

Television Cultures Assessment 1 – Part A:

### Post Broadcast Media Digitalisation, a Paradoxical Convergence

After reflecting on the web/television series *Broad City* I began to consider how digitalisation has obstructed the sender-receiver model, to a more audience controlled form of viewership and the ushering in of transmedia in televisual content.

Evident in the Deloitte Media Consumer Survey (2014) there is a preference of digital media over scheduled television, with 72% of people surveyed watching three or more episodes per viewing session online, and 26% doing so weekly.

*Broad City* is the epitome of success for this new method of viewer consumption; initially launching as an independent web series on You-tube in 2009 its success online drew attention from Comedy Central and premiered on the network in 2014.

We now enter a paradoxical convergence; traditional broadcast media institutions no longer hold the power to what audiences watch and how and when they watch it, instead networks are being told what to air by active audiences.



The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies (2004) defines active audiences as 'dynamic creators of significance' rather than being simple receptors of textual meaning, a theory that amassed from the understanding of the hypodermic model.

Len Ang first described the receptors interplay of televisual content when referencing her observations on women viewers of the American television series *Dallas*, she noted that the viewers were actively involved in the production of a range of meanings and pleasures despite the intended message of the content.<sup>ii</sup>

Digitalisation of post-broadcast media has increased the production capabilities of these messages, with social media conveniently at the fingertips of many allowing for quick social collaboration shared between a texts audience.

The narrative of televisual content becomes coherent across multiplatform devices 'transmedia storytelling' while simultaneously forming social cohesion; television programmes have increasingly become only part of the experience.

An interesting perspective of the development of television and its use within society, is highlighted in Elizabeth Evans research in 'Transmedia Television Audiences, New Media, New Daily Life', where DVD and

video players centralized not only the status of the television set, but also its 'accompanying apparatus', broadcasting.

Retrospectively, the same principle may apply to the increase in televisual texts availability and accessibility across multiple platforms with television, or its 'accompanying apparatus' broadcasting, still being at the centre.

For institutions, this means racing to increase market share from the TV set to the amalgamation televisual platforms.

Enter the big three in Australian media;



Seven West Media discusses 'Hybrid Broadband Broadcast Television', in its 2014 annual report, Network Ten Holdings vision in their 2014 annual review is to 'Create innovative and authentic multi-platform content', and Nine Entertainment Co. outlines the launch of its 'SVOD' service (Subscription Video on Demand) in its 2014 annual report.

Active audiences have shifted the traditionally colloquially passive broadcast theory of the macabre style hypodermic needle and seemingly democratized the world of televisual content, with institutions and citizen video composers free to create and share content simultaneously across multiple platforms for its effervescent, non-passive audience.

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<sup>i</sup> Online, available at: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/awesomer/are-you-experiencing-a-paradox#.cdRgWXEZ7> (Accessed 10/08/15)

<sup>ii</sup> Transmedia Television: Audiences New Media and Daily Life, Elizabeth Evans, (p. 100)

## Big Brother Syndrome – Bestowed upon a Zombie Nation



After watching the scheduled screening of *Dead Set* (2008), the meaning began to elucidate to me what type of culture engulfs itself in the reality TV series *Big Brother*.

I believe there are two types of audience dumbed-down zombification that can be discussed when considering the narrative of *Dead Set*, one that represents life-encompassing obsession with ritualistic anticipation, e.g. *'Omg do you think Janet will be evicted this week, come over to my house and we can watch it together this Friday'*.

And the other which represents an internal desire seemingly prevalent amongst youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that, given the right opportunity, fame can waltz its swindling self into ones life and bestow upon them a great many things, like having people discuss your shower scene with Blake. Yay.

This phenomenon is colloquially recognised as Big Brother Syndrome, and best defined by Oxford Reference as; *'A growing tendency among younger learners to voice an ambition for celebrity without notable achievement.'*<sup>ii</sup>

Vanity, self-infatuation and egomania, all encompassed in the zombie virus that preys upon its spotlight-lusting victims.

Arguably the unrealistic goal of becoming a Hollywood success can be disadvantageous to a society and its progression; youth become less inclined to work toward an academic or constructive goal, indulgent in their hedonistic attributes and deluded belief of random success.

A theme that is perceptible in *Dead Sets* narrative, as Britain begins to self-destruct in an apocalyptic realm engulfed by zombies.

Evidently, a study conducted by the American Freshman Survey (2013) reinforces this assumption, concluding that out of research of 9 million students over 47 years there has been an influx of students who rate their abilities higher than above average.<sup>iii</sup>

The study found that students consider themselves almost outstanding in the areas of academic ability, mathematical ability, self-confidence and an over all drive to achieve.

Ironically, the students considered themselves to be gifted in writing abilities, despite their writing abilities being far less than those of their 1960's predecessors.

This sort of self-gloating can't be healthy for a person. When faced with the realization that their skill-set is much lower than believed in their first job, or when they discover they can't even find a job at all, it all must be very depressing, potentially leading to an increase in unemployment and possibly even high suicide rates, leading to an ill effected society.

Sure enough, a 2006 study concluded in Jean M. Twenge' book *Generation Me* there are higher rates of depression resultant from something termed 'ambition inflation' and an increase of anxiety to reach unrealistic goals.

Perhaps this creates a socio-economic paradox, inflicting a societies ability to progress. The end does need to be nigh though, maybe the way to navigating a narcissistic society is to educate, promote and make aware the realities of egomania, and the benefits of modesty.

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<sup>i</sup> Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/linusishere/5538982961>

<sup>ii</sup> Available online at: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095505831> | Accessed 09/08/15

<sup>iii</sup> How college students think they are more special than EVER: Study reveals rocketing sense of entitlement on U.S. campuses | Available online at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257715/Study-shows-college-students-think-theyre-special--read-write-barely-study.html> | Accessed 09/08/15