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GoT Lost Behind the Scenes: Underexposed Television Producers in Magazines

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ABSTRACT

Award-winning television shows are popularly depicted through digital media and magazine coverage. However, the strenuous efforts of TV producers are hidden behind the publicity of celebrities and plotlines of the show. Using Eugene Shaw's agenda-setting theory and Robert Entman's framing theory as a basis, I created a case study analyzing how the producers of Lost and Game of Thrones are portrayed in magazines. My research shows that reporters tend to perpetuate anonymity of these producers, which in effect, leads an audience to deem them as unimportant.

An avid TV watcher lounges on the couch with a bowl of popcorn, glued to the clash of swords between Jamie Lannister and Brienne of Tarth in *Game of Thrones (GoT)*. But what the viewer doesn't see is the time, money, and effort put into Brienne's armor to make it look 100% authentic, or the half pound of makeup Jamie is wearing even though it only looks like smeared dirt or lastly, the hours of practice that Jamie and Brienne had to endure in order to perfect the fight's choreography.

Just as the case for the *GoT* fan, a person can name a TV series and will most likely mention a scene they enjoyed or an actor they were 'dying to see.' What they don't usually mention is "she was a great actress to play this character, I wonder which producer picked her." Most people probably don't even know the names of the producers from their favorite TV show or what that profession even entails.

Although all professionals in the television production process are important, the television producers (often called "showrunners," creators, or writers) are even more so. They wield the most power in a production (deciding which actor plays who, writing the

script, etc.), but we seldom see their talent discussed in the media. We see actors from television shows plastered on magazine covers at checkout counters, but we don't really see the creators behind the scenes. Fans flip through their favorite magazines to catch the latest news of their favorite show but won't even take a second glance at the name of the television creators. They read a catchy headline or gaze at photos of attractive actors but don't realize that the excitement they're feeling only exists because of the creation from television producers. By magazines perpetuating the anonymity of TV creators, it not only causes an inequality of credit but also causes readers to deem them as unimportant.

With this in mind, my thesis revolves around a case study that analyzes the exposure of television producers from award-winning TV shows such as *Lost* and *Game of Thrones* in magazines. As magazines are number one in reader engagement and celebrity/entertainment is the second most popular category of magazine app downloads, then producers would most likely be exposed in magazines more than any other medium (*Magazine Media Factbook* 13, 64). Magazines are credible sources of information that publish articles from all industries.

Lost and *GoT* serve as general examples to help validate my point of underexposed television producers of famous TV shows. I'm not only familiar with both shows but each has won ten Emmy awards (Emmys). Targeting both quality and popularity is beneficial towards my research. Because *GoT* is an ongoing show, it could win more Emmy awards, but comparing the exposure from a completed show (*Lost* 2005-2010) to now (*GoT* 2011-2013) could garner interesting results.

Even though *GoT* and *Lost* are commonly known, the producers of the shows are not. People can watch the show and be glued to it without ever thinking how the show even

originated. Most fans see celebrities and an intriguing plotline in magazines, not the production process behind the scenes. Therefore, I wanted more background on this topic.

Literature Review

Framing and Agenda Setting in Mass Communication

The content consumers see in newspapers and magazines is constructed in a particular fashion. A concept called agenda setting, introduced by Eugene F. Shaw, shows how media directs the audience's attention to certain topics. Shaw argues that by seeing these specific topics (whether it's an issue, event, or person) we determine the importance of the subject matter (Shaw 96). If the material is shown repeatedly, Shaw explains this will grab the attention of the audience, leading us to believe that it is important (102). For example, by seeing celebrities on covers of fashion, entertainment, or even environmental magazines like *National Geographic*, it leads us to believe that celebrities are important. "People tend to follow, according to the available evidence," wrote Shaw (101). Therefore, people direct conversation based on what they heard or saw in the media. With this theory, the media helps direct our thinking on what to think about, not what to think. Using Phillip Seymour Hoffman's death and the controversy of his drug use as a general example, we can connect the agenda setting theory to how magazines featured this matter. By featuring him on the cover and in feature stories, magazines made us think more about the situation and its importance than us immediately coming to the conclusion of his drug use. This theory helps show how consumers take in and reflect the information they read in magazines.

Framing, similar to agenda setting, narrows the focus of the communication theory even further. While agenda setting gives us topics to think about, framing shows us how to think about them. Robert Entman articulates that frames make topics salient by

highlighting bits of information in that focus. He defines salient as “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman 53). If producers of prime time television are salient through a particular lens –such as entertainment or sensationalism –audiences will interpret them through that frame. However, Entman notes that although a frame may be present to an audience, it doesn’t mean it will guarantee an influence in their thinking (53). How the text is communicated to readers shows how readers perceive and influence others in what they read. By covering celebrities more than producers, the media has caused readers to perceive these articles through a sensationalistic frame.

The Power Behind the Scenes

Magazines are a powerful source of information. According to the 2013/2014 *Magazine Media Factbook*, magazines are number one in reader engagement (13). Also, out of 20 genres (food, travel, health, etc.), celebrity/entertainment is ranked second for the most magazine app downloads (64). Given this finding, I focused on magazine coverage for the case study. If producers are in the media, they would appear in magazines the most. Because magazines acknowledge prominent people –those who are powerful, talented, or unique –then by definition, producers should appear just as much as their counterparts. This does not necessarily entail that actors should stray from the spotlight, but they should have more moderate exposure. Without the creators, neither the show nor the career for television actors would exist.

Television creators, often called “showrunners,” wield the most control in the production process. Tom Steward argues that the media depicts these “showrunners” as power hungry. “The media caricature[s] ...Bruckheimer [the producer of CSI] as a

production company executive concerned only with the business end of his programming” (Steward 736). By framing a producer in this way, it gives viewers a negative perspective towards him/her. Steward wants this counteracted by having the media culture understand that authorship is defined as the producer’s quality of narration and filming techniques and not as the producer’s profit motive (736). Robert Kubey interviewed 40 American TV producers and found that most of them thought money wasn’t crucially important. He noticed that when they obtained the wealth they wanted, it wasn’t what they “cracked [it] up to be” (Kubey 20). He noticed that when they truly loved their work, they found happiness and success. As our economy is driven by profit, it is easy to target highly paid professionals as money hungry. Although some producers’ motivations are insidious, attributing all of them in this fashion could negatively impact ratings and consumers’ respect for them as individuals.

Steward would say that because “showrunners” try to brand themselves through their filming techniques that the media misinterprets this branding as the producer’s need for attention. In Steward’s research on Bruckheimer, he found that the producer wanted to be represented as an “author intervening in text and production” and not for publicity purposes (736). Whereas Bruckheimer brands himself through unique visual appeal others may do it through the script. When someone has a talent they want to share, they demonstrate how their skill is unique. This particular branding could be transformed positively in the media by representing their skill as different and exciting. Branding in a particular fashion is a demonstration of the producer’s authorship. The sense of authorship in television is similar to that of movies as well.

Similarly, the value of television authorship can be compared to the auteur theory of film studies. François Truffaut's auteur theory (1954) illustrates movie directors as sole authors of a film because they wield the most power in a production (Cowan 75). Philip Cowan researched the auteur theory to prove that filmmakers such as scriptwriters, costume designers, or cinematographers are underexposed in media. If someone as powerful as the director of a film is rarely exposed (or so it seems), we can imagine that other filmmakers in a project are exposed even less. Cowan uses Gregg Toland, director of photography in *Citizen Kane*, to show that "film-making is a collaborative process" (93). Although directors must approve all shots under the auteur theory, Toland's use of angles, lighting, and shots was completely under his power. Cowan demonstrates this by giving examples of Toland's past work and comparing it to *Citizen Kane*. If Welles, the director of *Citizen Kane*, used Toland's influence then he isn't the "sole author" after all (Cowan 83). Cowan wants critics and commentators to "re-evaluate our ideas of authorship" (Cowan 90). One way to show this re-evaluation is by enlightening readers with content behind the scenes. However, the lack of exposure of the production process can be due to certain motives from the media or through the desires of the consumers.

The Outside Perspectives

Looking from the angle of the consumer we can evaluate possible reasons as to why celebrities dominate magazine coverage. The lack of attention on TV makers may be correlated to fans' addiction to sensationalism. If fans only react to a movie because of the actors, it would explain why the entertainment industry markets their actors more. Joli Jenson would explain this phenomenon as fans being "obsessed individuals" (Jenson 9). The media influences fans "obsessions" by having "celebrities function as role models" in

order to make fans feel more socially connected to them (Jenson 10-11). Rebecca Williams would claim that fans socially connect to actors more through their characters.

Fans thrive on identifying themselves with a character from a show, writes Williams (282). While watching the show *Lost* they may think “If I was in the show, which character would I be?” By identifying with the character, many fans express their perspectives on the progression of the plotline. For example, if a fan felt most similar to the character Kate, from *Lost*, they could either be excited when she dated Jack or distraught that she didn’t chose Sawyer. Therefore, in this case, fans desire a connection from their personal lives to a character in the fictional realm. Fans may think, “I’m as ambitious and clever as Kate. I could act her part.” According to Williams’ theory, fans aspire to connect through the actor’s character while interchangeably through their profession as well. But couldn’t people associate themselves closely to producers too? While some fans connect to characters in a story, others may connect to the author for his/her similar creative talents.

The parallel between producers and fans is more recognizable within their authority. Williams argues that fans voice their opinion as a tool of control over the production. This sense of power creates tension between the producers and fans. Williams explains that producers want to “both encourage loyalty to the show whilst paradoxically cautioning against fan expectation that their desires be sated” (282). Suggestions for or appraisals from fans are commonly considered when producers continue their series but not every suggestion is heeded. Kubey stated that during his interviews most producers said they would go with their gut instincts, even when pressured from the industry (especially fans) (17-18). Williams describes the producer’s decision making as a signal of

their hierarchy. The “showrunners” went with their gut instinct even if it was against fans wishes because it just felt right to them.

If fans have this much interaction with producers, why don’t we see producers more often in magazines? Producers try to sate the needs of their audience and they could demonstrate their appreciation of fans’ suggestions by explaining the process in a feature story. From the opposite spectrum, media (specifically magazine publishers) could be limiting the exposure of people behind the entertainment industry.

Magazine publishers control which type of articles are published. According to Theodor Adorno, media producers are driven by “profit motive[s]” (Adorno 32). If magazine publishers know that sensational items will sell they’ll do it even if a profile on a TV producer was more intellectually beneficial. Although advertisements for *True Blood* may be too provocative for younger audiences, Adorno would say that publishers ignore these implications of unethical TV advertisements if it meant making more money.

The quality of production, therefore, depends on the principles of the producer. Adorno mentions, "Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings...In [true works of art], technique is concerned with the internal organization of the object itself, with its inner logic..."(32). True artists are more concerned with producing art for art’s sake (although it will most likely produce profit) than concentrating on the return value. Using Adorno’s theory, “showrunners” are either creators demonstrating their artistic talent for the sake of sharing a story with others or they’re employees of a culture industry and share a story based on what sells. To Adorno, the use of true art in the producer’s work is significant because it reflects back to society.

In addition, Kubey cites David Marc and Robert Thompson on the importance of auteurism as an art form.

What critic would dare review a book without mentioning the name of its author?

The very heart and soul of the artistic act is the communication of a creator's emotion, perception, and thought to an audience. To deny the animating influence of the creator's personality in a film is to place it (and by implication, the entire medium) outside the realm of art (qtd. Kubey 79).

The absence of true artists then creates implications and limitations to what is exposed to consumers. Consumers are limited to information because the media controls what is produced (Adorno 32). Marc and Thompson illustrate that the authorial influence is lost if the media places television outside the realm of art. Therefore, the media has control in changing what mass audiences perceive as important or interesting news. Take for instance, a general example: the acknowledgment of producers in the opening and ending credits of an episode. Viewers can read that David Benioff and D.B. Weiss are the creators of *GoT*, but seconds after their names disappear, the acknowledgment does as well. The void of repetition (especially in magazines) drives viewers to not only forget a person but deem them as unimportant. The absent frame then creates consumers to negate producers as interesting.

Past Research

No past scholarly research—at least in the research databases I had access to—had a behind-the-scenes approach on *Lost* and *GoT* (see Method as to why these shows in particular). However, other topics did include gender roles, specifically on women (see Brookfield and Freehling-Burton); narration (see Morreale; Clarke and Drangshold); post 9-11 with focus on social realism or plausibility (see Herbert and Dunn); and comparisons of media texts vs. literary texts (see Jones). Research on *GoT* was much more limited, but articles I found were on eroticism with an adaptation analysis (see Wells-Lassagne);

fan subtitling (see Svelch); and torture depictions in television (see Hall). I'd like to expand research on these shows by focusing on the absence of television producers in magazines.

Research Question

RQ1: How are the producers of *GoT* and *Lost* portrayed in magazines?

RQ2: Does the portrayal of producers change from the trial and error season (season two of each show) to the virally popular season (third for *GoT*, sixth for *Lost*)?

With this topic I'm primarily focusing on the amount of exposure on producers. If the coverage is low, it reflects the imbalance of topics, the inequality of credit, and lack of potentially educational matters. Exposing more stories about the producers on their occupational lifestyle, and even their personal one, could be beneficial and interesting to the general audience that might have missed this information in the past.

Method

Case Study:

The basis of my thesis is a case study that determines the amount of exposure in magazines of the producers of two popular television shows. These producers are David Benioff, D.B. Weiss (producers of *GoT*) Carlton Cuse, and Damon Lindelof (producers of *Lost*). I picked these particular shows because I'm familiar with them, they're of high quality (had Emmy nominations/wins), and are extremely popular (both went viral). They also serve as examples of popular shows in order to help us understand a general perspective of what sort of media treatment is most common for television producers.

What:

My primary resource was magazines that ranged from general interest, fashion, environmental, entertainment, etc. The magazines I used were American based with the exception of foreign magazines sold in America.

Where:

I used the MasterFILE Premier magazine database that provided a total of 1414 different magazine options whether it was *Cosmopolitan*, *National Geographic*, or *Entertainment Weekly* (MasterFILE Premier).

When:

As mentioned in my second research question, I focused on two particular seasons for each show in order to determine whether there was a change in producer exposure from the trial and error season to the virally popular season (recap: season two for both *GoT* and *Lost*, season three for *GoT*, season six for *Lost*). The trial and error season is the season that exemplifies whether consumers were intrigued enough to watch the next season and if they were, magazines would publish producers more. In a virally popular season the ratings are high either because the mystery was finally answered, an unexpected twist caused outrage/high approval, or a number of other reasons. In effect, fans desire for more information increases. This would be the ultimate time for reporters to cover producers the most.

Another thing to keep in mind is that *GoT* airs in ten consecutive weeks (starting around the beginning of April) due to its status as premium cable on HBO whereas *Lost* airs around twenty weeks, inconsecutively (from September to May) and airs through a broadcast series on ABC. As the seasons begin at different times of the year, I chose a full

year sample for each show but timed it to correlate to the lead-up of each season premiere.

These are the dates that I set for criteria:

GoT

- Season 2: January – December 2012
- Season 3: January – December 2013

Lost

- Season 2: June 2005 – August 2006
- Season 6: June 2009 – August 2010

How:

Because I used a magazine database I needed specific search terms. These search terms were the producers' names, the title of each show, and a few actors. Using search terms beyond just the producers' names provided a comparison in how the producers were covered. The terms can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Game of Thrones		Lost	
<i>Season 2</i>	<i>Season 3</i>	<i>Season 2</i>	<i>Season 3</i>
David Benioff	David Benioff	Carlton Cuse	Carlton Cuse
D.B. Weiss	D.B. Weiss	Damon Lindelof	Damon Lindelof
Game of Thrones	Game of Thrones	"Lost" AND Television	"Lost" AND Television
Peter Dinklage (actor)	Emilia Clarke (actress)	Matthew Fox (actor)	Terry O'Quinn (actor)
Kit Harington (actor)	Richard Madden (actor)	Evangeline Lilly (actress)	Matthew Fox (actor)
Maisie Williams (actress)	Jack Gleeson (actor)	Josh Holloway (actor)	Michael Emerson (actor)

For terms that were used in everyday language like "lost" I used more search fields in order to exclude irrelevant articles (e.g. "Lost" AND television). The other search terms were left as is because with the articles sorted by relevance, the articles would be timely to

that topic. Due to preliminary research, particular actors were chosen as those who garnered the most attention.

Once my terms were determined, I chose to read 60 articles out of a possible 1,622. The total (1,622) includes articles that did not fit my criteria; therefore, it is abnormally high. 60 reflects a sample size that is not too small yet not too large that the research becomes repetitive. I first split the 60 articles in half–30 for *Lost* and 30 for *GoT* –and again into quarters so each show had 15 articles for season two and 15 for season six and three. The targeted amount of articles I used for each term was four for each producer’s name, three for the title of the show, and one for each of the actors’ names in that season (for a visual representation see Table 2). The bulk of articles is centered on producers because that’s the primary focus of my thesis. The other terms have a relatively close number of articles in order to compare how producers were mentioned in those articles. I realized that if some articles in the search term did not exist (i.e. only 3 articles exist on David Benioff instead of 4) that I would have to replace that article to the next best search term.

Specific Criteria:

In order to construct the most unbiased yet relevant results as possible, I sorted the articles by “relevance” instead of “date.” If I set four articles for Damon Lindelof then I would pick the first four. However, this could generate implications to my research so I set the criteria for elimination as follows:

Criteria for elimination:

- Irrelevant to my subject matter (must be connected either to the show or the producers)
- No mention of search term

- Less than 200 words
- Duplicates
- Overlap from previous term (if one article was used for David Benioff it wouldn't be used again for D.B. Weiss even if he was mentioned)
- Focus on technology (apps, piracy, website design)
- Letters to the editor
- Sound bites (direct quotes from the show)

Although I read each article fully, I was looking for how the article portrayed the producers. If the topic was relevant to the producers but not the show it was acceptable because I wanted a general perspective on them. My observations were to include direct quotes, attribution of their names, reference as "producers" only, no mention at all, how much they were referenced, length of article, and type of article. This is explained in further detail in my analysis section.

Analysis

With this study I'm trying to determine the amount of exposure television producers of *Lost* and *Game of Thrones* have in magazines in order to explain how this defines our society. By using the MasterFILE premier magazine database I could easily find relevant information during the time periods I needed.

I began my research by splitting my search terms in a specific fashion in order to correlate it most effectively with 60 articles. As I imagined might happen, my ideal set of articles for each search term (mentioned in the method) did not occur because of limited results. Below is the number of articles I ended up using for each search term:

TABLE 2

Show and Terms	Targeted # of Articles	Total # of Articles	# of Articles Studied
<i>GoT Season 2</i>			
David Benioff	4	5	3
D.B. Weiss	4	2	1
Game of Thrones	4	140	5
Peter Dinklage	1	16	3
Emilia Clarke	1	11	2
Sophie Turner	1	6	1
<i>GoT Season 3</i>			
David Benioff	4	15	4
D.B. Weiss	4	5	3
Game of Thrones	4	139	4
Richard Madden	1	3	1
Emilia Clarke	1	23	1
Kit Harington	1	6	2
<i>Lost Season 2</i>			
Carlton Cuse	4	3	2
Damon Lindelof	4	7	3
“Lost” AND Television	4	687	5
Matthew Fox	1	26	2
Evangeline Lilly	1	18	2
Josh Holloway	1	10	1
<i>Lost Season 6</i>			
Carlton Cuse	4	26	4
Damon Lindelof	4	27	4
“Lost” AND Television	4	418	4
Michael Emerson	1	12	1
Terry O’Quinn	1	10	1
Matthew Fox	1	22	1

As one can see, the number of articles fluctuates among each search term/season. Because I’m primarily focusing on producers, I tried finding more articles using their names, but in some circumstances my results had limited options. Therefore, if I could not find three articles on D.B. Weiss, for example, then I would use that extra article towards a different

search term that was most relevant to my subject matter. Although articles were used for search terms I did not originally intend, I used the available options in the most effective manner that I could.

The total number of articles column may also seem surprising but note that this column includes *all* results. Many articles were eliminated due to my set criteria; therefore, I could not use as many articles as I wanted. Naturally, Cuse and Lindelof had many articles for their last season, but in order to judge the results in an unbiased manner, I had to keep the restriction to four articles each. A different sample size could have explained this phenomenon further. Although, based on the results shown above, the majority of articles would have been focused on the show search term.

While I was searching through the articles I was specifically looking for the attention on the producers. Although I used the show or actors as search terms, I wanted to see if the producers would be credited or mentioned more than briefly. In order to determine their amount of attention, I categorized them after I took my notes on each article.

- “Mentioned briefly” = a couple quotes or were mentioned by an actor or author a couple times.
- “In-depth but short” = in stories that were short (briefs or 200-400 words) but focused primarily on producers or their point of view.
- “In-depth and long” = stories that were longer than 400 words (usually features) and focused as the bullet above.
- “No mention” = articles that didn’t mention the producers at all (excluding the deck paragraph under the headline).

Each qualification did not have to be represented on both producers; I was looking for one or the other or both. The “in-depth and long” stories were ones I was particularly looking for because it meant that they were receiving quality attention. Where the attention laid was also of importance.

Attention, Attention: Statistics on Exposure

Out of the 60 articles that I read, 41 were magazines concentrated from the entertainment industry –the majority written by *Entertainment Weekly*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Variety*. Entertainment magazines have topics ranging from television, movies, music, to literature. The other 19 were either from fashion, lifestyle, or tabloid magazines. Because more than half of the results were found in entertainment magazines, this shows that people only interested in this industry would find information on television producers. Moreover, 25 of the 60 articles had no mention of the producers at all. Almost half the time consumers read an article connected to the show, they are not even exposed to the show’s creators. The greater lack of attention, the greater gap the general audience is to this knowledge of the production process or profession.

However, I did notice that the viral seasons (*GoT* season three, *Lost* season 6) showed relatively higher results for in-depth exposure on producers than the trial and error seasons (*GoT* and *Lost* season two). The second half had six articles that mentioned producers briefly, three for in-depth but short, and nine for in-depth and long. The first half had seven that mentioned producers briefly, four for in-depth but short, and four for in-depth and long. As I was looking for in-depth and long articles, the second half of my research shows that by having nine of these articles (six for *Lost* three for *GoT*), magazines publish producers more when the show has either exceeded expectations or gone viral in

popularity. Viewers finally found closure to *Lost*'s series finale which allowed reporters to ask the producers questions without being hindered by spoiler alerts. As for *GoT*, the viewers either crave or hate the abrupt change of events in the show, but either way it caused viral attention.

When comparing the coverage between the creators of *Lost* and *GoT*, Lindelof and Cuse had much more attention. The bulk of material –whether it was a profile on an actor or a feature on the show's success –mentioned quotes or perspectives from Lindelof and Cuse. Also, Lindelof was mentioned more frequently than Cuse in the second season, but that may have been because J.J. Abrams (original co-creator of *Lost*) left the control to Lindelof while he was working on his many film projects. Looking at two profiles (both in the “briefly mentioned” category) of the most popular actors from each show during their second seasons, we can see how the attention differs.

(1) Peter Dinklage wasn't just the first option to play Tyrion Lannister - he was the only option. 'If he hadn't accepted the part, oh, boy,' says series author Martin. 'I don't know what we would have done.' Adds Benioff, 'When I read George's books, I decided Tyrion Lannister was one of the great characters in literature. Not just fantasy literature - literature! A brilliant, caustic, horny, drunken, self-flagellating mess of a man. And there was only one choice to play him' (Hiatt “Master of the Game”).

(2) 'Our characters are designed to be enigmatic,' says Damon Lindelof, *Lost*'s co-creator and executive producer. 'We wanted to populate the island with people who didn't want to talk about themselves.' They went on the prowl for likable, little-seen actors with a hint of mystery...J.J. Abrams, executive producer and co-creator of *Lost*,

rejected actress after actress for the role of Kate, insisting that they would find the alluring unknown they were looking for. Just two weeks before shooting was set to begin on the pilot, he saw Lilly's audition tape and proclaimed her to be both beautiful and goofy — exactly the girl he wanted (Edwards “Little Girl Lost”)

Each quote shows the reporter using the producer's name. However, if one read the whole article of each they would notice that the profile –a 4260 word count story –on Peter Dinklage (1) only refers to the producer twice whereas Evangeline Lilly's profile (2) –1030 word count story –refers to the producers multiple times. (However, it is important to keep in mind that each profile was written through two different publications; therefore, the target audience and questions the reporter asked would differ). Also, note the usage of the original creators in each quote.

The Original Creators

It would make sense that George R.R. Martin, author of *GoT* books, would be referenced because without the books and his ideas, the show would not exist. The same goes for J.J. Abrams. As mentioned before, Abrams created *Lost* and left Lindelof the control because he was juggling too many tasks at once. It was during the second season that the control between Lindelof and Cuse became more balanced. Lindelof and Cuse then had the power to write the scenes as they pleased while occasionally having an episode here or there written by Abrams. As for Benioff and Weiss, they had to condense 1,000 page books into ten hours of script. If anyone has read the second book and compared it to the second season they would recognize just how much the content differs (although the twists are the same). However, only 30% of articles on *GoT* credited Martin more than Benioff and Weiss, and only about 17% for articles on *Lost* credited Abrams more than Cuse and Lindelof.

Therefore, the reporters credited the producers properly for they had more control over the production than the original creators. Although reporters attributed the producers properly in this case, they did not when it came to articles on the actors.

The Hidden Identity

Reporters tended to perpetuate anonymity of the producers by referring to them as “the producers” –synonymous to the creators, writers, or “showrunners” given the right context –in actor-centered articles. I found that reporters’ placement of “the producers” within the article occurred in three different ways: by beginning an article with that phrase before attributing their real names, by ending an article with that phrase, and only using that phrase without any attribution to their real names.

In cases of attributing “the producers” in the beginning, reporters used a journalistic tactic called delayed identification. In the lead of an article –the first paragraph or two of an article that supplies the hook and most crucial information of a story –a reporter will identify a person with their real name if they are prominent person. If they are not prominent, the writer uses a generic term such as “a man,” “the author,” or in this case “the producers.” Below is an example of an instance that a reporter used the generic term in my research.

She also looks phenomenal in a bikini—a fact that *Lost*’s producers haven’t been shy about taking advantage of (Edwards “Little Girl Lost”).

In this example, during the time period of season two, Gavin Edwards used “*Lost*’s producers” as the generic term and references Damon Lindelof two paragraphs later. Therefore, by using delayed identification, Edwards represents Lindelof as not prominent. (Although, note that “producers” is plural and only Lindelof is referenced. However, two

paragraphs after Lindelof is mentioned, J.J. Abrams is attributed. Within context, it seems that Edwards is referring to both Lindelof and Abrams because Cuse did not have as much control during the second season as Lindelof).

On the opposite side of the spectrum reporters sometimes used “the producers” at the end of an article.

(1) ‘We were flirting with despair until we saw her audition,’ says a producer. ‘This was someone people would follow into the fire (Morris “The Queen of Dragons”).

(2) Producers had considered many actresses for the role...(Adalian and Schneider “Lost Finds new Castaway”).

The first example is an excerpt from an article in *Rolling Stone* during *GoT*’s third season. The quote was used earlier in the story by Benioff. However, he was credited three paragraphs before Alex Morris repeated the quote as an ending. Also, it is even more ambiguous because Weiss was mentioned in the paragraph before Benioff; therefore, writing “said a producer” leads the reader to question which producer Morris is discussing. Referring back to Shaw’s agenda-setting theory, the lack of repetition of Benioff’s real name prompts readers to forget him or to consider him as unimportant (102). The same occurrence happens in the second example. This quote is from the *Daily Variety* in season two of *Lost*. Although this article is only 200 words, the use of “producers” is used at the second to last sentence and Lindelof’s name was referred three sentences earlier. In such a short story, a few sentences can make the reader forget Lindelof’s real name.

Lastly, reporters perpetuated anonymity by using “the producers” and not even mentioning their names at all which again refers back to Shaw’s agenda-setting theory.

Below are three examples that exemplify this:

(1) Admit it, the writers have no idea where this thing is going (Miles “Evangeline Lilly”).

(2) When Evangeline Lilly found out that Michelle Rodriguez was joining the cast of *Lost* this season, she headed straight to the producers (Intini “Evangeline Lilly is sitting pretty in the land of the lost”).

(3) The good news was that his character –later found to be named Ben Linus –was so impressively haunting that producers hired him as a series regular (Ingrassia “Lost in Love”).

All these examples –which are from *Lost* season two, illustrate the underexposure of producers in magazines. No mentioning of producers will cause readers to think actors are important and that the true names of producers are not.

Although the succeeding paragraphs are only six examples of reporters using “the producers” to overpower their real names, out of the 18 total actor-concentrated articles, 13 of those had “no mention.” After doing the math, if six articles caused anonymity, and three of those examples had no mention then out of the total 18 actor-concentrated articles, only two reporters exposed producers by either referring to them always by their true names or by using their true names more frequently than the “producers” so that it wasn’t overpowered.

Because articles on actors are seen more frequently in the media, readers, according to Shaw’s agenda setting theory, would most likely approach a magazine article on an actor before one on a producer because they would recognize them more and think it’s more worthy news. Therefore, by reporters continually hiding the identity of the

producers in such highly read articles, the producers will continually be unrecognizable to readers.

They've Been Framed

Similarly, in comparing articles on actors and producers how each were framed by the reporter was crucial for how a reader would interpret the information. Most articles when centered on actors were personal whereas ones on producers were more professional. A personal lens illustrates a person's personality and life beyond their career. A professional lens primarily focuses on the person's career and job motives. Only two articles out of the 20 articles that were producer-concentrated (both in-depth categories) framed them through a personal lens. Out of the 18 articles on actors, 11 were framed through a personal lens. Referring back to Robert Entman's theory on framing, by framing the majority of articles on actors in a casual perspective, this allows readers to connect with actors because they are more humanistic. The lack of informality with producers drives readers to perceive them strictly as professionals.

Article Type and Search Term

Similar to the framing concept are the article types. Certain article types determine the way a reader perceives information. The main pattern I noticed was the use of reviews. The seven reviews that my search terms popped up were all focused on the show except for one that was focused on Peter Dinklage of *GoT*. Neither actors nor producers were touched on, except to attribute an actor's name. It makes sense that the majority of information is on the show but the fact that none referred to the quality of the filming techniques or talent of the actors was shocking. Transitioning the focus could be

intellectually beneficial for those who know nothing of the production process or expert techniques needed as a professional.

Lastly, the result from each search term was as expected except for the title of the show. Overall, when using the producer's name or actor's name the focus was on that specific search term. The show as a search term, however, was much more sporadic. Articles based on the show, actors, or other key people (e.g. composer for *Lost*, language creator for *GoT*) appeared in the search results for the show but in only one case did an article focused on a producer appear. Again, this illustrates the underexposure of producers. Given all these results and analysis, the fundamental question still remains: What does the underexposure of producers say about society?

Conclusion

Does it matter that producers are rarely exposed in magazines? Before diving into this question let's revisit the key points of my analysis. The majority of in-depth coverage on *Lost* and *GoT* producers occurred during extremely popular seasons (Season six, Season three). It is possible that viewers are only interested in the production process once a show has become viral in popularity. The more people know the show, the more they might wonder "Why is this show so popular?" or "Who are behind making such a great show?" This particular finding then implies that society is only intrigued with the production efforts once many more people share their common interest. If people are only interested in the plotline or characters of the show then it illustrates the extent of the consumer's attachment to the show. For some, the idea of seeing producers as creators of the fictional realm that they love, would be detrimental; this acknowledgement makes the experience less real.

Viewers may want to sustain that attachment in order to escape the reality of their everyday lives. As some may like the escape of fiction, reading about producers and their techniques in the media breaks this illusion. However, this can be countered by the quality of the show. If it is as impressive as the ratings deem it to be then the lighting, camera angles or whatever was discussed by the producers should vanish once viewers are glued back into the show. However, the human mind works differently for everyone and some may feel that the constant reminder that what they are watching is fake could make the experience of television less enjoyable.

The attachment to the fictional realm relates back to Joli Jenson's notion of fans being "obsessed individuals" (9). As Jenson states that fans desire the connection to celebrities and their characters, reading about producers could break this connection. However, some of these fans already perceive the producers as celebrities. In the sphere of television fanatics, fans form a culture with those of similar interests and regularly attend conventions (like Comic Con) to share their admiration for the show. Therefore, these individuals probably know the logistics of the production and can easily relate to it.

On the other hand, one could also argue that the producers are the ones that wish to stay hidden. If the producers are publicized on the same level as most celebrities then their privacy could be effected (paparazzi, screaming fans, reporters etc.). However, if fanatics already treat producers as celebrities then the difference in exposure wouldn't change their lifestyle. Television enthusiasts do express their appreciation through media, but this isn't generally exposed in mainstream media. The chances of being hackled would be higher for producers if mainstream media covered them more, but a balance in topic

could counteract this. The general audience would then be more knowledgeable on the production process.

On the topic of television production, I found in my analysis that Cuse and Lindelof of *Lost* were exposed more than Benioff and Weiss of *GoT* in their second seasons. The difference between *Lost*'s season 2 and *GoT*'s season 2 is six years. As society changes over time and adapts to technological growth and new media platforms, viewers' interests sway, depending on how the society transitioned. Because the society is more sensational today, we can speculate that media publishers may have transitioned their focus from producers six years ago to actors today. Another reason could be the difference between HBO vs. ABC. Although *GoT* is still popular, the accessibility of the show is lower. Viewers must pay an additional cost in order to view the premium channel. On the other hand, *Lost* was easily accessible through a broadcast network. As mentioned before, higher viewer footage means a higher chance that people will want more coverage on the production process and how that will correlate to the upcoming/most recent season.

Reporters' usage of "the producers" is particularly compelling. Because reporters control how a reader consumes the information they write, overpowering an article by the using "the producers" continually underexposes TV creators to the reader. The more reporters do this, the more the producers become anonymous. Eugene Shaw's agenda setting theory states that the more a topic is repeated the more an audience member will deem it as important (102). Therefore, reporters' lack of repetition in actor-dominated articles causes the reader to think that only an actor is important to a show. Reporters can undermine actor-dominated articles by using the constant exposure of actors to their

advantage. It's an opportunity to introduce a unique perspective (behind the scenes) to which the average viewer is not accustomed.

Similarly, how the reporters framed articles on producers changed the perspective of the story. As mentioned in my analysis, out of the 33 articles (including briefly mentioned, short, and long) articles on producers, only two were personal and out of the 18 in-depth articles on actors, 11 were personal. Therefore by framing producers in a professional environment, consumers only view them as professionals. By framing actors in a personal environment, it allows the viewers to connect with them more easily because it's more casual and humanistic. Although many fans want to read the latest updates on their favorite show, if producers were to be seen as more relatable (a casual, relaxed, personal conversation) then viewers might view them as such and demand more of those types of stories. Robert Entman would call this shift in framing by how the reporters make particular topics more salient than others (53). The lens through which fans (or even the general public) read the material can determine whether they find it important or interesting enough to spread to other people.

Another reason the lens may be portrayed in this fashion is due to the exposure in particular types of magazines. Again, 41 out of 60 articles in my research were published by entertainment magazines. Therefore, even if reporters used Shaw's agenda setting effectively and Entman's framing in order to make the topic of producers more salient, only those actively searching for them or interested in the entertainment industry would easily find exposure. However, this could be due to the limitations of my research.

The database MasterFILE Premier did create some complications. Although it offered 1414 magazines ranging from *Cosmopolitan*, *Cineaste*, to *Time.com*, it did not offer

smaller publications. In today's society, even within the past few years, the magazine industry has skyrocketed. Also, the technological growth has led consumers to be more digitally-oriented than print-oriented. Publications like Huffington Post, BuzzFeed, and Elite Daily, constantly report a vast amount of topics. They'll use their social media to their advantage to make an article viral –something that wasn't so popular during the time of *Lost*. Therefore, my research regarding *GoT* could be more focused on digital media instead of magazine print editions. Another limitation was the HTML format that the database provided. Although some of the articles specified they had pictures, in HTML format we can't see those or their placement. This design element could have provided further information towards my analysis.

The reason for the high amount of entertainment could be due to my sample size. Because of my criteria for elimination, any articles that were less than 200 words would not qualify. Many non-entertainment magazines, such as *Time.com*, were ones that did not qualify. This could have created bias, but 200 words barely exposed a subject matter; therefore, it was irrelevant to my research. As I gained much better results for the second half of my research (*Lost* season 6, *GoT* season 3), the sample size could be expanded for that portion. However, I do not suggest using it towards the first half because very limited results existed and this would create inconclusive results.

My research could also be narrowed by focusing on others behind the scenes of television. Other professionals, such as the cinematographer, costume designers, or editors, are equally important and play a large role in the production process. Although I focused my research solely on those who wield the most power (the producers), it could be

narrowed to their underexposure as well. Even further, my research could be compared to film directors as they are the most similar to “showrunners.”

Overall, my results suggested that producers are underexposed because of the restricted access to the general audience and how reporters chose to portray and format the producers within their articles. Reporters could have written their stories in a particular format because it was part of their job description to write what consumers want to read. However, we could also speculate that the questions reporters asked limited the interviewee’s answers. In doing so, readers take in the information in a particular fashion because the reporters decided which quotes to use and how to style the article.

This leads us back to the question of whether it matters if producers are underexposed in magazines. Restricting the information an audience is exposed to creates an ill-informed society. Therefore, consumers regard only certain matters as important. Certain dangers could arise from this because it creates a chain of events. If celebrities are generally the only prominent people showcased in magazines, to an extent, it manipulates the public to regard only celebrities as important to our society. In effect, when consumers read an article on a television producer, an editor of a book publishing company, or a songwriter for Beyoncé, they would automatically think the behind-the-scenes professional is less significant when compared to celebrities.

Celebrities are famous because of their profession but most of their articles have a personal tone to it, driving consumers to connect more easily with them. If reporters balanced the coverage among professionals and formatted them through a personal lens then more people will find them prominent and be more willing to try and connect with them. It only seems fair to provide credit to those who deserve it and consumers may be

surprised that articles on television producers could be just as interesting as those on a celebrity.

A balance in framing professionals as both professionals and personal could be beneficial. On one end of the spectrum consumers can connect more easily with a casual and humanistic tone, but on the other end consumers expand their intelligence by learning of new professions. It is important to expand a society's knowledge on matters that are beneficial because it teaches people to become self-proficient. Although, scandals, which are also heavily exposed in the media, may be entertaining, they do not exactly enhance a person's intelligence.

The media has the control to transition our attention on matters of importance. By having only certain information available and restricting the style of an article in a particular format, magazines create restrictions on what consumers think about and how they take in that information (once more relating back to Shaw and Entman). Therefore, publishing entertainment-based articles in more general publications could expand the general audience's knowledge of various fields. Also, reporters can credit professionals who deserve the credit by transitioning from generic terms to specific names in their articles.

The *GoT* fan who watches Brienne and Jamie now doesn't just watch in oblivion but understands that there is more to the show than meets the eye. Even the inkling of understanding can shift society towards important matters like exposing more professionals than just celebrities. A more open-minded perspective creates endless, beneficial opportunities for our society.

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