"Make Any Room Your TV Room:"

Media Mobility, Digital Delivery, and Family Harmony

In March 2011, the newly selected chairman of the MPAA and former U.S.

Senator, Christopher Dodd, acknowledged that several major studios, including Warner,

Sony, Universal, and Fox, would be releasing a small number of films through Video on

Demand (VOD) just sixty days after their theatrical debut for a premium rental price of

$30 per movie. Such a move signaled a continued departure from more traditional

distribution patterns, in which DVDs are released four to six months after their theatrical

debut. Although Dodd eventually took a more conciliatory tone with theater owners,

acknowledging that filmmakers don't make movies for "small screens," the debate about

premium VOD seemed to crystallize the ways in which digital delivery is altering the

film industry. Dodd promoted premium VOD as an alternative that could help to alleviate

the problems of physical distance and mobility for "families with young children, senior

citizens, the disabled, and those living in remote areas."[i] In particular, the continued

transition to digital media seemed to offer audiences with new forms of mobility and

access, making it possible for groups with limited access to movie theaters to get closer to

participating in the theatrical experience.

Theater owners complained that this would further undermine their exclusive

window and worried that movie consumers would choose to stay at home and wait for

movies to become available through on-demand, choosing convenience over the

pleasures of collective, public consumption. In fact, no less an authority than *Avatar*

(2009) director James Cameron, weighed in on the controversy, lending his name to a

letter distributed by the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO), an

international organization representing the interests of theater owners, with Cameron commenting in a *New York Times* interview that "I do feel it's not wise to erode your core business."[ii] Cameron's remarks are, no doubt, related to his practice of producing films identified with visual spectacle; however, the attempt to promote premium video-on-demand also underscored the ways in which the home video market itself was changing. In fact, premium VOD seemed designed as an attempt to make up for declining DVD sales. More crucially, VOD itself is just one of several new models of digital delivery that Hollywood studios are currently exploring in order to adjust to a rapidly changing attention economy. Although it is too early to predict whether any particular delivery format will succeed, these attempts to promote formats such as VOD offer a useful entry point for thinking about how the industrial discourse associated with digital delivery operates to shape the consumption practices of movie audiences.

Thus, this essay seeks to map out the changing reception and distribution cultures that are in the process of forming as digital delivery—whether through streaming video, video on demand, direct downloads, or mobile phone apps—increasingly becomes a more primary means through which audiences engage with film and television. Although recent scholarship has responded to the ways in which objects such as the DVD came to produce models of DVD spectatorship, the DVD itself now seems to be facing its own transition into obsolescence, with ambiguous implications for future practices of film consumption. However, as the debate over premium VOD suggests, much of the promotional discourse identified with digital delivery tended to focus on issues of mobility, flexibility, and convenience. Further, advertising and other promotional discourse has tended to link digital delivery simultaneously to the hectic schedules of

"on-the-go" workers and families, providing them with the ability to watch wherever and whenever they would like. Finally, these discourses emphasize that digital delivery can resolve domestic conflicts and create family harmony, ironically by encouraging individual, rather than collective forms of movie watching.

The films that were included in the initial premium VOD test included the Adam Sandler family comedy, *Just Go With It* (2011), and the Liam Neeson action film, *Unknown* (2011).[iii] Notably, neither film was part of a major franchise, suggesting that studios were reluctant to experiment with a film that had a larger budget or might have a larger built-in audience. But the VOD experiment allowed studios to investigate whether enough viewers might be willing to pay a specified amount—the equivalent of approximately three adult movie tickets—in order to see movies several weeks before they were available on DVD or in other streaming formats rather than dealing with paying for multiple tickets plus the incidental costs of a night at the movie theater.[iv] Although the studios' experiments remain inconclusive—both films showed only a modest drop in box office after being released on premium VOD—a number of entertainment pundits speculated that studios would continue to narrow the theatrical window in order to make premium VOD a viable alternative to seeing movies in the theater.[v] This uncertainty illustrates that digital delivery seems to challenge more traditional perceptions of moviegoing as an activity, one that is caught up with perceptions of movie theaters as what Charles R. Acland has referred to as sites that invoke "the material and sensory experience of commune" the ability to be part of a crowd, one that is engaged with the newest films.[vi]

To this end, I am interested in looking at how these promises of personal choice and media mobility shape media consumption practices. Although premium VOD seems to offer further control over the viewing experience, it is also caught up in assumptions about the status of movies as cultural artifacts, as well as the increasing role of video. As Sean Cubitt has noted, video is one of the more flexible media forms, allowing it to circulate through a variety of media platforms.[vii] Thus, I argue that the film industry is entering an era of platform mobility, one that leads to changed perceptions of film as a medium and movie consumption as an activity. I define platform mobility as the ongoing shift toward ubiquitous, mobile access to a wide range of entertainment content. Platform mobility involves not simply the screens and devices through which we access this content but also the ability to provide convenient and seamless access to that content; however, although the concept of platform mobility provides the appearance that video content has been rendered intangible, it is crucial to recognize that these forms of mobility have material consequences, as well. Rather than a single black box, we instead encounter the proliferation of multiple platforms and digital delivery systems, all of which are supplanted by new devices, resulting in what Charles R. Acland calls "the outrageous environmental impact of the metals and toxins that constitute our screen world."[viii] These platforms also lead us to renegotiate the physical space of our lived environment, altering the primacy of the central television set in the family room, while also requiring us to adjust physically to these new screens. In addition, platform mobility should not be equated with what film critic David Denby described as "platform agnosticism," the perception that all platforms offer equivalent viewing experiences.[ix] Instead, movie consumers often deliberate carefully over which platform to use to get the

most desired experience.[x] Finally, as I will argue, these new forms of mobility are often, though not exclusively, identified with personalized forms of media consumption, whether or not the consumption takes place on a personal mobile device. Thus, rather than the collective moviegoing experience associated with movie theaters or even the domestic image of a family gathered around a shared TV set, platform mobility engages with a seemingly empowered individual viewer.

These images of an empowered viewer are consistent not only with the promotional discourse associated with digital delivery but also with the depictions of digital media users in both critical theory and cinematic narrative. For example, Kristen Daly argues that recent Hollywood filmmaking should be characterized as a "cinema of the user," which she depicts, drawing from the terminology of Gilles Deleuze, as a third regime of cinematic storytelling after the movement-image and time-image.[xi] Because these films address (and sometimes depict) an active, participatory viewer or "viewser," to use Daly's term, these changes appear to be a form of liberation. The user is given the ability to interact with the text, altering it, or at least actively engaging with it in the process of making meaning, much like Keanu Reeves' hacker hero, Neo, is able to alter the world of *The Matrix*. Like Daly, a number of media scholars have sought to devise new language for defining this seemingly active viewer.[xii] These accounts of active viewing now find their match in advertising and promotional discourse that depicts users in complete command of their media experiences, able to chose our own (pre-packaged) paths through a textual system, whether that includes DVD extras or online menus offering a seemingly unlimited choice of films and TV shows. However, although such models of an active, energized viewer are enticing, providing viewers with a wide array

of interpretive materials that may shape their engagement with film culture, such an account must also acknowledge the ways in which these discourses of an active viewer are linked to large cultural myths about digital capitalism. In fact, in the enthusiasm for these new modes of interactivity and mobility, it is easy to forget that these addition markets essentially turn digital media in what Dan Schiller calls "a self-service vending machine of cultural commodities."[xiii] Further, as Vincent Mosco argues, experiments with digital delivery make it possible for the film commodity "to be measured, monitored, and packaged" in new ways.[xiv] Thus, although viewers of Hollywood films may encounter new forms of mobility, they do so at the expense of submitting to new forms of monitoring and surveillance.

As a result, it is crucial to consider the ways in which the processes of digital delivery have also altered the practices of doing business in the film and television industries. As the conflict between NATO and the MPAA suggests, there is substantial unrest over the changes that have been introduced as digital delivery has become more commonplace. These changes have significantly transformed traditional models of distribution that have existed roughly since the introduction of video and cable television in the late 1970s and early '80s, when studios, theater owners, and distributors agreed on a theatrical window of approximately six months. In fact, the introduction of digital platforms unsettles these earlier models, leaving the movie industry in a state of flux regarding future viewing practices.[xv] Although there is uncertainty about how the movie industry will take advantage of digital delivery, it is clear that digital delivery has been promoted in terms of its utopian potential to provide greater mobility to viewers who have ostensibly been tethered to their home television screens. In addition, platform

mobility was also promoted as further liberating us from programming schedules, further expanding the time-shifting potential of video. Most notably, digital delivery ostensibly helps to fulfill several promises: first, it promotes family harmony; second, it offers unlimited choice; and finally, it promises multiple forms of mobility. Not only can digital delivery allow users to carry their content with them. In fact, quite a bit of the advertising for digital delivery places emphasis on the mobility of texts themselves, the ability to move content seamlessly from one platform to another.

These questions about the role of new media technologies in the home have a long history, as a range of discourses develop to acclimate audiences to the introduction of media change. In her seminal analysis of the promotion of TV as a household object, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, Lynn Spigel points out that "the media … published pictorial representations of domestic life that showed people how television might—or might not—fit into the dynamics of their domestic lives. Most significantly, … the media discourses were organized around ideas of family harmony and discord."[xvi] As Spigel goes on to argue, TV was depicted as simultaneously producing family harmony, by bringing parents and children together, so that they could share in a viewing experience at home during the post-World War II era in which family unity received special emphasis. Further, Spigel explores the ways in which advertising discourse related the idea that television consumption could help to reproduce more traditional gender roles by shaping family interactions.[xvii] In addition, Spigel explores the ways in which these debates about TV consumption and domestic power took on specifically *spatial* configurations as a variety of women's magazines sought to determine how television sets would fit into suburban homes.

By comparison, contemporary promotional discourse for cable companies and mobile media platforms seem to imply that mobile, digital delivery effaces such concerns, allowing us to watch anywhere, on our own schedule. In fact, as a 2011 Time Warner Cable advertisement, "Never Lose Your Spot," sought to emphasize, viewers could move between multiple TVs throughout the house, never once losing their place in the movie. The advertisement depicts a young couple, the wife noticeably pregnant, settling in to watch a movie on the couch, with the woman struggling to get comfortable, while her husband patiently tries to help. Unsatisfied, the couple climbs up and down the stairs several times, trying two or three TV sets and a variety of increasingly absurd positions before returning to the original set and settling in to watch, with platform mobility magically securing harmony between the couple, while preventing them from having to worry about missing a single moment of the movie they were watching. Thus, there is no longer a question of where to put the TV set. Instead, the whole house is transformed into a space for consuming entertainment, one where any room in the house can be a TV room.

Like Time Warner, DirecTV promises a vision of platform mobility that offers viewers the chance to control their viewing experiences. In the spring of 2011, DirecTV had two TV advertisements that were designed to promote the consumer's ability to shift between a several media platforms while watching a movie. In one, "Love Match," a lone female viewer moves throughout her house while watching a Renaissance-era costume drama, complete with sword fights and eventually a love scene. As she moves from her bedroom to the kitchen and eventually the living room, the action literally spills out into the spaces of her house, suggesting that woman is completely immersed in the world of

the movie despite the interruptions of getting up for a snack or answering a telephone call.   In the other, a male viewer consumes a *Terminator*-style adventure, featuring robots fighting each other with swords while crashing through the walls of the rooms where he watches. In both cases, the viewer is able to pause the action while moving from one room to another—from the kitchen to the living room, say—before seamlessly restarting the movie as the action spills over into the next room. In both cases, viewers are individualized, watching a movie alone, again in a stereotypical suburban home, rather than watching with a spouse or family. Further, the movie choices are clearly marked by gender assumptions, with the female viewer engaged with a historical drama, albeit one with plenty of action, and the male viewer watching a futuristic science-fiction film.

Digital Delivery:

Although a number of scholars have attempted to map the role of the DVD in changing film consumption, in many ways the DVD merely served as an extension of the existing modes of distribution established with the introduction and popularization of the VCR in the 1980s. Movie theaters owners were provided with an exclusive "window," allowing them the right to show a movie without having to compete with other versions of that movie. Typically, this window lasted approximately six months, although the window was gradually shortened soon after the DVD was introduced, in part because studios saw DVDs as a sell-through commodity and marketed DVDs to movie collectors, while VHS was primarily considered to be a rental format. In fact, as Jeff Ulin observes, the average window between the theatrical premiere and the DVD release was five

months and 22 days in 1998, but by 2008, that window had shortened to four months and

ten days, a decrease that Edward Jay Epstein attributes to the desire to have the DVD

releases of summer blockbusters available for purchase before Christmas.[xviii] Ulin adds

that DVD sales have been declining steadily since about 2003, with a decline of 6.3%, for

example, between 2007 and 2008.[xix] However, despite these changes, the essential

window system remained in place, allowing theaters to extract profit from a film thanks

to their exclusive rights to show it. More recently, however, this window system has been

transformed, in part due to the fact that one of the primary sources of profitability for

studios—DVD sales—has declined considerably, as the move to premium VOD

illustrates.

Of course, experiments in digital delivery have been pursued since the late 1990s.

One of the earliest examples of this form of experimentation was the Sony, MGM,

Paramount, Universal, and Warner joint venture, Movielink, which was launched in

2002, and allowed users to download movies to their computer's hard drive for thirty

days, when it would be automatically deleted. Movielink offered crude time-shifting

controls, such as fast forward, rewind, and pause, providing users with limited temporal,

if not spatial mobility.[xx] In addition, the approach sought to emulate the experience of

renting movies from a video store, with the website "going so far as to use the word 'rent'

on the clickable icon under the pictures of the movies being offered."[xxi] At around the

same time, the studios signed an agreement with CinemaNow, which was eventually

purchased by the electronics retailer, Best Buy, to make studio films available for

permanent download, although users were restricted to watch the film only on the

computer where they originally purchased the film. No matter what, it seems clear, as

McDonald points out, digital delivery has led not to a single mode of delivery or storage for media content. Instead, platforms and delivery systems seem to be multiplying.[xxii]

It is difficult to predict the degree to which mobile video will become a prominent mode of movie consumption. According to a recent Nielsen study, only 24.7 million cell phone users, out of nearly 300 million overall users in the United States, watched videos on their phones. In addition, mobile subscribers watched roughly 4 hours and 20 minutes of video per month using mobile devices.[xxiii] These numbers suggest that adoption of mobile media consumption remains incomplete. In fact, as Gerard Goggin argues, adoption of mobile television has been gradual due to a range of technological, ideological, and regulatory factors. Broadband and 3G access remain far from universal, and data limits on most cell phone accounts make it more difficult or costly for users to watch unlimited content on their phones.[xxiv] Further, streaming services such as Netflix must compete for streaming rights. Unlike DVD rentals, which are protected under the First Sale Doctrine, broadcast and streaming rights curtail this seemingly unlimited mobility, with the result that Netflix has invested heavily in streaming rights. At the same time, their limited selection of streaming titles works against their niche as a renter of obscure "long tail" titles.[xxv] This mobility is also limited in other ways. The Time Warner iPad app allows users to stream selected cable channels; however, they can only do so within reach of a Time Warner Cable wi-fi network in a home that subscribes to their cable service.[xxvi] Although these factors are subject to change, as technologies improve and as demand for mobile television and film increases, it is important to remain aware that these promises of platform mobility remain relative or conditional. However, it is clear that platform mobility offers an enticing alternative for studios eager to recapture

lost DVD sales and that studios and cable companies alike are eager to promote this

mobility as empowering viewers and that studios are prepared to offer a variety of digital

delivery approaches ranging from streaming video plans to mobile phone apps that allow

users to download feature-length movies and digital lockers, where users can store all of

their media.

Interfaces and Limited Mobility:

As Daniel Chamberlin argues in his discussion of television interfaces, media

interfaces serve as an unexplored force in shaping how users engage with entertainment

content, in particular in their efforts to navigate seemingly unlimited media choices.

These interfaces provide viewers with a sense of mastery, even while their searches and

purchases can generate vast amounts of data that can be used to shape future viewing

habits. In fact, Chamberlin argues that "media interfaces are the visible tip of a software

layer that increasingly structures our engagements with text, audio, and video."[xxvii] As

digital delivery becomes an increasingly common way for fans to consume movies, these

interfaces will shape how we locate and identify movies. Scrolling through a menu on our

TV screen, accessed via the internet-enabled Netflix player on a Wii, the movie consumer

is presented with a series of menus, divided by genres, including new releases for both

movies and TV. More crucially, Netflix offers recommendations based on the viewer's

previous movie or TV selections. As a result, the new interfaces are caught up in a wider

system of what Chamberlin refers to as "an aesthetic of metadata."[xxviii] For Chamberlin,

these interfaces have a significant impact on how consumers find movies. In fact, he goes

on to argue that metadata "is now determinative of which programming is viewed."[xxix]

Chamberlin's deterministic model suggests that home cinema users are left with little agency over their programming choices, one that likely overstates how viewers' choices are shaped, especially given the role of social media in generating buzz about upcoming films.

These discourses of personalization are reinforced by the architecture of sites such as Netflix, Facebook, and Hulu, which all promise to offer personalized recommendations based on content preferences, using carefully designed algorithms that attempt to deduce movie and TV preferences based on past selections, leading to what Ted Striphas has described as an emerging "algorithmic culture." Striphas offers the concept of "algorithmic culture" to describe Amazon.com's use of data compiled from Kindle users. Like other forms of platform mobility, Amazon markets the Kindle in terms of its convenience to book lovers, allowing them to carry their book collection—and to buy books, of course—wherever they go. As Striphas observes, Amazon maintains a list of the most frequently highlighted passages by Kindle users, information it obtains through the Kindle's 3G connection. This practice is promoted by Amazon as a convenience to Kindle users. Your book data, including the passages you highlight, is stored in the computing cloud for retrieval, in case the original data is lost. However, as Striphas points out, this also allows Amazon to mine the data of its customers, in turn shaping cultural taste through the publication of the "highlighted passage" list. Thus, algorithmic culture, like the elite culture that once shaped the literary canon, is involved with "sorting, classifying, and hierarchizing cultural artifacts."[xxx] This ultimately leads to what Striphas describes as "a *statistical determination* of what's culturally relevant" (emphasis in the original). More crucially, these content aggregators help to shape the

actual viewing practices of consumers who watch movies using one of the new digital delivery systems. As Chamberlin argues, content aggregators are "configured to track and commodify viewing behavior."[xxxi]

In fact, despite these promises of mobility, the process of monitoring purchases and rental habits has led Mark Andrejevic to characterize digital delivery as part of a larger cultural trend toward enclosure and surveillance, suggesting that the mobility offered to consumers is actually highly constrained. Tools such as DVRs require users to submit to monitoring as a condition of use, while electronic retailers such as Amazon, Netflix, and iTunes monitor sales. Thus, for Andrejevic, a tool such as TiVo, which is marketed as offering greater convenience, "watches viewers while they watch TV," allowing media companies to customize advertising and to sell the metadata they collect based on consumer habits.[xxxii]

Mobile Cinephilia

One recent model of digital delivery involves the decision by Warner to sell two of their highest profile films, *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *Inception* (2010) as iPhone apps. Warner's decision to distribute these films as iPhone apps signaled that they were ready to experiment with new models that could bypass Netflix and other similar services and sell directly to the consumer, with the hope of reviving flagging DVD sales. The basic *Inception* and *Dark Knight* apps were free and provided users with a five-minute "teaser" depicting the opening scenes of the films, along with a limited number of "extras." The free *Inception* app, for example, offered a short making-of video that explained how the producers created the rainstorms while filming in Los Angeles. The

user could also purchase a secondary app, priced at $12 U.S., which included permanent access to the entire movie, as well as a number of supplemental videos about the film that might normally be found on the DVD, with a similar model for the *Dark Knight* app, although that film was priced at $10. Unlike the iTunes version of these films, however, the app is limited to a single device. If you purchase the film on your iPad, you can only watch it there, perhaps suggesting that Warner is hoping that users will purchase these films on multiple devices or through several different platforms. The app version does offer more special features and also allowed Warner to sell the film through a digital platform in more than twenty countries where iTunes is unavailable, including China, the Netherlands, and Brazil.[xxxiii] At the same time, the app was promoted as offering some social media features that would appeal to the fan cultures identified with both of these Christopher Nolan films by integrating the app with a user's Twitter and Facebook accounts so that he or she can chat with other fans in real time, a supplemental feature that Warner sought to characterize as consistent with the social nature of watching movies.[xxxiv]

Although the *Inception* app made it possible to watch a specific movie and engaged with the discourses of media fandom, offering what was essentially a more mobile version of the DVD, Time Warner Cable also launched an iPad application that would allow TWC subscribers to stream some of their television content to their iPad, as long as they are connected to a Time Warner wireless router associated with a cable account. Like other digital delivery platforms, the app was announced as a transformative way of watching TV and movies. The advertisement promoting the launch, "Make Any Room Your TV Room," depicts a series of quick cuts between various iPad users holding

or watching the iPad at arm's length in various rooms and spaces throughout a range of middle-class, presumably suburban homes: a businessman holds it in front of his entertainment center, while another man watches baseball on an iPad propped on his exercise machine, while a third follows a cooking show as he prepares a meal in the kitchen. An African-American woman watches in a clothes closet, presumably while doing housework, while another woman watches with the device propped on her bathtub, her polished toenails floating just above the water's surface. In all cases, the iPad is placed in the center of the frame, creating a graphic match that suggests the continued presence of the iPad anywhere inside or near the family home. At the same time, the commercial positions each shot as a POV shot, promoting the perspective that platform mobility encourages personalized viewing, given that all of the subjects in the ad appear to be alone.

But the most suggestive shot is of a young boy, the only person fully visible on-screen. The boy has propped up the iPad on his wall and has gathered a number of toy cars in front of the device, emulating the staging of a drive-in theater in miniature, while a child's cartoon plays on-screen, evoking nostalgia for older forms of movie watching. Although each of these figures appears on-screen for only a second or two, they tell us quite a bit about how TWC seeks to position itself within the culture of platform mobility. Unlike the seemingly obtrusive television sets that required families to "make room," the iPad transforms any room in the house into a site for consuming entertainment. Further, although TV watching was once seen as a communal activity that could bring parents and children together, the viewers in the Time Warner Cable ad all

watch individually, an activity that seems visually linked to personal escape, as with the woman who watches while relaxing in the bathtub.

Similarly, studios have sought to preserve a model of media collecting and ownership, rather than merely "renting" movies, whether through streaming or download, a goal expressed in the studio-planned initiative, Ultra Violet. At the writing of this essay, UltraViolet was still in its initial planning stages, but the rhetoric used to promote UltraViolet borrowed from many of the digital cinema myths and promises about interactivity, freedom, consumer choice, and even permanence, by promising that users would not have to repurchase every movie they own to update their video libraries every time there is a technology upgrade.[xxxv] UltraViolet users would create an account that would allow them to purchase "enduring rights" to access films and TV shows on any UltraViolet device associated with that household account. Thus, a consumer could buy a Blu-Ray DVD and, if that movie is unavailable, they could watch the movie later via streaming video, digital download, or some currently unimagined future format. UltraViolet is promoted using the discourses of platform mobility, selling to viewers who may be watching movies on-the-go, as well as to viewers concerned about having to purchase multiple versions of the same film in order to keep up with format changes. In fact, UltraViolet will allow users to load any movie or TV show onto as many as twelve devices. Further, a household account allows up to six users, with UltraViolet marketing itself as something that could be used by families to avoid the conflicts associated with media consumption.

This notion of platform mobility flies in the face of more traditional perceptions of TV and movie consumption as a shared domestic activity, associated with a central TV

set placed in the living room. As the UltraViolet webpage promises, there will be "no more fighting over the main TV when Dad wants to watch football at the same time the kids want to watch cartoons." The UltraViolet system also promised family harmony in other ways, as well, noting that college students would be able to engage in "rerun night" with their parents, even while living in the dorms. Looking more closely at these passages, we can see echoes of earlier modes of TV advertising. The father, as head of the household, controls the "main TV," while the kids follow the designated viewing habits of children by watching cartoons and obediently allowing their father to control the primary screen. At the same time, an UltraViolet account magically wipes away the distance between parent and child when that child goes away to college by allowing family members to continue watching together, even in separate locations. In addition, UltraViolet offers promises of consumer control and choice, both in terms of the range of content and in terms of the ability of families to control what content comes into the home. Like the V-Chip, UltraViolet offers filters to block content while still "allowing kids the freedom to choose."

This notion of family harmony also seems crucial to the efforts by Netflix to deepen their engagement with social media. Although Netflix has abandoned a "Netflix friends" feature, which allowed Netflix users to see their friends' reviews and ratings for films, they are seeking to integrate with Facebook again in an attempt to encourage people living within the same household to create personalized Netflix accounts. Thus, two or three members of the same household might maintain separate "individual memberships" within the same account at a slightly greater cost than a normal household account. In addition to the personalized account—which would allow Netflix to cater to

the individual tastes of different users on the same plan—the "individual accounts" would allow multiple people to stream videos simultaneously, thus eliminating any discord over what to watch.[xxxvi] Implied in these remarks is, once again, the idea of individual viewers within the same household watching content separately, a contradiction implied in the dissonance between descriptions of the new plan as both a "family plan" and as "individual accounts." By this logic, platform mobility once again seems to offer family harmony through individualized, rather than shared, consumption.

Conclusion:

All of these changes point to a transformation of the experiences and perceptions of viewers. In his discussion of digital television distribution, William Boddy argues that the media industry will know a viewer "by the decisions he has made about how to spend his time, each and every moment of which is recorded by his black box."[xxxvii]

Much like the popular discourses surrounding television in the 1950s, advertising for cell phones, portable media players, and other forms of platform mobility all help to define the ways in which these media technologies are understood and integrated into daily life. This should not imply that these discourses of platform mobility are determinative. In fact, micro-ethnographic examinations of local uses of media technologies often reveal that by looking at what Karen Lury refers to as "the everyday mess of living," we can begin to see how users resist and reshape these media discourses to their own purposes.[xxxviii]

[i] Michael Cieply, "Scuffle over On-Demand Portends Battles to Come," *New York Times*, April 24, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/25/business/media/25vod.html>.

[ii] Michael Cieply, "'Avatar' Director Cautions Against Early Video-on-Demand Release," *New York Times*, April 8, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com>.

[iii] According to Box Office Mojo, the budget for *Just Go With It* was $80 million, while *Unknown* cost $30 million. Of course, these estimates likely do not count advertising costs.

[iv] For one of the most thorough acconts of the launch of premium VOD, see Marc Graser, "WB, Sony, U and Fox Cue Premium VOD," *Variety*, March 31, 2011 <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118034714>.

[v] One of the entertainment pundits who was most critical of premium VOD was David Poland, who frequently complains that studios are failing in their efforts to market digital delivery. See for example, David Poland, "The Massive DirecTV Campaign for Home Premiere," *The Hot Blog*, April 21, 2011 <http://moviecitynews.com/2011/04/the-massive-directv-campaign-for-home-premiere/>.

[vi] Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 242.

[vii] Sean Cubitt, *Videography: Video Media as Art and Culture* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1993) xv.

[viii] Charles R. Acland, "Curtains, Carts, and the Mobile Screen," *Screen* 50.1 (2009): 149. For a discussion of the "black box fallacy," see Henry Jenkins, Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 14-16.

[ix] David Denby, "Big Pictures: Hollywood Looks for a Future," *The New Yorker*, January 8, 2007 <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2007/01/08/070108crat_atlarge_denby>.

[x] Acland, "Curtains," 150.

[xi] Kristen Daly, "Cinema 3.0: The Interactive Image," *Cinema Journal* 50.1 (Fall 2010): 82.

[xii] One of the most frequently cited terms is Axel Bruns' concept of the produser, which describes the role of audiences of users in making meaning (and often new texts) in the era of digital media. See Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond: From Production to Produsage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

[xiii] Dan Schiller, *How to Think about Information* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 141.

[xiv] Vincent Mosco, The Political Economy of Communication, 2nd Ed (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 136.

[xv] As Shawn Shimpach notes, similar problems are challenging the TV industry, as well. See Shawn Shimpach, *Television in Transition: The Life and Afterlife of the Narrative Action Hero* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 23.

[xvi] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 36.

[xvii] Spigel, 37. In fact, Spigel notes that the term "togetherness" was coined my *McCall's* magazine in 1954, reflecting the emphasis on the nuclear family.

[xviii] Jeff Ulin, *The Business of Media Distribution: Monetizing Film, TV, and Video Content* (New York: Elsevier, 2010), 196. Edward Jay Epstein, "Hollywood's Death Spirl: The Secret Numbers Tell the Story," *Slate*, July 25, 2005 <http://www.slate.com/id/2123286/>.

[xix] Ulin, 189.

[xx] For a full discussion of Movielink and other early experiments in digital delivery, see Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 172-73.

[xxi] Scott Hettrick, "Movielink Video on Demand Open for Business," Video Business, November 11, 2002, <http://videobusiness.com>. Quoted in McDonald, 173.

[xxii] McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries*, 176.

[xxiii] Nielsen, "State of the Media: Trends in TV Viewing—2011 TV Upfronts," Nielsen Wire Blog, April 2011, < http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/State-of-the-Media-2011-TV-Upfronts.pdf>.

[xxiv] Gerard Goggin, *Global Mobile Media* (London: Routledge, 2011), 80-98.

[xxv] The concept of "the long tail" was famously devised by Chris Anderson as a way of explaining that online retailers, such as Amazon and Netflix, would be able to rent or sell a wider variety of media products than bricks-and-mortar stores such as Borders Books and Blockbuster Video. See Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).

[xxvi] Harry McCracken, "TV Evereywhere? Cable on the Net Isn't There Yet," *Time*, May 5, 2011 <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,2069693,00.html>.

[xxvii] Daniel Chamberlin, "Scripted Spaces: Television Interfaces and the Non-Places of Asynchronous Entertainment," in *Television as Digital Media*, Ed. James Bennett and Nikki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 231.

[xxviii] Chamberlin, "Scripted Spaces," 235.

[xxix] Chamberlin, "Scripted Spaces," 236.

[xxx] Ted Striphas, "How to Have Culture in an Algorithmic Age," The Late Age of Print, June 14, 2010 <http://www.thelateageofprint.org/2010/06/14/how-to-have-culture-in-an-algorithmic-age/>.

[xxxi] Chamberlin, "Scripted Spaces," 248.

[xxxii] Mark Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007), 11.

[xxxiii] Mark Saltzman, "The Dark Knight: App Edition Fuses Movies with Social Media," *USA Today*, February 24, 2011 <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2011/02/dark-knight-warner-bros-app-ipad/1>.

xxxiv William Fenton, "Warner Debuts First Movie Apps for iOS, Inception and The Dark Knight," *PCMag.com*, February 16, 2011, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2380445,00.asp>

xxxv The concept of digital myths is borrowed here from Vincent Mosco and is meant to describe the ways in which digital discourses often take on mythological overtones. As Mosco is quick to point out, myth, as it is used here, does not imply falsehood. Instead, myth reflects deep-seated cultural desires for mobility, agency, and community. See Vincent Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).

xxxvi Janko Roettgers, "Next Up for Netflix: Family Plans," *New Tee Vee*, April 18, 2011, <http://gigaom.com/video/netflix-multiple-streams-family-plans/>.

xxxvii William Boddy, "'Is It TV Yet?' The Dislocated Screens of Television in a Mobile Digital Culture," in *Television as Digital Media*, Ed. James Bennett and Nikki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 96.

xxxviii Karen Lury, "'Close' Viewing: Stories of Technology in the Move from Analog to Digital Media," Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, March 12, 2011.