1-2017

Print Versus Digital: How Medium Matters on 'House of Cards'

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eCommons Citation

Ferrucci, Patrick and Painter, Chad, "Print Versus Digital: How Medium Matters on 'House of Cards'" (2017). *Communication Faculty Publications*. 35.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/cmm_fac_pub/35

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Abstract

This study utilizes textual analysis to analyze how journalists are depicted on the Netflix drama *House of Cards*. Through the lens of orientalism and cultivation, researchers examine how depictions of print and digital journalism would lead viewers to see digital journalists as less ethical and driven by self-gain, while also viewing technology as an impediment to quality journalism. These findings are then discussed as a means for understanding how these depictions could affect society.

Disciplines

Communication | Communication Technology and New Media | Journalism Studies | Mass Communication | Social Influence and Political Communication | Television

Comments

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This study utilizes textual analysis to analyze how journalists are depicted on the Netflix drama House of Cards. *Through the lens of orientalism and cultivation, researchers examine how depictions of print and digital journalism would lead viewers to see digital journalists as less ethical and driven by self-gain, while also viewing technology as an impediment to quality journalism. These findings are then discussed as a means for understanding how these depictions could affect society.*

Introduction

Beginning in the late 1990s, newsroom convergence became the most popular buzzword in the journalism industry (Bosch, 2010). But the transition to convergence, or as the industry now refers to it, multimedia journalism, decidedly did not go smoothly (Klinenberg, 2005). Today, while legacy media remain converged and yet still struggle with the transition, many news organizations started as digitally native (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Researchers, however, have shown news consumers do not find digital sources of news as credible as their legacy counterparts (Bradley, 2014). In fact, a Pew Research Center study showed news consumers found content in print or on television as more credible than Web content (Mitchell et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study is to examine, through textual analysis, how the distinction between print and digital journalism is portrayed on the fictional television show *House of Cards*. According to cultivation theory, portrayals on television directly influence how viewers see the world around them (Gerbner, 1998). Depictions of journalists in film and on television impact an audience's perceptions of real-world journalists (Ehrlich, 1997). In fact, Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) argued that the public's perception of the journalism industry is shaped more by popular depictions of the profession than the work done by journalists. Orientalism argues that the media depict certain dominant groups as normal, thereby subtly letting, in this case, viewers know that this group is part of the American mainstream and thus more credible; at the same time, the media depict any minority group as something different, subtly letting the audience know this group is weird or odd (Said, 1994). Perhaps the lack of trust news consumers have concerning digital journalism is partly due to mainstream depictions of digital

journalism. Understanding how popular culture depicts digital journalism, and journalism in the 21st century in general, can help us understand how and why the public views the industry (Conway, 2014). This study aims to do just this by examining, through the lens of orientalism, how the hit Netflix drama *House of Cards* depicts both legacy and digital journalism, as it is one of the first mainstream serials to depict journalists working for both media forms (Gould, 2013).

Literature Review

Depictions of Journalists in Popular Culture

Since the early days of film, Hollywood focused attention on journalists (Ehrlich, 1997). Even the film considered the greatest American cinematic feat, *Citizen Kane*, revolves around a character deeply entrenched in the newspaper industry (Schudson, 1992). Films as disparate as the 1931 screwball comedy *The Front Page* to the 2014 dark thriller *Nightcrawler* revolve around journalism, while television programs such as *Lou Grant* and *The Newsroom* all examine the inner workings of journalism.

Perhaps the most famous depiction of journalism comes from the 1976 Oscar-winning film *All the President's Men,* which tells the story of real-life *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein as they investigate and ultimately break the Watergate scandal. This powerful and positive depiction of the media as an incorruptible watchdog of power significantly and favorably affected the public's opinion of journalism (Schudson, 1992), which, again, illustrates how understanding popular depictions of the industry are important. Other films and programs such as *The Insider*, *State of Play*, *The Newsroom* and *Lou Grant* provided the public with a generally positive glimpse into the world journalism.

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While many images of the journalist in popular culture remain positive, even more provide viewers with a negative visualization (Ehrlich, 1997). Many journalists consider producer David Simon's *The Wire* as the most realistic depiction of the industry ever (Lowry, 2007), yet scholars have found that its fifth season, which focuses on the state of journalism, showed a morally decaying industry (citation of authors' work here -- to be completed in revision). *Shattered Glass* retold the real-life story of Stephen Glass, the reporter eventually caught plagiarizing stories in *The New Republic* and other magazines. Even producer Aaron Sorkin, who purposely attempted to depict journalists positively in *The Newsroom*, gave viewers an illustration of a newsroom more intent on spending time on personal and petty issues than uncovering and disseminating sports news in the sitcom *Sports Night* (citation of authors' work here -- to be completed in revision*).* However, regardless of how popular culture depicts journalists, these depictions can affect the public's opinions (Ehrlich, 1997), which is why it remains important to study how popular culture presents journalists.

Digital Divide

Journalism finds itself in a time of change (Lowrey & Gade, 2011). The newspaper industry took its first significant step toward embracing the digital world in 1980 (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Bosch (2010) defined digital journalism as news produced by news workers using digital tools. Singer (2011) then defined technology associated with digital journalism as anything computer-based that has affected journalistic practices and routines. For example, technological developments include everything from email, laptops and cell phones to blogs and inexpensive digital video recorders. Each of these advents and other similar tools allow journalists to perform their functions

"simultaneously easier and harder" (Singer, 2011, p. 218).

Habermas (1984) argued that technology is, at its core, neutral. However, he wrote that when outside its proper sphere, technology can then be utilized in manners that could become a major societal problem. Essentially, the argued put forth by Habermas (1984) is that technology itself does not cause anything negative, but simply how its used can effectively transform something else negatively. In journalism, technology allows non-legacy media organizations an opportunity to cheaply and easily disseminate news (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Because most of these new, digitally native news organizations focus their coverage on niche topics, it allows for a subtle shift of journalistic norms (Tandoc, 2014). For Habermas (1984), technology is not changing journalism, but rather new innovations are allowing new journalistic organizations to transform some essential norms of legacy media, such as **a** substantial **number** of layers in the gatekeeping process. Marcuse (1941), unlike Habermas, does not believe technology is simply a neutral apparatus. He argued that technology is constantly shaped by humans and social context and that the two cannot be separated. So therefore, he would say the journalists have consistently shaped technology as it relates to the field and that this has been guided by self-interest.

Orientalism

The crux of orientalism is that the media tends to portray dominant groups as normal. Because of this, language and norms of the dominant group are accepted as unbiased. However, the media tends to represent minority groups as appearing outside of the American mainstream (Said, 1994). Thus, the media plays a large **role** in shaping what the public views as standard American mainstream versus what could be considered

odd and abnormal (Buchowski, 2006). Originally, scholars applied the theory primarily to studies of cultural geography. Through the work of Wolff (1994) and Todorova (1997), though, orientalism is now a valuable concept for exploring the concept of the *Other* (Buchowski, 2006)*.* Essentially, orientalism, therefore, is a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between" the mainstream and the odd and non-mainstream (Said, 1979, p. 2).

The process of constructing the other occurs through media representations, and changes to this identity typically happen through "a restructuring of the perception of social inequalities by the hegemonic liberal ideology" (Buchowski, 2006, p. 464). Considering the media constructs meaning, studies examining how various things are depicted become essential to understanding how the public views something. If certain segments of the journalism industry continuously are depicted as the *other* by the media, then these representations might affect the public. Gurevitch and Levy (1985) argue that media representations are sites "which various social groups, institutions and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality" (p. 19). Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) noted that the public understands journalism more through popular depictions of the industry than through actual journalism, therefore examining how televisions programs present the industry in its totality is important to understanding how the public sees it.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory essentially posits that what people see on television affects them. First introduced by George Gerbner (1998), the theory's foundation lies upon the idea that the bulk of what people believe about the world is never experienced first-hand.

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Opinions about what they do not experience come from what they see around them, particularly on television (Gerbner et al., 2002). Researchers suggest that the more people watch television, the more they believe the images depicted (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Through a series of studies, Gerbner and his colleagues found that watching television does not directly affect people, that the images they see do not immediately, for example, make someone act out in a similar manner. However, they found that, through time, watching television "cultivates" an experience, and people believe what they see on television is consistent with the real world. Gitlin (1983) argued that people believe what they see on television because of a cyclical process: What they see on television reinforces previously held attitudes that also were formed by watching television. Most studies applying cultivation theory utilize quantitative methods, specifically content analysis, but a growing number of studies, apply the theory qualitatively (i.e., citation of authors' work here -- to be completed in revision; Miller, 2010)

The majority of the public would not have intimate experience concerning the journalism industry. Instead, they would base their opinions on what they see in the world around them, which mostly would come from television. Additionally, if the viewing public has rarely seen depictions of digital journalism outside of *House of Cards*, it stands to reason that with already lower levels of trust of the medium, these viewers would use the show's depictions as a manner of reinforcing attitudes.

House of Cards

The on-demand, Internet streaming media company Netflix released the first season of *House of Cards* all at once on Feb. 1, 2013. The show revolves the character of Francis "Frank" Underwood, a Democrat representing the state of South Carolina in the

House of Representatives who later becomes vice president and, ultimately, president.

The political drama follows the machinations of the political world, paying close

attention to the way Underwood attempts to gain and harness more and more power.

Netflix released season two of the show Feb. 14, 2014, and season three became available

for viewers Feb. 27, 2015. *House of Cards* depicts journalism in a pretty similar manner

to other television programs that came before it; McNair (2014) argued that the drama,

like all that came before, falls into a heroes and villains dichotomy and could very well

"be impactful in relation to public perceptions of the journalist's role" (p. 244). These

black and white depictions lead viewers to believe journalists are either ethically beyond

reproach, or completely impaired ethically (McNair, 2010).

What makes *House of Cards* worthy of an empirical examination, though, is that

the show is one of very few attempts by the entertainment industry to depict digital

journalists, and the show gives viewers a glimpse of "the battle between traditional

journalism and the blogosphere, a recurring theme in *House of Cards*" (Gould, 2013).

The drama features traditional journalism at the *Washington Herald*, a clear fictionalized

version of the *Washington Post*, a place where characters Zoe Barnes, Lucas Goodwin,

and Janine Skorsky all work. However, at the onset of the series, Barnes only works for

the digital side of the newspaper, and she later leaves the paper for the digitally native

operation *Slugline*, a "Politico-style website run by twentysomethings. They are out to

undo old-school journalism" (Gould, 2013). Skorsky soon joins Barnes at *Slugline*, and

soon, as an article by the journalistic foundation the Poynter Institute pointed out, her

move lets *House of Cards* explore the differences between print and digital journalism in

a manner never done before on television program (Moos, 2013). Therefore, this study

asks, how does *House of Cards* depict journalists from both print and online media?

Method

To investigate the question of how *House of Cards* depicts print and online

journalists, researchers conducted a textual analysis of the first three seasons of the show.

Both text and video of the 39 episodes that Netflix released between February 2013 and

February 2015 provided the unit of analysis for this study. For this textual analysis, the

researchers focused on narrative aspects of *House of Cards*, primarily conducting an

analysis as defined by Toby Miller (2010) in his book examining television studies.

Narratives encourage people to make decisions about aspects of the television program,

and an analysis of narrative also makes researchers make decisions about the artifact they

are consuming (Foss, 2009).

Textual analysis allows researchers to understand what people produce on

television (Berger, 1998). A textual analysis of television allows researchers to "unearth

the meaning of individual programs and links them to broader social formations and

problems" (Miller, 2010, p. 23) and "identify the ideological tenor of the content"

(Miller, 2010, p. 32). This allows the researcher to understand how the receivers of the

text could interpret meaning; therefore, a textual analysis of a television program cannot

truly get at the producers' goals, but can extrapolate all possible meanings and

interpretations of the viewer (Miller, 2010). Textual analyses of television shows can

utilize two different tactics: one using a grounded theory approach, and one that surveys

the program through the lens of a specific theory (Berger, 1998). For this study,

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researchers used the latter approach by analyzing the data through the lens of both orientalism and cultivation theory.

For this study, two researchers independently viewed the entirety of the three released seasons of *House of Cards* during a 20-day period. Both researchers took notes on how the show depicted journalists and the industry of journalism. After comparing notes, both researchers then independently viewed the entirety of the show once again. These notes were then combined and analyzed. During the analysis, researchers identified themes and subsequently categorized the data into these themes, as often done in qualitative analyses (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Finally, one researcher wrote the findings section for this study. Miller (2010) surmised that "television has become an alembic for understanding society" (p. 145), and the researchers look to *House of Cards* to, at least in a minor way, understand how society views the differences between print and digital journalism.

Findings

During the second stage of examining the data, researchers identified three consistent themes that continuously emerged during readings. As argued by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), when conducting a textual analysis, researchers should place data within the themes before writing up the findings section. For this specific study, the three themes that surfaced concerning how *House of Cards* depicted digital and print journalists were their relationship with technology, their application of ethics, and the overall goal of their journalism.

Relationship with Technology

Almost immediately, the show sets up a clear juxtaposition between print and digital journalism, a distinctly different paradigm for working within each medium. In the first scene concerning journalism, viewers meet Zoe Barnes (Kate Mara), a young and ambitious journalist at the *Washington Herald,* who comes from a digital background. She wants to write a digital-only blog about politics. Her immediate editor is Lucas Goodwin (Sebastian Arcelus), an older, but not old, print journalist. In this initial scene, this distinction between their backgrounds and loyalties are made clear, as Zoe argues with Lucas for a TMZ-like politics blog written in the first person, while Lucas dismisses the idea. Zoe informs him that this dismissal is the reason print journalism is dying, and Lucas tells her "then it will die with dignity," implying that digital journalism does not have dignity. Here, it is not simply technology that makes Zoe's brand of journalism odd or worse, but rather how her generation views technology and has adapted it into their culture.

In a scene during episode one, Lucas and *Herald* editor-in-chief Tom Hammerschmidt (Boris McGiver) are shown looking at the Web analytics concerning a story Zoe recently published online. The scene makes it very clear that both Lucas and Tom view the analytics only because they have to, as their faces clearly belie their annoyance and skepticism about the place of Web analytics in journalism. In episode two, another clear message is sent regarding how print journalists feel about digital journalists when Zoe barges into a *Herald* budget meeting to tell political writer Janine Skorsky (Constance Zimmer) some news. Skorsky displays a disregard for Zoe and digital journalism when she calls Zoe a "Twitter twat**,**" fundamentally communicating that Zoe's fascination and adoption of a specific technology altered her appreciation of

normal, mainstream journalism norms, which are less concerned with breaking news and more with truth and accuracy.

After Zoe gains nationwide recognition for the stories she is writing from material provided by Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey), she is asked to appear on a cable news program. Zoe tells the show's host that it is hard to work at the *Herald* because editors insist on "double and triple checking everything." This comment begins a dialogue about the future of journalism:

> **Host**: Is that a workable model in the Internet age?
> **Zoe**: Our readers think it is.
> **Host**: Readership is going down.
> **Zoe**: It's not that the *Herald* refuses to adapt. We have an online presence. But, yes, we could do more.

The "more" that Zoe refers to and the lack of rapid adaption is a euphemism, in this conversation, for too many layers of gatekeeping. Zoe wants to publish things straight to the Web without waiting on editors. The ironic part of this conversation is that the story Zoe is getting this attention for is completely bogus. Underwood leaked her the story only for his benefit because he would gain political capital if the *Herald* wrote about an early, incorrect version of a specific education bill.

Later in the first season, Zoe's consistent ability to break political news—all news provided to her by Underwood, most of which is wrong—leads Tom to offer her the White House beat, considered the most prominent assignment at the newspaper. He is being forced to do it by the paper's publisher and clearly thinks little of Zoe as a reporter, again, primarily because of her adherence to technology. At the meeting when Tom offers the job to Zoe, she turns it down but records the conversation, during which he calls her a "cunt." He fires her, but before she leaves, she says, "These days, when you're

talking to one person, you're talking to 1,000." When he explains the conversation to the publisher, who is in the process of firing him, Tom says, "Know this, Zoe Barnes, Twitter, enriched media, they're fads. They're not what this paper is built on. I won't be distracted by what's fashionable." There is a clear othering of technology during these early episodes. It is made clear that mainstream journalists think very little of technology, that it is a fad that should not be part of any real journalistic toolbox.

Shortly after Tom is fired, Frank shows up at Zoe's apartment and tells her to Tweet something. The news he gives her is false, but she asks no questions and simply Tweets it as news. The show is implying that the need for editors is vital. Without these layers, powerful people can mislead journalists and coerce them to print falsities.

Zoe leaves the *Herald* to work for *Slugline*, a digitally native *Politico*-like news organization, as does Janine. Producers, however, already have established Janine a print-style reporter, one who does not use technology. She tells Zoe that Underwood is using her, and she needs to rely on others, such as editors and reporters, to vet the information she is disseminating to readers. During the late portion of season two and throughout season three, most of the journalism happens at the *Wall Street Telegraph*, a newspaper. Two different journalists cover politics for the paper at different times, Ayla Sayyad (Mozhan Marnò) and Kate Baldwin (Kim Dickens). While journalism is not as prominently featured in the show during the later half of season two and throughout season three, both Ayla and Kate display a dislike of technology-based reporting.

House of Cards essentially depicts digital journalists as *other* by clearly setting up a distinction between Zoe the digital journalist and a host of print journalists. This is done through scenes of Zoe consistently publishing false information and receiving a

wholeheartedly negative depiction. Throughout the three seasons, digital journalism is shown as weird, odd, and a "fad."

Application of Ethics

One way *House of Cards others* digital journalism is through a juxtaposition of how digital journalists such as Zoe and print journalists such as Lucas and Ayla apply ethics during news production. This juxtaposition is set up early when Zoe is depicted as a journalist who will do anything for a story, including sleeping with Underwood so he will provide her with information. During episode two of the first season, Frank gives Zoe false information. The show implies that she knows it is false, but still wants to print it. She even tells Frank she does not think it will be printed because her editors will not find it credible. This doubt implies that she knows they, the print journalists, are more ethical than she is. This incident is not the only time Zoe knowingly writes a fake story. Before writing about a potential nominee for secretary of state, Zoe asks, "Is that true?" Frank replies, "It will be after you write it."

Shortly after Frank uses Zoe to print a series of inaccurate stories, they meet up at a bar, leading to the beginning of an affair. She uses her looks to sleep with sources, and the show depicts her consistently dressing provocatively to get ahead, something Janine and Ayla, print reporters, never do. In one scene, Frank arrives at Zoe's apartment and begins to initiate sexual foreplay. Zoe stops him, and he replies, "We'll talk after." She immediately replies, "No, we'll talk first." The implication of this scene is obvious: Frank and Zoe's relationship is very similar to one between a prostitute and a john. Zoe will not have sex with Frank until she receives her payment, a piece of information.

Digital journalists are depicted as having poor ethics throughout the show. In one scene, Zoe meets Janine for a drink and asks Janine if she would like to join *Slugline*. Janine is surprised and asks if *Slugline*'s editor, Carly Heath (Tawny Cypress), would even want her. Zoe does not know, she says, because Heath is "pretty fucking anti-establishment" and does not really care for print journalism. This implies that *Slugline* does not value the norms and ethics of print journalism, that she wants to "break all the rules" and "do whatever it takes to get stories."

Later in the show, Zoe, Janine, and Lucas all begin working together unofficially, trying to understand the story of Peter Russo (Corey Stoll), a representative from Pennsylvania whose career is taking awkward turns. The trio does not yet know that Underwood is controlling Russo's actions. Janine is attempting to put all the pieces together—she is shown doing quality reporting—but Zoe unethically looks at Janine's notes and asks Lucas what she should do with this info. Zoe believes Janine could report incorrect information—the audience knows Janine is right and Zoe wrong, though—and asks Lucas how to proceed. Lucas, the print journalist, tells Zoe she needs to trust Janine, a veteran, quality reporter. The audience knows everything Lucas says is correct, but Zoe does not agree and immediately brings the information back to Frank, her source. During the first episode of season two, Zoe again disregards Lucas' advice and meets Frank. She proceeds to tell him everything the three have dug up concerning him and Russo. Frank denies it all—again, the audience knows it is true—and tells Zoe not to print it.

Late in season two, Ayla is shown working on a story and attending a press conference concerning something she deemed potentially untrue, trivial, and, at best, not the public's business. At the press conference, she sees a digital journalist who is excited

about the story. Ayla tells him the story is "bullshit," and she leaves, implying that a print journalist does not print salacious material.

Throughout the entirety of *House of Cards*, whenever a digital journalist is faced with an ethical decision, he or she makes the choice the audience knows is wrong. However, the opposite is true of print journalists, who not only make the ethical choice but also consistently advise Zoe correctly. These depictions portray digital journalists as different than their print counterparts, as less able; they are shown to be beneath print reporters, as different.

Goal of Journalism

The final theme and last manner in which *House of Cards* consistently others digital journalism is through the goals of the journalists for different media. For example, through the course of three seasons, print journalists are consistently shown aiming to inform the public, the historically normative role of journalism. However, digital journalists are more concerned with, primarily, personal gain and fame, and, secondarily, making money.

The goal of putting profit before truth-seeking and journalistic norms appears early in season one. Zoe is called into Tom's office after appearing on television, and Tom very clearly tells her the role of a journalist, in his mind. He says, "Your job is to report the news, not be the news." She responds that she was "promoting the paper." He tells her, again, that is not her job, that she should not worry about making the paper money and only should worry about reporting accurate news. Later, when Zoe joins *Slugline*, she has a long conversation with Carly. Zoe asks her what the point of *Slugline* is, and Carly intimates that she is having some fun for a bit of time, but the goal is to sell

the organization. The conversation implies that Carly started *Slugline* with an end goal of selling for a large profit and the way she aims to achieve her goal is to publish as much news, real or fake, as possible. The key to *Slugline* is producing news people will talk about. Carly tells Zoe not to make her bored, implying that journalism is about sizzle, less about news. Later, when Ayla is at the aforementioned press conference she is deemed to be not newsworthy, the digital journalist covering the event implies that it does not matter because lots of people will read the story, thus generating clicks and, secondarily, income.

While digital journalists are depicted as having money as a primary goal, far more often they are shown desiring personal gain. Before Zoe starts at *Slugline*, she tells Frank that the place would allow her to do "whatever she wants." At one point, Frank provides Zoe with actual news, yet something that is not as impactful. She says "it's a puff piece" and she does not want to write it. He tells her to give it to someone else then. Her response: "I don't benefit from giving other people stories." This conversation provides the audience with the mission statement for digital journalism: It is all about me. Zoe does not care if the story could inform or if people needed or wanted to know the information. All she cared about was whether the story would benefit her.

This theme reoccurs numerous times. When Zoe and Janine believe they are on to a big story, Zoe wants to stop reporting because it may mess up her relationship with Frank. She tells Janine that the story scares her. Janine says, not knowing Zoe is lying, "Look, if you weren't afraid, you wouldn't be doing your job. The only articles that I've ever written that truly mattered scared the shit out of me." The implication is that Janine will risk her personal safety to get a truthful and impactful story to the audience, but Zoe

will not even risk her personal pipeline of information. When Zoe needs police sources, she does not try to get them herself. She says she does not know anyone and tells Janine she will ask Lucas, who used to cover crime. Janine is skeptical Lucas will get her this information because he works for the competition. Lucas, however, does acquire the information and gives it to Zoe, showing his allegiance to the news, not simply to his personal gain or the *Herald's*.

Once the three reporters have a good grasp of information concerning how Frank is controlling Peter Russo, Lucas and Janine both tell Zoe not to speak with Frank. Zoe, though, still agrees to meet Frank at a subway station. Frank tells Zoe to delete all their communications from her phone; this communication is evidence that the trio has used to uncover some of the conspiracy. Zoe, then, faced with a choice of either continuing to report on Frank and Russo, thus getting incredibly important information to the public, or to help cover up the story and keep her pipeline of information open, chooses the side that best suits her instead of her readers. After she clears her phone, Frank pushes her off the subway platform into a moving train, killing her.

After Zoe's death, Janine and, especially, Lucas, continue reporting on the conspiracy and Zoe's death despite the clear threat this poses to their safety. Lucas eventually goes to jail trying to uncover the story. Ayla does the same throughout season two and season three, continually digging into the story, though she does not get as far as Lucas and Janine, without regard to her safety.

Viewers with any knowledge of journalism see how print journalists are depicted as mainstream, as putting truth and readers first, while digital journalists are othered by always putting themselves and money before readers and truth.

Discussion

House of Cards depicts digital journalists differently than their print counterparts. First, in the drama, digital journalists have a positive relationship with technology, while print journalists approach new tools such as Twitter with trepidation. The show does not necessarily depict technology as a negative, but rather embraces the view of Habermas (1984), arguing that the way digital journalists embrace technology turns it negative. The show, in turn, depicts technology as the cause of many journalistic failings. Second, digital journalists do not practice an ethical form of journalism, consistently breaking major ethical norms of the industry, while print journalists do not engage in this behavior and are often shown lecturing digital journalists—and the audience—on proper ethical behavior. Finally, digital journalists are shown to have differing professional goals. Print journalists on *House of Cards* approach their job as people who represent regular citizens, as workers aiming to bring truth to the people. However, for digital journalists, truth is a secondary, tertiary, or non-goal altogether. Instead, the primary motivation for doing journalistic work is to attain personal attention. Once again, the way the digital journalists embrace and utilize technology illustrates that while technology could be used for positive, in this case the digital journalists such as Zoe have chosen to primarily employ it to build a personal brand and not inform a citizenry.

Ehrlich (1997) argued that depictions in popular culture affect how audiences view the depicted in real life. He specifically wrote about journalism, reasoning that most people do not truly understand what journalists do and exactly how they go about doing their jobs, but people fill in the blanks through what they see in entertainment. McNair (2010) added to this argument, finding that because journalists typically receive either a

heroic or villainous depiction, viewers are prone to attaching certain types of journalistic behavior as bad and other types as good, with little in between. And, more specifically, Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) posited that further academic study of how journalists are depicted in popular culture allows us to better understand why the public views the industry the way it does. Cultivation theory, furthermore, empirically illustrates that depictions on television affect viewers' reality, that viewers make decisions about the real world around them by applying what they see on television (Gerbner, 1998).

These depictions especially matter for viewers of *House of Cards* because, as found by McNair (2014), very few films or television programs depict digital journalists. Therefore, many viewers of *House of Cards* could form opinions of digital journalism from the Netflix series' juxtaposition of digital and print journalism. Clearly, as noted by Gould (2013) and other mainstream journalists, *House of Cards'* producers and writers show a disdain for digital journalism as a trade because of the way the journalists employ various innovative tools.

Said (1994) and other scholars of orientalism maintain that one manner in which the media assist people in forming negative views on a subject is through the action of othering. In *House of Cards*, digital journalists are othered. They consistently are depicted opposite print journalists whose behavior is normalized by being shown in an affirmative light. Whenever politicians or print journalists discuss digital journalism, it is often during a negative discourse. During season two, one politician, discussing a story first published on a digital site, says, "Nobody will believe it. People understand things coming from there are not accurate or vetted." While this comment is explicitly stated, there are numerous times these sentiments are implied.

For viewers not intimately familiar with digital journalism, *House of Cards* provides them with the character of Zoe Barnes as an archetype. As noted by Gould (2013), there may not be a worse fictional journalistic representative than her in recent years. Zoe is depicted as someone far more concerned with her own self-gain than truth. She will sleep with sources, knowingly print false information, entrap her boss into saying something controversial and, in general, do anything for attention. None of these negative traits have anything to do with technology, but the show still ostensibly juxtaposes legacy and digital journalism as different through the degree in which each embrace and utilize technology. While one could argue that Zoe is simply a villain, not a representation of digital journalism as a whole, *House of Cards* producers and writers make sure viewers understand she is not an anomaly. Zoe eventually goes to work for *Slugline,* an organization represented as successful considering the amount of mainstream press it attracts and the number of reporters it employees. Through *Slugline*, viewers meet Carly Heath, the organization's owner and editor, who explicitly encourages Zoe to conduct herself in this manner; of course, Heath also only practices journalism for personal gain, viewers are told. Once again, the show not so subtly juxtaposes these professional behaviors, which it implicitly treats as abhorrent, against the behaviors of print journalists, which conform to traditional journalistic norms. The main argument then is not that technology is bad, but the way a younger culture employs it is negative. And while the show does depict both males and females on each side of the digital divide, the main vessels for each side – Zoe as the digital journalist and Lucas as the legacy or print journalist – do, indeed, potentially illustrate a patriarchal social structure. In the world of *House of Cards*, young female reporters embrace technology not to better

follow journalistic norms, but to build a personal brand and become famous, while slightly older male reporters utilize technology only when appropriate and are ambitious in appropriate manners.

For viewers of the hit show, these depictions may be their introduction to the differences between print and digital journalism. To them, then, digital journalism is simply a domain for reporters looking to make news about themselves, and not relay truth to readers. Furthermore, studies show that new entrants into the journalistic field are often influenced by popular culture depictions (Ehrlich, 1997). Therefore, if current and future journalism students believe that *House of Cards* depicts solid archetypes of the industry, not only could that affect why people enter the field, but also what people believe is the goal of a journalist. For example, *House of Cards* depicts the digital journalist as an unethical person simply looking for personal gain. This depiction could have negative effects on future journalists and journalism students. Considering that news consumers already believe digital journalism to be less credible (e.g., Bradley, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2014), this type of depiction could further a negative opinion of digital journalism.

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