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**Persuasion and Television: How to Stay On the Air On the Five Major**

**Broadcasting Networks**

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## **Abstract**

This honors thesis postulates that there are certain determining factors, specifically persuasive factors, that the five major broadcasting networks can use when selecting which shows to order so they will have a decreased cancelation rate. The current cancelation rate of shows on these networks is nearing 70% and has been steadily declining for the past decade. Shows need to be persuasive in order for the networks to make money, thus the shows should use persuasion. The persuasive factor that shows should use to initially capture viewer attention is credibility. Credibility for these shows can be in the form of expertise or trustworthiness. This can be done by casting a well-known actor or using a theme that has been successful in the past, a trusted theme. A successful television show must also gain the compliance of their viewers through the use of rewarding activity, punishing activity, and/or the activation of impersonal commitments. These keep viewer interest from episode to episode and hopefully from season to season. Another element of persuasion that shows must utilize is motivational appeals. These appeals can be anything from fear to sex appeals. These appeals keep viewer interest during the episode and ultimately keep them watching entire episodes. All of these persuasive elements need to be shown visually and audibly. Watching a show is reinforced even more when a viewer hears and sees something, thus increasing a shows chance of being renewed.

## Introduction

The world of producing and broadcasting television shows is ever fluctuating. However, one thing seems to remain the same; the more money a television show makes per episode, the longer said show is likely to remain on the air. Television shows on traditional broadcasting networks make their money through the value of their commercial spots. Since the advent of television commercials, advertisers have attempted to get their ads on the most popular and most watched broadcasts on television. In turn, there is an abundance of research on how advertisers use persuasion in their commercials to boost sales and promote consumers to spend money on their products. With the exception of live sports broadcasts, advertisers try to get their commercials on the best primetime<sup>1</sup> shows on any one of the five major networks. These five networks are the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), The Columbia Werner Company (The CW), and Fox. Advertisers want their commercials shown on these networks during primetime because these networks cater to all those that watch television. That is, these five networks can be viewed by anyone with a television. This is because anyone with Cable, DISH, or just plain antenna television channels can view these five networks. So at any one time everyone in the United States, with access to a television, can be watching any of these five channels.

With the combination of primetime and the amount of viewers that could be watching these channels it seems that advertisers could safely advertise on these channels at this time and be sure that their commercial is seen by a sufficient number of viewers. However, this is simply not the case. With the recent advent of services like

DVR, Netflix, and OnDemand, advertisers have had to become more scrupulous when deciding on which shows to air their commercials. It is no longer sufficient to advertise on merely good shows. Now advertisers must select only the very best television shows, including popular live broadcasts. This is because when viewers watch episodes of their favorite shows on the services previously mentioned, they have the ability to fast-forward or even completely skip the commercials that the advertisers want them to see. It is because of these services that seven out of every ten new shows on these five networks will be canceled before the show even reaches its second season. This is due to the fact that advertisers are less likely to spend money on advertisement slots that are unlikely to be seen by the amount of people they want. So, it is the aim of this analysis to find out how the thirty percent of renewed shows persuade viewers to want to watch their show so badly, that they watch it live with commercials and all. Ultimately persuading advertisers to pay for advertisement slots during their program, and thus keeping the show going. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to shows that were not canceled in their first season as successful shows, and shows that were canceled during or immediately after their first season as unsuccessful shows. In this paper I will look at both successful and unsuccessful shows from each of the five major broadcasting networks and attempt to find the successful shows' most effective methods of utilizing persuasive content. The successful shows I will examine may be shows that started years ago or a year ago, while the unsuccessful shows will be those that have aired within the last three years. I postulate that for a show to become successful, it must employ certain persuasive tactics, in some form or another, that are good enough to get a show to be watched live so advertisements broadcast during them

are more likely to be viewed. I endeavor to find the most successful uses of persuasive content that shows can utilize in an attempt to halt the downward trend of these five network's success ratings with their shows. Otherwise, we will be watching new shows on these five networks knowing that there is a more than likely chance that a show we enjoy, will be canceled before its whole story could be told.

### **Persuasion and The First Episode's Success**

When attempting to define persuasion, Bettinghaus and Cody stated that "persuasion involves a conscious effort at influencing the thoughts or actions of a receiver." In this paper, I will be following Bettinghaus and Cody's technical definition of persuasion. This is because my understanding of persuasion is akin to theirs. This is to say, that I believe when I am attempting to persuade someone, I am structuring my message in a manner that is meant to influence that person's actions and or thoughts. Thus, when I use the term 'persuasion' in this paper, I will be referring to it in this manner.

Persuasion is paramount to a show's initial and overall success. For a television show to receive initial success, it must first persuade viewers to watch the first episode. If the first, or first several episodes, are flops there is a chance the network will cut their losses and cancel the show before the entire season has been aired. With this in mind, shows must focus on more than just their storyline; they must also focus on using persuasion to capture the viewer's attention from the show's conception to its end. I believe that credibility plays the most vital role in a show being able to persuade viewers to watch the first episode of a new television show. Not all shows can utilize credibility in the same way and succeed, but I do believe that some form of credibility is necessary

for a show to be watched when it is just beginning. I also believe that credibility can ultimately aid a show in continuing, but cannot be the only tactic a show uses.

Credibility is a concept in the field of persuasion that affects an individual's persuasiveness. By that I mean that credibility is a key factor that can either aid, or hinder, a person's ability to be persuasive. In 1990 O'Keefe defined credibility as a series of "judgments made by a perceiver concerning the believability of a communication" (Gass, Seiter 74). Credibility is composed three primary dimensions and three secondary dimensions. The three primary dimensions of credibility are: 1) expertise, 2) trustworthiness, and 3) goodwill (Gass, Seiter 76). The three secondary dimensions of credibility are: 1) extroversion, 2) composure, and 3) sociability (Gass, Seiter 76). The credibility that I will be referring to in this paper predominantly alludes to the first and second primary dimensions of credibility: expertise and trustworthiness. The expertise aspect of credibility deals with the qualifications, or training, of the individuals being reviewed. Usually a persuader must be knowledgeable in order to appear credible, but in this case they must also be capable of performing their duties in their respective shows. The trustworthy aspect of credibility, as I will refer to it in this paper, deals with the trustworthiness of a storyline or specific theme. This is to say that if someone enjoys cop shows, they are likely to try a new cop show because they trust that theme. Some of the ways creators can utilize credibility to persuade viewers to watch their show include; creator credibility, actor credibility, theme credibility, spinoff credibility, and remake credibility. It is important to note that credibility can be altered over time. An example of this would be, M. Night Shyamalan. The famed director's

name used to be synonymous with a good movie. Now an M. Night Shyamalan movie is associated with bad reviews and minuscule profits.

Credibility is receiver based, or rather entirely subjective. For this reason, those who are viewed do not control their own credibility. It is however, perceived and judged by the viewers. Being that it is receiver based, credibility “represents a composite of several characteristics that receivers perceive in a source” (Gass, Seiter 75). Essentially this means that credibility is not derived from only one action, but a combination of multiple actions. A good example of this aspect of credibility is Pope selection. Pope selection is a rigorous process where potential candidates entire lives are examined. In this process everything is looked at to determine the candidate’s credibility. Additionally, credibility is generally tied to a certain context. For the context of this paper, credibility will be tied to past success in television and film. I say this because it is unlikely that a new show will be released that has a completely original story. I mean it might be a new story, but it likely has some aspects that another show or film has already used and been successful. However, even if the new show could somehow be completely original and become successful, it is likely that said show would use an actor or creator who had been previously successful.

The first method of credibility that shows can utilize is creator credibility. Creator credibility, a show uses the past success of a creator in order to spark interest in their new show. This is like how horror novel fans flock to bookstores when a new Stephen King book is on sale. With creator credibility, a show can use advertisement spots to let potential viewers know that the new show is “from the creator of” a previously successful show. This means that the potential viewers of the new show are likely to

accept the creator's past success as their qualifications for being considered credible. Examples of creators who have had multiple shows include Aaron Sorkin, Joss Whedon, and Hart Hanson. Aaron Sorkin is the creator of both *The West Wing* and *The Newsroom*. Both shows had multiple seasons and were highly reviewed. Joss Whedon is the creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, and *Dollhouse*. Three of these four shows were renewed after their first season. While this is not a perfect record, it is a seventy-five percent success rate and that is much higher than the average success rate of thirty percent. Now Hart Hanson has created four shows and is the only example I have that still has a show that's success has yet to be determined. This show is called *Backstrom* and is on FOX. Excluding *Backstrom*, Hart Hanson has created two successful shows, *Traders* and *Bones*, and one unsuccessful show, *The Finder*. *The Finder* was a spinoff of Hanson's most successful show, *Bones*. Even though it was a spinoff of a highly successful show, *The Finder* failed to utilize some of the persuasive aspects that helped keep *Bones* on the air. *The Finder* is not alone in its inability to embrace all of the persuasive tactics necessary for a television show to succeed. It is important to note that while this, and the soon to be mentioned forms of credibility, are not all necessary, but some form of credibility is necessary to generate interest when creating a new television show.

The second form of credibility that a new show could employ would be actor credibility. Essentially in this type of credibility, shows use their actors star power. Actor credibility can be from previous shows or movies. So, as long as that actor has been well received, or is thought of as qualified, by potential viewers of the new show, the show has star power. Recent shows that have utilized this tactic are, *The Blacklist*, *The*

*Following*, *Crossbones*, and *The Michael J. Fox Show*. *The Blacklist*'s main actor is James Spader. James Spader had previous roles on *The Practice* and *Boston Legal*. The show has a good cast and a solid storyline, but without Spader's credibility, it is unlikely that this show would have fared as well. Secondly, *The Following* cast Kevin Bacon as their star and utilized his credibility to the fullest. Though Bacon is not generally a television actor, his big screen credibility transferred to *The Following*. Thirdly, *Crossbones* attempted to use John Malkovich's actor credibility in order to help them succeed. However *Crossbones* failed to utilize enough persuasive tactics, other than credibility, and was ultimately canceled by NBC in 2014. Lastly, NBC thoroughly used the Michael J. Fox's actor credibility with *The Michael J. Fox Show*. NBC understood how actor credibility worked, and attempted to fully utilize it but the show ultimately canceled before it could reach a second season. Thus, actor credibility has the potential to aid a show's chances at success, but cannot survive on it alone.

The third form of credibility that a show can utilize in order to attract potential viewers is theme credibility. This form of credibility comes from a show's ability to utilize trusted themes of past successful shows, movies, books, and even comic books. Three themes that have been successful in the past are murder-mystery, superheroes, or the supernatural. Examples of murder-mystery themed shows that have been successful include, *Castle*, *The Mentalist*, and *Bones*. In these series, there is usually at least one murder and in turn one mystery per episode. These three shows are shining examples of how murder-mysteries can thrive when put on the air. Shows that were successful with a superhero theme include, *Arrow*, *The Incredible Hulk*, and *Smallville*. All three of these shows focused on a previously known superhero, and were all successful. Lastly,

supernatural shows that have been successful include, *Supernatural*, *Vampire Diaries*, and *Grimm*. These shows utilized pop culture's fascination with supernatural powers and supernatural monsters. *Grimm* and *Supernatural* in particular don't focus on only one monster, but just about any that they could think of. With this they both appeal to a wider audience than just vampire fanatics. However, for every one show that succeeds there are more that failed to capitalize on their potential niche of viewers. The viewers are obviously out there, because some shows do indeed survive. For these reasons I believe that theme credibility has to be aided by more methods of persuasion in order for the shows to succeed.

A fourth form of credibility that a new show can employ would be spinoff credibility. Spinoffs are television shows that generated from a characters, or group of characters, appearance on a previous show. There have been many instances of spinoff shows over the years. Shows such as *CSI*, *NCIS*, and *Arrow* have each generated spinoffs. *CSI* generated *CSI: Miami*, *CSI: NY*, and most recently *CSI: Cyber*. Now *CSI: Cyber* is just in its infancy, but the others have had multiple seasons and are considered to be highly successful. *NCIS* has two spinoffs; *NCIS: Los Angeles* and *NCIS: New Orleans*. Both of these spinoffs possess spinoff credibility and actor credibility. *NCIS: Los Angeles* has Chris O'Donnell and LL Cool J. O'Donnell's credibility mostly comes from the big screen, while LL Cool J's comes both from being a successful hip-hop artist and being an actor on the big screen. *NCIS: New Orleans* also has actor credibility. Scott Bakula has plenty of actor credibility from his days on *Quantum Leap* and more recently *Star Trek: Enterprise*. His current show, *NCIS: New Orleans*, knew of their actor's credibility and capitalized on it by using his name as a

means of attracting potential viewers. Lastly, *Arrow* generated the creation of the show *The Flash*. Both of these shows are highly successful. *Arrow* has been renewed for a fourth season, while *The Flash* has already been renewed for a second season. Additionally, the CW, where these two shows are aired, has plans to add more shows and continue the spinoff universe created from *Arrow*. Spinoffs often are successful, but their success is never guaranteed. Shows that have generated failed spinoffs include *Criminal Minds* and *Bones*. *Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior*, the spinoff of *Criminal Minds*, ended its run with both low viewing numbers and poor reviews. *The Finder*, the spinoff of *Bones*, was semi-well reviewed but failed to attract the number of viewers necessary for a second season. These examples help to demonstrate that even though a show with spinoff credibility has great potential to succeed, it is not necessarily enough to ensure the show's success.

The last form of credibility that a show might utilize is remake credibility. Remake credibility is found when a completely new show is produced from an older show that was either canceled or ended its run in the past. Examples of remade shows include *Hawaii Five-O*, *Dallas*, and *Ironside*. The three original shows had two hundred eighteen, three hundred fifty-six, and one hundred ninety episodes respectively. Out of the three shows mentioned, *Hawaii Five-O's* remake is the most successful, with over one hundred episodes aired and more to come. *Dallas* was successful in reaching a second, and even a third season. *Dallas* is different though in the fact that it was not only a remake, but also a continuation that saw many of the original characters returning in supporting roles. Lastly, there is *Ironside* that was canceled before the first season was even finished. This was a phenomenon because this show possessed far

more than just remake credibility. *Ironsides* also had actor credibility and theme credibility. Blair Underwood starred in *Ironsides* as the main character. He gained credibility in *LA Law* and multiple movie appearances. The show was also a murder-mystery and even a police drama, both of which are themes that have proven successful in the past. Even with all of these forms of credibility, *Ironsides* became NBC's lowest rated, or viewed, fall drama premiere. This, more than any of the past examples, demonstrates that a few persuasive factors aren't enough. The persuasive tactics must be utilized correctly.

After reading this section, one may think that advertisements of the upcoming new show are how shows really get viewers to tune in and watch a show. I wholeheartedly agree that advertisements are how shows get viewers' attention. However, it is my belief that advertisements shown before a series airs, must effectively play off of the persuasive tactics previously mentioned in order for them to elicit the sought viewer response. Finally, as I have stated multiple times already. I believe that capturing viewer's initial attention is not enough; a show must also utilize persuasive tactics throughout the series for a show to succeed.

### **How Shows Persuade Viewers to Continue Watching**

In the previous section I detailed how a television show can employ persuasion in order to get viewers to watch their first episode. While this is important I must now move to how a show can utilize persuasion, and ultimately continue their run, allowing them to remain successful. Getting people to tune in and watch your show is not enough, a show must also be able to keep the viewers attention and interest throughout each episode of the season. There are multitudes of persuasive tactics that shows can

employ to succeed in this endeavor. However, not every show can succeed by using the same persuasive tactics in the same ways that past successful shows have accomplished this. In order to succeed a show must keep their audiences in mind and determine which demographic, or demographics, that their show can appeal to individuals. In this section I plan on detailing numerous types of persuasion that shows must, in some form or another, utilize. These methods will be used to ultimately succeed and continue to be watched from episode to episode and make it to a second season.

I must begin with detailing the aspects of demographics in persuasion, and why the two combine to determine how a show should persuade. Different persuasive methods elicit a diverse range of reactions from different people. These differences can be due to a number of different reasons. These reasons include: 1) age, 2) gender, 3) ethnicity/culture, and 4) intelligence (Gass Seiter 92). Knowing this new television shows should do what Gass and Seiter call keeping “your audiences mind in mind.” To begin, different things persuade individuals of different ages. Research and common sense tell us that children are probably going to be easier to persuade than an adult. Though the idea that it is easier to persuade children than adults does not alter how primetime television shows should utilize persuasion. According to [broadcastingcable.com](http://broadcastingcable.com) this is due to the fact that the median viewer age of any given show on during primetime is fifty years of age or older. Viewers from ages nineteen to forty-nine do watch primetime television, but are more likely to use programs such as on demand, Netflix, or Hulu. It is because of this that television shows must be prepared to focus their use of persuasion towards those fifty and older. Individuals fifty and older are

not necessarily all persuaded by different things than are younger individuals. Older individuals are just more likely to have their “attitudes and beliefs” already formed and they “tend to remain stable” over time (Gass Seiter 94). With this in mind television shows should endeavor to find what television shows have been successful with those fifty years of age and older and follow their lead. However, even though this is a good place to start, different shows were more successful with different genders of those ages. This means that shows also need to review what was successful with the different genders of that age bracket. For example, according to the 1985 study conducted by Ward (p. 95), people are generally “more easily influenced by members of the opposite sex than by members of the same sex.” Though more recent research supports the idea that how one is persuaded is not so much dependent on their gender, but rather one’s “goals, plans, resources, and beliefs” (Gass Seiter 95-96). Though men and women may have differences in these areas, it is ultimately more important to focus on the beliefs that a person holds. This is because of the age bracket that these shows must appeal to and as previously stated these beliefs are likely cemented in these individuals. This is the same regardless of whether a person grew up in a wealthy household or a poor household. With this information, one’s gender, ethnicity, or intelligence play a less important role than one’s age in how television shows should use persuasion during their primetime slots. This is most likely why spinoff shows have such a high success rates, because they follow the same model of the original show that was already successful with that demographic. Thus as previously stated, new television shows should look at what made primetime shows successful with those fifty years of age and

older during the previous season and ultimately use the persuasive methods that worked for those successful shows.

Another aspect of persuasion that can aid almost all shows in succeeding is compliance gaining. Compliance gaining is a subcategory of persuasion that deals more with changing “overt behavior” than most other aspects of behavior (Gass Seiter 226). This means that compliance gaining “focuses on persuasion aimed at getting others to do something or to act in a particular way” (Gass Seiter 226). This aspect of persuasion is especially prudent to television shows because they are attempting to get viewers to not only watch their show, but also like it enough to tune in and watch it live every week. Getting viewers to do this requires television shows to be experts at compliance gaining. Three specific aspects of compliance gaining that television shows should focus on are: 1) rewarding activity, 2) punishing activity, and 3) activation of impersonal commitments. Rewarding activity occurs when compliance is actively sought through the action of positively rewarding, or promising to positively reward, those who you wish to comply. This occurs when someone is promised something good in return for doing something else. An example of this in television is when the show promises to reveal who the bad guy is and then ultimately to catch or kill the bad guy. Most murder-mystery shows do this every episode, but overarching villains can provide a show’s entire season with the same effect. *The Mentalist* on CBS used both of these methods, both capturing bad guys every episode and promising to eventually reveal who the main villain, Red John, was. This show used the promise of finding out who Red John was for almost six seasons, and in the mean time gave the smaller rewards of capturing lesser villains every episode. Another example, that tends to be utilized by many shows, is the

promise of two characters finally becoming a couple. The show *Bones* on FOX used this form of compliance gaining for eight seasons. *Bones* promised that the two main characters, Bones and Booth, would get together and ultimately realize their love for one another. While waiting for these characters to realize that they were in love, *Bones* provided, and still provides, the reward of finding and capturing a new bad guy each episode. This form of compliance gaining is sometimes referred to as “eyes on the prize” compliance gaining. The most common way that shows keep viewers' eyes on the prize is through the use of cliffhangers. A cliffhanger, as defined by dictionary.com, is "a melodramatic adventure serial in which each installment ends in suspense in order to interest the reader or viewer in the next installment." Essentially this means that a cliffhanger is used directly before a commercial break, or the end of the show, in order to give viewers a strong sense of foreboding. This sensation usually allows a show to fill their viewers with anticipation for the reward to come and ultimately gets them to stay on the channel during a commercial break, or tune back in on the same channel at the same time next week. Now in contrast, punishing activity occurs when compliance is actively sought in a negative manner. This typically occurs when someone is threatened with something negative if they do not comply. The most likely threat that can occur in television shows is that what happens in a show, if you miss it, will be revealed by someone else. This can be either in person with another individual, or on social media. It is for this reason that individuals watch live sports broadcasts. Shows have realized this and often post spoilers, or what happened in the latest episode, on social media. Doing this can aid shows in prompting viewers to watch their show live, or else what happened will be spoiled. Lastly, shows can attempt to gain compliance through the

activation of impersonal commitments. Activating impersonal commitments occur when someone feels like they have a commitment to themselves to do, or not do, something. This can occur in film when a person might be thinking about missing an episode but see a commercial that says, "this is the episode that you've been waiting for." This statement directly activates a person's impersonal commitments, making them feel like all the time they have spent watching the show up to that point has led up to this one episode. Impersonal commitments are also triggered by shows at the end of their episode. At the end of most episodes, the next episode of the show is advertised and something to the effect of, "you won't want to miss what happens next," is said. This has the same outcome, the person watching feels like they would be failing to meet a commitment they made to themselves if they miss the next episode. In conclusion, I believe that compliance gaining, in particular "eyes on the prize" compliance gaining, is so vital that a show must utilize some form of it in order to succeed, otherwise viewers will become bored and disinterested in the show.

Another type of persuasive tactic that television shows need to utilize are motivational appeals. According to Gass and Seiter, "motivational appeals can be thought of as attempts to jump start an individual's drive to do something." Essentially motivational appeals, are types of persuasive tactics that aim to motivate the receiver. Individuals have to be motivated to watch a show, so television shows need to employ extrinsic methods of motivation. Extrinsic methods of motivation are those methods that are brought about by some outside factor, such as advertisements for a show or the show itself motivating you to watch the show. There are multiple different sorts of motivational appeals, not every show needs to use all forms of motivational appeals in

order to succeed, but they do need to be able to motivate viewers to watch their show from week to week and season to season. One such motivational appeal that shows can use to motivate viewers to watch their show are fear appeals. Fear appeals occur in television when a show attempts to motivate viewers to watch through the fear of what they might miss. Shows can do this through commercials, or by alluding to what might happen next week. When viewers fear that they may miss something if they do not watch, they are more likely to tune in live and watch the show. Another form of motivational appeal that is used by some television shows is the humorous appeal. Gass and Seiter claim that humor is pervasive in the world of persuasion. In television, humorous appeals are mostly used to motivate viewers of comedy shows to continue watching the show *M.A.S.H.*, one of the most iconic shows of all time, used humor very well to motivate viewers to watch and continue watching *M.A.S.H.* for eleven seasons. This was when viewers had no other option but to watch live, so tuning in for a good laugh was almost enough, but now humor appeals aren't enough. However, many shows still employ humorous appeals in order to motivate viewers to continue watching. Some examples of shows that have successfully employed humor in order to motivate viewers to watch their show and ultimately help them stay on the air include *The Big Bang Theory*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, and *Last Man Standing*. Yet another form of motivational appeal that a lot of shows employ is sex appeal. This type of appeal is perfectly defined by the old saying "sex sells." When shows attempt to utilize sex appeal they usually do so through the casting of either very good-looking men or very good-looking women. In either case, those attracted to the good looking person in a show, can be more motivated to tune in because they are attracted to the person that is in the

show. These character's that viewers are attracted to, stimulate the viewers, and in turn, viewers are likely to tune in week to week in order to be stimulated time and again.

Thus, if a person is appealed to by any of these motivational appeals, it is more likely that they will be motivated to stay on the show's channel during a commercial break and ultimately tune in from week to week in order to watch the show again and again.

The next form of persuasion has been touched on, but not adequately. This form of persuasion is visual persuasion. This seems rather obvious, after what I have said in leading up to this point in the paper. Of course the blind can also listen to television, but technically they are not "watching" the show. So when I talk about all those that watch television, I will be referring to all those who are physically able to watch television. According to Gass and Seiter, visual persuasion can often be overlooked because the field of persuasion has generally focused on the world of words. After the previous section, it is obvious that words and other forms of audible persuasion are of paramount importance, but visual persuasion can be just as important in many cases. In 1997 Faul Messaris conceptualized that there are three ways in which images, or visuals, can persuade. These three ways are: 1) iconicity, 2) indexicality, and 3) syntactic indeterminacy. Iconicity is literally using an image to function as an icon. Essentially this means that the image being used resembles the thing that it is meant to be represented. Icons can be anything, from male and female stick figures on bathrooms, to Uncle Sam. In either of the aforementioned cases, it doesn't matter if the stick figures or Uncle Sam is an exact representation of the original icon, all that matters is whether it can be understood what the image represents. A prime example of this in a recent television show can be seen in *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*. In recent

episodes, it has been seen that there are two competing S.H.I.E.L.D. agencies, each of which have slightly different symbols. Though the two symbols are distinctively different, if someone knows what the S.H.I.E.L.D symbol looks like, they could believe that either agency is the “real” S.H.I.E.L.D. Additionally; the symbol itself is often used at the end of the show and before commercial breaks, reminding viewers of what they are watching and of the upcoming importance. I now move to indexicality and how images persuade through it. Indexicality refers to an images ability to document past events. Most shows utilize this method in one way or another. The most common way that a show uses this is through their opening sequence. This can be through a “what happened last week” section or the show’s standard intro. Most show’s intros document what has happened in previous episodes. The third way that images can persuade is through syntactic indeterminacy. Essentially this means that images are unable to demonstrate the exact relationship between two things without words. This is to say that logical relationships cannot be determined through images alone. Though because of this, images can be used to loosely associate something with something else. Many shows utilize this idea through their commercials, using an image of the show and saying, “you don’t want to miss the show everyone is talking about.” This makes viewers believe that the show is popular, and by watching it they too could be popular. Additionally it also makes viewers feel like they won’t know what to talk about with everyone around the water cooler tomorrow because they didn’t get to watch “the show everyone is talking about.” With previous paragraphs in mind, and now that we have a basic understanding of how images persuade, I’m sure you understand how it is of the utmost importance for television shows to not only utilize audible persuasion, but also visual persuasion.

Following audible forms of persuasion are visual forms of persuasion. Most viewers who watch television also listen to it. Audible forms of persuasion can be the use of language and even the music being played. I have touched on language, by saying how some shows use different forms of persuasion, but do not believe I have demonstrated their importance. In the realm of persuasion, words can be used to symbolize many different things. These symbols can be arbitrary to a point. However, due to the fact that television has a widespread audience, there has to be a fair amount of agreement on most of symbols that a show utilizes. For example, a fictional show about our president, like *West Wing*, still needs to use the symbol of "president" in a manner according to how the viewers perceive the president of the United States. Some other examples of symbols that a show might utilize include: doctor, special agent, detective, vampire, scientist, soldier, lawyer, etc. The aforementioned symbols only represent a modicum of symbols available to a new series, but do allow for the understanding of how a show might implement certain symbols. If a show labels a character with any of these symbols it comes with quite a bit of viewer predisposition, be that negative or positive. If someone enjoys the vampire symbol, it goes to reason that they may also like the show *The Vampire Diaries* on The CW. Now a viewer may protest to some other symbols used in the show, but if they want show about vampires living in modern times they might just enjoy it. Shows can use these symbols to attract and keep the attention of viewers. In addition to being used as symbols, television shows can use words in the form of dialogue to persuade viewers to like or dislike characters, and ultimately like or dislike the entire series. Beautiful women and good-looking men can be made to seem annoying through their speech patterns, use of

language, and voice characteristics. John Wayne once said; “talk low, talk slow, and don’t say too much.” Wayne was a character actor who followed his own advice and is widely considered one of the greatest movie stars of all time. Now he may not have been in television, but many television stars have used his style. Some of these stars include: Dembe in *The Blacklist*, Captain Ray Holt in *Brooklyn*, and Leroy Jethro Gibbs in *NCIS*. Now this is merely one method that stars can utilize to be liked and help their show be liked. Now there aren’t many actors who can use language quite like James Spader, who currently stars in *The Blacklist*. Spader, much like John Wayne, is a character actor whose profession might change but his methods stay consistent. The vividness, intensity, and even the offensiveness that he brings to his characters, not only makes his character likeable, but helps viewers to enjoy the show. Whether he is telling the most vivid story, or making an offensive joke at an unlikeable character’s expense, his character, Raymond Reddington on *The Blacklist*, is beloved by viewers and critics alike. In addition to the spoken work, shows can also utilize music, whether is be lyrical or classically composed. The music accompanying a show can act like background music in retail stores. The Beverland studies in 2003 and 2006 suggest, “that the right music can help distinguish a brand and enhance the shopping experience” (Gass, Seiter 324). This is almost exactly what the right music in a television show can do for the show, except it does not enhance the shopping experience but rather enhance the viewing experience. Music can help us understand the state of mind of the character in any given show, or set the mood for an entire scene. Watch any show on television right now, and at the very least their intro sequence music will demonstrate the mood for the show, and at the most they will use

music throughout their entire show to get and keep the attention of the viewers. With this, I believe it is appropriate to say that whether it is through language or music, audible persuasion is one of the most important aspects of persuasion that a show can utilize to be successful.

In conclusion, I find that persuasion, in almost any form that it can be used, can be utilized by television shows on the five major broadcasting networks to help them in staying on the air. I consent that not every method of persuasion I mentioned must be used by a show in order for it to succeed, but do believe that if a show properly uses these forms of persuasion many of them can be used in harmony to create a very successful series.

### **Examples on The 5 Major Broadcasting Networks**

In the five sections to come I will be giving examples from each of the five major broadcasting networks. Again, these networks include the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), The Columbia Werner Company (The CW), and Fox. For each of these five networks I will be giving using six different shows as examples. Of these six examples, three will be successful shows and the other three will be shows that have been canceled. I want to use six examples from each network to demonstrate everything that I have been trying to say in this paper; that there are certain persuasive methods that shows must utilize, in some from or another, in order to stay on the air and be considered successful. I will not be explaining why each show should utilize these methods again, I will however be demonstrating how successful shows utilize these methods and unsuccessful might not, or might not use them adequately.

## **National Broadcasting Company (NBC):**

NBC has been on television waves since 1939. Since then it has become one of the most watched broadcasting networks in the United States. In that time, NBC has produced a number of successful shows, but even Babe Ruth struck out over half the time he got up to the plate. By this I mean that NBC has had as many, and lately more, unsuccessful shows than successful shows. Some of their recent successes include *The Blacklist*, *Hannibal*, and *Community*. Some recent unsuccessful shows include *Ironside*, *Crossbones*, and *Bad Judge*.

When mentioning recent successes of NBC, it is impossible to overlook *The Blacklist*. This show is so successful that Netflix paid NBC two million dollars an episode for *The Blacklist's* first season. This was an unprecedented amount, which may be beat someday, but for now it is the definitive record. *The Blacklist* is also one of NBC's best series premieres ever. By this I mean that this show's premiere had some of the highest viewing numbers of any show ever shown on NBC. This was achieved through *The Blacklist's* employment of actor credibility. The star of *The Blacklist* is well known through both film and television, his name is James Spader. Spader has starred in *Boston Legal*, *Private Practice*, and the movie version of the successful show *Stargate*. In each of these appearances, Spader was both well reviewed and well received by viewers and critics alike. These past successes have helped Spader to continue to get top-notch roles and top-notch pay. Though, his success has helped more than just himself. His success is the main factor that contributed to *The Blacklist's* initial success. The show's continued success is still aided by Spader's involvement, but knowing that he was attached to the project helped viewers discern whether or not the show was

worth watching in the first place. Now Spader's actor credibility may have been the main motivator in persuading viewers to watch in the, but there was another actor with a bit of credibility. Diego Klattenhoff, who isn't nearly as well known, but starred in the successful series *Homeland*. Now Klattenhoff was not the main character, but he was reoccurring, and *Homeland* is a show that has a similar theme to *The Blacklist*. With the addition of Klattenhoff, viewers who like large scale mystery shows flocked hoping that it would be as good as *Homeland*. This idea brings me to talk about the fact that *The Blacklist* also possesses theme credibility. It is a crime and mystery show, and both of these types of shows have had numerous successful shows. Having these two forms of credibility was crucial for the show to draw initial attention, but there are some factors that the show utilized in order to stay on the air. The first form of persuasion that *The Blacklist* utilizes to stay on the air is compliance gaining. This is one show that uses rewarding activity, punishing activity, and activates impersonal commitments all together. *The Blacklist* rewards individuals for watching each episode by giving them more and more insight to the relationship of the main characters Raymond "Red" Reddington and Elizabeth "Lizzy" Keen. The show also uses this relationship to punish viewers, though in a different way. The show utilizes commercials to let viewers know what they will miss, and they will miss the tidbits that inform us about Red and Lizzy's relationship. The show also activates impersonal commitments. It does this through the use of commercials that say; "this is the episode that you have been waiting for." This activates your impersonal commitment making you feel as if you have to watch the show because if you don't, you'd be letting yourself down. In addition to compliance gaining, *The Blacklist* uses some motivational appeals to encourage viewers to tune in.

Now *The Blacklist* uses both fear appeals and sex appeals. The fear appeals come mostly from what someone might miss, or might find out through social media before they watch the show. The sex appeals come from the men and women who have been cast in the show. Now James Spader is not exactly the most attractive man on the planet, but his personality is what sells his sex appeal. In addition to Spader, *The Blacklist* has a number of young and attractive team members, of both sexes. Lastly, *The Blacklist* uses music to persuade and give viewer's an insight to what the characters are feeling better than just about any show on television. Whether it be while Spader's character is carrying a shotgun walking through a prison riot, or when Elizabeth Keen is learning something new, *The Blacklist* utilizes music's persuasive functions to the fullest. In addition to the sounds of music, the vividness of Spader's speeches tend to attract and inspire viewers, making them fall more in love with the show as a whole. All of these aspects of persuasion come together to help *The Blacklist* stay on the air and continue entertaining viewers and critics alike.

Another successful show on NBC is *Hannibal*. *Hannibal* doesn't have quite as much actor credibility as *The Blacklist*, but Mads Mikkelsen isn't completely unknown either. Mikkelsen may not have as much on his resume as James Spader, but he was the villain in the first James Bond movie to star Daniel Craig. Now this isn't nearly enough to give the show traction, but it does help reinforce the show's theme credibility. This is because Mikkelsen plays another intelligent villain in *Hannibal*. However, in addition, *Hannibal's* theme credibility can stem from the fact that it is part of the Hannibal Lector storyline that has been seen in many different films by a large audience. This audience is likely not just a fan of Hannibal Lector, but the overall theme

of both the movies and the show. With all of this *Hannibal* was well anticipated and ultimately had a large number of viewers tune in for its first episode. *Hannibal* uses the fact that it is a part of the Hannibal Lector story quite well to gain the compliance of its viewers. Essentially, *Hannibal* is the story of how Hannibal Lector and Will Graham became friends before the movie *Red Dragon*. This means that it is rewarding viewers for watching the show, with giving them the backstory of the movie that they so enjoyed. In addition, they are activating viewers' impersonal commitments by making them feel that they need to watch the show so they understand the build up before the movie started. Additionally, the show uses fear appeals to make viewers feel as if they could miss out on understanding the relationship between Dr. Lector and Will Graham. As with any show, *Hannibal* does not shy away from using its actors to trigger sex appeals in the minds of their viewers. They do this by dressing their actors handsomely and seductively, so the viewers can see just how good the characters look. *Hannibal's* use of vividness and intensity of both Dr. Lector's and Will Graham's speeches and experiences entice and keep viewers interested, and even make them want more. With this viewers are persuaded to continue watching in hopes that they will get to see more vividness and intensity from the two characters. If this show did not utilize the vividness and intensity that Dr. Lector and Will Graham used in *Red Dragon*, I doubt that viewers would like the show as much, because ultimately it would not be the same two characters without their original demeanor. This would mean that the story is nothing like the movie and would be met with resistance from viewers who have a predisposition of what they believe the characters should be like. The show *Hannibal* is successful, at

least in part, because it has been able to successfully use the persuasive methods that I have detailed in this paper.

NBC has also had some success with comedies. One such example is the show *Community*. *Community* is about a man who faked his law degree and has to start his life all over in community college. The show has many typical characters that would be going to community college, like older people trying to keep their mind active. This show uses humorous appeal to gain viewer attention. They do this with the initial casting of their stars. The show's theme credibility is reinforced with the casting of Joel McHale, Chevy Chase, and Ken Jeong. McHale has hosted over 275 episodes of *The Soup*, an Emmy winning comedy news show. Chevy Chase is recognizable to anyone who watched funny movies or *Saturday Night Live* in the seventies and eighties. Jeong is a little less known, but did play Mr. Chow in *The Hangover* movie and gained many fans by making them laugh. With these three comic actors, *Community's* humor theme is given added support. It is because of these factors that viewers originally tuned in to watch *Community*. This show tends to gain viewer compliance through rewarding activity. *Community* rewards viewers with laughter and ultimately good moods after they have watched the show. The show seems to believe the old saying; "laughter is the best medicine." Additionally, *Community* obviously attempts to appeal to a viewer's emotion of humor. This humorous appeal gets *Community* viewers who are looking for some comedy and some laughs. *Community* also cast many young good looking individuals of different races and genders. This is an attempt to have a broad spectrum of sex appeal to a large viewing audience. The show also uses anticipatory sounds and music to lead

up to punch lines in their jokes, trying to make viewers pay more attention and keep waiting for what is to come.

I now move to some of NBC's failed shows, starting with *Ironside*. The creators of this show knew that credibility was important, but seemed to fumble at it a bit, or a lot. Now *Ironside* stars Blair Underwood, who stole the hearts of many young ladies *L.A. Law*. This gave the show some actor credibility. However, the show also possesses remake credibility. That is, *Ironside* (2013) is a remake of *Ironside* from the sixties and seventies. Now many shows, such as *Hawaii Five O* and *Dallas* have succeeded using this approach. However, the original character was Caucasian while Blair Underwood is African American and younger than the original actor. This causes unrest in the viewers who watched the original, which most people who watched the original fall just around the median age of viewers who watched the original. This messes with the viewers, who may not even care that a character is African American, but do care that their perception of the character was challenged. This can make viewers not want to watch because they enjoyed the original portrayal. This is much like the Coen Brothers remake of *True Grit*, which many people wouldn't even watch because they liked the original with John Wayne so much. Additionally, *Ironside* divulged too much information in the first couple episodes, over-rewarding viewers and giving them all the information they were seeking. That is they learned how Ironside became paralyzed from the waste down in the first couple episodes, and he even forgave the man who got him paralyzed within the first few episodes. This gave the viewers nothing to look forward to, because they revealed too much of the backstory. In addition, doing this also took away *Ironside's* ability to punish viewers, because viewers already had the information they

wanted to know. These missteps led to *Ironside's* viewing numbers to steadily decline. So much so that the show ultimately got canceled before the entire first season had even aired.

I now move to NBC's canceled show, *Crossbones*. *Crossbones* is a pirate drama that depicts a tale about the legendary Blackbeard. Though *Crossbones* attempted to use John Malkovich's actor credibility to fill the shoes of the Blackbeard character. However, Malkovich is bald, has white hair, and only has a goatee and not a full beard. This depiction of Blackbeard is so off the mark that when I typed in Blackbeard to Google's image search, not one picture of Malkovich's portrayal was in the first couple hundred images. The images depicted a man with a long black beard and long black hair. This is the traditional, and only version of Blackbeard that people have ever seen. Because of this, viewers were unable to look at Malkovich as Blackbeard, even though they may think he is a great actor. This casting choice would have been beneficial to many television shows and characters, but in this case it was just about the polar opposite of what fans expected and wanted. This led *Crossbones* to have a smaller than wanted viewing audience and ultimately led it to a first season cancellation.

My last example of a failed show by NBC is *Bad Judge*. This show attempts to use the successful themes of a legal drama, and a dramatic drama all together. Though, the show goes too far, depicting a female judge who has sex with a witness in her chambers, has hangovers in court, and asks her bailiff to dispose of her pregnancy tests. I believe that viewers can accept a depiction of a female judge, because Ruth Bader Ginsburg is one of the most influential U.S. Supreme Court Justices of all time.

However, females wanting a strong example of how women can hold positions of power were put off by how Kate Walsh's character abused and disrespected her position and title of judge. Additionally, men who might have a problem with a woman in power will be validated and ultimately not watch the show because it just shows them what they already know. This show was an attempt at showing how someone who is on the wrong path can help and be helped by someone else who is on the wrong path. However, Walsh, already being a judge should already be on the right path, and not be struggling with alcoholism and having sex in her chambers. This show was too much and turned many viewers off with just the promotional commercials.

### **Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS):**

The Columbia Broadcasting System, or CBS, has been on television since 1941. In that time CBS has had many successful shows that have helped CBS become one of the five major broadcasting networks. However due to the recent advent of DVR like services, CBS has had to make better and more persuasive shows. Some of CBS's recent successful shows include; *The Big Bang Theory*, *Elementary*, and *NCIS*. Some of CBS's recent failed shows include; *Bad Teacher*, *Reckless*, and *Friends with Better Lives*.

I begin with arguably all five networks and definitely CBS's most successful show, *The Big Bang Theory*. I say that it is possibly the most successful show on all five networks because *The Big Bang Theory* makes more money per commercial than any other show on during primetime on these five networks. Of course in its first season, *The Big Bang Theory* was not making the most money, but its success in both attracting viewers initially and ultimately keeping their interest has made it one of the most

watched shows of all time. To begin, *the renowned television show creator, Chuck Lorre, created The Big Bang Theory*. Lorre has created many shows, but I am going to focus on the two successful shows that he created before creating *The Big Bang Theory*. Before his creation of *The Big Bang Theory*, Lorre created both *Dharma & Greg* and *Two and a Half Men*. Because these two shows were huge successes before *The Big Bang Theory* aired, the preceding commercials were able to say “Created by Chuck Lorre.” This gave significant creator credibility to the show before it even started and made people very interested. In addition to creator credibility, *The Big Bang Theory* stars Johnny Galecki, who brings to the show some actor credibility. Galecki had a reoccurring role on *Rosanne*, which was a comedy that aired well over two-hundred episodes. Galecki was in nearly one hundred of those episodes and earned himself a place in the hearts of comedy show viewers throughout the United States. *The Big Bang Theory* is very good at gaining the compliance of its viewers through the use of rewarding activity and activating impersonal commitments. The way that *The Big Bang Theory* rewards viewers is through the constant idea that the main characters, Leonard and Penny, will get in, get back in, or stay in a relationship. The show activates impersonal commitments in a similar manner, insinuating that at any time you could miss the moment where Leonard and Penny realize they are meant to be together, or realize that they aren’t, it is still unknown. In addition to compliance gaining, *The Big Bang Theory* relies heavily on emotional appeals to attract and keep the interest of viewers. The chief emotional appeal that the show relies on is the humor appeal. *The Big Bang Theory* has gained, and kept such a large viewing audience by being able to make people laugh, and continue laughing from episode to episode and season to

season. *The Big Bang Theory* also utilizes the sound of laughter to make things seem funnier. They use the sound of a live studio audience laughing at different jokes to help let viewers think that certain things that they might not have otherwise laughed at are funny. In addition, *The Big Bang Theory* seems to cast attractive women in order to gain the sex appeal that may otherwise have been lacking from the MENSA card holding men that are on the show. This visual stimuli gives viewers something to pay attention to in between laughs. Thanks to Chuck Lorre's incredible writing, *The Big Bang Theory* has correctly utilized enough persuasive tactics to keep it on the air for eight years already and have two more seasons already on order from CBS.

In addition to *The Big Bang Theory*, CBS has also had some success with the show *Elementary*. *Elementary* is a modern day version of the Alexandre Dumas character, Sherlock Holmes. The Sherlock Holmes character has recently been a success at the box office, and a gigantic success as a modern day adaptation in the form of a mini-series on the BBC. After the BBC's success, CBS decided to give it a try and created *Elementary*. Obviously *Elementary* has character credibility with being an adaptation of the classic Sherlock Holmes character. *Elementary*, like *Ironside* and *Crossbones*, changed a few things. However, it only changed the gender of two characters, Watson and Moriarty, both of whom have essentially the same back-story. By doing this, *Elementary* did not agitate any predispositions of its possible fan base. In addition, *Elementary* did not over reward its viewers like *Ironside*, helping it to keep viewer interest and ultimately be successful. In addition, *Elementary* does a splendid job of dangling future rewards throughout the show. This reward style of writing, aids the show in gaining viewers compliance and getting them to watch the show religiously.

Additionally, the ties to a classic character aids in emotional appeals. Though mostly, this show utilizes sex appeals. Not only is Sherlock Holmes good looking and intelligent, the show's Watson and Moriarty are two very attractive and good-looking females. These casting choices helped *Elementary* appeal to individuals looking for some sex appeal charged visual stimuli. Lastly, *Elementary* uses vivid language to explain the deductive skills that Sherlock uses, making viewers feel like they could do that too and that they are learning something. All of these factors come together and ultimately aid *Elementary* on its pathway to continued success.

The third example of a successful show on CBS is *NCIS*. *NCIS* has aired twelve seasons and two hundred and seventy-nine episodes, and has been renewed for a season thirteen. *NCIS* began with some major credibility, both actor wise and spinoff wise. To begin, in 2003 when this series debuted, Mark Harmon, the show's star, was very well known. Harmon had been in the well received *Chicago Hope* and was named *People Magazine's* sexiest man alive in 1986. Now 1986 was a while ago, but Harmon still appealed to those who knew that he had been the sexiest man alive. In addition to the actor credibility, *NCIS* is a spinoff of another very successful show *JAG*. Being the spinoff of another successful show, allowed *NCIS* to showcase some of their stars before the show even started, and ultimately get viewers of *Jag* to like the characters and become viewers of *NCIS*. In addition to these forms of credibility that aided *NCIS* in becoming a success, the show also employed several different styles of compliance gaining. Though *NCIS* mainly used rewarding activity in order to gain the compliance of their viewers. *NCIS* does this by giving small clues into what made Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs the way he is, whether or not Agent Dinozzo will get together with Agent Ziva

David, and as always catching a bad guy from episode to episode. The show also appeals to various forms of emotional appeals. Agent Dinozzo is generally the humorous appeal, whether it be through making childish jokes or getting smacked upside the head by Gibbs, Dinozzo brings the necessary humor element to *NCIS*. Additionally, the show has an abundance of sex appeals. Between Gibbs and Dinozzo they have two good looking males, but the addition of Abby and Ziva, the show also has two attractive females. Lastly, Gibbs is a shining example of that John Wayne quote I mentioned earlier, making viewers hang on every scene hoping he will say something. Being a spinoff and continuing with other aspects of persuasion helped *NCIS* to become a well renowned show, with two spinoffs of its own.

I now move to some of CBS's recent failures, the first of which is *Bad Teacher*. This show is essentially a remake television show version of the 2011 movie *Bad Teacher* starring Cameron Diaz. The show was an attempt to be fueled by the success of the movie that preceded it. However, the movie wasn't at all successful. *Bad Teacher*, the movie, got a 44% out of 100% on RottenTomatoes.com. With this, the show didn't start with any initial credibility because they didn't have anything else to help them; they were playing off of the movie, which was a bad play. Because of this, the show never gained any traction and was ultimately canceled after three episodes were aired.

The next canceled show that was aired on CBS is *Reckless*. *Reckless* is described as a sultry legal drama. This is where *Reckless* seemed to lose its viewers it was too sultry. By this I mean to say that the show over utilized its sex appeal, offending many potential viewers. The show also didn't come with any credibility, other than it

being a legal drama, only trying to use sex appeal to get viewer attention. Though, as previously stated, it was too much even having a police officer pull over a woman, handcuff her and then have sex with her. Personally when this happened, I changed the channel because I could tell that this show was going to rely on sex appeal to compensate for everything else. Due to the fact that this show only relied on sex appeal to attract and keep viewers, it was lacking in other forms of persuasion and was ultimately canceled after one season.

The last example of a show that failed on CBS is *Friends with Better Lives*. This show relied on creator credibility far too much. Everything about the promotions for the show dealt with the show *Friends* and the fact the creator of *Friends* created this show. The show tried to be like *Friends*, but all of the people who were fans of *Friends* did not enjoy *Friends with Better Lives* because it is basically, a poor remake of a great original idea. Instead of playing off the creator's credibility and making another funny show, this show was basically *Friends* in a different environment. Ultimately this premise left much to be desired for viewers, and the show was canceled prematurely leaving five episodes unaired.

### **American Broadcasting Company (ABC):**

The American Broadcasting Company, or ABC, has had their network on television since 1948. Just like NBC and CBS, ABC has produced and shown many successful shows. Though as of late, ABC's success rate is down, just like the other networks. With this I believe it is important to detail what shows they have that have been successful and how they became successful, in addition to detailing what has made some recent shows failures. Examples of some shows that have been successful on

ABC are: *Castle*, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, and *Once Upon a Time*. Examples of some of ABC's recent failures include: *666 Park Avenue*, *Selfie*, and *Trophy Wife*.

*Castle* is one of ABC's highest rated shows, and has been a huge success ever since the beginning. This show correctly utilized two forms of credibility in order to attract initial viewers: actor credibility and theme credibility. Nathan Fillion is the star of *Castle* and gave the show immense actor credibility. Before *Castle*, Fillion starred in Joss Whedon's *Firefly*. The show may not have attracted the viewership it needed to continue, but since then it has become a cult classic. With this Fillion and his charismatic acting style brought much needed credibility to the show and helped it have initial success. In addition, *Castle* has theme credibility, being a murder/mystery show. Murder mysteries have been widely successful in the past and are still very successful. Pairing Fillion with this credible theme, gave the show the foundation it needed in order to have a solid start. If *Firefly* would have also had a successful theme, it is likely that it too would have been successful, but *Castle* learned from *Firefly*'s failure and ultimately did what it couldn't. In addition to having a very credible foundation, *Castle* dangled the reward of the two main characters, Castle and Detective Kate Beckett, realizing their love for one another and becoming a couple. In addition, this show also had the shorter-term rewards that usually come with murder mysteries, catching bad guys from episode to episode. *Castle* also has emotional appeals, focusing mostly on humorous appeals and sex appeals. Fillion, as Castle, is a very charismatic and humorous character, giving the show an abundance of Humor in addition to the rewarding theme this gives *Castle* a wider viewer appeal. *Castle* also has sex appeals, most of which come from the two main characters, Castle and Detective Beckett. Castle can be described as a

good-looking, charismatic, funny, and intelligent character, while Detective Beckett is basically the female version of Castle. These two characters, with their multiple forms of sex appeals, give the show visual stimulus that helps to sustain viewer attention. In addition, *Castle* utilizes composed music to keep viewer's interest and anticipation high throughout the show. Ultimately, *Castle* is continuing and will continue so long as it keeps using persuasion in the way that it has in the past.

Next on the list of successful shows on ABC is, Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* This show is a continuation of Marvel's cinematic universe that has grossed billions of dollars. With being a continuation of such a successful film franchise, instead of just one failed film, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* has had much more success than CBS's *Bad Teacher*. In addition to the credibility that comes with being a part of the Marvel universe, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* brought back actor Clark Greg. Greg plays Agent Phil Coulson, a character who was killed in the *Avengers* movie, brought back in a mysterious way. This rewarded viewers and gained their compliance in two different ways; bringing back a character everyone thought was gone and slowly divulging how he was brought back from the dead. In addition to this, the show solves new problems every episode and keeps viewers interested. Besides the rewarding activity *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* also activates viewer's impersonal commitments. The show does this by continuing to divulge not only the scope of the characters in the show but also the scope of the entire Marvel universe. This connection keeps fans of the movies interested in the show because at any moment something could be revealed that impacts the entire Marvel universe. The emotional appeals that this show possesses include humorous and sex appeals. The show has jokes, and cast multiple good-looking males and females,

keeping visual stimulus going throughout the show. Lastly, the show utilizes vivid and intense language in order to keep viewers engaged in the show. Even though Agents of *S.H.I.E.L.D.* has the credibility of the movie universe, it would have been unlikely to survive if it had not employed the other methods of persuasion detailed throughout the entirety of this paper.

The last successful show that aired on ABC is *Once Upon a Time*. This show centers on the idea that all fairy tales are real, and they all occur in a singular town in Maine. *Once Upon a Time* has two forms of actor credibility and theme credibility. The actor credibility comes from Jennifer Morrison, who was a regular on the series *House*. While on this show, Morrison gained a large fan base for both her superb acting ability and good looks. In addition to the actor credibility, the theme credibility comes from the fairy tale stories that the show utilizes. The use of multiple fairy tales makes the show's credibility appeal to a broader audience, because some might like *Peter Pan* while others like *Snow White*, but with this shows both viewers would find satisfaction. The show also gains the compliance of its viewers through the activation of impersonal commitments. It does this by continuing to open the show to new fairy tales, which viewers are interested in seeing from beginning to conclusion. This process keeps the show from getting boring and or stagnant to viewers. The show also uses sex appeal; this is easily done with the use of fairy tales, where both men and women are supposed to be utterly attractive. These attractive individuals are used as stimuli to keep viewer attention and interest. Lastly, this show also uses fairy tale style anticipatory and ominous music, keeping viewers connected to the characters and ultimately making them want to keep watching and keep up with the show to watch those characters. In

conclusion, this show uses its theme credibility and other methods of persuasion to keep viewers watching.

I now move to shows that have not succeeded, but rather failed, on ABC. The first of which is *666 Park Avenue*. Now this show, failed with its name. The name brought the credibility of the devil, or rather the idea of making deals with the devil. This theme has been successful for many movies, including *The Devil's Advocate*. However, giving it the name *666 Park Avenue* was ultimately the show's downfall. As previously stated the median age of television viewers is around 59. Individuals around this age and older are generally against demonic concepts, and using the number of the devil, 666, in the title didn't do anything but turn off a lot of potential viewers, that may have otherwise enjoyed the show. A better name for the show may have been "The Drake Hotel" with the tag line, "Apartments so good, you'd sale your soul." This might not be the best title, but it would give the show the same affect, but not discourage a large number of viewers from tuning in and at least giving the show a try.

The second unsuccessful show on ABC that I am going to talk about is *Selfie*. This show, much like *666 Park Avenue*, is the victim of its own name. Selfies are pictures that people take of themselves instead of just asking a stranger to take the picture. This show is about a woman rebranding herself after an embarrassing viral video of her goes viral. Now this might be an interesting concept if it were called "Rebranding", but the name *Selfie* doesn't appeal to older viewers, because many of them either don't know what a selfie is or think the idea of them is idiotic. Just with *666 Park Avenue*, *Selfie* is a show with fairly good ratings that's name didn't appeal to the

audience it should have. Thus, if these two shows would have rebranded themselves with different names, they could have survived to see a second season.

The third and final failed show from ABC that I am going to talk about is *Trophy Wife*. Again, the title failed an otherwise fairly well reviewed show. Though in this case executive producer Lee Eisenberg realized this and tried to fix it by saying that the title was “meant to be ironic.” Many women were offended by this title, and women are potentially half of a series potential viewership. With this it was likely that the show was to fail, because you can’t alienate half of your potential viewers and expect to succeed.

### **The CW Television Network (The CW):**

I now move to The CW, or the combination company of CBS and Warner Brothers was founded in 2006. The name The CW thus comes from the first letters in either company that owns the network. The CW is just like the other networks and has to be more selective when producing shows than they used to be. With this some examples of successful shows on The CW are: *Arrow*, *The Flash*, and *Supernatural*. Some examples of failed shows on The CW are: *The Tomorrow People*, *Star-Crossed*, and *Seed*.

The first successful show on The CW that I want to use as an example is *Arrow*. *Arrow* is a show about the DC Comics superhero the Green Arrow. They keep the Green Arrow storyline that DC fans love, but give it the flare of a more Batman style of storytelling. Combining these two forms of theme credibility, *Arrow* started out being a pretty successful show. Through the use of rewarding activity and impersonal commitment however, it became a very successful show. The show rewards viewers and activates their impersonal commitments through the use of capturing villains and

finding out how Oliver Queen became the Arrow. In addition to this, *Arrow* uses sex appeals to keep viewers interested. The main character, Oliver Queen, is shirtless almost once per episode and the females are dressed in tight beautiful dresses. Though, this is acceptable in the comic book world because that is how comic book characters have been dressed for years. In addition, *Arrow* uses the vocal line “you have failed this city” to let viewers know things are about to get interesting. Thanks to *Arrow*'s use of persuasion it has become a massive hit and will start its fourth season before the end of the year.

I now move to The CW's spinoff of *Arrow*, *The Flash*. *The Flash* uses the spinoff credibility of *Arrow* and the theme credibility of DC Comics. This show was a planned spinoff of *Arrow* from the show's second season, and seems to be on the same path to success as *Arrow*. This show is successful for similar reasons, but has the added benefit of humor appeals that *Arrow* sometimes lacks. The rewarding activity of finding out how many “meta humans” are out there and finding out who the Reverse Flash is, also activated impersonal commitments to the show. The humor appeal that *The Flash* brings, gives it enough of a difference to not be a replica of *Arrow* but its own separate superhero show with its own fan base. In addition, *The Flash* is like *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* in that the Flash symbol is a recognizable symbol that fans of any Flash variety can recognize and know what it means. This is different from *Arrow* because Green Arrow's only symbol is his green outfit, while the Flash's lightning bolt through a white circle is noticeable to any fan. *The Flash* successful for many of the same reasons as *Arrow*, and both shows are shining examples of how to adapt comic book stories for television.

The third and final successful show that The CW produced is *Supernatural*. *Supernatural* is much like ABC's *Once Upon a Time*, in that it uses different forms of classic tales to keep interest in the show. The show's initial success began with its use of themes, and ultimately its theme credibility. When *Supernatural* began, it started with a premise: "there are things that go bump in the night." The show features two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester, both of whom hunt those things that go bump in the night. They are much like Van Helsing, from the classic Dracula story. Though they hunt far more than just vampires, and each season there are many new supernatural creatures to stop. The hunting supernatural creatures theme has been successful in both past and present, and *Supernatural's* use of different supernatural creatures helps the show stay interesting and appeal to a wider audience. The show began with using a lot of rewarding activity and as it moved along began activating impersonal commitments in its viewers. The rewarding activity started through giving the fans a new supernatural creature to fight every episode, and ultimately continued with the mentions of the brother's dad, who we get to meet later in the first season. The two brothers are also very good looking, and give the show added sex appeal. One brother is the traditional bad boy and the other is an intelligent good guy, both of whom can appeal to different audience members for different reasons. The show also uses ominous music to warn of impending doom, or near doom. *Supernatural's* use of these factors created a successful show that will finish airing its tenth season and start filming its eleventh season before the end of the year.

The first failed show from The CW that I will be talking about is *The Tomorrow People*. This show is much like *Arrow* and *The Flash*, but unlike the other two, *The*

*Tomorrow People* did not come with the added benefit of being an adaptation of former comic book characters. *The Tomorrow People* was well reviewed and had loyal friends, just not enough of them. This show, being a stand alone without any connections, was unable to capitalize on the credibility that helped *Arrow*, *The Flash*, and *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* It is for these reasons that *The Tomorrow People* was not renewed for a second season.

The second failed show on The CW is *Star-Crossed*. This show failed to demonstrate any form of credibility and did not attract many viewers at all. *Star-Crossed* is about aliens who came to earth, only to have been put in internment camps and are outcasts on earth. Though you wouldn't know that from the commercials that advertised the show. The idea of star-crossed lovers and aliens are both themes that have been successful however, a show can't have credibility unless it lets viewers know that it possesses that theme.

The third and final example of a failed show on The CW is *Seed*. This is The CW's only show to be canceled before it had aired all of its episodes. *Seed* had such low ratings that it was canceled after just two episodes. The main reason for this is that this show did not come with any credibility and the credibility it did try to use was rather offensive. The show tried to use the idea that a sperm donor has to be in a family and children won't be happy without their real dad. This idea was offensive to homosexual couples, couples who couldn't conceive, and single parents. After this show failed there was a Vince Vaughn movie called *Delivery Man* that had the same premise, and did about as well as *Seed* but on the big screen.

**Fox Broadcasting Company (Fox):**

Fox broadcasting company, or Fox, began television operations in 1987 and has been going strong ever since. Fox's primetime schedule is one hour shorter than the others, and thus has to fill one less hour of primetime than the other companies. However, this doesn't change the fact that Fox's cancelation rate is still about the same as the other companies. With this Fox too has to be more selective with the shows they produce. Some examples of successful shows produced by Fox include: *Bones*, *Gotham*, and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. Some of Fox's failed productions include: *The Finder*, *Enlisted*, and *Surviving Jack*.

The first successful show that I am going to talk about on Fox is *Bones*. *Bones* has been one of Fox's most successful shows since it started ten years ago, and it is still producing strong viewer ratings. This show started strong with three different forms of credibility: actor credibility, creator credibility, and theme credibility. *Bones* stars David Boreanaz as Special Agent Seeley Booth. Before *Bones* Boreanaz played the character Angel in both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the spinoff *Angel* which centered around his character and was wildly successful. Having Boreanaz on board helped *Bones* to attract the fans that he had gained in his two previous shows. In addition, Hart Hanson, the creator, also created the eighty-two episode show *Traders* before creating *Bones*. Lastly, *Bones* is a murder mystery show, and that theme has been successful in the past and was again in this case. Additionally, the show uses the short-term reward of capturing bad guys from episode to episode. Besides the short-term rewards, *Bones* does a good job of activating its viewers' impersonal commitments through insinuating that the two main characters will get together eventually, and having over-arching villains that take seasons to catch in addition to their episode to episode bad guys. The

shows two main characters also possess sex appeal. In addition many of the supporting characters are also attractive. Additionally, there are humorous appeals that arise out of the fact that the smart people in the show generally don't understand humor, and that acts as comic relief throughout the show. *Bones* also uses music, specifically in their show introduction to instill a sort of scholarly setting to the show and to add an anticipatory factor. Using these aspects of the broad field of persuasion, *Bones* has become one of Fox's most successful shows ever.

In addition to *Bones*, Fox has had recent success with their show *Gotham*. *Gotham* is basically the story of how Batman and Detective James Gordon came to be. Essentially it is a prequel to the Batman story arc created by DC comics. It details how the heroes came to be, but also how the villains came to be. Any fan of Batman, and after the last Batman Trilogy's earnings its safe to say there are a lot of them, would be interested in this show because of its story's credibility. Additionally, the show activates viewer's impersonal commitments, giving them the back-story to some of their favorite heroes and villains from the DC comic universe. This is also an emotional appeal, playing on viewers wants and desires to learn about these characters. *Gotham* also uses music quite a bit as both an anticipatory function and a mood setting one. The show also uses visual persuasion, particularly with Penguin. Penguin is a classic Batman villain who uses different kinds of weaponized umbrellas to fend off Batman in the comics and past shows and movies. In the show, he is already called Penguin and owns a nightclub. The symbol of the nightclub is a neon umbrella, foreshadowing his love of umbrellas for fans of Batman. *Gotham*, no matter how good it was, was likely to be renewed for no other reason than fans would watch it because it had to do with

Batman. However, *Gotham* did not only rely on that credibility, it also utilized the other forms of persuasion in order to be successful and get picked up for a second season on Fox.

The last successful show on Fox that I am going to talk about is *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is a comedy that centers on a Brooklyn detective. The show has immense amounts of actor credibility with the main character, Andy Samberg, and the supporting character, Terry Crews. Both Samberg and Crews are well known as comic actors bringing laughs to whatever screen they are on, whether it be Samberg on *Saturday Night Live* or Terry Crews in an Adam Sandler movie. In addition to the actor credibility, the show has some theme credibility being a cop show in New York. Cop shows that are centered in New York have a long history of being successful. Solid examples are the entire *Law & Order* series, *Castle*, *Blue Bloods*, and *NYPD Blue*. The show rewards viewers with laughs and uses those laughs as humorous appeals to appeal to a wide audience. That includes people who think Samberg is funny and those who do not, because his costars act as if he is not and some viewers will enjoy watching their comebacks to his childish humor. The show's audible persuasion centers on jokes, keeping viewers attention because any line could be a good line for a laugh. This show is highly reviewed and highly watch due to the fact that it is a funny cop show instead of a drama that centers on death. It puts a happy spin on the sad world that seems to be the world of cop shows from other examples. *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* utilizes humorous appeals better than just about any show mentioned in this paper and manages to keep viewers laughing and keeps them watching. The show does this with their constant use

of a wide variety of humor. With this it is on the air and seems to be staying on the air for the foreseeable future.

I now move to some of the unsuccessful shows that Fox has produced, the first of which is *The Finder*. *The Finder* should have started strong with both creator credibility and spinoff credibility. The show is a spinoff of *Bones* and was also created by *Bones* creator Hart Hanson. These two factors should have given *The Finder* the credentials it needed to succeed. However *The Finder*, unlike *Bones*, is not a murder mystery show, it is quite literally just a show about finding things. By this I mean that the main character is hired to find anything and everything that is lost, and he always finds it. This is interesting, and the show was well reviewed, but it was so different from *Bones* that many *Bones* fans did not enjoy it while viewers who did not like *Bones* assumed it would be like *Bones* so they did not even give it a try. This was ultimately *The Finder's* downfall, because it was well reviewed. The problem was not appealing to the audience it wanted to.

The next unsuccessful show on Fox that I am going to talk about is *Enlisted*. *Enlisted* is a show about a very experienced army man who is demoted to small military base in Florida in order to punish him. There are many people in the country who enjoy military themed television, however *Enlisted* kind of makes a mockery of soldiers and their abilities. Joking about war was fine in *M.A.S.H.* when they were joking about doing things they are not supposed to, but in *Enlisted* characters are dysfunctional and downright idiotic. This style of show might have succeeded at another point and time but right now critics of the war in Afghanistan won't watch military shows about it, while

supporters are offended that the show seems to portray at least half of the military as idiots.

The last example of an unsuccessful show on Fox is *Surviving Jack*. *Surviving Jack* is a comedy about a man suddenly inheriting the parenting duties of his two children when his wife decides to go back to school. The show is set in the early nineties, before you could google how to do anything. The show stars Christopher Meloni, of *Law & Order: SVU* fame. Meloni was tired of doing *Law & Order: SVU* and ultimately quit to act in different things. Sadly for Meloni, I don't believe fans of his past show fully forgave him for leaving, and decided to not watch him in anything else. Additionally, Meloni's credibility extends to cop dramas, not to comedies, and it is hard for fans to see that sort of transition. Also, the whole wife going back to school theme is used pretty well in today's time; the show did not need to go back to the nineties. The show also didn't reward viewers with anything, it just focused on the idea that Meloni's character had to start taking parenting responsibilities with his kids, it wasn't enough to keep viewer attention, and the show was ultimately canceled with one episode left unaired.

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