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Media content choice: dynamics of selection in the new television ecosystem

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MEDIA CONTENT CHOICE:
DYNAMICS OF SELECTION IN THE NEW TELEVISION ECOSYSTEM

by

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MEDIA CONTENT CHOICE:
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MATTHEW T. HIGGINS

ABSTRACT
This paper expands existing understandings of how entertainment content viewers conceptualize, encounter, evaluate, and select entertainment video content in the emerging television ecosystem. Special attention is paid to the influences that create awareness around a particular media product and the decision-making dynamics that influence viewers as they move through the selection process. Patterns of awareness, discovery, selection, and adoption relevant to a theoretical understanding of media content choice are identified and discussed.

Keywords: media, content, television, entertainment, choice, selection, process
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INTRODUCTION

The global entertainment media ecosystem today is in the midst of a broad reorganization. Responding to new business pressures brought on by rapid digital innovation, the entertainment industry is reinventing itself as a business and as a cultural concept for a new generation of media consumers.

The growing dependence of entertainment/content companies on internet/technology companies for data and distribution has resulted in a flurry of acquisitions and intra-industry tie-ups\(^1\) that illustrate the promise, the threat, and the integration of these two sometimes-rival industries.

Traditional subscription cable operators, who provide a package of channels for a monthly fee, remain in control of the master remote in most American living rooms\(^2\), but the availability of new and lower-cost avenues for accessing entertainment content represents a serious and growing threat to the current cable-dominant model. These alternative services have established themselves a strong cultural presence for a new generation of media consumers, and their rise has begun to chip away at the dominance of the bundled-channel cable subscription model.

A recent report from SNL Kagan shows that the number of total cable subscriptions fell for the first time in 2013 (Lee, 2014) and the percentage of households

\(^1\) 2006 – Google acquires YouTube  
2007 – NBC Universal, NewsCorp, and Disney partner on Hulu  
2011 – Comcast purchases a controlling interest in NBC Universal

\(^2\) 83% of U.S. households subscribe to traditional cable television according to recent data by CEA (Consumer Electronics Association, 2013).
with a cable TV subscription dropped for the first time between 2010 and 2013 according to a report by the Consumer Electronics Association (Knott, 2013).

As new content delivery systems from technology companies like Apple (AppleTV), Amazon (FireTV), Google (Chromecast/Chromebox), and Netflix (an app available on all of the above) continue to improve and spread their reach into the American living room, many long held assumptions about entertainment television and its core infrastructure are increasingly ripe for re-examination.

The smallest unit of analysis, and the starting point for that re-examination, is the decision by an individual to watch or not watch a particular piece of content. These individual content selections, taken collectively, will determine not only the successful programs, but the successful video platforms of the next generation of “television,” or perhaps more accurately, “serialized story-driven entertainment video”.

Today there are more video platforms and content choices than ever before. It may no longer be the case that everyone is consuming the same mass media products, using the same kind of screen to watch them, or even choosing from the same set of content options, but everyone who views entertainment content is going through some version of the same fundamental process: consciously or unconsciously desiring entertainment, knowingly or unknowingly being presented with a variety of available choices, deliberately or reflexively narrowing down those choices to what looks promising, and viewing, or in the case of ongoing programming, incorporating the selections into some kind of viewing routine.

This thesis aims to shed light on the universals of that process in the context of the
current structures of media distribution. From the sources of the awareness that position a show on an individual’s watch-list, to the decision-making factors that drive the ultimate selection of an individual piece of content, to the dynamics that keep viewers interested in a program over time, the goal of this project is to map the process of content selection and viewing from start to finish, through the eyes of a modern entertainment consumer.
CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SCOPE

Communication theory is enormously rich in the range of ideas that fall within its nominal scope, and new theoretical work on communication has recently been flourishing. Nevertheless, despite the ancient roots and growing profusion of theories about communication, I argue that communication as an identifiable field of study does not yet exist. (Craig, 1999, p. 1)

Communication is not an easy area to delimit. Of the academic disciplines that have earned widespread departmental status in universities around the world, communication is among the most interdisciplinary in nature, and arguably the most difficult to define. As a relatively new discipline, the contemporary study of communication grew up in the 20th century as a menagerie of the fields from which it drew its founding thinkers: journalism, political science, sociology, psychology, and the humanities, to name a few (Rogers, 1994). To enter the field of communication research one must be prepared to respect and learn from its heterogeneous approaches, disciplines, and traditions.

At the same time, communication must not be thought of as simply “anything and everything,” or the formal study of it would have no place to begin and no structure for the inquiry to follow. Since there is no perfect way to delimit or sub-divide communication (as every editor of a first-year Introduction to Communication textbook can attest), the task of properly situating one’s work in the field and orienting readers to the territory is an indispensible first step.

Among the various sub-disciplines in the broader field of communication, the mass communication tradition represents a distinct set of theoretical underpinnings,
foundational writings, and research approaches aimed at understanding how the content and distribution of mass communicated media affects individuals and shapes society\textsuperscript{3}. The mass communication lens in particular draws on psychology and sociology, placing an emphasis on the role of the individual in creating his or her own social reality, and the collective body of individual actions that create norms and culture.

**The Beginnings of Modern Mass Communication Study**

The formal study of mass communication, at least as we understand it today, began with the study of propaganda used during World War I. Social observers in the aftermath of the conflict began to ponder the implications of widespread simultaneous mass media use and its role in politics and social policy. Prominent among these thinkers was Walter Lippmann, a journalist and editorialist whose four-times-a-week syndicated newspaper column lent his ideas enormous reach into the consciousness of the American political class (Rogers, 1994, p. 235). In the eyes of elites at the time, society was unstable, reactive, and prone to media influence (Lippmann, 1917; Lippmann, 1922). The new mass media were regarded with a mixture of awe and suspicion for their ability to communicate the same idea to millions of people across great distances and in a very short amount of time.

Lippmann’s 1922 book *Public Opinion* discusses the limits of public attention and the effect of the mass media on the public sphere (Rogers, 1994, p. 240). Lippmann observed that the political process was increasingly being handed over to a specialized

\textsuperscript{3} The National Communication Association recognizes 48 divisions within the field and describes the Mass Communication area as “The study of how mass forms of communication, such as print, radio and television disseminate information and influence society.” (NCA, 2014)
class of professionals and asserted that the new distance of the public from the policymaking process made it possible for public opinion and political consent to be easily manufactured by elites and sold to the public through the mass media (Lippman, 1922). Lippmann argued that the professional journalist could help to bridge the gap, but the theories of mass communication that prevailed at the time—now known as the “hypodermic needle” or “magic bullet” theories—began with the assumption that audiences were passive and could be more or less directly injected with ideas through systematic exposure to the mass media.

Lippmann’s portrayal of media effects was far more nuanced than the “magic bullet” simplification suggests. It was Lippmann who voiced the original ideas linking mass media to popular culture and public opinion, setting the stage for scholars like Lazarsfeld and Lasswell and Berelson to move the cutting edge of media theory forward in the 1930’s and beyond (Rogers, 1994, p. 243). Lippmann’s 1920’s era writings on media, society, and propaganda are nothing short of the intellectual foundations of the 20th century mass communication tradition we inherit today.

In the late 1920’s and 30’s Paul Lazarsfeld’s Radio Project carried forward the political and social focus of Lippmann’s work, albeit through a decidedly more quantitative lens. The Radio Project, founded under a Rockefeller grant at Princeton University and later institutionalized as the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University, recruited the world’s most well-known social scientists to study the effects of radio on society under the direction of Lazarsfeld, making pioneering advances in social science methodology and offering the academic study of media the beginnings
of institutional credibility (Rogers, 1994, pp. 245-315).

Trained as a mathematician, employed as a sociologist, and fascinated by media, Lazarsfeld never identified himself as a communication scholar (Rogers, 1994, p. 247). Nonetheless, Lazarsfeld’s work and approach came to define a growing body of theory and research on the relationship between the mass media and society. Lazarsfeld’s careful empirical methodologies, institutional savvy, and mentoring of young researchers left an enduring mark on the field (Rogers, 1994, p. 308). Intrigued by the application of statistical methods to the study of social phenomena, Lazarsfeld’s mathematical analyses of the process of influence in his election studies helped to advance the theory that the effects of media were tempered by the community and social fabric surrounding each media consumer.

In approaching the study of mass communication, it is helpful to keep in mind the history and lasting influence of Lippmann and Lazarsfeld; two very different men, with different backgrounds and approaches, who were fundamentally interested in the same kinds of questions. Like all fields, mass communication has seen its share of methodological disputes and epistemological questions. At times, the field has been held back by a divide between quantitativists and qualitativists. However, as a discipline devoted to understanding and describing the spread of ideas throughout the population, mass communication cannot afford to take an either/or approach. The synthesis of different methodological approaches has been fundamental to the study of mass communication from the beginning. The specific topic of this paper, media choice, is a
prime example of mass communication’s diversity of paradigms and methodological approaches.

**Media Choice**

The research area most commonly known as “media choice” is both a subfield of mass communication and an interdisciplinary interest-cluster concerned with how and why individuals select the media content they choose, regardless of platform. The specific question could be “Why does one student pick up *The New York Times* every morning while another prefers *The Wall Street Journal*?” or “Why does one person seek out only comedic television programs while another seeks out only television dramas?”, but the underlying question is always “How and why do people choose to watch, read, or listen to the media they choose?”

The question demands an interdisciplinary approach. In any media choice there are a number of factors to consider: individual attitudes, beliefs, desires, and predispositions (psychology); social norms, leisure time habits, modeled behavior, and community expectations (sociology); all taking place within a framework of available outlets and content that have been constructed for media consumers as the marketplace of culture and ideas (media).

Tilo Hartmann, in the introduction to *Media Choice: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview*, hopes that by aggregating the body of relevant work into a single up-to-date volume, the field will advance beyond its disciplinary boundaries and narrower

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4 Technically the phrase “media choice” can refer to either the choice of a communication medium (i.e. write a note or to send an email) or the choice of media content within that medium. For clarity, the title of this paper uses the clunkier term “media content choice,” but the standard phrase in the field “media choice” is used interchangeably throughout.
conceptions toward a focus on fully integrated theoretical models:

This book provides an overview of established and evolving approaches about media choice, i.e. why and how people turn to the media. The endeavor to provide such an overview is closely linked to the ultimate goal to support theory-building on media choice, in communication science and other disciplines in the social sciences. In the past, studies on media choice often followed applied questions instead of working towards conceptual models or theories. This book builds on the hope that the field undergoes a change (Hartmann, 2009, xiii).

Responding to Hartmann’s work, this paper works to advance the conceptual understanding of media choice by focusing on individual stories of content selection from a user perspective.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Every research paradigm brings with it its own point of view and set of assumptions about media, the audience, and human social behavior that influences its methodology and conclusions. No perspective can be considered perfectly “value-neutral,” but each has its strengths and weaknesses as an explanatory framework for media choice, and each has the potential to contribute to the field’s collective understanding of how and why people choose the media content that they choose.

In examining the question of how today’s media consumers discover and select entertainment content, it will be helpful to consider the history and development of the current state of theory in media choice, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of various research approaches.

Strong Media Effects

Early research in mass media begins with the assumption that audiences are relatively vulnerable to influence and must be protected from the potentially damaging effects of the mass media. The dominance of the paradigm was moderated somewhat by the limited effects perspective introduced by Lazarsfeld et al. in the 1940’s, but never disappeared from the public consciousness about media, and was never far from the minds of social conservatives who tended to suspect that the mass media were in fact capable of loosening mores, both sexual and otherwise. This social conservative perspective—and the inseparability of social research from the cultural climate of its time—is illustrated most famously in the Payne Fund Studies conducted in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s and published as a series entitled “Motion Pictures and Youth,”
The project legitimately sought to understand the social phenomenon of movie attendance on young people in the late 1920’s, but the presentation (not to mention the reception and the public’s interpretation) of the findings struggled to strike a balance between objective social research and social advocacy (Jowett et al., 1996). The struggles of the sociologists who worked on the project to present their findings in an unbiased way illustrate the hazards and political challenges of conducting objective social research.

The media effects paradigm enjoyed general resurgence in the 1980’s and 1990’s in various forms thanks in part to a broad trend of social conservatism and a parental consensus about protecting children from the effects of sex and violence in television, film, and in pop music. The social consensus that helped prop up the strong media effects paradigm throughout the 1990’s retreated in the early 2000’s as a new wave of digital media devices bulldozed boundaries between human beings of all ages and a new laissez-faire approach took hold. Today’s consensus, to the extent there is one, relies on judicious selection and parental presence rather than on externally determined ratings or content restrictions. Correspondingly, the prevailing popular theories have shifted from media effects to selective exposure.

The political and policy implications of the media effects paradigm, the thinking that brought you the V-chip and the television content ratings system, have given this paradigm a confusing reputation among scholars. It is perhaps the most politically charged research perspective in mass communication, but it has also documented some of

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5 Both were mandated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
the most illuminating connections between media exposure and behavior. Not all media effects thinking results in paternalistic content restrictions, but content restrictions are nonetheless a frequent outcome of the dance between the scholarly paradigm and policymakers. The media effects perspective, however, is agnostic on restrictions; what you do with the information that media has a strong effect on human attitudes and behavior is up to you.

Fundamentally, the strong media effects paradigm assumes that audiences will consume the media of interest that is available to them, and that they cannot help but be affected by the content.

**Social Learning Theory**

In his famous 1961 Bobo doll experiments, the social psychologist Albert Bandura had two groups of children observe adult behavior in a playroom setting. In the experimental condition, the children looked on as an adult yelled at and attacked a Bobo doll. In a control condition, the adult demonstrated no aggression to the doll. The children were then observed at they were turned loose in the playroom on their own. Children who had watched the adult attack the doll were significantly more likely to demonstrate similar acts of aggression (Bandura, 1965).

In 1963 Bandura performed a similar experiment to test whether the effect would hold in a mediated scenario where the adult-demonstrated aggression toward the Bobo doll was filmed and viewed by the children instead of demonstrated live. In addition, various reward/punishment conditions were added. The effect of the modeled behavior on the children held in the videotaped scenario, confirming Bandura’s foundation for the
social modeling of behavior and leading to the further development of what would become Bandura’s social learning theory. The Bobo doll experiments showed that the imitation of mediated behavior was a real phenomenon, opening new doors for social learning theory to enter into the study of mass communication (Bandura, 1965; Bandura, 2001; LaRose, 2009).

In media effects, Bandura’s work has been used to posit that certain types of media consumers may be prone to imitating the sex, violence, and other behaviors they see modeled on screen, although that predisposition depends on a number of individual psychographic variables (Bandura, 2001). In the realm of media choice, social learning theory suggests not so much imitation of what is on the screen, but imitation of the viewing behavior of their real-life peers; that is that people will watch what they see and hear about other people watching. In doing so they are imitating the viewing behavior modeled around them, although their ability to do this in a self-reflective way depends again on a number of individual psychographic variables (LaRose, 2009). This idea of ongoing social learning and adaptation is at the core of many of our assumptions about media choice today, and is consistent with the ideas of imitation, testing, implementation, and feedback we will see echoed in other frameworks, including diffusion of innovations.

The criticism of LaRose and Bandura’s social cognitive theories as applied to media is that they rely too heavily on individual psychographic variables to present a robust framework for theorizing more broadly about media choice (for example, an individual who scores high on self-efficacy and self-control will proceed through the stages of social learning in his media behavior in a self-enhancing way, but other
individuals will not). Nonetheless, social learning theory has made significant contributions to the understanding of how and why individuals select certain media.

**Uses and Gratifications**

The uses and gratifications paradigm holds that individuals are active and conscious consumers of media. The theories and theorists in this section believe that media consumers choose what to watch/read/listen to at any given time based on their expectation of the media product to meet a number of “gratifications,” which are sought but not always obtained.

**Herzog.** Herta Herzog’s 1941 study “On Borrowed Experience: An analysis of listening to daytime sketches” sought to explore the question of why people listen to radio shows by interviewing a variety of women who were regular listeners to radio serials. Herzog begins her study:

> Since the life of very many middle class and lower middle class people is uneventful, the variety of incidents in these programs is many times greater than anything which these women could live through or observe themselves. Thus the question comes up of whether, through daytime serials, radio is likely to have a great influence upon the attitude of these listeners toward their own lives and the problems they have to meet. (Herzog, p. 66).

Through an analysis of these interviews Herzog identifies three main types of gratifications: “listening as emotional release,” in which listeners seek an emotional stimulus like excitement or relief by following the story’s twists of fate, “listening as means of remodeling one’s drudgery,” in which listeners borrow bits of the characters or
their psychology from the radio stories, enabling them to imagine alternate situations and lives for themselves, and “listening for recipes making for adjustment,” in which listeners gather information and new ways of thinking about relationships and life that they may use to adopt new behaviors or modify existing thoughts and behaviors about relationships and life.

Herzog’s choice of the hands-on structured interview, a methodological approach that did not fit with either the critical/cultural scholars or the more quantitatively-inclined researchers at the Radio Project who favored surveys, is noteworthy. Herzog’s approach was simple, she listened to the women she interviewed explain in their own words why they listened and what they got out of the experience and compiled the findings into a thematic analysis. Herzog’s broad, pragmatic, and human-centric approach was a methodological departure that helped to lay the groundwork for focus groups and interviews to become an important part of mass communication research.

Although later work in the uses and gratifications tradition would rely more heavily on Likert scales, surveys, and other quantitative methodologies, Herzog’s unique insights into media use and major contributions to theory came from a synthesis of understandings drawn from real people and their plainspoken descriptions of lived experience with media. On Borrowed Experience provided the methodological framework and inspiration for the approach taken in the interview and analysis portion of thesis.

Katz, Blumler, Brown, Guerevitch et al. Uses and Gratifications was a major thread of mass communication research and theory from the time of Herzog’s early work.
through the end of the 20th century, though it was not always known by that moniker. The renowned sociologist Elihu Katz played a major role in formulating and formalizing disparate threads of research into the paradigm now known as uses and gratifications.

Katz studied under Lazarsfeld while earning his Ph.D. at Columbia University in the early 1950’s (Rogers, 1994), providing a critical link between two generations of mass media researchers. In working closely with Lazarsfeld in the early 1950’s, well into the era of Lazarsfeld’s theoretical two-step flow prominence, Katz was afforded a unique perspective from which to synthesize, sequence, and ultimately name much of the mid-century mass communication research for which Lazarsfeld had been directly or indirectly responsible.

In 1973 and 1974 a group of scholars that included Elihu Katz, Michael Guerevitch, Hadassah Haas, Denis McQuail, Jay Blumler, and Joseph Brown published a series of articles that introduced the theory of “uses and gratifications” by that name, building on the work of Lazarsfeld, Herzog, and others whose work shared the foundational assumptions of an active audience that uses media for certain psychological and social functions, not all of which are strictly dictated by the content or the medium itself. The paradigm they announced amounted to a revolution in thinking about media use.

The first publication to use the phrase “uses and gratifications,” as such is the 1973 article “On the Use of The Mass Media for Important Things.” Of the approach they have just named, the authors state:

It argues that people bend the media to their needs more readily than the media
overpower them; that the media are at least as much agents of diversion and entertainment as of information and influence. It argues, moreover, that the selection of media and content, and the uses to which they are put, are considerably influenced by social role and psychological predisposition. Viewing the media in this way permits one to ask not only how the media gratify and influence individuals but how and why they are differentially integrated into social institutions. Thus, if individuals select certain media, or certain types of content, in their roles as citizens, or consumers, or church members, we gain insight into the relationship between the attributes of the media (real or perceived) and the social and psychological functions which they serve. (Katz, Guerevitch, and Haas, 1973, p. 1).

The authors go on to group the 35 social and psychological functions identified in the study into five categories of needs: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, and tension release needs. Each of the media available at the time: books, newspapers, radio, television, and cinema was found to correspond with certain patterns of use, which could be divided into two categories: the personal and the political. A newspaper, for example, was used for a personal function to kill time, to be entertained, or to overcome loneliness, while also being used in a political function to understand the world, to keep up with government, and to know more about political leaders (Katz, Guerevitch, and Haas, 1973, p. 13).

Uses and gratifications theory, as formalized in the 1973 and 1974 papers for which Katz was the lead author, helped move communication theory toward the
worldview that individuals actively seek out and use mass media for specific individual needs, a worldview that remains influential to this day, and a central assumption of much of the mass media research that followed it.

**Uses and gratifications today.** Uses and gratifications research moves forward from these widely-cited works in the 1970’s in so many different directions that tracing it forward to the present day is not within the scope of this literature review. The most relevant update for the work at hand comes from Krcmar and Strizhakova, who update and summarize the state of uses and gratifications research in the context of media choice in a chapter from the Tilo Hartmann edited handbook *Media Choice*:

> Overall, then, uses and gratifications has provided many insights into our understanding of media consumption; however, as we continue to consider how selective exposure may play an important role in the entire process—as a predictor of use, and as a moderator of effects—it may be important to begin to think of uses and gratifications as one important portion in the entire process. Understanding media choices from a uses and gratifications perspective offers us insight into how and why people are motivated to make the selection that they do. Conceptually and holistically, it is crucial that we understand how and why people consume media if we are to understand the totality of the media consumption process. (Krcmar, M. & Strizhakova, Y., 2009).

The authors conclude that current uses and gratifications research has tended to focus too narrowly on proving connections between various personality traits and predispositions to certain types of media, but that that approach may have reached its practical limits and
that a larger reconceptualization is needed (Krcmar, M. & Strizhakova, Y., 2009).

**Opinion Leadership/Diffusion of Innovations**

The Opinion Leadership/DOI framework holds that human social reactions to new stimuli are mediated and influenced by the network of peer relationships and social pressures surrounding that person. Though originally identified in Lazarsfeld’s studies of opinion leaders in political influence, the broader framework can and has been applied to a variety of social behaviors, including the selection of media content.

**Lazarsfeld and Katz.** While the research coming out of the Radio Project in the late 1930’s helped nudge communication research out of the direct-effects model, the social understanding it produced didn’t immediately add up to a broad reconfiguration of theory. Fears had been eased about a dangerously manipulable mass society, but it was not clear exactly what the field was moving toward until Lazarsfeld helped redefine it, both methodologically and theoretically, with his election studies and subsequent theory of two-step flow.

In a study of the 1940 U.S. presidential election, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) surveyed people to find out more about the psychological processes that shaped their decision making and found that friends and social contacts, even more than the content of the mass media, influenced attitudes and opinions. The two-step flow model that emerged from this finding proposed that certain individuals in society functioned as “opinion leaders,” people to whom others look for direction in formulating an opinion, and that these opinion leaders, not the media itself, were the keys to widespread attitude change. Thus the media were still influencing society, but in a more limited way than had
been previously thought.

This model of socially-mediated media influence begged a host of important sociological questions, which Lazarsfeld would go on to explore with Katz in their 1955 book *Personal Influence*. The basic theory of opinion leadership would be expanded, explored, revised, questioned, and critiqued throughout all of 20th century mass media scholarship, but it was always being discussed. Lazarsfeld’s concept of opinion leadership was an important development in the history of mass communication research, and the thread would be picked up and carried forward by many others, including Everett Rogers who incorporated the concept into his own influential theory, the diffusion of innovations.

**Rogers.** Everett Rogers, a rural sociologist who began his research career studying the adoption and spread of hybrid corn seeds in farm communities, published *Diffusion of Innovations* in 1962. At the core of the book is Rogers’ meta-analysis of hundreds of diffusion studies, a synthesis of hundreds of studies comprising nearly all of the existing work on diffusion from various fields into a universal theory of how, why, and when innovations spread through organizations, communities, and society.

Rogers asserted that four elements impact the spread of any given innovation: the innovation itself, the communication channels through which it can spread, the length of time it takes to complete the decision making process, and the social system into which the innovation is introduced (Rogers, 2003).

Rogers lays out five stages of the adoption process: knowledge, in which the person first becomes aware of the innovation but is not motivated to seek further
information; persuasion, in which the person begins to actively seek information about the innovation; decision, in which the person decides whether to adopt or reject the innovation; implementation, in which the person puts the innovation into practice; and confirmation, in which the person decides to continue using the innovation, confirming his or her own decision to try the innovation.

Most relevant to Lazarsfeld’s work, Rogers divides adopters into categories based on when and how they react to the innovation: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Early adopters, in Rogers’ conceptualization of the influence process sound a lot like Lazarsfeld’s opinion leaders: they tend to have the highest social class and education, they aren’t afraid to try new things, and they are tied in to peers and social networks in such a way that they play a disproportionate role in influencing the spread of ideas. People look to opinion leaders and the early adopters/early majority in forming their own opinion and deciding what think about new innovations and what to try for themselves.

Rogers even acknowledges his debt to Lazarsfeld and picks up the term opinion leaders, fleshing out a profile of their status and behavior. “Opinion leaders differ from their followers in information sources, cosmopoliteness, social participation, social status, and innovativeness” (Rogers, p. 282) and “opinion leaders use more impersonal, technically accurate, and cosmopolite sources of information than do their followers,” (Rogers, p. 283).

Rogers goes on to explore the connection between opinion leaders and “change agents,” individuals who push the innovation in a particular direction on behalf of the
larger change agency that seeks to affect the system. Change agents are outsiders, marginal to the social system they seek to influence, and must therefore persuade opinion leaders within the society they seek to change in order to be effective at spreading their innovation. In many of Rogers’ case studies the change agency is usually a government or a non-governmental organization, the innovation is public health or safety oriented, and the change agents are the aid workers and physicians on the ground. In these contexts the opinion leaders are the key members of the society, sought out by the change agents, who will influence the society’s ultimate adoption or rejection of the innovation.

**Diffusion of innovations today.** The concept of opinion leaders and their role in the influence process is present in nearly every strand of mass communication research from Lazarsfeld forward, but the diffusion of innovations paradigm that followed in Rogers’s tradition utilizes it most extensively. Thilo von Pape, a leading member of the diffusion community charged with summarizing and updating the state of diffusion research for Hartmann’s 2009 *Media Choice*, uses the platform to note the current “methodological stagnation,” and suggest that the future of diffusion research lies in drawing more heavily from other methodologies. Social network analysis, a natural technological progression for diffusion research that allows researchers to better visualize the dynamics of diffusion through interpersonal networks, is one likely candidate, but von Pape also suggests diffusion research can incorporate more from descriptive, cultural-studies based approaches, which often focus on the appropriation of technologies in communities as they differ from the producers intended use:

Diffusion of Innovations Theory is today a well-established research perspective
offering a large spectrum of heuristics and generalizations to understand and predict the choice to first use a new medium. Although centennial in age, it is undergoing major theoretical and methodological evolutions. These are driven by influences from SNA—as the complementary approach most considered within Diffusion of Innovations Theory so far—but also from social psychological behavior theories, Cultural Studies, Uses-and-Gratifications and Sociology of Technology. (von Pape, 2003).

The title “Diffusion of Innovations,” however, like the title “Uses and Gratifications,” has become somewhat of a burden to the more recent research that bears its name. Both paradigms are so widely known as research traditions and popular, well-established theories, that they have each by now spun off their own offshoots, advances, and hybridizations with other bodies of theory. Scholars like von Pape in Diffusion and Krcmar in Uses and Gratifications associate their names with these traditions at their own risk, and with their own reservations.

The research coming from the late-stage work in these research paradigms remains important, but the “invisible college,” to use a favorite term of Everett Rogers’ for the community of researchers who participate in a research area while adhering to a shared paradigm and set of assumptions about reality, seems to dwindle after 30 or 40 years in the intellectual spotlight. After all, communication research itself is continually evolving; there are new approaches to explore, and old assumptions to upend.
The Selective Exposure Paradigm

The selective exposure paradigm posits that individuals select media content based on its compatibility with their existing worldview. A highly developed body of literature supports the notion that some individuals will tolerate or even seek out media content that contrasts with their existing worldview while others will consciously or unconsciously reject dissonant media content. Although the selective exposure paradigm does not present any easy answers, the theoretical framework has had perhaps the most direct and significant impact on our understanding of media content choice today.

Festinger. Leon Festinger and his colleagues began to explore one of the foundational concepts for selective exposure, cognitive dissonance, in the 1956 book *When Prophecy Fails*. The book contains a detailed social and psychological account of a group that believed in, and then lived through, the date their leader had prophesized the end of the world. In it, Festinger examines the coping mechanisms used by members of the group to deal with their disconfirmed expectations in the aftermath of the non-event. Among the findings of the study was that, under certain conditions, disconfirmation can lead to a strengthening of belief, as happened in the case of many of the members of the group (Festinger, 1956). This early finding would germinate into a fuller form as cognitive dissonance theory in Festinger’s hugely influential 1958 book *Cognitive Dissonance*.

Cognitive dissonance theory, as expanded and interpreted over the years, holds that individuals experience discomfort or mental stress when holding two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values, at the same time, and that individuals seek to
achieve consonance and reduce dissonance through a variety of internal mechanisms including avoidance, justification, reinterpretation of the stimulus, and outright denial (Festinger, 1958). The concepts introduced by Festinger quickly caught the attention of marketers, political scientists, and mass communication researchers who sought to understand the implications the ideas would have in the arenas of selling, politics, and influence. Festinger’s ideas spread quickly throughout the broader world of social science, fusing cognitive dissonance with a paradigm of political science research dating back to Lazarsfeld’s election studies to create the research paradigm now popularly known as selective exposure (Donbach, 2009).

Klapper. In 1960, drawing on studies of public opinion and the broadening of interest in Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance, the political scientist Joseph Klapper sought to explain media effects in terms that would become influential as the selective exposure paradigm. Klapper argued that individuals maintain consonance in their personal lives by consuming media content that confirms their existing worldview and avoid dissonance by avoiding potentially dissonant stimuli. Expanding this basic thesis into a broader theory of limited media effects, Klapper asserts that the mass media have much less of an effect on societal attitudes and perceptions than is generally assumed because the would-be-dissonant stimuli are simply avoided by those that are unreceptive to them (Klapper, 1960).

Sears and Freedman. In 1967, reviewing years of work in the sphere of selective exposure to political information, Sears and Freedman worked to tighten the sometimes-messy concept of selective exposure into a stronger theoretical formulation in the article
“Selective Exposure to Propaganda.” In it, Sears and Freedman work to both define selective exposure as a theory and address its primary failing as a paradigm up to that point:

Nevertheless, the empirical literature on selective exposure has been rather unsatisfying. Partly this is because the term itself has been used in a confusing way. The observation of an empirical correlation between attitudes and exposure has rarely been distinguished from an active psychological preference for supportive information, although they clearly may be quite different. Perhaps more important, a substantial amount of research has been done in the last decade relating to these two questions, and the results are not as unequivocal as one might expect. (Sears & Freedman, p. 195).

Much of what the authors believe is wrong with the selective exposure paradigm comes down to the classic social science problem of separating causation from correlation. With a laser focus, Freedman and Sears break down the questions holding back the credibility of their research realm into sub-topics which they address one at a time by reviewing the relevant studies in each area.

First is the notion of “de facto selectivity,” or the likelihood that a members of a given audience will find themselves in agreement simply by being a part of that audience. Although the authors find that the research in this area is plagued by the problem of accurately measuring “existing attitudes,” they go on to state that “it still seems likely that de facto selectivity holds, as a descriptive generalization, on many occasions and for many people,” Sears & Freedman (p. 206). In other words, it is probably true that people
who watch the same types of programs have similar attitudes and beliefs going in (as opposed to as a result of their shared exposure), but separating out those existing attitudes and beliefs is nearly impossible.

Next the authors turn their attention to the possibility of a “general psychological preference for supportive information,” or the notion that individuals generally prefer to hear supportive or positive information. For this section the authors review 18 studies that investigated the question concluding definitively, “The available evidence fails to indicate the presence of a general preference for supportive information,” (p. 208).

Finally Sears and Freedman turn their attention to the third sub-topic of the paper, the question of what factors do conclusively affect voluntary exposure to all kinds of information. In this category the authors identify three indicators with a high predictive validity for preferring information of any kind: “education and social class,” “utility of information,” and “past history of exposure on the issue.” In other words, regardless of their position on the issue, individuals are significantly more likely to voluntarily expose themselves to information when they have: 1) higher levels of education and social class, 2) a perception that the information is or will be useful, and 3) prior exposure to information on the topic. Perhaps it is proof of Sears and Freedman’s thoroughness that these three findings remain, to this day, just about the only certainties in a field dominated by the methodological challenges of separating causation from correlation.

Sears and Freedman’s findings in this influential review helped rein in some of the more extreme positions taken in the early days of the area and crystallize selective exposure research into a respectable research paradigm. In the conclusion, the authors
take a slight turn away from selective exposure and toward what might be called “selective dismissal” when they suggest that the active evaluation and dismissal of information may play an even greater role than avoiding information as in the original formulation of selective exposure:

It has generally been assumed that selective exposure and other processes that bar information reception are the primary mechanisms by which people resist influence... Perhaps resistance to influence is accomplished most often and most successfully at the level of information evaluation, rather than at the level of selective seeking and avoiding of information. (Sears & Freedman, p. 213).

Following the lead of Sears and Freedman, selective exposure research since has focused on identifying the individual psychographic variables and personality factors that explain why some people select, avoid, or dismiss information under certain conditions. In the years since Sears and Freedman’s work, a great many correlates have been identified, but the fundamental problem of distinguishing causation from correlation in selective exposure research contexts remains.

Zillmann. Building on the selective exposure and uses and gratifications paradigms, mood management theory suggests that individuals are pleasure-seekers who use media (consciously or unconsciously) to modulate their mood, cheering themselves up or calming themselves down by selecting the right media for the current mood. In the words of its founder Dolf Zillmann:

Specifically, this theory posits that persons tend to arrange their stimulus environments so as to increase the likelihood that bad moods are short-lived and
their experiential intensity is reduced, that good moods are prolonged and their
experiential intensity is enhanced, and that bad moods are terminated and
superseded by good moods of the highest possible experiential intensity.
(Zillmann, 2000).

Zillmann and Bryant pioneered the experimental methodologies that underlie this
approach in the 1980’s, priming subjects to feel bored or stressed before presenting them
with an opportunity to watch television and recording the resulting choices. “Without
respondents’ being able to articulate the reasons for their choices, their selections served
excitatory homeostasis, as predicted, in that the return to normal levels of sympathetic
excitedness was accelerated for both hypo- and hyperaroused persons” (Zillmann, 2000).

An impressive body of experimental literature in the mood management tradition has
since confirmed and expanded Zillmann’s hypothesis that people seek homeostasis
through media use.

**Selective exposure today.** The conceptual importance of selective exposure has
grown in recent years as more and more popular writers have picked up on the notion,
made possible by the internet, that media consumers may soon be able to completely
curate their own media intake, insulating themselves from news and entertainment that
does not match their worldview. The attendant anxiety is the techno-determinist fear that
behind-the-scenes algorithms may already be shaping our worldview for us, whether we
want it or not, without our knowledge or consent. Eli Pariser’s *The Filter Bubble* (2011)
is perhaps the most widely known example of this thesis in the popular press, but many
other thinkers have echoed the idea on various fronts, perhaps most dramatically in the

dystopian young adult book and movie genre that has emerged as a cultural force in recent years.

The core political and sociological concern of this thread of thinking is that there will be a reduction in the robustness and diversity of the public sphere as people increasingly turn themselves over to algorithmic control and silo themselves into like-minded groups that reinforce existing beliefs and shutter their minds to diversity of thought and alternative points of view.

It is a valid and poignant concern for our times, but at least some early evidence suggests the internet may increase access and exposure to alternate point of view. Building on work by Stanford political scientist and longtime selective exposure scholar Shanto Iyengar, Solomon Messing and Sean Westwood constructed an important study that sheds some light on the question of selective of exposure in the context of social media. The study sought to determine whether source (outlet) cues or social (recommendation) cues had a larger impact on what news articles people from different segments of the political spectrum would click on, and the evidence suggests that social cues outweigh source cues in determining exposure, at least in the experimental environment.

In other words, while a partisan Democrat may be unlikely to turn on Fox News on television (where the only decision-factor comes from knowledge of the source/outlet), the social nature of the internet makes it more likely that the same partisan Democrat would click on a link from Fox News if it was recommended by others in his or her social network:
In the context of the diverse social, work, school, and intergenerational familial ties maintained via online networking websites, the odds of exposure to counter-attitudinal information among partisans and political news among the disaffected strike us as substantially higher than interpersonal discussion or traditional media venues (Messing & Westwood, 2012).

The authors conclude that while the evidence so far is limited, there is at least some reason to hope that the mechanics of exposure on the internet are more open to alternative viewpoints than those at play in a strictly television, or even print, era when the outlet alone was the major determinant of exposure.

**Behavioral Economics and Structural Understandings**

The universe of available content is enormous, yet there are still only so many hours in a day. Given that we do not have the time or resources to explore the entire body of available media before making a selection, how do we zero in on content that is likely to meet our needs and expectations? In a bounded rationality understanding, we rely on heuristics and biases to serve as shortcuts to the desired decision. Heuristics can be conscious or unconscious and can as simple as “It has worked before so I’ll keep doing it” or “I’ve heard of it so it must be better than the one I’ve never heard of.”

Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman has spent much of his academic career interrogating the assumption of the rational economic actor and building a thorough understanding of how individuals make decisions in a variety of circumstances. In *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2011) Kahneman distills 30 years of research into bounded rationality and decision-making into a helpful distinction: System 1 and System 2.
System 1 is fast, automatic, intuitive, and emotion-driven. System 2 is more time-intensive, logical, and cognitively taxing. Not surprisingly, most people rely on System 1 when selecting media content.

**Marewski.**

Kahneman is a fine introduction to bounded rationality and decision-making, and the overwhelming expert in the broader field, but decision-making scholar Julian Marewski has done some important and original work in applying what we know about heuristics and biases in media choice.

In a chapter from Hartmann’s *Media Choice* entitled “Fast and frugal media choices”, Marewski et al. (2010) explains the “fast and frugal” paradigm in terms of three questions, it seeks to answer: “What heuristics do organisms use to make decisions, and when is a particular heuristic used?” “To what environmental structures is a given heuristic adapted—that is, in what situations does it perform well?” and finally, “How can the study of people’s repertoires of heuristics and their fit to environmental structure aid decision making?” (Marewski et al., 2011). The authors offer the following example:

After a busy week, a person finally collapses in front of his TV and tries to find something to watch. He looks at a program guide and sees that there are five TV shows that will all start in a few minutes, of course on different stations. Being very busy lately he has not had a chance to watch any of them before. How can he choose the one that he will be most likely to enjoy? One option, following from the subjective expected utility approach, demands significant time and effort. First, a decision maker should collect all the available information about the
shows, for instance, what genres they are, who the actors are, what the critics are saying about them … A simpler and more efficient way is to use only a few cues that were in the past the best predictors of whether the person liked a show or not. For example, if our TV viewer almost always liked the shows his friends liked, then he could use that cue first to reduce the number of alternatives. If his friends recommended more than one show, he could use the second most predictive cue, for instance, whether any of the alternatives is in the genre he likes, say, crime investigation. If just one of them is in that genre, he can pick that show and be fairly confident that he will enjoy it. This strategy is a variant of the take-the-best heuristic for situations where one has to decide between multiple alternatives. It has also been called deterministic elimination by aspects (Marewski et al., 2011).

The fast and frugal heuristics approach to the problem of bounded rationality is intuitively appealing because it reflects the real-world limitations of uncertainty and incomplete information with which we are all familiar rather than an idealized world of perfect information and ample time to review the options. Heuristics have always been important in media choice, but perhaps never more so than in today’s diffuse and abundant media environment. Bounded rationality tells us that heuristics like popularity, recommendation, and familiarity are likely to grow in importance as the number of alternatives grows beyond what one person could reasonably research on their own.

**Webster.** Mass communication scholars over the years have looked at the landscape of media choice and attempted to construct a comprehensive theory of media choice that would build on the multitude of perspectives and integrate them into a single
coherent paradigm. This is a profoundly ambitious goal, and while no universal theory of media choice has emerged yet, perhaps the most successful at incorporating different approaches into a comprehensive theoretical framework is Northwestern’s James G. Webster, whose work seeks to incorporate and emphasize the role of the often-invisible but hugely influential structures that bind all media choices:

The structures of everyday life have a profound effect on how people use media. They are durable and often unobtrusive. Unlike people’s moods or the gratifications they seek, unlike their variable, not-so-well-informed preferences, social structures persist. Where people live and work and the language they speak operate as constants. They create stable environments that encourage certain types of media use and discourage others. And yet, people scarcely think about how these environments affect what comes to their attention—and what does not (Webster, 2014).

Webster’s “structurational” approach (Webster, 2011) proposes a world in which users and structures mutually constitute one another. Users are always selecting from among the choices visible to them through the structures they know, and the structures are always listening to the users for feedback on what to offer.

Webster is an active industry audience researcher in addition to being an academic author, and this background infuses his work with a pragmatic, big-data perspective. Few academics have been as willing, or as well-positioned, as Webster to critique the focus on the individual and argue for the importance of macro-level structures in a scholarly environment that tends to place the individual and his or her psychology and preferences
at the forefront of the research agenda (Webster, 2011, p. 228).

To Webster, the user and his or her individual preferences make up one half of the marketplace of attention; the other half is the structures that constrain attention and guide the user in various ways. In a world of hyper-abundant media, the production of content alone is not sufficient to gain an audience. Producers of content must actively engage in audience-building in addition to production to attract and maintain a following and the advertising support that an audience brings. The difficulty of gaining an initial audience in this hyper-abundant media atmosphere, however, gives way to a number of advantages once the initial devoted following is attained. In the increasingly crowded marketplace of attention there are more options but (relatively) fewer known entities, so advantages quickly accrue to the winners.

The popularity and recommendation heuristics that guide so much of our content selection on non-linear video-on-demand systems today are prime examples of the role of structure in content selection. As traditional gatekeepers retreat and content choice becomes more ostensibly self-guided, Webster’s work encourages us to think about the invisible structures that guide our decision-making.

**Market Research**

Because television is a large and well-financed commercial industry there is no shortage of current information about what television viewers are watching and how they are watching it. At the same time, traditional television ratings agencies like Nielsen have struggled to keep up with the changing distribution technologies, raising questions about what traditional television ratings numbers today really capture. In response to the
changing dynamics, a number of ambitious reports by commercial ratings agencies and private market research companies in recent years have sought to uncover the emerging trends in television viewership and the results have been widely reported in industry trade publications.

The SNL Kagan MRG U.S. Video Entertainment Survey (2014) surveyed 5,000 adult internet users, classifying respondents by generation according to their age at the time of the survey: ‘Millennials’ (18-33), ‘Gen X’ (34-49), ‘ Boomers’ (50-68), and ‘Matures’ (69+). The report finds that Millennials are more likely than other generations to be early adopters of new technologies, that they prefer on-demand viewing to live television, that they are accustomed to finding and acquiring content from a variety of sources, and that they regularly view video content on multiple screens (SNL Kagan, 2014). Sixty-four percent of Millennials surveyed had used an online TV website to catch up on a show, 65% had a subscription to an online video subscription service like Netflix, and 48% had “binge watched” video content on demand.

Nielsen’s Cross-Platform Report—renamed the Total Audience Report in 2014—uses comparisons between the same time period in different years to identify emerging trends in video technology and television use. In the category of delivery technologies, Nielsen notes in its 2014 report that 40% of households subscribe to some non-cable form of video on-demand services, a 19% jump from the same time last year; 46% percent of households now have at least one tablet, a 59% increase from last year; and the percentage of “broadband-only” households, still only 3% of the total, grew 112% in the last year (Nielsen, 2014-1). Nielsen’s 2014 Digital Consumer Report showed that
television consumers added an average of 43 minutes to their time spent watching video online while the average number of minutes spent watching traditional television and using the internet on a computer saw significant declines (Nielsen, 2014-2). The same report showed that in the emerging category of “broadband only households,” 52% were in the 18-34 demographic. On the whole, the last three years of data in the quarterly Nielsen Total Audience reports show that while total television viewership is actually rising, traditional television-screen viewership is declining as viewers spread out across devices and platforms (Nielsen, 2013; Nielsen, 2014-1; Nielsen, 2014-2).

These market research reports tell us, broadly, what we may already suspect about the present moment and the future of television: viewership is shifting away from traditional time-locked TV sets in living rooms and toward streaming services delivered on-demand over the internet to any internet connected devices anywhere with a connection.

Absent from the market research literature, however, is a consideration of how these migratory television consumers are thinking about the digital television landscape, how new content comes to their attention, and how their habits of viewing and discovery will shape the future of entertainment content and its distribution. This untapped research angle represents perhaps the greatest potential source of insight for understanding our emerging television distribution ecosystem today.

**Context and Goals of the Present Work**

The stable forces structures that have undergirded the television as a system as a whole for more than a generation are under siege from technology that is increasing
content availability and consumer choice worldwide. As we move more and more toward on-demand and à la carte television, choosing to watch our content program by program whenever we have time instead of tuning into the stream as curated for us by the networks, the structure of television itself is being transformed.

And yet television networks are not extinct, nor do they seem to be in any real near-term danger, suggesting that there is still an important role for networks and structures like them to play in the content distribution and presentation process. Viewers are still tuning in, discovering new shows, and watching old favorites, both on live television and on a variety of on-demand platforms. But the roles are in flux. The networks, once arbiters of taste capable of launching an entire evening of television on the back of over-the-air promos on their widely watched evening newscasts, are repositioning themselves to create the right atmosphere for hits to emerge from the new dynamics of social distribution.

How this social distribution happens is not yet widely understood from a user perspective. While there is a wealth of theory and research covering media and content choice, there is relatively little existing work that describes this process from the perspective of the modern entertainment television consumer.

What does the diffuse and decentralized world of media content look like for television consumers today? What are the structural assumptions that give form in their minds to the chaos of available content? What are the heuristics that guide individuals as they navigate it? And what lessons can be drawn from this period of relative content and consumer freedom that might inform the design of structures for content distribution of
all kinds? These are important questions for our times. There has never been a selection of content so extensive, nor a disruption in the power of content distributors, like the one we are living through today.

For a generation of media consumers raised on broadband internet and video-on-demand systems, “television” is not a device, but a format of video with stylistic conventions (e.g. 30 and 60 minute serialized episodes with commercial breaks) based on its broadcast legacy. There is no single place that television comes from; each person draws from his or her own eclectic combination of sources: a parents’ cable package, a friend’s HBOGo password, a hard drive full of downloaded video files, scores of legal and illegal streaming sites, and a range of standalone subscription services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. In spite of the overwhelming variety of choices and the momentary absence of a distribution consensus, this generation of unbundled media consumers nonetheless continues to encounter, discover, and tune into content that is relevant and entertaining to them as a group.

The modern media consumer, empowered by the abundance and infinite scale of the internet, is changing the media landscape. Their habits, decision making processes, and structures of thought in the realm of entertainment media content choice have implications that stretch beyond what TV shows they decide to watch.

The goal of the present inquiry into entertainment television content choice is to explore the terrain of entertainment content in the digital ecosystem from the perspective of the consumer. The specific aim of this inquiry is to gather first-hand accounts of experiences and descriptive insight into the following research questions:
RQ1: How do viewers think about entertainment television in a general sense? What are the key constructs, elements, and structures of today’s experience?

RQ2: How do viewers encounter and discover new entertainment television content?

RQ3: How do viewers evaluate and decide whether to keep watching a particular piece of entertainment television content?
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The research described below was conducted by the author under the guidance of the signatory advisors, with the approval of the university institutional review board, and in strict accordance with the standards for ethical treatment of human subjects set forth in the sixth revision of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Participants

A convenience sample of students at a large northeastern research university was recruited using flyers on bulletin boards and in class announcements: [“Game of Thrones? Or Portlandia?” “What should we watch tonight?” “Participate in a study about media choice. Email ___@____ to set up a 30 minute appointment.”]. Flyers were posted in the hallways and classrooms of the communication building at the beginning of the university’s summer session and the announcements were made in two summer undergraduate research methods classes. In some cases class participation bonus points were awarded to students who participated. No other compensation was offered. Individual interviews were arranged with all students who emailed and participants were instructed to meet the interviewer at a research office at a designated time. In total, 14 participants were recruited and interviewed in this manner over a one-month span. The sample consists of 4 males and 10 females ranging in age from 21 to 29, all of whom were either regular or summer students at the college of communication. Race and ethnicity data were not collected. Hometown and country were collected for background. Two of the 14 participants identified their nationality as Chinese with the remaining 12
identifying their nationality as American.

**Instrument**

The semi-structured interview questionnaire (see Appendix A) provides a general outline to asking about and accessing the information about media choice the study aims to gather. The questionnaire is not a script, but a set of questions organized into sections with each question open to more probing and follow-up questions based on the response. The result is that the interviews all follow the same general structure while allowing for flexibility on the part of the interviewer to probe into any relevant and interesting threads that emerge in the interview,

Section I provides some general background on the participants: names, ages, gender, majors, hometowns, languages spoken, and reflections on how high or low they considered their own media consumption. Section II asks about their general viewing habits and preferences, where, when, and how they like to watch, what devices and systems they use to access and browse content, and seeks to establish some richer, descriptive background on the participants and their relationships to entertainment content in general. Section III asks the participants to generate lists of the programs they are currently watching or that they have been involved in watching at some point over the last year. Section IV asks about the respondents’ discovery of the programs listed in the previous section and about the content discovery process in general. Section V asks for a narrative account of the last new show the participant watched and continued. Section VI asks for a narrative account of the last new show the participant watched or tried but did not pick up or continue watching.
The goal of the first four sections of the questionnaire is to build a detailed understanding of the participant’s media and content universe and selection style in general. The goal of the final two sections is to generate descriptive stories that detail the journey from awareness to viewership (or non-viewership) of a particular entertainment media product.

**Procedure**

Interviews lasted 30 to 50 minutes and were audio recorded, after which the recording was transcribed for analysis and destroyed pursuant to the anonymity guidelines set forth in the research proposal. Transcripts were then edited for de-identification. Respondents were assigned a reference number and either picked or were assigned a random first name alias and are referred to throughout by their alias only.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

In total 14 interviews were conducted in the manner described above. The resulting transcripts were analyzed for answers to the research questions and broader patterns of interest relevant to the overall goal of mapping and understanding the process of media content choice in the digital ecosystem. This section will review the key findings for each research question and the supporting evidence from the transcripts, with a more detailed synthesis and discussion of the implications to follow in the next chapter.

RQ1: How do viewers today think about entertainment television in a general sense? What are the key constructs, elements, and structures of today’s experience?

Paralleling the structure of the questionnaire (See Appendix A), this research question opens on a general note, allowing respondents to speak freely about their media environments and habits of media use in order to establish a baseline understanding and rapport for the conversation ahead. The interviewer prompts for this section read:

How do you think about TV? What role does entertainment content play in your life? What’s a typical day like in your video entertainment content life? How did you watch TV and movies growing up? Do you currently have access to any subscription entertainment services? Do you have any appointment viewing shows that you watch live or right when they air? Do you record shows? Do you set aside particular times to catch up on recorded TV? Do you have a list of shows that you keep up with? Has how you watch TV changed much in the past few years? How?
In this section respondents described a range of television viewing behaviors, from very heavy (5 or more hours per day, June, Interview #3) to almost none (Walter, Interview #11). All of the respondents had a TV set in their home growing up, and a physical TV set was present in the current homes of nine out of twelve respondents. For many of the respondents the television set was incidental to their living situation (e.g. in the living room and belonging to a roommate) and not necessarily a conscious choice, but where a physical TV set was available the respondent generally made use of the larger screen. DVR’s were relatively uncommon. The students interviewed favored catching up on missed episodes by streaming them online. Table 1 shows the spectrum of respondent answers to the questions in this section.

Table 1. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TV set?</th>
<th>Pay cable?</th>
<th>DVR?</th>
<th>Subscriptions</th>
<th>Screen of choice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Janice</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>June</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Comcast, Netflix TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Comcast, Netflix Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sally</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Comcast, Netflix Computer</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Netflix Computer</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Yuri</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>None Computer</td>
</tr>
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</table>

On the whole, the general viewing habits and preferences portion of the questionnaire shows fourteen individual profiles with different preferences and habits. Most of the respondents indicated that their current media use and preferences were
related to how they had experienced television growing up. The preference for a computer or television screen was highly contingent upon whatever was available in the house at the time. Apart from a potential lasting influence of childhood patterns, which the questionnaire was not designed to measure, no important findings arose from this portion of the questionnaire, although the baseline it establishes for each individual was important in interpreting and probing into later responses.

Collectively, the general use portion of the interviews also offer a glimpse at what the world of television looks like to viewers today. Because the respondents were almost all Communication students, the general portions of the interviews are filled with diverse perspectives and opinions that offer a window into the current state of television in their own lives and in our popular culture:

TV is still an interesting form as far as entertainment mediums go because, I guess, there's a lot of innovation going on. I guess because people are starting to realize they have to compete with web series, Netflix, a lot of box office draws and stuff like that. I still feel like TV is relevant because they try to keep things interesting. (Yuri, Interview #14).

I think about TV as a way of like unwinding I guess, and relaxing. So I usually tend to watch TV when I'm lazy, or when... like, after a long day of class or work or something like that. I think that's because I like watching things that aren't too heavy, maybe like a mood lightener (Alexa, Interview #12).
I don't have a TV right now. I guess I do, but I don't have it hooked up or anything. Really I'm just trying to avoid watching things that aren't educational. Before I moved here I had a TV, and it would be on a lot during the day but I wouldn't really watch it. Just background noise while I was doing other things like eating or studying or playing guitar or something. I think it's a waste of time for the most part (Walter, Interview #11).

**Word frequency.** The next layer of exploration was to attempt a more objective overview of the data by performing a word frequency analysis on the aggregated transcripts. This analytic approach was designed to step back from the individual interviews and assess the relevant importance of various constructs in the minds of the population interviewed. The interviewer portions were removed from the transcripts so that the word counts would not be skewed by the words in the interviewer prompts. In the remaining body of text, every utterance of the word by any respondent was counted (including repeat mentions by the same viewer).

Table 2 (below) lists all of the video outlets in the transcripts with more than 5 mentions.
Table 2. Video Outlets By Number of Mentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Outlet</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netflix</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohu</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProjectFreeTV</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comcast</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy Central</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HGTB</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This simple frequency count has its limitations\(^6\), but it provides a good starting point for analysis and points to some important observations about the way the population interviewed thinks about television content.

First, Netflix occupies a prominent position in the way this population thinks about entertainment content and where it comes from. Second, the relatively low frequency of mentions for all of the other networks and outlets in comparison reminds us that television shows today are not necessarily prominently linked in the minds of their viewers with original network sources. A viewer in this group is more likely to think of a television show as a standalone media object, and less of a product of the network that originates, promotes and broadcasts it. The number of mentions for the outlets above will mean even more in the context of our next chart (Table 3), which lists all of the individual shows with more than five mentions.

\(^6\) For example, only two respondents mentioned Sohu, a Chinese video website, at all, but the two respondents combined used the word frequently enough in conversation to place it in the top three.
Table 3. TV Shows By Number of Mentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scandal*</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Park</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange is the New Black*</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Cards*</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Met Your Mother*</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Office*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey’s Anatomy*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Family</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Available on Netflix as of publication

*Scandal’s* 24 mentions contrast with only 6 of ABC, the only US network that promotes and broadcasts its new episodes. This is potentially related to the fact that many of *Scandal’s* viewers hear about it independently and/or encounter it through Netflix and thus do not encounter or form a strong brand association with ABC network in the process. Of the 10 shows with five or more mentions, seven were available via Netflix streaming as of this writing.

In one very obvious sense, these numbers are unreliable because the data set is so small. But the relative frequency of the word “Netflix” indicates, at the very least, a dominant brand awareness in the population interviewed. Eight students had access to a Netflix account, and all fourteen students mentioned the word Netflix at some point in their interviews. Methodologically this is fairly crude, but a similar approach on a larger
and more representative sample could be even more informative for the exploratory approach. Until then, the picture that emerges from this preliminary analysis is a world where individual shows and Netflix, rather than the broadcaster’s brand, dominate the mental landscape of viewers in the population interviewed.

Shows sought out by name for committed viewing, however, were only half the story. Although Netflix and searching the internet for specific shows by name were dominant when the participants were actively seeking entertainment content for a stretch of time, more traditional models of television viewing seem to have endured in the realm of routine, multitasking, and habitual viewing. Thirteen of the 14 respondents reported some kind of passive or multitasking-based use of television around the house or as “background noise,” especially during some other activity.

This distinction between passive or routine background viewing and active committed viewing-as-activity was surprising but unmistakable as a trend in the population interviewed:

When I get up. I like the noise and I have it on while I'm washing my face and I like to open the TV... And also when I'm taking exercise I like to watch TV show (Cynthia, Interview #1).

I don't know, usually I'll watch like CNN in the morning for like 20 minutes while I'm making breakfast or something, and then usually I don't really do anything else unless it's like the weekend, and then I'll watch a movie or something (Janice, Interview #2).
Like I said it kinda depends. I normally watch like... I'll have the TV on basically constantly, but I don't really like pay attention to it or watch it... I'll just have like syndicated sitcoms on. But I'll also watch like the late night shows sometimes before I go to bed. So I'll watch like Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers. But I'm not always sitting there like paying attention to it. I'll just kind of have it on (Sally, Interview #7).

Once I get out of bed I’m turning SportsCenter on. If I have class I’m going right to class, but when I get home from class or the gym I’m turning SportsCenter on. If I don’t have class that day I’m waking up at 10 or 11 and turning SportsCenter on (Raymond, Interview #13).

On one hand are shows that the respondents actively sought out and watched as an entertainment activity in itself. These shows were perceived to be of a higher quality and were approached in the manner of a standalone work, like a popular novel or a film, with the intention of catching up or watching it to completion. On the other hand are syndicated shows and entire channels of branded content like CNN, ESPN, and HGTV that are still embedded “in” the physical television, so to speak, and exist there as a part of the fabric of the participant’s daily lives and routine. This content was more likely to be watched live, with commercials on a broadcaster’s schedule rather than on demand. It was also usually less actively watched by the respondents who treated it as part of something else: getting ready in the morning, cooking, eating dinner, or just hanging out.
on the couch and multitasking with a cellphone or other device.

Like the graceful decline of radio before it, television seems to have found a niche where it is still relevant and useful for a specific purpose in the lives of the young population interviewed. Television maintains a presence as a place where the medium, rather than the content, comes into focus. The availability and consistency of television’s uninterrupted stream of content remains useful, if for no other reason than that one is not always engaged in active viewership of a particular program at the moment one desires entertainment. Several other quotes bear mentioning with regards to screen preference:

[Television]. I think it's, um, more cool than the computer for me. Because on the computer you have research some stuff for yourself but the TV you can directly present some stuff to you (Cynthia, Interview #1, on preferring TV).

Well if I'm currently in like a Netflix binge watching something I'll just watch the next episode of that. But if not, I will go on my TV, and I like to watch HGTV and TLC, so I'll like go to those channels and see if there's anything on there I want to watch. And if something’s on that I like then I'll just watch it. And if not then I'll find something else to watch (Shelley, Interview #5).

There is, in short, a time and place for television when the commitment to viewing is lower and full viewing attention is not desired. In analyzing the transcripts for information about what makes viewers watch and return to certain shows or streams of content and abandon others, this distinction was especially important. Patterns of
discovery, selection and adoption for the two types of viewing appear to be somewhat different.

**RQ2: How do viewers become aware of new shows and watch them for the first time?**

With the decline of the “primetime” evening grid as the consensus time and place for discovering new entertainment television programming, the new television landscape seems to rely less on orchestrated launches and more on authentic word of mouth than ever. In the transcripts reviewed here, personal recommendation was by far the biggest source of new-show awareness and the decision to watch something for the first time.

Usually it's friends who tell me to watch a show... or something like that. And then I'll watch it once or twice, and then if I like it I'll keep watching it, and if I don't I won’t keep going (Michelle, Interview #6).

Most of it is through friends because I often don't have an avenue for exploring new content. Or at least a readily available avenue, so I'm kind of apprehensive about trying new things. But if someone, especially someone I trust, gives a recommendation I'm more willing to try that media than if no one gives a recommendation or if random people on the internet give a recommendation (Yuri, Interview #14).

I knew it was on Netflix so I didn't really have to, like, find it. I guess I kind of just trusted their recommendation (Janice, Interview #2, on deciding to watch
House of Cards of the first time).

The weight given to the recommendation and the subsequent likelihood to watch seems to be related to the nature of the relationship and the trust in that person’s judgment in matters of entertainment taste. Recommendations from viewers with similar tastes, or a record of making good recommendations, were accorded more respect. Recommendations from viewers with broadly different tastes, or perceived bad taste, are regarded with suspicion:

My friends that watch reality shows, I'm very wary of their recommendations. Because I'm not really a reality person… I really respect the opinions of my friends that like the same movies as me, the same kind of directors and type of movies (Walter, Interview #11).

I probably won't watch something new unless it's, like, highly recommended… My brother watches a lot of TV and I always ask him what he thinks about certain shows (Haley, Interview #4).

In addition to what is known or assumed about the recommender, the nature of the relationship influenced the personalization of the recommendation. More personal recommendations seemed to carry more weight:

First I heard it from my friend. My friend told my boyfriend that this is very interesting, and he told me because he know I'm interested in politics and I will be one who will tell this is very good... the first season is watching in China but the
It was recommended by my friends, and because I love to watch Korean TV shows, even before they recommended that, and so one of my friends recommended this TV show for me and I started to watch it (June, Interview #3, on first hearing about *Successors*, a Korean TV show).

Cynthia’s friends knew of her interest in American politics. June’s friends knew of her interest in Korean television. The relationship of the recommender and the personalization of the recommendation go hand in hand, playing an important role in the decision to give a show a first viewing, especially when the program was not well known to the participant beforehand.

An extension of the personalized recommendation is the co-viewing introduction. In several instances in the interviews the participant recalled being personally introduced to a show by a friend who sat down and watched the first episode of the show with them. In many ways, this type of introduction is the strongest recommendation a friend can make since it implies that the friend is excited about it and that the program is high enough quality to support a second viewing.

A friend of mine, I was staying with her and she was like, “you'd probably like this show,” and I watched an episode with her just because, well, she made me, [laughs] (Michelle, Interview #6, on being introduced to *Scandal*).
*True Detective* was introduced to me by a friend. He watches a lot of TV and movies but he's also very engaged with it and educated about it so I trust his judgment. When we watched it I think we watched two or three episodes at once, so that probably did a lot to help me finish the rest of the show (Walter, Interview #11).

In these cases, the personalization is enhanced by the viewing context and the relationship. The fit and ultimate success of the co-viewing introduction depends on compatibility in tastes and a respect for the friend’s judgment in matters of film and television. Walter, who watched the least television of any of the respondents (almost none), notes the quality of his friend’s taste in film and television as a factor in letting himself be drawn into *True Detective*. In Michelle and Walter’s cases the initial involvement was deepened by watching multiple episodes and becoming absorbed in the narrative, which led them to seek out the content on their own.

In both of these examples the initial reaction was also positive enough that the new viewer overcame some barriers to availability, seeking out and accessing the content shortly thereafter on their own. Michelle had no immediate access to *Scandal* on demand through legitimate channels, but was able to access it and watch on the questionably-legal free streaming site ProjectFreeTV. Walter has no immediate access to *True Detective* through legal channels, but was able to find and download it through torrent sites.

In cases where a recommendation had been given, the respondents reported a broad willingness to seek the content in both legitimate and copyright-infringing ways. An interesting question for further exploration is whether the effort of going through
these extra-legal avenues to procure content implies a stronger desire to view to the program (and therefore reflects a higher value in the mind of the content seeker) than if it were readily available through an existing system. The data here are not sufficient to make any conclusion other than that most viewers in this population are extremely adept at finding television shows for free online and seem to have no moral objections to doing so. Torrents and free streams of copyrighted content are part of the system of the entertainment television system as they know it, although they seem to prefer legitimate sources when available. In several cases the effort involved in tracking down the content to watch illegally was cited as a reason for dropping a show:

Yeah the first five seasons are on Netflix, the sixth season I haven't gotten to just yet because it's not on Netflix and I can get it on ProjectFreeTV but it's just annoying with the links and the popups, it's time consuming I just don't have time right now (Orly, Interview #10, on Parks and Recreation).

I started watching The Mindy Project but I didn't get very far, because it's really hard to find online, and I wasn't caught up to the season, and I don't really know if I like it or not, so I just kind of abandoned it (Shelley, Interview #5).

**Social media.** Overall the influence of social media was fairly small as a stand-alone factor. By name, “social media” was mentioned by only about half of the respondents, usually as part of the larger buzz surrounding the show. The larger buzz
surrounding a show, however, came from mass media marketing and publicity sources, suggesting that authentic social media (in the sense of individuals going online to discuss and share things that they liked with their friends and contacts) was not a major source of new show discovery for this population.

That said, the standards of what is and isn’t “authentic” in social media are, by design, difficult to discern. Paid ads on for new shows on platforms like Twitter and Facebook are becoming commonplace in entertainment marketing, but so are mass media orchestrated publicity campaigns ranging from photo contests, buzzy hashtag campaigns, posts from the stars’ accounts, and even “astro-turfing” scores of phony accounts to drum up the appearance of an active community of fans. It can be hard to tell what is and isn’t real on social media. Perhaps for this reason, the recommendation of real-world friends or family members and good general word of mouth was usually mentioned in conjunction with social media:

I would say social media, word of mouth, I have a few friends who watch a lot of TV and they’re very interested in watching the first episode of the new show and they'll sometimes tell me about things (Haley, Interview #4, on new show discovery).

When questioned on the topic of social media specifically, the respondent’s answers showed that social media was a part of the buzz surrounding a new show but rarely the

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7 A term borrowed from politics, “astro-turfing” is when well-financed political operations quietly sponsor social campaigns to create the appearance of a grassroots movement

8 The lone exception was June, Interview #3 who was very active on Chinese social media and said that she had picked up and watched new shows on the recommendation of social media alone
primary influence in a decision to watch:

Interviewer: How do you usually come across new content, in general?

Tracy: I'd probably say personal relationships.

Interviewer: And what about online, social media, do you think they reach you?

Tracy: There would need to be another context.

Interview: Do you use any social media or websites regularly?

Tracy: I have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram... but if I haven't heard about it from a friend it usually doesn't register (Tracy, Interview #9).

**Availability, familiarity, and relevance.** In the absence of a specific personal recommendation, the most frequent pattern of discovery was an awareness of a good general buzz around the show combined with curiosity, availability and a time-sensitive relevance. When viewers went looking for something to watch on their own, the programs that they had heard of and already had access to seemed to have the greatest draw:

I just started watching that this year. I think I just like saw it on Netflix and everyone had been talking about it... and then I knew that the next season was coming out and everyone was kind of freaking out about it because it just came out this summer and so I just started watching it and I really liked it (Janice, Interview #2, on first deciding to watch Orange is the New Black).

Like it's definitely something that I want to watch for sure, because like
everyone's talking about it, and I'm paying for Netflix anyway, so I guess a lot of it has to do with like, it's there and I'm paying for it anyway, might as well get all the treats and benefits that come with it (Steven, Interview #8, on first deciding to watch House of Cards).

The fact that the viewer has access anyway, the "Netflix effect," frequently seems to be the tipping point between watching and not watching a show.

I don't know if I would have gone out and bought it if it wasn't on Netflix, probably not (Interview #5, Shelley, on Gossip Girl).

But a lot of shows are buzzed about, and a typical viewer is unlikely to watch most of them. Since only the most discussed will be sought out by name, and since old standbys and familiar programming occupy a good deal of the routine and structural television-viewing, there is likely less space in this environment than in a broadcast-dominant world for most viewers to randomly encounter and discover new programming.

In this narrow space of on-demand browsing, curiosity and availability are necessary but not sufficient. The final push comes from a time-sensitive sense of relevance, something about the show that pushes the viewer not just to want to watch it, but to want to watch it now:

Because the last season of Gossip Girl was going to be airing that year and I heard about it and I was like, "I probably should watch this," I don't know, and then I found it on Netflix and I was like, "OK, let's just do this." I don't even remember how I found it but I do remember that it was around when the last season was
airing (Shelley, Interview #5, on Gossip Girl).

And this last June I had just heard so much about it and the last season coming up and my friends are always cracking jokes from it, and they all told me, like, start at the second season, but I just pushed through the first because I wanted the full context, and I don't know... I finally just pushed through and watched from season one right up until I was caught up. I just watched whenever I had spare time (Orly, Interview #10, on Parks and Recreation).

Often, that spike in relevance seems to come when a popular already-running show is gearing up for a new season, or, as in the two examples above, the final season.

**RQ3: How do viewers today evaluate and decide whether to keep watching a given show?**

So far we have looked at the transcripts in a fairly broad way, analyzing the information contained mostly in the responses to Questionnaire Sections I – IV. These sections of the questionnaire focus on the general picture of the entertainment television ecosystem and the sources that create awareness and arouse the initial desire to watch. In this section of the analysis I will be narrowing the focus to the case study questions and their responses (Questionnaire Sections V and VI) in which viewers were asked to describe in more detail how they became involved and committed viewers of particular programs.

A word of caution before we dive in: the answers to these case study questions
were much more personal and idiosyncratic than the responses analyzed in the previous sections. As case studies, the data here are more difficult to generalize from, but the depth and specificity some of the respondents were able to provide in describing their journey to picking up or dropping a particular show has been extremely helpful in building out an understanding of the back end and decision points in the content selection process. What follows is an overview of themes that emerged from this line of questioning in my interviews.

The first episode. Respondents seemed to know very quickly upon watching a new show whether they liked it or not, and formed an intention to either quit or keep watching very quickly. June, Interview #3, is a Chinese citizen who was entering her third year as a student of Communication at a U.S. university at the time of the interview. She has a good grasp of the English language, is a self-described high media consumer, and has an appetite for self-guided discovery of new programs. She regularly evaluates new content, both shows that have been recommended to her and those that she browses for on SohuTV, a Chinese video website. In this excerpt she is describing how she came to finish the Korean TV series “Successors,” which was recommended to her by her friends.

Interviewer: How far into the series were you when you felt committed to it?

June: The first episode.

Interviewer: Interesting… What was it about it that grabbed you?

June: I liked it. The first episode is always crucial to me to decide if I continue to watch.
Interviewer: What else about the show, the show itself, did you like?

June: The first is the characters. They are very handsome and very tall. And after, when I continue watching the first episode the story is very romantic and it's the type I like.

Interviewer: So you knew right away that this was your type of show…

June: If I start a show I will finish it. All. I watch every episode with no exceptions.

This theme of knowing after one episode, or perhaps even sooner, was common among the interview participants. The effect of the first impression seemed even more pronounced when the first impression was negative and the outcome was to discontinue viewing:

I couldn't remember the names of the shows, but I'm pretty sure there were those shows where when I watched the first episode I didn't like them. I think mostly it's because when I watched for the first five minutes I thought the characters didn't act so well so I stopped immediately and I didn't go back to it (June, Interview #3).

Yeah, my freshman year roommate was kind of obsessed with the show, so I had heard all of the episodes, because she wouldn’t use headphones, and it was driving me crazy… so I thought, “I might as well like see what's going on,” and watch the show.... I think it was like one or two episodes and I was just like, “I
don't know about this…” (Janice, Interview #2, on evaluating *Arrested Development*).

In the first case, June shows that she makes judgments quickly based on the quality of the acting and her general response to the program. In the second case, Janice did not seem to expect to like the program, and by one or two episodes in seems to have satisfied her curiosity about the show enough to confidently dismiss it as not for her. Respondents in general seemed to understand and trust their own tastes, predicting successfully in most cases whether they would or would not enjoy a show based on the genre and tone, which could usually be established beforehand. This congruence between expectation and outcome is not surprising, and is broadly consistent with findings from the Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior body of literature on media choice.

The more interesting cases, then, came from the stories participants shared about shows they watched or “tried to like” in spite of some resistance because of an overwhelming tide of popular opinion.

**Making the effort.** Sally, a 21-year-old advertising major with a diverse cultural background, illustrates some of the more interesting social dynamics of content choice in this extended description of her approach and response to the critically-acclaimed AMC drama *Breaking Bad*:

Interviewer: What was the last new show you watched but discontinued or lost interest in?

Sally: *Breaking Bad*. I know a bunch of people who watch it who say it's like the best show they've ever seen, like it's mind blowing, it's so great. So I watched
the pilot on Netflix, and I was like, “I don't know how I feel about this, but everyone says it's really great so I'm going to keep going.” I went for like three more episodes and I just couldn't do it. It was too dark, and I knew it got darker, I knew it got more violent, so I stopped watching that. Not because... I'm sure it's a great TV show and I'm sure what everyone says about it is totally true, but I just couldn't, it's just too dark for me.

Interviewer: When did sense that it wasn’t for you?

Sally: After the first episode. I mean you've got like this guy with cancer who is cooking meth. And he was sad. It was just kind of sad. I could tell it was good, I knew it was a good show, and then I watched it again, and it was... well it wasn't like it got lighter. Based on everything I've heard it only gets violent, it only gets crazier, so I was like, well I know I'm going to have to stop at some point, because I cannot handle that kind of violence, it just haunts me, and I get really sad about it… I thought, well, I might as well get out now while I'm not attached (Sally, Interview #7).

Haley, a 21 year-old psychology and advertising major describes a similar experience trying to power herself through the popular American version of the sitcom *The Office*:

I think when *The Office* was in like its third or fourth season is when it really started to get popular and I think I just heard a lot of buzz through word of mouth. And my brother watched it from the beginning, and whenever I would walk through and see him watching it I just didn't really get it, it didn't make me laugh.
It does not make me laugh out loud, like I'll sit and I'll watch it but I'll kind of be sitting there the whole time. So I just never really bothered to actually watch an episode. Then a lot more people started watching it and telling me like, “No, it's gotten a lot better now, it's changing, I think it's really funny, Steve Carrell is so funny,” and I think The Office was getting buzz for like the Emmy's and things like that, winning all these awards, so I thought I would try watching it, and I think I genuinely sat down and watched like two whole seasons of it. And it's not... bad, I don't dislike it, I just don't LIKE it, it does not make me laugh out loud (Haley, Interview #4).

**Bad buzz.** One of the most interesting insights to emerge from the case study portion of the interviews was that at least some viewers in this population are so attuned to the overall reviews, buzz, and peer-opinion surrounding a show that bad word-of-mouth can quickly kill a budding interest. Tracy, a 20 year-old political science and communication major, illustrates the weight of this kind of bad word-of-mouth in this interchange:

Tracy: …So I started watching it and I was hooked on it, and I got to about the second to last episode of the first season, and I told a couple of my girlfriends about it, and I was like, “You guys should watch this,” because they're also into those type of shows, and one of my girlfriends said, “Oh I watched the first season but the second season wasn't as good.” And that's when I stopped watching it.
Interviewer: Most of the way through the first season?

Tracy: I want to say it was around 20ish episodes total, I had to have been around like 17 or 18.

Interviewer: And you just stopped outright. No desire to continue?

Tracy: She had seen all of it. And she said the second season wasn't as good.

Interviewer: But you didn’t want to find out for yourself? Or at least finish the season?

Tracy: Nah, I didn't want to watch the second season and be disappointed. It's one of those things where I might like watch a TV show, and it might be really good at first, but then when it starts getting disappointing it usually drops off my radar, because I don't want to watch something where I'm like, “Oh it was so good,” and it started being bad. I didn't want to be disappointed (Tracy, Interview #9).

Orly, a 21 year-old advertising major, touches on all three themes from this section in describing her decision to watch and quickly drop HBO’s The Newsroom:

Orly: I heard so many people, the same people that were telling me that like Parks and Rec was great, and they were like, yeah great show, check it out. I heard so much about it on TV and ads everywhere, you know, trying to make it look like a really great show, so that's why I did it. And the first episode was good, but I got a headache from watching it. I had a headache! And I'm just like, I don't like that. It wasn't pleasurable.
Interviewer: When was that?

Orly: Right around the time I started it was when the second season came out and it flopped. So that's what also led to stopping, I was like, f---, it's only going to get worse.

There is a class of shows at any given time that are so frequently mentioned and actively promoted by its fans that the uninitiated must eventually confront it. At the same time, once a show had declined in the esteem of the group or the general public, the participant seemed eager to drop it, lest they waste their time or energy committed to a losing show that is likely to decline in quality or be cancelled anyway. If each show represents an investment of these students’ scarce resources of time and attention, it makes sense that they would approach them with an eye toward their entertainment return. In the realm of the most talked-about “prestige” television conveyed by networks like HBO, AMC, and services like Netflix, viewers may find it worthwhile to stick with a show that has a high cultural relevance and confers social capital, even if he or she finds its entertainment value marginal. Likewise, if a show that a viewer personally enjoys appears to be declining in relevance, some pressed-for-time viewers may calculate that the continued investment simply isn’t worth their time.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

To condense and summarize the preceding analysis, three major themes of media content perception and media choice relevant to the future of the mass media entertainment distribution system were identified:

1) Two types of television

2) The recommendation heuristic

3) Availability, the first episode hurdle, and the social feedback loop

The aim of this section is to connect these larger themes of viewer behavior to their structural implications for distributors, producers, and consumers of content in the emerging entertainment television ecosystem.

Two Types of Television

**Observed behavior.** Entertainment content consumers, even in this highly internet-enabled sample group, showed an enduring willingness in the interviews to use television in traditional ways. The reasons seem to be both historical and structural. Daily rituals and routines, such as turning on the news in the morning or watching a late-night show before bed, were often described as having been formed at a young age or modeled after parents’ behavior. The fact that these behaviors are also embedded in the structures and rhythms of the respondents’ daily lives makes them all the more likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Structurally, the simple stream of television is advantageous because of its predictability and low search costs: when you turn it on, new content will be delivered to you without any effort on your part. If you have a favorite channel (see Raymond, Interview #11 on ESPN), you can be reasonably assured of finding the content
you’re looking for, updated daily, and delivered in a predictable manner. In the short windows of time consumers want to fill around the house, convenience remains the key factor.

Alternatively, when consumers are recommended a particular show or are seeking an immersive viewing experience as an activity in itself, their patience with the stream of broadcast television was significantly lower. Viewers in this cohort readily distinguished between these two different modes of viewing, and were adept at seeking out and viewing content that had been recommended to them through a variety of avenues.

**Structural implications.** Television use around the house is familiar and likely to persist the way that radio has in the car. Logically, there are so many better ways of getting more personalized and higher quality audio content in the car that would seem to make little sense to use the old-fashioned car radio. Practically, however, not everyone has the technology in their vehicle or the energy to expend setting up a better system. Even when new cars have better incorporated emerging technology to easily stream content from mobile phones, there are layers of cognitive effort involved in managing, selecting, and subscribing to new content delivery systems. As long as car manufacturers continue to put radios in cars, the historically familiar and cognitively low-effort solution will retain a strong appeal. The same is likely true for television.

For shorter stretches of time, the familiarity and ease-of-use of television as it is currently constructed will outweigh the time and search cost of logging into a better content delivery system, selecting an individual piece of content from a menu, and putting it on. For longer stretches of time, however, watching television as a stand-alone
leisure activity will continue to shift toward on-demand platforms like Netflix that create a more immersive and personal entertainment experience. There is simply no reason for savvy entertainment consumers to put up with the disadvantages of traditional linear television distribution when better alternatives have already been incorporated into their lives. Recognizing this shift, forward-thinking broadcasters will strategically pursue this casual, live, and around-the-house niche in order to sustain television as a medium and themselves as organizations, the way radio has survived by carving out its own niche and audience in the car.

The major broadcast networks are aware of this and have already begun tilting their content focus toward live sports and events accordingly, but an even deeper shift is likely coming. Continued network development and financing of taped comedy and drama entertainment programs depends on the network’s ability to monetize them through on-air ad sales and license agreements with other distributors (including video-on-demand platforms like Netflix). Because each of the major broadcast networks has a close relationship with a studio under the same corporate umbrella, the networks have remained in the advantaged situation of being both the point-of-contact distributor and the producer of content—the same advantage once enjoyed by the film studios described earlier.

But if television viewership continues to decline and the ad sales revenue stream dries up, the networks will no longer be in the position of being able to create hits from among the products their own studios produce. In this version of the entertainment

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television industry’s future we have to ask, would networks continue to finance taped entertainment television production? Will they spin off their studios into separate entities in order to shed costly back-end divisions and focus on their traditional role as broadcaster? Or will they double down on content production, effectively transforming themselves into studios with a network arm, selling their content to multiple distributors? The answers depend heavily on what role the networks will want to play in the new regime, which in turn depends on the individual network’s ownership and overall strategy. NBC, which is owned by Comcast and maintains a profitable studio division with many non-NBC customers, is likely to have a different strategy than CBS, which depends heavily on its position as a top broadcaster and until recently operated its studio division primarily to produce shows that would run on the CBS network.10

The Recommendation Heuristic

**Observed behavior.** Entertainment television viewers in the interview group relied heavily on peer recommendation in sifting through the crowded content landscape to discover programs that were likely to be relevant and interesting to them. Peer recommendation came in two major forms: “direct personal recommendation,” and “general social approval,” both of which were usually present in case studies of the eventually-adopted programs. While social media played a role in some content discoveries, it was generally perceived as part of the show’s general buzz and was accorded roughly the same weight as endorsement and promotion on other mass media

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10 On August 8th, 2014 CBS announced a shift in their studio strategy and plans to produce more original content for non-CBS outlets, including digital outlets like Netflix and Amazon Prime (Kafka, 2014).
sources, suggesting that the distinction between social media and mass media is becoming less significant to this population, at least in cases where a product is being promoted. Instead, respondents almost always credited a personal friend, family member, or other real-life peer with their decision to watch a new program, especially when it was previously unknown to the participant. More personal recommendations from closer friends seemed to carry more weight. Knowledge of the friend’s taste in television factored significantly into the decision to watch a program for the first time. Co-viewing introductions were observed to be a particularly strong form of endorsement. Although more data is needed, viewers are hypothesized to be more likely to seek out the content on their own and continue watching in the case of a co-viewing introduction.

When viewers went seeking content without a direct recommendation from a friend, they relied heavily on various indirect forms of recommendation, most notably recommendation engines from services like Netflix, and the general social endorsement of their peers in the form of positive buzz. Availability, familiarity and relevance, often created by the buzz around a show, were the most influential factors in viewers deciding to grant a first viewing to shows that had not been specifically and personally recommended. Some viewers were inclined to explore these buzzed-about shows on their own, others felt they already had full television schedules and were disinclined to watch anything new in the absence of a specific personal recommendation. When a show was specifically recommended but not readily available, viewers seemed more willing to go through some amount of effort to access and watch it. When a show was buzzed-about but not specifically and personally recommended, lack of convenient availability was a
major deterrent.

**Structural implications.** One conclusion suggested by these descriptions is that entertainment content selection in the digital ecosystem is an increasingly word-of-mouth-driven, two-step process. First, prospective viewers must become aware of a particular show by name. Second, they must be exposed to the actual content. In a broadcast-television era both steps could be achieved by the network: awareness through persistent on air promos, and exposure through strategic linear scheduling to ensure a good lead-in from an established show with a similar audience. In the digital era, however, word-of-mouth is crucial at both steps. First, good word of mouth is needed to cut through the noise and create even a base level of awareness and familiarity with the name. Second, the prospective viewer must either reach out for the content himself (in which case he had better be able to find it quickly and access it easily or he will be on to the next thing), or he must be introduced to it by a friend. The threshold of interest required to view *any* new programming is higher in a crowded marketplace where time is short, the stakes are fairly low (this is television choice, not life and death), and chance encounters are being reduced by technology.

The recommendation heuristic, whether in the form of trust in a friend or faith in the wisdom of crowds, has proven to be this generation’s most effective tool to combat the inevitable information overload of the digital era so far. The structural void created by the internet era’s skeptical, gatekeeper-less ethos has given way to new structures of evaluation, both formal and informal, that rely more heavily on public opinion and peer recommendation. The findings here suggest that this trend is likely to continue.
The response of media organizations to this consumer behavior so far has been mixed, depending largely on the age and worldview of the media company. At one end of the spectrum are the attempts by the marketing teams of broadcast networks to game the social system. This includes everything from the relatively harmless hashtags in the corner of the screen attempting to generate real-time social media buzz, to the more insidious purchasing of posts from influencers and other assorted “astroturfing” approaches intended to appear as spontaneous and authentic social approval. At the other end of the spectrum are the logical, if vaguely creepy, attempts by tech companies like Netflix and Amazon to demographically engineer a hit show based on mountains of personal data about prospective viewers’ viewing histories, habits, and general tastes. The desired result of this approach is that viewers will enjoy the program so much that they will talk about it and recommend it to their friends, creating an authentic social buzz among a target demographic that impacts the cultural conversation.

Of the two approaches, the latter seems to have been more effective, although we may never know for sure since Netflix and Amazon do not currently release any data about the viewership of their original shows. Press reports on the success of recent non-traditionally distributed shows like Netflix’s House of Cards (Carr, 2013) and Amazon’s Alpha House (Sharma, 2013) have begun to probe the possibilities of this approach. Given its early success, it seems to be only a matter of time until these demographic hit-making techniques become a standard industry practice.

Availability, the First Episode Hurdle, and the Social Feedback Loop

**Observed behavior.** Whether a show was specifically recommended by a friend
or more generally recommended by a swell of popular opinion, issues of access to the content in question arose throughout the interviews. Sometimes a lack of access was an obstacle to be overcome, sometimes a stated factor skipping or discontinuing viewership. Throughout the interview data, widespread availability and ease of access to the first episode was always an asset to the audience-seeking program, enabling trial and evaluation, frequently coinciding with word-of-mouth and eventual adoption.

**Structural implications.** The benefits of widespread availability, while on one level obvious, are compounding in nature when combined with the other dynamics discussed here so far. Availability promotes first-time viewership, which generates authentic word of mouth, which generates recommendations, which in turn generate more first-time viewership and so on until the show has achieved a critical mass of public attention. We have seen this happen several times in recent years, perhaps most notably with the Netflix original House of Cards, which seemed to sweep the nation by authentic word of mouth in a matter of weeks after its simultaneous 13-episode release of season one. But the effect isn’t limited to highly-talked-about Netflix originals. By creating widespread availability on the back catalogs of older but still-running shows, Netflix’s availability effect gives audiences a chance to catch up and catch on to series they may have otherwise skipped like ABC’s Scandal, and AMC’s Breaking Bad or Walking Dead, all of which added viewers the season after having catalogs of their previous seasons added to Netflix (Kafka, 2012).

This benefits the show, but the benefits to networks are questionable. Although a few shows grew their audiences following a release of the previous seasons on Netflix,
others, like the final season of *Mad Men*, did not see the so-called “Netflix bump” (Kafka, 2012). While the runaway success of *Breaking Bad* and *Scandal* on their broadcast networks in conjunction with previous season support from Netflix initially made a strong case for the availability of past seasons, no one can say for sure how much of the following season’s growth was related to Netflix availability. More importantly, Netflix and television networks are competing to be the primary point-of-contact with consumers, the best possible position for any distributor. As Netflix moves into more and more direct competition with television networks, the networks may want to take a lesson from Netflix’s perspective that availability is always an asset to audience building and create better on-demand platforms to make their shows available on platforms the networks can control and monetize. Distribution systems that are set up to leverage on-demand availability and word of mouth to create enthusiastic audiences will be more successful in this emerging media landscape. The importance of authentic word of mouth, already a significant factor, will continue to grow.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are important limitations to the conclusions we can safely draw from this modest exploratory study. Because the sample is small and unrepresentative of the general population of media consumers, it would not be appropriate to extend the findings here into the population at large. Keeping in mind those limitations, this paper has attempted to map and illuminate some of the structures of thought and internal processes that govern content selection in *this* group of individuals, and to describe as accurately as possible the world of entertainment content as it appears to them. Much
more work will be needed to establish this research area, beginning with a much larger scale survey that measures attitudes and perceptions about the media landscape comparatively across different age groups and levels of media consumption.
CONCLUSION

As the scarcity of outlets and video content that defined the pre-internet television era gives way to a new era defined by an abundance of outlets and an unprecedented variety of content, a new ecosystem for cultural production, distribution, and consumption is beginning to take shape. What that ecosystem looks like to the consumer, and what it will look like in the near future, is a timely question for exploration. Exploratory approaches are never neat, and rarely yield the kind of authoritative findings that tend to garner scholarly attention in journal articles and books. Accordingly, there are no such findings here. What this paper has done is take the first step toward a more nuanced understanding of the future forms that entertainment video will take by creating a detailed, descriptive picture of how today’s “television” landscape appears to the modern consumer and how they navigate it, in their own words.

This portrait of the present moment will be outdated the moment it is printed; the media ecosystem is simply evolving too quickly for publishing to keep up. The real value in this endeavor, then, has been to synthesize from this descriptive picture a theoretical understanding of the universal components of media choice and the structures that guide it. By beginning with the best theoretical models from the history of media choice scholarship, and by working through the interview transcripts with an eye toward the real world outcomes that the current disruption has produced, we are reaching for a theoretical understanding of media choice that transcends the present moment.

Informed by the history of radio and the theory of uses and gratifications, we are
able to glimpse a future in which linear, over-the-air television retains its place as a household appliance, valued for its convenience, familiarity, and ubiquity in the experience of being “at home”. Informed by the theories of opinion leadership, diffusion of innovations, and bounded rationality, we are able conceptualize the dynamics of our emerging social recommendation system that will dictate the hits, misses, and advertising spending for the next generation of entertainment video content. And by beginning with a deep understanding of the structural elements of distribution’s role in the selection process, we are able to better understand and interpret the interplay of dynamics like content availability, the first episode hurdle, and the social feedback loop.

To the modern media executives who have skimmed to the end looking for a few simple takeaways from this journey inside the mind of the millennial media consumer, the summary, in imperative form, is as follows: 1) Make your content as widely available as your cost structure and business model will permit; it is your best hope of leveraging the social dynamics that drive hits in today’s market in your favor. Not having seen the first episode is the single biggest hurdle to new fans adopting any given show. If nothing else, make sure your first episode is readily available online and that viewers can find it quickly with a simple search by the show’s name. This simple search by name technique is the primary way people will find your show and direct others to it. 2) Invest in outstanding content, less often if need be. Viewers are getting savvier about their time and won’t hesitate to drop a show that they feel is wasting theirs. The 26-episode season that plods along, anchoring every Thursday night from September to April may not be able to sustain interest in an on-demand, word-of-mouth, recommendation-driven world.
But even a short season of eight high-quality episodes is likely to garner at least a small following that, if enthusiastic and influential enough in their interpersonal networks, will turn others on to the show over time. If the catalog is available and the launch of the next season drums up enough buzz, the shorter season will be more appealing to viewers looking to catch up before the new season launch. Finally, for those working in the live-to-air broadcast model, 3) Use the structural advantages of time and place anchoring to give people a reason to flip on the television around the house. Passive viewing habits like breakfast with the news or dinner with a favorite sitcom are already in place, but the content delivered in these time-anchored interstitials must rise in quality and salience if it is to become more than “background noise” to a new generation of more discerning television consumers.
I. Profile of Respondent

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Major:
Career:
Country:
Region:
Urban/suburban/rural:
Level of media consumption (growing up):
Level of media consumption (current):
Estimated Daily:
Estimated Weekly:

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

How do you think about TV? What role does entertainment content play in your life?
What’s a typical day like in your video entertainment content life? How did you watch TV and movies growing up? Do you currently have access to any subscription entertainment services? Do you have any appointment viewing shows that you watch live or right when they air? Do you record shows? Do you set aside particular times to catch up on recorded TV? Do you have a list of shows that you keep up with? Has how you watch TV changed much in the past few years? How?
III. Current Media Diet

What shows are you currently watching? What shows do you watch or keep up with right now (whether live, recorded, streaming, or on DVD)? What are favorites? Which shows have gotten your attention or made an impression on you over the past year or so?

IV. Discovery

How did the shows you’ve just named first catch your eye? What would you say caused you to watch them? I’m going to prompt you from my notes and ask you how each one first came into your awareness and how you came to watch it for the first time.

V. Case Study of Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)

What is the last new you picked up and kept watching? How did you hear about it? Did you have to seek it out? Did you come on in the middle or start at the beginning? What was it about the show that grabbed you and made you want to start watching? What was it that made you want to keep watching?

VI. Case Study of Last New Show (Discontinued/Uncertain)

Alternatively, what was the last new show that you made an effort to watch but that you didn’t continue watching, or that you’re uncertain about continuing to watch?
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Editor’s Note: The interview transcripts have been edited for anonymity and readability.

For anonymity: Every effort has been made to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the interview participants. Out of scope references to the respondent’s personal life, especially those that could pose a threat to anonymity, have been removed without altering the meaning of the statements made.

For readability: Full transcripts tend to be tedious to read through because questions from the interviewer occupy every other line without contributing much to the goal of understanding the interviewee’s perspective and voice. I have edited these lines out of the transcripts and replaced them with a “...” on its own line to improve readability. In most cases the question is ascertainable from the response and/or a working familiarity with the questionnaire.

The interviews are organized within this appendix as follows:

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Interview #2. Janice................................. p. 91
Interview #3. June.................................... p. 96
Interview #4. Haley................................. p. 100
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Interview #11. Walter............................... p. 139
Interview #12. Alexa................................ p. 144
Interview #13. Raymond........................... p. 150
Interview #14. Yuri................................. p. 154
Interview #1. Cynthia

I. Profile of Respondent
22
Female
PR
China
Beijing area
Urban
High media consumption growing up
High media consumption today
4+ hours per day / 20-25 per week
Non-native English speaker raised on Chinese media

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

... I think it's, um, more cool than the computer for me. Because computer you have research some stuff for yourself but the TV you can directly present some stuff to you.

... TV Screen

... Hmm, I think so. Yes, cable.

... Yeah.

... When I get up. I like the noise and I have it on while I'm washing my face and I like to open the TV... And also when I'm taking exercise I like to watch TV show.

... Living room and also the bedroom.

... The living room TV.

... CNN.

... Yeah.

... You mean, when I will watch TV again after class?

... When I'm back home. I will open the TV. And maybe do something else.

... Yeah. Just to do two things at the same time, and when there is some interesting content I will watch TV, but when it's boring I will continue to do my own work.

... I think it's most times, TV on in the background.
... *Top Gear*. I like watching it.

... Depends on the channel. Sometimes they put on the whole season, I can watch it a whole day.

... On my TV it's 36... but I can't remember the name of it.

... I just open the guide of the TV and search some interesting show.

... Before I came to America I already watched *Top Gear* in China. You can watch it on TV in China but most times I watched it on computer.

III. Current/Recent Content Choices

... I think mostly it is news. And sometimes maybe the Fox channel to watch some entertainment shows.

... I don't record, no.

... Except *Top Gear* I often follow some drama.

... Such as, like, *The Big Bang Theory*, *House of Cards*...

... Yeah, I keep up with.

... *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*... Sometimes I open the channel can always find this one so I just watch it. But obviously it's like, on in the background.

... It depends on the content. If it's interesting I will just watch it very... concentrate, but if not interesting I just put it on in the background.

... Yeah, in the background.

... Sit down to watch it.

... Yeah, because the topic is more interesting to me.

... Not very many, none that I can think of. Maybe that guy, Jimmy... the talk show.

... Yes. Jimmy Kimmel.

... But I think the show cannot draw my full attention. Because they always talk lots of things but it's not very useful.
...  
*Sex and the City*  
...  
Depends on which season, if I've seen it before.  
...  
Film?  
...  
Depends on the film. If it's interesting and I've never seen it before I will sit down to watch it.  
...  
The show *Chinese Idol*. Also the *British Idol*.  
...  
Dancing show... I think it is very interesting, I watch it. I forgot the name of it.  
...  
American dancing show.  
*[Dancing with the Stars]*  
...  
And also I like to watch some record film, just to show some history and some famous place, just like it is, not the drama, because they tell the truth...  
...  
Yeah, like *National Geographic*, documentary  

**IV. Discovery**  
...  
*Top Gear*, first time is from magazine. And the same with *National Geographic*.  
...  
There is some page with the content of this show, so when I find it on TV I will watch it.  
...  
*[Big Bang Theory]*  
...  
I find it from the Chinese website *Youku*.  
...  
This is the most famous Chinese video website, just like *YouTube* in America and they will introduce different content of categories, and this is on the top of the "*American Dramas*" and also a friend, around me, introduce me to watch this show so when I found it on TV I watched it.  
...  
I think it's three years ago.  
...  
Yes, on *Youku*.  
...  
After I found it, I saw on the social media some of my friends just shared their experience of watching this show so I decided to click on it.
[House of Cards]
... 
First I heard it from my friend. My friend told my boyfriend that this is very interesting, and he told me because he know I'm interested in politics and I will be one who will tell this is very good... the first season is watching in China but the second is here. 
... 
Online. 
... 
Legal streaming, I think. 
... 
Because I... for this one I watched it from the website Sohu, SohuTV China, they are the only one that is official website that can show this in China. 
... 
I don't think so, just this one show, this is the only place to watch House of Cards but not much other shows. 
... 
I don't know, no subscription, free I think. 
... 
[Keeping Up With the Kardashians]
... 
Before I come to America I already know this show, but this show is just, I open the guide of TV and find it and then just watch it, and after I watch one time, and next time I find it I, "Oh, I will continue to watch it," but maybe it is just on in the background. 
... 
[Jimmy Kimmel]
... 
It is first time I think in a cab... In cab they always show some talk show in America, and when I find it on my own TV I just watch it. 

V. Last New Show (Picked up/Continued)
... 
[House of Cards]
... 
The friend of my boyfriend, and then my boyfriend told me about it. 
... 
Just somebody told me, "it's very good, and I think you must be interested in it," because it is about White House most interesting to me, so you should watch it. So then I just search it directly and watch it. 
... 
I heard about it while I was in the U.S., but most of the season 1 I watched while on holiday back in China. 
... 
Google. 
...
American Google, in China we use Baidu.

... Mmm, this is not, sometimes Google you know has some conflict with the Chinese government, it's not very... working well.

... Actually we typed it into search in Chinese letters. Translate "House of Cards" in Chinese letters and type in search to American Google. Because it will search Chinese websites.

... Yes, on Sohutv. Even though we are in Boston.

... First episode. I finished all of season one quickly, I searched other similar topics maybe to find some other interesting things like *House of Cards* but no other ones that I watched as much.

... Three days. I... on the airplane so I can't finish it as soon as possible, but watched in straight through.

... Season 2 I watched in America, and, from TV. My TV company is the company that can show the *House of Cards* at night, I can't remember the name of it... 

... Season 2 is directly available posted all at once so you can watch the whole thing...

... Yes, Netflix.

... Because I think they are not, tell you something, they just show you something. Lots of drama, although they are acting the scenes, they actually just tell you something, and they think we are stupid, we cannot think for ourselves, I really don't like that. And also, because this is the topic I'm interested in, so it's not very hard to hook me into this drama.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... *

[Rich Kids of Beverly Hills]*

... When I have brunch with my friends and they told me, "have you seen..." the name of this show, and I have the impression, because I have looked at the guide of TV, one time I have seen the name of it, so I have some memory of it, so next time I find it again on my TV so I watch it and it's not very interesting to me.

... Before I really watched it I have a memory of this name, and my friend also talked with me about this show, so the two memories drive me to really watch it this one time.

... Yeah because this is not meaningful, and very boring.

... They are at the same level, housewives who have nothing to do. And they just maybe like
me like to use it as a background. At nighttime, sometimes there's not many shows that are more interesting, so they maybe just use them to be the background.

... 
Maybe just on in the background. Sometimes I use them in the background because I want to practice my English listening... to create an English environment in my home.

... 
Thank you.

... 
[End of Interview #1]
Interview #2. Janice

I. Profile of Respondent
20
Female
Communication Studies
USA
Colorado/Montana area
Rural
Moderate media consumption growing up
Moderate media consumption today
1/2 hour a day or about 3-4 hours per week
Native English speaker raised on American media

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
... I don't know, not that big of a role, but it's entertaining, so... I don't know
... I don't know, usually I'll watch like CNN in the morning for like 20 minutes while I'm making breakfast or something, and then usually I don't really do anything else unless it's like the weekend, and then I'll watch a movie or something.
... Um, I mean if I'm watching like a current series that's on TV I'll watch that, but otherwise not much.
... I have night classes, I don't know, during the school year I watch more at night.
... Yes.
... My brother.
... Satellite.
... Yeah, I mean, like, even when I came to college I didn't like get a TV for my dorm room. I think I probably watch more on my computer than on an actual TV.
... Yeah.
... Netflix.
... And cable I guess.
... I think it's Comcast.
...
Not really live, not on TV.
...
No.
...
Yeah.
...
Usually like illegal streams, or one of my friends sometimes lets me use her HBOGo.
...
I kinda just Google it and see what shows up.
...
Yeah I think so. I mean after I started here I started to think more about how shows are actually made. I feel like before I used to just digest TV and not really think about what I was watching whereas now I think about like the ads that are playing during the show, or if there's like product placement in the show, things like that.

III. Current/Recent Content Choices
...
*Game of Thrones*. That's my number one. *Orange is the New Black*. I started watching *Arrested Development*. That's about it really.
...
I turn on CNN in the morning but I guess I'm not like actively watching it.
...
Oh and *House of Cards*. That's the other one.
...
I think so, those are all the ones I've really followed.
...
I watch *Sex and the City* whenever it's on.
...
*Friends*, reruns, *Law and Order*.

IV. Discovery
...
*[Game of Thrones]*
One of my friends told me to start watching it
...
She just told me about it
...
Yeah, she's a good friend. She's the one who's HBO Go password I started using
...
*[Orange is the New Black]*
I just started watching that this year. I think I just like saw it on Netflix and everyone had been talking about it... and then I knew that the next season was coming out and everyone was kind of freaking out about it because it just came out this summer and so I just started watching it and I really liked it.
... I don't know, I mean, like a lot of people I was in classes with and stuff would be like, "Oh this happened in that show," or if we were talking about something in class they'd be like relating things to *Orange is the New Black* so I was like "oh, I want to know what that is" or, I don't know. Like in my women's studies class I was taking they talked about the show a lot and I never knew what anyone was talking about so...

... I think it was mostly in person, because of my classes.

... [*Arrested Development*]
I just started watching that like two weeks ago. And it was just on Netflix, no one told me it was good I just kind of watched it.

... It was like, "recommended" or whatever. I was like "why not?"

... [*CNN*]
I think it's just because when I grew up my mom always did that, like when she made breakfast. It was like before school every day, CNN was on. Just a habit.

... Definitely my mom.

... [*House of Cards*]
I heard about it from a family friend. Her entire family was watching it and they kind of tried to get everyone in our family to start watching it and I was the only one who really did.

... They're actually from D.C. It was in person, they were visiting us, staying with us.

... Yeah it's so good.

... I knew it was on Netflix so I didn't really have to like, find it, I guess I kind of just trusted their recommendation.

... I really liked it from the start. With that show I actually really liked the intro, and usually I hate the intros of shows, so I feel like right when it came on I was like "Yup, I like this show."

... Whereas like with other shows, I hate the *Orange is the New Black* intro and I skip over it like every time, I don't like it.

... [*Sex and the City*]
I don't know, probably just because I'm a girl and... like want to live in New York...

... I probably heard about it when I was like way younger... I bet my mom was probably
watching it at some point when I was younger, because I've watched that show like forever, like probably when I was way too young to watch it...

... [Friends]
I actually started watching it like freshmen year of college, I had never watched it before then. And it's just because our friends that lived on the same floor as us, we'd always like go in there and watch TV and they always had it on.

... [Law and Order]
I started watching in like high school I think.

... Yeah. I've seen most of the episodes so I can just throw it on and I don't really have to pay attention, it's easy.

... [New show browsing]
I was looking for something new when I started Arrested Development. I was bored, browsing Netflix.

... Kind of a while. I just started watching like two or three weeks ago and I'm only on the 5th episode, but I'm like starting to like it now.

V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued Watching)

... [Game of Thrones]
... I really liked it. After the first episode.

... Probably like two years ago, a year and a half.

... I think like season 3 started and I started watching season 1. So they were only a couple episodes into season 3.

... Yeah, probably. I saw it on Facebook all the time and stuff too.

... I don't remember. I think, I started watching it over one of my spring breaks. A family friend. And they had HBO and I was just sitting around the entire break so I started watching it then. And that's when I think I was like, actually hooked on the show.

... I don't know, I just think it's like a really well done show. I kind of, at least, I like how there's all these different stories going on, and it was like kind of confusing at first, but I like that it actually kind of made you pay attention, and it wasn't like easy to follow.

... I think that's it. I didn't really like any of the characters at first, which was weird for me, but then I started to like them at like the end of the season.
My friend from college, then I was staying with our family friends over spring break and that's when I had the chance to watch it. She was like "Oh, you're gonna have time over your break, you should watch it!" and then I did.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... [Arrested Development]

... I have a friend who's in film and TV and I've heard her talking about it before, so I knew that like some people liked it, and her and I usually have the same taste in things, and so I think she probably recommended it to me once, and so like two weeks ago we had a little break in between summer one and summer two, and I had nothing to do, so I went on Netflix, and it was like recommended, and so I started watching it, and I think I only watched one the first day. Then it was like, if I got home late I'd watch one, but I think I'm only on like the fifth episode now. I think it's like, I didn't really like it at first, I didn't really think it was funny, I didn't think the jokes they had were funny... and then now that I'm watching it more it's getting better.

... I think it was just like I started to care about what happened to the characters, I wanted to know what was going to happen. Like if the daughter was going to get out of prison or like... I don't know. So then I was like, ok well I need to at least like finish the season and see if I like it. That's how I felt at first. I don't know. I've liked tried to start other shows and I'll just stop after one episode if I don't like them at all.

... I tried to watch Parks and Rec and I didn't like it.

... Yeah, my freshman year roommate was kind of obsessed with the show, so I had heard all of the episodes, because she wouldn't use headphones, and it was driving me crazy... so I thought, “I might as well like see what's going on,” and watch the show... I think it was like one or two episodes in and I was just like, “I don't know about this…”

... [End of Interview #2]
Interview #3: June

I. Profile of Respondent

...  
20  
Female  
PR  
China  
Beijing area  
Urban  
High media consumption growing up  
High media consumption today  
5 hours per day / 35 hours per week  
Non-native English speaker raised on Chinese media

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

...  
I think they are very important for me and for different purposes. The first one I will say is entertainment because I watch video content mostly for entertainment and I watch a lot of episodes in a TV series mostly on my laptop. And the other purpose is to study. There are a lot of videos on YouTube and even in the movies could help me on my classes, for example in my non-profit class my professor assigned multiple videos on YouTube. It introduced some concepts learned in our class and it helped me understand what I learned in class.

...  
During this summer I have summer classes, so normally I wake up around 8, in the summertime later, and I go to school, and I have my classes, and normally I'll watch TV in the evening, after 8 o'clock. Sometimes I watch videos for 5 or more than 5 hours... the latest I ever watched was until 4 o'clock in the next morning.

...  
Yes, during the summer normally until after 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock. But during the semester I would go to bed before 12 o'clock.

...  
No, it's pretty different now. When I was a child I didn't have access to the internet, even before junior high school. I had my first cellphone during junior high school but it was not a smartphone so I didn't have internet access. When I was in senior high school I had my first laptop and I lived at a school, board, boarding school, and the school had Wi-Fi and from then on I had internet access and I started to watch videos including movies and TV shows on my laptop.

...  
Now I can depend on internet and my laptop very much, either use it for my study or for entertainment.

...  
On my laptop. I don't have a TV.
... I have specific shows I prefer. And for the TV series they are mostly American TV series such as *House of Cards* and *24* and for the entertainment I watch a lot of the Chinese TV shows. And those are what I watch pretty regularly because it is uploaded to the specific websites regularly.

... Record? No.

... I think I have a routine to watch the TV series because there is a Chinese website that has all those TV shows I like--

... Sohu

... It's pretty convenient. It tells you from Monday to Sunday and which TV shows will be on so I don't need to remember it. When I go to the website I will see what's on. And it's free.

... I normally watch American TV shows on Sohu because it's free. I know a lot of Americans watch TV shows on Netflix, but it's not free.

... No, I don't have a TV and I subscribed to Netflix once because one TV show I like was blocked on that website.

... I think *Scandal* and then I went to Netflix to see the rest of the episodes. I think there is a one-month trial and that's when I watched it but I did not continue subscription.

... I don't watch episodes on YouTube because I couldn't find them for full episodes. But the Daily Show is on YouTube so I can watch it there.

**III. Current/Recent Shows**

... 24

... For me, all the American TV shows are connected with Sohu, not with American networks. I'm not sure if it's the only platform for American TV shows but I think it is really popular because when I watch every episode there is a number of the views in the right corner of the video and there are a lot.

... *Scandal, Big Bang Theory*

... *Homeland, The Black List, Criminal Minds, Person of Interest*
IV. Discovery

On Sohu. All on Sohu. When the summer began I looked through Sohu to see if there was any TV shows that I liked and there were a lot but I was only interested in 24 so I started to watch it.

Also for 24, if a TV show is so popular there will be a directory on the video homepage. And I remember I first found 24 because it's pretty obvious on the homepage, so I clicked into it and I found it interesting so I started to watch it again and again. I remember there is always a directory for popular TV shows on the homepage.

There are some other factors and the first one would be friends. Sometimes I ask my friends to recommend some TV shows to me because I really didn't know what to watch, and other times I use social media a lot, Chinese social media and sometimes I will watch a TV show because of a post. For example I started to watch Hotel King which is a Korean TV show because a very famous person on Chinese social media said that the costumes and the clothing in that TV show is very fashionable.

Hotel King

I don't know their English names.

I could try to translate their names into English, but it might not be precise.

Successors (Korea) ... Love Decade (Chinese)

Normally I would have a feeling that I would be interested in this TV show after one episode. I love them because they are somewhat romantic and very realistic, and, kind of, embodiment of life, real life.

For Love Decade there are a lot of promotions on the social media, because I use social media a lot I follow their social media accounts. For the Korea TV episodes they were normally recommended by my friends, but some of them were from when I was looking through Sohu and I just clicked on it and watched it.

V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)

Successors the Korean TV show. It was recommended by my friends, and because I love to watch Korean TV shows, even before they recommended that, and so one of my friends recommended this TV show for me and I started to watch it.

On Sohu
The first episode. 
I liked it. The first episode is always crucial to me to decide if I continue to watch. 
The first is the characters. They are very handsome and very tall. And after, when I continue watching the first episode the story is very romantic and it's the type I like. 
If I start a show I will finish it. All. I watch every episode with no exceptions. 
Only one season, but I couldn't remember how many episodes. 
No, it's over. I think that's the difference between American TV shows and Chinese and Korean TV shows. Normally they don't have too many seasons, they usually only have one with a lot of episodes. For example normally a Chinese TV show has more than 30 for sure. But for American TV shows I think one TV show only has mostly 20 per season... Yes, but more seasons.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/U ndecided)

I couldn't remember the names of the shows, but I'm pretty sure there were those shows where when I watched the first episode I didn't like them. I think mostly it's because when I watched for the first five minutes I thought the characters didn't act so well so I stopped immediately and I didn't go back to it.

For this reason I couldn't recall the names of the TV shows. But for one, it's an American TV show, my friends recommend it a lot and I saw someone posting about it on social media but I never watched it because of the name. I didn't watch it at all.

I don't like the name. I know it in Chinese but I don't know its English name.

Devious Maids. Or maybe it is because of the translation. I didn't pay attention to the English name until now. I only looked at the Chinese name and I didn't like it.

I think my friends and a lot of Chinese like watching American TV shows because there is something in American TV shows that Chinese TV shows don't have.

I think the depth. For the politics, I couldn't find one TV show which tells about politics in China, I think it's not possible. And I think for the American TV show, when they started to make the TV show I could feel they are very serious and very careful. Careful to the plot development. For the Chinese TV shows they don't give me that thing.

[End of Interview #3]
Interview #4. Haley

I. Profile of Respondent
21
Female
Psychology and Advertising
U.S.A.
Washington D.C.
Suburban
Very low media consumption growing up
Low media consumer today
1.5 hours per day / 5-7 hours per week
Native English speaker raised on American media

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
...
I think it plays a purely like de-stressing role, just entertainment, or information seeking, like I'll watch the news.
...
Entertainment and information, but I think I have to weed out a lot of noise to get to the proper information.
...
As media has grown we've been able to cater to more specific audiences, so we have a lot more, like, cartoonish news anchors and show hosts, and I don't like that. So I try to seek out, just, like the news.
...
I don't like how little censorship there is in TV shows today. So I inadvertently end up watching a lot of reality TV, and I also like competitions so I'll watch things like Project Runway
...
I think on a lot of TV shows, like broadcast TV shows, there’s just a lot of inappropriate content and nudity and this and that and you can't really show anything like that on reality TV, so if I'm just looking for entertainment I'll watch reality shows.
...
But there's no nudity, there's no drugs... I'm Indian so I'm more conservative when it comes to things like that. In Indian movies they don't even like kiss. And now on TV like every night there's sex.
...
No, I think people can do whatever they want I just don't want to see it.
...
We had a very basic cable plan. I didn't have Cartoon Network or Nickelodeon, but I had like PBS and the WB.
...
I live in Boston, on my own.
... Yeah, I have Comcast, they make it so that it's either all or nothing so I have all the channels now.
... Yeah, it includes HBO.
... My family shares a Netflix account.
... There are shows that come on in the fall that I keep up with, but over the summer I'll just kind of watch repeats of stuff or random episodes of things. I watch a lot more TV in the fall.
... I'll listen for the buzz, and I end up watching things after, sort of on demand or on Netflix just for timing reasons.
... I probably won't watch something new unless it's, like, highly recommended.
... I would say social media, word of mouth, I have a few friends who watch a lot of TV and they're very interested in watching the first episode of the new show and they'll sometimes tell me about things.
... My brother watches a lot of TV and I always ask him what he thinks about certain shows.
... No, never record shows.
...
*Saturday Night Live.* That show I like to see like when it happens, live.
...
I used to watch a lot more TV, for relaxation purposes, and now it's like, find other ways to relax, don't have as much time to watch TV, and I don't like what's on TV.
... Oh yeah. Lifestyle. I came into college not knowing what I wanted to study, and now I have two majors and a minor and I'm trying to finish in four years so, yeah.

III. Current/Recent Shows
...
There's nothing that's like, on right now that I watch, everything I watch is on in the fall. Like *New Girl* is on in the fall.
...
*New Girl, The Mindy Project, Family Guy, South Park,* and then there are a few shows that I really liked that got cancelled but if there's ever a rerun on I'll watch it.
...
*Happy Endings.*
...
I just hope we have like an *Arrested Development* situation where people all of the
sudden discover it and love it and they bring it back.
...
So good.
...
I'll watch Project Runway, but if I miss an episode I won't like go back and watch it.
...
I always turn on the news around like 6 or 7.
...
I think I have NBC on all the time. MSNBC.
...
I try to watch CNN but my patience with CNN is pretty much gone.
...
I'll keep it on for background noise, if I really want like, information I'll go online and read stuff online.
...
I feel like every time I turn my TV on I end up watching South Park, because I know it's going to be good.
...
Yeah, live. On Comedy Central on TV. I also watch The Daily Show a lot.
...
I couldn't even tell you what network some of those shows were on. I didn't even like realize that New Girl was on Fox, I don't think it's good to look at things with labels though, because I think the connotation can sort of filter...

IV. Discovery
...
[New Girl]
When it started. When it first came out. I liked the cast. I was watching Happy Endings at that point, because it was still on, and there was a character on New Girl who left to be on Happy Endings, and then he came back when Happy Endings ended.
...
Media buzz. Some TV. Friends.
...
[The Mindy Project]
I really like her as a comedian, and I had read her book, and with the buzz of the book came the buzz that she was getting this TV show.
...
Probably the promotions on TV too.
...
[Family Guy]
I have an older brother.
...
[South Park]
Same thing.
[Happy Endings]
I cannot remember how I found that show, I don't know what network it was on but I randomly saw a preview for it when I was watching Scrubs or something like that where the people who figure out what commercials to put in probably think like "Ok, people who like Scrubs will probably like this show" and I remember the name Happy Endings standing out to me because I thought it was really surprising. I don't remember exactly how I started watching it...

Yeah I don't think anyone really recommended it to me.

I think they tried to start it over the summer or something and it just never really caught on.

[Project Runway]
I think I started watching that show when there was nothing else to watch. Like over the summer. I did not watch it from the beginning. I couldn't tell you what the first couple seasons were about. But I watch like repeats over the summer, they kept putting promotions for when the real season would be starting and then I'd watch that.

[MSNBC]
I think from my parents.

[The Daily Show]
My dad loves that show. My dad and my brother record that show and watch it every night. At my house there's always a copy of The Week on the coffee table so they like just like really satirical news.

V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)
[New Girl]

I feel like when 500 Days of Summer came out Zooey Deschanel and Joseph Gordon Levitt both just sort of took off as actors. The media was sort of following both of them for a while and they both started getting more projects. And I really liked that movie so I would follow Zooey Deschanel and she would have like a guest appearance on Saturday Night Live, and probably on other shows after 500 Days of Summer, and I started hearing buzz about this new show, New Girl, and I watched sneak peeks live on TV, and so I watched the show and I actually really liked it. And I like it a little less now that it's gotten like wildly popular and a lot of other people are watching it, and I do think the script has changed, that it's sort of fallen into a mold and headed downhill, and I feel like the writers are sort of freaking out about that, but I'll keep watching it for sure.

I really like when during a show, during the commercials, they'll be like, "here's a one-minute sneak peek," into the season premiere of New Girl, and I feel like I definitely saw
a clip of that show before I actually sat down and watched it.

... I was probably watching *How I Met Your Mother*.

... Ok yeah, reruns of *How I Met Your Mother*, that's probably how I ended up seeing the promos for *New Girl* initially.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

*[The Office]*

... I think when *The Office* was in like its third or fourth season is when it really started to get popular and I think I just heard a lot of buzz through word of mouth. And my brother watched it from the beginning, and whenever I would walk through and see him watching it I just didn't really get it, it didn't make me laugh. It does not make me laugh out loud, like I'll sit and I'll watch it but I'll kind of be sitting there the whole time. So I just never really bothered to actually watch an episode. Then a lot more people started watching it and telling me like, "no it's gotten a lot better now, it's changing, I think it's really funny, Steve Carrell is so funny," and I think *The Office* was getting buzz for like the Emmy's and things like that, winning all these awards, so I thought I would try watching it, and I think I genuinely sat down and watched like two whole seasons of it. And it's not... bad, I don't dislike it, I just don't LIKE it, it does not make me laugh out loud.

... I think like season 5 and 6. The last two. But I didn't really ever get into it.

... So then I tried to watch the first season thinking I was missing something but I really didn't like that either.

... When the show was done. I was so mad about watching the last season.

... [End of Interview #4]
Interview #5. Shelley

I. Profile of Respondent

... 
21 
Female 
Public Relations 
U.S.A. 
Northeast 
Suburban/rural 
High media consumption growing up 
High media consumer today 
3 hours per day / 20 hours per week 
Native English speaker raised on American media 

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

... 
I mean, I think it plays a pretty big role in my life, it tells me information, like whether I'm watching the news or celebrity news or something, but it's also just entertainment. I'm not one to just pick up a book and read so I just turn on the TV because it's easier and there's always something on that I'll watch. It's very convenient, that's what it is. 
... 
Both on a laptop and on a TV 
... 
Netflix on my computer, when I'm just turning something on it's the TV. 
... 
Yeah I'm living at home for the summer but when I'm here I don't have a cable box. 
... 
Yeah, we had cable growing up. 
... 
At home my cable box has a DVR on it, so I'll record them and watch them on my TV but if I miss them at school then I just watch them on my computer. 
... 
If it's like a site that I know, like there are shows on ABC that I watch where I know they're on the website, but for other shows that aren't on official sites I'll go to ProjectFreeTV 
... 
Yeah, if it's not like the next episode is on the ABC or CW website then I'll watch it on ProjectFreeTV 
... 
Yeah I mean they have a lot of shows but sometimes the links don't work and if it doesn't work I'm not even going to try to watch it. 
... 
Usually the shows that I'm currently watching I'll watch on there. And if there's no show
that I know that's on there I'll just find something on Netflix.

... During the school year, I would, if I was very consumed with a show on Netflix, every
time I went back to my room I would try to watch an episode. But now, more so in the
summer, I don't really watch that much TV, it's more just at night. I don't usually watch
during the day as much.

... Yeah. *The Bachelorette*. Usually if it's on and I'm not doing anything, I'll watch it.

... Yeah, because if people are talking about it on Twitter I can like keep up. Whereas if I'm
not watching it and I go on Twitter, then I see a spoiler.

... Yeah, Twitter.

... Usually I'll like record it so like, I'll record the Bachelorette on Monday but usually the
next day, or whenever I have free time, I'll like sit down and watch it. I try to catch up on
it within like a couple days after it airs, before the next episode. But I don't have a
specific day that I sit down to watch.

... Yeah, I used to watch TV like all the time, or just like have it on a lot, and I mean I still
kind of do that, but more so I'll put the TV on, if there's like a game on that I'm interested
in, but I'll also like not pay attention to it and just kind of have it on. That's kind of how I
am now. When it comes to TV. Unless I like specifically want to watch it.

... Yeah, I used to more like sit down and watch, like that was all I was doing. Now I'm like
multitasking.

III. Current/Recent Content

... Right now I'm really just invested in *The Bachelorette*. That's pretty much the only one I
watch like consistently every night. Because there's not that much on right now. Before I
came home for the summer I was watching *The Office*, which is like really old, but I don't
have enough time to like invest in that now.

... That was like in the spring, right before I left school I think.

... I watched *Parks and Rec*. I caught up to it within the school year and then I started
watching it like on TV. I watched the whole series of *One Tree Hill* on Netflix. I watched
*New Girl*, partially on Netflix and then on TV... Well there was obviously like another
*Bachelor* that happened in the winter.

... I think I like *The Bachelorette* better. Less drama. Among the guys I mean. Plus I didn't
like the guy, the bachelor.

...
I also watched *Dancing with the Stars*. That was live. I actually watched that consistently every week. Other than that I don't really know what else I watched.

... 

Oh, *How I Met Your Mother*, that was a show I also watched.

... 

I watched Seasons 1 through 6 freshmen year of college, then the last, like, three seasons I watched live.

... 

During the year I have [the university’s] cable, I have Charter cable at home. Netflix. I don't use any other services.

IV. Discovery

... 

Well if I'm currently in like a Netflix binge watching something I'll just watch the next episode of that. But if not, I will go on my TV, and I like to watch HGTV and TLC, so I'll like go to those channels and see if there's anything on there I want to watch. And if something’s on that I like then I'll just watch it. And if not then I'll find something else to watch.

... 

If I'm like, going on TV and it's like a weird time I'd run the risk of like coming into a show that's already started and I don't want to watch like halfway of the show, so then I'd just go on Netflix.

... 

Usually if I'm going on Netflix I like have something in mind that I want to watch, whereas if I'm just looking on TV I have no idea what's going to be on so I'm open to whatever. Or I look at the TV Guide first, and if I don't see anything I want to watch then I just don't watch TV.

... 

*[The Bachelorette]*

... 

So I started watching that last summer because everyone was like tweeting about it, and I had never watched it, so I was like "eh I should probably get into this," because everyone else was talking about it, and it looked awesome, so that's how I got into that. Um, I don't know, it's kind of like, how can someone fall in love on TV. More so it's like an interesting concept to me and I had to see if worked or not.

... 

No, and it's just kind of funny too.

... 

*[The Office]*

... 

Well my boyfriend used to watch *The Office* and I actually used his Netflix account, and him and brother used to just watch it and it would always be in like the top 10, and I was like, "well, I'm not really watching anything else right now, so I should probably just watch this," and that's kind of like how I got into that.
I was just like, "I think I'm just going to watch this." I didn't really like it for a little while. I started watching it, and I was like, "Eww, I don't really like this," but then I was like,"alright I'll give you a try," and then I was like "ok this is fine."

No I'm only on season 4 right now. That's where I stopped.

Yeah I'll continue eventually when I have more time. Probably when I go back to school. I have a class and stuff and I also have a job so I've been really busy lately.

[\textit{Parks and Recreation}]  
That was also kind of a "Oh it's on the top ten of Netflix"... All of the shows on Netflix were because of the top ten on Netflix list.

It's like my boyfriend's and his brother's account and so the shows that they watch there's like shows that they think you would like based on what you've watched.

It gives you like, popular, and then it'll usually give you recently watched and recommended based on what you watched. Because you watched this... here's some other things.

[\textit{One Tree Hill}]  
My friend used to watch that and she like loved it so I figured I'd watch it as well.

Because it was over in like 2012 so I saw it on Netflix and I just wanted to watch it.

[\textit{The Bachelor}]  
Similar to \textit{The Bachelorette}, actually I got into it because I got into the Bachelorette.

[\textit{Dancing with the Stars}]  
I forget how I got into that. I guess I liked one of the people on it. Like Shawn Johnson was on it. She's a gymnast. They like announce the roster on like ABC or Good Morning America or something every year so you hear about it.

[\textit{How I Met Your Mother}]  
That was my boyfriend. Through his Netflix.

\textbf{V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Completed)}  
[\textit{Gossip Girl}]  
I remember when \textit{Gossip Girl} came out that was when I was in like high school, but then I came back to it in college. I had read all the books so I was super excited for the series to come out. So I watched like the first couple episodes and then I, like, just didn't like it for some reason, this isn't good, it doesn't relate to the books. But then I found it on
Netflix, sophomore year of college, and then we watched all of it. So I didn't like it at first, but then when I went back to it I, like, liked it. And then I finally caught up to it on TV and I watched the rest.

... Because the last season of Gossip Girl was going to be airing that year and I heard about it and I was like, "I probably should watch this," I don't know, and then I found it on Netflix and I was like, "OK, let's just do this." I don't even remember how I found it but I do remember that it was around when the last season was airing.

... I don't know if I would have gone out and bought it if it wasn't on Netflix, probably not.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)
[The Mindy Project]

... I started watching The Mindy Project but I didn't get very far, because it's really hard to find online, and I wasn't caught up to the season, and I don't really know if I like it or not, so I just kind of abandoned it.

... That I've had to watch on ProjectFreeTV, which was also hard because a lot of the links didn't work, and then I couldn't watch it on the channel, like Fox's website, because I'm way to far behind. So it's like, whatever, I'm just not even going to watch this.

... [End of Interview #5]
Interview #6. Michelle

I. Profile of Respondent
20
Female
Business (Marketing)
Canada
Toronto
Suburban
Low media consumer growing up
Medium-high media consumer currently
1-2 hours per day. 7-14 hours per week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
...
It's just like a break, like I just watch it to procrastinate.
...
I really like Grey's Anatomy.
...
Scandal too, big Shonda Rhimes fan. But yeah, otherwise I'm not really heavily invested in a lot of shows.
...
Normally I watch it in the evening, like after dinner, when I should be doing homework or laundry, something else I should be doing. Otherwise I'm in class or at work or something.
...
I live off campus.
...
No, none of the above. There's this site that I use, ProjectFreeTV.
...
The apartment I'm subletting now has cable so sometimes I'll watch it there. HGTV sometimes just to pass the time.
...
Food Network.
...
I'll sit down and watch.
...
I just turn on whatever's on at that time.
...
Ideally I would get to watch the Tour de France live, but I haven't really been able to watch it live, but I was just watching it now in the afternoons because they replay it.
...
I watch the World Cup too.
...
Wimbledon.

... No, I don't care much whether it's live other than for sports.

... No, like I watch *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal* but those are pretty much the only shows that I'll want to keep up with.

... I think probably when I came to college a few years ago I probably started watching more TV, because my parents weren't around and everything like that.

... Yeah because freshmen year I didn't have that much to do.

III. Current/Recent Content

... *Grey's Anatomy, Scandal*

... Yeah, I mean it's off season but I will when they come on in the fall.

... I usually get them online like the next day or whenever they're posted, because I don't usually have access to a TV.

... Yeah I just don't really bother with it. I don't really care that much about seeing it at that exact time, if it's like the next day or whatever.

... Shonda Rhimes. She has a new show coming out, I'm not really sure what the premise of the show is but I've liked her past shows so I'll probably watch it.

... I really liked *Gilmore Girls*, it's old now, but I liked it.

... Online.

... Yeah, there's *House Hunters, Love it or List It*, yeah there are probably others... oh *Property Brothers*.

... Yeah, I forget the actual names... *Giada*, I think is one. *The Barefoot Contessa*.

... The home ones I like because you get to see like a transformation... and I don't know, my mom watches a lot of HGTV so I guess it kind of rubbed off on me.

IV. Discovery

... Usually it's friends who tell me to watch a show... or something like that. And then I'll watch it once or twice, and then if I like it I'll keep watching it, and if I don't I won't keep going
Like a friend of mine got me into *Scandal* like a year ago.

*[Grey's Anatomy]*
That was my sister. She watched that show and she got the first season DVD's, back in the day when that was still a thing, and so we watched it that way, on DVD and then I kept up from there on TV.

*[Gilmore Girls]*
Friends that lived across the street from me. They used to watch it and I would go over there and watch it and I liked it so...

Yeah, they had like the box DVD's because they were like avid fans of it so... we'd watch it sometimes.

Friends from home.

I think I probably watched like one or two episodes, and I liked it, I think I probably liked the characters, thought they were funny, so I watched it. It was like on at a certain time every day like after school, like in middle school, so I would watch it regularly.

Yeah, occasionally.

I did originally, I had only seen like a few episodes when I started, so originally I watched it all in sequence, watched the DVD's, but now I just go back and watch my favorite episodes.

[Re-watching, repeat viewing]
Not really with *Scandal*, but with *Grey's Anatomy*, I have recently. I'm currently going through all the seasons, because there were a couple seasons where I didn't really like the show so I just didn't watch them, but I decided I was going to go through and watch them all this summer.

*[HGTV shows: House Hunters, Love It or List It, Property Brothers, etc.]*
No, just from HGTV. I started watching HGTV with *House Hunters* because that was the show that my mom always really liked, but now I'll just watch like any show on HGTV.

*[Food Network: Giadda, Barefoot Contessa]*
That was just, like clicking through.

I just like the way that... I like their style of cooking, it's very, like, calming, I think. Like after school I used to watch it in high school.
V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)

... Scandal.

... A friend of mine, I was staying with her and she was like, "you'd probably like this show," and I watched an episode with her just because, well, she made me, [laughs].

... Probably like two episodes. I was just visiting so it became like a nightly thing while I was staying there that we'd watch like an episode or two.

... We started from the beginning. From the first episode.

... It's really intense. There's always plot twists, and you never know who's on the good side or the bad side... and there's always like, the episode usually ends with some sort of like plot twist or drama so you want to like see how that turns out or how the events are going to transpire.

... I watched it on ProjectFreeTV after I left my friend's house on my own.

... I've watched the first three seasons, and it's going into its fourth this fall on TV.

... Yes. Definitely will watch it if I can.

... I think after I watched it with my friend, because, then I kept watching it. So after the first few episodes I was hooked.

... Yeah, I don't remember, probably a few months. It was after... probably like the beginning of this year.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... Orange is the New Black. I don't really like that show. I know everyone it but I'm just not a fan.

... I was with a friend, different friend, I was also visiting and staying with her. I think we started watching, she was in the middle of an episode in the first season somewhere, so it probably didn't help that I didn't start from the beginning and didn't really know what was going on, but then I also just really hate the main character. Drives me crazy. So I can't really watch the show, it makes me too frustrated.

... Like, we watched one and a half episodes. So like, one more after the half episode, my friend was convinced that I would still like this show. But pretty much after we had watched like the second half of the first episode I realized like, "this is not for me."
Not really. I have this thing where I don't really like to get into new shows. I'm busy enough as it is. I mean, I mean I have a lot of friends who really like that show, that are constantly like, talking about the next season...

... Not really. Yeah, I don't like watching new shows because I get too invested in the shows I do watch.

... Yeah, I don't really go looking for new shows. If someone tells me that I really need to watch something maybe I'll consider it, but a lot of times it's like, someone forces me to watch it... But yeah, I've just been re-watching old Grey's episodes but, I don't know, I just don't like getting involved in new shows. I feel like it's like too much of a commitment. I considered watching Game of Thrones last summer, but then all the characters like died, so...

... Nope.

... [End of Interview #6]
Interview #7. Sally

I. Profile of Respondent
Sally
21
Female
Advertising
U.S.A.
New Jersey / Europe
Suburban
Heavy media consumer growing up
Heavy media consumer currently
2-3 hours per day, 14–21 per week

II. General Viewing Habits
...
Probably twofold. One of them is - I watch the news every morning, The Today Show, if
that counts as news - and then I also just watch it to like relax. I watch the show Friends
like every day.
...
At night usually. I watch like an episode before I go to sleep.
...
Every night.
...
I have all of the DVD's so I just kind of cycle through, I've been doing it for like the past
20 years...
...
My parents probably shouldn't have let me watch it when I was younger. I turned out
ok...
...
I literally started like from the beginning. My family watched it and I grew up with it.
September of '94.
...
I was one.
...
Like I said it kinda depends. I normally watch like... I'll have the TV on basically
constantly, but I don't really like pay attention to it or watch it.
...
When I'm home. And I'll just have like syndicated sitcoms on. But I'll also watch like the
late night shows sometimes before I go to bed. So I'll watch like Jimmy Fallon and Seth
Meyers. But I'm not always sitting there like paying attention to it. I'll just kind of have it
on.
...
Pretty frequently growing up. Like my parents had shows that they would watch on like a
weekly basis. And when I lived in Europe when I was younger we used to have people send over tapes of *Seinfeld* and *Boy Meets World* and *Friends* and it was the same kind of thing they would have it in the background like as things were going on.

... As far as movies go, I was like a weird kid and would watch the same movie like over and over again after school.

... We had like a two-VHS set of like Titanic. I also watched that in kindergarten, which I don't think my parents realized. Because I would watch that every day after school for a while. I think they eventually picked up on it.

... When I lived in France I know we had cable but I don't remember watching like a lot of French television. We were pretty Americanized. We watched a lot of American TV.

... In England we had Sky, which was satellite, and it had one of the first DVR systems too.

... I have Netflix and I have cable.

... Comcast.

... DVR, I don't think I have on-demand.

... I did use Amazon Prime once.

... I used it once because I started watching *Scandal* on Netflix and then the Netflix episodes ended and there were like five episodes I needed to see so I watched those on Amazon Prime.

... I think they were free. Maybe I paid. I don't really remember.

... During the elections I watched the debates right when they air.

... I am, yeah, I like to follow politics.

... My mom and I both watch *So You Think You Can Dance*, so I like to watch that live because then we can discuss it. Because we're very cool busy people [laughs].

... Yes. I record a lot of syndicated sitcoms. And I record - I don't know why I do this because I don't usually watch them unless it's live - but I record like *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show*, in case I fall asleep watching them.

... It's a little bit of both. Scandal was an exception. I don't normally binge watch like a lot of people do, but I started watching Scandal and I got a little bit addicted so... I did definitely binge watch that until I caught up. Shows that I like and that I know, I kind of
put it on when I'm home and it's just kind of in the background and comforting to me. Like *The Office*, I've seen like every episode but I'll still play it back if it's been on in syndication. *30 Rock*. Probably my second favorite of all time.

*Friends, 30 Rock, The Office.*

Like I used to have shows that I watched every night. It was *Friends* and *Will & Grace* until it ended. I'd watch like *How I Met Your Mother, The Office, 30 Rock*, those shows I'd watch every time they came on live, and all of those shows have ended now. So there aren't as many shows that I care to watch live like right when they're on. I like to watch *Scandal* live, which isn't on right now. *So You Think You Can Dance*, which is just like fluffy reality TV. I don't watch shows live as much as I used to I guess.

More just watching it the next day on DVR I guess. Not paying as much attention, not being as engaged. And I used to just like sit on my couch with popcorn and watch TV, and I don't do that as much anymore.

III. Current/Recent Content

*The Today Show, Tonight Show, Late Show*, those are like my three, not-scripted.

Sitcoms in syndication, so, *The Office, 30 Rock, Friends*, of course...


OK, I did just start watching *Mad Men* on Netflix. Because I'm an ad major and I feel like I should. So I'm about four episodes in...

I tried to watch *Breaking Bad* too but I had to stop.


I watch the occasional *Dateline* mystery. Which I hadn't really done before but they've caught my interest.

Yeah if I just like turn on my TV and it's on, I'll watch it. And they're always pretty good.

*About A Boy*, that was a spring launch I think. It's got Minnie Driver, ABC or NBC I think.

It's loosely based on the movie, but it's not, it's a different situation but they took the same kind of concept. It's cute, it's just like, light-hearted.
No, it's a 30 minute sitcom. Which is why it like doesn't really work with the movie, but it's the same basic idea.

... 
I don't have USA. I don't have HBO, but I do have Showtime. And Lifetime. I don't know, it's a basic Comcast package but I have DVR.

... 
And I want to watch House of Cards because I've heard a lot about that.

IV. Discovery 

... 
[Today Show, Tonight Show, Late Show] 
My mom watches those. When I moved to [...] I just moved with my mom after my parents got divorced. So it was just me and my mom so I picked up a lot of her habits, and she watches The Today Show every morning. And she watches The Tonight Show and The Late Show. Oh and SNL...

... 
I am all NBC, yeah I think it's because I was brought up on like NBC Thursdays.

... 
But yeah, they were just part of my mom's routine so they became part of my routine and here I am [laughs]!

... 
[The Office] 
I was homeschooled for a while. I was like a weird kid... I was in sixth grade, it was a weird situation, but basically I would be like on my own for part of the day when I was homeschooled, and I started watching, in that time, shows that I wanted to watch but that my parents didn't watch. So I started watching Desperate Housewives, which I wasn't supposed to watch. I started watching Grey's Anatomy, which I also wasn't supposed to watch, and I also started watching The Office out of curiosity.

... 
[Friends] 
Friends my family watched like, always.

... 
[30 Rock] 
30 Rock premiered like right after Friends ended, and it took a very similar timeslot I think. Thursday nights. I liked Tina Fey on SNL so I just started watching it. I love it.

... 
[Modern Family] 
Modern Family my dad was like, "I've started watching this show, you should watch it," and I did. And it was kind of good.

... 
[Whose Line Is It Anyway?] 
I watched it as a kid so when they brought it back I started watching it again.

... 
[Mad Men]
My sister and my brother-in-law watch *Mad Men*, and then I've heard a lot of people here who like it who watch shows that I like. And I'm in advertising so... but I literally started watching it like this weekend.

...  
*Scandal*  
I just heard about it from people. I kept meaning to watch it but I was overloading last semester so I was just like a little bit busy, and then finally I just had some free time one weekend and I started watching it and I just could not stop. I watched I think like three seasons in a week. It was a really productive week for me [laughs].  

...  
All on Netflix, until I got to the point where Netflix didn't have what I needed. Then I went to Amazon Prime, and now I'm watching it like on TV, current, when it comes back.  

...  
In person, friends.  

...  
*How I Met Your Mother*  
That I think started right around the time *Friends* ended. People were like, "Oh, it's the next *Friends*," which made me really mad at first so I didn't want to watch it, and then, I was actually in Montana at the time, and we were in a hotel room and we decided to watch it, and then I started watching it.  

...  
I watched it basically week to week but I missed some.  

...  
*Castle*  
This one I actually saw the ads and thought "this looks good, I'm going to watch this," and I started watching in like the second or third season. And then I went back and watched some repeats from earlier.  

...  
I don't think so. I actually just watched show repeats like on TV.  

...  
*Desperate Housewives* and *Grey's Anatomy*  
As a kid, to be rebellious. I stopped watching both of them. I can't take *Grey's Anatomy* anymore. *Desperate Housewives* I stopped watching, and then I went back to watch the final season.  

...  
*About A Boy*  
I saw the ads for it and I was like, "That looks nice! I'll watch that."  

...  
*New content in general*  
*30 Rock* and *The Office* both ended the same year, and I was like, "I need something new," but for the most part I feel like I have so many shows that I'm watching that I'm not ever like, "Oh I really need a new show to watch."
I think if I like the characters. I get super, like, unhealthily attached to characters.

... Like sometimes I want to watch... this is what kinda determines whether I'm going to watch *Mad Men* or watch a show I already know... if I want to sit down and focus on a show and like pay attention to it then I'll watch something new and I'll watch something that has a more, not necessarily more intense, but something that's more plot-driven. And if I want to just kind of relax and multitask then I'll throw on a sitcom that I've seen a million times.

... And then, like I said, I always watch *Friends*. If don't watch *Friends* then something weird and terrible has happened.

V. Last New Show (Picked up/Continued)

... I think *About a Boy*, now that I think about it.

... Yeah, I just... TV, promos.

... I don't think so, not so much from people, I saw the ads, it looked cute, I recorded it, I watched it the next day and I was like, "Oh, I like this," and so I set up like a season pass to record it, and I would watch it, not necessarily like when it was on, but usually the next day or that weekend. It only had I think like six episodes, because it came in mid-season. I'm pretty sure it's coming back in the fall.

... There was a little bit of something to it. It wasn't total fluff. I mean it's pretty fluffy but, I don't know, the kid in it, he's probably I guess around 10, he was good and I liked the dynamic they were setting up.

... Probably character. Because that's what, like, I get attached to characters really easily.

... 

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... *Breaking Bad*. I know a bunch of people who watch it who say it's like the best show they've ever seen, like it's mind blowing, it's so great. So I watched the pilot on Netflix, and I was like, "I don't know how I feel about this, but everyone says it's really great so I'm going to keep going." I went for like three more episodes and I just couldn't do it. It was too dark, and I knew it got darker, I knew it got more violent, so I stopped watching that. Not because... I'm sure it's a great TV show and I'm sure what everyone says about it is totally true, but I just couldn't, it's just too dark for me.

... After the first episode. I mean you've got like this guy with cancer who is cooking meth. And he was sad. It was just kind of sad. I could tell it was good, I knew it was a good show, and then I watched it again, and it was... well it wasn't like it got lighter. Based on
everything I've heard it only gets violent, it only gets crazier, so I was like, well I know I'm going to have to stop at some point, because I cannot handle that kind of violence, it just haunts me, and I get really sad about it, so... like the scariest movie I've ever seen is Snow White, so yeah.

... And I knew I wouldn't be able to handle a lot of the stuff that came, and I thought, well, I might as well get out now while I'm not attached then get attached and be, like, haunted by it.

... [End of Interview #7]
Interview #8. Steven

I. Profile of Respondent
21
Male
Business Administration and Advertising
U.S.A.
Northern California
High media consumer growing up
Low to medium media consumer currently
1-2 hours per day, 7-14 hours per week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

I think television and the entertainment industry is like a completely influential part of how people think and how people, sort of, follow up on things. Like there's the news, there's certain things that just go... everyone talks about and gives people something to talk about. That's how I think television plays a role. In terms of my life, just something to sort of... growing up it was always sort of my thing, like my hobby, like everyone would always ask me, "Oh, how did things turn out on American Idol? What happened on Survivor?" I would be associated with that sort of thing, people would know me as watching every reality show, every single Vh1 celeb-reality junkie show like that. It was pretty much me... Now, I watch a show I look into sort of human aspect, saying like, "Oh, what would I do if I was in that situation," or how does that reflect upon who I am as a person, and would I react in a similar way to that contestant or to that TV show character if I was in that position now that I've gone through a lot more in life and everything.

I used to just see it as like, crazy people, entertaining me and stuff. Now I see it as like a TV show character and see a lot of depth in them and how that is legitimately formed because people are actually like that, and I kind of relate it to how I would react as a person and see, like, "Oh, he's dating someone else now," like how would I do that, how would I react, like everything like that.

Netflix. My apartment has cable which has HBO and On-Demand. DVR at my friends place and my friend has Hulu Plus which I have the password to.

Sometimes there's a particular movie that I need to see then I'll use it but not much.

Awards show or sporting events. Like I'm thinking of the World Cup right, it has to be seen live. I watched like the show Rising Star live. Only one episode though. Because it's interactive. The interactive shows that you need to be live with. It sucks nowadays because like TV shows are not getting viewers and stuff, but if they include DVR's and stuff the numbers would be the same as like ten years ago.
But like, people don't always watch it within seven days, they might wait like two weeks or three weeks or until the end of the season and binge watch it. That's a thing now. Binge watching. People don't want to wait week to week. People would rather just be like, "binge binge binge binge binge."

III. Current/Recent Shows

... I watch *Big Brother*, but not only the American version, the British version too. 

... Both. That's streaming, I hook it up to my Chromecast for the British one. 

... I'm trying to catch up on *Game of Thrones* and *How I Met Your Mother*. 

... Season 1 of *Game of Thrones* and Season 4 of *How I Met Your Mother*. 

... It's the summer right now so there really isn't that much going on, so I would say that is pretty much it. 

... I mean, there are those shows that you just watch casually, like *Chopped*, my roommates love *Chopped*, and I kinda hate it but I watch it because it's on like all the time now. *Catfish. True Life*. All those MTV and VH1 shows. 

... I mean my roommates are committed viewers, I'm not. 

... I did decide to watch *Chopped* on my own one time so it's kind of influencing me. 

... I watch *Top Chef*. That's one I watch throughout the year. And then *Survivor*. And *American Idol. The Walking Dead*, I have to catch up on that still. 

... I still haven't watched the second half of the last season but everything else I'm caught up on. 

... But I did spoil myself I did see the Lizzie scene... 

... It's really good. 

... I have a feeling they might kill one of the main characters. 

... I used to always love those sort of trashy shows, like *Are You the One?* on MTV, I think that's what it was called. 

... You have to find your match, in like a group of ten people. 

*The Amazing Race*, that's sort of current, I didn't watch the last season but I still watch it
occasionally.

... I like keeping up with other versions of Big Brother internationally just through updates and videos and stuff.

IV. Discovery

... [Survivor]
My first encounter was when it was like the biggest thing ever and everyone in my elementary school was talking about the all-star season. I watched one episode, didn't understand it, and like put it off.

... That was... 2004, I think... like 4th/5th grade. After that episode I thought maybe I should watch something else and then I watched Big Brother, and I didn't understand that either.

... My first first reality show that I watched on my own though was called The Mole. I fucking love that show.

... ABC. And I didn't understand that show either, it's a very complicated reality show and the fact that I got enjoyment out of it when I was eight was shocking.

... [The Mole]
I think it's because my family used to love watching Who Wants to Be a Millionaire. And I think I was left with the TV by myself and then The Mole was on. And it was just so exciting, my heart would race all the time, and everything would just... I remember Catherine getting like knives thrown at her and stuff, and she was my favorite, and I wanted her to win, and then all of the sudden she was the mole, and I didn't understand it, and I was like, "What? What? Did she lose?" I didn't even understand the concept of what the mole was, so, I guess that's sort of... the reality TV blood was there at the beginning.

... Yeah but then I put that off. Millionaire faded off because it just got too popular for its own good, and my family wouldn't really watch anything together like that. But then when everyone started talking about the reality shows that they would watch with their families I thought, maybe I should just watch this on my own. And that's when I started like going into my room more often and hanging out and watching those shoes by myself because those were a thing for me to watch. I was a little bit mature for my age, but I loved it all.

... Everyone else liked it. I didn't like my first season of Survivor, and I like it now when I watch it back, but it was something to like talk to about stuff. I remember having a crush on a girl back then, and that was her thing to watch with her family, and it sort of got us closer. I still liked it on my own but that was definitely part of it.

... Yeah, she shared her journal with me and she would write about it on there...
school crushes what are you doing to me!?

... And then it's like, "Oops, I'm gay!" [laughs]

... Well reality shows pretty much cast only like really flamboyant gay people. I didn't like it. I was thinking, "If I'm gay, do I have to be like that?"

... It's like, will I be seen like that? I don't want to be seen like that.

... Now that I think about it I did have a sort of inclination to root for them in the reality shows I watched, but it was like when they were portrayed as underdogs. I remember watching the reality show *Endurance* and there was this guy who was flamboyantly out and he like kicked the ass of all of the straight buff dudes, I think like a portrayal like that is great. I guess there was always this like underdog appeal of the gay character in a show now that I look back on it. And when someone wasn't gay but seemed like he was, or she was, then people on the interwebs would be like "Oh my God he's so gay..." and I hated when people did that in my daily life, and when I started putting myself in that place I thought, "I would never want to go on shows and be talked about like that..."

... Because people will always talk about you. Like Adam Lambert from *American Idol*. People always talk about his sexuality, and I would hate it when people would talk about me in high school and stuff. Why is that such a burning topic? That sort of social pressure of people talking about it and knowing that people are talking about it was sort of a checkpoint that I had with myself in high school.

... Even with celebrities, celebrity life is something people like to talk about. Not everyone is going to know everyone in your own life but everyone knows celebrities so everyone always talks about it with other people.

... No, not gay characters. Reality shows. A lot of gay people on the internet like to talk about reality shows. I don't know if there's a connection there. But I always root for girls. The bitchy characters. And it always frustrated when I know that women who watch the show always like root for the guys that are hot and I'm like, "Ew, no gross, root for the ones that have like the talent." I'm thinking of *American Idol* right now where all the winners are male because of all the female viewers who vote for them because they're hot. I guess it's a sort of underdog appeal again when it comes to females.

... *[Game of Thrones]*

Definitely the hype. Everyone's talking about it like, "Oh my God this is the best thing ever," and all. With things like Buzzfeed, and everyone posting articles like all the time about it. It's just all this hype that's definitely so important nowadays. There has to be a certain hype and popularity in order to be like one of the crème de la crème shows. Even if they're not the highest rated shows. Back in like 2005 the highest rated shows were the ones that were talked about, like *Grey's Anatomy* and *Desperate Housewives*, it was all
about the ratings, but now it's just about the topic of discussion. Like *Scandal* isn't one of the top 20 shows but it's talked about so much, I read a stat that it's like the most talked about show on Twitter. But they're talked about. Hype hype hype.

... All three. Mass media, social media and friends. A lot of people at my fraternity watch it.

... *How I Met Your Mother*  
All three.

... *Walking Dead*  
Hype. Actually it was more so that I was interested in it already but then when I saw my then-potential partner watch it, I was like, "I should watch this so I have something to talk to him about." Because I saw he had the DVD's in his room and we ended up talking about it, and we talked about other stuff, and we ended up being in a relationship.

... [New content in general]  
Definitely nowadays a lot of it does have to do with that, what's popular, what's out there, but back in the day I was really into reality shows I was so into the reality TV show genre that I would seek out anything that had to do with the reality TV genre and watch it.

... Like on forums and everything. I posted on reality TV forums and stuff, I'm a nerd like that. And I saw like an upcoming show and they'd have a section on the forum for it.

... Definitely, there was a new show on VH1, a new dating show, and I was like, "Ok I'll watch that."

V. Last New Show (Picked up/Continued)

... *Parks and Recreation*. I'm stalled on it right now because I haven't had time to watch it but I love it.

... Third season.

... When it first started I was actually getting self-conscious about how much I loved reality TV I was like, "I should pick up a comedy," and during that time *Parks and Rec* premiered, *Big Bang Theory* premiered and I decided not to really get into them, because I just watched one episode but I didn't really pick it up. I heard bad things about *Parks and Rec* actually at first like the first season sucked but it was the sort of thing that like progressively got better and people started to love it and it started becoming like a critical darling, and get nominated for awards and everything and then I started having friends who watched it. And the one that convinced me to actually go for it was that I knew [my boyfriend at the time] was watching it.

... He loved it so much he'd watch it like on reruns so I started watching it with him.
I think it's more so with a relationship. *The Walking Dead* was more of a beginning step. *Parks and Rec* it was more like a relationship, something more like being a part of his life.

I stopped watching it. Now that I'm in a good spot of like how the relationship ended I want to pick it back up.

**VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)**

... 

*House of Cards*  
One episode. Like half of an episode. Like it's definitely something that I want to watch for sure, because like everyone's talking about it, and I'm paying for Netflix anyway, so I guess a lot of it has to do with like, it's there and I'm paying for it anyway, might as well get all the treats and benefits that come with it.

... 

I first heard about it as an ad from Netflix. And I was like, "Are they really doing this?" I'm so classic about my TV the fact that better TV is moving to cable is still hard to adapt to, and when I saw "original Netflix series" I was curious about it like, is this really going to work?

... 

Yeah the model, the ad on the front page of Netflix and stuff. I thought, "I don't think this is going to hit," and then it premiered and like a week later everyone was talking about it and I was like, "Whoa it actually worked out, that's crazy."

... 

No, I checked it out like after people already loved it.

... 

Everywhere. Online and from friends.

... 

When I was in bed and couldn't go to sleep. And it was on my cell phone. I was looking for something to do, and I put it on. But I never finished it I fell asleep.

... 

It made me go to sleep. Although that's kind of unfair because I was already in like a sleep situation.

... 

I guess it's like a good first hand experience. Because *Parks and Rec* I was like awake to watch it and stuff, and I actually enjoyed the episodes and watched the second season and everything and I guess it's just like the right mindset, going into it with that idea to watch it. Also to make sure that the show isn't like too hyped up and stuff. Because that happens a lot.

... 

I am so like that. Like I hate Beyoncé. Because she's like the most hyped up thing ever. And yeah there's talent there, she's good but like at the end of the day it's just like, you just dance and sing. You're good, but you're not like the most amazing thing ever.
... It hasn't hit all that much for a TV show yet other than *How I Met Your Mother*. Like I think it's good but I don't quite understand how it's built like such a big big big 18-35 viewership.

... [End of Interview #8]
Interview #9. Tracy

I. Profile of Respondent
Tracy
20
Female
Political Science/Communication
U.S.A.
Mid-Atlantic
Suburban
High media consumer growing up
High media consumer currently
5 hours a day, 35 hour a week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
... Generally it's just like to watch TV shows or movies. And I usually watch on my laptop.
... Netflix. iTunes.
... On campus there's the university’s cable.
... Growing up we had cable, Verizon.
... No, I just think about the show.

III. Current/Recent Shows
... There's a show called Once Upon a Time. That's like my primary show right now. It's on
ABC. During the year I was watching Scandal every week. House of Cards, which is on
Netflix. Orange Is the New Black. I watch Law and Order SVU, religiously. Criminal
Minds. CSI Miami.
...
The Real Housewives, that's usually just on in the background if I'm not doing anything.
There's a show called Millionaire Matchmaker, same thing.
...
They feel kind of fake to me. Because reality TV isn't reality to me, because of the way
it's altered, it's more just like light entertainment. I don't take it seriously.
...
Probably the dramatic aspect of it.
...
If I'm multitasking. If I'm cleaning my room or something.
...
Scandal, definitely watch live, or week to week at least.
Because she has my job. That's what I want to do.

Loyalty-wise that's probably my favorite. But *Law and Order SVU* is up there, I can't usually watch it live because I'm busy during that block of time but I'll go on iTunes the next day or whenever they release it and watch it so I keep up week to week.

No, it's when I can fill them in.

There's probably a cap but I haven't expanded it, I haven't tried to watch more.

It's kind of always been like that.

IV. Discovery

*Once Upon a Time*
From other girls on the team.

*Scandal*
My mom.

*House of Cards*
My mom.

*Orange is the New Black*
My roommate.

*Law and Order SVU*
My mom.

*Criminal Minds*
My best friend.

*CSI Miami*
My mom.

*Real Housewives*
My mom.

*Millionaire Matchmaker*
Just by browsing.

*New content discovery in general*
I'd probably say personal relationships.
... [Role of social media] 
There would need to be another context.

... I have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram... but if I haven't heard about it from a friend it usually doesn't register.

... I started watching a show called The Following but I haven't finished it I kinda dropped it.

... Law and Order I used to watch when I was a kid, so that’s like kind of always been in my life, it’s just been a constant TV show, I’ve always been hooked on it. Scandal I remember I had just gotten shoulder surgery and I was on pain killers and she came up to me and was like, you have to watch this show, and so I turned it on, and I remember, because I was on pain killers, they talk really quickly in the show like normally, so being on painkillers it was even worse. So I completely had an aversion to it at first, and then I came across it like months later and I started watching it and I was like, Mom you have to watch this show it's amazing! And she's like, “Yeah I showed it to you after your surgery!” And I was like, “Well you showed it to me at a really bad time!” So I specifically remember that. And House of Cards I want to say it was while I was home for Christmas break my freshmen year of college, and that was when I was still trying to decide whether I wanted to go into advertising or public relations, and my mom works in public affairs so she does reputation management, so she was like, you have to watch this show you'll really like it, and I sat down and watched it with her in like one day, and that's how she got me into it.

V. Last New Show (Picked up/Continued)

... That would be Once Upon a Time.

... When I was a freshmen some of the older girls on the older girls on the dance team had been watching it, they were juniors and seniors, and one of the seniors was kind of into the fantasy-type of narrative, it was kind of her thing, but I hadn't really picked up on it. It wasn't until I came back to school, and I had finished Orange is the New Black, so I needed a new show to watch, so I decided to watch Once Upon a Time because they had been talking about it.

... Yeah this summer, very recently. So I've been watching it for about a week now and I'm done with the first season, I'm on to the second season and I actually really like it. I'm completely hooked, I think I watch like four or five episodes a night.

... No I just figured it would be like a pastime type of show but I didn't think I'd actually get hooked on in. But I got hooked.

...
I think it's really creative. It mixes all of the like children's fairytales and the modern world and like puts them together, and then creates conflict between the two. And the way that they tie in all of the fairytale stories, because the fairytales themselves don't relate to each other, there may be some same characters but not all of them are like that, but in the TV show they connect every single character. And they don't use the... Some of them are like not the original version where they have the happy endings, but some of them are the original Brother's Grimm versions, the not-so-happy endings.

I haven't really like... well I told my boyfriend to start watching it and he's hooked on it. But I haven't met anyone else who's really into it. I mentioned it to my friends, they were like, what are you up to and I was like, I'm watching Once Upon a Time, and they're like, really, you're watching a TV show about Fairy Tales? And I'm like, if you watch it, you'll understand that it's an awesome TV show. But I haven't like gotten into a sit-down discussion where it's like, really, you watch it too, whereas with like House of Cards and Orange Is the New Black like everyone is talking about it.

Probably. I don't necessarily know why Orange is the New Black is popular, but it is. So I definitely think that has an effect. Like I said, everybody is talking about it, like I mean Buzzfeed does like multiple articles about it, so yeah I think pop-culture definitely has something to do with it. I mean I don't know a ton of people who like, watch or talk about fairy tales.

It's on Netflix, at least the first two seasons. I don't know if it's still available.

VI. Last New Show (Undecided/Discontinued)
[The Following]

My boyfriend's the one that brought it up to me. He had already watched the first season, and he knows that I'm into shows that deal with criminals so he thought I might like it. And it's a show about a mastermind serial killer, and he creates like an entire cult and the investigator who like originally arrested him is trying to find him because he escaped. Which I thought was really interesting, and it's pretty twisted and pretty dark, which are things that I don't really mind in shows or in books, there's an attractive quality to them for me. So I started watching it and I was hooked on it, and I got to about the second to last episode of the first season, and I told a couple of my girlfriends about it, and I was like, "You guys should watch this," because they're also into those type of shows, and one of my girlfriends said, "Oh I watched the first season but the second season wasn't as good." And that's when I stopped watching it.

I want to say it's around 20ish, I had to have been around like 17 or 18.

She had seen all of it. And she said the second season wasn't as good.

Nah, I didn't want to watch the second season and be disappointed. It's one of those
things where I might like watch a TV show, and it might be really good at first, but then when it starts getting disappointing it usually drops off my radar, because I don't want to watch something where I'm like, "Oh it was so good," and it started being bad. I didn't want to be disappointed.

...  
I'd say Scandal and Orange is the New Black are the two that I really talk to friends about.

...  
And Scandal, because it's on every Thursday night at 10, all my girlfriends would come over to my suite and watch.

...  
[End of Interview #9]
Interview #10. Orly

I. Profile of Respondent
21
Female
Advertising
U.S.A.
New York City area
Urban/Suburban
Moderate media consumer growing up
Low media consumer currently
5 hours per day, 30-35 hours per week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
... For me, I don't know, it's a way to open me up to things outside of what I do in my daily life. It expands my bubble. Because going to high school in the suburbs it was pretty much a bubble, it's an education kind of tool.
... On a typical day in the school year I would go to class and do all my stuff and then I would go home and maybe watch like an episode of something on Netflix, and then I'll do some work, and I really consume most of my TV like right before I go to bed, I smoke and then I watch TV until I'm like drowsy and then I turn it off.
... My parents showed me a lot of things on my own, like I watched a lot of Monty Python growing up, like at home and stuff, and the movies... I watch a lot of Coen brothers and stuff like that, and a lot of the people around me wouldn't watch that they'd watch like the basic rom-coms and everything like that.
... Yeah, even still it's a lot of stuff that my female peers don't really watch but a lot of my male peers are like, "Oh cool, you know Coen brothers and Wes Anderson and Quentin Tarantino..."
... I like both [film and TV], but when it comes to TV I don't watch a lot of the big three channels, I watch a lot of HBO and Showtime.
... I feel like a lot of my friends watch stuff on like ABC like The Bachelor and a lot of reality, but the only thing I watch on basic cable is Scandal.
... Yeah, network you know what I mean.
... We had Time Warner, and then we had Optimum, and then we didn't really start getting like HBO and stuff until I was a little older.
...
I use Showtime Anytime, HBOGo, Netflix, my mom has a Hulu account but I think Hulu sucks.

... Yeah that's really it.

... I live off campus, I have cable. I use RCN.

... My consumption is mostly through the online apps, but because Netflix is connected to the cable I technically go through the cable box to watch Netflix.

... TV screen mostly. Netflix through the TV with my roommates and then I'll watch like an hour or two through my laptop... Through all of the services.

... My friend got me into Keeping Up With the Kardashians, sometimes I record that. I only use it because sometimes I work at the time its on, so instead of having to look for it online I want to watch it on my screen in HD, but otherwise I don't really care for DVR, it's not a huge deal.

... I do both, it's like even [between week to week watching and binge watching].

... Yeah, Girls, Game of Thrones, Scandal, most of the comedies I wait until there's a couple of them and then I watch them, because I feel like it's not worth waiting a week for twenty-whatever minutes of airtime.

... Like on ProjectFreeTV I look for them.

... Whenever I'm free. Or whenever I need some down time.

III. Current/Recent Content

... So there's Girls, Game of Thrones, Scandal... Veep. What else... Parenthood. Orange Is The New Black. House of Cards. Parks and Rec. Sons of Anarchy. Shameless, UK and US.

... Yeah, the original is like really good but then it gets shitty after most of the main characters leave.

... Oh, I watch Louie, Portlandia... I can't really think of them all right now but yeah that's a lot of them.

... Oh, I watch Curb Your Enthusiasm, that's a big one.

IV. Discovery

...
[Girls]
Magazines.
...
[Game of Thrones]
The books.
...
[Scandal]
Friends.
...
[Veep]
Just... It came on after Game of Thrones, so TV, or whatever.
...
[Parenthood]
I visited the set in L.A.
...
I did like a backlot tour and they took us walking through.
...
[Orange is the New Black]
Netflix.
...
[House of Cards]
Friends.
...
[Parks and Rec]
Friends.
...
[Sons of Anarchy]
Netflix.
...
Just browsing.
...
[Shameless (US)]
I didn't watch it until after I watched the UK one. Magazines, mass media.
...
[Shameless (UK)]
My dad told me when the US one came out that it was based on a UK show.
...
Oh I almost forgot, Summer Heights High, Jonah from Tonga, Ja'mie, those are big shows... They're all by Chris Lilly, I picked it up when I was in Australia.
...
They're all HBO here but they're ABC in Australia, like Australian Broadcasting Company.
...
I had Australian counselors at camp and they showed it to us. Like when I was 13 years
old.
... I just knew the characters so when they came out in the US I watched it.
... I studied abroad in Sydney and got back into it over there.
... [Louie]
Friends
... [Portlandia]
Friends
... [Curb Your Enthusiasm]
My dad, he like hated it, so naturally [laughs]
... [In general]
I don't know, I try not to look at ratings because I feel like everyone has their own opinion on a show. I try to look at like the cast and the premise and see if it interests me.
... If it's on TV and I see actual clips of it and it's good, that's big for me. Like with Veep. They showed a "coming to HBO" preview for it.
... I know before I did say that I don't listen to what my friends say, but like, if I have friends that I've watched TV shows with in the past and we both like the same type of shows I'll see what they think. But I don't know. I like to go blindly into stuff, and if I'm bored within the first ten minutes I'll stop. And that has happened with a lot of shows where I was bored at first but then I heard it was really good, you have to continue, so then I'd keep going.
... Like with Parks and Rec I didn't like it at first but I kept going. And I started to like it.
... My friends that watch reality shows, I'm very wary of their recommendations. Because I'm not really a reality person. I can tell that the producers manipulate it. I really respect the opinions of my friends that like the same movies as me, the same kind of directors and type of movies.
... [What to watch tonight]
Well I like to smoke some weed and to laugh. So I like something that is light, something that will put me in a good mood before I go to bed. With Game of Thrones I have to be like really into it, because I'm really serious about it and I don't want my mind to be racing all night so I wouldn't watch it before I go to bed.
... When I watch Game of Thrones it's always on the premiere night.
... [Parks and Rec]  
The first time I ever encountered it was when it first premiered and I just couldn't follow with it. I think it's also because I had started like losing interest in The Office so I was kind of like worn out over mockumentaries at that time. So I wasn't really into that style of TV at the time. And this last June I had just heard so much about it and the last season coming up and my friends are always cracking jokes from it, and they all told me, like, start at the second season, but I just pushed through the first because I wanted the full context, and I don't know... I finally just pushed through and watched from season one right up until I was caught up. I just watched whenever I had spare time.  
...

Back in 2009 was when I first tried watching it. I think I was too young to appreciate it. But this summer all my friends were talking about it, literally all my friends watch it, people always make jokes and post it on people's Facebook and like Buzzfeed lists, animated gifs from the show and I was like, I'm missing out, I need to watch it.  
...

Yeah the first five seasons are on Netflix, the sixth season I haven't gotten to just yet because it's not on Netflix and I can get it on ProjectFreeTV but it's just annoying with the links and the popups, it's time consuming I just don't have time right now.  
...

I really like Chris Pratt's character. I guess that. I always see articles about like, the actress that plays April... what's her name, I've heard a lot about her.  

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)  
...

[The Newsroom]  
I tried watching it, I loved the first episode, really good, but then I watched the second episode and it was like every other Aaron Sorkin thing, it's like he tries to fit so much into one... phrase, or one sentence, that the characters end up speaking really fast, they mumble, they make really obnoxiously stupid one-liner jokes that just make me want to... ugh I don't know, I just don't like Aaron Sorkin's writing. At all. I think he's so obnoxious, he thinks he's so intellectual and he's really not. He just doesn't know how to condense.  
...

I heard so many people, the same people that were telling me that like Parks and Rec was great, and they were like, yeah great show, check it out. I heard so much about it on TV and ads everywhere, you know, trying to make it look like a really great show, so that's why I did it. And the first episode was good, but I got a headache from watching it. I had a headache! And I'm just like, I don't like that. It wasn't pleasurable.  
...

Right around the time I started it was when the second season came out and it flopped. So that's what also led to stopping, I was like, f--r, it's only going to get worse.  
...

[End of Interview #10]

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Interview #11. Walter

I. Profile of Respondent
29
College graduate, part time student
Classical studies
New Jersey
Suburban
U.S.A.
Military veteran
Medium to high growing up
Low currently
Less than 1 hour per day

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
...
I don't have a TV right now. I guess I do, but I don't have it hooked up or anything. Really I'm just trying to avoid watching things that aren't educational. Before I moved here I had a TV, and it would be on a lot during the day but I wouldn't really watch it. Just background noise while I was doing other things like eating or studying or playing guitar or something. I think it's a waste of time for the most part.
...
It is very recent.
...
Probably on my last appointment in the army overseas, like February to May 2013, we had a lot of downtime and I was just trying to be more productive. There were guys that would sit down and, that was their goal, like watch all the seasons of a certain TV show. So basically I just decided if I had all this free time I wanted to do something more productive with it.
...
So that's where I started getting resistant to using my time just watching things. Specifically like TV shows. If I'm going to watch something I'd try to watch educational videos like how to play guitar and documentaries and stuff... But also I think I have a problem relaxing so its hard for me to sit down and just watch a TV show.
...
Just something more productive. It's not necessarily a good thing that I feel that way.
...
I've never had like a cable hookup in my room but it's also so easy for me to download things or stream things that I want to watch I didn't really see the point to it. I guess as I've gotten older it's just like, there's goals I want to reach. Like if I want to be a better guitar player sitting and watching TV for a couple hours a day isn't going to help me reach those goals, so I try to use my time more efficiently. Probably an artifact of my military experience.
...
The drive to always be doing something, to always be trying to improve yourself or using your time efficiently. We never had enough time to do everything we needed to do so there's always a lot of pressure on to do things efficiently, you always had to be doing something.

We weren't doing missions or anything, we were just training Afghans. It was very frustrating, we didn't feel like we were doing anything, that's not what anyone wanted to do. It just kind of felt like we were wasting time, so maybe in my personal time I was subconsciously trying to make up for that by saying, well if we're over here, we're just wasting our time doing nothing, then at least I can be productive and get something out of my personal goals.

I think that's when I subconsciously decided I could do different things with my time. And just, for the record, I want to say that if someone decides to watch TV it's not like I personally hold it against them or think they're wasting their time. I guess you have to be kind of an informed viewer, like if you sit down and watch something terrible for four hours that's probably a waste of your time, but if you decide like, "I'm really into movies, that's a hobby of mine" and you can say like when movies were made and who directed it and you know something about it that to me is different because you know something about it, you're engaged with it.

For entertainment maybe I'll just watch something on my laptop before bed. I use YouTube a lot for instructional videos for guitar and that, it's easy to research how to play specific songs or specific techniques, easy to find.

Growing up it was before streaming on the internet so it was more like at a TV, in the living room, with my family. Every Sunday we'd all sit down and watch The Simpsons together.

Amazon and Netflix.

It's my girlfriend's account.

*True Detective* I would watch live when it was running. I guess that's kind of an exception. My friends watched it so I guess that's kind of a social thing as well.

Generally before bed but I don't usually have like a set time for anything.

*True Detective* last season was the last thing that I tried to really follow all the way through.

III. Current/Recent Shows

*True Detective.*
... I watch a lot of Bob's Burgers and Archer. I guess I try to keep up with those as well.

... H. John Benjamin, the guy from Archer, does the voice for both.

... I used to watch Game of Thrones but I just got bored with it. I felt like it wasn't going anywhere.

... I think I've made it through Season 3, I wasn't really into it.

... No, not that I can think of.

... I like Adventure Time. I used to watch a lot of TV when I was eating, so Adventure Time was good. I like cartoons, there's some other cartoons on Nickelodeon that I would watch like that just for something to do while I was eating.

IV. Discovery

... True Detective was introduced to me by a friend. He watches a lot of TV and movies but he's also very engaged with it and educated about it so I trust his judgment. When we watched it I think we watched two or three episodes at once, so that probably did a lot to help me finish the rest of the show. And then I knew it was only going to be like 8 or 9 episodes or something so... and the self-contained season as well, you know it's going to be a compelling story. But like Game of Thrones is just so bogged down and so long, it's like, when is this going to end. So after the first one or two seasons I started to slow down, like this is too much, you know, I wanted it to be over.

... [Bob's Burgers]
I don't remember how I was introduced to that but I just think it was like, consistently good, it makes me laugh. Some of the jokes are clever.

... [Archer]
I don't remember how I started watching Archer either I would have to guess it was introduced by friends. And that's kind of the same thing, like I thought it was good for a while, I didn't like the last season though so I’m probably not going to go out of my way to watch it or keep up with it anymore.

... Arrested Development is a show that I've watched a couple times as well.

... [In general]
I'd have to say they are introduced by friends whose opinions about TV shows and movies are... I guess trust would be the right word. It doesn't have to be that they have the same taste as me, but if someone tells me, "hey this is good," and they've recommended things in the past that I've enjoyed, then I'm gonna watch it. But it also has to dovetail
with my interests. Like my girlfriend the other day wanted to watch a video on women's rights, and it was all these horrible things about women in like Cambodia and other places, and it's like, it may be a really good documentary, but it's not necessarily something I wanna watch right before I go to bed.

...Yeah I'd say word of mouth.
...Not really much on social media.
...[What to watch tonight]
Honestly we [me and my girlfriend] sometimes spend more time talking about what to watch than actually picking something and watching it. I guess in the absence of a recommendation from a friend I look at reviews, but I try to... I don't focus on the positives necessarily I focus on the negatives and I try to see what people say about it that they didn't like. So like if I'm looking at the reviews for a documentary and the negative review says, "It's poor quality, it's completely biased," that'll turn me off to it, but if the negative review says, "I disagree with the view" then I'll still watch it. So I guess the reasons why someone didn't like it are more important to me than the positive reviews.
...I'll look at the ones that are on Netflix first because they're easy to click on but if we're still on the fence then you can just IMDB it or Google it.
...Last time... we ended up watching a documentary on the space race. I think it's like six or seven episodes, and each one was like an hour. At that point, you know, because it's nighttime, it was around 11 o'clock, and there were other documentaries I wanted to watch or thought I'd be interested in but they were two hours so then I'd be staying up until 1 am watching something, so I guess length also can be an important factor.
...Probably just episodes of Bob's Burgers. I have them all on my laptop so I can just throw one on. It's kind of like ordering the same thing at a restaurant all the time, I've seen them all already but I know I'm gonna enjoy it, I know it's still gonna be funny.
...If we don't have a something in mind, I'd say Netflix is generally how we browse.
...By genre I think. Documentaries.
...And then you can justify it to yourself, or at least I can, because it's a documentary it's kind of educational

V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)
...True Detective
...I think I picked up on it like three weeks into the season. A friend had them all
downloaded on his computer and I was over at his house, and he was like, "Hey, let's watch this."

... We were watching it on a desktop screen.

... We were drinking... and also smoking a lot of weed. We were waiting for someone to show up, so we also just kept going because they weren't there yet.

... Probably just the first episode. You know it's HBO so you know it's not like it's gonna just drag on and drag on, you knew from the beginning it was going to be a self-contained season, so you know there has to be at least some kind of resolution coming fairly quick.

... I used to be more-- like if I pick up a book I still try to read it all the way through, even if I don't like it. I guess I used to be the same way for TV shows, but now, if I'm watching a show and I realize it's not that great I'm not going to keep going.

... I really liked the characters. I think Matthew McConaghey played a big role in that just because he's playing sort of against his type there. You're used to him playing kind of a stoner, surfer guy, and then in this show he's playing like a really jaded guy, really angry and angsty and so I thought that was interesting.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... *Game of Thrones*

... I think I watched Season 3 on my own... I think part of that was I watched Season 2 and Season 3 while I was deployed, so it was more of a social thing with my friends, like we could all sit around and watch and talk. So I guess for me the social aspect of watching with people... especially now with how averse to wasting time I am, because if you're hanging out with your friends you're hanging out with your friends... it's more about the social experience.

... Like watching horror movies, it's more fun to watch in a group.

... I thought -- and I've heard the same criticism of the books which I've also read -- the universe just gets so large and there's so many different characters to follow that the plot slows down because of it. You can't advance the main story because you're following all the individual characters. I got to the end of Season 3 and I'm like, nothing happens. You're waiting for something major to happen, but it's just taking too long for it to get there for me I guess.

... [End of Interview #11]
Interview #12. Alexa

I. Profile of Respondent
Alexa
21
Female
Public Relations
U.S.A.
Northeast
Suburban
Medium growing up
High currently
3 hours per day / 20 hours per week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
... I think about TV as a way of like unwinding I guess, and relaxing. So I usually tend to watch TV when I'm lazy, or when... like, after a long day of class or work or something like that. I think that's because I like watching things that aren't too heavy, maybe like a mood lightener.
...
Yeah mostly comedies, some drama and supernatural shows sprinkled in just for the creativity in it. But mostly comedy I'd say.
...
Yeah during the school year especially it's always at night, like after hours. Now during the summer I'll watch it anytime really.
...
I grew up with a big family, and I'm the youngest, so I kind of just watched what everyone else was watching. My parents were really strict about time limits and not being lazy, so I didn't get to watch that much, but when I did it wasn't usually my choice so I'd say I've been influenced a lot by the people around me.
...
No we weren't allowed to have any TV's in our rooms, just one in the living room.
...
Satellite, I think.
...
I am a subscriber of Netflix, Amazon Prime, and cable.
...
Comcast.
...
Yeah, through Comcast I have DVR at home. During the school year we just have the school cable, no DVR.
...
Yeah, I'm not allowed to have the TV on during dinner so if there's a show on at like 7 or
I'll record it and watch it later.

I watch a lot of reruns, and a lot of reruns, at least the ones I watch, are on really early in the morning so sometimes I'll watch those too.

Yeah, I'd say like two shows I always watch live.

The Mindy Project and Modern Family.

Yeah, I just did Orange is the New Black this past week. Or sometimes if I start a new show I'll try to watch as much as I can in one sitting.

It's easier during the summer, definitely, because I don't have as much going on. But during the school year it's usually just staying up late after class.

Just mentally, sometimes I just drop a show or pick it up a few months later...

III. Current/Recent Shows

[New, must watch]
Mindy Project
Modern Family
Workaholics
I think that's it.

[Binge watch/watched]
Orange is the New Black
One Tree Hill
Friends

[Re-runs/syndicated]
I watch friends, I watch Charmed, just like a lot of the Nick at Nite shows, like Full House or Fresh Prince of Bel Air, stuff like that.

[Other shows]
I don't watch religiously but I watch a couple of shows that my roommates watch, Teen Wolf, Mad Men... I forget what it's called, some TLC show... Long Island Medium. Like I've seen enough of them because my roommates watch them but I don't watch them religiously.

I would say I've watched a few episodes of Teen Wolf on my own but not of the other ones.

[Favorites]
I would say definitely *Friends* and *Modern Family* if I had to pick.

### IV. Discovery

...  
[Mindy Project]  
One of my friends started watching it and I was in her apartment and she was like, I have to watch this episode because it was airing live so I sat down and watched it with her, and when I went back to my apartment I started it from the beginning.  

...  
Yeah, ProjectFreeTV  

...  
[Modern Family]  
I think my dad actually introduced me to *Modern Family*, it was during winter break when I was home I think freshman year. My parents never watch TV so it was weird to me that he was watching it, but I watched a couple episodes and then I started watching it on my own. And I watch that on ProjectFreeTV too.  

...  
[Workaholics]  
One of my friend's older brothers was watching it. And one of the main actors in the movie was in that movie *Pitch Perfect* so I, like, I guess since I liked him in *Pitch Perfect* I made the connection and started watching the show.  

...  
So it was like, in passing I didn't really think much about it. But then when I saw the guy in *Pitch Perfect* I got more interested in it.  

...  
Once I was interested in it I watched a couple of clips on YouTube. I guess just growing up with older brothers and stuff I had gotten used to that kind of humor, so it just intrigued me I guess.  

...  
[Orange is the New Black]  
I think I actually saw it on Tumblr. Because, you know, they post the whole season so people were posting like screenshots and stuff. And then I just kept hearing people talk about it, and everyone was talking about it, and once the second season came out I watched both of them. I really did it just to see what all the hype was about but then I ended up actually really enjoying it.  

...  
[One Tree Hill]  
Netflix has the whole series. My cousins were really into it. We were too young to watch it when it was on TV but the last two seasons I think were in the late 2000's so I could watch those on TV and then I went back and watched the whole thing on Netflix. And I just picked it up from my cousins.  

...  
Yeah they live nearby.  

...
Yeah, my older cousin used to babysit me and it was her favorite show and I never really paid attention to it but as I got older I was like, more aware of what it was and I started watching it, and then my aunt bought me like the whole series on DVD.

That was before Netflix, I was only in like 7th or 8th grade, so if you wanted to watch a whole show that was the only way to do it. But every day after school I was like just like, okay I'm going to watch three episodes today and then three tomorrow and I just kept going until I was done.

No I finished a while ago. I went pretty fast, it was during the summer. Between watching the DVDs and watching the reruns on Nick at Night and TBS and stuff I've seen them all. Eventually I stopped going in order, but now I've seen all of them.

Yeah, I started when I was probably like 14. I just finished watching all the episodes when I was like, 19. There was a lot. But it was really good.

Charmed was another show where, well my aunt used to watch it with me when I was little, and that was on really in the morning for some reason so that was one where it was just always on in the background during my childhood. It was always syndicated on like TNT and WB so it's one of those where I just watch it when it's on kind of thing.

Yeah, it's like something where I put the sleep timer on my TV just to fall asleep to, sometimes I'm not even watching it or it's on mute but it's still on. Usually Nick at Nite...

I would say first I go to cable and see what's on, whether it's re-runs or, we subscribe to the premium channels so there's usually some kind of movie on. And then if there's nothing on live I'll go to on demand and like catch up on a show. And then if that doesn't work I'll go to Netflix and start re-watching a show that I've already watched.

I'd say probably Friends, because it would be on Nick at Night. I think it starts at 10.

I have a problem with attention span, so if I find one show then I'll get really really into it, but I don't think I'm the type of person that can watch like four shows that are on TV live at the same time. But I think if I heard about it or if a friend recommended it to me. I don't think I go generally like seeking online for new shows, it's just if they fall into my lap I'll watch them.
V. Last New Show (Picked Up/Continued)

...*

*Orange is the New Black.*

... Yeah both seasons. I watched the first season all over a couple weeks in May. And then I just watched the second season... like these past two weeks

... Yeah so I heard about it, or saw it, on Tumblr I guess, and it just kept coming up on my dashboard like all the time like incessantly and I had no idea what it was.

... A little on Twitter, but mostly on Tumblr. Not that much on Facebook... So I saw it on Tumblr, and I didn't really know what it was, and then I just kept seeing it pop up everywhere, like Buzzfeed articles and different tweets, stuff like that. So I decided that since I had a Netflix account already I would just start watching it. And I didn't really think I was going to like it, because it seemed kind of depressing and I intent to watch comedies, but it is actually pretty funny. Pretty funny show. And it was just really interesting, once I started it I had to find out what happened... and it was like an interesting mix of things that I like. I like a little bit of drama but not like really heavy shows, so it was like comedy and drama at the same time which was good.

... Yeah definitely. I was surprised by how much I liked it. I thought it was going to be just all hype I guess.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

... I would say *Crisis* on NBC. I would always see trailers for it like on TV before it started airing, and it looked kind of good, or like it had potential, but it just got, like, way too involved and plot-driven, and it ended up getting cancelled at midseason but by that point I was just watching like a couple of episodes.

... The end of May.

... Not really, I think it was just from my dad watching programs throughout the day and just hearing the commercials.

... I would say like 6, I think there were 13 in total. I know it just stopped at episode 13 I don't think it was like a full season.

... Well I don't usually watch dramas so it was rocky to start out with, I mean it's called *Crisis*, so... but I don't know, the acting was okay, that wasn't really the problem, it got really over the top and unrealistic, and I feel like it just... there were too many subplots. There was like the big conflict, and then there like a conflict within the conflict and a conflict within that conflict... and it was just really hard to follow and not interesting to me anymore. And each episode you found out about like another conflict, so I think that's
why I didn't go all the way through with it.
...
[End of Interview #12]
Interview #13. Raymond

I. Profile of Respondent
21
Male
Public Relations and Psychology
New York City area
Suburban
Level of media involvement: 8
Daily: 2 -3 hours
Weekly: 21 - 24

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences
...
My go to is SportsCenter, I immediately go to ESPN, aside from that I’m definitely not an avid viewer of commercials, they definitely don’t garner my reach and attention, the second a commercial comes on a channel I’ll start surfing.
...
Once I get out of bed I’m turning SportsCenter on. If I have class I’m going right to class, but when I get home from class or the gym I’m turning SportsCenter on. If I don’t have class that day I’m waking up at 10 or 11 and turning SportsCenter on.
...
To be more honest with the amount of time I spend watching … I would study for hours and hours upon end but it’s probably more now.
...
In the evening I’m definitely cooking, and while I’m cooking and while I’m eating I’m not doing it in silence I’ve got the TV on.
...
Yup. Comcast.
...
Aside from ESPN and live TV I watch HBO, Comedy Central, FX, all the mainstream networks.
...
Television and the internet. My family had two cable boxes in the household.
...
I can definitely root my binge watching to a very young age. I didn’t get cable at a very young age so before that I had VHS and DVD’s that were always on. My mom would put something on the TV while she was cooking kind of ‘TV as the babysitter,’ it was on a lot.
...
TV is familial, communal, yeah.
...
Sports events. Live sports events. You know as much as I would say I watch television I’m not a loyal patron to many shows or times. I’m really not keeping track of certain
shows or times, I can usually find something on no matter what.

III. Current Shows

... There are times in the day that I know certain shows are on. I’m not keeping track of when the next episode of the show Castle for example is coming on, I don’t like look forward to it, I don’t need to know. I do watch a lot of repeats, though, I know when Seinfeld is on, I know when Family Guy is on, I know when South Park is on...

... I watch South Park, avidly. I like Workaholics. My favorite sitcom is undoubtedly That 70's Show. My girlfriend and I watch Friends at night, which is probably the one in terms of like episode chronology I’ve been most keeping up with. Re-runs, Nick at Night.

... I watch How I Met Your Mother, Big Bang Theory, yeah, there are definitely sitcoms I like to keep up with.

IV. Discovery

... Seinfeld from my family, my dad.

... South Park I had exposure to at an early age, probably unnecessarily so. Growing up we didn’t have cable so on vacation whenever I was in a hotel room by myself I would channel surf and I discovered South Park at some point and got into it, probably back around like 8th or 9th grade.

... Family Guy… I was an avid watcher of The Simpsons when I was little and I knew when Family Guy was coming out, similar audiences, creators… Futurama too.

... How I Met Your Mother, I would say is something that has gotten popular through social media and my reference groups online, and inspired me to watch it.

... Game of Thrones is extremely popular - I’m not an avid watcher but I’ve watched a couple episodes once again out of reference group, out of community. So yes, for me, my influence in television has been a very social experience, as well as one of my own personal preference, like with South Park.

... Although I’ve been watching some shows like HIMYM and Game of Thrones which have come out in recent years, I would say my television watching has remained pretty static, I mean I’ve watched every season of That 70’s Show over and over again, probably 3 or 4 times, South Park I’ve seen every, every episode. Entourage I’ve seen the series 2 or 3 times now as well.

... If I do get into a new show, which I think correlates with a pretty big media trend in society these days, I want to binge watch it. I don’t want to just watch one episode I want
to keep going and going and going, which, with the resources of the web, has become more possible.

... The show *Blue Mountain State* I watch on Netflix.

V. Last New Show – Picked Up/Continued

... [Blue Mountain State]

... So my friend showed me one episode on Netflix in his living room. I loved the theme song it was a pump up theme song, it was a pump up show, it resonates with young college males like myself, same setting... I just saw that one episode and once I saw that one episode I think I thought about it maybe a couple weeks later and saw it on Netflix and thought, you know, I’m gonna try watching this I’m gonna check it out, and I watched the whole series, all three seasons in like four days.

... Yeah, I saw that little box with the play button on Netflix, and I just remembered seeing the show, something clicked in my head, this fits my interests, this is something I wanna see, and so I started with the pilot episode and, you know, once you start it’s kinda hard to stop.

VI. Case Study of Last New Show – Discontinued/Undecided

... No, I actually started watching a show from a couple years ago, *Hung*, on HBO.

... *Hung* is a show I started watching with a friend, me and a friend were bored, we were trying to find something to watch on TV, browsing through HBO, we went to on demand, we had just finished watching *Entourage*, I saw the title *Hung*, I had remembered hearing about it a few years back, I remembered the theme song vividly, I was thinking I was pretty it was a great show, I had read about it on Wikipedia, it’s gotten great reviews, I’m willing to like, get into it.

... I guess my apprehension, the reason I watch so many repetitions of series I’ve already seen or repeat episodes is because if I start watching a show, nowadays, I know I’m gonna start binge watching it because that’s like, if you’re gonna start you’re gonna keep going, it’s a commitment. It’s really a commitment to start watching something.

... I had to get to the second episode. I liked the first episode. It didn’t like stick out, the premise seemed cool but we didn’t get too much depth initially. But I knew it was intriguing for sure.

... *Blue Mountain State* on the other hand, not that it’s a show with any depth.. but just from the first episode I knew it had the tone and the attitude that resonated with a young college guy like myself. It was a fun show, yeah.
... I might not be the best person to ask this because I understand how the media works. When I say that *Blue Mountain State* presents attitudes and tones that work for me it’s because I’m very self-aware about how the media world works... I fit a certain demographic, these shows and channels get grouped together pretty well... A show like *Blue Mountain State* was recommended to me through the Netflix predictions based on things I have already watched.

... I’m still on the first season, but, you know HBO has a lot of credibility in my mind. I’m an HBO patron, I loved *Rome*, I loved *Entourage*, I loved *The Sopranos*, even *Sex and the City* I find entertaining. I fit the HBO demographic.

... [End of Interview #13]
Interview #14. Yuri

I. Profile of Respondent
23
Male
Grad student
Law enforcement
Northern California
Urban/Suburban
Medium-high growing up
Medium today
About a half hour an hour a day or seven hours per week

II. General Viewing Habits and Preferences

... TV is still an interesting form in terms of entertainment mediums go because I guess there's a lot of innovation going on, I guess because people are starting to realize they have to compete with web series, Netflix, a lot of box office draws and stuff like that. I still feel like TV is relevant because they try to keep things interesting. I guess my attitude, a large part of it is when I was younger I kind of had more ready access to cable television and nowadays not so much. I don't even own a TV in my apartment, so most of my TV watching is either at a friend's place who has a television or watching streaming things online. So it's not... I wouldn't say it's as major as it was when I was younger, my TV consumption.

... I think it's kind of a combination of both. Some of it is just because I have to straighten up my priorities and watching television doesn't really top the list when I have a master's thesis to work on or something like that. But I think part of it is also intentional, largely because, I feel a lot of things in media have been over-hyped so I'm kind of cynical about wanting to start new television shows. As a movie example, the movie Frozen, a lot of people I know were really excited about it when they watched it, they were obsessed with it. I watched it, it was good, but it wasn't THAT good, compared to the hype. So I'm afraid shows like True Detective, Breaking Bad, shows like that, I mean I hear they're good, but I feel like they're so overhyped at this point that my expectations will be let down no matter what happens.

... During most of the day I don't usually watch anything. But during meals, usually during dinner, I watch a show or two. And it's usually streaming on my laptop or online.

... Usually it's South Park. At this point they aren't going to be making new episodes for another 48 days, when the new season comes out, but there are a lot of old episodes, I've probably watched 75-80% of all the episodes that have been made, and I don't necessarily mind re-watching.

...
Yeah, they’re all available on South Park Studios.

... I will be next month starting a new cable package which gives me access to HBOGo. My father has a subscription to Netflix but I don't necessarily use it unless I'm home because I don't know the username and password because it's not super pressing for me.

... Very basic cable. Mostly just local stations.

... No, I never record shows.

... The biggest change is that I actually used to watch TV on a TV. Now it's usually just streaming.

... I guess technically my house in California, my parents’ house, they have a TV. But in a situation where I've lived independently from them I'm never had access to a television in my living space.

... It's usually just checking up on stuff, but sometimes, if I'm skeptical I tend to wait a bit instead of watching right away, and I read reviews online and I try to get like a spoiler-free overview of the season.

III. Current Media Diet

... One Piece (Japan), South Park, and, uh... I watch it irregularly, but I still watch it, The Daily Show, and John Oliver's new show, those are probably the main things that I watch right now.

... The John Oliver show, for example - I know you said excluding YouTube clips - has a lot of long YouTube clips online. I know he had a segment on FIFA and how corrupt it is.

... It's usually what draws me to it is the topic of interest that surrounds that segment. So for example the FIFA thing came out during World Cup, and I'm a soccer fan so I watched it immediately because I knew it would be funny.

... That's the recent stuff... going back a bit further, SNL, which is free through Hulu to an extent, you can't watch a lot of older episodes but you can watch newer ones as well as clips and highlights. I've watched one or two episodes of Game of Thrones recently. Let's see... Community... America's Best Dance Crew...

... I guess Tosh.O... Key & Peele... I guess Dexter. I think that's about it.

IV. Discovery

... [South Park]
So when I was in high school I had heard about South Park, but I wasn't really sure what it was about. Then one of my friends, she loved South Park so she showed me a clip, and it was from the "From Apologies to Jesse Jackson" episode... when they're playing Wheel of Fortune, um... have you seen the episode?

... The word is most of the way filled in and the clue is "people who annoy you," and the actual word is naggers... but Randy guesses a different word and... [laughs] yeah I thought it was hilarious and I've been a fan ever since.

... [One Piece] When I was younger, as in high school, early undergrad, I was pretty big into reading manga and watching the corresponding anime. My interest quickly waned in the other ones I used to watch because they got boring, the storylines got bogged down... so it's pretty much just One Piece that I've kept up with. The big thing, aside from the fact that I just find the characters and the story compelling, is it's something that my sister really likes. We're five years apart, she's just starting her undergraduate degree and I'm in grad school, but it's one of the things we have in common, that we share in terms of our interests so we can sometimes call and talk to each other about it.

... I guess the biggest thing... Dragon Ball Z was big in my generation, in addition to stuff like Pokemon, Sailor Moon, were kind of the big thing for a lot of people. Cartoon Network, there was the "Toonami" block, and I think a lot of people got exposed to that. I think gradually, due to people just talking about it and just being on television I watched it and got into it.

... And where I'm from too, there's a big Asian American community. So it's a little more popular, a little more socially acceptable to be into Japanese animation. I know there's some stereotypes, some negative connotations to liking Japanese animation.

... [The Daily Show] I think it's just from watching Comedy Central. Partially that same friend who got me into South Park, she just loved everything on Comedy Central so I think it was mostly through friends, as well as just watching the channel... and actually now my mom really likes The Daily Show, she's the one that often prompts me to watch it now.

... [Last Week Tonight with John Oliver] ... I think the biggest thing is, I knew John Oliver was part of The Daily Show as a correspondent, I thought the segments were pretty funny, but I really liked it when he took over for John Stewart when he was filming his movie. I just thought he was a really talented guy, he was really funny. I also really liked him on Community, I liked his style of comedy and I thought he did a good job.

... He brings a different cultural perspective too, seeing that he's British, which is actually
pretty interesting, because especially for stuff like soccer, it was more interesting to hear it from him than from an American comedian. It's kind of more relevant coming from him because soccer is pretty much the religion of Britain.

...[SNL]
My parents have always watched SNL, when they first came to the country that was one of the programs they really liked watching, and I think they watched it back when like Eddie Murphy was a cast member, so they've basically always watched it and I've occasionally watched it with them, but I don't really keep up with it all that often right now.

...[Game of Thrones]
I've never read the books, and I do generally like fantasy literature, but I've never gotten around to it. The thing is though, since the show was made, a lot of people have been talking about it and there's been a lot of interest in it. So with one of my undergraduate friends who is working here in Boston I watched the first two episodes with her and her two roommates. That was just kind of a one-time thing, but I never got around to watching the rest of the show.

...I mean my new cable package is going to start this fall so I probably will catch up. I kind of... well, from talking to people, I mean, people are really bad about hiding spoilers, so I kind of have an idea what happens. But I've already developed a favorite character and a character I hate. I want to see how their stories play out. The show is really pretty good considering they can already have compelling characters after two episodes.

...[Community]
One of my friends in my graduate program recommended it to me because she knows it's kind of the style of comedy I like. And it's true, I really liked the first three seasons, with the fourth season being okay. I started watching the fifth season but I never completed it, largely due to, I guess time constraints plus some apprehension about how the season would turn out. And I hear I guess it's getting picked up by Yahoo now, so I'm not sure, I might catch up on it and see what's going on.

...[America's Best Dance Crew]
A friend from high school, she really liked this one dance crew, mostly because she found the dancers attractive... she didn't actually know too much about the dancing. I started watching the show because of her and then I really got into it. I really liked the first six seasons but I didn't keep up with it after that. Largely because I just felt the crews weren't as compelling, and the judging, I didn't even know who the judges were anymore. You have to be kind of familiar with the judges. You know a lot of these competition shows you can phone in and vote, that is the only show that I've ever voted in on.
... 

[Tosh.0]
I was watching Comedy Central, saw the show, it was crass but kind of hilarious.

... 

[Key & Peele]
Comedy Central, and their web shorts. They have certain segments posted online.

... 

[Dexter]
Friends were just watching it in the place where I hung out all the time as an undergraduate, and I was kind of interested for seasons one through three, four was okay I guess, but then it quickly dropped in quality.

... 

[New content in general]
Most of it is through friends because I often don't have an avenue for exploring new content. Or at least a readily available avenue, so I'm kind of apprehensive about trying new things. But if someone, especially someone I trust, gives a recommendation I'm more willing to try that media than if no one gives a recommendation or if random people on the internet give a recommendation.

... 

[What to watch right now]

... 

I think how I'm feeling is definitely important. Certain shows or series have different emotional weight to them. I mean, if you're feeling depressed, don't watch 12 Years A Slave, right? I mean, it's the same thing with certain shows. If you aren't feeling up to it you shouldn't watch certain shows, like True Detective or Breaking Bad. I've never watched those shows, but that's what I hear. Same thing if you're in like a casual lighthearted mood, South Park generally works, and that's kind of my attitude on things. Another thing though, if a show that's a series that has a lot of inter-episode continuity, and I'm not familiar with the rest of the canon, I usually don't watch the show. Because it's frustrating, and, actually, well to see spoilers, and you watched them out of order. And for me, to understand what's going on in a plot, is really important. So if the plot is weak, if the script is poorly written or if, on my end, I'm not watching things in the proper continuity, that's frustrating, and I don't want to be frustrated when watching something for entertainment.

V. Last New Show (Continued/Followed Through)

... 

So I guess Community is probably the closest thing to something that I've watched virtually the whole way through. So again, it was recommended by a friend in my graduate program, and she just said, "the show's good, Dan Harmon is a fantastic writer, the actors are hilarious," so I kind of took her word and checked out the show. And when I started watching... that's a good question, I think maybe season 4 was starting on TV when I started... what exactly would you consider binge watching?

...
So I guess what I did, especially for the early seasons, I probably watched an episode or two a day to catch up with it. I started from the very beginning. When I watched it was pretty much exclusively while eating dinner, so that kind of 20 minute period of the show running was when I was eating, and I enjoyed it a lot.

... October to December.

... By the time I had caught up, Season 4 had finished. It was never at the point where when I was catching up I could watch an episode on the day it aired. I did finish Season 4, but I haven't finished Season 5.

... I know certain shows get to this point. When I was in high school I used to watch Heroes. And I liked the first two seasons, but it got to the point where I was just watching to see if it would ever get better, not because the show was any good. It never got to that point for me for Community, even though the quality did dip in Season 4, I watched mostly because I really liked the show. I thought the characters were really interesting and it was interesting to see the character arcs as they changed.

... I watched the first two episodes of Season 5 the day they aired, beginning of January I think. A large part of it I think is time, my academic workload pretty much doubled between first and second semester, I just haven't gotten around to it. Partially laziness, something like that.

... I think part of it too is the same friend that got me into Community, I was talking with her about what she thought of the new season, and she was kind of ambivalent, and, another large part of it I think was Donald Glover was playing a diminished role that season and kind of transitioning out of the show, and he was her favorite character, and I think that's why she was a little disappointed. And I think that was a part of it for me too. Kind of like with Chevy Chase's character, he left the show at the end of Season 4, and I really liked him on the show so that kind of sucked too.

... I don't know, I might try to pick it up again, but there's that hurdle, and once you cross it you can watch it again, it's kind of a mental block... it's kind of... once you do an activity you know it'll be interesting, but you kind of have to overcome a hurdle where you're not sure if you'll like it. I'm kind of at that point right now with it, I have no real motivation to seek it out, but let's say I just happen upon a TV and the show is airing, I would watch the show. So it's that situation. I guess that's the main issue with TV in general for me, if a show is on I will generally watch it, but I don't actively seek out many things unless I have a compelling reason to.

... South Park would probably be the best example. It's usually a situation where I'm like, "OK I have 20 minutes to eat my meal, I might as well watch something." I really don't want to start a new show, because it's kind of just, "meh," on getting into something new at this point. But with South Park, I already know the episodes are really good and
actually still really relevant, especially the newer seasons.

VI. Last New Show (Discontinued/Undecided)

[Game of Thrones]
So I mentioned before I heard about it from a ton of people, all through undergraduate, and pretty much everyone in my graduate program watches the show, so they all always talk about it and they're all always caught up. So I decide to watch it because one of my friends from undergraduate was here. My friend, at the time, she had never seen any of the episodes and I had never watched any of the episodes, one of her roommates also hadn't watched it and the other one, he was actually caught up but he liked watching the old episodes anyway so we all watched it together. So I watched the first two episodes and like I mentioned, I already had favorite characters, I felt like they did a lot with the 2 hours that they had to work with for the show. I guess as to why I haven't watched it since that point, I mean, obviously I could watch it through some streaming site that isn't 100% legal, or I could ask a friend for their HBOGo password, but I've never really been in a circumstance where I'm like, "I need to watch Game of Thrones. I really need to know what happens." And again, part of it is because, I mean, spoilers abound... so I mean, the Red Wedding episode, I know what happens, not all the details but you know, I know what happens, people will talk about the show, everyone watches it, people are not always careful with spoilers. Even with like casting, I know Sean Bean's character dies because I know he isn't on the show after Season 1. It's kind of at the point now where it's like, I'm not terribly compelled to watch it right now, but I feel like, like I said before I have a new cable package coming this fall and I'll have an easy avenue of access so I'll probably be more willing to continue watching it.

[End of Interview #14]
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EDUCATION

In 2004 I graduated from Longmeadow High School in Massachusetts and enrolled for at Boston College where I was admitted to the College of Arts and Sciences Honors Program. The Honors Program at B.C. provided the core of what is now called a classic liberal arts education, one that fosters deep reading and careful study of the great books of Western culture from Plato to Descartes.

I pursued a double major in Communication and Political Science with the notion that I would eventually settle into a career in either journalism or law. But it was in communication research that I found my first institutional home as a research assistant to Professor Ken Lachlan, an energetic Michigan State Ph. D. who taught Introduction to Mass Media at the time and was studying video game use from a uses and gratifications perspective.

During my senior year I became interested in the mass media entertainment industries and arranged to meet some alumni who were working in the field, mostly in the greater Los Angeles area. I became fascinated by Hollywood during that visit. When I graduated in 2008, I applied to the NBC West Coast Page Program.

TO HOLLYWOOD

I was admitted to the Page Program and moved to Los Angeles in early 2009. In the program, recent graduates seeking entry to the entertainment industry are given the chance to rotate through various departments, offices, and productions to orient themselves to the industry. During my rotations I had the opportunity to work in “primetime” – the management and development of new and on-air primetime shows for the flagship network, as well as office of the West Coast office of the Chairman of Entertainment. What I observed in both of these offices, in retrospect, was the tail end of the complete breakdown of the broadcast television model.

In addition to the trends of declining broadcast viewership and rising competition from cable and the internet, in 2009-2010 NBC was prepping for a sale from its stalwart corporate parent GE to Comcast, a sequence of events parodied in real time on NBC’s 30 Rock. It was an exciting, disruptive, time in in the television industry. A lot of older, broadcast era execs lost their jobs. A new class of ascendant digital executives began stealing the headlines in Hollywood’s echo chamber trade press. Meanwhile, in the business pages and analyst reports about the sale of NBC to Comcast, I began to suspect that the big picture of the media business was shifting in a way most people, even many
in my industry, had yet to grasp. I decided to go back to school.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

At Boston University I began working for Professor James Shanahan, a mass media effects researcher whose work on the Cultural Indicators project and collaborations with Michael Morgan connect him intimately with the legacy of George Gerbner and cultivation theory.

Influenced by my undergraduate and graduate mentors, who were schooled in uses and gratifications and media effects respectively, as well as more industry focused works like Tim Wu’s *The Master Switch* and James G. Webster’s *The Marketplace of Attention*, I began to take an increasingly structural view of the individual behaviors taking place within the mass media ecosystem.

Today I have come to think of content, including the kind of television that can over time cultivate a “mean-world-syndrome” in heavy viewers, as a product of the larger content production, distribution, and consumption ecosystem. My work seeks to understand the role of increased content choice, and strategies for dealing with it, in the emerging entertainment television ecosystem.