

Policing the Bromance:  
Platonic Male Relationships in Cop Shows

by

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## **Introduction**

Over the course of writing this thesis, a handful of well-meaning people have implied that my topic is a bit of a joke. Writing a thesis about male friendship in cop shows is a nice excuse to watch TV for a year, but not something with any real-world implications. I've always been amused by these comments, because I chose to write a thesis about TV for exactly the opposite reasons. I don't know *anybody* who doesn't watch TV, in one form or another. TV is like any new person we meet or any city we live in: it exposes us to new personalities, new stories, and new ideologies, some of which we will discard and some of which we will absorb. When televisions were first being sold, we brought them into our houses and our living rooms; as technology proliferates, we find TV in the neutral ground of airports and bars and we invite it even closer to us, onto our laptops, tablets, and cellphones. We download it, disseminate it across the internet, and discuss it with our friends and family and, sometimes, total strangers. TV characters become our friends and our frames of reference. TV shows come to represent entire eras in popular cultural nostalgia. How could TV *not* have real-world implications?

People produce TV shows and TV shows produce people. I don't mean to imply that television viewers are passive, idly letting their worlds be changed by a meaning that is transmitted through a television screen. TV, like many other forms of media, is polysemic, meaning that it's open to multiple readings. Moreover, everyone who watches a show, depending on their own personal history, preferences, and cultural context, is going to react to it a little differently. Some viewers may valorize the arc of a female character, saying that she is strong and displays unconventional forms of femininity, while others criticize the writing as falling into sexist patterns. Viewers

may accept certain meanings within the show and actively resist others. My point, rather, is that TV shows fall into certain patterns of representation and exclusion. Because those patterns are so prevalent and often reflect some pre-existing biases within American culture, they can become normalized. If they are considered normal, then they may affect how viewers look at the world. Thus, because TV shows produce people, it is worth examining them. Moreover, because people produce TV shows and people are continually evolving, TV itself is subject to change.

TV cannot remain static. It has not remained static; we can see as much just by comparing the early television era to the viewing options we have today. However, TV changes in inconsistent increments. The executives and producers with power leave and are replaced by others. New technology appears and is used by some people and not others. Advertisers reevaluate which consumers they want to attract. Networks drop in ratings and have to figure out new ways to attract viewers. Networks stay up in the ratings and continue doing what has proved to work. Viewers change, perceptions of viewers change, and producers create TV shows with different values and stories. Average ratings change and shows that would have been cancelled a few years previously are moderate hits. Producers try to add their own twists onto successful formulas of other TV shows. Some of those twists can involve moving a franchise to a new setting; others instead add aliens to cop shows. Each new show is built upon the examples of shows of ages past and, in its failure or success, becomes its own example in turn.

As such, both Julie D'Acci (2004) and Kenneth Mackinnon (2003) note that pure content analyses, while interesting, can't tell us much about the society that TV and

pop culture supposedly represent. Mackinnon (2003) argues that “representation does not merely reflect. It does not neutrally transmit a pre-existing meaning. It is more likely to provide a meaning that it has created” (24). In his examination of masculinity in pop culture, he finds it more useful to examine how different shows construct and reconstruct their individual definitions of masculinity and then sell them to viewers. D’Acci (2004) suggests that, when envisioning a project, TV researchers should consider the four interrelated arenas of TV: programming, production, reception, and social/historical context. Programming is the overall content of the show(s). Thinking about production means considering the people who make and distribute TV, and how they are working within a broader industrial pattern. Reception involves the people who watch TV, the different ways in which they do so, and how they may differ from industry conceptions of audiences. Social/historical context refers to “the ways general social events, movements, beliefs, and changes, produce or represent particular notions ... in and for the society-at-large” (D’Acci 2004:385). Studies don’t have to focus equally on all four arenas, but researchers need to acknowledge that TV doesn’t occur within a vacuum; it is part of a larger conversation between producers, consumers, and its own history.

Cop shows have been around almost since television was created. Most of them were radio dramas that made the jump to live-action as television became more and more popular. They have always, historically, been a male-oriented genre. Men are overwhelmingly the primary story movers; as protagonists, their concerns are paramount and the work that they do is often more important than that of their female colleagues, if they have any. This asymmetry remains on a more abstract level, too. In

the doctrine of separate spheres (see Spigel 1992), the public sphere — the productive world of labor and government — is considered male. The law is a masculine power, one defended by state-sanctioned force. The private sphere is associated with domesticity, familial life, and women. In addition, action is culturally coded as masculine while passivity is feminine. The central concept of cop shows involves the active, public-sphere crusaders defending the passive civilians from dangers that threaten to encroach on the private world. D'Acci (1994) argues persuasively that the cop show reproduces (white) male power by making the empathetic, capable cop hero and his moral code into stand-ins for the Law. He maintains the social order, whether or not he always follows the rules; in the end, his actions are justified. It's a dangerous world out there, and someone has to take down the bad guys.

Like all other genres, police procedurals are subject to change over time and across channels. For example, many shows have recurring female characters who rescue the men, rather than acting as perpetual damsels in distress. However, certain patterns are discernable over the decades. If, like many TV critics, we consider *Dragnet* the prototypical police show, many shows and movies since then have diverged from *Dragnet's* business-like portrayal of the partner relationship. Instead, producers have foregrounded the relationship between the characters to the extent that they have developed their own subgenre, typically known as the “buddy cop” show. The buddy cop dynamic had its historical antecedents; westerns, for one, depicted platonic male relationships within settings that were both violent and predominantly male. These friendships are a way to give the heroes emotional support without having to worry about the incursions of women into a male realm. However, they

must also be mapped onto a history in which homosociality has frequently been a site of negotiation.

The concept of masculinity is inherently unstable, because masculinity — or masculinities, because there are multiple — defines itself via exclusion. This is particularly true in the theory of hegemonic masculinity, which was developed by R.W. Connell and other gender scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Hegemonic masculinity is a process in which a particular version of masculinity sets itself up as the dominant norm by securing the acceptance of the subordinated types of masculinity. This dominant group then becomes thought of as right and natural: the common-sense definition of masculinity. As Eric Anderson (2009) notes in *Inclusive Masculinities*, hegemonic masculinity is a process, not an archetype, although some people confuse the two. It is a process, moreover, which relies just as much on qualities with which one is born, such as race, as it does on forms of behavior. Anderson instead uses the term “orthodox masculinity” to denote the particular kind of conservative, anti-feminine, compulsively heterosexual behavior with which many people associate hegemonic masculinity. He argues that orthodox masculinity holds hegemonic sway in periods of high cultural homophobia. Because of their fear of being homosexualized and thus subordinated, men are encouraged to be hyper-masculine and hyper-heterosexual and steer clear of anything that might be construed as homosexual or feminine. Anderson refers to these periods as periods of “high homophobia.” In these periods, homosociality, particularly soft physical contact and emotional intimacy, is limited by the fear of being seen as gay. However, he continues, in periods of declining homophobia, orthodox masculinity can coexist



with inclusive masculinity, in which straight men's behavior is not limited by the fear of being thought queer or homosexual. The prevailing culture remains heteronormative, but it is not homohysterical. Within these periods, neither orthodox masculinity nor inclusive masculinity are dominant.

Anderson traces the shifting currents of homohysteria and their relation to homosociality and male behavior, from Oscar Wilde's trials to the dominant orthodox culture of the 1980s to the inclusive, college-age sports players of his study. His research shows that homosociality is constantly being refigured within prevailing cultural conditions. Similarly, relationships within TV shows are refigured as producers begin to get a sense of how their commodity audience might be changing within those prevailing cultural conditions. The original *Hawaii Five-O* devoted very little time to the relationships between the main characters; the promotional materials for the new *Hawaii Five-0 (2010)* celebrate the "bromance" of Steve and Danny. I'm not saying that any TV show is going to be an accurate representation of life in the US during a certain era; as D'Acci (2004) notes, "TV can't even hold a mirror up to (or reflect) society's or the human being's version of nature (or reality or society) because TV *itself*, for a whole range of reasons, is utterly selective about what it chooses to represent and how" (376). We cannot read the universe through TV. However, we can work from the opposite direction, locating programming within its moment in social and industrial history and scrutinizing how producers create masculinity within this context. How do the depictions of the partner relationships change, and how do those changes relate to concurrent industry standards, the particularities of the shows themselves, and the social history of male friendship?

What do the changes in the shows say about what producers consider important or likely to appeal to viewers? And where does that leave us, in the present?

To explore these questions, I chose six different police procedurals, spanning from the 1960s to the present, that feature a relationship between male partners. For the sake of simplicity, I focused on shows where the main characters meet via work, rather than beginning as friends and then proceeding to work together. To examine each show, I first begin by trying to summarize its “essence,” in order to familiarize readers with the tone and overall narrative. Following this, I investigate the connections between the construction of masculinity and friendship within the show and the contexts — within the television industry, within pop culture, and within the culture at large — that enabled it.

In chapter 1, I look at the show *Dragnet* [NBC, 1952-1959, 1967-1970], which began as a radio program, became a television show in the 1950s, and was successfully revived again in the late 1960s. I explore how the show’s detached tone and realist aesthetic related to the vision of producer, writer, and star Jack Webb, who according to Jason Mittell (2004) wanted the audience to focus on the success of the justice system rather than any exceptional actions of the characters. I also examine the two main characters, Joe Friday and Bill Gannon, within the 1950s ideology of domestic containment and find that although the dominant ideology of the period promoted family togetherness, *Dragnet* also espouses an autonomous, work-oriented masculinity.

In chapter 2, I locate *Starsky and Hutch* [ABC, 1975-1979] within the context of other cop shows of the 1970s, which had moved from depicting the friendly local

police force to rougher, tougher, more flawed cops. However, the writers simultaneously foregrounded Starsky and Hutch's friendship by devoting significant episode time to their banter and emotional support of one another. I consider this in relation to both the growing awareness of feminism and homosexuality. I also examine actors David Soul and Paul Michael Glaser's claims that the series was the first buddy cop show.

In chapter 3, I discuss how the rise of cable, the growing interest in female viewers, and other changes destabilized the broadcast landscape and led to the television revolution of the 1980s, which introduced melodrama, serialization, and stylistic excess into prime time shows. *Miami Vice*, although mostly episodic, was influenced by a number of the decisions producers made during that time period to attract more viewers. I also look at *Miami Vice* as a neo-noir show with elements of old frontier narratives and connect it to Fred Pfeil's (1995) description of the 1980s male rampage films and their white hero-black sidekick partnerships. With the help of Jon Stratton's (2012) analysis of the show, I examine how these narrative elements relate to racial tensions and anxieties of masculinity in the 1980s.

In chapter 4, I turn to *Due South*, a Canadian-American comedy-drama. I delve into Wendy Pearson's (2000) argument that the show could be considered a satire of American cop shows. However, the show is not a straight parody; it allows its characters moments of depth and growth. In looking at those moments and the main characters' complex relationships with their fathers and their paths, I see *Due South* as resembling the "new age man" and men's movements of the 1990s. In the end, I

find, the characters of *Due South* must adopt behaviors that are feminized by the text in order to make human connections and move on with their lives.

In chapter 5, I first explain how TV shows went from completely episodic or completely serialized to hybrid forms, which allowed for more development of storylines and character relationships. Within this context, I examine *White Collar*, in which the relationship between the two main characters is one of the primary narrative thrusts. I also look at the way *White Collar* depicts the contrast between the “straight/normal” world of Peter, the FBI agent, compared to the alternative world of crime. Then, in “*White Collar* and the Police Marriage” I examine the trope of the divorced cop, comparing it to the happy marriage of Peter and his wife Elizabeth. I find that fictional divorce both provides an immediate source of conflict and gives protagonists a reason to turn away from the domestic world and into a quasi-marital relationship with their partner. In *White Collar*, however, Peter and Elizabeth’s marriage is part of a sitcom-style dynamic in which the characters slide easily between work and home.

In chapter 6, I look at how the differences between the original and current incarnations of *Hawaii Five-0* (2010) relate to the industrial and social changes of the past forty years. From there, I move to “Homosociality, Homoeroticism, and Changing Masculinities,” and this thesis’s greater project: tracing the path of homosociality in procedurals and relating it to changes in homophobia and expectations of male friendship. I particularly rely on Anderson (2009) and Mark McCormack’s (2012) theories of homohysteria, inclusive masculinity, and

heterosexual recuperation in discussing how different shows manage homosociality and why they might need to.

### **A Note On Interpretation:**

The magnificent, and occasionally frustrating, thing about television is that, like all forms of storytelling, it's open to interpretation. This problem only gets worse when you remember that it's a visual and auditory medium, because now instead of just words, we also get to decode body language, facial expressions, and intonation. At least the narrator of a book will sometimes tell you character motivation; in television, if they don't say it honestly in the dialogue, viewers have to try and figure it out from a combination of empathy, imagination, prior knowledge of the character, and the set of the character's shoulders.

Very few people will be able to read the same story with exactly the same feelings or opinions; each of us will mediate it through our own past experiences and perspective, meeting canon (the body of the text itself) halfway. Of course, I think Kenneth Mackinnon (2003) is right when he says that "It is surely over-optimistic to believe that they [viewers] are 'free' to choose from a variety of potential meanings. ... There are likely and less likely interpretations" (24). Our understandings are always going to be guided—or, if you like, constrained—by the canon. Within those limits, though, there is a range of possibility. For example, Mackinnon suggests that Crockett and Tubbs of *Miami Vice* don't have an emotional connection, but I can think of a plethora of fans who would laugh at that idea until they were sick. This doesn't mean that either Mackinnon or these fans are delusional; it's just that each of them watch the show differently, accumulating different pieces of evidence along the

way. Mackinnon doesn't explain quite why he felt this way, but he might be looking at the fact that neither Crockett nor Tubbs are prone to having conversations with each other about their feelings. The fans, meanwhile, might cite the fact that when Crockett has amnesia and thinks he's a criminal, he keeps having flashbacks to his partnership with Tubbs. Take this exchange from the episode "Evan" [1.21]:

Tubbs: "Excuse the hell out of me. We happen to be involved in an operation. And if something is going down between you and our middleman, then I need to know it!"

Crockett: "There's nothing going down, you don't need to know anything, and where the hell do you come off demanding that I bare my soul to you? You're my partner, not my priest!"

Tubbs: "Hey, hey, hey! Don't be copping no attitude, man, cause I don't need to hear it! You want to drop the friendship and just be partners, so be it!"

A viewer like Mackinnon might see this as Tubbs being angry because Crockett's reticence could screw up their operation. Another viewer might focus on the "friendship" line instead, saying that Tubbs is equally upset because he's worried about Crockett and the way that the situation with Evan is creating tension in their relationship. These are two equally valid viewpoints, each based on the script itself, but that create very different emotional landscapes.<sup>1</sup>

All of which is a very long-winded way of saying that while I will be relying on the texts of the shows I examine, trying to stay closer to the "likely" than the "less likely" end of the spectrum, my understanding of them is going to necessarily be mediated simply by who I am as a person and how my brain works. Other viewers might not agree. You, my reader, might not agree, and I encourage you to watch the shows and decide for yourself. After all, that's half the fun of television.

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<sup>1</sup> This isn't even getting into the chaos of viewer opinions that contradict the canon, or the difference between interpretation and something the viewer thinks seems logical but acknowledges is not likely to appear in the show, or any of the other questions that pop up when you somehow manage to convince people to care about something.

# 1.

## ***Dragnet* [NBC, 1952-1959, 1967-1970]**

Friday: “There are over five thousand men in this city who know that being a policeman is an endless, thankless, glamorless job that’s gotta be done. I know it, too, and I’m damned glad to be one of them.”

- “The Big Interrogation,” 1.04

**The Show:** Like many early American television shows, *Dragnet* began as a radio drama and was converted into a TV series when television started to edge out radio as the future of broadcasting in the 1950s. It ran from 1952-1959, and then was rebooted by creator/star Jack Webb for a 1967-1970 run.<sup>2</sup> *Dragnet* is often considered “the prototype of the television police drama,” the show that developed many basic elements such as the use of jargon, the emphasis on procedural, and the police partnership (D’Acci 1994:109).

The show stars Jack Webb as Joe Friday, who is assigned in each episode to a different division of the LAPD, be it Homicide, Narcotics, or Robbery. A few episodes had him and his partner working behind a desk, dealing with walk-ins and dispatching other officers to the scenes of various crimes that get reported. The crimes depicted, the opening voice-over states, are true; “only the names have been changed to protect the innocent.” Accompanying Friday on almost all his assignments is his partner Bill Gannon, played by Harry Morgan<sup>3</sup>. Together they slowly work their way through all the footwork involved in investigating a case, from interrogating witnesses to occasionally going undercover. The process is laborious, but not action-heavy. Friday and Gannon rarely even fire their guns; the one time

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<sup>2</sup> I watched the 1967 version, since it was easier to access than the original, and according to Jason Mittell, Jack Webb “refused to alter nearly any of the textual elements that had made *Dragnet* such a success in the 1950s” (Mittell 2004:149).

<sup>3</sup> In the 1950s version Friday had three different partners, sequentially.

Friday does shoot (and incidentally kill) a criminal, he spends most of the episode in front of the Shooting Board that will decide whether his actions were justified or not. Webb takes the viewers into the boring, nitty-gritty details of police-work. Friday and Gannon canvass neighborhoods, knocking on every door. When they search a house, Friday's voiceover narration explains that they and the other two officers on the case divide the house into quarters, each search one, and then switch when they're done. They repeat this process four times before they find the missing gun. Often, half of the facts of the case will be discovered off-screen and summarized in voiceover. I found Friday an astoundingly dispassionate protagonist; in the one episode that marks him as being too personally involved in a case ["The Big Gun," 1.15], the most he does is get grumpy and refuse to go home. After Gannon talks to him briefly about it, Friday's voiceover says, "Once in a great while an officer's knees bend. If they buckle, he's been on the job too long. Reiko Hashimoto was dead. It was our job to find out who made her that way. Bill was right. I smoked the cigarette and went home." End scene. After that, he's back on track.

According to Jason Mittell (2004), this was exactly what Webb wanted. *Dragnet* was developed "partly to present a realistic vision of police officers, eschewing the glamorized characterization typical of most film and radio crime dramas" (136). This unglamorous realist aesthetic encompassed the cinematography and the monotone used by most of the cops on the show, and was reinforced by the fact that the LAPD sanctioned each episode. In terms of characterization, it meant steering clear of personal lives and even emotional responses to the job. The main characters are not particularly charismatic, and they never take the law into their own hands; they are



one among many, tiny cogs keeping the justice system moving along. Viewers can't really identify with Friday and Gannon, because there's very little with which to identify. "This emotional distance emphasizes that it is the police *system*, not the individual policeman as human being, that functions as the authentic agent of justice" (Mittell 2004:137). When Friday doesn't react emotionally to a case, that's exactly the way the justice system should be working.

Although the deliberate pace, matter-of-factness, and lack of action and gunfights distinguished *Dragnet* from the other "cops-and-robbers" radio dramas of the 1940s, Rebecca Feasey (2008) notes that it is very similar to the British *Dixon of Dock Green* [BBC, 1955-1976] and other British and American shows that idealized local police officers. "These men were seen to uphold standards of honesty, decency and humanity in both their public and private lives" (81). They were just average men, doing their jobs to protect the American people. Episodes like "The Big Neighbor" [2.05] and "DR-06" [3.06] show them tied into their local communities, interacting with friends and neighbors. They are, in fact, very ordinary men, since Webb apparently didn't want either of the officers to develop a cult of personality that might have made them seem more than the typical police officer. The brief mentions or appearances of their families (Friday's partners are married, he is not) and lives outside of work "serve only to render officers as everyday people with average lives" (Mittell 2004:137).

### **Within the Post-War Context**

Cary Bazalgette (cited in D'Acci 1994) notes that in many American cop shows, the lead characters are made endearing through their idiosyncrasies, the gimmicks and

props with which they are associated. However, Webb did not need Friday to be endearing or gimmicky; he is the face of the police force, and accorded the appropriate gravitas. Gannon, Friday's partner and the frequent source of comic relief, is allowed his humanizing idiosyncrasies. His two notable personality traits are his bizarre food tastes — his favorite sandwich is cream cheese, garlic, and peanut butter on pumpernickel — and his interest in domestic matters. He lives in the suburbs with his wife Eileen and their two children, can competently diaper a baby and has very strong feelings about interior decoration, especially wallpaper. There is a running gag in "The Big Neighbor" [2.05] where Bill keeps correcting Joe about the names of various household items — telling him that it's a sofa, not a loveseat, or a chandelier rather than a light fixture. He is convinced that Friday needs to settle down with a wife and buy a house instead of an apartment; apparently, all Friday's partners on the original show shared a desire to set Friday up with various women.

Gannon is the breadwinner and the family man; he comes straight out of the ideology of the 1950s, when advertisers and popular magazines were stressing the value of family togetherness in the aftermath of the Depression and World War II. Lynne Segal (1990) mentions that the new family man existed at least as much in popular thought as he did in actuality, but the idea was that he "had returned from battlefield to bungalow with new expectations of the comforts and the pleasures of home" (3). Young couples were leaving behind kin networks in the more expensive city, moving to the suburbs in droves, and starting families. Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg (1988) note that members of the middle class were pursuing the 'companionate' model of family life, which in the 1920s had been largely restricted to

wealthier families. In the 1950s, the wife was still expected to be the emotional support of her husband and do the majority of the housework, but the companionate discourse of the period emphasized her status as a respected marital partner. Husband and wife live in loving harmony, like Gannon and his nearly telepathic connection with Eileen. (“I don’t even know why you bother with the telephone,” Friday tells him in wry amazement [“Public Affairs,” 3.06].)

The soldier — “The Big Fur Burglary” [1.09] does in fact mention that Gannon was in the Army — returns home and becomes the economic provider, although as part of the suburban companionate ideal he too was supposed to have some domestic obligations. One issue of *Esquire* told its readers, “Your place, Mister, is in the home, too, and if you’ll make a few thoughtful improvements to it, you’ll build yourself a happier, more comfortable, less back breaking world” (cited in Spigel 1992:97). The public/private gendered division of labor extended to the home, with men taking responsibility for the external spaces and home protection — locking up at night, fixing whatever broke, and working in the yard — while their wives took care of the long list of remaining, more nurture-minded chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Gannon, then, actually voluntarily takes on a more feminine role than the new family man. In addition to gardening (“You can’t do yard work when it’s muddy!” he condescends to Friday [“DR-05,” 3.02]) and his very bizarre home improvements, he also takes pride in his ability to competently change a diaper [“DR-05,” 3.02] and in his cooking skills, although the latter turn out to not stand up to his boasting [“The Weekend,” 4.17]. He is even more concerned with interior decorating than Eileen is; she doesn’t even notice that Friday has no wallpaper in his apartment,

but Gannon is very disturbed by this absence. In most cases, his excessive domestic involvement is represented as ridiculous and makes him the butt of the joke. His random monologues about things like blood sugar are also played for laughs. All his moments of solemnity are related to the individual cases. During the beats where Friday and Gannon are not talking about work, Gannon almost becomes an over-involved version of the archetypical 1950s suburban sitcom father — men like Ward Cleaver, who would disappear to some unspecified job but whose real work consisted of “mowing the lawn, fixing up the house, and engaging in long heart-to-heart talks with their children” (Mintz and Kellogg 1988:193). Gannon’s goofy musings liven up the episodes, which can otherwise get fairly dour, but his masculinity is made perpetually insecure by his over-involvement in domesticity and lack of self-awareness. As such, it’s hard to take him seriously.

It’s very easy to take Friday seriously, on the other hand, because “serious” is practically Friday’s entire characterization. He’s wry, sometimes, when listening to Gannon talk about lunch or his allergies, but otherwise he really has no quirks. This makes his voiceover more authoritative — as Mittell (2004) says, “he is the most reliable of all possible first-person narrators, with no visible flaws, biases, or even emotions” (140). It’s easier to think of him in terms of what he is not: he is not violent, racist, or interested in getting married. He dates occasionally and knows how to grill steak — competently, as compared to Gannon’s failed attempt to roast duck. (He has mastered the appropriately simple and masculine form of cooking, while Gannon over-invests in culinary matters by attempting a more elaborate meal and fails miserably.) His masculinity operates invisibly, in the way that straight white

masculinity is frequently considered the “default” masculinity, something that is normalized and does not draw attention to itself.

The main moments in which Friday is the object of attention rather than the window into the investigation are during his speeches, of which there is generally at least one per episode. Where Gannon gets comic digressions that typically relate to his personal life or activities, Friday’s monologues are all related to police work: correcting misconceptions of the police as racist, explaining the difficulties of the policeman’s job, moralizing about kids who turn to drugs and their families. (Episodes can, at times, sound like propaganda for the LAPD.) Because these speeches are one of the main ways for Gannon and Friday to express themselves, the common theme identifies Friday, essentially, as the Police Officer. As D’Acci (1994) puts it, “Joe Friday solidly embodied the figure of the completely dedicated cop—a character with ‘no personal life and no interests other than police work’” (109). In certain ways, he embodies what Segal (1990) describes as the other face of masculinity in the 1950s: “the old wartime hero, who put ‘freedom’ before family and loved ones” (20). In this case, instead of freedom, Friday is on the side of justice, and he literally puts upholding it before family; despite Bill’s nudging, he is never interested in settling down with a wife and kids — “Not just now” [“The Big Neighbor,” 2.05].

He embodies a version of what Kathleen Gerson (1993) calls “autonomous” masculinity; he has no interest in parenting and domesticity (“involved” masculinity), nor is his work a means of providing for his family (“breadwinning” masculinity). He works for the sake of the job itself. In the postwar era, such masculine autonomy

may have been more acceptable in fiction than in reality. Spigel (1992) and Mintz and Kellogg (1988) mention that unmarried adults in the era of the postwar domestic revival were seen as suspicious. Men and women were encouraged to find fulfillment within the family realm, an ideology known as domestic containment. “Fewer than one American in ten believed that an unmarried person could be happy. ... Failure to marry was typically associated with ‘homosexuality,’ ‘emotional immaturity and infantile fixations,’ ‘unwillingness to assume responsibility,’ the ‘narcissistic pursuit of career ambitions,’ and ‘deviant physical characteristics’ (Mintz and Kellogg 1988:180-1). Hugh Hefner and *Playboy* helped introduce the archetype of the playboy, which Spigel (1992) notes might have deflected suspicion of homosexuality away from bachelor men, but Friday isn’t a hedonistic, consuming male. Instead, he belongs to an older, literary tradition of the lone man, secure in his masculinity but without familial ties (Gerson 1993). Becoming the provider for a family was seen as one solution for the de-individualizing, emasculating nature of bureaucratic work. Interestingly, Friday could be seen to represent both an agreement with and a denial of that anxiety. He is indeed de-individualized, because Webb wanted him to represent the police as a whole. However, even within bureaucratic work, he is more unambiguously masculine than Gannon the breadwinner. The trope of the unattached cop has overwhelmed that of the married cop in the police genre; most TV cops are either divorced or have never been married. D’Acci (1994) suggests that their separation from women makes them worthier stand-ins for the law, as they epitomize a more pure, independent form of masculinity.

Friday, therefore, is a man devoted to his job, and yet he can be off-duty in a way that many of the officers and detectives in later shows never are. There are three episodes where the viewer sees Friday and Gannon's lives outside their jobs. In each of the episodes they have to deal with a variety of minor complaints from their neighbors, interrupting their relaxation time, before they're alerted to a crime and help to turn the perpetrator over to the on-duty authorities. After that, importantly, they go back to relaxing. The episodes take place after they've finished working on a case; they're not poring over evidence or constantly being called off to go solve a crime. Friday and Gannon will investigate if a neighbor reports something suspicious, because that's their duty and they would not want a crime to go unsolved, but they're not going to go out of their way to seek out wrongdoing. They're done for the day, "fully able to separate between their personal and professional selves," just as when they're at work, they're able to remain "emotionally detached from the drama due to the proper and accurate function of the criminal justice system" (Mittell 2004:137).

Their personal lives are further separated from their professional lives because the people they see at work aren't the people they see at home. Gannon makes a point of mentioning in one or two episodes that his partnership with Friday implies just how well they know each other and are comfortable accepting criticism from each other. "Joe knows what I mean. He's my partner," he says ["DR-06," 3.06], or "Come on, Joe, you don't have to kid me, I'm your partner" ["The Weekend," 4.17]. However, Gannon's relationship to his wife Eileen is far closer, as we discover when Friday is surprised by Gannon's near-telepathic ability to predict why Eileen is calling. Moreover, although Eileen is clearly fond of Friday, in "The Big Neighbor"

[2.05], the first of the at-home episodes, she mentions that they haven't seen each other in five months. When Gannon scolds Friday for not having noticed his interior decorating changes, Friday points out that although they've worked together for eight years, he's "only been in this house three times." Some contemporary police procedurals echo this dynamic, such as Dick Wolf's *Law & Order* franchise, which was very strongly inspired by *Dragnet* and follows the same basic pattern: episodic, very little character development, and focused on solving the case over personal matters. Other shows, however, have gone in almost the opposite direction. *Starsky and Hutch* was made only a few years after the second incarnation of *Dragnet* went off the air, and its titular characters lived out of each others' pockets, as I will explore in the following section.



## 2.

### Television Cops of the 1960s and 1970s

*Dragnet* was popular enough that Jack Webb only took it off the air so he could focus more attention on his new series *Adam-12* [1968-1975], but some viewers might have found Webb's portrayal of the honest local cop to be contrary to the context of the late 1960s. Mittell (2004) points out that it is overly simplified to paint the 1950s as tranquil and the 1960s as contentious and full of social rebellion, but as he continues, television viewers in the 1960s saw police departments in various cities acting as riot control. "By mid-1960s, the LAPD had distinguished itself as a model of paramilitary structure with a controversial underbelly of racism and corruption" (Mittell 2004:148). This was a drastic contrast to Friday and Gannon, who explained that police departments had a vested interest in reducing corruption and discrimination, that police brutality was overstated, and that many problems could be solved if citizens had a more trusting and open relationship with their local police force. TV representations of the police were changing, moving away from the romanticized community cops and towards something that might resonate more with the new status of the police.

Feasey (2008) notes that the new portrayal of police work was often less flattering than older police shows like *Dragnet* and *Dixon of Dock Green*. The policemen on the British show *Z-Cars* [1962-1978] were drunks and abusers, although in the end they did their work for the good of the community. Most of the popular American shows might not have made their heroes quite so flawed; rather, cop shows of the 1960s and 1970s were trying to be cooler, in hopes of attracting a younger audience (Rushkoff 1996). Aniko Bodroghkozy (2001) explores how Aaron

Spelling and ABC balanced *The Mod Squad's* [ABC, 1968-1973] ideological narratives, using the team of young, counterculture cops to draw in under-thirty viewers without alienating more conservative older viewers. This balancing act became a prototype for other shows in the early 1970s as a not-too-controversial way to lure younger generations back to TV, although Bodroghkozy argues that it had more success in comedies than dramas.

Mittell (2004) points out that in the US in the 1970s, a new form of the police procedural emerged and became dominant, one that focused more on the abilities of unique, charismatic police officers rather than the inevitable success of law enforcement as an entire system. In fact, this incarnation of the cop show “questions the efficacy of the system and procedures” (Mittell 2004:151), so that the hero is most successful when bucking his or her bureaucratic tethers. The wild/rogue cop fuses the cop’s badge and dedication to justice with the hardboiled detective’s willingness to step outside the law, in a setting that recreates the untamed frontier within an urban landscape. However, unlike film noir PIs or the urban cop-vigilantes of movies like *Dirty Harry* [1971], most TV cops are not aloof loners. They are sympathetic and part of some sort of functioning team, from partnerships to squad families to larger department ensembles (D’Acci 1994).

### ***Starsky and Hutch* [ABC, 1975-1979]**

“Paul [Michael Glaser, “Starsky”] and I decided early on that this show was not gonna be what the network and the producers decided it was gonna be about. They said it was gonna be two hard-hitting, street-wise, bachelor cops. ... But, this is the way we decided to approach it. We start with ordinary days, ordinary guys who really happened to like each other a lot, who happened to be cops, and we took off from there. And that's really where, how, how the show really gained its, its sort of, um, singular signature.”

- David Soul [Hutch] (*Word on the Street* 1999)

**The Show:** *Starsky and Hutch* is an episodic police procedural set in the fictional Bay City, California. It employs a half-and-half format, cutting between scenes of the investigators and scenes of the criminal of the week. There are only four recurring characters within the show. As the title implies, our heroes are the Homicide detectives David Starsky and Kenneth “Hutch” Hutchinson, who spend each episode driving around and solving crime in Starsky’s astoundingly flashy, red-and-white Ford Torino. (They often use this car even when they go undercover. Criminals in Bay City seem not to have picked up on this.) Captain Dobey gives them their cases and tries to keep them in check, although they’re equally prone to selectively ignoring his orders. At least once an episode, Starsky and Hutch also typically check in with Huggy Bear, their streetwise hipster friend with ties to most of Bay City’s criminal world. The show is fairly action-heavy, with plenty of car chases, fistfights, and shootouts. Their personal lives are also fairly action-heavy; they have a number of girlfriends or one night stands who disappear by the next episode.

But when Glaser and Soul talk about the show, they repeatedly say that the most important element was Starsky and Hutch’s friendship. The evolution of the opening credits, which are made up solely of brief clips from previous episodes, reflect Glaser and Soul’s emphasis on the ‘buddy’ part of ‘buddy cop.’ The season one credits are mostly clips from the pilot movie, and they almost entirely feature action sequences with Starsky and Hutch driving or running. The only two exceptions are a clip of Starsky and Hutch walking into a steam room wearing towels and holsters, and one of them completely drenched, getting out of a pool with their guns drawn. The season two credits feature the same action clips, but they have been cut down so that they

only take up about half of the minute-long credits. By the fourth season, the action sequences take up barely a fifth of the credits. The rest are Starsky and Hutch standing next to each other in various outfits, often laughing at each other. For the first three seasons, the title card plays over a freeze frame of the two heroes either in or next to a car; during the fourth season, it plays over a split screen of four separate scenes of the two of them together, including one where Starsky is dipping Hutch. The final clip of the season one credits is Starsky rolling out of an exploding car; the final clip of the credits for seasons two, three, and four is an extended sequence that ends in an explosion and Starsky falling into Hutch, making it look as if they're hugging.

Obviously, the opening credits can't describe every aspect of a series, but they're supposed to be evocative, a distillation of a show in a minute or less. The shift from action sequences to a more light-hearted focus on the two of them together, either performing (the odd undercover costumes, like them as cowboys or mimes) or getting physical, suggests that Soul and Glaser were not the only ones reevaluating the identity of the show. The credits go from an emphasis on the "cop" role to the "buddy" relationship.

### **Codependent Cops**

Starsky and Hutch freely admit in the pilot movie that they don't bother with the good cop/bad cop dichotomy. Instead of having "one guy who's folksy, who kinda wants the best for everyone," they're both "the other guy, the rough-em-up hardnose kinda guy" [1.00]. Their willingness to rough up suspects is a reversal from *Dragnet*, where Gannon and Friday frowned on any deviations from due process. Starsky and

Hutch, however, follow their own, extralegal code. “They let the bad guy go if they got good information from him. . . . This was different from cop shows, they looked the other way,” as Soul put it (*Word on the Street* 1999). They bribe snitches, beat up minor criminals, and sleep with the people they’re supposed to be protecting. They exist in a liminal space between the authority and legality of Captain Dobby and the shady connections of Huggy Bear, a space that conventionally used to be for private detectives rather than cops. Of course, as Feasey (2008) explains for the British show *The Sweeney* [ITV, 1975-1978], these dubious actions are all a means to an end, ultimately in the service of a greater justice. These “unorthodox and occasionally illegal methods seem justified as he [Regan of *The Sweeney*] routinely catches the villain of the piece in what was seen to be an increasingly lawless society” (Feasey 2008:82-3).

It was also an increasingly permissive society, although the show celebrates rather than criticizes this tendency. *Starsky and Hutch* has a relaxed view towards sex and single men, which is very different from the moral codes and compulsory domesticity of the 1950s. Starsky is single and Hutch is divorced, but both of them take rather more advantage of their bachelor status than Friday does. When they have one-night-stands, the narrative presents it as perfectly normal, both for them and the women involved. Of course, on the one hand, this made women more disposable and even less important to the storyworld, which may have been an easy way for male viewers to ignore the burgeoning growth of feminism. Michael Kimmel (1996) suggests that exclusion and escape are two common unconscious reactions when privileged groups see a threat to their privilege. We might see these responses

reflected in women's exclusion from the main narrative, except as femme fatales or girlfriends who die for the sake of making the main characters angst, and in the emphasis on male friendship within the show, enabling male viewers to escape to a fictional world where the focus is on interactions between men. On the other hand, the lack of concern over sexual activity fits in with the post-1960 shift in cultural values that Mintz and Kellogg (1988) describe, where marriage was no longer seen as necessary for well-being and sex outside of marriage was becoming more normalized. Happiness, in the ideology of expressive individualism that circulated over the 1970s, could be more self-centered, a byproduct of growth and self-realization rather than just hard work and familial responsibility.

Despite the growing importance of a focus on the self, the writers of *Starsky and Hutch* — like the writers of most episodic action series of the period — were not particularly inclined towards backstory or development, and so neither Starsky nor Hutch is particularly well-defined beyond a handful of character traits. Not even the fan devoted enough to write an unofficial overview of the show for non-viewers mentioned anything about their personalities in the individual character descriptions, sticking instead to the scant handful of details the show gives about their backgrounds before going into detail on their relationship. David Starsky is dark-haired, intense, and devoted to his car, the aforementioned striped Torino. Kenneth “Hutch” Hutchinson is blond, divorced, and health-conscious; the latter taste is displayed a few times by his presence at the gym, but mostly pops up in his tendency to go on cleansing fasts or eat things like sea kelp, which Starsky loudly disdains about as often as Hutch rolls his eyes at the Torino or Starsky's driving. Hutch is more

“highbrow” culture, while Starsky is “lowbrow”; when they’re assigned to guard a Russian ballerina, Hutch reverently recognizes her almost immediately, while Starsky watches her dance and says, “She’s got more moves than Muhammad Ali.”

Starsky, as a former inhabitant of Brooklyn, is also implicitly marked as Jewish (Paul Michael Glaser is of Jewish descent), but unlike many cross-ethnic pairings in action genres, he never falls into the sidekick role. He and the Minnesotan WASP Hutch are equal partners, balanced in how often they take charge, how often they’re the focus of the narrative, and how often they’re the butt of the joke. Their equality might be connected to what Jon Stratton (2009) describes as “Starsky’s assimilated behavior” (211), or the fact that by the 1970s, American Jews were considered white. If the frontier has become the savage city streets, then it is Huggy Bear who plays more of the “Tonto” role; he occupies a dual space as both a loyal friend and snitch to Starsky and Hutch and a native with strong connections to the criminal underworld, and is frequently a source of comic relief. (Huggy and Captain Dobby also portray two opposed faces of black masculinity, with Huggy as the unruly element and Captain Dobby as the rule-follower working for the system.) Although Huggy and Dobby are always on Starsky and Hutch’s side, they are secondary characters; it is Starsky and Hutch together against the world.

Hutch: “So, who do we trust, huh?”

Starsky: “Like always, me and thee.”

- “Death Ride,” 1.03

As I mentioned, they spend most of their time bantering — not speaking in monologues, as Friday and Gannon do, but making fun of each other about whatever subject is at hand, which has come to be a fairly common within the buddy cop subgenre. Episodes will also frequently stress their reliance on each other, versus

everyone else. There are numerous instances where one of them is in trouble — poisoned, wounded, deathly ill, facing murder charges, the target of a deranged cop-killer — and they must be each other’s bulwarks while solving the problem. A threat of danger to one of them means an immediate, often violent, reaction on the part of the other. Once, when Starsky thinks that Hutch has been killed during an investigation into a child kidnapping, he immediately rushes after the killers’ car and shoots it, causing it to explode in flames before they know where the child is. This moment is apparently so important that when the writers made a clip show episode at the end of the third season [“Partners,” 3.21], they chose that to be one of the seven clips they used. The other six clips, for the record, were: Hutch complaining about the absurdity of their call sign, “Zebra Three”; Starsky finding Hutch, who had been forcibly addicted to heroin, and refusing to let the beat cop on the scene follow protocol and report it to the department; a car chase featuring Hutch’s bad driving; Starsky punching Hutch in a bar as part of an act for a case; Hutch punching Starsky in the face when Starsky tells him that his dead girlfriend Gillian was a prostitute, and then breaking down crying in Starsky’s arms; the two of them drunk and considering other career options after the death of Starsky’s girlfriend Terry (dead or departed girlfriends were a frequent theme), and then opening gifts that she left them, including a letter saying, “Dearest Hutch, to you I entrust Ollie [her teddy bear] and David [Starsky]. Please love them both. Don’t let either of them change.” It’s theoretically possible to watch *Starsky and Hutch* without caring about their friendship, but given how frequently the text foregrounds it, I’m not sure why you would bother.



Huggy Bear: “A Starsky without a Hutch is like a pig without the pork.”  
- “A Body Worth Guarding,” 3.15

In more recent interviews, Soul and Glaser have suggested that *Starsky and Hutch* was the first of its kind. “We had *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* as a feature, but we hadn't seen that kind of pairing, male bonding, whatever you want to call it, in television,” Glaser said (*Word on the Street* 1999). While this is not entirely true — as Lynn Spangler (1992) points out, there is a history of TV comedies featuring intimate male friendship, notably *The Honeymooners* [CBS, 1955-1956], *The Andy Griffith Show* [CBS, 1960-1968], *The Odd Couple* [ABC, 1970-1975], and *M\*A\*S\*H* [CBS, 1972-1983], along with action series *I Spy* [NBC, 1965-1968], *Star Trek* [NBC, 1966-1969], and, although she doesn't mention it, *Route 66* [CBS, 1960-1964] and *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* [NBC, 1964-1968] — they may still be one of the first specifically *police* shows on television to play up the buddy aspect.

“Up to that point you had, ah, Jack Webb,” Glaser says in one interview (2004), as Soul echoes, “Just the facts, ma'am,” to suggest *Dragnet*.<sup>4</sup> In a different interview, Soul (2003) explains, “We were human beings first, cops second.” *Dragnet* emphasized the justice system over the individual; *Starsky and Hutch* focuses on the people behind the badge, their flaws, and their relationships. Starsky and Hutch's personal lives frequently get drawn into the case, unlike *Dragnet* but in a different way than *Miami Vice*, where, mentally or physically, Crockett and Tubbs can almost never shake the world of cops and criminals. As in *Dragnet*, Starsky and Hutch do have moments where it genuinely feels like they're off-duty — if a crime happened in front of them, they would stop it, but they're not fretting about work, either. When

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, although the catchphrase “Just the facts, ma'am” has lingered in popular cultural memory, it was never actually used on either version of *Dragnet* with that exact phrasing.

their work life comes home with them, it tends to be in the form of people. If they're not falling in love with a suspect or a witness, then their girlfriend of the week is almost inevitably going to get harmed by a vendetta-fueled criminal. They bring the personal to their work lives, and work then follows them home — both in the doomed girlfriends/vendetta-fueled criminal sense, as I mentioned, but also in the fact that Starsky and Hutch spend almost all their time together on the clock and off. Seventy-five percent, Hutch suggests in “Death in a Different Place” [3.06], although as commenter **merlthearl** says in a November 12, 2010, review of that episode, “with the after-hours socializing at the Pits and other places, the weekends playing basketball and going camping and fighting off Satanists, plus all that double-dating and taking naps at Hutch’s place, it’s more like ninety per cent.”<sup>5</sup> They even go so far as to buy a house together in season three. The professional relationship between partners has inextricably intertwined with the personal relationship between friends; the “buddy” meets the “cop.”

Glaser suggested a few times in 2004 that the show, and thus the central relationship, was so popular because "it was a very disillusioned time in our country. ... It was a time when people wanted to believe that someone else could be there for you” (Chicago Sun-Times). He links it to Vietnam. Spangler (1992) suggests that the relationship may have been part of a larger trend towards emphasizing intimacy and sensitivity in action shows in order to make them more appealing to women. (I’ll talk more about the network’s interest in attracting female viewers in the next section.) Of

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<sup>5</sup> Hutch: “Well, figure it out. In a five-day week, there are about eighty waking hours, right? ... We work, eat, and drink about twelve of those hours, right? That’s sixty hours a week, seventy-five per cent of the time we spend together and you’re not even a good kisser.”

- “Death In A Different Place,” 3.06.

course, according to the faux-documentary-style narration over the show's blooper reel, this emphasis led to Starsky and Hutch getting labeled "two French-kissing, primetime homos" by some critics. In the *Word on the Street* interview, Soul specifically mentions this as an insult, one of the "pot shots" taken at them. Even the show's violence and Starsky and Hutch's constant string of girlfriends, two traditional ways for men to prove their heteromascularity, could not completely defer suspicion. However, Spangler strongly doubts that the show would have been so popular if most people had interpreted their relationship as homoerotic. To be fair, *Starsky and Hutch* had a subculture of viewers who enjoyed the idea of Starsky and Hutch being in a relationship, but the relationship of queerness to institutions of authority would have been very charged at that time. The Stonewall Riots took place less than ten years previously; homosexuality was only removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1974, about a year before the first season came out.

The episode "Death In A Different Place" [3.06] shows that within the world of *Starsky and Hutch*, queerness was not an easy identity to bear in the 1970s. Captain Dobby mentions that his superiors have been receiving public pressure to have gay officers on the force, and, in the same breath, that they're not sure they want anyone to know that one of their finest lieutenants was gay because they don't want to have to give in to that pressure. In that episode, Starsky's murdered mentor turns out to have been gay; Starsky is a little disturbed by the fact that he never knew this, while Hutch, who is a step removed from the situation and has certain implicit privileges as a higher-class WASP, is unbothered. He even mentions to Starsky in the tag at the end of the episode that they spend enough time together for it to be questionable, "and

you're not even a good kisser," to which Starsky immediately responds, "How would you know?" In this the show is consistent with the buddy movies of the 1970s, which, according to Robin Wood (1986) might suggest a homosexual relationship between the main characters only to then vehemently disown it. On the other hand, that Starsky phrases the disavowal as a question gives it a much softer effect than the movies Wood discusses. This dance of suggestion and denial is a pattern that persists in contemporary shows like *Sherlock* [2010-], and I will explore it in more detail in my final section. However, it disappears completely in *Miami Vice*, which in general is more concerned with the relationship of the cops to the criminal underworld than their relationship to each other.

### 3.

#### **The 1980s and the Crisis of Network Television**

By the beginning of the 1980s, the Big Three — ABC, CBS, and NBC, then the only broadcast networks — were beginning to recognize that they were in trouble. Both Robert Thompson (1996) and John Caldwell (2000) note that broadcast television was facing an economic decline, one related to changing technology and new competitors. Cable television attracted smaller audiences than broadcast TV, but it was still pulling growing numbers of viewers, and especially affluent viewers, away from the networks. Remotes made it easier for viewers to change the channel when they were offended or bored or the show was on commercial break. VCRs gave homebodies the option to watch rented movies for their evening entertainment. Moreover, FOX premiered as a broadcast network in 1986, new competition for the previously unchallenged Big Three.

ABC, CBS, and NBC tried a number of different strategies to adjust to the changing industrial environment. They had used narrowcasting, to various degrees, since the 1970s — aiming at target audiences comprised of upscale, “quality” demographic groups. A program that drew a smaller ratings share but a large percent of that quality audience could potentially avoid cancellation. Beginning in the late 1970s, one of those target audiences was white, middle-class, working women. Eileen Meehan (2002) explains that prime time shows were traditionally typically male-oriented action genres focused on skilled professionals. TV schedulers assumed that men would control the remote, and advertisers were willing to pay more for the promise of male audiences. Networks and advertisers used talk shows and soap

operas to target women, who were thought to have jurisdiction over household purchases, during the daytime. However, with the increased numbers of working women in the 1960s and 1970s, advertisers could no longer assume that women would be at home with the television on during the day. Women also now had their own discretionary income, and many upscale households had multiple televisions and time-shifting technology like VCRs. Even if men still controlled the remote, women could tape the shows they wanted. Networks began to try and develop primetime dramas that would appeal to both men and women. *Dallas* [CBS, 1978-1991], for example, was a primetime soap that focused more on action than the daytime shows did. Producers of action shows began including more female characters. Some producers experimented by introducing melodrama and serialization, two elements with soap opera associations, into male-oriented shows (D'Acci 1994, Meehan 2002)<sup>6</sup>. The police drama *Hill Street Blues*, which appeared in 1981, had both relationship arcs and cases that stretched over multiple episodes. According to James Lyons, by 1984, episodic serials were the most popular or acclaimed shows on the lineup. Lyons (2010) quotes *Washington Post* TV reporter John Carmody, who was worried that NBC was going to crash and burn because none of the new shows on its fall schedule had continuing storylines (58). (For the record, that was the season NBC aired *Miami Vice*; needless to say, they hadn't made quite as dreadful a mistake as Carmody feared.)

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<sup>6</sup> I don't mean to suggest that women couldn't enjoy male-oriented shows; as Henry Jenkins (2006) shows in his study on female fans of *Star Trek* (1966-1969), women were, and still are, capable of finding many different types of pleasure in the media they consume, whether that pleasure comes from the action, the characters, or some complex combination of factors. Taste, although at least somewhat culturally constructed, is not dictated by gender, and television is polysemic; different viewers will watch and see entirely different things. However, actual viewers are not the same as the network conception of audiences, which tends to be far simpler.

Genre-blending and serialization were part of what Thompson (1996) refers to as the emergence of the “quality” genre, in writer-based shows like *Hill Street Blues* [NBC, 1981-1987] and *St. Elsewhere* [NBC, 1982-1988] that experimented with traditional generic forms. (Notably, several of the *Miami Vice* writer-producers had previously worked on *Hill Street Blues*.) Caldwell (2000) points to a related tactic: televisual spectacle or what he calls excessive style. New video and sound technology helped create a context that allowed stylistic exhibitionism. Some shows remained with a conventionally restrained style. Others ranged from what Caldwell describes as the high cinematic form of televisuality, with high production values, narrative excess, and Hollywood-style cinematography, to the low, videographic form, which celebrated self-conscious effects. The creators of *Miami Vice* chose to experiment with style, from Mann’s cinematic aesthetic and the darks-and-pastels palette to the music video-style montages.

### ***Miami Vice* [NBC, 1985-1989]**

Crockett: “Listen, man, I know what you’re in to. I’ve spent the last ten years doing it. Living, eating, breathing, getting in so deep that you don’t even know which end is up. It takes its toll.”

- “Heart of Darkness,” 1.02

**The Show:** Miami, apparently, is more rife with dirty crooks, dirty cops, and dirty money than with tourists and women in bikinis. Every week, filmed in bright colors and stereo sound, Detectives Sonny Crockett and Rico Tubbs try to contain the city’s major weapon smuggling, drug dealing, and prostitution operations, with the help of the rest of the team at the Organized Crime Bureau (OCB) — Detectives Gina Calabrese and Trudy Joplin; Detectives Switek and Zito, the comic relief until Zito’s

death in the third season; and the indomitable Lieutenant Martin Castillo, he of few words and mysterious-yet-dramatic backstory, who can elicit more obedience with a single glare than Captain Dobby managed with all his yelling in four seasons of *Starsky and Hutch*.

Episodes of *Miami Vice* generally show viewers the crime of the week, in the process providing a few scenes of the evildoers in their natural habitat. (For make no mistake, the criminals here are almost always Very Bad People, and generally part of Very Big and Very Bad Criminal Organizations.) This frees up both audience and creator energy: except in cases where there's a leak in the department, the show doesn't have to build up to revealing whodunit. Instead of focusing on the mystery, episodes can spend more time developing tension for the takedown and lingering over the way the sunlight plays across Crockett's face as he broods on his boat for long stretches of time. (That's facetious. Sometimes he broods in his car.) The show is about the action, the style, and the way that the characters react to the week's drama, as much as it is about the crime itself.

While the weekly plots technically revolve around the Vice crew trying to take down the bad guy of the week, the show itself circles around what Jeremy Butler (2010) calls the "narrative problematic," the recurring dramatic theme that pops up in different forms from week to week. Butler locates *Miami Vice*'s narrative problematic in the tension between the characters' real jobs and their flashy undercover lives. Will Crockett and Tubbs continue working on the side of law and order, or will they give in to the temptation of the luxurious criminal life? James Lyons (2010) suggests that in later seasons, this problematic was sometimes projected onto one-off characters



rather than Crockett and Tubbs themselves, but the allure of the underworld remains an overarching theme of the entire series.

I find it suggestive that the narrative problematic of *Miami Vice* is character-based, while the repeating dilemma of *Dragnet* and *Starsky and Hutch* is best characterized as action-based — “Who did it?” or “How will the main characters solve the crime?” This is not to say that pre-1980s narratives couldn’t be character-based or that later ones can’t be action-based, but the emphasis in *Vice* seems to reflect the show’s connections to character-centric MTM Studios and to the broader tendency to combine action drama with character drama. Butler (2010), meanwhile, sees it as a reflection of showrunner Michael Mann’s neo-noir cinematic aesthetic. Like *Miami Vice*, noir takes place in a shifting universe of moral ambiguity, where appearances are deceiving, identities are rarely stable, and the past — Crockett’s late wife, the vengeance that brought Tubbs to Miami, Castillo’s DEA work during the Vietnam War — frequently haunts or intrudes upon the present. Allegiances are fluid and must constantly be reestablished; many of their former coworkers turn out to be crooked, while others seem to have gone bad but later redeem themselves through sacrifice. Such instability is only to be expected when, like hardboiled detectives, Crockett and Tubbs must straddle two worlds, taking on the behavior of their enemy in order to capture him.

Along with the noir elements, however, Jon Stratton (2009) argues that *Miami Vice* reproduces the 1980’s contemporary conservative ideology of the United States as under threat at its borders from the lawless, chaotic, foreign world beyond. Stratton’s analysis echoes a version of frontier ideology, particularly with his frequent

comparisons of Crockett and Tubbs to the similar white hero/ethnic sidekick pairing of the Lone Ranger and Tonto (who in turn evoke James Fenimore Cooper's Hawkeye and Chingachgook). Crockett, Tubbs, and their fellow detectives must live on the borderlands, protecting civilization from the incursions of the implicitly racialized violence (most of the drug dealers are Hispanic). Miami was an appropriate setting for this represented conflict, between the Liberty City riots in 1980, the tensions from the 1980 Mariel boatlift that brought Cuban citizens to the US, and its growing reputation as a port for cocaine smugglers. Stratton mentions that Hispanic immigrants were popularly seen as responsible for the influx of the cocaine trade and organized crime. *Starsky and Hutch* dealt mostly with local crime; *Miami Vice* went international. Episodes expressed these anxieties, but did not resolve them. For a mostly-episodic procedural, cases rarely seem to wrap up neatly at the end of forty-eight minutes. Even if they manage to catch or kill the bad guy of the week, which isn't always a given, it frequently costs a number of lives — especially in, although not limited to, the Dick Wolf-led third season — or with the reminder that someone else will just step in to fill his position. The main characters are attempting to dam a waterfall of evil organizations, using only a handful of twigs and some wiretaps.

Most of the government agencies mentioned are corrupt, inefficient, or concerned with politics over grounded reality, a common theme in 1980s action movies like the *Rambo*, *Lethal Weapon*, and *Die Hard* series. Fred Pfeil (1995) describes these as “male rampage movies.” The working-class heroes of these movies, who are often stranded in a harsh environment with no support from the authorities that are supposed to help them, will ignore procedure, pit themselves

almost singlehandedly against corrupt institutions and powerful criminals, and win. Sometimes, as in *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*, they have the help of a more domesticated black sidekick. They do this not for the sake of the state or legal institutions, but out of an overriding sense of justice rooted in the hero's moral code and personal motives. Pfeil (1995) locates the genre's pleasures within the anxieties produced by the supposed "crisis of masculinity" of the 1980s that was inspired by social changes such as deindustrialization, "the increased presence of women in professional positions in the national workforce [and] the erosion and decline of phallic-patriarchal powers, in both the national state and the family home" (26). In male rampage films, state powers were useless, women were incapacitated and required rescuing, and the most important relationships were formed between men. Like the frontiersmen-outlaws Richard Slotkin (1992) describes, these heroes are 'real' men, coming from "a culture that placed personal honor, proud 'manhood,' and an intuitive code of 'justice' above the rationalism and restrictions of civilized law" (147).

Brenda: "You and Tubbs been partners long?"

Crockett: "Not too long."

Brenda: "Is it true that it's like being married?"

Sonny: [amused] "Well, not exactly. I mean, they don't give us blood tests."

Brenda: [laughs] "No, I mean, that your partner comes before anybody else."

Crockett: "On the job."

Brenda: "Off the job?"

Crockett: "I can't remember the last time I was really off the job."

- "Nobody Lives Forever," 1.20

### **Perpetually Undercover**

Although in theory, both Sonny Crockett and Rico Tubbs are the main characters of *Miami Vice*, the one who tended to get the most attention — both textual and extra-textual, if the favored fan pairings are any indication — was Crockett, almost

perpetually undercover as Sonny Burnett. And in *Miami Vice*, even during the seasons where the characters go undercover in fewer than half the episodes, it's hard to separate the detectives from their undercover personas. Crockett and Tubbs wear fashionable clothes and drive beautiful, expensive convertibles. Their conspicuous consumption reflects the increasing prevalence of stylish, consumer-oriented masculinity in the 1970s and 1980s, something that was encouraged by marketers (Stratton 2009:198). However, the clothes, the cars, and Crockett's houseboat used to belong to criminals who got busted. They're confiscated goods, provided by the OCB to help Crockett and Tubbs with their cover identities. Crockett and Tubbs' lives are on loan; they are literally driving, wearing, and living —performing — in their jobs. When Crockett gets married, he has to do it under the name of Burnett because his wife is a high-profile musician and it would blow his cover. Even Lt. Castillo, who never goes undercover, is in a sense acting the role of the taciturn boss, keeping his turbulent past hidden under a cool exterior. The show's construction of characters and masculinity, then, is intricately tied to both workaholism and performativity. (This may have appealed to "yuppie" viewers, who stereotypically were conspicuous consumers with an obsessive work ethic.)

James "Sonny" Crockett, alias Sonny Burnett, is a style-conscious Vietnam veteran, former football player, and Southern good ol' boy who lives at a marina with his crocodile, Elvis. He's been married twice — first to Caroline, who divorced him before the first episode but pops up a few times over the course of the series with their son Billy, and once to Caitlin Davies, the aforementioned rockstar. He meets and marries Caitlin in a single episode during the fourth season; a few episodes later she's

dead, murdered (while pregnant) by a man who blamed Crockett for the death of his girlfriend. For the record, this death had occurred while the man, who had also been in prison for killing Crockett's previous partner, was on a killing spree after he tricked Crockett into releasing him from prison. Sonny Crockett catches very few breaks. It's no wonder that the Miami Vice Wiki says, "His 24-7 undercover lifestyle, long string of tragic romances, and the vast number of characters he failed to save made Crockett an impressive well of manpain." Sometimes, rarely, he even discusses that manpain with other people. He's a tough guy — he takes dangerous undercover jobs and faces down certain death without losing his cool, always comes up shooting, and has a pet alligator, for crying out loud — but he's a tough guy with feelings.

Of course, those feelings are tempered by the fact that, like many other cop heroes, he's never off the job. He's not a suburban husband, like the sensitive men of *thirtysomething* [ABC, 1987-1991], or even *Dragnet's* Bill Gannon; in fact, the few times he tries to fill that role, he fails miserably. When Brenda, one of the many girlfriends who passes through his life throughout the series, asks him why he and Caroline got divorced, Crockett muses, "I guess my checks and balances weren't working too well. This town can really do a number on you sometimes" ["Nobody Lives Forever," 1.20]. Caroline herself uses slightly stronger language. The tension of being a cop's wife wasn't what led to their divorce, she tells him in the pilot; it was the way that the Vice detectives never seemed entirely separate from the criminals they investigated. "You're all players, Sonny. You get high on the action" ["Brother's Keeper," 1.01]. He can't turn off his job and go home; it's always lingering in the corners of his mind, reeling him back in — and it's an effort, sometimes, for him to

keep from falling into his role. Here again we find echoes of both the noir detective and the frontiersman, who must in a sense become the enemy they fight.

Half of the policework on *Miami Vice* consists precisely of policemen purposefully acting like criminals in order to catch them. My notes from the first few episodes, before I really had a sense of how the series was going to unfold, are littered with variations on a theme. “Wow, Sonny just pulled a gun on that one dude... Oh, wait, he’s still undercover.” They participate in drug deals, wave guns around, help out bad guys; short of something like murder, they are allowed astonishingly ample slack. It is only their status as The Law, and their presumed goal of eventually taking down the bad guys or preventing future crimes that separates them from the criminals they investigate. And other cops cross that line: “You know, buddy, you got a leak in your department the size of the East River,” Tubbs tells Crockett in part two of the pilot, and they are constantly discovering dirty cops, or cops who may have turned. Arthur Lawson and Crockett’s old friend Evan Freed are questionable right up until the end, when they make the right decision at the last minute and then die very soon after. Of course, while Crockett and Tubbs come under suspicion a few times — Crockett for graft, Tubbs for rape — they are always completely innocent. They, then, take the top position in “a hierarchy of invisible layers of other police—perhaps ‘better’ and more ‘noble’ police—whose function it is to police the police” (Tausig 2006:182), romantic substitutes for Internal Affairs, who on cop shows are almost uniformly portrayed as bureaucratic assholes. The people who are paid to police the police can’t be trusted, so the duty falls to our most heroic souls, tarnished and tempted though they may be. Even when they themselves do not seem tempted by the

lifestyles of the rich and criminal, they are perpetually on the lookout, able to trust few beyond their immediate compatriots. And, as Michael Taussig (2006) puts it, “policeman—as with the ministry of religion or a medical doctor, for instance—is more than just a job, so that even off duty one is still on duty” (182). It is either the lure of the underworld or the call of justice, but it is perpetually there, keeping Crockett from settling fully into domestic life.

There is one occasion where the opposite happens. In “Nobody Lives Forever” [1.20], Sonny is seduced by domesticity, spending every non-working moment with the beautiful Brenda, his girlfriend of the episode. She’s more of a yuppie than a suburbanite, but either way, as Tubbs points out to Brenda, “it’s like a fantasy. Ask myself, ‘What is a street cop like Sonny Crockett doing in a fantasy?’” Tubbs suggests that the reality of police work doesn’t mesh with Brenda’s clean, well-decorated world. He is primarily talking about the mundane aspect, the “department softball games and barbecues,” for which Brenda rebuffs him: “Let me see if I have this straight. Sonny’s a middle-class dolt, I’m a tasteful but shallow jetsetter, and you’re God?” But Tubbs ends up being vindicated — not by the issues that Tubbs brings up, but by the incompatibility of their immediate priorities and Sonny’s inability to balance love and work. His distraction begins to detract from his work, culminating in him accidentally sleeping in, while Tubbs has to go out alone and subsequently gets beaten up. Whenever Crockett tries to have a comfortable home life, something goes wrong: he’s too involved in his work when he should be at home (as he implies for Caroline, and as we see to an extent with Caitlin, although as a

rockstar she does understand the demands of a high-powered career), assassins come after his family, or he is distracted by his home life when he should be at work.

And as we see when shots get fired while Crockett is on the phone with Brenda, or when Tubbs shows up, bruised and bloodied, on Brenda's immaculate doorstep, there is an implicit value judgment going on. The civilians depending on Detective Crockett are in physical danger, ergo they get priority over the private individuals depending on Sonny Crockett the husband/father/lover. Brenda can be late for a meeting when Crockett wants to talk to her; Crockett *cannot* be late to meet Tubbs, when Brenda thinks he needs to sleep in. Crockett's career-life is not only more important than domestic life, it is more important than other people's jobs.

This idea is hardly unique to *Miami Vice*. Feasey (2008) says that "making a sacrifice in the private sphere for the good of the professional role appears to be a structuring theme in the police and crime genre" (84). It's not necessarily uncomplicated, or presented in an uncomplicated way; Crockett talks about his lack of "checks and balances" as a failure, something related to the unstable mental condition brought about by working such a dizzying job. At the same time, Crockett could have quit, or transferred departments, if his life outside of work were really more important to him than anything else. Ultimately, though, he is the hero devoted to justice, no matter how much of a struggle it may sometimes be. In the end, the only women who stick around are the ones who work with him; the rest leave, are traitors, or end up as victims. Tubbs and Castillo have the same romantic issues, which Butler (2010) suggests is another connection to the noir genre. The noir hero doesn't belong in the aboveground world of comfortable home lives, which in Michael Mann films



are the lives within the boundaries of the state and the law (Stratton 2009). Moreover, because the noir/borderland hero brings the instability of his world with him, he “can destabilize that world simply by his presence,” and so must remain in more liminal territories with only the company of his fellow cops (Butler 2010:77).

The predicament of these neo-noir heroes also resonates with Gerson’s study of men in the 1980s, and the three different trajectories she found they were following: the traditional breadwinner masculinity, which as Pfeil (1995) points out was becoming increasingly problematized by the growing numbers of working women and the seeming lack of jobs for men; involved masculinity, where men focused less on their jobs in order to spend more time at home taking care of their children; and autonomous masculinity, in which men remained independent of family and focused their attention instead on work and friendships. Crockett tries to be an involved father, as we see in the pilot when he talks about how important it is for him to be in his son’s life; however, in the end he can’t even be a breadwinner. He’s committed to the work for its own sake, rather than for the sake of providing for his family. His true self, as Caroline acknowledges, is autonomous of family. He does not prove his worth by how involved a father he is or by how well he provides for either of his wives, but — like the other characters of *Miami Vice* — by his work in the (male) public world. The (female) private world is a distraction or a weak spot. And this recreates a dynamic that, according to Marisa Silvestri (2012), occurs in the real world of the police. “Competitive presenteeism” is an important factor for promotions and credibility, as it is for many corporate or otherwise high-status careers. Officers must be seen to work long hours in order to be seen as committed, something that conflicts

with the ability to have a family. As one informant put it, “there is something about policing that doesn’t sit well with the existence of families; maybe this is masculinity at its worst” (Silvestri 2012:247). However, *Miami Vice* seems to suggest that you can’t reject life outside of work to the extent of closing yourself off from other people. Artie Lawson [“Heart of Darkness,” 1.02] goes crazy because he’s been left for too long in his isolated undercover position. You need human contact, people who know you outside of the act you’re putting on, or you may literally lose all sense of self.

After his wife Caitlin is killed in the fourth season, Crockett is in an accident that makes him lose his memory. Because he’s undercover when it happens, the people around him inform him that he is Sonny Burnett, criminal. Understandingly, the rest of the team at the OCB are more than a bit confused about not hearing from the previously upstanding Detective Crockett. The arc stretches from the end of the fourth season to the beginning of the fifth, when Crockett regains his memory just in time to shut down the drug smuggling empire Burnett has manipulated his way into taking over. The entire arc is great for a number of reasons, including the fact that one of the lesser villains ends up being unexpectedly killed by a panther, but for the purposes of this particular discussion, perhaps the most salient point is that Burnett specifically says that he doesn’t work with a partner. “With partners there’s always that ugly moment where you gotta say, ‘one for me, one for you.’” [“Hostile Takeover,” 5.01] While he does end up accepting the assistance of transportation expert Cliff, Cliff eventually ends up trying to sabotage him and take his position.

But when the appearance of a disguised Tubbs starts to prompt flashbacks, they're almost all to emotional relationships. Tubbs mentioning marriage brings up a shot of Caitlin's face and a longer memory of Tubbs hugging Crockett in congratulations. A boy and his father on a boat leads to a scene of Billy, his son; Tubbs being angry in "Evan" [1.20] that Crockett won't open up to him ("You want to drop the friendship and just be partners, so be it!"), and another clip from the same episode of Tubbs reassuring Crockett after Crockett finally does unload his guilt; Caitlin and Crockett at their wedding. When Tubbs tries to get through to him at the end of "Hostile Takeover," Crockett remembers Tubbs in the car with him, saying, "I love you." After he regains his memory and begins his slow trek back towards OCB headquarters, he keeps watching friends: two guys throwing around a football, old men playing board games in the park. As he goes to rejoin the white hats, he seems to be remembering the friendships that he came so close to throwing away. Or the friendship, specifically, since Tubbs is the only person from Crockett's flashbacks in "Hostile Takeover" and 5.02, "Redemption in Blood," who is still an active presence in his life. Caitlin is dead, and Billy is in another state.

In "Redemption in Blood," when Tubbs coldly rebuffs the desperate-for-redemption Crockett, he prefers to emphasize the partnership aspect: "We were friends. No, we were more than that. Partners. You tried to kill me, man. Twice."<sup>7</sup> Partners are more than friends; partners rely on each other. With the impossibility of

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<sup>7</sup> Yes, Crockett shot him. Or at least shot at him; at the end of "Hostile Takeover," Crockett/Burnett flashes back to Tubbs telling him "I love you," and we cut to the outside of the building and hear shots fired. I suspect we're supposed to wonder who did the shooting — whether it was Crockett; Tubbs, who said earlier in the episode he would take down Crockett/Burnett if he needed to; or a new person. At the beginning of "Redemption in Blood," we see Crockett flash through a few other memories and realize that Tubbs is a cop, wherein he shoots at the wall as Tubbs runs up the stairs. It's a matter of interpretation whether the flashbacks throw him off or he deliberately misses.

the domestic life but the need for mental and physical support comes the reliance on the partner, who not only understands the difficulties of the job but is also there in life-or-death situations. And here we come full circle to the quote at the beginning of this section: Crockett says that his partner only comes before everyone else when he's on the job, but he is *never off the job*. Until he retires, Tubbs is always going to be the most important person in his life.

Which leads us to Rico Tubbs, alias Rico Cooper, the other male lead. Tubbs is a New York beat cop in the armed robbery division; he comes to Miami under the name of his brother Rafael, a vice detective, who was murdered by a drug dealer. Tubbs came for revenge, not caring that he'd burned most of his bridges in New York by going AWOL; he and Crockett clash at first, but at the end of the two-part pilot he ends up with a job offer. By the sixth episode, when he'd only been there a month, he was already going to bat for Crockett's integrity, despite the scorn of the investigating IA officer.<sup>8</sup> In a nutshell, then, that is Tubbs: loyal and for the most part easy-going — and generally less emotionally entangled or prone to brooding than Crockett — he is prone to reckless behavior when in mourning, whether it is an unsanctioned revenge spree for his brother or suicidal missions after his girlfriends die.

However, as my stepdad said when I brought up Tubbs, “Yeah, but he was really an afterthought to Crockett.” I can't say he's entirely wrong; at times Tubbs really does come off more as someone for Crockett and his manpain to play off, someone to be laidback when Crockett is grouching, or to coolly investigate other officers when

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<sup>8</sup> Granted, Crockett's integrity is apparently easy to ascertain upon short acquaintance. Lt. Castillo, who was introduced in that same episode and did not seem easily impressed, backs up Crockett after having only read his file.

Crockett sometimes gets snappish at the very thought. He may be less a sidekick, perhaps, than a foil. According to the *Miami Vice* wiki, some fans even derisively referred to the Crockett-heavy fourth season as “The Don Johnson Show,” implying that Tubbs had practically been relegated to the status of the other supporting characters — the dark-skinned sidekick so prevalent in frontier narratives and male rampage movies.

Tubbs is black and Hispanic; the show barely mentions it, although he does often go undercover with a Caribbean accent. Textually, without viewer interpretation, Tubbs’s race becomes little more than something that visually distinguishes him from Crockett, like his penchant for wearing suits instead of the loose pale jackets and pastel t-shirts that Crockett favors. However, historically, and especially post-WWII, the police force has operated and publically been seen to operate as a force of white power frequently used to subordinate black civilians. “The cultural image of armed white men, whether as agents of state power or as vigilantes, attacking men of colour is as familiar as a Western movie or the beating of Rodney King” (Ray 2012:117). And yet, as scholars like Lyons and Pfeil point out, the 1980s were filled with black and white buddy cops. In the male rampage movies, the white hero invigorated the domesticated black partner, while the black partner brought the white hero back into the family fold, curbing his self-destructive behavior. This is akin to David Greven’s (2009) concept of the two heroes of the western: one the social outsider, and the other the embodiment of marriage and the social order (131). Tubbs isn’t at all domestic, unlike *Die Hard*’s Powell or *Lethal Weapon*’s Murtaugh; Crockett has been married twice, and Tubbs, as far as we know, has never been married. However, in episodes

like “Evan” [1.21], he does provide a safe space for Crockett to open up about his past, and he is the one who helps bring Crockett’s memory back in the fifth season.

However, Crockett also pulls Tubbs back from the brink while they’re working, preventing him from going on his suicide missions. When Tubbs suggests the reverse — that Crockett might want to rethink whatever reckless plan he’s come up with — he eventually ends up going along with Crockett. Stratton (2009), referring to Christopher Ames, suggests that the interracial buddy duo is a way to purge American historical guilt by having “dominant white Anglo American and a subordinate African American working in harmony and friendship together” (213). As Lyons (2010) points out, any sense of politics or black cultural consciousness has been erased. However, Lyons also notes that although Jacquie Jones observes that in most cases “the buddy formula tends to either deny or demonize black sexuality” (9), Tubbs is presented as an attractive man and has a number of romantic liaisons, most of which are at least equal to Crockett’s in emotional trauma. Nor is he a joke figure, only there for comic relief. Switek and Zito fill that role instead. Tubbs’s unhappy memories are shown with the appropriate solemnity and slow-motion flashbacks. Perhaps because of his fundamentally happy nature, the fact that he has been working Vice for a shorter time (although just as long in terms of dead girlfriends), or the lack of focus on him as compared to Crockett, his burnout and eventual aggressive retirement from the OCB doesn’t seem quite as intense as Crockett’s, but it is dramatic nonetheless. After all, when I say “aggressive retirement,” I mean that upon realizing that a criminal was being saved by the US government not so he could inform upon other drug runners but because of the information he had about

government officials, Crockett and Tubbs shoot down the plane containing this criminal and several federal agents. Then they retire.

That's the end of the series, their emotional arc, all of it. In *Due South*, Fraser and Ray Kowalski dogsled off into the Canadian sunset; Crockett and Tubbs quit, both with apparently no desire to work in law enforcement again, and Crockett gives Tubbs a ride to the airport. They split in different directions, Tubbs to the north and Crockett to the south, without mentioning whether or not they'll see each other again. With the end of their jobs comes the end of their partnership; what will happen to their friendship remains ambiguous.

## 4.

### *Due South* [CBS/CTV, 1994-1996, 1997-1999]

Fraser Sr.: “Partnership is like a marriage, son. Give and take, up and down, who left the empty butter dish in the fridge. . . It isn't easy.”

Fraser: “No, it isn't.”

Fraser Sr.: “Buck Frobisher and I were a team, maybe the best team the North has ever known. One day we fell out and it all but destroyed us.”

Fraser: “What did you do?”

Fraser Sr.: “We swallowed our pride for the greater good. Someone's using a brave ship's name for an evil purpose, and you've got to stop them. You need the Yank. Swallow the pride, son.”

- “Mountie on the Bounty, part I,” 3.12

**The Show:** “My name is Constable Benton Fraser of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I first came to Chicago on the trail of the killers of my father, and for reasons that don't need exploring at this juncture, I have remained, attached as liaison with the Canadian Consulate.” Fraser repeats this line, or some variation on this line, in almost every episode of the third and fourth season of *Due South*.<sup>9</sup> Diegetically, it allows him to explain why an excessively polite Canadian in a bright red uniform is running around downtown Chicago solving crime with an American cop. Nondiegetically, it was actor/writer/producer Paul Gross's compromise with network executives who wanted him to put an explanatory précis in the opening credits. What could have been a matter-of-fact explanation instead became an evolving running gag within the show, getting funnier and funnier even as it pointed out just how absurd the show's premise was.

*Due South* is a buddy cop show. It's also a fish-out-of-water story, an American-Canadian satire, and a comical piece of magical (sur)realism. As I mentioned earlier,

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<sup>9</sup> In the US, it aired as three seasons; in Canada it aired as four. I've chosen to go with the Canadian episode numbers because I think that “Mountie on the Bounty I & II” [3.12-13] makes sense as a season finale.



Fraser comes to Chicago while investigating the murder of his father Bob Fraser, a legendary Mountie. Bob's death has been filed as a hunting accident, but Fraser is as tenacious as Diefenbaker, his half-deaf half-wolf; once he picks up a scent, he follows it until the bitter end. The case has been turned over to the Chicago police and landed on the desk of Ray Vecchio. Although Fraser and Vecchio initially get off on the wrong foot, Fraser quickly inspires Vecchio's affection and loyalty, so much so that Vecchio follows Fraser back to Canada without prompting in order to help him out. Fraser eventually discovers that Bob was investigating the creation of a dam that would create hundreds of jobs but destroy the local environment, and another Mountie — one of Bob's best friends — killed him to keep him from revealing the secret. Fraser's dual dedication to nature and justice demands that he reveal the cover-up, but arresting a respected Mountie doesn't win him friends among his colleagues. His boss kindly suggests that he might want to stay in Chicago, since at least someone, in the person of Ray Vecchio, wants him there. All of these events occur during the pilot movie. Throughout the rest of the first two seasons, the basic plot of each episode involves Fraser, Vecchio, and Diefenbaker investigating whatever crime they happen to stumble across. Halfway through the first season, the ghost of Bob Fraser begins to show up occasionally to provide a great deal of largely unwanted advice. (Both Paul Haggis, the original showrunner, and Paul Gross, the star and eventual writer/producer, claim credit for having insisted that Gordon Pinsent, who played Bob Fraser, return to the show in some capacity. It seems that the ghost of Fraser past was not in the show's original concept, then, but it quickly became an intrinsic part of *Due South*.)

CBS cancelled the show twice, at the end of the first and second seasons. The show was saved through luck, strong fan support, CBS coming in third place in the ratings war, and the interest of international broadcasters. However, the second-season cancellation seemed final enough that, among other things, David Marciano couldn't return as Ray Vecchio. Instead, Callum Keith Rennie came on as Ray Kowalski. Kowalski, we learn at the beginning of the third season, is pretending to be Ray Vecchio while Vecchio is undercover with the mob. Kowalski and Fraser have a slightly different dynamic than Fraser and Vecchio, but otherwise episodes work in the same way as they did in the first two seasons. There are dramatic and poignant moments, like Fraser grieving over his father's death, or Fraser and Vecchio (the original) trying to mend their relationship after Fraser's criminal ex-flame Victoria has wreaked havoc in both their lives. There are also action scenes that end with an entire group of Mounties parachuting into an ice field while "O Canada" faintly plays in the background. The show's press release perfectly describes it as "fanciful flights of adventures hallmarked by revelations of character and the not-quite-camp" (Pearson 2000:124). *Due South* is frequently absurd (just see the entire sequence where Fraser and his boss have an entire conversation in semaphore [2.17]), but it's self-conscious of its own absurdity.

According to Paul Haggis, the original showrunner, *Due South* came about because then-president of CBS Jeff Sagansky suggested that Haggis (who is Canadian) make "a series about a Mountie or a trapper or somebody from way up north who comes to big city USA," an idea which Haggis found incredibly dumb.

And then the thought hit me -- what if I turned all of their expectations upside down? They want this superhero kind of guy, what if I make him both a hero and incredibly human? And then I thought of all those great movies and serials I saw at the movies in my youth ...

and I remembered Sgt. Preston and his wonderdog Yukon King, and thought -- these guys wouldn't last two seconds in big city USA -- unless everything thing they thought and said, everything they believed in, truth, honor, compassion, civility, offering a helping hand to your enemy...what if they all actually worked... And wouldn't that drive a big city cop just crazy? (Haggis 1999)

*Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* was an American radio serial and TV show about a Mountie who joined the force to find his father's killers and solved crimes in the wilderness with the help of his trusty husky. Haggis also mentions that they originally wanted the jaded city-smart cop to be Native American or Hispanic, as a play on the racial codes of the Tonto archetype. The noble savage native to the wilderness becomes the cynical, civilized city-dweller, while the hero comes from the backwoods of Canada. (The producers still partially achieved this contrast through the ethnicization of the Rays.) Thus, intertextual satire — grounded in character development — was present from the show's inception, as was the nationalistic satire; Fraser and Ray were created to exemplify American stereotypes of Canadians, and vice versa.

Haggis specifically mentions wilderness narratives, but in her essay “Have You Considered a Gun?”, Wendy Pearson (2000) suggests that *Due South* also works as a satire of the generic American cop show. As she puts it, “the image of the cop as hero in American popular culture is hard, masculine and aggressive... He shoots, he swears, and he fucks” (126). This archetype may be more or less accurate depending on the show in question — *Hill Street Blues* had a precinct full of very distinct cops, while Crockett and Tubbs shot, swore, and fucked, but balanced it with some emotional sensitivity — but the image is familiar. And yet Fraser, unquestionably the hero of the show, does none of these things. He doesn't carry a gun because he doesn't have a US firearm license; during the entire series, we see him shoot precisely

once, when they are in the dominion of Canada, and it's not a kill shot. It's not even a wounding shot; he shoots a detonator out of a pirate's hand. His strongest expression of consternation is, "Oh, dear." He does have one or two episodes where he's romantically involved with or interested in a particular woman, but for the most part, he's incredibly flustered by the veritable parade of women who throw themselves at him. Moreover, he's an optimist. Starsky and Hutch, Crockett and Tubbs, the *White Collar* and *Five-0* teams, even the propaganda duo of Friday and Gannon — at one point or another, all express some world-weariness, some cynicism about human nature or the effectiveness of the system. Fraser, however, is the type of person who lends a stranger at the airport \$100 because the guy says that his daughter is sick. And his faith in people is paid off; at the end of the episode, the guy returns the money in full. When Kowalski asks him why they bother doing their jobs, Fraser says, completely sincerely, "For the pride and honor of knowing that we make it possible for good people to tuck their kids in at night, turn out the lights and know they'll be safe" ["Eclipse," 3.02].

The Rays fit the American TV-show-cop mold on paper, at least in terms of cursing and carrying guns. (A vast percentage of the Americans on *Due South* carry guns, at least when it's good for a punchline.) Vecchio, especially, is a big proponent of weapons, sulking whenever they go to Canada where Fraser makes him give up his firearm. Like Starsky, Crockett and Tubbs, and *Hawaii Five-O*'s Steve and Danny, both the Rays also have classic cars that they love. They're more interested in romance than Fraser is, and far more cynical, as well as (especially on Kowalski's part) much more physically and verbally aggressive. And yet *Due South* puts the

characters who best embody the American cop-hero archetype in the sidekick role, while the hero is the dogsled-driving Mountie who lectures the Rays about politeness and has to walk home because he keeps giving away all his taxis. The cynical-yet-fundamentally goodhearted urban cop is the one providing backup, while the Mountie who would rather speak than shoot faces down Molotov-cocktail-wielding murderers. The Rays use their guns to provide cover fire and their gorgeous cars to drive Fraser around (and then occasionally see those gorgeous cars get set on fire and go into a lake). Their love of guns is portrayed comically, and Kowalski is an excellent shot only as long as he's wearing his glasses. Without them, he's awful, which means that in fight scenes he spends a lot of time either missing or fumbling around trying to remember where he put them. Whenever either of the Rays attempts to pursue someone romantically, it almost always ends in disaster.

The irreverent tone of the show seems akin to the genre-blending that had been cropping up in prior decades, taken to a sharper extreme. Paul Gross (1999), recollecting what Haggis would say about PR meetings, suggested that the US has “a real *narrow* compartmentalized approach to selling television ... Unless they can brand it into one of those categories that they understand and they've sold other shows on, then they just don't know what to do with it.” Genre-blending was becoming increasingly more frequent, and dramas with comedic elements weren't uncommon — *Hill Street Blues* had a dry sense of humor, and even *Starsky and Hutch* had its moments of levity — but *Due South* is almost evenly split between comedy and

drama.<sup>10</sup> The setting itself is frequently portrayed as absurd, to say nothing of the characters, who might not be out of place in a pure comedy series. This is not to say that *Due South* doesn't take its crimes seriously, because it does, particularly with respect to the human relationships that are disrupted by the crimes. It's just that those serious moments come alongside police stations filled with Santas and dead bodies being passed back and forth. Fanciful flights of adventure, revelations of character, the not-quite-camp: everything in the show has this mix of comical surrealism and emotional realism, especially the lead characters. Fraser and the Rays switch between deadpan straight man and comic relief at any given moment, but their moments of private, personal hurt are allowed gravity. *Due South's* irreverence spares almost nothing but its characters' interiority.

### **Two Lonely Guys, A Ghost, and a Half-Wolf**

Perhaps the best introductions to Fraser are the ones given by the show itself. The pilot movie ["Due South," 1.00] shows us the opinions of the other Mounties before we even see Fraser's face, and those opinions aren't entirely positive. "A dog sled?! Is this guy living in this century?" "Nobody makes it over the pass." "This guy is certifiable." From the start, Fraser, like so many other action heroes, is marked as a man apart. These are fellow Mounties out at an isolated posting, and he doesn't fit in even among them. Fraser tracks a man in a blizzard, through the supposedly unpassable Pass, in a dogsled, because he fished over the limit. "How much could a man fish over the limit that would justify you recklessly endangering your life and the reputation of this police force?" the Chief Mountie demands, while we are

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<sup>10</sup> In industry parlance this type of show might be known as a "dramedy," although most dramadies were half-hour shows that blended dramatic elements into comic formats.

dumbfounded by Fraser's seeming devotion to setting right even the pettiest wrongs, and Fraser replies simply, "Four and a half tons, sir."

This is a very neat moment that not only upends the balance of power between Fraser and the chief, but also reminds us not to underestimate Fraser and his judgment. The other Mounties aren't necessarily wrong; Fraser *is* bizarre enough to sometimes seem crazy, a throwback to a nostalgic ideal of Mounties and manhood that he learned from his father but seems entirely misplaced outside of the Canadian wilderness. But Fraser is also a man who does the impossible ("Nobody makes it over the pass") and makes it look easy, and he will let people think whatever they want about him right until it becomes important for him to regain control of the conversation. He's unconcerned with appearances, because what people think of him has no bearing on who he is.

Structurally, the third season opener is a direct parallel to the pilot, but instead of hearing the other Mounties talk about Fraser in his absence, we see him in action, chasing a litterer — of illegal chemicals — all the way off the side of a cliff. (Yes. He jumps off a cliff and into a boat. He then knowingly lets the boat go over a waterfall when the litterer orders him to stop anchoring the boat with his feet. As in the conversation with the chief, he's willing to allow people to continue digging themselves into a hole.) This, this gravity-defying, law-upholding woodsman, lurks underneath the obfuscatingly polite Mountie in the red uniform who strolls around opening doors for the residents of Chicago. Fraser in the Canadian wilderness is Fraser in his element; what we see for a vast portion of the show is Fraser *not at home*. (Indeed, the show gets a fair amount of mileage from the "fish out of water"

trope.) It is noteworthy that despite the women that fall all over him, the only women with whom he feels comfortable are as attuned to nature as he himself is. Within the city Fraser is out of place, not just a savage in civilization, but also a positive thinker in a land of cynics and a beacon of chivalry in a culture of rudeness. In a sense, these descriptions manage to upend each other; he may be a wilderness-born savage within civilization, but in his politeness and chivalry, Fraser embodies a romantic, “pre-modern” civility within a city of “modern” savages.

Gerard: What was the biggest city you ever worked in?

Fraser: Moosejaw.

Gerard: Yeah, and you were transferred out after five weeks because you couldn't adapt to such an urban life style. You're like your father. Out there in no man's land, there isn't a better cop in the world. But in Chicago, they'd eat you alive in a minute. Sorry.

- “Due South,” 1.00

Of course, they do not eat him alive in Chicago; instead, although his faith in human nature is sometimes challenged, his optimism actually is rewarded more often than not. But if Fraser is only at home in the Canadian wilderness, and he only returns to that wilderness a few times over the course of the three/four-season show, then who is he for the majority of the episodes? The immediate answer is that — in addition to being the live-action version of Dudley Do-Right from the *Rocky & Bullwinkle* franchise of the early 1960s — he's a Canadian superhero, as some commentators have noted in conjunction with the pilot's use of “Superman's Song” by the Crash Test Dummies. (“And sometimes I despair the world will never see/Another man like him.”) Vecchio even says, “So what's the Mountie like. He's Superman, alright.” [“Red, White, or Blue,” 2.17] He's intelligent, extremely attractive, chivalrous, often wears a brightly colored uniform, and faces down — and disarms — numerous criminals without any weapon other than his own courage and



physical prowess. And, like Superman, he's an alien in a world that isn't his, but that he protects nonetheless because he's a naturally good person.

All of these things make him a romantic hero. They also make Fraser humorously flawed. His intelligence becomes pedantry; Fraser is the sort of person who just can't stop himself from correcting other people's grammar, etc., which occasionally causes tension with the less-eloquent Kowalski. His attractiveness means that women frequently hit on him — often very aggressively — despite his obvious discomfort or obliviousness. His goodness makes him so painfully law-abiding that he can't even steal a candy bar in order to go undercover in prison. He — and, we are led to believe, many other Canadians — takes politeness and chivalry to the level of self-abnegation. He misses elevators because he's too busy letting others enter first; he walks home from the train station because he gives away all his taxis. His neighbors in the first two seasons have learned to cheat him by lending him broken electronics, and then demanding that he get them repaired before returning them. The moments where he faces down criminals aren't normally played for laughs, but the over-the-top things he does while in pursuit — like, say, clamber over a speeding car in search of a bomb, or drag Kowalski with him onto the wing of an airplane that's taking off — very much are. When Fraser gets amnesia in “Flashback” [2.18], he himself comments on how ridiculous it is to jump onto a moving van. “What am I, stupid?” he demands.

If he is stupid, it's a deliberate stupidity. So we have reason to believe, at least. “Don't put this on the water, Fraser, this is a conscious thing that you do, okay,” Vecchio accuses Fraser in “Red White or Blue” [2.17], talking both about Fraser's politeness and his intellectualized detachment. To me, “Flashback” continues this

theme; it means that Vecchio was right, and the aspects of Fraser that he loses with his memory are not the fault of “some genetic abnormality” or “some aberrant property in the Tuktoyatuk water system,” as Fraser suggests in “Red White or Blue” that they might be. When he looks at his small, bare apartment and asks, “I live like this? Am I being punished?” we have to consider the possibility that Fraser is, in fact, punishing himself. When Fraser, astonished, remarks upon the woman who just flirted with him, Fraser’s general obliviousness to women’s interest in him seems more like a defense mechanism. “Flashback” is not the only episode where Fraser behaves uncharacteristically, however. In “Victoria’s Secret” [1.20-21], when Fraser’s “the one who got away” shows up, Fraser finally lets himself give in to his own desires, including skipping work and the obligations of friendship in order to stay in bed with the titular Victoria. (Victoria also happens to be “the one whom Fraser arrested,” but that becomes more important later in the episode.) Fraser has desires; he just rarely lets himself express them.

Fraser evokes a number of different, paradigmatically associated tropes. He is the unthinkingly honest country rube, with his seemingly naïve belief in human goodness; the noble savage of the wilderness; the chivalric knight, living a monastic life of self-denial; the romantic natural man, unconcerned with appearances; a man who is good at politely, passively upending the lives and expectations of the people around him; and the investigator who can understand everything except how to let himself be vulnerable. Certain episodes also invite readings of Fraser as a man from the wilderness, within an entirely new kind of wilderness, who is locking down the wildness within himself. Haggis mentions that his version of Fraser had a dark side,

although he suggests that seasons three and four, after he left, focused far more on the lighter side of Fraser. I think he's right, but I don't think Fraser lost depth during Gross's tenure as showrunner; to me it seems rather that seasons three and four delved more into Fraser's loneliness. Fraser's life in the wilderness and his practiced, generous self-denial do not lend themselves particularly well to negotiating friendship or knowing how to ask for what he needs.

This is where the two Rays come in. Ray Vecchio is Fraser's partner in the first two seasons of *Due South*. He comes from a large Italian family, most of whom we don't generally see aside from his sister Frannie, but who all live together in a noisy, crowded house. He's a very protective and exasperated older brother, likes to dress well, and never forgets a nose. He's also a romantic who thinks of himself as a bit of a lady's man, despite some evidence to the contrary. The first time we meet him, he's in a jail cell trying to entrap someone who later turns out to be an IA detective investigating entrapment. He firmly believes in the power of guns, even when it involves sneaking them across international borders. His father was a neglectful alcoholic who hated cops and only thought about his own gains. He spends a lot of time protesting when Fraser tries to drag him into various shenanigans and then going along with it anyway.

Stanley "Ray" Kowalski (his father was a big Tennessee Williams fan) takes over as Ray Vecchio until the series finale, when the real Vecchio returns — much to Fraser's joy — from his undercover stint in Las Vegas. Kowalski is short-tempered, physically aggressive, and bad with words. From the few things he says about his family, he's probably working-class. (It hardly seems a coincidence that he's named

after a famously angry working-class character, and his Gold Coast ex-wife shares the same name as the original Stanley Kowalski's upper-class wife.) He's an amazing shot, but only when he has his glasses on. He works on instinct and seems to use his aggression to cover up for some massive insecurity issues. He insists that he doesn't stick his neck out for anyone, which given the stunts he pulls to save Fraser's life (including driving a motorcycle through a window when Fraser is being held hostage) is almost definitely a lie. He's still very much in love with his ex-wife, Assistant State's Attorney Stella Kowalski, even if he knows that it's unlikely that they'd get back together. (The only two reasons we get for their divorce are that they forgot how to talk to each other and that Kowalski wanted children but Stella didn't; however, both of those scraps of information come from Kowalski, who isn't an entirely reliable narrator when it comes to Stella.) Like Fraser, Kowalski is trying to leave his past behind, in this case by inhabiting someone else's life rather than staying in a completely unfamiliar city. He too protests against Fraser's insanity, although his challenges to Fraser's authority are sometimes more effective than Vecchio's.

The Rays also serve to contrast a different form of wildness with nature-boy Fraser; their wildness is the more unruly, rule-bending behavior of the maverick cop. And yet "at almost every point where he seems to fit the stereotype which contrasts him with Fraser, something happens to complicate, deconstruct, or, at the very least, ironize Vecchio's image as the tough, rule-bending, gun-toting American cop" (Pearson 2000:128). Pearson is speaking specifically about Vecchio here, but the point applies to both the Rays. Their guns are often less effective than Fraser's strange tactics. Their romances end in failure, often because they were trapped in

their own delusions rather than thinking about the perspective of the women in whom they were interested. Their toughness is frequently either a posture, made to seem ridiculous, or both. Because of the show's generic emphasis on comedy and melodrama, character traits that might have been played straight in a drama are instead used for laughs or poignancy. To fit in the hybridized genre, the archetype to which they are paying lip service must be re-inflected with more nuance.

One comic re-inflection is that despite their tough-guy rhetoric, the Rays often end up capitulating to Fraser, the least overtly demanding force of nature I think I've seen on TV. Fraser is a leader, but he leads in a particularly passive-aggressive way. **Truepenny** comments on this in his December 30, 2007 blogpost about "The Vault" [2.04], mentioning that heroes are never supposed to ask for anything for themselves — and so Fraser's solution to this is to get other people to do things without actually explicitly saying that he wants them to. "So Fraser's hyper masculine performance as a hero (Fraser as hero is very, VERY butch, and the camera frames him as such) circles around to become the same thing as the hyper feminine icon of self-denial that Frannie [Vecchio's sister, who spends the entire episode complaining about not getting respected] is refusing to be." He never orders either of the Rays around; rather, when they refuse to involve themselves in whatever crazy scheme Fraser is cooking up, he insists that he understands, and of course they don't have to do anything they don't want to. This is generally followed by an immediate cut to a shot of the Rays doing exactly what they said they wouldn't do, whether that's acting as chauffeur on a day off or jumping down an elevator shaft.

Fraser's form of leadership comes from his father, whose example Fraser struggles to manage and adapt throughout the course of the show. At first Bob Fraser is simply the heroic dead dad, whom Fraser is only just now discovering through the journals he left behind. Halfway through the first season, though, Bob shows up in person — well, in ghost-person — and we have the chance to actually see where the legend meets the man, and where Fraser meets them both. Fraser and his father generally end up arguing, sometimes comically and sometimes with a more serious bent, as when Fraser is yelling at his father about never being there or when Bob is sharing a more serious anecdote from his past. Often Fraser ends up following Bob's advice to some degree or another, albeit with some protest, but sometimes Bob's independent Mountie act is too much even for Fraser.

In *Hawaii Five-0* (2010), Steve McGarrett only really gets to know his father after his father's death — albeit through the notes and evidence his father bequeathed to him rather than through ghostly visitations. Daddy issues of some flavor or another are very common in contemporary cop shows, which on one level suggests a reading of the narrative as a discourse on how to resolve generational conflicts of masculinity and identities. Steve is trying to follow his father's footsteps while negotiating his feelings about the parts of his father's life he never knew existed; Neal from *White Collar* has to decide how his father's criminal legacy applies to his own sense of self. Fraser and both of the Rays have to deal with a past they cannot escape.

This connection between the father's example and the individual masculine identity bears some similarities to Pfeil's (1995) account of the various men's movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The movements that Pfeil examines all

had disparate focuses and ideologies, but according to Pfeil, there were a few common themes. Among those themes were the dysfunctionality of white, professional or middle-class, American masculinity, and the need for men to rekindle their inner wildness. Another common theme was the idea of the failed father — fathers who were either too overbearing or judgmental, or who were emotionally distant and had little part in their son's lives. Bob Fraser was the latter, as Fraser notes on numerous occasions; he spent most of Fraser's life ranging the wilderness, leaving Fraser to be raised by his grandparents after his mother's death. Vecchio Sr., meanwhile, was also a neglectful father, but he was still present too often for Ray Vecchio, who had to deal with selfishness and verbal abuse. They never reconcile, as Fraser and Bob do; instead, when Vecchio Sr. pops up in ghostly form, Vecchio has the chance to confront and reject his father's flawed, self-involved, autonomous masculinity. Kowalski Sr. also didn't approve of his son's choice to drop out of college and become a cop; as a factory-worker himself, he wanted his son to have an upwardly mobile life. However, Kowalski Sr. is still alive, as is Kowalski's mother, and these issues are brought up and resolved within a single episode — when Kowalski Sr. passes along the car that he and Kowalski used to fix together, he reconciles himself to the path his son has chosen.

Actually, the main issue from the past that Kowalski really needs to manage is his past relationship with Stella and how to define himself now that he is no longer a part of her life. In "Eclipse" [3.02], he explains that his self-image is intrinsically wrapped up with trying to live up to what he perceived as Stella's expectations for him. He sees himself as a fraud; it's up to Fraser to remind him that he has committed

heroic acts in his own right. This is also reminiscent of Pfeil's analysis of New Age men; in the absence of women, who were excluded from many of the men's movements, men must heal each other in order to remake their masculinities and move forward. Kowalski and Vecchio both need to exorcize the ghosts of their past that they could not fully escape.

I don't mean to say that I think Haggis, Gross, and the other writers were purposefully trying to evoke the New Age men's movements of the 1990s. Despite *Due South's* relatively low ratio of female characters to male characters, I read it as more feminist-friendly than most of those movements seemed — although to be fair, the men's movements were fragmented, and not all of them were anti-feminist. However, both the movements and the show seem to be reacting to a contemporary dissatisfaction with traditional forms of patriarchal masculinity, a feature common to both New Age and feminist men's movements. Fraser isn't part of the professional-middle-class, who comprised the majority of the men's movements (and probably many of the show's viewers), and he is already comfortable with a number of feminized behaviors. However, like the therapeutic New Age Man, he and the Rays need to pick and choose from their fathers' examples to find a more compassionate middle ground.

Fraser: "You know you were so afraid to open up. It's as though you chose to be killed rather than expose your feelings."

Bob: "That's ridiculous."

Fraser: "It's more or less what happened, isn't it? The thing is, I'm no better. I never loved anyone as much as I love you."

Bob: "Stop that kind of talk right now."

Fraser: "And I could never, ever say it."

Bob: "Well, if you did I woulda hit you."

Fraser: "Dad."

Bob: "Well, it's my fault. Shouldn't have left you with your grandmother all that time. You don't know until it's too late the effect women'll have on you. For years you're living a



perfectly normal life and then right out of the blue you start thinking about feelings and emotions. That was my mistake, not yours, son.”

- “Bird in the Hand,” 2.04

Fraser, who himself is truly *awful* at talking about feelings, is learning to blame his own inability to open up on his father’s example. Indeed, he uses a great deal of Bob’s manipulative conversational techniques. Fraser and Bob are both excellent at changing the subject or prevaricating in order to avoid subjects that make them uncomfortable — and as Fraser himself explains a short time later in the same episode, “There’s nothing more unnerving to men than talking about feelings.”

Fraser, Bob Fraser, and Vecchio each specifically mention the idea that expression of emotions is gendered, although Fraser does so with a little more irony than the other two — Bob with his blithe statements about the “effect” women will have and Vecchio distracting from amnesiac! Fraser’s questions about why they’re friends by saying, “You know guys aren’t any good at talking about this” [“Flashback,” 2.18]. Fraser’s discomfort with sharing doesn’t seem to stem from the idea that it isn’t masculine. He has no problem cross-dressing, after all, even though Vecchio insists he’d never be caught dead in drag [“Some Like It Red, 2.12”].<sup>11</sup> It seems more likely that Fraser’s difficulty sharing has to do with his inability to admit he needs help. In the episode “North” [2.01], Fraser and Vecchio are stranded in the wilderness, and Fraser insists that they chase a criminal despite the fact that a head injury makes Fraser first loopy, then loopy and blind, and finally loopy, blind, and partially paralyzed. And yet despite this, he continues trying to keep control, with

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<sup>11</sup> Fraser, chiding Vecchio, says, “Well there’s nothing to be ashamed of Ray. In fact, certain tribes in the northwest ... believe a man should experience life as a woman in order to be a better husband—” Here, the experience of femininity actually serves to make one better at heterosexual masculinity.

ambiguous results. He can still light a fire, but he also tries to lead them straight off a cliff. The only time when he doesn't seem stubbornly oblivious to how incapacitated he is — even when Vecchio is actually carrying Fraser over his shoulder, they're both still pretending that it's not a burden on Vecchio — is when he's arguing with his father. Bob thinks Vecchio is slowing him down; Fraser, with some asperity, points out that he cannot walk. Only when he's actually directing confronting his father's overly independent, always-get-your-man ethos can he actually admit that he needs help.

Vecchio's ghostly father, meanwhile, is *also* trying to convince Vecchio to leave Fraser in the middle of the woods, for the sake of self-preservation rather than the pursuit of justice. However, not only does Fraser have the wilderness knowledge that Vecchio's father never taught him (they compare stories of camping, or not camping, with their fathers at several points throughout the episode) but Vecchio knows that Fraser needs him. Both Vecchio and Fraser have learned more compassion than either of their fathers show in this episode. They also have to rely on each other in order to make it out of the woods alive; Vecchio is just slightly more accustomed to following Fraser's lead than vice versa. This problem pops up in a slightly different form with Kowalski, who argues that Fraser isn't treating him as a full partner; part of Fraser's character arc over the course of the series is learning how to connect to other people instead of being a lone cowboy/wolf.

This is emphasized by the moments that are given weight, and not played for the humor so prevalent in the rest of the show. The common serious denominators seem to be loss, loneliness, the way family screws you up, and partnership. Vecchio's

moments of seriousness revolve around his father and his relationship with Fraser; Kowalski's have to do with his ex-wife Stella — grief — and, again, his relationship with Fraser (and his parents, but that's resolved in a single episode); Fraser's are primarily about Victoria — grief, betrayal, loneliness — and his father, and sometimes about concern for or discord with the Rays.

One of the reasons for discord is again tied to the emotional vulnerability that Fraser does not know how to express. This vulnerability is articulated through the language of “humanity” in season two, after Vecchio has seen, in the Victoria arc, just how human Fraser can be. In “The Vault” [2.04], for example, when they're both a little concerned that Fraser's brilliant plan is going to end with both of them drowning, Vecchio badgers Fraser into admitting that he feels a little unappreciated for the work he does. “Can you admit that at least once in your perfect existence you felt the need to put yourself before your duty?” (For the record, Fraser's plan does end up working; Fraser's calculations just didn't factor in human distraction.) And then in “Red White or Blue” [2.17], when the media overlooks Vecchio's role in a sensational case in order to drool over the hot Mountie in the eye-catching suit, what begins as a blow-up over the difficulties of being practically invisible next to a superhero turns into Vecchio's criticism of Fraser's over-politeness — which he considers denying people their independence — and finally becomes the question of Fraser repressing his emotions. “Human beings feel things,” Vecchio insists. Later, when they're both tied to a bomb that's registering their heart rates, Vecchio demands, “Just once in your life, can you admit that you're a human being?”

Emotional intimacy through vulnerability is typically considered a characteristic of female friendships, but here Vecchio specifically calls it a *human* characteristic, if only to a point; later in the episode, after they've solved their conflict, Fraser is talking about why he and Ray are such close friends, and Vecchio cuts him off with, "Alright, alright. Don't get all mushy on me." They've closed the case, Fraser has admitted that he envies Vecchio's "existential honesty," Vecchio has come to terms with Fraser's Fraser-ness — they can go back to their normal patterns of emotionally restrained banter. The issue of vulnerability, however, lingers even after Ray Vecchio is swapped out for Ray Kowalski.

Fraser and Kowalski take slightly longer to click than Fraser and Vecchio, mostly because nobody manages to tell Fraser until the end of "Burning Down the House" [3.01] just why this strange blond man is claiming he's Detective Vecchio, and where the real Vecchio has gone. As such, Fraser spends the whole episode trying to prove who Kowalski is *not* (Ray Vecchio) rather than trying to learn who Kowalski *is*. Kowalski even tries to explain things to him, but Fraser is climbing around the outside of the car searching for a bomb, and completely misses Kowalski's entire confession. (Kowalski and Fraser are perpetually talking across each other, in general; sometimes this is because Bob is muddling up the conversation, but other times it seems more like they don't speak the same language.) We only find out who this new Ray is — in terms of both his name and his personal history — in "Eclipse" [3.02]. Fraser is trying to convince Kowalski to go be Vecchio at the station in order to get the real Vecchio out of trouble, but Kowalski has personal business to deal with; instead, Fraser ends up sitting in a crypt getting a crash course in Kowalski, and

helping him work through his crisis of faith. “You're a good policeman, Ray,” Fraser says, with all the support of Ray’s shining record behind him. “And I would be proud to call you my partner... and my friend.”

The language of seasons one and two was one of friendship, and this is echoed at the beginning of “Burning Down The House,” when Vecchio’s cryptic goodbye call is all about friendship — “down here in America we have this thing called friendship,” “something a friend would do,” “as a friend.” That’s the lens through which they articulate their problems, in Fraser’s fear of losing Vecchio’s friendship [“Victoria’s Secret part I,” 1.20] and how hard Vecchio finds it “to have a saint for a friend” [“Red White or Blue,” 2.17]. In seasons three and four, after star Paul Gross took over as showrunner, the language shifted to include partnership as well. Almost the first thing Kowalski says to Fraser is a rambling monologue about “duets” — or, as he says to a baffled Fraser, “Partners, Fraser. Partners.” The friendship part is still important, as we can hear in the emphasis Fraser gives to “and my friend” [“Eclipse,” 3.02], but when push comes to shove, it’s all about the partnership. In “Mountie on the Bounty” [3.12-13] and “Call of the Wild” [4.12-13], — the episodes where Fraser and Kowalski’s relationship is most unstable — the word “friend” is barely used.

This might be because where Fraser and Vecchio’s problems were rooted in emotional issues, Fraser and Kowalski’s issues are mostly about communication and trust. In “Mountie on the Bounty,” Kowalski and Fraser squabble about a whole mess of things; it begins with Kowalski yelling at Fraser that neither of them wears a cape (after they’ve both leapt off a building while being shot at, in a direct homage to

*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*), although it turns out later in the two-parter that Kowalski doesn't *really* mind Fraser's death-defying stunts, he just wants Fraser to say upfront that he's going to be endangering their lives in a wildly bizarre way. The real problem for Kowalski seems to be that Fraser's constant corrections and inability to let Kowalski take the lead<sup>12</sup> dig into his insecurities, while the perpetually calm, controlled Fraser is frustrated by the way Kowalski will jump straight to anger without really explaining what set him off. "Communication — we're not doing it," Kowalski says in part I. Funnily enough, throughout this entire episode, Bob is acting as the voice of reason, telling Fraser about the importance of compromise and how he needs Kowalski — "the Yank" — to play bad cop. Bob is the one who reminds Fraser at crucial moments, "You got to trust your partner, son. Otherwise, nothing will go right." And in the end, they do trust each other — Kowalski by admitting that he can't swim, instead of distracting from the issue by arguing about inanities, and Fraser by conceding that they're lost and following Kowalski's instinct. The case is solved with the help of some nonverbal communication and both Fraser and Kowalski decide not to take the transfers they've been offered.

The question of friendship here is subsumed under that of partnership, especially with the question of the transfers on the table, which would take Kowalski back to his old life and Fraser back to Canada. Not being able to work comfortably together is more important than their personal relationship — and if they can't work comfortably

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<sup>12</sup> Also presumably Fraser not always sharing information, although this is more of an issue in "Spy vs. Spy" [3.08], when Kowalski realizes during the climactic scene that he's the only one who doesn't know basic information about the case. "Partners means sharing. You ever hear of that, Fraser?" he demands, resentfully repeating it even when Fraser tries to politely go back to the standoff occurring in front of them. Kowalski is more focused on the dynamics of their relationship than Fraser, who at this point is treating Kowalski more like a sidekick than an equal.

together, then they're going to move far enough away from each other that there won't be much of a personal relationship left. But what it shares with Fraser and Vecchio's argument in "Red, White, or Blue," and, in fact, a lot of the second season, is the question of vulnerability. Vecchio wants to see the real person under the Mountie mask; Kowalski needs to be less defensive; Fraser needs to admit that he can't do everything by himself and take other people's feelings into account (and the fact that *Bob* is the one lecturing him about being too logical and dispassionate is, quite honestly, hilariously hypocritical).

Fraser happily, and seemingly obliviously, engages in a number of behaviors that could potentially open him up to scorn; he doesn't understand why anyone would be bothered by licking things or by crossdressing, something Vecchio categorically states he would never do. The only thing about which he seems to feel any sort of reserve is emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy is marked as feminine and uncomfortable, but it's also necessary for masculine friendship; letting someone else take control weakens Fraser's independent hero posture, but it's necessary for partnership. As in Pfeil's (1995) description of the new age men, typically feminine characteristics are refigured and absorbed into new masculinities in order to keep them dominant.

*Due South* makes sure to emphasize that friendship and partnership make you stronger. "A friend is someone who won't stop until he finds you and brings you home," Bob wrote in his journal ["Manhunt," 1.03]. "I mean, it's just one of those special cases where alone we're incomplete but together we're better than we are separately, you know what I mean?" Vecchio says when trying to jog Fraser's

memory ["Flashback," 2.18]. In the series finale, when Kowalski and Fraser are climbing a mountain, Bob says that when he and Fraser's mother were trapped in a blizzard, they "pushed on through the cold and the pain. Kept each other going." "Because that's what partnership is all about," Fraser agrees ["Call of the Wild part II," 4.13].<sup>13</sup> Kowalski himself spends most of the two-part episode peripherally worrying that Fraser is going to partner up again with the newly-returned Vecchio, so that Kowalski will lose his new identity and his partner all in one fell swoop. "You ever feel like you don't know who you are? Like if you weren't around somebody, or that someone wasn't around you, then you wouldn't be you, or at least not the you that you think you are?" he asks when he's been forced onto stakeout duty with Fraser's boss. Relationships with other people support you, keep you going, give you a touchstone for who you are. Friendship gives Vecchio better expectations to live up to than those of his father; partnership gives Kowalski an identity and a way to get over his past; and both of them help make the fundamentally lonely Fraser a little less alone. And it's important enough, apparently, that in the epilogue of (mostly) happy endings, Vecchio gets his romantic happiness with Kowalski's ex-wife, and Fraser and Kowalski dogsled off into the Canadian sunset.

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<sup>13</sup> This is one of two or so occasions where Bob implicitly compares his relationship with his wife — notably, the only truly successful romance of the canon — to Fraser's relationship with Kowalski.



5.

### **The 1990s and Beyond: Hybridized Shows and Mid-season Breaks**

I have used the terms “episodic” and “serialized” several times throughout this thesis without clearly defining them. Let me do so now. An episodic show, to put it simply, will resolve all of its plotlines in the space of a single episode. *Dragnet*, for example, is a purely episodic show; characters will remain the same from episode to episode, but a case that wraps up in one episode will never be spoken of or referenced again. Neither characters nor story develop across episodes; the show has no memory; with each episode, the slate is wiped clean. A serialized show, by contrast, tells a slowly developing story that unfolds across episodes. Plot elements and relationship growth carry over rather than coming neatly to a close at the end of the episode. The classic serials are soap operas, where, as Robert Allen (2004) puts it in “Making Sense of Soaps,” “each episode ends with some degree of narrative indeterminacy: a plot question that will not be answered until the next episode” (251). Viewers typically only had to wait twenty-four hours, since the shows unfolded in daily installments. Each new event in a soap opera can lead to unending repercussions among the large community of characters and their intricate relationships with each other. And without knowledge of those relationships, a viewer who only watches one episode will not grasp the significance of the plot’s various nuances.

Serialization used to be largely restricted to the realm of daytime soaps, while episodic shows reigned supreme during primetime. This changed when soaps began moving to primetime. Although *Peyton Place* [ABC, 1964-1969] aired three times a week in the 1960s and a few serialized miniseries paved the way in the 1970s, Robert

Thompson (1996) suggests that the most influential primetime serial was *Dallas* [CBS, 1978-1991]. *Dallas* combined the weekly format of the primetime drama with the serialized, melodramatic plots of the soap opera. “*Dallas*’s success did more than just inspire spin-offs and rip-offs. It gave a memory to the entire medium” (Thompson 1996:34). I’m not sure we can assign all the credit to J.R. Ewing getting shot in 1980 — Jeffrey Sconce (2004) notes that some 1970s shows like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *M\*A\*S\*H* had already laid a little of the groundwork — but as I have previously explored, the 1980s were a time of dramatic experimentation with serialized storytelling. Producers wanted to draw more intense interest from potentially smaller audiences. Soap operas had always had devoted viewers, and *Dallas*’s infamous cliffhanger drew a great deal of attention, not to mention stellar ratings in the fall. But as Thompson points out, the reason viewers *cared* about who shot JR was because they had gotten the chance to see his story and relationships develop over the past few seasons.

Serialization is even more prevalent now than it was in the 1980s. There are a number of fully serialized action shows and relationship melodramas, but even many episodic shows will include some degree of serialized storytelling. Even some animated shows no longer reset to zero at the end of the episode. Many genre shows, like procedurals, now emphasize what Sconce refers to as “cumulative storytelling” and Jason Mittell (2006) calls “narrative complexity”: “a redefinition of episodic norms under the influence of serialization” (32). The key to episodic structure is the sense of closure at the end of each episode. The key to serialization is the idea that viewers will care about how current developments affect the characters and future

storylines. Episodic-serial hybrids are a compromise between the two, letting old viewers invest in the story world without intimidating viewers who might want to tune in midseason.

Viewers can watch purely for the episodic pleasures, the distinct cases that get wrapped up each week, but they can also invest in the continuing narratives and anticipate new developments in the next episode. Because it's harder to watch them out of order, they may not be as successful in reruns, but with the DVD market, syndication is a less important source of profit, and DVD releases can also help to build audiences for an upcoming season. Hopefully, any confusion on the part of new viewers would be cleared up by conversation within the show or the "previously on" montage at the beginning of the episodes, but in this age of DVR and internet streaming, it shouldn't be hard for anyone interested to catch up on what they've missed.

Mittell (2006) suggests that this structure really began to cohere in the 1990s, in shows like *The X-Files*, *Buffy*, and *Angel*, among others.<sup>14</sup> *The X-Files* alternated between stand-alone episodes and episodes that delved more deeply into the "mythology" of the show — a term that was originally *X-Files*-specific but is occasionally appropriated to signify a show's overarching story world and mysteries. (Interestingly, according to the showrunner for *White Collar*, some of the fans have referred to relationship moments between the two male leads as part of the "mythology," suggesting that for some people the term just refers to the cumulative

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<sup>14</sup> I'm speaking in particular of dramas because comedies, although definitely affected by the revolution of the 1980s, sometimes tend to play by their own rules. For a more thorough look at new narrative structures for comedy, see *Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television*, by Jason Mittell.

elements or arc plots of a show.) *Buffy* and *Angel* are notable for their balanced interplay between arc-based storytelling — plots stretched over the course of multiple, although not necessarily consecutive, episodes — and single-episode stories. Most of the episodes center around a threat that will be killed or contained by the end of the forty-five minutes — the “case of the week,” or “monster of the week” as it’s often called in sci-fi shows. Over the course of the season, though, a major villain (the “Big Bad,” in *Buffy* parlance) will be working on some sort of devious, long-running plan. This arc will develop over the course of the season, with different pieces of information being released in dribs and drabs throughout the episodes until finally the villain is defeated at the end of the season. Character relationships both affect and are affected by the action-based plots. Hybrid shows allow writers to develop characters and relationships over time, without sacrificing the episodic pleasures of resolution and standalone episodes.

This basic set-up — which TVTropes refers to as a “half arc,” since many episodes will have very little to do with forwarding the arc — is now ubiquitous on primetime TV, both cable and broadcast, with some adjustments depending on the show. For example, *White Collar* typically has two arc-heavy episodes in the middle of the season: the midseason finale and premiere. Like many cable shows, *White Collar*’s season is shorter than most broadcast seasons and is also split in two. The first half of the season airs during the summer, and then there’s a break of a few months before the second half begins in January. The midseason break isn’t uncommon on cable, although it depends on the show, and the earliest evidence I can find of it was the late 1990s. As DVDs and internet viewing destabilize the traditional

seasons, some network shows are also beginning to either start in January or adopt the midseason break. Michael Curtin and Jane Shattuc (2009) suggest that *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) was the first network show to take an extended hiatus during the winter, rather than just showing a few reruns during the December holiday season, when (supposedly) viewers might not be watching as much TV.

The months-long break can provide a breather in the middle of a season, give the creators time to work on new episodes, and then pick back up after the holidays. If shows follow the *White Collar* schedule — a fairly common cable schedule — it means that they're beginning during the summer, an off-season for broadcast networks. Scheduling original programming against network reruns was a cable innovation. When some of these shows became more popular, producers would add more episodes in the winter, after the hype from the new broadcast shows had died down. (New shows traditionally air in September, although more full-season network shows are beginning in January.) The midseason break can also be profitable, since producers can box and sell each half of a season separately if they so desire, as *Battlestar Galactica* [Sci-Fi, 2004-2009] did. Of course, it can also be baffling to viewers who don't understand why they have to wait three months for new episodes (Pickard 2010). When the midseason break is specifically used in conjunction with a season-long arc, the midseason finale can either end with some sort of partial narrative closure — as *Glee* [FOX, 2009-] does, with New Directions generally winning some sort of challenge or another — or with a cliffhanger, as *White Collar* frequently does. Like season two of *Dallas* ending with J.R. getting shot, the serial,

unresolved questions linger with the viewer, hopefully leaving them abuzz with anticipation for when the story picks back up again in a few months.

***White Collar* [USA, 2009-]**

Caffrey: “Hey, before I go back you should know this. Out of all the people in my life, Mozzie even Kate. You know you're the only one.”

Burke: “The only one what?”

Caffrey: “The only person in my life that I trust.”

- “Vital Signs,” 1.10

When Neal Caffrey, the world’s smoothest, most charming con artist, escapes from prison in the very first scene of *White Collar*, he doesn’t dig a tunnel or stage a riot. Instead, he slicks back his hair, shaves the beard he grew specifically for that purpose, puts on a guard uniform he has gotten hold of, and walks out the door as if he does it every day. Between his ability to remagnetize security cards from inside a jail cell and his gift for making people see only what he wants them to see, Neal seems almost invulnerable in his escape. What ultimately gives him away is his heart. When the US Marshals call for the assistance of Special Agent Peter Burke of the FBI, the only one who was ever able to catch Neal in the first place, Peter knows immediately that Neal wouldn’t escape four months before the end of his sentence without reason. That knowledge and some digging lead him to the empty apartment where he finds Neal, mourning the end of his relationship, too disheartened to even attempt to escape. After Peter takes him back to prison, Neal manages to convince Peter that they’d both be better off if he wore an ankle monitor and served his new sentence as a Criminal Informant (CI) at the New York office of the FBI, White Collar division.

*White Collar* is an episodic series with a whopping dash of serialization, most of which involves season-long plot arcs. In almost every episode, Neal and Peter take down the white-collar criminal of the week. They're helped by the rest of the official and unofficial team: Agents Diana Barrigan and Clinton Jones; Peter's wife Elizabeth; Neal's quirky friend Mozzie; and, beginning in the second season, insurance investigator Sara Ellis, Neal's one-time adversary and off-on love interest. During most of the Caper of the Week episodes, the serialized arcs progress in a trickle, moved along by a few brief conversations or by discoveries that impact the relationships among the characters. The arcs primarily take center stage during the midseason finale and premiere — the two episodes bookending the show's typical hiatus between mid-fall and mid-winter — and the last two or three episodes of the season.

Most of the arcs involve conspiracies and grand crimes, mixed with Neal's history and relationship dramas. Although *White Collar* is a buddy cop show with a very strong work family/ensemble cast, it is in many ways a protagonist-centered drama that revolves more around Neal than any of the other characters. (In much the same way, *Due South* and *Miami Vice* emphasize the personal emotional sagas of Fraser and Crockett, respectively, over the character development of the Rays or Tubbs.) The relationship between Neal and Peter is unquestionably important — when the show's lead actors were asked to describe the show during a first-season interview, Matt Bomer (Neal) and Willie Garson (Mozzie) immediately pointed to Peter and Neal's "unlikely collaboration" — but Bomer is the one in all the promo shots. (It doesn't hurt that while Tim DeKay, who plays Peter, isn't unattractive,

Bomer is by far the more photogenic of the two.) Although the writers do focus on Peter's personal and professional concerns, they all relate to what is going on in the diegetic present; we learn little about his past that doesn't directly relate to Neal. It is Neal's ex-girlfriends who stir up trouble, Neal's old enemies who come calling, Neal's deadbeat father who leads them to a corruption ring stretching all the way to the Senate.

The overarching story of the series is the collision of Neal's two worlds — his constantly shifting past life as a criminal and his new, stable, mostly-legal life with the FBI. Mozzie and Peter embody these two poles. Peter is straitlaced, hard-working, and by-the-book, always reining Neal in and trying to keep him from doing anything too illegal. He's the one who put Neal in cuffs, the one tracking the ankle monitor that restricts Neal's freedom and disrupts his fluid selfhood. With his solid career, his strong work ethic, his loving wife, his nice house and his dog, Peter is the embodiment of "normal" or "straight" society, where the ideal life is both productive and settled. Mozzie, meanwhile, is an intrinsic part of Neal's criminal life; he and Neal have worked together since Neal came to New York. When Neal needs extra-legal help, he turns to Mozzie, who has a seemingly unlimited network of criminal contacts. Mozzie also vehemently dislikes and distrusts everything related to the government — he hates going to the hospital because he doesn't want to put a name into the system — and thus is more than a little disturbed that Neal not only works for "the suits," but also enjoys it. With his constantly shifting abode and his skepticism about permanent relationships — although he seems to consider his relationship with Neal to be as close to permanent as he can get — he and Peter are opposites in most



things except their concern for Neal, who occupies the common ground between the two of them. Neal longs for more stability than Mozzie's worldview allows, but he doesn't want as settled a life as Peter and Elizabeth have. Eastin told interviewer Jessica Ng (2013) that over the run of the show, they have been building up the question of Neal's moral compass: "I'm not the guy with the white hat who is the hero. Am I the guy with the black hat who's the bad guy? That's been the dichotomy that's driven him."

Mozzie and Peter are the devil and the angel on Neal's shoulders, but he is also to Neal what Elizabeth is to Peter — a grounding force and an outside perspective on Neal and Peter's relationship. (Elizabeth also sometimes acts as a foil or a mirror to Neal's love interests.) In fact, Mozzie and Elizabeth have developed a very close friendship over the years, one of the ways in which the collision of worlds has changed the parties involved. Mozzie will sometimes voluntarily collaborate with law enforcement for Neal's sake, and Peter has loosened up a bit about bending the rules, especially when it comes to people whom he cares about. Of course, one key way in which Mozzie and Elizabeth differ is that while Elizabeth welcomes Neal into her and Peter's lives, Mozzie is far more resistant to Peter's claim on Neal's attention, particularly when it leads to Neal not taking the chance to escape. Ultimately, though, the show seems to suggest that forming ties and creating a family, however unconventional, is important — as long as those ties are with the right people.

Neal escapes prison and subsequently proposes the CI arrangement because he's worried about his girlfriend Kate; being on the outside, even with his ankle monitor, enables him to continue following Kate's trail on the sly. Mozzie agrees to help —

there seem to be very few things Mozzie wouldn't do for Neal — but he frequently cautions Neal against his dreams of playing house with Kate, saying that “happily ever after isn't for guys like us” [“Out of the Box,” 1.14]. Mozzie's disapproval could be disregarded, since Mozzie is suspicious of half of the show's core protagonists, but Peter also doesn't like Kate. (After all, Kate could potentially take Neal away from both Mozzie and Peter.) Peter finds her in the middle of the season just to warn her not to screw up Neal's life, part of a chain of events that leads to Neal and Mozzie mistakenly believing that Peter is the Machiavellian wrongdoer who has put Kate in danger. After Elizabeth and Peter set Neal straight, they realize that the culprit is Agent Fowler of the Office of Professional Responsibility, the FBI equivalent of Internal Affairs, proving that very few cop shows can resist the allure of vilifying those who police the police. Fowler is after a mysterious music box that Neal is reputed to have stolen. Fowler offers Neal a deal: in exchange for the music box, he'll give Neal and Kate new identities, far enough away from their old lives that they'll be able to live in peace. Neal seems ready to get out of the game and settle down peacefully with Kate, but none of his friends think that's a good idea. Mozzie is upset that Neal will be out of reach, and while Peter wants Neal to lead a stable life, neither he nor Elizabeth are in favor of this particular romantic coupling. Elizabeth seems unsure whether Neal loves Kate or the idea of her, and Peter argues in the dramatic climax that Neal doesn't need to find a separate life. “You already have one. Right here. You have people who care about you. You make a difference” [“Out of the Box,” 1.14]. Neal's admission that he didn't say goodbye to Peter because Peter's the only one who could change his mind suggests that perhaps even he was having

second thoughts about what he wanted. However, the point ends up being moot when the plane where Kate is waiting explodes before Neal can make his final decision.

Thus ends season one.

In season two Peter and Mozzie come to a truce in order to look out for Neal, who is still grieving for Kate's death. (Creator Jeff Eastin has also mentioned that Willie Garson's interpretation of Mozzie turned out even funnier than they were expecting, which could explain his increased presence in the show.) At one point, Mozzie even betrays Neal's confidence in order to warn Peter that Neal was going after Fowler. Mozzie felt bad about it later, but Neal agreed that it was the right call, especially since it turns out that Fowler didn't kill Kate. She was killed by Vincent Adler, or, as Neal calls him, "the man who made me who I am today" ["Burke's Seven," 2.10]. Adler wanted the music box to lead him to a lost Nazi U-boat filled with stolen treasure. He gets caught in the season finale, and the warehouse full of treasure explodes, but just as the good guys are celebrating their victory, Peter discovers evidence that Neal may have stolen the treasure and that the warehouse fire was just a cover. The sudden rift between the two of them is especially distressing after the events of season two, in which Neal not only opened up to Peter about his past, but also gave up a ring he had stolen for Kate in order to save Peter's life. "Keeping Peter alive is more important than holding a candle for someone who isn't" ["Payback," 2.14]. Neal is angry that Peter still can't trust him, but when he storms off to his apartment, he finds a key to a warehouse filled with the supposedly-incinerated treasure and begins to smile.

The end of season two sets up the dynamic of season three, in which Neal and Mozzie try to prevent Peter and Diana from proving that they stole the treasure. Neal also has to decide whether he wants to stay in New York or slip his anklet and retire with Mozzie to a tropical island as a wanted fugitive, never able to return to the US. Mozzie, who stole the treasure and kindly shared it with his best friend, has a vested interest in the latter option, but Neal keeps waffling. He scuttles one of their escape plans in order to close a case, and doesn't tell Mozzie that he knows which pieces of the treasure are being tracked by the FBI. Mozzie gets fed up with the situation in the midseason finale, accusing Neal of having Stockholm syndrome, but eventually he reluctantly accepts that Neal has made his choice. "I always thought ours would be a happy ending," he says wistfully, and leaves, with the implication that he is off to retire without Neal [3.10]. Meanwhile, Peter finds himself once again obsessed with finding evidence of Neal's guilt, as unhappy as he is over Neal's betrayal of his trust. (Neal originally had some moral high ground, since he had no idea that Mozzie stole the treasure, but he loses that when he continues to keep Peter in the dark.) Neal and Mozzie keep obstructing his investigation, even after he brings in his tough old mentor Kramer. Things come to a head in the midseason finale, when, just after Neal has decided to stay, his archrival and ex-partner-in-crime Keller returns to kidnap Elizabeth. Neal, Peter, and Mozzie, who all love Elizabeth in their own ways, act against their natures in getting her back. Peter discards the FBI handbook, knowing that Keller will be familiar with it. Mozzie returns — not that he had left New York in the first place — and admits that "an unshared life is not living," and he and Neal

give up the treasure [“Checkmate,” 3.11]. Neal is not the only one who found it a little hard to leave everyone behind.

Peter: “What were you two arguing about?”

Neal: “Mozzie wanted to leave New York. I didn’t.”

Peter: “Why not?”

Neal: “You. Elizabeth. Sara. The view out that window. Stepping off the elevator Monday morning, all of it. I have a life here.”

Peter: “What about Mozzie?”

Neal: “Well, he didn’t like to admit it, but yeah... this is his home.”

- “Checkmate,” 3.11

It’s not always easy to trust Neal, since he performs different selves for different audiences, to the point where his performances may serve to obscure rather than express his true self. Several of the characters suggest that even Neal might have lost track of which mask he’s wearing; Mozzie’s parting accusation, “You’re fooling yourself if you think this is who you really are”, echoes Kramer’s first words to Neal: “The greatest way to live honorably is to be what we pretend to be” [“Countdown” 3.10]. When does the lie become truth? And how can we trust what Neal says when he’s spent the entire half-season lying convincingly to Peter? But Neal tells the same thing to Peter, Mozzie, and even Keller, who differ greatly — he likes his life in New York, and doesn’t want to give it up. Even Kramer tells Peter that he doesn’t know whether or not Neal is really reformed, but Neal wants to be in New York.

Neal even comes within a hair’s breadth of confessing to stealing the treasure and going back to jail, when Keller ends up confessing to it for reasons of his own. Neal’s main concern for the second half of the season is regaining Peter’s trust. Peter’s main concern is deciding what he’ll say to the committee debating whether to commute Neal’s sentence for good behavior. Unfortunately, just as Peter and Neal re-establish their working groove, Kramer returns, intent on making sure that Neal never becomes a free man so that he will have to work for Kramer instead. Peter, who knows that this

would be the worst thing possible for Neal, signals that Neal should run, and Neal and Mozzie flee the country. End season three.

Season four returns us to a more normal state of affairs between our heroes, at least after Peter — despite his boss warning him to keep his head down — manages to figure out a way for Neal to return to New York from his island paradise. (This involves a ruthless FBI agent and a convoluted heist, which as Mozzie points out is fairly par for the course with them.) Mozzie stays on the island, reluctantly entrusting Peter with Neal's safety, but he doesn't even last a full episode without Neal before he too returns to New York. After that, the story turns to Neal's father James, who we learned at the end of season three had been accused of being a dirty cop when Neal was three. Neal himself went into Witness Protection with his mother after James confessed to murder. Now not only does Neal get a chance to meet his father, but he discovers that James may have been framed by a ring of corrupt law enforcement officials. Neal, Mozzie, Peter, Jones, Diana, and Sara go searching for the location of a box of evidence that James's old partner gathered years ago. When Peter gets into a not-so-accidental car accident during their midseason investigation of the corrupt Senator Pratt, Elizabeth tells Neal to keep Peter away from the off-book investigations for his safety, even if that involves lying to his face — something Neal never does. He'll happily misdirect Peter, but he doesn't like outright lying to him. With the help of Jones, though, Peter manages to stay in the loop, and the two of them continue their own parallel investigation as Neal and Mozzie work alone. Elizabeth relents by the end of the season, though, and the team reassembles, just in time for James — who really was guilty all those years ago — to murder Senator Pratt and

frame Peter for it. Earlier in the season, Peter and Mozzie both questioned how trustworthy James was, but it was still possible that they were overreacting out of concern about where that would leave them in Neal's life. Elizabeth suggests as much to Peter. James's refusal to turn himself in, even when Neal begs him to be a decent man, proves Peter and Mozzie right. Anything threatening the stability of their little seven-person family is dangerous.

Season three split the focus between the burgeoning tension between Peter and Neal and Neal's emotional tug of war between his two worlds, but season four delves even more dramatically into Neal's character development. He grew up believing that his dad had died a hero, only to learn when he was eighteen that the man he idolized in absentia was in prison for murder, and that his own real name was Neal, and not the name he'd been called for the previous fifteen years. Suddenly, everything he thought he knew about himself was destabilized. The abrupt reappearance of his father so many years later, especially after already finding a father figure of sorts in Peter, is even more unsettling, and it doesn't help that James's actions have now disrupted Neal's new life by getting Peter arrested. Jeff Eastin has said that one of season five's main arcs will be Neal trying to figure out for himself who he is, as opposed to who other people want him to be.

Eastin mentions that season five will also have to re-set Peter and Neal's dynamic. Peter's relationship with Neal gets more screentime than Neal and Mozzie's friendship for a number of reasons, not least that the lawman-conman collaboration that is the high organizing concept of the entire show. Their cases all come from the FBI, and Neal is almost literally tethered to the Bureau. Without that semi-imposed

connection, he would have no reason to solve these cases. (The reverse of this would be *Psych* [USA, 2006-], where main character and similarly out-of-the-box Shawn Spencer solves crimes with his longtime best friend Gus, sometimes as a consultant for the police but other times as a private psychic for hire.) I suspect it's also because the relationship between Neal and Peter, by its very nature, has more inherent tension than that of Neal and Mozzie. Neal is a con artist, and Peter catches con artists. Peter is duty-bound to keep Neal from breaking the law — the very conditions of their partnership require him to keep Neal in line — and Neal is perpetually stretching or breaking the law. Their friendship transcends the rift between them, but they also end up in a wary dance between suspicion and trust. Without that tension, Eastin told Valerie Leung (2012), "I think then we'd just end up with another, you know police procedural show where the — you know two pretty guys banter solving crimes." That's the space that Eastin seems to want to go back to, a space that is disturbed when Peter enters too many moral grey zones or endangers his life and job for Neal's sake, which has happened with increasing frequency. As AV Club critic Kenny Herzog (2012) asked, "What is it about Neal that drives this generally strong, levelheaded federal agent to cross lines, take it on the chin and put his own family in harm's way?" That's another side effect of the collision of Neal's worlds; as Neal's, and by extension Mozzie's, life is stabilizing, Peter's is getting increasingly unsettled. I'm curious to see how the fifth season pulls Peter back onto steady ground while still acknowledging their history.

Of course, Peter and Neal have personality differences outside of their relations to the profession of law-enforcement. Peter believes in hard work, and Neal doesn't



see anything wrong with getting something for nothing. Peter has a stable life that anchors his sense of self, and Neal is constantly shifting between selves. Peter is the rule-bound, systematic bureaucrat, and Neal runs on instinct and emotions .

Sociologist Eric Anderson (2009) might describe Peter as embodying some of the tenets of conservative, orthodox masculinity; he's neither homophobic nor misogynistic, but he's associated with a number of traditionally masculine things, like frankness, sports, monogamous heterosexuality, reason, and the public world of government and law enforcement. Neal is both more ambiguously masculine — we might call him metrosexual, a blanket term from the early 2000s for straight-identified men who exhibit some type of traditionally feminine or queer consumer behaviors — and also less domesticated than Peter. Mozzie's masculinity is also ambiguous; he is as much of a high-class hedonist/epicurean as Neal (their wine-drinking disdain for Peter's beer choices is hilarious) and even more of a shifting trickster figure, although in a sense he's tamed by his position as comic relief. Neal might actually be slightly more conventionally feminine; he's vain, a romantic, better at expressing emotion (whether real or fake) than Peter or Mozzie, and his main weapon is manipulation. He balances this with physical fitness, a number of female love interests, constant risk-taking, and exemplary ability with guns on the very few occasions he is forced to use one.

Neal is both the most explicitly heterosexually successful character and the show's most objectified character, as with the long montages where he's sculpting shirtless for no apparent reason other than audience gratification. Elizabeth and Peter are allowed their moments of romance and the occasional hint that they do more than

just kiss, but Peter is set up as the boring one — although his friendship with Neal is making him better at romantic gestures. Mozzie, meanwhile, is mostly asexualized except for one or two awkward episodes where the show attempts to give him a love interest. He could be read as embodying more of a queer space, as a denizen of the criminal world that exists as an alternative to the show's representation of normal, straight society. (His queerness is reinforced by the intertextual associations to actor Willie Garson's well-known role as Stanford, Carrie's gay friend on *Sex and the City* [HBO, 1998-2004].) Neal straddles these two worlds. In the straight world, he carves out a space for himself within Peter and Elizabeth's household, either alone — arguably with them as quasi-parental figures, although interpretations may vary — or with Sara. If he is with Sara, their romantic relationship is compared and contrasted to Peter and Elizabeth's marriage. In the cool, criminal world, it is just him and Mozzie, occasionally with the benevolent support of his landlord June, who as the loving widow of an ex-con has a sort of grandmotherly regard for Neal. Alex, his con artist ex-fling, will occasionally appear, but she isn't permanent. When Neal becomes closer to Peter's world, he's traveling between the primarily homosocial criminal space to a space of more established heterosexual familial relations.

This is not to say that *White Collar* doesn't reinforce the importance of Neal and Peter's relationship, as when Elizabeth — so often the voice of reason — tells Neal, "Peter is the best thing that ever happened to you and you're smart enough to know that" ["Hard Sell," 1.08], or when the drugged Neal admits to Peter, "Out of all the people in my life, Mozzie, even Kate. You know you're the only one... the only person in my life that I trust" ["Vital Signs," 1.10]. Peter risks everything for Neal,

Neal sacrifices his treasures and his secrets for Peter. However, unlike many other shows featuring intimate male friendships, the writers don't tease viewers with the idea of a romance, either between Neal and Peter or Neal and Mozzie. (Neal and Mozzie's relationship is strong but rarely explicitly remarked upon, which could be for the sake of keeping things perfectly heterosexual, but I think actually has to do with how rarely their friendship is actually threatened.) Neal and Peter's relationship is compared to Peter and Elizabeth's marriage at least three times, by my count, but not in a "Wow, it's like they're dating!" way; it's just Elizabeth pointing out matter-of-factly that Peter and Neal work well together. The closeness of their relationship is remarked upon not because they're both male, but because they are different types of men and often on opposite sides of the law.

### ***White Collar* and the Police Marriage**

From the moment I read the script in the pilot episode, I always loved that Peter and Elizabeth have a positive relationship, and you don't always see that on TV very often. You always see the drama of a relationship, or infidelity, or what isn't working because obviously that makes interesting TV, but what's nice is that I get stopped all the time by people who say, 'It's so nice to see a positive relationship on TV. I love the fact that you and your husband love each other.'

- Tiffani Thiessen (Radloff 2012)

The fact that Peter and Elizabeth Burke have a perfectly happy, functioning marriage almost automatically makes *White Collar* an outlier among cop shows. An outlier among many TV shows, honestly — as Thiessen says in the quote above, it's one of the demands of drama. Contentment cannot drive the plot along or be a source of melodramatic complications, which have become increasingly important in action dramas since the 1980s. The tension between marriage and work began to be

emphasized when professional dramas began incorporating soap themes, bringing personal plots into the workplace. But cop shows, in particular, seem to be full of *divorced cops*. Out of just the shows that I'm examining, Hutch from *Starsky and Hutch*, Crockett from *Miami Vice*, both the Rays from *Due South*, and Danny from *Hawaii Five-0*, are all divorced by the pilot episodes of their respective shows. This may be art imitating life, to a certain extent; there are a number of self-help articles on the internet about the stresses and challenges that police work introduces into marriages. I found a number of people stating as fact that cops get divorced at a higher rate than the rest of the country on average, although there were very few citations of actual statistics or hard evidence. Of course, something doesn't need to be true for it to be reflected in media; it's the perception that gets picked up. Even beyond reality, the demands of drama hold true here as well. Narratively speaking, ex-wives and –lovers are good for returning and stirring up a little turbulence. They create a good story. However, distinct patterns can be detected in the profusion of divorces within the buddy cop genre, generating antagonisms that in turn emphasize certain kinds of masculinity.

Vanessa, the former Mrs. Hutchinson<sup>15</sup> — or as she puts it, “The lady who never darned your socks” — appears for the first and last time in “Hutchinson for Murder One” [3.19]. Hutch agrees to meet her, despite Starsky's veiled concern, but he doesn't seem precisely pleased at her attempts to remind him what they once meant to each other. “What do I say to a lady who left me because she thought being married

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<sup>15</sup> In the pilot, Hutch mentioned that he had an ex-wife named Nancy, but as she, like most of the other women in *Starsky and Hutch*, was never mentioned again, viewers are free to either ignore it as a continuity error or decide whether to believe that Hutch was married twice or that Vanessa's name was originally Nancy.

to a cop held no future?” he demands, reminding her of all the arguments they had. Although Hutch eventually relents once she tells him she’s scheduled for a biopsy, the viewer realizes before Hutch does that she was manipulating his paternalist tendencies, playing herself up as someone who needs to be protected, while secretly hiding stolen gems in his car and scheduling flights out of the country. As such, when she’s killed halfway through the episode, the main emotional currency of her death is the threat that it poses to Hutch, which becomes the subsequent focus of the story. Vanessa is manipulative, but she’s not a very effective femme fatale. She’s more of a “central disruptive force,” as Jeremy Butler (2010:74) would put it, in death than she is in life.

Butler points out in his analysis of *Miami Vice* as neo-noir that the show overall has very few of these “deadly seductresses.” Most of the love interests, including Crockett’s ex-wife Caroline, are “redemptive women,” representing the unachievable ideal of a stable, moral life. The pilot and “Calderone’s Return part 1” [1.04] make it clear that Caroline and Crockett are still in love, and Crockett still wants to be part of his son Billy’s life, but his job is not compatible with any sort of stable domesticity. It’s not just the bullets or the drinking, Caroline says; it’s Crockett’s thrill-seeking tendencies and the way he throws himself into danger. “You’re all players, Sonny. You get high on the action,” she wearily tells him in the pilot. She and Crockett briefly reconcile in “Calderone’s Return,” but after she and Billy end up getting in the way of a hitman who’s after Crockett, she leaves Miami for good. Crockett steps out of her family-friendly station wagon and lets her drive off, returning to his own flashy convertible where Tubbs is waiting. The next two times we see Caroline, she’s

remarried and expecting another kid, and the focus has shifted from the possibility of Crockett having her in his life to his relationship with Billy.

We don't know much about Ray Vecchio's ex-wife Angie, just that Vecchio vaguely associates her with his beloved Riviera, he didn't tell Fraser about her until they ran into her at a garage, and she believes that he would be willing to tamper with evidence for a good cause. Stella Kowalski, on the other hand, is more explicitly central to Ray Kowalski's character arc. When he recollects how he got to be a cop, the first event he mentions is meeting Stella. "I was thirteen and she was a Gold Coast girl. Private school. Untouchable." ["Eclipse," 3.02] And, indeed, most of their interactions still fall into that pattern — Kowalski trying to reach out, and Stella remaining untouchable. She's excellent at putting him in his place both personally and professionally, as the Assistant State's Attorney. I don't mean to say that she seemed mean. Particularly in "Strange Bedfellows" [3.04], when her relationship with Kowalski is spotlighted, she comes off as a woman who still has some residual feelings for her ex but is trying to move on, and trying to make sure that he moves on as well instead of following her around. *Due South* is fairly critical of the Rays' views on love; Kowalski in this episode plays counterpoint to a bomb-wielding stalker trying to win back his ex-wife, and during the final showdown he is forced to admit that "when it's over, it's over. You got to accept that. And live with it." We don't know for sure why they got divorced; Kowalski says in this episode that it's like they've forgotten how to talk to each other, and later in the season he implies that he wanted kids and she didn't. We never hear Stella's side of the story, but it doesn't seem as if all their relationship needs is a second chance, or a different set of

circumstances — and it doesn't seem as if their problems were related to Kowalski being a cop, which is rare among fictional police divorces.

Nor is it entirely clear why Danny and Rachel, from *Hawaii Five-0*, got divorced, but Danny does imply that — like all the other cops' wives — Rachel was the one to leave. “She woke up married to a cop,” he explains [“Heihei,” 1.10]. Of course, the issue with Rachel is that she is not written particularly consistently; first we know her as Danny's “Wicked Witch of the West” ringtone, the woman who remarried and took their daughter to Hawaii so that Danny had to follow her halfway around the world just to keep regular visitation. Then, when we meet her for the first time, she's a sweet but exasperated woman who gets along with Steve and is still fond of Danny. At one point she and Danny are having an affair, which functions mostly to give Danny a choice to make at the end of the first season — either he can meet Rachel and Grace in the airport, and go back to New Jersey with them, or he can run after Steve. He chooses Steve, although it ends up being a moot point, since by the beginning of season two Rachel is back with her second husband and she and Grace have returned to Hawaii. After that, Rachel goes between being friends with Danny and threatening Danny's time with Grace.

It's tempting to view this as simply a contrast between the private world of marriage/family and the public world of police work, but I think that would gloss over certain nuances. Caroline and Rachel are really the only ones associated with domesticity — Vanessa, after all, was “the lady who never darned your socks,” and it was Kowalski who wanted a family, not Stella, who is associated more with her high-powered job. She's in the world of public service, too, albeit in high status position.

In fact, all of these women are linked to specific class markers: Vanessa is apparently a social climber, and first appears in a lush fur coat; Stella is a Gold Coast girl (and it's no coincidence that the real name of distinctly-working class Ray is Stanley Kowalski). We know very little about Rachel's finances, but her new husband Stan is incredibly wealthy, particularly compared to Danny, who lives in a tiny dump of an apartment.

Danny: "Apparently the London School of Economics does not have driver's ed, so driving lessons turned into dates and dates, turned into a two bedroom in Weehawken. She woke up married to a cop."

Steve: "That's not so bad."

Danny: "No, uh, that's what I thought. But..." [he gestures at the large, well-furnished bedroom.]

- "Heihei," 1.10

Caroline is the only one who doesn't seem wealthier than her ex — her brand of suburban family life appears pretty firmly middle class, as opposed to some of Crockett's other rich/yuppie love interests — but Crockett's flashy car and clothes are only on loan. More importantly, Caroline represents domestic suburban comfort, a world to which Crockett will never be able to belong unless he adopts a more 9-to-5 ethos.

The cop husband and his socio-economically successful wife have appeared in a number of TV shows and films. Just look at New York cop John McClane, whose wife separates from him and takes an executive business in a corporation in Los Angeles with his anxiety over his corporate-executive wife. And the pattern doesn't seem to be going away, either, if *Common Law*'s [USA, 2012] Wes — with the ex-wife who keeps trying to persuade him to become a lawyer again — is any indication. They're not always divorced or estranged, either; Crockett marries the wealthy musician Caitlin Davies in the fourth season of *White Collar*, and the rough Detective



Sipowicz of *NYPD Blue* [ABC, 1993-2005] (who was also divorced prior to the beginning of the series, due to his drinking problems) eventually cleans up his act enough to marry Assistant District Attorney Sylvia Costas in later seasons of the show. The pairing of cop and professional or socially mobile wife contrasts two different types of success. The class opposition is often gendered; Mackinnon (2003) notes that “machismo caus[es] less question if [it is] associated with working-class representation” (58). In these shows, the women have a more comfortable, even luxurious, success, but our unruly heroes, immersed in a male working class culture, don’t care for money. Hutch isn’t interested in Vanessa’s offer of a business partnership; Danny gripes about Stan and Rachel’s very nice house; Kowalski’s class issues mostly resolve themselves through his idealization of Stella as “untouchable,” which links to his own rampant insecurity issues. And Crockett’s heart is in the streets, whether he’s with Caroline or Caitlin. Their success comes in the form of the work they do to capture criminals — and in the way they protect others. All of the women end up in mortal peril at one point; Vanessa, Caitlin, and Sylvia are killed. Stella, Vanessa, and Sylvia are endangered because of their own careers: Vanessa’s criminal activity has made her a target of other thieves, Stella is being threatened by a man she’s prosecuting, and Sylvia is in the courthouse at the wrong time. Rachel and Caroline, who are defined primarily by their relationships and thus in danger because of those relationships. Caitlin fits into both positions; she meets Crockett because he’s assigned as her protection detail when she gives evidence against a group of dangerous music industry officials, but she’s killed by a man with a vendetta against Crockett. Rachel and Caroline are summarily saved by their respective exes; Stella is

protected by Kowalski, although Fraser is really the one investigating who is trying to kill her. This might be an example of how, as Kenneth Mackinnon (2003) says, masculine genres “exclude women or else represent men’s importance as far exceeding that of women” (38); some of these women, like Stella, have more power within the diegetic public world, but in terms of the narrative they are secondary.

However, when the cop and his successful ex-wife are estranged or divorced, the trope works in an additional way. Combined with the fact that the women were uniformly the ones who left, it means that our heroes don’t have to be the bad guys who deserted their wives and left them destitute. Instead, the men are the ones who have been chewed up and spat out by emotions and marriage, leaving them still wounded, while their exes keep moving on. They can be jaded but sensitive, the steadfast ones left behind, even if the narrative also acknowledges their failings in the relationship. In addition, because these divorces generally happened before the beginning of the show, it leaves their lives in a state of disarray. Ross Haenfler (2006) notes that when men feel disempowered and uncertain of their position in the public world, they may look for security in the private world. When that strategy failed on a broad scale in the 1970s and 1980s, with the gains of feminism and the recession that undermined breadwinner masculinity<sup>16</sup>, many men turned instead to autonomous, work-focused masculinity, leaving domestic concerns behind. For these particular characters, the security of their private world was destabilized on a personal level by a divorce in which they seem to have had very little say. In response, they too turned

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<sup>16</sup> The so-called “crisis of masculinity, although masculinity could be considered perpetually in crisis. Because it is defined by opposition and exclusion, it consistently has to be redefined within shifting cultural contexts (Segal 1990).

to work, finding control and stability in their jobs and their relationship with their police partners.

All of these men still have unresolved feelings for their exes — even Hutch, arguably, since he does soften towards Vanessa. But in the end, the cop life trumps. *Miami Vice* is perhaps the most straightforward example of, as Rebecca Feasey (2008) put it, cops “ignoring the needs of their family in favour of the force, sacrificing their personal life for the good of the wider society” (84). He loves Caroline and their son Billy, but he can’t give up the streets. Caroline simultaneously criticizes him and absolves him of responsibility for this; when he asks in the pilot if they would still be together if he had a different job, she says it’s not the job, it’s him and his addiction to the action. She puts the onus on him rather than the demands of the job, but also implies that it’s not something he could have changed, no matter what decisions he made. Crockett was never meant for domesticity. This is visually represented at the end of “Calderone’s Return part 1” [1.04], when he and Caroline say goodbye. Once they’ve made the decision to separate permanently, he steps out of Caroline’s station wagon — a family car, appropriate for chauffeuring children around the suburbs — and returns to his flashy Ferrari convertible, where Tubbs — his connection to the world of work — is waiting.

Danny is more comfortable with the domestic life than Crockett, given that most of his subplots revolve around his relationship with his daughter Grace, but even he chooses work over family. It sometimes seems like Rachel’s change of heart and their affair at the end of season one, culminating in her announcement that she’s pregnant and she wants to raise the baby in New Jersey with Danny and Grace, is there

specifically to provide Danny with personal conflict in the season finale. Will he join Rachel and Grace at the airport to return to the life he claims to want back so desperately? Or will he stay and help Steve out of trouble? The answer is hardly even in question: he stays, and Rachel and Grace board the plane. No matter how often he insists that Grace is his priority and that New Jersey is superior to Hawaii, he cannot abandon his team in their hour of need. Romance and family lose; the work family — specifically Steve, his fraternal partner— wins.

Divorce provides a growth opportunity. It sets our hero free to invest all of his energies in his job and his male partner, a world where there are very few women of importance. Hutch gets framed for murder because Vanessa managed to play on his emotions and chivalry, and the only person supporting him is Starsky. When Rachel becomes a villain again in *Hawaii Five-0*, Steve and Danny bond over her trying to take Grace away, and Steve steps in to help Danny. *Due South* implies that it's because of his divorce that Kowalski agrees to go undercover in the first place. "I was weak, I was down. ... I think, maybe I can use a change, a change of scene, a change of luck, go undercover, get a new life" ["Burning Down the House," 3.01]. This loneliness, which mirrors Fraser's, is what draws both of them together so closely. At the end of *Due South*, Kowalski and Vecchio effectively swap relationships: Vecchio marries Kowalski's ex-wife, and Kowalski goes off to Canada with Vecchio's ex-partner, so that nobody has to be lonely. There is a reason that Fraser's dad and one of Crockett's girlfriends compare partnership to a marriage (and Fraser's dad would know, as his marriage to Fraser's mother was perhaps the only functioning romantic relationship of the show), and that Steve and Danny are frequently asked how long

they've been married. Just as professional dramas often involve the main characters recreating the familial structure with their coworkers, partners combine the private and the public worlds by recreating the closeness of the marital tie to a relationship within the work setting.

*White Collar* has the marriage-partnership comparisons as well. The only difference is that Elizabeth is the one making them, which says a lot. Elizabeth and Peter are not only together, they are the show's ideal romantic couple, the yardstick against which Neal (and, later, on-off girlfriend Sara) measures his own ideas of love. Moreover, unlike Crockett and his fourth-season wife Caitlin, they don't spend most of their on-screen time arguing about the demands of being a cop's wife. (And unlike Caitlin and Malia, the wife of *Hawaii Five-0* team member Chin Ho Kelly, it doesn't seem very likely that the writers will kill her off to cause some angst for the male characters. It would be out of keeping with the tone of the show. During the moments when she is in danger, she is instead often instrumental in her own escape.) Elizabeth is never bothered by Peter's dedication to his job. The closest that they've come to tension has been during the current season, season four, when Elizabeth asked Neal to lie to Peter and continue the personal side of his investigation on his own, for the sake of keeping Peter (then in the hospital) safe. Even then, although she has said multiple times that she worries about Peter when he walks out the door, she understands his commitment to justice.

Elizabeth: "Yeah, I would be lying if I said I didn't worry about him. But I knew who he was when I fell in love with him."

Sara: "You never tried to change that?"

Elizabeth: "No, why would I? I mean, we're married. For better, for worse."

- "Under the Radar," 2.16

In fact, she frequently helps with his investigations, and the Burke home has hosted numerous unofficial planning sessions with the entire team. She never argues about Peter continuing his official case, even though that was what landed him in the hospital; she just wanted to curtail his and Neal's extracurricular activities, and even then, she confesses about two episodes later. "Neal and I will always have secrets. But you and I, we don't," Peter tells her, in an astonishingly anticlimactic scene ["Shoot the Moon," 4.14]. Multiple characters explicitly note the lack of conflict in Peter and Elizabeth's marriage. The only real threats are external, like when one of them is kidnapped. Those moments juxtapose the way that relationships can make you vulnerable — Peter is never so willing to disregard the FBI playbook as he is when Elizabeth is in trouble — with one of the constant themes of the show, which is how relationships make you stronger. After all, a big part of Neal's character development is that he's letting himself settle down.

While the show still prioritizes the public world of police work, then — Elizabeth is very understanding when Peter needs to go work on a case, even when it's not an immediate priority — it also combines the public world with Peter's domestic life. This continues *White Collar*'s theme of worlds colliding. *Hawaii Five-0* also combines the familial with the judicial, but in their case, family will often get unexpectedly mixed up with an investigation. Steve's sister is in trouble, or his mother is the CIA assassin who killed a bad guy's father, or Kono is dating the heir to the Hawaiian yakuza. Although *White Collar* is not averse to that — the conspiracy this season circled around Neal's father, after all — what I mean is that the Burke household often becomes the base of the operation, both literally and figuratively.

Rather than just creating a team family within the work environment, they create a team family that is partially grounded in the home environment. Elizabeth is an intrinsic part of that — after all, Mozzie likes her, and Mozzie is habitually derisive of anyone even remotely connected to the federal government. As an inhabitant of the straight world who has no obligation to enforce the law, she mediates between Peter and Neal’s worlds. Rather than both of them being alone, then, and forging a replacement for the lack of other significant bonds in their life, Neal and Peter are bringing their other significant bonds — Elizabeth for Peter, Mozzie for Neal — into their job, fusing them all together into an extended work family. *White Collar* follows more of a sitcom model, where the boundaries between work and home are porous and not mutually exclusive, and the most inclusive unit is the family group.

Sara: “And now he’s got Neal.”

Elizabeth: “For better, for worse.”

Sara: “Yeah.”

Elizabeth: “But for the record, it’s actually better.”

- “Under the Radar,” 2.16

## 6.

### *Hawaii Five-0* [CBS, 2010-present]

Danny: "Is everything gonna become a personal mission for you? You hang a guy off a roof because you lost your father?"

Steve: "Danny, you know what..."

Danny: "I swear to God, I just wanna know. I wanna know because if everything is gonna become a personal mission to you, I count my odds at job security, not to mention survival pretty slim. Okay? We are partners. So if you are going to be the shoot first, ask questions later type of a guy, I would at least like to be consulted so I know when to duck."

- "Ohana," 2.02

**The Show:** In the pilot episode of *Hawaii Five-0* (2010), Steve McGarrett drives himself and a wildly protesting Danny Williams up a gangplank and onto a Chinese freighter full of armed criminals, all in search of the man who killed Steve's father. It's a pretty good summary for the show as a whole, which tonally tends towards the high-octane.

*Hawaii Five-0* (2010) is a very loose remake of the original *Hawaii Five-O* [CBS, 1968-1980]. As a few reviews mentioned, the original's main contributions to cultural memory were "the theme music, [star Jack] Lord's triumphant catchphrase "Book 'em, Danno!" and Lord's haircut, which waved like the surrounding palm trees" (Tucker 2010). Needless to say, it's not a show with a huge contingent of reverent fans, and the writers and producers weren't slavish in their updates. The set-up and the theme song are mostly the same, villain Wo Fat and "Book 'em, Danno!" have stuck around, "Danno" is Steve's right-hand man, and Chin and Kono are cousins. That's about as far as the similarities goes. The new show could well be called *Hawaii Five-2.0: Younger, Sexier, and Serialized*. Steve spends an awful lot of time with his shirt off; Kono is female; Danny's a single dad; there's a great deal more



violence; and most importantly, the characters have ongoing storylines and relationship drama.

Steve McGarrett is a Navy SEAL who returns to Hawaii on the trail of the killers of his father — or, more specifically, for his father’s funeral. He only ends up taking over the investigation of his father’s murder, on the request of the governor, in order to get access to a mysterious toolbox full of evidence. This little stunt lands him as the head of that task force, putting him in a position to gather the team together. First is Danny “Danno” Williams, the detective formerly assigned to the John McGarrett murder case and a recent transplant from New Jersey (a “haole,” as the born-and-bred Hawaiians call him with varying degrees of scorn and fondness). Danny is a single father who came to Hawaii after his ex-wife Rachel and her new husband move there with Danny and Rachel’s daughter Grace, which might be a nicer change of scenery for him if he didn’t hate Hawaii. After Danny comes Chin Ho Kelly; he was kicked out of the Hawaii Police Department under suspicion of bribery, but he’s also one of the few other detectives John McGarrett trusted, which is enough of a character reference for Steve. When they need someone unknown to go under cover, Chin suggests his cousin Kono Kalakaua, a former pro surfer about to graduate from the police force, and one of the few people in his family still speaking to him. All of this happens in the pilot; after that, the stage is set for Steve and his band of amazingly attractive, occasionally unclothed sort-of cops to go chasing down murderers, missing persons, terrorists, and international smugglers.

Like *White Collar* and unlike the original *Hawaii Five-O*, *Hawaii Five-0 (2010)* is an episodic-serial hybrid. The serialized elements blend relationship melodrama

and action melodrama; all the main characters have various tragic backstories that twine into the police business over the course of the series. The main thrust of the story is the 5-0 team's continuation of John McGarrett's investigation into police corruption and his wife's death, but there are endless other threads — Chin taking the fall for his uncle, who stole money in order to pay for his wife's hospital bills; Kono dating the heir to the local Yakuza; Danny's ongoing battles with his ex-wife; Steve's sister Mary constantly getting in and out of trouble; not to mention the ancillary members of the team — that diverge from the main plot before tying themselves back in again. It's impossible to separate the relationship melodrama from the conspiracies and investigations. The series' main antagonist is a villain named Wo Fat, who not only had the governor in his pocket — and thus is indirectly the reason 5-0 was formed to begin with — and stuck his fingers in a number of other pies, but also turns out to have ordered John McGarrett's death. Wo Fat, meanwhile, is obsessed with finding the person who killed his father, a mysterious CIA operative codenamed “Shelbourne,” and who turns out to be Steve's mother Doris — the woman who supposedly died when Steve was fifteen and inspired John McGarrett's investigation in the first place. Family just keeps on returning.

To balance out the convoluted melodrama — to be fair, it's a little less overwhelming when the revelations come in smaller weekly doses — we have the “carguments.” This is the shorthand used by both fans and producers for Steve and Danny's endless bickering, which often takes place in the downtime when they're driving somewhere. The promotional video, “Don't Call It A Bromance!” (2011), which was released during the first season, primarily features this type of banter. Like

Aaron Sorkin's famed walk-and-talk, setting these usually inconsequential conversations in a speeding car helps keep the show's energy up, although to be fair it happens in other places, too. A boat, a hardware store, halfway up a mountain — put Steve and Danny together, and they'll snark at each other no matter where they are. (Many of the critics who reviewed the first few episodes mentioned that pairing Steve with the prickly Danny helped make Steve a little less distant — less “cardboard,” as the *Washington Post's* Hank Stuever (2010) referred to actor Alex O'Loughlin — and a little more lively. The banter may also have been a way to attract a more youthful audience to CBS, which often struggles to appeal to younger markets.) Peter Lenkov, one of the producers, has mentioned in a handful of interviews that Steve and Danny's relationship become less wary and more brotherly — which is true, although a number of people both within the world of the show and outside it might replace “brotherly” with “old married couple” — but the arguments haven't changed that much. Steve will make fun of Danny for being too uptight, and Danny in turn will harangue Steve for insane stunts like driving a motorcycle up a flight of stairs. The relationship stories are serialized, but the inter-team relationships don't actually change that much. When everything else is constantly turbulent, the team stays the same.

The car is also where Danny will typically open up about things like his ex-wife Rachel starting a custody battle, and Steve can give a short burst of sympathy before they're distracted by the next expository phone call or high-speed car chase. This is quite a change from the original show, where Danny and Steve 1.0 were more likely to talk about the job than anything else. Critic Mary McNamara (2010) mentions that

the original was made “back in the late '60s when cops were all men who solved crimes and kept their feelings to themselves.” Now, cases and feelings intermingle, and the characters actually have personalities and lives outside of work (sort of). Of course, in the original Danny also almost never criticized Steve’s decisions, which he does all the time in *(2010)*. This lets Lenkov and the other producers hold up their model of stoic, risk-taking, heroic, allergic-to-emotions masculinity — the modern version of Lord’s Steve McGarrett, albeit with more of a sense of humor — while simultaneously undermining it by using Danny and the hard-to-impress Chin and Kono to point out just how ridiculous that character is. They can have their archetype, and mock it, too.

The tone of *(2010)* is so different from the original that when Chin Ho and Steve tell criminal Sang Min, after threatening to deport his wife and child to Rwanda, that they’re “the new kind” of cops [“Pilot,” 1.01], it seems almost like meta-commentary on the way the show has been updated. The editing is frenetic! They take off their shirts more! They’re more violent! They interrogate people by sticking them in shark cages! *(2010)* is more similar to the equally fast-paced, aggressive *24* [FOX, 2001-2010] than it is to your father’s, or your grandfather’s, *Hawaii Five-O*. And yet in a sense, they’re not “the new kind” of cops at all — and not just because the show portrays an updated version of the autonomous man/family man dynamic we saw in *Dragnet*. In Rebecca Feasey’s (2008) exploration of police shows over the decades, she mentions that in shows like *The Sweeney* [ITV, 1975-78], the main characters will frequently skirt the edges of the law — and sometimes step right over them — in order to catch the villain of the episode. In a world full of chaos and very bad people,

the ends justify the means. Danny may not let Steve off the hook for his bad police procedure and shark-tank interrogation techniques, but the 5-0 team gets a lot of important information when they threaten criminals. “That guy was only going to talk out of fear of death,” Steve tells Danny in the second episode. [“Ohana,” 1.02] We are supposed to accept that this violence against criminals is necessary in order to save innocent civilians. (2010)’s depiction of far-reaching corruption or uselessness in the government and the police department is a little more contemporary (at least, if we start the contemporary period in about the 1980s). Like *The Sweeney*, though, “the message of this seemingly hard-hitting and brutish show is that crime does not and must not pay, which is of course a message that ‘would not be out of place in the 1950s’” (Feasey 2008:83).

### **Homosociality, Homoeroticism, and Changing Masculinities**

Danny: [on the phone] “You, uh, you miss me, don’t you.”

Steve: “Oh, yeah, I wish you were here, but you don’t swim, do you.”

Danny: “I don’t swim? I swim. Very well, actually, I just choose not to.”

Steve: “Yeah, yeah yeah.”

Ed: “You talking to your wife?”

Steve: “I’m talking to my partner.”

- *Hawaii Five-0* (2010), “Ho’apono,” 1.07

People are perpetually asking Steve and Danny about their marriage. Sometimes the question is serious, as in the above example; other times it’s a jibe, like when the prisoner [in 1.04] or Lori [in 2.02] asks the bickering pair how long they’ve been married. Even Danny tells Steve at one point that their marriage has gotten predictable. It’s a running gag on the show: Steve and Danny argue like the stereotypical old married couple, ergo Steve and Danny are married.

They're not, of course; it's highly unusual for a cop show to feature queer-identified main characters, even as part of an ensemble. John Cooper on *Southland* [NBC/TNT, 2009-] is gay; Tim Bayliss from *Homicide: Life on the Streets* [NBC, 1993-1999] came out as bisexual; *White Collar*'s Diana Barrigan is a lesbian, as is *The Wire*'s [HBO, 2002-2008] Kima Greggs. Serena Southerlyn explicitly mentioned that she was gay in her last line on her last episode of *Law and Order* [NBC, 1990-2010]. There are a few more scattered here and there, but not many. Women have become a regular — albeit sometimes token — presence in the fictional police world, but gay cops are still a new frontier, even after what has been dubbed the “Gay 90s” brought a striking number of LGBT characters onto TV. Sexual orientation is only visible if it is either stated or displayed, which means that viewers can read whatever sexuality they want into the characters, and many do. However, because straightness is still the default sexuality in our society, those readings are only headcanon — fanspeak for personally-held beliefs about the diegetic storyworld — unless the show explicitly “outs” the character in a way that is not construed as a joke.

And yet over the course of my research, I noted that many scholars talk about the homoeroticism of the partner relationship, what Pearson (2000) describes as “a subtext common to virtually all police dramas of the ‘buddy’ variety” (129). The buddy genre is explicitly homosocial, and the male-male relationships are the most narratively important; as I mentioned in “White Collar and the Police Marriage,” women in these worlds are often peripheral. The main characters depend on and have their lives structured around relationships that are homosocial, not heterosexual. There is also the intimacy issue. Men are often stereotyped as being bad at discussing

feelings. This stereotype is reflected in *Due South*, in Vecchio's uncomfortable "You know guys aren't any good at talking about this" ["Flashback," 2.18] and Fraser's explanation that "There's nothing more unnerving to men than talking about feelings" ["Bird in the Hand," 2.04]. Emotional intimacy is culturally constructed as gendered behavior; women do feelings, and men don't — or rather, straight men aren't supposed to, because when straight men behave in ways associated with femininity, they're at risk of being perceived as gay.

Eric Anderson (2009) uses the term "homohysteria" to describe the overarching cultural fear of being seen as gay. This is only relevant in highly homophobic and misogynistic cultures; it's not a fear of misperception, but a fear of being perceived as something widely considered abhorrent or wrong. But homohysteria cannot exist in a society where queer people are an unambiguous, static Other; rather, it presumes a cultural milieu in which anyone can be gay. According to Anderson, "when one adds homophobia, to the social understanding that homosexuality exists in great numbers, and that it is not easily identifiable by one's aesthetics, or negated by one's religious affiliation, we have a culture of homohysteria" (86). Queer visibility, then, is intrinsically connected to violent homophobia and the fear of being homosexualized. As gay congressman Barney Frank put it, "visibility is the prerequisite for gay bashing. How do you bash somebody you don't know is there?" (cited in Walters 2001:50)

Homosexuality as an identity, as something you could *be* rather than something you *did*, existed before the Stonewall Riots of 1969. It was even sometimes talked about in the media; according to a study by Lisa Bennett, *Time* and *Newsweek*

published 21 articles about gays and lesbians in the 1950s. That's nothing compared to the 151 articles in the 1990s, but there was public acknowledgement even before the Stonewall Riots galvanized the gay rights movement and made the issue more pressing (Walters 2001:3-4, McCormack 2012:57). Anderson suggests, however, that most straight people associated homosexuality with the Wildean camp stereotype and the more radical politics of the 1970s liberation movement. (Interestingly, in the *Starsky and Hutch* episode "Death in a Different Place" [3.06], the victim, Blaine, is a married, closeted cop. Hutch seems initially distressed, although eventually sympathetic; Starsky is freaked out by the fact that he never knew this man, his mentor, is gay; and the bigwigs of the police department don't want to let the public know that a decorated officer is gay for fear of having to cave to pressure and hire openly gay cops, but it does implicitly acknowledge that not all gay people were flamboyant. Even when Blaine is in the gay bar where much of the episode's action takes place, he explicitly mentions that he doesn't pick up, and he spends the entire scene with his back turned to the crowd and to the drag queen performing on stage. However, the homosexual world, in this case represented by the gay bar, is an alien subculture for Starsky and Hutch — a "different place," literally. It is a place where even the two more "normal" gay characters we meet, Blaine and an out gay activist, were not entirely comfortable; they were frequent customers, but apparently remained aloof from the scene.)

Anderson (2009), Walters (2001), and Mark McCormack (2012) cite the AIDS crisis of the 1980s as a major factor in the increased homophobia of the decade. "The ubiquitous presence of gay men could no longer be denied, they were dying in



normal American families” (Anderson 2009:87). It became clear that you couldn’t know who was in the closet until the doors were opened. And not only did gay people inhabit a world larger than bathhouses and gay bars, not only could they be friends and neighbors and family members, but they were suddenly associated with a deadly virus that had no cure. The religious right was making a televangelical comeback; social conservatives were in power. Meanwhile, deindustrialization led to an economic crunch for working-class white men, among others, that, in concert with the spread of feminism has been associated with a “crisis of masculinity” in the 1980s. If men were not the breadwinners, what were they?

In the 1980s, gender scholars like R.W. Connell (1995) developed the idea of hegemonic masculinity, the process in which one form of masculinity comes to reign supreme over other and subordinate other forms of masculinity. Some of those subordinated forms of masculinity are associated with femininity, while others, like black masculinity, were stereotypically hypermasculinized. The hegemonic masculinity becomes the common-sense norm. The more qualities of hegemonic masculinity that a man embodies, the more privileges he has. Anderson correlates this social process, in which all other forms of masculinity are subordinated to a single one and femininity is disdained, with periods of high homophobia. Homosexuality, which was very strongly associated with femininity, was not merely subordinated but highly stigmatized. In such a highly homophobic environment, anything less than 100 percent heteromasculine could be questioned, which might be part of the reason that Crockett and Tubbs are far less tactile than Starsky and Hutch. And yet, even Crockett and Tubbs need to share things with each other, no matter how hard it

comes. In the episode “Evan” [1.21], Crockett refuses to discuss his past working relationship with the titular Evan, despite the fact that it might be important for the case he and Tubbs are working. Crockett lashes out about this with sufficient force that they both angrily agree to “drop the friendship and just be partners.” However, as Tubbs predicts, Crockett’s stonewalling turns dangerous when Evan’s recklessness threatens to get out of hand, and Crockett eventually relents, opens up, and lets Tubbs reassure him. As it happens, Crockett feels guilty because when his and Evan’s old partner came out as gay, he didn’t stop Evan from harassing him, and the partner ended up getting killed after purposefully walking into a dangerous situation without backup. Considering the era, this is a fairly sympathetic portrait of homosexuality, but the issue is quickly displaced from the dead gay partner to the guilt complexes of the living straight men. Crockett needs to bare his soul to Tubbs, not only for the case but for his emotional and physical well-being; by contrast, the homophobic Evan does not have a Tubbs to help him exorcise his emotional demons and ends up getting killed due to his own guilt-driven risk-taking.

The emphasis on male-male friendship is one way in which producers, whether accidentally or purposefully, downplay the importance of women and the domestic sphere in comparison to the bonds formed through the public sphere of police work. In his analysis of male rampage movies, Pfeil (1995) mentions that they portrayed “the perfect adequacy of the all-male couple and, according, the relative superfluity of all those around who remain merely biologically female” (17). There are women around, but they don’t provide much more than a foil or some extra angst for the protagonist. Instead, the white hero and his black sidekick heal each other. As I

mentioned in my analysis of *Miami Vice*, Tubbs and Crockett's relationship takes on a slightly different dynamic than that of the male rampage films; Tubbs is not domesticated in the same way as married cops Powell and Murtaugh. However, as the loyal support, Tubbs is generally more feminized than Crockett. He is the one to absolve Crockett in "Evan," counseling him on matters of emotions when the Police Academy has failed: "They don't teach that in the Academy. You learn it in the street. In the world. In our hearts, where I know you have it." When Crockett loses his memory and seems to have gone bad, Tubbs is the last to give up on him, right up until Crockett — as "Burnett" — shoots at him. Tubbs is a frequent star in Crockett's amnesiac flashbacks, and he and Lieutenant Castillo do eventually readmit him into the police family. Crockett repays this by saving Tubbs' life — the "Redemption in Blood" for which the last episode of the Burnett arc is named. Tubbs has saved Crockett's life by helping return his memory and his true self, and Crockett returns the favor in a more concrete way.

So how do producers play up homosocial relationships without potentially encouraging homoerotic readings, particularly within the traditionally hyper-masculine world of the cop show? Sometimes the relationships themselves are dialed down — "normally expressed through roughhousing and banter, intimacy is kept at bay by male bravado" (Mackinnon 2003:38). Such conduct can be understood in terms of what Anderson calls "masculine capital," a form of social currency that needs to be constantly replenished in order to refute suspicion. The more masculine capital you build up, the more (temporary) leeway you are allowed, as he observes with regard to the "amazingly homoerotic rituals" of team sports and football players

wearing dresses to school as a joke (Anderson 2009:43). There are three primary ways of gaining or regaining masculine capital: heterosexuality, homophobia, and physical performance. Starsky, Hutch, Crockett, and Tubbs aren't really homophobic — at the most, Starsky and Crockett are visibly uncomfortable, but they accept eventually that some of their cop friends may be gay, and *Starsky and Hutch* even lets a few gay characters get in some anti-homophobic remarks. The protagonists, however, are very overt about their affairs with women. What's more, a lot of Starsky and Hutch's more emotional, less bantering moments center around their attachments to women: Hutch punching Starsky and then breaking down sobbing when Starsky tells him his girlfriend is a prostitute; both of them sitting on the floor of Starsky's kitchen, drunkenly mourning Starsky's girlfriend. Tubbs's heart-to-heart with Crockett in "Evan" [1.21] is bookended by Tubbs scoring with a girl, blowing her off to talk to Crockett, and then joking that Crockett had better have his head on straight, "because I don't pass up beautiful girls like Michelle for nothing less."

Beyond the constant stream of attractive women in their beds, there is the physicality. Anderson discusses this mostly with regard to sporting prowess, but in cop shows masculine performance translates easily into violence, aggression, and the constant risk-taking — and is embodied in the incredibly muscular physiques of the decade's top male movie stars. The idea of sacrificing everything for the win remains, but the stakes are higher. Combined with the strong associations between masculinity and violence, and the idea of the public world and state power as masculine, cops — particularly cops who work in the field — have easy access to masculine capital. As D'Acci (1994) puts it, they prove their masculine supremacy by their physical or

technological prowess and by skillfully “negotiating the dangerous space between social order and lawless disorder” (116). In her essay “The Buddy Politic” about 1980s buddy cop movies, Cynthia Fuchs (1993) suggests that violent spectacle not only “emphatically displaces homosexuality” but also alibis it; when one partner is in danger and the other partner gets a little closer than might normally be acceptable, “impending death allows these exaggerated images of male-on-male contact” (202-3). Of course, even with this negotiation, these shows couldn’t escape scrutiny, as we can see with the “accusations” that Starsky and Hutch were gay — and it didn’t stop fans from enjoying the homoerotic tension that scholars would later remark upon.

Over the next decade, there were significant changes in the cultural view of homosexuality. Anderson (2009) points to the General Social Survey as evidence of “the trend of rising homophobia through the 1980s and diminishing homophobia since 1993” (89). This statistical data corresponds with Walters (2001) and Ron Becker (2006a), who discuss the explosion of queer visibility that earned the 1990s the nickname “the Gay 90s.” Becker sees the 1990s as a period when awareness of multiculturalism and identity politics came to a head, after the Cold War ended and even Americans who had remained oblivious to the growing tensions of the 1970s and 1980s could no longer see themselves as united against the Soviet Other. Meanwhile, niche marketing had already begun targeting social difference, and as AIDS became more common even in straight communities, the gay rights movement picked up steam at the beginning of the 1990s. Clinton — the first explicitly gay-positive president — made the government a more LGBT-friendly employer, endorsed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and was the first president to mention

sexual orientation in his State of the Union and publicly address gay groups while in office. Becker (1998, 2006a, 2006b) suggests that more and more middle-class straight Americans considered themselves gay-friendly, and Walters (2001) says that gay people seemed “like the paragons of trendiness,” despite the conservative and religious fundamentalist backlash against them (8).

The “Gay 90s” seem to have been less a celebration of diversity than a decade of negotiating which differences to recognize and how. There was the more obvious political negotiation, as with the debates over Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act, pitting virulently homophobic discourse against anti-homophobic protests. And yet “tolerant” straight people and the media also negotiated anxiety in more subtle ways. Walters mentions that making queerness into a spectacle was a kind of double-edged sword. On the one hand, having explicit queer representation on TV was a step forward, given that for so long, queer characters did not seem welcome in the shows that viewers brought into their living rooms each week. There were a handful of gay characters and gay-themed episodes on prime time TV — and a very few out, recurring characters in the 1970s and 1980s — but those apparently came at the expense of fundamentalist complaints to advertisers. On the other hand, as

Walters (2001) puts it,

“Far too often, gay access to cultural visibility seems predicated on an acceptance of two possible modes of representation: the exotic but ultimately unthreatening ‘other’ (the cuddly cross-dresser), or gays as really straights after all, the ‘aren’t we all just human beings’ position that reproduces cultural specificity to a bland sameness that ends up assuming and asserting the desirability of the mainstream” (15).

Lesbian and gay acceptance, then, was predicated on the palatability of homosexuality to straight audiences, which echoes both the growing assimilationist trend of the gay rights movement and Becker’s (2006a, 2006b) argument that “gay

chic” was an easy way for professional-middle class social liberals to be “transgressive” or “cosmopolitan” in their politics without having to overly disturb their worldview or their fiscally conservative policies. They could be multicultural without engaging with racial difference or the structural inequalities of racism.

There were more LG(BT) characters on shows, but the networks still shied away from really engaging with queer experiences; either there was one gay character, often stereotyped, among a larger and entirely heterosexual crowd, or a single episode would be queer-themed and the show would bounce back on its usual course by the very next week. As such, queer visibility on primetime TV mirrored Walters’s (2001) description of “a society readily embracing the *images* of gay life but still all too reluctant to embrace the *realities* of gay identities and practices in all their messy and challenging confusion” (10). Becker (2006a) suggests, then, that networks were primarily trying to appeal to the educated, upwardly mobile, gay-friendly-but-straight audiences with the “hip” factor of gay programming, rather than to actual gay viewers, who were not valuable enough as a niche audience. And as he explores, many of these single-episode stories actually focused more on the straight experience of queerness, as in the “homosexual heterosexual” sitcom trope where a straight character is mistaken for being gay. Where do the new demarcations of sexual orientation fall, and how does one navigate the unstable boundaries and redefine straightness in a world where homophobia is increasingly rejected? And, more to my point, how do these tensions reflect on same-sex friendship?

Anderson’s (2009) theory of inclusive masculinity argues that with the decline of cultural homophobia, multiple forms of masculinity can be socially esteemed

without a clear hierarchy. Some groups of men will continue to be homophobic, misogynistic, stoic, emotionally distant, and so on, while others will not only repudiate homophobia but will absorb conventionally feminine behaviors into their masculine performance. Masculinity, then, will also become less dichotomous in terms of gender. With the rejection of homophobia, meanwhile, being gay is not considered shameful, even if heterosexuality is still the norm. In fact, sometimes declining homophobia and inclusive masculinity can work in conjunction with heteronormativity, since this climate means that straight men have more leeway in their behavior and relationships before they are presumed gay.

Kowalski: "Can I ask you something? Do you find me attractive?"

Bert: "Oh, I wouldn't say attractive."

Rico: "Nah. Cute, maybe."

Gladys: "I'd say well-favored."

Kowalski: "Did I ask you?"

Bert: "Sorry, I thought you were asking all of us."

Kowalski: "Well, I wasn't, so zip." [to Fraser] "Well? D'you find me attractive?"

Fraser: "In what sense?"

Kowalski: "In the sense of... you know, being a woman."

Fraser: "Do I think you're an attractive woman?"

Kowalski: "No. No. I'm not the woman, you're the woman."

Fraser: "I'm the woman."

Gladys: "No, I'm the woman."

Kowalski: "Butt out."

Bert: "Well, she is."

Kowalski: "Well, I know she's a woman, I'm asking Fraser to pretend that *he's* a woman. Okay?"

Gladys: "Oh! Can you do that, dear?"

Fraser: "Well, I have done that, yes."

Rico: "So have I. It was rather fun. Heh heh."

Kowalski: "Look, you three zip, and you, you pretend you're a woman, okay? You find me attractive?"

Fraser: "Very much so, yes."

Kowalski: "You're not just saying that?"

Fraser: "Well, I'm not really qualified to judge, Ray."

[Ray laughs.]

Gladys: "And what's funny about that? He isn't."

Ray: "It just... sounds like something my wife would say."

- *Due South*, "Eclipse," 3.02



*Due South* is not a typical mainstream TV show; it was a quirky, surreal, half-Canadian comedy-drama with artistic aspirations, and it was cancelled twice over the course of its three/four-season run. Once, it was brought back by producer intervention; fans also staged a letter-writing campaign to help bring it back on the air, which may have given CBS hope that it could attract a youth audience despite its otherwise low ratings share. Thus, Fraser and Kowalski's relationship isn't necessarily representative of what networks thought that the majority of viewers would go for. However, I can't imagine the show being made before the mid-1990s, with the way it playfully subverts heteromasculine expectations. *Starsky and Hutch* played with the laugh factor in having its two male leads accidentally end up in some sort of clinch, but it's a little more slapstick than, for example, when Fraser kisses Kowalski underwater in "Mountie on the Bounty part 2" [3.13]. The kiss itself didn't read as particularly funny; it happens while the duo are trying to swim out of a sinking ship, and most viewers probably inferred that Fraser was providing air for the lagging Kowalski. What humor there is comes in Kowalski's confusion about "That thing you were doing with your mouth," and whatever anxiety he has is eventually dispersed when Fraser assures him that it was simply "buddy breathing," and that, as Kowalski put it, "Nothing's, like, changed or anything, right?" Interestingly, that "nothing's, like, changed," can be read in multiple ways. Kowalski could be talking about the kiss not changing their friendship, which is a very indirect way to ask whether your friendship is no longer simply platonic, or he could be referring to the potentially partnership-ending argument they've been having. The next thing he does, after all, is thank Fraser — a step forward for him in their relationship — which

sparks another flare-up of the conflict and completely distracts from whatever confusion Kowalski might have been feeling over the kiss. Their life-or-death situation, Kowalski's bemusement, and the quick conversational turnaround mean that the kiss is treated essentially as just another weird, and weirdly effective, thing Fraser does, like lick things in order to track people.

The conversation I quote above, meanwhile, is fascinating because it's so random. Kowalski needing help breathing makes sense inasmuch as he is unable to swim, but we never get any reason for why Kowalski wants to know whether Fraser thinks he's attractive — Fraser specifically, not any of the other people they've got in the crypt with them, although even the two male criminals freely offer their own opinions on Kowalski's attractiveness. The very oddness of the conversation, reinforced by the constant comments from the peanut gallery, is presented comically, but a surprising number of things get played straight within the exchange. Fraser's "Very much so, yes," sounds completely sincere, and neither Fraser nor Rico is embarrassed about their cross-dressing, although long-time viewers of *Due South* would know that Fraser's was for the sake of a case. The conversation operates in a weird bizarro-heterosexuality, where Kowalski needs Fraser to pretend to be a woman to decide whether or not he is attractive — but right when Fraser eventually closes it off by saying that he's not qualified to judge, which we would assume is because he's a straight male, Kowalski turns it around by saying that his *wife* would say the same thing. When Fraser disengages from pretending to be a woman, he ends up affiliated with a woman who presumably at one point *did* find Kowalski attractive. The conversation plays around with gender and sexuality on a number of levels, then, but

it has no narrative purpose other than to meander towards the introduction of Stella and lead into philosophical musings on loss, loneliness, and destiny. It has no alibi other than its own humor, most of which comes more from the linguistic misunderstandings and interjections rather than from the inherent oddness of Ray's question. It's just one guy asking another guy whether he's attractive.

*Due South* may be one of the most dramatic examples, but ever since the 1990s it has become more common to portray an intense platonic friendship and draw attention, however comically, to its potential romantic undertones. Subtext becomes text, in infinite variations across both television and movies. Rather than talk about how the partner relationship in general is like a marriage, people tell Steve and Danny that they specifically act like they're married, which is further bolstered by things like Danny signing "I [heart] you" to Steve or their constantly, casually addressing each other as "babe." Whenever characters on *Psych* [USA, 2006-] assume that leads Shawn and Gus are together, Gus immediately tries to explain the truth, while goofy main character Shawn has one of two reactions. Usually, he cuts Gus off and insists that yes, they are dating, which continues the running gag of Shawn spinning lies to the strangers they meet in the course of their investigation. When the girl Shawn is interested in thinks they're dating, meanwhile, Shawn responds, "You kidding me? He was voted most likely to succeed. Think he's gonna date *me*?" ["Murder? ...Anyone? ...Anyone? ...Bueller?" 3.02]. The entire premise of USA's *Common Law* [2012] is that at-odds cops Travis and Wes are in marriage counseling. (Interestingly, *Common Law* reverses the Shawn/Gus dynamic, in that Travis, the black cop, is the unruly one who is amused by the questions about whether they're together, while the

uptight, white, Wes gets annoyed by it. However, the show also cooled down on the “but we’re not gay!” jokes after the pilot.) *House M.D.*’s [FOX, 2004-2012] Wilson actually admits at one point that his girlfriend Amber is very similar to his long-time best friend House, and their relationship with each other is the most successful relationship either of them has. (And I’m not even getting into the end of the series, where Wilson has five months to live and House has a six-month prison sentence to complete, which results in House faking his own death so that he and Wilson can head off together for the open road on motorcycles.) Denny and Alan on *Boston Legal* [ABC, 2004-2008] actually get married in the series finale, for legal, medical, and sentimental reasons; the last scene is the two of them slowdancing on the balcony where they’ve spent so much time together. From the UK, there’s *Sherlock* [BBC, 2010-], which can’t seem to let an episode go by without John protesting that he and Sherlock aren’t dating.

These moments go hand-in-hand with friendships that aren’t just close, but are codependent. (Shawn and Gus are probably one of the most delightful examples of this, given that Gus claims Shawn on his taxes, and Shawn once interrupted a eulogy he was giving because he was so distressed by the thought of Gus dying, but it happens with all the others in various ways. Of course, unlike most of the other buddy duos, Shawn and Gus have also known each other since they were small children. Rather than meeting at work and becoming codependent, they go into business together because they already *are* codependent.) These characters are each other’s work lives and personal lives; they’ve gone through hell for each other without a second thought. They rely upon each other and open up for each other as they do for

no one else, including romantic relationships. After Elton writer Brent Hartinger (2009) criticized cinematic versions of the pattern in his article “I’m Officially Sick of Bromance!,” pointing out that the makers of straight-male-bonding movies like *Superbad* or *I Love You, Man* “actually eliminated women from love stories – and managed to do it in such a way that it’s not ‘gay’ either.”

These relationships can serve different purposes, depending on the network contexts. CBS rarely struggles with overall ratings share, but many of their viewers are older, and they have a hard time attracting younger viewers. The Judd Apatow-produced or –inspired bromance movies — *Knocked Up*, *Superbad*, *The Hangover*, and so on — with their homosocial banter were very popular among the coveted audience of men between the ages of 18-34. The banter and bromance of *Hawaii Five-0* (2010), as well as the fast pace and slick editing that had more in common with *24* [FOX, 2001-2010] than the original *Hawaii Five-O*, might have been an attempt to appeal to that audience. USA aims just as much at young-ish women as at men, which might explain why nearly every episode of *White Collar* features Neal with his shirt off. Their original programming balances blocks of wrestling with their “blue sky motif,” character-centric, light-hearted professional dramas. The latter tend to feature either tough women or unconventionally masculine men — and there’s been a growing trend towards unconventionally masculine male duos, as on *White Collar*, *Psych*, and *Suits* [USA, 2011-]. Creating less rugged male characters and unconventionally feminine female characters seems to be a way for them to point to their “Characters welcome” tagline, while targeting a cross-gender audience.

Sometimes the disavowal of queerness is explicit, with one of the characters explaining outright that they're not dating. The "No, really, we're not together" moments are akin to Becker's (2006a) "homosexual heterosexual" plot, although they last only minutes rather than an entire episode. In both, however, viewers have to understand why the confusion occurs, whether it's Shawn and Gus pretending to co-own a cat, or John's willingness to drop everything for Sherlock. Viewers are in what Becker calls the privileged position of knowing that it's not true, but "these comedic situations depend upon and, in the process, reinforce the notion that the distinctions between gay and straight are not easy to discern" (2006a:202). Here, the distinctions are blurred not in a single character's behavior, but by the very closeness of the relationship. As Anderson (2009) argues, inclusive masculinity allows men to loosen the restrictions on homosociality, since they're no longer afraid of being thought gay. John finds the attributions an aggravation, but he never actually changes his behavior; he just wants other people to recognize that he can spend all his time with his roommate and still keep their relationship platonic. These moments also serve another purpose, narratively speaking. With broadening queer visibility and the possibility that anyone could be gay, these denials remind the viewers — who may or may not take it that way — that the characters are *not* together. The questioning characters take the part of the imagined audience, pointing out the ways in which this relationship is not traditionally heteromasculine, and the protagonist who denies this characterization is the mouthpiece for the producers to disavow any suggestion that the men in question aren't straight.

Other scenes pass without explicit denials, such as the “I [heart] you” moment, Danny referring to his and Steve’s “marriage,” or Gus’s mom telling Shawn that she wonders if Gus would be married by now if he weren’t spending so much time with Shawn. One episode of *Hawaii Five-0* (2010) ends with Danny and Grace interrupting Steve’s date/movie night with his girlfriend Catherine and sitting between the two on the sofa. Instead of complaining about their private time being interrupted — Steve had been paying more attention to the horror movie he had never finished than to kissing Catherine — Catherine puts on *The Notebook*, Steve puts his arm around Danny, and the four of them settle in for the night. Cue credits. None of the characters act as if this scene is at all odd, leaving viewers to decide on their own interpretation. They may feel that it’s just a normal moment in the lives of the four characters, a cute scene to end a somewhat disturbing Halloween episode. If viewers laugh at the fact that Steve and Catherine’s date night ends up looking more like Steve and Danny’s date/family night, however, the scene can work as an example of what McCormack (2012) calls “heterosexual recuperation.”

Heterosexual recuperation is McCormack’s term for how high school students reclaimed their straightness “in homophobia-free settings, in which gay students are socially included, homophobic language is absent, and heterosexual students do not intellectualize negative attitudes about sexual minorities” (90). The students in McCormack’s study used two main techniques to police their heterosexuality, when they bothered to do so at all. First was “conquestal recuperation,” which involved boasting about the girls they were interested in or had slept with. The second was “ironic recuperation,” “a satirical proclamation of same-sex desire or a gay identity

made in order to maintain a heterosexual identity” (McCormack 2012:90). Ironic recuperation is a way to alibi transgressive behavior, and it can be used even by boys with low traditionally-masculine capital. The joke, essentially, is, “It’s funny because we’re straight.” The school setting McCormack describes is similar to the heteronormative but not overtly homophobic world of broadcast and most cable television: gay characters are present (even if they’re often stereotyped or desexualized); when homophobic language is used, it is problematized within the show; and protagonists are queer-friendly. In this context, ironic recuperation would be the writers either foregrounding the queerness of the relationship for the sake of hip humor, or writing a relationship that they recognize could be perceived as queer and then using hip humor to play it off.

These jokes are part of what annoys Hartinger. Straight male characters are allowed to have the trappings of queer relationships and use comedy to normalize it, while queer relationships between the two leading males in mainstream media remain distinctly *abnormal*, in that they rarely occur. There are bromances, but no romances between men. It is Walters and Becker’s arguments taken to a more extreme degree: a flirtation with transgression without taking it far enough to be ‘dangerous’, or even uncomfortable for those straight viewers. On the one hand, as Rebecca Feasey (2008) points out, these types of friendships can be seen as progressive “because these men do not let societal fears of being labeled interrupt or destroy their intimate relationships,” and because they’re not threatened by being called gay (27). On the other hand, in her review of *Common Law*, TV critic Maureen Ryan (2012) chastises the “but we’re not gay!” joke, saying that not only does it act as a “distancing



technique, something that draws attention to gays and lesbians as something out of the norm,” it’s also unrealistic. “Who *doesn't* know straight men who hang out all the time without anyone thinking about or guessing about their sexuality?” Rather than disagreeing with Anderson and McCormack’s theory of inclusive masculinity, she is saying that society is there, and TV has yet to catch up.

Of course, depending on the fanbase, such moments may also serve as a wink to the portions of the audience who *want* these characters to be dating. These acknowledgements could only happen now, in our era of increased fan visibility. Slash fandom — the subset of fandom that focuses on two same-sex characters, generally male, being in a romantic and/or sexual relationship<sup>17</sup> — is generally agreed to have started around the 1960s, with shows like *Star Trek* [NBC, 1966-1969] and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* [NBC, 1964-1968]. With growing queer visibility, slash fandom grew as well. *Starsky and Hutch* had a slash fandom, as did *Miami Vice*. And yet back then, fandom in general operated primarily through zines and conventions. Moreover, at first fandom was more important for movies than TV shows. The idea of TV fans as valuable only appeared after those fans began working to keep their favorite shows on the air, as they did with *Star Trek*. Over the 1980s and beyond, producers began targeting episodic serials at cult audiences (Sconce 2004). However, fan activities ran the gamut from somewhat public to incredibly private. It would have been easy to observe fans at the larger fan conventions, and Lucasfilm was aware as

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<sup>17</sup> I am only skimming the surface of slash fandom, because to truly explore it would take far longer than I can spare. Slash fandom, and fandom in general, is an incredibly diverse, complicated, and fragmented community; any account that does not acknowledge as much is amusingly simplistic. Jenkins 2006a makes a good start.

early as 1977 that some fans were writing fanfiction — even erotic fiction, of which George Lucas reportedly did not approve. G-rated stories were okay, but zines with more explicit stories got warnings, which according to Henry Jenkins (2006b) just pushed those zines underground. Jenkins doesn't say whether those erotic stories were slash or not, but a *Starsky and Hutch* slash fan recounts in “A Herstory of SHarecon” that in the 1980s, “In SH fandom, you could only find the slash if you knew someone who knew about it. It was like a secret society.”

By the 1990s, however, slash fans were beginning to garner a little more attention outside their secret societies. This was particularly dramatic with the advent of the internet, which opened up fandom for greater participation, but also more public exposure. In 1997, an interviewer showed a Fraser/Vecchio fanzine and mentioned slash websites to *Due South*'s star and new producer, the surprised and very amused Paul Gross. In 1998, Cynthia Brouse mentioned *Due South* in an article she wrote for *The Globe and Mail* entitled, “Internet authors put TV buddies in unusual romances.” Paul Haggis, the original producer of *Due South*, was introduced to the concept during an online chat with a group of fans in 1999. Now, slash is only a google search away — and sometimes less than that, if fans actually go directly to the source and mention it to the producers and actors. There have been posts about it on Gawker and Jezebel; Lev Grossman mentioned it in “The Boy Who Lived Forever,” an excellent article about fanfiction that he wrote for *TIME* magazine. It's more of a surprise if writers and actors haven't heard of slash, at this point. *White Collar* producer Jeff Eastin often mentions it on his twitter, saying things like “All you /'s

and shippers have fun with the photo shoot scene,” and “I enjoy all the White Collar slash. Makes me laugh.”

When Brouse talked to Gross in 1998, he insisted that the Fraser-Kowalski buddy-breathing “kiss” wasn’t there for the sake of slash fans. “‘It’s too marginal an audience to worry about.’ Anyway, said Gross, ‘no one’s clever enough in television to be putting anything like that in’” (Brouse 1998). However, today either the audience is less marginal or television producers are a little cleverer. A number of fans of *Teen Wolf* [MTV, 2011-] are very vocal about their love for one particular slash pairing; a video to try to get fans to vote for *Teen Wolf* for the Teen Choice Awards featured the two actors snuggling on a ship. (‘Ship’ is a common term for a romantic pairing, or relationship.) Misha Collins, who plays a commonly slashed character on *Supernatural* [CW, 2005-], mentions in one 2012 interview that “we subtly allude to the fanbase and their affinity for that, you know, homoerotic tension, for sure.” And yet, these characters have not been identified as queer. It is not unheard of for writers to have characters realize that they’re gay later in the run of a show — *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s [WB, 1997-2001; UPN, 2001-2003] Willow seemed straight for the first three seasons, until she met Tara. However, given the way that some of these shows disavow queerness, it seems unlikely that these relationships will become canon or these characters will identify as queer at any point in the future. (To be fair, *Teen Wolf* hasn’t been going on that long; its fate remains to be determined.) The idea that writers and producers are teasing the idea of a romantic relationship between two same-sex characters to attract the slash fans and then

simultaneously disavowing it to avoid alienating supposedly mainstream audiences is referred to as “queerbaiting.”

Queerbaiting is a concept with its own complicated politics, not least of which is the fact that the term implies an intent that is hard to prove without sitting in on the writer’s room. Is this a purposeful, calculated ploy to milk fans of their money? Is it a way to wink at a set of viewers who already exist but whom the producers never initially tried to attract? Is it just because they’ve seen that other shows and movies with these type of jokes and relationships work, and they don’t see a reason to fix what doesn’t seem broken? Are they trying to attract a youth market, like CBS seems to have been trying to do with *Due South* and, much later, *Hawaii Five-0 (2010)*? Do they personally find it funny? Are they actually setting the stage for these characters to get together? (Unlikely, but not impossible.) In some circumstances, fans don’t agree on whether or not a show is queerbaiting to begin with; I know two fans of *Due South*, who both vehemently dislike queerbaiting, and yet they disagree on whether or not Fraser and Kowalski’s relationship was queerbaiting or acknowledged subtext that wasn’t played for laughs. The issue is especially complicated given that slash can often (although not always) be read as a political act — a way for fans, many of whom are female and queer (see Jenkins 2006a and Kustritz 2006), to expand fictional worlds that focus on straight men. They are taking the implicit homoeroticism and making it explicit.

The question of whether ironic recuperation and queerbaiting are progressive depends a great deal upon perspective. If they are seen as a replacement for queer representation, then no, they’re not progressive; if they’re seen as a way for producers

to open traditionally conservative shows up more obviously to alternate subtextual readings, there is a better case to be made. Like the inclusive masculinities that Anderson (2009) and McCormack (2012) describe, they take place in a heteronormative but not explicitly homophobic environment. Most elements of pop culture aren't entirely positive or negative; they contain nuances that depend both on the text itself — or what the text itself excludes — and on intersections of interpretation. They are economically-motivated ways of marketing and mediating perceived changes and interests in the culture at large. In the case of queerbaiting and ironic recuperation — the explicit canonical attention brought to the closeness of male friendships — seem like they may be a way for producers to mediate any potential tensions caused by shifts in homosociality. However, the point is that they are part of a changing pattern of representation. Like the uncertainties of the “Gay 90s,” it may be a pattern that changes slowly and without a consistent internal logic, and it might not be entirely positive. As contexts alter, though, different groups of viewers become more prominent, and different shows succeed and fail, it will continue changing nonetheless.

## Conclusion

Since the mid-to-late 2000s, the idea of the “bromance” has garnered a great deal of attention, in reference both to real-life friendships and to fictional male relationships. The term came up constantly during the press tours for movies like *Star Trek* and *Sherlock Holmes*, which focused heavily on intense relationships between men. The October 2008 cover of *TV Guide* splashed the headline “Isn’t It Bromantic?” atop a photo of Hugh Laurie and Robert Sean Leonard as House and Wilson from *House, M.D.* Judd Apatow, producer of male-centric comedies and romcoms like *Knocked Up* and *Superbad*, has been declared the “King of Bromance” by a number of critics, and inspired a whole bumper crop of recent movies.

Jason Mittell (2001) states that “A category primarily links discrete elements together under a label for cultural convenience” (5). The recent prominence of the term “bromance,” despite the fact that it has allegedly been around since the 1990s, suggests that recently, we have found ourselves in need of a term to set certain types of male friendships apart from others. However, as I have explored in the previous chapters, these intimate, overtly homoerotic friendships didn’t come out of nowhere. They are part of a longer history of stories that have valorized and examined male friendship. These stories are also produced within a constantly shifting media industry, in which economic concerns, inherited industrial knowledge, and past successes help determine what is safe to be sold. The friendships in series like *White Collar* wouldn’t have been possible without the character development allowed by the introduction of melodrama and serialization into episodic narratives. In turn, prime time producers might not have experimented with melodrama and serialization

if not for the broadcast crisis of the 1980s. However, these stories are also implicated within broader concerns and cultural narratives of masculinities, which are produced by men's relations to different social and historical events. Men have moved from the family-centric expectations of the 1950s to the supposed crisis of masculinity in the 1970s and 1980s that not only led many men to take up a more autonomous masculinity, but also helped lead to a culture of increased homophobia and limitations on homosociality. However, as overt homophobia has dissipated since the 1990s, reduced homophobia has enabled men, even men of non-normative masculinities, to loosen the restrictions on how they express friendship.

The portrait that I have provided within the previous chapters is limited. There are other shows I could have watched, other angles from which I could have done my research, other intertextual references I could have followed. Inevitably, all examinations of pop culture are. Popular media is a selective, fragmented, artistically- and economically-concerned reflection of a culture that is not, and has never been, a united whole. Moreover, all stories exist just as much within the minds of the people who consumer them as within the texts themselves. In this thesis, I have focused on how different contexts enabled the production of these six cop shows and the forms of masculinity and friendship that they construct. However, I do not examine the different ways in which viewers might have engaged with the narratives they saw on screen. To do so would undoubtedly have taken at least another one hundred and fifty pages, since what any viewer takes out of a particular show is going to be mediated by how that viewer looks at the world. Networks' construction of viewers as a mass audience, even broken up by the demographics of age, race, and sex, is a vast

oversimplification. Still, I hope that at some point, someone will choose to examine fictional male friendships from the perspective of the viewers. The varying historical and industrial contexts affected how these shows were conceived and produced, and they give us an idea of how the shows might have resonated within different cultural shifts. However, representation does not stop once a text is released into the world; it continues interacting with viewers and their lived experiences, and their reactions can in turn trigger changes in both their personal lives and within TV itself.



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