

**Manufacturing Celebrity and Marketing Fame:
An Ethnographic Study of Celebrity Media Production**

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jean and Woodrow (“Nino”) Díaz. My father was murdered while my mother was a Ph.D. student in political science at UC Riverside. She did her best to raise three small children, work full-time, and complete her doctoral program. Ultimately, she was not able to finish the dissertation. Thus, this dissertation is for all of us.

I also dedicate this work to Chris Guerra, who lost his life while working as a paparazzo during the course of my dissertation fieldwork.

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SECTION I: Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

Celebrity Weekly Magazines and Los Angeles as the Cultural Center of Celebrity Manufacturing

On the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street in the heart of Hollywood, crowds of fans pressed as close as possible to the red carpet for the VH1 Do Something Awards. As I waited for the celebrities to appear for interviews, a process that has become routine to me after several years of reporting for *People* magazine, I overheard the conversations of the young fans. “Hillary Duff, I used to want to be her,” one teenage girl told her friend. “She’s so nice and so real. I feel bad for her sister though. It’s like Ashley [Simpson] trying to compete with Jess[ica Simpson]. Oh here comes [David] Beckham! I have fantasies about him all the time.” Such everyday conversations demonstrate the deeply personal connections and imaginary relationships people form with celebrities in the US today (Bird 1992; Caughey 1984, 1994). For this girl and many Americans, celebrities are the people we emulate, fantasize about, and feel we know intimately enough to be on a first name basis.

How is it that we know more about celebrities than we do about the people we see in person every day? Images and talk of celebrity have come to dominate American culture. In beauty salons and classrooms, at stores and dinner parties, people discuss celebrity gossip, such as Britney Spears spontaneously shaving her head or Lindsay Lohan’s latest stint in prison,

rather than discussing their own lives. While the ideas of celebrity and stardom have been a part of world cultures for centuries, the extent to which celebrity “news” dominates media coverage and personal conversations has increased dramatically in our own lifetimes. The reality television explosion, combined with online media and social networking sites such as Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook, make celebrities ever more accessible, while at the same time convincing people more than ever before that they, too, have a chance to become a celebrity. “We give people lip service that you have to be talented, but there’s a generation of people that see Snooki [of MTV’s reality show *Jersey Shore*] and think, ‘It happened for her, it can happen for me,’” Ron, a freelance reporter who has worked for *Us Weekly* magazine and *People* magazine told me. A 2005 Harvard survey revealed that 31 percent of American teenagers think they will become famous (“Study of Teens”); understanding why this obsession and desire for fame has permeated American culture lies, in part, in understanding how celebrity and fame are portrayed in media.

This project analyzes the politics and division of labor involved in the production of celebrity-focused media in the US. Based on fieldwork primarily in Los Angeles, and secondarily in New York, where I conducted ethnographic interviews, archival research, and participant-observation through institutional, informal, and virtual ethnography, my dissertation explores the work and lives of the celebrity journalists, paparazzi, and red carpet photographers who create the content for the celebrity weekly magazines *People*, *Us Weekly*, *OK!*, *In Touch*, *Star*, and *Life & Style*. I conducted full-time research from 2010 through 2012, and conducted preliminary research during the summers of 2008 and 2009. My work is also informed by my previous experience as an intern and reporter for *People* beginning in 2004. Within the broader framework of the anthropology of media, my research is positioned at the intersection of the

anthropology of news and journalism (Bird 2010) and studies of Hollywood (Ortner 2009), with a strong focus on gender, race, celebrity, and the media's effects on identity in the US

While issues of media consumption have been more thoroughly addressed in anthropology and related fields, media production remains under-researched, in large part because of issues of access to the media producers. During the course of my fieldwork, I continued my work on the red carpet for *People* magazine as part of my participatory ethnographic methodology; this facilitated my extended access to the media producers I worked with on my project. Because I already had a wide network in “the industry,” which is colloquial shorthand for entertainment industry among those who are a part of it (Ortner 2009), before I began my project, using the snowball effect to get references from reporters for other reporters and photographers was highly effective. In the industry, trust does not come easily, and my “in” was a central reason for my ability to do the work I set out to do. Having an online presence during fieldwork was also critical for the project's success—the reporters I worked with use online mediums (especially Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail) to keep in touch, and keep track of each other. Often I started online conversations with my reporter and photographer counterparts and we would then set up times to meet informally before doing a formal interview. Reporters and photographers alike often post images on Facebook and Twitter to demonstrate their “in” on red carpets. Without photos on the red carpet or with celebrities, in the case of reporters and red carpet photographers, peers start to wonder where you have been. Did you get fired? Did you stop getting freelance work? Thus, online presence (even just “liking” fellow reporters' posts on Facebook) became an important exercise for my research, as being part of an online community has become as important and meaningful as communities on the ground.

In her work on access to the entertainment industry in Hollywood, Sherry Ortner explores the meaning of “community,” noting that, “‘Hollywood’ in spatial terms is an entity that is spread discontinuously across and beyond the city of Los Angeles. But its spatially discontinuous nature should not be confused with the question of whether there is in fact a ‘community,’ and in this case the answer would very definitely be yes” (Ortner 2010:4). As someone who has worked within the industry, the feeling of community within it is undeniable—on red carpets, most people know each other, from publicists to reporters to photographers. Whenever I attended events with friends, as part of my participant observation, I was surrounded by people I knew. At any given event, I bumped into former editors, former *People* reporters, and public relations agents that I used to work with regularly. At one red carpet, I ended up standing next to my former boss who had returned to red carpet work. To be clear, the celebrity reporting community is a separate community from the actor/director/movie/tv community. While these communities sometimes intermix, there is a distinct community made up of the people who write and place celebrity-focused stories in the press. It’s a tight knit and incestuous one too. One person I worked with throughout my research is a former writer for *Star*, former editor for *People*, and, at the time of my research, was working in public relations. The communities are separate, but interwoven. To separate *People* from *Star* from *Us* is to forget that the people—the minds—that shape those publications all intermix and switch positions within those publications during their careers. Of course, each of the celebrity weekly magazines has a separate brand and reputation, but many of the same minds have worked across the various publications.

My research shows how the social relations of these celebrity media producers affect how they compose images and shape stories and, ultimately, how Americans relate to celebrities and understand fame. In doing so, it builds on the pioneering work of anthropologist Hortense

Powdermaker in Post-War Hollywood, which examined how the lives of movie-makers affected film production. Since Powdermaker's *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (1950), Hollywood industries have multiplied, and their media have become more engrained in everyday American life, entering homes through an array of new forms of media. Determining just *how* contemporary Hollywood—both the media it produces and the celebrities it promotes—affects American and global cultures is a critical area for anthropological analysis. My project advances conversations about the power of media producers, even those on the periphery (e.g. paparazzi), in shaping American culture and discourse and analyzes the motivations behind the decisions of individuals and companies that create celebrity media.

Through a focus on gender dynamics in celebrity media production, my project demonstrates how the predominantly female reporters and male photographers together promote and amplify the pressure for women to conform to certain physical expectations, while validating the male gaze on women in American culture. Furthermore, through my examination of online comments on the magazines' websites, fans' comments at celebrity events in Los Angeles, and the magazines themselves, my research underscores the role of celebrity media in facilitating imaginary/parasocial relationships between celebrities and consumers and constructing an imaginary singular American identity. These different facets of my project offer a significant contribution to the anthropological literature on media production, issues of race and gender in media industries, and American celebrity culture, and will enhance scholarly understanding of the media's influence on modern personhood and social relations.

The racial, ethnic, and class politics involved in the labor production of this media are also central to this project. At the first celebrity event I ever attended, I introduced myself to an African-American celebrity by explaining that I worked for People magazine. "I call that White

People magazine,” he joked. There is a complicated relationship between the race and ethnicity of the reporters, their interviewees, and their consumers. Reporters of color, like myself, are aware that they are mostly producing a magazine of white popular culture, and are most likely to do the few interviews with celebrities of color whom the magazines deem white-consumer friendly. Thus, the racial politics of celebrity media production are an important place for examination (Beltrán & Fojas 2008). Furthermore, it is a seldom-recognized fact that the Los Angeles-based paparazzi photographers who produce the majority of photographs for the celebrity weekly magazines are predominantly Latin American immigrants and Latinos. Based on my research, I estimate that as many as 50% of the Los Angeles-based paparazzi are undocumented and participate in an extensive informal economy of celebrity photographs. The racialization of paparazzi in Los Angeles and their exclusion from the formal production process of the magazines becomes a critical place of reflection as I examine the work of and relationships between the predominantly white, female celebrity reporters and the predominantly Latin American and Latino male paparazzi. Exploring the role of women and gender, as well as including a nuanced analysis of race and class, will help make my research on celebrity media production accessible and relevant beyond anthropology and will enhance our comprehension of the media’s influence on modern personhood and social relations.

I selected the media professionals my research focuses on during my Los Angeles-based fieldwork. They are photographers and journalists who work or have worked for one or more of the celebrity weekly magazines and represent both the dominant demographics, as well as the minorities, within their industry. Taking full advantage of my position as a member of the same group of media producers that I research, I approach my research auto-ethnographically (Peterson 2001) by making my own experiences a critical element of my ethnographic data.

Reflexivity is called for in the interest of disclosure, openness and increased objectivity (Behar 2007), and has historically given voice to underrepresented peoples (e.g. Gwaltney 1976; Jones 1970). Given the space that has emerged for self-reflexive ethnography across disciplines, my personal experience as a *People* reporter will provide an important angle to my perspective on media production.

While editors are relevant to the manufacturing of celebrities, the information-gatherers (Clark 2003:50)—the photographers and reporters—are at the forefront of my research, as they are the ones who craft content for the magazines. My research suggests that they maintain a significant amount of agency that allows them to shape US popular culture and American discourse on celebrity through their work. While older news ethnographies (e.g. Gans 1979; Tuchman 1978) proposed that journalists play a “relatively unconscious role” in a standardized process of news production (Cottle 2000:22), my research shows that, rather than simply doing as others request, celebrity reporters actively shape trends in popular culture. Bourdieu notes that journalists’ job is to impose a “legitimate vision of the social world” on their audiences (Bourdieu 2005:40), yet “very few case studies have sought to empirically attend in detail to how journalists’ preconceived story ideas (or ‘frames’) result in the deliberate pursuit of certain voices and commentary” (Cottle 2000:27-8). As celebrity news increasingly seeps into all forms of news media in the US, it is critical to understand the “visions” celebrity reporters and photographers impose on American culture, as well as the motives behind these visions.

The Celebrity Weekly Magazine

“We're consumers. We are by-products of a lifestyle of obsession. Murder, crime, poverty, these things don't concern me. What concerns me are celebrity magazines...”
– *Fight Club*¹

“Let's not just let the tabloid be the scapegoat for all of us who have to take ultimate responsibility about what experiences we want to consume.”
- Adrien Grenier, actor

This project focuses on the content creators for US celebrity weekly magazines, a genre that began with the launch of *People* magazine in 1974. *People* had no direct competition until 2000 when *Us Magazine*, which had previously existed as a more trade-focused bi-monthly and then monthly publication since 1977, re-launched as a weekly to compete with *People* (Kuczynski 1999). Then, beginning in 2002, a wave of new magazines entered the market. Between 2002 and 2005 *In Touch* and *Life & Style* began publication, the tabloid newspaper *Star* was re-launched as a weekly magazine, and the British magazine *OK!* created a US version. While the branding and reputation of these magazines vary somewhat, they all share a common focus on celebrity content and a glossy, image-heavy aesthetic.

I opened this section with a quote from the film *Fight Club* (Fincher 1999); an unconventional choice, indeed. Neither the screenplay, nor the novel it was based on, were written by scholars of any kind. But the first time I saw the film, I was unable to deal with the violence, for it brought to my mind too much trauma—my father died when I was a child as a result of being severely beaten over a drug money issue. When I was just six-years-old, I saw him on life support battered and bruised, alive only because of machinery that couldn't keep him going much longer. The film brought up pain for me, so much so that I could not even get through the whole film, but this quote resonated with me. A daughter of political activists, a

¹ (Fincher 1999)

child who saw at a young age how literally brutal this world could be, I did not want to think about murder or crime. Consumption offers escape. Escapist journalism, specifically in the form of the celebrity magazines the quote mentions, offers such an escape. In the film, the fictional character who utters the quote, wanted so badly to feel something in this isolated and numbing state in which we live that he physically assaulted himself—to feel. He could only pretend that everything was ok for so long. He could only consume to escape for so long before he longed to feel things for himself, instead of imagining how good things must feel for celebrities, for the rich and famous.

The creation and consumption of escapist journalism that entices and distracts is not a temporal coincidence. Rather, the materials that we consume are the products of precise historical moments in which cultural producers, in this case media producers, see a void ready to be filled with a new product designed to capitalize on a particular moment in time. A 1973 prospectus, outlining the vision for Time Inc.'s *People* magazine, boasts:

The times seem to be right for [*People*]. The war is over. Protest is at a minimum. The counter-culture has lost much of its steam. Except for what dismay and anger Watergate stirs up, people seem to be fairly relaxed. National and international problems don't impinge on the average persons' minds or consciences the way they used to. Their concerns after job and family (or job and mate) run to fun and games (or sex and sports). Enter *People*, reaffirming the indisputable fact that what really interests people is other people... The 60's (sic.) are finally ended; and now, too, the Nixon era. The uncharted, the real 70's (sic.), with their potential for new personalities, beckon (Fuerbringer 1973:1-2).

This quote, from a never-before published document provided to me by a former *People* magazine employee, demonstrates the (perceived) space that emerged in the 1970s for escapist journalism—for new fixation on personalities, broadly. As I further explore in this introduction and dissertation as a whole, the rapid multiplication of celebrity weekly magazines—all initially

created to imitate the original, *People*—were similarly designed to capitalize on a more recent moment of openness for distraction and escapism: post 9-11 America.

As a freshman at New York University (NYU), I began classes just two weeks before I witnessed the first plane fly over me as I walked down Bleeker Street in the West Village, watching it make a distinct turn straight into the first tower. Again traumatized, the political activist in me re-emerged and I began doing community activism and performing spoken word at the Nuyorican Poets Café. But my steam ran out. I just wanted to get away from it all. Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that I became part of this cultural machine of celebrity media production while still in New York as a student. I began working for *People* as a paid intern my senior year at NYU; my primary job was to keep an eye on the Olson twins, who were freshman at NYU that year. As a paid intern at *People*, I did not just get paid to follow celebrities. I got paid to interview them on red carpets and to go to the clubs and bars where they hung out. If this is celebrity reporting, I thought, then I'm in. But the critical analyst within me, the activist within me, the cultural anthropologist within me wanted to understand this production culture more deeply. I knew it was about more than just following celebrities; it was about more than churning out an online story or an item in a magazine; it was about the production of a culture through media products that promoted certain values, particularly around the understanding of (and desire for) fame and celebrity in the US I was given this opportunity, this door into this “exclusive” (as the magazine covers remind us every issue) world, and hope to use it to share my stories, my understandings, and my analysis with the same world, the same consumers, the same communities that produce and consume this product voraciously.

While I do not have a prospectus for each of the new magazines that emerged, or for the reformatting that the previously existing publications underwent as part of the emergence of

expanding competition, the historical prospectus for *People* makes it clear that there is a precedent for creating an escapist media product that capitalizes on a sociocultural moment. Similar to how *People* was conceptualized during a time of disillusionment during the wind-down of a war that had yielded immense protest, these new publications attempted to give individuals an outlet for distraction from the fear and paranoia that overtook the country following the attacks of 9-11 and to make “The War on Terror” feel as far from the general population’s list of concerns as possible.

If, as *People*’s success proved, “what really interests people is other people” and the “potential for new personalities” needs to be exploited at particular historical moments (Fuerbringer 1973:1-2), I believe that the creators of the newer magazines I examine found the post 9-11 US as a moment in which new personalities had the potential to emerge and attract attention. With access to celebrities for start-up publications being a real issue, those publications invested in the potential of the new television network personalities—reality television stars—who were easier to access, hungry for fame, and willing to share any and all personal information. As sociologist Karen Sternheimer has pointed out, “Love it, hate it, or love to hate it, celebrity culture is one of the hallmarks of twenty-first century America. Never before has it been so easy to know so much about so many people, even people we might not want to know about. We seem to be on a first name basis with them, give them nicknames, and sometimes even feel as if we know all about them” (Sternheimer 2011:xiii). We care so deeply about the minutia of celebrities lives today because we have been provided with the feeling of access to any and all information about certain personalities through the celebrity weekly magazines, reality television, and constant social media updates by celebrities. This is the new baseline—we expect to have access to all personal details of celebrities, broadly defined; access to this information

has shifted our own notions of community and our general discourse—information about these personalities have become the default conversation starters, the shared imaginary community among Americans.

Gatekeepers of Celebrity Culture: The People Behind the Celebrity Weekly Magazines

“We're like the gatekeepers. Part of what we do is dictated to us through the news. We're essentially a news-gathering machine. So, half of what we do has to be what's important to people now. The other half has to be kind of like fortune telling: what *should be* important to people?”

– Megan, editor and writer for a celebrity weekly magazine

Through a careful analysis of the methods of celebrity media production, my project explains how the content creators for the celebrity magazines manufacture personalities that people feel they know and can relate to. Photo sections of celebrity magazines tend to depict celebrities taking part in the practices of “everyday” American life—pushing their babies in a stroller, shopping at the grocery store, buying a coffee at Starbucks— in an effort to humanize them and reinforce the possibility that, not only can celebrities be like the reader, but the reader can be like celebrities. In fact, one section of *Us Weekly* is called “Stars: They’re Just like Us.” However, the activities and characteristics that reporters choose to feature as examples of celebrities being “just like us” presume certain things about the reader and, thus, about the general American public. This project will shed light on expectations of modern American behavior and personhood by analyzing how celebrity reporters reinforce what it means to be one of “us.”

In order to understand how celebrity reporters and photographers determine what makes a celebrity one of “us,” we must consider who these media producers are themselves. “In order to understand the complexities of media production, it is necessary to examine producers’

sentiments and subjectivities in conjunction with questions of political economy” (Ganti 2014:18). The female-dominance of the celebrity media business is something widely acknowledged within the industry, but not critically examined. Based on my first-hand experience as a reporter and on observations during fieldwork, I will investigate the sexualization of female celebrity journalists. Journalists are often encouraged to use their sexuality (generally a presumed *heterosexuality*) to relate to female celebrities on the basis of sharing common “women’s issues” and to exploit their sexuality for the sake of obtaining information from male celebrities. Beyond pressure from editors, some reporters have personal motives for exploiting their sexuality to get close to celebrities. “I see people who think they’re going to become a celebrity’s girlfriend and get the famous lifestyle out of it,” one weekly magazine reporter told me. At the same time, it is these predominantly-female reporters who are setting new and impossible-to-maintain beauty standards for women in American culture. The project will explore the implications of women playing this critical role in the molding of popular culture.

In contrast to the celebrity reporters, the position behind the camera is a male dominated field, particularly among paparazzi. Furthermore, in the context of Los Angeles, paparazzi are predominantly US-born Latino and Latin American immigrant men. The barriers it takes to get into the Hollywood studio system do not exist for paparazzi work, and this is precisely why it has become dominated by mostly Latino (and some Black) men. This is their way into the industry, and it is a critical part of the industry, even if it largely operates informally, without the hierarchies and elite spaces of the celebrity reporters. As I will discuss in this project, entrance to the industry through paparazzi work has put these men of color in a place in which they can be surveilled, criticized, and placed in physical danger.

Despite its growth, work in the celebrity culture industry still carries a stigma. In the field of journalism, celebrity reporters are a joke. When I first began work at *People* in New York, my friends were flabbergasted. As someone who was thought of as socially conscious, they viewed my working there as out of character and even disappointing. However I found my job to be fascinating. What was I being asked to do? Who were the other reporters around me? What material did I need to gather and what was the story that ended up being told in the magazines and online? Within weeks of working for the magazine, a story I wrote about the Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen was featured as the top story on the America Online home page (this was 2004, during the period of AOL's relevance). A second story I wrote was picked up by CNN. It showed me that celebrity reporting and hard news were blurring and forcing a change in the understanding of news media in the US

I had no idea that my experience working for *People* would captivate me and become a long-term research interest. As an anthropologist doing research in Los Angeles in a field in which I had years of experience, I found that the reporters engaged with me on a very deep level; they are conflicted about their role as producers of media that many of them believe is diluting news, journalism, and the depth of American culture. Instead, I see the work as *deeply* affecting American culture, perhaps in problematic ways, but the people producing these changes need to be understood, as do their publications, their tactics, their reliability, and their intentions.

This is not an attempt to criticize or condemn the celebrity media production, the weekly magazines, red carpet reporting and photography, or paparazzi work. Instead my aim is to critically analyze this pervasive form of media and the interest in celebrity that is such a major part of American (and global) cultures today. I, in fact, have a tremendous amount of respect for all the people I worked with on this research and all of the media producers I discuss; that does

not, however, mean that I do not view some of the practices in the media production as problematic. My job as an anthropologist is to document culture; my experience as a celebrity reporter allows me to document this, but also creates a complex vantage point from which I am required to thus also be critical of my own practice in the celebrity media production process.

The research and ideas in this project are derived from observations at celebrity events (red carpets, premieres, etc.); interviews with reporters, photographers, celebrities, and consumers; surveys and questionnaires; and analysis of media archives. Rather than just focusing on performative events like red carpets, celebrity reporters are almost always engaged in long-term assignments and are required to develop long-term and *meaningful* relationships with specific people or groups of people. Just as with anthropologists, deep relationships with “sources” are critical to the livelihood of a celebrity reporter's career. When observing celebrities, these reporters consider questions like: What do they eat? What do they say? What are they wearing? Who are they with? How do they live? I worked with the journalists before, during, and after they wrote stories in order to understand the process they go through to develop celebrity personas. With my own archive of celebrity interview transcripts, story outlines, and final published stories, I also re-examine my own approach to celebrity reporting and my own process of manufacturing celebrity personas.

This project shares the lives and the work of celebrity reporters and photographers. It aspires to help people understand the celebrity-focused material that dominates newsstands, television, and the internet, and to help people reflect on the ways this media is changing American life, as well as cultures worldwide.

While there are some excellent examinations of the history of celebrity journalism (Petersen 2011, 2014; Ponce de Leon 2002; Slide 2010), history of the Hollywood studio system

(Davis 1993); analysis of celebrity and fame (Braudy 1997; Herwitz 2008; Ferris & Harris 2011; Rojek 2001, 2012; Ward 2011); and contemporary textual analysis of celebrity magazines (McDonnell 2014), there are no ethnographies on the production of these magazines and the photographers and reporters that provide the content for these publications. In fact, in terms of ethnographic exploration of Hollywood as whole, there are few examples to speak of (Askew 2004; David 2007; Ortner 2009, 2010, 2013; Powdermaker 1950). Not since Hortense Powdermaker's 1950 ethnography of Hollywood has anyone truly captured the culture of Hollywood production. While this project is a different take on Hollywood and celebrity culture from Powdermaker's *The Dream Factory*, as I do not get into the studio system and instead focus exclusively on the magazines and the nuances of their production, I do view this as an extension of the work she began and of the path she carved within anthropology to argue for the importance of exploring this area of inquiry ethnographically. It is important to illuminate the consistency with which Hollywood and its many industries and cultures have been described as factories, as sites of production and manufacturing.

I continue that trend with my project, though I long debated it. I vacillated between the phrases "crafting celebrity" and "manufacturing celebrity"; because I respect the work of the media producers with whom I worked on this project (and because I, too, worked many years as a red carpet reporter), I felt that the word "manufacturing" implied a process so carefully prescribed that it removed agency from the media producers who are responsible for the cultural production that shapes American celebrity today. Still, I did not feel "crafting" accurately represented the scope and complexity of the celebrity industrial complex (Orth 2004) that produced the material I analyze in this project. Though I do believe the media producers I worked with on this project have a real handle in *crafting* celebrity culture through their work, I

use the word manufacturing not only to pay homage to my predecessors who illuminated the industrial nature of the Hollywood system, but also to emphasize that we (the media content creators) are part of a larger and more complex system of production.

From red carpet reporters and photographers, to paparazzi, to staff reporters for the celebrity weekly magazines I explore in this project, this ethnography provides a body of information that will bring insight to the professional lives of the content creators for the celebrity magazines. Without the human component, without the people who make *People*, we cannot truly understand the process, the history, and the material we are provided with for consumption. Anthropology is the study of humans, of people, thus, it is fitting to enter into an ethnographic investigation that examines who the celebrity weekly magazines consider worthy of public examination and why. What are the different classes of personhood that are developed through the production of celebrities and celebrity culture? For what is celebrity, if not an example of mass personhood and elevated personhood—meaning personhood developed and understood on a mass scale, creating an elevated status of what it means to be a person.

Methodology

My methods for this project included the following: institutional, informal, and virtual ethnography and participant-observation; one-on-one and group ethnographic and informal interviews; and textual and semiotic analysis of print and digital media archives. My research was grounded in collaborative and reciprocal approaches to ethnography.

Ethnography and Participant-Observation

The data for this research was gathered, intermittently, over the course of ten years. While I was engaged in full-time ethnographic research as a PhD candidate from 2010 through

2012, I also undertook both formal and informal part-time research before and after this time period. From 2004 to 2007, I worked as an intern and then as a stringer for *People* magazine, prior to entering graduate school. During this time, I kept journals of my experiences working as a reporter since I became instantly fascinated with the celebrity culture I was helping produce through my work for *People* magazine and its website. This experience and material informs my long-term fieldwork, though it is not the focus of the research. During the summers of 2008 and 2009, I spent months engaged in full-time ethnographic research in Los Angeles, laying the groundwork for the long-term fieldwork that began the following year. From 2012 to 2014, I also engaged in part-time ethnographic and archival research.

In order to gather data during my ethnographic fieldwork research, I engaged in participant-observation with celebrity reporters and photographers, took several hundred photographs, and compiled several hundred pages of fieldnotes. The institutional ethnography (Dávila 2001) in which I took part included the time I spent in the offices of weekly magazines and photo agencies, and on the red carpet. I conducted informal ethnography by: (a) spending time with the media producers at home and at informal work meetings; and (b) engaging with fans on the sidelines of red carpet events. While my work is predominantly with reporters and paparazzi, I also collaborated with celebrity managers, publicists, attorneys, and magazine ad agents and editors. Through my industry contacts on social networking sites, I conducted virtual ethnography (Bird 2010; Boellstorff 2008) by tracking and engaging in online exchanges between reporters about media production. As a participant-observer (Askew 2004), I worked freelance as a celebrity reporter, which provided me insider access to the community and inner-workings of the industry; I also accompanied paparazzi on “chases,” “gang bangs,” and basic shoots.

I worked with journalists before, during, and after they developed celebrity-focused stories in order to understand the process by which celebrity images are constructed, and the agency exercised by reporters (Cottle 2000, 2007; Hasty 2005; Hannerz 2004; Peterson 2001). My own experience as a celebrity reporter was a vital part of this research because I am familiar with the production process and have written extensively for *People* and its website. My continued freelance work for *People* throughout the course of my research allowed me to continue building contacts and obtaining access not only to reporters, paparazzi, and editors, but also to high profile celebrity managers and their clients. My position as a freelance reporter allowed me to truly be a participant-observer in the celebrity-reporting world (both participating in the practice of celebrity reporting and observing others performing the job) (Hasty 2005; Peterson 2001). Celebrity events were an optimum venue in which to examine the politics of celebrity reporting outside of the newsroom (Bird 2010; Cottle 2000, 2007; Hasty 2005, 2009; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010), as I gathered data on what celebrity reporters (both freelance and staff) discuss with each other about their story approaches, what celebrity managers and press agents request from the reporters on the red carpet, and what questions they actually ask celebrities. By focusing on red carpet and paparazzi work, I designed this project in such a way that prevented me from subscribing to the newsroom-centric trope of news ethnography (Cottle 2000, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010); still, being present in central office settings (Ho 2009; Gusterson 1996) can still reveal much about assigning practices, corporate pressures, and employee interaction. I visited the *People* offices regularly and worked in the archives (housed in the staff lounge), a frequent meeting place for reporters on break.

In my preliminary fieldwork, one senior web editor of a celebrity weekly magazine expressed to me that the emphasis on the magazine's website, individual celebrity-run websites,

twitter accounts, and celebrity bloggers (e.g. “Perez Hilton”) have changed the production of celebrity media and celebrity weekly magazine production more than any other recent developments in technology and journalistic practice. Thus, these web-focused issues are critical to a complete and complex understanding of celebrity journalism that has yet to be critically examined. Since the internet has changed the process of news production and journalistic communication so greatly over the past several years (Cottle 2000, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010), I conducted virtual ethnography (Behar 2009; Boellstorff 2008; Constable 2003) on the social networking sites (Facebook.com, Twitter.com), celebrity weekly magazine websites (e.g. People.com, UsWeekly.com) and other major celebrity news websites (e.g. PerezHilton.com, Jezebel.com, PinkIsTheNewBlack.com, and individual celebrity-run websites) to do participant-observation of conversations about celebrity news stories and events occurring over these sites between celebrity reporters themselves, reporters and celebrities, reporters and consumers, and consumers and celebrities. I built a network of over 100 celebrity reporters on Facebook who were aware of and supportive of my research. I also gathered 300 pages of online conversations regarding celebrity news production and celebrity/reporter relationships to ground my analysis.

Interviews

For this research, I completed in-depth ethnographic interviews with 85 distinct informants/collaborators, including photographers, journalists, public relations representatives, magazine editors, and celebrities. The staff reporters, freelance reporters, and editors interviewed include individuals from each of *People*, *Us Weekly*, *OK!*, *In Touch*, *Star*, and *Life & Style*. The photographers interviewed, who largely work freelance, include individuals affiliated with each of the major photo agencies. In these interviews I inquired about general statistical information (age, gender, highest level of education, job title), as well as more detailed information about

personal and professional history and goals, reflections on gender dynamics in celebrity media production, ethics in their particular of media production (e.g. as reporter or photographer), and how the internet has affected their work and celebrity media production. With my experience as a newspaper and celebrity magazine reporter, I auto-ethnographically (Peterson 2001) examined my own experience of professional training and understanding of the array of journalistic ethics.

I averaged two interviews with each informant, but the number of interviews with each person varied between one and five, and the length of each interview varied between two and four hours (see interview index at end of dissertation). Additionally, I have conducted roughly 100 informal interviews with other industry figures and fans at red carpet events. While I reference informal interviews throughout my ten years of work as outlined above, the majority of the interviews referenced in this project were carried out between 2010 and 2014.

For the most part, the names of interviewees and other collaborators used throughout this ethnography are pseudonyms, in order to protect the identity of my collaborators. However, some individuals asked to have their real names used; those individuals are mostly paparazzi. For those who are using their real names, I have included their full name at the first mention (e.g. Galo Ramirez), whereas for those who requested pseudonyms, I only refer to them using a first name (e.g. Ashley). When I mentioned to the paparazzi that the reporters and red carpet photographers mostly requested pseudonyms, the paparazzi were not surprised. Most paparazzi said, “We have nothing to hide,” while reporters were concerned about how it would affect their professional lives. As Ulises “Trucha” Rios told me, “We are hated anyway.” Paparazzi rely on their shots for sales, and not on their allegiances to any publication since they do not work on staff or with any publication in particular. If they take a good photo, publications will buy it regardless of what comments they may have made about the industry.

On the other hand, reporters who work on staff for a particular magazine largely expressed paranoia about the effect their comments might have on their professional lives. Freelance reporters were, perhaps, even more concerned about use of their identity since their work flow relies entirely on how well they are liked and how connected they are in the industry, thus, saying the wrong thing could get them blacklisted. However, it is also important to note that much of the impetus for the reporters to not have their real names used was because of the personal nature of their comments; much of what they shared had to do very specifically with their experiences as women at these publications and in various situations on red carpets and during interviews.

Interestingly, of all of the reporters I worked with, only two expressed a preference to be referred to by their real names: Scott Huver and Mark Dagostino. Dagostino left his staff writer position at *People* during the course of my fieldwork to pursue his book-writing endeavors (the biography he co-wrote with Hulk Hogan, *My Life Outside the Ring*, became a *New York Times* best seller and motivated his departure from the magazine business). Scott is a one-man Hollywood institution—he has freelanced for nearly every celebrity weekly in addition to numerous other celebrity-focused media outlets, thus, he can be found at a different red carpet event most every night in Los Angeles. He also makes appearances as a Hollywood and celebrity commentator for various news programs (from Fox to E!), and thus felt that he already had a public persona he was comfortable with sharing. You will hear from Mark and Scott in chapter eight.

What is clear is that, among my collaborators, the men generally felt a stronger sense of agency to attach their names to their opinions than did the women I interviewed. In the earliest phases of my project, I hypothesized based on my experience as a reporter that for many women

celebrity reporting was an ultimate career goal, whereas men used it mostly as a stepping stone to the next level of their entertainment industry careers. While I do not think there is enough empirical evidence to support this as a definitive conclusion, I do see the tendencies for men to use celebrity reporting as a stepping stone or as a side job while seeking more elite positions within Hollywood.

For example, long-time freelance red carpet reporter for *In Touch* Alexander Foard is also an actor and screen writer; his screenplay for the film *Same Kind of Different as Me* (based on the nonfiction book of the same title), was picked up by Paramount Studios and the film is now in production, starring actors Renee Zellweger, Greg Kinnear, Djimon Hounsou, and Jon Voight. In my first years working as a reporter in Los Angeles, I remember standing on the red carpet next to freelance reporter Matthew Cole Weiss, who has worked for *Us Weekly* and many other publications. At one event, actor James Van Der Beek walked down the red carpet and stopped to talk to Matthew. I asked the reporter about his relationship to the actor and he informed me that he had recently directed the film *Standing Still*, in which Van Der Beek starred. Reporting was just a side gig for Matthew in between projects, he said. Interestingly, during promotion for the film Matthew was interviewed about his perspective on celebrity reporting and gave his perspective as a director, even though he was also working for the weekly magazines at this time, “It’s so tabloid-y. But that’s what people want to read. Hell, that’s what I want to read. *Us Weekly* is so much more entertaining to me than *Entertainment Weekly*. It’s the juice. It’s the gossip. It’s Brad and Angelina. It’s fodder for the water cooler. I think the best way to end it is for celebrities to have a better relationship with the press in the first place. I’ve been treated like crap by so many of these people that I love to see them taken off their high horse, to be honest” (Childress 2005). Currently, Matthew reports for *People*, but celebrity reporting was not his goal,

it is his fallback. He views himself ultimately as a screenwriter. Red carpet reporter Melissa, on the other hand, came to Hollywood to act and quickly settled for a life of reporting when she felt discouraged by the obstacles to entering the industry as an actress. For her, celebrity reporting was an end in itself, as another way into the entertainment industry. This is just one of many examples of the ways in which gender plays a large role in the experiences of celebrity media producers.

Textual and Visual analysis of Multi-Media Archives

Throughout the course of my research, I also collected photographic and textual archival materials from the *People* magazine library (which includes archives of both *People* and other weekly magazines) and online media archives, as well as personal collections of notable stories and photographs and videos from the reporters and photographers themselves. I incorporate textual and visual analyses of these archival materials throughout the project in order to strengthen the ethnography.

Collaboration and Reciprocity in Fieldwork

“The original field workers in what was then called ethnology were missionaries, bent on redeeming the savage from his follies and making him over into a civilized Christian... Then there were the secular humanists—impartial, respectful, hands-off observers who did not come to sell Christ to the savages but to preach ‘reason,’ ‘tolerance,’ and ‘cultural pluralism’ to the bourgeois literary public back home.”

–Susan Sontag²

If the approaches outlined by Sontag above were my only options, my ventures into ethnographic practice would have come to a screeching halt before I made it to “the field.” Thankfully, the field has shifted and examples have been set by ethnographers who do widely relevant and accessible, self-reflexive, collaborative ethnography that has inspired my own work. Still, as anthropologist Ruth Behar has said, “Even though anthropology has changed in the last

² (Sontag 2010:74-5).

few decades...it really has not changed all that much, not enough yet” (2009:110). Thus, some of the projects that do not conform to the classical tropes of anthropology outlined by Sontag are still not “representative of what most anthropologists consider anthropology” (ibid.). I have forged ahead with my project in hopes of continuing the shifts that have occurred in anthropology, and in hopes of contributing to accessible and collaborative interdisciplinary research focused on cultural production.

The nature of my research as a collaborative and reciprocal endeavor is a central component of my work. Rather than being an afterthought, my intent to work collaboratively and to ensure that there is reciprocity in fieldwork has been a cornerstone of my project from the outset. As someone who worked within the field of entertainment reporting before, during, and after the course of my “fieldwork,” I seek to maintain long-term relationships with all of my collaborators. My intention has never been to gather the information that I need and then disappear only to reemerge years later with a book that feels disconnected from the very material these collaborators helped me gather. Instead, I have remained in regular contact and have also offered support to my collaborators where I could be of help. For the reporters I worked with, it was a continual theme that they were grateful to have me to talk through their experiences with them since they had felt stifled and afraid to talk about the realities of their work. Some said my interviews with them were “like therapy sessions” and asked for additional meetings with me. Many did not have enough time or money for therapy, and so they wanted someone to listen to them vent, and I offered the support that I could. For some of the reporters I worked with who are working mothers, I brought dinner to their homes or watched their children so they could take care of things around the house.

For the paparazzi, I did things like bring them lunch while they were at work so that they would not miss their shots. Paparazzi who are on location cannot leave because that could mean missing the shot for which they have been waiting all day. When there are a group of paparazzi at one location, one paparazzo will get lunch for everyone so that no one else has to risk losing the shot, and someone will split profits with the paparazzo who left to get lunch from any photos taken while he was gone.

When I was asked to contribute a chapter on the paparazzi to the anthology *Contemporary Latina/o Media* (2014), I immediately turned to the paparazzi I worked with to see if they wanted to contribute any photos so that they could be published in a book. I recall sharing the publication of the anthology on Facebook. Hector Campos, a paparazzo I worked with, shared his excitement about the publication in a reply. “Thank you, Vanessa. That book is a small part of me in the world’s history.” Campos was proud to have a story of the paparazzi shared in that platform. In another anthology to which I am contributing, I again reached out to the paparazzi and, again, a few have contributed photos that will now fill several pages of the anthology for both my essay and those of other scholars in the book. This, again, is a source of pride for them and puts them (and their names) literally on the same pages as the scholars writing about them and the celebrities they document. The paparazzi usually do not get to see their name in print; instead, the agencies to which they sell their photos get the by-lines, so publishing in an anthology is a way for them to actually see themselves get personal credit for the photos they work so hard to capture.

After being asked to help coordinate a panel at the Getty Center in Los Angeles about the state of paparazzi photography, I reached out to Galo Ramirez, my closest collaborator, and he joined a panel of museum workers, newspaper journalists, and magazine editors to provide the

paparazzi point of view. Not only was he paid, but several paparazzi showed up to the public event and were proud to have someone representing them in a discussion about paparazzi work on a national level that usually happens without the input of paparazzi. As Ramirez geared up to apply for community college in 2014, he called on me to help him apply. We spent time together at my table looking up schools, majors, ordering his transcripts, and talking to academic counselors. It feels rewarding to be able to give back to the individuals who have helped me develop my research.

Throughout my research history, I believe I have been what Behar has referred to as a “vulnerable observer” (1996). I could relate to the reporters on many levels from my own experience reporting, as well as to the paparazzi in many ways from my experience as a Latina working within the industry. In general, I offered support in whatever ways I could to the gracious collaborators who shared their stories with me. I believe that this led to more than just the production of this dissertation, but also to the development of strong relationships between myself and the reporters and photographers.

Urban Ethnography in Los Angeles

Even considering the degree to which the entertainment industry affects its landscape and culture, Los Angeles is not as simple as Hollywood television and film would have you believe. When people come to LA, they want to see celebrities. LA is a mecca of stardom, celebrity, money, media, and entertainment, but it is also home to a wide range of other industries and an extreme diversity of neighborhoods.

Car culture is a big part of daily life in Los Angeles. There is public transportation, but there is not a single celebrity reporter or paparazzi who does not have a car and who does not drive to each and every event. It would be impossible to be a celebrity reporter or red carpet

photographer without a car because the buses and metro simply do not go where the events are. We are not only going to central theater locations; often times we are driving into canyons and private estates on back roads. Reporters also have to be dressed in a way that wouldn't work well for public transportation (e.g. not walking shoes) and we have to be out extremely late. Similarly, the paparazzi need their cars to track celebrities across the vast expanse of Los Angeles. As I discuss in detail below, for the paparazzi their vehicles serve as their offices as much as their transportation. Having a car is a central part of life in Los Angeles, just as taking the subway is in New York.

My project was not a traditional rural ethnography; it was a decidedly and extremely urban one. The workplaces were mostly on busy streets across the vast metropolis that is Los Angeles. From red carpet events in Hollywood, to waiting outside a film set on a residential street in South Central, to “door stepping” with paparazzi in what is known locally as “the Valley,” this research is firmly grounded in city life.

Living and Researching at Home in Los Angeles

“For the anthropologist, the world is professionally divided into ‘home’ and ‘out there,’ the domestic and the exotic, the urban academic world and the tropics. The anthropologist is not simply a neutral observer. He is a man in control of, and even consciously exploiting his own intellectual alienation.”

—Susan Sontag³

“The meaning of home, I have come to realize, is full of contradictions, and impossible to encompass in a single definition.”

—Ruth Behar⁴

Ruth Behar has called the “pondering [of] the relationship between feeling at home and being homesick” an “anthropological obsession” (2014). If this is true, then it is no wonder that I

³ (Sontag 2010:74).

⁴ (Behar 2014).

have turned to anthropology. My father was born in Puerto Rico, raised between Puerto Rico and New York, then moved to Los Angeles as a young adult where he met my mother, who was from the East Coast and moved to Los Angeles as a child. My parents had children who were born while the young couple lived in East Los Angeles and later South Central Los Angeles. Years later, I, their youngest, moved to New York to go to college. Upon graduating, I moved to Los Angeles and got an apartment in a nice, residential West Los Angeles neighborhood. The first time mom came to my apartment, she couldn't get over how, in one generation, we had gone from living in the ghetto to her daughter living in an relatively affluent area. I was working for both UCLA as a media relations representative and *People* magazine as a stringer at the time, and it was clear that my cultural capital in the city had shifted. For graduate school, I relocated to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and then returned back to the Westside of Los Angeles where I have been living doing fieldwork and writing since 2010. In between my stints in these various locations, I also spent periods of time in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Spain. For me, for my family, I think home has never been a stable or a singular place. In fact, aside from the fact that we all have an address where we can receive mail, I'm not sure that any of my family members could really tell you where our homes are. We all get homesick for Puerto Rico. My family members who have left LA get homesick for LA. My family members who have left New York get homesick for New York. For us, and many others, home is a floating signifier.

Still, on any day, at any moment, Los Angeles—my place of birth—is the place to which I always return and feel like I could never leave. Because of that fact, I think my life has been extraordinarily affected by Hollywood and celebrity culture. Though I grew up in a household with radical left-wing political activist parents, my family experience demonstrates that being an activist and wanting to be in show business were not mutually exclusive, though they do seem

contradictory—the focus on equality and justice on the one hand, and the focus on notoriety and fortune that might come with fame on the other hand. Though my Nuyorican father moved to California from New York in the 1960s as a young socialist activist, but he spent much of his adult life (which was cut short when he was murdered in 1990) working on his music career. Like so many families in Los Angeles, we had, or at least attempted to have, a foot in the entertainment industry’s door.

Working at “Home”

For those anthropologists and ethnographers who have decided to work in ways that feel closer to home, the justification for their work becomes their insider knowledge. They have to sell the idea that they have good reasons for doing this research and have access to knowledge and culture that an outsider doesn’t, even though those anthropologists working far from “home” or far from cultures they identify with never have to give any explanation as to why it makes sense for them to do the research. The only justification they ever have to give is that they find it interesting and have read up on theory that is tangentially relative. This is grounds for their project “making sense.” Of course I have noticed that this changes, sometimes, based on race/ethnicity. For students of color, and women of color in particular, I have noticed a general lack of understanding when they do not want to work “at home,” or the presumption that wherever they are choosing to do research is “at home.” An African-American peer of mine in graduate school was pursuing her research in Haiti. When she approached various (white male) professors about her research topic, the question she heard time and time again was, “Oh, are you Haitian? That’s why you are doing research there, right?” When she explained that she was not Haitian, they seem baffled by her decision to do research there—wasn’t there somewhere she felt more identified with where she could research? Of course these professors studied in Haiti and

had no connection other than their intellectual one in the region, and that went unquestioned. Similar issues came up with an African-American woman student I knew who was pursuing research in the Dominican Republic. It was as if the white male professors expected them to use their race/ethnicity/cultural background to determine the research they would or could do, and the white male professors had felt that the world was theirs for the taking; there was no need to limit or justify where they did their research.

When I was initially going to do my dissertation fieldwork in Cuba, some white male professors (and not women professors) continually asked me, “Are you from Cuba?” I believe I only got this question because, to these professors, it was the only way my decision to do research there would make sense to them. I had a Hispanic surname, so they wanted to get to the bottom of my origin and that could serve as the decision maker as to where I should do my research. “No, I’m not Cuban, I’m Puerto Rican,” I told them. “Well, maybe you should do my research there,” one professor told me. It even got into my head that, maybe he was right, maybe that was the only place it made sense for me to do research, despite the fact that my primary expertise was in Cuba, not Puerto Rico. My expertise in Cuba did not seem to be of import to the professors in question. Somehow for white anthropologists in the US, the world is their ethnographic oyster, and for the racially/ethnically othered anthropologists, their ethnographic abilities exist within the confines of the places they are from. Somehow, it seems, these confines make them more “understood” and, thus, less of a threat to the traditional anthropologist who still wants to disappear from his ivory tower for a specified amount of time and join a tribe in the wilderness of a third world country.

Doing ethnography closer to home remains the exception rather than the rule, as does doing US-based ethnography. Thus, for those of us who choose to work at home and in the

United States, we have two strikes working against us, doubling our struggle for anthropological legitimacy among our peers. In a collaborative project with his students, who were looking at various aspects of American popular culture, anthropologist Conrad Kottak asserted that research in the US was not just for other social scientists—anthropologists needed to stake out their space here as well (Kottak 1982). While anthropologists are still working on making that space acceptable within the discipline, I hope to contribute to that line of work. I believe that concerns about home, place, and space become increasingly unfounded as home becomes a more indefinable space for many people, and many anthropologists.

At Home in the Entertainment Industry

In a way, I was made for this research. I was born in LA to a father who was an aspiring musician in Los Angeles. I had childhood aspirations towards stardom and celebrity that shifted during college, as I became increasingly involved in HipHop culture and was performing as a spoken word artist and rapper. But, by the end of college, I somehow ended up in the thick of celebrity culture working for *People* magazine. Like actress-turned-celebrity-gossip-columnist Hedda Hopper (Hopper 1963), many reporters interested in working with me on my dissertation project have a (failed) history of or aspirations of acting, screen writing, and film producing, and either hoped or hope to become celebrities.

While I would not consider myself an aspiring actor, I will say that I was a product of growing up in the greater Los Angeles area and had a strong desire and affinity for celebrity, entertainment, and fame. As a child I asked my mother to take me to open call auditions, though I had no headshot or experience. I began writing fan mail to celebrities at a young age, going to concerts like it was my job, and always making an effort to talk to celebrities who I saw at events. I was fearless about approaching every celebrity I ever saw. I wrote personalized birthday

cards to celebrities I liked. I knew their birthdays as a young child because I did research and marked their birthdays on my calendar. I went to events like “Get Moving With Oprah” at Griffith Park in 1995 at age eleven, and made it my duty to talk to and attempt to make friends with every celebrity there, including Oprah (until her security pushed me away). It was clear that celebrity media had done its job because I felt as if I had a real relationship to those celebrities.

I started working for a commercial radio station at age 16 as a DJ, going to celebrity events and hosting celebrities at the radio station. I worked for a commercial radio station in New York during college, and then I started working for *People* magazine. Though I came from a family of political activists and was one myself, I had the bug that affects most Americans—we are interested in celebrities. And I am most certainly not the only member of my family who has been affected by the Hollywood-itch. My mother thinks part of what led to the demise of my father through his heroin addiction was, in large part, the failure of his musical career. Members of my family have attempted to enter the entertainment industry through a wide array of approaches, but have been particularly proactive in their attempts to appear on reality television shows over the last several years. Collectively, my family has applied for 25 reality television show series. In fact, when I talked to my family to ask them about which shows they had applied to, my sister Larissa sent me a resume of sorts, outlining every reality television show she had ever applied to, and the stage she had gotten to in the casting process (call backs, interviews, etc.). Of all of these attempts, the only success was that my brother appeared on the show *The Dog Whisperer* with his misbehaved English Mastiff. Larissa did come close to being selected for the *Biggest Loser*, but was ultimately not cast. She said that, as a result of her auditions with the *Biggest Loser*, she was continually contacted for other reality TV shows via phone by casting directors for different roles. She ultimately turned down all of these other opportunities because

she “felt they were either humiliating and demeaning (i.e. going on the *Bad Girls Club* and competing in athletic challenges with skinny girls)” or were not shows she was interested in. When my family was going through one of our many incredibly rough patches involving drugs and financial problems, my oldest sister suggested we write to Dr. Phil and ask for help. This was presented, in all seriousness, as a real potential solution to our issues. There is a real illusion of having access to celebrities, to fame, to the resources that we come to expect we are special enough to receive, like Dr. Phil’s psychological services.

As a child when we were having another bout of difficult time, I remember writing a letter to Oprah asking her to help my mother—she was a single mom who lost her husband, mother, and father all in a year and she needed help. I thought my mother was as deserving as all of the people Oprah helped on her show. I remember the feeling of sadness that came over me when I got a generic letter with Oprah’s signature saying thank you for my correspondence. Even though they offered nothing, I still kept the letter in my nightstand drawer for as long as I can remember. After working at a radio station where I quite frequently interacted with celebrities, it became more commonplace and my enthrallment faded. I no longer glorified celebrities as I had previously. I don’t freak out about meeting celebrities anymore, but I do still like the shock I get from people when I tell them someone famous who I have interviewed. People still want to hear my best stories. What I realize now is that the best stories of interacting with celebrities happened before I worked for *People*, before I was a radio DJ; they happened when I was an overzealous little kid who made her way into ridiculous situations to meet celebrities. Like the time, at age twelve, I got my sister, her friends, and I invited to Alanis Morissette’s after-party because her manager saw us crying outside of the John Anson Ford Theater in Los Angeles after we had unknowingly purchased counterfeit tickets. We ended up at the manager’s Sunset

Boulevard Penthouse as the guests of honor and Morrissette even expressed her frustration with what had happened to us. These kinds of experiences were foundational to my childhood and adolescence and most certainly led me to work for *People* and, eventually, to this project.

My position as a reporter for *People* and my experience in this industry was a key part of my ability to do this project. My position also enabled me to be a part of my own research (Peterson 2001); I am my own source throughout this research, and my own experiences are a critical part of the project. In this case, the access I maintained in the industry was absolutely necessary to do the research, but this access also puts me in a unique position that makes my project even less traditional, as I am part of the material I am recounting and analyzing. I understand that several facets of my work raise a concern as to objectivity, as objectivity is striven for in both anthropology and journalism.

While I do not believe that objectivity is attainable for anyone, I do recognize the difficulty and conundrums ethnographers encounter when attempting research within communities of which they are a part. While my friends and, of course, everyone I interviewed and worked with on the research knew about my project, the process of filing emails from my peers away into a folder called “L.A. Research” was strange. Of course the e-mails themselves were not “research,” but the correspondence was part of my communication and set-up for the interviews; discussions about my research happened over e-mail, and I needed to keep track of it.

Like in any community, the issue of trust and processing who your “real” friends are became a subject I found myself reflecting on frequently. Some of the individuals I worked with were close personal friends with whom I am still in very regular personal contact, and some of them were only professional contacts who kept up with me while I was on the red carpet. Being a red carpet reporter (especially for *People*) did carry a great deal of social and cultural capital,

which, for the PR representatives, publicists, and celebrities, could often lead to economic capital (Bourdieu 1984). Their relationship to me could benefit them, since, as a reporter, I played a tangible part in determining the coverage of celebrities and brands in the magazine, so they would put additional energy into the relationship while I was a regular face on the red carpet. When they at least *thought* I could get more coverage for them in the magazine, they certainly treated me as a friend. Now, the amount of time I spend reporting is so small, and I've been in and out of the celebrity reporting community so much that the PR representatives and other reporters do not consider me a part of the community as they used to. They know I might still freelance from time to time and they know I used to be on the carpet regularly, but, without the cultural and social capital my position on the red carpet provided me, I'm not as important to them anymore. They don't need *me* anymore. Regardless of what I may have done to help reporters land positions, or magazine placement I might have provided for PR representatives and celebrities, as Scott Huver, a long time staple of the red carpet in Los Angeles, told me, "No favors in Hollywood go into a bank." Completing my fieldwork, or, rather, forcing myself to stop in order to completely focus on my dissertation, was thus bittersweet. I most certainly have felt at home in Los Angeles at various points of my life. I also felt that the celebrity reporting community was part of how I identified with this home, and why I felt at home. The red carpet felt like home; it was old, familiar, people I knew, routines and rituals I could do with my eyes shut. I have a love/hate relationship with it. Which is a sign that the red carpet was a true home for me. Feeling like I am not currently a part of this community, that I am no longer regularly occupying space within this home of mine, is difficult to come to terms with.

At the end of the day, however, wherever we think or feel home is can change instantaneously. While I still very much feel at home in Los Angeles, I no longer feel at home on

the red carpet and I do not think that anyone on the red carpet would consider me part of the community at this present time because I am not actively working as a reporter. I had to take a step back to focus on completing this project. Still, like any home, if I began to report on the red carpet again, it would feel like home again; I have left and re-entered the community so many times (every academic year of graduate coursework, I disappeared to Ann Arbor and reappeared in the summer, joining my peers on the red carpet almost immediately). Every year, I would reacquaint myself, say hi to the familiar faces, introduce myself to the new faces, and find my place, just like when I returned to my mother's house for my breaks in between college—it was not home to me anymore, but it was always one of my homes.

I do not believe that we ever lose our homes completely—even if we, or our home, are physically gone, the home remains in the core of our being. Every place we have ever considered a “home,” for better or worse, is a part of who we are. Each home takes us through a different phase of our life, a period of growth. Even if we were taken from a home at a young age, as my father wrote constantly about his experience being “raped” from his home island of Puerto Rico as an infant, every single home we have ever known, whether we remember them vividly or not, make us who we are. In a world in which where we are born determines our nationality, in a country in which the nation or ethnic background you are from determines how you are socially read and understood, we may cling to or desperately try to negate our various homes. Though my experience losing my “home” on the red carpet is, in many ways, unlike Behar's experience leaving her native Cuba as a small child, as the red carpet is not my birthplace, it still does hold a piece of the ways in which I understand myself; I, too, know that I can return to my home on the red carpet and, again, be a part of that community. This is how I know Los Angeles, and celebrity reporting on the red carpet, will forever be homes to me.

Manufacturing Celebrity and Marketing Fame

This dissertation is divided into four comprehensive sections. The first section includes two chapters that lay out the project and ground the project in both a time and space and within the existing body of scholarship. Chapter one has introduced the project, the celebrity weekly magazines, and my collaborators. It has also described the methodologies that I use and explored ideas of self-reflexively researching at home, in the urban environment of Los Angeles. Chapter two will examine the literature and theoretical frameworks on which this project builds, including within the fields of anthropology of news and journalism, anthropology of Hollywood, and interdisciplinary studies of celebrity.

The second section consists of two chapters exploring the work of celebrity reporters and photographers, including examination of issues of race and gender that are central to these positions. Chapter three looks at the rituals that take place on the red carpet, and outlines the work of red carpet reporters and photographers. Chapter four explores the other spaces in which celebrity reporting takes place, including nightclubs, public spaces, and one-on-one interviews.

Section three contains three chapters focused on the paparazzi. Chapter five ethnographically profiles the paparazzi to provide insight into this misunderstood group of laborers. Chapter six explores the economics of paparazzi work, including both formal and informal economies. Chapter seven examines the Latino demographics of the Los Angeles paparazzi, and its correlation with physical violence and a discourse of hostility toward these individuals.

Finally, the fourth section looks more closely at the tactics used by celebrity media and its effects. Chapter eight examines the specific tactic of celebrity couple name-combining, which

is used by the magazines to promote feelings of intimacy with celebrities amongst fans. Chapter nine looks at issues of body image, by focusing on the “body teams” employed at the magazines to report specifically on celebrities’ bodies. Lastly, chapter ten concludes by considering how celebrity and entertainment has affected contemporary American understandings of what news means and what news media is today.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

While the introduction offered some theoretical framing of the project, this chapter provides a more in-depth review of the literature used to frame this project, from conceptualization to drafting. Following the overview are more extensive reviews of particular areas of literature and theoretical frameworks. These areas include: (1) Reflexivity; (2) Anthropology and Celebrity (through a focus on the anthropological celebrity Margaret Mead); (3) Anthropology and Media; (4) Anthropology and Journalism; (5) Anthropology and Hollywood; (6) the history of Hollywood-based celebrity reporting; and (7) theoretical framing of fame and celebrity. This project was conceptualized from foundational works on the anthropology of media, but it also builds on contemporary studies of celebrity, production culture, and journalism.

Overview

Broadly, my research is situated within the anthropology of media and anthropology of work. My work on the predominantly Latino paparazzi of Los Angeles and predominantly female celebrity reporters examines the creative economies of visual arts and media in Hollywood, which create and promulgate national and international celebrity culture. While these individuals may sell their product to or contract with larger companies, they carry out their work as independent media producers. Within this system of media production, I offer a critical analysis of the hierarchies of labor, paying particular attention to the very pronounced division of

labor by ethnic, racial, class, and gender lines. The focus on media production culture positions my work within the newly formed interdisciplinary study of production culture, and my regional focus on Los Angeles allows my work to add to the interdisciplinary literature on Hollywood culture more broadly. While the demographics of paparazzi include many US born Latinos, there are also many documented as well as undocumented Latin American immigrants who have joined into this creative economy. Thus, this research offers insight into contemporary immigrant communities, networks, and economic interventions. The shift of the paparazzi demographics from mostly white to mostly people of color, which I address in section three, provides insight into a professional reinvention for contemporary paparazzi.

Foundational to the development of my project, and the analyses therein, are the Hollywood industry-focused works of anthropologists Hortense Powdermaker (1950), Kelly Askew (2004), and Sherry Ortner (2010, 2013). Askew's work on Hollywood film production serves as model of what it looks like to work within Hollywood industries while critically analyzing them. Ortner illuminates the virtual impossibility of doing successful ethnographic research in Hollywood without insider access to the industry. Also key are Catherine Lutz's work on magazine production (1993), Laura Nader's suggestion for anthropologists to "study up" in society (1972), and Liisa Malkki's theorizing of the relationship between anthropology and journalism, in which she asserts that "setting up a binary contrast between anthropological and journalistic modes of knowledge production, even provisionally, unduly homogenizes and simplifies both kinds of practice" (1997:94).

In recent years, there has been a great deal of academic interest in celebrity and fame (e.g. Burns 2009; Ferris & Harris 2011; Grindstaff 2013; Herwitz 2008; McDonnell 2014; Petersen 2011, 2014; Rojek 2001, 2012; Sternheimer 2011; Ward 2011). There has been and

continues to be work done on contemporary stardom and celebrity in sociology, psychology, history, media studies, and philosophy, but work in this area is seriously lacking in anthropology. This poses a critical void in the body of literature, as it is anthropology's job to explore these cultural phenomena from the inside, and this has not been done. Most recent studies of celebrity have used media analysis and minimal interviews, but no academics have successfully gained access within the entertainment industry (Ortner 2009, 2010) in order to do a thorough ethnography on celebrity media. The recent work of sociologists Kerry Ferris and Scott Harris covers various topics related to celebrity and red carpet culture, but their work lacks insider access, and instead relies on such tactics as analysis of television broadcasts of red carpet events (Ferris & Harris 2011). Even the few popular works that were produced by reporters themselves (e.g. Brokaw 2013; Kast 2007) do not critically analyze or delve into the politics of the business, the issues of race and gender that permeate the business, or the very culture created by the work they do. This is the work of cultural anthropology.

My experience as a reporter and my later training as an anthropologist has put me in a unique position to be able to understand and analyze this sector of American cultural production that we all (think we) know, but have not been able to fully understand. I hope to, at least on some level, reveal the women and men behind the curtain of celebrity media production. Celebrity and paparazzi are both talked about informally on a regular basis in American culture, but the assumptions made about this industry are not necessarily founded on its actual complex realities. Still, while there are not ethnographic works on contemporary American celebrity culture, there are anthropological studies of fame that offer important insights on notions of fame on a global and historical level, such as Nancy Munn's work on the Gawa in Papua New Guinea (1986).

While there has not been ethnography specifically in the areas of fame and celebrity, in recent years there has been interdisciplinary ethnography (still mostly carried out by non-anthropologists) on media production. In the introduction to the seminal work on the new interdisciplinary area of “production studies,” media and communications studies scholars Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John T. Caldwell describe the burgeoning field:

Production studies borrow theoretical insights from the social sciences and humanities, but, perhaps most importantly, they take the lived realities of people involved in media production as the subjects for theorizing production as culture. Production studies gather empirical data about production: the complexity of routines and rituals, the routines of seemingly complex processes, the economic and political forces that shape roles, technologies, and the distribution of resources according to cultural and demographic differences (Mayer et al. 2009:4).

The description is anthropological at its core—it is about people, it is about ritual, it is about culture. Later in the anthology, Caldwell examines “scholar-practitioners who ‘work both sides of the fence’ in production studies,” or “scholars who pursue industry fieldwork at the same time they maintain production identities” (2009:214). Because when I entered graduate school, I never broke my ties with my industry work, my fieldwork was an extension of the production identity I developed long before I had even applied for graduate school; thus, my fieldwork experience felt organic and, in many ways, allowed me to feel and physically be at home in both Los Angeles and the entertainment industry in my role as a celebrity reporter.

In 2006, a special issue of *Ethnography* was published entitled “Worlds of Journalism.” Dominic Boyer and Ulf Hannerz’s introduction to the special issue makes the case for “the ethnography of journalism as a key lens for better understanding four sets of research problems facing contemporary social science” (2006:5). They outline four main reasons for this:

(1) the involvement of media professions like journalism in processes of social mediation and cultural production more broadly, (2) the opportunity of reflexive social science to ‘study sideways’ other professional groups through ethnography, (3) the contemporary transformation of institutions and practices of political communication, democracy and

citizenship, and (4) the emergence of new modes of translocal social experience such as those experienced by mobile, cosmopolitan professional groups (ibid.).

To varying degrees, my project addresses these four issues, yet most directly addresses first two, as I examine the intersection between anthropology and Hollywood, journalism, fame, and celebrity from the perspective of a media producer working alongside her peers.

In my media production ethnography, rather than focusing on the publishers (who print the work that has already been produced) or the editors (who oversee the production of stories), my focus is on the information-gatherers (Clark 2003:50) and the image brokers (Gürsel 2010, 2012). I did interview and work with editors and photo agency owners throughout my research, but they are not my central focus, as most of their work is done within the confines of the offices or what we classically think of as “newsrooms,” as opposed to on the street like paparazzi or on the red carpet like red carpet reporters and photographers. Furthermore, most of these information-gatherers work freelance, which represents the contemporary reality for most media workers; freelancers are understudied in media production studies, and there has been a call to move out of newsroom-centric approaches to studies of news and journalism, as that notion has become increasingly irrelevant as media and production practices change (Cottle 2007:8-9; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010:30).

While within the area of cultural production, my work is focused on the field of large-scale production. “The field of large-scale production involves what we sometimes refer to as ‘mass’ or ‘popular’ culture...Sustained by a large and complex culture industry, its dominant principle of hierarchization involves economic capital or ‘the bottom line’” (Johnson 1993:16; see also Cook 1996; Horkheimer & Adorno [1947] 1997; Lash & Lury 2007). Under the umbrella of “mass” or “popular” culture, I hone in on the overlap between journalism and celebrity, and the production processes therein—production of both meaning, which yields

symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993:76), and material goods, which yield economic capital (this all *within* the creative economy). My research examines the material repercussions (around issues of labor, jobs, payment, inequality, racism, hierarchies of labor, and more) that are involved in meaning making regimes, of which the paparazzi are one, in so far as they are part of a larger regime of media/image/symbol making in the form of celebrities. Overall, while I look at production practices and labor, I am dissecting the media/image/symbol making of celebrity. This project, particularly its focus on the paparazzi, provides a way to unearth and unpack the linkages between the symbolic/meaning making processes of celebrity making and the material aspects involved. Analyses of media often remain stuck on symbol making and representations, but rarely link those representations to matters of political economy. My research offers an example of this linkage and the complexity of the economic/labor/commercial systems therein.

Reflexivity and Accessibility in this Project

In the previous chapter, I addressed the importance of collaborative approaches to fieldwork for this project. As an extension of the collaborative nature of the work, I will briefly comment on how reflexivity and collaboration come together in my project.

Anthropologists need to be prepared for the people they study *and* the general public to read what they write (Brettell 1993); this will only help to democratize the discipline and the genre of ethnography (Behar 1999; Deloria 1969). Of course, this means that anthropologists need to start writing ethnographies for a different “imagined readership” (Palriwala 2005), ethnographies that are not simply written to be in conversation with other anthropologists but that are useful to the people written about and to the world. Throughout the course of my writing of this project, I have sent drafts of various chapters to the collaborators of this project, I have

worked with some on anthology contributions and in popular media articles. I am hoping that the material in this dissertation can reach a broad audience, that I may find a happy medium between academic and commercial publishing approaches.

Because of its tendency to help anthropologists (to gain legitimacy, maybe even tenure), rather than the people they study, ethnography has been called “a one way street” (Clifford & Marcus 1986:22). The people anthropologists research give gifts that cannot be reciprocated (Behar 2003:22; Ulysse 2002:24)—time, cooperation, collaboration. As educators, anthropologists’ gift can be producing texts and using research methods to educate in ways deemed constructive by the communities themselves (e.g. Meek 2010). If anthropologists study people, they need to know how to talk *with* them, rather than *for* or *about* them (Alcoff 1991). My experience as a red carpet reporter before and during this research places me in conversation with my collaborators from the outset of the project. Because in journalism, objectivity remains (at least theoretically and aspirationally) a cornerstone of journalistic approaches and ethics, it was important to my collaborators that I make my position explicit and central, since some were concerned about how my experience as a reporter would affect my objectivity or, rather, how it would render it entirely impossible. I assured them that they were correct, but that objectivity was *not* in any way, shape, or form, a goal of my project. Instead, I explained that my goal was to offer an analysis of celebrity reporting and photography from the perspective of someone who has worked within the industry, with the subjectivity as a strengthening rather than a weakening force.

Does ethnography *require* reflexivity?

The art of observing others is critical to understanding humanity, as Alfred Schutz notes in his description of observing: “I am incomparably better attuned to him [the observed] than I

am to myself. I may indeed be more aware of my own past...than I am of my partner's. Yet I have never been face to face with myself as I am with him now; hence I have never caught myself in the act of actually living through an experience" (1932:169). Of course "What can be comprehended is always only an 'approximate value' of the limit of concept 'the other's intended meaning'" (ibid.:109), which is why self-reflexivity becomes ever more critical in attempting to provide *truly* candid accounts of ethnographic engagement and in delivering the most complete (partial) truths possible (Clifford & Marcus 1986). And since ethnographies are based on the relationships anthropologists develop with other people, this must be accurately represented. Why should the studied be exposed, while the ethnographer remains concealed (Bok 1982)? What information was exchanged in the process of ethnographic research? How did the ethnographer affect the people s/he researched/collaborated with? How did they affect him/her? How did s/he come to the project and how did s/he finish it? Ulysse believes reflexivity (as invoked by Ruth Behar) has become "a new mode of academic activism, which seeks to interrupt the problem of ethnographic authority that arises when the focus is only on the subject" (Ulysse 2007:6).

The complex issues that have arose from discussions surrounding representation and who can speak for whom are also critical to evaluating ethnographic voice. Since the call for native ethnography (Jones 1970), it has been much debated who can speak for groups of people, specifically through an ethnographic voice (Alcoff 1991). Should it only be individuals considered part of a group as opposed to outsiders (Deloria 1969; Lassiter 2000)? Linda Alcoff suggests that "a speaker's location (which I take here to refer to their *social* location, or social identity) has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one's speech" (1991:7). However, the "location" that one occupies can

change, even over the course of ethnographic research. As exemplified in the work of Circe Sturm, the process of doing ethnography can be a transformational one (2002). Changing voice and clashing positionalities are evident in Sturm's *Blood Politics*, as she fluctuates between an unsure researcher and a "native" Native anthropologist, reexamining her identity during fieldwork (ibid.). Ethnography is a transformational experience for both the researched and the researcher and should be represented as such in ethnographic texts.

In this project on the production of celebrity media, I navigate being a part of both the researched producers, and also being a media consumer. Because I am part of a clearly demarcated group of celebrity journalists, I identify strongly with the journalists I work with. In my work with reporters, I approached a project in which the question of representation is reversed from the typical privileged ethnographer speaking for the underprivileged "subjects" (Hart 1996). The journalists I worked with are a female dominant, heterogeneous group, but they are mostly from upper/upper-middle class white families, while I come from a racially/ethnically mixed working class family. My position as a Latina has created moments in which I have been pigeonholed into doing certain stories as a celebrity reporter because of my language skills or "ethnic" background; these naturally are critical points upon which I reflect in my project. Conversely, my work with the predominantly Latino male paparazzi positions me quite differently as generally the only woman in the group during moments of participant-observation, yet we do share some common experiences through a Latina/o identity. My decision to remain reflexive throughout this project is particularly important, as scholars have recently declared a necessity for self-reflexivity in ethnographic studies of news and journalism (Cottle 2007:5; Hannerz 1998). I believe my perspective, having previously worked in the field I study, can bring a complex reflexivity to the understanding of media production.

Ruth Behar suggests that “what has changed the most dramatically in our time is that there no longer is a justification for keeping a secret diary in the field. Ethnographers so thoroughly question their presuppositions now before embarking and wear their hearts so openly on their sleeves that there isn’t any place for them to hide” (Behar 1999:480). I believe that embracing the kind of reflexivity employed by Behar and producing more broadly relevant and collaborative work (Brettell 1993:3; Meek 2010) will make anthropology more useful, more democratic, and secure its space as a necessary and legitimate, yet accessible, form of intellectual inquiry. I hope that my project can serve as an example of the kind of work I believe should be done in anthropology.

Accessibility

My experience as a journalist and my hope to be a public scholar puts me in the position of *needing* to continue working cooperatively with mass media, as an anthropologist. Thus, it is my intention, and not a misunderstanding of what academic literature should look like, that this book is relevant and readable to the widest audience possible. While I have been working in the celebrity media industry in various roles since 2004, I did not formally begin my research until 2009. At that time, I spoke with my colleagues at *People* magazine and other weekly magazines to get approval and support. One of the editors of *People* told me, “Whatever you do, please make this accessible to us. If you are going to write about us, make it useful to us. So many academics study things that could be beneficial for non-academics to understand, but it ends up written in a way that we cannot access, and we are journalists. So, please, consider us as you produce your work.” This is one promise that I cannot back down on. This work is about people who both understand the significance of their work as cultural producers, and take their prominence for granted; it is my hope that this book will help clearly outline their importance in

American, and even global culture. This book is about individuals who have given me more time, patience, and energy than I could have ever asked for. Their willingness to work with me was a gift, and my production of this piece of literature should be something they can appreciate. Because the individuals I worked with on this project produce materials consumed by millions of people every day, they were also at times dismissive of my project, as they do not believe it has the possibility to be as relevant or as widely read as their own work—which is likely true, though I will do my best not to fall into that trap. One co-worker repeatedly called my work a “class project,” trivializing the nature of dissertation research; yet I understood her perspective as a mass media producer.

Another point of contention between reporters I worked with and my approach to this research was perhaps a similar point of contention many anthropologists may have had some time ago—my objectivity, or lack thereof, in this research. When working with celebrity journalist Stacey, she was concerned about how my position as a celebrity reporter while doing this research would prevent me from being completely objective. I told her, “That is the whole point of me doing this. I’m not going to be objective. But nobody ever really is, right?” The journalist’s concern with being “objective” in his or her reporting is as unattainable as the notion of academics being “objective” in their research; we all have experiences in life that lead us to be inherently *subjective* in every single action we take on a daily basis. Whereas academics have at least presented the issue that objectivity is impossible (Behar 1996), the notion of objectivity is a cornerstone of journalism, and journalists are taught to attempt to extract themselves and their biases from stories they tell. While I will spend more time elsewhere discussing the ways in which journalism and anthropologists share common struggles, I did feel more pushback from journalists on the issue of my inability to be “objective,” which tells me that, with relation to

objectivity/subjectivity, anthropology has more carefully thought through the human condition that prevents us from being truly “objective.” Thus, I move forward in both my ethnographic and journalistic endeavors with the understanding that I will not and cannot be objective in my work. I put forth my subjectivities as candidly as possible, and with as much critical analysis as possible.

Anthropology and Celebrity, Starring Margaret Mead

“Those whose lives I have touched—and still touch—have to deal with this also. It is not as if I were a quiet and private person who has suddenly stepped into public view. All those about whom I write here, as well as many people who are closely connected with those about whom I am writing, have already had to put up with me in one way or another. I come into their living rooms, unannounced, on television... When my daughter was ten, she commented, ‘It’s hard to have a mother who is half-famous.’ I asked her why, and she replied, ‘Because when I assume that people know who you are, so often they don’t.’ And when I asked her what being famous meant, she laughed and said, ‘Being in crossword puzzles.’”

—Margaret Mead⁵

Mead, a celebrity and a symbolic figurehead of anthropology, made her way into my research serendipitously. In December 2011, while going through the archives of *People* magazine in their Los Angeles office to look for trends in coverage over the years, I stumbled upon a collection of back issues of *Us* magazine that the *People* offices maintained. I took it as a sign that I was on the right track with my project when I opened up the December 26, 1978 issue of *Us* magazine (when it was a bi-monthly trade magazine, many years before it became a glossy weekly to compete with *People*) and saw an obituary for famed anthropologist Margaret Mead. On the “Departures” page of the issue, Mead’s obituary appears alongside those for The Who drummer Keith Moon, comedian Edgar Bergen (brother of Candace Bergen), and Morris the Cat (from 9 Lives cat food commercials). A quintessential photo of Mead standing in front of a

⁵ (Mead [1972] 1995:289).

Samoan statue is demonstrative of her definitive status as “an American icon” (Lutkehaus 2008). The brief obituary read: “Margaret Mead: In the prefeminist days, when even the most resolute women sought only the right to vote, Margaret Mead hared off to Samoa to study the habits of primitive cultures. Within her lifetime, she popularized anthropology and won the hearts of the young” (“Departures: Margaret” 1978:44). Almost exactly 33 years after the publication of this issue of *Us, I*, a young anthropologist, was going through celebrity magazines only to find one of the foundational figures in the anthropology whose legacy continues to impact the discipline. In fact, the culture and cult of celebrity has affected our own discipline very deeply.

Despite Mead’s legacy as a celebrity anthropologist, anthropological studies of contemporary (American) celebrity culture are rare; and the contemporary moment, with its exponentially increasing media presence requires a cultural examination. Understanding the production of celebrity magazines in the US can contribute to literature on anthropology’s concerns with personhood, imaginary relationships and communities, consumption, modernity, understanding cultural production and how cultural materials are produced. Understanding contemporary American celebrity culture can even help us to understand Margaret Mead’s fame (Lutkehaus 2008:12). Anthropologist Nancy Lutkehaus’ work on Margaret Mead led her to contemplate celebrity culture: “It is difficult these days not to see or hear a reference to celebrities or our ‘culture of celebrity,’ or to read that everyone in America wants to be a celebrity—to have their ‘fifteen minutes of fame’ that Andy Warhol spoke of—or to be associated with someone famous. That this is the case has much to do with the media and the creation of visual images” and particularly with these images as developed and produced by “public relations firms, press agents, the news media, popular magazines, advertising, gossip,

and political rhetoric” which shaped the new “star system” (Lutkehaus 2008:11-12; see also Boorstin 1962; Herwitz 2008:49).

The quote that opens this section recounts when, decades ago, Margaret Mead asked her daughter, Cathy Bateson, what being famous meant. For Mead’s daughter, being famous meant something very different than it might mean for youth today. The meaning of fame continues to evolve and has a great deal to do with the way media shape fame, from using their names in crossword puzzles, to the selection of photos, to the crafting of stories. While fame and celebrity are not synonymous, and while those two words can take on many different meanings, they do go hand-in-hand—a celebrity is someone who is famous, though someone who is famous is not necessarily a celebrity.

Anthropology has had an intimate relationship to fame and celebrity since the popularization of Mead, otherwise known as a “Founding Mother” of anthropology (Janiewski & Banner 2004; Yans 2004). Mead was widely considered a celebrity (Bateson 1984; Lutkehaus 1995, 2008), and her celebrity—which she, in fact, worked hard to cultivate—made her both a widely loved and heavily critiqued figure, not unlike many celebrities today (Lutkehaus 1995:xix). Mead made appearances on the Johnny Carson show (among many other day and night time talk shows), maintained several popular columns (including one for the magazine *Redbook*), as well as writing for various popular publications sporadically, and produced and appeared in made-for-television documentaries and films about her own research and life. As Lutkehaus notes, Mead’s celebrity was “the result of her belief that the fruits of scientific research were to be explained and shared with as broad a public as possible—and her successful efforts to do just that” (ibid.: xviii). While Mead’s books did help cultivate her fame, “fewer people ever actually read Mead’s books than saw her on television, read her column in *Redbook*

magazine, or heard her speak at a lecture or over the radio” (Lutkehaus 2008: 11; see also Ware 1998:120-1). Thus, Lutkehaus notes, “To look at the media in relationship to Mead is to acknowledge the dominant role that visual media in particular have come to play as myth-making mechanisms in American culture” (2008:11). Because of the “pictorial turn” in Western culture, “By the twentieth century everyday life in America and Europe increasingly came to be dominated by images—first in newspapers, magazines, and on billboards, postcards, and other ephemera—and then in the second half of the twentieth century on the television screen and now over the Internet. This plethora of images contributed to America’s celebrity-focused culture, and to Mead’s fame” (ibid.:11).

In a 1976 article about anthropology and mass media, anthropologist Martin Topper analyzes why Mead was so successful in popular media and why no other anthropologist had done so at a comparable level. The most important factor was that she established herself early on as a popular writer. “Her books were well-written; she avoided the pitfalls of jargon and complex sentence structure without sacrificing the quality of the text. She reserved difficult and hotly contested theoretical arguments for the scientific journals. By doing this, Dr. Mead was able to come up with ethnographic descriptions which were useful to her fellow anthropologists and were readable by the educated American Middle Class” (Topper 1976:28). Additionally, she was willing to work with the media, instead of refusing to do so as most anthropologists did at the time (ibid.:27). By utilizing the media to help popularize anthropology in a way that no anthropologist had or has, Mead foresaw not only what was necessary for anthropology to become more relevant, but she also foresaw what was necessary for television to stay relevant.

In 1973, Mead wrote an article for *TV Guide* about what we now refer to as reality television (Mead 1973; Lutkehaus 2008:194; Sanneh 2011). Mead’s article was about a Public

Broadcasting System series called “An American Family,” which documented a middle-class California household over the course of seven months, edited down into twelve one-hour episodes. “Bill and Pat Loud and their five children are neither actors nor public figures,” Mead wrote, they were simply “members of a real family.” Mead concluded that this kind of documentary-esque television programming was “a new kind of art form” that offered “a new way in which people can learn to look at life, by seeing the real life of others” (Mead 1973:21). Though nearly twenty years passed between “An American Family” and the program that truly popularized this new genre we now call reality television, MTV’s “The Real World,” which debuted in 1992, Mead was onto something when she outlined the appeal of this kind of programming. Reality television now occupies over 50 percent of the television market share in the United States (Bell 2010:180). Anthropology has always sought to examine the everyday, the “real” the “authentic” people, rather than actors or public figures; thus, it is not surprising that Mead was impressed by this new “art form.” However, the public desire for intimate knowledge about “actors or public figures” is now enhanced by the “art form” that is reality television, and other kinds of new media outlets that provide seemingly constant and intimate contact with (and a manufacturing of) celebrities.

The contemporary moment, in which people receive constant personal information about celebrities, requires an examination of what fame, what celebrity, what this kind of constant exposure to intimacy through reality television and intimate details about peoples’ lives through various new media outlets does to a culture. Anthropology’s interest in the everyday coincides with the contemporary manufacturing of celebrities as being “just like us.” While, according to historian Leo Braudy, notions of fame and celebrity as we understand them today began taking shape during the Roman Empire (Braudy 1997), the last several decades have seen a gradual

shift from larger than life celebrity figures who are entirely untouchable to a more relatable and accessible celebrity who exposes the mundane aspects of his/her daily life through contemporary media. Many people now achieve fame through reality television, and some celebrities use reality television and other new media, which provide venues from which to view and promote everyday life activities, to boost or revive their fame. Perhaps reality television, social media, and all media coverage could be viewed as an extensive catalogue of ethnographic material waiting to be analyzed. Is all of the material performative? Of course. But all interviews, all human interactions, all written material is performative on some level.

Still, it is not just Mead's celebrity status and media's "demotic turn" (Turner 2010) that makes anthropology an important place from which to examine the production of fame and celebrity through media. It is the questions to which I seek answers and the manner in which I sought out those answers that make this an anthropological project. While my approach is mostly on the production side of media, I look at this production ethnographically in order to help understand what, how, and why people understand fame and celebrity (and their relationships to fame and celebrity) in the way they do today. Mead wanted to know what fame meant to her daughter; today, it is still important to understand how ideas of fame are shaped popularly, as it affects daily life and culture.

I look to Mead as an example of celebrity and anthropologist, as someone who recognized the importance of not only consuming, but producing for and interacting with media in contemporary American society, and as someone who recognized the value of cultivating her own celebrity. Mass media is a major part of daily American life and to deny that, to poo-poo it, to suggest that it is either elitist or low-brow, is to ignore its cultural significance and power. Mead embraced it. "Some will claim that her celebrity came simply because she was the right

person (a Western woman) in the right place ('exotic' and 'primitive' cultures) at the right time (the era of the 'New Woman' and expanding opportunities for women), but it was also the result of her belief that the fruits of scientific research were to be explained and shared with as broad a public as possible—and her successful efforts to do just that” (Lutkehaus 1995:xviii). Mead’s serendipitous appearance in an *Us* magazine helped me realize that anthropology’s relationship to celebrity and celebrity media goes back quite far. Mead was not the only anthropologist I came across in my textual research of the magazines—in the archives, I also found a *People* article about anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff’s Oscar win for her documentary *Number Our Days* (Jares 1978) – but Mead was the first to embrace and even use media for her own benefit. If anthropologists were in *Us* and *People* decades ago, why are they not there now? I hope that my work can not only examine the production of this media to help us understand fame, celebrity, and American culture more broadly, but also help revive the legacy of anthropologists like Mead and Myerhoff who made it their duty to put the anthropology and anthropologists in places where their stories would be available to the broadest audience possible.

Anthropology and Media, News, and Journalism

In the introduction to *The Anthropology of Media*, Kelly Askew explains that media are materials that “translate/negotiate/intervene between parties to effect understanding” (Askew & Wilk 2002:11). Thus, the possibilities of what can be included under the umbrella term “media” are virtually endless, and include literature, news, photography, and music. Media—understood as a sign of (particularly Western) modernity (e.g. see Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1996:1)—was not a topic anthropology initially sought to address; it remained beyond the scope of anthropological concern for many years (Ginsburg 2002:60). Traditionally concerned with

foreign, exotic, and “underdeveloped” people and cultures, anthropologists lived for extended periods of time among the so-called “primitives” or “savages” to observe their daily life and examine what it might show the “modern,” Western world about themselves (ibid.; Gupta & Ferguson 1997). But as the science of wo/man, anthropology needed to pay attention to media as it clearly began to change human behavior, interaction, identity, and notions of community (Anderson 1983). While the critique of mass media and its effect on human life, social interaction, and intellectual development has been broad (e.g. Horkheimer & Adorno [1947] 1997; Baudrillard 1994; Habermas 1962; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Postman 1985), media’s ability to *transform* social relations, and, thus, human life, is undeniable (Bourdieu 2005:1).

Thirty years ago, communication studies scholar James Lull called for ethnography of mass communication; he was concerned with “media’s role in setting conversational agendas” and the “socialization effects of media” (1980:197). Twenty years ago, Arjun Appadurai defined the term “mediascapes” (Appadurai 1990) to help better understand the effects of media production and migration. Despite discussions of an anthropology of media (e.g. Ginsburg 1994; Spitulnik 1993, 1996), it has only been about a decade since this sub-discipline gained broad recognition and legitimacy (Abu-Lughod et al. 2002; Askew & Wilk 2002; Couldry et al. 2004). This moment of legitimacy has recently come for the anthropology of news and journalism (Bird 2010), as the firm establishment of the anthropology of media has cleared the way for specialization *within* media anthropology.

Although the term media extends “beyond the scope of news making,” the terms “the media” or “the mass media” (particularly in the US) tend to refer to journalism and news media outlets (Zelizer 2004:27). If “the media” is used in the everyday to refer to news and journalism, it is important that anthropology—a discipline concerned with the everyday life of the people it

studies—begin to more consistently tackle topics related to this understanding of “the media” through investigations of news and journalism. An early practitioner of media anthropology, Conrad Kottak, recently called for “studies with greater ethnographic richness—more on how people actually use media in different local contexts and in their daily lives” (2009:xx-xxi). Investigations of news and journalism are an important way to begin addressing this shortcoming in recent media anthropology research, as part of its mission is to investigate distinct global interpretations of just *what* news is (Bird 2010:18).

Understanding News and Journalism

“News” and “journalism” are two completely intertwined, mutually dependent, and subjective terms. While I continue to address this issue throughout the dissertation, and while the conclusion is dedicated to analyzing what news and journalism are and how they are changing, I want to provide some reflections on this matter up front. As S. Elizabeth Bird notes, what news means and what news does varies greatly across regions and cultures (2010:1,18; see also Appadurai 1996:35). Global communication has had homogenizing effects (Stanton 2007), but it has also had heterogenizing effects (Volkmer 1999:2) and locale still affects media, culture, and identity. Thus, I will engage with my understandings of news and journalism from a US and US media standpoint, as it is most relevant to my US-based research and my understanding of media in a national context.

Journalism is the profession of reporting news, usually for a particular news media outlet. But news, and thus news media, is incredibly difficult to delineate. Our understanding of news therefore determines our qualification of *who* is doing journalism. “For some people, news includes talk shows, late-night comedians, parody news shows, or reality TV, while for others it is confined to ‘straight news’ and does not even encompass magazine shows like *60 Minutes*”

(Bird 2010:11). Thus, if anthropologists are truly interested in diverse uses of media, we must work with a broad definition of news, so that the media “users” (de Certeau 1984:xi) can be the ones to express their own delineation and understandings of news and journalism. The need for a more inclusive definition is clear: “Journalism has been primarily defined in terms of only a small (and decreasing) dimension of news making—hard news, and this has created a bias that undermines scholars’ capacity to embrace journalism in all of its different forms, venues, and practices.” (Zelizer 2004:6). To examine current scholarly reference to just *what* news and, thus, journalism are, Zelizer points to “a repertoire of candidates that would not currently merit membership under the narrowed definition of journalism: *A Current Affair*, MTV’s *The Week in Rock*, internet listserves, Jon Stewart, www.nakednews.com, reporters for the Weather Channel,” etc. (2004:6)—all forms of media that “users” look to for news. When what are currently considered hard news outlets often incorporate celebrity and entertainment news as part of their top stories, there is clearly a need to adjust current classifications of news. An expansive definition of news will broaden the scope of news ethnography (Bird 2010:3,5), just as broader ideas of what ethnography can encompass have historically enhanced the reach of anthropology. Since celebrity-focused media are not typically considered part of news and journalism, my own research will be part of the broader understanding of journalism called for by Zelizer.

Anthropology and Journalism: Friends, Foes, Frenemies?

“Clearly, there is a measure of tension across the boundary between anthropology and journalism.”

—Ulf Hannerz⁶

“Among the best journalists, there are those like James Agee, and Walker Evans who have much to teach anthropologists. It would be useful to mount a careful exploration of the actual differences and also (perhaps especially) the similarities between the intellectual, occupational, social practices that the terms *anthropology* and *journalism* name.”

⁶ (Hannerz 2001:4).

—Liisa Malkki⁷

Though anthropologists and journalists maintain separate functions within the global economy and generally contribute to distinct bodies of literature, they are engaged in similar endeavors. As journalists and anthropologists are both responsible for translating information (see Askew 2002:11), “We necessarily find ourselves thinking about the sometimes uncomfortable parallels between ethnography and journalism as ways of describing and understanding reality” (Bird 2010:4). Still, anthropologists have tended to take a “holier-than-thou” stance towards journalists” (ibid.), and, aside from Margaret Mead, only recently have anthropologists began to contest the notion that “anthropological modes of knowledge are naturally or properly superior to journalistic modes of knowledge, or that anthropology obviously, automatically produces more profound kinds of understanding” (Malkki 1997:93). Whether or not anthropologists want to recognize the validity of journalistic production, ultimately journalists have a much wider and broader effect, as mass media producers, *not anthropologists*, and provide news and information to the majority of our world (Askew 2002:1). Journalist-turned-scholar Barbie Zelizer declares that there is a need to take journalism seriously in the academy (2004), particularly by the academics who seek to interrogate it. As someone who has worked professionally as a journalist and has been trained as an anthropologist, I hope to further combat the negative anthropological attitude toward journalism by outlining four (of many) ways I see anthropology and journalists as equally relevant and strikingly similar endeavors. I will briefly examine journalistic and anthropological/ethnographic overlap in (1) topic, (2) method, (3) theory, and (4) ethics.

⁷ (Malkii 1997:95).

A classic understanding of the division of labor between journalists and anthropologists assumes that the former report on extraordinary events, while the latter report on “ordinary, everyday occurrences...found in ‘sites’ suitable for long-term anthropological fieldwork” (Gupta & Ferguson 1997:34). Hence, it is typically thought that the “journalists arrive just as the anthropologist is leaving” (Malkki 1997:93). Still, as journalists embed themselves in war zones and engage in long-term overseas research, and anthropologists research “everything, from the mundane to the spectacular” (Sutton & Wogan 2008:1), these artificial topical divisions increasingly breakdown. In fact, Ulf Hannerz believes there has been an “ethnographic turn” in journalism, as journalists seek to “portray a slice of life,” albeit briefly (2001:3).

The methods by which anthropologists and journalists research their increasingly overlapping topics are also similar. Novel as it is, we might look beyond the new participant-observation-based embedded journalism back to the early muckrakers of the nineteenth century. In 1887, Nellie Bly famously faked her way into being committed to a New York state-run insane asylum for women, in order to live with and observe the women’s living conditions and lifestyle (Serrin & Serrin 2002:142). Though she remained in the asylum for only ten days, it was surely an effort in the ethnographic method of participant-observation. She published what I think most would consider an ethnographic investigation, one that led to actual changes in state policy and funding of women’s mental health institutions. Furthermore, some of the most respected anthropologists (e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss) believe that short-term ethnographic experience can be even *more* instructive than long-term. Another similar method in ethnographic and journalistic work is the establishment of contacts. Anthropologists gain access and authority by establishing rapport with key people in a community. Journalists use a similar method to establish access and authority commonly referred to as “sourcing” (Peterson 2001). Lastly, I

would like point to the centrality of the interview to both journalistic and ethnographic inquiry (Pedelty 1995:123). The overlapping method of the interview presents another similar issue for journalists and ethnographers: the interpretive challenge of “handling the polyvocality of multiple reports to produce a coherent study” (Peterson 2001:206).

The interview leads to a theoretical issue that affects both anthropology and journalism—objectivity. Whether or not it is possible, both anthropology and journalism have historically aimed for objectivity. Yet even the process of transcribing is subjective, as the journalist or ethnographer must select what to transcribe, what to leave out, how to frame quotes, etc. Such issues have prompted calls for subjective/reflexive approaches to both anthropology (e.g. Behar 1996, 2009; Peterson 2001) and journalism (e.g. Cottle 2000, 2007:5). While addressing subjectivity and self-reflexivity in anthropological texts may be a bit more accepted than in journalism, it should not be forgotten or ignored that there has been openly subjective journalistic accounts as far back as Bly’s 1887 personal account of the asylum and James Agee and Walker Evans’ long-term study of tenant farmers, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939). Agee serves as an educational and inspirational reference for anthropologists and journalists alike (Behar 1996:5; Fricke 2006:197; Harrington 1997:xvii; Malkki 1997:94-5).

While the ethics of such work as Bly and Agee remain complex and questionable (e.g. see Agee & Evans 1939:51), Jennifer Hasty’s “Journalism as Fieldwork: Propaganda, Complicity, and the Ethics of Anthropology” (2010) demonstrates that anthropologists, too, often find themselves in ethically complicated situations. In fact, she believes “anthropologists are just as immersed in the dubious obscurities of power and interest as journalists are, perhaps even more so” (ibid.:133). Yet there are overlapping ethical codes. “Off-the record” may be known as a journalistic term, but anthropologists often have information that is obtained under similar

conditions (Peterson 2001:202). Journalists are ethically obligated to not share *all* information they are privileged to receive. The ethnographer, likewise, must (or *should*) respect “sources” wishes and stop the recorder, video camera, or note-taking as necessary. Off-the-record information provides journalists with context, just as unusable ethnographic data still seeps through the textual lines and still affects shaping of story or ethnography.

This is not to argue, however, that journalism and anthropology are one in the same. “They have different missions, and they work in different environments and under different constraints” (Bird 2010:5). This comparison should demonstrate the illegitimacy of claims that journalism is somehow culturally/intellectually/aesthetically *below* anthropology in the seemingly arbitrary elitist hierarchy of discourse (e.g. Bourdieu 1993, 1998). In fact, because of their similar roles, anthropologist Ulf Hannerz suggests that ethnographic studies of journalism an effort in studying “sideways” (2004:3), rather than studying “up” or “down.” If journalism and anthropology were so different, then anthropologists would not be able to transpose themselves so readily to work as journalists during fieldwork. In Bird’s “The Journalist as Ethnographer?” (in Rothenbuhler & Coman 2005), she examines how anthropological methods can and do enrich journalism. With anthropologists’ desire to research news and journalism, and to work as journalists in the field, journalism is clearly enriching ethnography. Thus, Bird states, “If we wish to create an ‘anthropology of journalism,’ we should be prepared to engage with a ‘journalism of anthropology’ in return” (Bird 2010:5). This exchange, this overlap, this mutual utility and examination, might help ethnographic research become a two-way street. As Mead’s controversial approach to publication demonstrates, there was a clear tension between anthropology and the mass media, particularly before there was an anthropology *of* media. But much of this tension, I believe, came from the lack of clarity of the division between journalists

and anthropologists, particularly as figures like Mead began writing journalistically. In my experience, I found that a background in reporting made me a better anthropologist, and conversely that my training as an anthropologist has improved my skills as a reporter. Thus, I hope my work can contribute to the various needs outlined here by scholars across disciplines who are engaged in ethnography of media and journalism. Furthermore, I hope that my work will also compliment the current needs of studies of entertainment industries.

Anthropology and Hollywood

Though Hollywood as an industry has decentralized and its films are shot everywhere from Michigan to New Orleans, to Canada in order to avoid higher costs associating with filming in Los Angeles, Los Angeles is still the central location for Hollywood industries. It is still where red carpet events happen, where Hollywood studios are located, where most celebrities live, where agents and managers who serve the celebrities live, and where celebrity reporters and photographers thrive. There are also international entertainment industries like Bollywood (Mumbai-based Indian film industry) and Nollywood (Nigerian film industry), and those industries and celebrity cultures that have stemmed from it merit separate investigation. However, it is also worth pointing out that, while non-anthropologists have looked to Hollywood and its celebrity culture, some anthropologists have looked more to non-Western film production (Ganti 2004, 2012, 2014; McCall 2004). Again, issues of access are cited as reasons for this lack of Hollywood-based fieldwork (Ortner 2009).

Hollywood is an anomaly. Perhaps no other place in the world carries with its name the same number of meanings, connotations, and global symbolic capital. While it was originally the name given to a small tract of land in Southern California, Hollywood has come to reference

American film, television, and an array of entertainment-focused industries (Beltrán & Fojas 2008:2; Shohat & Stam 1994). Hollywood became a brand early in its history, as it was (and remains) a central part of the development and economy of the Los Angeles area. Hollywood's reach was also quickly national and then transnational, as the research of anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker demonstrated (Powdermaker 1939, 1950, 1962). Powdermaker researched how Hollywood films affected leisure activities in the America's rural South (1939), how the films themselves were produced in Hollywood (1950), *and* how Hollywood film (and local Hollywood-influenced film movements) were watched and interpreted in an African mining town (1962). Over the course of more than two decades, she was able to demonstrate the broad cultural, technological, economic, local, and global implications of Hollywood and its most prized product—the moving picture. Her work “blazed a pioneering path in media anthropology that subsequently lay untrodden, forgotten” (Askew 2002:3).

Since Powdermaker's *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (1950), Hollywood industries have continued to multiply and become more engrained in everyday American life, entering homes through an array of new media. This everyday *ordinariness* of American interaction with Hollywood media makes this area critical for anthropology. Only in the last decade have anthropologists “re-discovered” the need to study Hollywood from the inside, as a critical center of cultural production (e.g. Askew 2004; Ortner 2009). Powdermaker demonstrated that Hollywood film began changing leisure practices in the first half of the twentieth century (1939,1950). In an ethnography on Hollywood's effects on plastic surgery and women's body image, gender studies scholar Virginia Blum shows that, after prolonged and increasing exposure to Hollywood media in all of its contemporary forms, the cultural effects of the Hollywood industrial complex are even deeper and more personal today (2002). Determining just *how*

Hollywood affects contemporary American (and global) culture(s) is a ripe area for anthropological analysis.

Thus, Hollywood necessarily fuels potential ethnographic projects, as it creates new trends, new ideals, and new representations that merit examination. Anthropologist Sherry Ortner considers ethnography of Hollywood media producers an effort in “studying sideways” (Ortner 2009; see also Hannerz 1998). However, while some anthropologists might consider themselves on the same social level as producers of Hollywood media, those producers have remained largely inaccessible to anthropologists (Askew 2002:32; Ortner 2010; Powdermaker 1950; Silverman 2007:521). If studying people in the industry is a lateral move for anthropologists, then why are they so difficult to access? Similar to Deloria’s (1969) criticisms on anthropological approaches, Hollywood media figures have expressed their dislike of ethnographic interactions with anthropologists (Ortner 2010). In my own research on celebrity reporting, I have earned access to celebrity journalists through my previous work in their profession.

The Future of Anthropollywood⁸

Despite challenges of access, anthropologists like Kelly Askew have successfully pursued research among Hollywood media producers (2004), while others look to more easily accessible audiences (e.g. Sutton & Wogan 2008). But with the vast array of Hollywood industries, anthropologists must approach Hollywood more openly: Powdermaker proved that the “social relations of the filmmaking process significantly affect the content and meaning of movies” (Cherneff 1991:429; Powdermaker 1950, 1966). Thus, in order to research the significance and span of Hollywood’s influence, it is more than just movies and their producers

⁸ This is a term coined by Kelly Askew (2004).

that merit investigation. There are other key players in the “social relations” of Hollywood, including but not limited to: the television industry, producers, agents, managers, stars/celebrities, and celebrity news media. Anthropology’s role in studying Hollywood must reach beyond its physical location (Askew 2004) and movie-making.

Since the early twentieth century, celebrity-focused magazines have been of critical importance to the development of Hollywood and the American celebrity system, and are largely responsible for contemporary understandings of fame (Barbas 2005; Benjamin 1935; Gamson 1994; Ponce de Leon 2002; Powdermaker 1950:238). Yet there is not one ethnographic text dedicated purely to the current modes of production of this particular media. Ethnographic investigations of all aspects of Hollywood, partnered with consumption studies of Hollywood media, can deliver complex understandings of what lies behind: (1) American desires for fame; (2) cultural and ethnic stereotypes; and (3) pressures to embody various aspects of heterosexual, male-dominant expectations, as portrayed in a wide variety of Hollywood media.

Anthropologists are currently finding it necessary to engage with Hollywood as an avenue for examining contemporary cultural/ethnic/racial representations in popular media (e.g. Meek 2006; Ulysse 2010), and for interrogating the production *process* of various forms of Hollywood media (Askew 2004; Ortner 2013). In her critical, self-reflexive, and anthropologically informed analysis of the film *Avatar* (Cameron 2010), Gina Ulysse succeeds at making anthropology relevant to popular culture, but does not elaborate on how it places anthropology and Hollywood face-to-face (2010). The film’s depiction of colonizers discussing the “natives” eerily echoes early anthropological discourse—discussions of savagery, and the need to win the natives’ trust to get inside their minds. As anthropologists investigate Hollywood, there should be special attention paid to what Hollywood might be able to teach

anthropologists about their own discipline—a major Hollywood production can turn the lens back on the anthropologist, and Hollywood and anthropological representations might resemble each other more than expected. Thus, anthropological investigations of all forms of Hollywood media are broadly relevant, productive, and necessary.

Celebrity Reporting

While this project does not offer a complete history of celebrity-focused reporting in the US, I do offer a framework from which to understand the celebrity reporting culture addressed in this project. For a more complex historical approach to understanding the celebrity reporting industry, I recommend the work of Anne Helen Petersen (2011) and Charles Ponce de Leon (2002). For a biography and memoir perspective of early Hollywood celebrity reporters, I recommend the work of Jennifer Frost (2011), Val Holley (2003), Hedda Hopper (1963) and Samantha Barbas (2005).

Historian Robert Snyder asserts: “Contemporary fascination with celebrity has roots in journalistic practices and cultural transformations that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century” (2003:440). These journalistic practices took shape largely through a focus on Hollywood. Hollywood has come to be understood as breeding ground for celebrity, specializing in promoting people through media (Ponce de Leon 2002). Hollywood reporting is something that the country relied on for entertainment. Louella Parsons, Hedda Hopper, and Mike Connolly were pioneering reporters of Hollywood “gossip” that spread this news across the country, making readers hungry for more, allowing them to feel that they know what is going on in Hollywood. From 1913 to 1965, Parsons wrote a column for various newspapers, Hopper for the *Los Angeles Times* from 1938 to 1966, and Connolly for the *Hollywood Reporter* from 1951-

1966. These columnists were a cornerstone of the functioning of Hollywood; since the 1940s, was an important tool for popularizing and personalizing Hollywood in the US. Parsons not first to write about film stars or celebs, “but by writing a daily column exclusively devoted to motion pictures and by extending the existing celebrity journalism tradition to film stars, Louella pioneered a new journalistic format and started a new chapter in the history of American celebrity” (Barbas 2005:44). As I will explore further in section two, the approaches to celebrity reporting off of the red carpet have not changed substantially since the early days of celebrity reporting. Parsons “sneaked into theaters attended by stage and screen stars, loitered for hours in the lobby of Blackstone Hotel, a popular hangout for actors, and eavesdropped in bathrooms” (Barbas 2005:55). As a reporter in the 2000’s, when not on the red carpet, I found myself often engaged in similar behavior in order to obtain more intriguing information. This is what was expected, even of a *People* reporter. From my own experience, and those of the others I collaborated with on this project, it is abundantly clear that Parsons paved the way for today’s celebrity reporting.

Despite the parameters within which celebrity reporters must work—navigating the demands of editors, agents, and celebrities—journalists possess agency to craft their own stories. Pioneering Hollywood celebrity reporters like Parsons and Hopper did sometimes bend the truth to please industry figures, but they also held a tremendous amount of industry power and were treated with respect precisely because other insiders recognized the agency of the reporters to ultimately choose how stories were framed (Barbas 2005; Hopper 1963). This complex relationship persists today, as reporters of major celebrity weekly magazines like *People* are both working to keep industry figureheads happy, while they are simultaneously respected as individuals who have the power to boost or hamper celebrity careers. Rather than simply doing

as others request, celebrity reporters actively shape and affect trends in popular culture. Still, issues like the *People* cover from February 9, 1987, which was essentially a birthday card to Hollywood (“The 100th Birthday of Hollywood: The stars, glamour, & gossip of a century”) are demonstrative of the symbiotic relationship between industry and celebrity weekly magazines. In fact, *People* cares so much about the industry and the relationships it must maintain there that, for several years, it produced a daily magazine for every day of the week leading up to the Oscars, Emmys, and Grammys especially for top industry figures (at no cost to them, despite the costs to the magazine). It was a way of establishing that *People* was on the industry’s side and would do this just for them.

Celebrity reporting existed before *People* magazine debuted in 1974. But before *People*, celebrity reporting was reserved for newspaper columns, trade publications, and less-frequently published magazines. Although *Life* magazine had been star-heavy in the 1960s, it changed to a monthly format in 1978 because of declining sales. By contrast, *People* focused almost exclusively on stars and quickly proved to be profitable. *Us Weekly*, *People*’s biggest competitor today, was first published in 1977 as a bi-monthly industry magazine, but became a celebrity weekly in 2000. After *Us Weekly* proved to be real competition for *People*, other publishers wanted in on the rivalry, leading to the launch of celebrity weeklies such as *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *Star*, and *OK!*

Within the industry, *People* magazine is the original formula. Everything that came after it is to some extent a mimicry, and this is fairly accepted within the industry. While of course editors of each magazine, and some reporters, feel a particular sense of pride in their magazines, the ranking of the magazines is understood within the industry. It is no secret that *People* is the top weekly celebrity magazine, followed by *Us*. After *Us*, the water becomes a bit more murky—

In Touch, *OK!*, and *Life & Style*, are in the same class, while *Star* is seen as the bottom of the barrel in terms of quality. Since re-launching as a weekly, *Us* has outsold *People* on certain weeks in its history. As *Us* became popular as a weekly, *People* reconfigured the overall look of its book to be more competitive with *Us*.

People did not always have the same glossy, picture book look that it has today. In the 1970s, the only color photos were the cover and ads, which were for products like Virginia Slims, Beefeater Gin, and other alcohol and cigarette brands. In fact, *People* did not change to being fully printed in color until the mid-1990s. *People* used to cover much more news and human interest stories, but now there is a heavier focus on celebrity. “It’s a real problem,” Sean, a *People* reporter said. “There’s a huge backlog of news and human interest stories.” The look of *People* has also changed a great deal. The number of pages in “Star Tracks,” the celebrity photo section, has increased over the years (from as few as two pages in 1978 to as many as seven pages in recent years), and its placement has shifted from mid-magazine to the first section of the magazine. The cover used to have one single photo, now there are often several photos on the cover. Former *People* reporter Phil said, “*People* used to be a venue for growing stars, but now you have to be established to even get into the magazine. It’s not a place or a way for people to ‘breakthrough’ the way it used to be.”

Gossip, Tabloid, News, and the Shaping of Celebrity

I consider the media producers I work with journalists, and I consider the media they produce celebrity and entertainment *news*. I do not view the photos, stories, web content, and magazines they produce as gossip rags, as they are sometimes referred to. Still, across the various scholarly work about celebrity and Hollywood media, the classifications of the media

producers I work with and the media they produce varies widely. Media and communication studies scholar Andrea McDonnell refers to all of the magazines I focus on, with the exception of *People*, as gossip and tabloid magazines (2014). Depending on national and cultural contexts, reference to tabloid can have both positive and negative connotations (Nunn & Biressi 2008). In the Western context, it is usually considered something negative and sub-par as a journalistic form, while in other places, it is seen as a sign of development and modernity (Bird 2008).

Because of its history as a more complex publication that does not only focus on celebrity, but also includes political and human interest stories, as well as its history of adhering to more classical newspaper journalistic standards (e.g. having fact-checkers on staff), *People* has maintained a unique reputation compared to its counterpart celebrity magazines that are mostly universally considered tabloids. However, this classification does not take into account the ways in which *People* has been reshaped over the years to compete with magazines like *Us Weekly*. During my time as a reporter, I saw *People* remade with a more glossy cover, a thinner book, more photos and less text, and the reporters increasingly became their own fact-checkers over the years as budget cuts required downsizing and as online media required quicker turnarounds for articles before they could go through the rigorous fact-checking formerly adhered to at the magazine. Media studies scholar Anne Helen Petersen refers to the magazines I address as part of a “gossip industry,” but also includes that they contribute to entertainment news (2011). What is clear, however, is that *People* changed the ways in which celebrity was manufactured and subsequently understood, and it created a new market that has, since *People* launched, increased dramatically.

Not only did *People* become a cultural fixture, it led to the creation of a culture of a particular kind of magazine. While some scholars do not directly compare *People* with *Us, In*

Touch, Life & Style, Star, and OK! (e.g. McDonnell 2014), as *People* is not always considered a tabloid magazine and the others often are, I look at them as a genre of celebrity-focused weekly magazines that all have clear and undeniable similarities and, thus, deserve being examined side-by-side. As the most well-established and most read, *People* and *Us Weekly* naturally make up the majority of my analysis. Also, because they are the largest of the publications, they have the largest staffs that permitted me comparatively increased opportunities for interviewing and working alongside those who worked both staff and freelance for the publications. While my fieldwork included time spent with reporters from all of the aforementioned weekly magazines and paparazzi and red carpet photographers who have shot for all of the magazines, the focus will be heavily on *People* and *Us Weekly*.

The democratization of access to stardom and celebrity via reality television programming and social media, and the success of many reality television and social media stars, has created real anxiety in celebrities and major industry insiders (e.g. movie producers) connected to these individuals. One incident that came about as I conducted preliminary research on my dissertation, and movies about it came out as I wrote my dissertation, was the case of the “Bling Ring” (also referred to as the “Burglar Bunch”). In this particular case, a number of aspiring reality stars and their friends wanted so badly to gain access to celebrities and their capital that they actually broke into celebrities’ houses and stole items from the celebrities (including established reality stars). Through these actions, the thieves gained even more fame and renown for their bad deeds, leading to both a Lifetime movie and a major motion picture, produced by Sofia Coppola, daughter of Francis Ford Coppola, both titled *The Bling Ring*.

Coppola, who grew up in the industry, is clear about her disdain for the youngsters involved in the crime, and, in particular, her disdain with their desire to aspire to stardom and to

access the celebrity lifestyle (despite her being born into that lifestyle and having access to it her entire life, she cannot fathom why others would want it) (Baron 2013). As a *New York Times* article about the film points out:

Reality and fiction rub until they generate sparks. The characters in the film hunger for luxury brands, some of which, like Louis Vuitton or Marc Jacobs, Ms. Coppola has designed or modeled for. And the fame and easy fortune that the real-life burglars envied and craved has, to some extent, become theirs. One member of the so-called Bling Ring, Alexis Neiers was a consultant on the film, and Ms. Coppola spoke with Nick Prugo while working on the screenplay, which in turn immortalizes their criminal exploits (albeit under other names) (ibid.).

That some Bling Ring members helped with the film exemplifies the ever-blurring lines between media producers and consumers. “Consumers are becoming the casting talent for reality-based media, the viral advertisers for media product, as well as marketing data subjects helping production companies generate the concept, test ideas, and sell the audience to advertisers. Not only does this raise the question of what counts as media production, but also who may be considered a ‘media producer’” (Mayer et al. 2009:142). In another article about the film, Coppola said, “Kids are inundated with reality TV and tabloid culture so much that this just seems normal...It frightens me, and it just seems like this trash culture is becoming acceptable as mainstream culture.’ By ‘trash culture’...Coppola seems to be referring to a kind of democratization of the trappings of celebrity...Before the Paris Hilton age, there was a mostly unscalable wall between how famous people dressed, talked, and spent their time, and how normals like you and I could. But now ‘Celebrities — They’re Just Like Us!’ has become not just a weekly tabloid feature but a kind of generational mantra” (Yoshida 2013). Here, Coppola equates “trash culture” and “tabloid culture” and reality TV, thusly blaming the contemporary state of celebrity on tabloids and reality TV. If unfair, it shows that celebrities themselves hold the “tabloids” responsible for the climate of celebrity culture.

While I certainly agree that the magazines do have a major affect on celebrity culture, I still think it is shortsighted to blame the current moment on the magazines entirely, rather than looking holistically and historically at the situation, including the fact that Coppola was making use of so-called “trash” culture for her own artistic/financial gain and that Hollywood celebrity columnists have always encouraged star behavior by telling readers they can be celebrities too; Parsons had a 1915 column entitled “How to Become a Movie Actress” (Barbas 2005:51).

Just six months after *The Bling Ring* was released, the show *Rich Kids of Beverly Hills* debuted on E!, which is essentially a group of teenagers, much like the ones depicted in the film—hungry for celebrity status and flaunting their lavish lifestyle—only the “kids” on E! are actually rich and not stealing from celebrities to appear rich. The reality of celebrity today is a new one, with the possibility of access by many more than a traditional elite few. Still, as is evidenced by Coppola’s quotes, there is still a very clear hierarchy within the entertainment industry, and one that my research both substantiates and complicates—the magazines I study at once promote reality stars voraciously, yet still hold reality stars in an entirely different category of celebrity and importance. The process of crafting and promoting the iconic forms of celebrity that exist today are similar for both reality stars and what I call “craft celebrities” (celebrities known for their craft, e.g. acting, music, sports); still, one carries more symbolic capital than the other. One is, in effect, more iconic.

Many industry insiders agree that craft celebrity carries more weight than reality stardom. When I asked actor and R&B singer Tyrese Gibson about his conception of celebrity, he told me:

Celebrity is anybody that is recognized as a public figure. So you have these celebrities that are higher up in the food chain, and then you have people that are just famous. Then you’ve got the infamous. Higher up on the food chain, to me, is that you actually earned your popularity through doing something really artistic as an actress, or singer, or athlete, or public official, or politician. Somebody that’s really earned the stripes and I’m not so

sure that when you get into it with those type of genuine intents, that fame is actually the motivation. You are just really looking to have your gift be shared with the world.

Similarly, when I asked a reality television producer how reality TV had changed celebrity he replied:

Can I be honest? Lack of talent. I'm being serious. Lack of talent. I think a lot of them are smart. It's not about being a great actor. It's not about being a great singer. It's not about being a great anything. It's really about being smart about using your 15 minutes and making that 15 minutes into five years, into \$5 million, into \$15 million. Because that 15 minutes can continue. Look at Snooki. Not trying to say she's not smart. But she's smart enough to keep the light on. She's smart enough to build a brand. In reality TV, you don't have to be anything.

However, not all insiders agree that reality celebrity carries different weight than craft celebrity.

At an event honoring the Kardashians, I asked Melissa Rivers for her thoughts on the families'

"contribution, talent-wise to the field of entertainment." She replied, "They make people happy.

What does it matter? Isn't entertainment just about entertaining people in one way or another?

They make people happy."

Furthermore, the line between craft celebrities and reality stars is not as clear-cut as one might think. For example, Kanye West now appears on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. He was a craft celebrity, but he is also now a reality star now. The same can be said for Ozzy Osbourne and Gene Simmons, who were rock stars that became reality stars. Similar accounts could be said for many celebrities; in fact, former craft stars who have drifted into the periphery (take Toni Braxton, for example, who now has a reality show about her family), look to reality as a way to re-launch or expand their former brand. Thus, this distinction between reality celebrity (or what Coppola calls "trash culture") and craft celebrity is not a clear one, and is certainly not a sustainable one, despite the fact that some division will always exist. Despite the fact that many individuals aspire to transition from reality celebrity to craft celebrity, and vice-versa, this celebrity class distinction persists precisely because those insiders who have been on

the inside for many years (like the Coppola family) see those aspiring to reality celebrity as part of a “trash culture”—aspiring to be iconic, aspiring to have access to celebrity is not ok to those in the craft celebrity category.

Fame and Celebrity

This section is not meant to be an exhaustive history of fame and celebrity. For histories of fame see the work of Leo Braudy (1997) and Tyler Cowen (2000); for histories of celebrity see: Daniel Boorstin (1962), Chris Rojek (2001), and Karen Sternheimer (2011). For more broad work that incorporates how celebrity and fame are intertwined, see: Kerry Ferris and Scott Harris (2011), Joshua Gamson (1994), P. David Marshall (1997), Donna Rockwell and David Giles (2009), and Chris Rojek (2012). Instead I offer here a framework for fame and celebrity that will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the material presented in the chapters that follow, particularly how anthropological theorizations of fame can help further my project, as well as how contemporary notions of fame and celebrity are confirmed or challenged by my project. It is important to note that, over the last decade, there has been increased interest in studies of celebrities, leading to a burgeoning field called celebrity studies; the journal *Celebrity Studies* was launched in 2009 as a space in which to engage in interdisciplinary and international conversations about issues of celebrity. Insofar as it addresses the ways in which we understand celebrities today vis-à-vis celebrity weekly magazines, my project contributes to this new field of study.

Nancy Munn’s *Fame of Gawa* as it Relates to Contemporary American Fame

In *The Fame of Gawa*, Nancy Munn explores the expansion of forms of subjectivity, identity, and personhood through what she calls “intersubjective spacetime – a spacetime of self-

other relationships formed in and through acts and practices” (Munn 1986:9). Munn argued that, through forms of exchange, people were ultimately able to expand their identities, including both the way people understood each other and themselves; she was fascinated by the ways that fame involves the expansion of this intersubjective spacetime. Munn examines how identity and personhood develop through various acts, the implied meanings of those acts, and the subsequent promotion of these implied personality traits locally and overseas about any individual person (which we can also call fame, reputation, etc.). While she examines this on a small scale (the medium being one person who communicates his experience of another individual, is what leads to the fame of that individual and to that individual’s self-understanding), the medium through which I examine the development of, maintenance of, and shifts in fame are celebrity weekly magazines and their websites.

While anthropologists have been in ongoing conversation with the nature of personhood across scales, and in some cases fame, the contemporary moment requires us to develop an analytical approach to celebrity in order to understand how modern media affect fame and mass personhood (celebrity). Whether it is an individual (as in Munn’s work) or a mass media outlet (as in my own work) projecting and circulating a given form of personhood, the result for both is an expansion of intersubjective spacetime—it is the spreading of a person via information sharing across time and space to people whom that person has never met.

Munn’s main point on intersubjectivity is that: “practices not only form particular types of social relations but also, coordinately, the actors who engage in them” (Munn 1986:15). If a Gawan person, in her study, generously feeds an overseas visitor, he may become known for that act. “‘Becoming known’ is the rendering of the action process as a whole in a discourse that positively defines and evaluates the self of the actor” (ibid.:15). Thus, Munn says, “Fame is both

a positive value product (an outcome of certain positively transformative actions) and an evaluation of the actor by significant others. Similarly, the reverse evaluation of defamation is an outcome of certain negatively transformative actions” (ibid.).

While the context in which Munn is discussing fame is different than context in which my work examines fame, and while the media she refers to (e.g. the body) are not the same media my work focuses on (e.g. magazines, online), her outlining of qualisigns/icons with relation to the development of fame of Gawa can be applied to the fame of American celebrities. In fact, even the media she discusses (the body) (ibid.:17) can help understand values generated by celebrities by the use of their own bodies. For Gawans, the body exhibits “qualisigns of the positive or negative value generated by acts, notably by acts of food transmission...and consumption. For instance, if eating excessively rather than giving to overseas visitors is said to yield nothing but sleep rather than the potentials engaged by food giving to visitors...then sleep is being taken in this instance as a qualitative conversion of the actor’s body, a value product of the act of eating...This motionlessness entails, in Gawan symbolism, a negative value form of the body, a construction of the body’s own spacetime” (ibid.). If a celebrity does not pose for or otherwise allow paparazzi photos to be taken of them (images of the body), it yields nothing whatsoever for either actor—no additional fame or renown for the celebrity, no additional money for the paparazzo. Paparazzi use the term “giving it up” (Ruy 2008) to refer to celebrities posing for paparazzi photos or otherwise allowing for paparazzi to get a series of photographs of celebrities at any given location (e.g. not covering up their faces, causing a scene, etc.). If a celebrity “gives it up” for a paparazzo and the image sells well, this could yield symbolic capital for the celebrity through increased circulation of the image of their body (which ultimately increases fame, recognition), which could lead to future economic capital. In the mean time, both

the paparazzo and the media outlets used to promote celebrities/market fame and the famous (magazines, websites) see economic gains from this act. As in Hollywood, for the Gawa, age is correlated with beauty (Munn 1986:111); in both cases, wealth is demonstrated through self-decoration with valuable items that creates emphasizes status differentiation (ibid.).

“Certain outcomes can therefore be considered icons of the acts that produce them – in other words, they can be said to involve iconic signs of the spatiotemporal value transformation (positive or negative) generated by the act. Since the body takes on qualities that express the value of the intersubjective spacetime produced, this *bodily spacetime* serves as a condensed sign of the wider spacetime of which it is a part” (ibid.:17). In terms of paparazzi and celebrity, use of the word “icon” blends Peirce’s usage of icon (icons of the acts that produce them) with the popular use of icon/iconic—the photo of Britney Spears’ shaved head is at once an icon of the act that produced it (paparazzi photography) and iconic of her image as a celebrity (for more on celebrities as icons, see Herwitz 2008). To return to Munn’s discussion of fame, any celebrities’ active refusal to take paparazzi shots or, or to not “give it up,” should result in a negative value form of the (celebrity) body (since their act yields negative consequences for both actors). However, Munn’s theory does not take into consideration status, class, and pre-existing levels of fame and public approval. Instead, the paparazzi, who have lower social status, are lower class than celebrities, only retain negative fame and suffer from public disapproval, despite only working because of market demand (they would be out of a job if their work did not sell).

Munn sums up fame “as a coding of influence – an iconic model that reconstitutes immediate influence at the level of a discourse by significant others about it. Fame models spatiotemporal expansion of self effected by acts of influence by recasting these influential acts (moving the mind of another) into the movement or circulation of one’s name; this circulation

itself implies the favorable notice others give the person – hence the latter’s ‘influence’ with them...The circulation of names frees them, detaching them from these particularities and making them the topic of discourse through which they become available in other times and places” (Munn 1986:117). For a celebrity in American society, the “circulation of one’s name” is what helps them maintain their fame as well. Thus, celebrities’ participation in and cooperation with the forces that ensure the circulation of one’s name—namely popular news media—which promotes the “spatiotemporal expansion of self,” is critical to the celebrities’ fame maintenance. Still, those at the base of this promotion of fame or fame maintenance whose job it is to document the acts of celebrities, especially paparazzi, but also entertainment reporters, are highly critiqued for doing this culturally significant job.

A-List Celebrities and the Ulmer Scale

The idea of the A-list celebrity has become part of popular lexicon, though the concept is actually quite new. Celebrity rankings, from A to D-list, are used regularly in news and entertainment reporting to refer to the biggest names in Hollywood. While it is used in reporting as an adjective, the idea of A-list celebrity-dom was only clearly outlined in 2000 by entertainment reporter James Ulmer and was in fact intended to show which celebrities had statistically been shown to draw the most box office money in their movies (Ulmer 2000).

The book *The Hot List* (2000), in which Ulmer coins his ranking of stars as “the Ulmer Scale,” became an industry reference and was quickly popularized via the media. In it, the top 200 Hollywood actors are given a point value out of 100, which is said to reflect what Ulmer called a star’s “bankability”—an actor’s ability to draw audiences, and therefore money, based on statistics from their recent films. While this book offered the first comprehensive explanation

for his rankings, it was based on his contributions to the *Hollywood Reporter*'s recurring "Star Power" index during the 1990s. Ulmer, a long-time entertainment reporter who had worked for the *Hollywood Reporter*, *Premiere Magazine*, and other outlets, had an extensive network of colleagues within the entertainment industry facilitating the quick dissemination and popularization of his book as a go-to guide for film studios and production companies. Though he now also takes credit for the idea of the "D-List" via his website,⁹ Ulmer's original scale only included A, B, and C-list and what Ulmer refers to as the "bottom of the heap" (Ulmer 2000:5). Those who did not make the Ulmer Scale began imagining a D-List of which perhaps they would be a part, as demonstrated through Kathy Griffin's show "My Life on the D-List," which simultaneously mocked and complicated the ranking of celebrities in hierarchies based on letter grade and alluded to the fact that she did not make Ulmer's who's who of Hollywood list. The show offered Griffin's take on Hollywood and celebrity culture, and much of her life as depicted in the show and her comic routines made use of her celebrity-status, using her D-list status by default as a way to make her more *normal*, more *relatable*. The idea of "D-List" as a classification in general has become a popularized and is most commonly used in reference to reality television stars (Palmer 2005; Mizejewski 2014).

The expansion of the Ulmer Scale lexicon to include a D-list and the subsequent claiming of the D-list by Ulmer exemplifies what linguistic anthropologist Debra Spitulnik means when she says, "Social circulation of media discourse provides a clear and forceful demonstration of how media audiences play an active role in the interpretation and appropriation of media texts and messages" (1996:165). While the discourse may be initiated by established or corporate media producers (e.g. Ulmer), ultimately, these producers disseminate discourse that leads to the

⁹ <http://www.ulmerscale.com/aboutHL.html>.

consumers' production and circulation of their own meanings and definitions of mediated terms such as those outlined by Ulmer. Spitulnik says that the "public accessibility" of adopted media terms is "vital for the production of shared meaning" (1996:162); thus, the ways in which the A, B, C-list rubric was accessible to other industry professionals and consumers alike led to a dynamic continuation of the rubric into ways that fit the social realities of those who consumed what Ulmer produced. The *Hot List* served as inspiration for something that took on a social life of its own; it developed beyond its intended meanings.

Ulmer refreshes his rankings yearly and, according to Ulmer's 2012 list, Jennifer Aniston is not an A-list celebrity (Gornstein 2012). Based on his rankings, that may be true, however, in the common talk among entertainment and celebrity reporters, Aniston is most certainly A-list. So, like all social classifications, A, B, and C-list celebrities are not clearly definable in terms of daily discourse. Ulmer has classified stars based on "bankability," but these rankings do not necessarily correspond to social interest and the reality of notability of and interest in stars. A case in point is that no Kardashian is on the list, which clearly shows that the A-list he creates has nothing to do with real world realities of celebrity interest. Perhaps that is not what he is aiming for, but, for the purposes of my own work, I am extremely interested in how the unspoken understanding of celebrity rankings (across all kinds of celebrity) play out in the celebrity reporting world. The colloquial usage of A, B, and C-list celebrities, even if without use of the formal name "the Ulmer Scale" and even without reference to his particular rankings to individual celebrities, demonstrates the ways in which what is intended to be industry-particular terminology can popularize.

While not everyone who refers to an A-list celebrity may realize its origins with reporter James Ulmer, it is an example of how entertainment reporters shape national discourse and

ideologies. Bourdieu notes that journalists' job is to impose a "legitimate vision of the social world" on their audiences (Bourdieu 2005:40). Of course, how the audiences push this vision further is grounded in their own ideas. This is the power of the media to affect an audience, and the consequent power of the audience to similarly affect the media. It is a symbiotic process. The media production and consumption relationship cannot be simplified into the one-directional terms offered by Horkheimer and Adorno; instead there is a much more dynamic process that is demonstrated in the research presented in this project. Still, the power of the media, and thus all media producers, to have a more influential hand in the shaping of national discourse than the average person remains a reality. Thus, studying these producers and understanding the processes by which media are produced are still critical to our understanding of contemporary mediatized culture.

SECTION II: Weekly Magazine Reporters: Their Lives and Workplaces

“It’s award season. Tonight I covered a post-Golden Globes party. It’s after 5a.m. and I am delirious. I’ve been working since about 3pm and I have not had much to eat or drink. It’s no wonder that celeb reporters start to get jaded about the work that we do. It actually isn’t fun after a while. We were outside on the rooftop waiting for celebrities to come who ended up coming and mostly not talking to us. My feet hurt so badly right now I feel like I can’t walk. I’m hungry, I’m tired, and I doubt I’ll even be able to sleep. I will have to write more tomorrow, but I am completely delirious. This is the effect of the 24 hour news cycle.”

—Sarah, freelance weekly magazine reporter

Some of the reporters I worked with offered to keep journals before, during, and after their event coverage. Sarah’s award season red carpet experience begins to break down the seemingly glamorous life of celebrity reporting. In this section, I explore the world of weekly celebrity magazine reporters in order to offer “insights into the processes, possibilities, and constraints of media production that are not apparent from close readings of media texts” (Ganti 2014:17). The experiences of these celebrity reporters both on and off the red carpet present material that could never be gleaned from the published material we all have access to as consumers. Perspectives from both staff and freelance reporters are incorporated into this chapter. However, for red carpet reporting, the focus is specifically on freelance reporters since, at the time of this research, they made up the majority of the reporters at these events. This section also provides a space for the voices of the red carpet photographers (not to be confused with paparazzi), who are a critical component of the red carpet ritual. While the majority of reporters are white women, and the majority of red carpet photographers are white men, I share

perspectives from individuals who represent both the dominant and underrepresented demographics of these media producers.

Building on the introductory section, which outlines the notion of celebrity with which I am working throughout this project, this section shows how celebrities are identified and even defined vis-à-vis interactions with red carpet reporters and photographers. News media production “has become increasingly dispersed across multiple sites” and no longer centers upon a newsroom (Cottle 2007:8-9). In chapter three I present the red carpet as one of these alternative sites and, in chapter four, I present several different locales, such as nightclubs, as other alternative sites. Thus, this section illuminates the ways in which my focus on red carpet and paparazzi work ensures that I veer away from the newsroom-centric trope of news ethnography and that I focus on freelance media producers, who are currently understudied precisely because of the newsroom focus (a space from which most freelancers are far removed) (Cottle 2000, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010).

The female dominance of celebrity reporting (only on the reporter level—editors at the weekly magazines include relatively equal numbers of men and women, though generally slightly more men) is something that I noted from my first days in the offices of *People* magazine and on the red carpet. As I began my research I asked celebrity weekly reporters and editors about this gender disparity, and while most collaborators agreed immediately with the female-dominance of celebrity reporting, few, if any, had given any thought to it at all before I pointed it out. Sandra, a former freelance and staff reporter for multiple celebrity weekly magazines was immediately intrigued by my pointing out the dominance of women in the field. “I imagine that other women have had similar experiences to mine and I want to know about them. Was my experience crazy compared to theirs? Or similar? Sharing these experiences feels

like therapy, like a weight was lifted off my shoulders.” As I pushed for answers about issues of gender in this line of work, the media producers themselves reflected on this, and a section of chapter four is dedicated to these reflections. Through my discussions of gender in this industry, I demonstrate how female celebrity journalists are highly sexualized in their positions and are encouraged to use their sexuality (generally a presumed heterosexuality) to relate to celebrity women on the basis of sharing common “women’s issues” and to exploit their sexuality for the sake of obtaining information from male celebrities.

This section also examines the ethics of celebrity reporting. Ethical codes of celebrity journalism have historically been and remain unclear (Barbas 2005; Gamson 1994; Holley 2003; Ponce de Leon 2002). Though freelance reporters have more agency than staff reporters to accept or reject any assignment, all reporters take ethical risks to maintain professional stability. From loitering in hotels and outside of celebrity homes, to eavesdropping in bathrooms (Barbas 2005:55), celebrity reporters are often in compromising and stressful situations that sometimes lead to the revelation of extremely confidential celebrity news. These unclear ethical lines are the livelihood of celebrity reporting.

While freelance reporters may be able to turn down assignments more easily than staff reporters, staff reporters are able to pitch and get assigned their own story ideas more frequently than freelance reporters because of their in-office presence. The relationships between reporters and insiders, such as celebrity agents and studio heads, have never been as one-sided as they might seem (Barbas 2005; Holley 2003). Pioneering celebrity reporters like Louella Parsons and Hopper did sometimes bend the truth to please industry figures, but they also held a tremendous amount of industry power and were treated with respect precisely because people recognized the agency of the reporters to frame stories (Barbas 2005; Eells 1972; Hopper 1963). I know from

personal experience that this complex relationship persists today, as reporters of major celebrity weekly magazines like *People* are both working to keep industry figureheads happy, while they are simultaneously treated with a great deal of respect as individuals with the power to help or hamper celebrity careers. Rather than simply doing as others request, celebrity reporters *actively* shape and affect trends in popular culture. Thus, I hope to illuminate through this section the ways in which reporters at once have a tremendous amount of power and agency to carefully shape public understanding of celebrity image and persona, while at the same time they encounter moments in which they have serious constraints on their ability to exercise agency.

For example, at events and during interviews, reporters are asked to make assessments about appearance, behavior, mood, and demeanor of individual celebrities that ultimately fill the pages of the magazines and their websites and shape our understanding of the individual celebrities. Sarah said, “During award season, we are asked to immediately report any facts or observations, but our judgment of celebrities at the event are the facts and observations, and the publication treats it that way. This is the case whether or not we actually interact with a celebrity. Throughout the night, all the reporters are on an email chain making harsh judgments about individual celebrities, saying things like they looked ‘stretch-faced’ and commenting on their ‘back fat.’ This kind of exchange among reporters encourages this type of assessment that we actually use in the publication. In that sense, it’s crazy the amount of power we have to shape and assess individuals and public perception of those individuals.”

In one situation, the mental stability of a celebrity was called into question after Sarah had recently reported on this person, and she recognized the potential power she could have over the representations of this celebrity. Sarah wrote in her journal, “I actually feel a lot of power and responsibility right now. I feel like I could do something that could be eternally hurtful or

detrimental to someone. On the other hand, I feel like I could actually help her career. It's a delicate situation. And it's a powerful position to be in. I'm constantly perturbed and it's hard to figure out how to handle each scenario. Obviously my goal is to be honest, but it's hard not to embellish or exaggerate when you feel like you know that what your editors and readers want. You really have to check yourself, check your power, reality check yourself. But it's hard.”

News is produced and distributed 24 hours a day, which means that office hours of a typical workplace are largely irrelevant. Just as other kinds of businesses have looked for ways to cut costs by using cheaper labor sources, journalism is no exception; this, of course, has led to the freelancer-ization or stringer-ization of most media outlets. There are still staff writers/reporters at the celebrity weekly magazines, and these positions still carry much cachet in the industry. But the reporters I focus on here are predominantly freelance reporters, since during my fieldwork they still made up the majority of the red carpet reporters (this has since changed some, as more staff writers have been required to take over the night/event work that was previously assigned out to freelancers). As S. Elizabeth Bird points out in her introduction to *The Anthropology of News and Journalism* (2010), there has not been much attention paid to the freelance journalists who works outside of the confines of a traditional newsroom, but who produces a great deal of the “news” produced today. While I will spend some time on the “newsrooms,” or offices, of the weekly magazines, my focus is mostly on the red carpet and inside the events where the freelance celebrity reporters of Los Angeles do the majority of their work, their peer bonding and discussion of job practices, and their professional development. For freelancers, the offices of the weekly magazines are a place they may or may never see.

Race and Representation in Across Hollywood Industries

Actor and comedian Chris Rock recently wrote a highly critical evaluation of Hollywood industries for the *Hollywood Reporter*, a trade-focused publication that was once published as a daily Hollywood industry newspaper and was re-launched as a glossy weekly magazine in 2010 under the direction of former *Us Weekly* editor Janice Min. While the magazine includes more lifestyle reporting than its older version, it does still focus on Hollywood industries in a way that differentiates it from the celebrity weekly magazines focused on in this project, which rarely focus on industry particulars. In the article, Rock discussed the racial politics of Hollywood:

It's a white industry... It just is... But how many black men have you met working in Hollywood? They don't really hire black men... It is what it is. I'm a guy who's accepted it all... But forget whether Hollywood is black enough. A better question is: Is Hollywood Mexican enough? You're in L.A, you've got to *try* not to hire Mexicans... You're telling me no Mexicans are qualified to do anything at a studio? Really? Nothing but mop up? What are the odds that that's true?... The best [movies] are made outside of the studio system because they're not made with that many white people — maybe one or two, but not a whole system of white people... Now, when it comes to casting, Hollywood pretty much decides to cast a black guy or they don't. We're never on the "short list." We're never "in the mix."... And there are almost no black women in film... I go to the movies almost every week, and I can go a month and not see a black woman having an actual speaking part in a movie. That's the truth (Rock 2014).

Throughout this project, I hope to illuminate the ways in which the celebrity weekly magazines are yet another node in this system of Hollywood industries. The remarks that Rock makes about the exclusion of Blacks and Latinos in the Hollywood studio system coincide with practices in the publications that exist to serve that system. One only has to attend a single Hollywood event to see that this is the case. Melissa, a Los Angeles-based freelancer who reports for various entertainment-focused publications, said, "I am assigned to cover BET [Black Entertainment Television] after parties every year and every year I imagine people are wondering, 'Doesn't that outlet have any Black reporters?' The answer is no. I have been on red carpets for BET events where there are no Black reporters." Thus, even at events focused around

Black entertainment and Black entertainers, there are few Black reporters. At various points during my time working for *People* in New York, I was the only person of color reporting out of the New York bureau and, thus, was sent to cover any “ethnic” event. Similarly, during my time in Los Angeles, I was often called on to cover “ethnic” events when one of the few staff members of color were not available. Thus, the concerns brought to light by Chris Rock are not exclusive to the studio system.

In rare instances, *People* has published articles focused on the lack of diversity in Hollywood. One piece in 1996 and another in 2001 articulated similar sentiments to those expressed by Rock in 2014 (see Image 1). In 1996, the magazine published a multi-page spread entitled: “Hollywood Blackout: The film industry says all the right things, but its continued exclusion of African-Americans is a national disgrace” (Lambert 1996). Expressing a rare and reflexive voice not found in the magazine today, *People* offered a critical evaluation of Hollywood and took a long-term and ethnographic approach to studying the situation:

With the academy awards two weeks away, we are taking an intensive look this week at one side of Hollywood rarely exposed to bright lights: racial discrimination. “The exclusion of minorities from the film industry is one of Hollywood’s dirty little secrets,” says senior writer Pam Lambert, who wrote our cover story. “Despite the stars all of us can name, once you get behind the scenes, blacks remain the invisible men and women.” Four months ago a team of PEOPLE correspondents in Los Angeles began interviewing black and white actors, actresses and filmmakers about racism in Hollywood. Our first reporting came from national correspondent Lois Armstrong, who in 21 years with PEOPLE had already interviewed such prominent black stars as LeVar Burton, Billy Dee Williams, Danny Glover and Blair Underwood. Then staff correspondents Karen Brailsford, Betty Cortina, Johnny Dodd, Lynda Wright and Paula Yoo called 130 sources and gathered more than 60 interviews... “The fact that you can still name the people [blacks in various jobs] illustrates the problem,” says John Mack, president of the Urban League’s Los Angeles chapter. “The continuing reality is that if you’re an African American, it’s still a good ol’ boys club.” Within that fraternity, studio executives, producers and superagents make handshake deals on the beach at Malibu or after backyard barbecues in Bel Air. And if blacks are shut out of the socializing, then they’re also cut out of the wheeling and dealing that takes place. Such was the case last month as a small dinner party at the Malibu home of record and movie mogul David Geffen. The dozen or so guests who shared caviar, roast duckling and small talk with visiting

President Bill Clinton - among them co-Dream Works SKG founders Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg - were exclusively white, and exclusively male (Lambert 1996).

In 2001, “Hollywood Blackout, the Sequel” appeared in the magazine and echoed the sentiments expressed in the 1996 article, with some very minor improvements in percentages of representation outlined (Miller 2001). Perhaps most significantly from the 1996 article, however, was *People*’s own critical evaluation of issues of diversity within the publication itself:

Those of us in the print media have an equal responsibility to report accurately on American life and also to reflect it. Twenty-two percent of PEOPLE’s editorial staff of 255 is composed of minorities and 13 percent is African-American, but they represent only 7 percent of our managers. A staff lacking in diversity is at risk of losing vitality and responsiveness to the social mosaic that surrounds it, and stories like this one vividly remind us just how complex that mosaic can be. “We’re never profiled unless the issue is race,” black filmmaker Regional Hudlin told correspondent Karen Brailsford. At *People*, we plan to make it our challenge to change that (Lambert 1996).

It seems that *People* said all the right things in 1996 and 2001, but the celebrity weekly magazines have been slow to make advances in the ensuing years, as I will explore. As of today, *People* has only employed one Black Senior Editor in its history, Tasha Robertson. She was fired in 2014 and subsequently filed a lawsuit against the magazine claiming a racially discriminatory workplace, and alleging, “Every day, millions of readers pick up a People Magazine, open its glossy cover filled with celebrity photographs, and flip through its pages containing sensational human interest stories. Little do these readers know, behind the cover and pages of People Magazine, is a discriminatory organization run entirely by White people who intentionally focus the magazine on stories involving White people and White celebrities” (“Complaint,” Robertson vs. People Magazine 2014:1). Despite *People*’s 2001 assertion that they must develop a diverse staff and their mission to more inclusively report on Black people in their editorial process, the lawsuit also points out that, “In total since 2010, only 14 out of 265 covers have been focused on African-American individuals” (ibid.).

While the *Hollywood Reporter* gave space for Rock to comment on race in the industry, the same issue featured its annual "actor roundtable" made up entirely of white actors: Benedict Cumberbatch, Channing Tatum, Ethan Hawke, Michael Keaton, Eddie Redmayne, and Timothy Spall (Galloway 2014). Two weeks prior, the magazine published its actress roundtable, which similarly featured an ensemble of all white women: Reese Witherspoon, Julianne Moore, Amy Adams, Patricia Arquette, Laura Dern, Felicity Jones, and Hilary Swank (Belloni 2014). These actors are selected based on who they predict will get Oscar nominations, but, the fact that there are zero people of color in either group is a testament to the racial hierarchies at play in Hollywood and the ways in which the media that are made to help market Hollywood's celebrities reinforce this hierarchy. Much like *People* played lip service by raising the issue of race in their "Blackout" articles, the *Hollywood Reporter*, under the direction of former *Us Weekly* editor Janice Min, provided a space for Rock to express his concerns over racism in the industry, but simultaneously demonstrated Rock's exact concerns on the magazine's pages. Racial politics at the celebrity weekly magazines still play a prominent role in decisions about staffing and which celebrities to cover. I will explore these racial politics throughout this section, as well as the sections that follow.

CHAPTER THREE

Red Carpet Rituals: Positionality and Power in a Surveilled Space

“It’s a ritual. You stand in these lights. You talk to each person for one to three minutes in a pre-scripted fashion and everyone thinks they’re really getting to know you. It’s always been this way. It’s a tradition.”

—Steven, Red Carpet Videographer

“At its mythical best, entertainment reporting involves dressing up for parties, receiving messengered envelopes with Governors Ball tickets, and schmoozing celebs over a glass of champagne. While red carpet reporting has its perks, it does not always live up to that fantasy.”

—Kwala Mandel, Former *People* Reporter¹⁰

The “red carpet” as an event is a strange concept at the center of what it means to be “in the industry” (see Image 2). In Hollywood, a designer boutique has not officially opened, a film has not premiered, an award show has not begun, until a red carpet procession occurs in its honor. Despite an increase in the circulation of photos in celebrity weekly magazines portraying stars as being “Just Like Us!,” celebrity weekly magazines still consistently publish photos of red carpet events in every issue. Red carpet events are iconic of what it means to be a celebrity and magazines use these photos to show that celebrities remain part of an elite group with access to this elite space, regardless of how “like us” they may (or may not) be. Red carpet events and their infrastructure are among the most visible elements of the cultural fabric that makes the “industry” cohere.

The red carpet is, in fact, a ritual of the industry—it is a symbolic set of performative actions with particular actors performing designated roles. As celebrities become evermore central to American culture, the reporters and photographers (the media producers) become the

¹⁰ (Mandel 2012).

messengers linking the consumers, fans, and public to the celebrities. It is the media producers' job to make sure all details about the celebrities are recorded and shared, to make the celebrities look good, to ask the right questions, and to perform their own form of worship on the red carpet in front of the celebrities' guardians—their publicists and managers. Based on ethnographic fieldwork on the red carpet and interviews conducted with celebrity reporters, photographers, celebrities themselves, publicists, and fans in Los Angeles, and with reporters and editors of celebrity weekly magazines in New York and Los Angeles from 2010 to 2012, as well as my earlier experience as a red carpet reporter beginning in 2004, this chapter explores the framework of the red carpet ritual with a focus on the media producers who are critical to its success. The chapter examines not only the figures involved in the ritual, but it will break down the significance of the red carpet ritual—from the processes of obtaining permission enter the carpet to the barricading of the reporters; how the order of media outlets is determined; the gender dynamics at play on the red carpet; the strategic arrival and presentation of the celebrities; the various kinds of negotiations that take place on the red carpet; and the spectacle, from the lights to the fans, that surround this ritualistic event. I aim to put the reporters and photographers in action and in conversation with each other as I describe the red carpet, and my own experience as a red carpet reporter will weigh heavily in this chapter. I will also address the presence of fans and the politics of positionality on the red carpet.

The history of the red carpet is quite complicated, and there has been no comprehensive research on the precise origins and developments of the tradition. Some very brief overviews of the origins of the red carpet are available, including one recently completed by my advisor during my time as a pre-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, historian Amy Henderson (2013). As she explores, the earliest reference to walking a red carpet is in the

Greek tragedy Agamemnon in 458 B.C., when the title character is greeted by his wife Clytemnestra, who invites him to walk a “crimson path” to his house (Cryer 2012:300; Greene & Lattimore 1960:34). Since the 19th century, it’s clear that in the US, the red carpet represented wealth and prestige. After disembarking a plantation barge rowed by slaves of South Carolina rice plantation owners, President James Monroe walked down a red carpet that stretched from the boat all the way to the Prospect Hill Plantation where he was hosted (McAlister 2011:25). Mainly, though, it seems the red carpet was a transportation-related phenomenon: In 1902, the New York Central launched the luxury train the Twentieth Century Limited, which ran between New York and Chicago. Up until 1968, the entire length of the New York departure platform was covered with red carpet and passengers walked down this carpet to enter the carriage; similarly, upon arrival, a red carpet was rolled out so passengers’ feet never touched the pavement, and this is what originally “gave the world the expression ‘red-carpet treatment’” (Cryer 2012:300; Wolmar 2010:283). Even today, many airlines have a small strip of red carpet lining what they call their “priority” lane, reserved for customers seated in first class or customers who have elite frequent flyer status with the airline. Upon exiting Air Force One, the President of the United States walks down a red carpet that lines the path from the jet to the airport entrance.

Today, red carpets are mostly associated with celebrity runways at major entertainment events. The first Hollywood red carpet event was the opening of Sid Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre in 1922; Grauman eventually took credit for the red carpet becoming a signature feature of Hollywood events (Mansky & Walker 2014). One of the most celebrated red carpet events is the Oscars, but the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences did not begin using a red carpet until 1961 (ibid.; Henderson 2013). Television broadcasts of the Oscars began in 1953, and by 1966

when the awards were first broadcast in color, the red carpet had become a major component of the Oscar experience (Osborne 2008). But the Oscars is just one of many events that boasts a red carpet, and I will be exploring some more “every day” style red carpet events in this chapter, events that are more representative of the day-to-day culture of celebrity reporting in Los Angeles.

As I explore the role of the red carpet ritual in the entertainment industry, it is important to address the religious connotations that it evokes. There is a long history of relating celebrities to gods (e.g. Boyd 1958; Braudy 1997; Kobal 1973; Laderman 2009; Ward 2011). “Celebrities are routinely called idols, or icons, and from time to time they are called ‘divine’ or even referred to as ‘gods. Fans are said to be devoted to celebrities, to adore them, and in many cases the behavior of fans is likened to ‘worship” (Ward 2011:3). While the similarities between celebrity worship and religion include the various rituals that can be observed in both kinds of worship, anthropologists define ritual in a broader sense to include both sacred and secular (Hicks 2010:94); in my exploration of the red carpet as a ritual of celebrity culture and worship, I will focus on it as a secular event, rather than religious. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown saw rituals and ceremonies as a means by which both individuals and society maintain social cohesion and sense of organization (1977:99), and my analysis of the red carpet reveals the ways in which the red carpet ritual contributes to the development of social understandings of celebrity culture. Furthermore, the experience of all of the various players in the red carpet ritual contribute to a sense of community within Hollywood and celebrity culture, as “collectively performing rituals fosters a communal spirit, part of something larger than self” (Hicks 2010:94). I hope to demonstrate the ways in which the red carpet ritual truly is a collective performative ritual, and to take a processual approach to exploring its complexities.

Gaining Entry into an Elite Space

June 8, 2011: A different night, the same set up. The day before, I was emailed by the intern-turned-event-assigner at *People*. She sent me the tip sheet, the contact info for the event publicist, and a few specific questions for certain celebrities who were scheduled to attend. I arrived at 6:30 p.m. for an event that would last from 7 to 10 p.m. The press “call time” is the time the individuals coordinating the event request media arrival. It is always about an hour before the event starts, but celebrities do not usually start showing up until the event has already begun. For bigger events like award ceremonies, call time may be several hours before celebrities begin arriving. I pulled up to the W Hotel in West Hollywood, a very trendy and stereotypically “Hollywood” space on Hollywood Blvd. The valet attendant asked if I was there for the event, I showed him my valet parking pass that had been emailed to me in advance, but since most of the cars arriving for the event were luxury vehicles and mine was a 1999 Toyota Celica with finger-written “wash-me’s” engraved in the coat of dust and dirt on my beloved “old faithful” (the name I have given to my car, a practice I’m not sure is common outside of Southern California, where our lives center around our cars), he was entirely unsure as to whether or not I belonged there. I was too. No matter how many of these events I attended, I always felt out of my comfort zone.

Ashley, who has worked for multiple weekly celebrity magazines, does not experience the glamour that others assume she does when she says she is a red carpet reporter:

I tell people who are like, ‘Oh my god, that’s so cool, you get to go to the Oscars.’ I’m like, is it digging holes in ditches for a living? No. Is it drilling holes in sheet metal? No, it’s a lot better than that. However, it’s still a job. I don’t get to go to the Oscars, I get to stand on the Oscars red carpet and scream at people like I’m an idiot. I have to scream people’s names, practically begging them to come talk to me like, ‘Please, please come over here.’ And you’re interviewing these people who have so much money and they get so much stuff for free and they talk about things you can’t relate to. I remember, I don’t even know who the star was at this point but it was some mid-level TV person, who was

telling me – I think it was some *People* story on how people spent their summer vacation. I remember asking the person, they were like, “Oh my god, we had the best vacation in France. The only way to go is with renting a villa, getting a chef, and just hanging out there for a month. That’s the only way to really get to know it.” I remember thinking in my head, “I guess I’m never going to really get to know France.” Like, I’m just never going to have that experience because I’m pretty sure I’m never going to be able to afford a villa, a chef, and a month off.

Despite the fact that most reporters I worked with on this project come from middle and upper-middle class families, there is usually still a differentiation between their lifestyle and that of the celebrities they interview. Still, the pressure to look a certain way on the red carpet can drive reporters to push their financial limits to play the part. Ashley said:

You watch all these girls get ready for awards season and they’re girls that are making \$350 dollars on this event. But you had to buy a \$200 dollar dress. Then you start to believe the bullshit that they’re selling, like, ‘Well I can’t wear this dress again, I have to get something else! I look like crap, I have to lose 10 pounds! I should go on a cleanse!’ All these things go through your head like, ‘I should get a haircut. I definitely need to get my nails done.’ And then all of a sudden you realize, I just spent all the money I made today. So I definitely think you need to realize you are reporting on these people, but you aren’t these people. There is a natural jealousy that occurs, especially when you’re interviewing people where you’re like, you’re dumb, you happened to be born with the right dad, you’re not a good actress, and yet you’re getting all these roles.

Before taking my spot on the red carpet, I always experience a sense of both irritation and anxiety; for me, it is both irritating and anxiety causing to know that I will have to be fake, pretend to know “celebrities” who I have never seen before, and schmooze the public relations (PR) people. One might think that reporters feel a sense of importance showing up to a red carpet event and having a spot reserved for them, but not only is it just work to the reporters, it is also repetitive and often uncomfortable. Still, I arrived at each event with interest and fascination, even before I chose to research and reflect on this culture through an anthropological lens. If originally anthropologists studied isolated cultures and tribes, the world of celebrities and reporters in Hollywood, and particularly the ritual of the red carpet event, was a perfect example of a very contained culture and tribe that engages in ritualistic and regulated practices on a

regular basis. And, over the years, I had become a part of this culture and tribe, as a participant in the red carpet ritual. As I approached the carpet, I walked up to the obligatory “media check-in” desk and gave them my name and affiliation. “Vanessa Díaz for *People* magazine.” Immediately the “do-not-waste-my-time” expression on the junior public relations representative transitioned to an overzealous smile. “Hi, Vanessa! We’re so happy you could make it. Here is the updated tip sheet. Your spot is marked on the carpet. Let me know if you need anything.” *People* is highly regarded and generally liked by anyone doing PR for an event. If the media outlet does not send a reporter, there will not be any coverage on the event; even when the media outlets send a reporter, it does not guarantee coverage, but it helps the chances. I walked over to my spot on the carpet, the white spot lights shining down on the bright red carpet and illuminating the step and repeat banner,¹¹ which boasts names and logos of the evening’s sponsors; a “gobo”¹² of the Forbes logo danced across the carpet. In the line up of media outlets on the red carpet, I am the first print media outlet following the still photographers and then the television camera crews.

Once we pass the red tape to get to the red carpet, we have to find our spot. The spot is predetermined, and each media member knows where we stand, literally and figuratively (see Image 3). The line up always begins with an open space for the red carpet photographers, followed by network and cable television programs, followed by major news outlets (e.g. Reuters, AP); sometimes *People* magazine is before some news outlets and camera crews, but, more often than not, *People* is the first of the celebrity-focused print media. The location where

¹¹ A step and repeat banner generally lined the back of the red carpet. Celebrities pose in front of this banner, which typically displays the corporate logos associated with the event, from the name of the event itself or the corporate sponsors of the event.

¹² A gobo is template that is placed in front of a lighting source to control the shape that is emitted. Gobos are very common at red carpet events since most events have multiple corporate sponsors who want their brands projected on and around the carpet as much as possible.

each reporter should stand is marked by a piece of paper taped to the carpet or the concrete next to it that simply says the name of the media outlet. At one event, the line up was: Entertainment Tonight, E! News, CNN, AP, about.com, *People*, and Fox news, followed by the remaining weekly magazines and other online sources. The pieces of paper on the ground that dictate our ranking and our whereabouts at the event have come to represent parts of our identity—we are the media outlet, we do not have individual names. The prestige of the outlet is what we rely on to get celebrities to stop. When the paper is not on the ground telling us where to go, we don't know what to do and, suddenly, it's not a *true* red carpet. At events where my spot has been missing, I approach the publicist and insist that a paper is put down with the name *People* on it since, without it, I am just a person standing next to the red carpet; with the paper, I am advertised as being with *People* and celebrities might talk to me.

At many large premieres and formal events, there are metal barricades set up on the red carpet dividing the path that the celebrities walk from the concrete the reporters stand on (see Image 4). Once you get into your space, you are blocked in and you cannot move. You're smashed in with dozens of other people in a few feet of space; the barricades are hooked together and once you're in, you can't get out until the end of the event, even to go to bathroom. If you are not at your spot punctually, the six inches that were once reserved for you become absorbed by a camera person who was never given enough room for his or her equipment in the first place.

I look down the carpet for familiar faces and see some of my other reporter friends—all women. Based on data I gathered over the course of my fieldwork, including statistics gathered from over fifty red carpet events, 77 percent of the reporters on the red carpet are women, while only 23 percent are men. The majority of reporters are in the age range of 25-35, while some are as young as 20 and others are in 35-45 range. The gender breakdown of the photographers is

almost exactly the inverse to that of the red carpet photographers, with 85 percent men and 15 percent women. I continue to address the gender analysis among these media producers throughout the project.

The reporters at the events generally know each other fairly well, particularly the reporters from the same kinds of outlets (e.g. the magazine reporters know each other, newspaper reporters know each other). There is one reporter who appears at many events and she is notorious for moving up and down the red carpet line filming other peoples' interviews without permission and then putting them on Youtube. Over the last few years there has been a developing culture among the weekly magazines of jumping into interviews of other outlets, as they fear they may not get time with a celebrity if you are before them. They stand behind you to hear what you are asking about and, sometimes, do not even ask questions or stand in the spot that has been given to them; instead they opt to poach your interviews. This is what typically happens between reporters who are not friends. Reporters who *are* friends with each other and who do not wish to expend any additional energy trying to do interviews on their own (I never counted myself in this group) opt for group interviews. The reporters who agree to do this huddle together, announce to the publicist that they can just group the interviews (which the publicist and celebrity both often like if it is a big name celebrity who does not want to take his/her time on the red carpet). After the red carpet, the reporters then divide up the responsibilities of transcribing the interviews and then send them to each other to speed up the filing process (see Image 5). This takes away from the possibility of developing individual or “exclusive” stories that an outlet can break, which is why I never participated in this kind of behavior, since I know my ability to write stories and get published depends on the information I get from the interviews. There are, however, times when doing group interviews cannot be avoided and the

publicist, rather than the reporters, decides that a group of reporters must interview a celebrity together. In this case, the division of labor among reporters makes sense and does not compromise anyone's potential professional achievements.

The group of women, mostly in our twenties and early thirties, huddle together and talk about our latest concerns with work, who we “care about” that night (e.g. who has anything going on in their personal and/or professional lives that our magazines have interest in) and take goofy photos on my iPhone, which I then post to Facebook. Social media has become a way not only for celebrity reporters to connect online, but also to let the other reporters know where we are, that we are still getting work, and, essentially to assert that we are continually on the radar of the outlets we freelance for; this is a competitive industry and all freelance reporters are potential threats to each others' jobs. Some reporters use social media to show off who they have interviewed recently, while others use it as a place to show how “red carpet ready” they looked for an awards show.

While some red carpet reporters simply arrive with a list of questions from an assigning editor, many spend hours reading up on the latest news for each celebrity listed on the “tip sheet” for the event and come up with their own series of questions to compliment the specifically required needs of the outlet they are working for. Sylvia, a freelance reporter who has also worked on staff for multiple celebrity weekly magazines, says she spends at least eight hours preparing for every event she does:

When you're a freelancer too you've got to justify your job on every assignment. I think that puts that hunger and desire into reporters. I pick three things that stand out the most and then I take it a step farther and I create headlines for each one so it can get the editor thinking, 'Hey that's a great headline, let's make a story out of it.' I love coming up with a clever headline. I love pitching it and seeing it run. I like being useful. Isn't that what we all want in life; we want to be useful.

Jasmine, a freelancer for *Us Weekly*, said before events, the most important questions for her to know about the celebrities set to attend are: “Did they have a baby recently? Are they dating anybody? What have they been in? Do we have any connections to anyone? What are they working on right now?” For Sylvia, even after over a decade of covering red carpet events, she still gets an “adrenaline rush. It's the thrill of the chase. I think it's fun. It is better than digging ditches. There are worse jobs to have than talking to celebrities, even if it's silly stuff.”

In the public imagination, it may be perceived that every red carpet event welcomes A-list celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, but, in truth, reality television stars and lesser-known actors make up a lot of those individuals attending even the most exclusive celebrity events. As I reviewed the “tip sheet” for the event, I notice that most of the celebrities listed are reality television stars; when I started reporting for *People* back in 2004, the majority of celebrities at any event were not reality television stars, they were actors, musicians, etc., so this was a fairly new phenomenon. That night I was at the “Forbes Celebrity 100 Event: The Entrepreneur Behind the Icon,” an event honoring Real Housewife of New York, Bethenny Frankel, and the Kardashian sisters for their entrepreneurial work.

I also noticed that, according to the tip sheet, there are more than two people of color scheduled to attend, not a common occurrence for most red carpet events. In fact, it is not common for more than a few people of color to be attending a red carpet event as a celebrity, nor is it common for there to be more than a few people of color interviewing on the red carpet. As one of the few reporters of color working for *People*, in both New York and Los Angeles, I was typically sent to “ethnic” events (e.g. Alma Awards, BET events, NAACP, etc.). Joy, a former *People* writer shared a similar experience, “When I got to *People*, I was the only Black girl.

Also, there weren't any Black editors. There was no one. And so when I first got there, there were the BET Awards, and the Soul Train Awards, certain events I was always sent to."

As African-American actress Regina King made her way down the red carpet at the Forbes event, media outlets passed up interviewing her. Often if there is no specific "need" for a celebrity who attends an event, reporters do not talk to the celebrity. As she quickened her pace to get off the red carpet and avoid further disinterest by the media, I stopped her. "Do you want to talk to brown people too?" she asked me seriously and yet sarcastically at the same time. I was the only outlet that talked to her and the other Black women walking the carpet that night and it was not because the magazine had specific questions or "needs" for her, it was because I try, whenever I can, to include information on the people of color at events in hopes that some story might develop from it, that they might be working with a bigger name that could get them mentioned in the magazine, or, if nothing else, that their name will register with people at the magazine.

My first experience working on a red carpet was marked by a similar experience when I covered the first VH1 HipHop Honors awards in New York in 2004. I introduced myself to an African-American celebrity walking the red carpet by explaining that I worked for *People* magazine. "I call that *White People* magazine," he joked. Ten years later, after the firing of their only Black editor, an article about *People* magazine in the *New York Daily News* suggested, "Maybe they should call it White People magazine" (Gregorian 2014). There is a complicated relationship between the race and ethnicity of the reporters, their interviewees, and their consumers. Reporters of color, like myself, are aware that they are mostly producing a magazine of white popular culture, and are most likely to do the few interviews with celebrities of color whom the magazines deem *white* consumer friendly. This exchange at the HipHop Honors

Awards made a permanent mark on me and immediately showed me that racial politics are a major factor in celebrity culture, red carpet rituals, and entertainment journalism, and, without firsthand accounts like mine, it is difficult to understand what these politics look like on the inside. It is not an issue that people of color in Hollywood are afraid to talk about or one that they ignore, but unless one engages with people of color in Hollywood or pays close attention to issues of diversity, it is possible for individuals to not even register that this issue exists. As actor/comedian Chris Rock said in the *Hollywood Reporter* essay I referenced in the chapter's introduction, Hollywood is "a white industry" (Rock 2014).

Before even posing a question to her at the Forbes event, King was putting Hollywood's racial hierarchy front and center in our conversation. So stunned that I even wanted to talk to her, she posed a question that demonstrated her uncomfortability with the racialized space that is Hollywood and red carpets, despite her years in the industry. Another seemingly minor, but significant part of the interaction I had with her was that it did not involve a publicist mediating our conversation. Unlike every other interview I did that night and almost every interview I have ever done, she did not attend the event with a publicist, nor did one of the event publicists accompany her as she walked down the carpet (as typically happens if a celebrity shows up without their personal publicist or manager). Perhaps this actress was not seen as in need of having her interviews facilitated, but, there is only one reason for this—the publicists did not think enough reporters would want to talk to her and, thus, she did not need assistance.

Anyone I have ever brought to an event is immediately struck by how surveilled, regulated, or chaperoned each interview between celebrity and reporter is with the overseeing publicist assessing, censoring, and setting parameters on the interviews. A guest who I brought to an event expressed to me her surprise at the red carpet interview dynamic, "The next thing I

noticed was when Seth Rogan came up, the PR rep was staring at him so close. It was awkward. If I were him, I would feel awkward. I wouldn't be able to speak as freely as I would want to, especially with her so close. It's not a true one-on-one. It's like a babysitter overseeing the interview." Talking to King at the Forbes event, I felt like I connected to her in a way that I had not connected with someone on the red carpet in a long time; perhaps it was the mere fact that I *wanted* to talk to her when nobody else did, perhaps it was the absence of the publicist that allowed us to have less-censored exchange (for surely it was not uncensored, we were on a red carpet, which is a highly regulated space with or without a publicist), or perhaps it was our lack of fear in addressing the highly racialized nature of every red carpet event in Hollywood. But then I found myself wondering, "Did we really have a moment? A real connection? How much is planned performance? Are we both performing? How much are we able to connect when we are both pre-scripted to some extent?" Samantha, a staff writer/reporter for a weekly celebrity magazine who had also worked for other celebrity weekly magazines both on staff and as a freelancer said, "I don't feel like people are themselves on the red carpet because they're aware of how they look. They're also looking around their shoulder. And there's a publicist tapping your elbow as you're holding your recorder and you're like, 'You've got to be kidding me, this is the second question. Give me a break.' There are too many distractions."

On this night, I only had to wait about an hour before my first interview (sometimes reporters wait many hours before a celebrity arrives). By the end of the red carpet, it was clear that, as usual, many of the celebrities listed on the tip sheet would not actually attend. The tip sheet is a list of celebrities who have supposedly confirmed their attendance at the event. However, typically many of the biggest names on the list, as well as some B and C-list celebrities sprinkled throughout the list, simply did not alert the event that they *were not* coming

and, thus, they are left on the list as attendees. The names on the list are intended to entice and guarantee media coverage, but, in reality, those names are often just a tease, as was the case with this evening's event.

After the PR people closed the red carpet, I was escorted inside the event. While I make it a fairly strict policy that I do not ask to take photos with celebrities at events I am covering for the magazine, my peers do not all take the same stance. Fellow reporters crowded around the cabana where honoree Bethenny Frankel sat. One of the reporters had her friend approach the reality television star and ask to take a photo. The reporter was extremely excited and was giddy afterward. Thus, even those who work in the industry have an affinity for reality television stars. Some of the reporters I work with have even been approached about starring in their own reality television shows. In fact, at one event held at the Beverly Hills mansion of a well known designer, I introduced myself to someone inside the event and, when I explained I was reporting for *People*, she said, "So, you're a celebrity in your own right." Celebrity reporters are not necessarily celebrities in their own right, but there may be desires for fame, possibilities of fame, and, since Perez Hilton, there is definitely more of a perception that celebrity reporters can become celebrities. Still, Perez did not start reporting on celebrity gossip to be a journalist, he started reporting bits and pieces of information on celebrities and making fun of them on his website *in order to* turn into a personality; the name Perez Hilton was already a fictitious name meant to earn himself immediate recognition and turn it into a persona/character, not to become a journalist. Even in his work now, Perez reports for magazines and radio stations, and interviews on television shows as a celebrity; he often talks about being friends with various celebrities he is "reporting" on; weekly magazine reporters talk about celebrities as individuals they report on,

not as their friends. In fact, long-time red carpet reporter Scott Huver, one of the few men working in the industry in this capacity, sticks to the motto, “Be friendly, but never be friends.”

Walking the Carpet

The ritual of the red carpet centers on the display and worship of celebrities. The reporters, photographers, and video camera crews arrive early and check in with the leaders of the ceremony—the event publicists. The media outlets are put into place on line so that the celebrities feel properly worshipped and attended to as they arrive. The barricade – typically a waist-high divider with metal bars – separates the media producers from the celebrities. We are crammed together and look and feel like caged animals at a zoo, but it is, in fact, the other side of the barricade that is on display.

As the first celebrity arrives, the media representatives in attendance quickly turn as they hear the photographers screaming the name of the celebrity who is posing “Jennifer, over here!” “Jennifer, can I get you to look right here!” “Jennifer, let me see that smile!” “Jennifer, one more for me!” I can make out those few phrases, but, in fact, most of the yelling is indecipherable because the number of photographers at a red carpet event can range anywhere from about five to fifty and, as the number of photographers increases, the more deafening the sound of their cries for the perfect angle, as well as the barrage of clicks and flashes from the cameras. The celebrity generally obliges and is sure to look clearly into the cameras of as many photographers as possible, alternating between serious faces and smiles, over the shoulder looks to show the intricate details of the back of her dress, and front-facing shots that more fully display her complete outfit, accessories and all.

Red carpet photographer Liam, who works exclusively for one agency, said, “I always keep ear plugs in my bag. There are certain people that really scream. For some reason nobody

screams at Samuel L. Jackson. Everybody is quiet. I guess they are afraid of being called a MF. Sometimes when women are pregnant, like when Natalie Portman was pregnant, everybody was quiet. Some publicists, beforehand, they say to keep it calm because they don't like to be yelled at." The biggest obstacles for red carpet photographers are the celebrity publicists, Liam said. "The photographers need to leave at least five feet of space for the shot. So a lot of times the publicist is standing right on their client. Especially if it's somebody big, someone is reaching their hand in. That's a ruined shot. So that's when they get really loud." Despite the sometimes aggressive nature of the red carpet photographers, the hierarchy between them and paparazzi remains intact. Red carpet reporter Ron says, "It is still a controlled situation and it's by invite and clearance." So, the surveilled and protected nature of the carpet contributes to the legitimacy of the red carpet and the illegitimacy of the paparazzi.

Given the overwhelming sound of the screaming red carpet "photogs," as they are called for short, it always amazes me that many of these celebrities who pose patiently on the red carpet are the same who claim to feel threatened by paparazzi who, at the very least, do not create the same amount of audible chaos. The photographers take photos of every person who walks the red carpet and they yell out for clarification or names if they are unfamiliar with the celebrity (if it is a lesser-known celebrity, the publicist usually stands near the photographers and says and spells the name repeatedly while the photographers jot down the information).

Escorted by a publicist or manager, the celebrity then makes her way down the red carpet, stopping to talk to the various media outlets, while fans outside of the barricades snap photos (see Image 6). I stood on "the carpet" (as it is referred to in the industry) regularly as a "red carpet reporter," a term used in the industry to reference journalists who predominantly report on red carpet events. Red carpet reporters are often freelance reporters, though this has

changed since I completed my research, as many weekly magazines and other celebrity-focused media outlets have simply asked more red carpet reporting of their staff writers and reporters and have cut back on freelance/stringer budgets. However, this is in relation most specifically to red carpet reporters working for print media outlets; for television outlets, many red carpet reporters are regular anchors on the television channels and programs they work for. Not coincidentally, in the typical red carpet “line-up” of outlets, television outlets always go first. On screen is always seen as more important than print. Celebrities walking a red carpet not only can be seen on television this way (thus giving maximum exposure to their wardrobe, personality, etc.), but it is much more problematic to show a celebrity walking a red carpet and not stopping to talk to a television reporter than it is to not have them speak to a print reporter. On camera, a video of celebrity snubbing a television reporter can make a celebrity look unattainable or unfriendly, while print reporters only record the voices of celebrities who stop to talk to them—those reading the stories of print reporters are not left with the visual that we, the reporters, experience—that of the celebrity disregarding our existence and us left having to invent a vague description of how they looked or “seemed.” This, however, has also changed some with online stories expanding to include video—if someone is on the carpet reporting for People.com and doing video for People.com, she will get much more attention than a People reporter who does not have a camera crew.

Thus, while my focus here is on the celebrity weekly magazines, the influence of television, and particularly the E! network cannot go unmentioned. In 1990, when E! was rebranded as E!: Entertainment Network and became dedicated to covering celebrity and Hollywood news more aggressively, it had a tangible affect on the practices of the red carpet. Movie premiers and award ceremonies “had been covered for decades, first by the fan magazines

and gossip columns...Yet E! greeted each attendee with commentary and a barrage of questions concerning the provenance of dresses, suits, shoes, and jewelry. E! and the other gossip outlets forged an implicit understanding with the celebrities, who understood that talking, even ad nauseum, with these outlets served as a source of free yet essential promotion” (Petersen 2011: 278). Because of the benefit of promotional often offered vis-à-vis red carpet appearances, Hollywood newcomers use appearing on a red carpet as an opportunity for potential exposure.

Often the celebrities who make their way down the red carpet are not people with whom the reporters are familiar. As we stand waiting on the carpet, we often turn to each other to ask, “Who is that?” Despite the frequent portrayal of celebrities’ annoyance with the media, that is a luxury signifying that they have reached a certain level in their career. Reporters often do not know who “celebrities” walking the carpet are because they may have had a minor part on a recent show or movie, or perhaps are on a new reality television show, and are walking the carpet hoping to make it into the magazines. A common practice is that a publicist who has more prestigious clients attending the event will bring a lesser-known client to the event and, essentially, barter with reporters to get them to interview the lesser-known celebrity; if the reporter agrees to interview the lesser-known actor, for example, we know the publicist will give us more time with the A-list celebrity we really need to interview. While the publicist, of course, recognizes the likelihood of the lesser-known client making it into the magazine is slim, the goal is to get the client practicing interviews and feeling comfortable in this highly surveilled and regulated space. It is as much an opportunity for the client to rehearse and be coached on red carpet interview practices as it is a way to boost their confidence and feeling of importance, which is also part of the publicist’s job (publicists promise coverage and interviews with media as part of their services).

After working countless red carpet events, I am keenly aware of the formula by which celebrities and their publicists handle interviews: The celebrity's level of fame can be demonstrated by the way she handles the media on the red carpet. When a celebrity is C or D-list, meaning the person is not close to a household name, she may have played a minor part in a film alongside a bigger star, she may have been in a reality television show, or she may have an album coming out that no one has heard of yet, the publicist generally pitches the "celebrity" client to the media in advance of the client's arrival so that the client is not humiliated when nobody wants to talk to her. It creates an awkward and often uncomfortable interaction between the publicist and reporter. If the publicist has a relationship with the reporter, the reporter will often do the interview as a favor, particularly if the publicist has other big name clients also attending the event. "You don't have to talk to her, but, if you don't mind, it would be helpful," the publicist tells me. I say, "No problem," and indulge this person I have never heard of and may never hear of again, making them feel important and worshipped, like a real star participating in the most prestigious role of the red carpet ritual. Before we had smart phones, I would just wing it and research the person afterward, hoping to uncover some connection they might have to a big movie or other upcoming project; since the advent of the smart phone, I could quickly look up what the person was working on in case there was anything relevant I could talk to them about. Otherwise, I would just ask her about her outfit, what brought her out to the event, and what projects she is working on. For the reporter, it can also be a strategy for developing a relationship with a celebrity who might develop into someone more famous down the line and might remember that red carpet reporter who actually talked to her before she was famous, but this seldom pays off the way we might hope.

I remember a red carpet event in Hollywood in 2005, before Kim Kardashian was known for anything other than being a member of Paris Hilton's entourage (her sex-tape had still not yet been "discovered," or released rather), when Kardashian attended the event alongside Hilton. Hilton, with whom I spoke on a regular basis at various events, was acting as her own publicist as well as Kim's and said, "This is my friend, Kim. You should ask her some questions." I could have talked to Kim on the red carpet all night if I wanted to, but I really had nothing much to ask her since she was not of any real relevance. Years later at a red carpet event in 2011, Kardashian was now the only reality star who my celebrity media producer peers viewed as an A-list celebrity, and Kardashian's publicist announced to me that she would only answer one question. This change in her handling of red carpet events demonstrates Kardashian's transition from being unknown to an A-list celebrity. Her transition is representative of contemporary culture that revolves so heavily around reality television stardom and the desire to have (at least perceived) constant intimate interaction with stars' personal/home lives.

Still, there is a very large middle ground between giving all the time in the world to a red carpet reporter and only answering one question; this is where most B-list celebrities fall. Unless it is specifically for a project they are promoting (e.g. the premiere of a movie they are starring in) or a major awards show, many of the very top A-list celebrities opt to skip the red carpet altogether, even the photo opp, and are taken in through a back entrance to the event. Not walking the red carpet is an option that all celebrities have; whether or not they decide to skip it is usually indicative of how much they desire additional media attention. This, however, does pose a problem for reporters who are expected to produce reporting on celebrities, especially A-list celebrities, whether or not they actually get an interview. This leads to speculative reporting that, while dismissed by every media outlet, is very common. Sarah, a weekly magazine reporter

who had worked in the industry for over five years when I interviewed her, recalled a particular experience when she was not able to get any time with Sandra Bullock at an event and her editor, without directly telling her to pull reporting out of thin air, essentially asked that of her by pressing for details that she did not have. “I did not have any reporting because the actress did not do interviews. She showed up and went inside quickly. But I had to come up with something or I feared losing my job.” This is the report she sent in:

Sandy showed up around 8p. She walked down the red carpet with Kevin Huvane (her publicist). Though she was rushed into the event quickly, surrounded by event reps, she did stop to pose for photos on the red carpet and seemed in very good spirits. She laughed and smiled while she posed in her gold dress and looked like she was having fun getting photos taken. (Tried to get her fashion ID, but nobody had it at the event, Just Jared says it was AllSaints). She looked really amazing and, though she didn't stop to talk to anyone on the carpet, she did smile as she walked passed reporters and seemed to be in a very upbeat mood.

This is the kind of speculative reporting that inevitably gets written up when celebrities by pass interviews while media outlets need fodder. While the ethics of this will be explored in a later chapter, the perspective of the reporter is no different than using material from a “man on the street” style of interview, which is a cornerstone of journalism.

The politics of timing in red carpet interviews is also not without a particular set of ritualistic rules. Regardless of whether or not you are talking to a celebrity for five minutes on the red carpet, or only thirty seconds, another element of the surveilled nature of this space is the signal that publicists give when they want you to know you have had enough time with their client (see Image 7). When I am interviewing a celebrity, even if we seem to be in a mutually enjoyable conversation, the publicist will often subtly tap my forearm, usually twice with the index and middle finger. Depending on the demeanor of the publicist, who usually stands to the left of me while the celebrity is slightly to the right, this signal tells me that I need to either simply allow the celebrity to finish answering the question she is giving me before bidding adieu

or I can try to quickly get in one more question before the publicist whisks the interviewee away. The other tactic used by publicists is simply to tell the reporter, “Ok, thank you,” before guiding the celebrity to the next interviewer. The red carpet is a ritual of worship and display, in which the celebrities can be gazed upon and admired, photographed, worshipped, as they carefully craft, under the supervision and surveillance of their hired publicists, the image they wish to portray of themselves. Simultaneously, the reporters similarly get to craft the ways in which *they* want to portray celebrities, depending on the information they get (or often do not get) from the celebrities themselves. It is a highly regulated space, and one that is emblematic of American celebrity culture. Many of the images of and quotes from celebrities that are results of red carpet events become part of both collective and individual opinions of these celebrities.

Questions Asked

“I don’t like red carpet reporting because it’s an art. I’m not good at it, for starters. People who do it well, I’m always impressed that somebody can ask and interview a subject. Wait, you got this on the red carpet? You got to ask them six questions? Oh my God, how did you keep their attention for that long?”
—Samantha, writer for a celebrity weekly magazine

In my research with celebrity reporters, they often complained that the questions they were required to ask by the magazines were either inane or invasive. The questions the magazine instructs reporters to ask can be as frivolous as, “What is your favorite color?” One reporter from a weekly magazine shared, “If they were actual legit questions I wouldn't feel so bad asking. But I feel so ridiculous asking questions like ‘who do you like on dancing with the stars?’ It's embarrassing.” On the red carpet at a Grammy after party in 2011, I observed as another reporter looked through a list of questions her magazine had given her and tried to decide which ones to actually ask. “Well, let’s see here... how about... what’s your go-to pair of shoes or how many

pairs of shoes do you have?” Another reporter at the event had to ask each celebrity, “Bieber fever: On a scale from one to ten, how bad do you have it?”¹³ These kinds of questions often lead reporters to say things like, “I’m so sorry, my editors told me I had to ask.” Since we are the faces the celebrities actually see, we find ways to lessen the sometimes humiliating blow of the questions we are supposed to ask on the red carpet.

As journalists who cover celebrities, we have to push for “news” about the celebrities. Thus, in the pursuit of breaking stories, reporters often try to find clever ways to get insider and very personal information about the celebrities. One strategy is to reference stories that are already in the media to try to position yourself as being separate from the rest of the media – and on the side of the celebrity. “There’s been a lot of media speculation on ... what do you think about that?” For example, during a period when there were rumors that Mariah Carey was pregnant, one reporter set herself up in opposition to the rumors, asking Carey’s husband Nick Cannon, “There’s lots of talk in the media right now that you and Mariah are expecting, how do those rumors make you feel? Do you want to clear them up? How do you stay supportive of your wife through all of this? Is it hard to deal with media speculation?”

The goal was to get inside information without offending the celebrity. But sometimes when news is on the line, we have to offend. For example, just a few days after Justin Timberlake’s break-up with Cameron Diaz, I had to work a movie premiere he attended and was very specifically instructed to ask him how things were between him and Cameron. I only had a quick window of opportunity as part of a group interview to ask the question; there was no time to use finesse. Of course, my question turned him off and it was quite difficult and humiliating,

¹³ “Bieber fever” is a phrase that references obsession with pop singer Justin Bieber, similar to use of the term Beatlemania in the 1960s.

but I knew I had to do it. There was no choice. As a reporter, you have two seconds to ask a question and that is the only thing you can do—be straightforward and ask the question.

Invasive questions can cause problems not only because some celebrities are reluctant to divulge details of their private lives, but also because some celebrities are looking to monetize their personal information themselves, rather than give it to reporters for free. For example, one reporter shared with me her thoughts on the following exchange she had with Kim Kardashian:

Reporter: Have you decided if you want to be a summer, winter, or fall bride? What time of year are you thinking?

Kardashian: I do know, but we're not going to reveal that. I'm going to try to keep it as private as we can.

The reporter reflected, “Bullshit answers. This is what we get. She means private from everyone but the cameras that will film it.” Keeping lucrative personal details of her life a secret in the immediate future means the celebrities have information to sell, whether as an exclusive to a magazine or via other media channels. If Kardashian revealed too much about what is going on in her life, she won't have new information to reveal on her reality show. She doesn't literally mean she wants to keep the information private, she wants to keep it fresh so her own show can share this new information with the world (see Image 8).

The Not-So-Glamorous

“Everyone is just doing their own thing on their phones. It was a lot of waiting. It's not very glamorous.”

—First time guest at a red carpet event

While it's true that there are some times and places where red carpet reporters are afforded some of the same luxuries as celebrities, like extravagant gift bags and tickets to sit inside the Oscars, that is more of the exception than the rule. There are often times when the situation is not-so-glamorous. In reality this is a job that involves standing outside for hours,

often in the cold since most events are at night, and hoping that at least one of the A-list celebrities that are supposed to show up actually show up and, if one shows up, that s/he will actually talk to reporters. Neither of these things are guaranteed. Inside of the red carpet events, if reporters are lucky enough to be brought inside after the carpet closes, reporters essentially act as well-paid stalkers who need to track the celebrities' every move. It's certainly not the worst job in the world, by any means, and I don't think any reporter would ever make it seem that way, but it is not as glamorous as many would think. Like with every job, though, there is the good and the bad that comes with red carpet work.

Sometimes it's even hard for the reporters themselves to accept that their work is not as glamorous as it often seems to others. Some reporters like to Tweet or Facebook about how they were hanging out with celebrities at a party so that their friends and family see their work as more glamorous, when in reality they are inside the party just trying to get a glimpse at the celebrities and take note of everything they are doing. Inside red carpet events or award ceremonies, there is generally no interpersonal interaction between reporters and celebrities unless coordinated by a publicist. It's the reporter's job to not bother the celebrities, but to just observe them. To me, that does not connote "hanging out" with the celebrities. Still, I remember being at one particular event where we were staring at Halle Berry from across the room, trying to observe who she was talking to and what she was eating, and the reporter next to me was Tweeting and Facebooking about how she was hanging out with Halle Berry at an event. Of course dozens of friends replied to that post about how lucky she was and how they wished they could have her job. But the reality of the situation was very different than the way the reporter represented it.

Reporters often talk about the negative ways they have been treated by celebrities. For Stephanie, a long-time freelance red carpet reporter for a celebrity weekly magazine, her most traumatic red carpet experience was when she asked an actor how he was doing and he said, “How about I give you a big can of shut the f*** up,” and then walked away from her. Once inside of a party for a major award ceremony, Amber, a staff writer for a celebrity weekly magazine, was pushed up against the wall by a male celebrity simply for asking for an interview.

Another example of the not-so-glamorous side of red carpet reporting is situations where the media relations people at the event decide to let certain reporters into the event. At a recent event I attended with a reporter, some reporters were escorted inside and were put in an area above the celebrities where the reporters were looking down at the celebrities as they were served a lavish five-course meal. Meanwhile, the reporters were standing, hovering over the balcony to take note of what they were being served and who was sitting with whom, but the reporters could only get water. This was after six hours of standing in the cold on the red carpet. The reporters know they aren’t celebrities themselves, but it’s still hard to be in those kinds of settings and not feel bad about being treated so differently than the people next to you. But, in the end, they are being paid to observe these other people, not to be treated like them.

When people think about red carpet events, they imagine herds of their favorite celebrities. But people do not necessarily think about what reporters have to ask celebrities on the red carpet. And what you’re asking actually really changes things. Many reporters would love to talk to Angelina Jolie’s about her humanitarian work, but instead they have to ask her about how long it took her to get ready for the event, or what is the latest milestone in daughter Shiloh’s life, or why she and Brad Pitt had not gotten married yet. Most reporters don’t feel like there are clear-cut ethics in celebrity reporting, and this makes things difficult for reporters to

navigate what their job asks of them and what they feel comfortable doing personally. But reporters will still Tweet or Facebook “At the Oscars” or “At the Grammys,” and so the reporters are also partially responsible for the continued myth that celebrity reporting is entirely glamorous. The reporters don’t usually Tweet or Facebook “Standing outside of Tom Cruise’s house hoping to catch him and Katie on their way out with Suri” or “Standing behind a barricade on the red carpet getting snubbed by every celebrity who walks by me.” There is some shame in that, so reporters do not necessarily volunteer or share that kind of information. It is a special job, but being a red carpet reporter does not mean that you are walking the red carpet like a celebrity. It means that you are standing in a barricaded area with other reporters hoping that at least some celebrities will stop and answer a question or two.

Reporters as Celebrities?

The premiere for the Glee 3D movie at Mann Village Theatre in Westwood was set up like the Oscars, with bleachers filled with fans who security told me had “been waiting here since 3 o’clock in the morning,” and tons of fans spilling off of the bleachers and into the streets. The streets surrounding premieres are always blocked off. Los Angeles is notorious for its traffic, and the constant street closures for filming movies and television shows, and for red carpet events, do not help the case (see Image 9). I remember a security guard at TLC Chinese Theater (formerly known as Grauman’s Chinese Theater) in Hollywood told me some people camp out for several days before a big movie with a cult following, like the *Green Lantern* film.

As I stood on the carpet waiting for the stars of Glee to arrive, I found myself next to Perez Hilton for the first time in a long time. He was on the red carpet interviewing celebrities (see Image 10). I had seen him at an event months prior and asked if he would interview with me

for my dissertation research. His publicist and I had exchanged many emails and I never got a definitive answer about whether or not he would do the interview. Once we were on the red carpet and I reminded him about my research and that I had been seeking an interview with him, suddenly he said, “Well, why don’t we just do the interview now?” I turned my recorder to him and started asking him questions about how he marketed himself, what his goals were when he got into the industry, etc. At the end of the interview, the person filming his interviews handed me a waiver to have the footage of my interview used. I was being filmed (without knowing) for a show he is shooting called *Sleeping With Perez*. I didn’t have a problem with it since he was also helping me out, but the footage ended up showing me as the red carpet reporter interviewing Perez as a celebrity walking the red carpet when, in fact, he was interviewing celebrities on the red carpet. It was an interesting position for him to be in, though, since all of the teen and twenty-something actors walking the carpet stopped to talk to him and expressed that they were huge fans of his. Perez used to stand next to me at events before he built his brand. When he was starting out, he would make his way into events, stand on the red carpet awkwardly and then exit the carpet whenever he felt like it and stand close to celebrities at the event, trying to overhear conversations. Now, however, he is his own form of celebrity that has inspired many young reporters.

Hedda Hopper’s legacy showed if someone wanted to make it in Hollywood and failed as an actor, there were other options. Her mediocre acting career led her to developing a well-known celebrity gossip column. A contemporary example of that is anchor for the entertainment news show *Extra* Mario Lopez, best known for his role as “Slater” on *Saved By The Bell*, or Licia Naff (most well known for her part as the three-breasted woman in *Total Recall*) who was a former staff reporter for *People* and recently has gained notoriety for her reporting on the Bill

Cosby rape cases. However, Mario Lavandeira (a.k.a. Perez Hilton) presents an alternative approach—start as a reporter/blogger and *then* become a celebrity. Sandra, a former staff and freelance reporter for multiple weekly celebrity magazines, believes this desire to become a celebrity from the status of a reporter is widespread. “Some of these girls that are celebrity reporters are trying to be celebrities themselves. There is a term – I’m sure you’re very aware of it – called ‘Star Fuckers.’ They think that by being a celebrity reporter they are going to be around the celebrities they are writing on, and that will open the door to that whole realm that they want to be a part of.” One example of this is former *Star* reporter Kate Major who, while covering a story about former reality television star Jon Gosselin (of *Jon & Kate Plus Eight*) “fell for him” (Marikar 2009). *Star* magazine even featured an article about their own staff member in a July 2009 issue of the magazine. After the two broke up, Major went on to date Lindsay Lohan’s father Michael Lohan, with whom she has had a highly publicized and tumultuous relationship. The two recently wed, have a child together, and are expecting a second (“Michael Lohan” 2014). These are just some examples of the ways in which celebrity reporters have sought out celebrity-dom and the ways in which other Hollywood figures have looked to celebrity reporting as a viable alternative career.

Placement

Earlier I mentioned that *People* magazine is generally the first print media outlet following the photographers and television camera crews. The line up of media outlets on the red carpet is fairly standard and typical variations on this list might involve switching around the order of the weekly magazines or television camera crews. Most of the time when this placement waivers, it has to do with prearranged agreements with an outlet (e.g. an outlet promises to put

the event in the magazine so that they may get better placement on the carpet, an outlet recently published something as a favor to the PR people putting on the event and it is seen as quid pro quo to give the outlet a better spot on the carpet, or a reporter is friends with the PR person doing the carpet lineup). Order on the carpet matters for several reasons: First and foremost, celebrities are increasingly less likely to stop and talk the further down the carpet they get. They do not always have patience, time, or interest in talking to everyone, so, the closer you are to the front of the press lineup, the more likely you are to talk to them. Many of the media outlets will ask similar questions (who are you dating, what is your workout and diet regimen, etc.) and the quality of answers for similar questions seems to decrease as a celebrity continues down the red carpet; they get lazy and give shorter answers to questions they have already answered multiple times. The goal on a red carpet is to get an interview that leads to a scoop that nobody else gets or overhears and, the further down a carpet, the more cramped the space gets and the more aggressive reporters get. By the time celebrities get to the end of the red carpet, if they are still answering questions, the publicist is usually “grouping interviews,” meaning several outlets are all vying for a question with the celebrity, which leads to many generic answers that are not based on personal interactions and conversation. Individual time with a celebrity still does affect the interaction, in my experience; looking someone in the eye and talking to them one-on-one yields better results than questions being shouted out by a group at an individual.

Still, there is always room for negotiation on a red carpet placement, depending on the outlet a reporter is working for. There are various ways of handling this kind of negotiation. Jasmine, a freelance red carpet reporter for a weekly celebrity magazine, said “I had an instance in which a reporter threw a serious tantrum when my outlet was placed on the carpet ahead of hers. She literally yelled and stomped her feet.” As a *People* reporter, I know that the PR people

doing the event will want *People* to be happy because it has the largest readership of any of the celebrity-focused magazines. There are times when *People* reporters are placed before some camera crews because the magazine is seen as more important than some news stations or less popular networks in terms of celebrity coverage (e.g. a publicist would prefer to have a client pictured and quoted in *People* than in a 30 second clip on a local news station or a new web video series because *People* guarantees readership and has a very particular brand). In fact, I have arrived at red carpet events where I thought my placement was inadequate because I was towards the end of the line and there were other weekly magazines before me and, as soon as I voiced my opinion, I was relocated towards the front of the line because the event publicists do not want to upset *People* (see Image 11). Whenever I had the opportunity, I would bring a guest with me to a red carpet event, and then get his or her perspective on the event. One of my guests told me, “You spent a lot of time going back and forth about where you would stand on the red carpet and it showed me how much this matters for your work. It seemed so important to figure out where celebrities would be forced to talk to you instead of passing you. You said I know this is your event, but I need to get these interviews. And she was willing to hear you out.” This was an astute reflection on the process of negotiating placement on the red carpet. Similarly access inside to red carpet events is granted and negotiated in a way that is meant to make certain outlets feel more exclusive than others. This is another frequent topic of conversation on the carpet, “Are you going inside?” It is generally discussed to find out who is and is not being slighted.

We Are Not the Paparazzi: Red Carpet/Event Photographers

According to several red carpet photographers, there are about 30 red carpet photographers who are regulars at Hollywood events. Of course for larger events and awards ceremonies, there can be upwards of 50 red carpet photographers, but those are not the photographers seen on the carpet regularly. Much like paparazzi, most red carpet and event photographers are freelance, but work freelance for one agency in particular, though some are on staff. They work hard. Liam, the photographer I will focus on in this section, calculated that in 15 months he took 500,000 images collectively from the various events he covered. This is not the number of images sent to magazines, but rather how many times he took a photo. Liam is not only amazed by the sheer quantity of images he takes, but also by the instantaneous distribution of photos through photographers' respective agencies:

When we shoot an event like a movie premiere, these 30 people work with different agencies and all this stuff goes worldwide within a matter of hours, sometimes minutes. If you take somewhere like Wire Image, they're posting things up immediately. So within ten minutes of the photographer shooting something, it's already been photoshopped, captioned and on the web. There are situations, say SAG Awards. Our cameras actually have radio devices, and some of them you can do a tether. You can run a wire from the camera to a device in the briefcase, which is a wireless device, and they can have an editor clone the images that you're shooting. So if I'm shooting you, I have an editor in the office that's linked up to my camera. It's basically called cloning. It's pulling the images from that thing and photoshopping. That's why red carpet images are up so fast. That's amazing to me.

Earlier I described the ways in which reporters (both print and broadcast) are arranged by outlet. However, as Liam—who has been working in Hollywood since 2006—explains, red carpet photographers are representing agencies that do not necessarily carry with them the same clout as outlets and, thus, they do not have pre-established place settings on the carpet. The photographers have taken it upon themselves to create their own process for order on the red carpet. They have a “first come, first served” policy, which is an unspoken rule among the red

carpet photographers. The way it works is that, if you want a prime position on the red carpet (which would be at the beginning of the carpet since the celebrity will gradually make his or her way down the carpet, and is most likely to give the best shots first), you go somewhere near where the event will be (like a Starbucks—basically anywhere obvious and close to the event) and you get a receipt to prove what time you were at the location. Liam said: “Photographer number one starts the list of photographers and then as the day goes on it grows. You have to stay an hour or so at the location and wait until the next photographer shows up. He is number two. Then if there is any discrepancy later on, no, I’ve got my receipt right here.” It took a while for Liam to find out about this rule, and it affected his ability to get the shots he needed. “I didn’t realize that was a rule until I kept showing up to premieres and I’m like, I’m getting here an hour early, why can’t I get a good spot? Then someone told me.” If you are not “in” with the other photographers, “you are screwed.”

As new photographers join the ranks, they have to go through the growing pains Liam faced:

When there is a photographer nobody knows, the other photographers give them hell. We call it initiation. It happened to me. There is one photographer whose name I won’t say, but she is sort of known for hazing. You have to be initiated. There is another guy that started a couple of years ago and I warned him. I said, “Dude, when you get out there a person is going to come at you saying all kinds of crazy things. This is who she is.” What he did was he challenged her. He said, “You must be such and such.” She went, “How do you know?” he said, “I was warned about you.” She started laughing. There is a certain hazing that goes on. You get hazed for about an hour. It depends on how you react. People determine if they like you or not. If they like you, you’re good. If they don’t like you they will rip you apart.

Notwithstanding a distinct collegiality the photographers share, one in which they all trust each other to keep an eye on thousands of dollars of equipment at any time while the others go to get coffee or dinner, since the recession the competitiveness in the business has affected the aggressiveness at the work. Liam said, “It’s been aggressive since day one. But it became more

aggressive when the sales dropped. So what happened was, people aren't making as much money as they were. I definitely noticed the change. I remember talking to my editor about it. People are getting really, really aggressive. The magazines aren't paying what they used to so people have to work harder. They have to get more eye contact." This sometimes can contribute to the level of yelling heard on the red carpet since photographers will yell to get a celebrity to look more towards them in order to get eye contact for a better photo.

An important tactic of red carpet and event photography is called "seeding." Seeding is when a designer has paid a publicist to distribute a product to celebrity clientele, then a publicist will notify a photographer or a photo agency to take close up items of a particular handbag, shoe, or article of clothing. "When you see a close up photo of a purse in a magazine, that was a seeding job." The publicist usually requests the photos for a particular publication. Oftentimes photos with particular fashion products will sell well regardless, but when a particular item is focused on, it has usually been pre-requested by someone. This is similar to setup paparazzi shots, which is when a publicist will tell an agency to send a photographer to a certain place at a certain time to shoot a certain celebrity. For example, if Mercedes Benz wants to get their new car promoted, a celebrity is set up and paid to be at a gas station at a certain time in the morning putting gas in his or her Mercedes. The paparazzi will focus in on the logo to make sure they get the shot the company needs.

Despite Liam's recognition of how seeding is similar to set up paparazzi shots, he said, "We're not paparazzi. There's a distinction, and we want that known and clear. We just feel like paparazzi work is dirty work. It's not ethical at times, which, I've seen firsthand is not." But, he also said that pap work is "definitely" harder. "I hung out with one of my paparazzi friends one day just to see. I can't do it. The waiting. You're waiting, and if you have to go to the restroom,

there is no restroom.” But the level at which red carpet/event photographers have to work with celebrities also affects their ability to cross into the paparazzi world, even if they wanted to.

Liam said:

I know a lot of celebrities and the moment they catch me out on the street it’s going to mess up my other work because of the agency that I work for. We’re known for doing inside party shots. We take somebody like Nicole Ritchie or a number of celebrities. And Sophia Bush or Angie Harmon – people who I know. I have a rapport with these people. I show up to the party and they know I’m going to get great fashion. But the moment they see me out on the street chasing them or whatever, it’s done. My rapport is done with them. Raven Simone lives somewhere in my neighborhood. She was in Whole Foods the other day with a knit hat on her head, a t-shirt and pajama bottoms. If I were paparazzi and I had my camera in the car I could have lit her up in the grocery store or coming out of the grocery store. I know if I want to shoot Raven, I know she sees me when I see her – I don’t know her personally but we’ve talked and that would ruin our relationship.

Liam also feels particularly recognizable because he is “always the only [Black photographer] on the red carpet.” When he covers the events inside, he said he is oftentimes the only person of color in the room. He keeps his focus on producing the best work he can, despite the sometimes isolating conditions in which he works. He does, however, feel he is stereotyped based on his looks, “When I walk in the door to do a shoot for a PR company and they are not expecting to see me looking like me, I go through hell. They don’t engage me. They have a really nasty attitude. I don’t know if they are not expecting that I’m able to shoot or what. I don’t know what it is, but there is just like an immediate assumption or something. At that point I’m like, you know what, I’m going to shoot the hell out of this; I’m going to make it look damn good.” There are pronounced racial politics happening on both sides of the camera, and in all realms of celebrity media production. This chapter began exploring these politics, and the chapters that follow will continue to address the way forms of difference affect the work of my collaborators at every stage of their work.

CHAPTER FOUR

On the Job with Weekly Magazine Reporters: Beyond the Red Carpet

“There is a whole new breed of the latest generation of these red carpet and party-type reporters and they have grown up, the last eight years or so, on *Us Weekly* and Perez Hilton and it's all good to them. If they can go out and party and see all this stuff and be in the mix then they are into it big time. You know what, if I was twenty-three and I was doing it I might have been the same way. I came into it over thirty.”

—Ron, freelance celebrity weekly magazine reporter

“We are workhorses. We are show horses. Sometimes we are both.”

—Amanda, freelance celebrity weekly magazine reporter

This section began with an alternative kind of newsroom—the red carpet—instead of the traditional office newsroom, which does not accurately represent the way news is created today. The red carpet is a space in which celebrity journalists from all different kinds of media outlets, from so-called hard news outlets like Associated Press and CNN, to the weekly magazines focused on in this dissertation, come together in a common production space. It is a space in which interviews are negotiated on the spot, the latest trends are highlighted, and the journalists discuss their work. Beyond the standard office workplaces and the red carpet, however there are other significant workspaces occupied by celebrity reporters. Throughout the years I spent as a reporter, in addition to traditional red carpet events, I worked everywhere from classrooms to restaurants, night clubs, dive bars, shopping malls, and even sitting in my car outside of celebrities' homes. In this chapter, I will explore some of these divergent workspaces. As celebrity weekly magazine staffer Samantha said, “I don't think of the office as a newsroom. The office, to me, is a time suck. In my world, I find that when I go visit people at the studio, that to

me is more like my newsroom, because I feel like I'm on site, I'm in my element, I'm in the TV world. That to me is more a meeting place where I'm gathering news and processing it. I don't view the office in that way at all."

In the previous chapter, I also addressed that the majority of the celebrity reporters in Los Angeles are women. This chapter will include a deeper analysis of the reasons for this discrepancy as well as some of the problematic gender politics that emerge from this reality. The female dominance of this business is something that has been casually acknowledged within the industry, but not critically examined (much like the predominance of Latino men working as paparazzi, as I will explore further in the following section). Off the red carpet, we can see more clearly how female celebrity journalists are highly sexualized in their positions and are encouraged to use their sexuality (a presumed hyper-feminine heterosexuality) to gain access for the media outlets for which they work.

The Office/Newsroom

While I have made it clear that the traditional office newsroom is not a focus of this dissertation, I do want to touch briefly on office politics here, particularly as they are representative of the larger issues discussed in this chapter, such as the various pressures of office politics, the sexualization of women, and the exclusionary racial politics. Here, I use an example of one person's experience at a weekly celebrity magazine. While I realize that each of the magazines has unique editorial practices, I aim to use examples that are representative of what practices are across all weekly magazines.

With the increasing importance of the magazines' websites in the past ten years, which included the magazines' shift to a 24-hour news cycle, reporters noticed a tangible difference in their work and the pressure surrounding it. Reporter Joy recalls that, beginning in late 2006:

I always slept with my Blackberry. It was never off. I couldn't turn it off. It was never allowed to be turned off. Intermittently throughout the night I would see that red light flashing. I would roll over. I would check it. I got up usually around 6:00-6:30. I would be in bed, I would watch the *Today Show*. That was always important to me to know what was on the news. Especially the *Today Show* because it's the news of the day and you want to know what happened. So during meetings people talk about stuff and you need to know what they are talking about. But then also because the *Today Show* started showing You Tube clips, I would get online to watch the clips. Then I would get into the car and get to the office around 9am. If not a little earlier, because I like to get a lot done because most of the people I worked with were on the East Coast. So the day always started off very fast versus back when I first started at the magazine. Before, you would sort of leisurely come in at 10 a.m. It was a more leisurely old school sort of thing. Because it wasn't like you were reading any websites back then. It was before *TMZ*.

In July 2006, *TMZ* had their first major exclusive breaking news story, which was that Mel Gibson had been arrested under the suspicion of driving under the influence ("Exclusive: Mel" 2006). Around this same time, the blog run by Mario Lavandeira (aka Perez Hilton) began gaining popularity as well. Celebrity weekly magazine freelancer Sarah, who began working in the industry in 2004, also spoke of the effect of these websites on her reporting, "Suddenly we were looking to these organizations nobody really knew of for direction. Once *TMZ* and *Perez Hilton* started breaking stories and taking away from the news the celebrity magazines wanted to break, we had to take them really seriously and become competitive with them. This meant making online reporting a really big part of what the magazines did. After any event, after any nightlife reporting, we had to write everything up immediately, instead of taking a day or two like we used to. It did not matter if we were working until 4 a.m., we had to get the information in."

Along with this shift in news production, *People* magazine's editorial system also changed. Whereas staff reporters' files used to get filed to a central system and then staff writers would collect various files pertaining to a larger story and craft a unified narrative for magazine publication, now staff reporters were also given the title "staff writer" and were responsible for seeing their own stories from start to finish.¹⁴ Similarly, freelance reporters like myself were given more responsibility to craft stories from start to finish that could be ready for immediate posting online. And while *People* used to have many fact-checkers who took responsibility for confirming the facts in each story, staff writers now took on most of this responsibility themselves, leaving fewer checks and balances in place. Staff writers talked about certain writers coming up with the perfect quote from a "source" in just moments; this created suspicion about the factualness of some peoples' reporting.

The benefit, however, of this transition from reporter to writer was that reporters found themselves with much more ability to shape their stories in ways they saw fit. Previously staff reporters would file "20 to 30 pages and then the story ended up being a one pager," former *People* reporter Jackie said. But now "you got way more of a say as a writer. I think it also has to do with your being realistic about what *People* magazine is. It's not *Rolling Stone*. It's not *Entertainment Weekly*. It's not anything else but *People*. So once you reconcile that you work for *People* magazine, and this isn't the Jackie show, that the story has to be written a certain way, and there's going to be certain details you have to have in there, and certain casualties you can't include, you can still have a lot of say about how the story takes shape."

Office Gender Politics

¹⁴ For the purposes of continuity, however, I refer to all staff members as reporters since that is more standard journalistic phrasing and allows for maximum anonymity, as not all celebrity weekly magazines give the same titles to their staff members.

During my time as a freelance reporter, there were some highly publicized scandals in the Los Angeles bureau of *People* magazine that involved serious issues around gender dynamics and leadership. First, in 2005, then-Bureau Chief Todd Gold was accused of sexual harassment by a female reporter (Roderick 2005). It greatly affected bureau moral and left reporters feeling disempowered, as the reporter who accused Gold was well-liked and was visibly distressed during this time, while Gold was placed on indefinite book leave (most likely due to his strong Hollywood connections that the magazine did not want to lose). In effect, staffers felt he was rewarded for his behavior rather than terminated. Just a few years later, it was uncovered that the Associate Bureau Chief Brian Alexander was having a long-term relationship with former intern Mary Margaret Acoymo, who had quickly gained substantial responsibility at the magazine and was promoted to a writer/reporter under his supervision (“Dating People” 2008; “People’s West” 2008). In fact, Acoymo became the person I reported to, even though I was a long-time freelancer with substantially more experience as a reporter than she had. Eventually, both Alexander and Acoymo left the magazine. While there was no evidence of harassment in this instance, the complex hierarchy between the former intern and associate bureau chief certainly left room for speculation about possible motivations and pressures at play in this office romance. This, again, left the Los Angeles bureau of the magazine in a complicated state.

The gender dynamics at play in the Los Angeles office for *People* magazine is representative of similar struggles at other publications. Most important, however, is the fact that these gender dynamics are replicated in all spaces of female celebrity reporter’s work. Men in positions of power yield that power over their women subordinates; both women and men in power positions at the magazines expect women reporters to embrace the publications’ expectations of sexual exploitation. Both on the red carpet and in individual sit-down interviews,

female celebrity journalists are highly sexualized in their positions and are encouraged to use their sexuality (generally a presumed heterosexuality) to relate to celebrity women on the basis of sharing common “women’s issues” and to exploit their sexuality for the sake of obtaining information from male celebrities.

Sit-down Interviews, Gender Dynamics and Exploitation

“Actors are actors. And when you talk with them, they act with you. So you have to be aware of that. It’s their job to seduce. We’re trying to seduce them to give us the interview. They’re trying to seduce you to make you love them so you’re going to write something great. So you have to be a little bit careful about that.”

—Miranda, former celebrity weekly magazine reporter

Sit-down interviews with celebrities, at their homes or at public places, are generally reserved for those on staff at magazines, though freelance reporters who have rapport with particular celebrities may be asked to do sit-down interviews. On occasion, short sit-down interviews will also take place at events. In the previous chapter, I described the nature of red carpet interviews and how there is generally a publicist invading the interview space and surveilling the conversation between reporter and celebrity. Weekly celebrity magazine staffer Samantha said that sit-down interviews are much different than red carpet interviews, in her experience. “At most of my sit downs, there isn’t a publicist there. We get to negotiate more with the celebrity. With one celebrity, we went off record once and she said, ‘Can you not use this.’ And I hit pause, and she said, ‘I don’t want to talk about this, and this is why.’ And this is where I became negotiator. I said, ‘Would you feel comfortable with this?’ ‘No, I don’t think so.’ ‘What about this? Can you see that if I were to put that in here, a reader might read that and be inspired.’ ‘I know, but this is why I feel the way that I do, and I don’t want to say it.’” What

Samantha describes shows a collaborative and cooperative spirit between the reporter and the celebrity. But this is not always the case in reporter-celebrity interactions.

Sandra, who worked as a freelance and staff reporter for various celebrity weekly magazines, shared her perspectives on how gender affects celebrity interviews:

I think it is easier for women to do the job of a celebrity reporter because it's a very slippery slope that you have to navigate in the celebrity world. I'm not talking red carpet or anything because I think when it comes to red carpets celebrity journalism, I think a man and a woman reporter are on an equal playing field. I'm talking more about the reporter that has to go get the scoop. I think it's just a little easier for women. I think women can use – I don't want to say "themselves" because that sounds so wrong. In my experience the people who I have tried to report on or the people who I have dealt with are mostly men. This is just common sense. Who is a man most likely going to open up to a man or a woman? Obviously a woman. I think that is why it's maybe a little bit easier for women in that sense. I think women can get a little flirty, they can be friendly or whatever the case may be and you will most likely get a story. I'm not saying go sleep with your source or whatever, but men are more likely to open up to women.

While Sandra emphasizes that she is not suggesting sleeping with sources, celebrity weekly magazine staffer Amber said that, while it is not required of her at the magazine she works for, "I know other people at other magazines have been told specifically to make out with sources, to sleep with sources, and to lead sources on. Whatever you need to do to get the story. Everything is acceptable and encouraged." Sandra's opinions have been shaped by her own successes using the tactics she described. Her editors instructed her to:

Use my woman-ness to flirt with a guy, to get closer to celebrities, to get scoops. I was being told flat out to flirt with people. "Be nice to them. Be friendly. Act like a fan. Act kind of dumb." They didn't tell me flat out to act like a bimbo, but they did tell me to act a little looser and I'm not really that person. I felt very exploited. I did not appreciate it, not at all and in that respect, it's not something that I would do again and since I've had those experiences I've lived and I've learned. I've grown as a woman and I don't think I would ever do that. A story isn't more valuable than me and my self worth and I would not do it again. When you're young and you're hungry and your editors are asking you for it, you want to succeed, you want to freelance more and, so, sure.

So, even while Sandra does not advocate sleeping with sources, the slippery slope she mentions has left her at the center of controversy:

Sometimes you become the story; I had that happen to me. I had another weekly [magazine] write about me. I was the other girl. I don't even remember which reporter it was, but it was when an actress was cheating on her husband, they were about to get divorced and I was there trying to follow her husband. He and I were spotted in the car. There was either a reporter there or that reporter somehow got the information from another source that he was there talking with a blonde girl and they referred to me as "the A-lister lookalike." I was saying, "Oh my gosh! I became the story." They wrote about me. I still have the magazine. My friends laughed about it. I haven't done that type of reporting in years but when I did it, it made me really uncomfortable. Personally I'm a very honest person and I don't like to lie. At that time I did kind of have to label myself as a college student or I just graduated and I didn't know what I was doing. I had my guilty conscious telling me, "This isn't okay." It made me very unsettled. It gave me a lot of anxiety.

Despite her feelings of uncomfortability with these types of situations, Sandra continued this line of work for several years. After several experiences with feeling she had to exploit her gender and sexuality for the magazine, Sandra decided, "I had that internal talk with myself of 'what the f'?' I thought, 'This isn't what I went to journalism school for. This isn't what I was being taught in my lecture or anything we ever talked about in my journalism class.' It was a very eye opening experience, but I would say that is the nature of the beast. I don't mean to talk down upon it but women can be exploited in this field definitely. I think they have to be aware of what is happening and not let it happen to them." As I will explore further in the pages that follow, the ethics of celebrity journalism are extremely vague and several reporters I spoke with asserted that there are *no* ethics in celebrity journalism.

Despite criticisms of paparazzi's lack of ethics, including by the magazines that use their images (e.g. Cagle 2014), the celebrity weekly magazines also use women to get in with the predominantly male paparazzi. Christy, a former *People* intern, said, "*People* has regular freelance reporter whose only job for the magazine is to tag along with paparazzi on everything. I mean anything and everything, but they will never put that person on staff because their whole goal is to keep them not connected to them legally so they can go ahead and use any of that

material and call it a source or call it whatever – however they want to frame it so that legally they are not actually tied to that person. Literally she does all of her reporting with paparazzi. And, of course, they choose a pretty girl who can go and flirt with the paparazzi and get more information.”

Thus, reporters are in a precarious situation at nearly every turn in their work. In terms of sexual exploitation and harassment on the job, one of the most disturbing, though not entirely unique, stories was former weekly magazine staff reporter Miranda’s experience while doing an interview at a celebrity couples’ home, which was to be focused on the couples’ happiness as a family:

A very famous person made a pass at me while his wife was upstairs changing for the photo shoot. I pushed him away and laughed about it. But I came back and told my boss. And she said, “I’ll make sure you never have to interview him again.” And she was going to kill the story, because the story was all about how he was so happy with his new wife. Meanwhile she was pregnant and he’s making a pass at me. Literally pushing me against the wall sticking his tongue down my throat. Someone very famous. And he called me up after the article ran and said, “I just want to tell you what a great article you did, it was fabulous.” The boss asked if I wanted to press charges. No. I just thought, this guy felt so big, so important, I thought it could hurt my career. It’s such a sick feeling, too. It’s such a terrible situation to be in. I just wanted to sock him, but at the same time you don’t know what your editors are going to say. Do you need to come back with a story, or what? Do I keep interviewing him or just sock him and throw him into the pool? Now, I would just sock him and throw him to the pool. And fuck you with your story, your fabulous charade. But then, I didn’t know what to do. I was kind of shocked and I wanted to keep my job.

As these on-the-job stories show—from office life to sit-down interviews with celebrities—women reporters on staff for celebrity magazines are subject to sexual harassment and exploitation. Like many women who suffer from these experiences, they are unsure how to respond for fear of losing their livelihood. Even in the case where a staffer accused Todd Gold of harassment, her level of distress was so intense that her professional life suffered long-term after the accusations. Many reporters at the magazine wondered if she regretted speaking out. And the

staff members have more responsibilities and clout than do the freelance reporters and interns who represent the magazines on red carpets and at events. At age 20, former celebrity weekly magazine intern Brittany was assigned to cover a pre-Oscar party; while she was there, she approached a television star, of whom she was a fan, to introduce herself and request an interview. “He started to rub my back and try to talk to me romantically. He was very physical with me and I did not know how to handle it. I was just an intern and I did not know what the magazine would say if I told them. I was new.” While it is nothing new that sexual harassment of working women has been widely practiced and systematically ignored (MacKinnon 1979), it is important to bring these issues to the surface and create a dialogue in hopes of changing practices in this field.

While female reporters cited the encouragement to use their sexuality as a reason why the field of celebrity reporting is dominated by women, male reporters believe that another reason is because it is more socially acceptable for women to ask the types of questions the magazines want answered. As Scott Huver said, “It's weird for me to go out there and ask somebody intimate questions about their body. It's an odd thing for a man to do to a woman in a conversational/chatty way; on a red carpet it's basically a total stranger.” Ron is keenly aware of the fact that most of the people he works with are women, “Here in LA the weekly magazine offices are really female dominated, at *People* in particular. I think it's the nature. I'm a straight man. I can talk to a girl about her dress, and her makeup, and her diet, and her pregnancy; I can do it. I'm not comfortable doing it, I never have been, but I don't particularly care. It's a skill that I've had to develop. It's not easy. Women can ask that kind of stuff. It's a girlfriend kind of vibe.” In fact, Ron says, women have a definite “edge” over men in the celebrity reporting world when it comes to interviewing both men and women. “With women it's because you go into a ladies

room and you run into a total stranger female and you might ask them, ‘Oh my gosh! That dress is so cute. Where did you get it? Your makeup looks great. Where do you get your hair cut?’ You chitchat, put on lipstick, look in the mirror and you might have that experience in a ladies room anywhere in LA. Men don’t do that. Men don’t talk to each other in those kinds of situations unless they are very, very friendly guys. We don’t care about where you got your hair cut or where you got your pants. We genuinely don’t.” While these notions do reflect the experiences of some female reporters, the calculation of these benefits is, again, based on a stereotypically heteronormative notion of what women and men bring to the table as celebrity journalists.

Inside the Red Carpet Events

Another typical workplace occurs once the formal processional component of a red carpet event is finished, and select journalists are escorted inside the event to report on the goings-on. There are different expectations for reporters at these events depending on the type of event. At major award shows, for example there are hundreds of reporters lined up for a chance at interviewing celebrities, and only a few of those reporters might be brought inside the show. Award shows are the rarest of the red carpet ritual, since there are only a few of them every year, compared to the hundreds of other Hollywood red carpet events. At galas and benefits, the red carpet is generally followed by an informal cocktail hour, and then a more formal program. At a movie premiere, the formal red carpet is followed by the film screening, which is generally followed by a reception or after-party. At a designer boutique opening or any other kind of party, the red carpet is followed by a more informal program. At any of these kinds of events, some reporters will be escorted inside, depending on the status of the event and status of the

publication. In my experience as a freelancer for *People*, access to the inside of most red carpet events was expected, whereas for my colleagues working for less prestigious magazines like *Star*, the chances of going inside were more remote. On the red carpet, reporters often dialogue about who is going into the event and who is not, which, in essence, becomes about flexing industry power.

At any red carpet event where inside access is provided to a reporter, the reporting does not end when the procession ends; in fact, reporters may end up doing more reporting inside events than on the carpet, particularly when certain celebrities skip the red carpet and finding them inside the event becomes the only way of reporting on them. During an event, reporters have to be particularly vigilant about observing any celebrity amidst a current newsworthy conflict, or if they have a new significant other with them, had a recent breakup, or are pregnant.

I spoke to Susan, a celebrity weekly magazine intern covering a red carpet event for the first time, immediately following the event. At this particular event, there was one celebrity who was in the middle of a highly publicized scandal and all reporters attending the event were under instruction to monitor his behavior as closely as possible. Susan told me how she felt while doing the kind of observation-based reporting required of her once inside the event:

I felt really stealthy. I really felt like a spy, strategizing where I could be to look less awkward by myself. I went to the bar and sipped on my drink. Luckily I found him right away and he was right next to the bar. I was by myself so I wasn't looking to talk to anyone. There were people there, so I didn't want to be there, but for a while I was by the table where you could sign up for the raffle and, from time to time, I would be on my phone typing notes. Then I moved to the table and I was almost scared he was going to look and see me looking at him. I had adrenaline going. I felt like a spy. But they asked me to write down anything and even just looking at someone for five minutes, it was interesting, just knowing the situation, I was trying to find things to write that were relevant. I focused on how he was behaving, what kind of mood he seemed to be in, that sort of thing. Some of the things I know the magazine wanted me to report on seemed irrelevant to me, like what he was drinking. How is that relevant? But his emotions, who he was talking to, how he was interacting with his date—that all seemed very relevant to me.

This is a very typical description of the kind of work reporters have to do once inside red carpet events, particularly when there are specific celebrities who need to be focused on. In general, reporters need to observe all that the celebrities are doing: What are they eating? What are they drinking? Who are they talking to? What kind of mood are they in? These kinds of questions addressed by reporters at events contribute to the ways in which celebrity personas are shaped by the media. It is through these details that stories are shaped and that consumers of media are then able to form their own ideas and opinions about individual celebrities. Thus, inside of red carpet events is an important professional space for reporters precisely because it contributes to the crafting of celebrity images.

Informal Spaces

At a red carpet event, and even inside the events, celebrities and their publicists know that journalists are present. On a carpet, reporters are behind the barricades described in the previous chapter, wearing a press badge, holding the tape recorder, asking questions—they have “reporter” stamped on their foreheads. While inside a red carpet event journalists are less conspicuous than on the red carpet and, thus, the celebrity does not always know they are being observed, there is still an understanding that journalists were on the red carpet and may be inside the event as well. Outside of these formal event spaces and sit-down interviews, unless a reporter has particular rapport with certain celebrities, the celebrities do not know the reporters’ identity. This is one place where celebrity journalism ethics become cloudy—where and when are celebrity reporters reporting? The answer is anywhere and everywhere.

Classroom

I was originally hired by *People* magazine as an intern when I was a senior in college at New York University (NYU). This was the same year that Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen enrolled at NYU. From the time I began my internship, part of my responsibilities included reporting on how they were as students and where their favorite spots were to hang out. By asking around and taking note of the very obvious bodyguards who accompanied them to campus, I quickly came to know, at least roughly, when they were on campus. Thus, much of my work happened on campus (and at night clubs—their favorite hang outs), rather than at an event or in the office. I was not the only reporter in this position either. I quickly came to know the other magazine reporters who would use similar tactics to report on the twins. They were NYU students also, who had been hired by other celebrity weekly magazines to engage in work similar to my own and we would often sit next to each other near the Olsens' classrooms. One of my first items published on *People.com* was this small bit of reporting on Mary-Kate Olsen. It was published as “Mary-Kate’s Classroom Chitchat” on November 18, 2004:

The first student to arrive for a freshman writing seminar at New York University on Monday was none other than Mary-Kate Olsen, who showed up 15 minutes early wearing baggy gray Nike sweat pants and holding a Starbucks cup. Olsen sat on the floor outside the classroom, and smiled at her classmates as they arrived. When everyone started filing into the classroom, Olsen, still sipping her Starbucks and chatting with a fellow classmate, picked up her notebook and lime green leather handbag and followed suit (Diaz 2004).

This type of informal observational work is customary in celebrity reporting and carries on in other, even more personal venues.

Hospitals

When it comes to celebrity journalism, there are truly few places, if any, a reporter will not go to get the job done (or, at the very least, will be asked by his or her outlet to go). One of

the most difficult spaces in which celebrity reporters must work is a hospital. Reporter Ron told me:

When Owen Wilson tried to commit suicide, I was pressured by one of the celebrity weekly magazines to monitor the situation. I had interviewed Owen and his brother I don't know how many times. What's going to happen in a waiting room in a hospital? I don't know, but I went in and I babysat. I sat there and I'm like just waiting for somebody to recognize me because it's not like I've always done undercover. I've done a lot of sit down interviews. I was in Hawaii for a film festival with the Wilson brothers for a week. So my attitude was, "I don't want to do this." I hated it. Nothing bad happened. I sat there with another reporter who was talking incessantly about every day stuff for work and I'm like, "Dude? Aren't we supposed to be low profile here?" I was stunned. Of course people are worried about a sick family member so they probably didn't notice but still, it's a weird experience.

Just as any reporter is responsible for covering his or her beat, celebrity reporters must cover celebrity-focused news. If someone covers politics and a politician passes away, reporters will be tasked with the difficult job of getting quotes from family members about the passing of the politician. Similarly, with celebrities, celebrity reporters are tasked with the less-than-desirable responsibility of approaching very difficult situations. This is a place, however, in which freelance reporters are forced disproportionately to put their careers at risk. Because they do not work on staff, they do not have the same kind of leverage or any kind of guarantee about their next project. Thus, when they are asked by a publication to cover a dicey situation, their sense of empowerment quickly dissipates because each assignment guarantees your next. Ron said he "hated" his experience, but knew that he needed to oblige to keep up his relationship with the publication. Still in terms of hospitals, it is not only bad news that must be reported on. When a pregnant celebrity is close to a due date, reporters are tasked with waiting at hospitals to try to glean information about the birth. In addition, in the case of A-list celebrities, reporters are often asked to wait outside of celebrity homes and observe to see if the pregnant celebrity leaves to go anywhere, in case she might be headed to the hospital.

Outside of Celebrities' Homes

Staff reporter Samantha, who had worked on staff and as a freelance reporter for multiple celebrity weekly magazines throughout the course of her career, shared her uncomfortable experience as a freelancer monitoring the pregnancy of Katie Holmes:

Tom Cruise and Katie were expecting, and we were all expected to do shifts sitting outside Tom's house. We were instructed to follow any of the cars that left the house. Even my boss was doing shifts, so I thought, if she's going to suck it up and do it, then I'll do one. And I was getting paid. So it's easy money. But it's a little bit freaky. So I showed up. I think my shift was 5am to noon, so it was dark when I got there. And one of my colleagues was there with me. We were sitting in my car, and all of a sudden "bang" on the roof of my car. It was the loudest noise. And we both jumped and I said I think I'm going to pee myself. That scared the crap out of me. Then we hear something else on the ground. I was parked under a tree, and these pinecones that were this big, they were like mini footballs were dropping from the tree, and one of them drops on my roof. Well then when it was daylight I got out, just to see if it left a mark. It dented my roof. So I got down, picked it up, and put it in the car. I was like, "The magazine is going to pay for this. You instructed me where to park, where to go." I felt so dirty after sitting outside of there, I didn't pick up any more shifts. I felt so dirty. Tom Cruise's mother had left the house around 10 a.m. and I had to follow her. And I remember calling one of the people that was on weekend duty. And I said, "So here's where we're headed." "Oh, she's probably headed to the Scientology center. You don't have to follow her. Yeah, that's where she's going. Turn around. Go back." I didn't pick up any more shifts. I can't do this. This is weird. And when I got to the Scientology center, somebody took a picture of me and my car, and it just felt weird. The magazine was like "Oh yeah, did they take a picture?" And everyone thought it was funny. I thought, no, this is weird. I don't want to do this. It felt dangerous to me. It felt sneaky. The rationale that we were told was, "If you don't do it, somebody else will. The other weekly magazines would do this. We don't want to lose out on the story." It just felt gross to me.

Former celebrity weekly magazine reporter Joy also experienced similar situations outside of Cruise's home:

We were all hands on deck for Tom and Katie, when the baby was due. And that was scary. The family was sending decoy cars because they knew reporters and paparazzi were at the house. We would have to chase after cars. It was such balls to the wall, you must get it. I was going down the 405 freeway following a decoy Mini Cooper. I didn't know it was a decoy. I had my boss on the phone, I was going 90 miles an hour, and he was like, "Do not let them out of your sight." Ninety miles an hour on the 405. I thought, "You ain't got to pay my ticket, you ain't going to bail me out. You ain't going to buy me a car." I did not want to do it, but I just didn't want to be the one on the team not pulling my weight, and I didn't want to mess the whole thing up and have the entire magazine

looking at me saying, “You could have gotten it, but you weren’t willing to go to that next level.” Even sitting outside of Tom and Katie’s house was seedy to me. Those neighbors would see us and would come over and take our license plate numbers. Me going on high speed chases to follow this chick is not all right with me. There were times when I got out of it. There were times when I said, “I’m not okay with it.”

During this period, Joy was on staff at one of the weeklies. Thus it is clear that, while freelance reporters are more frequently asked to do this kind of work, staff reporters do it as well. For both freelance and staff reporters, the ethics become incredibly unclear, as I will explore further in the pages that follow.

Still, there are certain tasks that a magazine would have never sent a staff reporter to do for fear of legal repercussions; this is much like with paparazzi—media outlets want the work paparazzi produce, but they do not want to be formally associated with the photographers. Freelance reporters get used to doing the more risky work so that the brand of the publication is not harmed, regardless of what happens to an independently contracted freelancer. In 2005, freelance reporter Jeff Weiss was arrested outside of Brad Pitt’s Santa Barbara home while on assignment for *People*. *People* would have received no public relations consequences whatsoever, except for the fact that, “Sheriff’s deputies escorted Weiss back to his car and found a copy of an e-mail between Weiss and an associate bureau chief for People’s Los Angeles bureau” (Morin 2005). Thus, in a rare turn of events, *People* was implicated as part of this controversy. Still, the *Los Angeles Times* article about the incident referred to Weiss as “some kind of a scout or forward guy,” thus minimizing the significance of freelance celebrity reporters to the industry.

Sandra, who worked as an intern, freelance reporter and staff reporter at various weeklies during her time as a celebrity journalist, shared her experience and tactics used while reporting outside of Reese Witherspoon’s home:

One of my first freelancing jobs was when Reese Witherspoon had her second baby; it was Deacon. I basically had to sit outside of her house and wait for the nanny to leave. Somehow I was magically going to talk to the nanny. Well, I magically stopped her vehicle, got out of my vehicle, stopped hers, I waved her down, she rolled down her window and I just said, “Oh my gosh! Hi! It's so good to see you.” I was pretending like I knew her. She was kind of looking at me like who is this woman? I don't know you. I was trying to be a neighbor and I said, “Oh, I heard Reese had her baby. How is she doing?” She started feeling more comfortable and said, “Oh she is doing great. She's at the house.” I said, “Who does the baby look like? Her? Ryan?” She said, “The baby looks just like her father.” That was the quote right there. It was just as simple as that. It's something that is not that hard to do, but there is a certain *je ne sais quoi* kind of way that you have to go about it. These scenarios are just a different kind of reporting than set up interviews where everything is orchestrated and everything is arranged for that interview. Just going up to someone and speaking to them, you have no idea how they are going to react. You have no idea if they are going to tell you to fuck off and they are going to walk away. You just have to kind of go into it and hope for the best and hope that you will get a quote that will get you a good bonus or something. I detested the work, but I did it.

Sandra explained that she especially felt like she “had” to do the kind of work that required her sitting outside of celebrity homes because she had to do whatever was asked of her to keep the magazine interested in her. She was not alone in this sentiment. Joy said that one of her first assignments was to go to Britney Spear's home in a gated community:

The nursery was under construction for the second baby, and the magazine didn't know if it was a boy or girl. My boss wanted me to find out what the color of the room was, so we could figure out the gender. I lied to get into the clubhouse where she lived. I said I was going to a meeting at the top, because I had friends who lived there, and I knew there was a community center situation. So I lied and said that. Then I went to Britney's. I had scaled the walls to see if I could find out what the room looked like. I'd asked one of the architects. Had looked in her mailbox. I mean, stuff that's illegal. But here I am, 22-23 years old. I don't know. And my boss told me “Don't come back until you know the damn color of the room.” I didn't feel comfortable, but I was trying to get a job.

Restaurants

While today restaurant and nightlife reporting is not treated as a vital part of celebrity reporting, as it was from 2002¹⁵ until the financial crisis, many reporters I interviewed spoke of

¹⁵ As I explore in section III of the dissertation, paparazzi images became increasingly valuable as celebrity weekly magazines multiplied and struggled to put forth unique products. In a similar

the level of seriousness with which this kind of informal reporting was treated during these years. Reporters were asked to dine at various celebrity-frequented restaurants in hopes of spotting one (or more) stars and gleaning information by observing them. Sometimes celebrities' "camps"¹⁶ would tip off the magazines about their clients' whereabouts specifically so that the client might get coverage from the tip. Just as paparazzi are treated as nuisances even though their tips often come from celebrities and their camps, the so-called "tabloids"¹⁷ are similarly tipped off since, ultimately, celebrities rely on media coverage for their maintained relevance and fame.

The following is an example of a typical file from a night of restaurant reporting, that might later be used to write a story about the celebrity:

On Thursday, Nov. 17, 2005, at 7:45pm Cameron Diaz and an older male and female couple (possibly her parents) dined at Il Sole in Hollywood. The actress dished about friendships and her recent time in Europe. "When we got to Italy after Paris, we were speaking French, when we got to London after Germany, we were speaking German. We just got the languages all crossed up," she explained to her friends, after Diaz said "merci" to the waitress at the Italian restaurant and then corrected herself by saying "grazie." Diaz ordered lamb chops, but couldn't finish them. "I'd love this to go," Diaz told the waitress. "I'm taking this home for Justin [Timberlake]," she said to her friends. For dessert, the group ordered a plate of cookies. Before leaving, Diaz asked the waitress, "Can you pack another macaroon to go?" She stashed the cookie in the bag with leftovers for Timberlake. As the group got up to leave the table, Diaz grabbed a chocolate cookie off of the plate and said, "If you're not going to eat it, I am," and took a bite of the cookie. Diaz paid for the dinner.

While this kind of reporting may seem trivial, it is precisely the kind of information used to craft or *manufacture* a celebrity persona. Cameron Díaz often portrays fun-loving characters, as exemplified in her famous dance scene to Sir Mix-A-Lot's "Baby Got Back" in *Charlie's Angels*

vein, the magazines put tremendous effort in to reporting any celebrity nightlife news in an attempt to offer unique insider material.

¹⁶ "Camp" is an industry term used to refer to a particular person's staff or team who is responsible for their career. For most celebrities, it includes such figures as a publicist, agent, and manager.

¹⁷ There is a continual lack of clarity about what the term "tabloid" actually refers to, as I discuss in "Gossip, Tabloid, News, and the Shaping of Celebrity," in chapter two of this dissertation.

(McG 2001). Obtaining details that show her as the sweet fun-loving girl-next-door she plays in the movies satiates not only the celebrity camps, but also the consumers of the media outlets that print this material; this “insider” view on a celebrity’s life helps consumers and fans feel more “in the know” about what a celebrity is *really* like. A person’s ability to make assessments about another person based on information about their individual behavior, whether it be positive or negative, creates a feeling of intimacy, even if one-sided intimacy (as I discuss further in section IV of this dissertation). Thus, this reporting on Cameron Díaz’s dinner offers a glimpse of her as a thoughtful, considerate girlfriend, and a world traveler who attempts to blend into local culture—these are the kinds of details fans and publicists live for. Similarly intimate, though usually not quite as endearing, information is gathered from reporting at nightclubs.

Inside the Clubs: Nightlife Reporting

“When I was a club reporter I definitely felt like a stalker.”
—Jasmine, freelance weekly reporter

“Nightlife Reporting became popular... I think online really just because we've had so much more of a demand for information so that's a good place where it came from with sightings and that kind of thing. Secondly, I think it's a part of, just like we cover events; part of what we cover is where celebrities are and what celebrities do, and the nightlife stuff is part of that. While it might be an unofficial thing, it's a great glimpse into their lives.”
—Megan, staff reporter for a celebrity weekly

As I mentioned above, while covering Hollywood nightlife was once a major component of celebrity reporting, there is no longer much money pumped into producing this content. Today, it is more frequent for specific tips get passed down to media outlets from third parties, However, there was a period during which the magazines sent reporters to all of the hottest clubs in Hollywood (and New York) where celebrities were regulars. Reporters were paid for doing this work and also permitted to expense drinks. While PR reps may not give reporters the most amount of respect on the red carpet, PR reps for clubs showed a great deal of respect and

appreciation for reporters because, as night life reporters, we gave a whole new level of exposure to the clubs. In the beginning, the reporting was more neutral, in the sense that we were supposed to not use brand names in our reporting (e.g. what brand of alcohol a celebrity was drinking), but, quickly, this became a marketing tool that made brands happy, celebrities happy (if they had deals with specific brands), and PR people happy. Once a particular club obtained a significant amount of coverage, PR reps for that club welcomed reporters in with reserved booths and the “red carpet treatment.”

Significantly, however, the level of racial discrimination in Hollywood explored in the previous chapter did not stop on the red carpet. Jasmine, an African-American weekly magazine freelance reporter expressed her humiliation during routine stops at Hollywood clubs, where the bouncers knew her. In a 2011 interview, she told me, “I would show up at my regular spots that I covered. The bouncers knew me really well. They were often Black too. When they would keep me waiting to get in, we would start talking and they disclosed to me that they were only able to let in a certain number of Black people at a time. That’s why I would have to wait while they let others in. They would say, ‘I know it’s fucked up, but that’s how it is.’” While the red carpet is a white space because of the filtering that happens at the level of media outlets hiring, the club environment created a space of contemporary segregation practices that requires further acknowledgement and investigation. Jasmine said:

I can’t say I was shocked at how racist clubs were. I’m going to say racist because they really are, still to this day. The hot spot clubs, they have a quota. I developed friendships with the bouncers and they would tell me they have quotas at the club of how many Black people – Black people specifically. I hated it. Who wants to go to a place like that that doesn’t want you there because you’re Black? But you know, I was getting paid to do it so I had to look at it that way.

Joy, also African-American, witnessed not only the racial politics of nightlife reporting, but also the politics of gender and other elements of appearance:

When you're doing club reporting, you're at the club and you're trying to get in, [the magazine] is not going to send someone that they don't think can actually mesh and meld into the club, especially when you have relationships with the owners and they're calling the next day saying, "Okay, who was the ugly girl sitting in the corner stalking Paris Hilton the entire night? It was obvious it was your reporter. Don't do that again." Or sometimes we would hear, "Was that you guys? Does anybody else know an overweight chick?" That [overweight] person wouldn't be let go, they would just be reworked into another situation; some people just wouldn't be brought out for those sorts of things. But there were always reports back from club owners or whoever our PR contact was at the club. It was either, "Your person came late," or "They were drinking too much," or "They didn't look right"—there were always things that came back. You always want to blend in. You want to look like you're actually supposed to be there, so you need to look a certain way. You need to dress a certain way. But, if you're the only chick in there that weighs more than 150 pounds, you're standing out. I don't care who you are, everyone's going to know. There were people responsible for helping us get our reporters in at clubs.

As I explore further in chapter nine, beauty and body standards for women are such that what is classified as "overweight" by Joy and other celebrity reporters in Hollywood may not be the same classification others have.

Women who did report at clubs regularly were also subject to potentially dangerous situations. While engaged in nightlife reporting myself, on an instance when I had to attend a club and could not find anyone to go with me, I was solicited as a prostitute multiple times.

Jasmine had similar experiences:

People think you're a prostitute because you're in a club by yourself. It's weird for you to be in a club by yourself, so people would ask, "Why are you here by yourself?" Also it's really dark in a club. Sometimes celebrities are deep in the cut somewhere and you may not see them. And if you miss a celebrity, it's a problem. That can be very stressful because you're always on the lookout the whole night, you can't relax for a second because if you miss that person or you miss something they did and a reporter from another magazine was there and they caught it, you can get in a lot of trouble. The magazines compete with each other and they do not want to lose any information to a competitor.

Beyond these gender and racial dynamics at play in club reporting, ethical lines in club reporting were very blurry, as far as what behavior was acceptable in order to get a scoop. Most

celebrity weekly magazines had a regular reporter assigned to the particular nightclubs in LA that were frequented by celebrities. Joy recounted her feelings about club reporting:

I'm not a club person, so being sent out for club watch to me is seedy. The idea of sitting in a corner at Hyde and all these other clubs waiting to see if somebody's doing cocaine in the bathroom, and following somebody into the bathroom, that is seedy to me. But that is what we were supposed to do.

The following is an excerpt from a file submitted by freelancer Sarah when she covered nightlife in Hollywood. The file is from October 2005, at the peak of nightlife reporting:

At about 1:30a.m., Kristen Cavalleri of "Laguna Beach" showed up with friends and joined the [Paris] Hilton booth. While "Hey Mickey" was playing, Hilton sat in the booth with her legs completely straddled as [Stavros] Niarchos [Hilton's then boyfriend] pushed his pelvis into her. And while Niarchos and Hilton spent a majority of the time grinding and making out, during DMX's "Ruff Riders Anthem," the couple stood atop the booth hugging and caressing each others' arms for the duration of the song. Hilton went right back to dancing when N.E.R.D.'s "Lapdance" came on. During and right after the song, she gave Niarchos a bit of a lap dance, turning around to face him and then grinding on him, as he put his hands up her dress. During one of the last songs of the night, Kelly Clarkson's "Since You've Been Gone," Hilton went wild, flailing her arms singing, jumping on the booth, and singing. Right after this song, at about 2:15 am, Hilton, Stewart, Phillips, and "Sahara," took a bathroom trip (turned gossip session) before the club closed.

As Megan said, this reporting offers a glimpse into celebrities' lives. While this kind of information is still considered invaluable for the manufacturing of celebrity images, it is not done as frequently anymore is because, after the financial crisis, the magazines cut down nightlife reporting budgets, and, more recently, have cut down on freelance reporter budgets generally. However, because of the significance of nightlife reporting, public relations representatives for celebrities themselves, the brands they represent, or particular nightlife venues often send blurbs directly to the magazines with information about who attended which club, who they were with, why they were there, and what they were drinking and what designer(s) they were wearing. So, the information is still available, it is simply not gathered in the ways it was previously.

Reporting While Black

As I outline in the introduction to this section, race in celebrity reporting is a contentious issue. In 2014, when *People* fired their first ever Black senior editor, Tatsha Robertson, the lawsuit she fired back with spoke volumes about the sentiments of racial hierarchy felt by reporters of color (Gregorian 2014; “Complaint,” Robertson vs. People Magazine 2014). In order to give some in-depth perspective, the pages that follow allow Joy to share, in her own words, some of her experience as one of the few African-Americans on her magazine’s staff.

* * *

“When I got to the magazine, I was the only Black girl. Prior to that, there had only been three women who were Black in the L.A. office. So there was a void. Also, there weren’t any Black editors. It was just a known thing. There was no one. And so when I first got there, there were certain events, like the BET Awards and the Soul Train Awards, and it was automatically me who would be assigned to cover those. It seemed exciting because of course I wanted to sit down and do an interview with [rapper] TI, so of course I pitched that idea. So it came from both sides: The magazine was looking to us to have information, and we were looking to them to include Black people on the pages. It was something I always felt was super important—to open the magazine and make sure there were brown faces in there.

“Then it got to the point where it was all I was doing. At some point I was like, that sort of sucks. It felt like I could *only* do Black stuff. But then, it definitely hit me— no one else knows this shit, so I would rather do that than have someone handle it who doesn’t get it at all. I saw it as a beat, just like style and fashion was a beat at the magazine, just like television was a beat, just like anything else, but it was something that I excelled at, that I happen to know about. And I think in those sort of situations, you can either take it as a negative thing like, ‘Oh, they’re

trying to keep me down. I only get the Black stories,’ or you can take it as a positive thing like, ‘I’m the only one who knows this industry, and because I was the only one at the Soul Train Awards from the magazine, I was the only one who saw Chris Brown and Rihanna walk down the carpet so I know what’s going on, or I was the only one who had a sources in the Black community.’ And, especially when it came to sources, my role was vital because you’re not talking about the same group of producers as white Hollywood. You’re not talking about the same casting directors or agents or managers. You’re just not. And so everyone else is like, ‘I can call Brad and Angelina’s publicist.’ Well, it’s not the same publicist... the players were different. A lot of these African-American talents, they had the publicists they started out with, they had the manager they started out with, and then when they got big enough, the mainstream agencies started calling. So that was all fine, but I knew all the players before then, and that was a nice thing. So it was great to be able to say, let me call so-and-so’s stylist just to see what we can get. Or someone’s hair stylist. Well, they’re not going to the Ken Paves and the mainstream celebrity stylists; they don’t do Black hair. You’ve got to know those people. It became a beneficial thing, and it became a youthful, alternate route that a lot of people just didn’t have.

“So, like I said, a lot of people could see it as pigeonholing, and some people told me to beware. But I thought of it as getting a leg up on the competition. I don’t want to be fighting with the other reporters for the television and young Hollywood beat. There’s no need. And I say sometimes at weeklies in particular, there tends to be this focus on what’s hot and who’s being photographed right now. And we’re all doubling up on the same damn people. It’s not to say that it’s not important, but then what happens when and Eddie and Mel B situation happens? What happens when TI gets arrested and you don’t know anybody? Or Whitney and Bobby—the magazines don’t know any of those players. And then everyone is scrambling like, ‘Oh shit!’

And it's all because we had six people covering Nicole Richie and Paris Hilton. So I found my focus to be super beneficial and a feather in my cap because I could always pipe up and because I knew what was going on with the Black blogs. Everyone else was reading *Pink Is the New Blog*, and *Perez Hilton* and *TMZ* and all that, but I was reading the Black blogs like *Concrete Loop*, *Bossip*, and *the Young, Black, and Fabulous*. These were not even on the magazine's radar. But what happens when Kanye [West] gets up on stage at an award ceremony and does something to Taylor Swift, and everyone's like, 'So what's Kanye really doing right now?' Or, 'Who's Amber Rose?'

"I remember distinctly having a conversation and Amber Rose first popped on the scene, and someone was like, 'She's not Black.' I looked at them like, 'She's Black.' And everyone's like, 'No. I hear she's Italian and Filipino. I said, 'Physical features betray you. She is Black. Trust me. I called my girl who is a friend of hers, and she was like, 'Oh no, she's Cape Verdean, which is Black. So anyone who's from Boston knows Cape Verdean. And it's not like I'm trying to be racist, but you know a Latino walking down the street. Just like there's gay-dar, we know who's what. You can just tell. Somethin' ain't right in the water. I know this woman is not Italian and Filipino. I just felt empowered to speak up in meetings and be that authority because it wasn't there otherwise. And there weren't that many Black people at the magazine at all. And yes, I did find it empowering.

"I think people recognized that I was Black and I was proud of it. And they knew that they came to me for certain things, and they always did it in a respectful way. I had one instance where I felt that a reporter got a story assigned to her that she should not have—I pitched it, it should not have gone to her. And I piped up and said, 'Look. Something is not right. This is not making any sense.' I felt that there were some things that were said that were a little racially

motivated. I said something to one of my bosses and he took me out to lunch and was like, ‘Let’s talk about it. I’m your human resources representative.’ I told him the situation, and he said, ‘I don’t even see how that’s racial.’ And I said, ‘It’s not for you to see. It’s how I feel. You’re not Black. I’m not a man so I can’t assume what you feel.’ In some instances, it was hard. You definitely had to bite your tongue, but that’s in any workplace.

But you saw other people using their backgrounds to their advantage as well. One of the few Latinas on the red carpet I knew, if Penelope [Cruz] is walking down the carpet or Javier [Bardem] is walking down the carpet, she would yell out something in Spanish and they see her and they know and you can work it to your advantage. As long as your coworkers don’t get out of hand abusing it, and they’re like automatically, ‘You take the Negro story.’ No. Let me speak up and be the one who wants to take that story. But don’t get upset if I somehow don’t know the inner workings of Nigerian community. That’s not me. I’m not Nigerian. So, you have to watch it; just because it’s out there doesn’t mean it’s safe. You have to watch how your race is utilized in the news world, and every situation has to be watched. Whatever image you have in the workplace, you have to sort of watch. I think, especially when you do what we do, because it can be used and packed in so many different ways on a daily basis, you really have to watch out for it and make sure you’re the only one in control of it. I said it’s a gift and a curse. It’s a great thing if you use it as that. It works for certain people. At some weeklies, their writers are really sexy and they use that to get close to the paparazzi or whatever the situation is. ‘You use what you got to get what you want,’ which is one of my favorite quotes from *The Players Club*. But you have to watch out for it because sometimes it does bite you in the butt.

* * *

As I explored in the previous chapter, reporters of color are often funneled into doing “ethnic” events and following celebrities of color. Through her story, Joy offers an interpretation of this as a positive, even an empowering aspect of her job. For her, covering Black celebrities was a niche she could fill that other (white) reporters were not willing or able to cover. From her experience in a corporate magazine office, the significance of the role of people of color in media is highlighted very clearly. While the celebrity weekly magazines are notoriously devoid of people of color, having someone like Joy at one of the weeklies ensured a certain level of representation and inclusion in the magazine she worked for, or, at the very least, ensured there was someone advocating for that inclusion inside the corporate space.

Ethics of Celebrity Journalism

In essence, this entire chapter has addressed ethics, or the lack thereof, in celebrity journalism. This, however, is not new. From the days of Hollywood’s earliest reporters, like Louella Parsons, Hedda Hopper, and Mike Connolly, ethical codes of celebrity journalism have historically been and remain unclear (Barbas 2005; Gamson 1994; Holley 2003; Ponce de Leon 2002). From loitering in hotels and outside of celebrity homes, to eavesdropping in bathrooms (Barbas 2005:55), celebrity reporters are often in compromising and stressful situations that often lead to the revelation of extremely confidential celebrity news. These unclear ethical lines are the livelihood of celebrity reporting, and have been for decades. Of course, the extent to which these things happen under a 24-hour news cycle with exponentially more forms of media and media outlets is on a level incomparable to the reporting during Hollywood’s golden years. Reporters today are not necessarily happy with the lengths to which they must go for their work, but every day as a celebrity reporter is a test of individual ethics and limits.

Earlier in this chapter, I conveyed Ron's experience reporting in a hospital. This experience, to Ron, was an educational one. "I'm being pressured to do it so I'm going to test myself and see if I like it or hate it. I know I went in predisposed to hate it. See if it totally blows up in my face and the magazine's face to prove, 'Don't ask me to do this crap' and to just know what that experience is like so that I have it. It was absurd for me. It's why I don't do it anymore." Sandra felt similarly about her experiences outside of celebrities' homes: "I certainly detested sitting outside of people's homes because it's just not normal. It's a little creepy to be sitting outside of someone's house and it always made me really uncomfortable, but starting out at the magazine as an intern, I felt that that was what I had to do. I was paying my dues and I didn't really have an option."

Throughout my fieldwork, one of the first questions I asked reporters during my interviews was, "Do you think there are any clear-cut ethics in celebrity reporting." The response I received was nearly a unanimous "no." When I asked Sandra if she was given any training or presented with any particular ethical codes of the magazines she worked for, she said, "No. I cannot recall ever having any of those conversations with any of the magazines that I worked for." Freelance and former staff weekly magazine reporter Sylvia did not have any issues with this, however, "Even the things that should be bothersome, at the time weren't because I get to say I did it for the magazine. Just sitting in the car outside of Tom Cruise's house waiting for Katy to come out—I had never done a stakeout. We were totally in our legal limits. We weren't doing anything wrong. There was nothing immoral or unethical. I should look back on that and go, 'God! I can't believe I did that,' but I thought it was kind of exciting and fun and I don't feel like I did anything wrong." Joy's perspective on ethics at the magazine she worked for was that, "A lot went unsaid. You just sort of had to figure it out and use your own moral compass for a

lot of things. But again, if you didn't have your moral standing or you just didn't give two shits, you could go above and beyond." With a quicker news cycle, fewer (if any) fact-checkers at the magazines, and young and aggressive reporters, some reporters believed their peers were fabricating material for the sake of a story. Joy said, "Somebody would call and say, 'We need a source to say X. This hole is missing in the story.' And somehow, on a Monday, in an hour, this one reporter somehow had a source that said the exact thing that was needed. Something's not right. And that was happening time and time again. I'm not saying that she was lying every time. I think she definitely has well-placed sources. However, there isn't really a check and balance system for sources. There just isn't." This again emphasizes the power of celebrity reporters to shape the ways in which we understand individual celebrities. They ultimately wield the power to inform (or not inform) the public about various celebrities in ways that affect understanding of these public figures.

A veteran reporter who has worked for *People*, *Us Weekly*, and *Life & Style*, told me, "There are certain standards media outlets say they adhere to, but they will completely bend the rules if something too appetizing and potentially profitable comes along. If a bathroom attendant overhears something, should that go to a magazine? To report on those things is tempting. Most of the weekly [magazines] in particular will fall to temptation. They don't think they're going to suffer for it and they know that they will profit. And I think it's a problem." The inverse situation is true as well – magazines will refrain from publishing certain information if they believe it will profit them to do so. Reporters are conflicted about the way the information they uncover is withheld and manipulated by publications to maintain leverage in celebrity relationships. For example, one former *OK!* reporter discussed the coverage of Mary-Kate Olsen's supposed treatment for anorexia with me: "She was treated at Cirque Lodge which is known to be a place

for substance abuse, where Lindsay [Lohan] was treated. But [the magazines] didn't give you the real name of where she was treated, even though they know, because they want to keep celebrities on their sides. They cover things up—then when it broke the magazines ignored it to play it safe; they are trying to guarantee future story. We don't question ethics when we're covering for celebrities.”

For these reasons, I see the ethics of reporting as equally complex as the ethics of the largely unregulated field of paparazzi work, as I will explore in the following section. While celebrity reporters operate more formally and are treated with more respect in Hollywood than paparazzi, I hoped to demonstrate in this chapter that reporters often find themselves in similar ethically compromising situations as paparazzi, which I will discuss in the next section.

SECTION III: *Shootendo*: The Real Paparazzi of Los Angeles

The paparazzi are a notorious fixture in Los Angeles. In contrast to other types of celebrity photographers – such as red carpet photographers or celebrity portrait photographers – paparazzi work on the street in an effort to capture candid, photojournalistic shots of celebrities (see Image 12). Not only are they emblematic of Hollywood, celebrity, and Los Angeles culture, but they have also become a tourist attraction themselves. The official website of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board has a page dedicated exclusively to paparazzi. Under the links on this page for “Activities & Recreation” and “Points of Interest,” one can stumble upon the heading, “Following the Paparazzi: 12 Places to Spot a Celeb” (see Image 13). Thus, the paparazzi are seen as a resource for tourists and the tourism industry. The page reads as follows:

Like swarms of bees searching for nectar, packs of celebrity-seeking paparazzi travel across Los Angeles every hour of the day in search of that next buzz-worthy shot. The encounter might be as ordinary as *Grey’s Anatomy* star Katherine Heigl buying groceries, or as extraordinary as Reese Witherspoon having a romantic date at the beach. Witnessing the paparazzi portion of the star-making cycle is an authentic LA experience. The famous (and infamous) may go to great lengths to protect their privacy, but the paparazzi have uncovered their favorite public haunts. If you’re eager for a celebrity sighting, check out some of the best paparazzi star-stalking spots in the city.¹⁸

Yet, reporters and editors of celebrity weekly magazines do not always consider paparazzi an extension of their profession, and generally talk about them with disdain. “Paps¹⁹ are yucky, creepy people. They are stalking people for a living,” said one former weekly magazine photo editor, who dealt almost exclusively with the selection and purchase of

¹⁸ <http://www.discoverlosangeles.com/blog/following-paparazzi-12-places-spot-celebrity-la>

¹⁹ The terms pap and paparazzi will be used interchangeably. Pap is the informal term used by paparazzi, and others in the entertainment industry, to refer to paparazzi photographers.

paparazzi shots for the magazine. Similarly, photographers who take celebrity photos on the red carpet become enraged if referred to as paparazzi. “We are college educated, trained photographers. Paparazzi are animals who stalk celebrities,” one red carpet photographer told me. Based on public reaction to paparazzi both in person and online, it is clear that the general public largely has a negative perception of paparazzi as well. Perhaps no other profession in the entertainment industry is looked down upon as much the “paparazzo,” particularly since the death of Princess Diana, in which paparazzi were initially blamed for her fatal car crash (Herwitz 2008:130; Jordan 2008; Riding 1997; Squiers 1999).

Still, the majority of photos in the weekly magazines, and even a large number of celebrity photos used in news programs, are taken by paparazzi. A representative issue of *People* magazine had twice as many paparazzi photos in the first 25 pages as it did non-paparazzi photos.²⁰ Because of the social stigma and physical risks involved in taking paparazzi shots, media outlets only purchase photos once they are taken; they do not employ paparazzi or assign paparazzi to take specific photos. Consumers might not even realize that the majority of the photos they see of stars walking down the street, lounging on the beach, or shopping are taken by paparazzi. In this chapter, readers will get to know the rarely revealed paparazzi’s point of view, and why they feel that they are entirely misunderstood: “We are good people. We are just doing our job,” one pap told me.

As is the case with any realm of the Hollywood and celebrity industrial complexes (Orth 2004), gaining access (Ortner 2010) to paparazzi is the first challenge in pursuing work with them. Through my experience as a reporter, and my network of friends and family in Los

²⁰ The issue examined is from October 15, 2012. The first 25 pages featured 20 paparazzi shots and only ten non-paparazzi shots. Overall, the magazine had 29% paparazzi photos, 19% red carpet photos, 24% photos shot specifically for the magazine, and 26% promotional photos from television and movie studios, and record labels.

Angeles, I was able to get “in” with a few paparazzi who then introduced me to others as someone who was already figuratively *cleared* as trustworthy. Paparazzi are, ironically, quite private about their work (Loomis 2009), so the existence of prior connections was critical to the productivity of my research.

In Los Angeles, the center of celebrity media production, the paparazzi are predominantly Latino men, including US-born Latinos and both documented and undocumented Latin American immigrants. Though some of the paparazzi are Brazilian and speak Portuguese, many of the paparazzi are from Spanish-speaking countries. In my fieldwork experience, I worked most closely with Spanish-speaking paparazzi, hence I have titled this section “Shooteando,” a term I heard used frequently during my fieldwork. Shooteando is a Spanglish term that combines the English “shooting” or the Spanglish “shootear” referring to shooting photography, and the Spanish suffix “ando,” indicating the gerund of regular verbs ending in “ar” (e.g. “sacar,” “tirar,” “tomar,” the alternative verbs commonly used to indicate shooting photos).

Despite the ubiquity of their photographs, paparazzi continue to operate largely outside the formal economic channels of celebrity media. Paparazzi are not on staff at any media outlet; they generally work on a freelance basis and provide their photos to one or more photo agencies in exchange for a percentage of any profits made on the photos. Other paparazzi participate in “under the table” sales of photographs by selling photos to another paparazzo to act as an image broker (Gürsel 2007, 2010, 2012) to the agencies on their behalf. The generally informal, unregulated nature of the paparazzi work reduces barriers of entry into the profession and helps fuel the celebrity media system, but at the same time it also positions paparazzi as a public scapegoat for what is wrong with celebrity media today. By looking critically at the paparazzi as key media producers at the periphery of the formal media production process, and as vilified

symbols of celebrity media, this chapter will explore the exclusive and discriminatory nature of formal media production and the racial politics at play.

This section will provide ethnographic data about the life and work of the Los Angeles paparazzi, partnered with a critical analysis of that work and their place within the celebrity media system. The goals of this section are to: (1) Explore who today's Los Angeles paparazzi are and how they do their job; (2) Analyze the economic system of paparazzi photo sales, and the reasons why we see more paparazzi photos now than ever before; and (3) Critically examine how race, ethnicity, and gender are intertwined the ways in which these predominantly Latino paparazzi are portrayed, viewed, and treated within and outside of the entertainment industry. Ultimately, this section will demonstrate that paparazzi are cultural producers who play a significant role in the functioning of the celebrity media industry while being highly criticized, discriminated against, and used as a scapegoat for ethical questions regarding the industry both by the public and by other industry professionals (Riding 1997).

The data for this section was gathered through ethnographic fieldwork with paparazzi and ethnographic interviews with paparazzi, photo agency employees, red carpet photographers, weekly magazine reporters and editors, publicists, and public relations specialists. Virtual ethnography (Boellstorff 2008; Behar 2009; Constable 2003) on such websites as YouTube, X17.com, and People.com provided me with dialogue and user comments that demonstrate public sentiments towards paparazzi. Lastly, popular media articles and documentaries, as well as transcripts from a panel I helped organize entitled, "Are We All Paparazzi Now?," which took place at the Getty Center in Los Angeles on May 16, 2012, serve as critical sources of contemporary discourse around paparazzi and the celebrity culture they seek to document (see Image 14). This reliance on popular material is due to the fact that contemporary paparazzi work

in the US has not been written about ethnographically,²¹ nor has it been analyzed in academic work because of the relative inaccessibility of the paparazzi. There is an abundance of contemporary news articles about the paparazzi, but little that provides a full and accurate picture of their life and professional circumstances. Throughout this chapter, I aim not only to explore the professional life of this complex group of critical, if unappreciated, contemporary cultural producers, but also to contribute a well-rounded perspective on who they are—their lives, their values, and their struggles. In short, I aim to humanize the most dehumanized media producers in America today.

²¹ Beyond an in-depth Atlantic magazine article (see Samuels 2008), a coffee table book entitled *Paparazzi* (Howe 2005), and a series of news articles, contemporary paparazzi have been relatively unstudied as a workforce. There are plenty of interesting historical studies of paparazzi, however (e.g. Linkof 2011; Squiers 1999).

CHAPTER FIVE

Making the Invisible Visible: The Work and the People Behind a Critical and Criticized Media Profession

Galo, A Pap Profile: An Abbreviated Pap Life History Told on the Job

“People tell me to get a better job or a real job. What do you do? What gives you the right to say this? I make way more [than you]. That’s why I have this job. I’m not obsessed with celebrities. This is my job. If I hear that Brad Pitt is at a restaurant, you’re damn right I’ll go. It’s my job. It could be a good job, or a bad job, but it’s my job. I don’t have to steal, lie, or hurt anyone to do this job. And I make a good living. I’m an entrepreneur. Don’t criticize me based on what you see on TMZ. That’s not me.”

—Galo Ramirez, Paparazzi

The defensiveness with which Galo talks to me is not unique among paparazzi. In Los Angeles they are regularly criticized and criminalized and, thus, regularly defending themselves. As an April 3, 2008 AP article summarized, “paparazzi are disparaged by mainstream media, discouraged by the cops and despised by the same public that consumes their product” (“Crashes and Deception” 2008). Though the paps often assert that they are thick-skinned and cannot let what other people think of them or say about them affect their work, and this is generally true, they are still visibly affected by the way they are treated on the job. Among the paparazzi, Galo Ramirez was my main informant/collaborator. We had a friend in common and so, while many

paparazzi are hesitant to allow others into their professional lives for fear of being scooped²² or simply for fear of being criticized, Galo welcomed me into his world of photography.

Galo is 31-years-old (see Image 15). He is usually wearing jeans and a fitted t-shirt that shows off his lean, muscular 5'10" frame. He is proud of the fact that, no matter how hard or late he works, he makes an effort to go to the gym nearly every day. He is very concerned with eating healthy but, given his profession, sometimes he just has to eat what he can get, which usually means whatever fast food restaurant is closest to his job on any given day. He has large piercing blue-green-gray eyes, full lips that are part of an infectious smile, tan skin, and dark brown hair. He drives a gray 2009 Toyota Prius (see Image 16). He says the Prius was the best investment he could make because his car is like his office, his photo studio, and, sometimes, his apartment and bathroom, and he has to keep the air conditioning running constantly as he drives to and from all corners of the vast metropolis that is Los Angeles (Davis 2006; Howe 2005:37). He has a GPS screen built into the dashboard, and all of his important contacts are saved into this system. When he pulls up a map with his contacts' addresses highlighted on the GPS, I can pick out nearly every A and B-list celebrity with a home in Los Angeles—George Clooney, Jennifer Aniston, Ben Affleck, Sandra Bullock, and the list goes on. When I spend days with him on the job, following celebrities or “door stepping”²³ outside of celebrities' homes, we have several hours to talk. He likes having me around because the truth is being a pap can be quite a lonely profession. Sometimes he has several friends around working on the same job, and sometimes he

²² Paparazzi rely on their sources for highly confidential tips on where to shoot celebrities, so they do not want to expose their sources, celebrity addresses, or share their tips with others who may share that information with competition.

²³ Door stepping is the paparazzi technique of parking near a celebrity's home and waiting as many hours as necessary to spot them, or any newsworthy individuals, entering or exiting the home.

is completely alone. When he is alone, I bring him food and offer him company; I have a lot to learn about his work and life, and I do it all from the passenger seat of his Prius.

Galo is currently in the process of applying for citizenship. As a young child, he was brought to the US from El Salvador on political asylum; his home country was in the middle of a brutal civil war.²⁴ “We were trying to get away from all the shit that was going on,” he says.

When his mother left for the US without him, to try to set up a better life for them, he was left with his maternal grandmother. He was then kidnapped and held hostage by his father, who was in the military; he was kept on a military base and left alone for days at a time:

This one time he left and I don't know where he went, but I was starving. I was like three or four years old. This woman came by and was supposed to clean the room, but she saw that I was really small and so she asked me if I was hungry and I said yeah. So she took me and she had a bag of chips and some candy. So when I got back he was there and he was freaked the fuck out. I walked in the door. He yelled at her and fired her. Then when she left he beat the crap out of me with a military belt. It's like a batman style belt, it's a big thick. That's when I was like, whoa, I don't want to be with him. Then he took me to his house and tried to force me to call his girlfriend “mom.” And I said “No, she's not my mom.”— Oh, was that Ben Affleck?

In the middle of this serious story, Galo stops to ask if Ben Affleck was driving the car that just passed us. It does not matter how engrossed in conversation, or how serious a conversation may be, his job and his responsibility is to keep an eye on celebrities at all time. When he decides that it wasn't Ben Affleck, he gets back to his story of childhood trauma. “Then he made me get on my knees and he threatened me with this really thick chain and said he would hit me with it if I didn't call her mom. And then he was about to beat on me, but she got in the middle.” He was finally rescued by his mother when she returned. “I was at his house and I heard someone at the door. I didn't know it was her. He kept lying and saying I wasn't there. And she left. And I asked who it was and he said it was no one. She went straight to his boss in the military and his boss

²⁴ For more on El Salvador's Civil War see: Byrne 1996; Wood 2003

gave him an ultimatum. And that was it. My mom came and found me and then I came here [to Los Angeles].”

When he moved to California, his mother had already found them a place to stay and had job prospects. It was 1987 and Galo was six-years-old. From elementary through high school, he went to school in the Hollywood school district—their heart of L.A.’s celebrity culture. He picked up English quickly:

They taught me how to count and say some stuff in English before I came here. So I picked it up really quick because I knew what they were saying. Otherwise I would have had a really hard time. Then the accent thing went away really quick too because I picked up English so young. I can sound really collegiate, or I can sound all slang. But I know I can speak proper English, I know how to spell, all of that. I learned that real quick. And it was hard because my mom didn’t understand [English], so I had to really listen in class.

The rest of his family stayed behind in El Salvador; only he and his mother came, and his brother was born in the US shortly thereafter. When he got older and began thinking about careers, being a paparazzo was not his first choice. e stumbled upon the work accidentally. He was attending college at California State University, Los Angeles, when he began to feel guilty because his mother was working so hard to pay for his schooling and yet he wasn’t excelling in or enjoying classes. Much against his mother’s wishes, he quit school and started looking for other work:

I didn’t focus and I was like I’m out of high school, I’m on my own, so I could do whatever I want. So I looked at it like I don’t want this anymore; I don’t want to go to school every day and scribble raps. That’s what I used to do was scribble raps every day. As much as I wanted to concentrate, I wanted to focus on what I wanted to do. That’s what made me happy and I figured I wanted to do something that made me happy, so I was like I’m gonna become a rapper or whatever. So everyday I would go to school, write raps, get alright grades, and then I started falling off. And my mom was like what the fuck, I’m paying all this money. So I was like, ok, I can’t do this to you anymore. She got depressed, but she got over it, because I said to her, “I can’t keep doing this to you. I’m not going to school. I’m not learning anything I don’t already know. I’m not taking any fun classes. It’s all bullshit. Even if I get a diploma, it doesn’t mean I’m going to get a job.” So I dropped out and I was like I’m going to work really hard to make myself a successful person at whatever makes me happy, and photography just fell into my lap.

When Galo first dropped out of school, he didn't go straight to paparazzi work; he first worked for five years at a non-profit company as a home caregiver for people with disabilities. From roughly 2000 to 2005, he took care of people with conditions such as schizophrenia, paralysis, and autism. "I changed pampers on adults. I can actually say that I attended UCLA for a semester because I was in class taking notes like crazy style. I learned something sitting in the classroom. One of the people I worked for was in a wheelchair, so I was his proctor/caretaker. So because he couldn't write, he used to sit there and listen and then he was like, 'Go. Write.' I had to take his tests, like be his proctor. So I went to class with him every day, English, computer science. I was like, oh shit, this is complicated shit." Galo grew as a person and enjoyed his work, and was especially proud of his time at UCLA, but says, "It wasn't exactly where I found true happiness. It was something that made me feel good because I helped people, but I was like I can't do this all my life. I could only get so far doing that and it wasn't the road that I wanted to take, so I kind of was like I gotta figure something else out."

One day after quitting his job as a caregiver, he says, "I was just chillin' one day with my homie and he was like, 'What's up, fool? You wanna come with me to work, dogg?'" I knew he was a pap. So I was like, 'Aight, let's go. Fuck it.' So he said, 'You gotta be at my house early.' He got to his friend's house at about 7a.m. and they set out to find Brad Pitt. It was 2005 and, according to Galo and many other paps, that was a time in the paparazzi industry in Los Angeles when there was an abundance of material to shoot (especially hot young celebrities like Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, and Nicole Richie, among others) and not a tremendously large number of paparazzi. Unlike today where the paps have to struggle to find photo opportunities that other paps have not already found, 2005 "was easy," Galo says (see Image 17).

He and his friend got into a follow²⁵ with Brad Pitt and his friend asked Galo to get into the driver's seat and take over.

So I'm following Brad Pitt going crazy. We get all the way to Malibu and I've been driving a Navigator and I'm after a motorcycle and [Brad Pitt] is smashing, so I caught up to him. He gets a fucking speeding ticket, and we get the shots. Then I get pulled over, so the homie has to take me to the office and explain to his boss, "This guy was driving your car. He was with me, he's my buddy and we got a ticket." And the boss is like, "What the fuck is he doing driving my fucking car? Who the fuck is he? What is he doing with you at work? What the fuck are you doing?" It's like this prestigious position working for Fame²⁶ and, back then, it was like you don't get this opportunity often, so the boss was pissed. But my friend said to the boss Jack, "Yea, but it's because of him that we got Brad Pitt. He was able to keep up with him." And Jack looked at me and said, "Is that true?" And I said, "Yea, I got a ticket." And he said, "Ah don't worry about it. I got lawyers. We'll take care of it. You need a job? You want to work for me?" And I was like, "Yea." He said, "Alright, you're a lucky guy today." So I started training with all these guys.

Prior to this job at Fame Pictures, Inc. (Winton 2005; Winton & Alanez 2005), Galo had no formal training in photography beyond a high school photography class where he learned how to develop his own film. Now he was training with some of the top paparazzi in Los Angeles for a major photo agency. A few days into the job, Galo was training with another pap and they spotted an A-list actress who was then in a high profile relationship with an A-list pop star:

We stayed in the car for four hours and shot her "cheating" on her boyfriend. They sold the story like she was cheating, but we were outside of a studio where she was filming a movie and there were bushes and we had to shoot from the waist up. But we got her hugging and kissing this guy on the cheek. I think she ended up saying it was her producer, but it looked intimate and it looked papped. But when I shot the pictures, I didn't know he was a producer. I didn't know who it was. I just took the pictures and turned them into the agency, then they handled the sales. The photos sold for over \$300,000, so there, again, the boss was happy.

When Galo started, he was hired as a staff photographer; which means he received a fixed salary in addition to small bonuses for high-grossing sales like this one (this is in contrast with

²⁵ A "follow" is when a paparazzi is following a celebrity in his/her car.

²⁶ Fame Pictures, Inc. is one of a few prominent photo agencies that specialize in paparazzi photo sales. Other major photo agencies selling paparazzi photos in the US include: X-17, Splash News, AKM/GSI, Bauer-Griffin, and INF (Insight News and Features).

freelance paps who do not earn a salary but make a percentage of the total sales on every photo they take). Two weeks after helping with this major sale for the agency, Galo's opportunities changed when he got into a highly publicized car accident with Lindsay Lohan (Balassone and Piccalo 2005; Winton and Alanez 2005). He was initially arrested under suspicion for assault with a deadly weapon (Winton 2005). Although the charges were eventually dropped, Galo's career opportunities changed. "The boss was like, 'Everything is fine. Don't worry. We'll have a new car tomorrow.' And then he was like, 'Hey, my lawyer advised me. I need to let you go.' I wanted to cry out of anger, I was so pissed. It was liability towards the fuckin' owner. It was like, 'Oh he doesn't work for me no more, they can't come after me. He doesn't belong to me no more.' Some people go out with a bang, I came in with a bang. I went back to try to get a job from him, but he wouldn't hire me. I worked for the other guys briefly, but I wasn't making nothing."

Frustrated and demoralized, Galo decided to go back to a more traditional profession and got a job working for Cedars Sinai Hospital in the x-ray department. He was excited about the position, but the week after he started the job, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article about the Lohan car accident that mentioned him by name. Galo believes that this is why the hospital then immediately terminated his employment; hospitals in L.A. are known for having confidential celebrity medical information leaked and so they are very careful about having anyone work there who has ties to the entertainment/media industry (Hennessy-Fiske 2011). Galo went back to trying to pap and was eventually hired by another agency, JFX. After working for them for a few years on staff, he decided to go freelance in hopes of making more money. Now he works freelance, but sells his photos exclusively through one agency, AKM/GSI

Media,²⁷ where he feels like he is able to determine his own financial fate depending on how much work he does. Though paparazzi never actually know how much the agencies are making—their compensation is entirely based on an honor system of the agencies actually giving paparazzi the percentage of sales they are promised—Galo feels confident that he is being treated right at this agency. “They won’t steal from me, but I guess you never know,” he says.

Galo and I have been in such deep conversation that I almost forget we are following Heidi Klum’s new bodyguard boyfriend and her children. “Does he know all of your cars?” I ask Galo.

“He knows my car. He’s trained to do that.”

“But there are so many, how can they keep track?”

“License plates.”

“It’s funny, though, because even though I know there’s overcrowding in terms of the number of paparazzi, it still seems like whenever I’m with you, even that time over by Vanessa Hudgens, there were a lot of paps over there, but it wasn’t crazy out of control the way it gets on the streets. It’s never like dozens of people.”

“Because it’s not a hot celebrity.”

“So when do you feel like, ‘Oh, fuck this is way too overcrowded?’”

“Big stories, like Brad Pitt maybe. There are a lot of guys, a lot of action, a lot of movement.”

We are both yawning. We are tired. “There we go,” Galo says. Galo is looking at his smart phone while we’re at a stop light, something I am constantly asking him not to do, particularly since he had recently gotten into a minor fender bender while looking at his phone.

²⁷ AKM is an agency that formed in 2009, while GSI formed in 2007. The agencies merged in 2012. Now AKM’s owner Alex Kantif and GSI’s owner Steve Ginsburg jointly own AKM/GSI.

He looks at a headline and announces it to me. “Don’t look now, Seal. Heidi Klum’s bodyguard turned boyfriend joins her brood at Starbucks.’ And there’s my shot.” He is proud of the photos he gets and he loves to see them used.

“Look at this fucking idiot!” Galo says, pointing at another paparazzo in a car near him. The paparazzo cut him off to get ahead and closer to Klum’s bodyguard’s car. “Now he’s going to let his brother in. Great. Can you see how many of my pictures they used?” I start to scroll through the article he pulled up on his phone.

“A ton. It’s a lot.” He starts to take the phone back and count the images. I snatch it back. “I’ll count for you. You drive.” I scroll down the long article counting each photo with a Stars Only Photography symbol by it; the outlet has used a combination of agencies’ photos. “There are 11 that say Stars Only.”

“Eleven. Nice!”

I notice Galo looking off in the distance. “What are you looking at?”

“Mateo. He’s going to Reese Witherspoon’s.”

“Oh, for real?” We sit in quiet for a few minutes, while Galo focuses on driving. I’m thinking about Heidi Klum and Seal’s breakup.

“That time that I first interviewed Heidi Klum that I was telling you about –” I had talked to Galo earlier about one of my very first assignments that I ever did for *People* magazine that involved Klum, “When I talked to all of the Victoria’s Secret Angels it was like right after she and Seal had gotten together and I interviewed her about it. It was our quote of the week in the magazine. And now they’re split.” Galo is looking at his phone.

“You got a green light, stop it!”

“I know! I needed these shots on a Wednesday. Because on Saturday everybody’s going to be here again trying to get it.”

“So what now?,” I ask.

“Go back and sit again until 7p. We’re just going to sit here and wait, see if they come out.” He points out Gwyneth Paltrow’s house to me as we pull back up to Heidi Klum’s street. He didn’t want to show it to me earlier because he didn’t want the other paparazzi to know—he wasn’t sure if they knew or not and he wanted to keep it a secret. ““Can I have some of your water?,” Galo asks me.

“I think it’s gone, but you can get the last trickles out of it.” Galo takes my metal water bottle, opens it up, and turns it upside down over his mouth, trying to get any last drops out. It’s been a long, hot day. He doesn’t have any more water, neither do his buddies, and he’s going to have to be door stepping for at least another four hours. He can’t leave, or he risks losing the shot and, thus, his paycheck.

While we are waiting outside in the Brentwood/Pacific Palisades area near Klum’s house, another pap named Hector Campos played me videos he took of all the paps saying their nicknames (see Image 18). “If you don’t have a nickname, you’re not ‘in.’ And if you’re not ‘in,’ you’re probably not going to make it. There is a certain brotherhood. I have respect for a lot of guys, but there are guys I can’t stand because they don’t get the business and they are ruining it,” Galo tells me after Hector stops playing the videos. That day, I was with el Diablo (“The Devil”), Gallo (“Rooster”), Cupcake Eyes, and Señor (“Mister”) and a few new guys who do not yet have nicknames; they are all in their 30s and early 40s. They are all Latino—mostly immigrants from El Salvador— and most have been working as paps between five and ten years (see Image 19). Their time as paps coincides with a demographic shift in the Los Angeles pap work force that

has been alluded to in the media, but not thoroughly investigated or critically analyzed. This shift coincided with the expansion of the celebrity weekly magazine industry and an increased demand for paparazzi photos; more Latinos started joining the workforce between 2002 and 2005 and, by 2008, the shift from “all white guys” to mostly Latino (and, thus, presumed “illegals”) was noticeable (Pearson 2008; see also Halbfinger & Weiner 2005; Howe 2005; Winton & Alanez 2005; Ruy 2008).²⁸

As I stand outside with the paps, I see that, in these rich areas where paps do their work, the only other brown faces are construction workers and landscapers. There is a Mexican food truck parked on the street for the service workers at the multi-million dollar homes in this neighborhood to get lunch. Here, the paparazzi are like the other service workers. They provide a type of service labor, but one that the people they shoot do not, or at least pretend they do not, want, and one that they do not pay for. But the paps occupy a similar social space; they are eyesores in the neighborhood. People want to pretend they do not exist, like all service workers (Buch 2010; Garcia 2003:156,184), but they are there and are integral part of the Los Angeles and entertainment industry economies.

Interestingly, paparazzi often talk about how their goal is to be invisible, which is often possibly when they are working on a story alone. But when there are multiple paps on one story, a group of young, brown-skinned Spanish-speaking Latino men in a rich, white, celebrity-heavy area become highly visible. The two new guys who Galo is training seem out of place because they are white and don't speak Spanish. They are left out of a good portion of the conversation because most of it is happening in Spanish. “Rooster” and “Mister” speak English, but it's clear that they prefer Spanish and, when they do speak English, they are often code-switching.

²⁸ I will further address race, ethnicity, and the issue of the demographic shift in the paparazzi later in this section.

El Diablo gets to talking about politics. “I guess I’ll take my chances *con el negro*,”²⁹ referring to his plans to vote for President Barack Obama in the upcoming presidential race. He opines that he knows Obama is a good person and that he just got dealt a bad deck of cards. He is very interested in politics and says he listens to National Public Radio constantly, on and off the job. He said that when Obama made his speech on health care, it almost made him cry. “He was talking to me,” he said.

As we are having this conversation, I recall a previous conversation I had with Galo on the job. One day I got into his car near Dakota Fanning and Vanessa Hudgens’ homes in Studio City and he said: “You know about Cuba, right? What’s the deal with Ché Guevara? Was he a killer? I don’t want to learn about the motorcycle diaries, I want to know what really happened. I wear his shirts and someone got mad at me for it once, so I don’t want to feel ignorant or jump on a bandwagon I don’t know about. I want to learn.” I have done extensive research in Cuba since I was 18-years-old, and Galo knew that, so he wanted me to talk through Cuban history and Ché Guevara while we staked out celebrities and conducted informal sales. Issues surrounding politics and education are recurring themes that come up during the workday with the paparazzi.

As I sat with el Diablo talking about the presidential race, he asked me what I did, so I explained to him my research and also that I worked for *People* magazine. I told him Galo had been helping me out and that we had mutual friends and he said, “He’s one of the few people in the industry who is really genuine.” “The Devil” talked about what a stand-up guy Galo is, while he did arm presses on the bench outside on a small walking path in the Brentwood/Palisades neighborhood, his arms mostly exposed from his short-sleeve t-shirt, showing his tattoos and muscles. He got his nickname because the paps said people think he is scary. He’s wearing a golf

²⁹ This literally means “with the Black man.”

cap, sunglasses, and has a thick goatee. He reminds me of my dad, both in his looks and the way he talks. He and the other paps seem to have become immune to the fact that every car driving by is staring at them; the passers-by either know who they are and do not like them or look at them as if they are wondering, “What in the world are these Latino men doing here?” The only other people walking are in construction clothes or carrying cleaning supplies; the residents of the wealthy, white neighborhood are protected behind the windows of their Bentleys, Mercedes, and expensive SUVs as they glare at the paps.

I came home sweaty, dehydrated, and exhausted. That day, I had arrived to meet Galo four hours after he got to the neighborhood, and I left four hours before he and the other paps went home. I was with them from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. and I could not have kept up for their entire 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. day. But these hours are worth it since, in a good year, Galo still makes over \$100,000 (though many paps currently make around \$30,000 or less). “The American Dream, right? Entrepreneurship,” Galo said to me as I left him that day, exhausted.

The Changing Demographics of the Los Angeles Paparazzi

Several factors contribute to animosity towards the paparazzi, including the male-dominance of paparazzi and the symbolically violent and sexualized language associated with paparazzi. The animosity in turn reifies the gendered and racialized ways in which paparazzi are talked about publically, both by individuals and the media.

As with other forms of informal and on-the-move laborers, the demographics of paparazzi are not easily researchable (Soto Laveaga 2009: 260). The paparazzi are a transient and constantly changing group of workers who are not confined to any particular workspace. Though they sometimes become highly visible via videos and photographs of “gang bangs”—the

term used to reference several paparazzi photographing one celebrity—they generally seek to not be seen and are, thus, often hard to locate. The number of paparazzi in Los Angeles is unknown, though the figure 200 is often suggested as a ballpark range by the paparazzi and photo agency workers. Some paps estimate that, 15 years ago, there were only between ten and 30 paps, and that number has multiplied exponentially as the market for candid celebrity photos has grown (Halbfinger & Weiner 2005; Winton & Alanez 2005; Sanschagrin 2010). The very nature of this unregulated, freelance-dominant, on-the-move, informal, field makes it impossible to accurately and thoroughly quantify its demographics. What I have been able to do, however, is count and observe paparazzi while in the field, and make lists of paparazzi with my closest informants, noting the names, backgrounds, gender and ages of the photographers my informants know best. Based on lists compiled with the help of a few trusted paparazzi, I estimate that present-day paparazzi in Los Angeles are roughly: 62 percent Latino/a (mostly Salvadoran, Mexican, Guatemalan, Brazilian), 26 percent Asian (including Filipino, East and South Asian, And Middle Eastern), 8 percent African-American, and 4 percent white/Caucasian.³⁰ The percentage of Latinos includes both Latin American born and US born Latinos/as. Based on the sample lists of paparazzi I gathered, the percentage of undocumented paparazzi could be as high 50 percent, though this is an imperfect and rough estimate since the paparazzi emphasize that it is not something they actively discuss; this estimate is based mostly on unspoken understandings about the status of the photographers they work with. The gendered nature of paparazzi work, however, is entirely clear: 98 percent of the paparazzi are men and 2 percent are women.³¹

³⁰ This is based on a representative sample of 47 paparazzi, which is considered to be about ¼ of the paparazzi working in Los Angeles today.

³¹ And, to my knowledge there are no transgender people working as paparazzi. I also did not meet any openly gay/queer paparazzi.

Thus, it is not an accident that the only interviews I conducted with paparazzi were with men (Howe 2005:43). In all of my time researching, I met one female paparazza—a term that I have never even heard used because paparazzi work is gendered as predominantly male and performed by the male singular “paparazzo.” She did not feel comfortable doing an interview with me or talking with me outside of my observations of her on the street, but I rarely saw her and, when I did, she was often alone, or with one other person, and shooting less followed celebrities (i.e. not A-list stars that would attract a lot of attention). This gender division is not surprising given that photography is a historically male-dominated field (Rudisill et al. 2000:34), as is journalism (Chambers et al. 2004; Pedelty 1995). In response to my curiosity about the male-dominance of paparazzi, one pap said, “That’s like asking why there aren’t more women mechanics. There just aren’t.” Another paparazzo told me he does not think there are more women because “women get scared and you get a bad reputation, and women care more about that than men do. Some paps say it’s more of a man’s business.” There is also an element of simple logistics—women can’t urinate as easily into a bottle as men can. Thus, in some ways, the male sexual organ is actually permitting this kind of work.

The fact that the paparazzi are almost universally male provides additional avenues for criticism and somehow even validates the use of bodily harm against paparazzi in a way that would not be socially acceptable to exercise against women; paps are seen as thugs and gangsters who deserve the treatment they get. Proving that the gender of paparazzi is highly noticeable to the general public, during a panel entitled “Are We All Paparazzi Now?” at the Getty Center in Los Angeles in 2012, an audience member raised the question: Why are there not more women paparazzi? Galo responded:

I don’t know [why]. Maybe too much tension. It’s an aggressive field of work. You’re constantly on the run. How would a woman feel when a couple people start screaming at

them, or what if a body guard wants to beat up a girl? We get encountered by bodyguards, I mean we gave them that job. It's because of us they have a job. [Laughs] Am I right? I think that has a lot to do with it. They'd be in predicament. They wouldn't be able to act like us. For example, if a bodyguard punches; there's a guy at LAX that got punched by Mike Tyson.

It is interesting to consider whether or not women would be physically assaulted to the extent that men are if they were on the job. In the case of Mike Tyson, someone who has a record of domestic violence against women, he might have been equally aggressive towards a woman. That the paparazzi in Los Angeles are predominantly Latino, and Latino men have historically been stereotyped as aggressive, macho, violent, sexual predators (Aparicio 1998:157; Carroll 2003:263-6; Delgado & Stefancic 2012; Greco Larson 2006:60; Parada 2012; Sutherland & Felty 2010) becomes a convenient way to demonize them and justify physical aggressiveness towards them. The language of "shooting," "giving it up," and "gang banging" gets put into the context of men who are already seen as aggressive and violent thugs/gangsters, further degrading their public persona. The racial and gender dynamics, thus, come to the forefront as critical parts of this dangerous field of work. The theme of racism and discrimination against paparazzi will continue to be explored throughout this section.

Cultivating Public Disdain: How Celebrities View Paps

"Photo shoot fresh, looking like wealth/I'm 'bout to call the paparazzi on myself."
-Jay-Z, "Otis"

"Till I get flashed by the paparazzi/Damn, these niggas got me/I hate these niggas more than the Nazis"
-Kanye West, "Flashing Lights"

Paparazzi are hated and talked about as a nuisance by those within the industry, especially by celebrities themselves. For example, Brad Pitt talked to NBC's "Today" show about the paparazzi in 2008, saying, "Let me be very blunt: I hate them. I hate these people. I

don't understand . . . that they do that for a living.” (AP 2008). Plenty of other celebrities have shared similar sentiments. Mila Kunis has called what paparazzi do “bullying” (“Mila Kunis” 2012:126). In the documentary *\$ellebrity*, Jennifer Anniston accuses paparazzi of keeping her in “false imprisonment” (Mazur 2012). But despite celebrities’ disparagement of the paps, when paps are around it signifies importance. “In our contemporary world everything seeks to be made visible, and visibility conveys price and power” (Herwitz 2008:39). There is great irony in that, and maybe hypocrisy—celebs complain about the presence of the paps, but their presence, and the resulting images, provide the celebrity with power and capital, and help promote the celebrity’s career. Actor Adrien Grenier reconciled this contradiction at the Getty Center panel by explaining that celebrities’ hatred of the paparazzi doesn’t stem from an invasion of privacy, but rather the issue of control over the monetization of the celebrities’ image. “Your media attention is an avenue to making money. Big studios know that. They’ve controlled it for years. Celebrities utilize it to make a living and they do quite well, and they like it when they’re controlling it. And now what’s happened with modern technology and point and shoot cameras is that suddenly everybody has an ability to make a couple bucks off the game. So, they don’t like that so much.”

The presence of paparazzi is in fact a particular kind of status symbol in Hollywood. Shortly after I returned to Los Angeles to begin my fieldwork in 2010, I noticed a billboard on Lincoln Blvd. near Venice beach. It said, “Attract the Paparazzi,” and it had a picture of Vitamin Water Zero Glow (see Image 20). This billboard shows that the appearance of paparazzi signifies an individual’s importance and celebrity, and is something to aspire to (whether this aspiration can be achieved through drinking a particular brand of sugar-water will be left unexplored). The status conveyed by paparazzi is further evidenced by the existence of services such as “Celeb 4 a

Day,” in which customers can pay to have a team of “paparazzi” follow them during a night out (see Image 21).³² Higher priced packages even include a bodyguard to “keep those pesky paparazzi from invading your personal space.”

If the presence of paparazzi conveys status on their subject, annoyance at the paparazzi conveys even more. This is part of what makes an individual a real celebrity—not only having paparazzi following them and making them noticeable, but having it happen so often that it is an inconvenience. If a celebrity acts like they love the attention, they will be seen as vain. They hire bodyguards and create modes of protection to further promote this image - are you really an important celebrity if you don’t have a bodyguard to “keep those pesky paparazzi from invading your personal space”? Even those celebrities genuinely do not like paparazzi following them have agents, managers, and P.R. reps who are directly paid by the celebrity to strategize media placement, and those people will tip off the paparazzi when it would be lucrative to do so.

For those celebrities willing to admit that paparazzi serve an important role within the entertainment industry and celebrity industrial complex, they treat paps cordially. On a day-to-day basis, there is a functional work dynamic between paparazzi and most celebrities. Actress Selma Blair told me, “I’m just a regular actor trying to get a job. You’re an ass if you complain about it. I’m just gonna say that one day they will provide a scrapbook for me and that’s kind of how I want to look at it, like, ‘Look there’s a picture of me and daddy. There’s me and baby.’ So, it’s nice and the guys when you talk to them, they’re all pretty nice. They just try to be a nice part of my day. I learn their names, say, ‘Hi’” (Díaz & Leon 2011). Some celebrities (or their public relations teams) even prearrange photos for paps based on the needs of media outlets and celebrities. For example, after a recent bout of rumors suggesting Will Smith and Jada Pinket-

³² <http://celeb4aday.com/Home.html>.

Smith had broke up, a shot of them together was set up by the celebrities and their camps, in coordination with pap agencies, just to dispel rumors. While celebrities generally present themselves as anti-paparazzi, when they need paparazzi services they are very cooperative with the photographers. In the case of Will Smith and Jada Pinket-Smith, the couple showed up at a location, and the paps had been tipped off in advance that the couple would be there (see Image 22). Smith was pleasant with the photographers, made sure they all got their shots, and then they all moved on. At these stages, the celebrities need the paparazzi and want the paparazzi.

For those celebrities who do not acknowledge the important role of paparazzi within the industry, however, paparazzi are everything that is wrong with being famous. For example, in a 2012 interview with Glamour magazine, Mila Kunis discussed her views on the paparazzi in depth. The article read, “It’s a beautiful day in Manhattan, but inside the Tribeca Grand Hotel, Mila Kunis is feeling claustrophobic. She’d love to go biking or walking or something—*anything*—but paparazzi are camped outside both of the hotel’s exists. ‘I will try to enjoy it from inside looking out,’ says the actress, in town to shoot the film *Blood Ties* with Clive Owen and dressed down in jeans, a black tank top, and a comfy black sweater” (“Mila Kunis” 2012:124). “Glamour: You felt uncomfortable with the paparazzi? MK: Yes. I still am. I know this sounds obnoxious, but drinking coffee outside, I haven’t done in my twenties, ever. A couple months ago I finally sat outside in Los Angeles for lunch with my girlfriend Lisa, who is the mother of my god kid. It was the most beautiful day. I don’t want the fear of being photographed to prevent me from doing things that I enjoy” (ibid.). The magazine provides the space for Kunis to promote the notion that she is trapped inside by the paparazzi; they are holding her captive and they prevent her from experiencing happiness because she is so scared of having her photo taken.

She says she doesn't want the "fear of being photographed," even though she is a public figure and has chosen to be an actress.

The magazines need the paparazzi to be the "bad guy" of celebrity media, solely responsible for the lack of privacy faced by today's stars, so that the magazines can position themselves on the side of celebrities, furthering their development of relationships with the stars they cover. Of course, surrounding this article about Kunis were paparazzi shots of the actress purchased by the same magazine condoning her criticism of these photographers in the article.

In a nation where celebrities are role models who their fans dream are "just like us," it is no wonder that the public opinion of paparazzi is so closely-aligned with that of celebrities; the criticism starts with the idolized celebrities themselves and those celebrities' fans seek to support their idols. The media who use the paparazzi's work while simultaneously publishing it are critical of the paps in order to try to keep celebrities and their camps cooperative; the media outlets do not and cannot exist without celebrity cooperation, so it is no wonder that the media outlets attempt to appease celebrities by appearing to disapprove of paparazzi work.

On the Job With Paps

Researching paparazzi on the job in Los Angeles took me everywhere from the beach neighborhoods to the furthest inland reaches of the city. One thing for certain, however, is that it never took me to any centralized "newsroom," which are typically associated with news and media production. British media and communications scholar Simon Cottle has pointed out that the "reconfiguration of news corporations, news production and journalistic practices" has created a need for a new wave of ethnography of news (Cottle 2000:20). This call for new(s) ethnography determines a need to look beyond the newsroom as a center of production (Cottle

2007:8; see also Cottle 2000). Karin Wahl-Jorgensen's "News Production, Ethnography, and Power" (2010) echoes Cottle's call to look beyond the newsroom-centric approaches in studies of news; she explains that one key way to do this is through studies of freelance journalists like myself (Wahl-Jorgensen 2010:30; see also Cottle 2007:8-9); this also includes freelance photojournalists and the paparazzi, in particular, because even those "on staff" at any photo agency would typically spend their days "in the field" rather than in any office, since their job is to gather images on the streets.

The closest thing to an office paparazzi have are their cars and the street corners where they might converge. Whether or not paparazzi are photojournalists and whether or not the media they contribute to are "news" outlets is something that requires further discussion. I, however, will argue in a future chapter the media paparazzi contribute to are certainly news media (including both the celebrity weekly magazines and the major television network "news" programs in which their images appear), and they are, thus, most certainly photojournalists. Frank Griffin, co-owner and co-founder of the photo agency Bauer-Griffin is explicit about his feelings. "Paps are the only real journalists in Hollywood," he declares on his website.³³

When the paparazzi are doing their job, they generally seek out specific celebrities the agencies are looking for, based on who is in demand by the celebrity weekly magazines. If paps' contacts or their agency's contacts have certain intelligence on a breaking story of a particular celebrity, that takes priority. Beyond that, the ideal photo for paps is a full body shot with great lighting, the celebrity wearing bright clothing, and no sunglasses or hat. Catching celebrities in an emotional moment—happy, sad, in love—is also important (see Image 23). The photo here is an example of the ideal paparazzi photo. In this case, the circumstances and set-up for a great

³³ <http://www.bauergriffin.com/about/>

pap shot are so good that they are likely posed; in other words, they dressed this way and went to the location in hopes of getting shot by the paps and/or they explicitly tipped paps off and were prepared to be shot. This is something that occurs regularly and is particularly popular with lower-level celebrities and reality television stars (Montag & Pratt 2009).

In order to get a perfect shot, paps also need expert knowledge of their cameras, which generally comes with time on the job. Although Galo and many of his fellow paps did not have previous training on photography before entering the field, they also entered during the digitalization of photography (Gürsel 2012), so it was a time when many photographers were relearning how to work with the changing technology. Still, different paps have different levels of expertise with their cameras; the paps Galo was training had no basic photography skills at all when I first saw them in the field and he was just showing them basics like how to frame shots (i.e. in pap shots meaning not to cut off the head or the legs, aim for that a body with optimum lighting and focus).

When I went on the job with paps, I often brought along my own digital camera with a zoom lens, but it paled in comparison to their high-tech oversized machines. Still, Galo took the time to help put optimum settings on my camera, altering its aperture, shutter speed, International Standards Organization (ISO), and white balance; because I have a background in photography and documentary filmmaking, I am familiar with some of these functions, but Galo is an expert. As he checks the settings on his own camera, we wait for something to happen outside of Vanessa Hudgens' and Dakota Fanning's homes in Studio City. Vanessa had just left, but because there were about ten cars following her, Galo decided not to follow. His justification is that he "won't be able to sell the photo." Though the bidding wars on celebrity photos have calmed down quite a bit, and the possibility of "exclusive" photos are less likely now with the

abundance of paparazzi on the street, an exclusive photo is still ideal and does bring the promise of the greatest possible revenue for one shot.

As we wait for any new action around the starlets' homes, a woman drives passed us. We are parked in front of her house. She looks at us and rolls her eyes. "She is going to come talk her shit 'cause we're paparazzi. She wants to fuck with us. I bet she says that to all criminals. That's what I want to tell her. Like, 'Oh, do you say that to all criminals?' We're not doing anything wrong." Galo and the paparazzi know that they are generally not received well in the neighborhoods in which they work. But Galo would still love to live in one of these celebrity-heavy neighborhoods. "I want to move to Studio City, because then I would live so close [to celebrities]. If I lived over here, I would get to Hollywood so fast. I would make a left on Ventura, jump on the 101 up the street and be in Hollywood in five minutes. If I have to go to Beverly Hills, I just take this short cut right here, come out on Mulholland, make a right, boom, make a left on Laurel Canyon. Bam. I'm done. It's perfect," he tells me. As we sit waiting for one of the celebrities to come home, Galo shows me old pictures he has taken that he is proud of, like ones of Britney Spears around the time she shaved her head. I had recommended him for the Getty Center panel on paparazzi that I helped organize, and he is gathering photos he says he might want to share at the event. I ask Galo about a woman pap who I have been trying to get in touch with, and it turns into a conversation about what it really *means* to be a paparazzo:

Oh, you mean Cat Woman who stands out on Hollywood Blvd.? She does pap work, but she's not a pap. She is out on Hollywood dressed up like Cat Woman. She's not paparazzi. Just because they do what I do doesn't make them a paparazzi. There are different types in this business. She doesn't do door steps. She might get a few tips and go do stuff, but she's not out here with us. The things real paparazzi do to get pictures without bothering celebrities is crazy. That's what makes you paparazzi. Paparazzi used to be in your face. It means pest. But there are stealthy ones. It's supposed to be a candid moment. By definition people think of paparazzi as scum, they think of us as being all in your face. What about if I take a picture from my car and I don't bother you? Then what? I'm letting you be. I'm not bothering you. How can you be mad? I'm the guy who

doesn't bother you. Others are in your face. It's behind your back, kind of, but if you're a public figure, it's part of the deal.

The term paparazzi was famously coined after the character named Paparazzo in Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960). Paparazzo was the "annoying news photographer who raced around Rome chasing celebrities along with the jaded gossip columnist ... Once the film came out, the photographers—who up until then had been aptly called 'assault photographers'—were thereafter known as 'paparazzi,' a relentless bunch who stalked the many movie stars and other celebrities who poured into Italy in the postwar years" (Squires 1999:278). Although this is still the image of often portrayed in paparazzi-shot videos shown on news programs (shown because the news programs are using the paparazzi's footage of certain celebrities), as Galo explains, this is just one approach to paparazzi photography and many of the paps instead specifically try to stay out of the celebrities' way and be "invisible."

Still, Galo recognizes that the paparazzi in Los Angeles do come into more contact with celebrities than they used to. "In New York there is a lot less pestering. LA used to be like that. We would get our shot and be done. But now LA is more pestering because there are more guys and more competition. The last thing I want is to be on one celebrity all day like this. If I get one picture that will sell, I'm done," he said.

As Galo explains to me his desire to remain invisible while on the job, he shows me a video of him and his former pap partner being harassed and beaten by musician Travis Barker and his friends outside of a shopping mall. This is not a unique example; the violence exercised against paparazzi while on the job is not only a reality, but a focal point of their professional experience and one that they want others to know about. There is real trauma inflicted upon them through these experiences and they want to share this. In Galo's case, he had a camera recording the entire altercation. Galo and his partner were attempting to shoot photos from their car in a

mall parking lot, so as to not invade the personal space of Barker and his friends. In the video, one of the musician's friends walks up to the car and, as he starts to berate them, spits in Galo's face. Barker's friends then pull Galo's partner out of the driver's seat of his car and start to beat him. They slash his tires. They steal his phone. Barker's friends call the cops and, when the cops appear, they want to arrest Galo and his partner. The majority of the videos the paparazzi have shown me involve white men attacking men of color in public spaces. These videos are shown publically, thus validating the inhumane treatment of paps and reiterating their place as subhuman media slaves.

Galo says that being in a car is like being in a cage. "It's like being in prison, but I know I can leave ...but I don't." He doesn't leave because he cannot risk missing a shot. "People tell me to get a better job or a real job," Galo tells me, emotionally. "What do you do? What gives you the right to say this? I'm not obsessed with celebrities. This is my job. If I hear that Brad Pitt is at a restaurant, you're damn right I'll go. It's my job. It could be a good job, or a bad job, but it's my job. I don't have to steal, lie, or hurt anyone to do this job. And I make a good living. I'm an entrepreneur. Don't criticize me based on what you see on TMZ. That's not me."

* * *

It was a Sunday morning. August 22, 2011. I got a text message from Galo at 7 a.m. telling me, "JLo is shooting a video downtown. Streets are blocked off. Paps are here. Get down here." He wanted me to come see him in action, since most of the time I had spent with him on the job had been in his car. I threw on some comfortable clothes, jumped in my car, and hopped on the 10 freeway going east, the Hollywood sign peaking out from the smog on my left, then to the 110 south and got off at the second exit in downtown Los Angeles. Several streets were blocked off, a common occurrence in Los Angeles because of commercials, videos, movies, and

television shows being shot. Los Angeles, in fact, is not just “Hollywood” in the sense of the actual geographic location of Hollywood, as many imagine; but all of Los Angeles does, in fact, become Hollywood—all of its diverse landscapes, neighborhoods, and people become part of Hollywood imagery. I have sat with paparazzi outside of movie sets in every part of Los Angeles from South Central, to the actual Sunset strip of Hollywood, and everything in between. On this day, downtown Los Angeles was Hollywood, as crowds of fans and photographers gathered to get a glimpse of Jennifer Lopez shooting her music video “Papi.”

When I walked up to Galo and a few other paparazzi on the corner of Spring Street and Fourth Street, they were sitting on the sidewalk with camera gear spread out around them. There was a sign on the door of the building they sat next to: “Notice of Filming (Commercial – Standard),” it said. “Production company: Island Def Jam Inc. will be filming: Cookie Love” (see Image 24). They used the name as a decoy so people could not figure out that it was Jennifer Lopez’s video, but the paparazzi seem to always know where and when to find a celebrity. Jennifer Lopez and her children had just come out from her dressing room trailer and they got some clear shots of her holding them. “Did you see that [Lopez’s] daughter, Emme, gave her flowers when she came out? I got that shot,” Galo told me as he proudly showed me the images on his camera. It was already hot out and the paparazzi were wiping their foreheads. Galo wore a muscle shirt, in part to show off his muscles, but in part because it was an August day in Los Angeles, and in downtown at that, where a breeze is hard to come by.

Galo warns me that the other paps we are with that day might not want to talk about their work with me. He says paparazzi don’t like talking about paparazzi work because “it’s like secret society stuff.” But some of the paps tell me a few of “the little secrets we keep”—that they make me swear I will not share in my research—making me feel like I had finally reached the moment

Clifford Geertz discusses in his work on the Balinese cockfight where he was, “quite literally, ‘in’” (1973:416). After a few minutes of chatting and looking at their shots, the paparazzi and I get up and move to the opposite side of the street where the set is located. The paparazzi are met with the usual disparate and diverse reactions to their presence—pedestrians are simultaneously curious and seemingly disgusted about their work. One person walked by and yelled, “Get a life. Leave her alone!” Another pedestrian, a middle-aged Latino man in business-casual attire stopped and peered over the shoulder of one of the paparazzi who was re-examining his photos; the pedestrian wanted to see what the photographer had shot. European tourists gathered around the paparazzi and posed next to them (see Image 25). One of the tourists—a woman in a brightly colored shirt with a hot pink sweater tied around her waist, a neon green mini-backpack, and a camera bag—had zoom lens cameras and placed herself directly next to the paparazzi in hopes of getting the same kinds of shots the paparazzi get (and her family members took photos of her photographing a celebrity next to a paparazzi). Her camera, much like mine, looked like a joke next to the mega-zoom lens cameras the paparazzi have. Galo’s lens, when standing up on the floor, is about one-third his height (see Image 26).

Since we were at this Jennifer Lopez shoot just two days after Kim Kardashian’s wedding to Kris Humphries, and since the wedding had dominated not only our own work lives as celebrity media producers but also our social and consumer lives, our conversation inevitably turned to the Kardashian wedding. There was a general feeling of “Kardashian exhaustion” in Los Angeles, and maybe countrywide. As a paparazzo who had to follow Kim’s every move, Galo was tired of her as well. “The Kim Kardashian wedding images were sold for \$1.5 million to *People* magazine. They just had to have it. It’s like the next Will and Kate [referring to the Duke and Duchess]. And the wedding was basically sponsored. They are gonna sell every

wedding. It's all fake. The Kardashians are bank. The brother is the only one who isn't getting love because he's a guy. He has no sex appeal. I see him at the 24 hour fitness," Galo says.

"Do you shoot him?," I ask.

"No. Why am I gonna shoot him? Nobody will buy those." In this moment, the focus on women and women's bodies as well as the demand-driven nature of paparazzi work is evident.

The paps are bored as they wait for Lopez to reemerge for the next scene, so they start spontaneously quizzing each other on celebrity kids' names, inspired by them talking about Jennifer Lopez's twins, Max and Emme. They start with the "Brangelina" babies Zahara, Knox, Vivienne, Pax, Maddox, Shiloh, then Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner's kids, then Britney Spears' kids, then Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale's kids, and the list goes on. "We know all the celeb kids names," Galo boasts. This is part of their job; just like I have had to do as a reporter for *People*, they have to stay on top of all the celebrity names, news, faces, and trends. They have to know who and what to be looking for at all times; they're proud of their knowledge. There are five paparazzi on this job, all men, as usual—three Latino and two white men. The Latinos break off into their own group and are all speaking Spanish. A white security guard starts yelling at them. "Stay off this side of the street and we won't have any problems," the security guard says without ever making eye contact with the paparazzi, so as to reinforce their inferiority. One of the guards had made it his task to get in front of every potential shot the paparazzi could get, blocking Jennifer Lopez at all costs. Another person working on staff at the video shoot stood with a pair of binoculars, scoping out the paparazzi, counting them, looking at the positions where they stood. The paps said he was doing this to report back and strategize how to keep Lopez out of their view.

“Shooteando,” José, one of the Latino paparazzi said to me. “This is what we do. Exciting, huh?”

“Yea, it is, I said. It’s really interesting,” I had never met this pap before.

“They’re not all nice though. Some paps won’t talk at all,” Galo announced, happy that the paparazzi we were with that day welcomed me into their group. He sometimes worried that people wouldn’t want me around, but it hadn’t been an issue so far when I was with Galo. I was dismissed by some paparazzi I approached on my own, particularly by some I encountered who I had been told were undocumented. When I asked, in Spanish, to talk with them and explained my research, they fled immediately. There was no interest in talking with me because they could not be sure of my actual interest in them, and could not risk explaining their stories to me.

“¿Hablas español, verdad?”³⁴ José asked.

“Sí, claro,”³⁵ I said. He wanted an explanation. I told him my father was from Puerto Rico and that I grew up with my dad’s family speaking Spanish, that I spent a lot of time in Puerto Rico and Cuba, and that I had lived in Spain for a while.

“¡Que rico! Yo estaba shooteando en Puerto Rico hace poco. Mira, te lo juro que la gente allá me trataban bien. Me encantó, de verdad,”³⁶ he told me. Naturally, I smiled con mucho orgullo; nothing makes me happier than people loving Puerto Rico.

“Hay, que bien. Me alegro mucho. ¿Y hay mucho paparazzi allá?”³⁷

“No, no tanto. Unos pocos. A nosotros nos mandan allá para shootear. Mira, no puedes incluir esa info sobre el XXX,”³⁸ referring to the secrets they had told me earlier.

³⁴ “You speak Spanish, right?”

³⁵ “Yes, of course.”

³⁶ “How wonderful! I was shooting in Puerto Rico recently. Look, I tell you the people there treated me well. I truly loved it.”

³⁷ “That’s nice. That makes me very happy. And are there many paparazzi there?”

“Sí, yo sé. No te preocupes.”³⁹ The feeling I got was that he didn’t believe I wouldn’t include the secrets they mentioned until he said it in Spanish; that sealed the deal and before that, it was just a hope that I wouldn’t blow their cover. José started to show me photos he had shot yesterday, which had sold well and were on People.com that morning.

“We thought about not coming back after yesterday ‘cause we didn’t think we could beat that, but we might,” Galo said.

Security, again, started questioning and harassing them as they stood on a public street corner. The reality is that paparazzi generally stay on public property—parks, sidewalks, and streets. The celebrities, regardless of where they are, are protected and great lengths are taken to keep paparazzi away from them, even when it involves questioning the paps for being in public spaces. The paparazzi have grown thick-skinned, but they are also always aware of the potential for a situation to escalate into violence, so they do their best to stay calm and cooperate; the taunting they have to go through is often humiliating and, when they are attacked, they often do not fight back for fear of getting blamed, arrested, or, in some cases, deported. They do not want to be physically aggressive toward the staff or the celebrities they need to cooperate with in order to get their work done and, thus, make money. Their bodies are constantly vulnerable.

A recent altercation between Justin Bieber and a paparazzo involved the paparazzo being beat up by Bieber, but the pap did not fight back at all for fear of his job and livelihood. Bieber did not have that fear; he felt the agency as a rich, white celebrity to exercise force over a brown-skinned individual whose livelihood revolves around taking images of rich, white people like Bieber. Galo was there and shot pictures of the aftermath of the situation. These photos made

³⁸ No, not many. Just a few. They [the agencies] send us there to shoot. Look, you cannot include the information about the XXX.”

³⁹ “Yes, I know. Don’t worry.”

over \$25,000 for AKM/GSI within the first few weeks⁴⁰; apparently, there is a market for photos and videos of paparazzi being assaulted. Paparazzi take them to have evidence for legal recourse, but, based on online comments about incidents like the Bieber one, the public sympathizes with the celebrities. Galo was disturbed that the witnesses he approached at the Bieber scene told him that they saw what happened, but that they would tell the police it was the pap's fault because he deserved it at that the paps should leave Bieber alone. "They gave false information to the police, but I got that confession from them on video. There was no provocation and Bieber got out of the car and punched the pap," Galo told me. One would think that there would be some concern from Bieber's staff that this would be bad press for him. But paparazzi are not liked, there is no sympathy, and no concern. Paparazzi have no protection, while those they photograph have ample protection from staff, law enforcement, and the public. The fans who buy the media the paps contribute to are the same fans who tell paps they deserve to be punched by the celebrities who assault and chastise them.

"I hope the kids go home because we are the only two that got them; the less my competition has those shots the better," Galo announced. He tells me that he never tells anyone who he is shooting because they could be informants and then they could share that information with other paps who could then come and scoop the story. "See that girl walking? She could be a reporter because she is walking back and forth and texting," Galo says. A security guard comes up to the paps and says, "You can all be here, but we are closing this part of the street and so I have to ask you to move now. You can cross the street but we are gonna do a shot here," the paps

⁴⁰ Those sales could increase over time, if the images continue to sell. Since this case may go to court, it is likely that rights to those photos will continue to be purchased and re-circulated. To be clear, however, this figure is the amount of money the agency makes. Galo would receive about a 70% cut of those sales, which he then splits with his pap partner.

reluctantly step back; they don't know if he is telling them the truth or just trying to get them to leave.

One pedestrian asks Galo who they are shooting and he tells them it's Jennifer Love Hewitt. He tells another guy who asks that it's Marc Anthony. Other pedestrians continue to ask for a peak at their shots. "How much does one of those cameras cost?" one man asks. Security comes back to ask them to move further back. The paps and I move to another side of the street. This time the security guard has a new approach. He seems to either be humbling himself because he knows that he is not high on the entertainment industry totem pole either or simply trying to get the paps to cooperate further. "Sorry, guys," he announces to the paps. "I don't want to be a dick. I'm just doing what they tell me. I know you guys are just trying to make a buck too."

A policeman rode up on his bike and asked the security guard what he was doing. "You can't shut down both sidewalks," the cop told the guard, "If they do that I will shut the whole shoot down. You cannot stop pedestrians on both sides."

The paparazzi felt validation from a police officer, and it felt good. "This is one of the only times we got the law on our side!" one of the paps said.

The guard agreed, opened the sidewalk back up that he had just pushed the paps off of and said, "To be honest, man, I don't give a shit if you take pictures."

As we stand on the sidewalk, we can tell that they are going to start shooting a moving scene because Lopez gets into a car that is perched on top of a trailer. Pedestrian traffic has drastically increased by this time and people on the street are commenting how good Lopez looks. The shoot starts and her car gets pulled on a trailer (in the shot she does not actually drive, instead she appears to be driving while the trailer actually moves the car). In the shoot, dozens of

aggressive men dressed in business attire are chasing her with flowers and teddy bears while she looks frightened and panicked. The shot is almost too ironic; the men chasing her aggressively are supposed to demonstrate how highly desired and desirable she is. This shot shows her importance, her appeal. Similarly, paparazzi chase her to get shots and this behavior is ridiculed; yet the paparazzi's interest in her is similarly representative of her importance, her desirability. In fact, as the shot moves down the street and the hoards of men chase her in the actual shoot, on the outskirts of the shoot the five paparazzi I was with and one other latecomer are chasing the set (and, thus, Lopez) down the street to get the shots of her attempting to escape these aggressive men while faux-driving a Fiat. The image is so fascinating, and yet nobody is grasping the irony, the complexity, the hierarchy playing out in front of our eyes as we watch the shoot transpire (see Image 27). When the scene is done shooting, the paps gather together and compare shots. Lopez gets out of the Fiat and waves to the hoards of fans who have gathered on the street and climbs into a black Suburban SUV that drives her to a different side of the set.

I asked Galo who the other pap was who had come just before that scene was shot. "He's old school. I got respect for him, but he probably doesn't know who I am. He owns his own thing. Eric Ford. He won't talk to you. He keeps to himself," Galo said.

I approached Eric anyway. He has been working as a pap for about 15 years and is enthusiastic about talking to me. He thinks it's interesting that I'm doing my dissertation research on this and has a lot to say about the economics, how he used to make a good living, but now he struggles. He specializes in sets—mostly TV and movies. He used to get minor jobs on the sets and that is how he got insider information and access to places he otherwise wouldn't have been able to go. "We're in a time when the appetite for celeb reporting is at its highest but photos are getting paid the least," Ford said. "I used to make a good living, but it's harder now.

There are so many people working as paps.” Later that day, he sent me a link to his website called onlocationnews.com. He definitely considers his work news, as evidenced by the name. I started to walk with Eric to the other side of the set where the other paps had migrated.

The security was again pushing the paparazzi around. The guards did not address them as people. They talked about handling them with their fellow staff members, pointed at, pushed, but did not talk to them. One of the workers on the set, a young hipster looking white guy in a plaid shirt yelled to Galo, “Hey, you're embarrassing that camera. That is high tech gear and you're embarrassing it.” At this moment, the worker on the inside of the set asserted his elite-ness and legitimacy by criticizing the informal, outside-of-the-set workers for their work documenting the celebrity the set-worker is closer to. To this person, and to many others in the entertainment industry who are more “formal” fixtures of the celebrity industrial complex (Orth 2004), it does not matter what kind of images these paparazzi produce, they and the work they produce are unworthy. Continuing the overlapping reactions of hate and fascination, another pedestrian passed by and asked one of the paps, “Who are you shooting for?”

“Myself,” the pap said.

“Oh, well I'm a photographer too. I got my masters in photography and I live in the neighborhood. I need work if you can help.” A young woman came up and asked to see Galo's photos. A middle-aged woman dressed in a purple sari, with a bindi on her forehead, also gathered around the crowds near the set and asked for a glance at the paparazzi shots.

CHAPTER SIX

The Formal and Informal Economics of Paparazzi Work

“The celebrity system runs on itself; the celebrity is valued in virtue of mere participation in the system. Put a slightly different way, celebrity is increasingly a media effect combined with public appetite. These together set its ‘market value.’”
—Daniel Herwitz⁴¹

Meeting the Demand for Celebrity Images

The photos paparazzi seek out are based on what the media outlets want, which is in turn based on what the magazines project will sell, and what kind of “newsworthy” stories the paps uncover. Still, Randy-Bauer, who co-owns Bauer-Griffin photo agency says that a lot of the decision-making still has to do with magazine editors’ favorite celebrities. “It’s funny how I know the [magazine] editors’ pet celebrities. I know for a fact that editors at *People* magazine love Reese [Witherspoon] and they love Cameron Diaz. It’s a personal choice; you’re not always saying, ‘Readers love that,’ you’re saying, ‘I love that.’ And you see it with all of the magazines. And I target subjects based on that too. No one ever says anything to me about it, but I see which pictures the magazines run; and when I see them leaning towards using a lot of pictures of whoever, I know that if I get those pictures, my chances of selling photos to them are higher.” Bauer also says that he polls editors at the weekly magazines regularly to get current lists of who they want photos of:

I have a list and it’s the same list as always; you would not find it surprising in the least. Jennifer Aniston and Justin Theroux, Brangelina, J.Lo hopefully with a new man, the

⁴¹ (Herwitz 2008:18).

Kardashians, Tom and Katie and Suri, Will and Kate, the *Twilight* kids, Pink and her daughter, anyone in a bikini. That's it. I call [the magazines] and I say, "Hey, what you guys want?" so that I know what to target. You have to give the customers what they want. It's a boring list [of people], but that's what you want. Do you know how many times I've told photographers [to shoot] Jennifer Garner with the kids? It's so boring, but it's like no you give the customers what they want. That's a new thing—magazines used to never run the same person two weeks in a row. They'd say we just ran it last week were not going to run at this week. Now they do it all the time. Jennifer Garner with the kids, Suri, Jessica Alba, the Kardashians—it's the same pictures every week over and over. I have tracked *In Touch* magazine and this is the fifth week in a row they have run photos of Tori Spelling with her kids. Their editor says, "[Spelling] knows how to work the game they give us what we want. They wear bright clothes; they have cute babies; they have smiles on their faces like they love being photographed. It's like that's what we want and they give it to us, and they know how to play. So we put it in the magazine."

Sales to the celebrity weekly magazines make up a majority of paparazzi photo agency sales. This, combined with the fact that other media outlets (Access Hollywood, Extra, and local and national newspapers and television) often build celebrity-focused stories based on what *People* magazine or *Us Weekly* report, the celebrity weekly magazines generally dictate the celebrities the paparazzi target. According to one pap who also has his own agency, "The weekly magazines are still my bread and butter and that's about 75% of my sales. Then I'd probably say about 20% of sales are the blogs now for me. And then the final 5% are interesting new customers and TV." Since the decisions behind the photo publication and the market demand is out of the hands of the paparazzi, Galo is often frustrated at the blame paparazzi receive from celebrities, the media, and the public. "Why am I the bad guy? It's not my responsibility. I'm a photographer," Galo said. "I'm not the person who sits behind the desk at a magazine and decides what story to run that week. If you are gonna blame us, then blame everyone. Don't just single out the paparazzi because they're the ones who take the pictures. No, dude. I can take a million pictures, dogg, and, unless you buy them, what are they worth to me? Nothing. It's not worth anything to me. It's supply and demand."

The people and corporations making the most money off of the pap business are the photo agencies and magazines owners, not the paps (or the magazine reporters). The magazines, in particular, need the paps to be “the bad guys” so that the magazines can continue to peg them as such while building cooperative relationships with the celebrities and Hollywood industries they need to guarantee interviews. Many of the former paparazzi of the 1990s and early 2000s have gradually made their ways into positions as strictly “image brokers” (Gürsel 2007, 2010, 2012), selling paparazzi photos from behind desks while hiring paparazzi or selling photos on behalf of paparazzi who are now predominantly Latino. In general, freelance paparazzi make between 60 and 70 percent of the proceeds of their photos. Since the freelance paparazzi do not deal with the sales at all, however, it is difficult for them to know if they are ever getting paid based on what their photos actually make; some paparazzi have faith and trust in their agencies, and others do not believe they are being compensated fairly. But paparazzi stay freelance for a few reasons. One pap who, briefly tried to start his own agency, quickly realized that “they are two full-time jobs and you can’t do both.” The only real way to get the full profits from your photo sales is to do the business alone, which proved, for this pap, to be impossible. Another reason is that not just anyone can sell to the magazines. In order to be seen as a legitimate company, “You have to have about 500,000 images for magazines to see what you have and then they might agree to do business with you. You have to get permissions to upload images to the magazines’ FTP sites,” a Brazilian pap named Luiz told me. “Otherwise you have to go through an agency.”

Formal Economic Channels of the Paparazzi Business

When Galo started working on staff as a pap for Fame, he made \$100 per day. Early on in his job, Galo took a photo that sold for \$300,000; he received a \$500 bonus for that shot. These types of sales, in which paparazzi receive less than 1% of the amount paid for their photos, became incentive for paps to work freelance. This tendency towards freelance work, however, also contributes to the informal, anyone-can-access nature of the business.

Of course, with the possibility of greater reward comes greater risk. When Galo first went freelance, he only made \$700 in three months. For those three months, he was staked outside of actors Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise's home while she was pregnant. During this time, paparazzi and reporters alike were essentially camped out in front of the Holmes-Cruise household 24 hours per day, waiting for her to go into labor so they could follow her to the hospital. Galo could not leave his car or the site for food or to use the bathroom. He began to have health problems from the work conditions and he was not making enough money to live on. This prompted him to go back to working for an agency, this time JFX, before again deciding to go freelance.

Galo's experience was not unique; Luiz also remembered the earlier days when one of shots of Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, and their children would make \$300,000. Luiz said this is why, for agencies like X17 who had greatly expanded their staff photographers as opposed to using mostly freelance photographers as other agencies tended to do, "having us on staff was cheaper." A former photo editor of a celebrity weekly magazine named Phoebe described this period of expansion from 2002 to 2008 as the "paparazzi boom," while a photo agency owner termed those years "the gold rush."

The “boom” was triggered by an explosion in demand for photographs by the celebrity weekly magazines. Prior to 2000, the weekly magazine *People*, which launched in 1974, had no direct competition in the magazine market. In 2000, *Us Magazine*, which had existed as a more trade-focused bi-monthly and then monthly publication since 1977, re-launched as a weekly to compete with *People* (Kuczynski 1999). Two years later, the magazine *In Touch* began publication. Then in 2004, *Life & Style* entered the market and the tabloid newspaper *Star* was re-launched as a magazine to compete with the other celebrity weeklies. The US version of the British weekly celebrity magazine *OK!* was launched the next year. These new magazines brought about a competition for content that had not previously existed in the industry.

The expansion from one celebrity weekly magazine to six in the span of only five years created a market in which the magazines struggled to make their product distinctive. In contrast to posed red carpet photos, which are obtained by multiple photographers at any premier or special event and typically sell for about \$150, candid paparazzi shots are more unique and, thus, have the potential to be much more valuable. In this newly competitive environment, procurement of “exclusive” paparazzi shots became a crucial selling point for the magazines. Phoebe believes the paparazzi boom started after the first major bidding war over photos among the celebrity weekly magazines, which was over a set of photos of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez kissing that was purchased for around \$75,000 by *People* magazine (Carr 2002). The highly publicized nature of the bidding wars worked as an advertisement for the new demand for paparazzi photographs. Phoebe recalls that this period of increased competition coincided with the expansion of digital photography, which not only reduced costs for aspiring paparazzi but for the magazines as well, allowing them easier access to photographs:

One of the big reasons we started to see more was: a) photographers flooded the market because it was all of a sudden really profitable and b) they could get us

pictures by just pushing a button and putting them into our FTP [File Transfer Protocol—a standard for the exchange of program and data files across a network]. When it became easier for us to get pictures, more people were game to buy them.

The boom ended in 2008, not coincidentally at the beginning of the financial crisis. According to editors, paps, and agency heads, the magazines reduced their budgets for photo acquisition and scaled back to pre-boom pricing standards for photos.

Since 2008, paps and agency heads alike say sales do not come near the big numbers of the boom years anymore. For example, X17 made over \$3 million dollars off a set of Britney Spears photos in 2007 (Lambert 2012), including the famous head-shaving incident; in 2011, a set of photos of Britney sold for \$50,000, which is considered high in today's market. When I spoke with him in 2011, Luiz's last major sale was of Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson filming a movie in Brazil for which a set of photos grossed between \$100,000 and \$150,000, of which he received a percentage. Prices like these however, were "not often anymore," he said. "But you can still get big numbers, it just depends on the story." Galo's shots of Justin Bieber after he beat up a pap in 2012 have made about \$25,000 to date, of which he will receive 70%; since he works with a partner pap, they will split that percentage. His shots of Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin have grossed about \$20,000 for the agency so far, though Galo believes they will continue to sell since they are such rare photos.

In general today, the average paparazzi photo sells for anywhere between \$50 and \$4,000, though photo agency co-owner Gregory calls the \$500 to \$4,000 range the "meat and potatoes" of their business and says 90 percent of their image sales fall within that price range. Without any bidding wars on a photo, the standard magazine photo rates have been cut in at least half since the boom. For example, one pap said, "It used to be standard to get \$1,500 for a quarter-page photo in *People*; now it's \$750. Exclusive images that would have earned \$3,000

will only get me about \$500. Back in the day, they had the ‘exclusive rights,’ which today you don’t really have anymore. Nobody really pays exclusive rights anymore and the chances of getting anything exclusive are slim because there are so many more paps. Magazines only pay extra for exclusive rights if it’s something really, really big *and* nobody else has it.”

At the Getty Center panel, Galo was asked if the paparazzi profession was still lucrative. He responded: “In my opinion, I think it’s oversaturated...there’s still a lot of opportunity to make a lot of money if you get the right photo, like Brad and Angelina or a Jen Aniston baby bump. [How much I can make on that kind of photo] depends on if it’s exclusive, how good the photo is. The baby bump... It’s enough money to make me sit at her house for a long time.” Galo said that the changes in the industry have made the job more challenging since they can no longer rely on an average shot to make them thousands of dollars, but it can still be profitable and many paps consider themselves lucky to be able to make a decent living in this industry.

To understand the changes in the market and the “oversaturation” Galo speaks of, it is significant to note how many photos are sent to the magazine offices—which all maintain similar programming for receiving photos. A photo transmission manager who has worked for multiple celebrity weekly magazines explained to me that, in ten years, the number of digital photos being transmitted via the FTP sites multiplied exponentially. In 2001, the number of digital photos received that year was around 50,000. By 2011, that number had jumped to over 8 million. Today, the magazines receive between about 800,000 per month. While this includes both paparazzi and red carpet photos, the majority are paparazzi shots. This is not just a jump in numbers based on technological advancements, but also one that correlates to the increase in the number of paparazzi on the street every single day.

Many paps quickly got used to their lifestyle in the paparazzi boom, during which Luiz, for example, estimated he was making \$10,000 a month. He bought a home and then lost his it because his earnings quickly dropped to about \$30,000 in 2009. Another pap said that his best year ever was 2008, and his worst year ever was 2009.

A major contribution to the decline in photo sales was the reduction in the number of “exclusive” images published (and fought over) by the magazines. As the price for images dropped based on the magazine’s decisions not to engage in bidding wars except under special circumstances, so too did the need for or the expectation of earning “exclusive” rights. Today, unlike during the paparazzi boom years, multiple competing magazines run the same images. The only way a magazine can get an exclusive anymore is if no other pap shot a similar image, which is rare in today’s market. Still, in addition to the saturation of photographers, magazines have made a strategic business decision not to pay what they used to for exclusive images, so it is difficult to tell the cause from the effect. Another factor is that paparazzi may not be as careful or cautious about protecting their potentially “exclusive” shots since they know they will not get the kind of money for those shots that they used to.

A related change is that freelance paparazzi, in an effort to maximize sales, will do what paps call “double dipping”—this is when a pap gives the same photos to different agencies in hopes that the various agencies will have better relationships or salesmanship with certain outlets than others, thus maximizing the paps’ profits. Some paps feel that this is exacerbating oversaturation and having a detrimental effect on the market. As one agency owner put it, “At a time when the celebrity media is at its biggest and the photos are most important, the photos are the cheapest.”

Beyond the magazines, photographers, and celebrities, the remaining major group in the economic system of celebrity image production is employees working within certain industries who tip off photo agencies and/or paps in exchange for regular payments. Some people who routinely get paid are individuals who work for airlines, at restaurants frequented by celebrities, or on the sets of various studio productions. Airline employees who provide sound information might receive several hundred dollars a month. For basic set information on studio productions (e.g. what time celebrities will be arriving on set), studio employees generally receive \$25 per day, for each day they provide the information. One agency owner said the “tipsters” do not have “formal contracts”:

But it's like, hey, we give you money every month. We send it to your bank account, and it's an ongoing relationship. We've had some of our key information suppliers for years and, you know, the funny thing is their desire to be a part of this industry. I mean cash is cash, but it's about their desire for them to be involved. People want to be involved in this whole juggernaut of celebrity; it's their way of being involved and part of the action. Because they really get into it. You talk to some people and they are giving you detailed specifics, like, “I know this person just had a fight with the girlfriend, so it looks like he's probably getting away to visit the family,” like they really get involved personally. Everyone, if they have the opportunity, would be a celebrity. I think that's why all these reality TV shows that basically take people out of obscurity and turn them into celebrities, are so popular, because that's really everyone's dream. Who would say no to it?

Celebrities themselves are also often on agency payrolls. Celebrities not only tip paps off themselves, or have their publicists do it, for the resulting publicity, but they also sometimes get paid by agencies for doing so. For example, an agency recently paid for Kim Kardashian’s entire family to go on vacation under the condition that they could have free reign to shoot photos of the trip. One agency owner said: “Basically Kim Kardashian does it all the time. She has deals with photo agencies and they pay her to do photo sets. The agencies will say, ‘We're going to give you \$50,000 and you're going to do pictures on the beach in a bikini. And they send a

photographer. It's set up. They do the pictures. The agency pays Kim Kardashian her money and the agency makes money off of the photos.”

Informal Economy of Paparazzi Images: Paps as Image Brokers

While the agencies serve as the image brokers (Gürsel 2012) to the magazines, an informal economy of paparazzi images has also developed in which some paparazzi serve as intermediary image brokers between other paps and the agencies. This informal system revolves around certain freelance paps—who I will call the informal paps—who evade dealing with photo agencies by selling their photos to other freelance paps for a small, flat fee (generally about \$50 a set). The brokering freelance pap then owns the photos and gives them to whatever agency (or agencies) he might work with and will then earn the same percentage off of the brokered photos that he would from his own images. This new form of pap image sales facilitates increasing openness within the industry in a way that allows for more undocumented workers to compete in the market on their own, without having to engage in any formal business channels and without having to provide any personal information. It is now a real part of the economics of paparazzi work and adds another leg to the complex “labor hierarchy” (Soto Laveaga 2009:140) already in place in this industry.

Based on interviews and observation in the field, it is apparent that undocumented paps are more likely to sell in this fashion than others, as they attempt to avoid formal business transactions. However, undocumented paps are not the only ones informally selling their photos – some paps sell this way to avoid negotiations with the agencies or to avoid taxes. Regardless of any potential correlation between Latinidad and the undocumented status of some paps, every pap my closest collaborators in this research have witnessed selling their images informally has

been Latino. The informal sales are often negotiated in Spanish. Though a significant number of paps are Brazilians, they generally do not participate in this new informal realm.⁴²

On the particular occasion I will examine, the sale of a video of Halle Berry becoming enraged with a paparazzo outside of her daughter's school became an example of the complicated intertwining of the informal economy of paparazzi images and the ethical codes observed by the paparazzi (see Image 28). On May 9, 2012, I sat in Galo's grey Prius around the corner from the homes of actresses Vanessa Hudgens and Dakota Fanning in Studio City. As a group of paps gathered around another pap's car, Galo and I went to say hello. The paps we approached were part of a group nicknamed "the Home Depots." As with all pap nicknames, they embrace the often playful, if insulting, names assigned to them by their fellow paps. As Galo said, "If you don't have a nickname, you're not 'in.' And if you're not 'in,' you're probably not going to make it."

The Home Depots are a group of paparazzi who generally sell and circulate their photos informally through other paps (or multiple agencies). Through their name, "The Home Depots," their role in the pap economy and their racialized bodies/ physical appearance are bundled together. One Latino pap explained, "We call them the Home Depots because they look like a group of guys standing outside of Home Depot looking for work." But another pap says they were also given that name because, "They're like the guys at Home Depot. They're there every day to get pictures to sell for \$50, which is what they do at Home Depot. Pick me up and, for \$50, I'll paint your house."

The Home Depots were watching a video of Halle Berry. She had become irate at a pap, Andy Deetz ("Halle Berry" 2012), because he went inside her daughter's school to take photos,

⁴² The majority of Brazilian paps work on staff for X17 or are freelance and sell their photos directly through agencies.

instead of remaining outside the entrance, as other paps do. This act violated the self-regulated ethical code, mainly revolving around legal restrictions, that paparazzi understand they are supposed to adhere to. In this case, Galo instantly made an ethical judgment upon seeing the video. “She was right,” he said, explaining that he felt Berry had reacted appropriately. Galo did not approve of Deetz’s behavior; thus, he wanted to ensure circulation of the video to expose this pap’s lack of adherence to ethical codes – and, of course, because he saw the potential for monetary gain. “What are you going to do with the video?” Galo asked the Home Depots. “I’ll sell it to you,” one of them offered.

As the paps talked about the video, they discussed ethics, right, wrong, and whiteness, as the pap who crossed the ethical line was white. The Home Depots described what led up to them shooting the video. “I was following Halle [Berry], and he was following Vanessa [Hudgens]. While I was waiting for Halle, he [Deetz] went inside of the school.” “I guarantee the video will sell,” Galo told them. “He is a fucking idiot,” they agreed, referring to Deetz.⁴³

Galo, who normally does not play a part in the informal pap economy, offered \$200 for the video, which the Home Depots would normally have sold for \$50. They agreed, and sold the video to Galo for \$200, which he hoped to turn around and sell for at least ten times that amount. Galo began calling different agencies and organizations attempting to sell the film. His main agency didn’t want it. Initially, TMZ did not want it, because they thought that it made paparazzi look bad, which they want to avoid in order to maintain their brand. X17 had purchased another version of the video (there were about three versions of the video circulating). Galo hadn’t really gotten any shots that day, and so this was another way to potentially make money. Ultimately, Galo was unable to sell the video as quickly as he had hoped, so he returned the video and, since

⁴³ This dialogue was translated from Spanish to English.

he normally does not buy from the Home Depots and is well-respected by the other paps, they returned his money to him. Eventually, the Home Depots sold the video through other paps and agencies.

This informal economy of images contributes to the inundation of photos available to the magazines, the corresponding lower cost for images, and the relative unimportance of an “exclusive” photo today compared to during the boom. The informal paps generally do not sell their photos as exclusives, since it would prohibit them from selling their photos multiple times. Sometimes the informal paps sell the same photo set to multiple image brokering paps, and, more often, the image brokering paps attempt to sell the informally acquired set through multiple photo agencies; thus, both parties involved in the informal sale contribute to the flooding of the pap photo market. Yet paps like Galo place more blame on the brokering paps since they feel the informal paps are taken advantage of because they are not paid anywhere near the potential value of their photos.

Galo believes that this cooperative informal economy is generally disruptive to the overall pap business. “They flood the market with pictures,” he said. “Before, if there were three paps, there were only three agencies buying pictures. Now, if there are three guys, there could be ten agencies buying because one guy could give his [photos] to six agencies and another guy gives it to another four and it’s like everyone has it now.” Though less common, some informal paps sell their photos under the table to agencies for the same flat fees they receive from the image brokering paps. This, again, disrupts the regular pap image sale system because it drives down the overall prices of the images. As Galo elaborates:

Because the [informal paps] sell the pictures so cheap, those agencies can sell the pictures for cheap to get placement and it doesn’t matter to them because they are already making profit because they paid \$50 bucks. They turn around and sell it for \$500. That’s 90 percent profit and it doesn’t matter to them because they are

making \$450 bucks. Whereas with my boss, he wants to sell pictures expensive, so everyone wins. He'll get a placement in *People* magazine, a full page. They're going to pay around \$6,000, depending on what story it is. That is non-negotiable, whoever has it, because those are the prices he gets. The other places who get the pictures off of these guys, they sell them cheap—*People* magazine full page, \$500.

This informal economy of images adds another node to the chain of working relationships, creating an even more substantial labor hierarchy. It further distances the actual image producer from the final media products in which the images appear and ensures there is no dialogue or acknowledgement of the informal pap, as they are rendered professionally invisible in this process. Their position as informal workers—as “The Home Depots”—again reinforces notions of the invisible (Latino) immigrant workers and fully interconnects their racialization with their professional, legal, and (presumed) immigrant status (McDonald & Sampson 2012:63).

Through this informal economy, the originating producer of the image that leads to the final media product has neither a relationship with the agencies that place his/her images nor with the media outlets that ultimately publish them. Still, even without the informal economy of pap images, the paparazzi who sell their images formally are not given any acknowledgement by the media outlets who rely on their images. The paparazzi perform the labor, but seldom have any relationships with the actual media outlets that use their work; they are intentionally left out of the formal media production process and rendered invisible by the media outlets and organizations that demand their labor.

Ethics in Paparazzi Work

That there are any ethical standards in paparazzi work may be surprising, particularly in light of the paparazzi's public persona that has been crafted, in large part, by the very media outlets that buy their images and the celebrities their images feature. In the coffee table book

Paparazzi, which profiles paparazzi and agency workers, the author highlights the fact that the shortest section of the book is the one on ethics, reinforcing perceptions that there are few ethical standards to doing this kind of work (Howe 2005:148). Throughout my fieldwork with paparazzi, I found that, while there are no written ethical codes for the job (and the same can be said for celebrity reporting), there are both spoken and unspoken rules and ethical expectations that are understood among the paparazzi themselves and serve as a way to give structure the profession and resolve issues within it. The maintenance of paparazzi ethics, in fact, relies on the self-regulation of paparazzi and the ways in which certain paparazzi create forms of punishment against their peers when they feel they have broken ethical codes or behaved in a way that will make the job harder for others. Generally these violations consist of making themselves overly visible or getting too close to a celebrity.

Galo, for example, prides himself on his ethics, as do his closest pap friends. “We get vilified no matter what. We’re the criminals, and I understand that there are a few rotten apples. I have no control over the rotten apple. It gets tense out there when a pap doesn’t do their job right, it makes you feel bad. You get the wrath of it because of someone else. I’ve gotten into fights [with other paps]. There are arguments,” he says. For Galo, getting into fights with paps when they don’t “do their job right” takes various forms. There are times when there are verbal or physical altercations, but there are also times when Galo tries to punish other paps by doing things like bombing their photos or exposing them to the media or to the celebrity they have upset.

Still, to the extent that they can, they “take care of each other,” el Diablo told me one day, as he did arm presses on a bench. He said that when he first started he was hired by an agency to be competition against another paparazzo and he didn’t even know it. Still, that paparazzo took

el Diablo under his wing and trained him. “When I didn't have money he'd be like here's \$60, go fill up your car with gas. I'd tell him I didn't have money for lunch because I hadn't gotten paid and he'd be like don't worry about it. That's the kind of person he is, and all of these guys. That's why we're tight. They look out for each other. We're a small group, but we have each other's back.”

On May 22, 2012, Galo called me. “Did you hear about that dick paparazzi who hit Justin Timberlake's friend's car and left?” he asked. Galo says he wants to help track down the pap who kicked the car, but he's upset because now Justin is tweeting about the paps. Timberlake tweeted, “So... A paparazzi can't get a photo of me so he kicks my best friend's truck door in? And they wonder why they can't get a ‘fair’ shake. I mean, seriously... Not ruining my day though. #getaREALjob.”

Galo said, “Now it makes me mad, it makes me feel like I'm responsible. But I told them, once I find that mother fucker...!” This is an example of an instance where the paps try to work with the celebrities to help regulate paparazzi behavior and build respect/rapport with the celebrities. Still, the celebrities generally disregard this effort by individual paparazzi to try to be helpful and further ridicule the paparazzi as a whole. Galo is as critical as Timberlake of the pap in question, but is frustrated that these portrayals contribute to a negative dominant narrative about paparazzi. “ Sometimes I wonder what the fuck is wrong with these people,” Galo said. “This is how we make money. Why the fuck would you do that?” He was truly upset and was determined to help try to make this situation right by bringing the paparazzi to justice. He wants there to not only be ethics within the paparazzi community, but also to make sure that they are keeping each other in line. “This is the shit I have to deal with on a daily basis. Somebody made a mess and I have to clean it up. See all Facebook pics and posts I took. I'm trying to show

people what's going on." Thus, Galo does not try to hide the "bad" that paparazzi do; rather, he tries to expose it to his community of paps via tools like Facebook in order to encourage community regulation of professional practices and enforcement of general ethics.

In an instance described earlier, Galo tried to enforce professional ethics by attempting to sell a video of a pap doing what he and other paps thought was ethically wrong—going into a school building in an effort to shoot Halle Berry's children. Since the consensus among the paps Galo talked to was that this pap had crossed the line by going into the building, he tried to expose the pap to the media to help enforce/reinforce professional ethics. "We try to follow the rules," he said. "What happened that day, one of the guys decided he would take a step further and go inside the [building], so she followed him outside and she flipped. And she had every right to be mad. But does that mean that we all do that? No. And every batch has a rotten apple. So a lot of times guys don't know the limits, they are so money motivated, so they do whatever they have to do. It's wrong. It really is. It doesn't mean we all do that."

In certain cases, celebrities themselves set the ethical codes for paparazzi, which they generally respect. For example, Jennifer Garner actively communicates to paparazzi that shoot her that she does not want them coming close to her children. "When [the celebrities] talk to us and they tell us what they want or don't want, we can work together. We respect that. Jennifer Garner says, 'Don't come close to my kids,'" one pap, originally from Brazil, told me. There is no exact measurement of how close is too close, but paps now operate with a general understanding that you should stay within a reasonable distance of Garner's children. This is not to say that the paps seek to get excessively close to other celebrities' children, it is simply that, with Garner, they are particularly cautious of their proximity since they know how Garner feels. Recently, when a group of paps shooting Garner and her daughter Violet at the Brentwood

farmer's market saw one pap get what they thought was too close to Violet, they attempted to ruin his photos by blocking his shots or inserting themselves into his shot so that they would be less saleable.

I have seen similar tactics used in other situations where a celebrity or their security has requested certain guidelines of cooperation and one paparazzo has deviated from the request; the others attempt to protect the integrity of their work. This mentality is driven by a belief that they all need to operate with similar limitations so that they can all conduct their work within the most optimal and cordial conditions possible. Galo's perspective on taking pictures of children is that if they're not interfering with anyone, and the parents aren't telling them not to take the photo, then it's ok. "If the parents tell us not to, then we should respect that and most of us do. But if there are no laws against that, media outlets are paying for them, and parents are not objecting, then we're not going to stop." As Galo said about shooting Garner and her daughter at the farmer's market, "It's not like we ruined their day. We stayed at distance. We don't want celebs to look angry or unhappy. We want to be respectful."

Galo's assertion that he has to "clean up" messes lends itself to an analogy I referenced earlier, which is that in some ways, paparazzi work is a service job. The work they do is the janitorial work of celebrity media and is rarely appreciated or respected, much like the way other low-end service workers are regarded. The paps are filling a role that needs to be filled; there is demand and they know this is a way to make money and many of them have been able to learn the trade on the job. They are doing the dirty work for the celebrity media industry. That they are a group of mostly marginalized people—most of them men of color, and many of immigrants—makes them a convenient scapegoat for what is wrong with celebrity media. Furthermore, much like low-end and informal work, particularly the kind of work Latin immigrant works in

California often take, paparazzi often experience physical assault by the people who indirectly employ them and are not always paid what they are promised by the agencies who control their image sales (Valenzuela 2006). Still, paparazzi deliver images to the world, and some of the most well known and most circulated contemporary American images at that. They are workers operating in the informal channels of an often highly formal media production process, within a hugely profitable corporate system.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Latinos at the Margins of Celebrity Culture: The Politics of Paparazzi

Agency and Pride: Creating a Brown Space within a White Industry

The Hollywood entertainment industry, and the celebrity industrial complex it has helped build and sustain, is predominantly white (Hughes 2012). This is something not only obviously noticeable in Hollywood products readily available for public consumption, like films, television programs, and the various forms of media that serve to promote films and television (e.g. magazines and entertainment news programs); rather, this is something that those working behind the scenes of these consumable entertainment products notice and critique. In the article by Chris Rock, which I reference earlier in this project, he exposes the hierarchical racist structure in Hollywood that generally prevents Latinos from entering the industry. “Forget whether Hollywood is black enough. A better question is: Is Hollywood Mexican enough? You're in L.A, you've got to try not to hire Mexicans... You're telling me no Mexicans are qualified to do anything at a studio? Really? Nothing but mop up? What are the odds that that's true? The odds are, because people are people, that there's probably a Mexican David Geffen mopping up for somebody's company right now” (Rock 2014). Within this industry “there is widespread nepotism—the employment of people along family lines. This means that if your family does not have a presence in the business, you are less likely to be hired and promoted” (Valdivia 2010:49). Thus, it is difficult for young Latino men to break into the entertainment and

media industries, but paparazzi work has given them an avenue. “There are no requirements to be a paparazzi. Tomorrow you could decide you wanna be one. There's no, ‘Who did you work for last?’ Or, ‘Where's your resume?’ None of that,” paparazzo Ulises “Trucha” Rios said.

The field of paparazzi photography is not regulated. There are no barriers to entering the business (aside from the ways in which the current paparazzi might attempt to informally regulate it by either training, helping, or rejecting paps who try to enter the work force), because the work does not take place in regulated elite spaces, like red carpets, private events, or press junkets. The recent shift in the demographics of the paparazzi demonstrates Latino agency; it is an avenue for professional development and a way to earn a living in an otherwise inaccessible entertainment industry. I see their domination of this realm of work as an assertion of local presence. They are aware of and analyze the fact that people who look like them (e.g. Latinos and other minorities) are not valued bodies in Hollywood, so they co-opt what they can by photographing and selling images of the white stars they can never embody.⁴⁴

In high school and his short-lived time in college, Galo wrote rap lyrics non-stop and hoped to become a famous rapper. Though that dream never materialized, he found another way to tap into the money of the industries he saw growing up in Hollywood, but was otherwise removed from in every way. Arnold Cousart and Sergio Huapaya of the photo agency JFX grew up as street gang members, even further removed from Hollywood than Galo. Luiz came to the US from Brazil as an adult and could not believe the amount of money his paparazzi friends were able to make as recent immigrants to the US “It was like a new opportunity,” Luiz said. “It was money that we didn’t know was available in the industry. When you first come [work for

⁴⁴ As an example, in the October 1, 2012 issue of *People* magazine—the weekly celebrity magazine with the most diverse representation—there were five times as many photos of white celebrities as there were of celebrities of color.

X17] at that time, you would start making \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month, then it went up. I heard stories about it and I would say that's baloney. I said, 'You cannot make that kind of money at any job here.' But it was real. When I started [in 2007], most of my friends were making around \$10-15,000 per month. They don't make that anymore because the market changed, but that's what we were making." Hollywood, and the plethora of industries within it, were inaccessible to these young men before paparazzi work. Upon learning of the money available in pap work through friends and popular media reports, their perspective was: If people can make money off it, why shouldn't it be us? Diversity as exists among the paparazzi is not a reality in any other Hollywood-related industry; it is, unfortunate, then that the most minority-heavy part of the celebrity industrial complex in Los Angeles is also the most hated, antagonized, criticized, and abused group within the industry. Still, for the paps, there is pride in the fact that they found a way to insert themselves into this industry and lucrative economy, particularly in comparison to other jobs available to new immigrants and men of color without college educations.

It is also important to note the ways in which their roles as paparazzi incorporate them into the celebrity culture of Los Angeles. As much as they are profiled and harassed by police and security guards in Los Angeles, their camera also serves as protection in the rich, white neighborhoods and other public spaces in which they work. Police see paps' cameras and suddenly understand them and their reason for being in a place they otherwise would not be perceived as belonging. In fact, police and other "enforcers" understand this business since, in Los Angeles, they are often on photo agency's payrolls and, thus, indirectly provide tips to the paps (Winton & Alanez 2005). This understanding of their role in the celebrity media industry does not guarantee that they won't get physically assaulted or arrested, but it does provide automatic context and answers to people who otherwise question why the paps are present in the

spaces in which they work.

Skill, Training, and the New Paps

“Like a car, a camera is sold as a predatory weapon—one that’s as automated as possible, ready to spring. . .Manufacturers reassure their customers that taking pictures demands no skill or expert knowledge, that the machine is all-knowing, and responds to the slightest pressure of the will. It’s as simple as turning the ignition or pulling the trigger.”

—Susan Sontag⁴⁵

“This is your camera, this is your weapon. Me and my partner, we don’t have room for mistakes. This isn’t a game. We’re out here because we have to feed our children. This is real. This is life.”

—Sergio Huapaya, paparazzo and co-owner of photo agency JFX⁴⁶

The demographic change in the paparazzi workforce has correlated with increased rhetoric questioning the skill and professionalism of the paparazzi. A stereotype of Latinos that has circulated in popular media and discourse is that Latinos are lazy and uneducated (Andersen & Taylor 2010:249; Baugh 2012:259; Petty & Wegener 1998:379). That Latinos are also often presumed to be (undocumented) immigrants further correlates Latinos with presumptions about immigrants in general. The idea that unskilled immigrants dominate low-skill work and, thus, bid down the wage scale in local markets (Espenshade 2000: 128) demonstrates that there is an assumption “that all immigration is unskilled” (Dustmann & Glitz 2005:17). In the case of the paparazzi, the discourse about paparazzi has not only shifted to a racialized one, but this discourse is intertwined with a narrative about the new paparazzi’s (presumed) immigrants status and their level of skill (or lack thereof) for the job.

One former pap and agency owner referred to this new group of (predominantly Latino) paps as “knuckle-scraping mouth breathers” who were just working as paps as an alternative to

⁴⁵ (Sontag 2010:14)

⁴⁶ (Ruy 2008).

criminal activity (Pearson 2008). As the paparazzi demographic of Los Angeles shifted—and it is one that is unique to Los Angeles⁴⁷—immigration and lack of skill were directly correlated in descriptions of this new wave of paps. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported, “Agencies use foreigners working on what some say are questionable visas. Photographers are hired less for their camera skills than their ability to navigate the rough-and-tumble of the celebrity chase” (Winton & Alanez 2005). A *New York Times* article called the new paps “hordes of untrained or corner-cutting paparazzi who are loath to lie in wait in cars for hours or days and are willing to make their presence known, even to jump out at celebrities on the street, if it means a chance for quick cash,” thus giving established Los Angeles paps “a bad name” (Halbfinger & Weiner 2005).

In a 2011 interview, Eric, an Anglo American paparazzo, brought up the demographic shift of the paparazzi and declared, “Certainly you have the unprofessionalism brought into the paparazzi field by all these guys who aren’t professional. All these guys who were gang members or whatever, valet parkers. And now they’re carrying around cameras, so they’re not really trained. Not that there’s a school you have to go to be a paparazzi, but they’re not professional.” Interestingly, Eric himself explained to me that he had no formal training as a photographer. He had worked odd jobs on sets before transitioning to paparazzi work and specializing in sneaking photos on set, using his professional experience to help him gain access to these hard-to-reach spaces. The owner of the agency AKM/GSI Media, Steven Ginsburg, an Anglo American, worked as a bartender in Santa Monica and had no photography training before

⁴⁷ In my research in New York, I found that, while there was a diverse group of paparazzi, most were from Eastern Europe. Similarly, historical accounts of the Princess Diana incident reveal that all of the paparazzi involved were from Europe (Jordan 2008).

picking up a camera and becoming a paparazzi (Howe 2005). Another pap/agency owner, who had no previous training before entering the pap business as a teenager, said:

In the past, all the photographers that were working were trained. There was a certain level of a kind of pride associated with it, and that's because they were photographers who were trained as photographers, and they knew each other's work and the talent that they had. Now it's kind of like no one takes pride really, as far as being a photographer. It's more about maybe the hunt. And you know there are some good pictures being done, but a lot of the better pictures are generally done by the trained photographers. There's a lot of shit coming out because [the newer paps] are not photographers.

These ideas, coming from untrained photographers, demonstrate the ways in which appearance—racial, ethnic, presumed immigration status—dictates assumptions about skill level and about “professionalism,” even in the eyes of photographers who entered the business with no professional training in photography themselves (see Image 29).

Some Latino photographers also complain about the “untrained” immigrant paparazzi, however, even when they themselves are untrained. Huapaya, who grew up in Los Angeles, said, “It's gotten ridiculous out here. A lot of these guys are untrained. They really have no background on photography,” but he also said, “I'm not a high school graduate. I'm a hustler. That's what I do. Being out on the streets [as a photographer] is kind of like being on the streets when I was younger.”

Brazilian pap Luiz defended the position of the “untrained” photographer, calling the work “on the job training. The thing is, you're practicing every day. You're shooting something every day. It's a process of learning and trying different settings. You see the results. The other thing is that when I went to see Regis [the owner of X17] he would talk to us a lot about photography. He would make suggestions about tactics to try. We learned a lot.” Luiz described how the Brazilian paps changed the nature of the industry by working around the clock, demonstrating how hard they were willing to work to learn the trade.

Ultimately, rhetoric around the new unskilled paps is a means by which a group of previously untrained laborers critique their newer competition; but the threat these newer laborers pose is intertwined with racist notions surrounding immigration and fear of economic threat by people of color on a previously predominantly white workforce (Kaplan 2011:76).

Invisibility vs. Visibility for the New, Racialized Paparazzi

As the number of paparazzi grew and the demographics shifted, another oft-voiced complaint was that “few [paparazzi] adhere to an unwritten code of Los Angeles paparazzi - that the ideal picture is one that a celebrity does not even suspect has been taken, shot by a photographer who is neither seen nor heard” (Halbfinger & Weiner 2005). Accused here, then, are the paparazzi newcomers—the Latinos and other minorities—of not adhering to the industry standards related to a particular skill: stealth. Of course, this broad assumption about the new paparazzi work force is inaccurate. For example, in October of 2012, Galo—an “untrained” Latin American immigrant photographer—got a highly sought after shot. The photo was of Gwyneth Paltrow, Chris Martin and their children and was shot using long lens without their knowledge (see Image 30). Celebrity media called it “the celebrity sighting equivalent of a unicorn,” and it made his photo agency around \$20,000 in the first week of sales (Serpe 2012).

The extent to which the paps remain invisible, allowing them to snap the hard-to-get shot, still factors into the respect they get from peers and the amount of money they can make. “This is how we separate the men from the boys,” Galo told me when he got the shots. Salvadoran pap “el Diablo,” who also joined the workforce after the Brazilian influx and who had no formal photography training before he trained on the job as a pap, had the same understanding of what it meant to be a good pap. “Do the job right the way. Never leave your car, or shoot from a bush on

a long lens. Those are the [paps] who get the big scoops like Kristen Stewart,” he said, referencing the paparazzi who shot the photos proving that Stewart was cheating on Robert Pattinson.

Paparazzi often talk about how their goal is to be invisible, which is often possible when they are working on a story alone. But when there are multiple paps on one story, a group of young, brown-skinned Latinos and Latin American immigrants in a rich, white, celebrity-heavy area become highly visible and “othered.” The idea of Black and brown bodies, especially immigrant bodies, being socially invisible, but fulfilling necessary social roles, is a familiar one (Harzig & Lee 2003:240; MacDonald & Sampson 2012:63). In the case of paparazzi work, being invisible correlates with economic empowerment; there is value in their invisibility in a way that cannot be said of other lines of work. Still, as they seek invisibility, their work seeks to make others (predominantly white celebrities) hyper-visible. When these paparazzi are seen or described, it is often in a negative light that promotes racist stereotypes.

During the 2012 panel at the Getty Center that I helped organize, a comment by one of the panelists, Carol Squiers, curator at the International Center of Photography in New York, distilled the racially tinged negative view of contemporary paparazzi held by both elites and the public at large: “To me the whole notion of the expansion of paparazzi brings up the question of who are these people... I mean some of the paparazzi, to me, look like thugs.” When these new paparazzi are seen, they are viewed as criminals, and using a term that unmistakably references men of color. This racialization has been transposed onto paparazzi as they have changed demographics in LA. Subconsciously or not, the public and art critics like Squiers are registering the different “look” of paps now compared to pre-2005.

Thus, the media outlets prefer that paparazzi remain nameless and faceless; in many ways, the paps do as well. The media outlets do not want to be affiliated in any way with paparazzi, despite the use of their images. The notion of their invisibility, namelessness, and facelessness is problematized by their status, particularly in Los Angeles, as immigrants and even undocumented immigrants. Essentially, these are people who are marginalized by their race, ethnicity, “legal” status in this country, and yet they are performing a task that is in demand by major corporate organizations who further marginalize them by keeping them on the outskirts of the actual production process. At the same time, this position as “outsiders” in terms of the media production process and the nature of paparazzi work as an unregulated field is also what allows undocumented people, individuals without formal training or education, and individuals without access to elite spaces (like the red carpet, press junkets, etc.) to do this kind of work at all.

As paparazzi work itself becomes more visible, particularly through the popularity of TMZ.com and TMZTV—a website and television show that relies almost entirely on paparazzi images and videos for their celebrity news coverage—scholars and industry members alike have taken to referencing a so-called “TMZ-ization” of media (Huver 2009; Swanbrow 2012), and yet the workers behind the lenses of this “TMZ-ization” are invisible. TMZ.com was launched in 2005 and TMZTV was launched in 2010; as a whole, TMZ—which presents itself as the direct link to the paps—is thought of as the face of paparazzi. But the media producers featured on the TMZ television show are not the paparazzi on the street, they are reporters inside the TMZ offices. The ones on the street getting the photos are the predominantly freelance and predominantly Latino paparazzi I discuss in this research. They feed the content into the “TMZ-ization” but are not a part of the ways in which their work is being popularized and corporatized.

The paparazzi are producing some of the most iconic and culturally relevant images of this era, and yet, even as their work and the idea of “paparazzi” becomes more mainstream through outlets like TMZ, the paparazzi themselves are not seen nor given a chance to speak for themselves. The Latinos are on the ground taking the verbal and physical abuse, but not getting credit as arbiters of the images that dominate our culture and that represent the current cultural demand. These photos are taken because they are selling and there is a demand; as Galo has told me many times, “If those pictures don’t sell, we won’t take them.” Furthermore it should be noted that the paparazzi who shoot celebrities are not invited onto television shows to talk about the very shots they took; instead the celebrity weekly magazine reporters, who are predominantly white women, are the celebrity media producers who serve as the faces of the intermediaries between the public and celebrities, even though the paparazzi deal with celebrities day-to-day. In short, paps are not seen as the legitimate or presentable news sources they are, and I believe that is, in large part, because of gender and race.

The paparazzi of Los Angeles have become an extension of the idea of the “Latino threat”—that Latinos are immigrant groups uninterested in assimilating and yet interested in “destroying the American way of life” (Chavez 2008:2; see also Valdivia 2010:1). As (predominantly Latino) paparazzi photograph and supposedly torment American celebrities—who currently represent the “American way of life” better than any other contemporary cultural symbol—they threaten the core (imaginary) members of many Americans’ communities (Anderson 1983). The public, thus, is quick to attack the paparazzi for their attempts to photograph in-demand celebrities (for publication in American owned publications and outlets), and use Latino-specific slurs and insults in their attacks. It is clear that the face of the Los Angeles paparazzi has been marked as a Latino one. Still, much like the fact that the threat

paparazzi pose to celebrities is imaginary, so too is the idea that these paparazzi are a threat to the American economic and cultural system; on the contrary, these image producers (and brokers— Gürsel 2012) are major cultural producers of some of the most circulated and iconic images of the last ten years.

Symbolic Violence and Gender Dynamics in Paparazzi Work

“The camera/gun does not kill, so the ominous metaphor seems to be a bluff—like a man’s fantasy of having a gun, knife, or tool between his legs. Still, there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they have never seen themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed.”

—Susan Sontag⁴⁸

“Working with the paparazzi to create memorable shots is called ‘giving it up,’⁴⁹ a sexualized metaphor that neatly captures the masculine-feminine romantic dynamic of need and reluctance that characterizes the relationship between celebrity photographers and their subjects.”

—David Samuels, journalist/writer⁵⁰

“I’m working on a film set,” read the text that Ulises sent me. Of course, Ulises wasn’t literally *on* the film set; he was attempting to shoot it from the outside, but the way he and other paparazzi understand their role is as *part of* the Hollywood media production process. To Ulises and other paparazzi, their role on the outskirts of the set, and the subsequent photos that would then promote the film being shot, is critical to the promotion of the film and the celebrities in the film. This, of course, is contrary to the peripheral position in which most people in the industry view the paparazzi, and the paparazzi know that as well.

Ulises told me the street address where he was parked; I looked it up to find that it was an area in South Central,⁵¹ just a few blocks from where my family lived when I was born. In all of

⁴⁸ (Sontag 2010:14-15).

⁴⁹ (See Ruy 2008).

⁵⁰ (Samuels 2008).

my years as a celebrity reporter, no red carpet had ever been set up on this side of town. It was one of those moments when I realized how Hollywood affects Los Angeles in every corner of the city, even those areas furthest geographically and socioeconomically. I arrived near the set at about 1 p.m., where Ulises had been waiting since 6 a.m. to try to get a shot of Jake Gyllenhaal dressed in a police uniform for his role in *End of Watch*. I walked towards Ulises' black Expedition and a tall, sizeable man in jeans and a black t-shirt emerged from the oversized car. "Well, this is my office," he said, pointing to his car, and gave me a friendly hug. We got into the car, where we would spend the next several hours waiting patiently for the shot. There is a lot of time to kill, and I quickly understand that Ulises wants my company as much as I want to learn from him. I realize I should have offered to bring him food since the paparazzo can't leave his car for anything because it would mean risking the loss of the shot. Waiting inside the car outside of a celebrity's house is what paparazzi call "door stepping"; since we were waiting outside of a set on a residential street where a movie was being filmed, I think to myself, "Maybe we can call this set stepping?"

Aside from door stepping, and what I am calling set stepping, paparazzi also do stake-out style shoots with long lenses in remote locations; in both door stepping and stake-out shoots, the goal of the paparazzi is to remain unseen. There is another style of shooting that does not allow such stealth: the on-foot, celebrity-chasing, generally group-oriented type of papping now referred to as "gang banging."

⁵¹ The area formerly known as South Central, Los Angeles, was re-named "South Los Angeles" by the Los Angeles City Council in an effort to de-stigmatize this area known for the LA Riots and gang-related problems (Sims 2003). I continue to use "South Central," as I see the re-branding as an effort towards de-politicization and gentrification of this historically Black and Latino neighborhood.

The symbolic violence inherent in the act of shooting the photograph of another – especially shooting a subject non-consensually with a long telephoto lens – has been analyzed before (Sontag 2010). Not only is the paparazzi-celebrity interaction rife with this symbolism, but much of the slang used to describe these encounters reinforces the symbolic violence and infuses it with a sexual component. For example, the act of a celebrity allowing him or herself to be photographed is known as “giving it up” (Ruy 2008). And “gangbanging” is used relatively commonly in reference to situations in which there are several paparazzi on foot attempting to shoot one celebrity.

It’s unclear whether the term “gang bang” in reference to paparazzi originated from within or outside of the paparazzi themselves, but paps have appropriated the term. Of course, use of terms like “gang bang,” which carries the meanings of both street gang violence (Sanders 1994) and group sexual assault, only enhances public perception that paparazzi are violent, angry, dangerous photographers. The unique gang history and reality of Los Angeles makes this term resonate particularly strongly in this city (Vigil 2007). But, as Ulises says, “We’re already so hated. I don’t give a fuck.” The informality I feel with the paparazzi makes me feel like I’m talking to my brother; it’s not the formality of talking with editors and reporters.

On this rare occasion with Ulises, the focus of the shoot is a male celebrity. Most of the time, the goal is to shoot women celebrities because of the profitability of images of the female body (Herwitz 2008; McDonnell 2012, 2014). According to paps, beach/bikini shots, baby bump shots, wedding ring shots, and baby face shots are generally the higher paying photos. The predominantly male paparazzi do hope for, and even rely on, the possibility of women celebrities “giving it up” to ensure that they can get profitable shots (Ruy 2008; Samuels 2008). According to paps, the gang bang approach is generally used when there is a big story/news story (e.g.

Lindsay Lohan at the courthouse) or when there is a current news story attached to the person (e.g. shots of Kristen Stewart after the photos uncovering her affair were released). But, in other cases, the gang bang approach is used simply to get celebrities coming in and out of Los Angeles International airport (“LAX”). It isn’t an intentional or pre-meditated attack, as the term generally implies, but it is a circumstance in which several paparazzi are aware of the whereabouts of one particular celebrity, of whom they are all seeking shots. Because there are many people at gang bangs and they are usually in very public spaces, these types of shoots are thus the ones that generally get publicized and shape the way people perceive paparazzi. In my experience, gang bangs are, in fact, anti-climactic and much less aggressive than one would imagine. They do not last more than a few minutes (generally the amount of time it takes a celebrity to get from their car to a destination) and the photographers are generally trying to cooperate with each other and the celebrity (see Image 31).

As we sat waiting for Jake Gyllenhaal, Ulises showed me series of videos depicting violence towards paparazzi. He had recently been accosted and had his car vandalized by Jesse James, Sandra Bullock’s ex-husband, and was in the middle of a lawsuit with him over the incident. James had smashed his window, slashed his tires, and attempted to assault Ulises, and the case had already garnered coverage in local news media (D’Zurilla 2010). Ulises also showed me a video of British singer Cheryl Cole’s friends spitting on him through his car window. Ulises stays in his car as much as possible; his goal is to not bother celebrities, but in both of these instances they approached his car and accosted him from there. He has a camera mounted on the inside of his car, so all of these incidents end up on camera.

I am appalled at what I see, but there is more. He shows me a video that the photo agency X17 posted of several paparazzi being assaulted outside of the 2010 *Bachelor* wedding

(“Photographers Sue!” 2010). Ulises tells me that the publicist for the television show *the Bachelor* had told them where the wedding was and asked them to come shoot; when they arrived, they were assaulted by security in a public park (see Image 32). Though ABC, the network responsible for *the Bachelor* and the wedding, denied any fault in the situation, they did air parts of the attack on *the Bachelor* wedding special (ibid.). In an online comment about this video on X17’s website, one person posted, “Literally [paparazzi are] the scum of the Earth. Why are they always Latinos? Are they even citizens? Maybe they should show their green card so they can be deported.” This comment is indicative of the ways in which the paparazzi are both racially and linguistically profiled. “Whereas ‘racial profiling’ is based on visual cues that result in the confirmation or speculation of the racial background of an individual... ‘linguistic profiling’ is based upon auditory cues that may include racial identification” (Baugh 2003:158). Thus, the imagery and the audio of paparazzi prompts profiling in this video, and in others.

For ABC and *the Bachelor*, showing the paparazzi’s interest signaled importance and drama that ABC capitalized on. The paparazzi sued for assault and false imprisonment. Interestingly, in a recent documentary, actress Jennifer Aniston claims that the paps keep her in a state of false imprisonment (Mazur 2012). These contrasting experiences highlight the complex dynamic between the *symbolic* violence of paparazzi work on celebrities and the *actual* physical violence experienced regularly by the paparazzi on the job. The ways in which celebrities perceive, or at least perform perceiving, paparazzi as violent individuals doing violent and/or oppressive work contributes to the discourse of violence surrounding the paparazzi profession.

When Gyllenhaal was a no-show and it was getting to be late, Ulises got a tip that Cheryl Cole was going to be coming into LAX, so we headed there for what turned out to be my first “gang bang.” When we arrived, Ulises said “what up” to all the other paps who were on the

scene. They were all men—one Mexican (Ulises), two Salvadorans, one Guatemalan, three Brazilians, and one Caucasian. As soon as we were among paparazzi, the language shifted and only Spanish was spoken among the Spanish-speakers, Portuguese was spoken among the Brazilians, and the lone English-only speaker was standing and observing. The paparazzi spread out and there were a few paps at various entry and exit points.

While standing with Ulises outside of one of the exits, he informed me that people inside the airport who do reservations get money on the side from the biggest agencies for tipping them off about which celebrities they can expect to see come through LAX. Individuals who have these kinds of vital and hard-to-get tips are paid up to \$5,000 per month for continual good service. As we wait, the paps all take test shots of each other and me to get the lighting and settings right. “I think she might not even come out the terminal she landed in. They might take her to another terminal and she will leave through there and we will be standing here like fucking idiots,” Ulises said. A few moments later, Ulises and I ran downstairs as we heard commotion. Cheryl Cole was exiting through baggage claim and, suddenly, what had been a small group of paparazzi became about 25. It was like a quick swarm. There were men with camera bags and oversized lenses all over the place. I got lost in the shuffle of paps and people, but I could see the one paparazzi who infamously wears a black leather biker jacket that says “paparazzy,” which was initially a spelling error, but has become his trademark. Ulises tells me this guy had been part of a notorious Salvadoran gang.

Once Cole gets in her car, things die down and I see Ulises. He’s headed straight for his car to edit and post the photos to his agency’s site (see Image 33) “We used to not have to upload immediately, we used to be able to wait until Monday, but now have to do it immediately. We put info with the photo too. We do reporting. The goal is to get things up quickly, so we do a

basic crop, adjust the brightness, sharpness, and color, then we post it,” Ulises explains as he edits and posts. Several other paparazzi have their computers on top of their cars and are cropping and sending photos furiously. Ulises works seven days a week. On this day he worked from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. I was tired and had only ridden along for half of his workday. He was ready to go home to his wife and two young children.

Brown Bodies Shooting White Bodies: The Effect of Race on Market Value

Although the paparazzi are in constant competition with each other for sales, they do discuss sales and finances frequently. It is common for them to stand around waiting for a shot together and talk about each of their biggest sales of the week, or even what they took that did not sell. My experience with the paps demonstrates that they are critical thinkers who actively reflect on their position within the Hollywood/celebrity media industry and the influence of media industry on American culture. The paparazzi are not passive media producers who absent-mindedly take photos and ignore the trends or circumstances under which their photos are purchased. They analyze the trends they see, and they discuss them.

On one particular outing with the paparazzi, I was struck by a conversation I wandered into while waiting with about eight other paparazzi outside of the gates of the school Heidi Klum’s children attend (we had followed Klum’s boyfriend/bodyguard to the school and planned to then follow their driver to see if they went on a group outings that would make a good photo). As we stood outside waiting patiently, if sweltering, most of the conversations going on were in Spanish. Here is an instance where, if I did not speak Spanish, I would have missed so much. We followed Heidi Klum’s bodyguard-turned-boyfriend to her kid’s school just passed the Getty Center. While he went to pick up the kids inside the school gates, Galo and the other paps parked outside on the opposite side of the street. There are six cars, but two were already there waiting

when we got there. Cars as zooming by so fast—when I listened to the recording it sounds like we are on a freeway. The elementary school we are standing outside of costs about \$4,000 a month, Galo estimates (and these celebrities are concerned over the paparazzi making that kind of money?). The paps socialize while they wait. The ones who were already there come and say hi. A photographer who they say does more “news” comes by and says hello. I get introduced. It is about 95 degrees where we are waiting and Galo offers me a sip of some very cold water that Milton had in his car in an ice chest. The rest of them are drinking other electrolyte enhanced water. I tell him no, but then he says, “Are you sure? Está casi congelada.”⁵² I was so hot and I could see the ice-cold water sweating cold droplets as much as my face was sweating salty droplets.

On their own, the paps began discussing their theories about sales of photos of people of color. Galo talked about taking an exclusive set of photos of Connor Cruise (Tom Cruise’s son, adopted when he was married to Nicole Kidman) driving Katie Holmes’ car recently and was shocked that it didn’t sell. “I got Connor two times and they didn’t even sell. I got him at the dog park and it was exclusive. And I got him at the carwash and it was exclusive,”⁵³ Galo says. “I don’t waste my battery nor my camera on him anymore. Why wouldn’t those photos sell? ¿Por qué es negro?”⁵⁴

“Sí,” Halcón says with tremendous confidence.

I’m catching the tail end of the conversation, so, as I walk over, Galo tells me, “We have this theory that the magazines predominantly pick white people.”

I say, “Yea, it’s true.”

⁵² Translation: It’s almost frozen.

⁵³ Much of this dialogue was conducted in Spanish, but, for continuity, I opted to translate most of it into English.

⁵⁴ Translation: Because he is Black?

“It’s fucking 100 percent true,” Galo says, in a disappointed tone. “And it’s weird that Connor Cruise doesn’t sell, yet Suri Cruise sells all day,” Galo says. One of the paparazzo’s ask me what I’m doing, what my interest is. I explain, in Spanish, that I’m writing my dissertation about the production of these magazines and that looking at who sells and what people they include is part of my research as well, particularly why it is mostly white people in the magazine. He nods approvingly.

“Unless it’s Beyoncé or Alicia Keyes,” Galo says. We go in circles discussing the cyclical nature of them taking photos, basing their photography on what will sell. If they shoot people of color and those photos don’t sell, they will be less likely to take more photos of those same people or even other people of color when they see the trend is not working in their favor. It comes down to simple math, simple economics—which photos, or which faces and bodies, will make them money? The black and brown bodies simply are not worth as much. Black people are noticeably under-cast in Hollywood pictures (Rock 2014), and this correlates directly to their value in magazines. If they are not cast, they do not receive symbolic or economic capital through promotion via media like celebrity magazines. As the paparazzi point out, images of Black people do not sell like their white counterparts. This all contributes to an economy of celebrity bodies in which white bodies are systematically appointed more value. Non-whites are purposefully left out of casting; they are also largely left out of other realms of the entertainment industry production (from movies to magazines). From Chris Rock (2014) to a former Black editor at People magazine (“Complaint,” Robertson vs. People Magazine, 2014), the racial hierarchies built into the various realms of the entertainment industry reinforce the racism at its core. Because the cycle is never broken, the hierarchy is static.

The paps begin to discuss how people of color only sell when there is a big news story

around them, but white people sell just for going to Starbucks. “Por lo general, los negros no se venden.”⁵⁵ Halle Berry porque es un poquito...” he stops himself. He is going to say that Berry sells more because she’s a bit lighter skinned. But he doesn’t. I point out that they don’t include many Latinos either, which they initially are not admitting. “Yea, but they have *People en Español*.”

I say, “Jennifer López is pretty much the only Latina who is in the weekly magazines regularly.”

Galo chimes in, “JLo, Shakira. Mariah? What’s Mariah? She’s not Black.”

“Yes,” I tell him. “She’s Black and white.”

“Oh, ok, well that’s probably why she still sells, then.”

“Ok, but Connor Cruise will not sell. We’re talking about the richest fucking actor out there. He is the richest mother fucker out there. All kinds of drama around him. I get [Connor] driving Katie Holmes’ car and it’s still not a story. It’s like, what? I got Tom Cruise’s son,” Galo says.

“Well, it’s not that Black people never sell. But if it is not P. Diddy or the most rich and well-know Black people, then forget about it. But the Spanish-speaking artists, we don’t even try to get them because las magazines no quieren pagar dinero por esas personas,”⁵⁶ Halcón says.

“So now you’re not going to shoot Connor because he doesn’t sell,” I say to Galo.

“No. He doesn’t sell, so I won’t shoot him.”

“But don’t you see about the cycle, though, because you take the pictures and they don’t buy them, and then you guys stop taking the pictures because you can’t waste your time doing that. But it’s a cycle because if the material’s not out there for them to buy, then it’s going to be

⁵⁵ Translation: In general, photos of Black people don’t sell.

⁵⁶ Translation: The magazines don’t want to pay money for those people.

even less people in the magazines that are people of color. It's a fucked up cycle. I understand because like on the reporting side, it's the same. Like they don't take most of the interviews I do with Black people, but I try to do them anyway because I don't want to not have that out there."

"Los negros todavia no son aceptados,"⁵⁷ Halcón chimes in. "When I want to shoot someone, people will be like, honestly he's black fool. It's not going to sell."

"Yea, but if you're talking about the most popular outlets like *People*, *Us*, they don't include many Latinos either," I say.

"Nope. Not Latinos. Not Black people. And this affects the work we do because we can't keep taking photos of these people if they don't sell," Halcón says.

"And it's the same artists featured all the time," I say. "It's like ten people they always want us to report on and you guys to take photos of."

"Yes. In general it's like Jennifer Aniston, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie."

I remind the paps of this fact: "Well, for example, the photos of Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony's twins were bought by *People*, but for less than half the price of the photos of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's twins."

"Exactly. And we're talking about Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony. We are talking about the most famous Latinos in the world. The photos of children of Latinos stars are worth much less than those of white stars," Halcón says again sounding sad.

"But you take photos of people you think will definitely sell and they just don't sell?" I ask.

"Yes, it happens."

"Like with...?," I inquire.

⁵⁷ Translation: Black people are still not accepted.

“One time I took photos of Demi Moore and they did not sell at all. But it also depends if there is a story in the photos or not.”

“The truth is you have to get her naked or in a bikini,” Milton chimes in.

“If there is not an obvious story behind the photos, it’s possible to sell, but it takes a lot of work to get them to sell. But then a few days later the agency sent me to take photos of her again and I said, ‘Why do you want me to shoot her again if the last set didn’t sell,’ but they tell me that these new photos will have a story,” Halcón says.

“But you think the issue of not selling happens more with Black and Latino people?”

“Yes. I definitely think that Black and Latino people sell less.

“Even in *People en Español*?” I ask

“They barely even have Black people in that magazine either,” Halcón says.

“Even though there are plenty of people who are Afro-Latino,” I say.

“Yep.”

“They are still not accepted,” Milton adds.

“It seems like it’s made up, but it’s true that there are people who have still not been accepted, especially Black people,” Halcón says.

“I’m telling you, Denzel Washington says that they have to lighten his skin so that you can see him in the films because he is so black,” Milton says. Halcón chuckles and looks at Milton suspiciously. “Sííí, porque el color de él en las películas no es el color viendolo en persona. Es así, man. Es negrísimo,”⁵⁸ Milton says.

The conversation the paparazzi had over Black and brown bodies not selling is a conversation I believe was largely based on the fact that they are people of color. The red carpet

⁵⁸ Translation: Yes. Because his color in films is not the color he is in person. It’s like that, man. He is really black.

reporters are predominantly white. In my interviews and fieldwork, they never raised an issue with the lack of diversity in the celebrities they photograph. The one Black photographer who I interviewed and worked with (and one of the few who regularly works red carpets) readily and immediately talked to me about his issues as a Black person working mostly with white media producers in a hyper-white space, and producing images mostly of white bodies. This is why diversity matters in the newsroom, on the red carpet. The assertions and correlations the paps made about race of celebrities and sales of images is not something the outlets/agencies would address or confirm, nor is it something that they might even register.

“¿Debe salir el tipo, no?” I ask, “Ya son las 3:30. Ya viene.”⁵⁹ And the conversation is cut and everyone runs to their cars and starts getting in line to follow him home. Everyone knows where he is going, since he has the kids in the car with them. So they assume he will be heading home and they all know the route there; but there is always the chance that they stop to get ice cream or something and that is what they don’t want to miss—the chance at getting the family together doing something out in public and, in order to make sure they don’t miss that, they have to follow them. “Celebrities are unpredictable,” I remember a paparazzi telling me. They have their daily routines, but you never know exactly what they are going to do, so you have to follow them or you can’t get the shot.

They want to make sure it’s him, that they’re not following the wrong Escalade, so Galo yells out, “Si tiene placas, es 290.”⁶⁰

“It’s not him,” one of the paps yells back.

“Yo, it’s hot as fuck, homie,” I tell Galo. I’m dying of thirst and sweating like crazy.

“Big time. Let’s sit in here. I gotta run the A.C. all day. It’s hot as fuck,” Galo. He starts

⁵⁹ Translation: They guy should be coming out, right? It’s already 3:30. He’s coming.

⁶⁰ Translation: If it has [license] plates, [it ends in] 290.

playing Selena Gomez's song "Love Song." Then he switches the radio station and Biggie Smalls is on. He starts rapping along with him, " I like the waistline/Let me hit that from behind/Which wall you wanna climb/My style genuine/Girl love you long time/I got you pinned up/With yo fuckin' limbs up/Or because you like the way my Benz was rimmed up," Galo kept rapping along until he had to get out of the car to see if the car we were after was coming out of the school. Galo used to want to be a rapper; he still writes raps and poetry and likes to share it and recite it whenever he has a chance. He is incredibly smart and thoughtful, and a truly kind person. He is not the animal that paparazzi are described as. We're still in the car waiting for the bodyguard. Galo's cell phone starts to ring; his ring tone is "Regulator" by Warren G. I can hear his conversations because they come through blue tooth, and he's fine with it. As we pull after the bodyguard exiting the school, other cars pull in front of Galo, "That's what they do when they don't want me to be in the front. They want to push me out. But I don't need to be closer. I don't need to be behind them when I don't need to. I like to be there when it counts. When we're about to park and I know it, I like to be in the back."

Conclusion: Anti-Papp Laws

Today, we are in a moment of proliferation of public discourse regarding the moral and professional judgment of the paparazzi, which has culminated in a surge of legislation in California targeting their work. The office of California Assembly Speaker Karen Bass contacted a lobbying group called the Paparazzi Reform Initiative in May of 2009 with a request for assistance in getting new paparazzi-reform legislation passed in the California Legislature. The result was passage of AB 524, which was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger in October 2009. The law became effective January 1, 2010. AB 524 imposes penalties on anyone

who purchases a photograph taken illegally. The law is directed at the media outlets who purchase photos taken by paparazzi who break laws during the act of capturing photos. Penalties range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

The Paparazzi Reform Initiative spearheaded the passage of additional legislation over the next several years, including laws that criminalized the photographing of children for commercial purposes without consent and increasing the penalties for reckless driving when a driver is in pursuit of a commercial photograph. Why are paparazzi particular objects of derision when they are but one node in a much larger chain of celebrity media production? Lobbying efforts in Sacramento against the paparazzi have been led by some of Hollywood's biggest stars. Both Halle Berry and Jennifer Garner testified before the California State Assembly in support of the recently approved anti-paparazzi law SB606, with Garner testifying in tears that "Large, aggressive men swarm us...I don't want a gang of shouting, arguing, law-breaking photographers to camp out everywhere we are." Actress Kristin Bell spoke to media outlets in support of SB606, consistently using the term "pedorazzi" to describe the men who photograph her children, thus insinuating that non-consensual photos of her children are akin to their sexual molestation. Despite the rhetoric used by the interests in favor of these laws, the anti-paparazzi movement is not truly about privacy. As this section has shown, celebrities' opposition to the paparazzi is about (1) sparing the celebrities from being exposed to interactions rife with symbolic violence and (2) monetary and brand control over the celebrity's image.

Rather than attempting to change the practices of celebrity media production from the top down, starting with the purchasing practices of celebrity weekly magazines like *People* and *Us Weekly* (who take no responsibility for the current climate of paparazzi photography despite their usage of the images paparazzi produce), current legal and public relations efforts by celebrities

are largely centered on the laborers who carry out the work demanded by the media outlets and a voraciously consuming public. I suggest that it is not by coincidence that closer policing of paparazzi through these legal measures was put into place after the demographic shift towards more Latino/Latin American immigrant dominant paparazzi. As described throughout this section, a perception has emerged in contemporary discourse and in the news media that Los Angeles paparazzi are “illegal,” “pack animals,” “knuckle-scraping mouth breathers” (Pearson 2008), and “foreigners working on...questionable visas” (Winton and Alanez 2005). This rhetoric has accompanied a demographic shift in the Los Angeles paparazzi over the last decade, from being predominantly white men to predominantly Latino men, both US-born and immigrants. This shift, not coincidentally, also corresponds increased social and physical aggression towards the paparazzi and has culminated in the creation of the new laws aimed at restricting their behavior.

SECTION IV: Crafting the Media and the Sociocultural Consequences

“Babies and wedding in particular are the most popular things that we showcase. We care about children of all of our friends and family and the thing about celebrities is you feel like they’re friends and family, even though you don’t know them.”

—Ian Drew, *Us Weekly* entertainment director

“Sadness and hurt is all what the Robsten community is feeling right now. Tears are streaking down my face as I post this, but I presume it was only inevitable, although I thought Rob & Kristen would grow old together.”

—Melissa, founder, owner, and administrator of StrictlyRobsten.com, July 25, 2012

After reading the highly emotional posts, like the one excerpted above, that Melissa posted on StrictlyRobsten.com in reaction to the news that actress Kristen Stewart had cheated on her boyfriend, actor Robert Pattinson, I reached out to Melissa to inquire about her interest in doing an interview for my research. While there are varying degrees of intimacy and imaginary relationships that fans develop with celebrities, Melissa’s level of dedication to and interest in “Robsten”—the combined celebrity couple name for Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart of the *Twilight* movies (who shared both on screen and off screen romance)—was particularly remarkable. She served, in certain ways, as a spokesperson for what she refers to as “the Robsten community” through her blog.

When I first heard the news, it made me extremely sad and depressed. I noticed myself going through the stages of depression, denial, sadness, anger, etc... Initially upon hearing about the scandal, I was in complete shock. Normally, tabloids come up with these stories and never really have proof that they even happened, but the fact that *Us Weekly* had picture proof of the incident sent me into tears. I wouldn’t say that the reason for my tears was the fact that Kristen cheated on Rob; it’s the fact that I had spent COUNTLESS times defending the girl, saying that she’s a genuine person and a terrific

role model for young women...In hindsight, my emotions got the best of me during that time. Thankfully, it's made me realize that I shouldn't be so invested in these people I have no real contact with."

Melissa was not alone in her emotional reaction. In *People* magazine's coverage of the scandal, they had a special section of the article entitled "Tough Times for Twihards"⁶¹ (Tauber et al. 2012). In this section, *People* included a photo and quotes from British "Twihard" Emma Clark who, upon revelation of the scandal, posted a video on YouTube during which she cried and pleaded for others to "leave [Rob and Kristen] alone" (ibid.) (see Image 34). Clark's video had garnered over two million hits in a matter of days, and *People* deemed her newsworthy. In the age of digital and social media, the imaginary relationships and level of investment fans have in stars is not only enhanced by new media, but is promoted and rewarded by the print media who need fans to be invested in celebrities in order to have a consumer for their product.

While psychologists have written about "parasocial relationships," anthropologist John Caughey used the term "imaginary social relationship" to convey one in which individuals develop relationships with individuals they do not know or relationships with fictional characters played by actors (1994:126). In fact, he explores the "social and cultural patterns in imaginary relationships Americans develop with figures from the mass media" (ibid.). While most of the relationships between fans and celebrities remain imaginary and, thus, one-sided, there have certainly been shifts in this dynamic since the development of social media. There is an opportunity for celebrities and fans to interact, so there can be more direct connections. For example, Kim Kardashian uses her twitter account to "recognize[] and encourage[] the online

⁶¹ "Twihard" is a nickname that *Twilight* fans have adopted. In fact, fans have coined several different names and classifications to demonstrate their allegiances to different celebrities from *Twilight*. For example, there are the "Robsteners," who support Robsten being together, and the "Nonstens," who are anti-Robsten and who do not want Pattinson and Stewart dating. This illustrates the depth of investment and level of self-identification Twihards have to the personal lives of the actors in the films.

community based upon her by consistently directing attention to fans that curate online pages devoted to her and her family, singularly naming individual fans, and applauding other family members' forays into social media" (McClain 2014: 97). Similarly, actress Sophia Bush told me, "[I use twitter for] charity and social change. It's a place of dialogue for me. That was my intention when I started it. To have a dialogue. Some of us that follow each other, some of the people who follow me, we don't know each other. But we have dialogue about why we feel the way we do. It's a really incredible thing." However, the goal with social media, from a public relations standpoint, remains one-sided—to make consumers and fans *feel* as if they are developing a more intimate relationship with the celebrities they follow. But of course, thousands of people are reading the tweets and, thus, it is not an intimate exchange between two people. Any exchanges are public and intended for widespread consumption, all while conveying an illusion of intimacy that, ultimately, helps the celebrity sustain her fan base. For Kardashian, her fans are invested in her and her tweets make them feel like close friends. They watch her show on television and feel as if they know the innermost details of her life; that compounded with following her on twitter make them feel as if she is truly a part of their lives in a real and intimate way.

How have we arrived at this place in which imaginary relationships exist between fans/consumers/readers and celebrities? If we look to the questions and approaches the celebrity journalists take in order to craft their stories, it becomes clear how these kinds of imaginary relationships develop and sustain interest. The questions weekly magazines seek answers to from celebrities include specific questions about what the stars like to wear, beauty products they like to use, food they like to eat, places they like to travel to, items they like to purchase. The ultimate goal for consumers is to understand and process what celebrities like so that we can incorporate

those very things into our own lives and feel more like them, more like stars, and have lives like celebrities. Fame is not necessarily the goal, but the feeling of experiencing *how* famous people live and what famous people do. This is what the magazines provide access to.

The coverage offered by celebrity weekly magazines is intended to foster the kinds of intimate relationships fans perceive themselves as having with celebrities. Tactics employed by the magazines, from the in-depth focus on celebrities intimate relationships, to coverage of celebrities' workout and diet regimens, is intended to make the readers feel connected to the subject of the coverage. The celebrity weekly magazines, celebrities, and social media interdependently create and maintain the feeling of closeness and level of investment consumers have in individual celebrities.

The negotiation for magazine coverage between celebrities, their public relations teams, and the magazines' staff also illuminates hierarchies within the industry. For example, it is true that *Us Weekly* did the first cover story on the Kristen Stewart cheating scandal, however, *People* magazine broke the story online just before the *Us Weekly* issue was due out. I learned through my ethnographic research that when Stewart's publicist was made aware that *Us Weekly* was going to break the story (since the photos had been kept under wraps), the publicist took the story to *People* and, essentially, asked them to break it since they would rather have the story broken through *People* (the more elite and established publication) than *Us Weekly*. The impetus behind her request also included the possibility that breaking the story on *People.com* would possibly lower the sales of the *Us Weekly* issue since fans could get the information on *People*. This is merely one example of a regular occurrence.

In this section, I focus on two tactics in particular that are used by the celebrity weekly magazines to create a feeling of intimacy between their readers and the subjects covered in the

publication. Chapter eight offers an analysis of the ways in which (predominantly white heterosexual) romantic relationships are carefully branded for consumption through portmanteau names like “Brangelina”—a combination of the names Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie—that, for the reader, convey the feeling of an insider who has a nickname for this celebrity couple. Chapter nine examines *People* magazines’ “body team,” which is dedicated to assessing and reporting on women’s bodies, and the general plethora of personal information related to body and diet provided to readers about celebrities, which further contributes to a feeling of familiarity and intimacy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“Brad & Angelina: And Now . . . Brangelina!”: The Cultural Economy of (White) Heterosexual Love

The term Brangelina—a name created by blending the first names of the celebrity couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie—made its debut in *People* on May 9, 2005 (Tauber 2005), while I was an intern and reporter for the New York bureau of the magazine. The name was created by one of the editors, Larry Hackett (now the managing editor), and fueled a multi-page spread of the couple in the May 9 issue (see Image 35). I remember the mock-ups pasted along the edges of the cubicles on the 30th floor of the Time Inc. building, near Rockefeller Center. At the time, I didn’t realize that this Brangelina spread would become legendary, would stimulate a continuing trend, and would serve as a term I still use to this day as a celebrity reporter.

Brangelina did not just affect celebrity media producers; it popularized a new naming practice among the general public and impacted contemporary meanings of celebrity. With the popularity of Brangelina, a new standard was set in which celebrity couples linguistically merged into one, and the term grew to represent several social meanings that I will explore in this chapter. While Brangelina was not the first combined celebrity couple name, it led to the practice of combining names becoming commonplace in celebrity media newsrooms and sparked a race between celebrity magazines to come up with the next catchy couple portmanteau. Former *People* magazine reporter Nora told me, “The name Brangelina represented a shift in celebrity culture and in celebrity reporting. Saying ‘Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes,’ for example, was no longer enough. We needed something short and catchy. The popularity of Brangelina reflected

our celebrity-focused society. It was not necessarily about them as a couple. It was what they represented—a new level of celebrity” (see Image 36).

The case of Brangelina has been analyzed from the perspective of film studies, focusing on the couples’ star power and character portrayals (Williams 2012), but there has yet to be any analysis on the sociocultural implications of the combining of celebrity couples’ names and of the name Brangelina itself. Not only does Brangelina index Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, it has also taken on several other meanings in American popular culture; the term is its own cultural entity and it carries with it both symbolic and real capital. In addition, the process of bestowing a nickname on the couple also promotes a sense of intimacy between consumers and celebrities. One of the goals of the celebrity media industry is to promote something that makes people feel invested in, attached to, and intimate with celebrities. As I will explore in this chapter, the combining of celebrity couples’ names into an informal nickname, the popularity of these nicknames in social circulation, and the subsequent practice among the general public of creating our own combined couple names, illustrate the achievement of this goal.

My particular interest in the combining of celebrity couples’ names stems from my fascination with the media’s ability to create the illusion of intimacy by bestowing nicknames upon couples (a practice normally reserved for those intimate with a person) and the unique ways in which consumers have decoded and adopted the practice, as well as the general omission of celebrity couples of color (like Beyoncé and Jay-Z) and Queer celebrity couples from the practice of combining names.

Nora recalled the first time Brangelina was used in *People* magazine: “The morphing of the two names described exactly what we do in celebrity journalism. We pair people up together and report on them as one unit.” This is a practice that promotes (imaginary) intimacy between

consumers and celebrity couples, thus encouraging the personal interest and investment of individuals in those couples (Caughey 1994). The combining of celebrity couples' names by media outlets, the social circulation of these names, and the subsequent practice of combining names of non-celebrities is indicative of the power of social circulation of media, the potential impact of current social norms on media marketing tactics, and the public appetite for fabricated intimacy with celebrities. Through the example of Brangelina, I explore these assertions by examining the conditions under which combined celebrity couple names emerged, the social meanings that have been attributed to Brangelina, turning it into an adjective rather than just a pronoun representing the couple, and the various social media platforms through which consumers have decoded and adopted the practice of blending the names of two coupled individuals. While anthropologist Grant McCracken suggests that the "meanings" celebrities come to represent are derived "from the roles they assume in their television, movie, military, athletic, and other careers" (McCracken 2005), I suggest that these meanings are also derived from the framing of the stars by the celebrity news media industry, including through linguistic marketing tactics such as name combining, which fundamentally shift the identities of individual celebrities. Finally, I argue that the blending of celebrity couples' names is an exclusionary practice that predominantly promotes white heteronormativity.

The History of Celebrity Couple Name Blending

Graeme Turner suggests that "we can map the precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity. It occurs at the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role . . . to investigating the details of their private lives" (Turner 2004). The name change for couples like Brangelina is fully representative of media interest in the

personal lives of the celebrities *as a couple*. As a celebrity reporter, I know that the priority in covering celebrities always centers on their love lives—it is a general rule that, in an interview with a celebrity, the more personal information a reporter can get from a celebrity, the better. This is a strategy that has persisted since the popular celebrity gossip columns of Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons’ in the first half of the 20th century (Barbas 2005; Hopper 1963). By providing consumers with details about a celebrity’s love life, media producers encourage consumers to feel invested in that celebrity. A celebrity in a relationship guarantees additional news—an engagement, a baby, marriage, divorce, cheating, or just a break-up—and this news will feed a consumer’s already developed appetite. Many consumers become invested in celebrity relationships and take sides as things progress or unravel in any given relationship (see Gamson 1994), as in the case of Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt (who left Aniston for Angelina Jolie); this break-up led to the creation of websites, t-shirts and other paraphernalia that allowed individuals to declare themselves members of “Team Aniston” or “Team Jolie” (Goldberg 2012). As a couple, Pitt and Aniston missed the blended name trend, but the end of their relationship led to Brangelina. For an individual celebrity, a new relationship provides a space for his or her celebrity to be redefined. Accordingly, it has become increasingly commonplace for popular media outlets to blend the two celebrities’ names in order to formally remake them into a new, marketable, celebrity entity.⁶²

“As silly as it sounds, this new tendency to make up single names for two people, like ‘Bennifer’ (Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez) and ‘TomKat’ (Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes), is an insightful idea,” comments Robert Thompson, director of the Centre for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University. “‘Brangelina’ has more cultural equity than their two star

⁶² Denham and Lobeck define blends (‘also called portmanteaus’) as words ‘made from putting parts of two words together’ (2010:197).

parts” (“The Brangelina Fever” 2006). Brad Pitt was old news; Brad Pitt dating Angelina Jolie was new news and, thus, was of more cultural relevance to consumers and more monetary value to media outlets. Regardless of the previous individual renown of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, their relationship made them more newsworthy, and the media made Brangelina more famous than either Pitt or Jolie. Beyond increased fame, however, the new name also has taken on new meanings—meanings that the two celebrities on their own could never have. Grant McCracken says that the “meanings” celebrities come to represent are derived “from the roles they assume in their television, movie, military, athletic, and other careers” (2005:107; see also Bonner et al. 2008:142; Boorstin 1962:61; Caughey 1994). But I suggest that these meanings are also derived from the linguistic framing of the stars by the media, through tactics like name combining.

Celebrity uni-names, bundled names, combined names, name-meshing, name blends or celebrity couple portmanteaus—there is no agreed-upon name for this trend, but combining the first or last names of celebrity couples has proven to have sustained momentum in popular media and popular culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Denham & Lobeck 2010). Brangelina began as a celebrity magazine’s marketing tool and turned into a commonplace newsroom name, a name used by the general public, a term used by celebrities themselves, and a practice the public uses in their everyday lives. But Brangelina was not the beginning of the name blending trend.

As film historian Michael Williams has illustrated, the trend can be traced back to what he believes is the first instance of such a blending in the 1920s, when the fan press referred to John Gilbert and Greta Garbo as “Gilbo” (Williams 2015). Referring to their business, rather than their personal life, Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball gave their production company the name “Desilu” in 1950 (Park 2005). Similarly, John Lennon and Yoko Ono trademarked “Lenono

Music” as the name of their music publishing company in 1980. The name “Billary,” used in reference to Bill and Hillary Clinton, was popular among talk radio in the 1990s during Clinton’s first years in the White House, but it never caught on to the mainstream media (ibid.). In terms of contemporary popular culture, in late 2002 or early 2003, celebrities Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck begin dating and the term ‘Bennifer’ was coined (ibid.). Bennifer created a media craze until the couple’s break-up in early 2004. Scott Huver, a Hollywood-based reporter who has worked for *Us Weekly*, *People*, and several other major celebrity-focused media outlets, told me, “There was a clever bit of inspiration in ‘Bennifer,’ the first celeb-couple portmanteau to really hit the zeitgeist hard, and I think it became a fun game for writers, editors, bloggers and their readers to play whenever a new couple surfaced.” *People* magazine last used the term “Bennifer” in 2005 (“Separate Peace” 2005). That May, *People* launched Brangelina. “TomKat”—a blended name for actors Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes—came shortly there after. The trend snowballed from there. More recently, the trend has been applied to younger couples, like Zack Efron and Vanessa Hudgens—“Zanessa” (“Zanessa” 2010), Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart—“Robsten” (Talarico 2010), Leonardo DiCaprio and Blake Lively—DiLively (“Scoop: Blake” 2011), and reality television stars Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag—“Speidi” (Silverman 2008). The newest trending combined name used in mainstream media is Kimye—a combination of reality television star Kim Kardashian and music producer and rapper Kanye West (Garcia 2014).

I have previously explored the new pressure on celebrity weekly magazines to stand out in a newly competitive market at the very time “Brangelina” was first published by *People* magazine (Diaz 2014). During that time, using new and catchy tactics like combined names was a way to draw and maintain readership. As previously mentioned, *People* had no direct

competition in the magazine market from 1974 to 2000, when *Us Magazine* re-launched as a weekly to compete with *People* (Kuczynski 1999). *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *Star* and *OK!* all entered the celebrity weekly magazine market in the subsequent five years, bringing about a competition for content that had not previously existed in the industry. The expansion from one celebrity weekly magazine to six in the span of only five years created a market in which the magazines struggled to make their product distinctive. Huver said, “The celebrity naming trend was fun and familiar-feeling at a time when celebrity gossip was reaching an all-time zenith, and it made for catchy cover blurbs and headlines and actually effectively ‘branded’ some of these celebrity romances for public consumption.” Being the first to publish an issue with a name like “Brangelina” on the cover set *People* apart in an increasingly saturated market.

The Effects of Blended Names on Identity and Public Perception

Whether formal or informal, name changes have effects on identity and public perception of identity and, thus, have powerful social meaning (Alford 1988). Turner argues that the “whole structure of celebrity is built on the construction of the individuated personality” (Turner 2007). Along with Turner, Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall see celebrities as “brand names as well as cultural icons or identities; they operate as marketing tools as well as sites where the agency of the audience is clearly evident; and they represent the achievement of individualism” (Bonner et al. 2008). Based on the practice of combining celebrity couple names, there is a trend toward the construction of couples, rather than individuals, as icons and marketing tools. As Nora told me, “[Blended couple names] add more publicity to them as a couple because it makes for a cuter headline, and it makes for people talking about it. You’re in the know if you say Bennifer instead of Ben and Jen. It causes more buzz. Any word or phrase that is creative helps

promote that thing, be it a film or a couple or a product. It's advertising. It's a hook that people attach onto." From the media's perspective, there are clear marketing benefits. There are implications for the celebrities who form the couple as well.

They were Brad and Angelina and *now* they're Brangelina (Tauber 2005:56). Given the significance of names on individual identity, the bestowing of a blended name upon a celebrity couple by the media may feel like a violation to the celebrities it affects. Perhaps this is why Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie eventually expressed to *People* magazine editors that they would not cooperate on magazine coverage if the name Brangelina was used. Former *People* reporter Seth Jameson told me, "Angelina Jolie gave the ultimatum that she would not cooperate with any photos or stories unless we agreed to stop using that combo-name. Clearly having her give the magazine a first look at things like baby photos was more important than a silly name that had been coopted by all of the other celebrity weeklies anyway." Since Jolie worked almost exclusively with *People*, they obliged her request.

Despite Pitt and Jolie's rejection of the name Brangelina, it nonetheless took on a life of its own and its multiple meanings cannot be erased from popular culture. Even though *People* ceased using Brangelina, that did not stop other magazines from using the name, nor did it slow the creation of other blended celebrity couples' names. Perhaps most importantly it did not affect the circulation of the name Brangelina online by fans and bloggers. Modern celebrity couple name blending is a distinct practice from earlier cases in which the celebrities themselves were exercising their agency, rather than the media. In the cases of Desilu and Lenono the combined names signified the joint ownership of companies by two celebrities who were partners in both business and marriage. By contrast, modern combined names are bestowed by the media upon pairs of celebrities when they merely begin dating, and signify the media's validation of a pair as

an ‘official’ couple regardless of the way the individuals define their own relationship. A deviation from this is the case of Gilbo, in which fans coined the term to express their own agency within the fan magazines (see Williams 2015). Although Gilbo was bestowed unto the couple by fans who did not know them personally, the practice was later adopted by other celebrities themselves (i.e. the case of Desilu) to express their own agency. Today, the practice has returned to the hands of the media and fans.

Anthropologist Richard Alford writes: “A name change is a constant reminder that an identity change has occurred . . . Most people identify so strongly with their names that a name change almost inevitably affects their sense of self” (Alford 1988). While Alford’s study of naming practices shows that, in various cultures, names are known to change soon after birth, at marriage, or at the death of a relative, they are not known to change at arbitrary points in relationships not marked by marriage or child birth (ibid.:18-19). Brangelina and TomKat were coined by the media before children were conceived or adopted, and before marriage. In fact, Pitt and Jolie had symbolically become one through the name “Brangelina” nearly a decade prior to becoming one in marriage in 2014. The Associated Press’s breaking news article about the wedding quipped, “The celebrity press and ‘Brangelina’ fans alike had been consumed with the matrimonial mystery” (Coyle 2014). However, as former *People* reporter and New York Times Bestselling author Mark Dagostino told me, it was precisely because of the fact that they were already Brangelina that, to celebrity reporters (and presumably fans), “the wedding seemed like a non-event. They’d long proven themselves to be a real couple.” The use of celebrity couple names is a way for the magazines to suggest who is, in fact, a ‘real couple’ in a time when committed relationships are not quickly signified by marriage (see Image 37).

In so doing, the magazines further one of their primary goals of making celebrities relatable to the consumer. This goal is evidenced by the first section of every *People* magazine issue, called “Star Tracks,” in which celebrities are shown doing things like picking pumpkins for Halloween with their kids or grocery shopping—things that many American families do. The first section of *Us Weekly* is entitled, “Stars: They’re just like us!” It displays photos similar to “Star Tracks,” reflecting how “the iconography of celebrity photography has begun to move away from the contrived gloss of ‘the ideal’ towards the more mundane territory of ‘the real’” (Lai 2006). Rather than merely being a *contemporary* issue, positioning celebrities as “normal” people has been a strategy of media producers since at least the 1940s, as relayed in Hortense Powdermaker’s *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (1950). This “production” of “authenticity,” how stars *really* are, is at the core of successfully marketing celebrities (Redmond 2006:36); consumers crave “para-social interaction” with celebrities, to feel that they can emulate celebrity behavior (ibid.; see also Ponce de Leon 2002; Barbas 2005). Celebrities *need* to be relatable for success, and that *must* include their personal lives (Turner 2004:8).

The celebrity couple name-blending trend is another way for celebrity magazines to prove that stars are ‘just like us’ in reflecting the changing trends in marriage and marriage practice. Couples in the USA are increasingly living together without getting married. According to the US Bureau of the Census (2010), the number of ‘cohabiting’ couples – defined as two unmarried people of opposite sex living together – tripled from 1970 to 1980, nearly doubled from 1980 to 1990, nearly doubled again from 1990 to 2000; and continued to rise from 2000 to 2010⁶³ (see Kreider 2010). Census Bureau data also confirms that young people are continuing to

⁶³ Cohabiting couples in the USA:

YEAR	TOTAL
2010	7,500,000

delay marriage (DeBarros & Jayson 2007). Considering that *People*'s demographic is primarily women ages 18 to 34 ("Online Media Kit" 2008), and the number of young women delaying marriage is increasing,⁶⁴ it is fitting that *People* has worked toward increasing the social acceptability of unmarried couples. Thus, the idea "Stars: They're just like us!" constructs "us" as much as it constructs "them." The blending of couples' names reflects this new generation that does not necessarily get married or take the man's name in a couple and, by so doing, connects the audience of celebrity magazines to the stars they are observing, idolizing, and/or emulating.

The use of blended names has real effects, not just on media production, but also on public discourse. I, for instance, did not take my husband's last name when I got married. Friends have taken to calling us "Benessa"—a combination of my husband's name, Ben, and my name, Vanessa. And even before we were married, friends and family called us by this nickname. I took the use of Benessa as a marker that—in the eyes of our friends and family—we had become an "official" couple, if unmarried, just like Brangelina. Sociocultural and linguistic anthropologist Shalini Shankar's article "Reel to Real" discusses how popular media affects language use, particularly of the youth (2004:319). The targeted audience of celebrity weekly magazines is young women; this audience might be prompted to incorporate the practice of combining names into their own language practices if it is relevant to their reality (e.g. if they are cohabiting). The blending of couples' names reflects this new generation that does not

2000	5,500,000
1990	2,856,000
1980	1,589,000
1970	523,000
1960	439,000

(US Bureau of the Census),

⁶⁴ From 2006-2010 women married for the first time at older ages than in previous years (Copen 2012).

necessarily get married or take the man's name in a couple and, by so doing, connects the audience of celebrity magazines to the stars they are observing, idolizing, and/or emulating.

Brangelina differs from most nicknames, including blended couple names like “Benessa,” because “in most societies, many individuals informally receive nicknames from their intimates” (Alford 1988:18). Celebrity couple names are generally not given by the couple's “intimates” but rather by practical strangers at magazines like *People*, and are then adopted by other media producers, media consumers and fans. Since the use of a nickname is generally demonstrative of a close relationship between the speaker and the subject (Sapir 1949:15-16), the use of celebrity nicknames by the media and public is a concrete example of the imaginary relationships between consumers and celebrities (Caughey 1994). The celebrity media intentionally cultivates these imaginary relationships. Nora told me, “When you put together a name like [Brangelina], we are saying that we are *intimate* with them, that we know them well enough to give them a nickname.” Bonnie Fuller, former managing editor of both *Star* magazine and *Us Weekly* echoed Nora, “[Media consumers] want to have a nickname for the couples because they feel as if they are part of the stars' extended group of family and friends” (Cave 2005). Huver explained how this manufactured intimacy encourages consumers to want to follow the couple further, presumably through the continued purchase of celebrity magazines: “[Brangelina] made the story of two rich, gorgeous and desirable celebrities feel weirdly intimate to the outside world. And in some ways, I think it also personalized them in a way that downplayed the scandalous nature of their union – despite the notorious circumstances of how they got together, the public seemed to want to root for them to work out as a couple.” The closer and more intimate consumers feel to celebrities, the more likely they are to invest in the magazines, as it aids in the maintenance of these imaginary/para-social relationships. In this way, the combining of a celebrity couple's

name is symbolic language capital that can be translated into actual capital for the celebrity industry.

Brangelina: Object, Icon, Commodity

In *High Visibility*, marketing and communications scholars Irving Rein, Philip Kotler, and Martin Stoller refer to the significance of a celebrity's name in his or her marketability, "A celebrity is a person whose name has attention-getting, interest-riveting, and profit-generating value" (1987:15). If the celebrity him or herself is a commodity (Marshall 1997) then his or her name is an important part of that commodity (Bonner et al. 2008), as it can be imbued with meanings that reinforce the celebrity's brand identity. Thus, it is critical to consider the name and, therefore, language as a particular kind of property (Maurer 2003:776-7) and capital (Bourdieu 1991). "In practice, the individual star has a highly identifiable, even iconic, physical image, a specific history for the circulation of this image, and accrues psychological and semiotic depth over time" (DeCordova 1990: 9). But, since Brangelina was coined, now the icon rests on the couple that the name refers to. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reference Brad Pitt and not Angelina Jolie or vice versa.

The uni-name, however, accrues more than just linguistic, symbolic, and cultural value; it also accrues *actual* financial value, as I will elaborate on below through the example of sales of Brangelina baby photos. "While they are cultural workers and are paid for their labor, celebrities are also 'property': that is, they are a financial asset to those who stand to gain from their commercialization" (Dyer 1986:5). If we consider language and celebrity as certain kinds of property, the language that is used in discourse on celebrity is both property and a commodity. There is linguistic and material significance to the combining of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's

names. “As the asset appreciates—as the celebrity’s fame spreads — so does its earning capacity” (Turner 2007:193).

As the public continues to gain exposure to Brangelina and feel an increased perception of intimacy with the couple, the value of all things Brangelina increases. US rights to photos of Brangelina’s first biological child, daughter Shiloh, were sold to Getty Images and then to *People* for a reported \$4 million (“People Magazine Gets” 2008). For the first photos of “the Brangelina twins,” *People* and the British tabloid *Hello!* paid \$14 million for “joint rights to publish the most expensive celebrity pictures ever sold” (ibid.). This was “more than double the \$6 million *People* paid for Jennifer Lopez’s twins on a March cover, according to *Forbes*” (ibid.). The celebrity status of Jennifer Lopez is on par with that of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie as individuals, but she cannot compete with Brangelina. Thus, I attribute part of the disparity in the monetary value for the photos to the real economic capital, as well as linguistic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984, 1991, [1972] 2006), which the marketing of the combined name Brangelina has yielded. While the June 19, 2006, *People* magazine issue with photos of Brangelina and baby Shiloh sold 2.2 million copies (Smith 2008b), the *People* issue with the photos of the Brangelina twins sold 2.6 million copies. It was the magazines “biggest seller in seven years, and is the fourth highest newsstand seller in the magazine's 35-year history,” behind the Sept. 11 issue (4.1 million single copies), the issue covering Princess Diana's death (3 million) and the one covering the death of John F. Kennedy Jr. (2.8 million) (ibid.). Would the Brangelina baby pictures be as marketable if they were Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie’s babies? Instead, they are “the Brangelina Twins” (“First Photos” 2008; “*People* publishes” 2008). The continued use of the name Brangelina has built symbolic and actual capital for the magazines

and the celebrities themselves (Bourdieu 1984, 1991, 2006 [1972]), as evidenced by the increased cost and circulation of the second set of the couples' baby photos.

The Evolution of Brangelina: Meanings and Uses

The use of Brangelina—first by *People* magazine, then by other media, then by celebrities themselves and the general public—is an example of what linguistic anthropologist Debra Spitulnik describes as social circulation: “Social circulation of media discourse provides a clear and forceful demonstration of how media audiences play an active role in the interpretation and appropriation of media texts and messages” (Spitulnik 1996:165). While *People* may have only intended for Brangelina to refer to Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie—the couple—the term has taken on myriad meanings through a variety of media audiences.

Brangelina refers to a couple: Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. It also refers to everything that this couple embodies (e.g. cohabitation, glamour, fame, globe-trotting, etc.). Individual names are bound to certain qualities and ideas (McCracken 2005), but blended names intensify this binding. “Brangelina” refers to a couple, a family, celebrities and fame. It also refers to marketability, extravagance and beauty. A November 13, 2008, MSNBC segment featured *Us Weekly* editor Albert Lee referring to President Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle, as the “new Brangelina.” The transcript of this segment of the show is as follows:

MSNBC ANCHOR: It used to be that if you wanted to sell magazines, you'd put Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt on the cover.

US WEEKLY EDITOR: I mean, the Obamas are like the new Brangelina. You know? That's why we keep putting them on the cover, you know, week after week. And we did sell over a million copies with the last issue. Everything else on the newsstands just feels totally irrelevant right now. People want to learn more about this family (Smith 2008a).

Here, Lee is indexing the celebrity status of the Obamas by equating the marketability of Brangelina to the marketability of the Obamas. He is not referring to Brangelina in the sense of

an extravagant, unwed couple adopting and having babies, rather he is referencing the celebrity status and public importance of Brangelina and relating that aspect of the couple to the Obamas.

Even other celebrities are using these new terms to create new forms and meanings for use in everyday interactions. In a *People.com* article on the wedding anniversary of actors Jerry O'Connell and Rebecca Romijn, O'Connell says: "I wish I had something sexy and all Brangelina to tell you where we're going to go flying. But it's really just going to be my in-laws crowding us" (Rizzo 2008). Here, not only has the celebrity used the term to represent another couple of celebrities, but he has also indexed it with a new meaning. Since Brangelina are known for their jet-setting travel (see "Brangelina Take" 2008), O'Connell has taken Brangelina to mean extravagant traveling, spontaneity, or something "sexy." Spitulnik writes that the "public accessibility" of adopted media terms is "vital for the production of shared meaning" (Spitulnik 1996:162). Now that O'Connell has used Brangelina with a new meaning, it becomes shared via media, which leads to a new, shared meaning of the term, adding a dimension to the indexicality of the name. Brangelina has come to index glamour, fame, extravagant travel and sexiness, and it has done so explicitly through the portmanteau of the celebrity couple rather than the individual names Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. This challenges the prevailing celebrity studies scholarship that argues celebrity is the apotheosis of neoliberal individualism (Bonner et al. 2008:144; Turner 2007:195). Brangelina shows that meanings of celebrity are now also being defined through constructions of couples as celebrity entities in their own right, with unique names that develop their own meanings.

An important aspect of the implications of Brangelina is the way the media consumer has not only used the name, but also how the practice of celebrity couple name making has impacted the consumer on a more personal level. "Fame can be understood to be the 'glue' that holds the

cultural centre together and which offers the alienated and anomic forms of para-social relations ... a part of a material culture that they can invest in and which “invests” in them” (Redmond 2006:35). Investment in consumers was demonstrated through a *People.com* poll that asked website visitors to vote on their favorite combined celebrity couple name; through the poll, *People* could learn which couples to focus on in order to please the consumers (“Celebrity Name Game” 2005). Similarly, *USA Today*’s “Celebrity Couple Name Maker” database that accompanies an online article on celebrity couple names gives consumers something in return for reading and visiting the site (Coddington et al. 2007). If they are interested in Brangelina and other celebrity couples, they can become a part of the naming practice themselves; thus, the consumer feels rewarded for consumption. As anthropologist Kelly Askew notes, “emphasis has shifted from the power of the producers to the power of the consumers” (Askew 2004:8). It is also significant that the user-generated “How To” site, wikiHow, has a page on “How to Make Your Celebrity Couple Names.”⁶⁵ Separate from the *USA Today* database, consumers have created instructions on how to develop their own celebrity couple names. Brangelina was fed to media consumers by *People* as simply a combination of the names Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie to index their relationship. The consumer, from other media producers to celebrities to the general public, has owned the term Brangelina and redefined it in several ways. The creation of the wikiHow page shows the completion of the cycle of media production agency to media consumer agency.

Where are Pellen, Mennifer and Jayoncé?: The Marginalization of Celebrity Couples of Color and LGBTQ Celebrity Couples

It is important to consider how media producers decide which celebrity couples get their names combined. As I examine in this section, non-white and LGBTQ celebrities are largely left

⁶⁵ <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Your-Celebrity-Couple-Names>

out of the name combining. When exploring this issue in my ethnographic research, I encountered numerous justifications for this, including the aesthetics of the sound and appearance of a blended name, and assumptions about which celebrity couples evoke emotion in readers. Brian, a freelance reporter for *People* said, “The ones that do land seem to be those that have a frenetic amount of attention surrounding their personal lives alongside their tremendous fame, and I think the name combo also simply needs to be fun to say or put in print.”

It is no secret that the celebrity weekly magazines—*People*, *Us Weekly*, *Ok! Weekly*, *In Touch*, *Star*, and *Life & Style*—focus primarily on White celebrities. As the token Latina in the New York bureau at that time, I was particularly sensitive to how little people of color and other minorities were represented in the magazine. As an intern and developing reporter, I wanted to know how it was decided, and who decides, which celebrities get their names combined. Was it simply a representation of those celebrities who are thought to evoke “strong emotions” in the consumers (Thomas 2007)? Why are non-White and LGBTQ celebrities so often left out of the name combining? To take one example, Lindsay Lohan and Samantha Ronson were not given a name when they were a couple, despite the media’s constant interest in Lohan during these years and the potential catchiness of ‘Lohnson.’ The October 13, 2008, issue of *OK!* magazine featured a cover story and four-page spread about Lohan and Ronson next to a shorter Brangelina-focused article, but no attempt was made to combine *their* names (Murphy 2008). The article proclaimed that Lohan and Ronson had been together for months, which is more than could be said of Pitt and Jolie at the time the phrase Brangelina was coined. It is difficult not to interpret the magazine’s clear interest yet tangible difference in its attempt to market the couple as connected to their Queerness. From my perspective as someone who works in the industry, this practice has become one that reinforces wider social hierarchies even in the celebrity world. Portia de Rossi

and Ellen DeGeneres were featured on the cover of *People* for their 2008 wedding (Jordan 2008), but they were never given a combined name—Pellen, perhaps?

One same-sex couple name that has gained traction among consumers is Larry Stylinson, the name One Direction fans have given to the fictional romance fans have dreamt up between group members Louis Tomlinson and Harry Styles. This is the most widely used example of a combined name for a gay couple and not only is it a fake couple, but it is sometimes used by fans as a way to demean the boy band members. Thus the phenomenon of the celebrity heterosexual couple name has been most widely applied to a (imagined) same sex couple in a way that further ostracizes same sex relationships.

Like Queer celebrity couples, celebrity couples of color are noticeably less present in the name-combining trend. Michelle and Barack Obama may have been called the next Brangelina, but they have not been given a combined name by the press. Beyoncé and Jay-Z are, and Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony were, examples of couples that based on their popularity alone seem natural choices for a blended name. When Jennifer Lopez was with Ben Affleck, it was Bennifer. But when she was with Marc Anthony, it was never “Mennifer.” Still, Ben Affleck with Jennifer Garner became Bennifer 2.0 and then Garfleck. When Lopez was in a couple with a white man, she was marketed with a combined name, but when she was with another Latino, they were never given a combined name, even though her former partner was given one immediately. This fact exemplifies structural prejudice within the celebrity media industry and celebrity culture. The difference cannot be attributed to the celebrity status of the individual members of the couples, since Marc Anthony, Jay-Z and Beyoncé, for example, are long-time A-List celebrities in the US and are arguably *as famous*, if not more so, than Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner and Katie Holmes (especially Garner pre-“Garfleck” and Holmes pre-“TomKat”).

Perhaps the most prominent recent case of the blended celebrity couple name is “Kimye.” This is the only combined name commonly used in mainstream celebrity press that includes an African-American. Previously the only people of color included in a highly publicized name were two women—Jennifer Lopez and Vanessa Hudgens; no men of color were part of the combined names before Kimye (and the much lesser used Khlomar – for Khloe Kardashian and Lamar Odom). In the case of the Kardashians—especially Kim who launched her entire family’s entertainment career from an (allegedly) accidentally leaked sex tape—their entire celebrity is built around access (or the illusion of access) to the intimate moments of their everyday lives. As Alice Leppert explores in this collection, the Kardashian family has reaped profits as a result of the promotion of their romantic relationships; thus, perhaps they are invested in the circulation of the intimacy implicit in blended names in a way that is not true for Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, and other celebrity couples referenced here.⁶⁶ While the inclusion of people of color in blended celebrity couple names is significant regardless of the circumstances, the structure of the name itself is also significant; perhaps not coincidentally, Kimye and Khlomar are two of very few combined names anchored in the women’s names. Garfleck and Spederline are the only other two such names, and neither of those two gained the same degree of widespread usage as names anchored in the man’s name, such as Brangelina and TomKat. There has yet to be a popularized blended name for a couple where both individuals are minorities.

Throughout my ethnographic research, my suggestion that celebrity name combining has been an exclusionary practice promoting white heteronormativity (or interracial

⁶⁶ When the name “Speidi” was first used, it was suspected by media producers (including myself) that reality television stars Heidi and Spencer Pratt coined this name and suggested that friends who worked at the weekly magazines began using it. It is possible that Kris Jenner (“momager” of the Kardashian sisters) did the same with the names Khlomar and Kimye. If this is the case, then reality television stars are, in fact, taking the agency back into the hands of the celebrities, as was the case with Desilu and Lenono.

heteronormativity so long as one partner, preferably the male, is white—maintaining the acceptable trope of the available minority woman to the white man (Beltrán 2008; Marchetti 1993)) has been met with reasonable disagreement by other reporters and editors in the celebrity media industry. Those in disagreement with my proposal have suggested that perhaps the couples I am pointing out simply do not have good *sounding* possibilities for combined names; after all, marketability has to do with catchiness. However, based on my experience in the industry and my observations of how decisions are made in celebrity media production, I do not believe the many examples I provide to be a mere coincidence, nor do I see it adequate to attribute it to the pleasant *sound* of some of the combined names that have been heavily promoted. My suggestion of Mennifer, for example, is *exactly* the same as Bennifer, with the exception of one consonant. Pellen, Mirack or Jayoncé, seem to flow better than Garfleck, for example, or the recent trendy combined name Robsten.

Brian admitted, “Honestly, it only now registered to me that, as a celebrity super-couple, Beyoncé and Jay-Z never landed a portmanteau. There seem to be plenty of fun combos to experiment with. They certainly fit the bill of both being uber-famous.” I attribute this discrepancy in representation not to the aesthetics of the potential combined name or the level of fame of the individuals, but to conservative decisions made by celebrity media producers (reporters and editors alike) based on what they think will sell to the imagined consumer, which they generally presume will be white ‘mainstream’ couples. Perhaps this presumption is not surprising, given the lack of diversity in celebrity media newsrooms. *People*, for example, has only had a single African-American Senior Editor in its existence, and she recently filed a lawsuit against the magazine alleging racial discrimination (Gregorian 2014).

In 1950 Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker wrote: “Hollywood people live more or less *normal* family lives, and it is the current studio policy to do everything possible to publicize this. Publicity and fan magazines have been concentrating on pictures of ‘normal’ family life” (Powdermaker 1950:23). Note the emphasis on the word ‘normal’— a word that, when combined with family life, tends to reference the status quo white American nuclear family. In my experience, not much has changed since Powdermaker’s research; the only difference is that the magazines seek this angle out on their own, without the aid of studios, and this can explain the restriction of combined names to largely white celebrities and heteronormative couples. As Halle Berry expressed in her 2002 Academy Award acceptance speech for Best Actress, women of color have remained “nameless” (Redmond 2006:31); so too, literally, have celebrity couples of color.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the sociocultural significance of Brangelina and the practice of celebrity name combining. This practice encourages consumers to relate to the celebrity, while the producer is also looking for ways to make celebrities relatable to consumers. Still, in trying to promote the image of mainstream white, heteronormative America by focusing on combining the names of white, heteronormative celebrity couples, the producers of celebrity media inevitably eliminate the relatability some consumers might have not just to Brangelina, but to the practice of combining couples’ names.

The use of the term Brangelina began with *People* magazine, but did not end with *People*. Instead, a broad range of media consumers have transformed Brangelina into much more than *People* editors ever intended or imagined. Brangelina first represented the informal, even

speculated, union of two people—Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Now it represents the “blending” of all things that have come to be associated with those two people *as* a couple. Consumers are at once consuming Brangelina and producing their own meanings of Brangelina; and producers, for example Albert Lee of *Us Weekly*, are producing media based on their own consumption and understanding of Brangelina. The “24 hour global [media] clock” is on Brangelina and the media depictions that result from Brangelina’s surveillance provide the fodder leading to the ever-evolving meanings that Brangelina embodies. Thus, this phenomenon represents the dynamic relationship between media and consumer--the media provides images and meanings of Brangelina for the consumer, and the consumer creates, molds and redefines what those images and meanings *are*. This process challenges the assertions of popular culture and celebrity studies scholars who argue that celebrity is built around individualism. Brangelina does not override the individuality of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie as celebrities, but is its own entity carrying its own shared meanings and value, thus complicating the ways we understand the construction of celebrity in contemporary culture.

CHAPTER NINE

Body Teams, Baby Bumps, Beauty Standards

“For those who can afford it, the body is fully customizable and adaptable, whether through tattoos, piercings, branding, liposuction, or cosmetic surgery. And although identity is considered conterminous with lifestyle, a commodity to be purchased, dominant ideology promotes looking young and beautiful (‘californication’) as a way of being healthy, successful, and morally right.”

—Stephen Van Wolputte, anthropologist⁶⁷

“No one is more interested in women's bodies than women. So I think when it comes to the body thing, I think *People* really gets into the body stuff because women are really interested in that. Men don't really care what a woman's workout regime is or if she's five pounds heavier or five pounds lighter. Men can be jerks, don't get me wrong, but women are more interested. I don't think it so much catty as it is internalizing the information, ‘How does this apply to me? My body is a lot like Kate Hudson's except for this and this. How does she do it?’ Or, Kirstie Alley or Valerie Bertinelli; they let themselves go but now they've bounced back. If they can do it I can do it. How did they do it?”

—Scott Huver, freelance reporter for several celebrity-focused publications

The focus on beauty and appearance has been present in celebrity weekly magazines since *People* began in 1974. The early issues of *People* magazine, however, left the beauty product promotion to the companies that purchased advertising space. There were, for example, plenty of Oil of Olay ads about how to look younger. Now the publications themselves tell readers what to do to appear younger, get thinner, look cooler, and the companies that used to pay for advertisements do it in less obvious ways, working, instead, with the celebrities and publications to place their products more discreetly.

A 1986 issue of *People* featured the cover story: “New Year’s Resolution: Shape Up! New machines, new regimes, diet dos and don’ts from dozens of celebs.” In following years, similar covers appeared to mark the new year. The January 13, 1992, cover of *People* boasted the

⁶⁷ (Van Wolputte 2004:264).

caption: “Who’s winning, who’s sinning: Diet wars: You think you’ve gotten a weight battle? Celebs like Oprah Winfrey, Dolly Parton and Jack Nicholson have problems that are off the scale. Here’s the latest skinny on Hollywood’s heavy hitters” (Rosen et al.: 1992). At the time, Oprah Winfrey was one of the most highly covered people of color in *People* and much of the coverage on her was weight-focused, rather than on her relationships or accomplishments. This early January issue became a regular feature. The January 10, 1994, issue of *People* was a near carbon copy of two years prior: “Diet winners & sinners of the year: Here’s the skinny on who got fat, who got fit, and how they did it.”

As their new year’s issues featured diet secrets from the stars, other issues raised concerns about the role of media in shaping perceptions of women’s bodies. A September 20, 1993, issue of *People* also focused on weight: “Skin & Bones: Supermodel Kate Moss is the ultrathin symbol of the underfed waif look. Is a dangerous message being sent to weight-obsessed teens? (Big girls don’t cry: Jeans model Anna Nicole Smith is sexy and successful—at 155 pounds).” Their January 22, 1996, cover “How the stars fight fat: celeb tips on eating smart, feeling great and losing 5 pounds fast” was a stark contrast to their June 3, 1996, cover: “Too fat? Too Thin? How media images of celebrities teach kids to hate their bodies” (Schneider et al. 1996) (see Image 38). This back and forth between conversations on body size and issues questioning how those conversations affected readers fed an endless cycle of diet-focused issues that always sold well. It is important to point out the ways in which “media” is mentioned in the June 3, 1996, cover as a phrase that does not include reference the magazine itself. It is a regular tactic, even in my own reporting, to use “the media” as a generic “othering” classification that positions the media producer using the phrase as separate from “the media” to which they refer. Thus, it puts the onus on “the media” that does not include, in this case *People*, despite their

regular coverage of the very issue they say teaches “kids to hate their bodies.” Still, even if the magazine does not acknowledge its own role in this problem, at least covering the issue shows some critical reflection on the media production process. Looking forward to October 8, 2012, the cover of *People* featured a small photo with the caption “Lady Gaga: How She Hides Those Extra 25 Lbs!” The article explained that Gaga was, “Showing off her fuller figure...Online bullies quickly called her 'gargantua' and 'a fat little monster’” (O’Donnell & Pham 2012:109). By pointing to these unidentified “online bullies” and repeating the insulting comments made about Gaga, the magazine is at once condoning them while using them in such a way that differentiates themselves from the comments (see Image 39).

It is clear that the celebrity magazines have continued to focus on body and weight over the years. The October 18, 1999, issue of *People* featured the cover headline: “How thin is too thin? Hollywood rewards a new and shockingly skinny shape, but health experts warn that the trend has gone too far.” But the next year, they featured a number of sensational cover headlines about body image: June 12, 2000: “Diet Wars! Low Carb? No fat? What’s dangerous? What’s not? Celebs take sides in the food fight”; September 4, 2000: “Special Report: Searching for the Perfect Body: How do women really feel about their shapes? And whose bodies do they admire most and least? A surprising PEOPLE poll” (see Image 40); October 30, 2000: “Special report: Dying to be thin”; October 21, 2002: “Sexy at Any Size: Can we get real? Fed up with the pressure to look perfect, celebs get more confident living large, lean or in-between.” Then, the November 18, 2002, saw the first diet-focused cover featuring a man—Al Roker after having lost 100 pounds (see Image 41). Thus, the focus on weight loss and weight gain was evident from early on in *People* magazine’s history, setting the precedent for the magazines that followed in its path. The trend has continued through today for all of the celebrity weekly magazines. The

early January weight loss issue of *People* has shifted over the years and now features non-celebrities in the “Half Their Size” issue, which I discuss in more detail below, making it even more directly about the “average” person rather than celebrity diets.

People's focus on the body culminated in the formation of a “body team” at the magazine in 2006, which I will examine in detail in the pages that follow. While *People* magazine is the only celebrity weekly magazine that openly discusses the fact that they have a “body team” at the publication (Winerip 2009) focused exclusively on monitoring the weight and bodies of celebrities, each of the celebrity weekly magazines pays close attention to celebrity bodies, as evidenced by their coverage. *Star*, for example, has an editor who specializes in diet, even if they do not have a “diet team.” This increased specialization on the body has, of course, affected the market for photos as the need for body-focused images is more explicit than ever. Paparazzo Luiz Pimentel said that the photos with the most value are generally swimsuit and pregnancy photos.

The focus on body also affects the way reporters assess celebrities on red carpets. In my experience as a celebrity reporter, following the formation of the body team, it became increasingly expected by editors that reporters would “keep an eye” on certain celebrities for weight gain or loss and report this back to the magazine immediately. It also affected the discourse among reporters at celebrity events. At one red carpet event after a young singer approached us for an interview, a freelancer for a celebrity weekly told me, “I feel bad for her, she is just not pretty. Her hair and her nose, it’s just not cute.” At a January 5, 2011, event for Cover Girl, a weekly magazine reporter commented on how a young actress in attendance should not have been wearing a tight leather dress. The reporter told me, “I can’t believe I’m saying this, I know she has an amazing body, but only certain people can wear that and I can’t believe she

wore that.” This critical assessment of women’s bodies by other women is part of what celebrity reporters do—view, assess, even judge celebrity bodies, particularly women celebrities. We have to make judgments about peoples’ actions and appearances and report this back to the magazines. If someone is looking heavier or thinner, we must report this in our files.

The magazines do not just acknowledge changes in body and general appearance, they focus on it. Think of the countless covers of “body after baby” (not just *People* covers). Fashion and beauty writing teams at top magazines are essentially dedicated to the assessment and ultimate judgment of women’s bodies. The primary medium through which these assessments are made is photographs – including both red carpet and paparazzi photos. When photos were taken of singer Pink in a bikini looking like she had a bit of a belly in November of 2010, rumors that she was pregnant began to circulate. As it turned out she was in fact pregnant, but if she weren’t, the result would be stories about her weight gain. Ron, a freelance celebrity weekly reporter commented, “What is fat? I have issues talking about weight stuff with people because even if it's Valerie Bertinelli losing a lot of weight it's like is it putting the wrong idea into the general public's head of what is good and what is not good as far as your weight. I struggle with that and what I will ask and how far to take that kind of stuff. For me it just feels like distasteful. But I have to make those decisions and there are things that I would do that I wouldn't necessarily ask somebody but the magazine asks and I think it's fair enough. I'm like, ‘Because I'm working for this outlet this night it's fair enough to ask’ because the person that I'm talking to is an adult and can say, ‘None of your business’ and I can say, ‘I understand.’” Thus, despite reporters’ hesitance to engage on issues of weight with celebrities, it became a non-negotiable part of our work.

While the body team consists of staff members at the magazines, the red carpet reporters bring back answers to the questions crafted by the body team and the entire magazine makes use of those red carpet interviews. “We are all responsible members of this bigger project, even if we aren’t on the ‘team,’ all of us are supposed to have eyes peeled, etc.,” Christy, a former *People* intern and freelance reporter said. “Many of the questions we have to ask are body and diet questions that are designated specifically for women. Questions would instruct us to ‘ask young, style-watchy celebs about what their go to diet is around award season, what their fitness routine is’—this is a constant. We are always to be on the lookout for people post-baby, for big weight loss. Even the events themselves are set up around looking at the women’s bodies in revealing outfits. The men wear suits that cover them up, while the women have to pose to the front, side, and back, so that we can see their boobs, their butt, their waist.” Former body team member Jackie confirmed that much of the material that leads to body-focused stories begins on the red carpet:

At red carpet events, certainly looking at women’s stomachs, searching for a baby bump, or searching for any bump even if it was just that her dress was too tight, these were important things to keep an eye on. And we would get a lot of these tips from the carpet. Someone would see someone looking a little different, thinner, thicker, and this information would trickle down and turn into a story. And there was real crafting as to how to talk about or how to ask a celebrity about looking thicker. Like, “How do you stay in love with your body?” or, “What do you love about your body?” different ways to get celebrities to say—yes, I’ve gained some weight, or yes I’ve been going to yoga. Celebrities used to be open on the carpet about details about their lives too. Like they would say, “Yes, I’m going to this specific yoga studio five times week.” But then five paparazzi would be standing outside of that studio. So now the celebrities don’t say where they’re going or where they work out. And if you notice in the publications, the captions always say, “Nicole Richie working out.” But it never says where because now the paparazzi don’t want other people to know where they are getting those shots because they are valuable. And those paparazzi are doing a lot of that reporting too. They are some of the best reporters. And there has also been a change to the crafting or changes in how celebrities are prepped by their managers and press agents/PR people. Because they tell them how to say things, what not to say, etc.

Celebrities and their PR teams also became increasingly savvy about how to use weight gain and weight loss to market themselves and to get promotion out of changes in their body.

“Bikini Bodies”

A May 29, 2009, New York Times article made public the fact that *People* magazine has a “body editor,” which is essentially an editor dedicated to monitoring celebrity bodies—their weight gain and weight loss (Winerip 2009). The body editor heads up the “body team.” While drastic male weight gain or loss may get mentioned in celebrity weekly magazines, the focus is mostly on women. *People* magazine’s managing editor Larry Hackett said that the body editor is “the one who alerted me that Valerie Bertinelli was offering to pose for us in a bikini.’ Mr. Hackett wasn’t sure a teenage star from a 1970s sitcom would sell, until he saw the photos. ‘She looked fantastic’” (ibid.). The April 6, 2009, Bertinelli cover with the title: “Valerie Bertinelli Lost 50 LBs. Bikini Body at 48!” was the second-best-selling *People* cover that year (see Image 42). An excerpt from the Bertinelli article portrays a self-conscious Bertinelli:

Bertinelli tried to summon up a pep talk, telling herself, “What am I so afraid of? Come on – it’s just a bathing suit!” And yet as any woman knows, those innocent-looking strips of Lycra can be a terrifying sight – especially for someone just shy of her 49th birthday (April 23), who only two years ago tipped the scales at 172 lbs. – more than 40 lbs. over her goal weight for her 5’4” frame. But after whittling herself down to 132 lbs. in about 9 months on Jenny Craig (for whom she serves as a company spokeswoman), Bertinelli, who had last worn a bikini when she was 20, was ready for a new challenge. During what she calls the bikini “homestretch” – the last three weeks – she trimmed her daily caloric intake from 1,700 to around 1,200, and gave up her regular “splurge” glass of champagne. “It was crunch time,” she says, “like getting ready for your class reunion!” The result? Bertinelli dropped another 9 lbs. to get down to 123. (She says she hopes to “settle in” at 125, and that she has drawn a “stake in the ground” at 132 lbs., meaning she hopes to never let herself get above that number again.) (Leonard 2009a).

Following up on the 2009 cover story, in 2012, a People.com article proclaimed: “Three years after she first donned the itchy-bitsy green bikini on a cover of PEOPLE, Valerie Bertinelli is ready to break it out again. ‘The green bikini is in my drawer just waiting for me to put it back on,’ the Hot in Cleveland star, 52, said at Thursday’s American Heart Association’s Wall Street

Run & Heart Walk in New York. ‘When these 5 lbs. come off, then I will put that back on.’ (Strohm 2012).

Strategically, however, an April 2007 *People* article about Bertinelli had shown a photo of the actress with the quote “I know what you’re thinking—I’m fat” next to it (see Image 43). This created the beginning of a dialogue about her weight that would guarantee follow up stories (Sheff-Cahan & Tauber 2007). The article opens with a bit about how her house is filled with Jenny Craig goods, priming the audience for what is next to come—her weight loss. “‘Every single piece of food in the house is Jenny Craig,’ laments the high school sophomore and guitarist [Bertinelli’s 16-year-old son Wolfie], surveying the airy kitchen in the family’s Studio City, Calif., home, which is now brimming with prepackaged food from the weight loss program.” Several reporters across the weekly magazines who I spoke with openly discussed the ways in which celebrities used weight loss as a way to gain endorsements and promotion through magazine covers. Deals were orchestrated between celebrities, weight loss companies (like Jenny Craig), and the magazines who would print the stories on their cover. Since weight loss-focused magazine covers consistently sold well, it was equally beneficial for all parties involved.

The article explained that Bertinelli would be “joining Kirstie Alley as a celebrity face—and body—for Jenny Craig, the 5’2” actress best known for her 1975-84 sitcom *One Day at a Time* is vowing to lose 30 lbs. by September (from a size 14 to a size 8). Going public with her goal ‘is the motivation I need,’ she says. ‘I need to do this in front of millions of people so I can’t mess up. It is freeing because I can say it first: I know what you’re thinking—I’m fat.’ ‘We feel the same way about weight loss,’ says Alley, 56, who has maintained her 75-lb. downsizing.” “The campaign, for which she will shoot a new ad every month as she shrinks, represents a major step back into the public eye for Bertinelli, lately a stay-at-home mom whose last big TV

role was on *Touched by an Angel* in 2003. ‘Wolf is my priority,’ she says. ‘I was a Hollywood hermit.’ Also, she adds, ‘I didn’t like going up for interviews because I didn’t want to hear how fat I am.’”

Kirstie Alley had done similar coverage with the magazine just a few years prior, beginning with an August 2004 (Tauber & Cagle 2004) story in which she proclaimed that she was fat and happy, followed by December 2004 story in which she declares that she will lose weight, followed by a series of other covers and articles chronicling her subsequent weight loss. By September 2005, Alley was “slimmer and wiser” (Adato 2005b) (see Image 44).

Just a few months after the April Bertinelli cover, in August 2007, both Alley and Bertinelli appeared on the cover of *People* for a “tell all” about how they keep off their weight (Harrington 2007). Despite the fact that Bertinelli clearly outlined her weight loss plan with corporate sponsorship in April, and had a follow up article in August 2007 about her weight loss, the 2009 cover of *People* magazine featuring her in a bikini includes the following quote from the actress: “I can’t believe I did it!” (Leonard 2009a). The 2009 Bertinelli weight loss cover, exclaiming that she can’t believe it seems disingenuous given the earlier article explicitly outlines her weightless plan. The 2009 article also emphasizes that this cover shot is planned and, thus, must have been believable to her since she refers to the three weeks leading up to the magazine photo shoot as the “bikini ‘homestretch’” during which she dieted even more strictly, worked out even harder, and lost an additional 9 pounds (ibid.). The illusion that she cannot believe it gives quite the false impression about her intentions. Of course, a few years later, we find yet another follow up in which Bertinelli has gained some of the weight back and is ready to lose weight and to put the bikini back on (Strohm 2012). Similarly, Alley’s weight continued to garner her press coverage for years beyond the initial 2004 cover about her weight. By 2009,

Alley declared, “I’ve let myself go,” after gaining back more weight than she had lost on Jenny Craig (Leonard 2009b). *People* editor Hackett “has found multigenerational, multicover appeal to roller-coaster weight sagas like Ms. Alley’s. ‘It’s like Kirstie’s out there again,’ he said. ‘She’s like family — we have traveled this road with Kirstie’” (Winerip 2009).

In April of 2014, the weigh gain and loss cycle came back full circle when Alley announced that she would once again be a Jenny Craig spokesperson and, once again, received coverage in *People* (Hamm 2014). That same month, Bertinelli was covered on *People.com* and said, regarding her minor weight gain, “We all need to give each other a break – especially women.” She adds, “Let’s leave each other alone” (“Valerie Bertinelli” 2014). Bertinelli’s sentiment is certainly appreciated—there is no question about whether or not there is too much pressure for women to conform to certain physical expectations, at any age. However, if she wants everyone to be given a break then, perhaps, taking responsibility for the false hope and unreasonable expectation of getting down to 123-pounds and posing in a bikini at age 49, might be a good place to start. The celebrity back and forth between being super-human and “just like us” rears its head in these situations in which a celebrity does not acknowledge that they are being paid to consume and promote diet food and they have the money for full-time personal training and an overall healthy lifestyle. Still, despite these advantages, when they put on weight they want that to make them more relatable.

The focus in celebrity weekly magazines on drastic weight-gain and weight-loss stories of individual celebrities did not begin with Alley or Bertinelli. It began with Wilson Phillips singer Carnie Wilson. The September 29, 1997, issue of *People* had the following headline on the cover: “Who says size counts! So what if they aren’t size 6? Healthy, wealthy, and unabashed, they’re proudly proving big is beautiful too.” Pictured on the cover were Oprah Winfrey, Rosie

O'Donnell, Delta Burke, Wynona Judd, and plus-size model Emme. Inside the magazine, other “big” celebrities were featured as well, including Carnie Wilson declaring her happiness with her size. Yet, just a few years later, on January 15, 2001, *People* published an issue with the cover headline: “Half her size! Seventeen Months after stomach-reducing surgery, singer Carnie Wilson has dropped 150 lbs. and 20 dress sizes. ‘I can’t believe it’s me in that tiny body!’” (see Image 45). The popularity of this issue prompted the reoccurring “Half Their Size” issue, which now includes non-celebrities on the cover along with their triumphant diet stories. *Us Weekly* took inspiration from *People* and has published similar covers, such as their May 2007 cover featuring Ricki Lake with the headline: “Half My Size! From Size 24 to 4 without surgery!” (see Image 46).

The symbiotic role of the media producers and celebrities is critical to the creation of these stories. While Alley may have been ridiculed for being overweight, she was hardly in the spotlight when she did the first *People* cover about her weight. She had not been acting regularly and may not have had any interest in her had she not been ready and willing to begin a conversation about her weight, which then led to future opportunities for sponsorship (by Jenny Craig) and promotion (by magazines like *People*). At the 2011 Cover Girl event I discussed earlier in this chapter, actress and singer Raven-Symoné arrived looking thinner than usual. Despite the fact that one moment, she was “combatting body critics,” stating that she was happy with her “thick and fabulous” body (Pham 2009), the next minute she had lost significant weight and asserted, “I thought I looked fabulous before and nobody else did” (Shira 2011). This quote demonstrates the ways in which she advertises her capitulation to societal pressure to change her “thick and fabulous” body. Similarly, Tyra Banks was featured on the January 24, 2007, cover of *People* magazine sarcastically asking the public, “You Call This Fat?” The cover featured Banks

in a strapless bathing suit, and included her weight—listed at 161 pounds (see Image 47). Here is an excerpt from the article:

On her hit show *America's Next Top Model*, Tyra Banks has always stressed the importance of body confidence – but it still hurt when tabloids ran an unflattering photo of her in a bathing suit under headlines that screamed, “America's Next Top Waddle” and “Tyra Porkchop.” Now, for the first time in an exclusive interview with PEOPLE, Banks, 33, is publicly discussing her much-buzzed-about weight gain. “I get so much mail from young girls who say, ‘I look up to you, you're not as skinny as everyone else, I think you're beautiful,’” she says. “So when they say that my body is ‘ugly’ and ‘disgusting,’ what does that make those girls feel like?” (Keith 2007).

Then, after having asserted that she was happy with her body in 2007, on September 21, 2009, *People* featured an article covering Banks’ 30 pound weight loss. “But Banks took pains to reassure fans in an Aug. 9 Twitter posting, ‘My butt is still juicy and round’—albeit small enough to fit into a sample size 2 Rachel Roy dress at the Aug. 30 Daytime Emmy Awards” (Keith 2009). Thus, there is an uncomfortable, if confusing, discursive conversation between media and celebrities about expectations of women’s bodies that, as *People* pointed out back in the 1990s, affects the people who consume this media.

And while Banks said she weight 161 pounds and this was portrayed as looking great, former teen actress Melissa Joan Hart was featured on a June 8, 2009 *People* weighing in at 113 pounds. The cover photo of Hart in a bikini featured the headline: “How I Lost 42 Lbs! A ‘horrifying’ photo (above) led the *Sabrina* star, 33, to take control. ‘I realized I don’t have to be heavy just because I have kids’” (see Image 48). Next to the photo of the bikini-clad actress is the “before” photo, which is described as ‘horrifying,’ and a note that she weighed 151 pounds at the time of the photo. Of course weight looks different on different body types and on people of different heights, but including the numbers gives no context about healthy weights based on heights and body types. Thus, the readers are left seeing that one person is “horrifying” at 151 pounds, while another person looks great at 161. While this may be true, the numbers could

simply be omitted if there is a concern with how the portrayals of women's bodies affect consumers.

Firsthand from the Body Team

Jackie, a member of *People's* "body team" from its inception, shared her perspectives on the team with me. "I totally thought the team was necessary. I didn't have any issues with the formation. It was hard to adjust to the discussion." There were no men on the body team, which Jackie thought was a good thing. "The insight is really about the women. The women are the ones being profiled. The women are the ones reading. I don't think it's a bad thing, but I don't think men were weighing in. But the highest up editors like Larry Hackett were very much weighing in on the big stuff." The pages that follow share some of Jackie's story as a body team member, in her own words.

* * *

"Ridiculing other women's bodies was the hardest part of my job and I was definitely not the only one who felt this way. There were times when we would leave body watch meetings and say I cannot believe we are talking about this. Or I would talk to other team members, or someone would sit in on a meeting for body watch and be so surprised as to what we talked about and how we had to talk about people. Because every other meeting is like, this is so and so coming out with a new album and a drug problem, we should totally try and talk to them. But in body watch it's like, oh my God, did you see those pictures of so and so? And we'd all bring pictures. You've already done your photo research. You've already chose through the freelancer files. You bring those pictures, and you're like, something about her face looks fuller now. Didn't she reportedly have an eating disorder back in the day, maybe she was back on it. Or, oh

my gosh, her cancles are ridiculous. That sort of thing. And a lot of us felt bad about that situation. Simply because we're a roomful of women deciding on how other women will feel about these women. It was a very disgusting thing. But at the same point, we were really one of the highest grossing groups, in terms of dollar signs, in terms of sales on newsstands. Body covers sell more than any other cover of the magazine unless it's Princess Diana or Brangelina. We sell.

“When we first kicked body watch off, no other magazines were doing body coverage. *The National Enquirer* and *Star* would do, ‘Oh, guess whose cellulite this is.’ But not in the same way where you're talking about how all these celebrities lost weight on Jenny Craig, or oh my gosh, you didn't know so and so, had an eating disorder and now she's like that. There were stories that made us feel really good. Tyra Banks, Jennifer Hudson, Valerie Bertinelli.

“There were a lot of stories that made up for the, so-and-so lost 50 pounds, so-and-so gained 15 pounds. But it was definitely difficult because you can't be a thick chick, or forget thick—you can't be a chick with body issues in that room. You just can't. It's hard to sit there and talk about it every day, and talk about that. And you feel the pressure. Like I'm naturally a relatively skinny chick. I was skinnier this when I first started. When I first started I was 115 pounds. I'm currently 135. But I know when I started to get to that point, I take Hydroxycut. A lot of people say it's not FDA approved. A lot of people call me. My editor used to get on me about it. She's like, ‘Why are you taking that shit. I can tell you're on it right now because you're so hyper.’ ‘I know. Just get me some more water. I have to fit into this dress.’ It was a joke, but if someone really did have an issue, it's not the safest place to be. But there was never a concern like, are you girls okay? You were in charge of that. If it was too much and you felt like this is not what I really want to be doing, then you had a private conversation with your editor. But I

think being out here in LA, because you see celebrities on a regular basis, you're used to small. You had to remember that you have a bias, just by being here and being around people who are skinny. So when someone says, 'Oh, I'm 5'7" and 115 pounds,' to the rest of the world that's small, whereas to me that's sort of average. But it's not average to anyone else.

"In my role on the body team, I was responsible for keeping in touch with and negotiating with all the major trainers out here, figuring out all of the diet trends, but also paying attention to the pictures every single day. Who looked bigger? Who didn't? And our conversations in meetings were very raw. She has cankles. She has back fat. What the hell is up with her stomach? Those were the conversations, and you had to get adjusted to that. I think that really started and kicked off in a major way bringing a lot of money in with Kirstie Alley. And then you had Valerie Bertinelli. But because they gave such raw quotes, you were going after that every time. You couldn't just have someone say, 'I work out three times a week. I watch what I eat.' Hell no. That wasn't enough. There was such a big push.

"It was a beat to work. You went back to the same trainers and the same sources just like you would a cop beat. And the body team editor was just asking all the questions that you wanted to know and would point out – she would call a spade a spade. And would let you know that, too. And so phone calls and meetings were sometimes awkward, but then you had to get snarky with it. Like if someone says, 'You know, cardio is what makes me so thin.' No it doesn't, Tara Reid, you're skinny because of cocaine. So let's address that. My interview with one actress was unbelievable because it was when she had all the cellulite on the back of her thighs and she swore that she didn't really look like that. So we did a shoot out on the beach here. I had her turn around. We interviewed and I said, 'What do you eat? What do you do?' That's a very different interview style than some of our other reporters who say to talk to

celebrities like they are your friends. Uh uh. I only had so much time. You had to get in there and ask the really tough questions. Do you have an eating disorder? What is it? What's the issue? How many times do you work out? Do you feel fat? You talk about doing some post baby workouts, but really, how many calories were you consuming? What was the trick? That kind of stuff. And pushing. The interview style changed because you automatically assumed everybody was lying. Because they were so good at it already. So in the teams, because you had these big stories on Kirstie Alley, Valerie Bertinelli, and Jennifer Hudson, it's like the ante got upped, and you saw the ante getting upped in the TV realm. Finding the pictures was also a big challenge. Your before picture had to be the saddest possible picture. It had to be the most and the least appealing photo. That's another thing. And so sometimes I would ask myself, 'Is that really what we're doing?'

“But we needed a body-focused team because the numbers were there, time and time again. We gauged the need because we saw how well issues were selling. We saw how much pickup we were getting from other outlets. The PR was really a great litmus test. Seeing how many requests we were getting for those images. Seeing how many requests we were getting for the cover or for me to be on TV. That was very popular. And we also read readers' letters. *People* magazine's letters team would send us letters. The reader letters had a big impact on the content.

“Middle America women wanted to know how everybody lost weight. And because they were watching *Biggest Loser*, they were watching all these shows about how really hard it was to do this, they knew wheatgrass shots and jogging with my friends in Runyon Canyon ain't gonna do it. They wanted to see people being truthful, but also they were seeing these issues in *National Enquirer* and everywhere else and you couldn't just say, 'That's a doctored photo,'

because it wasn't. And some celebrities were starting to become, as far as the public discourse, really open about it. Kirstie Alley went on Oprah herself.

“And our coverage wasn't just, ‘Oh, we have a girl in a tight top and jeans.’ We had a bikini on Kirstie Alley. We had a bikini on Valerie Bertinelli who everyone loved. It pulled in all the best things that people loved about *People* magazine – the nostalgia, the fact that these actors had been in our homes forever. That's what it was pulling in. But even things as small as the weight loss regimen of Kate Moss or any of those Victoria Secret models. People still really wanted to know how hard they worked or that they were flipping tired. Things like that. But the body transformations were really the thing. Mila Jovovich putting on 70 pounds for her last pregnancy. What? And you got it down, and you're back in the tight clothes? And you see Heidi Klum. How does she do it after four kids? And plastic surgery also became a big thing. Day in and day out, we were going to conventions to learn the latest and the greatest in plastic surgery techniques. We had to know. We had to build the rapport and know what you were talking about when you were interviewing plastic surgeons. Ear tucks weren't popular, and then all of a sudden they were popular. How do you get a face-lift and then only be down for two days? Knowing that kind of information and knowing who the doctors were – and not just knowing them, but them knowing you was imperative.

“The bodies are something that everyone can relate to. And just like people love to see inside people's homes, there's a voyeuristic aspect to it. There was a big emphasis on who's looking big, and whose looking small. Monitoring our major folks. There were some people who were always on our radar. Beyoncé. Tyra. Valerie. Kirstie. Carnie. Just certain folks. Kate Gosselin. You were always monitoring in that way and if there was anything else that you were noticing or seeing. I think the important thing is to know that none of us were trying to hurt

anybody. That was never anybody's intention. It was just trying to point out what people were really doing, and to do that you had to be skeptical. You had to be a little bit ruthless. You had to be a little bit cutthroat. And you had to push people to their proverbial limits.

“I never thought it was going to give a fuck about what someone else thought. But I thought, ‘Damn, this is what we are putting out there?’ It was true, but it was always the most gripping of the truth. It was never the soft and easy version. So I didn't think about the little girl in Tallahassee who was reading this, per se. But I more so I would think, ‘Damn, that's kind of cold.’ And I'm the person doing this work, but that to me isn't what's most important. I was at church every Sunday. So is it really what I want to be doing?”

* * *

In the introduction of this project, I outlined the demographics of each of the celebrity weekly magazines. As the demographics for the magazines and their websites establish, the magazines are targeted at and predominantly consumed by women, with median ages in their 30s and most in the 18-54 age range. Thus, the ways in which women's bodies are portrayed will have real ramifications for the women consuming the magazine, as well as for the women producing it. Another former body team member, Nicole, shared her experience about working on the body team and how it affected her personally. “I saw myself becoming a different person while I was on the body team. When we were discussing women's bodies, people would say things like, ‘Why are we even talking about her, she is too fat.’ And we were talking about people who are size 8. I felt like I started to obsess over my own body. I started to feel like I needed to lose weight.”

The endless cycle of weight gain and loss has proved lucrative for the celebrity weekly magazines both through issues sales and corporate relationships. Jackie shared, “We had great

relationships with the diet companies. Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig. Whoever their new person was, they were going to break it with us...Every diet company wanted us.” *People* created a body team “because the numbers were there. Proved time and time again... Not only did it sell well, it blew off newsstands.”

Pregnancy: Body After Baby

“Back in the day you would wait until [new celebrity mothers] got to where they wanted to be and then you would approach them for a [body] story. Now you approach her as she is on a gurney into the delivery room or you’re approaching before. If you can’t get the baby pictures than you should get the body after baby, or the home run if you can get the double.”

—Jackie, former member of *People*’s body team

“There is a point where there is such an appetite for pregnancy news; I find it distasteful to ask somebody if they are pregnant. Personally I find that to be a very personal thing and you don’t know what’s going on with them, like medically what they are dealing with to make sure that they are healthy. I think it’s awful. I think it’s awful to speculate that somebody is pregnant because maybe they are but they are having a problem and they have to deal with it, or maybe they are fat.”

—Ron, celebrity reporter

“We’re all motivated in this capitalist society to make money. And really at the end of the day, the magazines are motivated for eyeballs and viewership because that’s what pays the bills. I think if you would get viewership on baby bump or a little bit of chunk, you’d probably run it because that’s paying your bills and paying to keep the magazine alive or keeping the website going, and paying the paparazzi, so let’s not pretend that that’s not the real motivation, that is the motivation.”

—Adrien Grenier, actor

One of the most popular angles for stories focused on celebrities’ bodies is the “body after baby” story. At the LAX airport in 2013, I noticed someone carrying a Hudson News bag. The bags furnished by the newsstand have images of various magazine covers printed on either side. One of the most prominent covers was an *Us Weekly* cover featuring Trista Sutter, the original *Bachelorette*, in a bikini holding her baby, with the headline, “How I got my body back.” This cover headline, similar to many of those featured on other celebrity weekly

magazines, suggests that changes in women's bodies post-baby is a loss, and that a woman should aspire to return her body to the way it was before pregnancy. This is not possible for many reasons, but the celebrities have money, fame, and are likely to get large endorsements from diet companies for losing the weight. Celebrities can also earn money by mentioning trainers' names in the publications. The body after baby stories are ultimately centered around marketing products and weight-loss plans.

“The relationship between celebrities and the news media is never more symbiotic than during the arrival of a new baby” (Bernstein 2012). As a *New York Times* article pointed out, “Magazines get a boost to their newsstand sales, reality TV shows get a new plotline and the expectant parents often get lucrative paydays” (ibid.). While celebrities can get six-figure cover deals for the first photos of their baby,⁶⁸ that part of the celebrity pregnancy deal is all celebratory. After the first baby shots, celebrity mothers often milk their pregnancy for all they can while simultaneously contributing to the unrealistic expectations on women's bodies.

The first “Body After Baby” story in *People* was on February 10, 2003 and featured profiles on several celebrities, including: Uma Thurman, Sarah Jessica Parker, Brandy, Holly Robinson Peete, Cindy Crawford, Anne Heche, Julianne Moore, Elizabeth Hurley, and Cynthia Nixon (Espinoza et al. 2003) (see Image 49). The article included details about their diet and exercise regimes. “For Hollywood's new moms, snapping back into red-carpet shape is a business imperative—one that doesn't come cheap. Hurley dropped 53 lbs. with the help of a nutritionist and private Pilates instructor; other stars turn to custom weight-training workouts or yoga. And a pro to do the cooking can't hurt (anything to keep Uma Thurman away from

⁶⁸ It is for this reason that paparazzi speculate actress Kristen Bell spoke out so angrily about the so-called “pedarazzi”; a paparazzo took and sold the first photos of her baby, preventing her from being able to negotiate an exclusive first photo series with a magazine. This, the paparazzi believe, enraged the B-list actress.

M&Ms). Read on for the weight-loss secrets of nine red-hot mamas” (ibid.). That the regimes outlined in the article are out of reach for the average reader is obvious. Letters written from readers in response to this first article express a combination of praise and frustration with the coverage; it is clear, however, that as Jackie mentioned earlier in this chapter, whether positive or negative, the body story generated interest. A letter from reader Tara Kearney in Washington reads: “I’m six months pregnant, and after reading your cover story I don’t know whether to be inspired or depressed by how quickly the celebrity moms profiled got their bodies back. Could you ask them to loan me their personal trainer? I’ll need to be in shape to impress the other moms at the play group.” Trish Jordan from Hawaii, said, “Your staff has sunk to a new low with your cover about celebrities who quickly regained their figures after giving birth. As if new mothers today don’t suffer enough societal pressures to be übermoms, now you venerate those of us who managed to fit back into our pre-pregnancy clothes in record time. It’s not a contest!” (“Mailbag” 2003). These letters demonstrate the mixture of intrigue and frustration felt by readers when it comes to body-focused stories. The pressure Jordan speaks of is real, however, and is felt not only by the readers, but by those who work on staff at the magazine as well.

Amber, a long-time staff reporter for a celebrity weekly magazine, lamented the position she was often put in by hounding post-pregnancy women for body covers. Once after a pop star gave birth, Amber was tasked with calling her rep to ask if she would be willing to do a special spread on her post-baby body. “A senior male editor saw a photo of her just a few days after she gave birth. And he asked, ‘Did you see her? Oh my gosh we have to do a body after baby.’ I knew it was too soon. I’m a mother. The editor was not considering that it takes three weeks for the uterus to go back to its normal size. But this is what the magazine wanted. When I talked to the rep, I apologized, but said I had to ask.” Amber asked editors if they could wait to do the

post-baby stories until a year after the baby was born and they would say, “That’s too late.” The desire of the magazines to show these women rebounding their bodies within just a few weeks after giving birth fuels the culture of unrealistic expectations on women’s bodies.

The emphasis on “Body After Baby” developed quickly. In just one issue in 2005, *People* featured multiple “Body After Baby” articles. The November 7, 2005 issue featured post-baby body stories about Denise Richards, Britney Spears, Victoria Beckham and several others (Adato & Jordan 2005; Souter & Wong 2005). The articles embody the synergy identified by Jackie in her description of the body team practices, which included cooperation between celebrities, magazines, trainers, and diet companies. One of the November 7, 2005, articles is entitled, “Losing it Fast: They're Breaking Speed Records, but Celeb Moms Like Denise Richards Know That Getting Back in Shape After Baby—Whether It's the First or Fourth—Takes Sweat and Sacrifice” (Adato & Jordan 2005) (see Image 50). The article explains that Richards “threw herself” back into exercising as soon as she got the ok from her doctor. “I’m not going to lie and say, “The pounds just came off,”” she says. “There's definitely pressure in Hollywood to be thin, but even if I didn't have to work, I would still want to lose the weight”” (Adato & Jordan 2005). But the methods by which the featured celebrities lose weight, again, illustrate the inability for most people to attempt the same program—she worked with celebrity trainer Garret Warren, who also worked with Kate Hudson after her pregnancy, four to six times a week. And she did not have to cook for herself, “Richards has her own portion-controlled meals delivered by nutritionist Carrie Wiatt's Diet Designs” (ibid.).

An issue of *People* later that same month in 2005 featured yet another “Body After Baby” spread, this time about model Heidi Klum (Adato 2005a). The November 28, 2005, article, “Heidi’s Secret: From the Maternity Ward to Lingerie Model in Two Months? Here's How Heidi

Klum Did It” shows a photo of the new mom walking the Victoria’s Secret Angels runway show, where “she wore little more than a bra and thong studded with tiny lights and Swarovski crystals” (ibid.) (see Image 51). Again, the article outlines Klum’s “few advantages”: “Genetics, for one. Another: some time off. A third: the ability to get top New York City trainer David Kirsch, 45, to fly out to her Los Angeles home (he arrived Oct. 13). So, yes, her situation is far, far from that of a typical new mom. Still...eight weeks?” Her workouts included “the David Kirsch jiggle test,” Kirsch says. “If it jiggles, it ain’t good” (Ibid.). The September 1, 2008, issue of *People* featured the article: “Jessica Alba Body After Baby: Now She’s Pregnant, Now She’s Hot! Here’s How the Famously Fit Actress Got Red Carpet Ready in Record Time” (Keith 2008) (see Image 52). The title insinuates that pregnant women are unattractive, as Alba was only “hot” after her pregnancy was over and she got “fit” again. This article, again, supports what former *People* “Body Team” member Jackie refers to earlier in this chapter with regard to the emphasis on relationships with trainers. The marketing of the trainer and her program is explicit. The article teased, “Now Alba’s trainer Ramona Braganza reveals how Alba dropped 25 lbs. so fast”; the answer was by following “Braganza’s 321 Baby Bulge Be Gone program” (ibid.). Thus, these tactics at once give very specific and intimate details about celebrities’ lives, make it clear that ordinary people cannot follow the regimens celebrities follow, and create desire and envy.

Prior to the announcement that Jessica Simpson was a Weight Watchers spokesperson, celebrity weekly magazine writer Stacey told me in an early 2012 interview, “I have a theory that Jessica Simpson got so big during pregnancy because she has a deal with Weight Watchers and so she wanted to get big so she could get paid more.” Just as Stacey predicted, Jessica Simpson began mentioning her desire to get fit immediately after giving birth; shortly thereafter it was announced that she would be a Weight Watchers spokesperson (“Scoop: Jessica” 2012). It was

reported that Simpson made between \$3 and \$4 million dollars through her contract with Weight Watchers (Fox 2012; Johnson 2012). In a Weight Watchers ad released later in 2012, Simpson declares: “I’m Jessica Simpson and, yes, I’m doing Weight Watchers. There is a lot of pressure to lose weight, but I’m not a supermodel. I’m just Jessica trying to eat real food in the real world and I really just want to be healthy for my daughter, so I knew Weight Watchers was the only way to go. It’s working. I’m on my way and it feels amazing. Really, I just want to be a better version of myself. Join for free, you’ll see. Weight Watchers, because it works.”⁶⁹ Comments posted below the video of the ad online demonstrate the consumer’s understanding of Simpson’s position as a pitchwoman and frustration with the boons of celebrity life. One comment read: “Only in America can you get paid for fattening yourself up. And even then, ONLY if you’re a celebrity.” Another read, “Eat like a nasty pig, get paid 4 million bucks. WTF America?”⁷⁰

Perhaps no other celebrity has received the kind of ridicule during pregnancy that Kim Kardashian received. Similar to the *People* cover featuring Tyra Banks in a bathing suit with the headline “You call this fat?” (Keith 2007), the May 20, 2013 *Us Weekly* article featured a photo of a pregnant Kim Kardashian with the same headline (see Image 53). Part of the reason Kim Kardashian is so popular is because she is also easy to hate. We know she became famous, at least initially, for something we would hope nobody would be proud of—the public release of a sex tape (though her husband Kanye West brags about it in his song “Clique”—“My girl a superstar all from a home movie”). Still, she lets us into her life through her various television programs, her twitter account, and her blog. We feel we really know her. Then, when she gains weight or goes on a date with a rich European man who paid half a million dollars for her to attend an opera on his arm (D’Zurilla 2014), we can all react in disgust and not feel guilty about

⁶⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjIZPftTjbg>

⁷⁰ See link above.

it. We never respected her to begin with. However, this particular position also allows her to continue to build her fame, advance her career, and grow increasingly rich.

As anthropologists Lara Descartes and Conrad Kottak explain, part of America's media obsession is to validate themselves by noting "bad things happen to people unlike me" (Descartes & Kottak 2009:149). The consumer might think: I'm glad I'm not a young celebrity like Britney Spears; the pressure she is under from stardom is contributing to her failed marriage, her mental breakdown, her hospitalization, her separation from her children (ibid. 154). Thus, the happiness that the Kardashians bring to people might not be as straightforward as Rivers makes it seem, but, ultimately as she says, "What does it matter?" If the consumer is getting something out of it, and the Kardashians are certainly getting financial gains out of it, then everyone is satiated. Still, the assertion Descartes and Kottak make does not take into account the envy that many fans/consumers may feel towards celebrity, particularly fellow mothers who might be struggling to lose baby weight and cannot afford a private chef and trainer to help them reach their goals. Thus, the dynamic is complex and multifaceted.

Responses to Weight Criticism and Body Patrolling

People's body team is certainly not the only feature of the weekly magazines that contributes to the constant assessment and ridicule of women's bodies while conveying intimate details and knowledge about celebrities' weight, personal issues, diet, and workout plans. While *Us Weekly* may not have a "body team," they have dedicated much time to the evaluation of women's bodies. Their website features a tab on their menu labeled "BODY." This body section is home to all body-focused articles, including the regularly featured photo essay called "Body Evolution" (with some variations like "Hot Body Evolution" and "Post-Baby Body Evolution")

that allows readers to click through several photos of (almost entirely) women celebrities at their heaviest, thinnest, and most pregnant, while providing commentary. Everyone from Kate Middleton, to Jessica Simpson, to Snooki, to Reese Witherspoon, to Blake Lively, to Beyoncé, to Kim, Kourtney and Khloe Kardashian, has been profiled in this body-focused feature. The focus on the body is meant to put additional attention on the celebrity body in question and create interest and dialogue, whether it be from a place of envy, disgust, or indifference. With the exception of a magazine like *Star*, which has no illusions about its place in the celebrity world (it is not seen by stars as a way to gain promotion, as are *Us Weekly* and *People*) and which publishes covers that blatantly attack celebrity bodies (e.g. their annual “Best and Worst Beach Bodies” issue is particularly harsh (see Image 54)), the celebrity weekly magazines tend to use language carefully so that they nod to weight gain, in particular, without explicitly calling the celebrity fat or heavy. Instead, they use the tactic of putting it in the words of others (e.g. “The tabloids have said...”) or using rhetorical phrasing (e.g. the Tyra Banks cover which asks, “You call this fat?”).

As an example, I will examine the “body evolution of singer Christina Aguilera” (see Image 55). From 1999 onward, *Us* points to various particulars about the singer’s body (“Christina Aguilera’s” 2012). The photo essay comments on such aspects as her “toned tummy,” “toned, tanned body,” “abs and ample cleavage,” “lean legs” and “tiny waist,” and later her “svelte post-baby body.” This complimentary coverage continues until 2010, when they begin to highlight a change in her shape. “After her performance at the American Music Awards in L.A., Aguilera was bullied for putting on a few pounds” (ibid.). Of course, while the magazine points out that she was bullied, they do not say *who* bullied her, which allows them to imply that they are not bullying her, despite the fact that they are specifically pointing to her weight gain.

The 2011 photo in the essay features the caption, “*The Voice* mentor was subjected to intense scrutiny for her ill-fitting Herve Leger dress at the American Music Awards in L.A” (ibid.). Again, she was scrutinized, but by whom? The magazines refuse to acknowledge that they (and other similar publications) are the ones doing the scrutiny by focusing on her body. Finally, the photo essay is rounded out by a complimentary comment (e.g. one that focuses on weight loss, because weight gain is never ok); the 2012 photo features the quote: “Aguilera revealed a more fit figure while taping *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* in Burbank, Calif.” (ibid.). Providing readers with these photos and commentary is problematic particularly in that it does not take into consideration that this is an “evolution” from 1999 to 2012, from her being a teenage pop star to a mother.

Just a few months after the *Us Weekly* “Body Evolution” feature on Aguilera, *People* wrote carefully about the singer’s “figure” (“Star Tracks: Curve” 2012:11). The image of the singer featured in the front section called “Star Tracks” provides the suggestive caption: “Curve Appeal: Christina Aguilera flaunts her figure before announcing the nominations for the American Music Awards. ‘I embrace my body,’ says Aguilera. ‘I embrace everything about myself.’ The use of the word “curve,” which can be seen as a positive descriptor, is used strategically by the magazines to suggest thicker or heavier bodies, which for celebrities is generally a negative attribute. In the “Star Tracks” section of its May 5, 2012 issue, *People* ran a photo of teen star Demi Lovato, who was struggling with drug abuse and an eating disorder, with the caption, “While on her world tour, Demi Lovato took a break to hit the beach with friends-- and show off her curves in a bikini.” Lovato appears very thin, but the magazine still refers to her “curves,” which *People* uses as a code word for fat. Another similar example is the instance in which *People* included a photo of Lady Gaga in their November 19, 2012 Star Tracks section,

shortly after there had been much media attention around her weight gain. The photo caption reads: "Poolside Laugh: San Juan, Nov. 2: Flaunting her curves during a break from her Born This Way Ball tour, Lady Gaga relaxes poolside with one of her album's producers, DJ White Shadow." This particular picture is a highly unflattering photo in which no "curves" are visible, yet it still mentions her curves simply to allude to the fact that she does not look as skinny as she once did. The image was placed next to a photo of actress Rumer Willis looking extremely thin with a caption stating that she "turns heads" ("Star Tracks: Poolside" 2012:16). On November 7, 2012, *People's* web edition of "Star Tracks" featured a similar photo of Lady Gaga in a bathing suit with the caption: "Curves Ahead: Lady Gaga flaunts her fuller figure" ("Star Tracks: Curves Ahead" 2012) (see Image 56).

Us Weekly's "Body Evolution" photo essay on Khloe Kardashian employs similar tactics to describe her changing body (see Image 57). The essay starts out with the praise, "Go, girl! Khloe Kardashian is rocking her best body ever, thanks to a careful, healthful weight loss and a consistently active lifestyle. Click through to see her amazing transformation" ("Khloe Kardashian's" 2013). Immediately *Us* begins ambiguously commenting on the ridicule Khloe faces as the "fat" Kardashian. The caption for a 2007 photo reads, "When Khloe Kardashian and her family let viewers into their household for a new E! reality show in 2007, the 'tough skinned' Kardashian had no idea how mean some viewers and online critics would be—instantly billing her as 'the fat sister'" (ibid.). A 2008 photo in the series refers to her showing off her "curves," but what is clear based on the context of the caption is that "curves" is used as a polite way of saying fat. The caption reads: "Emotional Eating: Kardashian showed off her curves in an emerald green dress in 2008, but admits that her weight was always a battle. 'As a girl, you have baby fat,' she explained. During her parents' divorce in 1991, she said, 'My brother [Rob] and I

were always heavy. They gave us food to keep us company. All we did was eat crap” (ibid.). Again, through this careful verbiage and through the use of the anonymous “viewers and online critics,” *Us* is able to criticize her weight in a way that does not directly implicate them. The photos starting in 2009 are the beginning of the yo-yo commenting, as the captions range year to year commenting on her weight loss and gain. A 2009 caption says, “Slimming Down: Debuting a slimmer figure in a tight purple frock in 2009, Kardashian revealed she did it by using the weight loss program QuickTrim (all three Kardashian sisters were spokeswomen for the product). ‘QuickTrim is seriously amazing and I swear it works!!!’ she wrote in a blogpost” (ibid.). This caption is an opportunity to see how the magazines not only want to provide the most detailed and personal information about the changes in celebrity bodies, but that the magazines and celebrities are also working together with diet companies, as Jackie pointed out earlier.

Now that the specific diet information has been shared, the magazine moves on to focusing on her exercise program. “Making Progress: Taking a break from QuickTrim, Kardashian stepped out in 2011 with a more toned bod, largely due to upping her exercise regimen—doing 30 minutes of cardio daily, boxing, hiking, and even using a sauna suit to work out. ‘It’s like a trash bag that makes you sweat,’ she told *Us* at the time. Her goal? To be bikini ready! ‘Most girls in their 20s get to be in bikinis around their friends,’ she explained. ‘I was never that girl’” (ibid.). The phrasing of this last caption insinuates that weight loss is always the goal—because she has a “more toned body,” she has made “progress”; this phrasing, and this coverage contributes directly to the concerns Jackie had about the effects of body team work, as well as the concerns of the earlier *People* magazines that raise the question of “how media images of celebrities teach kids to hate their bodies” (Schneider et al. 1996) (see Image 39). The

take away is that if you are not losing weight, you are not making progress. By 2012, according to *Us*, “Kardashian was feeling sexy enough to flaunt her curves in a leg-bearing red dress— haters be damned. ‘I’m a size 6/8,’ she told *Us Weekly* in the past. ‘If I weren’t in Hollywood world, no one would ever say I was fat’ (“Khloe Kardashian’s” 2013). Again, we see clearly through the juxtaposition of the caption and the Kardashian quote that “curves” is being used as a substitute for “fat,” despite the fact that Kardashian has just asserted that she is a size 6/8, which should convey that she is not fat. It is also evident that the “haters” are, again, ambiguous, and that the very ambiguity of these so-called haters is what provides permission for *Us* to address her weight. Lastly, for the final 2013 photo, the magazine once again insinuates that thinner is better: “Rocking Body: Stepping out on May 22, 2013 in a red-and-white striped dress, the 5 ft. 10 in. star was looking better than ever, showing off her 20-pound weight loss” (ibid.). Even though she was a size 6/8, 20-pound weight loss made her look “better than ever,” shedding those unwanted “curves.”

Us Weekly’s website also featured a photo special entitled “We’re Tired of the Fat Jokes!” (“We’re Tired” 2009). This photo essay featured images and quotes from several celebrities who have, apparently, been called fat. By whom, the magazine does not disclose, but the celebrities in question are all celebrities who have been featured in the magazine. Here are a few examples of the quotes featured: “Kelly Clarkson: ‘For seven years it’s been happening. It’s like, “OK cool, the fat joke,”’ she said earlier this year. ‘I don’t think artists are ever the ones who have the problem with their weight, it is other people’”; “Jennifer Love Hewitt: ‘A size 2 is not fat!’ she seethed on her blog after critics mocked Web photos of her in a bikini in 2007” (ibid.). Much like Tyra Banks’ January 2007 cover of *People*, a bikini-clad Love Hewitt was featured on the December 17, 2007, cover of *People* with the caption: “Stop calling me fat!”

Thus, the magazines are in an ironic and precarious position as they simultaneously replicate the critiques of celebrity bodies, while also providing a space for them to denounce the critiques.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion: Celebrity “News” Media: Reexamining and Redefining What News Means

“I was watching the news, or my news—TMZ. I don't watch ‘real’ news because that is depressing. There aren't any good Samaritan stories, it's all about bombing and stuff, so I'd probably cry.”

—Reality television star at Hollywood red carpet event

“Before I knew it I was a junior [in college] making freelance money from a weekly magazine and I thought, ‘Wow! This is really fun reporting. It is very easy. Why would I want to go report on hard news that is really depressing?’”

—Sandra, former freelance reporter for multiple celebrity weekly magazines

“Media is the number one export of this country. The business of America is entertaining people. The US does a lot of other things too, but the media has never been more ubiquitous, never been more challenged, never been more important than it is now.”

—Senior Editor at a celebrity weekly magazine

On August 20, 2011, I found my trusty car “Old Faithful” in desperate need of a wash, so I headed to a neighborhood car wash (a very southern California experience). In Los Angeles, there are car washes on nearly every corner and on any given day, you can see as many as 30 people standing around on their phones waiting for their cars to be hand washed by mostly Latino men who rely on our tips to earn a living. On this particular day at the Overland Carwash, near Overland and Venice Boulevards in Culver City, everyone was crammed inside of the small convenience store attached to the carwash. The store had a television that was tuned to Channel 5 news, KTLA, which was broadcasting parts of Kim Kardashian’s wedding to now ex-husband Kris Humphries. This was not unique to Los Angeles. The televised two-part wedding special on E!, titled *Kim Kardashian’s Fairytale Wedding*, garnered 4.2 million viewers (Stelter 2011).

The only other time I saw people crowded around a television in public was when I was in Manhattan on September 11th and I found myself in a crowd of pedestrians outside of the P.C. Richards electronic store on 14th street, near Union Square, trying to get a glimpse of what was happening. On September 11, 2001, we were crowded around watching the Twin Towers fall to pieces. Ten years later, I find myself in a group of people watching Kim Kardashian's wedding on television just as intently as on that terrible day in 2001. This is not only emblematic of the rise of celebrity culture as a form of escapism, but also illuminates how serious entertainment news is to people today and ultimately calls into question how we define *news*.

Reconsidering News and Journalism

Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which celebrity-focused news is an important cultural product that has crossed the boundary into so-called "hard news." Media and the news they features are, at their core, cultural products. They are the results of cultural and creative economies. Thus, they must adapt to cultural shifts. The meanings of media, news, and consumption of media and news must be constantly revised to address the contemporary moment.

As discussed in chapter two, "news" and "journalism" are two intertwined, mutually dependent, and subjective terms. Journalism is the profession of reporting news, but news, and thus news media, is difficult to delineate. Our understanding of news therefore determines our qualification of *who* is doing journalism. Disparate notions of news necessitate a broader and more inclusive working definition of news and journalism. Journalist and communication studies scholar Barbie Zelizer notes that journalism is generally defined in terms of hard news "and this has created a bias that undermines scholars' capacity to embrace journalism in all of its different

forms, venues, and practices” (2004:6). It is my hope that through this celebrity journalism-focused project, I have created a space that helps foster our capacity to embrace journalism in a more expansive way that will broaden the scope of news ethnography and, thus, our understanding of contemporary news and media production (Bird 2010:3,5).

In the introductory section of this project, I laid out similarities between journalism and anthropology, and also briefly explored the ways in which meanings of news need to be reevaluated to bear on the present moment. Because notions of what news and journalism mean affect everything from the celebrity media producers’ sense of their professional selves and lives, to the crafting of anti-paparazzi laws, it is important to have an ongoing dialogue about what news and journalism mean today. This conclusion focuses on the perspectives of the media producers I worked with on this project regarding how they classify their own work and how they define news and journalism more broadly. It is my hope that this material can be useful in order to understand the ways in which celebrity affects news, as well as the ways in which elite and exclusive ideas about what “hard news” is creates a place from which celebrity media producers, like paparazzi, are made subject to harsher restrictions than other photojournalists. While some might disagree with the notion that paparazzi are photojournalists, this, again, is dependent upon what we classify as news. The reality is that paparazzi photographs are used by all media outlets, including routinely by so-called “hard news” media outlets.

In the conclusion of his book *Ordinary People and the Media*, media studies scholar Graeme Turner suggests “that the overwhelming global trend towards the commercialization of the media as entertainment industries encourages an alternative formulation – that we are now entering an age in which entertainment has become increasingly important” (Turner 2010:10). Yet, Turner asserts, shifts in the media “have not reduced their social, political, and cultural

centrality” (ibid.). Thus, a broader and more inclusive definition of news and journalism should not and cannot diminish the cultural significance of news media.

As we have long since learned, approaching popular media production as a unidirectional monster, as Horkheimer and Adorno famously did ([1947] 1997), is far too simplistic. Similarly, attributing the current state of media entirely to consumers’ desires, since they now have more direct say in media production with the ability of internet programming to catalog which topics are generating the most interest in real-time, removes the onus from those getting paid by media corporations to produce media content and disregards the cultural politics that go into media production practices. Media production has always been and remains a dynamic exchange between both producers and consumers, and today the division between the two is blurrier than ever, as news media “find new ways to incorporate user-generated content into their menus of entertainment” (Turner 2010:10).

In twenty-first century America, celebrity images are everywhere: the magazine racks of our grocery stores, gyms, and doctor’s offices; the nightly news; talk shows; billboards; and, of course, on the internet. This project has offered insight into how and why celebrities have come to play such a major role even in the so-called news media. In 2008, visual artist Jonathan Horowitz created a piece that speaks critically to this era of celebrity-focused news. Horowitz’s piece *CBS Evening News/www.Britneycrotch.org*, which showed at MoMA PSI from February 22 to September 14, 2009, combines the lower half of the infamous “crotch shot” of Britney Spears with an upper-torso image of CBS News anchor Katie Couric, “creating the unsettling effect that the vulva looms under Couric’s anchor desk or that, conversely, Spears’ vulva has grown Couric’s head” (Schwartz 2011:225). This image visualizes how news/celebrity have become conflated, as it features an icon of American news media combined with an icon of

celebrity obsession. This is news today, for better or worse, and it should be treated and analyzed as such instead of fought against. Analyzing the state of “news” in America today can shed light on contemporary American lives and goals, culture and society.

In the sections that follow, I will address celebrity media producers’ own positions on what news is and whether or not they view celebrity news as “real news.” One *Us Weekly* reporter said: “I don’t consider celebrity news real news because news is something that actually affects my life. And I don’t think what celebrities do affect our lives.” But when people develop imagined relationships with stars, when people care deeply about those stars even if they are one-sided relationships, and when people discuss those stars with friends, family, and peers, it does affect their lives. This chapter will offer an analysis of the understandings of media producers who facilitate the development of these relationships and may not always appreciate the complex implications of their work. After offering the perspectives of the media producers to help advance understandings news and journalism, I will briefly consider the difference between and cultural significance of gossip and news. Finally, I will point to a future direction of my research, which is a natural extension of the conclusion. Specifically, I explore my future research plans to examine California’s anti-paparazzi laws and the ways in which they are entirely dependent upon definitions of news and journalism, since the laws presume that the work paparazzi do is not photojournalism, despite the use of their photos by major news media organizations.

Reporters and Photographers Define News

As an anthropologist doing research in Los Angeles in a field in which I had years of experience, I found that the reporters engaged with me on a very deep level; they are conflicted about their role as producers of media that many of them believe is diluting news, journalism, and the depth of American culture. In contrast, I see the work as *deeply* affecting American

culture, and the people producing these changes need to be understood, as do their publications, tactics, reliability, and intentions.

A former Google employee recalled to me that the “Google news” tab did not originally include stories from the weekly magazines, but it eventually began to include them as celebrity “news” became more popular. Decisions about what news is, and whether it includes celebrity stories, is something that celebrity journalists grapple with.

The Hard News Journalist Perspective

Sam, a journalist for a major national news network, covers politics. Even as a journalist for a so-called “hard news” outlet (Bird 2010; Zelizer 2004:6), he has extensive experience in observing the power of celebrity in news. In fact, the draw of celebrity has had real effects on the political reporting he does:

I think the internet has made it a lot harder to say, “Well, this issue of special interests spending is important, so we’re going to cover it,” because now you can see how many hits your stories get. You’re faced every day with the fact that, if you do something about Bristol Palin [Sarah Palin’s daughter], that’s going to do better than a serious story about campaign finance reform. There are a lot of pressures to cater to the fact that you can see what people want, and what they want isn’t always what you think they should have. So I do think news has changed. It has become more focused on what the consumer wants, but that’s not a good thing necessarily because what the consumer wants is often a sort of a short-term fix. If you put a plate of candy and a well-rounded dinner in front of someone, they often eat all the candy but they know on some level they’d be better off if they ate the dinner, but they just can’t help it because the candy is right there. That’s what the internet has done. It’s just like a giant plate of candy. People are more interested in Bristol Palin because it’s gossip and it’s also work to worry about serious issues. People also like to have their own biases confirmed. So if you do a story that’s Obama has screwed something up, all the conservatives will click on that story. Or Michele Bachmann said something stupid, all the liberals will click on that. But when you’re just doing a “This is why Washington is screwed up story” there is no bias confirmed there. It’s sort of, this is the situation and people just aren’t inclined click on that. And the Bristol Palin story, you know, it’s more of a celebrity or gossip story. The Palins are a celebrity family and people are more interested in that kind of stuff than they are politics. Because politics is a little bit of work and Bristol Palin is not.

As Sam explains, the internet has made media more consumer-driven than ever. Consumers are thus able to assert their own desires that yield real (and often immediate) results. The results include the shifting of hard news to personality-driven journalism. While personality journalism has a long history (see e.g. Ponce de Leon 2002), in the present moment there is a more precise ability to gauge the significance of personality-focused journalism on readers:

You get these characters, and they're often women. Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin, Christine O'Donnell in Delaware, who become – you end up covering them so much for sort of their wackiness that you wonder, am I covering politics here? Am I covering celebrities who happen to be in politics? It's about the characters. So politics really has become like celebrity journalism in a lot of ways, but that's because people don't care about the important stuff. Nobody cares about politics. Readers don't care about politics. If people would just start paying attention to policy then I would happily write about it, but they don't. And I need to pin my traffic goals. Before we measured hits with the internet, we could delude ourselves into thinking people cared about policy. But now we know they don't. It's ratings. I think journalists would love if there were more of a desire for hard news. I think most journalists would rather cover hard news. But, if you're a producer at CNN and you go up with like four minutes about the economy and the debt ceiling or you get four minutes on Lindsay Lohan, you're gonna do better with Lohan. And you don't want to lose your job. Ultimately you go where the ratings are. What I try to do is balance it. I'll write a Sarah Palin post and then I'll write a more serious post. And I'll know that the traffic comes from the Palin post but at least we're still getting the other stuff out there. Google puts out their top trends of what people are searching, and a lot of journalism now, or whatever you want to call it is people chasing after those trends. So you'll see that Google has Michele Bachmann as number two and will say okay we should do a Michele Bachmann post because we might get a good Google hit out of that. So instead of the news dictating what you're going to do, you're having what people are searching for dictating your news judgment, which is obviously not the way it traditionally went. But of course if she's trending, there's a reason so usually there is news there.

Not only are the magazines offering the escapism I spoke of in the introduction, but the hard news media outlets are as well. Since 9-11, the US has been engaged continuously in war(s). Thus, while the *People* prospectus (Fuerbringer 1973) talks about post-war need for escapism and while my own personal story shed light on the new demand for post 9-11

escapism, the escapism now is fueled by the perpetual state of being at war while not wanting to engage intellectually with these international affairs. In the present moment, there has also been a series of tragedies within the US, from the killing of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and so many other people of color, highlighting the continual struggle for racial equality in the US that starkly contrasts with the discourse of the post-racial Obama America. Again, celebrity reporting provides an escape, as well as a sense of community and connection because of the intimate details that facilitate imaginary relationships between readers and celebrities. As Melissa Rivers said, celebrities “make people happy.” How they make people “happy” becomes immaterial at some level; their job is to entertain and they are succeeding. The journalists who work to shape and promote celebrities, thus, also contribute to the happiness, escapism, and community this industry offers its consumers. As the reporters at the forefront of the shaping of news mediated relationships between consumers and celebrities, it is significant to also understand the perspective of the celebrity journalists themselves in the current state of news.

The Celebrity Journalist Perspective

The notion that celebrity journalism is not “news” in the sense of “hard news” in the traditional perspective has also affected celebrity journalists’ feelings about their own work. Broadly, celebrity journalists acknowledge that celebrity news is incorporated into all forms of news media, but they still experience their own work as something perceived as different than hard news. When I asked celebrity reporters about their understandings of themselves as journalists and news media producers, I received the following responses:

Jasmine: “I consider myself an entertainment journalist. Sometimes it does feel silly for me to even call myself a journalist when I’m doing entertainment stuff.”

Joy: “During my time at the magazine, celebrity news and hard news started converging. When you have the first story on the *Today Show* is on Britney Spears, you know what’s happening. They report it and they say ‘the tabloids,’ but they’re reporting it. There was a

definite convergence because everyone wants to know what was happening. Brad and Angelina and the kids was top rated news on *Good Morning America* and the *Today Show*. I always felt that it was important to know what was happening beyond the celebrity. I can't just do that. That's not valuable information to me. It is, but it isn't. I think the convergence came from an inability to ignore. Too many people are talking about the celebrities. Maybe the BBC and the CNN can stay away from it, but even CNN now has entertainment coverage. And CNN covers the red carpets and they're doing all that stuff, too. I could be on a red carpet next to CNN and AP. They are there too. Celebrity news has gone mainstream. The big events like the Oscars have always been mainstream 'news,' but a lot of the hard news outlets are covering the smaller stuff in a frequency that I just didn't expect.

Sandra: "But I think anything that pertains to a famous person could be titled as news. Is it news? Is it substantial? Is it something that is really going to benefit our society? Is it going to benefit us by reading this crap? Not really, but you know what, people read it. I think it's all about what people feed into. As long as people keep reading these stories and keep looking at these pictures, I mean it is news; it is news because that's what people make it to be. I follow politics and when President Obama gave the thumbs up to start attacking Syria, that to me is news; that is huge. That affects everyone. That affects men and women, the families of men and women, that affects the families of Syria, that affects the US as an economy. That to me is something I want to read about because it has an impact on everyone. But Anderson Cooper is reporting on Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton. It is mindboggling to think that it has come down to that, but honestly the reality is that it comes down to ratings; it comes down to numbers and money. That is what drives journalism in the media. Unfortunately people give a crap about all these famous people, whether they are B-List or A-List, people want to know what they are doing and what they are not doing. That is why we are seeing CNN and Fox News do all these pieces and segments on celebrities, because that is what is selling and they need to stay on the air. CNN was having a lot of issues keeping their viewers. Fox News was beating them. CNN was the leading evening news and here they are struggling so why not throw a couple of pieces in about celebrity breakdowns and Charlie Sheen? Why not have him on Piers Morgan to get the ratings up or get more exposure? They have to cave into what society is demanding. It is supply and demand; basic economics.

Ron: "Celebrity reporting can feel stupid. When something really serious happens – something major newsy – it always makes everybody kind of look at, 'Brittany Spears got married again.' It's like, 'That's not news; that's crap. We need to care about this disaster.' Well, we don't always care. It really is a global village. The conversations that people have at home are like, 'Can you believe that they are going to put a red light in at this street. It's going to fuck up all the traffic and it's important to our town' to 'Did you know my hairdresser is fucking my pharmacist?' It's just on a mega level about famous people or political people."

Sylvia: "Celebrity has become so big that when CNN is covering breakups and stuff, unfortunately, that is news. Everyone has to serve their audience and that's what sells. Every news media outlet tends to sell out because every media outlet covers celebrity. It's

not just CNN with *Showbiz Tonight*. I remember being jarred a few times when CNN—not just during *Showbiz Tonight* but during regular CNN news coverage—they were talking about politics or whatever and then they talk about Beyoncé being pregnant. You're just like, 'Wow!' But you can't blame them. If we were in journalism for altruistic reasons we'd all be doing charity work. You have to sell advertising, you have to sell it or you have to be okay with being a total sell-out. News is anything that your readers or viewers are interested in, that's all it is. We could fight it as much as we want but nothing is going to change. Look what happened with the Hollywood Reporter? [Janice Min from *Us Weekly*] from the celebrity world had to come in and turn that around. She turned it from an entertainment news publication that was hard business news and explored how Hollywood ran and now they've turned into the glossy weekly. So what is news is whatever your readers are going to turn the channel on or buy that magazine for.

Samantha: "I had trouble with stories like Lindsay Lohan going to jail and Britney Spears shaving her head being lead news story. I still do. I think it indulged that bad behavior. Charlie Sheen, as a more recent example, was everywhere. *Dateline* did an hour special. *20/20* did an hour special. Everybody wanted to have their hand in the pot to attract more viewers, more readers. And that, to me, wasn't news. That to me was, this person is very ill. And Britney shaving her head, clearly she had some sort of mental illness and it shouldn't be made fun of. It should be treated, and she had so many people taking advantage of her. She had no sense of reality. And Charlie Sheen is the same thing. This is a guy who was making \$2 million a week."

Stacey: "I think generally people think of celebrity news as its own sort of category for sure. However, CNN you know has celebrity news on their website every day. I mean, Prince William and Kate Middleton getting married was news. And the magazine websites have changed what news is as well. Before, news had to be like a major life event to warrant space in a magazine and carry through, and now it doesn't have to be. It can just be something very small because you're not competing against anything for space in the magazines since the website can include everything. And now the stuff that's in the magazines, they almost don't want things to be too newsy, because the news has already been covered on the website all week long and people know what the news is and they don't know if whatever news that is gonna change by the time they're on newsstands, so it's very different. So news now I think is something that can be defined as whatever's happening from like minute to minute in a celebrity's personal life, whereas before I think it would have to be something more consequential."

The comments by celebrity journalists echo Sam's perspective that journalists claim they would rather cover hard news and blame the celebrity focus of our media on the desires of consumers, ratings, and advertisers. It is emphatically a perspective that media content is consumer-driven. If a more inclusive notion of hard news were popularized, there might be a shift from the judgmental and classist discussions that emerge from the discourse presented here about the

readers not wanting or being interested in real news. An increased sociocultural understanding and awareness around the reasons for this desire in consumers—like escapism and desire for community—could perhaps shift the onus for the increased focus on celebrity news from the consumer to issues like the economy, politics, and international affairs. The current climate of celebrity culture should be dismissed as simply pandering to the consumer without a more complex analysis of contemporary issues of economy, politics, and community.

Still, as media producers themselves express, they want to provide the consumer with the material they desire. As he was ridiculed for his work as a paparazzo by both audience members and fellow panelists in May 2012 at an event at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, paparazzo Galo Ramirez responded by saying, “I’m giving the audience what they want. So if it’s bullshit they want, it’s bullshit I’ll give them. It’s very simple.” Actor Adrien Grenier offered support, “I’d like to just defend that bullshit for a second because life can’t all be about elevated thinking and transcendence. Sometimes you just gotta live and have a little fun. It’s like the equivalent of going to a dinner party just for sustenance; just to eat for sustenance. You go for all the frills. And sometimes the frills aren’t that lofty, sometimes it’s just a basic joke or just little banter, so let’s not just let the tabloid be the scapegoat for all of us who have to take ultimate responsibility about what experiences we want to consume. You choose.”

Gossip or News?

“[Gossip is] a form of interaction that in most societies variously provokes scorn, derision, and contempt, but also enormous interest. Precisely because it is the object of such contradictory sentiments, gossip embodies the complexities of social life. Confined to the intimacy of domestic contexts, gossip can nevertheless have a long reach, affect important events, and determine biographies. Through gossip, people make sense of what surrounds them, interpreting events, people, and the dynamics of history.”

—Niko Besnier,⁷¹ anthropologist

While staying at a bed and breakfast about an hour outside of New York City, I found myself sitting at breakfast with a group of strangers. My friend Anna’s mother owns the bed and breakfast, so I made myself useful by helping her in the kitchen. As I overheard the conversation transpiring at the breakfast table, the topic turned to celebrities. Nobody at the table wanted to talk about themselves, but, within five minutes of sitting down together, the group of strangers carried on an intense dialogue for over an hour. The conversation centered on their various opinions about specific celebrities, but also included their personal connections to celebrities, or imagined connections.

One guest, a twenty-something secretary at a New York law firm, Cassandra, had brought a copy of *Us Weekly* to the table and commented about the cover saying, “Jessica (Simpson)—she was way too skinny when she was with Nick. She looks better now.”

Another guest Sarah, in her forties followed, “Did you see what Lady Gaga wore to her sister’s graduation? The beekeeper hat? And then did you see what she wore to the Mets game? The Mets hate her now. I hate her too. She’s too much. Why does she want to draw so much attention to herself?”

⁷¹ (2009:2-3)

“Well you know my friend’s friend’s boyfriend is her hair stylist,” another guest chimed in. “He has to be there for her all the time. He basically is her. I mean he has to work so hard and they pay him a ton of money.”

“Yea, well my son’s friend’s friend went to high school with her and she was really normal,” Sarah said.

“Yea, I heard that she was just a hippy. Totally normal. But she told this friend’s friend that she was going to be a super star. I guess she knew. Yea, but a lot of people say that, they don’t always become famous.”

“Did you see the video with her and Beyoncé?” Cassandra asked. “I mean, what was that all about. It’s just a PR thing. It’s just celebrities being manufactured. It’s fake. And what about Lindsay Lohan? I’m tired of these celebrities getting special treatment. She should just be in jail. Oh, and I can’t stand Miley Cyrus.”

Anna, who was seated with the guests said, “In the end, it’s entertainment.”

“Yea but some people take it more seriously than that,” I said, as I served one of the guests their breakfast. “They really feel connected to them.”

Just as I said that, Cassandra started up again. “Catherine Zeta Jones is very thin now. She has an eating disorder and everything. I hate her. Put her in Vegas. Even on the red carpet, she’s not nice to look at. She doesn’t have the facial expression or the style.” Cassandra expressed her strong opinions about someone she has never seen in person. “You know who I love? Sandra.”

“Who?” One of the guests asked.

“Sandra Bullock,” Cassandra clarified. “I love her. It’s crazy how the adoption came at the exact right time when she had nothing. Right, now she has the kid, she got rid of him [ex-

husband Jesse James]. I feel so bad for her, she seemed so happy. I felt really bad. To be honest, I never understood the attraction to him. She's so girl next door. So vulnerable. I feel bad for her that she's subjected to these headlines. Let her live her life without being turned into this pathetic character."

The conversation about celebrities fascinated me. It was as if no one could think of anything else to talk about. It seemed to stem from a combination of people seeking anonymity by focusing on others, and also wanting specifically to focus on fame. People want to feel close to fame, and talking about it makes people feel connected to it (Anderson 1983; Gamson 1994). This very typical conversation is demonstrative of the ways in which individuals not only have ideas and opinions about celebrities, but also feel levels of closeness—calling them by first names, and having emotional reactions towards them. Celebrities become parts of the lives of many people they do not know, like the women discussing celebrities here, at a bed and breakfast in New York.

In her work on celebrity-focused media, Anne Helen Petersen declared that the celebrity weekly magazines accomplished the transition of "gossip" into "news" (2011:205). Gossip is broadly considered news about someone's personal life. Thus, gossip and news are often intertwined both informally through conversation and formally through news media (Dracklé 2010). But what of gossip on a mass scale? When public figures are gossiped about, does it still serve the role sociologist and ethnographer Jorg Bergmann suggested, which is that the news to be communicated as gossip "is always 'news-for-a-social-unity'" ? (Bergmann 1993:48). Through the imaginary relationships that result from the ways in which celebrities are manufactured and shaped through celebrity media, celebrities become common ground for strangers to discuss, perhaps contributing to some kind of a new social unity in a postmodern

state. Arjun Appadurai notes the significance of American celebrity media, both print and film, and how reception of such media was his first experience with “modernity” (1996:1). I am especially interested in how American celebrities emerge as globally known citizens of an imagined (global) community. Appadurai’s notion of “*mediascapes*” furthers the idea that individuals might imagine communities based on personages in the media. Imagining the lives of others can lead one to imagine a connection (Caughey 1994), even a relationship to such lives (after all, the mediated personage may be a “stranger,” but you often know more about him or her than you do about your neighbor). These celebrities are common ground, are connection, are community. In the case of celebrities, as the previous chapters have shown, there is a desire, demand for, and industry built around gathering personal news about celebrities. The point at which that which might be considered gossip becomes “hard news” is what I consider here. If the news media determine what news means in practice, then I think it is clear and obvious that celebrity news, whether it initially classified as gossip or not, becomes hard news. Essentially, it is formalized gossip on a mass scale.

When something happens in a celebrity’s life, it can truly affect individuals who do not have formal connections to that celebrity. Because of this, it has become impossible to draw a line between hard news and celebrity-focused news. I believe it is time to embrace this new, more inclusive, and practice-driven understanding of news.

The May 14, 2014, episode of Jon Stewart’s the *Daily Show* featured a segment entitled, “A Roc Nation in Crisis: Trouble in Beyadise,” which elaborated on the (“hard”) news media’s extensive coverage of a fight that took place in an elevator between rapper Jay-Z and his sister-in-law Solange Knowles (Stewart 2014; “Jay Z” 2014). “It’s been a hard time for the news media lately,” Stewart said. “You’ve got the absence of any new missing Malaysian planes. CNN is so

desperate they actually covered some guy who said he found the Santa Maria... Then it happened: A miracle.” (Stewart 2014). The segment went on to show various clips of so-called hard news networks, from Fox News to CNN, showing the surveillance footage of the kerfuffle and speculating about what might have caused the fight. CNN’s program *New Day* dedicated several minutes to discussion about the newsworthiness of the fight. While *Wall Street Journal* editor Christopher John Farley asserted that the fight was “not newsworthy” and did not merit news media coverage, anchors Don Lemon and Chris Cuomo expressed their feelings that coverage of the fight was necessary. Cuomo thought Farley’s ideas about what newsworthy means were too idealistic but, echoing the perspectives of the journalists I interviewed, he still added, “I wish I didn’t have to cover it” (“Beyoncé’s Sister” 2014). Similar to the comments from Sam earlier in this chapter, media producers working for historically hard news outlets express a certain level of disdain for this coverage, and yet acknowledge that they must cover celebrity news to satiate their consumers. Still, if there is to be a true shift in evaluations of news, those producing it need to embrace it for all of its complexities. When Jay-Z and wife Beyoncé finally made an official statement about the elevator ordeal, it was picked up and reported on by CNN, *Time*, *Huffington Post*, ABC news, *Variety*, *Vogue*, *New York Daily News*, MTV, *Salon*, *People* and virtually every other outlet imaginable. News is both what people want to know about and what journalists choose offer through their work. Since the next phase of my project is anchored in what news and journalism mean in the context of paparazzi, I will continue to research and contemplate meanings of news.

The Next Phases of This Research

As I elaborated on in section three of this dissertation, the next phase of this project will focus on law, labor, and the Latino paparazzi of Los Angeles. I will examine the anti-paparazzi laws, which build precisely on the subject matter of this conclusion. The laws are crafted around the notion that celebrity photography is not news and, therefore, paparazzi should have special restrictions not applicable to news photographers. What does this mean for so-called hard news outlets that constantly use paparazzi images and video? How can we actually legally define the parameters of news and, thus, who is considered a legitimate news producer? Paparazzi photograph anything having to do with celebrities, from daily life routines like pumping gas to visits to courthouses, and are often working alongside reporters, photographers, and videographers who are sent by news agencies (see Image 58).

The passing of anti-paparazzi laws in California, as well as the substantial levels of physical aggression against paparazzi witnessed during the course of my fieldwork, has inspired me to continue researching the work and lives of paparazzi beyond what is included in this project. With the approval of Senate Bill 606, referred to informally by Hollywood celebrities like Kristen Bell as the “pedarazzi” law (“Kristen Bell” 2014), the question of newsworthiness was brought to the forefront, as various outlets began asserting that they would not buy paparazzi photos of children that were not approved by their parents. *People*, of course, included a clause in its statement saying it would still purchase unauthorized photos of celebrity children if the photo had “newsworthiness.” But, of course, this is the reason all photos are purchased. Essentially, it appears this was an instance of lip service to make the celebrities feel like *People* was responding to their demands.

In the public letter by *People* executive editor Jess Cagle, entitled “Why PEOPLE Does Not Support Paparazzi Who Target Celebs’ Kids,” *People* clarified the types of photos they will run of celebrity children:

Of course, we still run a lot of sanctioned photos – like exclusive baby pictures taken with the cooperation of celebrity parents, and photos of stars posing with their kids at events (like a red carpet) where they're expecting and willing to be photographed. But we have no interest in running kids' photos taken under duress. Of course, there may be rare exceptions based on the newsworthiness of photos. And there's always the tough balancing act we face when dealing with stars who exploit their children one day, and complain about loss of privacy the next (Cagle 2014).

There is a tension between the “newsworthiness” caveat cited by Cagle and the anti-paparazzi laws themselves, which are predicated on paparazzi not being journalists and therefore not protected by the first amendment because they are not documenting news. If *People* will now only publish newsworthy photos of celebrity children, but paparazzi are not journalists because they are not documenting news, then how could paparazzi photos possibly meet this standard? In essence, *People*'s letter indicates that paparazzi are only to be seen as journalists documenting *real* news when *People* or other outlets say they are. This is lip service in an attempt to save face with celebrities without actually changing the practices of the magazine. Blame is once again laid on the paparazzi, which creates the illusion that the paparazzi are the only ones violating any moral code. In fact, market forces within the field of large-scale cultural production and the economic capital that these photos can yield for the media corporations are what truly determine which photos are sought after by paparazzi and ultimately published. Rather than attempting to change the practices of celebrity media production from the top down, starting with the purchasing practices of celebrity weekly magazines like *People* and *Us Weekly* (who take no responsibility for the current climate of paparazzi photography despite their usage of the images

paparazzi produce), current legal efforts are instead centered on the laborers who carry out the work demanded by the media outlets and a voraciously consuming public.

Beyond the socio-legal work I plan to carry out on the paparazzi, I see a need for transnational research that will build on this project. My professional experience provides a clear link to my dissertation research. However, my previous academic research experience has mostly focused on Cuba. Rather than viewing my work on Cuban HipHop culture as separate from my experience working for *People* magazine, I find that they are part of a larger body of work addressing how contemporary popular culture and icons are produced through popular media. I hope to eventually research how Cuba has adapted its own versions of such celebrity publications. My ties in Cuba will allow me to expand my US-focused research and eventually include Cuba, and other countries, in my celebrity reporting research as part of a global investigation into how celebrities are manufactured in numerous countries *and* how American celebrities are understood worldwide, in order to analyze the role of the American celebrity system in global popular culture. Because of its place as the hub of worldwide entertainment, and my ties to local celebrity reporters, it was logical to begin this project in Los Angeles. However, the implications of celebrity and the production and consumption of celebrity media are significant on a global level. With local editions of *People* magazine now produced in India and Australia, and a local edition of UK-based magazine *OK!* now produced in 20 countries, there is clearly a developing transnational network of celebrity media production that merits long-term investigation.

APPENDIX A: IMAGE APPENDIX

Image 1: Covers of *Hollywood Reporter* and *People* magazine



Image 2: Red carpet for the premiere of *The Fighter* at TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood (formerly Grauman's Chinese Theater and later Mann's Chinese Theater). This red carpet takes up the entire westbound lane of Hollywood Blvd, between Highland and La Brea. The eastbound lane of the same block is occupied by the red carpet for the premier of the *Tempest*, which took place at the El Capitan theater across the street. December 6, 2010. Photo by author.



Image 3: The reporter for Just Jared stands on the sheet of paper labeled with her outlet. To her left is *People en Español* and to her right is *People*. The barricade blocks the reporters from the celebrities and ensures reporters do not have their feet on the exclusive red carpet. This is at the Alma Awards in Santa Monica on September 11, 2011. Photo by author.



Image 4: Reporters line up in their spots, sandwiched between two sets of metal barricades. An additional set put up between the reporters and the fans. This is the *How Do You Know* movie premiere at Mann's Village Theater in Westwood on December 13, 2010. Photo by author.



Image 5: Weekly magazine reporter researches celebrities and transcribes interviews on the red carpet, while waiting for additional celebrities to arrive. July 23, 2011. Photo by author.

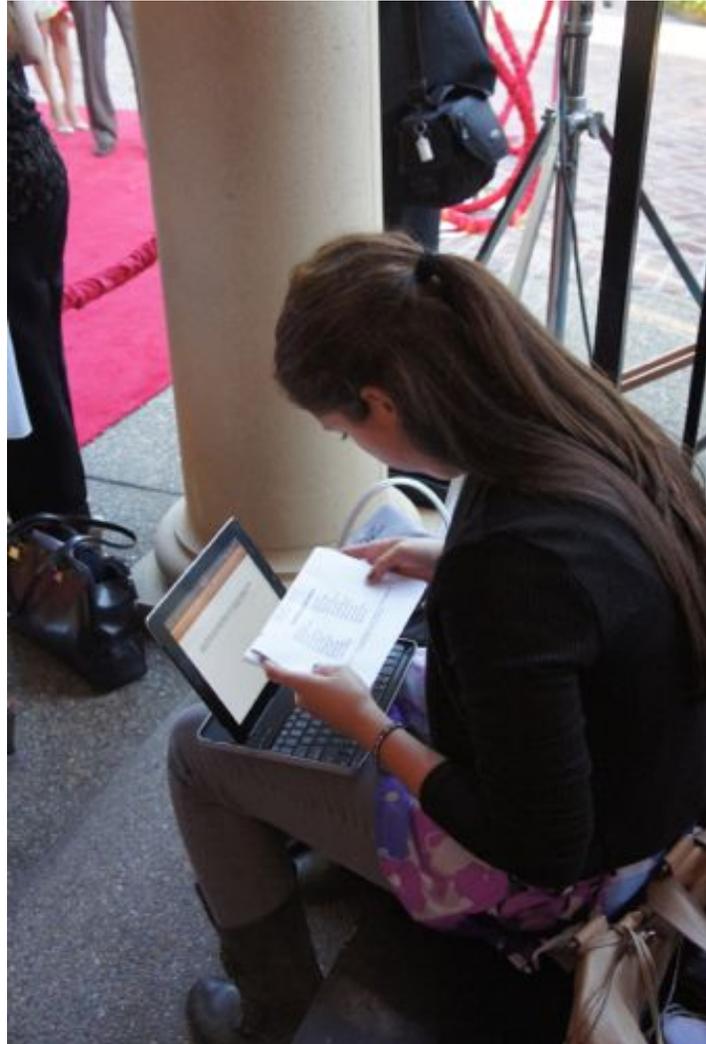


Image 6: Bethenny Frankel doing the obligatory poses for the cameras on the red carpet at the Forbes Celebrity 100 event on June 8, 2011. Photo by author.



Image 7: Red carpet reporter interviewing Sofia Vergara at pre-Emmy party in 2011. The publicist stands close to her client to observe and regulate the interview. Photo by author.



Image 8: Kim Kardashian with then-fiance, now ex-husband, Kris Humphries walking a red carpet event on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood July 20, 2011. Photo by author.



Image 9: Officer directing traffic on Hollywood and Highland in Hollywood because of two premieres happening that night, one at TLC's Chinese Theater and one at el Capitan theater. December 6, 2010. Photo by author.



Image 10: Perez Hilton interviewing Kathy Griffin at the *Glee 3D* movie premiere at Mann's Village Theater in Westwood on August 6, 2011.



Image 11: The press line-up at the June 8, 2011 Forbes event. At this event, I was originally placed after *Life & Style* and I spoke with the PR person at the event to get moved ahead of them. Photo by author.



Image 12: Los Angeles Paparazzi. Photo by Ulises Rios.



Image 13: Local offerings in Los Angeles for how to see the paparazzi in action. The official website of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board has a page dedicated exclusively to paparazzi. Under the links on this page for “Activities & Recreation” and “Points of Interest,” one can stumble upon the heading, “Following the Paparazzi: 12 Places to Spot a Celeb.”

FOLLOWING THE PAPARAZZI: 12 PLACES TO SPOT A CELEB

Print |  Share This



Like swarms of bees searching for nectar, packs of celebrity-seeking paparazzi travel across Los Angeles every hour of the day in search of that next buzzworthy shot. The encounter might be as ordinary as “Grey’s Anatomy” star Katherine Heigl buying groceries, or as extraordinary as Reese Witherspoon having a romantic date at the beach. Witnessing the paparazzi portion of the star-making cycle is an authentic LA experience.

The famous (and infamous) may go to great lengths to protect their privacy, but the paparazzi have uncovered their favorite public haunts. If you’re eager for a celebrity sighting, check out some of the best paparazzi star-stalking spots in the city.



TMZ TOUR 1-855-4TMZ-TOUR
Starline TOURS
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TMZ CUSTOM CHARTERS
BOOK YOUR OWN BUS!

DIRECT FROM THE TOUR!

- ▶ **MI** **SHARE**
- ▶ **MI** **SHARE** **TMZ**

BOOK TICKETS NOW! >

Image 14: Online description of Getty Center Event “Are We All Paparazzi Now?”

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Education Research and Conservation Publications Public Programs About the J.

Are We All Paparazzi Now?

The Getty Center
Date: Wednesday, May 16, 2012
Time: 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Location: Harold M. Williams Auditorium
Admission: Free; reservations recommended. Call (310) 440-7300 or use the "Make Reservation" button below.

Is it fair to vilify paparazzi for chasing down celebrities and tying up traffic when millions of us clamor to see their work on *TMZ* or in *Us Weekly*? And in an age when every film, television, and even reality personality seems to have a team of stylists and publicists choreographing their every move, what role are the stars themselves playing in this industry?

Carla Hall of the *Los Angeles Times* moderates this panel comprised of those immersed in paparazzi culture. Actor **Adrian Grenier**, who produced and directed *Teenage Paparazzo* in an effort to understand what makes the lure of fame so powerful; **Carol Squiers**, curator at the International Center of Photography in New York; **Carolyn Davis**, editor at *Us Weekly*; and **Galo Ramírez**, photographer consider our conflicted feelings



Andy Warhol, New York City, Marie Cosindas, American, 1966.
© Marie Cosindas

Image 15: Galo Ramirez on the job as a paparazzo in LA. Photo courtesy of Galo Ramirez.



Image 16: Galo editing photos in his car and map of Los Angeles. Photo by author.

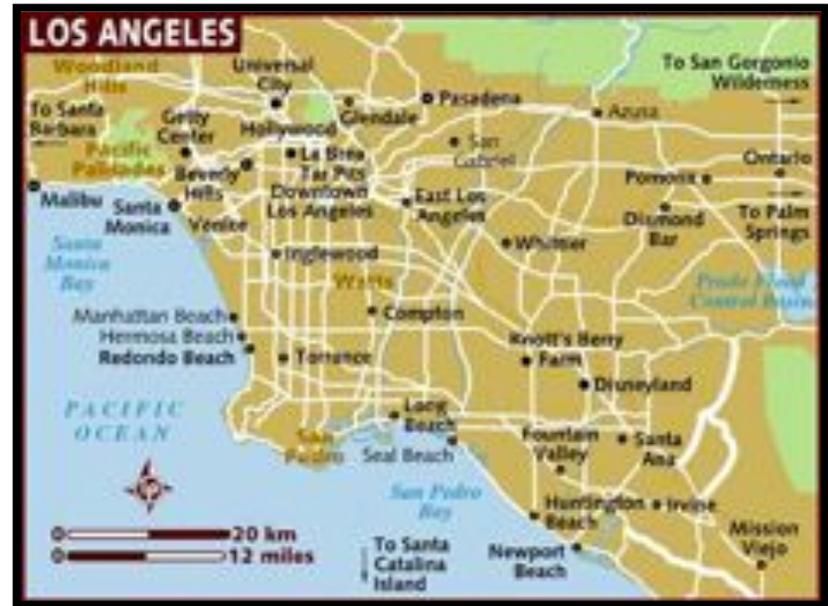
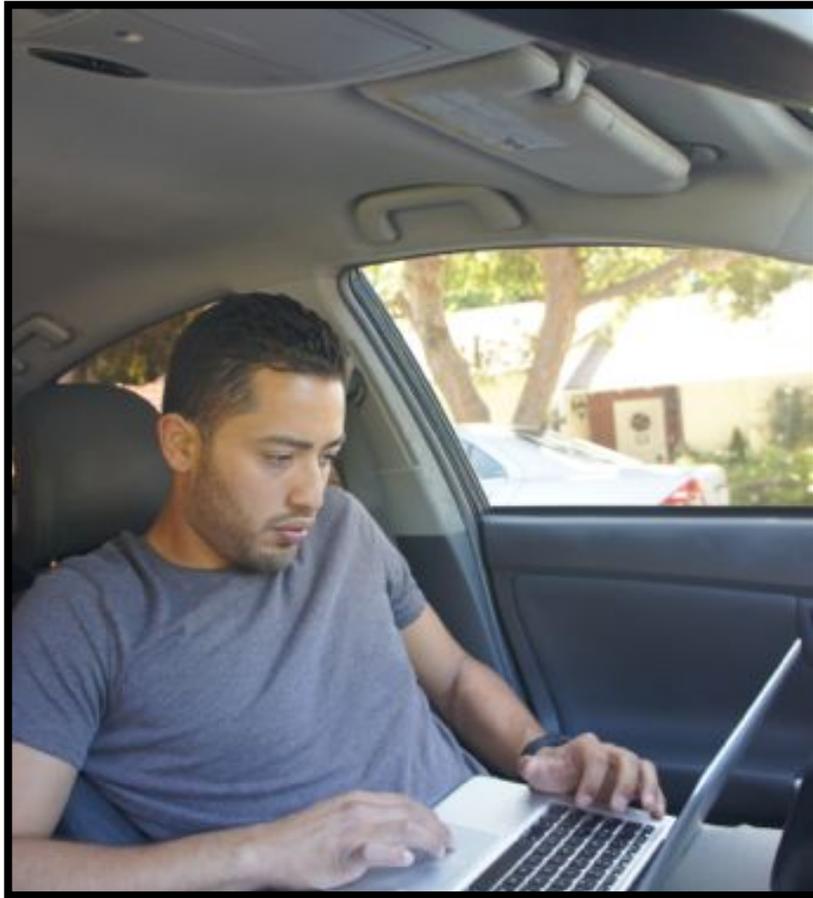


Image 17: Photo of Galo with Britney Spears in his car in 2006. Photo courtesy of Galo Ramirez.



Image 18: Paps by car in Brentwood hanging out while on the job. Photo by author.



Image 19: Paps on job; paps hanging out. Photos courtesy of Galo Ramirez.



Image 20: Vitamin Water Billboard on Lincoln Blvd. in Santa Monica, Calif. Photo by author.



Image 21: "Celeb 4 A Day" Safari Description.

**GO ON
A CELEB 4 A DAY
SAFARI:**

Live in Los Angeles or visiting soon? Want to see a real celebrity up close & be a part of the Hollywood action? Experience an all day excursion with a **real Los Angeles paparazzo** as she goes on assignment searching for the next great celebrity shot.

Safari Package

What you get:

- A Full Day** - on location with a real paparazzo for up to 2 people
- Find Out First Hand** (either by yourself or even with a friend) - what it's like working in the most controversial industry in Hollywood and learn what it takes to get "the shot."
- A Tour** - of Hollywood and secret events & celebrity locations that only those "in the know" can show you.
- A Video Camera** - to use to shoot real footage of your celebrity sightings.
- Sightings** - see some of your favorite celebs up close & personal

Image 22: Published of Will Smith and Jada Pinket-Smith after paps had been tipped off in advance that the couple would pose for photos to help dispel rumors.



Image 23: Photo of Gwen Stefani playing with her son at a park. Photo by Galo Ramirez.



Image 24: Downtown Los Angeles on the set of the video for Jennifer Lopez’s song “Papi.” Photo by author.

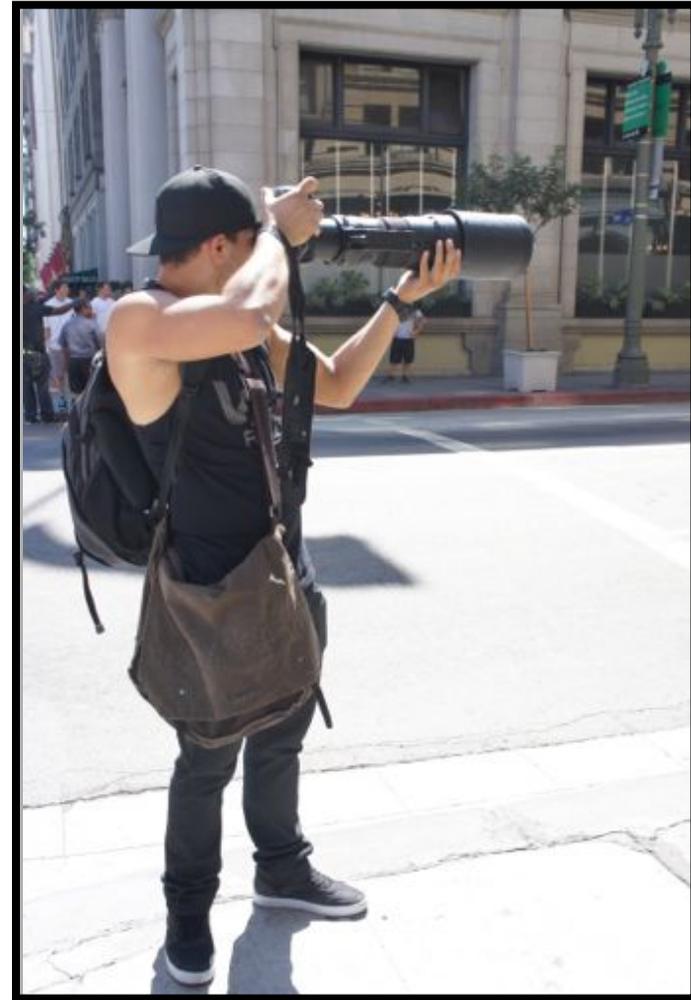


Image 25: European tourists posing and shooting near paps at the downtown Los Angeles photo shoot for Jennifer Lopez. Photo by author.



Image 26: Galo's lens is about one-third his height. Photo by author.



Image 27: Image of Jennifer Lopez getting chased as part of the her music video. Photo by author.



Image 28: Photo of Halle Berry enraged with paparazzo.



Image 29: Paparazzi on the job in Los Angeles. Photos courtesy of Ulises Rios.

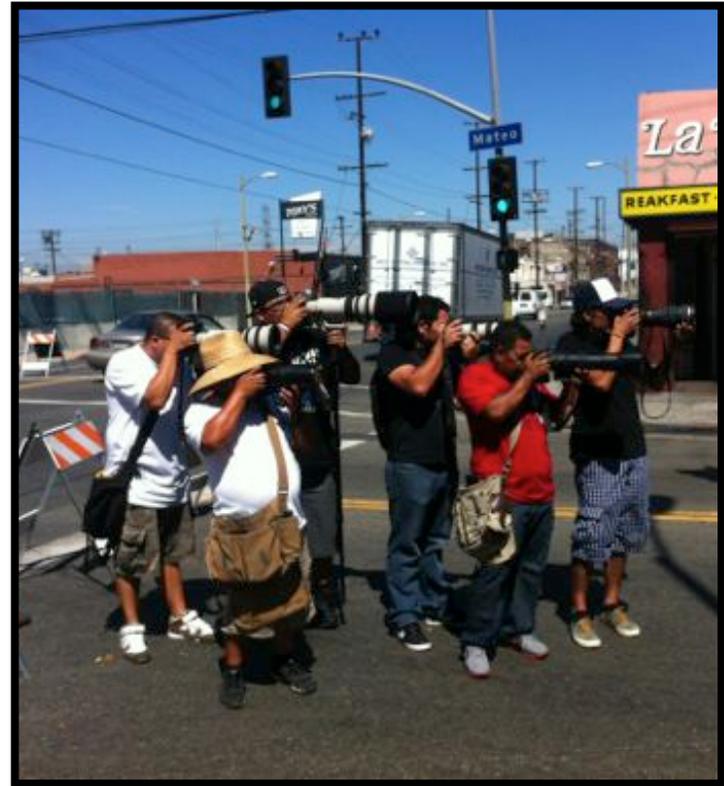


Image 30: Galo's photograph of the Paltrow-Martin family; Galo in a tree shooting long lens. Photo of Galo by Eduardo Pimentel.



Image 31: Example of a “Gang Bang” shoot. From Bauer-Griffin website.



Image 32: Photos taken of the paparazzi who were assaulted outside of the wedding for the show *The Bachelor*, 2010.



Posted by: Anonymous

March 9, 2010 11:05 AM

They were asked to leave but didn't leave so force was needed. It's bc of the photogs that Diana is dead and countless other traffic accidents. Literally the scum of the Earth. BTY, why are they always Latinos. Are they even citizens? Maybe they should show their green card so they can be deported...lamigra!

Image 33: Photo of paparazzo editing images in the parking lot at LAX after shooting a celebrity who just arrived. Photo by author.

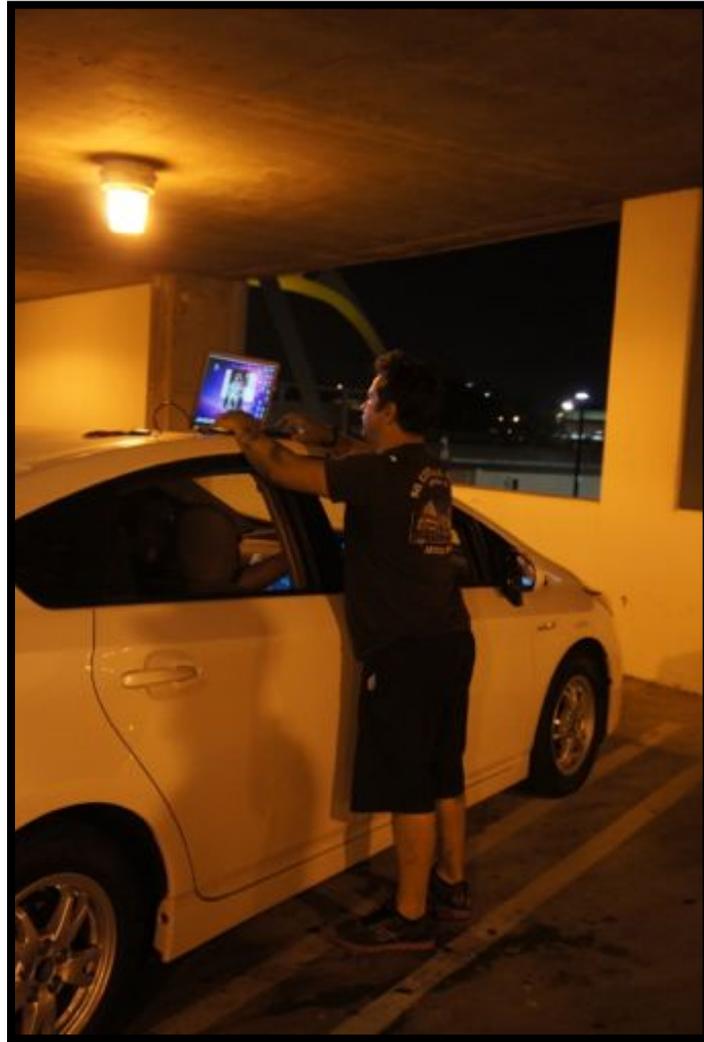


Image 34: Coverage of the viral “Twihard” video featured in *People*.



Image 35: The Brangelina cover spread in *People*, May 9, 2005.



Image 36: Brangelina family photo. Photo by Galo Ramirez.



Image 37: Photo of Brangelina and daughter. Photo by Eduardo “Lalo” Pimentel.



Image 38: *People*'s June 3, 1996, cover: "Too fat? Too Thin? How media images of celebrities teach kids to hate their bodies" (Schneider et al. 1996).



Image 39: *People* article highlighting Lady Gaga's weight. The article explained that Gaga was, "Showing off her fuller figure...Online bullies quickly called her 'gargantua' and 'a fat little monster'" (O'Donnell & Pham 2012:109).



Image 40: *People* cover from September 4, 2000: “Special Report: Searching for the Perfect Body: How do women really feel about their shapes? And whose bodies do they admire most and least? A surprising PEOPLE poll.”



Image 41: *People* cover of Al Roker's weightloss. Nov. 18, 2002.

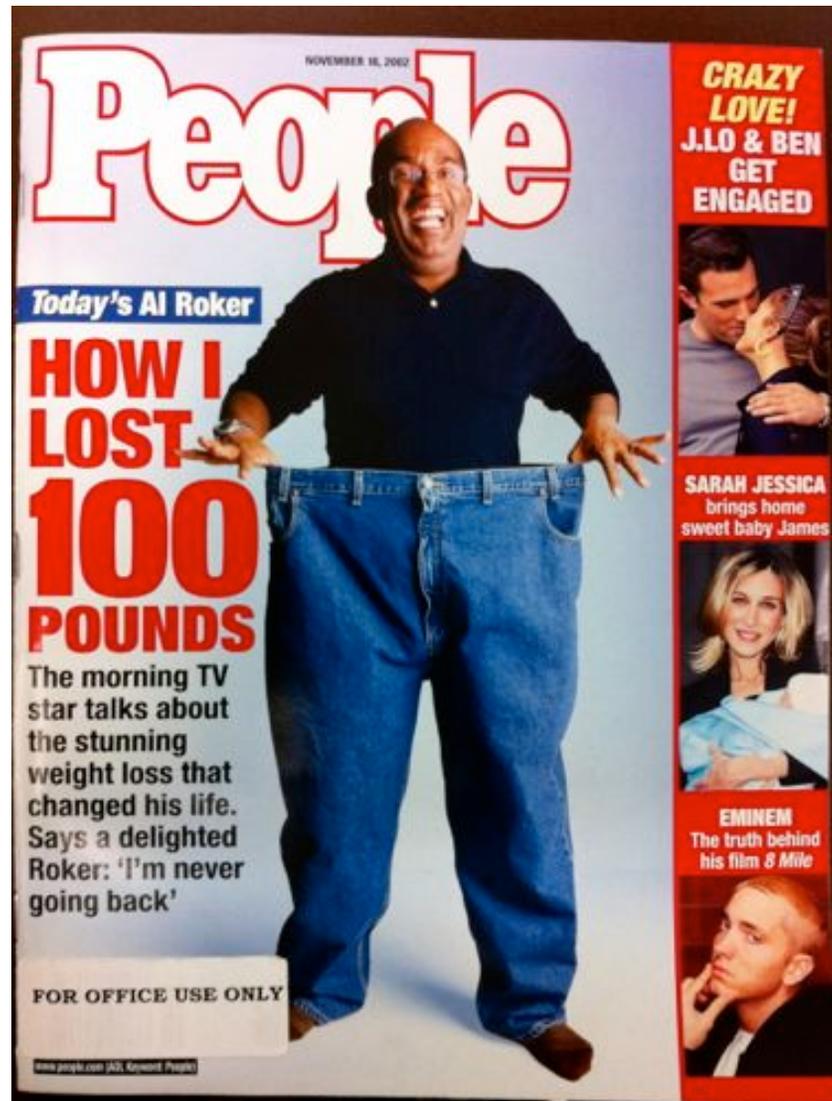


Image 42: *People* cover of Valerie Bertinelli, April 2009.



Image 43: April 2007 *People* article about Bertinelli with the quote, “I know what you’re thinking—I’m fat,” priming readers for her weightloss-to-come.

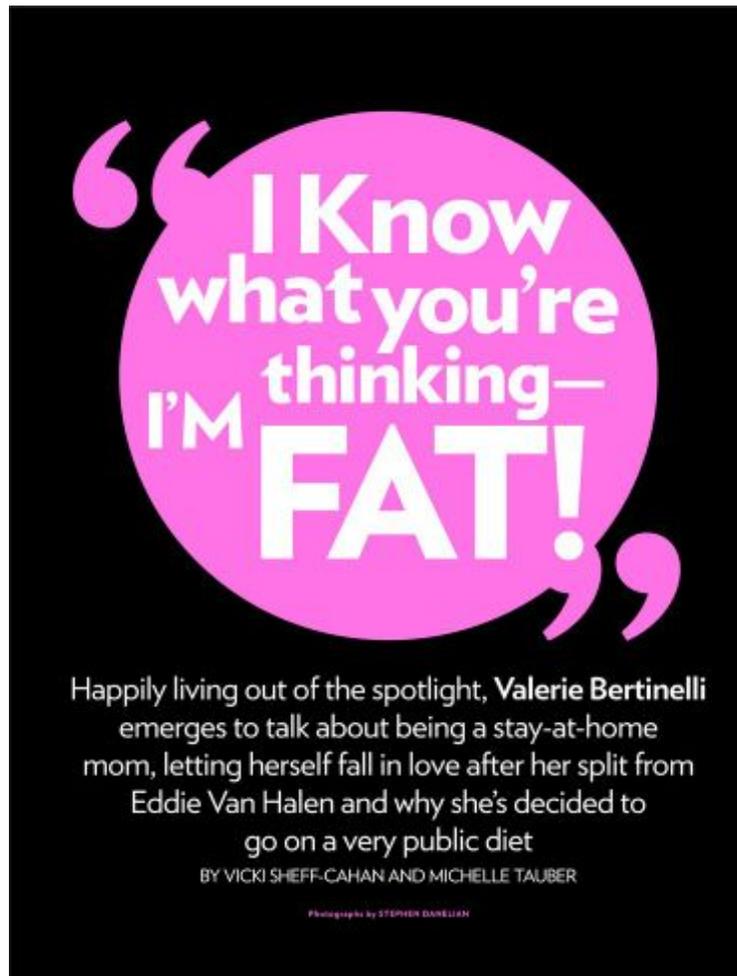


Image 44: Covers of *People* magazine focused on Kirstie Alley's weight.



Image 45: *People* magazine cover from January 2001, featuring Carnie Wilson “Half Her Size.”



Image 46: *Us Weekly* cover of Ricki Lake: “Half My Size.”



Image 47: *People* magazine cover of Tyra Banks: “You Call This Fat?”



Image 48: Cover of *People* featuring Melissa Joan Hart, June 8, 2009.



Image: 49: *People*'s first "Body After Baby" cover, February 10, 2003 (Espinoza et al. 2003).



Image 50: *People*'s "Body After Baby" article featuring Denise Richards (Adato & Jordan 2005).

They're breaking speed records, but celeb moms like **Denise Richards** know that getting back in shape after baby—whether it's the first or fourth—takes sweat and sacrifice

LOSING IT FAST.

Nine-month-old Sam, just over a fever, is teething. Little sister Lola is making it known she needs a nap. Spend time with their mom, Denise Richards, and it quickly becomes clear she has more on her mind than whittling her waistline. But just months after she gave birth to Lola June 1, that waistline is visibly tiny. How did she do it?

People have been asking that question ever since the actress, already slim just two weeks out of the delivery room, was spotted shopping in Calabasas, Calif. She instructed her

publicist, "Please tell people I'm not exercising. I don't want women to think they have to start exercising right after a C-section!" Nursing Lola for three months and being "naturally thin" may have helped pare down the 30 lbs. she put on (just as she had with the first pregnancy). But the real secret? Richards says, only half joking, "It's called the Stress Diet."

The regimen goes something like this: File for divorce (from husband Charlie Sheen, father of Sam and Lola) in your sixth month of pregnancy. Cope with the public acrobatics that follows—to a point when you feel less camera-ready by the day ("Toward

the end I was waddling in my sleepy sweats. I wish I looked like Heidi Klum with her cute outfits"). Then start filming your new TV show (*So, Low & Secret*, since canceled by UPN) just six weeks after giving birth. "I had so much going on in my life," says Richards, curled up on a love seat in her cozy bedroom. "Juggling both babies and starting a job."

Once she got the go-ahead from her doctor to workout, Richards, 34, threw herself into the task. "I'm not going to lie and say, 'The pounds just came off,'" she says. "There's definitely pressure in Hollywood to be thin, but even if I didn't have to work, I would still want

to lose the weight. Who wants to keep weight on after 18 months of being pregnant in the last two years?"

In late July she began meeting with trainer Garrett Warren four to six times weekly. "I'm disciplined if someone shows up at my house—otherwise I'd be hitting the snooze button." With Warren as a motivator, she says, "I get up at 4:30 and work out from 5 to 6, when it's quiet. That's my hour. I think it's so important for moms to have that balance of time for yourself, work and the kids."

Warren, who also worked with Kate Hudson after her pregnancy, has Richards weight-train, box, kickbox

40 Photograph by FROOZ ZAHEDI

PEOPLE November 2, 2005 61

Image 51: A 2005 issue of *People* featuring yet another “Body After Baby” spread, this time about model Heidi Klum (Adato 2005a).

Heidi's Secret

From the maternity ward to lingerie model in two months? Here's how Heidi Klum did it

For most new moms, those first few days home from the hospital are a time to nap next to their infants or rationalize eating a pint of Ben & Jerry's Caramel Fudge Chunk. And then there's Heidi Klum, who, after giving birth to son Henry on Sept. 22, decided that there had never been a better time to...model in the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show before an audience of millions? "I had a great birth, the baby was fine," she says. "I thought, 'Maybe I can get back into shape by then.'"

From the reaction to her appearance—besides the wings, she wore little more than a bra and thong studded with tiny lights and Swarovski crystals—at the show's Nov. 9 taping, Klum

NOV. 9
Klum "feels great," said model Karolina Kurkova during the VS show taping. "It's amazing."



AUG. 25

While pregnant, "I didn't overeat," Klum says. "Your body has to relax."

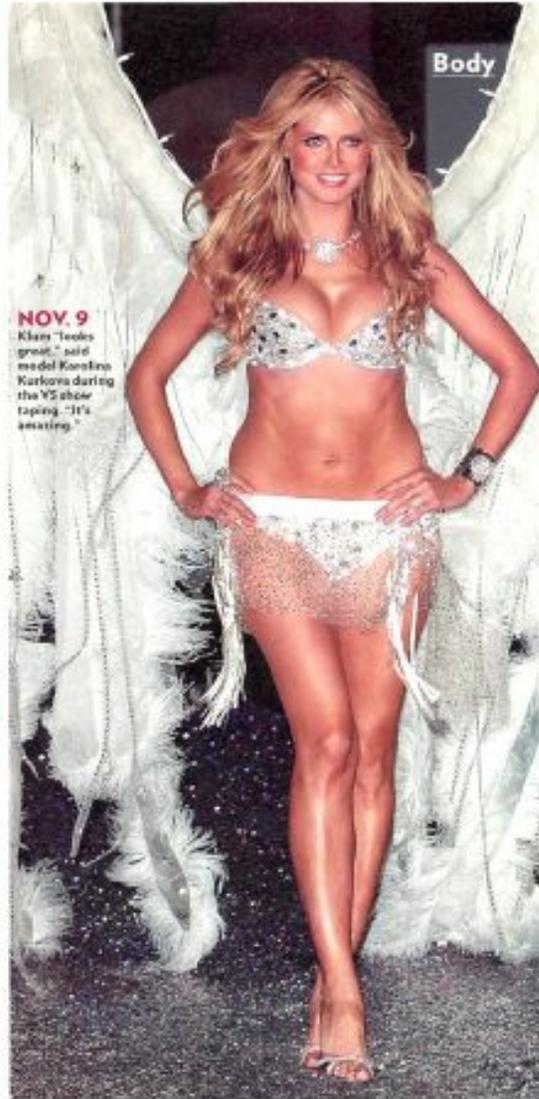


Image 52: People “Body After Baby” article about Jessica Alba (Keith 2008).

BodyWatch

JESSICA ALBA

BODY AFTER BABY

Now she's pregnant, now she's hot! Here's how the famously fit actress got red carpet ready in record time

When new mom Jessica Alba walked the red carpet at the ALMA Awards on Aug. 17, it wasn't only her sassy Narciso Rodriguez gown that turned heads. The star, 27, also showed off her newly svelte silhouette just two months after welcoming daughter Honor Marie. Now Alba's trainer Ramona Braganza reveals how Alba dropped 25 lbs. so fast:

HER DIET "During her pregnancy, she was able to indulge," says Braganza. Now on Braganza's 521 Baby Bulge Be Gone program, Alba starts off her day "with carbs—within reason," says Braganza, who suggests oatmeal, turkey bacon and egg whites. In between lunch (fish with a small salad) and dinner (chicken breast with brown rice), Alba snacks on fruit, almonds or cheese. Luckily, says Braganza, "Jessica has always preferred healthy food."

HER WORKOUT Alba hit the gym three weeks after giving birth and eased herself into her routine with 25 minutes of core exercises such as crunches for the first two weeks. She gradually added 20 minutes of cardio and 15 minutes of circuit training, which includes chest presses and lunges. "Her arms are leaner, and her legs and hips are firmer," says Braganza. Now working out six days a week for an hour doing three core workouts, two cardio sessions and one strength-training routine, Alba—who gained 35 lbs. during her pregnancy—has also incorporated boxing and hikes to shed about 8 more pounds. "She always gives me 100 percent," says Braganza, "and her body shows it."

By Amy Eliza Keith

92 September 1, 2008 PEOPLE



BEFORE



WOW!
10 WEEKS
AFTER
BABY

Alba's May one month before giving birth.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY MAYER

Image 53: *Us Weekly* cover featuring a pregnant Kim Kardashian saying, “You Call This Fat?”



Image 54: *Star* magazines' 2008 and 2011 "Best and Worst Beach Body" issues.



Image 55: *Us Weekly*'s "Body Evolution" feature on their website; this one is on the is on the "body evolution of singer Christina Aguilera."

The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying a feature titled "HOT BODIES" and "Christina Aguilera's Body Evolution". The page shows a grid of five photographs of Christina Aguilera in different outfits and poses, illustrating her body evolution. The photos include: a purple dress, a red top and purple skirt, a pink dress, a black dress, and a black jacket over a grey skirt. To the right of the photos is a text block with the title "Christina Aguilera's Body Evolution" and a paragraph of text. Below the text is an advertisement for "NASTY GAL" clothing, featuring a woman in a red dress and a "Shop Now" button. At the bottom right, there is a banner for "4 FREE ISSUES!". The page also includes social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, and a "1 of 27" indicator.

HOT BODIES

Christina Aguilera's Body Evolution

1 of 27

Facebook Twitter Pinterest

Christina Aguilera's Body Evolution

From *The All-New Mickey Mouse Club* to one of the best voices of our generation, Christina Aguilera has grown up before our eyes. And throughout her many phases — who can forget the *Dimmy* years? — her body has been constantly evolving.

ADVERTISEMENT

NASTY GAL

Shop Now

4 FREE ISSUES!

Image 56: People.com image of Lady Gaga, indicating she has a “fuller figure” in 2012.

StarTracks The singer shows off her bikini bod while greeting fans in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Plus: Kim Kardashian, President & Michelle Obama, Hilary Duff and more

1 OF 17 NEXT +

CURVES AHEAD

Lady Gaga flaunts her fuller figure while catching some rays Wednesday in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the Born This Way singer, who recently pledged \$1 million for Hurricane Sandy relief, greeted fans from a

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Image 57: *Us Weekly*'s "Body Evolution" photo essays on Khloe Kardashian.

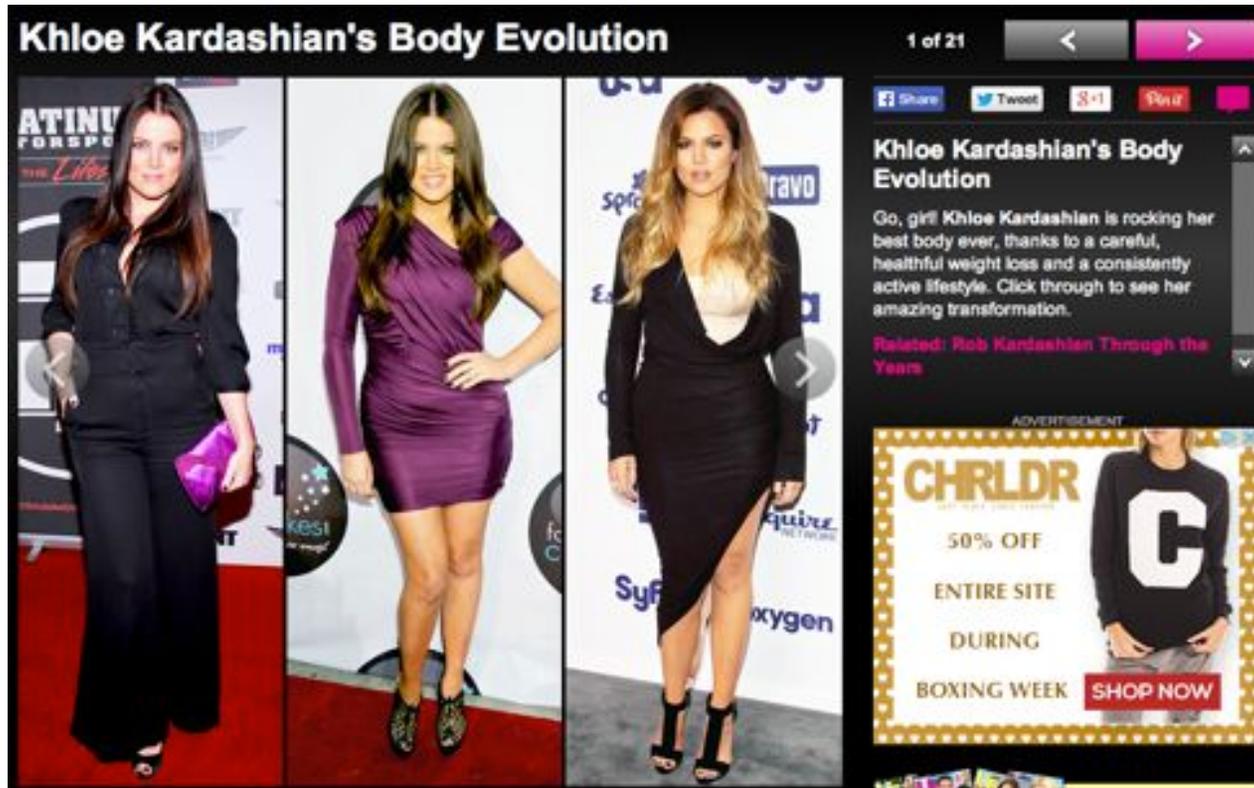
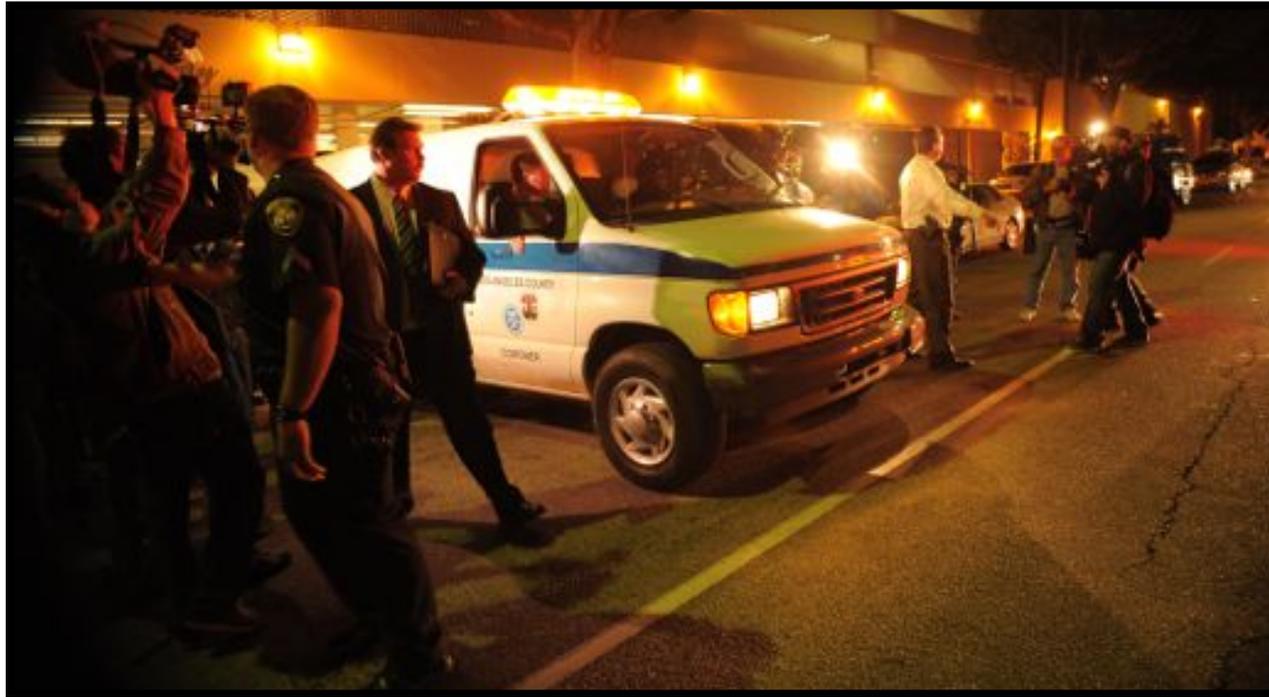


Image 58: Photo at the scene of Whitney Houston's death, Published in Feb. 21, 2012 issue of *People* magazine. Photo by: Galo Ramirez (credited to AKM/GSI in the magazine)



APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SOURCE APPENDIX

*NOTE: This is a list of all interviewees quoted in the dissertation, and is not an exhaustive list of every individual interviewed throughout the course of my research. Those individuals listed by their first and last name are either public figures or requested use of their real names. In cases where only a first name is listed, these are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my collaborators, per their request. All information about individuals listed here is based on their status at the time of my first interview with them. Any identifying information used was approved by the interviewee. It should also be noted that no staff reporter worked for more than one celebrity weekly magazine at the same time; this is against policy of the magazines, as they are direct competitors.

Amanda: Amanda is a white woman in her early 20s. She is a freelancer for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Amber: Amber is a white woman in her 30s with a Bachelor's degree. She is on staff at a celebrity weekly magazine.

Ashley: Ashley is a white woman in her 30s. She worked for multiple celebrity weekly magazines, both on staff and as a freelancer and currently freelances for one of the celebrity weekly magazines focused on in this dissertation. Prior to her work for the celebrity weekly magazines, she had worked for several other media outlets focused on entertainment.

Brian: Brian is a white man who does freelance reporting for *People*.

Brittany: Brittany is a white woman in her 20s who worked as an intern for one of the celebrity weeklies.

Christy: Christy is woman in her 20s who was an intern at *People*.

Eduardo "Lalo" Pimentel: Eduardo is a Latino man who works as a paparazzo in Los Angeles.

Galo Ramirez: Galo is an immigrant from El Salvador who came to Los Angeles as a child fleeing the civil war in his home country. He works as a paparazzo.

Gregory: Gregory is a photographer and co-owner of a major photo agency in Los Angeles.

Halcón: Halcón is a Latino immigrant man who works as a paparazzo in Los Angeles.

Hector Campos: Hector is a Latino man who works as a paparazzo in Los Angeles.

Jackie: Jackie worked on staff at *People* magazine as part of the “Body Team,” which is a group of staff members dedicated to documenting stories about celebrity bodies.

Jasmine: Jasmine is an African-American woman in her late 20s who is a freelance reporter for a celebrity weekly magazine. She has a Master’s Degree in journalism.

Joy: Joy is an African-American woman in her late 20s with a Bachelor’s degree. She worked as on staff as a reporter for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Khloe Kardashian: Khloe is a reality television star and member of the Kardashian family.

Liam: Liam is an African-American man who works as a red carpet photographer.

Luiz Pimentel: Luiz is a Brazilian immigrant who moved to the U.S. to pursue work as a paparazzo in Los Angeles.

Mark Dagostino: Mark Dagostino is a former staff writer at *People* and the author of numerous books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Outside the Ring* (2009), which he co-wrote with Hulk Hogan.

Megan: Megan is a white woman in her late 20s. She worked as both a staff reporter and freelance reporter for multiple celebrity weekly magazines. She currently is on staff at a celebrity weekly.

Melissa: Melissa is a white woman in her 20s with a Bachelor’s degree. She works freelance for various celebrity-focused publications in Hollywood.

Melissa Frost: Melissa is a blogger who focuses on Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. She is one of the founders of the website StrictlyRobsten.com.

Melissa Rivers: Melissa is an actress. She is the daughter of famed comedian Joan Rivers.

Miranda: Miranda is a woman who worked on staff for a celebrity weekly magazine for over a decade.

Nicole: Nicole is a woman who worked on staff at *People* magazine as part of their “Body Team.”

Phil: Phil is a white man who worked for *People* magazine both on staff and as a freelancer for several years.

Phoebe: Phoebe is a woman who worked as a photo editor for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Randy Bauer: Randy is a photographer and co-owner of the photo agency Bauer-Griffin. He started out working as a photographer for famed paparazzo Ron Galella in New York before relocating to Los Angeles.

Regina King: Regina King is an African-American actress.

Ron: Ron is a white man who has freelanced for several of the celebrity weekly magazines throughout his career. He currently freelances for one of the celebrity weeklies.

Sam: Sam is a white man who works for a major national news network covering politics.

Samantha: Samantha is a journalist with a Bachelor's degree who has worked as a freelance reporter for multiple celebrity weeklies during her career. She is currently on staff at a celebrity weekly magazine.

Sarah: Sarah is a woman in her 20s who worked as a freelance reporter for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Sandra: Sandra is a Latina woman in her late 20s. Throughout her career she has worked as an intern, freelance reporter, and staff reporter for multiple celebrity weekly magazines.

Scott Huver: Scott has been reporting in Hollywood for over a decade. He has written for Hollywood.com, myhollywood.com, *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *Us Weekly*, and *People*, and is the author of the book *Rodeo Drive* (2001).

Sean: Sean is a white man in his 40s. He has worked for *People* magazine as a news and human interest reporter for many years.

Sophia Bush: Sophia is an actress.

Stacey: Stacey is a white woman in her late 20s. Her highest degree is a BA. She worked as a freelance reporter and on staff at a celebrity weekly magazine.

Stanley: Stanley is white man who works as a paparazzo in Los Angeles.

Stephanie: Stephanie is a white woman in her late 30s. She has worked on staff and as a freelance reporter for numerous celebrity-focused publications. She currently freelances for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Steven: Steven is a white man in his 50s who has worked as a red carpet videographer on and off for two decades.

Susan: Susan is an intern for a celebrity weekly magazine.

Sylvia: Sylvia is a white woman in her 30s who worked for several different weeklies, both as a staff reporter and as a freelancer. Prior to her work as a celebrity weekly magazine reporter, she had worked for E!, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Teen People*, *Cosmo Girl*, and several other entertainment-focused publications. She currently freelances for a celebrity weekly.

Tyrese Gibson: Tyrese is an actor and singer.

Ulises “Trucha” Rios: Ulises was born in the U.S. of Mexican descent. He works as a paparazzo, as well as photographing weddings and quinceañeras. He specializes in photography of Mexican musicians and has also produced videos about low-riding cars in Los Angeles.

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