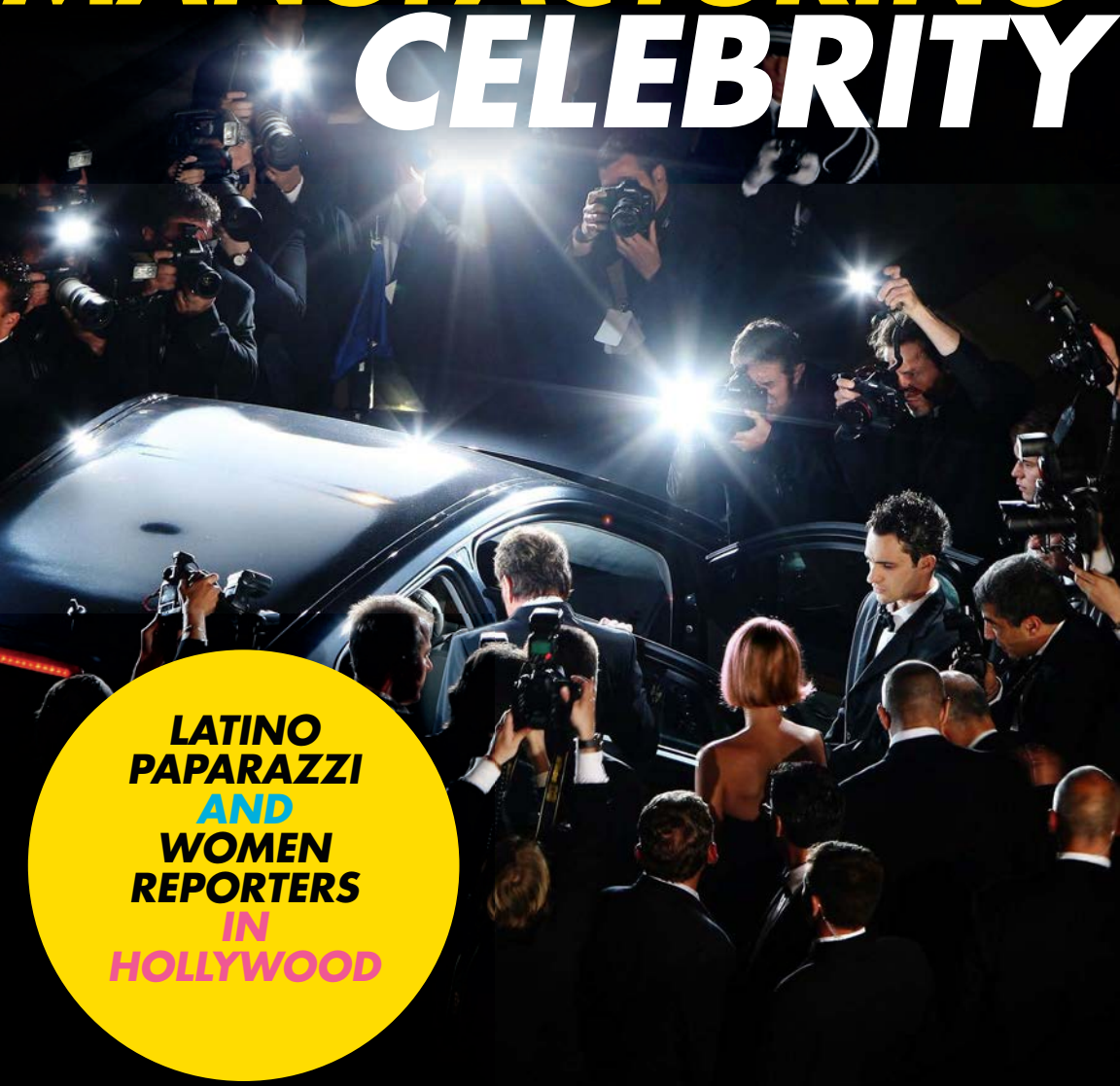
VANESSA DÍAZ

MANUFACTURING CELEBRITY



LATINO PAPARAZZI AND WOMEN REPORTERS IN HOLLYWOOD

Manufacturing Celebrity

Latino Paparazzi and Women Reporters in Hollywood

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

VANESSA DÍAZ

Manufacturing CELEBRITY

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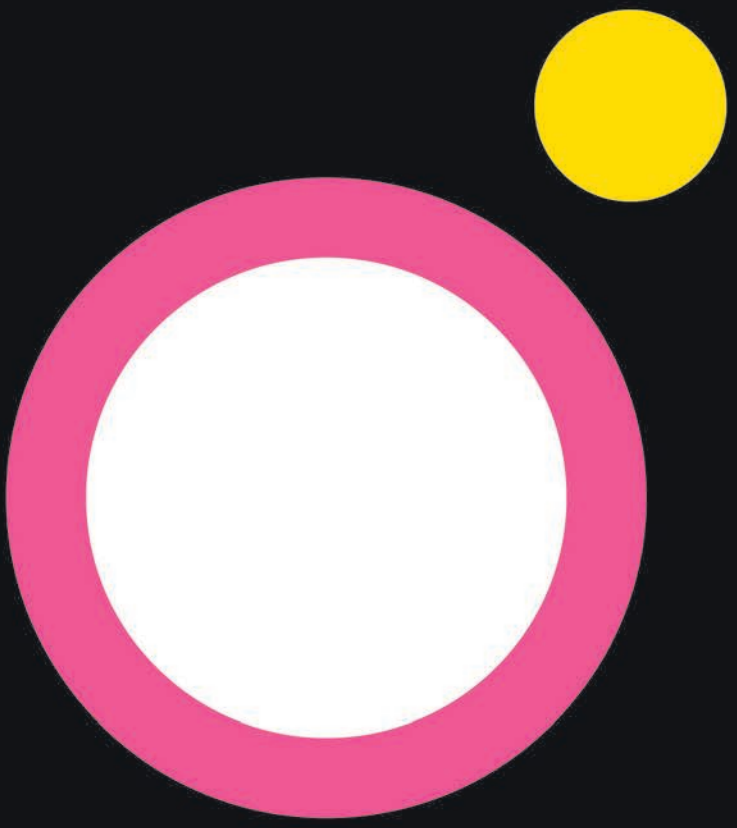

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I never imagined that my first book would focus on celebrity culture in the U.S. Coming to this book project was an organic process that evolved as a result of several personal and professional factors. From the time I started working for *People* magazine in college to the reporting I did for them during my time as a graduate student, I constantly reflected on the racial and cultural politics of celebrity culture, and entertainment more broadly. As a child growing up in Southern California, the allure of Hollywood was omnipresent. Thus this book is a result of both highly concentrated times of research and lifelong reflections.

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INTRODUCTION

The Precarious Work of Celebrity Media Production

I met Chris Guerra in October 2012. The paparazzi photographer Galo Ramirez introduced me to Chris, a young, aspiring paparazzo who had only recently begun working on a freelance basis for the same agency as Galo. I photographed one of their training sessions as they waited outside Heidi Klum's Pacific Palisades mansion. My photos of Chris's training were shown during his memorial service three months later (see fig. I.1).

Chris was struck by multiple cars and killed on New Year's Day in 2013. Reports indicate he was attempting to comply with a California Highway Patrol officer's orders to return to his car after trying to photograph Justin Bieber's Ferrari in Los Angeles. He was twenty-nine years old. According to witness testimony and dashcam transcriptions, a police officer had stopped Bieber's Ferrari for speeding and was beginning to question the car's occupants about the scent of marijuana in the car. When one of the occupants told the officer that Chris was videotaping the stop, the officer released them to focus his attention on Chris instead.[1]

"What the hell are you doing?" the officer was recorded saying. He then uttered several undecipherable words, ending with "paparazzi." When Chris explained that he was a photographer and a member of the press, the officer asked, "Do you have any credentials other than you just standing there?"

1.1 Photo of Chris Guerra training as a paparazzo near Heidi Klum's home. October 2012. Photo by the author.

As the officer's tone became more aggressive, Chris responded, "Okay, all right! Relax!" The officer told Chris that paparazzi should not hassle people and demanded that Chris return to his car, which was parked across four lanes of traffic with no crosswalk nearby. Chris's last words were, "All right, brother." He was then hit by two cars and killed.

The driver of the first car, an SUV, was stopped, questioned, and sent on her way with no charges. Per the police report, the officer told the driver that "the accident was not her fault." The second driver never stopped, which constitutes a felony hit-and-run, but no investigation followed.[2] Although there is no evidence that Chris was killed instantly, the officer, who was trained in CPR, made no attempt to investigate whether he was still alive. The dashcam later recorded the officer saying to his partner, "Dude, I was just like, I just told him he couldn't stand there. Fucking idiot, man."

The singer Miley Cyrus echoed this sentiment in a Twitter thread reacting to the incident: "Hope this paparazzi/JB accident brings on some changes in '13. Paparazzi are dangerous! . . . It is unfair for anyone to put this on to Justin's conscious [*sic*] as well! This was bound to happen! Your mom teaches u when your [*sic*] a child not to play in the street! The chaos that comes with the paparazzi acting like fools makes it impossible for anyone to make safe choices."[3] These tweets were retweeted almost 100,000 times, and fans responded with such comments as "Your hate for the paparazzi is one of my favorite things about you."[4] Some comments from viewers of online video reports of Chris's death were even more vitriolic: "It's sad when people die. Paparazzi, not so much"; "Paparazzi don't count as human beings, so it's ok to laugh when one gets flattened"; "Poor Justin. I feel so bad for him. Fuck you, paparazzi"; and "More paparazzi need to die. If I see one on the road, I will swerve to hit the motherfucker."[5]

As part of her Twitter tirade against Chris, Cyrus tweeted at the *E! News* correspondent Ken Baker, "@kenbakernow you can have a big part in making that change if the photos stop being made entertainment. There's plenty of news without paps [paparazzi]!"[6] Baker, who had previously worked for *People* magazine and *Us Weekly*, agreed with Cyrus and condemned paparazzi work, despite the fact that his own work depends on it: "@MileyCyrus honestly, I can't believe this hasn't happened before. So many super sketchy street ambushes, all for stupid pics."[7]

Instead of being acknowledged as an integral part of the celebrity news machine, the work of paparazzi is popularly derided and framed as disposable.

That today's Hollywood paparazzi are predominantly Latino men, including U.S.-born Latinos and Latin American (im)migrants, is central to the nature of the public discourses around paparazzi. News articles refer to them as "untrained," "corner-cutting," "foreigners working on . . . questionable visas," while online reader comments call them "bottom feeders" and "illegals" who should "be deported."[8] The field has become dominated by Latinos because formal barriers of entry do not exist for paparazzi work. This is their way into the Hollywood system, outside the hierarchies and elite spaces inhabited by others in the industry, such as celebrity reporters. The paparazzi's informal labor and racially minoritized status position them as public scapegoats for what is wrong with celebrity media.

Celebrity reporters, on the other hand, contribute similarly to celebrity media production but are not scapegoated in the same way. This is due at least in part to such factors as race, gender, class, education, and perceived professionalism. Celebrity reporters are predominantly college-educated women, many from middle- to upper-middle-class backgrounds, and the vast majority are white, while the paparazzi were predominantly working-class men of color without a college education. However, celebrity reporters face different perils, as the story of the former *People* magazine reporter Natasha Stoynoff reflects.[9]

Before working as a stringer—a regular freelancer—for the magazine, I was hired as an intern at *People* in the fall of 2004. My cubicle was directly outside of Natasha's office. At the time, many of her reporting assignments were focused on Donald Trump, whose television show was soaring in the ratings (see fig. I.2). Indeed, the entire magazine was wrapped up in the success of *The Apprentice* and heavily promoted Trump. Talk of *The Apprentice* was so prominent during that time that it inspired a group of us at the office to dress up as Trump and his apprentices for Halloween. Only weeks later Natasha was conducting interviews at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate for a story about the happy married life of the reality star and his third wife, Melania, who was pregnant at the time. When they were alone during the interview Trump attacked Natasha, forced his tongue into her mouth, and told her they would have an affair.[10] Despite the assault, the story Natasha was working on was published; it was titled "Happy Anniversary" and celebrated the couple's wedding anniversary and Melania's pregnancy.[11]

In 2011, during a taped interview for my research, Natasha confided in me about the attack since it was relevant to my focus on gender in the work of celebrity media producers. She said that she was writing a story about a "very famous person" that "was all about how he was so happy with his new wife.

1.2 Natasha Stoynoff (*second from left*) with Donald and Melania Trump in 2005. Despite Donald Trump's denying Stoynoff's accusations or even knowing her, photographer Troy Word took a photo of a smiling Stoynoff and Trump at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate on the day Stoynoff was assaulted. Photo by Troy Word.

Meanwhile she was pregnant and he's making a pass at me. Literally pushing me against the wall sticking his tongue down my throat." She paused and whispered, "Donald Trump." I was still freelancing for *People* and thus a colleague as well as a researcher, and a friend. But even in a private setting with someone she trusted, she hesitated to say his name out loud, years before he was a presidential candidate. Natasha continued, "He called me up after the article ran and said, 'I just want to tell you what a great article you did. It was fabulous. I love it.'" At the time of the attack she told a superior, who asked if she wanted to press charges, but she decided against it. "I just thought, this guy felt so big." She explained that she felt dishonest about the story. "But I didn't know my power then. . . . I was in shock for those few moments that I couldn't react normally as I should have. . . . Donald Trump doesn't give a shit about what anyone thinks or feels. And then I talked to one of my best friends and she said, 'Oh, he made a pass at me once too. It's just common for him.'"

For fear of losing her job, she did not publicly tell the truth about Trump

for years. She even allowed her story about Trump's very happy home life as a doting husband to be published. Stories like Natasha's are not unique. Women in the entertainment industry, in all kinds of positions, are frequently used strategically and mistreated for the benefit of the companies they work for or the pleasure of the men they are interacting with professionally. Celebrity reporters spend most of their careers at the mercy of celebrities, who are able to exercise a great deal of power over them and the media outlets they represent. To maintain her dignity, the reporter of course likes to think of herself as powerful, possessing the agency to shape a story and change the world. But as Natasha's story reveals, the power of the celebrity reporter can be quite limited. Faced with the possibility of disrupting the narrative about Trump in a very real way, she opted for the status quo, the path of least resistance—a testament to her vulnerability rather than her weakness.

Because Natasha had revealed to me years earlier that Trump had assaulted her, I was not surprised when the infamous *Access Hollywood* video was released during the 2016 presidential campaign, in which Trump said that as a "star" "you can do anything" to women.[12] The fact that the tape had only a limited impact on public opinion made me fearful about what the outcome might be if Natasha publicly shared her story, but I still hoped that she would. On October 12, 2016, *People* published the first report in which Natasha publicly told the story of her assault by Trump.[13] I reached out to her to remind her that she had described the assault to me in a recorded interview and named Trump as her assailant; my recordings became a potential legal asset to her as she faced criticism and threats of a lawsuit from Trump. My research on celebrity media had become wholly intertwined in the U.S. presidential race.

Maybe this should not have been entirely surprising. The practices of celebrity reporting, and celebrity media production more broadly, are now important to U.S. politics and world events. While there were always blurred lines between entertainment, celebrity, and politics, the distinction between entertainment and news media is not an empirical reality, but rather a function of a public imaginary—that there *should* be a difference between so-called hard news and entertainment news. The dynamics I talk about in this book are increasingly relevant to media in general, international politics, and to the state of American culture more broadly.

Chris's and Natasha's stories demonstrate why the topic of this book matters. Their stories are interconnected and divergent in significant ways, which is why this book focuses on both the reporters and the photographers whose

work populates the pages of celebrity magazines. A central component of this book is understanding how the politics of visibility and invisibility affect these media producers and are critical to the maintenance of the celebrity system.

A narrative of invisibility and precarity connects Chris's and Natasha's stories. Natasha felt invisible and unimportant next to Trump, who was rich, powerful, and influential at her place of work and in the country. She had established her career in part by interviewing him. She might have the opportunity to meet and interview high-profile individuals, but she herself is not one of them. Her work is in the service of the celebrities and of the corporation that paid her to do this work. As a freelance celebrity photographer working outside of the confines of corporatized spaces and contexts, Chris's labor was even more precarious. Paparazzi work has historically depended on remaining as invisible as possible so as to obtain truly candid shots of celebrities. However, instances like the policing that led to Chris's death are a result of hypervisibility. Both Chris and Natasha were marked subjects, deployable and disposable in the service of prevailing formations of power. In the context of her assault, even while on the job Natasha's body existed for Trump to use, demonstrating the authority and power his celebrity status afforded him. In the context of Chris's death, even while on the job his body existed to be policed, demonstrating the forms of authority and power that he was unable to challenge. Neither Trump nor the police officer had to confront the consequences of his actions. In these two cases, Natasha and Chris shared a complicated relationship with (in)visibility. They were both positioned as highly visible, and yet, in terms of their own agency and ability to act, they were invisible. Thus even if someone is made visible, it is often in ways that don't honor, respond to, or disrupt prevailing formations of power. The experiences of Chris and Natasha very clearly, and very deeply, underscore the precarious nature of their labor in a glamorized field, in which visibility is always strategically produced.

Events following Chris's death and the assault of Natasha demonstrate the care and agency with which these two different precarious laborers are understood and treated in their socioprofessional contexts. Recently the entertainment industry has made institutional space for victims of sexual assault, but the physical assault of paparazzi largely continues without punishment. The industry and society in general still do not see the attacking of paparazzi as a social problem. This discrepancy raises questions around visibility, legality, gender, sexuality, race, privilege, and education that I explore in this book.

Race, Gender, and Power in the Manufacturing of Celebrity

On the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street, in the heart of Hollywood, crowds of fans pressed as close as possible to the red carpet for the 2011 VH1 Do Something Awards. As I waited for the celebrities to appear for interviews, a process that had become routine after several years of reporting for *People* magazine, I overheard the conversations of the young fans. "Hillary Duff, I used to want to be her," one teenage girl told her friend. "She's so nice and so real. I feel bad for her sister, though. It's like Ashlee [Simpson] trying to compete with Jess[ica Simpson]. Oh, here comes [David] Beckham! I have fantasies about him all the time." Such everyday conversations demonstrate the deeply personal connections and imaginary social relationships that people form with celebrities in the United States.[14] For this girl and many Americans, celebrities are the people we emulate, fantasize about, and feel we know intimately enough to be on a first-name basis.

How is it that we often know more about celebrities than we do about many friends and neighbors we see in person every day? Images and talk of celebrity have come to dominate U.S. culture. In beauty salons and classrooms, at stores and dinner parties, people discuss celebrity gossip, such as the latest celebrity breakup or current Kardashian family drama, rather than discussing their own lives. While celebrity, stardom, and fame have been a part of global cultures for centuries, celebrity news has increasingly come to dominate media coverage and personal conversations during our lifetime.[15] Reality television, the internet, and social media make celebrities ever more accessible, while at the same time convincing people more than ever before that they too have a chance to become a celebrity. "We give people lip service that you have to be talented, but there's a generation of people that see Snooki [of MTV's reality show *Jersey Shore*] and think, 'It happened for her, it can happen for me,'" Ron, a freelance reporter who has worked for *Us Weekly* and *People*, told me. Research corroborates this observation. A 2005 Harvard survey revealed that 31 percent of U.S. teenagers think they will become famous.[16] A 2012 UCLA study on preteen values found that fame was the most important value to participants.[17] To understand why this obsession with and desire for fame has permeated U.S. culture requires understanding how celebrity and fame are portrayed in the media.

My research shows how the social relations of celebrity media producers affect how they compose images and shape stories and, ultimately, how

Americans relate to celebrities and understand fame. In doing so, it builds on the pioneering work of the anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker in postwar Hollywood, which examined how the lives of moviemakers affected film production. Since Powdermaker's *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* was published in 1950, Hollywood industries have multiplied, and their media have become more engrained in everyday life in the U.S., entering homes in an array of new forms.

To understand celebrity media production, it is vital to understand the racial, ethnic, and class politics involved in its labor. At the first celebrity event I attended, I introduced myself to an African American celebrity by explaining that I worked for *People* magazine. "I call that *White People* magazine," he joked. The relationship between the race and ethnicity of the reporters, interviewees, and consumers is layered. Reporters of color, like myself, are aware that they are mostly producing a magazine of white popular culture and are most likely to do the few interviews with celebrities of color whom the magazines deem white-consumer friendly. My own conversations with paparazzi photographers suggest that as many as 50 percent of the Los Angeles–based paparazzi are undocumented and that they are the backbone of an extensive informal economy of celebrity photographs. The racialization of paparazzi in Los Angeles and their exclusion from the formal production process of the magazines became a critical place of reflection as I examine the work of and relationships between the predominantly white female celebrity reporters and the predominantly Latino (both U.S.- and Latin American–born) male paparazzi. Through a focus on gender dynamics in celebrity media production, I demonstrate how the predominantly female reporters and male photographers together promote and amplify the pressure for women to conform to certain physical expectations, while validating the male gaze on women in American culture.

This study of the manufacturing of celebrity culture is, at its core, a study of labor, race, gender, and the neoliberal global political economy. Understanding the contemporary neoliberal moment requires taking seriously the "accounts of Western media production that finely delineate the complicated power relations of organizational hierarchies" therein.[18] These are not simply studies of popular culture or celebrity but rather studies of labor, economies, race, gender, and the hierarchies that define the global social order. The industries that make up Hollywood—which I conceptualize as the Hollywood-industrial complex—exist and thrive because of these hierarchies, like most other financially profitable economic institutions. In order to understand the

power structures within these industries, we must understand who is behind the production of media and why it matters. Furthermore, it doesn't *just* matter who is behind the camera or who is involved in production; the circumstances of the labor performed by those producers matter as well. In the case of the paparazzi, the precarity and disenfranchisement of their labor affects the extent to which they are able to receive equal citizenship in the celebrity media industry.

While the politics of inclusion in both media production processes and media products themselves is important, it has been regularly addressed in scholarship.[19] This book points to a deeper and more nuanced story. Throughout *Manufacturing Celebrity*, I emphasize that the statistics of diversity in media production, and in corporate and institutional realms more broadly, are not the only concern. Even where so-called diversity is present, we must contend with the politics of labor in that production, including the ways the labor has been structured based on race, class, and gender, and the dynamic interplay between various media laborers and the content of the work they produce. As the comedian Chris Rock argued in a blistering essay about race in Hollywood, Latinxs are institutionally excluded from Hollywood industries despite being the dominant demographic of the region.[20] The preponderance of Latinx paparazzi allows celebrity media to capitalize on the vulnerability of Los Angeles's Latinx laborers. The inclusion of Latinxs as paparazzi was a side effect of an initial hiring practice at one particular photo agency (X17), resulting in a pattern that quickly snowballed because of savvy immigrant labor networks and Latinx understanding that this was their way into the industry. Paparazzi should not be thought of as bringing diversity to the industry. Framing the paparazzi as diverse reflects the neoliberal approach to diversity, in which diversity is defined as nonwhite. But the paparazzi community is actually not diverse; it is overwhelmingly Latinx. Allowing Latinx labor into one informal, delegitimized, and denigrated sphere within the industry is an example of tokenism and reflects the marginalization of these laborers.

As other ethnographers of culture industries have pointed out, the invisible laborers working behind the scenes wield tremendous influence over the cultural products we are all presented with as objects for consumption.[21] Much like the film and TV production communities that the media scholar John T. Caldwell describes in his book *Production Culture*, the communities of celebrity-focused media producers that I elaborate on in this book are as important to understanding celebrity culture, and Hollywood industries more broadly, as the content of the media they produce.[22] While it is fully possible

to analyze media content without any understanding of the media producers themselves, as many scholars and journalists have done, these studies lack engagement with the stories, histories, feelings, opinions, and labor politics that directly affect the content.

My analysis of the politics and division of labor involved in the production of celebrity-focused media in the United States is based on ethnographic fieldwork—primarily in Los Angeles, and secondarily in New York—during which I conducted ethnographic interviews, archival research, and participant-observation through institutional, informal, and virtual ethnography. I explore the work and lives of the celebrity journalists, paparazzi, and red carpet photographers who create the content for the celebrity weekly magazines *People*, *Us Weekly*, *OK!*, *In Touch*, *Star*, and *Life and Style*. I conducted preliminary research during the summers of 2008 and 2009, full-time research from 2010 through 2012, and part-time research from 2013 to 2017. My previous experience as an intern and reporter for *People* beginning in 2004 also informs this work.

While issues of media consumption have been more thoroughly addressed in anthropology and related fields, media production remains underresearched, in large part because of issues of access to the media producers. During the course of my research, I continued my work on the red carpet for *People* as part of my participatory ethnographic methodology; this facilitated my extended access to the media producers I worked with on my project. Because I already had a wide network in what those who work in entertainment call simply "the industry," using the snowball effect to get references from reporters for other reporters and photographers was highly effective. In the industry, trust does not come easily, and my "in" was the reason I could do the work I set out to do. Having an online presence during fieldwork was also critical for the project's success; the reporters I worked with used social media (especially Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) to keep in touch. Reporters and photographers alike often post images to demonstrate their "in" on red carpets. Failing to do so would raise questions among others in the industry: Did you get fired? Did you stop getting freelance work? I often started online conversations with potential interviewees, then met with them informally before doing a formal interview. "Liking" fellow reporters' posts was a necessary exercise for my research, as it facilitated such connections.

Sherry Ortner's insights about the meaning of "community" in the entertainment industry reflect my experiences. Referring to actors, directors, and movie and TV crews, she notes that while "Hollywood" is spatially discontinuous, there is a good deal of community.[23] As someone who has worked

within the industry, I can attest that the feeling of community within it is undeniable; on red carpets most people, from publicists to reporters and photographers, know each other. Whenever I attended events as part of my participant-observation, I was surrounded by people I knew; former editors, former colleagues from *People*, and public relations agents I worked with regularly were all there. This distinct community of the people who write and place celebrity-focused stories in the press is tight-knit to the point of being incestuous. Connections tighten as people move from job to job; one person I worked with throughout my research had written for *Star*, been an editor for *People*, and was then working in public relations. To separate *People* from *Star* from *Us Weekly* is to forget that the people who shape those publications all intermingle and switch positions within them during the course of their careers.

The media professionals I interviewed during my Los Angeles–based fieldwork are journalists who work or have worked for one or more of the celebrity weekly magazines and photographers who regularly place photos in those magazines; they represent both the dominant demographics and the minorities within their industry. Taking full advantage of my position as a member of the same group of media producers that I research, I approach my research auto-ethnographically by making my own experiences a critical element of my ethnographic data.[24] Reflexivity is called for in the interest of disclosure, openness, and increased objectivity and has historically given voice to underrepresented peoples.[25] Given the space that has emerged for self-reflexive ethnography across disciplines, my personal experience reporting for *People* provides an important angle to my perspective on media production.

Although magazine editors are also relevant to the manufacturing of celebrities, the information gatherers—the photographers and reporters—are at the forefront of my research, as they craft content for the magazines.[26] While underscoring the precarity of their labor, my research simultaneously suggests that they maintain a significant amount of agency that allows them to shape U.S. popular culture and discourse on celebrity through their work. While older news ethnographies proposed that journalists play a "relatively unconscious role" in a standardized process of news production, my research shows that, rather than simply doing as others request, celebrity reporters actively shape trends in popular culture.[27] Bourdieu notes that journalists' job is to impose a "legitimate vision of the social world" on their audiences, yet "very few case studies have sought to empirically attend in detail to how journalists' preconceived story ideas (or 'frames') result in the deliberate pursuit of certain voices and commentary."[28] As celebrity news increasingly seeps into all forms

of news media in the United States, it is critical to understand the "visions" celebrity reporters and photographers impose on U.S. culture, as well as the motives behind these visions.

Hollywood and the Hollywood-Industrial Complex

Hollywood is an anomaly. Perhaps no other place in the world evokes the same number of meanings, connotations, and global symbolic capital. While it was originally the name given to a small tract of land in Southern California, Hollywood has come to reference U.S.-based film, television, and an array of entertainment-focused industries.[29] Hollywood became a brand early in its history, as it was (and remains) a central part of the development and economy of the Los Angeles area. Hollywood's reach was quickly national and then transnational, as Powdermaker's research demonstrated.[30] Powdermaker studied how Hollywood films affected leisure activities in the U.S. rural South, how the films themselves were produced in Hollywood, and how the residents of a mining town in present-day Zambia watched and interpreted Hollywood film and local Hollywood-influenced film movements.[31] Over the course of more than two decades, she demonstrated the broad cultural, technological, economic, local, and global implications of Hollywood and its most prized product: the moving picture. Her work "blazed a pioneering path in media anthropology that subsequently lay untrodden, forgotten."[32] The everyday ordinariness of American interaction with Hollywood media makes this area critical for anthropology: What does contemporary Hollywood look like, and how does its media shape everyday life? Only recently have anthropologists "rediscovered" the need to study Hollywood from the inside as a critical center of cultural production.[33]

To much of the world, Los Angeles *is* Hollywood, and Hollywood *is* mass entertainment media and celebrities. Of course, Hollywood and Los Angeles are much more complex than the films that represent them. Despite its diverse, multiethnic, and multilingual history, by the mid-twentieth century, in part because of the Hollywood media industry, Los Angeles became the most "WASPish" major city in the United States.[34] Now more polyethnic than New York, Los Angeles shifts landscapes and demographics as quickly and frequently as the Hollywood film sets that have come to epitomize it.[35]

In 1887 a midwestern realtor named Harvey Wilcox registered the 120-acre subdivision of Hollywood in Los Angeles's Cahuenga Valley, which began as

a rural community of farmers.[36] At that time, "pioneers on the far side of the continent and in Europe were inventing the movies, drawing on a century of experiments, and the latest advances in optics and photography."[37] Hollywood farmers began renting spaces to aspiring filmmakers; Cecil B. DeMille's first picture was filmed in a rented horse barn.[38] In 1903 Hollywood's population was 1,000, and it already had its first sightseeing bus.[39] By 1915 Hollywood movies were hugely profitable. The industry payroll was $20 million, and Charlie Chaplin's salary went from $150 a week in 1914 to $670,000 a year in 1916. Fan magazines, precursors to the ones I focus on in this book, helped fuel the industry.[40] The studio industry peaked in the 1940s, riding a wave that began in 1939 with epic films like *The Wizard of Oz*. But after World War II Hollywood looked different. "Strikes, trade disputes, anti-trust action, a flight of the audience to suburbia, [communist] witchhunts and television" hurt the motion picture industry.[41] In the late 1950s Hollywood was in a major decline and filmmakers began moving and working abroad. "In an ironic reversal of Hollywood's role as a haven for the oppressed, American writers and directors emigrate[d] to Europe and Mexico as refugees from McCarthyism."[42] Low-budget films like *The Graduate* (1967) and *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) that featured young "budding stars" triggered a revitalization, shifting the focus to a more youthful-looking Hollywood and audience, a focus that persists today.[43]

As this brief overview demonstrates, Hollywood has a conservative history. Even before World War II, Hollywood films were subjected to government-sanctioned "moral" guidelines known as the Motion Picture Production Code, which included racist and sexist regulations. Hollywood productions have always "sold" the American way of life.[44] This means that films tend to establish white, suburban, capitalistic, heteronormative family life as the norm. Hollywood also tends to advance stereotypes and social norms about race, culture, gender, sexuality, beauty, and body image.[45] Most people do not believe that Hollywood representations deeply affect them, but in fact research shows they do affect opinions, values, and self-image.[46] The Hollywood-industrial complex creates media with the very *intent* of affecting imagined audiences.

Several scholars and journalists have invoked the term *Hollywood-industrial complex*. But what precisely is referenced by the term has varied and has never been theoretically framed. The term has been used to reference Hollywood's ties to U.S. political and military interests, and it has been used more generally to refer to Hollywood's conglomeration of businesses.[47] In her work on fame and celebrity culture, the journalist Maureen Orth used the term "celebrity-industrial complex," but this is not inclusive of the broader

system that builds and sustains Hollywood.[48] Because this book focuses on the work that builds and maintains the entity I call the Hollywood-industrial complex, I provide my own clarifying framework for this term.

I use *Hollywood-industrial complex* as a way to reference the political economy made up of the totality of Hollywood's many subindustries and its laborers. This encompasses film, television, music, radio, agents, managers, celebrities, and media producers at all levels in the labor hierarchy. It also encompasses celebrity-focused media of all kinds, including reporters and photographers and those who employ them. In President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1961 farewell speech, he warned of the "military-industrial complex"—the conglomeration of military and defense industries that promotes war to sustain itself, which Eisenhower was concerned would wield tremendous influence on U.S. government and society.[49] The Hollywood-industrial complex exists to sustain itself in a parallel fashion, with the celebrity system as its driving force. Celebrity personas are constantly created and promoted in order to stimulate consumption of Hollywood media, and vice versa. In his work on stardom, the philosopher Daniel Herwitz explains, "The celebrity system runs on itself; the celebrity is valued in virtue of mere participation in the system."[50] The military-industrial complex has such a grip on American society that members of the military are given automatic admiration and respect merely for participating in the military system. Similarly, as illuminated by Herwitz's quote, celebrities are admired and celebrated simply for being celebrities—for being pronounced worthy of celebration by the very system that manufactures them. The media producers I focus on are at the heart of this manufacturing of the celebrity system.

That Hollywood's political economic structure mimics that of such neoliberal forces as the military-industrial complex is no surprise, given the neoliberal agenda of Hollywood industries that I have outlined. Although there have always been films that critiqued the social order, Hollywood has been the purveyor of racist and xenophobic stereotypes that have served U.S. political interests domestically and abroad. Hollywood's relationship to the state may have evolved over the past several decades, but it still serves to profit from promotion of U.S. military and political interests, such as in representations of the War on Terror in film and television in the wake of 9/11.[51] Hollywood is and has always been an extension of the system, despite accusations of its liberalism (and its self-promotion as such). As an example, following the initial *People* story on Natasha's assault by Trump, the magazine continued to run follow-up stories going into further detail, including Natasha's response to

Trump's denial of the accusations and testimony from others corroborating her story.[52] But the day after Trump's election victory, *People*'s tone dramatically shifted. The magazine's website featured a story entitled "My Front-Row Seat to History: PEOPLE Senior Editor Charlotte Triggs Watches Trump Win the Presidency," featuring a photo of the president-elect with his arm around the editor.[53] More puff pieces quickly followed, including "27 Photos of Ivanka Trump and Her Family That Are Way Too Cute," "Melania Trump's First Lady Style: See Her Best Moments on the Campaign Trail," and a celebratory election story with the title "He's Hired!"[54]

People's quick switch from supporting Natasha as she spoke out against Trump to publishing laudatory postelection coverage of Trump exemplifies the nature of the Hollywood-industrial complex and its relationship to the state. The fact that Trump was a celebrity who did not hold any political office or military position prior to achieving the presidency at once highlights and concretizes Hollywood's link to the state, while also demonstrating that the power of celebrity and Hollywood stardom has never held more social, cultural, political, and economic power than it does now. The original purveyors of "fake news"—celebrity reporters and the media they produced that were colloquially called "rags"—built a system in which Trump could flourish. He now employs against "hard news" the rhetoric that celebrities have always wielded against "entertainment news" to derive empathy by accusing celebrity reporting of being false and performing aggrievement by the celebrity media. Trump treats CNN no differently than TMZ.

The Celebrity Weekly Magazine

> Let's not just let the tabloid be the scapegoat for all of us who have to take ultimate responsibility about what experiences we want to consume. | **ADRIAN GRENIER** | ACTOR, AT THE GETTY CENTER EVENT "ARE WE ALL PAPARAZZI NOW?," 2012

This book focuses on the content creators for U.S. celebrity weekly magazines, a genre that began with the launch of *People* in 1974. Before *People*, celebrity reporting was reserved for newspaper columns, trade publications, and less frequently published magazines. *People* did not always have the same glossy, picture-book look that it has today. In the 1970s the only color was on the cover and in the ads, which were for Virginia Slims, Beefeater Gin, and other

alcohol and cigarette brands. Full-color printing of *People* began in the mid-1990s. The magazine used to include some news and human interest stories, but now there is a heavier focus on celebrity. As a *People* reporter told me, the magazine has a "huge backlog" of human interest stories because it devotes so little space to them. The look of *People* has also changed a great deal. The number of pages in "Star Tracks," the celebrity photo section, has increased over the years (from as few as two pages in 1978 to as many as seven pages in recent years), and its placement has shifted from the middle to the first section of the magazine. The cover now often has several photos instead of just one. Yet in spite of the greater number of celebrities mentioned or pictured, as a former *People* reporter named Phil told me, "*People* used to be a venue for growing stars, but now you have to be established to even get into the magazine. It's not a place or a way for people to 'break through' the way it used to be."

People had no direct competition in the United States until 2000, when *Us Magazine*, which had existed since 1977 as a more trade-focused bimonthly and then monthly publication, relaunched as a weekly.[55] Then, beginning in 2002, a wave of new magazines entered the market. Between 2002 and 2005 *In Touch* and *Life and Style* began publication, the tabloid newspaper *Star* was relaunched as a weekly magazine, and the British magazine *OK!* created a U.S. version. While the branding and reputation of these magazines vary somewhat, they all share a common focus on celebrity content and a glossy, image-heavy aesthetic.

The timeline of the weekly celebrity magazines reflects historical moments in which media producers saw a void and a cultural moment in time on which they might capitalize. A former Time Inc. employee provided me a never-before-published 1973 prospectus, which outlines the vision for the company's *People* magazine. It boasts:

> The times seem to be right for [*People*]. The war is over. Protest is at a minimum. The counter-culture has lost much of its steam. Except for what dismay and anger Watergate stirs up, people seem to be fairly relaxed. National and international problems don't impinge on the average persons' minds or consciences the way they used to. Their concerns after job and family (or job and mate) run to fun and games (or sex and sports). Enter *People*, reaffirming the indisputable fact that what really interests people is other people. . . . The 60's are finally ended; and now, too, the Nixon era. The uncharted, the real 70's, with their potential for new personalities, beckon.[56]

This prospectus demonstrates the (perceived) space that emerged in the 1970s for escapist journalism and a new fixation on personalities. Time Inc. saw the public as being tired of grappling with serious issues like the Vietnam War and Watergate. Of course, while the content of celebrity magazines may appear to offer diversion from the stressful realities and injustices of contemporary neoliberal life, it also reproduces those realities in both its content and its labor production processes. The media we consume and the celebrities we worship are part of the larger global political economic system, and not somehow the escape from it. These celebrity media products might feel like an escape because they offer a look at the lives of others—of the rich and famous. But much of this media is about creating the illusion that celebrity lives are like our non-celebrity lives, while reinforcing notions of what contemporary (white) American life is supposed to look like.

Like *People*'s founding, the rapid multiplication of celebrity weekly magazines from 2002 to 2005 was a similar attempt to capitalize on a moment of yearning for distraction and escapism in the U.S., this time following September 11. My own story suggests why they succeeded. As a first-year student at New York University, two weeks after classes began I witnessed a plane fly overhead as I walked down Bleecker Street in the West Village, then watched it make a distinct turn straight into the first tower of the World Trade Center. Traumatized, I sought solace in the following months by doing community activism and performing spoken-word poetry at the Nuyorican Poets Café. But after years of activism, my steam ran out. I just wanted to get away from it all. Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that I became part of this cultural machine of celebrity media production while in New York as a student. I began working for *People* as a paid intern during my senior year at NYU; my primary job was to keep an eye on Mary-Kate and Ashley Olson, who were in their first year at the same university. As an intern, I did not get paid just to follow my famous classmates; I also got paid to interview celebrities on red carpets and to go to the clubs and bars where they hung out. If this is celebrity reporting, I thought, then I'm in. But I came to see that it was about more than just following celebrities and churning out an online story or an item in a magazine. It was about the production of a culture through media products that shape gender, racial, and class ideals, as well as the understanding of (and desire for) fame and celebrity in the United States. I was given this opportunity, a door into a world that is "exclusive" (as the magazine covers remind us in every issue). I hope to use it to share my stories, my understandings, and my analy-

sis with the same world, the same consumers, and the same communities that voraciously produce and consume this product.

If, as *People*'s success proved, "what really interests people is other people," and the "potential for new personalities" needs to be exploited at particular historical moments, I believe that the creators of the newer magazines I examine found the post-9/11 U.S. a place where new personalities had the potential to emerge and attract attention.[57] Because lack of access to celebrities was a real problem for start-up publications, those magazines invested in the potential of the new television personalities—reality stars—who were easier to access, hungry for fame, and willing to share any and all personal information. As the sociologist Karen Sternheimer points out, "Celebrity culture is one of the hallmarks of twenty-first century America. Never before has it been so easy to know so much about so many people, even people we might not want to know about. We seem to be on a first name basis with them, give them nicknames, and sometimes even feel as if we know all about them."[58] We care so deeply about the minutiae of celebrities' lives today because we have been provided with the feeling of access to all information about certain personalities through the celebrity weekly magazines, reality television, and constant social media updates by celebrities themselves. This is the new baseline: we expect to have access to all personal details of celebrities, broadly defined. Access to this intimate information has shifted our own notions of community and our general discourse, with information about these personalities becoming the default conversation starters for many people, the shared imaginary community among Americans.[59]

Gatekeepers of Celebrity Culture: The People behind the Celebrity Weekly Magazines

> We're like the gatekeepers. . . . Half of what we do has to be what's important to people now. The other half has to be kind of like fortune telling: what *should be* important to people? | **MEGAN** | EDITOR AND WRITER FOR A CELEBRITY WEEKLY MAGAZINE, 2009 INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR

Through analysis of the methods of celebrity media production, this book explains how the content creators for the celebrity magazines manufacture personalities that people feel they know and can relate to. Photo sections of these magazines tend to depict celebrities taking part in the practices of every-

day American life—pushing their babies in strollers, shopping at the grocery store, buying a coffee at Starbucks—in an effort to humanize them and reinforce the possibility that not only can celebrities be like the reader, but the reader can be like celebrities. In fact, one section of *Us Weekly* is called "Stars: They're Just Like Us." However, the activities and characteristics that reporters choose to feature as examples of celebrities being "just like us" presume certain things about the reader and thus about the general American public. This book will shed light on expectations of modern American behavior and personhood by analyzing how celebrity reporters reinforce what it means to be one of "us."

To understand how celebrity reporters and photographers determine what makes a celebrity one of "us," we must consider who these media producers are. "In order to understand the complexities of media production, it is necessary to examine producers' sentiments and subjectivities in conjunction with questions of political economy."[60] That the majority of celebrity reporters are women is something widely acknowledged within the industry, but not critically examined. Based on my experience as a reporter and observations during my fieldwork, I investigate the sexualization of female celebrity journalists. Journalists are often encouraged to use their sexuality (usually presumed to be heterosexuality) to relate to female celebrities on the basis of so-called women's issues and to exploit their sexuality for the sake of obtaining information from male celebrities. Beyond pressure from editors, some reporters have personal motives for exploiting their sexuality to get close to celebrities. "I see people who think they're going to become a celebrity's girlfriend and get the famous lifestyle out of it," one weekly magazine reporter told me. At the same time, these women reporters set new and impossible-to-maintain beauty standards for women in American culture. In this book I explore the implications of women playing this critical role in the molding of popular culture.

I also explore the implications of the demographics of celebrity photographers, who are typically male and, in Los Angeles, primarily Latino. Entrance to the industry through paparazzi work has put these men of color in a place in which they can be surveilled, criticized, and placed in physical danger.

Despite the expansion of celebrity-focused publications (both print and online), work in the celebrity culture industry still carries a stigma. In the field of journalism, celebrity reporters are sometimes considered a joke. When I first began work at *People* in New York, my friends were flabbergasted. My working there seemed to undermine my social consciousness, to be out of character and even disappointing. However, I found my job fascinating, from

the tasks to the colleagues and the end product. Within weeks of working for the magazine, a story I wrote about Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen was featured as the top story on the America Online home page. (This was 2004, during the period of AOL's relevance.) A second story I wrote was picked up by CNN. Long before Donald Trump's presidency, it showed me that celebrity reporting and hard news were blurring and forcing a change in the understanding of news media in the United States.

Celebrity reporters are often conflicted about their role as producers of media that many of them believe is diluting news, journalism, and American culture. Instead I see the work as *deeply* affecting American culture, perhaps in problematic ways. But the people producing these changes need to be understood, as do their publications, their tactics, their reliability, and their intentions. Rather than focusing just on performative events like red carpets, celebrity reporters are almost always engaged in long-term assignments and are required to develop long-term and *meaningful* relationships with specific people or groups of people. Just as with anthropologists, deep relationships with sources are critical to the livelihood of a celebrity reporter's career. When observing celebrities, these reporters consider questions like the following: What do they eat? What do they say? What are they wearing? Who are they with? How do they live? I worked with journalists before, during, and after they wrote stories in order to understand the process they go through to develop celebrity personas. Using my own archive of interview transcripts, story outlines, and final published stories, I also reexamine my own approach to celebrity reporting and my own process of manufacturing celebrity personae.

There are some excellent examinations of the history of celebrity journalism, history of the Hollywood studio system, analysis of celebrity and fame, and contemporary textual analysis of celebrity magazines; there are also ethnographically informed analyses of Hollywood media products themselves.[61] However, there are no ethnographies on the production of these magazines or on the photographers and reporters who provide the content for these publications. Not since Powdermaker's 1950 ethnography of Hollywood has anyone truly captured the culture of mainstream Hollywood production. While focusing my attention differently, I follow the path Powdermaker carved within anthropology to argue for the importance of exploring this area of inquiry ethnographically.

Since Powdermaker, Hollywood and its many industries have consistently been described as factories, as sites of production and manufacturing. I continue that trend in this book, though I long debated it. I vacillated between

the phrases *crafting celebrity*, *selling celebrity*, and *manufacturing celebrity* for my title. In using the last, I do not mean to imply that the media producers I studied do not have agency in shaping American celebrity today. I use the word *manufacturing* in part to pay homage to my predecessors, who illuminated the industrial nature of mass media and the Hollywood system.[62] Likewise I did not feel *crafting* or *selling* accurately represented the scope and complexity of the celebrity-industrial complex that produced the material I analyze.[63] The word *manufacturing* emphasizes that media content creators are part of a larger and more complex system of production.

From red carpet reporters and photographers to paparazzi and staff reporters for the celebrity weekly magazines, this ethnography will bring insight to the professional lives of the purveyors of celebrity culture. Without the human component, without the people who make *People*, we cannot truly understand the process, the history, and the material we are provided for consumption.

Methodology

The data for this project were gathered intermittently over the course of more than ten years. While I was engaged in full-time ethnographic research from 2010 through 2012, I also undertook both formal and informal part-time research before and after this time period. From 2004 to 2007 I worked as an intern and then as a stringer for *People* magazine. This experience and material informs my long-term fieldwork, though it is not the focus of the research. During the summers of 2008 and 2009 I spent months engaged in full-time ethnographic research in Los Angeles, laying the groundwork for the long-term fieldwork that began the following year. From 2012 to 2017 I also engaged in part-time ethnographic and archival research.

My ethnographic research was multisited and multimodal. In order to gather data on the manufacture of celebrity media, I engaged in participant-observation with celebrity reporters and photographers, took several hundred photographs, and compiled several hundred pages of field notes. Time I spent in the offices of weekly magazines and photo agencies as well as on the red carpet offered insights into the institutional configurations of celebrity media production.[64] I also conducted informal ethnography by spending time with the media producers at home and at casual work meetings, and by engaging with fans on the sidelines of red carpet events. While my work was pre-

dominantly with reporters and paparazzi, I also collaborated with celebrity managers, publicists, attorneys, and magazine ad agents and editors. In order to understand these broader networks, I also conducted virtual ethnography on social networking sites by tracking and engaging in online exchanges between reporters about media production.[65] Finally, as a participant-observer, I worked freelance as a celebrity reporter during the research, which provided me insider access to the community and inner workings of the industry—as did my accompaniment of paparazzi on shoots.[66]

The unique nature of freelance and contingent labor means that, while paparazzi have little agency in their financial dealings with the corporations that depend upon their labor, they do have agency in the ways they perform their labor. When working with paparazzi, I was able to spend time on the job with them, before, during, and after their workdays, with no corporate restrictions. Unlike almost any other work in the entertainment industry, in theory anyone can be a paparazzo or go to their job sites, which are public spaces. At the same time, working with paparazzi is restrictive for two reasons. First, social stigma has led them to be wary of others' interest in their work, as they anticipate ridicule, humiliation, or worse.[67] Second, the value of their photographs increases with exclusivity, so paparazzi are wary of those who may want to scoop their story. Due to my work as a celebrity reporter, the second point was of particular concern, but I made it clear to the paparazzi I worked with that my time with them was strictly about observing their work, not about celebrity reporting. However, with the permission of the photographer, I occasionally filed a report with *People* on what was happening at the time an image was shot in my presence, in case *People* decided to publish the photographs and wanted corresponding reporting.

My research on the red carpet relied almost entirely on my continued freelance work as a reporter for *People*, although occasionally reporter friends brought me as a guest when this was permitted. While I informed individuals I worked with and for at the magazine about my research, I also made it clear that my research would not detract from my reporting. If anything, my particular ethnographic attention to detail surrounding red carpet work enhanced my reporting. Just as reporter friends invited me to accompany them, when possible I invited guests to red carpets where I was reporting. I discussed with my guests their impressions of and questions about the red carpet ritual and the celebrity culture that surrounds it. My times in corporate spaces, such as the offices of celebrity magazines, were in the capacity of a researcher using

their library to perform archival research, and thus I was not asked to sign any nondisclosure agreements. Other than this time in the offices of weekly magazines, almost all of my research was conducted in public spaces or homes of reporters and photographers.

I had an extensive network of reporters, photographers, editors, public relations representatives, and other industry figures willing to contribute to and participate in my project. In total, I completed in-depth ethnographic interviews with eighty-five informants and collaborators, including photographers, journalists, public relations representatives, magazine editors, and celebrities. The staff reporters, freelance reporters, and editors I interviewed include individuals who worked with each of the major celebrity weeklies: *People*, *Us Weekly*, *OK!*, *In Touch*, *Star*, and *Life and Style*. The photographers I interviewed, who largely work freelance, include individuals affiliated with each of the major photo agencies. Additionally I conducted roughly a hundred informal interviews with other industry figures and fans at red carpet events.

The research for this book was conducted predominantly in English, as that is the primary language of most of my research collaborators. However, my research with paparazzi was conducted in Spanish, Spanglish, and English; this is reflected in part I of the book.

For the most part, I use pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of my collaborators. However, some individuals, mostly paparazzi, asked me to use their real names. I analyze why this may be below. The title associated with each of my interlocutors is that individual's title at the time of the interview.

Since the internet has changed the process of news production and journalistic communication so greatly over the past several years, I also conducted virtual ethnography on social networking sites, celebrity weekly magazine websites, and other major celebrity news websites such as *Perez Hilton*, *Jezebel*, *Pink Is the New Blog*, and *Just Jared*, as well as individual celebrity-run websites.[68] On these sites I both observed and participated in conversations about celebrity news stories between celebrity reporters themselves, reporters and celebrities, reporters and consumers, and consumers and celebrities. Media-centered methods of my research also included mobile video ethnography, as I had celebrity photographers shooting first-person GoPro footage while on the job, allowing me to view their experiences from their own perspectives and discuss those experiences with them.[69]

Throughout the course of my research, I also reviewed photographic and textual archival materials from the *People* library (which includes archives of

both *People* and other celebrity weekly magazines) and online media archives, as well as personal collections of notable stories, photographs, and videos from the reporters and photographers themselves.

My approach to the ethnography and theorizing in this book relies on working collaboratively with the media producers I studied. As John T. Caldwell points out, media producers "critically analyze and theorize their tasks in provocative and complex ways."[70] The recent work of the anthropologists Aimee Cox and Yarimar Bonilla provides helpful and contemporary examples of cotheorizing—that is, theorizing *with* community members in the course of ethnographic research.[71] Throughout my research I grappled with how to best engage with the individual laborers I relied on in ways that recognized them as equal intellectual citizens in this project, while also engaging with my own experience as an industry worker.[72] I sometimes heard that individuals I interviewed later said it was therapeutic and illuminating to discuss their professional practices with me, and this encouraged others to participate. I believe this sense of emotional release came from my tendency to analyze the work of the interviewees and process those ideas aloud *with* them. Their stories and answers informed my analyses; my ideas informed their own reflections. This approach of cotheorizing is at the core of my project.

In more recent work, Cox urges us to go beyond cotheorizing and fortify our ethnographies, and our ethnographic methodologies, with what she calls *unconditional relationality*. Unconditional relationality is a way to articulate the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual transformations that emerge *because* "the relationships formed during research have a life outside of the research and are not solely beholden to the condition that these interactions service the anthropological project." Unconditional relationality is not focused on theorizing ethnographic experience; it is about harnessing the complex transformations that occur through ethnography.[73] My relationship with Chris's mother, Vicky, is a case in point. As I describe in chapter 3, our dynamic and collective processing of Chris's death exemplified the unconditional relationality Cox calls for. Our processing was not carried out in the interest of theorizing but, rather, was a means of mourning and seeking justice. To reduce to cotheorizing the intellectual and collective manner of mourning in which Vicky and I engaged—which occurred in back-and-forth conversations and emails, reading the words I wrote about Chris's death, and observing presentations where I discussed his death—is to remove the humanity that our relationship embodies. In ethnography, especially when we are examining

such serious matters as the violent death of Vicky's son or the sexual assault Natasha experienced at the hands of Donald Trump, we must embody empathy, we must be open to transformation(s), and we must acknowledge when we are doing much more than cotheorizing.

At Home in the Entertainment Industry

A central distinction between my work and that of others who have written ethnographically on media production is that my work emerged out of an existing relationship with the celebrity media industry. I worked in media (radio, documentary, newspaper, online, print magazine) for several years, including working for *People* magazine, before beginning my research. Other researchers who have chosen to embark on research in Hollywood or media production more broadly often decided to enter the industry *because of* and *for* their research interests.[74] My years of experience within the media industry naturally affected not only my access to it but also my relationships to interviewees. My relationship to the geographical locations in which I worked, and my identity as a woman and a Latina from Southern California, also had major impacts on my positioning of the self within my research and the ways in which I related to the individuals who collaborated with me.

I was born in Los Angeles to a father who was an aspiring musician. He tried his hand at acting and stand-up comedy as well. I had childhood aspirations of stardom and celebrity that shifted during college, as I became increasingly involved in political activism and hip-hop culture. But by the end of college, I was somehow in the thick of celebrity culture, working for *People*. Like Hedda Hopper, an actress who became a celebrity gossip columnist, many reporters interested in working with me on this project have a (failed) history of or aspirations of acting, screenwriting, and film producing, and either hoped or hope to become celebrities.[75]

I was a product of the greater Los Angeles area and had a strong desire and affinity for celebrity, entertainment, and fame. As a child I asked my mother to take me to open-call auditions, though I had no headshot or experience. I began writing fan mail to celebrities at a young age, including personalized birthday cards to my favorite stars. I knew their birthdays because I did the research and marked their birthdays on my calendar. I always made an effort to talk to celebrities I saw at events and was fearless about approaching them. I went to events like "Get Moving with Oprah" at Griffith Park in 1995 at age

eleven, and attempted to make friends with every celebrity there, including Oprah Winfrey herself (until her security guard pushed me away). After years of consuming celebrity media I felt as if I was friends with all of them already.

Members of my family have attempted to enter the entertainment industry through a wide array of approaches, many of them involving reality television shows. Collectively my mother and three siblings have applied to be on twenty-five reality television series. One of my sisters keeps a list that includes the stage she has gotten to in the casting process (callbacks, interviews, etc.) of each show. She came close to being selected for *The Biggest Loser*, and this interaction with the industry led many other casting directors to contact her. Some of these she turned down because, she says, they were either "humiliating or demeaning" or just uninteresting. In fact the only member of my family who has appeared on television is my brother, who appeared on an episode of *The Dog Whisperer* with his ill-behaved English mastiff.

Once, when my family was going through one of our many rough patches involving drugs and financial problems, my oldest sister suggested we write to Dr. Phil and ask for help. This was presented in all seriousness as a potential solution to our issues. There is a real illusion of having access to celebrities, to fame, to the resources that we come to expect we are special enough to receive, like Dr. Phil's psychological services. Similarly, when we were going through another difficult time when I was a child, I wrote a letter to Oprah asking her to help my mother—a single mom whose husband, mother, and father had all died in the span of a year. I thought my mother was as deserving as all of the people Oprah helped on her show. I remember the feeling of sadness that came over me when I received a generic letter with Oprah's signature thanking me for my correspondence. Yet I kept the letter in my nightstand drawer for years.

After working at a radio station where I frequently interacted with celebrities, the nature of my enthrallment shifted. I no longer wanted or expected that I might be friends with celebrities, or that I might even become one myself. I became more captivated with the actual processes of interacting with celebrities at events, especially the rituals of interviewing and photographing them. Just like the readers, fans, and consumers who want to know every last detail about their favorite celebrities, I wanted that information, but I also wanted to know *why* and *how* that information was being amassed. My research interests are the natural product of growing up surrounded by communities obsessed with fame and celebrity.

My experience in media industries was instrumental to my ability to do this project. My work for *People* also enabled me to be a part of my own re-

search; I am my own source throughout this book, and my own experiences are a critical part of it.[76] I understand this could raise concerns as to objectivity, a traditional goal of both anthropology and journalism. While I do not believe that objectivity is attainable for anyone, I do recognize the difficulties ethnographers encounter when attempting research within communities of which they are a part. I found myself wondering frequently whom I could trust and who my real friends were. Some of the individuals I worked with are close personal friends with whom I am still in very regular contact, and some of them are only professional contacts who kept up with me while I was on the red carpet. Being a red carpet reporter (especially for *People*) did carry a great deal of social and cultural capital. Savvy about the nature of this capital, public relations representatives, celebrity publicists, and celebrities recognized that their relationship to me could benefit them. As a reporter, I played a tangible part in determining the coverage of celebrities and brands in the magazine, so these industry figures put additional energy into our relationship while I was a regular on the red carpet. Now that I have largely transitioned out of this world, I am no longer considered a part of the community. Without the cultural and social capital that my position on the red carpet provided me, I'm not as important to them anymore. As Scott Huver, a longtime red carpet reporter in Los Angeles, told me, "No favors in Hollywood go into a bank." Completing my fieldwork or, rather, forcing myself to stop in order to focus on writing this book, was thus bittersweet. The red carpet was a home to me; it was familiar, filled with people I knew and routines and rituals I could do with my eyes shut.

I do not believe that we ever lose our homes completely; even if we, or our home, is physically gone, the home remains in the core of our being. Every place we have ever considered a home, for better or worse, is a part of who we are. Each home takes us through a different phase of our life, a period of growth. Even if we were taken from a home at a young age, as my father was taken from Puerto Rico as an infant, in an experience he described in violent terms, every single home we have ever known, whether we remember them vividly or not, make us who we are. In a world in which where we are born determines our nationality, in a country in which our national or ethnic background determines how we are socially read and understood, we may cling to or desperately try to negate our various homes. Though I lost my home on the red carpet, it still holds a piece of the ways I understand myself.

Manufacturing Celebrity

This book is divided into three sections. Part I contains three chapters focused on the paparazzi. Chapter 1 takes you on the job with the paparazzi, providing a window into the complex lives and work of this misunderstood group of laborers. It describes how the racial transformations in the workforce have impacted such issues as perceived skill and visibility, and how the photographers themselves conceptualize their work as a form of day labor. Chapter 2 explores the ethics and economics of paparazzi work, including both formal and informal economies shaped by the varying levels of precarity among the photographers. This chapter reveals the ways in which these racialized laborers understand their role producing images of mainstream white culture. Chapter 3 centers on Chris Guerra and the institutional circumstances that led to his tragic death on the job, including the broader structural violence that paparazzi face, the simultaneous disparagement and strategic use of paparazzi by celebrities, and the proliferation of anti-paparazzi legislation in California. I analyze these realities utilizing my conceptualization of media rituals of hate, as well as the framework of raciontologies, which Jonathan Rosa and I previously developed.[77]

Part II explores the work of celebrity reporters. Chapter 4 examines the red carpet as a space of media ritual that is more nuanced than popular imagery would suggest. It investigates how the red carpet shapes reporters' coverage of celebrities and, as a result, consumers' relationships to the stars. The chapter concludes by considering the perspective of photographers who document the red carpet process, producing a type of celebrity photography distinct from paparazzi images. Chapter 5 explores the other spaces in which celebrity reporting takes place, including nightclubs, public spaces, and one-on-one interviews. I illuminate the acute levels of precarity faced by reporters in these spaces, as they face pressure to push legal boundaries and are leveraged for their sexuality in ways that can be exploitative and sometimes traumatic, such as Natasha's experience with Trump. This chapter also underscores the ways in which the intersectional identities of the reporters further complicate this precarity.

Finally, part III provides a deeper analysis of specific tactics used by the celebrity weekly magazines to foster emotional investment in celebrity. Chapter 6 focuses on the magazines' "body teams," who report specifically on celebrities' bodies. The obsessive media evaluation of celebrity diets and pregnancies affects not only consumers but also the women reporters who produce this

content. Chapter 7 examines the specific tactic of celebrity couple name combining, which is used by the magazines to promote feelings of intimacy with celebrities among fans. The name *Brangelina* is used as a case study in the very deliberate marketing of white heterosexual love. The book concludes by examining shifting boundaries of news and gossip and where the work of celebrity reporters and photographers fits in the contemporary media landscape.

NOTES

Introduction

1 Velasco, State of California; Walton, State of California.
2 Walton, State of California.
3 Miley Cyrus, Twitter post, January 1, 2013 (9:13 p.m.), https://twitter.com/miley cyrus/status/286354541828530177; January 1, 2013 (9:24 p.m.), https://twitter.com /mileycyrus/status/286357265429180416; January 1, 2013 (9:25 p.m.), https:// twitter.com/MileyCyrus/status/286357480433397761.
4 Hayley Marlar, Twitter post, January 1, 2013 (11:01 p.m.), https://twitter.com /haleymarlar/status/286354774390108160.
5 Nicolini, "Celebrity Photographer Killed."
6 Miley Cyrus, Twitter post, January 1, 2013 (11:01 p.m.), https://twitter.com /MileyCyrus/status/286381648663166976.
7 Finn, "Miley Cyrus."
8 Halbfinger and Weiner, "Eye vs. Eye: Inside the Photo Wars"; Pearson, "'Britney Beat'"; Winton and Alanez, "Paparazzi Flash New Audacity"; "Photographers Sue!"
9 This interview was completed with an understanding of anonymity, which is standard practice in ethnographic methodology. After going public with her story in 2016, Natasha asked me to refer to her by her real name since the story had become public information.
10 Stoynoff, "Physically Attacked."
11 Stoynoff and Lipton, "Happy Anniversary."
12 Fahrenthold, "Trump Recorded."
13 Stoynoff, "Physically Attacked."
14 Bird, *For Enquiring Minds*; Caughey, *Imaginary Social Worlds*; Caughey, "Gina as Steven."
15 Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*.
16 "Survey of Teens."

17 Ulhs and Greenfield, "The Value of Fame."

18 Martin, *Haunted*.

19 For example, Yuen, *Reel Inequality*; Hunt, Ramón, and Price, "Hollywood Diversity Report"; Hunt and Ramón, "Hollywood Diversity Report"; Hunt, Ramón, and Tran, "Hollywood Diversity Report"; Hunt, Ramón, and Tran, "Hollywood Diversity Report 2019"; Hunt et al., "Hollywood Diversity Report: Setting the Record Straight"; Hunt et al., "Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years."

20 Rock, "Chris Rock." The same issue of *Hollywood Reporter* featured its annual "actor roundtable," which consisted of six white men (Galloway, "Benedict Cumberbatch"). Its "actress roundtable" two weeks later was seven white women (Belloni, "Reese Witherspoon"). The fact that the roundtable reflects the publication's prediction of who will get Oscar nominations only calls attention to the scope of the problem Rock described.

Throughout the book I use the term *Latinx* or *Latina/o/x* as a gender nonbinary/gender-inclusive alternative to *Latina* and *Latino* to refer to U.S.-based persons of Latin American descent. I use *Latino* or *Latina* in direct quotations and when referring specifically to individuals or groups who identify as Latino(s) or Latina(s) and not as Latinx(s).

21 Caldwell, *Production Culture*; Caldwell, "Both Sides"; Mayer, *Below the Line*; Mears, *Pricing Beauty*.

22 Caldwell, *Production Culture*.

23 Ortner, "Access," 4.

24 Peterson, "Getting to the Story."

25 Behar, *An Island*; Gwaltney, "On Going Home Again"; Jones, "Towards a Native Anthropology."

26 Clark, "Journalism," 50.

27 For example, Gans, *Deciding*; Tuchman, *Making News*; Cottle, "New(s) Times," 22.

28 A "legitimate vision of the social world": Bourdieu, "The Political Field," 40. For "very few case studies," see Cottle, "New(s) Times," 27–28.

29 Beltrán and Fojas, *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 2; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

30 Powdermaker's works include *After Freedom*, *Hollywood*, *Copper Town*, and *Stranger and Friend*.

31 Powdermaker, *After Freedom*, *Hollywood*, and *Copper Town*.

32 Askew, "Introduction," 3; see also Askew, "Striking Samburu"; Cherneff, "The Legacy"; Silverman, "American Anthropology."

33 For example, Askew, "Striking Samburu"; Martin, *Haunted*; Ortner, "Studying Sideways"; Ortner, "Access"; Ortner, *Not Hollywood*.

34 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 104.

35 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 104; Rodriguez, *Los Angeles Now*.

36 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, ix, 1, 19.

37 Webb, *Happy Birthday*; see also Caughey and Caughey, *Los Angeles*, 255; Cherneff, "The Legacy," 434.
38 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, ix.
39 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, 26.
40 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, 49; Barbas, *The First Lady*; Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*.
41 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, 145; see also Barbas, *The First Lady*; Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*, 3; Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 3; Holley, *Mike Connolly*, 3.
42 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, 169.
43 Webb, *Happy Birthday*, 193.
44 Powdermaker, *Hollywood*, 36; see also Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*.
45 Beltrán and Fojas, *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 2; see also Askew, "Striking Samburu"; Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*; Blum, *Flesh Wounds*; Mazur, "U.S. Trends"; Powdermaker, *Hollywood*; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*; Silverman, "American Anthropology"; Sutton and Wogan, *Hollywood Blockbusters*; Traube, "Secrets"; Ulysse, "Avatar."
46 Blum, *Flesh Wounds*; Descartes and Kottak, *Media*.
47 For example, Tabibian, "On the Hollywood Industrial Complex."
48 Orth, *The Importance*, 19–20.
49 Ledbetter, *Unwarranted Influence*.
50 Herwitz, *The Star*, 18.
51 Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims*.
52 Petit, "Revealed."
53 Triggs, "My Front-Row Seat."
54 *People* Staff, "27 Photos"; PeopleStyle, "Melania Trump's First Lady Style"; Triggs, "He's Hired!"
55 Kuczynski, "Striking Back."
56 Fuerbringer, "PEOPLE," 1–2.
57 Fuerbringer, "PEOPLE," 1–2.
58 Sternheimer, *Celebrity Culture*, xiii.
59 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
60 Ganti, *Bollywood*.
61 For celebrity journalism: Petersen, "The Gossip Industry"; Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*; Slide, *Inside*. For the Hollywood studio system: Davis, *The Glamour Factory*. For celebrity and fame: Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*; Herwitz, *The Star*; Ferris and Harris, *Stargazing*; Rojek, *Celebrity*; Rojek, *Fame Attack*; Ward, *Gods*. For contemporary textual analysis of celebrity magazines: McDonnell, *Reading*. For Hollywood media products: Bucholtz, "Race"; Bucholtz and Lopez, "Performing Blackness"; Meek, "And the Injun."
62 Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*; Powdermaker, *Hollywood*.
63 Orth, *The Importance of Being Famous*.

64 Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*.
65 Bird, "Introduction"; Boellstorff, *Coming of Age*.
66 Askew, "Striking Samburu."
67 Randolph, "Pap Smear"; Randolph, "Stalking the Paparazzi."
68 Regarding change wrought by the internet: Cottle, "New(s) Times"; "Ethnography"; Wahl-Jorgensen, "News Production." The term *virtual ethnography* borrows from Behar, "Believing"; Boellstorff, *Coming of Age*; Constable, *Romance*.
69 Spinney, "A Chance."
70 Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.
71 Cox, *Shapeshifters*; Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures*, xvii; Rappaport, "Anthropological Collaborations," 27.
72 Trouillot, *Global Transformations*; Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures*.
73 Cox, "Afterword."
74 For example, David, "Self for Sale"; Ganti, *Producing Bollywood*; Ganti, "The Value"; Hasty, *The Press*; Hasty, "Journalism"; Martin, *Haunted*; Ortner, *Not Hollywood*; Peterson, "Getting to the Story"; Peterson, *Anthropology*; Powdermaker, *Hollywood*.
75 Hopper, *The Whole Truth*.
76 Peterson, "Getting to the Story."
77 Rosa and Díaz, "Raciontologies."

Chapter One. *Shooteando*

1 Discover Los Angeles, "The Guide to Spotting a Celebrity in LA."
2 I use the terms *pap* and *paparazzi* interchangeably. *Pap* is the informal term used by paparazzi, and others in the entertainment industry, to refer to paparazzi photographers.
3 Herwitz, *The Star as Icon*, 130; Jordan, "Ellen and Portia's Wedding!"; Riding, "Public Likes"; Squiers, "Class Struggle."
4 The October 15, 2012, issue is examined. The first twenty-five pages featured twenty paparazzi shots and only ten non-paparazzi shots. Overall the magazine had 29 percent paparazzi photos, 19 percent red carpet photos, 24 percent photos shot specifically for the magazine, and 26 percent promotional photos from television studios, movie studios, or record labels.
5 Ortner, "Access."
6 Gürsel, "The Image Industry," "U.S. Newsworld," and "The Politics."
7 Loomis, "Paparazzi."
8 "Crashes and Deception."
9 Paparazzi rely on their sources for confidential tips on where to find celebrities, so they do not want to expose their sources or celebrity addresses or share their tips with others who may pass that information on to the competition.