

*BREAKING BAD* AT DENNY'S: THE INFLUENCE OF  
NARRATIVE TRANSPORTATION ON BRAND  
PLACEMENT EFFECTS IN ANTIHERO TELEVISION  
SHOWS

By

SEAN KENNEDY

Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications

South Dakota State University

Brookings, South Dakota

2003

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
May, 2016

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Jami Fullerton

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Thesis Adviser

Dr. John McGuire

---

Dr. Danny Shipka

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Name: SEAN KENNEDY

Date of Degree: MAY, 2016

Title of Study: *BREAKING BAD* AT DENNY'S: THE INFLUENCE OF NARRATIVE  
TRANSPORTATION ON BRAND PLACEMENT EFFECTS IN  
ANTIHERO TELEVISION SHOWS

Major Field: MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Abstract: With the proliferation of antihero protagonists on television, brand marketers are being presented with new opportunities to place brands in these types of programs. Since viewers develop connections with television characters over an extended period of time, narrative transportation was suspected to have a moderating influence on the brand placement effects. This study examines the brand placement of the restaurant chain Denny's in the television show *Breaking Bad* to examine the influence narrative transportation plays on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent in television programs with an antihero protagonist. Using a convenience sample of college students, this study utilized an experimental methodology to test an episode of the program and measure brand recall, brand attitude, purchase intent, character liking and narrative transportation. The results indicate that narrative transportation is a moderating factor for purchase intent and liking of the antihero protagonist. These findings were supported by previous research on narrative transportation and antihero characters. The study also suggests that brand marketers may want to be cautious about associating brands with antihero characters, though further study is recommended.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A pivotal object in the television universe of *Breaking Bad* is a Coca-Cola machine in Walter White's car wash. The business is part of a money laundering operation to cover up the vast sums of cash he makes by manufacturing and selling a special blue methamphetamine (Gilligan, 2008). Walter hides a gun inside the Coke machine, which is prominently featured in several episodes. The frozen gun is eventually used for nefarious purposes as Walt battles drug cartels and an assortment of other criminals in his efforts to build his own drug empire. The placement of the Coke machine, one of many brands featured during the show's critically acclaimed five-season run on the cable network AMC, is noteworthy because the iconic, wholesome Coca-Cola brand is being associated with murderers, drug dealers and money launderers. Denny's, the restaurant chain best known for the Grand Slam Breakfast, also made a deal with the show that allowed its Albuquerque, New Mexico-based restaurant to be prominently featured throughout the second half of the series (Baskin, 2013).

*Breaking Bad* is a type of show that is redefining what is acceptable to broadcast on television while breaking the traditional rules for brand placement (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). Traditional brand placement, more commonly referred to as product placement, is

the featuring of a real product or service in the mass media, which focuses on protagonists or heroes that people like, empathize and identify with and depicts the brand being used in a positive manner (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006). Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher turned illegal drug manufacturer, is not a character with whom most people can identify, but fans of the show still derived enjoyment from watching as he completed a number of immoral, criminal acts throughout the course of the series. Other recent television shows like *Dexter*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *The Walking Dead*, *The Sopranos*, *Weeds* and *Mad Men* are other examples of television shows that feature flawed characters committing immoral acts for reasons that were deemed marginally acceptable by the audience and prominently feature real brands as part of the show.

A well-placed brand in a movie or television show can have a profound impact on sales of a product (Balasubramanian, 1994). But must the character who is associated or interacts with the brand be someone that the viewer can self-identify or can it be someone who is completely different and does immoral things, but for noble reasons? This study examines the use of brand placement in a television show with an antihero as the central protagonist. Using an experimental design, this study examines the effects of brand placement on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent in a television show with an antihero protagonist.

### **Brand placement**

Many researchers point to the success of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* in 1982 and the movie's brand placement partnership with Hershey's Reese's Pieces, a lesser-known

candy that had only been on the market for two years, as a major turning point for modern brand placements (i.e. Russell, 2002). When the candy was prominently featured in the movie, sales skyrocketed by more than 60% and provided anecdotal evidence for other companies that brand placement was a potentially lucrative promotional tool capable of dramatically increasing sales (Gregorio & Sung, 2010). However, brand placement is hardly a new innovation in movies, television or other entertainment media. The first movie brand placement dates back to the early days of cinema, when a detergent was prominently featured in Lumière films in the 1890s (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). Television soap operas gained their name from the soap advertisers who sponsored the programs and embedded products into the radio and television episodes (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). The James Bond series of films has also prominently featured brands ranging from cellular phones and expensive watches to designer suits and expensive sports cars (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Modern brand placement did not become standard practice, however, until after the success of *E.T.* Brand placement is the incorporation of a real branded product in a film, television show or book that either appears in the background or television show or is prominently worked into the storyline (Balasubramanian, 1994).

With the advent of digital video recordings and streaming video services, many consumers are no longer watching television shows live and have the ability to skip commercials when they do eventually watch (Russell & Stern, 2006). The dwindling live audience has taken a toll on advertising revenue that supports television programs and has made television advertising less successful because fewer people are watching commercials (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). The increasing distrust of traditional advertising

has also led brands to seek out new avenues for promotion to consumers (Ong, 2004). Television producers and advertising executives have turned to brand placement as a way of subtly integrating advertising messages into television programs so that viewers are exposed to the brand, yet unable to fast forward through the advertising messages. In 2010, there were 9,227 instances of brand placement on broadcast television according to Nielsen Research (2012). The number of brand placements on television is actually believed to be much higher because this statistic does not include basic or premium cable shows like *Breaking Bad* or *Sons of Anarchy*. These cable networks are becoming increasingly popular, as are shows on streaming services like Netflix or Amazon Prime.

Partnerships between television shows and brands, like that of Subway with the television show *Chuck*, have helped keep low-rated, critically acclaimed television shows with extremely loyal fan bases on the air by off-setting production costs (Gibson, Redker, & Zimmerman, 2014). These partnerships build goodwill between fans of the show and the brands and can be a motivating factor that prevents a show with a loyal fan-base from being canceled. Additionally, the television viewing landscape has become increasingly fragmented with more shows available to viewers on many different networks and viewing platforms (Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2013). These brand placement partnerships enable marketers to target very specific viewer demographic segments that are in line with the brand's marketing strategy. As audiences become more segmented, advertisers can be selective about using shows and characters that align with their target markets to more effectively promote their brands.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine if brand placement in television shows with an antihero protagonist will have an effect on viewers' brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent. The study will attempt to ascertain whether brand placements in association with antihero protagonists are a wise decision for brand marketers who are being presented with these increasing opportunities. The study will specifically examine the use of the restaurant chain Denny's brand in the television show *Breaking Bad*. With the booming brand placement industry making \$8.3 billion in profits, it is essential for brand marketers to know that these types of placements are an effective tool as part of an overall marketing campaign and will have a positive effect on the brand's image and overall sales (Friedman, 2013).

The study partially replicates an experimental design developed by Chang, Liang, Zhang and Fang (2014) that examined the effect of brand placement for a restaurant in a television show. While the original study purposefully used likeable protagonists to test brand placement effects, this study utilizes a television show featuring an antihero protagonist. For this study, participants watched half of an episode of *Breaking Bad* (approximately 25 minutes) that prominently features brand placement of Denny's and then completed a questionnaire to measure brand recall, brand attitudes and purchase intent. The questionnaire measured brand recall using modified Likert-type scales developed by Morton and Friedman (2002) and Karrh, McKenn, and Pardun (2003). Brand attitude was measured using a modified Likert-type scale developed by Garretson and Niedrich (2004), while purchase intent was measured with an adapted Likert-type scale also from Morton and Friedman (2002). Questions measuring attitudes toward brand placement using a 5-point Likert-type scale are from a scale developed by Gupta

and Gould (1997).

There has been little research involving brand placement in television shows with an antihero protagonist. Previous research has indicated that the use of brand placement in conjunction with villains had a negative impact on brand attitudes when the brand was used in an immoral way (Karışık, 2014). However, while antihero characters commit some of the same immoral actions as villains, they traditionally have some redeeming qualities and viewers root for these characters to succeed. In the case of Walter White and *Breaking Bad*, viewers are rooting for the main character to be a successful drug lord so that his family will have financial security after Walt dies of lung cancer. However, during the course of the series, Walter White commits a number of immoral and illegal actions, including theft, blackmail and murder, to protect his criminal empire, all while claiming his actions are motivated by providing for his family.

Previous research also has shown that audience engagement and narrative transportation are essential for brand placements to have an effect (Scott & Craig-Lees, 2010; Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). Fans of the show are able to morally disengage from these actions and are more likely to experience transportation into the narrative and thus brand placement effects will likely be stronger for them than non-fans or first-time viewers (Krakowiak & Oliver, 2012; Shafer & Raney, 2012). As such, the study will also include 15 items measuring narrative transportation adapted from an original study by Green and Brock (2000).

### **Theoretical Approach**

Ruggieri and Boca (2013) state that in high involvement processing, one exposure

to a brand or product is enough to effect change. While watching television or a movie, the brain is processing the story in a way that allows the subtle appearance of a brand to be processed without actively thinking about it. The researchers found an increase in favorability of the brand only if a positive image of the brand already exists. Though singular exposure can have some effect, repetition is likely to influence the effects of brand placement at higher levels.

According to the literature, narrative transportation is an essential component of deriving enjoyment from television shows with morally ambiguous characters (Yang & Vanden Bergh, 2015). Transportation theory states that viewers use cognitive engagement, emotional engagement and mental imagery to transport themselves into an imaginary world and become part of the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000). This effect helps trigger moral disengagement, enabling viewers to excuse the immoral actions of the antihero protagonist and derive enjoyment from the program (Shafer & Raney, 2012). Narrative transportation is suspected to be moderating variables on the effectiveness of brand placement in television shows with antihero protagonists.

## **Methodology**

To examine if brand placement is effective in television shows with an antihero protagonist, this study uses an experimental design. A convenience sample of college students was solicited to view an episode of a television program with an antihero protagonist. Since awareness of brand placement can trigger defense mechanisms against the persuasive message in the show, the participants were told they were participating in a study about television shows with antihero protagonists (Gibson, Redker, &

Zimmerman, 2014).

After watching approximately half an episode (about 25 minutes) of the television show *Breaking Bad* featuring brand placement of the restaurant chain Denny's, the participants completed a questionnaire measuring the dependent variables of brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent against the independent variable of the Denny's brand. Narrative transportation was measured as a moderating variable. The questionnaire was specifically designed to determine whether the participants remember seeing the brand in the episode and to measure attitudes and purchase intent toward the placed brand. The questionnaire also included items to measure the narrative transportation effect and attitude toward *Breaking Bad* as well as respondent demographics. After completing the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed and released.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews a broad variety of research on product and brand placement, audience connections with fictional characters and the rising phenomena of morally ambiguous characters in popular culture. The review covers the history of brand placements in media, attitudes toward brand placement, types of brand placements, the effects of brand placements, antiheroes and morally ambiguous characters, narrative transportation and the connection between brand placement and the narrative.

#### **Brand Placement**

Brand placement and entertainment media have a long shared history, providing revenue streams for underfunded theater productions, props for television programs and movies, and sponsorships in the early years of radio and TV broadcast program (Turner, 2004; Kretchmer, 2004). Many researchers point to the success of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* and Reese's Pieces in 1982 as the launching point for modern brand placement. This partnership provided Hershey's with a 60% increase in sales for its new candy in the months following the film's release (Gregorio & Sung, 2010). However, the practice has been in existence since the dawn of the entertainment industry (Galician &

Bourdeau, 2004). Examples are found in books (Sung & Gregorio, 2008), music (Karıřık, 2014), television shows (Russell & Puto, 1999), movies (Galican & Bourdeau, 2004) and video games (Pope, 1994; Jeong, Bohil, & Biocca, 2011). The earliest forms of brand placements can be found in ancient theater and continues through to modern entertainment. The practice has evolved over time and its prominence in entertainment, particularly in movies and television, has increased as the practice has become more lucrative. The James Bond movies are another prime example of how products have been integrated into a production to provide financing for the films (Morton & Friedman, 2002).

Brands include names, terms, signs, symbols, designs or a combination of these that are intended to identify a product, service or company and to differentiate them from the competition (Schramm & Knoll, 2015). Placements have been used prominently to feature a variety of brands including restaurants, candy, sunglasses, alcohol, tobacco, shoes, clothing, offices supplies, automobiles, shipping companies, athletic supplies and the list goes on (Condrat, 2008). Placements have also been used to carry social messages and influence social behavior (Paluck, et al., 2015) on things like alcohol consumption (Noguti & Russell, 2014) and farming practices (Pastina, 2001). Brand placement is not just an advertising tool used in America, as other countries have seen and experienced its effectiveness as well (see Jan & Martin, 2013; Lee, Kim, & King, 2012; Pastina, 2001; and Hackley & Hackley, 2012).

Balsumbramanian (1994) defined product placement as the paid placement of products in entertainment media with the intention of subtly influencing a viewer's attitude toward the product. This definition is somewhat limiting as many brand

placements are unpaid or conducted through a series of *quid pro quo* agreements in which the brand allows or provides its products for use as props in a television show or movie without payment and in turn receives free publicity from the product being used or seen on screen. The term brand placement is more encompassing and covers the wide spectrum of product placements in entertainment media. Brand placement is defined as the purposeful inclusion of brands in editorial content (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). This definition more accurately reflects the state of the industry and the incorporation of brands in entertainment. This phrase also more accurately reflects the goal of brand placements, which is for consumers to remember and build an association with the entire brand rather than an individual product the brand produces (Maynard & Scala, 2006).

With more options available for television viewers with the advent of cable television and streaming television services available via the Internet, audiences are becoming increasingly fragmented (Park & Berger, 2010). As a result, television shows and networks are attracting smaller audiences. However, networks are charging higher and higher prices for commercial airtime during programs. Following in the footsteps of traditional advertising, brands are utilizing placements to target very specific audience segments who utilize or could utilize their products or services (McClung & Cleophat, 2009). Brands are able to target consumers based on age, ethnicity, income, spending habits and other demographic traits that are available through viewer tracking data.

Brand placement offers many advantages over traditional advertising. With the advent of digital video recorders and streaming television services, many television viewers are able to forgo watching TV ads by fast-forwarding or paying extra to watch commercial-less options (Pomper & Choo, 2008). With the brand message embedded

within the show, viewers are unable to skip past the exposure. These placements also serve as an implied endorsement by either the character or the actor portraying the character (Pomper & Choo, 2008). The characters, in essence, serve as *defacto* celebrity spokespersons for the brands they are using and their actions are therefore reflected back upon the brand (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). Brand placements also have a longer shelf life than traditional advertising, with television shows and movies offering additional viewing in rebroadcasts, Bluray and DVD and more recently on digital streaming services like Netflix and Amazon (Brennan, Duban, & Babin, 1999). Additionally, viewers are often less distracted while watching entertainment content and therefore experience narrative transportation that therefore provides deeper mental exposure to the embedded brand message.

One drawback that several brands have experienced with brand placement is that they may have limited control over the message or story context for their brand within the narrative storyline. While brands that pay for placements can exercise some form of editorial control based on their financial contracts, those that do not pay often have no say in how their brand is depicted (Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011). In several instances, brands had no knowledge of their products being used in a television show or movie and were so unhappy with how the brand was presented that they filed lawsuits to recover damages. For example, in the television show *Heroes*, a main character sticks her hand into a running garbage disposal with the disposal's brand name prominently displayed on screen. Her fingers are chopped off, but quickly grow back as part of the storyline. Despite this recovery, Emerilson, the makers of the In-Sink-Erator, sued NBC for the unapproved use of its brand (Edwards, 2006). Reebok paid for its placement in the movie

*Jerry Maguire*, but due to a cut scene at the end of the film were unhappy with how the brand was portrayed and sued the film makers (Nitins, 2005). However, these placements can have lucrative success for brands even if they do not have editorial control over the brand's depiction. The Wilson volleyball that was prominently featured as a character in *Cast Away*, a movie filled with brand placement, is a prime example of an unpaid placement that became a financial success (Maynard & Scala, 2006). The placement was so successful, the company began selling a version of the Wilson volleyball with a recreation of the bloody handprint seen in the movie.

The context of how the brand is used in the television show can also influence viewers' attitudes toward the brand (Hong, Wang, & Santos, 2008). Brands that are portrayed in a negative way, like that of the garbage disposal on *Heroes*, may result in a negative valuation of the brand. The same has been found for characters criticizing brands, as was a common practice on the television show *Gilmore Girls* (Edwards, 2006). Hong, Wang and Santos (2008) claim that brands should focus brand placement efforts on television shows and movies where the brand will be featured in a positive context or create a positive association. In the case of antihero narratives, viewers may create a positive association with the characters and the characters are not always acting in immoral ways. Therefore, placements that are used in a positive context should create positive effects.

### **Attitudes Toward Brand Placement**

Anecdotal evidence like the successes of Reese's Pieces and *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, Wilson and *Cast Away* and even Pottery Barn and the television show

*Friends* (Russell & Stern, 2006) have lead marketing practitioners to invest further in product placement. Experts estimate that brand placement is an \$1.8 billion a year industry in television and that figure continues to climb each year (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). More recent estimates have placed the brand placement industry at \$8.3 billion (Friedman, 2013). It is difficult to turn on a television program and not be exposed to a multitude of brands, indicating that marketing managers are clearly working to become the next major success story. More than 100 international companies exist solely to connect brands with placement opportunities in movies and television (Redondo, 2006). While brand managers are reluctant to discuss their particular strategies for brand placements, they have noted that it can be an effective tool in an overall marketing campaign (Um & Kim, 2014).

Brand marketers listed that the most important executional factor in brand placement agreements is that the brand must be portrayed in a favorable light (Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003). For television shows with antihero protagonists, products can often end up with a negative association with the characters bad behavior, which is one reason brands have been reluctant to sign off on inclusion in these types of programs. In an investigation of violent media and brand placement, Berger (2012) found that violent images can correlate to a decreased preference to the embedded brand if the viewer has a negative response to the image. Researchers have also found that viewers are less likely to remember brands when they are featured in violent media (Berger, 2012). Berger (2012) also points out that other researchers have found that no relationship exists between violent media and brand attitudes. This could have implications for brand placements in television shows with antihero narratives, which often feature characters

committing violent acts (Shafer & Raney, 2012). Brands have also avoided placements with nudity, bad language and profanity – qualities commonly found in antihero narratives – due to the perceived negative associations of these images and behaviors (Ong, 2004).

Consumers have become increasingly distrustful and skeptical of claims made in traditional advertisements (Chen & Leu, 2011). Doubt and distrust about the advertisement breeds negative emotions, which in turn impacts the effectiveness of the persuasive message in the ad, decreasing positive attitudes toward the brand and lowering purchase intent. Personal traits, occupation, self-esteem, age, intelligence, product type, ad structure and execution factors can all have an impact on consumer trust in the advertisement (Chen & Leu, 2011). However, researchers have found that viewers generally have positive attitudes toward brand placements in general (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009). Brand placements can have a greater impact than traditional advertisements as they are more likely to affect mood and social judgments through their connections to storyline and characters (Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003). Movies and television shows also provide a non-threatening, symbolic environment that could render viewers more susceptible to commercial messages (Park & Berger, 2010).

Researchers have found that brand placements can create a sense of realism which aids in the viewer's transportation into the narrative (Morton & Friedman, 2002). In historical shows like *Mad Men*, brand placement is essential for enhancing the show's verisimilitude in the advertising world because the characters are interacting with brands that actually existed during the time period depicted in the series (Cowan, 2009). In a study of brand placement effects, McDonnell and Drennan (2010) used virtual

placements – or products that are not real – as a way to more purely test placement effects and discovered that pre-existing attitudes toward brands before exposure to the placement can impact the effectiveness of brand placements.

Brand placements have increasingly saturated television and movies, particularly in the length of time that brands are on screen (McDonnell & Drennan, 2010). In some cases, the duration of in-program brand appearances in a television show exceeds the total running time for commercials for the program (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeria). As brand placement has become increasingly common, a backlash has started to form against the practice. Some critics of brand placement have described the practice as insidious, underhanded and virtually impossible to avoid (Nitins, 2005). Others have described it as a dark practice, particularly the practice of digitally inserting brands into popular television show reruns (McPherson, 2008). Critics slam the subtle nature of brand placements, which prevents viewers from putting up defenses against the persuasive message of the embedded product (Galician, 2004a). According to some, viewers should know that a persuasive attempt exists in the show, so they are more adequately prepared to process the message (Galician, 2004b). In Galician's (2004b) roundtable discussion with brand placement critics, placements were described as potentially misleading and unethical because they could portray the normative use of a brand that may not exist in the real world. Some television writers have also criticized brand placement for the additional strain it puts on them to work brands naturally into scripts without being provided extra compensation for the effort (Vranica, 2005).

Critics of brand placement have suggested that programs be required to disclose sponsors of embedded messages prior to the start of program, but advertisers have

resisted since disclosure is believed to lessen the impact of covert persuasion (Campbell, Mohr, & Berlegh, 2013). Russell and Russell (2008) found that placing warnings or disclosures at the beginning of programs can have mixed results depending on how connected viewers are with the program. In some cases, the disclosure created more interest in the message, also known as the “forbidden fruit effect”, and in others, those who became so engrossed in the program still ended up having reduced resistance to the persuasive attempt. Researchers have also found that viewers find ethically charged placements promoting alcohol, tobacco and firearms to be unacceptable (Lee, Kim, & King, 2012).

Despite these criticisms, the practice is continuing to grow. As marketers and television executives seek new avenues to create new revenue streams, shows that have traditionally been rejected for not having the stereotypical likeable hero characters, such as antiheroes, are now being considered for brand placements (Baskin, 2013).

### **Antiheroes**

Antiheroes have begun to proliferate in popular culture, particularly in the past decade (Shafer & Raney, 2012). Dexter Morgan, a serial killer of serial killers in the Showtime series, *Dexter*, is a prominent example of an antihero protagonist. The show lasted eight seasons on the premium cable network. Rick Grimes, the central protagonist on *The Walking Dead*, the top-rated cable program and one of the highest rated shows on television, is another example of an antihero (Carter, 2013). Grimes has killed numerous people throughout the course of the post-apocalyptic zombie series on AMC, but claims to be doing it to protect his family and friends. Jax Teller was the leader of a motorcycle

gang for seven seasons on the FX show, *Sons of Anarchy*. The character was involved with murder, prostitution, drug dealing, illegal gun sales and murder, but claimed it was all to provide a better life for himself and his family (Philpott, 2010). Tony Soprano from HBO's *The Sopranos*, Annalise Keating from ABC's hit, *How to Get Away With Murder*, John Luther from the BBC One's *Luther*, and Luscious Lyon from Fox's *Empire* are all recent prominent examples of antihero protagonists on television.

The success of these types of characters has lead writers and networks to take chances on television shows featuring characters that fall outside the stereotypical hero protagonist category. Shafer and Raney (2012) define antiheroes as characters who display the qualities of both villains and heroes, acting at times in ways that are morally ambiguous with actions that are unjustifiable, all to reach a noble goal. For Walter White, that noble goal was earning enough money from selling methamphetamine to be able to provide financial security for his family after his death from cancer (Gilligan, 2008). Krakowiak and Tasy-Vogel (2013) call these morally ambiguous characters because their motivation often waivers between altruistic and selfish, with their actions having both positive and negative consequences. Shafer and Raney (2012) found that antiheroes often take the form of revenge-seekers, well-intended but flawed characters or criminals who are redeemable. These characters still function as a force of good in some way that is justifiable to the audience. While these types of characters have grown in prominence in recent years, they are nothing new to television shows, movies, comic books and even historical plays, with an early examples found in Greek tragedies and running on through many of Clint Eastwood's popular movies, television soap operas and other countless examples (Jonason, et al., 2012).

Previous research has shown that audiences derive pleasure from narratives through moral judgments of characters using Affective Disposition Theory (Shafer & Raney, 2012). This theory posits that enjoyment of a program is based on an emotional response rooted in moral judgments which regulate whether viewers like or dislike the characters. According to Affective Disposition Theory, viewers hope for successes and fear the failures of the characters as the story unfolds and they experience the same kind of emotional catharsis as the characters feel at the end of the story. In the case of antihero narratives, viewers are still able to derive enjoyment from the story despite the morally repugnant actions the characters have engaged in through a process called moral disengagement (Krakowiak & Tsay-Vogel, 2013). This set of attitude defense strategies, rooted in the cognitive processes first researched in Leon Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, enables viewers to cheer for the antihero in spite of immoral actions through a process of justification. Viewers maintain cognitive consistency using several tools including a) euphemism labeling, b) moral justification, c) diffusion of responsibility, d) displacement of responsibility, e) advantageous comparison, f) attribution of blame and g) dehumanization (Krakowiak & Tsay-Vogel, 2013). As a result, the viewer is able to morally disengage and continue to like a character despite the negative behaviors and actions in which the character indulges. Moral scrutiny and condemnation is put aside and viewers assume the greater good is being served by these actions (Shafer & Raney, 2012).

Krakowiak and Tsay-Vogel (2013) found that viewers are only able to justify the actions of a character to a certain point and that most of the results centered on motivation and outcomes. Using a story about mountain climbers, they ascertained that

viewers rely more heavily on motivation cues than consequences when evaluating negative behaviors. A negative outcome from good motivation resulted in more positive character liking than a positive outcome with negative motivation. However, they stress that the outcome of actions still plays an important role in character liking. Gibson, Redker and Zimmerman (2014) state that brand placement works well when viewers can self-identify with the character that is using the product. The characters should be likable or doing something heroic with which the viewer can identify. If the viewer can see themselves in the character, they are more likely to associate positively with the products being utilized by the character. Through moral disengagement, the viewers are still able to like the antihero characters (Shafer & Russell, 2012).

While this research helps explain how viewers are able to derive enjoyment from an antihero narrative, Krakowiak and Tsay-Vogel (2013) caution that there may be a limit to audiences' willingness to forgive immoral behavior. They state that some actions, like the murder of innocent people, may be unjustifiable. They also theorized that prolonged exposure to antihero narratives may have an impact on moral disengagement. This came not only from watching multiple episodes of the same show, but also watching different shows and movies that featured the antihero archetype. Shafer and Raney (2012) also found that fans and nonfans of a show enjoy a program differently, respond differently and derive different levels of enjoyment from the show. Nonfans of the antihero show were still able to derive enjoyment from the program.

### **Narrative Transportation**

One of the findings in research literature on brand placement is that the viewer

must enjoy the program for placement effects to work (Redker, Gibson, & Zimmerman, 2013). Through a cognitive process called narrative transportation, viewers are able to become fully immersed in the imaginary world they are viewing (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). Transportation theory states that being fully immersed in the narrative world is beneficial for enjoyment of the program.

It is a challenge for writers to successfully integrate the brand placement with the plot of the show (Vranica, 2005). However, the degree of connection between the brand and the plot of the show has been shown to influence brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent (Russell, 2002). According to Russell (2002), brand placements that appear to be congruent to the plot of the show or movie will positively affect change while those that appear to be incongruent with the plot – those that seem out of place or are disconnected – will negatively affect change.

Viewers develop a type of long-term relationship with the characters on television shows they watch (Russell & Stern, 2006). Over the course of several years, watching a program on a weekly basis, television viewers become actively invested in the lives of characters. This effect is stronger in television viewers than in book readers or movie watchers, who maintain a more limited relationship with the characters. This attachment enables viewers to feel more connected to the characters and then they tend to identify and accept them as role models. This includes modeling clothing and other brand consumption after the characters.

For some viewers, the use of real-life brands in a television or movie helps create a sense that the story is actually happening, rather than something that is completely fictional (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). Even when products are just used in the

background and never mentioned by the characters, they help establish a sense of realism in the story. Some brands, like Taster's Choice, instead of placing their product in a television show, established a narrative in their commercials, enabling viewers to follow the relationship between two characters that enjoy the instant coffee for more than a decade (Kretchmer, 2008). Taster's Choice created its own narrative world in which viewers were transported for short segments at a time. The advertising endeavor clearly establishes how important narrative can be in capturing viewers' attention to prevent them from realizing that they are being persuaded at all (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

There has also been an interesting phenomenon known as reverse brand placement, in which fake brands are created specifically for a television show or movie, but a real demand for the products fictional brand occurs (Muzellec, Kanitz, & Lynn, 2013). Dunder Mifflin brand paper from *The Office*, the Cheers bar from Cheers, the Central Perk coffee shop from *Friends* and MacLaren's Pub from *How I Met Your Mother* are examples of fictional brands that started out on television, but became real due to consumer demand after viewers became engrossed in the weekly adventures of the characters on these television programs (Natharius, 2004). Attitudes toward these fictional brands are driven entirely by the perceived quality they see on television, not by any experience with the brand in real life. However, using fictional or generic brands or obscuring real brand logos can destroy the sense of realism the show is trying to produce, striking at the transportation effect for some viewers and interrupting their enjoyment of the program (Natharius, 2004).

While a compelling narrative does not completely guarantee brand placement

success, it does increase the likelihood that viewers will be engaged in the story and will not see the brand placement as a form of advertising. In narrative persuasion, story engagement is critical to success (Natharius, 2004). If viewers can tell they are being persuaded, they are likely to block the persuasive attempts (Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011). Bressoud, Lehu and Russell (2010) found that the placement's degree of meaningfulness to overall story affects the way the brain processes the placement. Those more fully integrated into the plot are more likely to be processed centrally, while those that are more blatant and obvious will be processed peripherally.

### **Types of Placements**

There are generally three levels of brand placement that can be utilized in a television program. The product can appear on screen (visual), the characters can discuss the product (audio) or the characters can discuss and use the product (audio and visual) (Cheng et al., 2014). There have been numerous tests to compare which is most effective and the results have varied based on a number of variables ranging from how well the product is integrated into the plot to which characters use or interact with the product (Cheng et al., 2014). However, the general consensus among researchers is that audio and visual interaction with the characters is the most effective of the three levels, followed by audio only and then visual. These placements can be subtle or blatant (Gillespie, Joireman, & Muehling, 2012). The more prominent the placement is within the show, the more likely that the viewer will remember the brand later (Gupta & Lord, 1998). In addition, the stronger connection there is between the product and the plot, the more effective the placement will be as well. Therefore, placements that are simply in the background with no connection to the plot of the show will have lesser effects.

According to Hong, Wang and Santos (2008), these placement levels affect different areas of the brain and contribute to memory of the placement, which is important for placement effects to happen. The audio and visual level also provides stronger association between the brand and the character, triggering viewers to make comparisons between the two. For instance, if the viewer likes the character and the character uses the product, the viewer will like the product that the character uses (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). This should hold true for antihero characters with viewers who like the characters as well, since they are deriving enjoyment from the show.

Prominence and exposure time can also have an effect on brand placements success (Brennan, Dubas, & Babin, 1999). The longer a brand is featured in some way on screen, the more likely it is that the viewer will remember it. Brennan, Dubas and Babin (1999) found that exposure time can be moderated by the type of placement in the program and its integration with the plot. Reijmersdal (2009) found that placement prominence has a strong effect on brand memory, but that under a certain set of circumstances it can have a negative effect on brand attitudes because it draws awareness to the placement and its persuasive intent. The activation of cognitive defenses against these persuasive attempts can even occur when the viewer has no memory of the brand placement in the program (Reijmersdal, 2009).

Repetition can also impact the success of brand placements. Homer (2009) found that repeated use or mention of the brand on a television program can both positively or negatively affect brand placement success depending on the type of placement used. For instance, repeated prominent placements for known brands may have a negative impact on brand attitude while subtle placements had a positive impact. Homer (2009) urges

marketers to carefully consider placement options when considering repetitive brand placements because they may lead to a decline in attitudes toward the brand.

### **Brand Placement Effects**

In addition to increasing awareness of brands and creating a sense of realism in television programs, brand placements are meant to have a persuasive effect on the viewer (Cheng, et al., 2014). According to a comprehensive model developed by Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan (2006), the outcomes of placements are broken down into three broad categories: cognitions, affects and conations. These categories provide the basis for determining if brand placements are successful because they provide a level of measurement for researchers and marketers in addition to sales figures.

For cognitions, researchers attempt memory-related measures to determine if the viewer recalls the placement and recognizes the brand within the program (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). Some researchers also attempt to measure the impact that brand placement has on brand salience, or the order in which brands come to mind (Hong, Wang, & Santos, 2008). Prior to viewing brand placement of a restaurant in a television program, a viewer might not include Arby's on the list of fast food chains when asked or it may be low on the list. However, after viewing a program that features the restaurant brand, viewers may place the brand higher on the list because they recall the brand sooner and awareness of the brand is present in their mind. The prominence of the placement often has the most effect on memory, though as previously noted, a brand that is too prominently featured or does not fit with the storyline for the program could have a negative effect on the other two categories (Reijmersdal, 2009). McDonnell and Drennan (2010) found that brand recall from brand placement was often better than recall from

traditional advertising. Since brand placements can be subtle, viewers' memory of the placement may not be triggered. Some research has found that even though there may be low recall for subtly placed brands, these placements may trigger an effect in the other two categories (Gupta & Lord, 1998). Viewer attitude toward the brand is influenced by their attitude toward the characters (Schramm & Knoll, 2015). For viewers of antihero narratives, this may mean that if the viewer likes and roots for the character, they share a similar affinity for the brands the character uses.

In the affects category, researchers attempt to measure attitudes toward the brand, attitudes toward the brand placement, the connection between the viewer and the characters and storyline and the connection between the viewer and the brand (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). Attitudes toward the brand are a key measure of the success of brand placement and will shape the viewers' intent to purchase or use the brand featured in the television program (McDonnell & Drennan, 2010). A consumer who does not like a brand is unlikely to engage with it. However, just because a consumer has positive feelings toward a brand, it does not necessarily equate to purchase intent or purchase behavior (Karışik, 2014). As previously discussed, the viewers' connection to the characters and immersion in the storyline often have an impact on the placement effects and is important to measure (Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011).

The conation category is the trickiest measurement as it attempts to connect the brand placement with purchase intent, purchase choice and brand usage behavior (Kamleitner & Jyote, 2013). A single exposure to a brand in the placement of a television episode will have an effect on brand attitudes and brand recall, but may not have as strong an effect on purchase intent. Marketing executives who engage in brand placement

acknowledge that it is a weak to moderate communication effect and that it is best utilized as part of an overall marketing strategy that includes other forms of brand promotion (Jan & Martina, 2013). Research shows however, that high brand salience and recall in conjunction with positive brand attitudes can lead to increased purchase intent (Hong, Wang, & Santos, 2008).

### **Denny's**

Since the Denny's brand will be utilized for this study, it is important to take note of how the restaurant chain has been featured in popular culture and general attitudes toward the restaurant chain. The 63-year-old restaurant, which has more than 1,600 locations around the world, has worked in recent years to rebrand itself as America's diner and has focused on consumer value and franchising in order to raise its public profile (Daley, 2011). The restaurant chain is most known for its Grand Slam breakfast, which has been called "the most common breakfast on America's highway system" (Daley, 2011, p. 88). These efforts have been successful for the company, as Denny's Corp., the parent company for Denny's restaurants, is reporting record sales increases for the past decade (Jennings, 2016) and the chain has been listed as one of the top 10 franchises in the nation for the first time since the 1980s (Daley, 2011). This trend, especially in terms of sales growth, would seem to indicate that attitudes toward the Denny's brand are improving as more people are eating at the chain.

Some consider the restaurant chain's agreement to allow *Breaking Bad* to film in its Albuquerque, New Mexico location as redefining the rules for brand placement on television (Baskin, 2013). The chain has a limited history of brand placements in films

and televisions, though it was famously part of the 1994 movie, *The Santa Clause*, a family holiday movie starring Tim Allen (Oleck, 1995). Director Quentin Tarantino has repeatedly requested to film in Denny's locations for his films, but has been turned down by the company (Spurlock, 2011). Tarantino's films, as with the television show *Breaking Bad*, feature antihero characters involved in violent or criminal situations. Instead of opting for brand placements, the company often does menu tie-ins with popular movies, such as the launch of a Middle Earth-themed menu to coincide with the release of the 2012 film *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* and a product line for the 2012 holiday film *Arthur Christmas* (Bricken, 2013).

## **Summary**

Brand placement is an increasingly common marketing tool that uses characters in television, movies and other venues to provide subtle persuasive effects on the entertainment consumer. Brands have traditionally stayed away from characters who did not fit the stereotypical heroic archetype. However, with the increase in the number of morally ambiguous antihero protagonists on television, there is a new avenue to connect marketers with consumers using brand placement. Marketers have been reluctant to use this subtle form of persuasion for fear of the negative associations that could come with the immoral and violent acts of these characters.

Based on the preceding literature, it appears that narrative transportation helps establish how brand placements in television shows with antihero protagonists could still affect positive brand attitudes, brand recall and increase purchase intent. Liking of the characters is a key component to brand effects working as well as brand placement within

the show and its level of integration into the plot (Krakowiak & Tsay-Vogel, 2013). This study aims to determine if brand placement effects occur in television shows with antihero protagonists.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the research objectives of this project, the independent, dependent and moderating variables that were tested, the research hypotheses, and the experimental design for the study. The chapter includes a discussion of the measurement scales, the brand placement treatment utilized and the sampling method that were used for the study. The chapter concludes with discussion of the study's data collection, data processing and statistical analysis.

#### **Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to understand if brand placements have an effect on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intention in a television show with an antihero protagonist. The study also aims to determine if there is a correlation between these brand placements effects and viewer's narrative engagement with these types of television programs. With the growing popularity of television programs with antihero characters (Shafer & Raney, 2012) and the increased usage of brand placements as a means of marketing products (Um & Kim, 2014) and funding productions (Bressoud, Lehu, & Russell, 2010), this study attempts to understand if the two industries can mutually

benefit from brand placements. To explore these relationships, an experimental design was chosen.

The study builds on previous research in brand placement, which has typically focused on placements with positive characters (Gibson, Redker, & Zimmerman, 2014) or the interaction of placements with violent content (Berger, 2012; Jeong, Bohil, & Biocca, 2011) to understand if placements in shows with antihero characters are effective. In addition, the study will examine the suspected moderating effect of narrative transportation on brand placements in television shows with antihero protagonists (Bhantnagar & Wan, 2011).

The study provides useful information for brands who are considering placements in television shows with antihero protagonists, and television executives who are looking for additional funding sources to help produce shows with nontraditional lead characters. It also adds to the depth and understanding to the literature on brand placements.

### **Variables and Hypotheses**

This study's independent variable is viewing the brand placement in a television show with an antihero protagonist. The dependent variables measured are brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent. Because research suggests that viewing brand placements in television shows with an antihero protagonist will have an effect on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent (Morton & Friedman, 2002; Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003; Garretson & Niedrich, 2004), the following research question was explored:

RQ1: What is the effect of brand placement on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent for brands placed in television shows with an antihero protagonist?

Transportation into the narrative of a program is suspected to moderate the effectiveness of brand placement in antihero narratives (Yang & Vandenberg, 2015). The research also suggests that viewers who experience narrative transportation while watching the program will have a greater response to the brand placements (Bhantnagar & Wan, 2011). Thus, the research hypothesizes that viewers who experience transportation will experience greater brand placement effects versus those who are not transported.

- H1. Viewers a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater brand recall than viewers who experience low narrative transportation.
- H2. Viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have more positive attitudes toward brands placed in the show than viewers who experience low narrative transportation.
- H3. Viewers a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater purchase intent for brands placed in the show than viewers who experience low narrative transportation.
- H4. Viewers who experience high narrative transportation while watching a

television show with an antihero protagonist will view the protagonist as more likeable than viewers who experience low narrative transportation.

### **Television Episode**

Participants watched approximately half an episode (25 minutes) of the television show *Breaking Bad* featuring placement for the restaurant chain Denny's. The episode was viewed on a large screen in a classroom without commercials to create a streaming viewing experience which has become an increasingly popular way to watch television programs. The episode was first of the show's fifth season and had a key scene featuring Denny's and several other brands at the beginning of the episode, including a Valero gas station and a Dell computer. The antihero protagonist, Walter White, is seen ordering breakfast at Denny's and interacting with a waitress before conducting an illegal deal in the restroom, then leaving a \$100 tip and exiting the restaurant. During the rest of the portion of the episode viewed by participants, Walter White is seen scheming to destroy evidence at a police station crime lab using a giant magnet. The episode in this study included audio and visual mentions of the Denny's brand and the brand was prominently featured for nearly four minutes at the beginning of the episode. The Denny's brand was selected for this the study because its placement was so prominently featured during the episode and throughout the series.

### **Research Instruments**

The study partially replicated an experimental design developed by Cheng, Liang, Zhang and Fang (2014) that examined the effect of brand placement on a restaurant brand in a television show featuring traditional characters. Brand recall was measured by asking

participants what brands they recall seeing in the episode. Participants also answered three items about brand recall based on questions developed by Morton and Friedman (2002) and Karrh, McKenn, and Pardun (2003). Brand attitude was measured using five items modified from Garretson and Niedrich (2004), and purchase intent was measured using seven items modified from Morton and Friedman (2002). Attitudes toward brand placement were measured using a four-item, Likert-type scale developed by Gupta and Gould (1997). Narrative transportation was measured using 15-item, Likert-type scale adapted from an original study by Green and Brock (2000).

Demographic questions that are commonly used in surveys were also used to reveal the participants' age, gender, race, level of education and major. The questionnaire also included items to measure pre-exposure to Denny's and *Breaking Bad*, as well as the amount of television the participant normally watches.

### **Sampling Method**

A convenience sample of students from a southwestern university took part in the study. This sample was deemed appropriate due to the difficulty of selecting a representative sample, the time commitment required for viewing the episode and completing the questionnaire and because the group is representative of the demographic age range that is traditionally targeted by advertisers (Gibson, Redker, & Zimmerman, 2014). Two sections of the same course were solicited to participate in this study with the permission of the course instructor. Participants were required to watch half of an episode (approximately 25 minutes) of the television show *Breaking Bad* as part of the class project for the day, but were informed that they would have the option of not having their

data used as part of the study. Participants were told that the data would be aggregated and used anonymously in the study. An option was included at the end of the questionnaire that enabled participants to opt out of being included in the analysis. The data for those students who opted out was deleted prior to analysis. Two groups of students were measured on the same day under identical conditions about two hours apart.

### **Procedure**

After obtaining appropriate IRB approvals, the researcher used SurveyMonkey.com to create and host the Internet-based questionnaire. Participants received a general overview of the research project, being cautious to avoid discussion of brand placement so as not to bias the results. Participants watched the selected episode of *Breaking Bad*. They then were directed to go to the questionnaire website utilizing either their smartphone or laptops to complete the survey. Participants were asked several questions related to previous viewings of *Breaking Bad* and the last time they had eaten at Denny's to determine any pre-existing connections with the television program and the Denny's brand to measure if it had an impact on the results. Participants were asked to recall any brands they can recall from the episode. They then completed items using Likert-type scales measuring brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent related to the restaurant chain Denny's, as well as questions related to attitudes toward brand placement in general. The questionnaire also measured transportation into the narrative using 15 items on a Likert-type scale. At the end of the questionnaire, students provided demographic information on gender, year in school, GPA, race, age and status as an international student. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and

dismissed.

### **Data, Processing and Analysis**

The online questionnaire contained a total of 55 questions, with responses collected by surveymonkey.com into a spreadsheet. Since the data entry was automatic, it reduced the risk of human error due in data entry. The spreadsheet was downloaded and the data were imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Participants who opted out of having their data used in the sample had their information deleted immediately. The data were analyzed using independent samples *t*-tests and a one-way analysis of variance to test the hypotheses. Results, implications and limitations of the study are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The following chapter details the results of this study, which utilized an experimental method to better understand the role of narrative engagement on brand placements effects in television shows with antihero protagonists. Participants were shown half of an episode (approximately 25 minutes) of the television series *Breaking Bad* prominently featuring a brand placement for the restaurant chain Denny's. After the viewing, participants completed a questionnaire to measure brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent based on the brand placement in the episode. The questionnaire also measured the narrative engagement of the participants to determine if there is a difference in the brand placement effects for those who experienced high transportation and those who experienced low transportation while viewing the episode. General demographic information about the respondents was also collected.

The study utilized various scales to measure brand recall (Morton & Friedman, 2002; Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003), brand attitude (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004), purchase intent (Morton & Friedman, 2002), attitudes toward brand placement (Gupta & Gould, 1997) and narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000). Each variable was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Because there was high internal consistency

in the scales, items were collapsed into a single variable for brand recall ( $\alpha = .89$ ), brand attitude ( $\alpha = .80$ ) and purchase intent ( $\alpha = .87$ ). This individual score for each variable makes it easier to make comparisons and provides a better picture of the overall brand placement effects on the participant.

### **Respondent Profile**

The data for this study were collected from 160 college students at a southwestern university in March of 2016. The study was designed to measure brand placement effects on viewers and the possible moderating role of narrative engagement on these effects. Since college students are in the highly sought-after 18-34 demographic targeted by advertisers, the convenience sample was deemed appropriate for this study (Gibson, Redker, & Zimmerman, 2014). Participants were between the ages of 18 and 31.

Of the participants in the experiment, 58.8% were male and 41.2% were female. Additional demographic data revealed that 68.1% of the sample was White, 16.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.0% African American, 3.8% Native American/American Indian, 3.1% Mixed Race and 2.5% Hispanic. The sample contained a mix of education levels, with freshmen at 45.6%, sophomores at 21.5%, juniors at 17.7% and seniors at 15.2%. Of the sample, 16.3% reported being international students, while 83.8% were domestic students.

Several demographic measures were also taken to better understand how respondents use television and the amount of television watched per week. More than half reported preferring to watch television via delayed streaming services like Netflix (56.9%), while participants reported viewing live via antenna/cable (16.3%), next day streaming services like Hulu (13.8%) and digital video recording (10.0%) at lower rates.

A small number of participants (3.1%) reported not watching television at all.

Participants also reported varying numbers of hours spent watching television per week, with 1-5 hours at the highest frequency with 43.1%, followed by 5-10 hours at 26.3%, 10-20 hours at 19.4%, less than 1 hour at 8.8 % and 20+ hours 2.5%. A complete table of the sample demographics can be found in Table 1.

To measure prior exposure to *Breaking Bad*, participants were asked how many episodes of the program they had watched prior to this viewing. Nearly half (46.3%) reported never having seen an episode prior to the experiment, while 21.9% reported having watched 1-10 episodes, 19.4% watched 30+ episodes, 9.4% watched 11-20 episodes and 3.1% watched 21-30 episodes.

Table 1. Sample Demographics

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	94	58.8
Female	66	41.2
Race		
White, Non-Hispanic	109	69.0
Hispanic	4	2.5
Native American/American Indian	6	3.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	26	16.5
African American	8	5.1
Mixed Race	5	3.2
Year in School		
Freshman	72	45.6
Sophomore	34	21.5
Junior	28	17.7
Senior	24	15.2
International student		
Yes	26	16.3
No	134	83.8
Preferred method for watching TV		
Live via antenna/cable	26	16.3
Next day streaming services like Hulu	22	13.8
DVR	16	10.0
Delayed streaming services like Netflix	91	56.9
Don't watch TV	5	3.1
Time spent watching TV per week		
Less than 1	14	8.8
1-5 hours	69	43.1
5-10 hours	42	26.3
10-20 hours	31	19.4
20+ hours	4	2.5
Previous episodes of Break Bad watched		
0	74	46.3
1-10	35	21.9
11-20	15	9.4
21-30	5	3.1
30+	31	19.4

### Measuring Brand Placement Effects

Individual scales were used to measure brand placement effects in participants after viewing the partial episode of *Breaking Bad*. These scales included measures for

brand recall (Morton & Friedman, 2002; Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003), brand attitude (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004), and purchase intent (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Each item was measured from one to five with 5 indicating highest level of agreement with the statement and 1 indicating the lowest level. Unaided brand recall was measured by asking participants to name brands they could remember from the episode. Responses were recoded using 1 to indicate mentions of Denny's in the response and 2 for not mentioning Denny's in the response. Negatively phrased statements for brand attitude and purchase intent were reverse coded so that mean scores could be calculated for both variables. The scores were combined to give a global mean score for each brand placement effect. The higher scores indicate positive brand placement effects and lower scores indicate negative brand placement effects as a result of viewing the partial episode.

*Table 2. Unaided Brand Recall*

<i>Unaided Brand Recall of Denny's</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	86	53.8
No	74	46.3

Table 3. Brand Placement Effects

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Description of items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Overall mean</i>
Brand Recall	I remember Denny's restaurant appeared in <i>Breaking Bad</i> .	4.36	4.21
	I remember the scenarios that Denny's appeared in.	4.23	
	I remember which characters were shown at Denny's.	4.07	
Brand Attitude	I think Denny's is a good restaurant.	3.02	2.69
	I think Denny's is a pleasant place.	3.18	
	I think Denny's is very attractive.	2.76	
	I am interested in Denny's as shown in this drama.	2.78	
	I like Denny's very much.	2.73	
	I want to know more information about Denny's after viewing <i>Breaking Bad</i> .	2.24	
	I will seek out more information about Denny's after viewing <i>Breaking Bad</i> .	2.11	
Purchase Intent	I want to spend money in Denny's after viewing this episode.	2.31	2.57
	I want to taste the food in Denny's after viewing this episode.	2.64	
	I will consider going to Denny's after viewing this episode.	2.65	
	I am willing to go to Denny's after viewing this episode.	2.96	
	I will recommend that my friends and relatives go to Denny's.	2.41	
	It is quite possible that I will go to Denny's after viewing this episode.	2.43	

### Measuring Narrative Transportation

Green and Brock's (2000) narrative transportation scale included 15 items to measure the participants' overall engagement with the partial episode that was viewed. The scores ranged from one to five, with 5 indicating highest agreement with the statement and 1 indicating lowest agreement. Negatively phrased statements were reverse coded so that mean scores for the scale could be calculated and combined to provide a global score for narrative transportation. Higher global scores indicated higher narrative transportation effects, while lower scores indicated lower transportation effects.

Table 4. Narrative Transportation

<i>Narrative Transportation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Overall mean</i>
While I was watching <i>Breaking Bad</i> , I could easily picture the events in it could take place in real life.	3.27	2.97
While I was watching <i>Breaking Bad</i> , activity going on in the room was on my mind.*	3.21	
I could picture myself in the scene of the events onscreen.	2.72	
I was mentally involved in the show while watching it.	3.75	
After finishing the show, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.*	2.86	
I want to watch more episodes of the show after watching this one.	3.58	
The episode affected me emotionally.	2.52	
I found myself thinking of what happens next in the series.	3.72	
I found my mind wandering while watching the episode.*	3.04	
The events in the show are relevant to my everyday life.	2.08	
The events in the show have changed my life.	1.92	
* reverse coded		

According to the responses to the narrative transportation items, the sample was then divided into two groups for comparison purposes, high narrative transportation and low narrative transportation using a median split method. Respondents with an overall mean score of 3.09 or higher were placed in a high narrative transportation category, while those with an overall mean score of 2.91 or lower were placed in the low narrative transportation category. Those that scored a 3.00 mean score were removed from the study. Of those remaining, 70 respondents experienced high narrative transportation and 75 experienced low narrative transportation (N = 145).

### **Character Liking**

Participants were asked to rate the likeability of the protagonist, Walter White, using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The scores ranged from one to five, with 5 indicating highest agreement with the statement, “I like Walter White”, and 1 indicating the lowest agreement with the statement. Of the sample, 55% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 5.6% strongly disagreed or disagreed and 39.4% neither agreed nor disagreed.

## Testing the Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 asked what the effect of brand placement is on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent for brands placed in television shows with an antihero protagonist. Participants reported high recall for the Denny's brand in the episode ( $M = 4.22$ ). Participants reported lower attitudes toward the Denny's brand after viewing the episode ( $M = 2.69$ ). Reported intent to purchase from Denny's was also low ( $M = 2.57$ ).

Tests of significance were run to measure demographic influences on brand placement effects. Gender appeared to have no effect on brand recall ( $t(158) = -0.90, p = .371$ ), brand attitude ( $t(158) = 0.70, p = .487$ ) or purchase intent ( $t(158) = 0.09, p = .925$ ). Additional tests revealed that GPA also had no significant relationship to the brand placement effects. A one-way analysis of variance showed that race seemed to have some influence, however. Asian/Pacific Islanders' attitudes toward the Denny's brand ( $F(5, 152) = 6.10, p = .001$ ) and intent to purchase from Denny's ( $F(5, 152) = 6.06, p = .001$ ), was significantly higher than that of other races. While levels of viewing of *Breaking Bad* reported by participants prior to the study did not have a significant impact on the brand recall and purchase intent, a difference was found between viewers and non-viewers. Those who reported never watching *Breaking Bad* prior to the study showed statistically significant higher attitudes toward the Denny's brand than those who had seen at least one episode before ( $t(158) = -2.31, p = .022$ ).

A significant correlation was found between brand attitude and purchase intent ( $r = .747, p = .001$ ). Thus, brand attitude and purchase intent are related for viewers of television shows with antihero protagonists, but brand recall was not shown to be related to brand attitude or purchase intent.

Table 5. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients for Brand Placement Effects

	Recall	Attitude	Purchase Intent
Recall	1	-.018	.017
Attitude	-.018	1	.747**
Purchase Intent	.017	.747**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater brand recall than those who experience low narrative transportation. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The *t*-test ( $t(143) = -0.43, p = .655$ ) revealed no statistically significant difference between viewers who experienced high narrative transportation ( $M = 4.20$ ) and viewers who experienced low narrative transportation ( $M = 4.27$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Table 6. *T*-test Comparing Narrative Transportation by Brand Recall

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta$	$\eta^2$
High	75	4.20	1.01	-0.45	.037	.001
Low	70	4.27	0.83			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Hypothesis 2 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have more positive attitudes toward brands placed in the show than those who experience low narrative transportation. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the means. The *t*-test ( $t(143) = 0.71, p = .061$ ) showed that viewers who experienced high narrative transportation ( $M =$

2.72) had more positive attitudes about the Denny's brand than viewers who experienced low narrative transportation ( $M = 2.65$ ), but the results are not quite statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported.

*Table 7. T-test Comparing Narrative Transportation by Brand Attitude*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta$	$\eta^2$
High	75	2.72	0.61	0.71	.059	.004
Low	70	2.65	0.50			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Hypothesis 3 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater purchase intent for brands placed in the show than those who experience low narrative transportation. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted ( $t(143) = 2.28, p = .024$ ) and found that viewers who experienced high narrative transportation ( $M = 2.70$ ) had a statistically significantly greater intent to purchase from Denny's restaurants than viewers who experienced low narrative transportation ( $M = 2.43$ ). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported. Though the hypothesis was supported, it should be noted that the scores for purchase intent were still not very high.

*Table 8. T-test Comparing Narrative Transportation by Purchase Intent*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta$	$\eta^2$
High	75	2.70	0.76	2.28*	.187	.035
Low	70	2.43	0.70			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Hypothesis 4 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero

protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will view the protagonist as more likeable than those who experience low narrative transportation. An independent samples *t*-test was used to test the relationship. Results ( $t(143) = 3.24, p = .001$ ) showed that viewers who experienced high narrative transportation ( $M = 3.79$ ) viewed Walter White as more likeable than viewers who experienced low narrative transportation ( $M = 3.39$ ). Thus, hypothesis 4 was supported.

*Table 9. T-test Comparing Narrative Transportation by Character Liking*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta$	$\eta^2$
High	75	3.79	0.78	3.24**	.262	.068
Low	70	3.39	0.71			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The present study used an experimental methodology to examine the role of narrative transportation on brand placement effects in a television show with an antihero protagonist. The study utilized a convenience sample of 160 college students in two classes at a southwestern university during March of 2016. The participants watched half an episode (approximately 25 minutes) of the television show *Breaking Bad* that featured a prominent audio and visual placement of the Denny's restaurant brand. Participants then completed an online questionnaire that included measures of brand recall, brand attitude, purchase intent, narrative transportation and liking of the protagonist, Walter White.

#### **Discussion**

The results of the study showed there was little overall variation between those who experienced high narrative transportation and those who experienced low narrative transportation. While overall recall of the Denny's brand was high, brand attitude and purchase intent were lower. For brand marketers, this could be an indication that placements in these types of programs do not significantly improve brand attitudes or purchase intent. As discussed in the literature, brand marketers hope these placements

will have a positive effect on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Even with the participants who experienced high narrative transportation, the overall mean scores for brand attitude ( $M = 2.72$ ) and purchase intent ( $M = 2.70$ ) were not positive (Scott & Craig-Lees, 2010).

Research Question 1 sought to determine what the effect of brand placement is on brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent for brands placed in television shows with an antihero protagonist. The findings revealed that participant's recall of the Denny's brand from the episode was high, but they reported lower attitudes toward the Denny's brand and even lower intent to purchase from Denny's. This is consistent with previous research that has shown that brand recall tends to have higher results, with brand attitudes being lower and purchase intent falling even lower than attitude (Gibson, Redker, & Zimmerman, 2014). The results also did not indicate that demographic variables such as gender or GPA had any influence on brand recall, brand attitude or purchase intent. Interestingly, Asians and Pacific Islanders had statistically significantly higher attitudes toward the Denny's brand and intent to purchase from Denny's than participants who identified as White or other races. Further study is needed to understand what factors created this difference.

For those who had seen *Breaking Bad* before, the number of episodes that they had watched did not have a significant impact on brand recall and purchase intent. However, participants that reported never watching *Breaking Bad* prior to the study had statistically significant higher attitudes toward the Denny's brand than those who had watched at least one episode. While the reasons for this difference are unclear based on the current data, it may suggest that repeated exposure to the Denny's brand and its

association with the characters in *Breaking Bad* had the opposite of the desired effect on brand attitude. As such, brand marketers should use caution when agreeing to be in these types of programs.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater brand recall than those who experience low narrative transportation. This hypothesis was not supported. The results revealed no difference in brand recall between high and low narrative transportation viewers. Since the placement was the most prominent variety for memory recall, featuring both visual and auditory mentioning of the brand by characters, high recall for the brand was expected and the overall results for brand recall were in line with previous research (Reijmersdal, 2009; Morton & Friedman, 2002; Karrh, McKenn, & Pardun, 2003). The experiment could be run again with either a visual-only or audio-only placement to see if they type of placement has an effect on brand recall in television shows with antihero protagonists (Cheng et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have more positive attitudes toward brands placed in the show than those who experience low narrative transportation. This hypothesis was not supported. The results for this hypothesis were approaching significance but did not meet the required threshold. Overall, reported attitudes toward the Denny's brand were low. While recent reports have indicated that Denny's sales are on the rise (Jennings, 2016), the findings of this study did not indicate over overall desire to eat at the restaurant chain after viewing the episode. In addition, few of the participants had reported recently eating at Denny's prior to participating in the study which could

have had an impact on the results. Since the closest Denny's is more than an hour away, it may not have top-of-mind awareness as other restaurants that are located in the community. Therefore, even though Denny's sales are on the rise, that brand awareness may not have translated to residents of this area (Jennings, 2016).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will have greater purchase intent for brands placed in the show than those who experience low narrative transportation. This hypothesis was supported. These findings were in line with research about the effects of previous research on narrative transportation (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). While the findings reveal that viewers who experienced high narrative transportation had greater intent to purchase from Denny's than those who experienced low transportation, overall these respondents still reported that they were unlikely to purchase from Denny's. These viewers were able to engage cognitive functions to justify the villainous actions of Walter White to support his actions and root for his success (Krakowiak & Tsay-Vogel, 2013).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that viewers of a television show with an antihero protagonist who experience high narrative transportation will view the protagonist as more likeable than those who experience low narrative transportation. This hypothesis was supported. High narrative transportation viewers reported a greater affinity for the character of Walter White than those viewers who experienced low narrative transportation. This result was in line with previous research on narrative transportation and antihero characters and was expected from the program as viewers are rooting for the character to be successful (Shafer & Raney, 2012). The highly transported viewers were

more engrossed in the show and able to tune out the outside world while enjoying the narrative (Redker, Gibson, & Zimmerman, 2013). This helps explain why those viewers held Walter White in higher regard than viewers who experienced low narrative transportation. It should be noted that overall opinions of Walter White were high, which probably goes to the quality writing and inventive narrative produced by the show's writers (Natharius, 2004).

The results of the study indicate there is no relationship between narrative transportation and brand recall or brand attitude. However, there may be a relationship between narrative transportation and purchase intent. This may be because the character of Walter White is strongly associated with the use of the Denny's brand in the episode and therefore those who became immersed in the narrative experienced that brand placement effect more strongly because of their connection with the character. Similarly, there exists a relationship between narrative transportation and liking of the antihero protagonist Walter White. This result is expected because those who become immersed in the story are more likely to hope for the success of the protagonist while those who do not experience this immersion or who do not like the story are unlikely to feel an affinity for a character who commits numerous immoral actions (Shafer & Raney, 2012). They may be unable to engage in the necessary mental activities to justify these actions, unlike those who are experiencing high narrative transportation. Further testing of other television shows with antihero protagonists may provide additional insights into the success of brand placement effects associated with these types of narratives.

### **Implications**

While the results of this study cannot be generalized to all antihero narratives, it

does provide some insight into how brand placements in these types of television programs can impact brand recall, brand attitudes and purchase intent. While brand recall remained high in this study, brand attitudes and purchase intent were low. Even with narrative transportation as a moderating variable on purchase intent, those who experience high transportation were still unlikely to eat at Denny's. The results of this study suggests that while narrative engagement may be important for placement effects to work, overall the viewers may still have negative attitudes or purchase intentions for the brands placed in television shows with antihero protagonists. Brand marketers should use caution when agreeing to have their brands in these types of shows to ensure that the brand is featured in a positive way and the program meets with their overall marketing goals.

### **Limitations**

When examining the results of the current study, several limitations should be considered. The population, prior brand attitude, episode treatment and experimental conditions are limitations of this study.

**Population.** The results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population because a convenience sample was used. Although the selected sample was similar in make up to that desired by brand marketers, the results of this study should be restricted to describing the population drawn from college students at a southwestern university.

**Prior Brand Attitude.** Few of the respondents reported frequenting a Denny's restaurant with any regularity, with nearly a quarter (N = 37) reporting never having eaten at Denny's and half (N = 83) having not eaten at a Denny's for more than a year.

The closest Denny's location to the campus is nearly 40 miles away, making it an inconvenient dining option for most college students. Perhaps lack of familiarity with the brand influenced brand attitude levels in the study.

**Episode Treatment.** Due to time constraints, only half of the episode was shown. In a real-life viewing situation, the entire episode would presumably be watched. This resulted in the conclusion of the episode not being shown. Additionally, a viewer would not have started watching a television show at the start of the fifth season. However, those who were most familiar with *Breaking Bad* and who reported having watched the program before did not vary significantly from those who were less frequent viewers.

**Experimental Conditions.** The conditions of the experiment were not standard for viewing but it was determined to be the best way to get results. Ideally, the participants would watch the episode as they normally would instead of in a classroom with classmates, and then report the results to get more authentic viewing results. Often finding results in a laboratory setting requires larger effect sizes than may actually exist in a real-life setting.

### **Future Research**

**Antiheroes.** Further research could focus on the interaction of antihero characters and brands. The current study did not feature any visual depictions of violence or showcase the brand in a negative light. This study could be replicated with a depiction of an antihero committing an act of violence. Previous research has shown that visual depictions of violence can have a negative impact on brand placement effects, but these were in reference to traditional villainous characters (Jeong, Bohil, & Biocca, 2011). It would be interesting to see if that remains true when the character committing the act of

violence is an antihero.

Research could also examine how prevalent brand placement is in antihero television shows. While the number of antihero characters has increased on television in recent years and the brand placement industry has skyrocket into a billion-dollar industry, there are few direct studies cataloging brand placements in these types of narratives. A content analysis could examine what brands are placed in antihero television shows and movies and also categorize how the brands are portrayed, the level of violence and criminal activity portrayed and document the interaction of the antihero characters and the brands (Berger, 2012; Jeong, Bohil, & Biocca, 2011). Research could also examine if certain types of brands like clothing, restaurants or music are more prevalent in these types of programs versus others.

**Brand placement effects.** Future research on brand placement effects could provide further insights into whether brand recall, brand attitude and purchase intent are positively or negatively impacted by antihero characters. The current study used narrative transportation as a moderating variable to hypothesize a difference, but future research could look purely at these brand placement effects to measure if there is a positive or negative change after watching a television show featuring an antihero character with prominent brand placement.

Future research could also focus on if repeated viewings of brand placements in television shows with antihero characters has a negative impact on brand attitude. The current study suggested there is an association between repeated exposure to *Breaking Bad* and lower attitudes toward the Denny's brand. Research on this phenomenon could provide further insights on whether antihero characters attribute to lower brand attitudes.

**Narrative transportation.** While this study revealed that there was a difference in purchase intent and character liking in viewers who experienced high narrative transportation and viewers who experience low narrative transportation, further study could examine how it impacts overall responses to the characters. While the respondents in this study had an overall positive view of Walter White, research could examine the same effect for other antihero characters in other television programs and movies. A comparison could also be done utilizing social media to compare responses between viewers who are highly transported and those who are highly engaged with the show to see if there are any differences in the responses.

In regards to television programs, a long-term study of people who watch a series featuring an antihero protagonist may also reveal more information about the relationships that viewers develop with these types of characters during the course of many years. It would also provide further insights into how these long-term relationships impact how viewers regard brand placements in these programs and give a bigger picture on the long-term effects of brand placements.

## **Conclusion**

Antihero characters have become increasingly popular as protagonists on television shows and in movies (Shafer & Raney, 2012). These types of complex characters provide a distinctive narrative that differs from the traditional hero and villain narratives that have crowded television networks. These characters are often presented as doing the wrong things, but for the right reason. Even though these characters are involved with violent action and criminal activities, viewers still want them to be successful.

With the increasing number of television networks and online services offering programming for viewers, competition for advertising dollars and funding for programs is becoming increasingly fierce (Bressoud, Lehu, & Russell, 2010). Technological advances have also enabled television viewers to fast forward or skip commercials which provide networks with revenue (Russell & Stern, 2006). Brand placements have become a popular way of ensuring that advertising messages are reaching viewers and of providing funding sources for lower rated television programs.

The advance in the number of television programs with antihero protagonists and the increasing need for alternative revenue streams have opened the door for brand placements to appear in these types of programs. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that these types of placements are popular among fans of the show (Baskin, 2013). As such, it is important for brand managers to know whether these types of placements are effective or if they can actually damage the brand's reputation.

This study specifically examined whether narrative engagement is a moderating variable on brand placement effects in the television show *Breaking Bad* – a popular series that features antihero characters. The results showed that there was some correlation between narrative transportation and intent to purchase from the Denny's brand. The research also showed that viewers who experienced high narrative transportation were more likely to like the character of Walter White than those who experienced low transportation. This study suggests that high quality programs that encourage narrative transportation among viewers should be considered when selecting brand placements in television shows with antihero protagonists.

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## APPENDICES

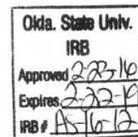
### Appendix A- Questionnaire

#### Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

Thank you for participating in this Oklahoma State University sponsored research on narrative engagement in antihero television shows. Your participation is completely voluntary and to the researchers, your responses are completely anonymous.

By clicking the button below, you are consenting to your voluntary participation in this survey.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Hugh Crethar, IRB Chair, 422 Willard Hall, Stillwater, OK 74074, 405-744-9442 or irb@okstate.edu. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Sean Kennedy at 918-594-8360 or sean.michael.kennedy@okstate.edu.



## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

1. What is your preferred method for watching television?

- Live via antenna/cable
- Next day streaming services like Hulu
- DVR
- Delayed streaming services like Netflix
- Do not watch television

2. Considering all methods mentioned above, on average how many hours of television do you watch per week?

- Less than 1
- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20+

3. Have you viewed one or more episodes of AMC's *Breaking Bad* prior to watching this episode?

- Yes
- No

4. How many episodes have you watched prior to this viewing?

- 0
- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 30+

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

Now, think back to the episode of Breaking Bad that you just watched and respond to the questions below.

5. What brands do you recall seeing in the episode?

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

Now, think back to the episode of *Breaking Bad* that you just watched and respond to the questions below.

6. I remember Denny's restaurant appeared in *Breaking Bad*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. I remember the scenarios that Denny's appeared in.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. I remember which characters were shown at the Denny's.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. When was the late time you ate at Denny's?

In the past week	In the past month	In the past six months	In the past year	More than a year ago	I have never eaten at Denny's
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. I think Denny's is a good restaurant.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. I think Denny's is a pleasant place.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. I think Denny's is very attractive.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I am interested in Denny's as shown in this drama.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. I like Denny's very much.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. I want to know more information about Denny's after viewing *Breaking Bad*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. I will seek out more information about Denny's after viewing *Breaking Bad*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

17. I want to spend money in Denny's after viewing this episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. I want to taste the food in Denny's after viewing this episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. I will consider going to Denny's after viewing this episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. I am willing to go to Denny's after viewing this episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. I will recommend that my friends and relatives go to Denny's.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. It is quite possible that I will go to Denny's after viewing this episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

23. I don't mind if brand name products appear in a television show.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. The presence of brand name products in a television show makes it more realistic.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. I prefer to see real brands in television shows rather than fake/fictitious ones.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. I will not watch a television show if I know that brands are placed prominently in the show for commercial purposes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. I buy brands I see television stars using in television shows.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

28. While I was watching *Breaking Bad*, I could easily picture the events in it could take place in real life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. While I was watching *Breaking Bad*, activity going on in the room was on my mind.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. I could picture myself in the scene of the events on screen.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. I was mentally involved in the show while watching it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. After finishing the show, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33. I want to watch more episodes of the show after watching this one.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

34. The episode affected me emotionally.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. I found myself thinking of what happens next in the series.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. I found my mind wandering while watching the episode.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. The events in the show are relevant to my everyday life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38. The events in the show have changed my life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

39. *Breaking Bad* is too violent for me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. Walter White does some positive things.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. Walter White does some negative things.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

42. Walter White does some immoral things.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. Walter White has some negative attributes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

44. I like Walter White.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. I dislike Walter White.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. I would like to be friends with someone like Walter White.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. I believe that Walter White is an ethical person.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Narrative Engagement in Antihero Television Shows

You are almost finished. Please provide some demographic information about yourself below.

48. What is your major?

49. Year in School

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

50. What is your race/ethnicity?

51. Age

52. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Do not wish to answer

53. GPA

54. Are you an international student?

- Yes
- No

55. My data may be used anonymously and in aggregate (not individual responses) for the purposes of academic research.

Yes

No

## Appendix B – IRB Review Approval

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2016  
IRB Application No: AS1612  
Proposal Title: Understanding the effects of brand placement in antihero television shows

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/22/2019**

Principal Investigator(s):

Sean Kennedy Jami Armstrong Fullerton  
OSU-Tulsa 700 N. Greenwo  
Stillwater, OK 74078 Tulsa, OK 74106

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

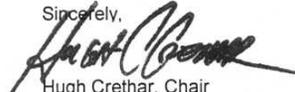
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

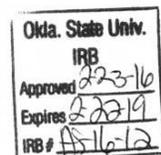
## Appendix C - Introduction Script

Good afternoon! My name is Sean Kennedy and I am a master's student in the Mass Communications graduate program here at OSU. As part of class today, you will take part in an academic research study. This is a study about narrative engagement in television shows with antihero characters. We will be watching approximately 2/3 of an episode of the television show *Breaking Bad* and then I will ask you to complete a survey on your smartphone or laptop computer to measure your opinions of the episode.

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved: 2-23-16
Expires: 2-22-19
IRB #: 12-12

## Appendix D – Debriefing Script

Thank you all for your participation today and for completing the survey. Anyone who opted not to have their information included will not be included in the results of the study. For those of you who did opt to participate, your information will remain anonymous. My research interest is in understanding how narrative engagement moderates brand placements effects in television shows with antihero characters. *Breaking Bad* is just one example of this genre of television program. Traditionally, brand placements have been popular in programs that utilize the traditional heroic stereotypes for the main characters. My interest is to see if those placement effects are still present in characters that the audience roots for, but who do illegal and immoral actions. Again, I think you for your participation. If anyone has any questions about the study, you can contact me at [sean.michael.kennedy@okstate.edu](mailto:sean.michael.kennedy@okstate.edu).



## VITA

Sean Michael Kennedy

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: *BREAKING BAD* AT DENNY'S: THE INFLUENCE OF NARRATIVE  
TRANSPORTATION ON BRAND PLACEMENT EFFECTS IN ANTIHERO  
TELEVISION SHOWS

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in mass communications  
at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in mass  
communications at South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota in  
2003.

Experience:

Oklahoma State University  
Communications Manager (2011-present)

Northeastern State University  
Staff Writer (2009-2011)  
Media Relations Coordinator (2006-2009)

Tahlequah Daily Press  
Weekend Editor (2003-2006)

SDSU Collegian  
Lifestyles Editor (2002-2003)

Professional Memberships:

Oklahoma College Public Relations Association  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine