From Networks to Netflix

A Guide to Changing Channels

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Pop

Television Guides and Recommendations in a Changing Channel Landscape

Derek Johnson

In fall 2014, the US-based TV Guide Network announced it would abandon its name to become a new service called Pop. With ratings still "on the rise" for the existing channel, press releases described this shift not as a complete revolution so much as a "brand refresh"; carrying over interest in celebrity and celebration of television inherited from its predecessor, Pop would "focus on entertainment and the world of fandom." Channel president Brad Schwartz promised this embrace of pop culture would support quality programming "so good, it pops" ("Network" 2014). Yet one could also read a third kind of "pop" from this development: the bursting of linear models of television delivery in which many viewers relied upon print and electronic versions of *TV Guide* (or some other ordered list of channels and their scheduled program offerings) to navigate a complex channel environment.

When first published in 1953, *TV Guide* magazine featured in-color entertainment news stories about television stars and national network programming as well as black-and-white listings of the channels and programs scheduled for viewers throughout the day, with localized versions produced for over 100 different areas of the US. While *TV Guide* was the single most circulated national magazine in the 1960s (Farber and Bailey 2001, 397), the navigational need shared by television viewers supported similar efforts by *TV Choice* (United Kingdom), Figaro's *TV Magazine* (France), local newspapers, and many more publications across the world. Feature stories, spotlight reviews, and starred ratings all helped readers sort through their viewing choices—to which channels' curated programming lineups should they tune their televisions? This problem of choice would only exacerbate as new cable and satellite services joined terrestrial broadcast channels, beginning in the 1970s and expanding through the 1990s. Viewers required a guide in a crowded channel landscape.

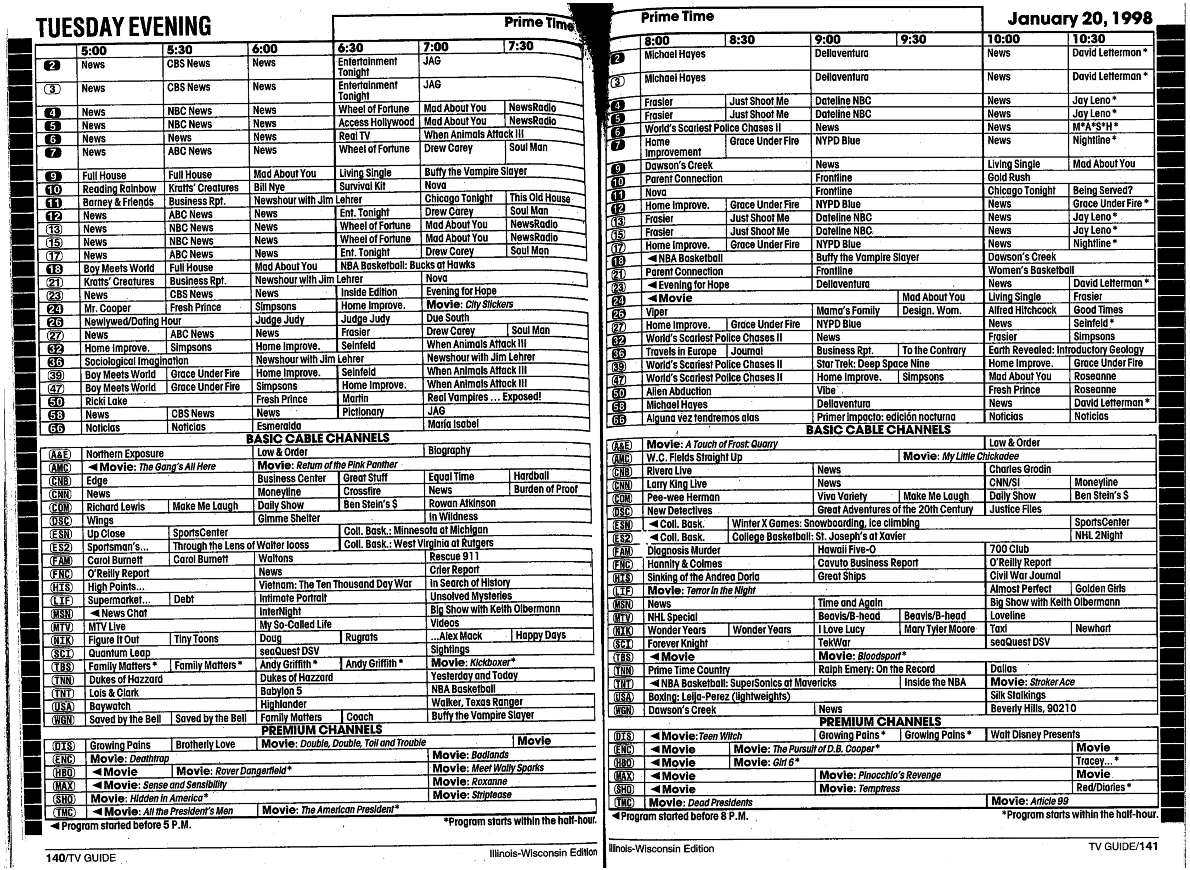
The cable service TV Guide Network brought this navigational function to the television screen, experimenting with a mix of scrolling program listings and entertainment features. TV Guide Network was a channel about channels, providing viewers with a portal to the hundreds of choices available to them. As one of those choices, however, TV Guide faced pressure to thrive as an entertainment service in its own right; to attract carriage fees and advertising revenues, the channel needed to be more than a "waystation" for television viewing, but also a "destination" in and of itself (Motavalli 2004). Between 1999 and 2013, this pressure led to experimentation with new programming formats to run alongside—and eventually replace—its listings. The disappearance of TV Guide Network in favor of Pop, therefore, represents not just abandoned brand legacy, but more significantly the passage of an entire navigational apparatus for engaging with linear television. One might assume that viewers simply do not need this kind of guide anymore. Able to subscribe to, search for, and stream programs rather than relying on the linear programming schedules of broadcast and cable channels, the users of newer non-linear services like Netflix and Hulu have no need for program listings. Non-linear viewers can be their own guides.

However, as one of hundreds of channels fighting to sustain themselves in a mature television industry beset by challenges from digital upstarts, Pop's emergence from the vestiges of TV Guide reveals much about the forces currently transforming the experience and business of television. As much as the Pop story suggests the passage of linear guides from increasingly non-linear television screens, it also helps us see why channels—as well as guides for navigating them—remain useful and essential means of understanding, researching, and criticizing television, as much if not more than ever before. While their functions change, and new navigational guides provide new curated pathways and recommendations, channels still matter. This book shows its readers how and why, providing its own navigational guide that anyone interested in the television industries can use to make sense of the abundance of choices and changes that define the channel landscape.

CHANNELS AND CONJUNCTURES IN A NETWORKED ERA

Insistence on the continued relevance of channels and television guides is neither intuitive nor uncontroversial. In a "post-network" moment in which "viewers now increasingly select what, when, and where to view from abundant options," power has shifted considerably away from industry professionals who program specific channels and channel networks in uniform, scheduled ways (Lotz 2014, 28). The dominance of a few, bottlenecked broadcast services has given way to a "networked" era, as described by Aymar Jean Christian (2018), in which the more open and participatory affordances of the Internet enable audiences to make programming choices while independent modes of production and distribution thrive outside the control of traditional channel gatekeepers. If channels represent these older, passing industry models, some argue they should be of decreasing concern to those of us tracking this exciting post-network—but networked—state of affairs.

For example, *TechCrunch* writer Tom Goodwin (2016) argues that as streaming services like Netflix deliver television programming through the Internet, "two



TUESDAY EVENING

Prime Time

	5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30
2	News	CBS News	News	Entertainment Tonight	JAG	
3	News	CBS News	News	Entertainment Tonight	JAG	
4	News	NBC News	News	Wheel of Fortune	Mad About You	NewsRadio
5	News	NBC News	News	Access Hollywood	Mad About You	NewsRadio
6	News	News	News	Real TV	When Animals Attack III	
7	News	ABC News	News	Wheel of Fortune	Drew Carey	Soul Man
9	Full House	Full House	Mad About You	Living Single	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	
10	Reading Rainbow	Kratts' Creatures	Bill Nye	Survival Kit	Nova	
11	Barney & Friends	Business Rpt.	Newshour with Jim Lehrer		Chicago Tonight	This Old House
12	News	ABC News	News	Ent. Tonight	Drew Carey	Soul Man
13	News	NBC News	News	Wheel of Fortune	Mad About You	NewsRadio
15	News	NBC News	News	Wheel of Fortune	Mad About You	NewsRadio
17	News	ABC News	News	Ent. Tonight	Drew Carey	Soul Man
18	Boy Meets World	Full House	Mad About You	NBA Basketball: Bucks at Hawks		
21	Kratts' Creatures	Business Rpt.	Newshour with Jim Lehrer		Nova	
23	News	CBS News	News	Inside Edition	Evening for Hope	
24	Mr. Cooper	Fresh Prince	Simpsons	Home Improve.	Movie: *City Slickers*	
26	Newlywed/Dating Hour		Judge Judy	Judge Judy	Due South	
27	News	ABC News	News	Frasier	Drew Carey	Soul Man
32	Home Improve.	Simpsons	Home Improve.	Seinfeld	When Animals Attack III	
36	Sociological Imagination		Newshour with Jim Lehrer		Newshour with Jim Lehrer	
39	Boy Meets World	Grace Under Fire	Home Improve.	Seinfeld	When Animals Attack III	
47	Boy Meets World	Grace Under Fire	Simpsons	Home Improve.	When Animals Attack III	
50	Ricki Lake		Fresh Prince	Martin	Real Vampires ... Exposed!	
58	News	CBS News	News	Pictionary	JAG	
66	Noticias	Noticias	Esmeralda		María Isabel	
BASIC CABLE CHANNELS						
A&E	Northern Exposure		Law & Order		Biography	
AMC	◄Movie: *The Gang's All Here*		Movie: *Return of the Pink Panther*			
CNB	Edge		Business Center	Great Stuff	Equal Time	Hardball
CNN	News		Moneyline	Crossfire	News	Burden of Proof
COM	Richard Lewis	Make Me Laugh	Daily Show	Ben Stein's $	Rowan Atkinson	
DSC	Wings		Gimme Shelter		In Wildness	
ESN	Up Close	SportsCenter		Coll. Bask.: Minnesota at Michigan		
ES2	Sportsman's...	Through the Lens of Walter Iooss		Coll. Bask.: West Virginia at Rutgers		
FAM	Carol Burnett	Carol Burnett	Waltons		Rescue 911	
FNC	O'Reilly Report		News		Crier Report	
HIS	High Points...		Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War		In Search of History	
LIF	Supermarket...	Debt	Intimate Portrait		Unsolved Mysteries	
MSN	◄News Chat		InterNight		Big Show with Keith Olbermann	
MTV	MTV Live		My So-Called Life		Videos	
NIK	Figure It Out	Tiny Toons	Doug	Rugrats	...Alex Mack	Happy Days
SCI	Quantum Leap		seaQuest DSV		Sightings	
TBS	Family Matters*	Family Matters*	Andy Griffith*	Andy Griffith*	Movie: *Kickboxer**	
TNN	Dukes of Hazzard		Dukes of Hazzard		Yesterday and Today	
TNT	Lois & Clark		Babylon 5		NBA Basketball	
USA	Baywatch		Highlander		Walker, Texas Ranger	
WGN	Saved by the Bell	Saved by the Bell	Family Matters	Coach	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	
PREMIUM CHANNELS						
DIS	Growing Pains	Brotherly Love	Movie: *Double, Double, Toil and Trouble*			Movie
ENC	Movie: *Deathtrap*				Movie: *Badlands*	
HBO	◄Movie	Movie: *Rover Dangerfield**			Movie: *Meet Wally Sparks*	
MAX	◄Movie: *Sense and Sensibility*				Movie: *Roxanne*	
SHO	Movie: *Hidden in America**				Movie: *Striptease*	
TMC	◄Movie: *All the President's Men*		Movie: *The American President**			

◄Program started before 5 P.M.

*Program starts within the half-hour.

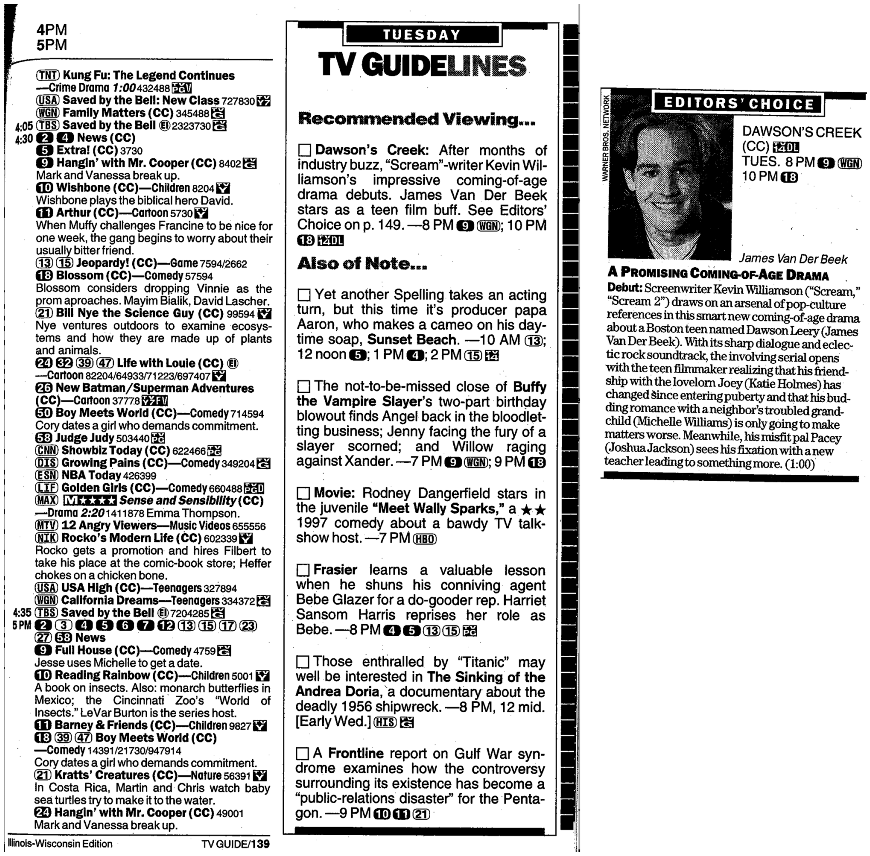
Prime Time January 20, 1998

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30
2	Michael Hayes		Dellaventura		News	David Letterman*
3	Michael Hayes		Dellaventura		News	David Letterman*
4	Frasier	Just Shoot Me	Dateline NBC		News	Jay Leno*
5	Frasier	Just Shoot Me	Dateline NBC		News	Jay Leno*
6	World's Scariest Police Chases II		News		News	M*A*S*H*
7	Home Improvement	Grace Under Fire	NYPD Blue		News	Nightline*
9	Dawson's Creek		News		Living Single	Mad About You
10	Parent Connection		Frontline		Gold Rush	
11	Nova		Frontline		Chicago Tonight	Being Served?
12	Home Improve.	Grace Under Fire	NYPD Blue		News	Grace Under Fire*
13	Frasier	Just Shoot Me	Dateline NBC		News	Jay Leno*
15	Frasier	Just Shoot Me	Dateline NBC		News	Jay Leno*
17	Home Improve.	Grace Under Fire	NYPD Blue		News	Nightline*
18	◄NBA Basketball		Buffy the Vampire Slayer		Dawson's Creek	
21	Parent Connection		Frontline		Women's Basketball	
23	◄Evening for Hope		Dellaventura		News	David Letterman*
24	◄Movie			Mad About You	Living Single	Frasier
26	Viper		Mama's Family	Design. Wom.	Alfred Hitchcock	Good Times
27	Home Improve.	Grace Under Fire	NYPD Blue		News	Seinfeld*
32	World's Scariest Police Chases II		News		Frasier	Simpsons
36	Travels in Europe	Journal	Business Rpt.	To the Contrary	Earth Revealed: Introductory Geology	
39	World's Scariest Police Chases II		Star Trek: Deep Space Nine		Home Improve.	Grace Under Fire
47	World's Scariest Police Chases II		Home Improve.	Simpsons	Mad About You	Roseanne
50	Alien Abduction		Vibe		Fresh Prince	Roseanne
58	Michael Hayes		Dellaventura		News	David Letterman*
66	Alguna vez tendremos alas		Primer impacto: edición nocturna		Noticias	Noticias
BASIC CABLE CHANNELS						
A&E	Movie: *A Touch of Frost: Quarry*				Law & Order	
AMC	W.C. Fields Straight Up			Movie: *My Little Chickadee*		
CNB	Rivera Live		News		Charles Grodin	
CNN	Larry King Live		News		CNN/SI	Moneyline
COM	Pee-wee Herman		Viva Variety	Make Me Laugh	Daily Show	Ben Stein's $
DSC	New Detectives		Great Adventures of the 20th Century		Justice Files	
ESN	◄Coll. Bask.	Winter X Games: Snowboarding, ice climbing				SportsCenter
ES2	◄Coll. Bask.	College Basketball: St. Joseph's at Xavier				NHL 2Night
FAM	Diagnosis Murder		Hawaii Five-O		700 Club	
FNC	Hannity & Colmes		Cavuto Business Report		O'Reilly Report	
HIS	Sinking of the Andrea Doria		Great Ships		Civil War Journal	
LIF	Movie: *Terror in the Night*				Almost Perfect	Golden Girls
MSN	News		Time and Again		Big Show with Keith Olbermann	
MTV	NHL Special		Beavis/B-head	Beavis/B-head	Loveline	
NIK	Wonder Years	Wonder Years	I Love Lucy	Mary Tyler Moore	Taxi	Newhart
SCI	Forever Knight		TekWar		seaQuest DSV	
TBS	◄Movie		Movie: *Bloodsport**			
TNN	Prime Time Country		Ralph Emery: On the Record		Dallas	
TNT	◄NBA Basketball: SuperSonics at Mavericks			Inside the NBA	Movie: *Stroker Ace*	
USA	Boxing: Leija-Perez (lightweights)				Silk Stalkings	
WGN	Dawson's Creek		News		Beverly Hills, 90210	
PREMIUM CHANNELS						
DIS	◄Movie: *Teen Witch*		Growing Pains*	Growing Pains*	Walt Disney Presents	
ENC	◄Movie	Movie: *The Pursuit of D.B. Cooper**				Movie
HBO	◄Movie	Movie: *Girl 6**				Tracey...*
MAX	◄Movie		Movie: *Pinocchio's Revenge*			Movie
SHO	◄Movie		Movie: *Tempress*			Red/Diaries*
TMC	Movie: *Dead Presidents*				Movie: *Article 99*	

◄Program started before 8 P.M.

*Program starts within the half-hour.

FIGURE 1.1 *The program listing grid served a navigational utility, helping readers of publications like* TV Guide *to choose between numerous channel offerings (in this case, for prime-time offerings on the night of Tuesday, January 20, 1998).*



4PM
5PM

(TNT) Kung Fu: The Legend Continues —Crime Drama 1:00 432488
(USA) Saved by the Bell: New Class 727830
(WGN) Family Matters (CC) 345488
4:05 (TBS) Saved by the Bell (EI) 2323730
4:30 2 4 News (CC)
5 Extra! (CC) 3730
9 Hangin' with Mr. Cooper (CC) 8402
Mark and Vanessa break up.
10 Wishbone (CC)—Children 8204
Wishbone plays the biblical hero David.
11 Arthur (CC)—Cartoon 5730
When Muffy challenges Francine to be nice for one week, the gang begins to worry about their usually bitter friend.
13 15 Jeopardy! (CC)—Game 7594/2662
18 Blossom (CC)—Comedy 57594
Blossom considers dropping Vinnie as the prom aproaches. Mayim Bialik, David Lascher.
21 Bill Nye the Science Guy (CC) 99594
Nye ventures outdoors to examine ecosystems and how they are made up of plants and animals.
24 32 39 47 Life with Louie (CC) (EI) —Cartoon 82204/64933/71223/697407
26 New Batman/Superman Adventures (CC)—Cartoon 37778
50 Boy Meets World (CC)—Comedy 714594
Cory dates a girl who demands commitment.
58 Judge Judy 503440
(CNN) Showbiz Today (CC) 622466
(DIS) Growing Pains (CC)—Comedy 349204
(ESN) NBA Today 426399
(LIF) Golden Girls (CC)—Comedy 660488
(MAX) M★★★★ *Sense and Sensibility* (CC) —Drama 2:20 1411878 Emma Thompson.
(MTV) 12 Angry Viewers—Music Videos 655556
(NIK) Rocko's Modern Life (CC) 602339
Rocko gets a promotion and hires Filbert to take his place at the comic-book store; Heffer chokes on a chicken bone.
(USA) USA High (CC)—Teenagers 327894
(WGN) California Dreams—Teenagers 334372
4:35 (TBS) Saved by the Bell (EI) 7204285
5 PM 2 3 4 5 6 7 12 13 15 17 23 27 58 News
9 Full House (CC)—Comedy 4759
Jesse uses Michelle to get a date.
10 Reading Rainbow (CC)—Children 5001
A book on insects. Also: monarch butterflies in Mexico; the Cincinnati Zoo's "World of Insects." LeVar Burton is the series host.
11 Barney & Friends (CC)—Children 9827
18 39 47 Boy Meets World (CC) —Comedy 14391/21730/947914
Cory dates a girl who demands commitment.
21 Kratts' Creatures (CC)—Nature 56391
In Costa Rica, Martin and Chris watch baby sea turtles try to make it to the water.
24 Hangin' with Mr. Cooper (CC) 49001
Mark and Vanessa break up.

Illinois-Wisconsin Edition TV GUIDE/139

TUESDAY

TV GUIDELINES

Recommended Viewing...

☐ **Dawson's Creek:** After months of industry buzz, "Scream"-writer Kevin Williamson's impressive coming-of-age drama debuts. James Van Der Beek stars as a teen film buff. See Editors' Choice on p. 149. —8 PM 9 (WGN); 10 PM 18

Also of Note...

☐ Yet another Spelling takes an acting turn, but this time it's producer papa Aaron, who makes a cameo on his day-time soap, **Sunset Beach**. —10 AM (13); 12 noon 5; 1 PM 4; 2 PM (15)

☐ The not-to-be-missed close of **Buffy the Vampire Slayer**'s two-part birthday blowout finds Angel back in the bloodletting business; Jenny facing the fury of a slayer scorned; and Willow raging against Xander. —7 PM 9 (WGN); 9 PM 18

☐ **Movie:** Rodney Dangerfield stars in the juvenile **"Meet Wally Sparks,"** a ★★ 1997 comedy about a bawdy TV talk-show host. —7 PM (HBO)

☐ **Frasier** learns a valuable lesson when he shuns his conniving agent Bebe Glazer for a do-gooder rep. Harriet Sansom Harris reprises her role as Bebe. —8 PM 4 5 (13) (15)

☐ Those enthralled by "Titanic" may well be interested in **The Sinking of the Andrea Doria**, a documentary about the deadly 1956 shipwreck. —8 PM, 12 mid. [Early Wed.] (HIS)

☐ A **Frontline** report on Gulf War syndrome examines how the controversy surrounding its existence has become a "public-relations disaster" for the Pentagon. —9 PM 10 11 (21)

EDITORS' CHOICE

WARNER BROS. NETWORK

DAWSON'S CREEK (CC)
TUES. 8 PM 9 (WGN)
10 PM 18

James Van Der Beek

A PROMISING COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA

Debut: Screenwriter Kevin Williamson ("Scream," "Scream 2") draws on an arsenal of pop-culture references in this smart new coming-of-age drama about a Boston teen named Dawson Leery (James Van Der Beek). With its sharp dialogue and eclectic rock soundtrack, the involving serial opens with the teen filmmaker realizing that his friendship with the lovelorn Joey (Katie Holmes) has changed since entering puberty and that his budding romance with a neighbor's troubled grandchild (Michelle Williams) is only going to make matters worse. Meanwhile, his misfit pal Pacey (Joshua Jackson) sees his fixation with a new teacher leading to something more. (1:00)

FIGURE 1.2 *In addition to full listings,* TV Guide *offered recommendations—which of the program options, like the premiere of* Dawson's Creek *on January 20, 1998, would be most worthwhile or "notable"? And on what channels could those recommended programs be found?*

foundational elements of TV choice architecture are wildly irrelevant for the future but are still used as organizational principle for billion dollar decisions." First,

> the old notion of a publisher curator has died . . . we don't watch channels we watch shows. . . . The role of TV channels is entirely irrelevant for curation, only relevant for the funding of shows we like. To take the entirely anachronistic device of the TV channel, and replicate it as an app, is stupid in the extreme.

Incredulous toward app-delivered television that extends channel logics of the past rather than embracing newer technological affordances, he continues, "Who wants to watch TV by selecting Apple TV, being paralyzed by 50 TV channel apps, then opening the CBS app, before selecting the show?" Rejecting the relevance of channels, he also questions the value of linear programming guides in a streaming environment. Services like Netflix have "freed" content from time: "this 'time shifting' for connected households is the predominant form of TV. Yet the centerpoint of TV remains the electronic programming guide and it's never changed. It shows irrelevant channels vertically and on a now irrelevant timescale." Frustrated with failed technological potential in favor of an "agonizingly complex" array of incompatible devices, services, and formats, he laments "I want all content to be linked . . . I want my remote to be my phone and control center for all content."

By these terms of analysis, this book would be doomed to the same stupidity and irrelevance in its interest in channels and its attempts to provide readers with a guide to their agonizingly complex landscape. However, if we temper techno-futurism with a critical understanding of media industries as contested, often contradictory systems of institutional meaning making and practice (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009, 236–7), we might better see our continued need for guides to television channels. Television is not merely a set of technologies awaiting universal compatibility, but also a system of competing industrial forces in which human agents embedded in institutional structures manage and deploy those technologies in different ways. Goodwin's chimeric universal service would exist outside the competition and choice that in significant part define capitalistic television industries. A single service with the convenience of Netflix and an unrestricted content library would depend on all content owners agreeing to support it. Studios like 20th Century Fox, NBC-Universal, ABC-Disney, and CBS Studios would need to agree to collaborate in a single space, finding a way to share profits equally or acquiescing to the dominance of a single player (instead of offering competing proprietary streaming services like Hulu and CBS All Access). Streaming services like Amazon and Netflix would need to stop competing for exclusive access to content. Or, a single, monopolistic, vertically integrated service would need to own all program rights and choke off supply to any competition. Goodwin is correct that there is no good reason we simply must have television channels; they are not natural or inevitable, but products of how television technology has been historically organized as an industry. Yet channels persist as the expression of different companies attempting to organize television in economically advantageous ways, carving out distinct territories and brand identities in collaboration and opposition to one another.

Viewer relationships to television technologies have also depended on the logic of the channel. Television sets act as channels receivers, tuning in to over-the-air VHF, UHF, and now digital signals captured from the electromagnetic spectrum by antennas attuned to individual channel frequencies; but the expanded bandwidth allowed by coaxial wires added dozens then hundreds of additional channels that cable or satellite subscribers could feed to their television screens. Today's "smart," online-ready television sets, meanwhile, carry on-board app suites that receive services carried by Wi-Fi from our Internet routers. Other Wi-Fi enabled devices like Roku and Apple TV connected to our televisions by HDMI cable bring an even greater variety of apps to the menu of channels from which we can select. Apps and services like Netflix and Amazon Prime carried to our television are no mere channels, of course, but something different and more advanced. Yet these television apps use wired and wireless connectivity to modify, adapt, and reconfigure television to receive new channel inputs. While many no longer viewer television content on traditional television sets, opting instead for tablets, phones, and other personal devices, our ability to access specific programming services like Netflix over a Wi-Fi connection links these devices with the same tradition of receiving television signals channeled to us by the television industries.

In the face of disruption and new competition, moreover, legacy television industries hold dearly to channel logics. Local broadcast stations, national broadcast networks, and cable services devote serious energies to identifying and differentiating themselves as channels, all to cultivate viewer loyalty, affinity, or habit in choosing among an abundance of options. As relative newcomers like YouTube and Netflix intensify the fragmentation of the television audience into ever-smaller pieces, they too adopt some of these channel logics to position themselves in a crowded field. The creation of a channel, in this sense, results from branding practices (Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004) that provide for product differentiation in competitive environments. In her landmark study of television branding, Catherine Johnson argues that the impetus to brand television services in both the US and the UK emerged as consumers gained access to a greater number of channels and services beyond the broadcast context (2012, 5). Yet as traditional television technology "becomes decentred as the primary means through which television programmes are watched," she asks if new digital services have "undermined the role of the channel brand in the US television industry" (38). Traditional television channels differentiated by their organization of specific content offerings lose ground in this digital environment to "service brands" like Hulu defined by the experience of "what you can do with television," she finds. Nevertheless, rather than a "death knell" for the television channel, this transformation drives "the development of the television channel as a global media brand that can be adapted and extended into new markets" (56–57). In other words, even as new digital services threaten legacy television channels, it is through channel brands that legacy media conglomerates negotiate this disruption. The channel is both at stake in the digital revolution and a means to survive it.

Rather than refer to Hulu as a "channel," Johnson refers to it as a "portal through which to engage in the extended experiences of television viewing that are enabled by the internet" (57). Amanda Lotz (2017) also embraces the language of "portals" for describing streaming television and its resistance to the time-specific viewing of linear television industries. Whereas broadcast and cable television programming relied upon a linear notion of time in its scheduling practices, distribution windows, program lengths, and episodic storytelling structures, online television need not adhere to that same timeliness. Instead, non-linear, online television portals support viewing experiences in which consumers choose what to watch when. It is thus worth considering the contemporary television industries as a struggle between legacy channels adapting to new conditions, on the one side, and the new portals that threaten to replace them, on the other. From that perspective, channels still matter as the persistent, not-yet-vanquished continuity in a story of media change.

Yet even if we distinguish services like Hulu or Netflix from legacy television channel brands like CBS or HBO, that difference need not be one of diametric opposition. While providing non-linear viewing experiences, streaming services may not fully transcend the linear limitations of television channels. Lotz (2017) contrasts the distributional model of portals to the "flow" and "publishing" models identified by cultural theorist

Bernard Miége (1989). The flow model of linear broadcast and cable television distributed scheduled media programming that could be integrated in the patterns of everyday life, while publishing logics allowed television to be marked, sold, and experienced at retail in the form of commodities like the DVD or iTunes downloads. Portals offer their own unique logic of distribution, however, providing users a menu of goods from which individualized media experiences can be constructed. Yet despite these distributional differences, Lotz shrewdly visualizes several ways in which portals carry forward channel strategies. Although portals are not so restricted in their "capacity constraint," offering more programming than could fit in a linear 24-hour-a-day schedule, they continue to engage in curatorial practices to select and organize content. Moreover, "the strategies of audience targeting—or channel branding—that have been characteristic of cable channels seem consistent here and applicable to the portal environment," especially as subscription services like Netflix target a multiplicity of specific taste cultures. So even as a new portal logic dominates the space of Internet-delivered television, its relationship to the television channel may not be one of opposition and obliteration so much as evolution and adaptation.

With that in mind, we can consider how television "flow" evolves even as new services operate outside of Miége's flow-based distributional logics. Raymond Williams developed his own theory of "flow" to describe, at the height of the network era, "the defining characteristic of broadcasting simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form" (2003, 86). Analyzing the sequences in which programmers produced meaningful connections within television scheduling, Williams pushed his readers to think beyond individual television programs to consider the contexts of flow in which programming was delivered. Individual television shows shared generic and thematic links with the programs that preceded and followed them, as well as the ads aired during them. This flow concept also captured viewer relationships to the channel, where programmed sequences aimed to get us to "go with the flow" and be swept away in the resulting programming schedule, as Jostein Gripsrud (1998) once put it. The linear television channel programmer, in this sense, generated the current that could sweep up audiences and, above all, stop them from changing channels. Even then, changing the channel would prove to be less than an escape from flow, and more like navigation to another current in a greater programming stream.

Water metaphors abound in these attempts to understand how media industries organize television experiences: from channel to flow to streaming, all suggest the production of a current in which viewing occurs. They also imply movement, in that currents carry viewers forward in time, from the beginning of one program to the end and perhaps into another. Portals threaten this logic, as television industries surrender the power to sweep us away. From VCR to DVD to DVR and now streaming, new technologies have empowered viewers to remove themselves from linear currents and construct their own sequences of television, obliterating the idea of a single experience of flow. Moreover, in a digitally connected world, limitations once imposed upon television flows—such as the maintenance of global distribution territories—have been challenged by users who deliver television to one another across national boundaries. Instead of going with the flow, television viewers now create channels of flow. Within participatory media, it becomes harder to imagine channel flows that simply wash over us, where the undertow pulls us into the watery depths of industrially designed television experiences.

However, to proclaim flow as obsolete would miss its continued conceptual utility for thinking about industrial contexts of television creation, delivery, and experience. DVD and DVR did not eliminate flow so much as shift control over its "regime of repetition," where users not industry schedulers now determine when specific programs can be seen (Kompare 2005, 215). The same could be said of streaming services like Netflix: while no two users would likely have the same experience of flow, watching Netflix nevertheless produces a recognizable sense of flow, often fed by the platform's ability to gather data about viewing habits and generate personalized menus and recommendations. Users construct their own sequences of viewing, but the platform encourages particular pathways through the menu of options in its programming library. Netflix might grant one of its original series, like *House of Cards* (2013–) or *Orange is the New Black* (2013–), prominent placement on the home screen for some or even all of its subscribers. It can suggest one sample a library program like *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003–2009), perhaps, after receiving from the user five-star feedback for dramas like *House of Cards* and *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999–2006), based on the theme of presidential politics shared by all. Nothing can compel the viewer to follow that recommendation; but even in the era of network and cable dominance, viewers always had the option to change the channel. Thus, much like network programmers developed practices like "hot switching" to eliminate commercial breaks between programs in hopes of keeping viewers in the current, Netflix designs user experiences so one episode's conclusion automatically cues up and plays another. Encouraging us to "binge," Netflix hopes we will ride the current of the service it provides.

The menu of programs before us means that there is no universal, linear experience; yet Internet-delivered television is non-linear only in an abstract sense of quantum potentiality. Our social lives remain bounded by time: every episode we watch brings us ever closer to the next workday, appointment, or other obligation. Netflix can offer us unlimited programming resources for constructing our own television flows; but we as viewers remain limited in how many sequences we can string together within the linear passage of time. So more precisely, Netflix helps us to shape linear flows from the non-linear possibilities of its program offerings, privileging some quantum outcomes over others based on its economic and cultural priorities. Even if skeptical readers will not grant that Netflix *is* itself a channel in the traditional sense, it nevertheless *creates* multiple channels of individualized viewer experience.

The persistent significance of channels, then, does not depend on lumping all television services into a single category. As the organization of this book suggests, the television industry supports and maintains many different kinds of channels across the broadcast, cable, and streaming arenas. In different ways across these distinct sectors, industries use channels to create meaning out of and mediate experiences of watching television. Put another way, channels matter because they are sites at which media industries provide contexts and conjunctures for television to be produced and consumed. Reflecting on the intellectual project of cultural studies, Lawrence Grossberg describes

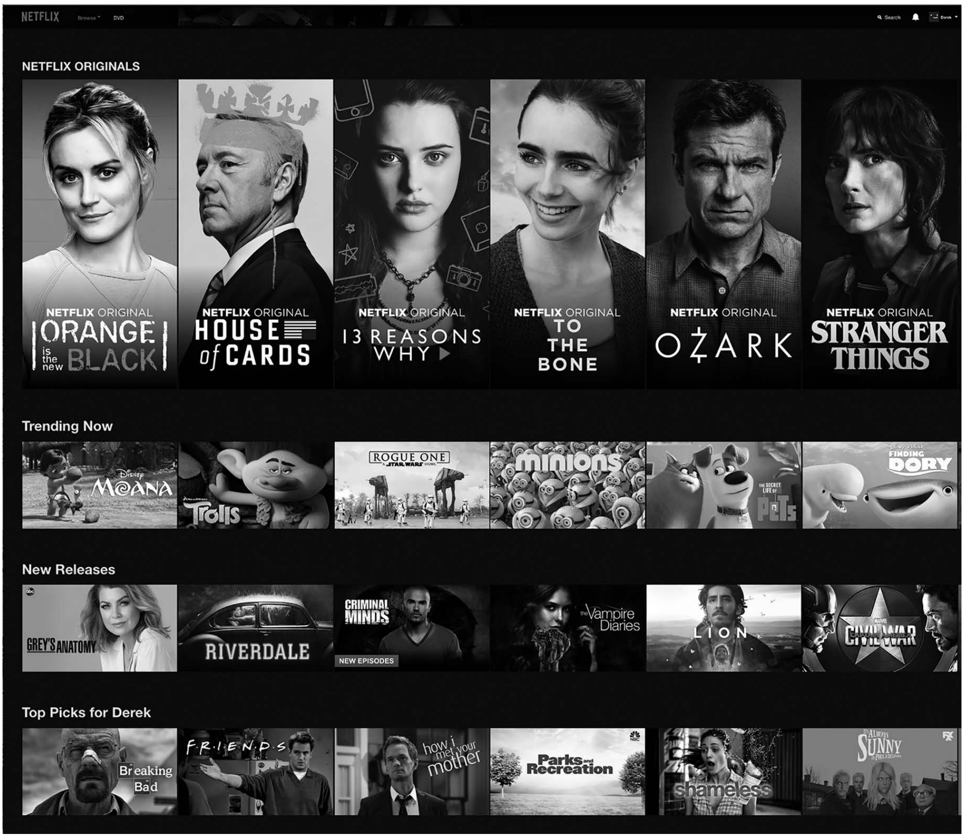


FIGURE 1.3 *Non-linear television services like Netflix encourage subscribers to construct particular programming flows out of the unlimited possibilities that they can build for themselves, foregrounding Netflix original series, new releases, and programs matched to users' tastes by recommendation algorithms.*

the conjuncture "as a way of constructing contexts," in which "the identity, significance, and effects of any practice or event (including cultural practices and events) are defined only by the complex set of relations that surround, interpenetrate, and shape it, and make it what it is" (2010, 20). The constantly changing nature of these relations, he adds, requires that cultural studies adopt a "radical contextualism" attuned to a continual process of articulation in which these relations are made, unmade, and remade. Analysis of channels, in this sense, produces insight into some of the specific contexts in which television programs, industry players, viewing practices, and hierarchies of value might become articulated to one another. At a second level, the changing significances of channels in an era of industry transformation encourage us to confront industry as a process of adaptation and rearticulation over time. Channels reveal currents that carry some content, ideas, and cultures while forcing others to swim upstream. Channels are tangible sites of industry practice where the agency and labor of cultural struggle can actually happen; while they may be sites of flow, they may also provide contexts for what Anna Tsing (2004) calls "friction"—clashes of culture as globalization brings media companies into new articulations with diverse audiences, tastes, and practices.

Examining channels means investigating currents, flows, and streams (and—beyond water metaphors—pathways, gateways, platforms, and portals) as contexts to be analyzed and deconstructed. This contextual analysis also contributes to burgeoning discussions about distribution and delivery in media studies (Curtin, Holt, and Sanson 2014; Perren 2013), revealing how television distributors of all kinds generate contexts and produce articulations in this sense. Every channel in the television landscape might therefore reveal industry efforts to shape television for viewers in specific historical and cultural contexts. From that perspective, this book embraces a case-study model in which a single channel like Pop can tell us something significant about the evolving television industries.

CHANNEL GUIDES GO POP

The origins of Pop from the TV Guide Network (and before that, the TV Guide Channel) reveal how the cable industry, as recently as the 1990s, leveraged the linearity of television as an asset, articulating viewer need for navigational assistance to new business models and channel brands. Prior to relaunching as Pop, TV Guide served two key industrial functions in the cable industry. The first was a "utility" function (Donaton 2000) through which the company provided listings and navigational guidance—a valuable service sought out by cable providers as scheduled channel offerings became more numerous. TV Guide functioned secondly as "entertainment"—a role that it occupied in an increasingly exclusive way as a less linear channel landscape meant less demand for the utility once offered.

To understand the utility of TV Guide, we can consider the longer history of the electronic program guide (EPG). As cable channel capacity grew, operators did not rely on publications like *TV Guide* (which initially lacked the same depth of cable listings as for broadcast), instead making navigation a part of the subscription service provided. In 1981, United Video Satellite Group began offering US cable system operators a service called the Electronic Program Guide that displayed a scrolling grid of program listings. Although not searchable and only projecting a couple hours into the future, early EPGs nevertheless challenged print guides as the dominant navigational utility. *TV Guide* thus developed a competing EPG service called TV Guide Onscreen, delivered to 3 million homes by 1996, compared to 40 million for United Video's EPG, by then called Prevue Guide (Flint 1996, 26). Parent company NewsCorp ultimately sold *TV Guide* and its cable interests to United Video in 1998, however; Prevue would be renamed in the merger to exploit the print publication's legacy brand ("TV Guide Deal" 1998).

Despite efforts to create a consolidated channel for cable listings from the merger, the new TV Guide Channel struggled to thrive as a utility in a cable industry otherwise organized around entertainment services. First, while carriage on major cable systems opened up the possibility of subscription and advertising revenue, sufficient funds proved difficult to secure. Even after the merger, advertisers were not particularly interested in the channel (Lafayette 2005). This was not due to low viewership, as TV Guide claimed 84 page views per television household a day (200 billion views a year) (Donaton 2000). However, because the program listing was omnipresent, advertisements shared screen space and viewer attention. Low advertiser interest fed other problems: believing that a utility channel would draw less viewer interest than entertainment programming, cable operators were not willing to pay TV Guide carriage fees of more than pennies per subscriber (Motavalli 2004; Farrell 2008). While generating revenue as a utility channel proved difficult, TV Guide enjoyed more success when it sidestepped its branded service, licensing new listing technology to cable operators who wanted their own proprietary program guides as part of the interface for digital set-top cable boxes (Lafayette 2004). These guides would no longer be "passive," but Interactive Program Guides (IPGs) allowing for searches, DVR, and other new functions ("TV Guide Channel Launches" 2004; "TV Guide Channel Selects" 2006). Throughout, viewers increasingly came to rely on search-enabled functions that TV Guide made available on its own website—billed as "America's No. 1 television entertainment Web site" in 2003 ("TV Guide Channel" 2003). Increasingly, it looked like that the television channel itself might best be used for other purposes.

After competing EPG provider Gemstar purchased TV Guide for $9.5 billion in 1999, the cable channel embraced a new programming format. Alongside scrolling program listings, TV Guide Channel began offering short-form programming centered around entertainment news, program previews, celebrity gossip, and more. Each programming hour would consist of ten three- to five-minute segments, with advertisements in between. This familiar arrangement of entertainment-embedded advertising (even if in split screen with channel listings) increased the channel's Nielsen ratings by 8% and overall ad revenues by 66% compared to the previous year (Friedman 2000). By 2003, the channel's self-described "signature" program was *What's On*, a ten-minute series airing every ten minutes to the hour throughout prime-time to preview the "most noteworthy programs in the next hour" and provide a guide to "primetime in real time" ("TV Guide Channel" 2003). Two years later, General Manager Tom Cosgrove announced his intent to build a "real schedule" relying on original series programmed at intervals of 30 and 60 minutes (Hibberd 2005).

Although these efforts maintained the channel's self-professed niche in "entertainment guidance" ("TV Guide Channel" 2006), they increasingly put TV Guide in competition with other entertainment channels to which it had once served more as a utility companion. By 2007, as the channel rebranded itself TV Guide Network, it veered harder into entertainment, deemphasizing navigation of other channels' offerings in favor of its own original programs. The 2007 TV Guide reality series *Making News: Texas Style*, for example, extended the channel's thematic interest in television by focusing on the production of a local television news program. In 2009, TV Guide Network began relying on second-run syndication to acquire scripted programs previously distributed by broadcast networks and other cable outlets, adding reruns of series like *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006–2010) and *Punk'd* (MTV, 2003–2012) to its schedule ("TV Guide Network" 2009). Crucially, this move to remake the channel in the image of more traditional, programmed cable outlets came as it dropped scrolling program listings altogether. Although *Advertising Age* reported that some 20 million basic cable subscribers without enhanced IPG service would lose on-screen navigational assistance (Learmonth 2009), the elimination of this broad-based utility followed the newfound pursuit of market segmentation. By 2010, the channel sought “entertainment-based original and acquired programming that appeals to the channel’s core female viewers” (Umstead 2010, 11).

TV Guide Network now looked much like other cable channels: it offered a linear schedule of entertainment programming to attract specific consumer demographics it could package and sell to advertisers in the form of Nielsen ratings. Yet it now had to compete with those other services, too. When Macrovision purchased Gemstar in 2008, it immediately put the channel up for sale, hoping for $400 million or more; but perceptions of TV Guide Network as a losing investment led to a sale of only $255 million to Lionsgate in 2009. Ownership and control of the channel changed multiple times in succession, with Lionsgate selling a 49% stake to One Equity, which then sold to CBS Corporation in 2013 (Abrams and Littleton 2013). By the next year, CBS leveraged its partnership as a mean of reallocation, feeding encore presentations of *Amazing Race* (2001–) and *Survivor* (2000–) to TV Guide Network as a “secondary national platform” to build viewership for each new episode broadcast on CBS (Farrell 2013, 28).

So while the 2014 launch of Pop represented a significant change in brand name, it was only the most recent moment in a long transformation from viewing utility to entertainment service. Now competing on the same terms as most other channels, Pop offered a window into both the pressures facing television entertainment channels and the strategies imagined to negotiate those challenges. First, amid competition between cable channels for similar markets, Pop tried to articulate new, discrete audience segments to serve. Pop executives described their audience as the “modern grownup,” a generation of viewers more “in touch with their youthful side” and more “engaged with culture” than the social expectations of marrying and having kids (Lafayette 2014). Pop also secondly communicated its commitment to original program production as a means of building viewership and justifying its individual channel value, promising 400 hours of original programming throughout 2015 (Lafayette 2014). Pop participated in a moment of “peak TV” in which desires to attract the attention of viewers who can choose what, when, and where to watch led to an abundance of original episodic television production—with insiders like FX Network President John Landgraf questioning its sustainability (Holloway and Littleton 2016). In other words, Pop helped drive a production “bubble” that might itself pop (Littleton 2017, 8). Even before the rebrand, industry analysts named TV Guide Network as one of many channels “hunting for prestige episodic series” (Goldstein 2014). Initial support by original production—as well as imports of original Canadian comedy series like *Schitt’s Creek* (CBC, 2015–)—enabled Pop to sustain eight quarters of consecutive growth by 2016. This growth notably included a 30% increase in viewership by the 25- to 54-year-old women targeted by the channel, as well as carriage in eight million more new homes served by Cablevision, WideOpenWest, and AT&T Uverse (Umstead and Gibbons 2016, 8).

While just one case study, the transformation of TV Guide into Pop offers significant insight into how channels and channel logics operate amid disruption and change. TV Guide’s efforts to leverage, manage, and ultimate abandon its utility functions underscore a fundamental industrial shift away from linear viewing experiences that required its particular navigational guidance and recommendations for scheduled programming. Instead of seeing this transformation as evidence that non-linear television has rendered utility functions obsolete, however, we might ask instead what interfaces or other industrial conjunctures are now providing these contexts for navigation and recommendation. This particular channel model may have passed, in other words, but its functions have not.

In the new forms and functions driving Pop as an entertainment service, meanwhile, we see the channel as the persistent foundation upon which legacy industries consolidate their power and try to adapt to change—even or perhaps especially if in retreat. Not all channels will survive this fragmented, disrupted environment: some will rebrand, like Pop; others will collapse. Finally, the Pop case study reminds us that the new world of online television is not one of universal experience. For some basic cable subscribers—millions of them, even if not those most valued by advertisers—the passage of TV Guide Network and its on-screen listings represented a loss of orientation in a linear channel landscape in which they were still very much embedded. While unsurprising that TV Guide and later Pop would ignore this less valuable consumer group, our own critical attention to a variety of channels should tune in to *all* the contexts, linear and non-linear alike, in which television is organized by industry and experienced by viewers.

LINEAR AND NON-LINEAR RECOMMENDATIONS

Each chapter that follows delivers on this promise by offering focused examination of a single television channel or service. These case studies show how their respective channels identify and distinguish themselves from competitors, how they reposition themselves in the face of disruption and change, and why they provide unique or fundamental insight into the history, present, and future of television. Digging into the logics of the television channel, and exploring a vast array of examples from different cultural, economic, regulatory, and infrastructural positions, this book provides a guide to help readers gain a critical understanding of the abundance of services and choices currently characterizing the medium. In its organization, the book even evokes the structure of channel listings—as a relative of sorts to *TV Guide*—laying out an ordered list of curated content and providing insight into a menu of channel offerings. This format encourages readers to turn their attention from channel to channel and, in the process, gain deeper understanding of the television industries and the logics by which they shape television culture. Yet while *TV Guide* and other popular channel listings help viewers decide what to watch from a channel menu, this book takes on the more critical mission of helping readers understand how and why those options have been constructed in the first place. Of additional note in the organization of the book is an attempt to integrate study of television channels as they operate and evolve on a global scale. By putting different channels from different national contexts in dialogue with one another, readers should gain a strong sense of how channel logics shape television as a transnational medium, how television services negotiate global boundaries, as well as how viewers situated in specific geographic and cultural relations across the globe engage with television through channels. Across all of these concerns, the channel listing serves as the metaphorical backdrop against which many different conversations in the critical study of television industries might be organized.

The first set of chapters focuses on traditional broadcast stations and networks whose over-the-air signals provide channel space for reaching large audiences while balancing tensions between the local and the national as well as between public obligations and commercial profits. Laying out a conceptual foundation for understanding network television as an industry, Kristen J. Warner explains how transitions in personnel and programming strategy at ABC extended from management of risk and crisis—where moves toward more racial equality in casting result from careful strategic calculation. Caryn Murphy emphasizes the importance of ownership in assessing network channels, finding that the relationship between The CW and CBS Corporation enables this broadcast service to target audiences on a smaller scale more common to the cable industry. In her chapter on Rede Globo, Courtney Brannon Donoghue shows how these relationships between channels and conglomerates unfold in both domestic and global dimensions, with Brazil's most powerful media company seeking to maintain local dominance as it contends with shifting media platforms and audience tastes worldwide. Turning investigation of broadcast networking to the realm of public television, Michele Hilmes identifies the US Public Broadcasting System as a crucial innovator of "crowdsourcing" models, illustrating how channels can serve the needs of local and national citizens alike. This tension in public broadcasting between the local and the national drives Allison Perlman's investigation of the Alabama Public Television Network, where she shows how local public television channels have served and will continue to serve as platforms for the construction of local identities and institutions within national televisions cultures. Looking beyond the US, Hanne Bruun considers the case of the Danish broadcaster DR to assess how public service changes in an era of digital technology, where channels continuing to receive public funds might challenge the interests of commercial services as they move to online platforms. Although his chapter on MeTV shifts focus back to US commercial broadcasting, Derek Kompare continues this investigation of what emerging media platforms mean for broadcasters, exploring how the small "diginet" uses digital subchannels to carve out a new space on broadcast television for syndicated programming and nostalgia-based marketing.

A second group of chapters shifts focus to channels that provide content to cable and satellite subscribers. Most often, these channels operate in the same commercial vein as many broadcast services—selling audiences to advertisers. However, a subscription economy in which channels supplement ad revenue with carriage fees paid for inclusion in subscription bundles, combined with an abundance of channel choices that fragments the overall television audience, means that these channels often carve out narrower niche markets compared to broadcasters. Instead of nations or publics they often serve specific demographics and tastes.

In her study of WGN America, Christine Becker bridges the gap between the broadcast economy and subscription television by tracing how a local television station transformed into a national cable service. Although sports channel ESPN has long served as an anchor for the bundles sold by cable and satellite providers, Travis Vogan explores how it responded to challenges from new streaming services by emphasizing prestige programming and the persistent value of liveness in an on-demand world. Meanwhile, Deborah L. Jaramillo argues that competitor NBC Sports Network differentiated itself by eschewing mass appeal and increasingly covering non-US events to give the domestic service a more elite sensibility. Focusing on the specific identities that channels construct to achieve this differentiation, Jon Kraszewski explains how The Weather Channel depended on a promise of trustworthiness—a valuable identity disrupted in struggles with cable and satellite operators who reframed its "docu-series" programming as "reality TV." Melissa Zimdars continues this investigation of the value of reality genres within channel programming and branding strategies by considering how TLC's focus on everyday spectacle depends upon compassionate discourses about food and fatness recognizable to viewers. Identifying these ways in which channels brand themselves as "prosocial," Laurie Ouellette examines MTV's self-promotional social outreach campaigns, arguing that the public service model of broadcast television has been reinvented in cause-oriented terms more lucrative for media companies.

The remaining chapters focused on cable and satellite channels explore how these services build and maintain programming appeals to specific audiences while potentially reorienting themselves around new target markets deemed more strategically or economically viable. David Craig and Derek Johnson characterize A&E in terms of a managed multiplicity, where the channel's initial investment in elite arts and entertainment grew to a more general entertainment focus incorporating multiple tastes, demographics, and ideological sensibilities, organized across subsidiary channel outlets. In her chapter on Spike TV, Amanda D. Lotz examines its aim to become the "first cable channel for men," revealing how and why attempts at constructing a gender-specific cable brand proved elusive. Similarly concerned with industry attempts to court young men, Nick Marx examines the seemingly progressive and feminist support that Comedy Central offered for female-led programming, arguing that promotional efforts nevertheless reaffirmed the power and privilege of men and masculinity amid these attempts at broadening appeal. Considering how Nick Jr. carved out a NickMom programming block within an otherwise child-oriented schedule, Erin Copple Smith illustrates the links between audience and dayparts as well as the challenges of balancing appeals to multiple markets. Kyra Hunting and Jonathan Gray build on this interest in marketing to children and parents by examining how Disney Junior uses a strategy of industrial intertextuality to create a network of connections between Disney properties (some new to the channel and some "classics" recognizable to parents), selling an entire "family" of products. Christopher Chávez, meanwhile, explores the limits of the cross-demographic marketing built into the Disney empire, arguing that the gender-specific service of a universal boyhood underlying Disney XD assumes whiteness and reveals how marketers' explicit interest in childhood gender neglects crucial intersections with race. Considering one last Disney-owned channel, Barbara Selnick examines the transformation of ABC Family into Freeform, a rebranding that articulated a new youth audience called "becomers" amid retreat from the idea of family viewing as a means of channel organization and identification. Finally, Alisa Perren investigates how El Rey, at launch, used the "indie" image of auteur filmmaker Robert Rodriguez to appeal equally to viewers relating to his Latino identity as well as his genre tastes—a match that struggled to cohere amid intense competition within the cable and satellite industries.

By contrast to these linear services, the third set of chapters focuses on new forms of television delivery enabled by online streaming platforms. In these cases, television channels based in open program development and participatory forms of engagement can emerge even as legacy logics of commercial advertising, merchandising, and public service persist.

Many of these new channels operate on digital and social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Twitch. As argued by Avi Santo, AwesomenessTV supports itself not just as a multi-channel network on YouTube, but also as a fully branded and merchandised empire, leveraging a host of young social media celebrities across different genres, formats, markets, and licensing opportunities. While Santo traces a new strategic arrangement afforded by YouTube, Lori Kido Lopez focuses on its political potential: considering the channel ISAtv, she argues that the branding strategies afforded by platforms like YouTube can support Asian Americans and other communities that corporate media have previously ignored. Echoing these political possibilities for the public sphere, Subin Paul examines how East India Comedy's YouTube channel uses satire to carve out a space for citizen dialogue that broadcast institutions in India did not previously allow. Beyond YouTube, James Bennett and Niki Strange explore the ways in which social media platform Twitter has positioned itself in relation to the television industries, increasingly functioning as a television channel itself in the process. Building on this investigation of social media *as* television channel, Matthew Thomas Payne explores how Twitch.tv has applied a televisual framework to streaming of game play videos, creating a channel in which distribution of game footage and commentary becomes profitable and game spectatorship becomes accessible. Outside this profit-driven realm, Faye Woods considers the relaunch of BBC Three as an online-only, on-demand, platform-neutral public service broadcasting channel compelled to balance public interest obligations and the pursuit of popularity—all turning on efforts to connect with younger viewers. Using interest in new political possibilities as the foundation for launching an online television platform, Open TV founder Aymar Jean Christian explores how his web distribution channel enables development of television programming by independent producers—especially from communities long ignored by legacy television industries.

The final group of chapters in this volume explores the logic of "premium" television embraced by both upstart and legacy television channels as a means of generating revenue (as well as distinction) in an increasingly crowded marketplace for broadcast, cable and satellite, and streaming services alike. Premium channels depend on subscription revenues, using original, exclusive, or otherwise attractive programming to lure in those subscribers. As the global leader in this market, Netflix often denies interest in the branding strategies defining its cable and satellite progenitors; yet as Timothy Havens argues, Netflix relies on branding to differentiate itself from the competition while making general entertainment appeals to broad but diverse audiences around the world. Against these global aspirations, Evan Elkins identifies Hulu as uniquely American, maintaining a national focus in the digital era that respects "geoblocked" market territories and corresponds to the domestic priorities of the legacy networks (ABC, NBC, and Fox) that co-own it. Similarly interested in the persistence of the national amid globalization and digitization, Michael Curtin and Yongli Li examine China's most popular video streaming service, iQiyi, arguing that it represents a new moment in Chinese television where new conceptions of the audience, pushes toward commercialism, and continued state oversight support new kinds of programming. Attuned to the movement of non-media businesses into subscription television industries, Karen Petruska examines how Amazon Prime Video links television delivery to an economy of retail and free shipping, distinguishing itself from its competitors through a wider suite of technology-based services.

The remaining chapters consider how legacy television industries, too, navigate premium strategies in the face of channel disruption. Peter Alilunas highlights the case of Playboy TV, showing both how the channel embraced early premium cable models to establish a market for sexually explicit content and how those models face new challenges when online streaming platforms make the same kind of programming available for free. In the premium cable service Starz, Myles McNutt sees not just an attempt to compete with HBO and Showtime through claims to program quality, value, and distinctiveness, but also development of an affective marketing strategy geared toward cultivation of fandom suited to non-linear forms of distribution. Similarly, Cory Barker and Andrew Zolides track the transition of wrestling programming from a staple of broadcast and cable schedules to an over-the-top subscription service in its own right; as the WWE Network, the wrestling franchise can develop new production practices and industrial relationships, while protected by its established industry footholds from the risks facing many other new services. A final chapter brings this consideration of premium television—and channels more broadly—full circle by considering the case of CBS All Access, which uses exclusive content with built-in franchise appeal to encourage subscribers and broadcast affiliate stations alike to follow the broadcast network to the new subscription economy.

With any luck, the linear organization sketched out here coheres as an orderly, satisfying flow of content with a clear, curated identity. Nevertheless, readers are encouraged to read these chapters out of order as well, taking a hint from the television channel landscape under investigation. While traditional television channels present curated viewing schedules, we have long been free to change channels, moving from ABC to MTV—and now from YouTube to Netflix. Indeed, it is that long-standing freedom to choose for ourselves and build programming flows out of an abundance of channels that drives programmers' attempts to keep us tuned in and makes the enhanced freedom of choice provided by Netflix so desirable to many. As much as each linear channel might present a structured program, in the aggregate channels have offered choice and the possibility of movement between them. In that context, the reader of this book—whether a researcher, an instructor, or a student—should be encouraged to carve their own paths through the flow of the channel chapters.

Beyond reading within the four main sections elaborated here, therefore, readers are also recommended to read across them. Those interested in the role of executive and creative personnel in the management of television channels, for example, would benefit from reading the chapters about ABC, A&E, The Weather Channel, El Rey, and AwesomenessTV in combination. At the same time, those interested in conglomeration and/or the management of specific television companies can uncover a deeper story about how Disney operates across many channel holdings including ABC, Disney Junior, Disney XD, and Freeform.

Meanwhile, television's mediation of national and local identities can be read across commercial channels like Rede Globo, WGN America, East India Comedy, Hulu, iQiyi, and CBS All Access. In the public television sector, these same dynamics can be compared in the cases of PBS, DR, Alabama Public Television Network, and BBC Three.

Still other recommendations could be made. Coursing through several chapters is reflection on the particular value ascribed by the television industries to masculinity and male viewership, as seen in the case studies of Spike, Comedy Central, Disney XD, and Playboy. At the same time, one might explore the emergence of alternatives to those hegemonic valuations in the way that El Rey, ISAtv, and Open TV re-envision television channels as conduits for a greater variety of voices. Those interested in marketing and audiences might be intrigued by reading about the way channels like Pop, Freeform, and El Rey imagine new categories like "modern-ups," "becomers," and "strivers," respectively, into being. While Nick Jr, Disney Junior, and Disney XD obviously target children and families, MeTV, MTV, Freeform, AwesomenessTV, and BBC Three highlight issues of age and generation more broadly when read in concert. Those more intrigued by genre might enjoy reading the connections between The CW, The Weather Channel, Comedy Central, TLC, and WWE Network. Ruminations on the notions of quality, taste, and distinction in legitimating channel brands can be produced from reading about ESPN, NBC Sports Network, A&E, and Starz. And a theme on the value of liveness stretches across ESPN, Twitch.tv, and Twitter. All this is to say that the possibilities for reading this book and drawing out new perspectives on and arguments about television channels are fairly robust and non-linear. So just as one's use of Netflix helps generate new pathways and recommendations, this book too aims to produce value from having its linear content arranged and experienced in idiosyncratic ways. Perhaps the strongest recommendation that can be made to readers is this: consider using these chapters as templates to engage in your own investigation and analysis of the many more channels *not* featured in this volume, building your own conceptual connections along the way.

In sum, the following chapters hope to provide a critical guide to television channels by emulating them: providing the structured, curated presentation of legacy linear channels while also enabling unique pathways through a vast library of content as non-linear services can do. The chapters collectively recognize that as one channel logic pops, so to speak, another may pop up alongside it. By understanding the processes by which channels transform as well as the many different forms that they can take (whether that is the transformation of TV Guide Network into Pop, or the difference between Pop as a cable service and the non-linear channels that pushed programming guides to the industrial margins), the shape of changing television industries becomes easier to discern. With that perspective, our power and agency to impact that process—to change channels—may also more clearly pop into view.

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