia production as stand-alone content. While I believe that micromedia production is here to stay as a central feature of a media world of proliferating screens and choice, there are some caveats that need to be recognized. Even with a heavy amount of industrial and amateur micromedia production, long form television is still seen as powerful player in our media landscape. While broadcast television has struggled, cable television remains a highly profitable business.[19] Certainly, some predict a glum future for the television industry since, as Nielsen Media Research reports, half of the "zero TV"

19. Sam Gustin, "Comcast's NBCUniversal Deal: As One Media Era Ends, Another Begins," *TIME Magazine,* accessed February 15, 2013, http://business.time.com/2013/02/14/comcasts-nbcuniversal-deal-as-one-media-era-ends-another-begins

households are people under the age of 35.[20] But, many of the survey participants I interviewed talked about curtailing their social media use (a major provider of micromedia) because they were "growing out of it" or "too old for it."[21] Others made clear distinctions between what they would have posted in high school and what they post now. It appears that once you get a job after college you realize that "whatever gets put on the internet never comes down."[22] But, while half of the "zero TV" people in the Nieslen Media study were under 35, this does not tell us whether they will buy a TV in the future or subscribe to a cable package as they grow out of their youthful stances and perhaps into more capital or familial obligations.

Audience Empowerment and Everyday Life

I have spent the chapters of this dissertation looking at how television companies create and circulate soft control features into the industry-audience relationship in a digital media environment. Yet, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that new technologies do offer some type of qualified control to audiences. As Mirko Schäefer points out, "users were granted new possibilities for cultural production that were previously inaccessible to consumers of industrially produced goods and mass media: media content could be produced, published, and distributed by amateurs on a global scale at negligible cost."[23] Access to relatively cheap technology, while by no means universal, does allow more people to circulate "professional-looking" creative goods and services that were relatively economically prohibitive before. This,

20. Perez, "As TV Falls Apart," 1.

21. Survey Interviewees, meeting with author, April 12, 2012.

22. Survey Interviewee, meeting with author, April 20, 2012.

23. Schäfer, *Bastard Culture!*, 11.

in theory, creates the potential for more media producers in the United States and elsewhere.

It has also been well documented that "users have more 'power' than ever before in choosing when, where, and to what they will be connected."[24] This type of "control" is the one that troubles the television industry the most. The television industry's trajectory from an environment with relatively few broadcast networks to hundreds of cable and satellite channels to thousands of HTTP-routed web pages and smart phone applications paints this media environment in a dire light. If you add in time-shifted viewing and piracy, then an unruly picture emerges. Choice abounds and screens proliferate, so obviously it is more difficult to establish appointment viewing now.

As discussed in earlier chapters, television companies fight back against these environmental factors by utilizing a range of micromedia as ways to reestablish relationships to audiences in different digital spaces and times. One of these ways, as discussed in Chapter 5, is the harnessing of all the data trails audiences leave in their use of social media. As we saw, Twitter is positioning itself as a new type of ratings company that can deliver structured data about audience likes, dislikes, and opinions.

Yet, even this data harnessing is not without its issues. As Simon Dumenco of *Advertising Age* points out, data is not neutral, nor is what to do with it self-evident. Rather data appears too often as "Too Much Data and/or Useless Data and/or Inaccessible Data and/or Nobody Knows Quite What To Do With It Data and/or ... you get the idea."[25] This means that the signal to noise ratio is still relatively high. As the Big Data industry workers I spoke with said, "data is wonderful but you still need an analyst to parse it . . . algorithms are great too but you still need

24. Oswald and Packer, "Flow and mobile media," 283.

25. Simon Dumenco, "The Bruth Truth About 'Big Data,'" *Advertising Age,* accessed March 19, 2013, http://adage.com/article/dataworks/brutal-truth-big-data/240364/

someone to write them."[26]

Furthermore, an emphasis on data shows some of their conceptual limitations. Data are the digital abstractions of features ripped out of an everyday context. In *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991), Ien Ang points out that the audience as conceptualized by television companies "is a discursive construct" and the "social world of actual audiences" is "too polysemic to be completely articulated in a closed discursive structure." [27] To Ang, this statement applies to any methodology or technology used for audience assessment. Like a dot that moves every time you put your finger on it, the possibility of full audience control (in its strictest, most determinate manifestation) is elusive. In this light, television executives are like Hubertus Bigend, the brash advertising executive from William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition,* who desperately searches "for patterns in the fabric of history" only to find "that 'now' changes too abruptly to map completely."[28]

Thus, one could make the case that audiences are simply too unruly to control in any meaningful way in a digital media environment full of long and short form nonmarket production alongside market-driven industrial goods. In *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), Yochai Benkler persuasively argues how digital technologies can foster a greater sense of democracy in a liberal society. Benkler argues that a networked public sphere is more attractive than a mass media-dominated public sphere by putting more options in the hands of the people. To distinguish himself from first-wave internet gurus that see digital emancipation as abstracted from social context, Benkler says that this flourishing of content producers (and the positive effect this has

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26. Anonymous Big Data insider, telephone call with author, June 12, 2012.

27. Ien Ang. *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), 13-14.

28. See Lee Konstantinou, "The Brand as Cognitive Map in William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition" Boundary* 2 36:2 (2009).

on culture) is relational to the democratic potentials of mass media.[29] So—not perfect, but better.

This stance seems a far bit more measured than the techno-utopianism coming from *WIRED Magazine* with columns like "Saving Democracy With Web 2.0."[30] Benkler's hopes focus on an acknowledgement of the importance of nonmarket production to the economy and creativity. Similar to Lawrence Lessig's ecological approach in *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (2008), Benkler says that a culture dependent on limiting nonmarket production misrecognizes how creativity and production work. People in nonmarket situations foster a great deal of creativity that needs to be acknowledged and regulated in such a way as to empower more nonmarket production. In this sense, Benkler's idea of audience empowerment is directly tied to an orientation toward democratic, public sphere potentials. To Benkler, this nonmarket production should be fostered by the state, non-profits, and market sources that acknowledge the potential benefits of nonmarket production.[31] Benkler also says that when nonmarket production transformation occurs, "it will lead to a significant redistribution of power and money from twentieth century industrial producers of information, culture, and communication." Yet, he also notes that these conglomerates will not take this "reallocation" lying down.[32]

Thus,, I have established that there is the potential for many more producers of culture in the United States as cheaper digital technologies and shifting cultural norms allow and foster more access. Further, I have noted that audiences have the power in many cases to say when and

29. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks,* 239.

30. Jennifer Garnick, "Saving Democracy With Web 2.0," *WIRED Magazine,* accessed, March 12, 2012, http://www.wired.com/software/webservices/commentary/circuitcourt/2006/10/72001

31. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks,* 39.

32. Ibid., 23.

where they will view the media they love. But the question is: can the type of nonmarket empowerment that Benkler professes gain a significant foothold in a world where major conglomerations would not take "reallocation" lying down?

I would argue that the hopes for a robust sphere of nonmarket production supported by the state, non-profits, and industrial actors look a bit bleak if you imagine this as a radical transformation of the media landscape. It appears Benkler is right in asserting the conglomerates will not take reallocation lying down. Rather they are finding new ways to translate nonmarket audience activity into market logics in sophisticated ways by asking us to contribute and using these contributions to build large data sets on us.

To understand how this could be, I need to revisit some of the core issues of the dissertation. In Chapter 5, I talked about how television companies use the user-generated micromedia of social media as sources for audience data. While being cognizant of the lesson of Ien Ang, I still want to acknowledge the unevenness of the playing field, where corporations have a great deal of money and analysis on their side. Even when they use all of this data poorly, this creates an asymmetry between audiences and the television industry. This asymmetry is important because it allows moneyed corporations to fail in audience outreach strategies, regroup, re-formulate, and re-implement soft control practices. Thus, companies can learn from their failure by, for instance, using all the data we offer up through social media platforms.

However, it is difficult to tell what companies actually do with that data because they protect their algorithms as trade secrets and sign their workers to non-disclosure agreements. We are asked to trust the data scientists, their ability to frame issues, and the ethical views of these companies. Take, for instance, Facebook and all the data they collect from how users interact with the interface and across web API-connected user interfaces. I cannot even access the full

range of what Facebook knows about me. Yes, I can download my Facebook Data from my Privacy page, but it is incomplete. It only tells me what I posted, or what messages I sent. Facebook collects far more data than this like the time on the web site, the web browser information, my IP address (and presumably location), the number and duration of interactions with specific people, etc. Furthermore, how can I access my metadata? How can I understand the categories they put me into?[33] Furthermore, none of this data tells me how information about me is used to build data profiles for Facebook to sell to potential advertisers.

As I discuss in Chapter 4, digital information companies are in the business of monetizing this information and sharing it with institutions that can pay them. Through the standardization of web APIs, HTTP protocols and pathways are used to allow a range of actors like television companies to engage in data tracking. In *Code Version 2.0* (2006), Lawrence Lessig points out that cyberspace is not the inherently unregulatable medium that was presupposed at its inception.[34] In fact, this space is moving more and more toward both legal and technological control. It is precisely these types of protocols that make the materials that power this abstraction we call the internet both more open and more regulatable. When we recognize this, as Everitt and Mills say, the "purported democratic nature of Web 2.0 must necessarily be false at an ontological level. Although the Web 2.0 behemoths pay lip service to the open source ethic by offering limited access to some of their frameworks and data (as mentioned above), this

33. Miranda Miller, "Your Facebook Data File: Everything You Never Wanted Anyone to Know," *Search Engine Watch,* accessed March 12, 2012, http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2114059/Your-Facebook-Data-File-Everything-You-Never-Wanted-Anyone-to-Know

34. Lawrence Lessig, *Code 2.0* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 4.

should not be mistaken for true openness."[35] Thus, the internet is routable, and, even in extreme cases, can be shut down entirely.[36]

From the perspective of these databases and the accumulated power of data, any totalizing view of audience control seems to wither. So, while data will certainly be used messily by most, and people who trade in data will overdetermine the role data plays in the industry-audience relationship today, one still must be curious about the data profiles they are creating on us.

Furthermore, an interconnected digital media environment built on flexibility and speed means we can see the rise of more flexible strategies for large media corporations. According to Lev Manovich, channeling the work of Michel de Certeau, the modularity of digital media allow producers to implement flexible strategies that rapidly incorporate audience tactics in such a way to make a distinction between the two difficult. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel De Certeau investigates the ways in which everyday people individualize (or subvert) mass culture. He distinguishes the practices of the powerful (institutions) from the weak (individuals) through the lens of strategies and tactics. Strategies are a used by the powerful to impose meaning on time and space. This leads to a "specific type of knowledge" that determines how one should approach something.[37] Tactics, on the other hand, are the "art of the weak" defined

35. Everitt and Mills, "Cultural Anxiety 2.0," 762.

36. Evgeny Morozov, "Repressing the Internet, Western-style," *The Wall Street Journal,* accessed September 14, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article /SB10001424053111903918104576502214236127064.html

37. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 26.

by isolated actions as they chip away at strategies, making them "habitable."[38]

The key here in the distinction between strategies and tactics is how tactics utilize time. Tactics are spontaneous, appearing and disappearing quickly. This emphasis on time is important to mention, because strategies, to de Certeau, are not flexible.[39] If moneyed corporations can respond quickly to the way audiences respond to media texts, then this only strengthens media industry strategies, especially so if we think about how much data we post on just about everything from our everyday lives on social media.

Responding quickly to the tactics that populate the everyday lives of audiences is important to the television industry. The pervasive tracking across the internet and mobile devices helps companies incorporate soft control practices into their micromedia products. For it is the space of the everyday where these soft control practices are realized in branded strategies that branch out across devices and on the data we offer up simply by engaging in social media activity. Furthermore, it is in this space that we see the potential for micromedia created by the television industry to exist just about anywhere.

In addition to informational asymmetry and the possibility of flexible strategies, I want to recognize that just because there are more producers along a continuum from industrial to amateur actors vying for our attention does not necessarily mean that our viewing environment suddenly becomes more democratic.

Even *WIRED Magazine* notes that "the top 10 Web sites accounted for 31 percent of US

38. Ibid., xiii, 37.

39. Lev Manovich, "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production?" *Critical Inquiry* 35,no. 2 (2009): 328.

pageviews in 2001, 40 percent in 2006, and about 75 percent in 2010."[40] The majority of these websites are social media sites built on the collection and monetization of your data. Twitter, the social media outlet with deepening ties to the television industry, is one of the 20 most popular sites in the world.[41] Even Yochai Benkler acknowledges "that the network at all its various layers follows a degree of order, where some sites are vastly more visible than most.[42]

This view does not even take into account the potential threats to net neutrality—the belief that all packets of data on the internet should be treated equally. Service providers like Comcast are pushing for an end to net neutrality so they can monetize traffic on their internet services. In theory, one of the many benefits to moneyed corporations like Comcast is that a content provider like NBC (which Comcast now owns, so perhaps not the best example) could pay more to have its content delivered faster to consumers. This would further reinforce a stark contrast between those who are popular and those who are not, or those who have money and those who do not. In this light, a digital media environment starts to look a lot more like the television-viewing environment from the years of yore.

It is precisely this type of environment, net neutrality debates pending, that helps foster a transition of television companies into digital media environments. In addition to allowing them to tap into the wellspring of consumer data, television producers find ways to retrofit practices from single screen to many screen environments. Through the use of branding and commodifiable elements, television companies find a way to compete in an environment full of micromedia. It seems that television companies have found a variety of ways—star-studded

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40. Chris Anderson and Michael Wolf, "The Web Is Dead. Long Lie The Internet," *WIRED Magazine,* accessed March 20, 2011, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/08/ff_webrip

41. See Alexa Top Sites: http://www.alexa.com/topsites

42. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks,* 253.

webisodes, investments in micromedia portals, and the harnessing of user-generated videos—to make micromedia (and its makers) work for them.

All of this is held together by discourses of participatory audiences as framed and sold by the media industries. I believe it is important to the critique discourses of empowerment coming from the cultural industries because, as Charles Acland notes, discourses are a form of cultural work that organize, limit, circulate, and direct certain ideas and limit others.[43] In light of what I have discussed, active participation seems a lot less like Benkler's hopes and more like Jodi Dean's "fantasy of participation." We need to be more mindful about identifying this rhetoric for what it is, a promotional push that shapes the way we interact with media. This means acknowledging that, while a decentralized computer environment fosters new articulations of technology and culture, the controls afforded to audiences in this environment are not without their limits and, in many ways, may already be inscribed with broader media industry objectives.

43. Acland, *Swift Viewing*, 28.

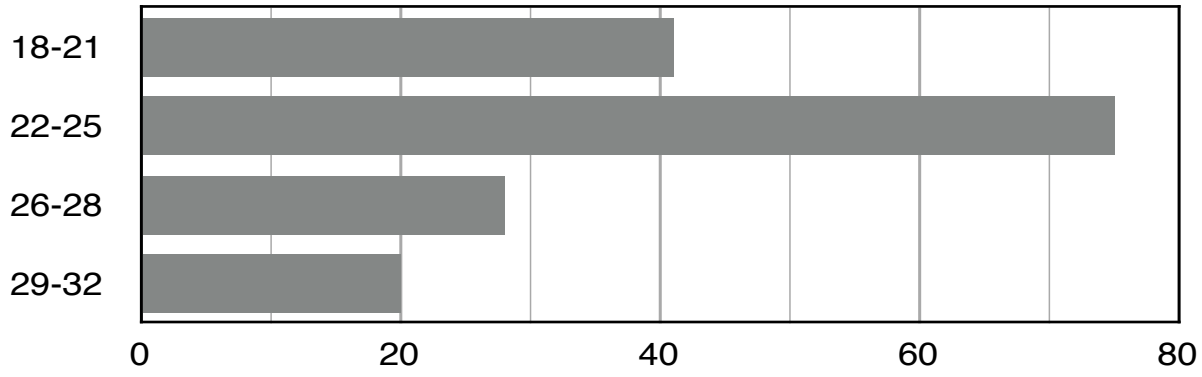
Appendix A

What follows is a survey provided to current and former students during the 2012 spring semester at Indiana University. Some of the students filled out a survey document in class while the majority filled out the survey on Survey Monkey. In addition to asking (then) current students to fill out the survey, I asked them to ask their friends to participate. Additionally, I also emailed a roster of former students. In all I received 200 surveys which I narrowed down to 175 after eliminating radically incomplete forms.

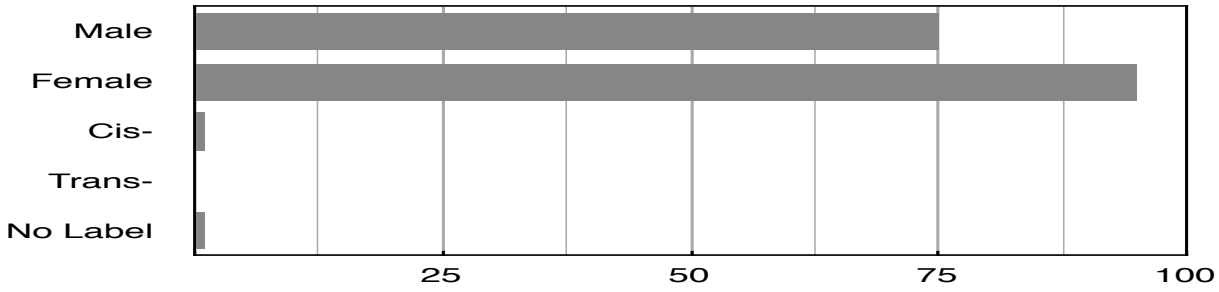
Short Media Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire, you will remain anonymous. Your answers will help me write my dissertation, which is about understanding the relationship of television to digital forms of short media. The digital short media I'm looking at includes short films/videos (YouTube clips, webisodes) and casual games (Bejeweled, Angry Birds, Flash-based games). Also included is social media (Facebook, Twitter), which is a platform for the exchange of short forms of media. If you do not understand a question or do not wish to answer it, please skip it.

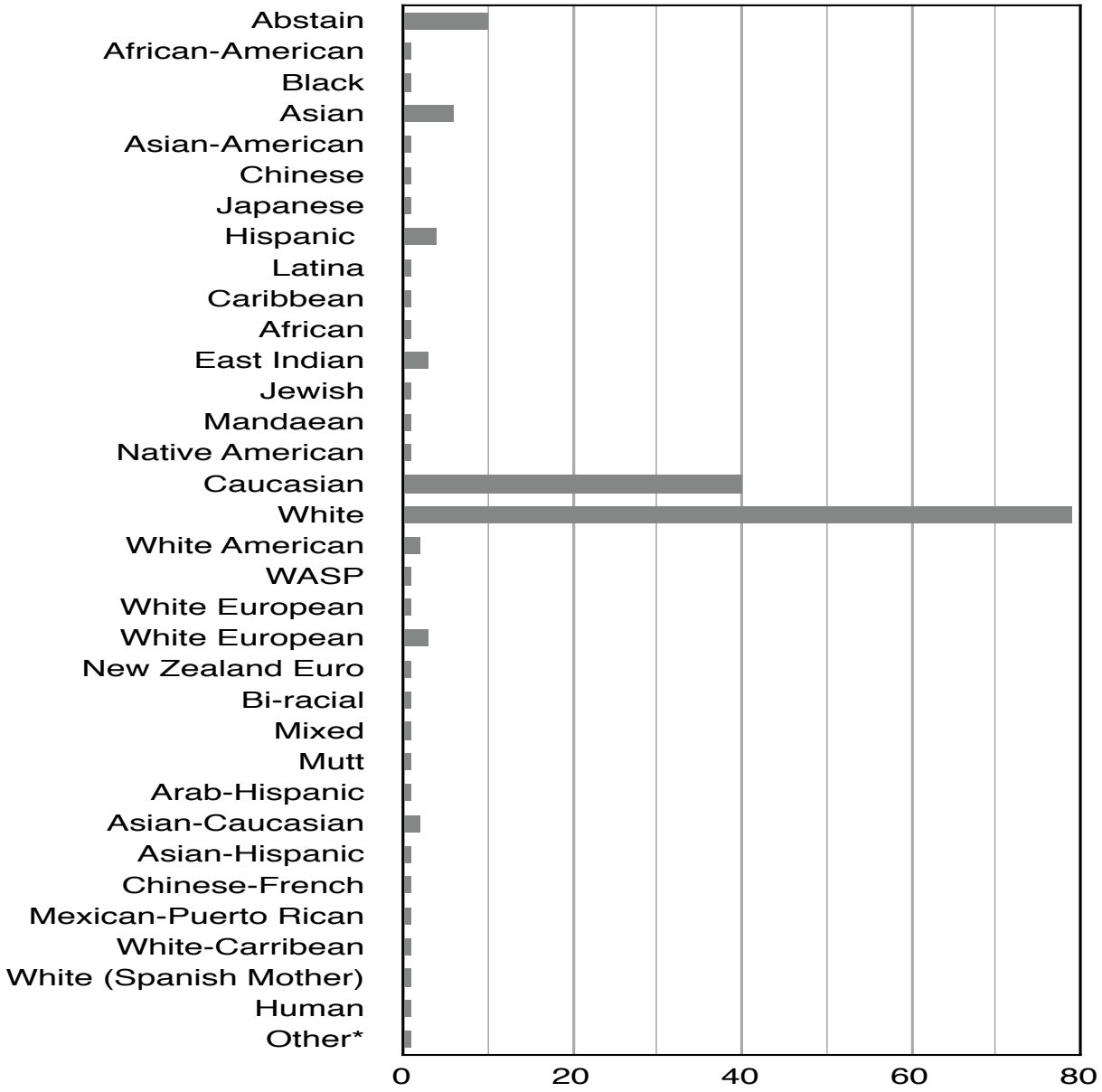
1. Age



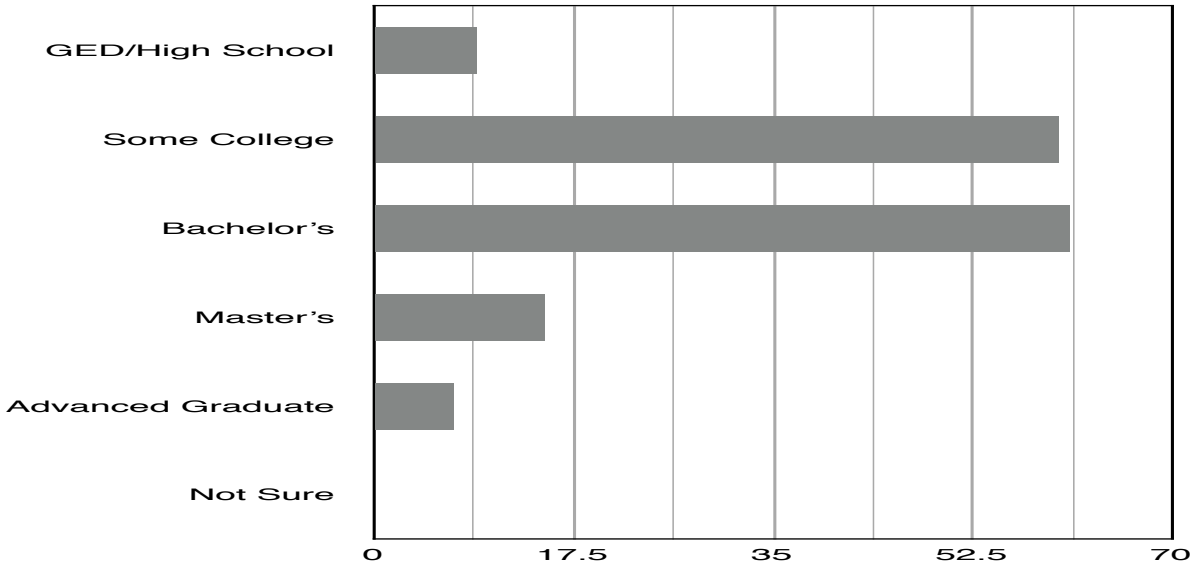
2. Gender



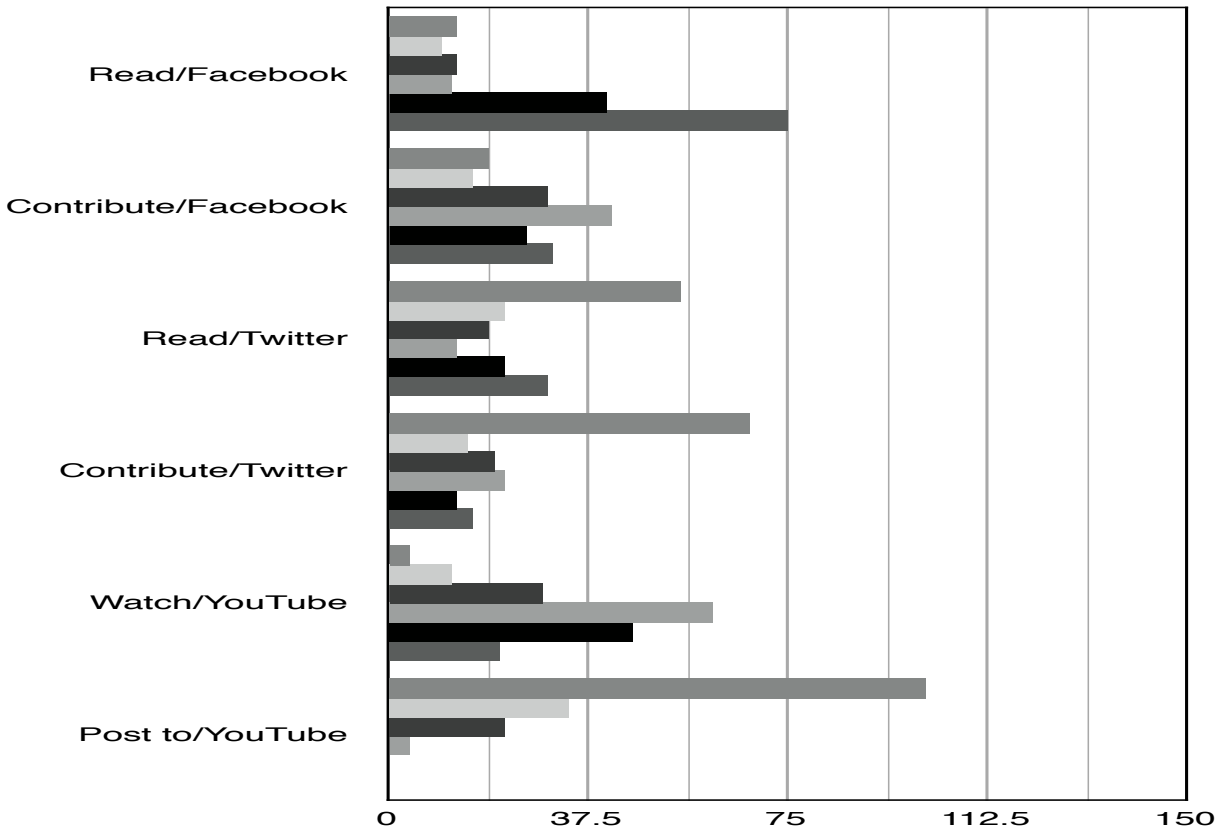
3. Race/Ethnicity (How you self-identify):



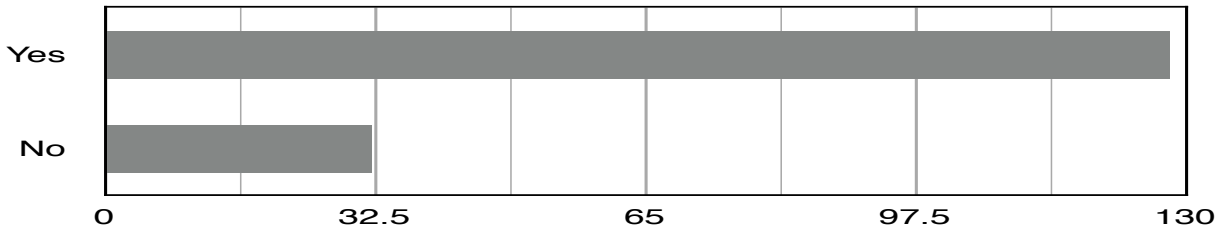
4. Highest level of education you've completed?



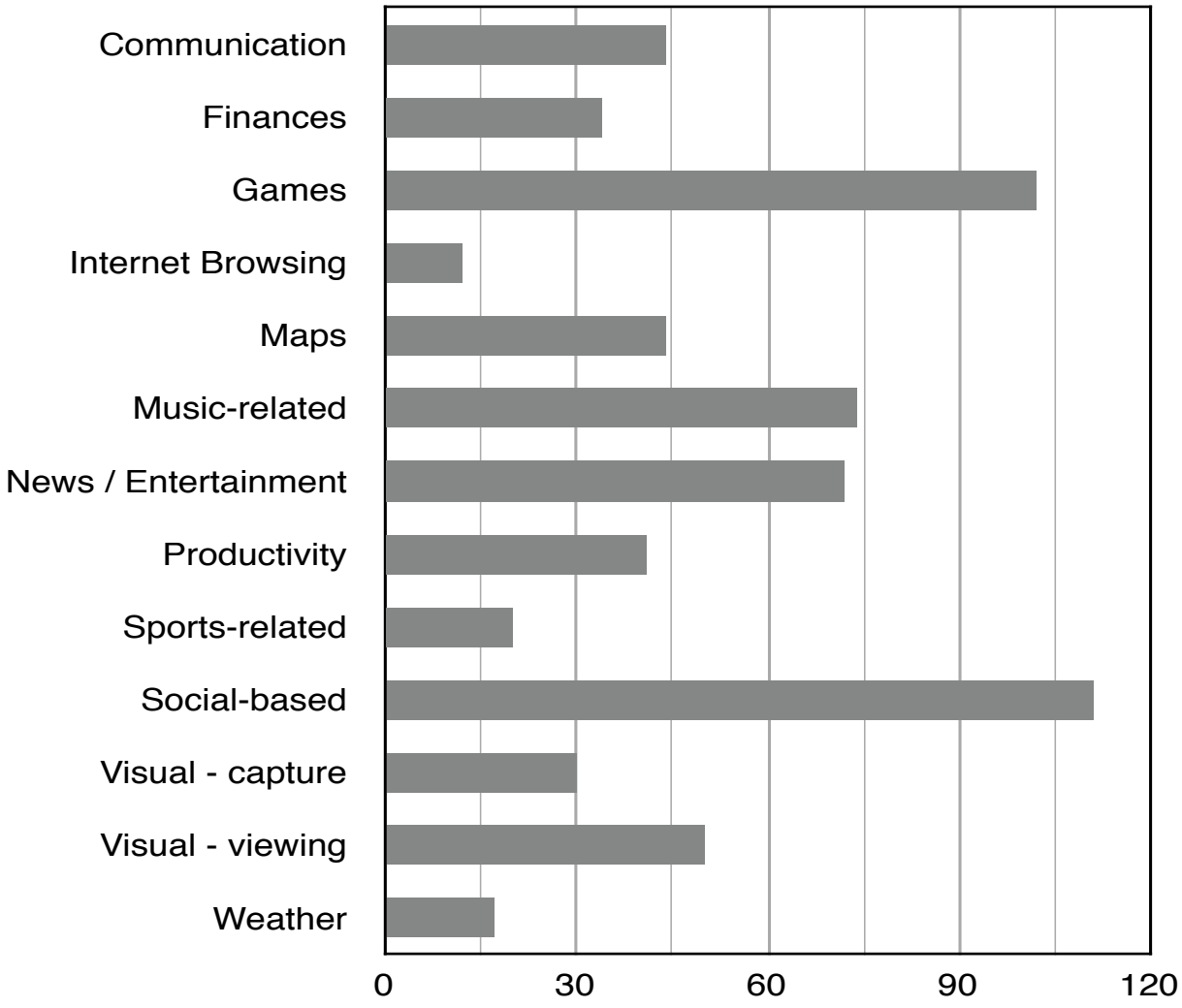
5. Do you use social media (technologies, media, and users that actively co-create communication across various platforms)? If so, what types (check all that apply)? (never, rarely, occasionally, weekly, daily, multiple times per day)



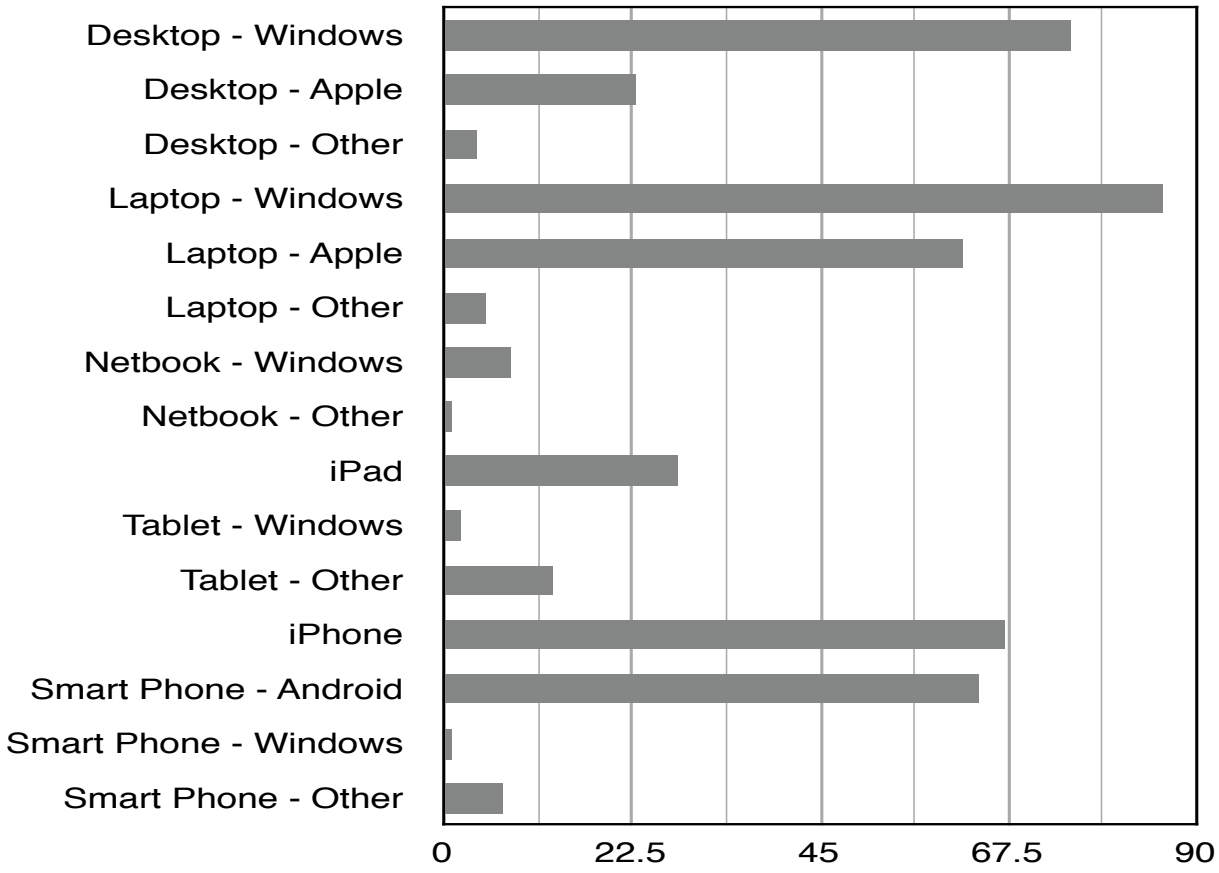
6. Do you own a smart phone (data-enabled)?



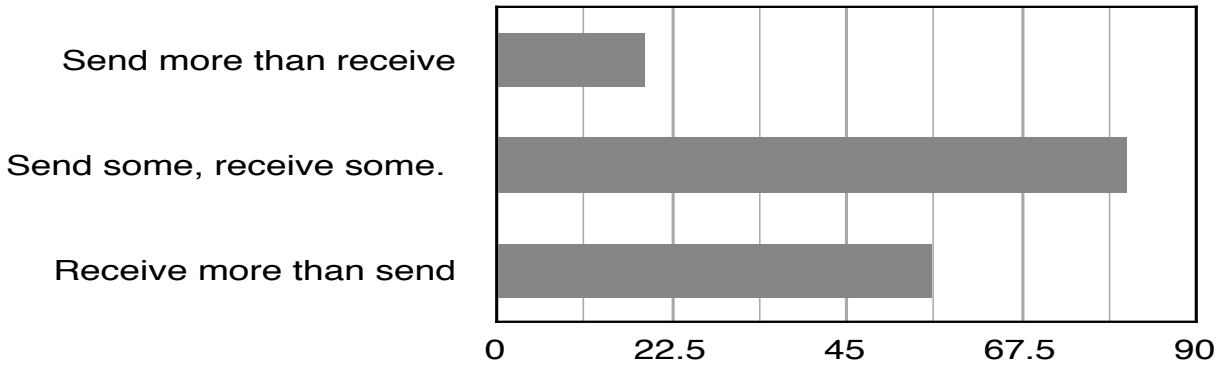
7. If you own a smartphone, what are some of your most used apps?



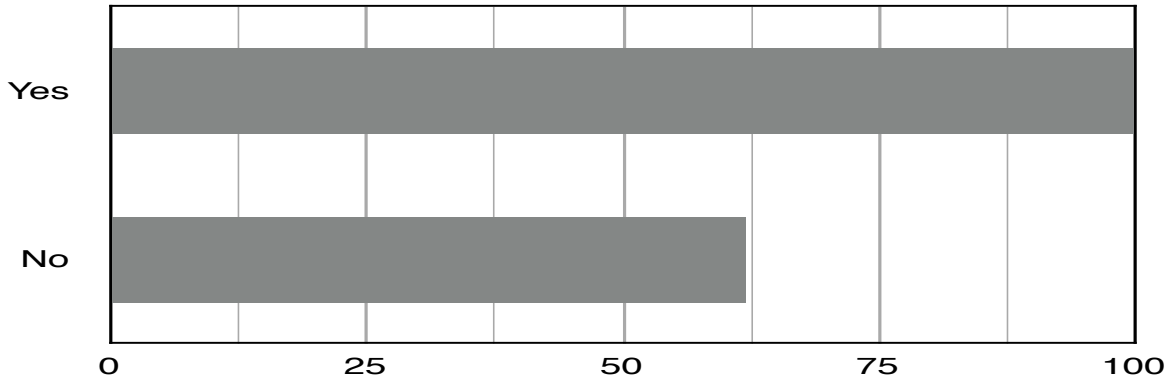
8. Which of the following digital media technologies do you use? (check all that apply)



9. Within your friend group(s), are you more likely to send or receive links, Tumblr sites, YouTube videos, etc?



10. Have you "friended"/"followed" any TV shows on Facebook or Twitter? Or the stars of that show?



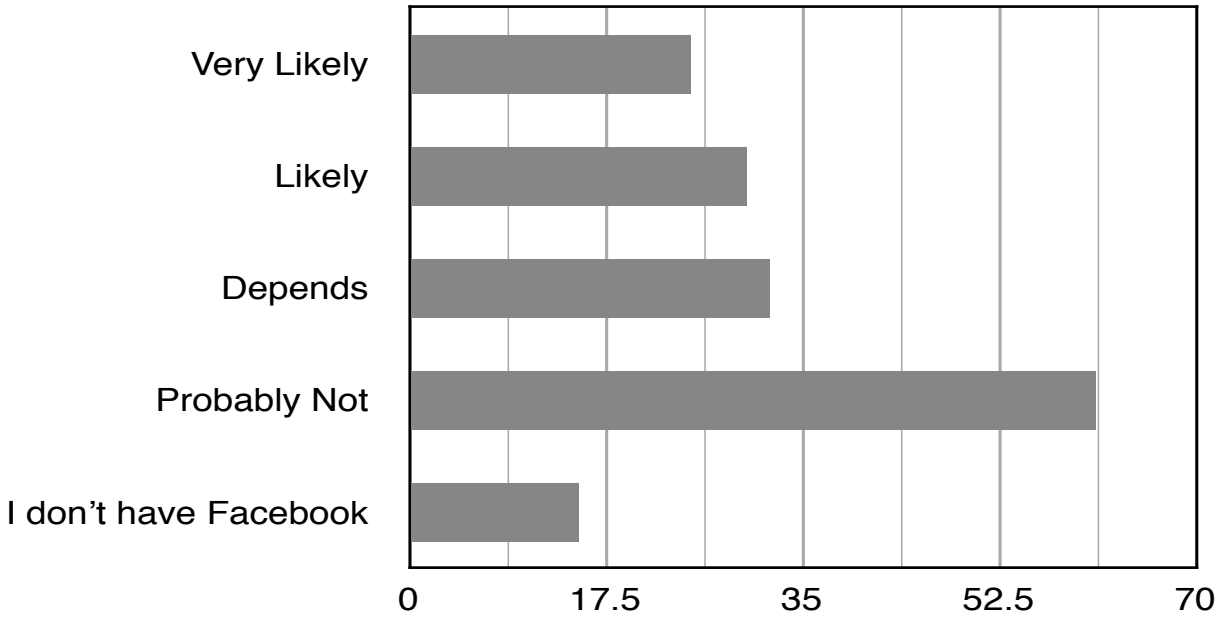
If so, which ones? (repetition in parenthesis)

30 Rock (2)*, Adventure Time, Archer, Arrested Development* (2)*, Awake, Batman: The Animated Series, Big Bang Theory* (2)*, Boardwalk Empire* (2)*, Bones* (3)*, Breaking Bad, Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (2)*, Burn Notice, Cake Boss, Californication, Castle, Community* (2)*, Criminal Minds, The Daily Show* (2)*, Dance Moms, Deception, Dexter* (3)*, Dollhouse, Dr. Who* (4)*, Family Guy* (2)*, Firefly, Flashpoint, Friends, Fringe, Game of Thrones, General Hospital, Glee* (2)*, Gossip Girl, Grey's Anatomy* (2)*, Homeland, House, How I Met Your Mother* (2)*, How it's Made, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* (2)*, Justice League: The Animated Series, Justified, King of the Hill, Law & Order: SVU, The League* (2)*, Lost, Mad Men* (2)*, The Mentalist, Misfits, Modern Family, NCIS, The New Girl* (5)*, The Office* (2)*, Once Upon a Time, Parks and Recreation, Pretty Little Liars, Project Runway, Psych* (8)*, Scandal, Seinfeld* (2)*, The Simpsons, Shameless* (2)*, Smash, Sons of Anarchy. The Sopranos, South Park, Spaced, Sportscenter, Star Trek, Supernatural, True Blood, Up All Night, Veronica Mars, The Walking Dead, Weeds, White Collar* (2), *The X-Factor*

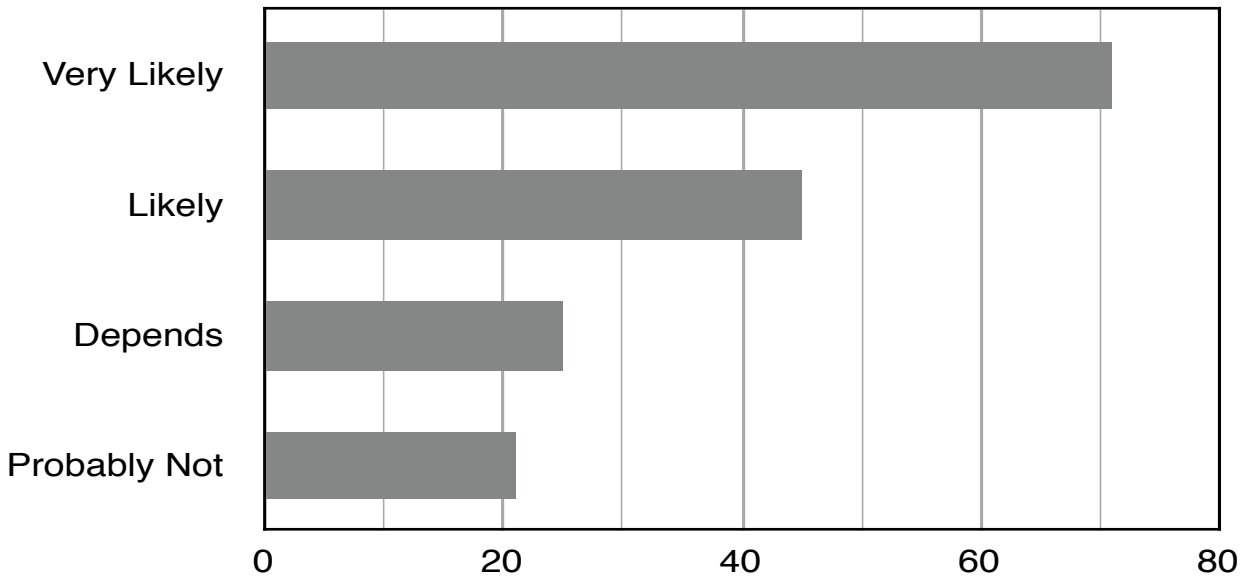
Blake Anderson, Tyra Banks, Roseanne Barr, Amber Benson, Bruce Campbell, Simon Cowell, Zooey Deschanel (2)*, Don Draper* of *Mad Men, Ellen DeGeneres* (2)*, Tobias Funke* of *Arrested Development, Selena Gomez, Shah Rukh Khan, Conan O'Brien, Aaron Paul, Sarah Shahi, David Tennant, Michael K. Williams*

"too many to name" (2), "writers of my favorite TV shows," "gosh, too many to name," "some talk show hosts," "too many to list"

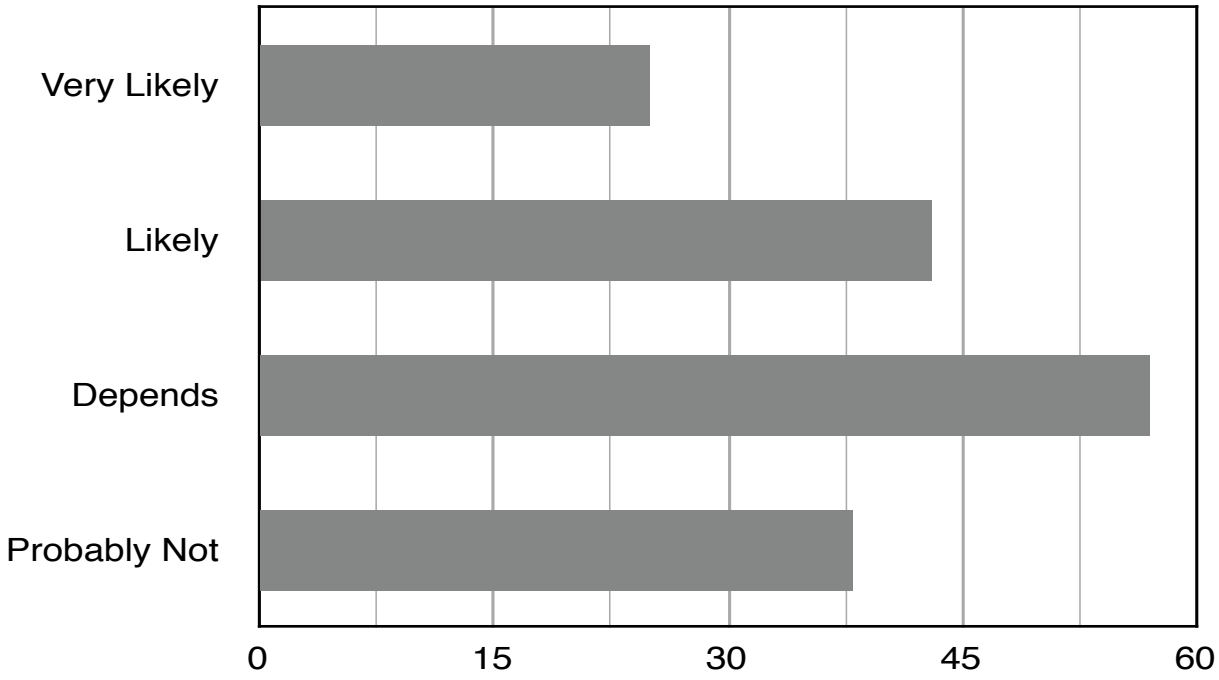
11. If you really like a TV show, how likely are you to join that show's Facebook page?



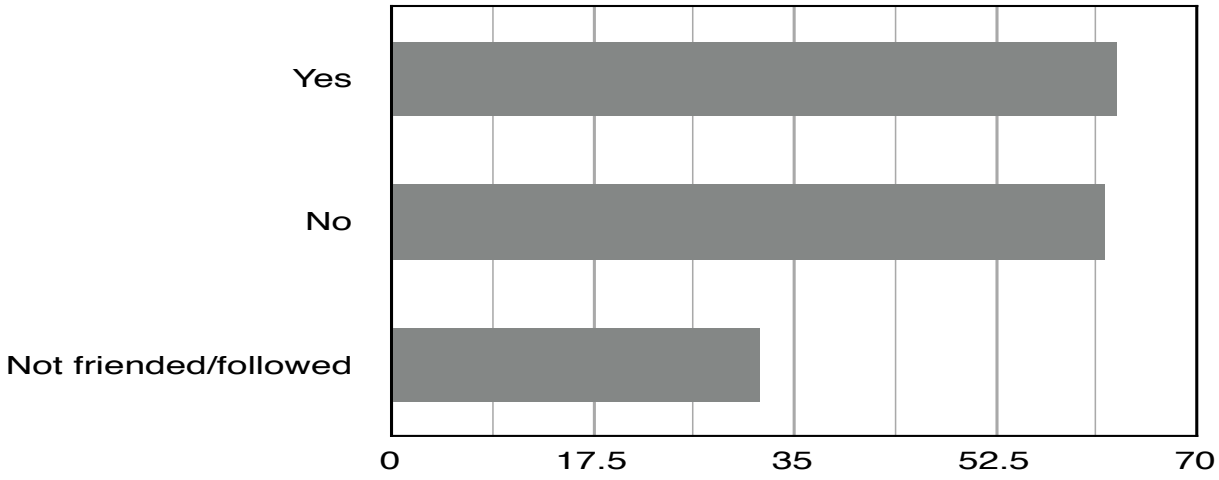
12. If you really like a TV show, how likely are you to look up extra information about that show (or perhaps an actor on that show)?



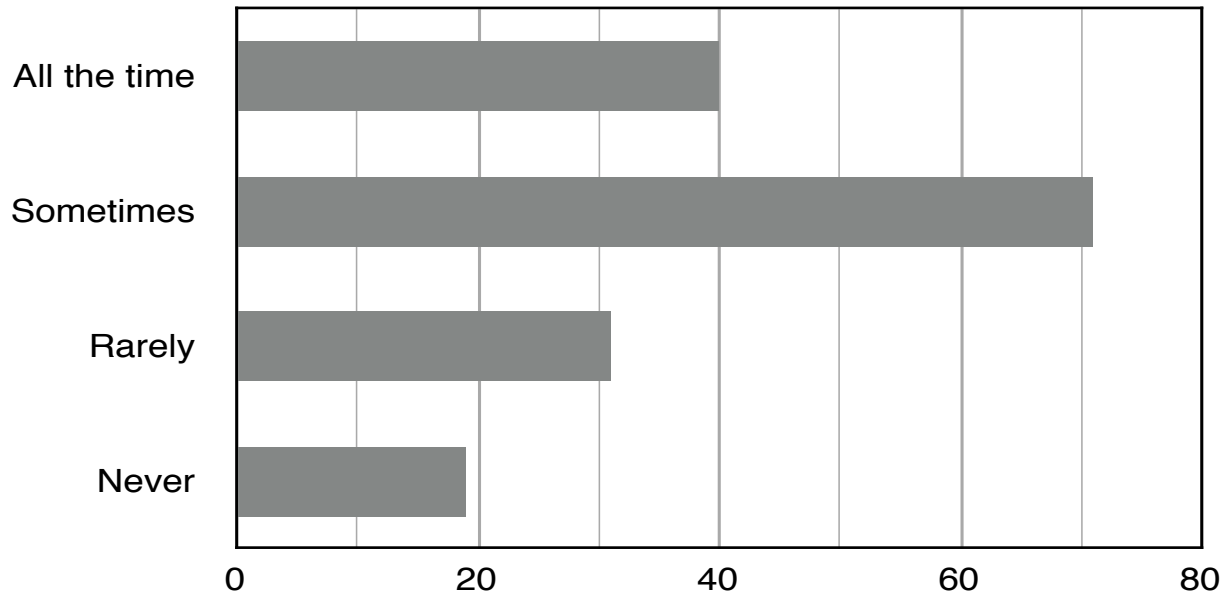
13. If you really like a TV show, how likely are you to go to that show's official website?



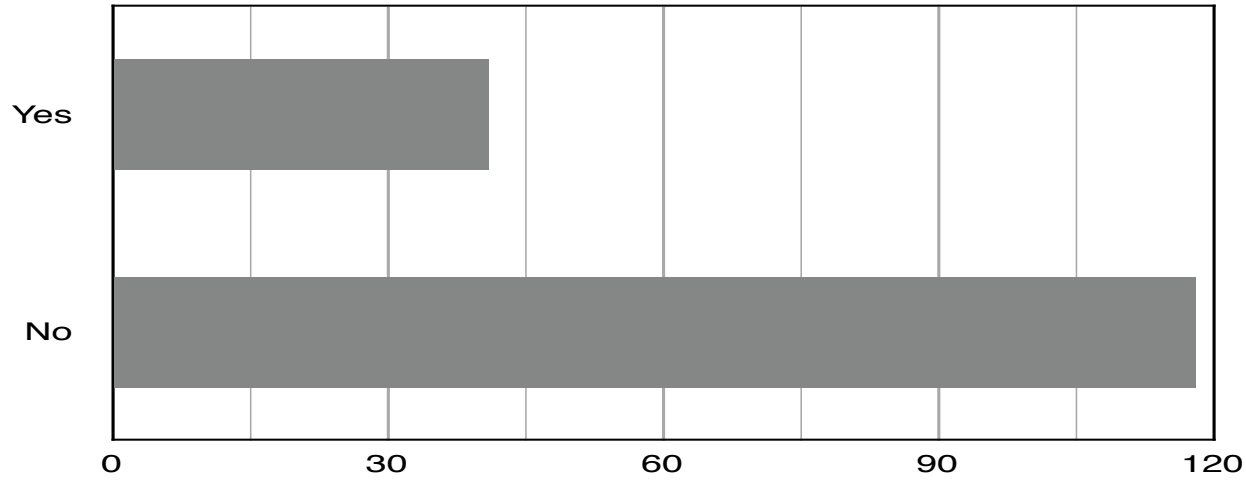
14. If you have become a show's friend on Facebook or followed on Twitter, have you ever interacted with that show (i.e., "liked" a comment, posted on their wall, reposted a Tweet, et cetera).



15. How often do you check social media while watching TV?



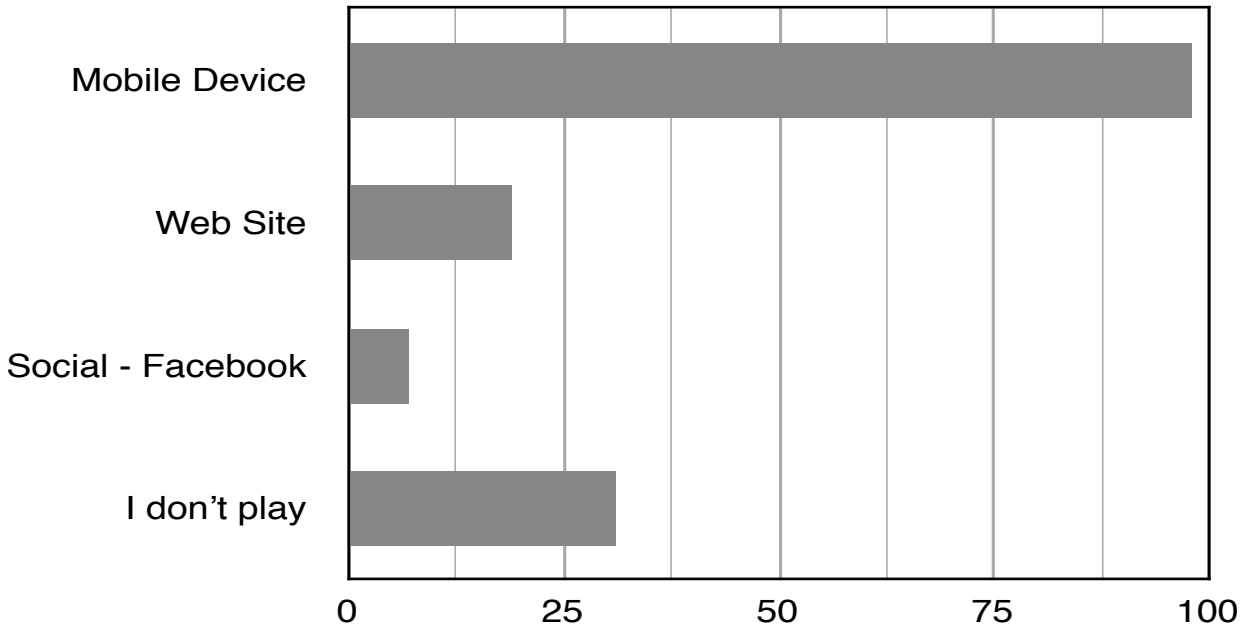
16. Have you ever played a casual game (games that are short in length & complexity, like Bejeweled and Angry Birds) related to a TV show?



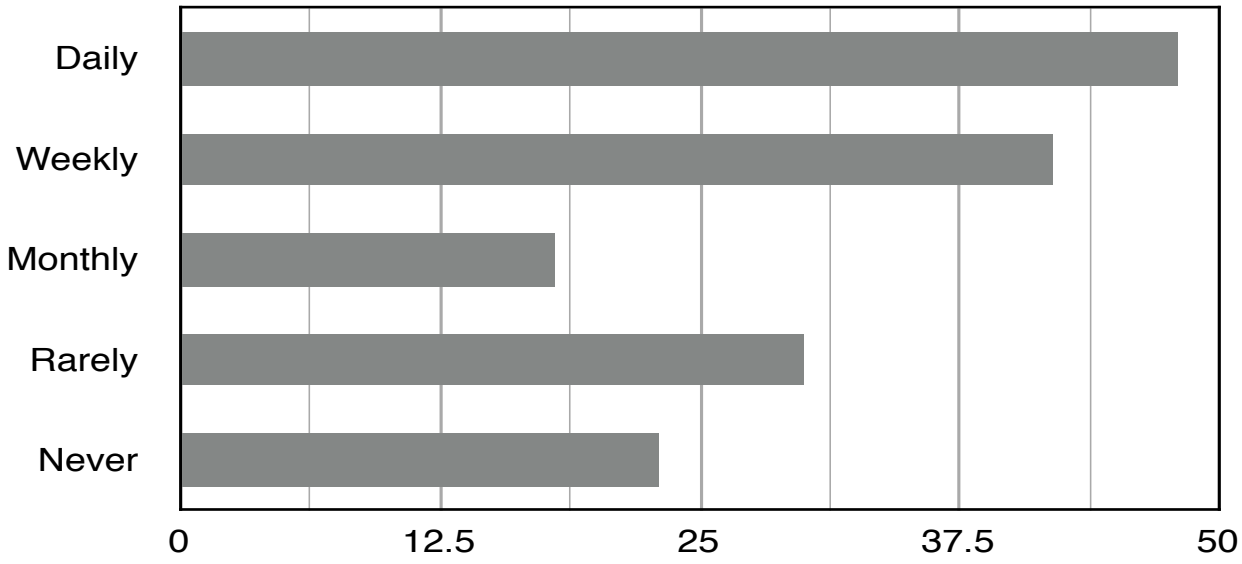
If yes, which TV show?

Castle, Dexter, Lost, The Office, Psych (4)

17. On what devices do you play casual games?



18. How often do you play casual games?



19. Do you have any idea who the audience is for short media related to TV shows (webisodes, exclusive content, games, trivia, tweets, et cetera)?

Demographics
14 - 40 // 13 - 35 yrs old // 18 - 24 // 17 - 23 // Probably the coveted 18-34 target demo. // 20 - 30 year olds // 18-35 maybe teenagers // 18-30 year olds // 13-40 // Young teens-35 year olds // The audience would definitely depend on the content, however, since your examples of short media include webisodes and tweets the demo is most likely Adults 18-34. // 16-25 year olds? // younger generation 15-25 // 20somethings // middle school to early thirties //

Youth
Young adults // Young adults (high school, college-aged) // Young adults // Younger demographic // Young adults // tweens, young adults // I would guess kids to middle school. Maybe mostly middle school. // Obviously it appeals to a younger group // As far as a particular audience goes, no. I expect it draws a fairly young generation. And I understand the benefits of further marketing through social media outlets, webisodes, etc // depends on the specific short media- probably mostly young adults Teenagers // Teenagers // young adults and teens // Teens and young adults // teenagers // young people // young adults // Young Adults // teenagers? //

Age - College
college students // The college age demographic // College students, smart phone users // People in College // college students/young working adults //

Gender Specificity
I would say 13 to 34 or so, but it depends on the show. Also, I think women are more likely to use this. // educated people, young adults 18-35, white audiences, females // However when it comes to games on mobile devices, it has been shown Women 25-54 are a major target market. // Teens or middle aged women // Teens and Women

"Savvy"
The younger tech savvy generation // Me. Media/technology savvy fans who enjoy making more out of the experience. Sharing the experience with a larger community. // I imagine they're for relatively younger (read: more likely tech savvy) fans of the show who might want more content. // younger generation? people on the go.

Learning More
Maybe someone who watches the program online, like on Hulu, after the program aired. Maybe someone who is just learning about the program and is excited to learn more. If it's a new, booming program, people would be more likely to seek out content. // Short media related to TV shows are for those who watch those specific shows, and perhaps to get new viewers to learn and watch a certain television show. // I suppose both the audience of those shows and non-audience members whose viewership is wanted. // Potential Customers // I would guess that some of it is targeted at fans of the show, and some of it is meant to attract new fans

Attention / Boredom / Procrastination
bored college students/procrastinating college students // younger generations with less and less attention spans // Presumably teenagers with short attention spans // Younger generation, rising diagnosis of ADHD, but mostly Stoners // Young adults, people who have too much time on their hands // ppl with time on their hands

Fandom
I'd assume big fans of the show who are in a younger demographic // Fans of the show? // I'm assuming the most dedicated members of the audience, or maybe more technologically inclinced individuals who are likely to look up any subject that comes to mind. I'm going to assume it's mainly people under 22 // Fans or any people who are interested in that show. // Younger people, most likely, more digitally adept, fans of the show. // super fans, people that are really into the show // It depends. If it's a webisode, no, but if it's a fan site, I can take a pretty good guess, since the show is most likely on T.V as well. // Fans, particularly millennials, who fall somewhere on the spectrum of casual fan to regular fan. Those who are socially active and will share it with their network // Fans // 17-25 year old fans. // Not really. People who really enjoy the show. // the obsessive fan // Target Audience: Likely casual/passive fans of the source media that the studio/producers/whoever want to turn into fanfic-writing, tshirt-wearing, Blu+DVD combo-buying missionaries. Actual audience: Few of the above, some passing curious, mostly those already in the fold. // Hard-core fans, who don't like to miss any action. // People who are very interested in the show. // Show lovers

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