

BEYOND THE H8R:

THEORIZING THE ANTI-FAN

“Where’s the ‘Dislike’ Button?”

From the benign to the vitriolic, haters are everywhere. One TV critic recently asked, “Whatever happened to ‘I don’t like’?”(Weeks 2011) Let us consider “hateration,” that is hate as anti-fan activity, on a continuum. On the passive end, if you do not like something on a Facebook friend’s wall your options are to either comment with your dislike or ignore the posting. Somewhere in the middle of the continuum, celebrity news blogs such as *dlisted*, mix equal parts adoration and hate in posting, such as acknowledging celebrity birthdays under the heading “Birthday Sluts.” And, at a gathering of friends, a lull in conversation can be enlivened by a round of the party game, “Kill, Fuck, Marry” or naming six celebrities you would like to put on an airplane that is sure to have engine failure and crash. (Those last two are on the vitriolic end, in case that was not clear.) Hate for genre texts, people, events, and objects in popular culture is all around us, yet it continues to be an overlooked sentiment in fan studies. Anti-fans hang about the periphery of fandom, but they are nonetheless part of the fan world.

It is not that web 2.0 – the mix of interactivity and online communities – is blind to the existence of dislike nor completely ignores the sentiment. The 2012 Adobe Digital Index Report finds that a little more than half (53%) of consumers surveyed “said they would very much like to have a ‘dislike’ button” on the social media site Facebook (Lomas 2012). People make ample use of ratings on YouTube. Users can rate videos with “thumbs up” and “thumbs down,” as well as up or down vote other users’ comments.

Pinterest, on the other hand, only allows users to “heart/like” other users’ pins. These sociotechnical features allow website creators to steer the norms of their sites in the direction of positive sentiment.

By “sociotechnical” I am referring to the buttons, virtual spaces (e.g. chatrooms), and other features that encourage particular norms and sentiments. Regardless of whether Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, or other sites offer the ability to like or dislike, social media and its marketers pay huge amounts of attention to positive affirmation. Robert Kraut and colleagues, in *Building Online Communities*, come closest to addressing anti-fandom in their chapter on managing conflict (Resnick and Kraut 2012). However, conflict is characterized as “trolling” or intentional provocations. Reactions to trolling have been the object of study more so than trolling’s intent and the sentiment behind it; it is unclear how hate plays into the activity. Kraut et. al.’s advice to moderators and designers of online communities generally centers around enabling or disabling comments to control negative, hateful, inflammatory, or otherwise unpleasant comments.

On the monetization side, Facebook cares more about what users like than what they do not like. Facebook wants to add value to mined data and present positively-inclined consumers to advertisers. “Likes” to individual friends’ or business’ posts translate algorithmically into larger “suggested posts” or advertisements that Facebook can target for users to “like.” Joining the chorus concerned with how Facebook uses consumers’ information and propensity for the like button, one blogger notes, “Access to your newsfeed is like gold. And the price is rising.” (Moyers 2013) But how would social media sites translate dislikes or make them valuable to potential advertisers? Advertisers

only care about existing and future consumers. They see “likes” as the only way to convert someone who is ambivalent into a consumer – increasingly called a “fan” – with a positive view of their product. Social media marketers aiming for advertising dollars ignore detractors, rarely working to convert the dislikes to like.

This article offers three points in favor of theorizing anti-fandom. First, scholars in fan studies need to pay attention to this form of fandom lest we dismiss anti-fan practice on the same grounds upon which regular fandom was, and still is, dismissed. Second, cultural studies needs a better methodology for studying fans and applying tools from computer supported cooperative work (CSCW) can provide that intervention. And, third, I use the short-lived CW TV show, *H8R*, to explain why I am connecting haters to anti-fandom and the distinction from trolling, flaming, and other undesirable web-based behaviors. Retrieving anti-fans from the margins of fan studies and applying theories relevant to the emotions and enactments of haters offers new pathways for considering a broader range of fan productivity.

Why Study Anti-Fans?

Anti-fandom is acknowledged, but not understood. Nor is the anti-fan incorporated into our recuperation of the fan from perspectives that seek to psychologize or pathologize. The problem is this where do we situate anti-fans? Are they a subset of fandom alongside fans? Are fans completely outside the realm of fandom? Do anti-fans exist outside the definitions of reasonable, resistive, creative participants in popular culture? Do anti-fans self-identify, thus constituting an online community or hybrid (off-line/online) subculture?

Jonathan Gray (2003) and Matt Hills (2012) both offer compelling arguments for paying attention to anti-fandom. Gray's research on *The Simpsons* afforded him the opportunity to study and distinguish between fans, anti-fans, and non-fans of the show. He advocates for studying these nuances in fandom to understand the subtleties of textualities. Gray advocates for the inclusion of paratexts as they shape viewers' and non-viewers' experiences (Gray 2003, 72). How people situate themselves in relationship to texts tells us a great deal about meaning-making through texts and, as such, anti-fandom offers much unexplored terrain.

Matt Hills (2012), concurring with Gray over the importance of this neglected area of inquiry, offers this definition of the anti-fan: "Anti-fans are those who viscerally dislike specific texts, often without much experience of them, basing their distaste on trailers, textual snippets, or other paratextual sources. Anti-fans carry out 'distant readings' and perform their moral and cultural opposition to particular media products (121)." Importantly, Hills' and Gray's attention to texts and paratexts situates anti-fandom as *inter-fan* behavior: that of fan versus anti-fan. In this definition, the text is almost peripheral to other relationships acted out.

I suggest that we also need to consider texts more broadly, in fact, taking people as texts, in order to delve further into the nuances of anti-fandom. True, anti-fans are integral to how fans structure their love and adoration of texts (Hills 2012; Pinkowitz 2011). But, for my purposes, "texts" cross genres, media, and venture into considering people and objects as texts. If celebrities are constantly vigilant about their "brand" and regular citizens increasingly cohere personal identity through social media, bodies and

personalities are, indeed, the text to which fans and anti-fans ascribe identification and *disidentification*.

The fan studies literature seems to have reached consensus on a “wave” model of the field’s evolution – a linear progression from fans characterized as irrational and obsessed individuals and the hysterical crowd in the first wave to the second wave’s isolated and alienated victim of mass culture. The latter wave’s compensatory fan is said to rely on parasocial relationships to fulfill what is lacking in their interpersonal lives. Joli Jensen (1992) observes that, under the mass society framework, “Fandom is conceived of as a chronic attempt to compensate for a perceived personal lack of autonomy, absence of community, incomplete identity, lack of power and lack of recognition.” (17) If this was/is the verdict for regular fans, are anti-fans even more extreme in their lack, absences, and incompleteness?

Concurring with Hills in working toward a definition of the anti-fan, there are striking parallels between early effects research on audiences and the neglect of the anti-fan. The wave or linear progression approach to fandom assumes that scholars’ approaches to the study of fandom never folds back upon itself or circles through previous perceptions of fans. It is fair to say that, looking at fandom representations in contemporary media, elements of all the waves intermingle in assessments of how fans are perceived. Popular culture and society-at-at-large stubbornly resist fan studies linear wave progression. This has particularly been the case with the advent of the internet, web communications, and social media. More often than not, the web is blamed for contemporary bad behaviors as if the web is, itself, a being with agency and not merely a tool that enables agency.

If, for example, we substitute “the internet” for “mass society,” outside of fan studies, fans are still perceived as: alienated...*from other human beings because everyone is attached to screens*; irrational...*in their attention to the lives of celebrities and the materialism they see exhibited on the internet*; obsessed...*with celebrities who are, as per Daniel Boorstin, “well known for being well known;”* and isolated individuals engaged in parasocial relationships...because they do not leave the house to interact with real people (Boorstin 1992).

How, for example, would we situate the fandom of young women and girls for murderers, such as James Holmes, Dylan Klebold, Eric Harris, and more recently Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (Monroe 2012; Read 2013). The comfortable answer would be: we do not. For to allow *these* women (and men?), engaged as they are in hybristophilia, or achieving sexual arousal from crushing on murderers, into our pantheon of fan behavior merely reinforces pathologizing explanations for what is clearly fannish behavior. Only willful ignorance would fail to see the correspondence that Charles Manson receives fanmail; Tumblrs dedicated to the young men who murdered 13 people at Columbine high school are the equivalent of fan magazines; and #FreeJahar, launched presumably by Tsarnaev’s friends who believe him to be innocent of the Boston bombings, was easily and quickly appropriated by girls who think Tsarnaev is cute as a way for his fans to find one another on Twitter.

I would contend that Holmies, Columbiners, and Tsarnaev crushers are engaged in *anti-fan* behavior. These objects of fandom – convicted murderers and the likely-to-be-convicted – are enacted on the web because these individuals know that their fandom is unacceptable and even morally reprehensible to a large segment of the population.

However, the web enables, not causes, particular enactments of anti-fandom by using the same web tools as fans. Entertainment news coverage of these anti-fans has all of the hallmarks of early assessments of regular fandom. Gawker, for instance, concludes,

Like the “Holmies” and “Columbiners” devoted to the Aurora, Colo. and Columbine High School shooters, respectively, #FreeJahar has its roots in “fandom” culture—those devoted communities of admirers, usually young women, that organize themselves on sites like Tumblr, exchanging photographs, fan art and writing, and expressions of “the feels,” a near-undefinable flood of emotion and desire...But it's been combined with the conspiratorial rhetoric of sites like Infowars or Natural News, and informed by viral “issue” campaigns like Kony 2012. The result is a strange hybrid phenomenon—part conspiracy-mongering, part gushing fandom, part political movement, part self-promotional tool, structured by social media, populated almost entirely by teenagers and stubbornly resistant to argument (Monroe 2012).

Positing Holmies, Columbiners, and #FreeJaharists as young, ill-informed, obsessed, and rather deluded places them in an extreme position that confirms regular fans as normal and harmless. They may be anti-fans. Or they may be fans of the ultimate haters. But wherever we place them, their fan behavior must be reckoned with as relevant to fandom.

It is from the fandom-as-pathology perception that contemporary fan studies recuperated the fan in its third wave of analysis. Even scholars have joined fandom as “aca-fans,” but remain notably silent in their scholarship about texts that they hate. Resisting claims to objectivity and steeped unashamedly in declared subjectivity as aca-fans, *not* speaking to disdained texts evades the implications of one-sided subjectivity. Recognizing fans’ productive value, we have turned to examining the creative output fans produce, as well as, to paraphrase Lawrence Grossberg’s words, the empowering pleasure of fandom. (85) Can this contemporary constellation of the fan, which is capable of “spinning shit into gold,” accommodate the anti-fan who is concerned with making sure everyone else knows shit is, in actuality, shit?

Jensen notes that early studies of fandom sought to create us/them boundaries between high and low culture, between reasoned appreciation and out of control hysteria, and between fans and aficionados. (9) These distinctions determine who counts as a fan and who does not based on sentiment, which in turn guarantees uncritical romanticization of fandom. Are we scholars in the field meta-fans, aca-fans or cultural critics?

Ignoring the fan activity of the “Holmies,” “Columbiners,” and self-professed haters narrows our scope. Expanding the field to take seriously anti-fandom potentially encompasses those marginalized and troubling forms of fandom that demonstrate the fallacy of the wave progression and, instead, indicate a much more complex view of fandom. Whether we acknowledge them or not, boundary lines and hierarchies are drawn. It behooves us to determine where those lines are and the placement of different types of fandom in a hierarchy.

The anti-fan is situated somewhere between the top-down, uses and gratifications, effects model and the bottom-up, grassroots empowered individual. This positioning prompts further questions before we arrive at answers about anti-fandom. From the top down, if we approach anti-fandom from the effects perspective, do the media encourage anti-fans? And does the internet enable anti-fandom in ways that were not possible before the advent of the web? From the bottom up, do anti-fans, like active fans, have agency? Are not anti-fans, like regular fans, engaged in a two-way conversation with media texts, especially when celebrities get into Twitter flame wars with anti-fans? Who, we might ask, is better at resisting the influence of media’s imposed narratives: fans who decode the dominant narrative by creating their own meaning, but still are engaging with the original media source, or anti-fans who resist by disliking and refusing to engage with

any meaning in the texts? We cannot, as most celebrities do, ignore the haters. Advertisers and those of us in fan studies ignore the negative to our own detriment in studies of fandom, social media, and the web more broadly.

What Is a Hater?

Popular culture producers increasingly embrace “haters” as part of fandom. If we accept that the anti-fan has a place in fan studies, we must also recognize variation in defining the anti-fan. The hater as s/he manifests in popular culture one emerging dimension of anti-fandom. Hater derives from the longer phrase, “player hater.” As historian Marcus Reeves explains players are “working-class hustlers or urban players of a system set up to keep them out.” (Weeks 2011) He continues, “Player Hater was the term given to those who work against or criticize the make-it-by-any-means-necessary ethos of a successful rapper or any successful person” and the phrase was shortened to hater as shorthand for “anyone who criticized – even constructively – a person’s success or business practices.” (Ibid.) Scripted reality TV is rife with accusations of, “You’re just a hater.” Reeves goes on to note the function of calling someone out as hater; it “began to be used to shut down any criticism or examination of how one obtained success” (Ibid.).

Steeped in 1990s hip-hop culture, it is striking, and a marker of slang’s rapid appropriation, that today some people *embrace* being a hater, dishing out the hate, participating in “hateration,” and/or drinking the “hater-ade.” This shift links old definitions of fans-as-pathological and new ideas of Everything That Is Wrong with the Internet. With the proliferation of Facebook posts, tweets, comments, and other web-based communications between fans and celebrities, between fans and brands, celebrities and brands are also more easily accessible to anti-fans. We seem intent on dismissing

anti-fans as impeding progress in redeeming fandom as valid activity with their critique or negativity, while at the same time blaming the web for allowing such behaviors to exist and proliferate.

Haters' assumption of identity that they affiliate with their actions as anti-fans mirrors the activities that regular fans assume in their remixing, reformulating, love, and acceptance of popular culture texts and figures. Likewise, haters exhibit agency, and sometimes incredible creativity, in what is, essentially, cultural critique. How scholars in fan studies interpret this activity can draw a great deal from previous studies of fans, but also must reach beyond those studies to explore sentiment assumed to be unproductive and disruptive to the fan experience.

Reconsidering Parasociality

This paper approaches studying the anti-fan – motivations, behavior, and activity – from two bodies of literature. Whereas Hills and Gray situate their analyses in cultural studies, Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) theories and methodologies offer tools for investigating the sociotechnical processes that enable human behavior through technology. CSCW stands at the intersection where information, computer, and social sciences meet to explain how the social and technical meet in society and organizational structures. Given the degree to which the internet, web-based interactions take the blame for negative behaviors, such as incivility and anti-social behavior, it seems time to bring CSCW and cultural studies together to either affirm or refute these claims. CSCW is particularly useful because, while we all use the web, using it is not the same as knowing *how* we use it or *how it works*.

Introducing theories of parasocial interaction to CSCW and media studies is a first step in rethinking fan activity. Typically, parasocial interaction (PI) theory is used to explain the interaction between users and mass media as one of identification. Implicit in PI is a positive association for consumers: media consumers find companionship and gain a sense of personal identity to make up for feelings of loneliness in their own lives. (Giles 2002) Studies note attraction, both social and physical, that accounts for the strength of parasocial attachments. David Giles (2002), in a review of the parasocial literature, advocates for, “ways in which parasocial interaction may be viewed as ‘usual social activity.’” (280)

Hate is constructed as pathological and unhealthy, especially since the anti-fan does not, typically, actually know the object of their hatred. This criteria for determining pathology overlooks the fact that, the regular fan typically does not necessarily know the object of their affection, though the more persistent fans do make these connections. Parasocial interaction theory has room to expand and consider anti-fandom. How might we determine the parasocial interactions of anti-fans? As much as liking and loving are approved emotions in our society that occur as usual activity, I would like to pose a few questions about anti-fandom as parasocial, usual activity. These questions assume a certain degree of introspection on the part of the anti-fan, but if we give fans that allowance, surely it can be extended to the anti-fan.

1. How does dislike or hating something or someone help the anti-fan understand his/her own life? For example, does the anti-fan consider how her/his dislike or hatred of a particular person might be hatred of some aspect of the self that they dislike?

2. Does the anti-fan experience revulsion toward the object of their hatred? Or is there also an element of attraction that drives being a hater?
3. The assumption is that haters are wracked with envy. Do haters actually wish they were the object of their dislike? Are they, in fact, *overidentifying*?

These three inquiries speak to whether self-hatred is implicated in anti-fan behavior. It makes the object of a hater's wrath feel better about the animosity directed toward them if they can assume that haters are "just jealous" or somehow reacting to a deficiency within the hater.

Parasocial interaction as an explanatory model for anti-fans can employ uses and gratifications methodologies scholars used earlier, such as Phillip Auter and Phillip Palmgreen's (2000) Audience-Persona Interaction (API) Scale. The API scale is an open-ended questionnaire intended to assess "identification with a favorite character; interest in a favorite character; interaction with a group of favorite characters (e.g., a sitcom family); and a favorite character's problem-solving abilities"(cited in Giles 2002, 283). Similarly, Mary Step and A. M. Rubin's PSI scale, which has been used to measure, "perceived realism, and attraction to the media figure" can be used to measure anti-fan interaction. (Ibid, 288-289) Measuring hater sentiment both quantitatively and qualitatively reaffirms the utility of parasocial identity in defining emotions and activity that seem, on the surface, irrational, but may be imbued with more meaning than appearances belie.

Incivility on the web and the literature about online communities is also useful for defining the motivations and activities of anti-fans, as well as reactions to them. CSCW

and its attention to the sociotechnical processes that motivate online participation focus heavily on what creates a sense of community on the internet. Hate, however, is dealt with only obtusely as “conflict.” If fan communities, moderators, and brand managers are merely concerned with conflict in terms of establishing positive norms and controlling activities such as trolling, they ignore anti-fans who might actively dislike or profess hate for particular objects, brands, people, etc. Thus, feedback mechanisms such as thumbs up/down buttons, posting expected etiquette guidelines, deleting negative comments, and other attempts at regulating behavior can only go so far in controlling the negative. Understanding motivations and uses of sociotechnical tools can lead to a deeper understanding of what it takes to convert dislike to like, but also when to move on to more promising pastures in cultivating likes.

Anti-fans are motivated as much as fans to use the features offered to them to express their opinions and sentiment. Rather than react defensively – after all, there will always be someone who does not like – studying anti-fans through the same mechanism used to study fans and lurkers would work toward, if not pre-emptive strategies, ways of changing the impact of the role of anti-fans. Lampe et. al. (2010), for example, sought to understand why people participate in online communities through a survey of anonymous and registered users to the website Everything2. They asked users about their past and anticipated future behaviors using analysis of site features. Through this methodology they are able to discover those behaviors that indicated motivations such as entertainment and information, as well as how users’ own identity relative to the perceived community on the site influenced participation.

Similarly, CSCW studies on lurkers and the social roles Wikipedia has evolved offer analysis of contributions key to discerning how the anti-fan fits into more formal fan communities and as disruptive or productive to informal conversations amongst fans. (Lampe et al. 2010; Welser et al. 2011) Hypothetically, we should consider whether anti-fans, as part of their function, push fans to more concretely define their positions of identification and admiration, similar to ideals about whether people from differing political perspectives serve a similar function. (Conover et al. 2010) Is this the case? Do anti-fans disrupt the “echo chamber” of fan communities? Do they also help make concrete fans’ bonds by fostering in-group/out-group dynamics? If we can categorize fans according to their degree of participation in fandom, the same metrics of fandom – nature of activity, level of involvement, and degrees of commitment – may help us to more concretely define anti-fandom.

Studies in Computer Supported Cooperative Work demonstrate the possibilities of studying those who self-identify as anti-fans, or haters, and determining behaviors that constitute anti-fan behavior as distinct from fans and trolls. Just as important as understanding *why* people engage in these behaviors, it is also important to understand how they demonstrate anti-fandom. Anti-fandom is disruptive on many levels, but until we know more about the particulars, it remains an amorphously defined, highly pathologized, and easily dismissed blind spot in fan studies.

What Is Hater Activity?

Andrea MacDonald (1998) defines fans as “people who attend to media texts, icons, stars, or sports teams in greater than usual detail.” (135) The attention she alludes to can just as easily be critical as it can be positive. Vexing about the anti-fan is that they

are, in fact, somehow attached to the object of their hatred. They are linked or in a relationship with something or someone they abhor. Far from ambivalent, anti-fans *care*; there is nothing inherent in the definition of care that means loving or concerned attention to something or someone. In fact, the etymology of care is more closely aligned with “lament,” “cry,” and the Latin for “chatter.” In narrowly ascribing care to preference, we say that we *do not care* for country music or jazz much more frequently than we might profess to care for Brit pop or electronic dance music; we either love it or hate it.

Thus, in the care or attention they pay to people or things they do not like, anti-fans, participate in any number of activities fans studies scholars attribute to fans. Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen (2012) claim that “each fan space has its own customs, norms and expectations for participation” whereby fans speculate, discuss, critically evaluate, and create transformative works. (9) They also note that fans have often been categorized in terms of their modes of participation, with that participation usually defined in terms of production. (16) Add to this Henry Jenkins’ assessment of fanwork as interpretive and a space of communion, it becomes easy to see how Lawrence Grossberg (1995) characterizes that fandom, as “the relation between audiences and popular texts[,] is usually always active and productive.” Where does the anti-fan fall in the context of fandom as transformative?

The rise, or coming out of the anti-fan, can potentially be productive. As with much user-generated content, marketers and brand managers today work to quantify the value of a fan, what a “like” is worth. This “return on interaction” can likewise be quantified negatively: how much does one celebrity hating on another in the media cost celebs in terms of reputation? But, how much does this same interaction

add to tabloid and gossip websites' revenues and advertising click-throughs? (Neuhauser 2013) Doubts about whether "beef" – probably solidly known now as "hating on" – between rappers and b-list socialites is genuine, particularly before the release of new material or a lag in interest, begs the question: what are real or manufactured grievances worth to today's media coffers?

Commenting on celebrities' Facebook pages disparaging their latest production or engaging in Twitter wars constitute some of individual anti-fans' activities. Popular blogs, such as the aforementioned *dlisted*, *Perez Hilton*, and *Bossip* participate in a more public and, presumably profitable, form of anti-fan behavior that benefits from the slightest misstep or display of normalcy. Notably, stalkers typically engage in anti-social behaviors out of self-professed love or adoration, not because they despise or otherwise dislike the celebrity receiving this unsolicited attentions.

Hater Nuances: The CW's H8R.

I want to close with a brief analysis of a short-lived CW network show, *H8R*, to illustrate some of the issues awaiting our attention with the study of anti-fandom. Related to the aforementioned theoretical and methodological possibilities, *H8R* demonstrates the potential for interrogations into dis/identification, gender interventions, and the sociotechnical aspects of anti-fandom. Warner Horizon Television produced eight episodes for the show's 2011 debut, but only four made it to air. Hosted by the permanently be-dimpled Mario Lopez, *H8R* set out to have celebrities confront their haters *Candid Camera*-style. Lopez's accomplices included: Snooki (*Jersey Shore*), Kim Kardashian and Scott Disick (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians*), Eva Longoria (*Desperate Housewives*), Jake Pavelka (*The Bachelorette*, season 5), and other b-to-d-list

celebrities. The unaired episodes included other provocative and divisive personalities, including: Levi Johnston, Janice Dickinson, Nene Leakes, Tito Ortiz, Nadia Suleman, The Game, and Charles Barkley.

Each episode usually proceeded as follows: Lopez shows the celebrity a video of their hater dissing them...*hard*; the celebrity confronts their hater; the celebrity either engages their hater in an activity meant to show that they are “human, too” or in an activity the celebrity thinks the hater will enjoy; the celebrity and hater have a heart-to-heart talk about the personal costs, to both the hater and the celebrity, of hating; and the celebrity asks, doe-eyed, “So. I have to ask: do you still hate me?” The majority of the time, the hater softened to a grudging admission that s/he may have misjudged the celebrity, but it was not unusual for the whole endeavor to end with just as much vitriol as at the start of the program.

Toward dissecting what anti-fandom means in the case of *H8R*, relatively quickly Lopez, in direct address to the viewer, notes conspiratorially that celebs will confront *their* hater. Lopez’s use of the possessive is notable in that, ordinarily, normal people would not typically claim connection nor ownership over an adversary. Claiming people that have nothing but disdain for their celebrity status extends Marcus Reeves’ earlier discussion of the evolution of the player hater to hater. Now, having haters is a marker of success. As the comedian Katt Williams declares in a popular stand-up comedy routine, “You gotta be grateful. You *need* haters” as a marker of successfully being on the grind. (Williams 2006)

This shift in acceptance of the haters by celebrities begs the question of intentional provocations to the public for media attention and the subsequent productivity

of anti-fandom. Does the Celebrity Industrial Complex already know and recognize the use of anti-fans for generating attention? The adage of “any attention is good attention” is no less relevant in the maintenance of celebrity status than in any other industry reliant on advertising and public relations. Likeability functions differently for different types of celebrities and in different industries. Thus, having one’s haters and parlaying negative attention into productive, money-generating attention is one result of anti-fandom.

Haters on Lopez’s show almost uniformly claim to glean their knowledge from tabloids. I am guessing, and need to verify through focus groups or surveys, that these tabloids are online magazine websites, blogs, or social media posts. While it is tempting to blame the insatiable demands of web publishing for creating a climate in which celebrity “crotch shots” and the minutiae of celebrities’ lives constitute infotainment or news, I would suggest investigation into the sociotechnical processes that accompany an always-on news cycle and enable both fandom and anti-fandom.

In particular, how does celebrity interaction with social media create and sustain parasocial relationships with both fans *and* anti-fans? Twitter has long had verified accounts that allow celebrities to claim their name and authenticity on the social media site and Facebook recently followed suit with verified pages. With this line of communication open, celebrities such as Rihanna, Chris Brown, Mylie Cyrus, Amanda Bynes, and Perez Hilton regularly engage in slanging matches with other celebrities and fans. Developing tools and metrics to measure the impact of web and social media features on celebrities’ reputations and brands is one area of inquiry for anti-fandom researchers. If, as *H&R* illustrates, anti-fan activity includes tabloid news consumptions, it would be useful to know how anti-fans act on this information and whether

sociotechnical tools enable these enactments in ways previously not enabled by “old” media tools. Old and new media interact in compelling ways to ensure that neither is ever wholly obsolete.

Scholars in celebrity studies have paid great attention to gender and constructions of “good” and “bad” female celebrities. (Gies 2011; Tyler and Bennett 2010; Williamson 2010) Such insights into the gendered nature of celebrity can be instructive in how female and male celebrities are expected to respond to their haters. The show *H8R*, during the ambush segment of the show, has female celebrities demurely sneak up on their hater in a semi-public space. This negotiation that starts on the hater’s “turf” begins the process of convincing their haters not to hate the celebrity by firmly taking her out of the spotlight and moving into the private sphere – a space where, presumably, the female celebrity can prove that she is “human” and, as their haters usually conclude, she is “just like us.”

Snooki, for example, has to win over her hater’s entire New Jersey family by cooking dinner them. Her hater and his family accuse Snooki of poorly representing Italians in the public eye, so her redemption necessarily involved her domestication and proving that she is a “good girl” by cooking them her family recipe of chicken cutlets. Snooki, Chilean-born, but adopted into an Italian-American family, must prove that while her public actions might not show it, she is capable of being authentically and morally a good Italian girl. It is only once her hater’s father asserts, “This is very interesting to get to see a side of you that we don’t see on TV” that Snooki is addressed by her real name (Nicole) and given his patriarchal seal of not-disapproval (the hater family never reaches full-fledged like).

Similarly, Eva Longoria has to prove her Latina-ness by cooking authentic Mexican cuisine (chile-rubbed flank steak and guacamole) in her own LA restaurant because her hater believes, from the tabloids that she is “ashamed to be Latina.” Snooki and Longoria are only allowed to acknowledge any life in the public sphere by discussing the charities they support as a way of illustrating that they use their celebrity for the good of, respectively, Italian-American firefighters and Latino service organizations. While Snooki’s male hater will only grudgingly admit that Snooki is an “alright girl,” Longoria’s hater professes to now be a “lover” because she has proved her Latina-ness to him by “bossing [him] around like my mother and sisters” and cooking Mexican food. Female celebrities must work twice as hard as their male counterparts to prove that fame as not ruined them.

The male celebrities who appear in *H8R*, on the other hand, as part of their ambush, first play up to everything their female haters despise about them – usually arrogance – by treating people poorly in public or coming on to their hater. The male celebrities are, then, expected to win over their hater by, essentially, taking them on a date that shows that they are “regular” guys...who happen to drive Lamborghinis, pop by the mansion set of *The Bachelor*, fly their own planes, or outfit their haters in sparkly dresses and teach them out to cha-cha (and dip!). Male celebrities are expected to sweep their haters off their feet, first, by being “bad boys” and then displaying markers of successful, celebrity manhood. The depiction of female haters toward male celebrities consistently seeks to reinforce stereotypes of women playing hard to get, “no” meaning “yes,” and the ladies protesting too much. The gender politics of *H8R* can answer some important questions about the nature of fan identification today. What is the

heteronormative fantasy that Hollywood thinks fans want and what happens when that ideal falls flat, creating anti-fans rather than fans?

Studying the anti-fan from the theoretical lens offered by computer supported cooperative work will help take into account, not only the content of haters' critique, but also their *mode* or *media* for expressing themselves. It is through this route that we can gain a broader picture of the fandom's transformative impact in terms of fan productivity. Bringing on board different anti-fan identities, such as that of the hater, will ensure that anti-fans, like fans, are not relegated to the sidelines of fan studies as unimportant. Instead, the field will prove to be vast enough to support the detailed study of a range of affective engagements, including like, love, hate, dislike, and indifference.

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