



YouTube's Uncertain Futures

Notes from Chapter 6

"YouTube: Digital Media and Society Series"

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Participatory Culture's Highs and Lows

- Our book's authors use the final chapter to speculate on the YouTube's participatory culture's future
- They tell of two "hybrid media events"- one "apparently trivial and the other momentous" to illustrate the very different ways each moved through YouTube in connection with the mainstream media
- Both events took place in Australia, home of our book's authors

“Fast Times at Melbourne High”?

- In January 2008 an out-of-control teenage party in Melbourne (he used MySpace to invite everyone) gained national then international media attention for the young party host’s “outrageously unrepentant” behavior during [television interviews](#), such as one with a tabloid “current affairs”-type program
- The episode fit into the “media panic” moral anxiety about youth and the “narcissism and exhibitionism” associated with online social media network
- Delaney’s defiant behavior was celebrated by many in the youth culture, and the story “blew up” in various ways along all of the popular social media platforms
- In the U.S., Fox News added party and interview clips to its YouTube channel, “The Blast,” bringing the story to the attention of the large U.S. audience

Dominant Media Gets Played

- This incident- and the way the youth culture shared it and reveled in it via social media- could be considered a case study showing how out-of-step the dominant media, especially the popular TV tabloid shows of the time, were with the sensibilities and in-jokes of participatory culture
- It can also be said that the youthful MySpace/YouTube users were sufficiently literate in both the discourses of the “youth, risk, moral panic” media/public concerns and in how traditional news/TV function to turn those discourses on their ear and mobilize them using the “rapid spreadability” of their own mediated social networks
- The “anonymous message board multitude” would have their day then (5 years ago), and continue to be a force today

A Contrasting Event and Discourse...

- ...would show a different, more serious side to the participatory culture
- Feb. 13, 2008, Australia's prime minister made an official apology to the nation's Indigenous (or Aboriginal) people
- It was an event that had been centuries in the making and was more than a decade overdue
- Soon after Australian TV's full broadcast of the PM's speech was put in YouTube Australia, the channel's "most viewed" pages began to fill with related videos
- The kinds of videos that were uploaded (and with which audiences engaged) in response to the historic speech provided a good summary of YouTube's diverse uses in general

The Mix of YouTube Feedback

- They included:
 - Copied uploads of the full speech for the benefit of people who missed it or to record it for posterity
 - Clips of the speech's "best parts" (subjectively), providing the "quotes" and "catch-up" functions
 - A range of user-created videos using the audio of the speech and remixing it with users' own text-based commentaries and images to express personal opinions on the issue
 - Vlog entries of people offering personal perspectives and opinions on the apology

Two Versions of Participatory Culture

- The teenage party story represents a “playful subversion with no purpose but exhibiting the awesome speed and creativity of ‘viral’ web culture”
- The Aboriginal apology, in contrast, showed a “cultural public sphere” where conversations, self-mediated representation, and encounters with difference took place on popular terms with less departure from “official public culture”
- The examples illustrate the range of YouTube’s power to spark participation and debate
- And how traditional mass media cover and represent YouTube is sometimes negative ways, intentionally or not

What Does This Say About YouTube's Future?

- 5-6 years ago, when this book was written, the authors believed YouTube was seeking to retain visitors more (so were content providers with series and subscriptions)
- And that YouTube was trying to strengthen its “stickiness” by enticing viewers to log in and build relationships with the site
- YouTube seemed also to be encouraging advertisers to work *within* YouTube rather than just placing advertisement on it

YouTube's Established Niche

- YouTube certainly has achieved staying power, hardly just a fad
- YouTube has become an accessible platform for businesses and organizations to invite user-generated content to market and create buzz for products and issues- the college student from Sumter, S.C.'s [Doritos spot](#) is an example
- Recent [surveys](#) and [reports](#) show YouTube is being used more than ever by the public, especially in the U.S. and North America
- Google's [bottom line](#) indicates continuing growth and popularity

YouTube Tailored for Technology

- As video capturing, creation and sharing continues to improve, become easier for the average person, and cost-effective thus even more accessible and mainstream, YouTube is certainly well-positioned to stay relevant and to change and adapt with the technological times
- GoPro cameras, for example, allow for capturing amazing no-hands needed video

YouTube Set to Lead the Parade

- YouTube helped foster the participatory culture and will continue to be at the forefront of the good, bad and ugly that goes with people today having such a voice to express their own views, ideas, and creations
- Mainstream, traditional mass media have had their day and are more the entities today that are battling to stay relevant and profitable
- No question we are in a new media world with a landscape that changes and evolves as we speak
- Get on the bus or you will be left behind!